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How can the concept of voice contribute to the understanding and supporting of transition processes?

Writing in new environments often entails a process of changing from one state to another – for example from pupil to student when entering higher education, or from student to professional when entering a workplace. Such transition processes are related to issues of identity, to different possibilities of selfhood (Ivanič 1998), to processes of becoming (Wenger 1998), and thus to the concept of voice. The term voice is frequently used in writing research and in writing pedagogy and can contribute to the understanding and supporting of transition processes in various ways.

In a previous study, I focused on the voices of master students in their theses. These texts revealed a tension between the master students’ voices as students and their voices as researchers – voices in transition. My current research is concerned with how writers at different stages of their academic life use others’ voices to create and develop their own voice. Through the analysis of academic texts written by students and researchers from different disciplines, I examine how different writers use sources and to what purposes. I also examine how writers’ use of others’ voices might contribute to strengthen or weaken their own voice.

The results can help to understand how voice is related to transition processes that involve both the appropriation of new knowledge (jfr. Blåsjö 2009) and the development of the writer’s identity. In addition, the analysis of how other voices can be used for different purposes in text production can provide useful tools for the teaching of writing and for using writing in different contexts. The awareness of how other voices influence the way in which texts and the writer’s own voice are created will not only benefit student writers when writing in academic contexts, but may also prepare them for writing in different workplace settings, and thus support transition processes.
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