11 The Dance of Voices: A Study on Academic Writing at AUB

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In this chapter, the authors hypothesize that first-year composition students benefit from explicit instruction in developing what we call "authorial voice." To study this hypothesis, the authors analyzed the academic, personal, and reflective writing of 44 students taking Advanced Academic English courses at the American University of Beirut. This study showcases the impact of multi-leveled explicit instructions that have been developed in assignments that emphasize the rhetorical moves that students can make when incorporating internal and external sources/voices into their writing. The authors then trace to what extent students were able to achieve an "authorial voice," distinguishing between an array of voices across a variety of writing genres in their reflective and academic writing assignments. The chapter's findings suggest that although L2/3 students coming from the MENA region gradually learn to incorporate external voices into their texts, they struggle with maintaining and interweaving their "authorial voice" with the other voices they refer to in their academic argumentative writing.

Keywords: authorial voice; writing pedagogy; positioning; L2 writing; rhetorical moves

Context and Motivation

Although voice is "one of the most frequent metaphors employed in rhetoric and composition" (Yancey, 1994, p. vii), scholars who have written about and debated the importance of the concept of voice in writing have used the term in such various ways that the metaphor of voice seems "to mean almost anything" (Elbow, 1994, p. 2). A look at the literature demonstrates what Zhao (2012) refers to as the "elusive nature" (p. 217) of the concept of voice, resulting in its

emergence as a controversial concept (Elbow, 1994; Hirvela & Belcher, 2001). As such, it has also been difficult for critics to assess studies written on voice because they fail to address what scholars initially meant by the term (Stapleton, 2002; see responses by Atkinson, 2001; Elbow, 1999; Matsuda & Tardy, 2008).

Despite the fact that some critics from second-language writing feel that voice has been overstated in the literature and that more emphasis should be put on ideas and arguments in L2 writing than on voice (Stapleton, 2002), the literature shows that considerable attention continues to be given to voice as an integral element in academic writing and an essential component of writing pedagogy. Researchers who have attempted to measure voice in their students' writing (Macalister, 2010; Zhao, 2012) seem to place little emphasis on how to specifically train L2 students to acquire appropriate voices in their writing. Yet, this is an approach that we find imperative in our writing pedagogy so that students can learn how to distinguish and maintain their own voices (Hyland, 2005) while interweaving their voices with the voices of other authors (for additional studies on student writing in this volume, refer to Arnold, DeGenaro, Iskandarani, Khoury, Sinno, & Willard-Traub; and Ronesi, this volume).

We believe that by empowering L2/3 writers—for whom English could be their second or third language (if they were French educated)—to acquire what we call an "authorial voice," their arguments and ideas will become clearer and more persuasive in their academic writing. We define authorial voice as the use of language that articulates the author's position clearly, particularly in relation to other voices or texts. As teachers at the American University of Beirut (AUB), we find that authorial voice in the first-year composition (FYC) classroom is illustrated well in personal and reflective writing; our goal in this study was to understand whether, and how, explicit instruction of three rhetorical moves—what Joseph Harris (2006) calls "coming to terms," "forwarding," and "countering"—might improve FYC students' ability to develop an authorial voice in academic writing contexts. By "rhetorical moves," we refer to Harris' notion, explained in *Rewriting: How to do Things with Texts*, that when incorporating external sources, voices, or texts into our own research writing and thought, we enter a dialogue and use a set of writing strategies to push the conversation forward. We refer explicitly to the rhetorical moves described in *Rewriting* because they offer students practical rhetorical strategies through which texts can be incorporated into students' academic writing as they develop and maintain an authorial voice.

Our Study

The purpose of our research was to study the effectiveness of our assignments

in the second of a two-semester FYC sequence at AUB in helping students develop an authorial voice. Our assignments, as well as in-class instruction, specifically focus on the three rhetorical moves noted above. In our analysis, we consider whether, and to what extent, students achieve an authorial voice in their academic writing after being given explicit instruction in these moves. We ground our research questions in the notion that it is writing teachers' responsibility to embrace the concept of authorial voice in their pedagogy and explicitly train students to make the appropriate rhetorical moves to develop their own authorial voices. We find inspiration in Harris' *Rewriting* (2006), Elbow's "Voice in Writing Again: Embracing Contraries" (2007), and Bazerman's "Creating Identities in an Intertextual World" (2015).

Our study investigates the following questions:

1. To what extent does explicit instruction of "coming to terms," "forwarding," and "countering," as described in Harris (2006), help students develop an authorial voice in their academic writing?
2. How do FYC students reflect on the notion of authorial voice in the activities they do in academic writing courses?

Research on teaching voice indicates that it is a problematic issue (Cadman, 1997; Fox, 1994; Hinkel, 1999; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996; Stapleton, 2002; Wu & Rubin, 2000) in the context that certain social practices of the L2 learner's culture operate as inhibitors against promoting the individualized voice, authorial identity and presence required when writing in English. Linguists have argued that interdependent or hierarchical values may either prevent L2 learners from projecting a strong voice in their writing or diminish their presence as authors (Helms-Park & Stapleton, 2003). However, these studies have dealt primarily with students in East Asia or Latin America.

Our study extends this list to include L2/3 students in the MENA region, mostly from Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine, for whom individualism as a concept is not so foreign, although they may belong to collectivist cultures. As this study shows, these students are neither "voiceless" nor "devoid of a writerly identity" (Hirvela & Belcher, 2001, p. 84) upon entrance to the university. As L2/3 writing teachers ourselves, we see that "voice is not necessarily tied to the ideology of individualism," nor is it "necessarily foreign to students who come from so-called collectivist cultures" (Matsuda, 2001, p. 140).

The challenge our students face, as L2/3 writers, is in developing an authorial voice, in which they position themselves in writing, where they need to clearly "adopt a point of view to both the issues discussed in the text[s] [they use] and to others who hold points of view on those issues" (Hyland, 2008, p.

5). Hence, we adopt Elbow's (2007) notion of voice as a powerful metaphor that allows writing teachers to support students, and we endorse Bazerman's (2015) advice that we, as writing teachers, need to create appropriate tasks and nurture a suitable environment for students to create and reinvent their authorial voices and identities. We believe that students should be capable of creating their own "authorial identity" (Pittam, Elander, Lusher, Fox, & Payne, 2009, p. 154) in their writing, a task that is difficult for novice writers in English to achieve. We want students to gain practice articulating an authorial voice, establishing a position within what we call a "dance of voices," where students learn to interweave their voices with those of other authors, orchestrating those other voices to support an argument and push the academic conversation in new directions.

In other words, we argue that students can better control this "dance of voices" with explicit instruction on rhetorical moves that develop an authorial voice. This practice, in turn, enables L2/3 FYC students to more easily come to terms with the intertextual nature of writing (see Bazerman, 2015). We believe all college students need to receive explicit training in how to write about the "sea" of scholarly texts available (Bazerman, 2003, p. 83) and to integrate the ideas of others to support their own "authorial voices," rather than eclipsing them.

Research Design and Methods

Our action-research study was conducted with three sections of Advanced Academic English (English 204) at AUB, during the seven-week summer semester of 2014, after having piloted it with two sections during spring 2014. We obtained IRB approval from AUB and presented consent forms to each other's students after they had submitted their final research papers. We assured students that we would not open the consent forms until all final grades had been formally released, to protect them from undue pressure. Students were asked to insert their signed consent forms in sealed envelopes and drop them off at the English department's main office to further protect them. Seventeen students signed the consent forms and provided pseudonyms. All excerpts from students' writing reproduced in this chapter use the pseudonyms they suggested in their consent documents. It is imperative to mention here that we did not inform students of the purpose of our study at the beginning of the semester, because we wanted them to work on their assignments with no undue pressure and to trace the process of development of their authorial voices without imposing our own hypothesis that, with the support of explicit instruction in three of Harris' rhetorical moves, they would

be able to invent and cultivate an authorial voice as they took a position in their academic writing.

For the study, we selected representative samples from a variety of writing assignments. Our pedagogy in English 204 is process-oriented and mainly designed to offer L2/3 student writers "training in academic critique, argumentation, and research," as stated in the course syllabus. In English 204, students write informally in addition to composing rough drafts to produce approximately 30 pages of formal writing. The course focuses on the development of students' critical thinking, reading, and writing, and the development of analyzing, critiquing, and synthesizing ideas from a variety of texts. The course outcomes, in turn, require attention to positioning and the development of an authorial voice in academic writing. To meet these goals, we designed a number of reflective and personal (informal) and academic (formal) assignments throughout the semester that would emphasize the rhetorical move(s) commensurate with the specific assignment and level of difficulty for our students. In order to create a suitable environment to "nurture the students' invention of themselves as powerful academic writers" and acquire an authorial voice (Bazerman, 2015, p. 45), we engaged students in a number of activities, including oral presentations, and assigned them a variety of written genres throughout the period of study. The assignments were ordered so that students would gain the skills needed to develop a longer argumentative essay. Some of these assignments called for personal and reflective voices, while others initiated their entry into research writing within their learning communities and encouraged them to experiment with different authorial voices and rhetorical practices. For the latter, students accessed academic articles, which they learned to "come to terms" with through paraphrase, quotation, and summary. Then, they learned to use academic texts to "forward" ideas, or evidence, in agreement with their arguments. Finally, they learned to "counter," in which they presented counter arguments and traced the limitations of academic arguments.

In order to analyze students' assignments, we developed two checklists adopted from Ivanič & Camps (2001) and Whitney (2011) (see Appendix). The first checklist directed our assessment of students' informal reflective writing, while the second checklist guided our assessment of their formal academic assignments. We used the first checklist to measure the extent to which students were able to position themselves in the context of their assignments, and take a position of authority or control over their own writing. The first checklist also guided us in measuring students' ability to clearly convey a message, engage the reader using a unique personal voice, and use appropriate evidence to illustrate their own ideas. We also wanted to analyze the extent

to which students were able to control their own writing by speaking their own mind and pulling away from mere repetition of others' ideas. We used the second checklist to analyze the extent to which students could incorporate textual examples and creatively interweave other writers' ideas into their own texts while maintaining a strong authorial voice in their argumentative academic writing (Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Harris, 2006; Whitney, 2011).

AUB Students

The FYC student cohort at AUB has a complex language background. In the case of the Lebanese students who form the majority in our classes, the National Lebanese High School Curriculum does not stipulate that all instruction be taught in their first language (L1), standard Arabic. Sciences and math are taught in a foreign language L2/3 (English or French), while social studies is taught in standard Arabic, the L1. In addition, all students are required to learn a third language (L3), French or English, in grades 7-12. As such, students who enroll at AUB could have Arabic as their L1, alongside French and English as their L2 and L3. In some private schools, foreign languages might be taught in other arrangements (for example, some students may grow up with French as their L1, English as their L2, and Arabic as a third required language). Besides the complicated nature of government-stipulated language requirements, there is a clear discrepancy in the language level among students coming from public and private schools, where there is more emphasis on the first foreign language (English/French) in the private schools than state-owned public schools. More importantly, in the context of writing, while students in some private schools, including those in the International Baccalaureate Program, are required to write documented research papers using APA or MLA style, students who follow the National Lebanese Curriculum are not trained to write more than 250-300 word personal opinion essays in English.

The majority of FYC students at AUB enroll in English 203 (Academic English) upon entry and then move on to English 204 (Advanced Academic English). We chose to carry out action research with students enrolled in English 204 because it is the final required writing course for most AUB students. Moreover, these students are expected to acquire transferable skills that enable them "to use information ethically, develop critical approaches to discourse, design research projects, and produce oral and written accounts of their research" (English 204 course syllabus). As writing teachers working with these groups, we also regard it as our responsibility to introduce these students to the concept of entering the "Burkean parlor" (as quoted in Harris,

2006, p. 34) in academic writing, to teach them how to appropriately position themselves as writers in their discourse communities and become life-long learners able to act on "worldwide stages mediated by texts" (Bazerman, 2015, p. 45). For this reason, we developed explicit instruction about rhetorical moves students should make when they incorporate other voices into their own academic writing.

Results and Analysis

The sequence of assignments in this study was designed to allow students to identify and gradually develop their authorial voice through at least three phases in different contexts. First, students were asked to articulate an authorial voice in personal writing through an introductory letter (what we'll call a "cover letter") and personal narrative; then, in the next few assignments, students were asked to apply explicit instruction in three of Harris' rhetorical moves to argumentative research-based writing. The final assignments—peer review and final reflection—asked students to demonstrate meta-awareness of authorial voice.

Building on the concept of the "architecture of voice" (Hirvela & Belcher, 2001, p. 84) we traced and analyzed the level to which the novice writers were able to distinguish among an array of voices across a variety of genres as they worked on the sequenced assignments. We also wanted to see to what extent our explicit instruction in the three rhetorical moves enabled them to acquire an authorial voice as they "forwarded" or "countered" other authors' ideas in their academic writing (Harris, 2006).

Authorial Voice in Personal Writing

The notion of authorial voice as an expressive medium was called upon early on in the semester. We started with low-stakes personal and informal tasks that asked students to articulate an authorial voice in genres they were likely already comfortable with, such as the cover letter and the personal narrative. In the cover letter, students were asked to create a personal profile in which they introduced themselves to their writing community, and determined a writing goal they might set for themselves to achieve upon taking the course. In the second assignment, the personal narrative, we introduced the "Burkean parlor" metaphor, which is one of the prominent steering concepts in the course. The metaphor allows students to experiment with positioning their own voice within a writing/learning community where they could participate in a conversation and reflect on what they did in order to be able to effec-

tively participate in a debate. They were instructed to refer to the source(s) they had read to be able to better participate in the debate and add value to the conversation on the topic; in addition, they had to reflect on their participation in that discussion to assess their experience and show how they could distinguish their own "voice" among the other voices participating in the conversation.

Both assignments were designed in a way to enable students to express their authorial voice before being "appropriated by specialized discourse" (Bartholomae, 1986, p. 9), and before being exposed to academic writing conventions of the argumentative synthesis. These informal assignments were analyzed based on the first checklist we developed (see Appendix) to examine how they were able to position themselves in a writing context, engage the reader in a conversation on the ideas being discussed, and express a unique voice while maintaining control over their own writing.

Students shared their cover letters on an online forum on Moodle (the official learning management system at AUB) and were encouraged to read other postings by peers and comment informally on them, creating, as such, a communal sense of a writing discourse community (Ivanič & Camps, 2001). Students assessed strengths and weaknesses in their writing, and expressed expectations using the first-person pronoun which allowed them to "insert themselves into texts" (Lores-Sanz, 2011, p. 173) and display a "high level of authority" (Tang & John, 1999, p. S26) and ownership of their first written text in the course. For example, Marita wrote: "If I had to define myself in just a few words, I'd say free-spirited, ambitious, sociable and a little (too much) stubborn . . . open minded person [who has] strong opinions on almost every matter." This statement reflects the student's ability to strongly represent her opinion and engage the reader by using a unique voice to serve the purpose of the assignment. Marita continued to establish a context for her writing and said that "[her] dream is to become a psychiatrist, and provide people with the assistance they need, especially in a country such as Lebanon, where psychiatric disorders are not given enough care and attention."

However, most students' writing goals in this first writing assignment were centered on writing skills and how to improve their language needs with an eye on future academic goals and career requirements. One student, Sam, wrote: "I have all the ideas in my head but find it difficult to start writing." His expectations from the course were to "enhance his writing skills and be able to use proper citation methods to avoid plagiarism."

Expressive writing in the cover letter was revisited in the personal narrative and gradually worked its way to the proposal and final reflection. In the personal narrative, authorial voice was regarded by some students as some-

thing heard and as "an idea defended or logically growing to persuade another speaker or audience" (Marita). Marita said she felt "proud," "empowered," and more "organized" as she got the support of other texts to defend her own ideas and win a debate.

Sarah, too, like many other students, felt that using what she perceived as reliable information would help her win the debate and distinguish her voice as a writer. She said that "[i]n the discussion I felt that there was something that distinguishes my voice from the others, and I think that it was . . . the trustful resources from which I got my information."

Others talked more about the need to go through a process of writing, starting with what one student, Habib, termed a "personal voice" to win a debate:

> I then decided to take my own pathway to support my thesis . . . I discovered the thoughts of famous atheists like Richard Dawkins and Stephen Hawking . . . I tried my best to use a logical . . . approach to support my argument, by starting with my own personal voice and supporting it by famous scholars' voice [sic].

Hassan, however, seemed more cautious while entering a debate. He said he preferred to "stay silent" and "listen to different opinions" before he intervened in a debate. James was also hesitant to argue on a topic at this early stage of the course. He wrote: "One thing that I do know is that I do have ideas on my own, but sometimes prefer to keep them to myself; sometimes it's easier to listen and accept things than to argue endlessly."

To sum up, while some students were able to articulate a position clearly when they were working in their comfort zone, others like Habib, Hassan, and James, who were still hesitant about proclaiming a clear position on a specific topic, needed training on how to express their opinions when they had to argue for or against a topic. However, we felt their voices generally seemed individualistic and persuasive, which served the context and purpose of the assignments, and their choice of words represented the set of values they adhered to.

Authorial Voice and Harris' Rhetorical Moves

One main principle in our pedagogy is that, after allowing our students to express their personal goals and experiences, they can be moved to academic writing genres where they need to incorporate scholarly texts by other authors into their own writing. Moreover, we insist that students do not merely "recite

or ventriloquize" (Harris, 2006, p. 2) resources in "bipolar oppositions" (pro or con) (Harris, 2006, p. 25)—that is, we do not want students to totally agree or disagree with everything an author says in a text. Hence, the second phase of assignments engaged students in a more academic context, where their tasks required a more formal authorial voice through the rhetorical practices in a more formal academic context. As we noted above, we borrowed from Harris (2006) the notions of "coming to terms," "forwarding," and "countering," and designed tasks that required students to articulate an authorial voice in argumentative and research-based genres they might be uncomfortable with, which would enable them to create a new research space for their thinking to develop.

The assignments in this phase of the study were meant to substantiate students' authorial voice with appropriate support while incorporating external sources into their academic writing. The guidelines we offered for each assignment asked students to pull away from a reliance on quotations and excerpts, and to focus instead on using their own "authorial voice." The papers were assessed based on the students' abilities to position themselves in the writing context and represent their claims strongly and clearly, while at the same time engaging themselves in the discussion of specific topics. We looked into how students could incorporate external sources, invoke the expertise of other authors, and creatively borrow or extend the ideas and arguments of other authors while they maintained control over their own writing (see Appendix). In short, we wanted to assess whether explicit instructions and training students on such rhetorical moves would help them articulate their position clearly in relation to other authors' voices/texts.

To prepare students for the first formal assignment in the semester, which marked students' entry into research, we trained students on how to "come to terms" with a text. Our instructions required students to think intentionally about a text, mark key terms and passages, and write an account of the author's aims, methods and materials. In their account of a given text, students were encouraged to summarize, paraphrase and use direct quotations, and to incorporate the text into their own writing. They were asked to identify what a text sees and does "well," and suggest what it "stumble[s] over or occlude[s]" (Harris, 2006, p. 25). Hence, "the key questions to ask [had] to do not with correctness but use" (Harris, 2006, p. 25). In this assignment, students learned to look at texts in ways they might not have done before, in the sense that they identified what ideas in the texts they could make use of in a new context and what they could see as gaps or limitations in the texts that would allow them to open new research space for their own writing.

Since texts and scholarly conversations build on previous texts and con-

versations, students need to fully grasp and dissect texts before they are able to incorporate any excerpts into their own writing or take an informed position on any topic in the conversation. Hence, identifying what they needed from a text and whether a text could fulfill that need or not opened novice writers' minds to the world of research writing and their ability to enter the conversation, while articulating a clear authorial voice.

For this first assignment of "coming to terms," we selected moderately easy texts, yet very few students managed to successfully grapple with the concept of coming to terms and express themselves adequately. Marita, one of the very few students who could identify the author's background and grasp the main aim behind the text, could see that:

> . . . in her article for *The Times*: "Bombs and Botox in Beirut: How do you cope with living in Lebanon? Get a nose job" the young British journalist [was discussing] an opinion piece that offers a rather unique point of view concerning the contrast under which the city of Beirut is drowning. It is the contrast between people's behavior and the alarming political situation that [she] . . . wrote about . . .

However, Marita's attempts to assess the text's limitations fell short of noting the text's context as an opinion piece in a popular journal; she stated that there were no in-text citations, and that "the author didn't use any website."

The text was too subtle for some students to come to terms with, and many of the students felt the author was too cynical rather than appreciative of the complex nature of the situation in Lebanon. The fact that most students struggled with recognizing the author's main aims and goals warned us that more training on critical reading along with "attentiveness and intention to writing" (Blumner, 2007, p. 72) was required and which was, therefore, given at this stage of the course.

Another problem arose when students had to assess uses and limitations of the text "Brain drain or brain gain? A Lebanese perspective" (Safieddine, Jamali, & Daouk, 2004). Most students' assessments were rather brief, lacked appropriate interrogation of the authors' claims, and fell short of substantial attempts to examine the reliability of the external resources. For example, one student, with the pseudonym of SWRM, wrote: "Since Safieddine, Jamali, and Daouk (2004) are experts on this subject . . . their views . . . are credible along with the extensive use of percentages and examples . . . [that] back up all the information and thesis that they are trying to prove." We might relate this to cultural practices among students in the MENA region, where authors are

mostly considered to be infallibly credible and reliable; hence, students lent total authority in their writing to the authors of the texts we assigned without being able to appropriately and objectively identify limitations.

Another student, Farah, who attempted to identify a limitation in the text and follow our instructions to take the conversation in a different direction, said that the authors "were unable to trace some positive aspects of emigration"; yet she couldn't back up her ideas with substantial support, writing that "emigration may be sometimes positive in a way where it may result in diminishing unemployment in a society by offering 'the middle class' work opportunities . . . [and] provide our country with investments and capital money received by the emigrant's family."

After students worked on identifying the author(s)' purpose in a text, they were moved to another level of engagement with texts where they had to show how a text could be useful for them as researchers with their own authorial voice, and, more importantly, how a text that falls short of offering them the needed support could still allow them to create their own research space for future work and investigation. As such, the "forwarding" and "countering" assignments called on students to show how they could use authors' ideas in order to "push [the discussion] forward" (Harris, 2006, p. 25).

One main principle in our pedagogy is that argumentative practice does not call for ventriloquizing resources in a "bipolar" way, in the sense that students should not approach writers' arguments in their texts as "simple antitheses (either x or not-x)" (Harris, 2006, p. 25). In order to train students how to make use of what they read in different texts, they were given a text, asked to "come to terms" with it, "forward" two ideas they were in agreement with, and support their thesis statement with evidence from two other articles that they found on their own and that were related to the theme. They had to summarize, paraphrase, or use direct quotations and include in-text citations and a bibliography for the assignment. Prior to that and within their small groups, students practiced selecting ideas, evaluating, concluding, and reporting them using the appropriate strategy. Emphasis at this stage in the course was on the strategies for citation rather than on documentation styles.

Some students were able to state a clear argumentative thesis statement but fluctuated between their own authorial voice and those of other authors as they were trying to synthesize external texts in their writing. They became invisible when they referred to external sources to validate their arguments and lent authority to the other authors, allowing voices other than their own to take over their writing. This trend could be seen when one student's idea ventriloquized the main points of the assigned text rather than her own stance toward the research topic. Farah, for example, wrote: "[the author] covers

how individuals are able to impact their job opportunities by being 'special, specialized, anchored or adaptable' (Friedman, 2005) and finally tries to discuss uncontrollable conditions." Instead of invoking the expertise of another author to support her own argument, she just reiterated what the author was arguing and, we believe, lost her authority over her writing.

Sam, like most of the students, was unable to unable to creatively engage in extending the ideas/arguments of other authors to advance his/her own ideas in his own research project. Although he managed to construct an argumentative thesis statement, he was unable to develop his own arguments and seemed to waver between summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting external sources to "forward" his own ideas. He started his first body paragraph with his own idea: "The job market is no longer like it used to be, after the industrial revolution in the 1900s the competition for well-paid and stable jobs has been increasing . . ." Then, as he tried to support that idea, he resorted completely to the external source and became invisible by lending full authority to the author:

> Knowledge workers . . . won't be outsourced (Friedman, 2005, p. 238). If you can't be specialized then you have to acquire new knowledge, skills, and expertise in order to become adaptable and add value to your work. "The people who are losing out are those with solid technical skills" (Friedman, 2005, p. 239). One example provided by Friedman was about his childhood friend Bill Greer . . . a freelance artist and graphic designer . . . "I had to look for work that not everyone else could do." (Sam)

Sam continued by offering a synopsis of Friedman's account of his childhood friend and ended his paragraph without pulling out of the example to make his own point. We regarded this as the student's invisibility in his own writing and his struggle with how to adequately "put in his oar" (to use the Burkean parlor metaphor) at this stage. Students like Sam also alerted us to the fact that more rigorous training and emphasis on how to create and maintain an authorial voice (Whitney, 2011), and how to forward other authors' ideas in support of the writer's own, was still needed.

However, students' authorial voice gained momentum as they gradually proceeded in the course, and especially when they wrote the proposal assignment, in which they had the freedom to choose their own topics. Students again used the first-person to signal their personal stance in their writing, and the task allowed students to gain authority over their writing, express a strong stance towards their experience, and uniquely relate themselves to their con-

texts (Brooke, 1987) as students in their majors. Their use of the first-person also helped them establish a sense of credibility and commitment toward their readers (Hyland, 2002). Individualism and "textual ownership" (Elbow, 1999, p. 327), which some linguists, such as Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999), may not have expected from L2 writers, were evident in some of our students' choices of topics that dealt with taboos and went against traditional notions of animal use or sex education. We regarded this as an individualistic notion in the sense that the students chose topics that were not normally discussed in conservative cultures likes those in the MENA region. One student, Yasmine, who opted to work on sex education was conscious of her individualistic and personal purpose:

> I chose this topic because I consider sex education an important issue that isn't discussed the way it should be. I will be defending the importance of this education, and I will prove that the society as a whole is responsible [for] this "ignorance." *My purpose* is to draw attention to the danger we are facing just because we consider sex a taboo. In my paper I'll be focusing on the youth because these young people are the real victims . . . I will be treating the subject *in my way adding my opinion* towards [those] responsible or my *own interpretation* when it comes to our "*conservative societies.*" (emphasis added)

By allowing students to see purposes for writing beyond taking good grades and to regard themselves as writers first and students second, they engaged, according to Brooke (1987) in an "underlife behavior" (p. 141), which allowed them to subvert their role as passive learners. Students could now position themselves as novice researchers in their learning communities, a concept central to our writing pedagogy. Annotations, which provided short statements about how student writers intended to use each source, allowed students to further see themselves as the primary authors navigating external texts in an academic writing project.

After students learned models of argumentation and how to trace logical fallacies in authors' arguments, we introduced the "countering" move. The general guidelines to this assignment reminded students to keep in mind that they needed to "highlight the unseen," "suggest a different way of thinking," and respond to the position an author takes by constructing their "own position," and they were asked to use one of the following three strategies: "arguing the other side," "uncovering values," or "dissenting" (Harris, 2006, pp. 56-63). Students were asked to situate their ideas in a new context and take

the discussion in a new direction while supporting their ideas and arguments with other credible sources.

In most of the samples in the countering assignment, students assessed what they thought were biases, unjustified observations, extremism, irrelevance of some findings, and shortcomings of the text; however, they were not as successful in adding something new to the topic or substantiating their ideas with further evidence or support. For example, one student, Sam, located a limitation in one of his sources and found proof from another in his attempt to push the discussion forward, but he failed to extend the idea with appropriate evidence and support. In his assignment on genetically modified food, Sam described Henry I. Miller as a "a physician and molecular biologist at Stanford University (2013) who contends that genetic engineering is actually making food safer rather than making it more dangerous." Sam then explained how such a presumption should be considered erroneous because although "Miller believes that genetically modified food has [fewer] contaminants such as fungus and mold that can prove to be dangerous for human consumption . . . many health problems can take decades before they surface." Sam invoked the expertise of an epidemiologist to support his argument by saying that "HIV/AIDS epidemic went unnoticed for decades . . . even though there were by then thousands of HIV/AIDS cases worldwide."

But Sam cuts his discussion at this point without giving further evidence and without moving the conversation forward. This shows students struggled, at this stage of the course, with how to interpret an argument, negotiate it, or provide an alternative that would be convincing enough to the audience. This struggle suggests that more training on how to counter a text is required before students can appropriately contribute to a debatable topic and add value to it. So we emphasized these rhetorical moves in the instructions to the research paper and offered more training as they worked on their forthcoming assignment.

The instructions for the final argumentative paper in this course highlighted the different learning outcomes that should be met by the assignment, along with the expected rhetorical moves students should be making. By recounting these moves in the prompt, we meant to have students purposefully build on the previous training. Students were reminded of the context of the Burkean parlor metaphor and the added value that "putting in their oar" (Harris, 2006, p. 34) and maintaining their authorial voice would give to the ongoing conversation. In this context, students were expected to start a journey of negotiating all the different voices in their writing, interacting with their resources, and showing how they were relevant to each other in relation to the research paper and the topic they have chosen to defend. The students

were expected to orchestrate their stances in relation to the sources and the ideas within them.

A student who chose the pseudonym SWRM, for example, wrote:

> The first major factor behind marijuana legalization is economic, which was shown as one of the biggest factors behind voters legalizing marijuana in Washington State and Colorado in 2012 (Shane, 2014) . . . most of the focus is on the United States. The two main economic benefits of marijuana legalization are the ability to tax marijuana sales and the savings in law enforcement (Dighe, 2014), so even though the data is western-oriented, we can easily apply these principles to Lebanon.

This student could contextualize evidence and maintain her own authorial voice as she related the main ideas in the text to a local problem in Lebanon. She pushed the conversation forward by citing a number of external sources in parentheses without losing authorship. However, very few students managed to take the main ideas of their sources in new directions.

While many of the students in our classes accessed external source and referred to well-researched facts and statistics as they integrated a range of substantial data in support of specific arguments, counter-arguments, and rebuttals, we believe what is missing is the ability to situate the resources intertextually, conversing with each other. Students needed more training on holding a bird's eye view and developing control over a "dance of voices" with their resources, where they could participate in a conversation with the authors they researched for their project.

Authorial Voice, Revision, and Reflection

The last phase of the course allowed students to demonstrate meta-awareness of authorial voice through peer reviews and final reflections on the course. By self-assessing their learning experience in the course, we expected that student writers would be able to move beyond task-specific practices and position themselves in the larger context of academic writing in a specific learning community.

Instructions for the peer review required that students read critically at least two of the first drafts of their peers' research reports that were posted on Moodle. We created online discussion forums that were sometimes designed for small research groups, and, at other times, for the whole class to participate in as one learning community. Students were expected to comment

on how their peers had formulated claims and communicated the purpose behind writing; had drawn relationships between the different documents; had chosen evidence or information from various sources to support the arguments; and had integrated the summaries, paraphrases and/or quotes and developed them appropriately within the paper.

We wanted students' comments to be given in the form of advice on how to make their peer's texts achieve an A on the assignment. Highlighting strengths rather than weaknesses in their peers' assignments and offering advice rather than "corrections" were crucial strategies in our work, given that students belong to a culture where negative criticism, which might be constructive, is generally avoided. So our instructions allowed students to speak freely in the context of offering guidance without the threat of intruding on the positive face of their peers, a point which Ramanathan & Atkinson (1999) also found problematic for L2 learners. We thought that such instructions would indirectly reinforce the idea of authorial voice and help students assess how a writer could engage in extending the ideas of other authors to advance their own ideas and use texts for their own purpose rather than simply recounting them (see Appendix). In other words, we wanted to assess whether students were able to demonstrate a kind of meta-awareness of authorial voice in relation to their peers and their own writing.

Despite the instructions provided, some of the peer reviews showed that students were still occupied with language mechanics, rather than voice and positioning. One student commented, for example, that:

> If this was my draft, I would pay more attention to things such as grammar and links . . . that could lead to a useless loss of points. Also, despite the introduction of many ideas that back up the thesis, the ideas are not linked in a way that shows synchronization in between. (Siba)

Even though some students referred to organization of ideas, they hesitated to give clear and substantial advice to help their peers. For example, Farah wrote: "Personally, I would rather distribute each component in a different paragraph to make it clearer. Also, I might add two sentences in the beginning of each paragraph to assure the continuity of ideas and link my arguments." The fact that Farah said she would "add sentences" to show how her arguments link to each other suggest that at this stage she was aware of the need to pull away from the words and ideas of other authors to create space for her own thought; however, she did not provide her peer with further hints on how to show a clear authorial voice or better develop the writing. Another question that specifically asked them to trace and comment on whether their

peers were able to infer or draw relationships between their external sources—in other words, "engage in a dance of voices"—was not addressed to a certain extent.

Although peer reviews might seem unsubstantial in terms of the added value they offered to the writers being reviewed, the reflection component of the assignment provided a glimpse of what students perceived to be good writing. A question that was included in the guidelines for the peer review required that students comment on what they have learnt when doing this peer review and how they thought they could make use of the strategies they learnt to improve their own papers. In response to that question, Yasmine wrote:

> I was searching for what weakened some arguments, and how the strong arguments were built. I will certainly use this critical reading to correct my first draft . . . to identify the weak points . . . and strengthen my argument. I will also try to quote less from my sources.

Although this student, like most of the students in our study, did have an eye on some of the basics of argumentation, she still needed more training on what to do with quotations from external sources other than look at frequency of use. Our question that specifically asked them to trace and comment on whether their peers were able to infer relationships between their external sources was not fully addressed, either.

The students' comments on what they had learned from peer reviewing, on the other hand, demonstrated a strong authorial stance. Sam, for example said, "I've learnt from the experience that we can highlight some points that [my] peer has not seen and at the same time accept others to criticize you." We regard this as a progress on the part of the student, who, after some practice, and with the guidance of our instructions and assignments, was able to take criticism openly and offered guidance to his peers without worrying about any resentment on their part.

In their final reflections, students were asked to briefly self-assess their experience in the course. We wanted to probe more into their perceptions of rhetorical moves and authorial voice. We asked students to reflect on what they had learned about knowledge construction and how much the training on rhetorical moves had helped them position themselves as novice writers in their academic learning communities. They were also asked to assess the development of their own authorial voices in their academic assignments.

Sarah felt that her positions in her writing developed from being shy to becoming more confident and traced this happening mainly in her second

peer review. On the other hand, Marita found "countering" as the most diffi-
cult rhetorical move despite the fact that she reported she had been "uncon-
sciously using the 'forwarding' or the 'countering' methods [she] had learned
in the previous weeks." Moreover, Habib found that the course mostly helped
him develop his position as an author, and changed [his] way of reading texts
and analyzing them." He said that "small assignments . . . dealing with one
aspect of writing such as 'countering,' 'forwarding,' [and] 'coming to terms' . . .
helped [him] to focus on one purpose at [a] time, learning progressively how
to employ these methods in any coming essays." He added that "the most im-
portant thing [he] learned . . . was how to distinguish [his] voice from other
authors' voices."

Students reported that the course created a space for them to progress in
research writing. Starting with "coming to terms," then moving to arguments
in agreement with their thesis, to addressing counter arguments and the need
to rebut them, students practiced research in an organized and linear way.
They traced a development beyond what they had anticipated in their cov-
er letters, yet almost none referred to the nonlinear stance of the "dance of
voices" with their sources in their papers. Moreover, they could not offer an
insight into the reflections to demonstrate how they have internalized the
strategies being discussed.

Discussion and Conclusion

Amid the debates in the literature around the level of emphasis voice should
be given in L2 writing pedagogical practices, our primary interest in this
chapter is to demonstrate to what extent explicit instruction in Harris' rhetor-
ical moves can assist L2/3 writers to acquire an "authorial voice," which can in
turn allow their arguments and ideas to become clearer and more persuasive.
Our study shows how certain social practices of L2/3 learners' MENA culture
may operate as inhibitors against capturing the individualized voice, the au-
thorial identity, and presence required when writing in English. For example,
when our students tried to incorporate external sources, they rarely justified
what each borrowed idea meant; very few noted degrees of agreement or
disagreement with authors' ideas or articulated their ideas as extending or
building on other authors.

In answer to our first research question, "How does explicit instruction
of rhetorical moves allow students to invent and cultivate an intellectual and
authorial voice as they take a stance in their academic discourse communi-
ties?" we found that, to a certain extent, some students have developed an
authorial voice and accessed external resources for support and evidence in

their responses to the first two argumentative/research-based writing assignments: "coming to terms" and "forwarding." Our findings strongly suggest that although L2/3 students coming from the MENA region gradually learn to incorporate external voices into their texts, they struggle with maintaining and interweaving their authorial voice with the other voices they refer to in their academic argumentative writing, a rhetorical strategy that we refer to as a "dance of voices," which Harris explains:

> You *move* in tandem with or in response to others, as part of a game or dance or performance or conversation—sometimes toward a goal and sometimes just to keep the ball in play or the talk going, sometimes to win and sometimes to contribute to the work of a group. (Harris, 2006, p. 4)

Moreover, in their countering assignment, students hardly moved beyond the one-dimensional stance of totally agreeing or disagreeing with all that an author said. Because students did not move beyond this stance, we believe that more training should be given to make sure students acquire more rhetorical strategies and practice when noting limitations in other texts. We believe, in other words, that they should be able to engage in a bird's-eye view of their sources so as to dance with these voices in their academic argumentative writing.

The answer to our second research question "How do FYC students reflect on the notion of authorial voice in the activities they do in academic writing courses?" can be traced in students' proposals, peer reviews, and mostly in their final reflections on the course, all of which fall within the category of informal writing activities. Students' use of the first-person pronoun allowed them to express ownership of their texts, and their annotations of references allowed them to see how it could be possible to navigate external sources in their writing. Moreover, being able to reflect on their choice of topics, which might go against students' collectivist conservative cultures, demonstrated authorial voice and individualist positioning in such assignments. In their peer reviews, students developed self confidence in critiquing others and accepting criticism on their work. In their final reflections, although some students revisited concerns about language proficiency that they had mentioned earlier in their introductory cover letters, many of them were content with their growth as writers and their ability to acquire an authorial voice while taking a position with or against an argumentative topic in their final papers.

To sum up, while we note that many of our students were able to project their authorial voice when they engaged in informal writing, the journey to develop an authorial voice in argumentative research-based writing was not

smooth for many. Despite the training our students received and the progress reflected by some of them in their final papers, where their writing became clearer and persuasive, other students remained reluctant to "engage voice in meaningful ways" (Hirvela & Belcher, 2001, p. 84). Each rhetorical move was significant to student writers in the context of the individual assignments; however, combining all the moves at a more developed level in their own writing is an area where these novice writers need more training.

Our recommendation for a future research project is to conduct a longitudinal study covering English academic writing courses and a number of content courses at the university level in order to trace students' development in using an authorial voice. We believe that coming to terms with a text, which requires more training on critical reading along with "attentiveness and intention to writing" (Blumner, 2007), should be the focal and entry point in writing assignments across the curriculum in order to enable students to "come to terms" with what they read before they can "put in their oar" and "forward" or counter an idea. Moreover, L2/3 students need to internalize the process of acquiring and maintaining an authorial voice as a transferable skill to all college writing. Thus, as writing teachers, we have to incorporate training on rhetorical strategies into our writing pedagogy and to embrace the term "authorial voice" in our class discussions and especially when giving feedback on student writing, in order to empower students to orchestrate their *dance* with other authors.

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Appendix: Checklists

Checklist to assess voice in Reflective writing, based on Ivanič & Camps (2001) and Whitney (2011)

- ✓ Positioning oneself in the Writing Context
- ✓ The student writer strongly represents his/her opinion in establishing a context for the journal.
- ✓ A clear message is conveyed throughout the reflection.
- ✓ The student writer is able to engage the reader in a conversation on the ideas being discussed.
- ✓ The choice of words represents a set of values the student writer adheres to.
- ✓ The student voice is unique to serve the context and purpose of the assignment.
- ✓ The student writer appropriately selects evidence from his/her own assignments to illustrate his/her own ideas.
- ✓ Ability to take a stance of authority/control over one's own writing
- ✓ The student writer is sure to explain and justify his/her ideas.
- ✓ The student writer offers an insight into the reflections to demonstrate

how he/she has internalized the strategies being discussed.
- ✓ The student writer creatively engages in extending the ideas/arguments that reflect control over his/her own ideas.
- ✓ The student writer successfully transfers strategies used in assignments to other contexts/situations.

Checklist to assess voice in academic writing, based on Harris (2006), Ivanič & Camps (2001), and Whitney (2011)

- ✓ Positioning oneself in the Writing Context
- ✓ The student writer strongly represents his/her opinion in the thesis statement/claim.
- ✓ A clear message is conveyed throughout the text.
- ✓ The student writer is able to engage in a conversation on the topic being discussed.
- ✓ The choice of words represents a set of values the student writer adheres to.
- ✓ The student voice is unique to serve the context and purpose of the assignment.
- ✓ Reference to sources (summary/paraphrasing/quoting)
- ✓ The student writer appropriately selects evidence from other authors' texts to illustrate his/her own ideas.
- ✓ The student writer is selective in borrowing other authors' ideas/arguments.
- ✓ The student writer appropriately invokes the expertise of other authors in support of his/her own ideas.
- ✓ The student writer creatively weaves/recombines other authors' ideas/arguments into his/her own writing.
- ✓ Ability to take a stance of authority/control over one's own writing
- ✓ The student writer explains and justifies what each borrowed idea/excerpt means.
- ✓ The student writer offers ideas/arguments that other readings referred to in the context fail to address.
- ✓ The student writer creatively engages in extending the ideas/arguments of other authors to advance his/her own ideas.
- ✓ The student articulates his/her ideas as an alternative to other authors' opinions.
- ✓ The student writer successfully pulls away from the words and ideas of other authors noting degrees of agreement and points of departure.
- ✓ The student writer uses texts for his/her own purpose rather than simply recounting them.