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Amanda Kerr

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CONCEPTUALIZING FIRST-YEAR WRITING AGENCY: THE TRANSFER-RHETORICAL  
GENRE-VOICE TRIAD AS AN ENACTMENT OF RHETORICAL AGENCY

by

AMANDA KERR

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in English  
Department of Literature and Languages

Hui Wu, Ph.D., Committee Chair

College of Arts and Sciences

The University of Texas at Tyler  
November 2023

The University of Texas at Tyler  
Tyler, Texas

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## Dedication

This dedication is for the people who served on the frontlines, making this Master of Arts possible for me. Thank you, dad, for all the times that you let me sit at your kitchen counter for hours and hours writing while my son sat in your lap watching Robo Car Poli. Thank you for your constant words of encouragement and wisdom.

Thank you to my husband, for all your sacrifices throughout this journey. Thank you for acting as a sounding board for all the introductions and random paragraphs: “Does this make sense?” Even when you had no idea what I was writing about because of its disciplinary context, you still listened.

Thank you to my son, who was born while mommy was a student and has never known anything different than snuggling up close to me on the couch while I’m nose deep in a novel for class, grading papers, or typing away on my computer.

Thank you to Katrina Graham for making your house a safe space for my son to come and play while I wrote.

Thank you to Zera Coffee House, for providing me with the perfect atmosphere for creativity to spark.

To anyone else who helped me accomplish this massive feat, I dedicate this thesis to you, for making it possible for me to grow as a scholar and writer.

To my grandpa, I dedicate this published work to you. Someday, your hundreds of one-dollar Walmart notebooks of poems, stored in your closets and the floorboard of your car, will be made known to the world.

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Conceptualizing First-Year Writing Agency: The Transfer-Rhetorical Genre-Voice Triad as an  
Enactment of Rhetorical Agency

Amanda Kerr

9 November 2023

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Hui Wu

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Tara Propper  
Dr. Matt Kelly

**Abstract**

In First-Year Composition, Teaching for Transfer is an evidence-based pedagogy that teaches students to write across contexts, a goal specified in the *WPA Outcomes Statements for First-Year Composition (3.0)*. However, the implicit relationships shared between Teaching for Transfer, expressivism, and Rhetorical Genre Studies pedagogies are an underexplored area in the teaching of first-year composition. Given the presence of an implicit relationship between transfer, proficiency in rhetorical genres, and student voice in the *WPA Outcomes*, this thesis defines a dynamic interrelationship between pedagogies of transfer, expressivism, and Rhetorical Genre Studies. In an effort to foreground a comprehensive first-year composition pedagogy that teaches students to transfer writing knowledge across contexts and in the disciplines, this thesis develops the terminology of rhetorical agency to position students as agents of their own learning. As expressed by the transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad, a pedagogy based in rhetorical agency redefines the expressivist notion of voice to teach students to position their writerly identities amid various rhetorical genres and contexts of writing, a socially situated and evolving communicative practice. Moreover, this thesis uses classroom research from an online first-year composition course to explore whether students can reimagine their voices outside of a purely personal and expressivist context.

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Amanda Kerr

Dr. Hui Wu

Nov. 2023

Conceptualizing First-Year Writing Agency: The Transfer-Rhetorical Genre-Voice Triad as an  
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**Note to the Reader**

What does agency mean in the context of the first year-writing classroom? What role do students' identities play in their navigation of the university? These are questions I asked myself upon my initial acquaintance with composition studies. Enrolled in two courses oriented toward my professional development as a future teacher of composition and the history of composition as a field of study, I was enamored with Mina Shaughnessy's *Introduction to Errors and Expectations*. As an AP/Dual Credit Literature student, I had tested out of taking composition in a university setting. Learning about the struggles of basic writing students and separating first-year writing curriculum from literature sparked my growing inquiry and interest in the lived experiences of freshmen composition students. Admittedly, while I read the chapters assigned about expressivism, critical, and genre-based pedagogies with interest and fascination, I skimmed over the assigned reading on Yancey and Teaching for Transfer.

Little did I know that Yancey's pedagogy would become the springboard for my newfound interest in adequately preparing students to write across contexts. If teaching for transfer is the most evidence-based pathway in the teaching of composition, I wondered what role students' voices played in a curriculum oriented toward transfer. As I read about Yancey's research on the development of a writing identity and transfer, my prior knowledge of the

struggles of basic writers in Yale's Awkward Squad (see Ritter<sup>1</sup>) and my own deeply rooted sense of a writerly identity born in a fourth-grade writing classroom fostered a sense of enthusiasm and purpose that developed into the inquiry represented in this work. In this thesis, I hope that my readers resonate with the enthusiasm that lies in its pages. It is the enthusiasm of an emerging scholar for teaching students how to *become* writers, for helping students learn to form relationships with and take ownership of their writing across disciplinary and professional contexts, and most of all, an enthusiasm for helping students find an identity in writing in and beyond the requirements of the classroom.

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<sup>1</sup> Ritter, Kelly. "Before Mina Shaughnessy: Basic Writing at Yale, 1920-1960". *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 60, no 1, 2008, pp. 12-45.

## Introduction

In the afterword of *Stories from First-Year Composition: Pedagogies that Foster Student Agency and Writing Identity*, Ann M. Amicucci and Jo-Anne Kerr advocate for the value of First-Year Composition (FYC) and encourage the field of rhetoric and composition to envision FYC as more than just a “service course” (186). Arguably, these scholars provide an important call-to action for first-year writing teachers and FYC curriculum development. Given the role of FYC in preparing students to transfer writing knowledge across contexts and content areas, a holistic approach to teaching first-year writing must meet this call-to action by combining informed teaching practices with the goal of cultivating students’ agencies and fostering students’ ownership toward writing. In my view, the stakes for teaching FYC with informed practices and evidence-based pedagogies are high. The “institutional assumptions” underlying the successful transfer of FYC course content means that disciplinary courses are not oriented toward reinforcing writing concepts or writing knowledge proficiency in students (Driscoll 4). In other words, a lack of disciplinary writing preparation through Teaching for Transfer can have serious consequences for students as they move into writing in other courses and continue to navigate the university beyond FYC. Orienting FYC courses toward preparing students to write in their disciplines and the various contexts outside the writing classroom is an important aspiration for FYC teachers. Applications of the Teaching for Transfer method can help students to develop a sense of agency by giving them the necessary tools to succeed across writing contexts. Given the link between Teaching for Transfer and student agency in writing, the research undertaken in this thesis aspires to amplify the benefits of Teaching for Transfer by investigating its implicit, and often indirect, relationships with expressivist and Rhetorical Genre Studies pedagogies in the teaching of writing. While Teaching for Transfer is indirectly connected to expressivist and Rhetorical Genre Studies pedagogies, there is currently no direct or

established link between Rhetorical Genre Studies pedagogies and expressivism. Through investigating the relationship between Teaching for Transfer, Rhetorical Genre Studies, and expressivism, I foreground a comprehensive approach to the teaching of FYC via a terminology of rhetorical agency, which is conceptualized as an interrelationship, or triad, between transfer, rhetorical genres, and student voice.

### *Conceptualizing Rhetorical Agency*

The research undertaken in this thesis conveys that students' voices play a crucial role in developing their writing identities, a goal of the Teaching for Transfer framework. As Yancey et al. explain, the inclusion of key terms in the Teaching for Transfer framework help students to "create or strengthen [their] writing identity," or what they also term "a writing-transfer-mindset" (60). Students' writing identities, or writing-transfer-mindsets, help enable them to move across rhetorical situations with a sense of agency. In identifying students as "agents," I draw upon the Alliance of Rhetoric Society's definition of rhetorical agency as "the capacity of the rhetor to act" (Geisler 12). For my study, I redefine action as encompassing students' abilities to navigate writing across contexts and in the disciplines, the goal of FYC. Examining how a methodology of genre-awareness pedagogy helps foster students' theorization of writing with the complexity of rhetorical genres, I argue that a redefined notion of voice as "rhetorical agency" can foreground new methods of teaching FYC. With the goal of transfer of writing knowledge and movement across genres in mind, I use rhetorical agency as a key term for discussing student identity, action, and expression in writing across contexts to help students understand how to position their writerly identity within the communicative acts of socially situated genres. The notion of rhetorical agency is an expansion of Yancey et al.'s "writing-transfer-mindset" (60). In other words, rhetorical agency is the means through which a writer navigates the construction of

their identity amidst the discursive features of written texts. My definition of rhetorical agency, while encompassing similar aspects of the term discussed in prior rhetorical scholarship, such as the idea of students' agency as "competence," or "capacity," should be distinguished from the idea of "agency as social change," or "agency as effect" ("What Can Automation" 144). While foundational scholarship claims that communicative acts are only rhetorical when they initiate a "creation of discourse" that "changes reality through the mediation of thought and action," I argue that every writing context involves rhetoric, whether it produces productive social change or not (Bitzer 4). Since the goal of FYC is not necessarily the production of social change, defining rhetorical agency as students' "capacit[ies]" to navigate writing across contexts and in the disciplines rather than their potential to "effect" change, provides a more adequate definition for the context of FYC.

While my definition of rhetorical agency makes space for students' personal voices via reflection, it also teaches students the nuances of how to develop an academic writing identity. Thus, students learn to differentiate between the types of voices that are appropriate for the rhetorical situation at hand. In other words, rhetorical agency redefines voice in terms of its social and dialogic elements (Matsuda and Tardy; Tardy) and communicates how voice acts as a useful tool for developing rhetorical awareness in the regular and systematic practice of reflective writing characteristic of Teaching for Transfer approaches to FYC. Within the context of academic writing and writing in the disciplines, developing rhetorical agency helps students understand the nuances of the writing situation, with an emphasis on the audience, purpose, and genre of the writing task. With a theoretical framework of rhetorical agency as a transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad in mind, I investigate how a methodology of teaching FYC via my theory of rhetorical agency can help students understand their role in the various writing tasks

that they encounter by helping them develop a multifaceted academic writing identity. By understanding the nuances of writing as a contextually based practice, students position themselves as agents capable of re-imagining and recontextualizing prior writing knowledge, enacting the pedagogical goals of FYC and developing ownership toward writing.

### *Layout of the Chapters*

The first chapter of this project, “Teaching for Transfer, Expressivism, and Writing Agency in FYC,” paves the way to the development of a holistic FYC pedagogy based in rhetorical agency. In this chapter, I investigate the relationship between students’ personal voices and the reflective writing framework characteristic of Teaching for Transfer approaches. I theorize transfer and “tacit expressivism” to show how students can make space for their personal voices in Teaching for Transfer’s reflective space (Burnham and Powell; Goldblatt). By proposing voice as a meta category for reflection in Teaching for Transfer pedagogies, I posit that students can develop greater rhetorical awareness for writing across contexts and develop a writerly identity. By teaching rhetorical awareness of how students’ individual voices can take up space in the context of writing in the academy, this section lays the foundation for the concept of rhetorical agency, which is defined and theorized in the third chapter. By exploring how to help students understand the appropriate context of personal writing in a writing across contexts framework, this chapter paves the way to the second chapter, “Conceptualizing Rhetorical Agency via the Transfer-Rhetorical Genre-Voice Triad.”

In the second chapter, I combine elements of Teaching for Transfer pedagogies and Rhetorical Genre Studies pedagogies to explore the idea that the teaching of rhetorical genre theory through transfer pedagogies may enable students to develop rhetorical agency and take ownership of their writing processes. I theorize Rhetorical Genre Studies pedagogies while

demonstrating how they can enhance prior work in transfer theory to help students enact rhetorical agency. While rhetorical scholars have debated the meaning of rhetorical agency, I provide a definition situated to the context of FYC. In my definition, rhetorical agency equips students as agents capable of communicating effectively by positioning their voices to write across multiple genres, contexts, and disciplines. At the same time, my definition involves the teaching of the role of the writer's identity in navigating various rhetorical situations. Rhetorical agency differentiates between students' personal voices and their development of a scholarly voice, or an academic writing identity, to help them enter scholarly conversation with appropriate attention given to the discursive features that shape various writing tasks. Put simply, teaching rhetorical agency can help students understand how to enter the conversation in professional and disciplinary contexts, and is best conceptualized as a dynamic interrelationship between writing-knowledge-transfer, rhetorical genre theory, and student voice.

The final, and concluding chapter, includes a pedagogical intervention based on the theory of rhetorical agency developed in the previous chapter. In an IRB-approved study conducted at the University of Texas at Tyler (UTT), I engage my online English 1302 students in metacognition and reflective writing to explore whether they can reconceptualize prior understandings of voice in writing to account for the role of rhetorical genres in shaping the writer's voice.

## **Teaching for Transfer, Expressivism, and Writing Agency in FYC**

### *Introduction*

Current scholarship in composition pedagogy focuses on the transfer of writing knowledge across contexts (Clark-Oates et al.; Jankens; Taczak; Taczak et al.; Taczak and Robertson; Yancey et al.). Specific to writing, transfer is defined as “the repurposing of knowledge and practice from one writing context to another” (Taczak et al. 159). Teaching for transfer is vital to increasing students’ understanding of how to draw upon prior writing knowledge and reframe, recontextualize, or relocate that information in novel writing situations (Clark-Oates et al.; Jankens; Taczak; Taczak et al.; Taczak and Robertson; Yancey et al.). Generally speaking, transfer is a nuanced and complex process that does not happen easily (“Teaching for Transfer” 23). The scarcity of transfer stems from learning’s “contextually welded” state (qtd. in “Teaching for Transfer” 24). Likewise, writing is a very specific, contextualized practice that is “keyed to each situation” (Taczak et al. 161). Most scholars in the field of composition and rhetoric recognize that writing is not a universal process, and thus cannot be transferred seamlessly to other academic situations (Taczak et al. 161; Downs and Wardle 558; Michaud).

As a route to promote agency in the first-year classroom, the goal outcome of transfer is to equip students to use what they learn in first-year composition (FYC) in new, unfamiliar, and diverse writing situations (Taczak et al. 159). By understanding the nuances of writing as a contextualized practice, students can use a conceptual understanding of writing for transfer across a variety of writing situations, increasing their overall sense of agency as writers (Clark-Oates et al. 142; Jankens; Taczak and Robertson 43; Taczak et al. 162; Yancey et al. 49). Transfer can foster student agency and increase students’ abilities to use “writing to act as agents in the world” by teaching students the practical knowledge about writing necessary for real world



application (Clark-Oates et al. 142). The benefits of writing knowledge transfer provide composition instructors with an evidence-based pathway to teach FYC. Given the purpose of FYC to develop students' proficiencies to write across "disciplinary, civic, personal, and professional" contexts, teaching for transfer can help students begin to take ownership of their writing (Driscoll 2).

One aspect of transfer pedagogies is that they implicitly embody expressivism but have yet to make explicit connections with the latter. For example, the regular and systematic reflective writing present in Teaching for Transfer course designs has been linked with the legacy, or "tacit tradition" of expressivist pedagogy (Burnham and Powell 113; Goldblatt 440). This "tacit tradition" is defined as the presence of expressivist teaching practices without taking on the expressivist label (Goldblatt 440). While scholars of rhetoric and composition regard expressivism as outdated and profoundly negative (Burnham and Powell 117-118; "Personal Writing" 30), the pedagogical interventions in today's Teaching for Transfer approaches quietly continue to keep expressivism alive. The implicit connection between expressivism and Teaching for Transfer is present in both transfer pedagogies' "reiterative reflective framework" and its goal of fostering of students' "writing identit[ies]" (Taczak et al. 170; Yancey et al. 60). Given the implicit connection between expressivism and transfer, this thesis explores a central tenant of expressivist pedagogy, the writer's voice. By examining the potential of strengthening the implicit link between expressivism and Teaching for Transfer, I expand on the connection between the pedagogies to conceptualize a comprehensive method of teaching FYC that is "oriented to agency" (Yancey 8). Built upon helping students develop a sense of ownership toward their writing, a blended expressivist-transfer approach to FYC gives students opportunities to connect with their writing on "compelling" and "deeply personal" (Goldblatt

461) levels while still undergoing extensive preparation for writing across contexts. More specifically, reflecting on “voice” as a key term for transfer can enliven the Teaching for Transfer approach by providing students with opportunities to forge personal connections with academic discourse. Encompassing Teaching for Transfer’s goal of cultivating a writerly identity, reflecting on the writer’s voice can help further foster students’ sense of ownership toward their writing by helping them develop a greater understanding of their role as a writer across rhetorical situations.

### *Transfer Theory in Educational Psychology*

The theory underlying today’s Teaching for Transfer approaches stems from educational psychology’s foundational work in understanding transfer (Jankens; Taczak 303; Taczak et al. 160; Taczak and Robertson 43-44; Yancey et al. 49). Educational psychologists David N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon define positive transfer as “the phenomenon [where the] knowledge or skill[s] associated with one context reach out to enhance another” (“Teaching for Transfer” 22). In the case of negative transfer, the previous knowledge and skills “interfere” with learning in a new context (“Teaching for Transfer” 22). Transfer is distinguished from learning because it happens across contexts rather than being held in the context it first occurred (“Rocky Roads” 115). In the past, educators thought that transfer happened as a natural occurrence of learning, but educational psychologists learned from their studies that transfer is incredibly complex (“Teaching for Transfer” 23, 28). Transferring knowledge across contexts is a multifaceted process that benefits from deliberate instruction (“Teaching for Transfer” 28). The methods of intentional instruction outlined by Perkins and Salomon coincide with the type of transfer they enhance. High-road transfer is defined as the willful and deliberate formation of connections across different learning contexts (“Rocky Roads” 118). The high-road mechanism

is distinguished from its low-road counterpart, in which transfer happens without the conscious deliberation of the learner (“Teaching for Transfer” 25; “Rocky Roads” 118). Whereas low-road transfer is involuntary (“Rocky Roads” 120-121), high-road transfer requires what David N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon term “mindful abstraction,” or the “deliberate... decontextualization of a principle, main idea, strategy, or procedure, which then becomes a candidate for transfer” (“Rocky Roads” 126). Mindful abstraction is characterized by its dependence upon creative thinking, reflection, and metacognition (“Teaching for Transfer” 27). To encourage high-road transfer, instructors are encouraged to “bridge” the necessary “processes of abstraction and connection making” (qtd. in “Teaching for Transfer” 28). In the case of low-road transfer, instructors “hug” the knowledge they would like students to transfer by introducing the original knowledge in a similar context to the prospective location of transfer (“Teaching for Transfer” 28).

In greater depth, Perkins and Salomon explicate what mindful abstraction entails. Breaking down the terminology, the scholars define “abstraction” as “the extraction from or identification in a learned unit of material, in a situation or in a behavior, some generic or basic qualities, attributes, or patterns of elements” (“Rocky Roads” 125). Through the process of abstraction, students draw from previously learned material, “decontextualize” it, and reframe it in “new[er], more general form[s]” (“Rocky Roads” 125). Mindfulness encompasses the willful metacognition necessary to apply the decontextualized information in the new context (“Rocky Roads” 125). In Teaching for Transfer approaches, instructors bridge the necessary processes of mindful abstraction by incorporating systematic reflection into their course designs. As a process, reflection requires metacognition, or students’ involvement in “thinking about their own learning” (qtd. in Yancey et al. 112).

*Transfer Theory in Rhetoric and Composition*

The mechanism of high-road transfer provides the foundational theory underlying the Teaching for Transfer approaches to FYC. The mindful abstraction characteristic of high-road transfer is woven into Teaching for Transfer approaches in rhetoric and composition (Clark-Oates et al.; Jankens; Taczak and Robertson; Taczak et al.; Yancey et al.). Composition scholars Rebecca S. Nowacek and Kathleen Blake Yancey et al. base their theory of transfer on the agency that students develop in the process of transferring knowledge (Nowacek 39; Yancey et al. 43). Nowacek's theory of transfer extends beyond understanding how transfer occurs to include students' experiences of the process of transferring writing knowledge across contexts. Like Perkins and Salomon, Nowacek's theory recognizes that the transfer of knowledge is rare. However, Nowacek's terminology of transfer differentiates from Perkins and Salomon's. Rather than focusing on high-road vs. low-road transfer, Nowacek distinguishes levels of knowledge transfer as zero, negative, or positive. In the case of zero transfer, knowledge remains contextually bound and does not interact with knowledge located in other contexts at all (Nowacek 37). Negative transfer, on the other hand, is "most often understood as the inappropriate application of prior knowledge" (Nowacek 37). In the case of positive transfer, knowledge from one context enhances learning in a new context (Nowacek 37). Transfer is viewed as an act of recontextualization, which involves integration, or the successful and intentional act of transferring knowledge among contexts (Nowacek 40). Transfer commonly occurs by route of application; wherein earlier knowledge alters understandings of the knowledge learned in the new context (Nowacek 25). Alternatively, in the route of reconstruction, knowledge is reshaped and remodeled from both the old and new contexts.

Knowledge from the old and new contexts converges to construct new and interdisciplinary knowledge (Nowacek 25; qtd. in Nowacek 26).

In Nowacek's framework for transfer, successful transfer is judged by the student rather than the instructor. Instructors often do not recognize when students have successfully transferred knowledge. By undervaluing the connections formed by students, instructors hold students back from recognizing and valuing their own knowledge transfer (Nowacek 38). By instead positioning students as "agents of integration," the necessary attention can be "redirect[ed]... to the student's experience of transfer" (Nowacek 39). As agents of their own experiences of transfer, students become "meaning maker[s] at the center of conceptions of transfer and integration" (Nowacek 39). The "agents of integration" route to transfer complicates the black and white categories of positive, negative, and zero transfer by accounting for students' unique avenues in forming connections, including their "knowledge, ways of knowing, identities, and goals" (Nowacek 18). The following example illustrates an "agent of integration" in action:

One context may provide a way of seeing possibilities where none existed before:

working to define a topic for her term paper on the French Revolution, [the] student drew on her identity as well as her knowledge, ways of knowing, and goals as a feminist to see an entire field of possibilities. (Nowacek 25)

This example shows how Nowacek's framework centers transfer around students' identities and experiences. By understanding students as agents of integration responsible for their own successful transfer of knowledge, Nowacek makes a space for students' unique identities and worldviews.

Like Nowacek, Yancey et al.'s theory of transfer is contingent upon student agency. Yancey et al. define agency as the writer's recognition that "their rhetorical acts, whether

conscious or unconscious, ... make them who they are, ... affect others, ... and can contribute to the common good” (qtd. in Yancey et al. 50). In Yancey et al.’s understanding of transfer, writing is understood as “always and at once specific and contextual” (43). Because writing is contextually bound, the transfer of writing knowledge requires a deliberate “conceptual framework of writing knowledge and practice for approaching writing in diverse situations” (Yancey et al. 43). This conceptual knowledge of writing is fostered through deliberate instructional bridging. Students are provided with a framework of key terms that serve as access points for the encountering of writing across contexts (Yancey et al. 43). As a base, these key terms are “rhetorical situation, purpose, context, audience, genre, reflection, knowledge, and discourse community” (Yancey et al. 43). Students are encouraged to add or subtract from these base key terms as they continue to develop their writing-transfer-mindset. Specifically, the writing-transfer-mindset involves the successful “repurposing, or transferring, [of] writing knowledge and practice for use in many writing contexts, including within or between assignments in a writing course” (qtd. in Yancey et al. 42). By developing a writing-transfer-mindset, students develop the necessary agency to understand writing as specific to the rhetorical situation of its genre and context (Yancey et al. 43). This agency is enacted upon when students repurpose their knowledge about writing in new and unfamiliar writing situations based on their key terms (Yancey et al. 50).

### *Teaching for Transfer Applications in FYC*

Three approaches to teaching for transfer in FYC include Yancey et al.’s Teaching for Transfer, Clark-Oates et al.’s Design Into, and Adrienne Janken’s Rhetorical Reflection design. These three approaches to transfer claim that their curricular designs result in increased student agency by fostering a relationship for students with their writing (Clark-Oates et al. 148;

Jankens; Yancey et al. 43-44). Central to these three approaches is the regular and systematic practice of reflective writing (Clark Oates et al.; Jankens; Taczak and Robertson; Taczak et al.; Yancey et al.). In FYC transfer pedagogies, reflective writing is adopted from the “tacit tradition” of expressivism as a metacognitive strategy encouraging the mindful abstraction necessary for high-road transfer (Goldblatt 442; Taczak et al. 160; “Teaching for Transfer” 26). Reflection is a crucial intervention for FYC because of its ability to help students explicitly draw from their prior learning experiences and reframe that knowledge in new contexts (Clark-Oates et al.; Jankens; Taczak and Robertson; Taczak et al.; Yancey et al.). Writing knowledge transfer emphasizes the necessity of rhetorical awareness to decontextualize and reconstruct a particular writing situation (Clark-Oates et al.; Jankens; Taczak and Robertson; Taczak et al.; Yancey et al.). The pedagogical intervention of reflection can be used to foster the rhetorical awareness necessary for transfer (Clark-Oates et al.; Jankens; Yancey et al.). While using reflection creates a practical route for transfer in the FYC classroom, the practice of reflective writing is also credited with increasing student agency in writing (Yancey 8).

Yancey et al.’s Teaching for Transfer approach is comprised of a reiterative reflective framework, meaning that all components of the course build upon the foundational concept of reflection (Taczak and Robertson 46). Woven throughout all elements of the Teaching for Transfer framework, reflection provides the basis for students’ transfer and articulation of their knowledge about writing (Taczak and Robertson 43). In Taczak and Robertson’s words, reflection in the Teaching for Transfer curriculum is “a practice that serves as process and product; theory and practice; and before-the-fact activity, during-the-fact activity, and after-the-fact activity” (43). As an integrated curriculum, the Teaching for Transfer framework is comprised of “key terms, systematic reflective activity (including readings, activities, and

assignments), and a culminating ‘Theory of Writing’ project in which students articulate their understanding of writing” (Taczak et al. 160). Together, these three curricular components are said to promote the cultivation of student agency through what Yancey et al. calls the “development of a writing-transfer-mindset,” which is defined as “a conceptual framework of writing knowledge and practice for approaching writing in diverse situations” (43). As discussed in the previous section, the writing-transfer-mindset is central to understanding Yancey’s theory of writing transfer.

Students are taught to access the conceptual framework for understanding writing through the key terms they develop to contextualize their writing in different locales. This practice of accessing key terms and reflecting upon writing experiences leads to students’ developing a sense of “ownership of [their] writing vocabulary and experiences” (Yancey et al. 43). Further, the cumulative reflective assignment, the Theory of Writing, acts as a locus “in which students articulate their writing knowledge and practice based on learning about writing (e.g., through the key terms) and on analyses of the rhetorical choices made in responding to writing situations” (43). The goal outcome of the Theory of Writing, then, is the creation of a “space to think about [student] relationship[s] with writing” (44). In developing a closer relationship with their writing, students are able to “*think like* the writers they are becoming in FYC and the writers they need to be in contexts beyond [FYC]” (Taczak et al. 163). The Theory of Writing, then, prepares students for future writing while also helping students develop a personal connection to their writing through the act of theorizing about it.

Reflections from student interviews regarding the Theory of Writing assignment convey how reflective practice can help increase agency in students by giving them the ability to develop a practical framework about writing to draw upon. Taczak et al.’s study on the results of



implementing the Theory of Writing assignment featured interviews and IRB approved data from two institutions, one a private research institution in the West and the other a “Hispanic serving, public comprehensive suburban university in the Northeast” (163). In Taczak et al.’s article, three student interviews are discussed. For the scope of this section, I will explore one out of the three student examples from the study that shows a growth-mindset and an increased understanding of writing as contextually and rhetorically based. For Scott, a first-year writing student and research participant in Taczak et al.’s study from the public university, reflecting on his writing prior to and during the final Theory of Writing shows his growth toward understanding writing as contingent upon the rhetorical situation (165-166). At the onset of his preliminary development of key terms, Scott identified key terms that, in part, centered around good writing as grammatically correct writing: “My key terms are editing, layering, and evidence... And then editing, because writing and editing go hand in hand” (Taczak et al. 165). Scott’s initial understanding of writing focused on surface level concerns of editing rather than a more mature understanding of revision, wherein editing is the last step. As the semester progressed, Scott’s understanding of writing developed as did his agency. In week six, Scott reflected on his earlier notions about writing: “my Theory of Writing now is more about knowing who your audience is and what genre they need from you... I can still edit or whatever, but fixing my mistakes doesn’t matter really if my audience gets the wrong kind of writing from me” (Taczak et al. 166). The data from Scott helps illustrate how developing and revising key terms throughout FYC can increase students’ understanding of the rhetorical situation. In his later assessment of his theory of writing, Scott shows a more mature understanding of how his work is dependent on audience, and how the relationship between the writer, audience, and

context must be prioritized over editing. While editing and revision are also important, writing in a way that is contextually and rhetorically relevant takes precedence, as Scott comes to realize.

A second approach to teaching for transfer in the FYC course is Clark-Oates et al.'s framework of "Design Into." In their multimodal course design at Arizona State University, reflection is "designed into" the class, meaning that all other aspects of the course are founded upon reflection (146). By further incorporating students' reflections into a multimodal portfolio, Clark-Oates et al. assert that students in their course "grow a practice of reflection to support their learning and their writing by collecting and referencing artifacts such as drafts, written feedback, and dialogue with peers, writing fellows, and faculty" (Clark-Oates et al. 146). This practice of reflection is meant to be transferred "in courses across the curriculum and in [students'] professional lives" (Clark-Oates et al. 156). Like proponents of the Teaching for Transfer method, Clark-Oates et al. claim that their framework for transfer increases student agency by equipping students with the ability to use the writing knowledge they learn via reflection and metacognition in real world contexts (142).

Throughout their digital portfolio, students are asked to reflect upon the "Framework for Success in Post-Secondary Writing" and the *WPA Outcomes and Statements for First-Year Composition (3.0)* (140-143). Clark-Oates et al. implement the Framework's "eight habits of mind: curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition" to students, who use these habits as points of reflection in their digital portfolio assignment (qtd. in Clark-Oates et al. 140). Clark-Oates et al. assert that these habits are used to help students foster a perspective of their "writing knowledge in the present," which changes as students grow as writers (140). Like proponents of the Teaching for Transfer Framework, the authors recognize metacognition as a crucial aspect of writing-knowledge-transfer, contending

that metacognition increases students' likelihood of transfer by fostering the ability to "intention[ally] analy[ze] the rhetorical situation" (Clark-Oates et al. 141). Students are further encouraged to reflect upon the *WPA Outcomes and Statements for First-Year Composition (3.0)*, which consist of learning across "four-areas: (1) rhetorical knowledge, (2) critical thinking, reading, and composing, (3) processes, and (4) knowledge of conventions" (qtd. in Clark-Oates et al. 143). Together, the Framework and the *WPA Outcomes* act similarly to Yancey et al.'s key terms. Reflecting on the Framework's eight habits of mind and the areas of knowledge from the *WPA Outcomes* equips students to adopt a language for discussing their learning. These reflections are conducted weekly, and students are asked to write "on how one of the eight habits of mind is fostered through specific learning experiences and composing practices highlighted in the WPA Outcomes Statement" (Clark-Oates et al. 147). Together, the *WPA Outcomes* and the Framework encourage students to transfer contextually bound knowledge by drawing upon prior writing knowledge and assessing it in comparison to future writing tasks. Students engage in metacognition by looking forward to how either the *WPA Outcomes* or the Framework can apply in their future writing (Clark-Oates et al. 143-144).

Like proponents of the Teaching for Transfer Framework, Clark Oates et al.'s "Design Into" helps students construct their own theory of writing, which they can use to relate writing to their everyday lives. Sarah, a first-year writing student at Arizona State University, develops her own theory of writing that relates her everyday life as a nurse to the rhetorical situation (Clark-Oates et al. 146). Sarah reflects on how her understanding of rhetoric changed when she was shown a video in which ASU "students, staff, and faculty discuss rhetoric" (145). Sarah explains,

Before this video, I did not really understand the word rhetoric in a literary sense. I now realize that I use a rhetoric approach almost every day as a registered nurse. All too often,

RN's [sic] are responsible for communicating and sometimes persuading patients to complete tasks or follow physicians [sic] orders they might not agree with initially. For example: administering medications like insulin in a timely manner, performing physical therapy exercises to strengthen their joints, and schedule yearly physical examinations to preventively screen for diseases and disorders. (Clark-Oates et al. 145)

In the above example, the student (Sarah) begins to understand that what she is learning about rhetoric and writing in the classroom is practical and applicable to her life. Sarah connects writing and the rhetorical situation to the communicative practices and persuasive speech that she uses in her career. As Yancey et al. explain about the Theory of Writing approach, by theorizing about writing, Sarah begins to develop a relationship with writing. This increases her agency as a writer and communicator inside and outside of FYC. Sarah is able to construct language to talk about her writing, which empowers her to reimagine her work as a nurse in relationship to her emerging identity as a writer (Clark-Oates et al. 145).

The third teaching for transfer approach is Adrienne Jankens' Rhetorical Reflection design. Jankens' method for transfer combines a rhetorical framework for teaching FYC with an inquiry-based approach. Drawn from her practical experience as an FYC instructor, the implementation of the rhetorical reflection stems from identifying her students' knowledge gaps. From a 2012 study, Jankens realized her students were not able to "as[k] the kinds of questions that would help them move across assigned genres most successfully." As a result, Jankens' designed the rhetorical reflection assignment, which directs students to ask questions rooted in "rhetorical knowledge, genre knowledge, and writing process knowledge." These questions are an example of the "explicit [instructor] prompting" and "modeling" that is often necessary for successful high-road transfer (Jankens; "Teaching for Transfer" 28). As a response to Jankens's

understanding that “students are more likely to consider prior knowledge in relationship to a new learning task when teachers explicitly prompt that knowledge in dialogue or written tasks,” the rhetorical reflection “prompt[s] students’ assessment of prior knowledge and knowledge gaps at the onset of a writing project.” Like Yancey et al.’s *Teaching for Transfer* and Clark-Oates et al.’s “Design Into” curriculum, Jankens’s rhetorical reflection asks students to use “key vocabulary [from] the writing class.” This “conceptual vocabulary” is meant to aid students with transfer by providing an access point to reference “across writing assignments.”

Jankens’s emphasis on inquiry in her FYC curriculum is a result of her belief that asking questions “support[s] recontextualization of prior knowledge and preparation for future learning.” Recontextualization is emphasized as a skill that can help students transfer locally bound knowledge among genre specific writing tasks, while also subscribing to the conventions of a particular discourse community (Jankens; Nowacek). In practice, the rhetorical reflections were assigned prior to the course’s major assignments: “a proposal argument in a new genre and [a] reflective argument essay.” The purpose of assigning these reflections before the major assignments was to help students develop the means necessary to “recontextualize” their prior writing knowledge to fit the genre-specific requirements of the new writing task (Jankens; Nowacek). As in the previous transfer FYC pedagogies, the reflection component of Jankens’ course is implemented to help produce “the metacognitive abstraction required for transfer.” Behind Jankens’ design, like the other approaches to transfer in FYC, is the belief that understanding the rhetorical situation empowers student writers as they learn how to write across situations. Jankens puts it this way:

As part of the social construction of knowledge making, asking questions empowers the student-rhetor by helping them gather information about the thought processes, ideals, and beliefs of their audiences and other aspects of the rhetorical situation.

Asking questions, then, is a way to bridge the necessary awareness of audience for a given writing task. As demonstrated in the previous transfer pedagogies, understanding audience can be viewed as a way to increase student agency towards writing. In her 2016 study over the effects of implementing the rhetorical reflection, Jankens' student, Natalie, had success using her reflective assignment as a means to understand her audience for a major writing project in the course: "In this reflection, I decided what direction my project 3 was going to in, who my target audience was, and my purpose for writing it." In Natalie's writing process, reflection creates a site where she can deliberate about her process while working out the outward nuances of what writing entails: responding to an audience and an outside purpose for writing. These skills of analysis are what teaching for transfer approaches hope to foster: the ability to break down the context of any writing situation based on its rhetorical situation.

As a whole, all three approaches to teaching for transfer are concerned with cultivating a careful awareness of the rhetorical situation. As the key intervention of the transfer pedagogies discussed above, reflection makes a space for students to become what Nowacek calls "agents of integration" (39). In the above qualitative data from students, reflection is a space where students can think about how they form connections and what these reflections mean in relationship to their "knowledge, ways of knowing, identities, and goals" (Nowacek 18). For instance, Sarah's act of relating her emerging understanding of rhetoric to her profession of nursing shows that she is forming connections between writing specific knowledge, her ways of knowing and knowledge as a nurse, and her goals of taking care of patients via the necessary act of persuasion.

From the above literature, forming transferable personal and practical connections with the writing assigned in FYC seems to be vital to transfer pedagogies. The literature suggests that teaching for transfer approaches are overtly concerned with positioning students as successful agents of writing across contexts via implicit expressivist practices. For instance, proponents of expressivism, including Donald Murray, Ken Macrorie, and Peter Elbow, viewed writing as a means to “create identity” (Burnham and Powell 114). In the Teaching for Transfer approaches reviewed above, reflective writing is used as a tool for identity development to help students navigate writing across contexts. Unlike in expressivism, the goal of nurturing the writer’s identity is not to “help students become morally aware citizens” or “foster the writer’s aesthetic, cognitive, and moral development” (Burnham and Powell 112-113). Rather, the goal outcome of cultivating students’ writing identities in transfer is to help them draw upon their conceptual knowledge about writing in various situations (Taczak et al. 163). Through rhetorical adaptation, students can draw on their conceptual writing knowledge and transfer their writing identity across novel writing contexts.

#### *Expanding the Implicit Expressivism in Transfer FYC Pedagogies*

Expanding the implicit expressivism present in Teaching for Transfer models to include voice creates an opportunity to cultivate student agency and ownership in writing in a holistic approach to FYC instruction. As such, I propose that the writer’s voice enlivens the Teaching for Transfer approach by providing a lens where the personal can help students connect with academic discourse. More specifically, I view the teaching of voice in writing as encompassing Teaching for Transfer’s goal of cultivating a writerly identity through reflection. When given attention in a Teaching for Transfer curriculum, voice can foster a greater understanding of the writer’s role in the rhetorical situation.

Expressivist pedagogy is known for its concern for developing and nurturing the writer's sense of self, "assigning [the] highest value to the writer's imaginative, psychological, social, and spiritual development" (Burnham and Powell 113). With its positioning of the student-writer at the center of the classroom, expressivist teaching methods engendered an overall trend of student ownership and agency in writing. Expressivist pedagogy, according to Chris Burnham, Rebecca Powell, and Eli Goldblatt, has left behind a legacy of curricular practice in writing classrooms that reveals itself through more modern composition pedagogies, including the Teaching for Transfer approaches discussed above (120; 440). Burnham and Powell describe this legacy as "expressivism[']s [position as] the source for, and target of, many of the developments in the field [of composition and rhetoric]" (112). Expressivist curriculum includes pedagogical interventions such as "freewriting, journal keeping, reflective writing, and small-group dialogic collaborative response" (Burnham and Powell 113). The curricular practices of expressivism are designed to nurture the student-writer in a holistic manner, attributing attention to "the writer's imaginative, psychological, social, and spiritual development" (Burnham and Powell 113). In other words, the deliberate attention paid to students by expressivist instructors provides a safe space for students to turn to writing. One way that expressivist pedagogy creates self-assurance in writing is by its "insist[ence] upon...writer presence even in research-based writing" (Burnham and Powell 113). This writer's presence is known as the writer's "'voice', or 'ethos'" and can either be "explicit, implicit, or absent" in the text (Burnham and Powell 113). In other words, voice does not have to be expressed using personal language. Instead, voice can adapt to the genre and rhetorical conventions of a given writing task. To connect voice to student agency, voice functions as a site where student insight becomes adopted as an essential aspect of writing.



As stated previously, the cultivation of student voice may be a potential pathway for expressivism to enhance a Teaching for Transfer approach. As Peter Elbow asserts, “Voice is alive in our classrooms. Students at all levels instinctively talk and think about voice, or their voice in their writing, and tend to believe they have a real or true self- despite the best efforts of some of their teachers” (“Reconsiderations: Voice” 170). The field of composition and rhetoric has become hesitant to adopt personal expressions of voice as a point of conversation in the face of the very valid necessity of preparing students to access their writing knowledge in the academy and the professional world (Burnham and Powell 23; Goldblatt 439). In the face of these concerns, defining voice becomes critical to understanding its potential role in writing knowledge transfer.

Because early models of expressivist pedagogies were primarily concerned with the “personal experience and personal development” of the writer (Burnham and Powell 114), voice was also understood as wholly individualistic (Amicucci and Neely; “Reconsiderations: Voice” 168). In its early expression, voice was the window to understanding the writer’s identity, a form of self-actualization (Burnham and Powell 124). In entering a conversation between expressivism and transfer, it is important to recognize that expressivism is situated in its own historical context, wherein “few, if any, empirical studies of writers writing had been published, when the term rhetorical situation had only recently been coined, and when the notion of genre in the English classroom referred mostly to literary forms” (Michaud). Over time, however, expressivism grew to incorporate aspects of the rhetorical situation, including an understanding that “writing is social and active” (Burnham and Powell 114). The individualistic view of the writer matured to encompass “concern for the writer’s relationships with audience, context, and

subject” (Burnham and Powell 120). Writing was no longer viewed as an isolated process occurring solely inside of the writer. Instead, writing became situated in the world.

As compositionists’ knowledge of how writing works progressed, their definition of voice went through a similar evolution. The disciplinary movement toward social constructivism redefined voice from the personal ‘ethos’ of the writer to a product of the text’s “discursive features” existing in “respon[se] to social forces shaping writing expectations” (Amicucci and Neely). Composition scholars Anne N. Amicucci and Michelle E Neely explain this change: “As composition studies has moved away from expressivist pedagogies and toward pedagogies that teach students to navigate the ways their writing is constructed by social context, we have moved away from discussions of the self in writing.” However, voice is arguably still important to students—even amid the field’s movement toward social constructivism, teachers and students both recognize that through the act of writing, something of the self is translated onto the page (Amicucci and Neely). Rather than thinking in black and white categories, where voice is either the text or the self, the experiences of students tell a different story: one that lives in the gray area (“Reconsiderations: Voice” 175).

Alena, a first-year student, displays an understanding of writing as personal in a Teaching for Transfer course. Alena’s understanding demonstrates what I call the “gray area,” illustrating that personal writing and voice are still part of her value systems. When establishing her key terms, Alena explains that her writing process “all depends on what I have to write and how it is related to me” (Taczak et al. 169). Two of Alena’s key terms, “personal,” and “emotionally engaging,” suggest that forming a relationship with writing is important to Alena. Relating to her writing in a personal way does not necessarily mean that Alena writes a research paper from the first person or in colloquial language. What it does mean is that Alena’s personal thoughts and

beliefs influence how she approaches writing. By allowing her personal thinking to influence how she understands a writing assignment or genre, Alena's intuition can guide her understanding as she writes ("Personal Writing" 23). Alena's experience shows what most FYC instructors are often aware of: students do not leave their personal identities, worldviews, and experiences behind when they enter the classroom. Rather, students' personal experiences and identities can enhance their research and writing in the academy ("Personal Writing" 16). In other words, the way that students think or go about writing for college "does not have to be formal and impersonal or strictly logical" ("Personal Writing" 24). As Elbow posits, "teachers should note how often good writers in the world bring to bear personal language and personal thinking on nonpersonal topics- and that most of our students will do virtually all of their future writing outside of the academy ("Personal Writing" 18). Making space for personal thinking and voice in FYC, then, could further strengthen students' agency in writing by forming relationships with their writing, a shared goal of expressivism and Teaching for Transfer (Burnham and Powell 120; Yancey et al. 44).

More recent scholarship demonstrates how teaching students about voice can benefit them in a Teaching for Transfer approach. The "writer-text-interactive-triad" captures the complicated interaction between the writer's individual identity or 'ethos' and the rhetorical situation, while understanding writing as both personal and socially constructed (Amicucci and Neely):

... The field's most current and most robust theorization of voice recognizes that what readers call "voice" in writing is constantly in flux and occurs amidst the interaction of a writer's choices, discourse features on a page, and a reader's interaction with a text.

The writer-text-interactive-triad provides an entry point for understanding how voice can exist in and interact with academic discourse. By acknowledging voice as a valid rhetorical choice that students draw upon in a variety of writing contexts, voice in a transfer curriculum could function as another means to foster rhetorical awareness in students. In terms of implementing voice into transfer pedagogies, voice could be added to Yancey et al.'s key terms or serve as a point of conceptual knowledge that is reflected upon. Voice could potentially bridge a gap in transfer pedagogies by creating a point of connection for students, where they can understand the impact of their rhetorical choices. In other words, putting voice into a transfer curriculum does not necessarily mean that students will write solely about their thoughts or feelings. Rather, fostering an understanding of voice that is dependent upon the writer-text-interactive triad could prompt a greater understanding of how written discourse functions in relationship to both its author and its reader. In this increased understanding, voice as a key term in a transfer curriculum could increase student confidence when it comes to academic writing.

Drawing on qualitative data from Taczak and Robertson's study on reflection, I show how voice and personal thinking can influence students' development of rhetorical awareness in the Teaching for Transfer approach. In Matt's writing process, he demonstrated both rhetorical awareness of the assignment guidelines for his psychology class and personal thinking. Matt's reflection for his Theory of Writing project shows how his thinking about his psychology paper evolved. First, Matt chose abnormal psychology as a topic because he "really lik[ed]" it (Taczak and Robertson 49). Matt's experience shows how students often use academic assignments to explore their interests ("Personal Writing" 16). Matt explains, "I kind of felt like I knew how to write this even before I started, like I had an idea of how to make it happen" (Taczak and Robertson 50). Matt's personal thinking about the topic guided him through his writing process

by giving him the confidence to explore the intuitions he “felt” about how to move forward in the project. Matt’s thinking was further connected with the rhetorical situation of the project: in his reflection, Matt went beyond the obvious audience of his professor by thinking about how the topic might affect other people who were impacted by borderline personality disorder. Matt expanded his audience to include “any students who might have the disorder or their family members do or whoever” (Taczak and Robertson 50). Matt used his expanded audience to contextualize his purpose, in which he was heavily influenced by his personal thoughts: “I also thought about all these people who take psych meds and how doctors just prescribe them and we don’t know if people really need them all, and it’s just the drug companies, you know, selling their pills, so I thought about that too, for context” (Taczak and Robertson 50). Matt’s reflection illustrates that teaching personal thinking as a dimension of voice may increase students’ creativity, a necessary aspect of high-road transfer (“Teaching for Transfer” 27). In thinking about his psychology project, Matt draws upon real-world experiences, and he allows these thoughts to help him contextualize his project.

Where transfer can orient students toward a successful understanding of how to approach writing situations encountered outside of FYC, expressivism can help students connect with their writing in deeply personal ways. Eli Goldblatt puts it this way: “In my view, students need a reason to write that comes from more intimate and compelling sources. Without an urgency that is felt as personal, a writer will always be looking to the teacher, the boss, the arbiter for both permission to begin and approval to desist” (461). Making academic writing personal to students can increase their sense of authority as writers. This sense of authority is essential to developing a writerly identity, which can benefit students’ agencies as writers and help them transfer their knowledge about writing to other contexts. Teaching for Transfer’s extensive use of reflective

writing is one way to help foster this writerly identity and increase students' self-efficacy by acting as a space where their voices can become "crucial, informed, and authoritative sources" (Yancey 8). While the expressivist practice of reflection is already implicitly integrated in transfer pedagogies, voice seems to be the missing piece in the Teaching for Transfer curriculum. Why is such a crucial aspect of writing left implied, rather than explicitly drawn upon as a strategy to increase student agency and ownership in writing? The benefits of teaching for transfer cannot, and should not, be separated from the expressivist focus on developing students' voices in writing. Therefore, adding voice as a meta-category could further help students conceptualize a language for transfer.

Given the role of deliberate instruction in teaching for transfer, a comprehensive FYC pedagogy must pay attention to students' voices and identities and use them as a method of instructional bridging to help students navigate writing contexts. Whether or not teachers acknowledge the role of voice in helping FYC students develop a transferable writing-identity, I argue that integrating voice as a key term for transfer can serve as a springboard for new insights and developments in composition pedagogies. Because of the heavily personal connotation of voice, which is often viewed as conflicting with writing in academic genres, (Tardy 34; Matsuda and Tardy 236), designing a comprehensive FYC pedagogy requires a renewal of the terminology to refine the role of students' identities and voices in navigating academic and disciplinary writing contexts.

## Conceptualizing Rhetorical Agency via the Transfer-Rhetorical Genre-Voice Triad

### *Introduction*

Given the crucial role that rhetorical awareness plays in Teaching for Transfer approaches to FYC, it is reasonable to argue that developing a comprehensive FYC pedagogy calls for a strengthened link between Rhetorical Genre Studies pedagogies and Teaching for Transfer pedagogies. As with the implicit connections to expressivism embodied across versions of Teaching for Transfer, transfer pedagogies often quietly embody the theory and practices of Rhetorical Genre Studies pedagogies. For instance, the pedagogies emphasizing transfer in the previous chapter are focused on cultivating genre awareness in students via metacognitive reflection (Clark-Oates et al. 146; Jankens; Taczak et al. 162; Yancey et al. 43). In Rhetorical Genre Studies, transfer across genres is a pivotal goal of the pedagogy, which is embodied in Rhetorical Genre Studies' aspirations to teach students to "act rhetorically" in a successful navigation through "genre[s] and [their] situations" (Bawarshi and Reiff 195; 189). The role of genre is less explicit in Teaching for Transfer approaches. Teaching for Transfer approaches develop students' awareness of various writing tasks and rhetorical genres by helping students cultivate a language, or writerly identity, for understanding the writing situation across multiple contexts (Clark-Oates et al.; Jankens; Taczak; Taczak et al.; Taczak and Robertson; Yancey et al.). As I made the case for strengthening the implicit connections between transfer and expressivism through a forthright inclusion of voice in transfer curricula, I now make a similar case to strengthen the ambiguous relationship between Teaching for Transfer and rhetorical genre theory. However, voice cannot be absent from a comprehensive theorization of FYC pedagogy, given the role of voice in fostering students' agency and ownership towards writing.

Though pedagogies of transfer, rhetorical genres, and voice are expressed as interrelated by Writing Program Administrators in the *WPA Outcomes*, the scholarship conveys that there has

yet to be a theory of pedagogy in FYC that fully infuses Rhetorical Genre Studies, transfer, and student voice. A transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad can further clarify what it means to provide FYC students with the tools to become successful agents of their own learning, the topic of this chapter. In an effort to foreground a comprehensive approach to teaching FYC based on a combination of Rhetorical Genre Studies, transfer, and student voice, I propose the terminology of “rhetorical agency” to refine the field’s conceptualization of voice in writing. While my definition of rhetorical agency stems from rhetorical scholarship, it is distinct from prior understandings of agency as the ability to “change reality through the mediation of thought and action” or enact “social change” (Bitzer 2; “What Can Automation” 144). My definition of rhetorical agency refers to students’ processes of navigating their personal voices and identities, academic discourse, and the learning curve that comes with adapting their prior writing knowledge to new writing situations. Rhetorical agency can be best defined through a transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad, which expands upon Yancey et al.’s writing-transfer-mindset to illustrate how students position their writerly identity amid socially situated genres throughout the process of transfer. In other words, rhetorical agency is the means through which a writer navigates the construction of their identity amidst the discursive features of written texts in their rhetorical genres. As such, in my theory of rhetorical agency, “agency” is best defined as students’ development of proficiency and communicative capacity for writing based on the aspirations of the *WPA Outcomes*.

With the notion of rhetorical agency in mind, I explore how “genre,” a key term in Yancey et al.’s *Teaching for Transfer* curriculum, can foster in students a robust rhetorical awareness of the discursive conventions surrounding writing, a socially situated and evolving communicative practice (43). To further conceptualize a pedagogy of rhetorical agency in FYC, I



propose that FYC instructors deliberately teach students the complexity surrounding rhetorical genres through Miller et al.'s expanded definition of genres as “multimodal, multidisciplinary, multidimensional, and multimethodological” entities, enacting a genre-awareness teaching methodology (269). Such a methodology for teaching rhetorical genres can be easily integrated into already established pedagogies oriented toward transfer, such as Yancey et al.'s Teaching for Transfer framework. For instance, instructors can encourage students to adopt “multimodal” and “multidisciplinary” conceptualizations of genre by using instructional bridging tactics, helping students integrate robust theorizations of genre into their overall theory of academic writing.

*Adopting an Understanding of Agency as Efficacious Action*

In rhetorical scholarship, the concept of agency is multifaceted and complex (Belikan; Campbell; Geisler; “What Can Automation”). Definitions of agency reflect aspirations of rhetoric to “produce action or change in the world” through meaningful communication (Bitzer 4). The debate in rhetorical studies concerning the “pragmatic” role of rhetoric “effect” society and produce social change requires that a concept of “rhetorical agency” situated to FYC be distinguished from the previous definitions (Bitzer 3; Geisler 13; “What Can Automation” 144). Previous rhetorical theory defined communicative acts as rhetorical when there is a “creation of discourse” that “changes reality through the mediation of thought and action” (Bitzer 4). Given the purpose of FYC to prepare students to effectively “diversify” their writing “abilities along disciplinary, professional, and civic lines,” rhetorical agency in FYC refers to students’ development of the capability and capacity to enact the “rhetorical outcomes” from *The WPA Outcomes Statement (3.0)* (Council of Writing Program Administrators). Becoming proficient in rhetorical knowledge is connected to the idea of agency as the “capacity” of the rhetor to act and

“produc[e] efficacious action” (Geisler 13). The purpose of FYC is to prepare students to transfer writing knowledge from the course to their outside lives, whether professional, disciplinary, or otherwise (Council of Writing Program Administrators). Given this purpose, rhetorical agency in FYC refers to the development of students’ communicative capacities, rather than their ability to enact their civic duties by producing change in the world.

In rhetorical theory, efficacious action refers to the rhetor’s “competence to speak or write in a way that will be recognized or heeded by others in one’s community” (Campbell 3). FYC students act efficaciously when they “negotia[te] purpose, audience, context, and conventions” while composing to convey a message to their readers (Council of Writing Program Administrators). A successful enactment of agency involves the dynamic interplay between the author’s conveyance of their message and their audience’s comprehension of their intended meaning (Miller 145). As a participatory act, agency produces action when the audience “recogniz[es]” or “heed[s]” the message of the rhetor (Campbell 3). Positioning students as agents of their own learning means that teaching students to be productive communicators is a crucial aspect of students’ abilities to enact agency. Because written communication involves the presence of someone beyond the page, a successful writer adapts their craft based on the perceived needs of their audience. As Marilyn Cooper writes, “rhetors are agents by virtue of their addressing an audience” (442). In the context of FYC, agency is not just the ability to “address” the audience; rather, it is the process of successful and productive communication. True agency means that the reader understands the writer’s intent and purpose for writing. Drawing back to the *WPA Outcomes*, FYC students embody agency through the process of “analyz[ing] contexts and audiences” and “act[ing] on that analysis by comprehending and creating texts” that effectively communicate a message to their audience (Council of Writing Program

Administrators). Effective communication based on an analysis of audience and the resulting creation of text is an important aspect of my definition of rhetorical agency. However, the role that students' identities play in enacting rhetorical agency cannot be neglected in redefining the terminology for FYC.

*Adopting Understandings of Agency as Authorship, Identity, and Invention*

To connect a redefined notion of rhetorical agency to transfer, I draw upon understandings of agency as “authorship” and “identity” from rhetorical scholarship (Campbell 1). Those two terms encompass students' cultivating of their academic writing identity as they navigate the discursive and genre-related expectations of the academy. As proponents of the Teaching for Transfer Framework have asserted, successful transfer often involves the development of a writing-identity, or the ability in students to “think like the writers they are becoming in FYC and the writers they need to be in the contexts beyond [FYC]” (Taczak et al. 163). Students' development of a “writing-transfer-mindset,” or the conceptual framework of knowledge that allows them to “repurpo[se] and trans[fer] writing knowledge and practice for use in many writing contexts,” helps students to understand their identities as writers across multiple contexts (qtd. in Yancey et al. 42). As an expansion of Yancey et al.'s “writing-transfer-mindset,” rhetorical agency carries the nuance of identity formation. As rhetorical agents, students navigate academic writing with a specific purpose and audience in mind. As a result of such navigating, students' identities must translate, transform, and conform to the academy's existing generic and disciplinary conventions.

To emphasize the ways that students navigate their identities in writing, I draw upon two pedagogical aspirations from the *WPA Outcomes*. Listed under “Rhetorical Knowledge,” the *WPA Outcomes* aspires to “develop [students'] facility in responding to a variety of situations

and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure” (Council of Writing Program Administrators). A pedagogy of rhetorical agency encompasses what the *WPA Outcomes* identifies as “purposeful shifts in voice” to help students “negotia[te] purpose, audience, context, and conventions” across novel writing situations. By learning the rhetorical expectations of writing situations and adapting their writerly identity in response, students “purpose[fully] shi[ft]” their voices based on generic expectations. As the *WPA Outcomes* convey, FYC ideally provides students with opportunities to “rea[d] and com[pose] in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers’ and writers’ practices and purposes” (Council of Writing Program Administrators). Because understanding the rhetorical situation is interconnected with rhetorical genre theory, developing rhetorical agency involves students’ developing proficiency in understanding rhetorical genres. From an analysis of the *WPA Outcomes*, I conclude that understanding rhetorical genres, student voice, and writing-knowledge transfer are interrelated components of effective FYC courses. Circling back to the previous section, the *WPA Outcomes* convey an overarching purpose for FYC courses to be oriented toward transfer, with students writing proficiencies “diver[sifying] along disciplinary, professional, and civic lines” (Council of Writing Program Administrators). Such diversification of writing knowledge involves developing an understanding of how to navigate academic genres and adapt a writerly identity, or voice, in response to textual conventions.

To further encompass the ways that writers and rhetors create and adapt written text based on their identities as writers and the audience’s rhetorical demands, I draw upon understandings of agency from rhetorical scholarship as “invention.” As a crucial aspect of authorship, the notion of “invention” as agency is important in clarifying what a terminology of

rhetorical agency means in application to FYC. To make this point, I draw upon the scholarship of Karlyn Khors Campbell:

As I have noted, authors/rhetors are materially limited, linguistically constrained, historically situated subjects; at the same time they are “inventors” in the rhetorical sense, articulators who link past and present, and find means to express those strata that connect the psyche, society, and world, the forms of feeling that encapsulate moments in time. (5)

The ability of the rhetor “to link past and present” when engaging in invention becomes a crucial aspect of enacting rhetorical agency, and arguably, represents an act of transfer when applied to first-year writing (Campbell 5). In FYC, “linking past and present” involves students drawing from prior knowledge to reposition that knowledge for a new writing task. As detailed in the previous chapter, successful transfer comprises “the writing knowledge and practice students bring with them into new contexts and the ways that they repurpose both for new writing tasks” (Campbell 5; Taczak et al. 159). In reflection, linking past and present can involve two types of transfer: forward-reaching and backward-reaching. To enact successful forward-reaching transfer, students must “abstract” prior learning “in preparation for applications elsewhere” (“Teaching for Transfer” 26). Successful backward-reaching transfer, on the other hand, involves the “abstract[ion] of key characteristics” of the present situation and the act of “reach[ing] backwards into one’s experience for matches” (“Teaching for Transfer” 26). As students link past and present writing knowledge or reach backwards for transferable knowledge in a novel writing situation, they enact rhetorical agency by negotiating their writerly identity to adapt to the expectations of the new writing task. By searching for prior knowledge and applying the discovered knowledge to the new writing context, students can demonstrate self-efficacy and take ownership of their writing processes.

*Reconsidering Voice: The Transfer-Rhetorical Genre-Voice Triad*

Arguably, redefining voice based on rhetorical genre theory and transfer can help novice writers start to recognize how their individual voices can enter a text given the discursive features that shape academic writing. As Gordon Fraser posits in his article, “Finding a Voice: Reconciling Discourses in Student Work,” “if this is the goal of academic writing—to bring the individual’s discourse into contact with a larger discourse, or to enter the conversation, as Kenneth Burke writes—then our goal should be to understand as fully as possible how this process takes place (63). To understand how students enter academic conversation, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by academic writing. To do so, I draw on Brian Paltridge’s comprehensive review of the “socio-cultural context[s]” surrounding academic writing, which encompasses the role of “genre[s] and discourse communi[ties]” in shaping understandings of academic writing (87). In his review, Paltridge cites scholarship which conveys the complexity of academic writing:

There are many decisions that influence decisions a student makes while writing an academic text. These include the purpose of the text, the academic and cultural context of the text, the extent to which the writer is given advice on the positioning and organization of the text, the students perceptions of the audience of their text, the discipline in which the student is writing, the values and expectations of the academic community at which the text is aimed, and the relationship between the text and other similar such texts... writing is always embedded in a complex web of relationships between writers, readers, and the text and reality. (qtd. in Paltridge 88-89)

Given the complexity of academic writing, which is situated in multiple, often evolving contexts, understandings of the role of voice in academic writing must be treated with a similar nuance.

Because academic writing involves complexity, entering academic conversation has been equated with several well-known metaphors, including David Bartholomae's assertion that students must "learn to speak our language" by "inventing the university" each time they undertake a writing task ("Inventing" 4). With Bartholomae's metaphor in mind, it is important to recognize that composition teachers are conscious that student voice plays a role in academic writing (Amicucci and Neely).

To make this point, I draw on the previous chapter, which conveys that the concept of "voice" from expressivism's "tacit tradition," helps students to develop self-efficacy toward their writing (Burnham and Powell 113; Goldblatt 440). When FYC courses make space for students to develop their voices through course reflections, students can become rhetorically aware of writing as a contextualized practice (Taczak et al. 161). Learning about voice as a key term for transfer can help students begin to learn how to negotiate their identity as "authors" of texts, developing their writing abilities across "new situations where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge" (Council of Writing Program Administrators). The lack of a "monolithic form" or "universal academic discourse" governing the writing students encounter in the university makes such negotiations of identity crucial for student writers to meet the rhetorical demands of their audiences (Kerr 106; Downs and Wardle 552). As Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein note, successful writing in the academy involves a dynamic interplay between the "they say" of an academic source and the "I say" of the student writer's position in presenting other's ideas within their own purpose for writing (3). Encouraging students to "write the voices of others into [their texts]" means that students must have the necessary proficiency to understand how to adapt their voice to meet the rhetorical constraints of a given writing context or situation (Graff and Birkenstein 3).

Research by scholars who emphasize the role of voice in the composition classroom conveys the ways that instructors' knowledge of their students' identities oftentimes informs their assessment of student writing (Amicucci and Neely). As teachers read students' work, they "construct a notion of [the] student's voice in writing" that influences their perceptions of student writing (Amicucci and Neely). If identity and voice are implicitly important to teachers, so much so that they impact teachers' perceptions of student writing, why not use voice as a tool to help students navigate academic writing? This question acts as a follow-up to the inquiry raised at the end of the previous chapter, where I ask why the notion of student voice is not used as a strategy to increase students' ownership toward writing. Part of the answer lies in the disparaging connotation of voice as a term, which has roots in the history of the expressivist movement (Matsuda and Tardy 236; Tardy 34; "Reconsiderations: Voice" 170; Stapleton and Helms 96). Refining the terminology to show the importance of voice while removing it from decades of debates and contention in the field's history can foreground new methods of teaching FYC. To make this point, I review some of the literature surrounding voice and renew the terminology to fit a comprehensive pedagogy for navigating writing contexts. Understanding how writing knowledge transfer takes place amid and amongst rhetorical genres is one step to understanding how students enter the conversation. However, because my definition of rhetorical agency carries the nuance of forming a writerly identity amid the navigation of academic writing contexts and rhetorical genres, the role of voice in constructing a writerly identity for entering the conversation cannot go unaddressed.

In the expressivist understanding, the writer's voice is defined as "a sense of writer presence even in research-based writing" (Burnham and Powell 113). In expressivist teaching, voice is "a key evaluation criterion" for assessing student writing, and its presence is "explicit,



implicit, or absent” from writing (Burnham and Powell 113). Christine M. Tardy describes the expressivist notion of voice as individualistic, concerned with the internal workings of the writer, and encompassing the author’s “authenticity, resonance, authoritativeness, and authorial presence within a text” (Tardy 36). Well-known expressivists, such as Peter Elbow, ascribe to an individualistic notion of voice while acknowledging the contention among the field regarding the definition of voice (“Reconsiderations: Voice” 170, 179). Criticism of voice stems, in part, from the field’s criticism of the expressivist notion of writing as an internal process inside of the writer with no input from the outside world (Matsuda and Tardy 236). As Matsuda and Tardy explain, there is a “dichotomy between personal writing and academic writing” that represents the tensions surrounding the terminology of voice (236). This dichotomy is encompassed in the well-known Elbow-Bartholomae debate. As Bartholomae puts it, the work of expressivist teachers, like Peter Elbow, are “part of a much larger project to preserve and reproduce the figure of the author, an independent, self-creative, self-expressive subjectivity” (“Writing with Teachers” 65). As a result of the dissenting goals of expressivist teaching from writing in academic genres, the field’s understandings of voice are “caught in the dichotomy between personal and academic writing,” with voice “relegated to the realm of personal and individual” (Matsuda and Tardy 236). Understandings of academic writing, on the other hand, are “characterized as relatively impersonal” and “voiceless” (Matsuda and Tardy 236). In the face of the field’s debate, the literature conveys that scholars are working to reconceptualize voice to adequately acknowledge the role that it plays in academic writing.

For example, Tardy’s work traces the field’s definitions of voice, which categorize the term based on personal, social, and dialogic understandings. As mentioned above, personal notions of voice are based on the idea that the internal workings of the author shape written text

and distinguish one author from another (35). However, Tardy and other scholars recognize that “self-representation is constructed both individually and socially” (37). Even Elbow acknowledges that voice is “rhetorical” and shaped by “the historical and material and social context[s]” in which an utterance occurs (“Reconsiderations: Voice” 175). According to Tardy, social understandings of voice are “associated more with the disciplinary or other social groups to which the writing and writer are linked,” determining the writer’s “discoursal identity” (37-38). Based on an understanding of the complexities of academic writing, the metaphor of social voice is appropriate for understanding how discourse shapes author identity. However, a more complete definition of voice is one that removes the “false dichotomy between the personal and the social,” instead recognizing that voice is “dialogue” (39). A dialogic definition of voice, then, “underscores the interaction between the individual and the social and the resulting co-construction of voice,” also positioning the reader as a key-player in constructing an impression of the writer’s voice (Tardy 40).

Other scholars have redefined the expressivist notion of voice to elucidate the role of voice in academic texts. For instance, Matsuda and Tardy redefine as 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” (239). Matsuda and Tardy’s study on author construction in blind peer review suggests that voice is part of academic texts—that readers can sense the person behind the words even in scholarly work (247). Further, scholars engaged in debates surrounding the role of voice in pedagogy acknowledge the importance of voice in academic writing, claiming that “there is hardly a piece of writing that does not evoke some image of its author even if this image is fuzzy or counterfactual” (Stapleton and Helms). In Matsuda and Tardy’s view, voice is a “jointly

constructed reader-writer interaction” wherein the reader plays an important role in constructing the writer’s voice (247). As pointed out in the previous chapter, Ann M. Amicucci and Michelle E. Neely call this joint-construction of voice the “writer-text-reader interactive triad,” where “what we readers call ‘voice’ in writing is constantly in flux and occurs amidst the interaction of a writer’s choices, discourse features on the page, and a reader’s interaction with text.”

Conceptualizing voice via the writer-text-reader interactive triad or via Tardy’s dialogic definition carries important implications for an approach to teaching writing that is oriented toward helping students write across contexts and navigate academic genres. Based on these implications, I come to the conclusion that the use of voice in a pedagogy oriented toward writing across contexts must be carefully distinguished from the term’s use in the expressivist movement. As a term, voice carries connotations of self-exploration and self-actualization, and the meaning of the term’s use in the field continues to be “imprecise” and “slippery” (Tardy 34; Stapleton and Helms 96).

Therefore, distinguishing the role of voice in expressivism by redefining voice as rhetorical agency can strengthen the field’s understanding of how writers navigate their individual identities alongside the discursive features of written texts. In other words, based on what has previous scholarship has defined as a dialogic or discursive understanding of voice (Tardy 39-40; Matsuda and Tardy 239), I develop the terminology of rhetorical agency, which involves the reshaping of the writer’s voice and identity in written texts to meet the generic expectations of writing in the academy. A pedagogy of rhetorical agency, while interconnected with voice, must be distinguished from the expressivist notion of voice as the real or “true self” of the author (“Reconsiderations: Voice” 168). Moreover, because transfer research shows that first-year writing courses taught in the expressivist lens do not adequately prepare students to

write in disciplinary contexts, rhetorical agency as a term for FYC students' development of writing knowledge proficiency must be distinguished from the self-exploratory nature of the expressivist movement (qtd. in Driscoll 3; Yancey et al. 44).

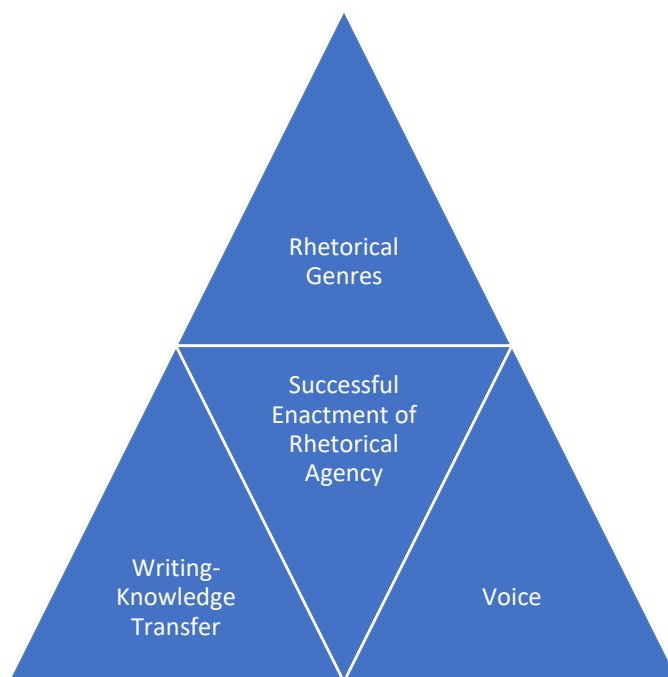
In refining the terminology, I point to the crucial role that rhetorical genres play in students' enactment of rhetorical agency. As research conveys that voice is inextricably "tied to" the "social aspects of writing, such as genre and audience" (Tardy 39), students must be taught "genre awareness" by learning to understand rhetorical genres (Bawarshi and Reiff 189; Devitt 147). Learning to understand rhetorical genres can help students to fully participate in the social conventions surrounding writing. As Matsuda and Tardy hypothesize, "it seems reasonable to consider the acquisition of voice as an aspect of writing proficiency, possibly related to specialized genre knowledge, that can benefit from instruction as students develop their writing knowledge expertise" (102). By strengthening this understanding, improvements in FYC pedagogies can be made. One such improvement involves the role of genre-awareness pedagogies in helping students understand how to position their writerly identities in relationship to textual conventions. As conceptual frameworks of human communication, genres can help students reshape their voices based on the conventions of academic discourse:

Genres help frame the boundaries and meanings of utterances, providing us with conceptual frames through which we encounter utterances, predict their length and structure, anticipate their end, prepare responsive utterances. In short, genres enable us to create typified relationships between utterances as we organize and enact complex forms of social interaction. As typified utterances, genres are dialogically related to and acquire meaning in interaction with other genres. (Bawarshi and Reiff 83)

Understanding and responding appropriately to “typified utterances” is an example of how students navigate their identities and shape their voices based on the external input of rhetorical genres. As “conceptual frames,” for human communication, learning genres can help novice writers start recognizing how to “enter the conversation” and “bring [their] individual discourse into contact with a larger discourse” (Graff and Birkenstein 3; Fraser 64). As Fraser explains, first-year students often “struggle to reconcile competing and often contradictory ways of thinking, speaking, and writing” as they learn “discipline-specific language and methods” of writing and begin to “think like” academic writers (63). Turning back to the notion of agency as “authorship” and “identity,” rhetorical genres provide a framework for understanding the nuance of students’ development of an academic writing identity, allowing them to begin “participat[ing] in and reproduce[ing]” the “norms” of the discourse they encounter in the academy (Campbell 1; qtd. in Bawarshi and Reiff 80).

Genre-based knowledge can provide students with a framework for invention across varying rhetorical situations, further strengthening students’ sense of agency as they encounter new and unfamiliar writing situations. When FYC students begin to understand how to shape their voices to writing expectations, they learn to “exercise a rhetorical dexterity” for navigating shifting “disciplinary conventions” in the academy (Hendricks 50). Such rhetorical dexterity, or skill in navigating rhetorical contexts, involves a rich understanding of the social forces that shape writing expectations. With awareness of rhetorical genres, students can begin to use their writing knowledge as “a tool for traversing disciplinary and professional boundaries,” transferring their conceptual writing knowledge across multiple contexts (Hendricks 50). Therefore, it is best to conceptualize rhetorical agency as a triad, or interrelationship between writing-knowledge-transfer, rhetorical genres, and voice, which helps students to move across

academic, disciplinary, and professional writing contexts. The diagram below helps to visualize the dynamic interrelationship between transfer, rhetorical genre, and voice, which comprise the successful enactment of rhetorical agency.



Based on the role of rhetorical genres at the top of the triad, I turn to a thorough analysis of rhetorical genre theory and pedagogy in composition instruction. Such analysis can help further refine and conceptualize a theory of rhetorical agency for FYC.

#### *Implications of Rhetorical Genre Theory for FYC Pedagogy*

Arguably, rhetorical agency cannot be conceptualized without a comprehensive understanding of rhetorical genre theory. Because rhetorical genres are intricate rhetorical entities that embody “social action,” teaching rhetorical genres in the composition classroom must avoid the danger of oversimplification by solely teaching rhetorical genres as formulaic classifications (Bawarshi and Reiff 189; Devitt 149; “Genre as Social” 153). As a “key concept in rhetorical studies,” rhetorical genres bring together “theory and practice, innovation and tradition, agency and structure, form and action, [and] social and cognitive aspects of rhetorical

theory” (Miller et al. 270). In drawing together “agency and structure,” and “form and action,” learning rhetorical genres can help students begin to conceptualize how to navigate writing based on both the structural components of rhetorical genres and their lived purpose as “typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations” (“Genre as Social” 159). In other words, learning rhetorical genres can help students begin to develop a robust awareness of the complexity of written communication (“Genre as Social” 159). Rather than seeing genres as “modes of thinking,” or corresponding “rhetorical situations,” pedagogies that teach rhetorical genres in the writing classroom must be oriented toward the role of genres as “categories of lived rhetorical experience” (Miller et al. 271). Navigating written genres as “lived rhetorical experiences” refines my theory of rhetorical agency for FYC pedagogy. For instance, understanding rhetorical genres can help students take on an empowered position when traversing writing situations: “If genres are rhetorical actions, then genre pedagogies can help students learn to act rhetorically; and if genres are based in situations, then genre pedagogies can use genres to help students perceive, understand, and even change situations” (Devitt 146-147). Because of their role in cultivating rhetorical awareness, rhetorical genres carry important implications for students’ enactment of agency in and beyond the writing classroom. As Devitt notes above, pedagogies comprising rhetorical genre theory can help students begin to reimagine themselves as they act efficaciously to navigate complicated and dynamic forms of written communication.

When considering how to conceptualize a theory of student agency for FYC that combines rhetorical theory with the *WPA Outcomes*, rhetorical genre theory plays a crucial role in understanding what it means for students to successfully enact rhetorical agency via the transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad. For novice writers, the question is whether the following goal from the *WPA Outcomes Statements* alone is sufficient to foster rhetorical agency: students

will “rea[d] and com[pose] in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers’ and writers’ practices and purposes” (Council of Writing Program Administrators). Is reading and composing in several rhetorical genres, an action that the vast majority of, if not all, FYC courses already sufficiently undertake, enough? In other words, can students learn “how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers’ and writers’ practices and purposes” without at least an emerging theoretical understanding of rhetorical genres? In my view, learning rhetorical genres in isolation is not enough to help students become agents of their own learning. Rhetorical genres must be taught via pedagogies that cultivate awareness of their rich theory and the social and rhetorical action that they are comprised of. Given the purpose of FYC, integrating a rich understanding of rhetorical genre theory with transfer and voice can help students become effective communicators, giving students reasons to write beyond satisfying assignment outcomes, earning a grade, or pleasing instructors. In other words, as rhetorical actions, rhetorical genres may help students to begin to navigate written communication with diversified intentions. Drawing back to the previous chapter, Goldblatt raises an important call to action for FYC pedagogies: “students need a reason to write that comes from more intimate and compelling sources,” otherwise they will “always be looking to the teacher” for “approval” in their writing (461). While Goldblatt is making a case for personal writing in the FYC classroom, his claims are equally important in arguing for a FYC pedagogy that incorporates a more extensive theorization of rhetorical genres. Rhetorical genre theory can help students envision themselves as producers of meaningful communicative action. Such a reenvisioning of authorship may help students to find opportunities to bring their words to the page for reasons beyond a response to the authority of their teacher. In other words, students may begin to see their writing as important and meaningful, relevant to their careers and lives outside of FYC.



The scholarship of Rebecca Nowacek provides important insights to help envision how students might use an understanding of rhetorical genres to take ownership of their writing. As rhetorical action, “genre not only provides a sociocognitive resource for crafting a response to a social situation but it also provides a resource for interpreting (and indeed constructing) that situation in the first place” (18). In other words, rhetorical genres are inextricably connected to the new and unfamiliar writing contexts that students encounter, in part because of their ability to help students interpret and construct meaning across written texts. When students begin to theorize about rhetorical genres, they position their voices as “response[s] to...social situation[s]” and learn how to “interpret” and “construct” similar typified situations while proficiently navigating the conventions that surround writing (Nowacek 18). This navigation is an example of rhetorical agency in action and should be distinguished from Nowacek’s “agents of integration,” or the role of students’ “knowledge, ways of knowing, identities, and goals” in their experiences of writing knowledge transfer (Nowacek 18). While my concept of rhetorical agency does involve students’ identities, the concept is differentiated from Nowacek’s “agents of integration” because it involves the nuance of shaping students’ voices to the discursive expectations of various academic genres. The transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad helps map where this distinction lies. When students enact rhetorical agency, they develop a framework for understanding how to position their writerly identity based on the external input of textual conventions. As rhetorical agents, students can position themselves in, among, and between various rhetorical genres, developing conceptual writing knowledge that can assist them in transfer. In other words, the transfer-voice-rhetorical genre triad provides students with the ability to navigate academic writing contexts. Given the role of rhetorical genres in helping students cultivate an academic writing identity, I turn now to the role of genre awareness in the

Teaching for Transfer Framework and propose a strategy for expanding FYC students' theories of writing.

*Students' Theorization of Writing: Genre Awareness and the Teaching for Transfer Framework*

As a pedagogical approach that “seek[s] to help students build critical genre knowledge” and “formulate connections between genres,” writing courses taught via the Rhetorical Genre Studies approach often integrate multiple aspects of genre pedagogies in the teaching of writing (qtd. in Driscoll et al. 75; Devitt 59-60). Methods of teaching rhetorical genres combine three avenues of Rhetorical Genre Studies pedagogy, genre critique, the explicit teaching of genres, and a critical awareness of genres (Devitt 147; Bawarshi and Reiff). Instructors who teach rhetorical genres employ pedagogies that include “analyzing, critiquing, creating, manipulating, and researching genres, as well as enacting them in public and disciplinary settings for authentic audiences” (qtd. in Driscoll et al. 75). The role of rhetorical genres in the transfer of writing knowledge is a topic that has been studied extensively and is recognized as a “key factor for understanding and promoting writing development” in students at various levels in the university (Driscoll et al. 69). In novice writers, “an awareness of how conventions relate to a genre’s audience and purpose” helps students to grow as writers (qtd. in Jankens). Transfer research has identified genre-analysis as a valid method for teaching students to “bring multiple knowledge domains- subject matter, rhetorical knowledge, discourse community knowledge, and writing process knowledge- into dynamic interaction” (Bawarshi and Reiff 192). As Nowacek claims, genre “is a powerful and underappreciated cue for transfer,” and learning rhetorical genres can help students to reconstruct multi-disciplinary knowledge across new writing contexts (17). Genre-analysis pedagogies cultivate students’ awareness of the contexts and purposes that surround rhetorical genres, helping students “learn transferable genre-learning skills” while

“connect[ing] rhetorical and social actions” (Bawarshi and Reiff 195). Because of their role in cultivating rhetorical awareness and developing students’ writing knowledge proficiency, I view the teaching of rhetorical genres as a vital component of a writing pedagogy tailored toward developing students’ rhetorical agency. As stated previously, the crucial role of rhetorical genres in helping students to enact rhetorical agency is why rhetorical genres are positioned at the top of the transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad.

In Yancey et al.’s Teaching for Transfer framework, students are taught to write in “multi-genre projects” with the goal of expanding students’ understandings of the ways that writing is “contextually unique” (Yancey et al. 47). Yancey et al.’s approach is distinguished from traditional Rhetorical Genre Studies, which Yancey et al. claim attempts to transfer writing knowledge through “a general rhetorical education” (50). Instead, as Yancey et al. put it, the transfer of writing knowledge comes from students’ engagement in metacognitive reflection. Students’ integration of key writing concepts into their theories of writing helps them to develop their writing expertise across multiple contexts (50). Yancey et al.’s approach to teaching rhetorical genres as a key term for writing knowledge transfer integrates the Rhetorical Genre Studies pedagogy of “genre awareness.” Genre awareness pedagogies seek to help students learn skills to write in multiple contexts rather than become “expert writers in a single context” (qtd. in Devitt 152). According to Devitt and Bawarshi and Reiff, teaching genres through a methodology of genre awareness can avoid the pitfalls of teaching rhetorical genres solely by their typified features, and instead helps students to conceptualize rhetorical genres as complex forms of social action (Bawarshi and Reiff 189; Devitt 146). Rather than teaching students to parrot the conventions of rhetorical genres, genre awareness pedagogies encourage students to look at rhetorical genres holistically by understanding “text[s]” and “context[s]” while “mak[ing]

deliberate decisions” about their own writing processes. By doing so, students learn how to integrate the social contexts of rhetorical genres into their own purposes for writing (Devitt 153). Promoting students’ engagement in metacognition, genre awareness pedagogies are cited as an evidence-based pathway for cultivating writing knowledge transfer (Devitt 153). With their focus on teaching students how to interact in rhetorical conversations prompted by the various genres they encounter day to day, genre-awareness pedagogies can increase students’ sense of agency when encountering novel writing situations (qtd. in Bawarshi and Reiff 199).

Arguably, teaching rhetorical genres through genre-awareness pedagogies helps students to develop rhetorical awareness. In conveying the complexities of rhetorical genres, instructors can benefit from the ways that genre “offers... an important scaffolding strategy to help novices grasp and engage the complex configurations of interests, traditions, and capacities of rhetorical situations in the academy, the professions, the media, the arts, and civic life” (Miller et al. 272). By preparing students to encounter various rhetorical situations and multiple contexts for writing, rhetorical genres are directly connected to the goal of FYC courses to “diversify [students’ writing abilities] along disciplinary, professional, and civic lines” (Council of Writing Program Administrators). Transfer involves repurposing writing knowledge learned in one context across multiple contexts, with students often encountering diverse rhetorical situations as they navigate toward transfer. A critical awareness of rhetorical genres can help students navigate the transfer of their writing knowledge from one assigned genre to another by further fostering their capacity for rhetorical awareness (Taczak et al. 159; Jankens). The method I now propose for further expanding students’ writing proficiency and theorization about writing provides a pathway to help FYC students enact rhetorical agency by fostering their rhetorical awareness in a reflective framework of transfer.

Findings from transfer research convey that novice writers are often unable to interpret varying writing requirements across rhetorical situations because of their lack of a comprehensive understanding of writing (Driscoll 18). Qualitative data from Driscoll's transfer study illustrates that students often do not perceive writing conducted in disciplinary contexts, such as writing for a lab report, as actual writing (15). A possible solution to students' limited definitions of writing comes from the Teaching for Transfer Framework, in which students develop a "conceptual framework of writing knowledge" and cultivate a "theory of writing" based on that framework (Taczak et al. 161). I propose that students may develop more expansive theorizations of writing when they are taught a critical awareness of rhetorical genres through Caroline Miller et al.'s categorization of genres as "multimodal," "multidisciplinary," "multidimensional," and "multimethodological" rhetorical entities (Miller et al. 269). Together, the Teaching for Transfer Framework and Miller et al.'s four-part conceptual framework for understanding rhetorical genres can begin to bridge gaps in students' rhetorical awareness, knowledge of writing, and their identities as writers. In other words, providing students with a conceptual understanding of genre via Miller et al.'s four-part analysis can further strengthen the role of rhetorical genres via the transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad comprising my theory of rhetorical agency.

For instance, Miller et al.'s terminology for understanding and theorizing about rhetorical genres may further students' definitions of writing. Exposure to and learning of rhetorical genre theory can serve as an expansion of Yancey et al.'s "writing-transfer-mindset," enriching students "conceptual framework of writing knowledge" through introducing students to rhetorical genre theory via Miller et al.'s four-part conceptualization of genre (Yancey et al. 60; Taczak et al. 161; Miller et al. 269). If students begin to make sense of rhetorical genres, they

can begin to enact rhetorical agency by positioning their writerly identity amid the communicative acts of socially situated genres. The role of “genre” as a key term for transfer in the Teaching for Transfer Framework, then, must also somehow be used by instructors to promote a multidisciplinary understanding of writing, in which instructors deliberately “bridge” the connection between writing in the disciplines, writing across contexts, and writing in FYC (“Teaching for Transfer” 28).

By teaching students a critical awareness of rhetorical genres as “multimodal” and “multidisciplinary” via deliberate instructional bridging practices, students may further develop their theories of writing, a goal of the Teaching for Transfer approaches detailed in the previous chapter (Clark-Oates et al.; Jankens; Taczak; Taczak et al.; Taczak and Robertson; Yancey et al.). One method of instructional bridging encourages students to reflect on Miller et al.’s four-part conceptualization of genre as part of their engagement in “constructive reflection,” which Yancey defines as “the process of developing a cumulative, multi-selved, multi-voiced identity, [taking] place between and among composing events” (14). As students further their theorization of writing via developing their “conceptual framework of writing knowledge,” by engaging in reflection “between and among composing events,” students become empowered to integrate diverse modes or disciplines of writing into their overall understanding of writing (Taczak et al. 161; Yancey 14). Miller et al.’s language theorizing genres as “multimodal” and “multidisciplinary” can only further serve as a point of metacognitive reflection in students, allowing them to expand their ability to write across contexts. As the *WPA Outcomes* suggest that writing teachers “employ the methods and technologies commonly used for research and communication within [students’] fields [of study],” teaching students’ awareness of how rhetorical genres exist across multiple modes and disciplines of communication may help

students begin to see multimodal and multidisciplinary communication *as writing* (Council of Writing Program Administrators). Understanding communication's diverse modalities as *actually being writing* can strengthen students' awareness and capacities for reimagining the disciplinary and multimodal communication encountered in their own theory of writing, their personal framework for forward-reaching transfer. As Miller et al. explain, "Consideration of genre is essential to characterizing these combinations of modalities, to critical understanding and interpretation of the social actions they perform, and to successful performance and further innovation in the multiple modalities available for rhetorical action" (Miller et al. 271). If rhetorical genres are multimodal and multidisciplinary, then a theory of rhetorical agency must also account for the multiple modalities of communication that FYC students encounter in and outside the academy. For students to learn to shape their voices and adapt their discursive identities to written texts, they must also learn the vast modalities and disciplinary conventions that such written texts entail. Such learning involves deliberate teaching to help students bridge their past knowledge of conventions with the conventions of the new modes and disciplines they encounter. Such processes relate back to the concept of agency as invention, or the act of "linking past and present" (Campbell 5), truly encompassing the ways that the embodiment of rhetorical agency is an act of navigating prior writing knowledge amid the new rhetorical genres and contexts of the university.

The "multidimensional" nature of genres may further students' capacities for transfer and invention requiring the "linking [of] past and present" knowledge (Campbell 5). As "multidimensional" rhetorical entities, rhetorical genres encompass "innovation and conformity, stability and change, and form and substance" (Miller et al. 273). Understanding rhetorical genres through the multidimensional lens, or as encompassing both "conformity [and] stability"

and “innovation...[and] change” can help illuminate novice writers’ knowledge of conventions. I draw upon the *WPA Outcomes* to further this point:

A writer’s grasp of conventions in one context does not mean a firm grasp in another.

Successful writers understand, analyze, and negotiate conventions for purpose, audience, and genre, understanding that genres evolve in response to changes in material conditions and composing technologies and attending carefully to emergent conventions. (Council of Writing Program Administrators)

By theorizing about rhetorical genres as “multidimensional” and “multimethodological” in their theory of writing, students may begin to further recognize how writing is a socially situated and evolving communicative practice. Through an expanded understanding of writing, students may more easily recognize how prior writing knowledge, the “past,” can grow with them into new writing contexts, “the present.” Such awareness of writing growth can serve students well as they navigate their writerly identities throughout their time in the academy. Clarifying to novice writers that rhetorical genres are “multimethodological” can show them that both their own writing and teachers’ pedagogies of writing are not one-size-fits-all entities (Miller et al. 274). Given the variety of “empirical” and “interpretative approaches” to rhetorical genres, a pedagogy that encourages students to reflect on rhetorical genres as “multimethodological” in their theory of writing can help students distinguish rhetorical genres as social action rather than just through their typified, formal characteristics (Miller et al. 274). Understanding rhetorical genres via multiple avenues can further help students to recognize that as a writer, they have multiple avenues, purposes, and contexts to explore each time they undertake a writing task and begin to undertake the “linking [of] past and present” writing knowledge while composing.



Without a doubt, a FYC pedagogy that bridges Miller et al.'s complex conceptualization of genre with the evidence-based pedagogical practices of the Teaching for Transfer Framework is an ambitious undertaking. Further research is needed to clarify if FYC students can successfully integrate an understanding of genre as “multimodal,” “multidisciplinary,” and “multidimensional,” and “multimethodological” rhetorical concepts into their theories of writing (Miller et al. 269). However, the potential benefits of an approach to FYC that successfully integrates a robust understanding of rhetorical genres via Miller et al.'s four-part definition with the Teaching for Transfer Framework makes such study a worthwhile pursuit. Miller et al.'s conceptualization of genre provides a language for novice writers to begin to see writing as a socially situated and contingent practice. Fostering students' writing identities with a robust understanding of rhetorical genres may help students to begin to take ownership of their writing by helping them to enact rhetorical agency via the transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad conceptualized in this chapter.

## **Genre and Voice in a Writing about the Disciplines Course: A Pilot Study for Rhetorical Agency**

### *Brief Introduction to the Study*

This chapter explores a pedagogical implementation based on the theoretical framework of rhetorical agency developed in the previous chapters. Considering rhetorical agency as a dynamic interplay between transfer, voice, and rhetorical genre studies, I explore the use of reflection as an instructional bridging tactic to foster students' awareness of how their voices adapt to shifting genre and rhetorical conventions. As a pilot study, the case studies of two writers from my Fall 2023 second-semester composition course are analyzed in light of the assignment rationale, which combines pedagogical goals from transfer, rhetorical genre theory, and a redefined version of the expressivist notion of voice. The case studies explored in this chapter are meant to open a dialogue to further research and exploration for the development of pedagogical interventions based on the notion of the transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad as an enactment of rhetorical agency.

### *Study Rationale*

The preliminary research leading to this pilot study explores interventions in FYC pedagogies that teach student-writers to navigate among diverse writing contexts while fostering a sense of ownership in students toward their writing. As detailed in the previous chapters, transfer research conveys that students' development of their writing-identities positively influences writing-knowledge transfer and cultivates students' agencies as writers (Clark-Oates et al. 148; Taczak et al. 163; Yancey et al. 49-50, 60). Interlinking the writing-transfer-mindset and rhetorical genres as "categories of lived rhetorical experience" (Miller et al. 271), a pedagogy of rhetorical agency teaches students to shape their voices via dialogic adaptation amid

the socially situated and evolving conventions of academic genres. Drawing on genre-awareness pedagogies, this pilot study explores FYC students' perceptions of voice before and after explicit instructor prompting of voice and genre as key terms via an online presentation. Early exploration of the impact of teaching voice as a socially situated construct based on genre and rhetorical awareness can further the development of FYC pedagogies oriented toward transfer. Further, early exploration can shed light on the impact of identity formation in novice writers, a topic of interest in the established transfer scholarship. Exploring students' conceptualizations of their voices can create a pathway for the explicit teaching of rhetorical agency based on the transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad in FYC.

### *Institutional Context and Study Design*

The reflections included in this chapter are part of an IRB-approved study conducted at the University of Texas at Tyler (UTT). UTT is a public, four-year university in rural East Texas, with an enrollment of 9,761 students as of 2023. The FYC program at UTT enrolled 480 students at the onset of the Fall 2023 semester. This number excludes students enrolled in developmental English. Courses in the FYC program are offered face to face and online. This study includes two case studies from student responses collected across two combined online sections of English 1302, a second semester writing course oriented toward teaching students “the process of research and writing” (Wu and Kelly). The FYC program at UTT uses a Writing about the Disciplines approach, which is based on the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Disciplines (WID) movements in the field of rhetoric and composition (Wu and Kelly). As Wu and Kelly explain, WAC and WID are “designed mostly for instructors of disciplines other than English to incorporate writing as a method of learning... in general education or core curriculum courses.” What distinguishes UTT’s approach to FYC from WAC and WID is its

emphasis on reading and writing “about” the disciplines (Wu and Kelly). The rationale for the Writing about the Disciplines design is as follows:

Reading and Writing about the Disciplines focuses on developing first-year college students’ academic literacy, a set of reading, thinking, writing, and researching skills required of an expert or a professional, by introducing them to the conventions of academic writing in and beyond the discipline they wish to explore as their major. (Wu and Kelly)

*Reading and Writing about the Disciplines* is an approach to writing-knowledge transfer geared toward the early development of students’ connections between the writing in FYC and writing in their disciplines (Wu and Kelly). As the authors of this approach put it,

Behind this approach is a conviction, or a philosophy, that if some of the critical thinking and writing skills we teach in composition or first-year writing hold cross-curricular values, then we are able to transfer our expertise to the teaching of the basic skill set embodied in academic literacy and required by expert performance in other disciplines. (Wu and Kelly)

In other words, the pedagogies in UTT’s FYC program are oriented toward transfer. By encouraging students to connect writing in FYC with writing in the disciplines at an early onset, UTT’s approach incorporates the explicit instructor prompting necessary to “bridge” students’ “abstraction and connection making” to encourage high-road transfer (qtd. in “Teaching for Transfer” 28).

The reflections included in this pilot study are integrated into the established curriculum of *Reading and Writing about the Disciplines: A Guided Process for Academic Research* by Hui Wu and Matthew Kelly. As the research on writing-knowledge transfer conveys, theorizing

writing is an important aspect of transfer and students' development of a writing-identity (Clark Oates et al.; Taczak et al. ; Yancey et al.). The reflective writing assignments developed in this sequence are meant to help students theorize their writing within the constructs of UTT's Writing about the Disciplines approach. As covered previously, integrating reflections before, after, and during composing is an example of "constructive reflection." As a process, constructive reflection can help students to form "a cumulative, multi-selved, multi-voiced identity" to navigate writing contexts (Yancey 14). The backbone of my study is the idea that pointing students to understand their voices based on a framework of rhetorical agency can help them to take ownership of their writing through the development of an academic writing identity. The student responses in this study were collected from two course reflections with IRB approval. To obtain consent, my mentor teacher, Dr. Miriam Rowntree, sent out an email explaining the study with a Qualtrics survey that asked for student consents. Three student responses were collected and deidentified by Dr. Rowntree and sent over for use in the study chapter. While I was able to collect three student consents from the Qualtrics survey distributed as part of the IRB approval process, the following two student responses best embody how rhetorical genre theory can help students begin to understand voice beyond the author's sense of self in writing.

### *Opening Reflection Design*

At the onset of the semester, I asked students to articulate their understanding of the writer's voice in an opening reflection on Graff and Birkenstein's introduction to *They Say I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. The goal of this reflection was to help students conceptualize their writing as a response to a conversation. By asking students to develop a definition of their writing in the prompt below, my students engaged in a process of theorizing

their writing. While this prompt was written by my mentor teacher, Dr. Miriam Rowntree, asking students to conceptualize academic writing as “an interplay of voices” and to define their voices as writers are my own contributions to the assignment.

**Opening Reflection Prompt:** In their introduction to *They Say I Say*, Graff and Birkenstein describe writing as "not just stating your own ideas but in listening close to others around us, summarizing their views in a way they can recognize, and responding with our own ideas in kind" (3). The authors highlight how academic writing is an interplay of voices, consisting of a "they say," and "I say" format (Graff and Birkenstein 3). Based on the reading and your own experience, write a 500-word definition of writing. What does writing do? What are the characteristics of writing? What do you think of when you hear the phrase "the writer's voice?" How would you characterize your own voice as a writer? Use Graff and Birkenstein's definition as part of your reflection.

#### *Week Five Presentation and Reflection Design*

The second assignment of the semester, an analysis of a scholarly publication in the students' disciplines, provided the opportunity to test how students' understandings of voice changed after viewing a presentation detailing the impact of rhetorical genres on the writer's voice across various rhetorical contexts. My mentor teacher and I approached the analysis of a scholarly publication as a rhetorical analysis. As written in *Reading and Writing about the Disciplines: A Guided Process for Academic Research*, the instructional purpose of the analysis of a scholarly publication is to “teach critical thinking skills by examining the assumptions behind an argument, the evidence, the voice, the language use, the methodology, and the logical development of the whole text” (Wu and Kelly). Based on this instructional goal, the analysis assignment provided the opportunity to teach students about how their own voices can be shaped

rhetorically. I approached my pedagogical goal by introducing my students to rhetorical genre theory and fostering their sense of genre-awareness via an online PowerPoint presentation recorded in Canvas Studio.

The presentation, which students viewed in Week five after an initial introduction to the analysis learning unit, draws on Perkins and Salomon's theory of deliberate teaching as a method of instructional bridging for high-road transfer ("Teaching for Transfer" 28-29). In this presentation, titled, *Entering the Conversation: Voice in Writing*, I teach my students that voice depends on context and audience. I frame the analysis assignment as an opportunity for my students to shape their voices as experts entering the academic conversation. I introduce voice as a key term to my students by adapting Peter Elbow's idea of "personal thinking" to fit my own teaching rationale ("Personal Writing" 19). More specifically, I apply Peter Elbow's terminology of "personal thinking" to the personal contexts that inform students' writing when they begin to navigate an academic writing task. As Elbow notes, "when we invite personal thinking, we invite people to develop ideas by following their own personal and idiosyncratic thought processes—using hunches, metaphors, associations, and emotional thinking" ("Personal Writing" 28). In other words, I teach my students that voice in academic writing most often refers to how they think about their writing as they go through the writing process. Teaching students about audience expectations plays a crucial role in helping them to understand voice as personal thinking. In the presentation, I explain to my students that their thinking can remain personal, but that their voice will adapt to meet the expectations of their intended audiences. To increase students' sense of authority as writers, I use reflective writing as an academic space where they can express themselves in their personal, authentic voices.

After introducing my students to common perceptions of voice within rhetoric and composition, I used Kerry Dirk and Jacobson et al. 's chapters in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, to define rhetorical genres. While I first introduce rhetorical genres as “types” (Dirk 250), I then clarify that a more holistic understanding of rhetorical genres includes the purpose and social action that the rhetorical genres accomplish (Dirk 253; “Genre as Social” 159). I use Jacobson et al. 's analysis of student absence emails from their chapter, “Make Your ‘Move:’ Writing in Genres,” as an example to help students understand rhetorical genres as rhetorical action. After fostering a sense of genre-awareness via the presentation, I clarify to my students that voice requires movement within and among various rhetorical genres. Put simply, I teach my students that they must adapt their voices based on the rhetorical requirements of the rhetorical genres that they write in. Teaching my students to adapt their voices to appropriately fit the rhetorical situation, and to consider the rhetorical genre’s audience, purpose, and context, is an example of deliberately teaching students to develop rhetorical agency and begin to conceptualize their writerly-identity via the transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad. With the notions of rhetorical genre and voice in mind, I reframe the analysis of a scholarly publication assignment as a way for my students to take on a critical, scholarly voice as they examine the ways that their chosen article for analysis uses language to influence its audience. I conclude the presentation by introducing rhetorical agency as a term encompassing students’ process of entering academic conversation and communicating more effectively in their writing.

With the goal of hypothesizing how my theory of rhetorical agency can inform the teaching of FYC, I assess how students’ understandings of voice altered from the Opening Reflection (Week One) of the semester, to the invention stages of their analysis of a scholarly



publication (Week Five), when they were asked to respond to a series of reflection questions after viewing the presentation on genre and voice:

- How does understanding the writer's voice as dialogue contribute to your understanding of rhetorical analysis?
- Have you thought of voice as being shaped by the rhetorical situation it's involved in before? Or, has your understanding of voice been more personal? Explain.
- How does understanding genres contribute to your understanding of voice?
- What questions do you have about the writer's voice?
- How do you anticipate shaping your voice in the LU #2 Rhetorical Analysis?

The goal of these reflection questions was to prompt my students to engage in metacognition by reflecting on the information presented in my video. The following sections analyze case studies from two of my students who gave consent for the use of their work. The identities of the students will remain anonymous throughout this chapter.

*Case Study: Writer #1*

In the opening reflection, Writer #1 first conveys a predominately personal understanding of voice. However, the writer does seem to understand that writing involves conventions, or a certain set of standards depending on context:

Some characteristics of writing are basic, such as conventions, fluency, and word choice. While some characteristics of writing are more elaborate, such as ideas, approach, and voice. When I think of the more elaborate characteristics, specifically voice, I think of a type of writing that has always interested me: blogging. This style of writing began long ago but gained popularity with the advancement of technology. Blogging is a self-published way to write about a particular topic while expressing **you** with every word.

The student compares voice to blogging, a personal, uninhibited genre of writing. When reading a blog, the audience typically expects to gain a sense of the author's personhood, authority, or resonance from the text. The student further connects writing to popular media, drawing on the anonymous identity of a blogger in the show *Gossip Girl*. From this comparison, I conclude that the student understands writing in a way that relates to her life and experiences outside of the classroom.

As the opening reflection continues, the student expresses a tacit understanding of genre-conventions without prior course instruction in rhetorical genre theory:

On one hand, some would say that my life now revolves around technical writing rather than the creative writing of a blogger. On the other hand, I would disagree. Despite having stringent criteria that must be met by CMS guidelines, I have not lost my own voice in my response to patients through grievance letters. In fact, I would argue that I'm not only reiterating information that is in the medical record but is presented with my own voice. My writer's voice displays empathy, compassion, and an overall understanding of how the patient interpreted their experience. In conclusion, despite upholding technical writing traits, I have not set aside my own voice. With every word I write, I choose how the reader feels: heard or unheard. Which in my opinion, my voice is not a requirement of technical writing, but it is a necessity of truly advocating for patients.

In distinguishing between the genre-related requirements of "technical writing" vs. "creative writing," the student demonstrates rhetorical awareness. Even amid the generic conventions of technical writing, the student holds onto a sense of identity in the desire to communicate with their audience in their "own voice." The student seems to have a mature understanding that a

writer must navigate their voice while adapting to generic conventions and audience expectations. As the student puts it, “despite having stringent criteria that must be met by CMS guidelines, I have not lost my own voice in response to patients through grievance letters.” The student seems to at least have an initial understanding of how to construct their voice in response to conventions and audience expectations. As the writer puts it, “I would argue that I’m not only reiterating information that is in the medical record but is presented with my own voice. My writer’s voice displays empathy, compassion, and an overall understanding of how the patient interpreted their experience.” While the student does express a desire for a sense of themselves to come through in their writing, the desire to portray “empathy” and “compassion” to patients shows the student’s awareness of patient expectations from communication with medical professionals. In my analysis, having a real-world audience gives this student a more mature understanding of rhetorical situations encountered in their everyday life. The students’ assessment of the rhetorical requirements of responding to patient grievance letters conveys an implicit understanding that the genre is “social action” (“Genre as Social” 153). In other words, the student understands the action that is meant to be accomplished in their response to patients: “With every word I write, I choose how the reader feels: heard or unheard. Which in my opinion, my voice is not a requirement of technical writing, but it is a necessity of truly advocating for patients.” The writer responds to the rhetorical situation of medical grievance letters with an acute awareness of the needs of their audience. In my perspective, this student has already begun to enact rhetorical agency by adapting their writerly identity based on conventions and audience expectations. Without a conceptual understanding of the term, the writer expresses an understanding of voice that is both personal and dialogic while successfully navigating a professional writing context.

In the Week Five Reflection, the student utilizes the redefined notion of voice from my presentation to navigate the rhetorical analysis assignment: “My understanding of the writer’s voice helped me recognize the intent of Thomas and Zolkoski’s article regardless of the assumptions that could be made based on the title.” In conceptualizing voice as a rhetorical choice that writers can draw upon and adapt to based on generic and discursive conventions, the student more fully conceptualized how the authors of a disciplinary article used textual conventions and voice to fulfill rhetorical expectations. As the writer explains, “my understanding of the writer’s voice helped me become aware of the persuasive strategies used by Thomas and Zolkoski such as offering counterpoints to their own study and research, and their use of trustworthy sources.” Here, the writer conveys an understanding of voice as the ethos, or credibility, of the authors in the analysis of a scholarly publication assignment. Furthermore, by analyzing the authors’ voices as persuasion, the writer begins to conceptualize an understanding of voice as a dialogic interaction between the authors and their expected audience.

The writer articulates what she learned about voice from the presentation and how it impacted her initial understanding of voice:

My understanding of voice has been more personal as I am still learning how it is used in rhetorical situations. I thought that most rhetorical situations had a more decisive and authoritative voice. However, I am learning that some voice can be used as a tactic of persuasion.

Here, the writer distinguishes between the use of personal voice and the rhetorical situation, conveying the misconception that personal writing is not embedded in its own rhetorical situation. However, the writer’s opening reflection shows an implicit and emerging understanding of the social expectations of writing in certain genres, such as in blogging and in

responding to patience grievance letters. Likely, the student would benefit from further instruction of examples various types of writing and the rhetorical situation that encompasses these types in real world examples. However, the writer's emerging understanding that "voice can be used as a tactic of persuasion" conveys the potential of using the transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad to conceptualize rhetorical agency in the FYC classroom.

The potential of teaching rhetorical agency through the transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad is further conceptualized in the student's assertion that "understanding genres has impacted how I look at the writer's voice as it relates to the topic and purpose of an article. I've learned that a writer's voice is dependent on the genre and determines the intention of the article." In understanding the relationship between genre, topic, purpose, and intention, the writer is beginning to demonstrate a further rhetorical awareness of writing as a contextualized practice. In using a redefined conceptualization of genre and voice, the writer expresses an emerging understanding that voice is meant to be reshaped to mold to genre-conventions. As the writer puts it, "I anticipate shaping my voice based on my understanding of the genre. I anticipate attempting to use more research and less personal experience during my rhetorical analysis." In this reflection response, the student shows a desire to shape their voice to cultivate a sense of academic credibility for their audience. When asked what further questions the student has concerning the use of voice in writing, the students' response was as follows: "what strategies does an author use keep readers engaged when instructing or presenting evidence if their writer's voice is not emotionally connected?" In my view, this question opens an avenue for further research. As the student expresses a desire to understand rhetorical situations and the construction of the writer's voice beyond just the use of "pathos," it might be useful to teach students to conceptualize voice based on its role in persuasion.

*Case Study: Writer #2*

In the Opening Reflection, Writer #2 expresses audience awareness, but understands voice as expressive rather than shaped by context or the rhetorical situation:

One might argue that characteristics of good writing is writing that is focused, well thought out, grammatically correct, and uses proper punctuation. I would add that to write well the author should know their audience and invite them to participate in the story or message by enticing meaningful thought on the subject matter. Writing allows the reader and author to reflect on the words and ideas and discern the message that is given. Writing opens up the intimate thinking of the writer and displays the writer's true self. It allows you to express your innermost thoughts and feelings. Writing is an outlet; it's a way to say things that one may not say out loud.

The student's characterization of voice as "intimate thinking," "the writer's true self," the writer's "innermost thoughts," and "an outlet" conveys that the student thinks of voice in the expressivist definition. Furthermore, the student characterizes writing as a "story," or "message," seeming to equate writing with creative genres. From my analysis, this student initially understands voice from a personal rather than academic perspective.

After viewing the Week Five presentation, the student's perceptions of voice remain personal but begin to consider the author's personal connection to academic topics. For example, in reflecting on the role of voice in rhetorical analysis, the student discusses the writer's "passion" about the subject and connects the passion of the author to their own passion for their discipline: "I feel the writer is passionate about connecting foundational knowledge and critical thinking. Although the article could be read by some as boring or even monotone [sic] I am passionate about the subject so I am able to read it and feel the desire the write [sic] has to prove

her point.” In other words, the writer conveys interest in a scholarly topic because of their personal interest in the discipline.

After an introduction to rhetorical genres, the student still conveys a personal understanding of voice, but begins to further explain the connection between the author’s personal thinking about, interest in, and connection to scholarly discourse:

My understanding of voice is more personal. I think that any writer, regardless of the genre or subject, is writing to be heard. In my opinion, that is personal. Take something that could be considered boring by some, like writing that explains a study or analysis of how computers work. If the writer didn’t care or had no personal connection to the subject they wouldn’t take the time to research and write it in the first place. Another example, I have no plans to be writer or major in English but what I write is personal even when we are writing about different ways to write. Whether a thought is voiced or written, its personal because it’s mine.

In a way, the writer redefines what personal writing means. In the case of writing a “study,” or “analysis of how computers work,” the student redefines personal writing to encompass a personal connection to the subject. In other words, this student is starting to envision voice in academic genres as their personal thinking about the subject. However, when responding to the question of how understanding genres contribute to the student’s understanding of voice, the student responds with a vast array of written genres: “Writing genres are really no different, there are romance writers, thriller novels, scholarly articles, or magazine editorials, just to name a few. Each writer has a voice and message, and they chose what style they wish to relay the message with.” In relationship to my theory of rhetorical agency, the student’s question about the author of disciplinary article’s connection to the topic of research is especially intriguing: “For my

chosen article, my question would be what personal experience the writer had that made her want to research the topic of how foundational knowledge is linked to developing critical thinking skills. What was her experience as a student nurse and the first few years as a new nurse?" In asking about the author's relationship with her scholarly article in terms of the author's personal experiences, the student recognizes that the disciplinary author has developed a writerly identity that when appropriate, merges personal experiences and personal thinking with academic discourse. In concluding the Week Five Reflection, the student asserts the desire to express their "passion" about their discipline, further showing that the relationship between the students' personal identity and their emerging academic identity.

### *Discussion*

The case studies represented from the two writers in my online English 1302 courses convey the potential of utilizing rhetorical agency as a pedagogy for FYC. In the case of Writer #1, introduction to rhetorical genre theory and a dialogic understanding of voice helped Writer #1 to start to understand how voice can be used as a tactic of persuasion. In the case of Writer #2, the writer begins to conceptualize voice as the author's personal connection and thinking about the topic, although I would argue that this student's connection needs further explicit instruction to be fully nurtured and developed. In terms of the implications for the research undertaken in this thesis, this pilot study demonstrates that teaching genre-awareness in conjunction with voice can help students begin to envision how voices are shaped in response to audience and conventions, both by mature writers in the disciplines, and in the case of their own voices. Moreover, conceptualizing rhetorical agency via the transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad provides a pathway to help students develop a more expansive and thorough theory of writing. Further research is needed to conceptualize the role of rhetorical agency via the transfer-



rhetorical genre-voice triad as a method for composition pedagogy. Some questions to consider include the implementation of rhetorical agency in courses outside of the traditional Teaching for Transfer approach and WID. For instance, what might be the implementation, or role of rhetorical agency as conceptualized via the transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad, in a FYC courses designed in the Writing about Writing approach? Another question to consider is the role of a multi-modal diagram of the transfer-rhetorical genre-voice triad in the teaching of rhetorical agency. In other words, could the diagram for rhetorical agency in chapter two help students visualize their relationship with and identity in and amongst various texts? These are questions I will continue to research and consider in my own teaching practice.

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