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GENRE STRUCTURE AND DISCIPLINARY IDENTITY IN CANDIDATE STATEMENTS FOR AN ELT ASSOCIATION ELECTION

Abstract

Despite the literature extensively exploring identity construction in the self-promotion genre, there is a scarcity of studies investigating how a discipline-related identity is shaped through voice in candidate statements. To address this gap, the present study conducted a move analysis to examine how a disciplinary identity is constructed using voice in candidate statements. The study involved 31 candidate statements written by English instructors vying for seats in an ELT association board election in 2020. The analyses followed several procedures, including identifying moves and steps of candidate statements to determine their rhetorical functions. Subsequently, we adopted Thompson's model of three voice levels (2012) for voice analysis, which was expanded by Li and Deng (2021): the propositional content level, the structural level, and the holistic level. The findings indicate that candidates strategically employed distinct voicing techniques to garner sufficient votes, expressing their disciplinary identities through propositional, structural, and holistic voice levels. The study concludes by discussing the pedagogical implications arising from these findings.

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Key words

candidate statement, ELT association election, genre-based approach, disciplinary identity, rhetorical structure.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In academia, writing plays a crucial role in knowledge construction and the establishment of scholarly identity (Botelho de Magalhães et al., 2019; Rahimivand & Kuhi, 2014). Initially, identity is concealed cognitively, but linguistic choices in a particular social context (Hyland, 2011), make it observable to readers and the intended audience for drawing judgment or impression (Petroni, 2019). This transformation indicates that identity is not merely a personal choice; rather, it is socially constructed. To gain acceptance and create a credible identity, individuals are bound by social conventions and discourse options established by the specific community or discipline they are targeting (Herrando-Rodrigo, 2019; Hyland, 2011; Hyland & Tse, 2012; Li & Deng, 2021; Matsuda, 2015; Reeves, 2018; Suau-Jiménez, 2020). Consequently, identities are constructed by the writers themselves but positioned by the readers and social conventions (Reeves, 2018) using voice (Ivanič & Camps, 2001).

Since the writers themselves as well as readers contribute to the positioning of identity, identity is no longer internal and fixed but becomes socially mediated (Herrando-Rodrigo, 2019; Hyland, 2011; Matsuda, 2015; Reeves, 2018; Suau-Jiménez, 2020). It is mediated by “a range of social personae, including social statuses, roles, positions, relationships, and institutions and other relevant community identities one may attempt to claim or assign in the course of social life” (Ochs, 1993, p. 288). In other words, identities are constructed with the individuals’ claim of self-positioning and positionings done by others due to several external factors, such as social conventions, institutions, persons, etc. (Reeves, 2018; Suau-Jiménez, 2020).

Social conventions as an external factor refer to the rhetorical options that are offered by the social discursive repertoire and utilized by writers to respond to specific rhetorical demands (Matsuda, 2015). Each disciplinary community adheres to standards, practices, and expectations that writers need to address and consider while writing (Li & Deng, 2021). These rhetorical repertoires restrict choices and impact writers’ linguistic approaches to representing their identities. For instance, Suau-Jiménez (2020) conducted a corpus-based study of 112 hotel websites to investigate how self-mention strategies, including personalizing and depersonalizing strategies, may affect the authorial voice and the distance and closeness to readers. The results revealed that personalized agentive self-mentions conveyed closeness and trustworthiness and were used to invite customers and describe hotel services. The most used pronoun was *we*. On the other hand, depersonalized agentive self-mention was used for topics related to payments and regulations to convey objectivity and credibility. Similarly, Herrando-Rodrigo (2019) investigated 40 medical research papers to uncover writers’ rhetorical strategies to make their identities visible. The writers voiced their identities using the first-person pronoun *we* and its possessive adjective form *our*. They also used passive constructions to emphasize what was done more than who did it. Frequent uses of abstract rhetoric included words such as *study*,

findings, research, results, and analysis. The results indicated that writers in medical disciplines prefer using passive construction in writing their papers, reflecting the medical disciplines' norms and conventions.

However, identity construction is emphasized or polished based on the chosen voice type. A voice type reflects how writers employ genre and discourse to align themselves with a particular group (Ivanič & Camps, 2001). As a result, linguistic resources affect the subjectivity of their users, ranging from assertive and authoritative effects to tentative and deferential (Ivanič & Camps, 2001). This variation is significant, as the voice links the writer to the audience and shapes the audience's perceptions of the writer.

One type of identity academics often construct in writing is a disciplinary identity in which "writers have to demonstrate that they meet the requirements and expectations of their target programs and that they are unique in their motivations, life experiences, and future plans" (Li & Deng, 2021, p. 2). However, despite extensive research conducted in the field of identity construction in different contexts and across different disciplines and genres, the exploration of disciplinary identity construction utilizing voice in the Middle East in English Language Teaching (ELT) using candidate statements remains limited. This creates a significant gap in examining disciplinary identity construction using voice in the self-promotion genre in ELT and the move structure of candidate statements as a genre.

To address this research gap in the discourse analysis and ELT literature, this study used the three voice levels developed by Li and Deng (2021) to examine the candidate statements of 31 participants who applied for the board election of the ELT association in 2020. The study employed two qualitative linguistic tools, namely textual analysis and three voice levels, drawing out the moves and steps of the candidate statement genre to reveal the candidates' discourses and rhetorical choices, exploring the social conventions and discourse options they were bounded by to structure their disciplinary identity. This analysis would shed light on how to effectively voice a disciplinary identity in candidate statements for an ELT association and, potentially, for other general associations, given the significance of candidate statements for securing positions in the board of directors' elections held within associations and the limited research available in the L2 context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The self-promotion genre has long been prevalent in academia (Bhatia, 2004), and it is recognized by various names, such as self-profiling, self-branding, and self-representation genre (Brown, 2004; Petroni, 2019). This popularity can be attributed to two factors. Firstly, universities face immense market pressure to achieve a tangible impact, which also affects scholars (Duffy & Pooley, 2017). Secondly, advancements in technology have intensified the use of this genre, making it essential for academicians to possess strong discursive skills to showcase their

identity across various platforms, including social media (Bhatia, 2004). In this competitive landscape, scholars strive to represent themselves and their identity in a persuasive manner to gain acceptance from their target audience or potential clients (Bhatia, 2004).

Various rhetorical forms of discourse are employed within the self-promotion genre, including job application forms, autobiographies, CVs, and personal statements (Bhatia, 2004; Brown, 2004). Regardless of the specific form, the underlying purpose of seeking acceptance from the target disciplinary community remains the same. A key type of self-promotion genre is personal statement (PS). According to Chiu (2016), a PS is a tool used by applicants to self-represent and define their identity. It is not a mere autobiography recounting personal experiences but involves constructing an apprentice scientist identity (Brown, 2004). Applicants achieve this by highlighting their experiences, skills, and outstanding attributes through anecdotes and examples (Ding, 2007). Consequently, they present various versions of themselves and create multiple identities within one context (Li & Deng, 2019). These diverse representations of oneself showcase uniqueness, motivation, life experiences, and plans to construct a discipline-related identity or an impressive self-image for the audiences (Li & Deng, 2021).

Several research studies have delved into the process of identity construction within the self-promotion genre, revealing the diverse content and linguistic features employed, such as first-person pronouns, recontextualization of genres and content, narratives, plans, previous and current positions, academic achievements and motivations to present desired skills and appeal to the target community effectively (Aslan & Jaworska, 2024; Brown, 2004; Ding, 2007; Haji, 2023; Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Kathpalia, 2024; Kessler, 2022; Li & Deng, 2019; Maier & Engberg, 2023).

Self-mentioning using personal pronouns was a significant strategy of self-promotion in academia and education. Haji (2023) investigated linguistics strategies in PS used by English and French students applying for academic programs to promote their candidature and seek admission. The analysis revealed excessive use of self-promotion strategies to create an authorial identity that is determined and has a firm knowledge of the discipline. This was achieved through the extensive use of the first-person pronoun *I* and its possessive adjective *my*.

Another essential strategy discussed in the literature included recontextualization of content or a topic to fit the specific audience. Kathpalia (2024) used the recordings of 25 Three-Minute Presentations (3MP) to explore the presenters' simplification and engagement strategies to hook the non-specialist audience. The presenters were trying to recontextualize their topics to make them understandable to the audience. The researcher found that 3MP presentations are characterized by clarity and conciseness, using various presenting mechanisms to hook the audience's attention, such as audience interaction, repetition, humor, and the strategic use of statistics to ensure coherence and enhance the presentation's impact. The focus was on defining ideas, concepts, and terms while keeping the language simple to bridge the gap between the proficient speaker and the average

audience (Kathpalia, 2024). In line with the previous research, Maier and Engberg (2023) explore the levels of explanatory depth in multimodal knowledge communications, in which a genre of the trailer is recontextualized from the film business to an academic one. The authors found that the moves like topic identification, topic justification, course identification, course justification, and course recommendation, are explanatory to a limited extent and are more of a descriptive text. This gave the course supplier enough margin to change the course if necessary (Maier & Engberg, 2023). The authors concluded that by redirecting this genre of the trailer from business to academia, the academics proclaim a new identity: “promotional social actors in academic trailers”, expanding their academic roles and broadening the prospects of their discourse communities and the non-academic audience (Maier & Engberg, 2023, p. 276).

Academic achievements and professional skills were among the significant content included to construct a desired identity in the self-promotion genre. Aslan and Jaworska (2024) investigated how academic identities were displayed by examining 200 email signatures of applied linguists. They found that although signatures provided information about the academicians, they were also used as a digital platform to create reputation, credibility, and authority by demonstrating their academic achievements. There were core moves, which included information about the academic name, institution, titles, and contact information, while the optional moves included information about positions and academic achievements. Li and Deng (2021) adopted a unique perspective in their investigation of identity construction by focusing on how voice levels were used to shape identity in personal statements written by two Chinese students. Their analysis emphasized content features rather than linguistic ones. The study highlighted how individuals employed voice to create a professional and distinct disciplinary identity to gain acceptance within the target community. These findings underscore the significance of voice as a core element in identity construction, influencing how readers perceive an individual’s identity through written text.

Botelho de Magalhães et al. (2019) employed a narrative inquiry to explore how voice, identity, and agency impacted the writing experiences of two doctoral students. Regarding voice, they found that writing in English as an Additional Language (EAL) presented sensitive challenges due to various writing conventions that may limit students’ choices of personal pronouns and vocabulary to comply with the norms of the disciplinary community. The authors suggested that voice was influenced by sociocultural and contextual conventions prevalent within the disciplinary community, which aligns with Canagarajah’s (2015) perspective on voice analysis. Canagarajah identified four layers of voice, encompassing the writers’ identity, role, subjectivity, and awareness level, all of which impact the writers’ language usage and perspectives.

In personal statements, applicants aim to persuade readers or gatekeepers by showcasing their personality and originality (Ding, 2007). The chosen voice type plays a crucial role in how applicants want to be perceived and project their identities

through the text (Ivanič & Camps, 2001). The voice serves as a criterion that can significantly influence how identity is constructed, guiding readers to form specific impressions of the individuals they read about and possibly categorize and position them accordingly.

Specifically, the voice in PSs contributes to the overall impression left on readers and reflects the writers' level of confidence in their ideas (Botelho de Magalhães et al., 2019). As written texts are like "living organisms" (Castelló et al., p. 98), serving as the only connection between the writer and the readers (Matsuda, 2015), the voice type controls how readers perceive the writer's identity. Writers employ linguistic and content choices available within their disciplinary community to create a preferred voice that readers receive, process, and subsequently judge and position. This dynamic process of reader interpretation indicates that the identity generated by voice is not fixed but continually shaped (Castelló et al., 2012). It also suggests that writers craft a desired self-image (Li & Deng, 2019), presenting an identity that can be unique, productive, potential, or constrained.

Despite the substantial amount of literature on identity construction in the self-promotion genre, there is a lack of studies focusing on how a disciplinary identity is formed using voice in candidate statements. While existing research has provided a theoretical understanding of identity construction and voice in higher education pedagogy, exploring how voice is employed in the candidate statement genre is necessary. Previous inquiries in the literature have mainly focused on promoting voice in academic writing for Ph.D., and Master's degrees and research articles conducted by L2 speakers (Breeze, 2023; Moreno, 2022), as well as other genres (Canagarajah, 2015; Castelló et al., 2012; Dressen-Hammouda, 2014; Hyland, 2011; Stock & Eik-Nes, 2016). In this study, we have chosen to apply it to candidate statements that differ from personal statements found in the literature. Notably, candidate statements target a broader audience, including the entire disciplinary community of the association, as opposed to personal statements that primarily target admission committee members. Furthermore, in candidate statements, candidates must state their contribution to the association's community they aim to persuade, which is not a necessary component in personal statements of graduate programs, as indicated in previous studies.

Our study investigates how scholars construct their disciplinary identity in candidate statements to gain acceptance within the English education community. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What rhetorical moves of candidate statements are used to gain positions in the elections of the board of directors in an ELT association?
2. How do candidates construct their disciplinary identity in the candidate statements?

3. METHODS

3.1. Participants

The data used in this study consisted of candidate statements provided by Saudi and non-Saudi scholars who were part of an English language association board election in Saudi Arabia. These candidates held various degrees in TESOL, linguistics, or English education. As part of the election process, the candidates must submit their résumé and a 300-word candidate statement. The candidates were free to include whatever they believed to be relative to gaining votes. There were no specific instructions or templates to follow in writing their statements. To gather the data, all 38 candidates were contacted via email or in person to request for their candidate statements. Of these, 33 candidates (13 males and 20 females) voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and shared their candidate statements with the authors. The email sent to the candidates included a consent form and a detailed explanation of the study's purpose. The participants' identities were kept anonymous to ensure confidentiality and privacy, and pseudonyms were used. Additionally, any information that could lead to the identification of the candidates, such as their university details, was removed from the data. The textual examples included in the study were carefully chosen to represent less than 5% of each participant's candidate statement. This approach was taken to maintain the integrity of the original statements while providing relevant examples for analysis.

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3.2. Textual analysis

We conducted a textual analysis of the candidate statements (CSs) through various procedures. Initially, we reviewed all the CSs received from volunteering participants to determine their suitability for further analysis. Two CSs were excluded from the study as they were primarily written in a CV-style format and did not align with the primary purpose of the self-promotional genre, which is to promote oneself to gain acceptance in a specific discourse community (Chiu, 2016; Li & Deng, 2021).

For the remaining 31 CSs, we independently conducted a move analysis through the lens of Swales's (1990) framework because it offers a broad perspective. The 'move analysis' approach breaks down larger discourse units into smaller ones, working from the top down. Swales posits that texts have a discourse structure comprising several parts, each serving specific rhetorical functions known as "moves." These moves may consist of one or more steps that provide detailed perspectives on the options available to the writer in presenting the moves (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p. 89). According to Hyland and Tse (2012, p. 157), each move functions as a distinctive communicative act seeking to project a specific aspect of the self. Additionally, works by Chiu (2016), Li and Deng (2021), and Luo (2020)

were consulted to establish the coding protocol for CSs. We followed several procedures to analyze the CSs. First, we met to review the rhetorical functions of the moves presented in these previous studies and employ them as the starting point for our analysis. The analysis process of identifying moves and steps involved carefully reading the CSs several times to determine the rhetorical function of text segments. This process was iterative, moving back and forth between the CSs' data "to identify and (re)define functional units which represented a particular communicative purpose" (Chiu, 2016, p. 51). Finally, we met again to share our analyses via constant redefinition and refinement of the moves.

For voice analysis, we adopted Li and Deng's (2021) three-level modified voice construction model based on Thompson's (2012) original model. This model comprises three levels: the propositional content level, the structural level, and the holistic level. The propositional content level involves examining the content of the CSs, including the four moves derived from the move analysis (see Table 1). The structural level explores how scholars make their mentioned experiences and life episodes coherent in the propositional content. At this level, we employed metadiscourse, "an umbrella term for a range of linguistic features" in the textual analysis to investigate how a text was coherent in line with the writer's preference (Li & Deng, 2021; Thompson, 2012, p. 125). Manual text analysis was applied since the number of texts was not significant. Each author coded each candidate statement separately to focus on how each move/step is a distinct communicative act attempting to project a specific aspect of oneself (Li & Deng, 2021). Then, we discussed and refined our coding and categorization results until we reached the final coding protocol. This coding method is advantageous because it provides more accurate results, especially with small amounts of data. Finally, the holistic level delves into the overall impression the scholars aimed to convey through their use of voice. We cumulatively examined the self-images the writers tried to create explicitly and implicitly by cross-referencing certain words and phrases (e.g., words showing abilities and qualities such as EFL/ESL/EAP and TESOL teaching; research abilities and publications; professional development (PD) plans and past experiences; and leadership skills) employed by the writers in their intent to describe themselves (e.g., their abilities such as making plans for research journals; organizing conferences; planning new PD programs for EFL/ESL/EAP teachers; managing the association; and giving advice on TESOL education).

4. RESULTS

4.1. Rhetorical moves of candidate statements

Table 1 presents the rhetorical moves identified from the CSs, comprising four moves: Move 1 - Introduction and Relevant Background, Move 2 - Goals/Reasons for

Applying, Move 3 - Self-promotion and Move 4 - Contribution to the Association. These moves were found to be obligatory, as they appeared in nearly all CSs. The candidates strategically employed these moves to persuade the community members (i.e., voters). It is noteworthy that we did not observe any cyclical or repetitive moves. It appeared that the authors adhered to the genre’s conventions, as they were required to be as concise as feasible and incorporate critical information to demonstrate their capabilities. Due to space constraints in this article and to avoid redundancy, the results of the rhetorical moves are integrated with the propositional level in the subsequent section.

Moves and steps	N	%
Move: 1: Introduction and Relevant Background	31	100%
Step: 1-A: Education, Academic Achievement, and TESOL/ELT Experience	29	94%
Step: 1-B: Work/Professional Experience	29	94%
Step: 1-C: Research Experience and Interests	14	45%
Move: 2: Goals/Reasons for Applying	25	81%
Move: 3: Self-promotion	28	90%
Move: 4: Contribution to the Association	27	87%

Table 1. Frequency of moves and steps found in candidate statements

4.2. At the propositional content level

In their candidate statements, all applicants vying for the ELT association board member election predominantly focused on showcasing their TESOL/ELT-relevant background, which they believed would position them for a future role within the association. Move 1, titled “Introduction and Relevant Background”, encompassed three steps: educational, academic achievements, and TESOL/ELT experience, work/professional experience, and research experience and interests. The range of qualifications varied from bachelor’s (BA) degrees in ELT to Ph.D. degrees in TESOL, corresponding to the diversity in their professional experiences. These experiences included a wide array of roles and responsibilities, such as supervising MA TESOL students’ involvement in the “TESOL industry”, working in public schools, teaching in various contexts, organizing events, conferences, and seminars, supervising teachers in public schools, instructing in specialized ELT approaches like EAP and ESP, teaching in native speaker contexts, contributing to the development and planning of policies in different ELT and TESOL institutions and organizations in Saudi Arabia, and constructing several ELT and MA TESOL programs. The following examples 1 and 2 illustrate this.

- (1) I have been involved in the industry of TESOL for more than 15 years and I have a variety of work experiences in teaching, training, and management with a focus in TESOL. As an English teacher, I taught many language courses in general, academic, and ESP. I also taught MA courses in TESOL and have served as a supervisor for many MA students. At a management level, I have worked on several projects in ELT including the development of an MA TESOL program, co-chaired the XXX conference in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and co-founded XXX association. [Candidate 11]
- (2) I have experience in teaching English in Saudi Arabia for more than 15 years. In addition to the experience of being an EAP teacher at XXX University delivering interactive classes for adult ESL. [Candidate 3]

The candidates' professional trajectories encompass diverse experiences, spanning ELT teaching, studies in second language acquisition (SLA), adult education, PD in TESOL, and involvement in assessment and evaluation in ELT. Furthermore, their research experiences are equally impressive, with notable publications, including research articles, books, and book chapters. Moreover, their dedication to the field is further solidified by their active participation in various ELT and TESOL conferences, as evident in examples 3 and 4 below.

- (3) I am humbled to receive multiple accolades for my research and contributions to the field of TESOL. [Candidate 15]
- (4) Dr. XXX's research interests include English Language teaching, ... her initiation of Arabization, and Translating the Saudi linguistic landscape had been accepted by the Governorate of Jeddah Province. [Candidate 17]

In addressing Move 2, candidates outlined their goals and reasons for applying which differed based on their educational backgrounds. Specifically, individuals with Ph.D. or MA degrees in TESOL or ELT, and working in tertiary education, were primarily motivated by academic aspirations. Their goals revolved around establishing platforms for research dissemination through newsletters, journals, and conferences, to share their valuable insights, beliefs, and ideas in the fields of TESOL, ELT, and leadership. This is illustrated in examples 5 and 6:

- (5) I hope to foster scientific research that examines the field of ESP/EAP pedagogy in Saudi universities. [Candidate 25]
- (6) The whole process of meticulously researching a topic, organizing the points in a presentation, and the final exhilaration of presenting my perspective to my peers, has always been a rewarding experience. [Candidate 7]

On the other hand, candidates working in school-level education, particularly in public schools, were motivated by the desire to enhance teachers' training and fulfill specific professional development objectives. Examples 7 and 8 illustrate this.

- (7) I performed many different courses in the field of teaching and self-development. I believe that training is very important to help others to be qualified for their jobs. Training needs a lot of reading and searching. [Candidate 8]
- (8) Having worked in different contexts, I am an experienced teacher and teacher trainer. ... I can contribute to the XXX [association] board by planning and delivering many workshops and webinars that help all teachers working in international education. [Candidate 28]

Regarding the third move, which involves self-promotion, candidates strategically projected their disciplinary identities to create a favorable image that aligns with the voters' expectations. Apart from highlighting their qualifications and training, candidates emphasized their expertise as ELT/TESOL scholars with profound knowledge in the fields of TESOL, ELT, and leadership. They underscored their potential as competent candidates by showcasing their academic research accomplishments, leadership abilities, proficiency in-school training, and popularity on social media. However, the approach to self-promotion varied based on the candidates' educational backgrounds.

In academia, candidates working in tertiary education provided details about their memberships in various local and international associations related to applied linguistics, ELT, and TESOL. They also associated themselves with native speakers and institutions by mentioning their previous supervisors and educational providers, often from Western countries. Additionally, they highlighted their experiences of working in native speakers' institutions and obtaining further degrees in ELT, such as CELTA. This is evident in examples 9 and 10.

- (9) I completed my Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics at the XXX [university] under the supervision of Professors XXX and XXX [well-known scholars]. [Candidate 16]
- (10) In addition to serving as a judge at the XXX Symposium in XXX (city), XXX (country), Dr. XXX chaired and participated in several high-profile boards, committees, and councils. Further, he was invited as a keynote speaker at many national and international symposia. [Candidate 19]

Moreover, candidates from non-Saudi backgrounds established connections with Saudi culture by referencing their prior work experiences in the Gulf region. This allowed them to claim that they understood the teaching and learning needs in Saudi Arabia's ELT context well. Creating such a link fosters a sense of belonging and is used to gain acceptance from community members, as evident in examples 11 and 12 below.

- (11) I have been working in the field of teaching English as a second language for 21 years, and I worked at the XXX [university] from 2009 to 2015. This means that I am familiar with the English language instruction capacity and its requirements in KSA. [Candidate 22]

- (12) My ten years of expertise as a presenter, honed by myriad opportunities for professional development in the Arab world, have made me a suitable candidate for the membership of the board of directors for XXX [association]. [Candidate 7]

In the self-promotion move, research publications and conference attendance were significant factors. Candidates highlighted their publications in prestigious journals, emphasizing their recognition in the academic community. Some mentioned their research projects in ELT and TESOL, without specifying the journals. Additionally, candidates proudly showcased their active participation in both local and internationally renowned conferences within the field. They also specified their roles as members and representatives of notable ELT organizations, further solidifying their disciplinary identity. This is stated in the following examples 13 and 14.

- (13) In addition, I presented at different ELT conferences within the Kingdom and internationally. I published many articles in ELT journals in numerous areas in ELT. [Candidate 11]
- (14) My publications have appeared in various journals including *Language Learning*, *Modern Language Journal*, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *ELT Journal*, *Language Teaching Research*, and *Learning and Individual Differences*. [Candidate 16]

Indeed, candidates utilized their expertise in planning policies and managing ELT and TESOL education at universities to self-promote their disciplinary identities. For instance, Ph.D. holders having prominent positions in TESOL education emphasized their leadership skills in spearheading ELT and TESOL education expansion within their institutions. They showcased their involvement in establishing new ELT programs, such as MA in TESOL, further enhancing their credentials and presenting themselves as valuable candidates for the association board election, as shown in examples 15 and 16.

- (15) As the Head of XXX Unit at the XXX [university], I have worked hard to maintain XXX's [university] mission and values ... This is evident in the many seminars, tutorials, workshops, and other small group learning activities that I have delivered to develop graduate students and faculty's research skills in TESOL. [Candidate 4]
- (16) I have had long experience in the pursuit of excellence in English language teaching in Saudi Arabia. Throughout my time at the XXX [university], I have seen the student body grow from 8,000 to 18,000, been directly involved in the XXX [university] achieving its initial CEA-accredited status, and overseen its accreditation renewal which resulted in a 10-year accreditation. [Candidate 1]

Furthermore, candidates with BA and master's degrees highlighted their expertise in training and ability to understand teachers' needs in public schools.

They emphasized their role as experts in the educational domain, positioning themselves as valuable assets to the association. Additionally, three candidates utilized their popularity on social media as part of their self-promotion moves in their candidate statements. They asserted that their substantial number of followers on platforms like Twitter and Facebook would enable them to positively influence and advocate for ELT association events, activities, and initiatives. This demonstrated their potential to engage with a broader audience and contribute to the association's growth and visibility. This is evident in examples 17 and 18 below.

- (17) I have got XXX followers on my professional Facebook page, and this, in my humble opinion, can help me hold professional development and SIG events with instructors and learners of English. [Candidate 22]
- (18) I also manage a Twitter account for XXX EFL teachers with more XXX followers. [Candidate 20]

The last move, "Contribution to the Association", allowed candidates to outline their plans and aspirations for the association's development locally and globally. However, the nature of their contributions was in line with their educational backgrounds and underlying motives. As previously mentioned, candidates holding a Ph.D. in ELT and TESOL proposed initiatives such as establishing dedicated academic research journals for the community, fostering network communities in ELT and TESOL across various contexts, and organizing annual conferences. Their vision also involved aligning with the association's goals and objectives. Conversely, candidates with BA degrees aimed to make contributions that focused on addressing the professional development needs of teachers and providing training courses in schools. Their approach to contribution revolved around the practical aspects of supporting educators in enhancing their skills and expertise in the field of ELT, as illustrated in examples 19 and 20.

- (19) I am hoping to bring forward all the knowledge and experience I have gained from working alongside distinguished scholars and researchers and support our learners in achieving great success. [Candidate 3]
- (20) Through XXX [association], I aim to support teachers and educators with effective instructional strategies that promote students' deeper understanding of content and acquisition of skills such as setting goals, explicit teaching, collaborative learning, and feedback. To achieve this goal, I will search for High Impact Teaching Strategies in different classes for teachers in Saudi schools. Then, bring them together as examples for teachers and educators in Saudi Arabia. [Candidate 26]

From the analysis and examples presented above, we found three social conventions controlling candidates' discourse and rhetorical options: the specific requirements for the target position within the ELT association board election,

linguistic conventions prevalent in the self-promotion genre, and each candidate's sociocultural background.

4.3. At the structural level

All candidates in their candidate statements utilized a combination of past, present, and future tenses, and their sequencing of information ranged from general to specific, though not always in a consistent order. Some began by stating their current position, while others started with their motives or achievements. As a result, there was variation in the amount of detail and language used in each section. Most candidates dedicated two to three paragraphs to elaborate on their experiences in TESOL and ELT, while others divided their focus equally between qualifications, experiences, and contributions. Notably, six candidates, five males and one female, provided specific details about their goals and plans for the future, while giving relatively less attention to their qualifications and experiences.

Candidates employed various linguistic features to construct their disciplinary identities throughout the CSs. The dominant usage of first-person and possessive pronouns served multiple purposes, including highlighting their contributions, asserting their abilities as educators and academics, explaining their motivations, and promoting their identities. Interestingly, four candidates, two males, and two females, opted to use their names instead of personal pronouns, possibly to strengthen their self-presentation.

Additionally, gender differences were evident in the language used by male and female candidates. Male candidate statements followed a more structured format with precise major moves and steps commonly found in CSs. In contrast, female candidate statements sometimes omitted certain moves or steps, like contributions or reasons for applying. Moreover, male candidates demonstrated a confident and assertive language style, utilizing boosters to emphasize their qualifications and achievements. On the other hand, female candidates tended to adopt a softer and more hedging tone when discussing their motives, contributions, and abilities. This is evident in examples 21, 22, 23, and 24 below:

Male:

- (21) I firmly believe that with my proven experience developing the XXX [university] as well as with all I have already done for XXX [association], I will be able to continue to help XXX [association] pursue its dreams and meet its full potential for the benefit of Saudi society and the broader region. [Candidate 1]
- (22) I will strive to take part in achieving the country's Vision 2030. I aim to contribute to this through various means. [Candidate 16]

Female:

- (23) I sincerely hope you consider my nomination to the board of directors as I will display professional and academic values when conducting the roles and responsibilities assigned to me. [Candidate 4]
- (24) I would appreciate an opportunity to be considered as a candidate for the board of directors for XXX [association]. [Candidate 7]

Female candidates effectively utilized storytelling to highlight their professional experiences. Their narratives were infused with emotive adjectives, allowing them to express their identities in the relevant disciplinary field. Additionally, they employed positive adjectives to praise the ELT association, a characteristic that was not observed in the CSs of male candidates. In a similar vein, female candidates used conditional statements (“if” clauses) to elaborate on the contributions they would make if elected as board members, demonstrating their commitment and dedication to the association. Examples 25 and 26 show examples of storytelling.

- (25) My passion for linguistic discoveries and word etymology started a long time ago, in my childhood. This spark of talent was observed and nourished by my XXX [nationality] language teachers, all the way through to high school. However, my experiences as an adult have put me into favorable situations and I’ve been privileged enough to know other cultures and their languages. [Candidate 6]
- (26) I would like to join XXX [association] because I want to be a part of this great association that concerns teachers’ professional development, expand my ideas, and provide what I acquired from my different experiences. It will be a great opportunity that will allow me to share what I have with many teachers. I have a lot to provide for English teachers. I wish that I could be a director in this amazing association. This will grant me great honor. [Candidate 8]

4.4. At the holistic level

The holistic level of analysis was used to assess the overall impression and self-image that candidates aimed to convey in their candidate statements. Almost all participants projected a final disciplinary identity connected to the TESOL and ELT professional community. Their disciplinary identity differed according to what they asserted in their introduction, their relevant background, their reasons for applying, their self-promotion, and their contributions to the associations. Candidates hoped to be nominated and elected by voters from different geographical and educational backgrounds. Therefore, they proclaimed the academic merits and the teaching knowledge voters would find appealing and relevant to the TESOL and ELT community. The intended disciplinary identity they strived to portray varied among candidates. Some candidates voiced more than one relevant disciplinary identity to demonstrate that they could perform multiple tasks and meet the voters’

expectations. This strategy was employed to increase their chances of being nominated and elected by voters.

We found nine candidates with disciplinary identities related to the ELT and TESOL communities. They are divided as follows: four candidates were ELT scholars and leaders; one candidate was an ELT professional trainer, scholar, and leader; three candidates were ELT professional trainers and scholar; three candidates were ESP/ EAP/ESL professional trainers; one candidate was an EFL professional trainer in vocational colleges; six candidates were ELT scholars and TESOL advisors; two candidates were ELT scholars and researchers; one candidate was an ELT scholar, researcher, and translator; and four candidates were EFL teachers. This is shown in examples 27 and 28 below:

- (27) With more than 13 years of experience as a teacher, trainer, leader, and director, I've always been keen on supporting the ELT community and educational leadership in English language institutes in Saudi Arabia. [Candidate 2]
- (28) The Saudi TESOL will represent a starting point for giving Saudi EAP teachers at all levels of experience a comprehensive, up-to-date, and coherent account of the field of English for academic purposes, offering an accessible description of ESP practices, which is thoroughly grounded in current theories and developments in the field. [Candidate 25]

5. DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study was to investigate how disciplinary identity is established through the use of voice in candidate statements. We analyzed 31 CSs submitted for an election to obtain positions on the board of an ELT association. The candidates strategically showcased various areas of expertise to increase their likelihood of being chosen as board members. Of the 38 individuals running, only nine were successful in the board election.

At the propositional level, candidates generally focused on presenting their academic achievements, professional experiences, research interests, and certifications related to the TESOL or ELT disciplines. However, the type of information stated in moves and steps differed among candidates due to their different educational backgrounds. Most candidates emphasized their ELT linguistics and TESOL language education expertise, showcasing their work experiences in various ELT contexts such as ESP and EAP. Furthermore, they highlighted their research interests, which aligned with TESOL theory and practice. This use of specific discipline-related terms is consistent with the findings of Li and Deng (2021), who observed similar behavior in their participants, where specific disciplinary terms were used to voice their disciplinary identities. In this study, candidates covered almost all moves, but the type of information included played a significant role in directing voters' verdicts and influencing their decisions. The

audience favored higher education professionals except for one candidate in the Ministry of Education office. It is evident from the election results that candidates working in public education as teachers or in vocational institutions as trainers were not elected.

In addition, the audience tended to elect those with academic leadership skills compared to other skills and achievements. We found that candidates who included specific details in their moves, such as their progression journey into leadership positions, were the ones elected by voters. The voters also endorsed those candidates who made tangible changes such as expanding ELT tracks, developing MA programs, and developing curriculum and teaching methods in their ELT institutes. Other details such as an association with different cultures and their connections to the culture of English native speakers, professional development achievements in public schools and vocational institutes, EAP/ESP future planning, research publications, and presenting in scientific conferences were found to be less attractive to voters. Overall, voters valued expertise related to leadership and past achievement in ELT education and management rather than skills related to intellectual achievement in research.

Structurally, all candidates employed a time sequence in their candidate statements, moving from the past to the present and then to the future. The conventional past-present-future sequence was prevalent among most candidates, which aligns with findings from Li and Deng's (2021) study. This narrative approach allows candidates to construct a cohesive sense of self, blending their past experiences and future aspirations into their present identity, as proposed by Bamberg et al. (2012). Eight of the winning candidates followed this convention in their statements, except for one candidate, who followed a listing writing style in which she listed all her future contributions to the ELT board using the future tense.

Interestingly, one of the most noticeable findings was the differences between male and female candidates using linguistic features to express their disciplinary identities. These distinctions encompassed the organization of ideas, using first-person pronouns, and adopting adjectives. Most candidates used personal pronouns to represent themselves and showcase their abilities. Only four candidates used depersonalized self-mention. Personalized pronouns are a well-known norm in the academic writing convention of writing personal letters (Li & Deng, 2021), unlike the tourism and medical genres. The construction of voice in Suau-Jiménez's (2020) and Herrando-Rodrigo's (2019) studies suggested that self-mention strategy is based on depersonalization in the tourism genre and passive construction in the medical field. This indicates that each discipline has its social conventions and discourse options for writing.

From a holistic perspective, candidates aim to create a coherent image of their professional identity that aligns with voters' expectations. Each candidate expressed an individualized identity that is exceptionally qualified for their forthcoming position within the organization. As a result, specific candidates expressed their expertise and qualifications in TESOL education within the context of higher

education and academic research. On the other hand, some candidates emphasized their competence and ambition in TESOL education in public schools and professional development for teachers. However, the former disciplinary identity appeared to be the one that most voters preferred. Voters favored candidates in the higher education sector who had a background in ELT, were scholars, and possessed leadership skills. These candidates were also seen as supporters of professional development in academic settings. On the other hand, voters were less inclined towards a candidate identified as an EFL/ESL/ESP teacher working in public schools. This candidate was seen as more focused on PD in EFL teaching precisely. Candidates' social positions and roles in their current jobs, such as being educators or university professors, significantly influenced voters' choices. The election was won by all four candidates who were classified as ELT scholars and leaders. The remaining five competitors who won the election were also experts in academia and had research interests and professional development plans related to higher education. They were classified in the following manner: two candidates were ELT scholars and researchers, two candidates were ELT PD trainers and scholars, and one candidate presented themselves as an ELT professional trainer, scholar, and leader.

Overall, the study highlights an essential aspect of candidate statements that differentiates them from other self-promotion genres like CVs, personal statements, and job applications. Specifically, the study emphasizes the significance of a candidate's social popularity within the ELT/TESOL community in influencing election outcomes. This popularity is showcased through thoroughly presenting the candidate's qualifications, experiences, and achievements in ELT and TESOL. Voters' choices seemed to be influenced by such popularity in the ELT field.

6. CONCLUSION

The candidates in this study demonstrated a keen effort to construct compelling disciplinary identities to secure votes for a seat on an ELT association board in Saudi Arabia. They employed myriad strategies at the propositional content level, showcasing their educational background, reasons for applying, self-promotion, and contributions, all aimed at presenting their desired identities. At the structural level, they skillfully used various linguistic features, such as first-person pronouns, storytelling, hedging, praising, and conditional statements, to convey their disciplinary identities effectively. The holistic level showed how the candidates carefully assembled their overall disciplinary identity images, often encompassing multiple facets of their professional selves.

From a pedagogical perspective, Hyland (2022) mentioned that ESP teachers should use the most significant and relevant ideas from other theories and practices in teaching and learning. This research study highlights the significance of including self-promotion genres in teaching academic writing in ESP classes using three voice

levels. ESP teachers can utilize the findings of this study to teach students how to voice their disciplinary identities more openly and indirectly using the three voice levels in writing: propositional, structural, and holistic. The findings of this study assist in shaping writing strategies regarding what to include at the propositional content level, such as educational background, professional experiences, goals and reasons for applying, and academic contributions. The structural level included using pronouns, descriptive adjectives, and past-present-future sequences to create an image that aligns with voters' expectations. Being informed of such strategies would help students generate efficient rhetorical choices in the self-promotion genre that creates the desired image to impress the target audience.

In addition, the study's findings distinguished the main moves and steps of candidate statements, a genre rarely researched in the literature. Teachers could use such findings to teach students the differences between candidate and personal statements. This is crucial in academia, especially with the increasing importance of self-promotion and branding (Bhatia, 2004). Therefore, the instruction for this type of writing could be adapted to cater to various requirements of different individuals in English composition classes by incorporating appropriate moves/steps and linguistic elements.

Moreover, several factors have shaped the candidates' final image in the current study, including the specific requirements for the target position within a specific association, linguistic conventions prevalent in the self-promotion genre, and how each candidate's sociocultural background influenced candidates' choices of content and linguistics strategies. As such, academic writing instruction should address these three factors by making students aware of how they shape their writing and then construct their intended holistic image. Finally, the importance of social media and how to self-brand and promote students' image on social platforms should be essential skills taught in ESP classes.

However, certain limitations in this study should be recognized. To start with, the analysis relied exclusively on the written statements provided by the candidates without obtaining a deeper understanding of their viewpoints. Future studies could consider incorporating candidate interviews to better comprehend the motivations behind their chosen disciplinary identities. Additional research in the Middle East, where there is a lack of studies on candidate statements written for associations, could offer significant understanding and perspectives on constructing disciplinary identity in writing. Another drawback is that writers are free to incorporate personal narratives or backgrounds into their candidate statements, as there is no verification system to confirm the accuracy of the information provided. Every text can be seen as a subjective portrayal of oneself, potentially including elements of fiction.

One possible field to investigate is the influence of social media on writing styles and the creation of personal voices in self-promotion. The study suggests that the popularity of social media among specific candidates may impact the way academic self-promotion is conducted, potentially influencing discourse and

conventions within the field. Studying this impact could provide insight into how digital platforms shape the portrayal of disciplinary identities.

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