The Dynamics of Intersubjectivity
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is based on a study day organized at the Higher Institute of Studies Applied to Humanities of Tunis called The Politics of Intersubjectivity, which was held in April 2018. I am grateful to a number of colleagues who encouraged me to publish the proceedings of the study day, namely Dr. Boutheina Boughnim and Dr. Souhir Zekri. I thank in particular the contributors whose chapters in the book developed my initial idea and research question related to inter/subjectivity.

I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the support of Professor Nabil Chemi and Professor Chokri Smaoui—the two guest contributors—who helped me develop my project and showed confidence in my work. A special word of gratitude is due to Dr. Hejer Ayedi and Dr. Salwa Mezguidi for their stimulating suggestions and editorial expertise. Equal thanks go to the Cambridge Scholars Publishing team.
INTRODUCTION

THE QUEST FOR INTER/SUBJECTIVITY

FATEN HAOUIOUI

How we perceive the other and ourselves is at the heart of the symbiotic relationship between the subject, subjectivity, and intersubjectivity. What makes subjectivity intersubjectivity is not only the history of negotiation between the early concepts and the philosophers who coined and conceptualized the subject; rather, it is the interconnectedness of the personae identifying the subject. Studying intersubjectivity necessitates research that is interdisciplinary, polydisciplinary, and transdisciplinary. The concept varies according to the discipline yet it integrates other disciplines. Intersubjectivity in psychology is different from that in anthropology, sociology, media studies, or politics. Subsequently, the politics and poetics of intersubjectivity differ according to the methodology and rational of the study, while the dynamics of intersubjectivity already implies the underlying and changing influences of the concept. Consequently, more and more research needs to be undertaken in this respect.

Today there is no room in theoretical debate for a monolithic, essentialist, self-referential, and Eurocentric vision of the subject, asserts Paola Rebughini.1 The subject is defined as such due to his/her subjectivity concerning culture, history, language, gender roles, media, and so on. Since the aforementioned criteria are multi-, cross-, and interrelated, thus ontologically, theoretically, and literally the subject is many subjects. As the debate about the subject is shaped politically in language and discourse alike, and the position of the subject is debated and negotiated in light of new contexts, events, and developments, so the focus of this book is consequently on mapping a scattered cartography of a subject and subjectivity. Subsequently, the contributors to this book, tackle the subject from diverse standpoints. Nabil Cherni reads the subject as a dynamic

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1 Paola Rebughini, Subject, Subjectivity, Subjectivation (Milan: State University of Milan), 6.
process that negotiates its subjectivity in the light of circumstances: literary, social, political, and ideological. The subject, beyond being a fixed permanent structure, is the subject of and subject to socio-cultural and historical processes. It does not occupy a fixed realm, it is rather a nomadic construction, located and defined always in relation to established normative structures. It occupies an unsettled location of interstices, cleavages, and shifting language positions.

A close reading of Cherni’s—brief—theorization of the subject and conceptualization of subjectivity identifies a semantic realm converging in “structure” (three times), “process” (twice), “position” (twice), “negotiation” (twice), and “established” patterns; while a rereading in light of this analysis states that, according to Cherni, the subject processes and negotiates established structures, positions, and patterns. The subject is conscious of the pre-existing positions and resists them. The subject actively debating his/her moving subjectivity.

An additional reading of subjectivity compares it to the genesis of subject and m/other. Souhir Zekri, for instance, focuses on intersubjectivity and defines it as being the heart of human subjectivity as it originates in the first mutual act of recognition between a mother and her newborn. In The Bonds of Love, Jessica Benjamin summarizes this crucial social stage in the two subjects’ lives as “I recognize you as my baby who recognizes me.” As the mother recognizes her child as both hers and separate from her, she also seeks the child’s recognition of her as the first and most important “other” in his/her life. Each one asserts the other’s existence. Benjamin’s theory moves away from Freudian views of infants as passive objects and gives the latter a more equal status in the pre-Oedipal relationship. Subjectivity is an intricate process, initiated as it is by an act of mutuality.

Subjectivity in the case of a mother and child is also a complex process that involves recognition, separation, and one and other. Subjectivity and intersubjectivity imply an active interconnectedness between one and another, whether it be a subject or an institution, which is corroborated by Dan Zahavi—philosopher and director of the “Center for Subjectivity Research” in the University of Copenhagen.

A treatment of intersubjectivity requires a simultaneous analysis of the relationship between subjectivity and world. It is not satisfactory to simply insert intersubjectivity somewhere within an already established metaphysical framework; rather, the three dimensions “self,” “others,” and “world”

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Intersubjectivity then is a three-dimensional concept that is investigated in light of “the self,” “the other,” and “the world.” Professor Smaoui asserts that intersubjectivity manifests itself in language, psychology, sociology, pragmatics, and language learning.

The book

Language plays a powerful role in social and political lives. Crucially, it details the way discourse proffers political potential and exposes the subjects’ positions. In this regard, many critics investigate how written and spoken materials disclose the subjectivity of their creators. Victoria Bromley states, “words, language and discourses are less objective and more subjective/purposeful than we would like to admit” (95); significantly, the first part of this book endeavors to present a dialogic view of language, political discourse, and subjectivity. This first part, Subjectivity in Political Discourse and Language, commences with a text written by guest contributor Chokri Smaoui. Chapter 1, “Second Language Learning as Inter-subjectivity,” investigates the question of inter-subjectivity in relation to additional language learning. Smaoui studies two angles of this subject: the psychological and the socio-cultural. While the first examines the psychology of the learner through constructs such as motivation, attitude, and integration, in order to grapple with this state of hyphenation, the second investigates the broader context, focusing on collaboration, joint construction, belonging to a community, and identity formation. Chapter 2, written by Emna Fendri, is entitled “Identity Construction in the EFL Academic Writings of MA and PhD Tunisian Researchers.” It examines Tunisian EFL postgraduate academic writers’ way of constructing and inventing themselves as members of the discourse community they aspire to adhere to. A semi-structured interview is conducted with students at MA and PhD levels. It studies the writer’s subjectivity across the different sections of the theses. The contributor scrutinizes the dynamics of identity construction for Tunisian EFL writers and the way it is governed by individual, textual, and contextual factors; she shows how self-perception as an EFL academic writer and the

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particular understanding of the politics of persuasion in an EFL context shape the way intersubjectivity is constructed within the text. The chapter also reveals that the writer’s subjectivity is more dynamic and is aligned with the rhetorical needs of academic writing at a more advanced level of academic research. It concludes that her research findings reinforce the idea that it is important to instruct students at a postgraduate level about identity construction in academic writing, especially in an EFL context. Chapter 3, by Mouna Hamrita, “The Linguistic and Discursive Mechanisms of Subjective Political Discourse: Trump’s Language as a Case Study,” analyzes Donald Trump’s subjective discourse with an eye to its “perilous effects” nationally and internationally. The contributor uses a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach to study the linguistic and discursive mechanisms indicating subjectivity in Trump’s language used in a selection of speeches, official encounters with political counterparts, and TV show interventions. The findings of this article show that Trump’s language indicates the “pathological” state of a leader who has gone beyond subjectivity to produce an extremely aggressive discourse in which minorities and women are subject to aggression and abused to the bone.

The texts in this first part examine the relationship between language and subjectivity and their connection to political discourse. They stress the inter-subjectivity of language learning from two main angles: the psychological and the socio-cultural. Emphasizing the politics of persuasion in an EFL context shapes the way intersubjectivity is constructed within the text and reveals how academic writing transcends the objective representation of facts to become an intersubjective encounter between the addressee and the addresser through focusing on MA and PhD levels. The chapter critically studies the way Trump’s subjective discourse is revealed through a number of verbal and non-verbal discourse strategies and shows how subjectivity is a rhetorical strategy used by politicians to achieve multiple political ends.

The formation of subjectivity encompasses a series of interlacing relations of power. The presence of the other creates a connection between the subject and the other that is intrinsically related to the issue of power. Therefore, several theoretical approaches view the construction of the subject and its relation with the subjugated as a space to be problematized. In this respect, Paola Rebughini asserts that “today research is moving towards an idea of subject and subjectivity that takes into account cultural and gender differences, historical and situated processes of subjectivation, complex relationships with techno-scientific tools, contextual capacities of
resistance and creativity” (emphasis added, 6). Ultimately, the second part of the book, Negotiating Positions: The Subject Under Subjugation, ventures to chart a negotiation between all the transformations ascribed to the subject (cultural, political, economic, etc.). The first text in the part, chapter 4, is written by guest contributor Nabil Cherni. “Negating/Negotiating Positions: Subject, Subjection, Subjectivity, and Intersubjectivity in J. M. Coetzee’s Life and Times of Michael K. Cherni” presents a multi-layered definition of subjectivity from a philosophical and theoretical perspective, which serves the purposes of his chapter. He applies some chosen theories of subject to J. M. Coetzee’s Life and Times of Michael K. Furthermore, Cherni investigates the multiple resitutions of the subject with endless shifts and reactions, from the position of the object to that of the abject. He concludes that the limits of subjectivity are repeatedly framed within the various patterns of passivation, in both action and language, to which the protagonist is either subjected or ascribes unconsciously. Deprived of any will except that of control, Micheal K cannot escape the dominant structure of ethical consideration. The analysis determines that “beyond any attempt to negate entirely subjectivity, the object/abject position is a location from which the subject re-emerges as possibilities, as a process, as fragments . . . among numerous other possibilities” (Cherni).

Chapter 5, by Souhir Zekri, is entitled “The Biographer as Biographee: Relational Masculine Subjectivities in Marina Warner’s In a Dark Wood.” She analyzes the protagonists’ (Gabriel’s and Andrew’s) subjectivities and the processes through which these are linked and revealed, namely the intersubjective perceptions of “transference,” which is a psychoanalytic concept and a form of empathy that may influence the biographe’s perspective leading him to expose his own self through what he likes or abhors in the biographee, and “metabiography”; which displaces the focus from the biographee to the biographer. She focuses on how the two priests’ masculine subjectivities disrupt the “hegemonic masculinity” of the priesthood. Succinctly, the writer spotlights the intersubjective dimension in the novel, showing how the biographer’s self is constructed through “recognition” of the biographee’s self.

Chapter 6, by Insaf Khémiri, is entitled “‘One Becomes Two’: The Singular Self, the Multiple Self, and the Prophetic ‘I’ in Leslie M. Silko’s Gardens in the Dunes.” The focus of the chapter is on the meetings of three subjects, Hattie, Edward, and Indigo, in Leslie M. Silko’s Gardens in the Dunes. It examines how the intersection of subjective worlds may damage or restore the self based on Kohut’s psychology of the self,

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3 Paola Rebughini, Subject, Subjectivity, subjectivation (Milan: State University of Milan).
Husserl’s we-subjectivity, and Whitehead’s conception of the prophetic “I.” Khémiri refers to the encounter between the characters Hattie and Edward, which results in an aggrandizement of the false self, whereas Hattie’s and Indigo’s interaction leads to a restoration of the self. She explores Husserl’s notion of an intersubjective nature with reference to Whitehead’s relational theory that emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of all existence. The Whiteheadian prophetic “I” goes beyond the limits of the terms of the “self,” “subject,” and “object” to introduce an inclusive view of the human structure of the “I,” one that occurs through an intersubjective experience with the divine “I.” This is seen through the character Hattie who encounters the divine “I” in her dreams.

Chapter 7, by Faten Najjar, “The Shaping of Donnean Subjectivity in the Elegies and Satires: Power(s) Re/Unmaking Identity,” studies Donne’s personality/ies on three different levels. The first level centers on the role of the Renaissance in the process of Donne’s self-fashioning, especially as a poet and as an ascending political figure. The second level focuses on the carnivalesque aspect of Donne’s *Elegies and Satires* where a multiplicity of mingled voices sparking from the poet’s mind acts simultaneously upon readers and the bard himself. The third relates the different social, political, religious, and cultural changes that enriched Donne’s voices. The chapter deciphers some of the complexity of Donne’s shifting between subjectivities and outlines the various ways in which the poet grasps the different pressures of political and social powers. It analyzes some of Donne’s different selves and concludes with the role subjective diversity plays in helping the bard shape his political and poetic identities.

This part is structured around four texts that investigate the interconnected relationship of the subject and the subjugated. It stresses the concept of transference and the way it limits the subjectivity of the biographee (Andrew Da Rocha) and fortifies the subjectivity of the biographer (Gabriel). Significantly, it refers to the subject position that the writer has and his struggles in detecting the perfect form that would restore sense to a chaotic universe. It crucially accentuates the idea that the subject’s relationships with its “self objects” either damage or restore the self and underscores the idea that Donne’s deployment of polyphonic self is a symbol of his deceitful character and a way of adaptation to the norms of the society he lives in. The part depicts new forms of studying subjectivity in the twenty-first century. It throws light upon the emergence of various views based on historical and cultural diversities.

Since their inception, feminist theories have been concerned with questions of identity and subjectivity, not least because the established traditional definitions of the self have been predominantly male-centered
and have, therefore, relegated the female subject either to the position of the subordinated other or to that of the “stranger to her own self” by dint of her endeavor to fit into the coercive paradigm of male subjectivity (Mezguidi). Even later poststructuralist revisions, which have come to decentralize the notion of subjectivity and to redefine it in terms of “lack” or as a “process”—though liberating because they redefine identity as a provisional rather a fixed entity—have remained, to a certain extent, unsatisfactory to feminist writers who have been primarily concerned with the recuperation of female political power and agency. The general strand connecting the different chapters in part 3 is, therefore, the vehement endeavor that all the female protagonists in the different studied texts share to reconceptualize and redefine female subjectivity in such a manner as to liberate it from the alienating and estranging dominant discourses that strive to make it devoid of agency. In chapter 8, “Performing Gender: Rosalind’s Cross-Dressed Identity in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*,” Amel Ben Ahmed draws on Judith Butler’s theory of the performativity of gender or, more precisely, on her contention that “gender is a correctly coordinated set of acts and gestures that link the subject to clearly defined parameters of healthy and normal identification,” in order to pinpoint the artificiality of gender as a social construct. Ben Ahmed’s close reading of the Shakespearean cross-dressing convention in *As You Like It* allows her to conclude that the female protagonist’s agency lies within herself and not in the gender-based disguise she adopts. Hanene Baroumi, in chapter 10, insists likewise on the imperative of reconceptualizing female subjectivity. In “Beyond Pernicious Differences: Re-creations of the ‘Me-Others’ in Nawel El Saadawi’s *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*,” Baroumi argues that an understanding of, or at least an approximation of, one’s own subjectivity can only be attained through the establishment of inter-subjective relations and insists, in the same vein, on the necessity of reformulating the concept of female subjectivity beyond the reductive articulation of difference and otherness. She warns against complacently accepting the limiting and fixing myths of difference and otherness and advocates a more liberating perception of female subjectivity premised on the creation and re-creation of inter-subjective relationships. The “me-others” encounter is, therefore, valued as an enriching experience both inwardly and outwardly as it brings together and reconciles the stranger/foreigner both within and without the self.

A similar attempt at the redefinition of female subjectivity is undertaken by Salwa Mezguidi Jday who, in chapter 9, “Rethinking Female Subjectivity at the Intersection of Colonial and Postcolonial Discourses,” proposes to address Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and Jean
Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* in order to underscore the respects in which the inter-subjective encounter between the “mother-text” and its rewriting permits the revision of the essentialist, canonical/colonial definition of female subjectivity and for the negotiation of a more apposite definition that is more sensitive to the articulations of cultural differences. The last chapter in this part, chapter 11, “Women’s Cunning: Toward a Form of Female Subjectivity,” is driven by the same motive of redefinition of female subjectivity and agency. In this chapter, Hejer Ayedi peruses a number of Maghrebian folktales in order to revise the pejorative connotations associated with women’s cunning and wiles in order to substantiate the respects in which these strategies are used by women to confirm their female agency and to challenge and subvert patriarchal authority. Cunning and malice become, in other words, women’s strategies to challenge the marginal position to which they are relegated and to re-assert their female subjectivity in a biased patriarchal society.

The fourth and final part is titled “‘Migrant Subjectivity’ and the Intersubjective Construction of the Other.” A different idiosyncrasy in the dialogue between the self, the other, and the world is migrants’ imposed and already constructed intersubjectivity. Chapter 12, by Imen ben Hamouda, investigates the intersubjectivity of refugees as fictionalized in Khaled Hosseini’s *Sea Prayer*. This Afghan-American novelist voices the grievances of misfortunate asylum seekers who are reduced to mere numbers. “‘A Flyspeck in the Heaving Waters’: Precarious Subjects and Subjectified Precarity in Khaled Hosseini’s *Sea Prayer*” castigates refugees’ subjectivity constructed by imperviousness, indifference, and detachment towards human suffering. Equally important in mapping the other’s intersubjectivity is “Ego and/versus Alter: The Construction of Interpenetrating Consciousnesses in Paul Bowles’s Travel Literature,” by Amel Guizani, which addresses the issue of intersubjectivity through a focus on Paul Bowles’s representation of the aesthetics of expatriation and postmodern travel literature. The paper explores Bowles’s postmodern conception of travel as a cultural experience that affects the mutual and interdependent construction of ego and alter. Guizani studies an interconnected subjectivity. Finally, chapter 14, Amira Chatti’s “Storytelling and the Establishing of a Freed Voice for the Silenced Subjectivity, a Reading in André Brink’s *Imaginings of Sand*,” examines how storytelling blurs time and space to give voice to oppressed women and reshapes history by defeating the versions made by Afrikaner males. Chatti investigates a post subjectivity that denounces the patriarchal hegemony (of the colonizer) that uses religion to invade South Africa, violate its lands, and massacre its people, and trap the country in a sort of barbarism.
PART 1.

SUBJECTIVITY IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND LANGUAGE
CHAPTER 1
SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING
AS INTERSUBJECTIVITY
CHOKRI SMAOUI

Introduction
Learning a language other than one’s mother tongue (MT) opens up a multitude of worlds. The learner, in this way, not only masters a new code (with a different phonology, syntax, and set of meanings) but also is involved in a new way of thinking (cf. Weinreich 1953), different cultural conventions, and other rhetorical patterns (mainly as far as written modality is concerned). Smaoui (2017), on this subject, argues that rather than talking about “belonging” in the case of the language learner, it is more appropriate to talk about “bi-longing” where the dimension of “hyphenation” is emphasized, the learner belongs to more than one sphere (hence the relevance of the prefix “bi”), and the learner enters into an inter-subjective relationship with various parties.

This short chapter will investigate the inter-subjectivity of language learning from two main perspectives: the psychological and the socio-cultural. The psychological dimension encompasses questions of personality having to do for example with the learner’s attitude towards the language being learned and its speakers, their motivation (or lack thereof) to embark on this endeavour, and their degree of closeness to or distance from the target language (TL). The social dimension, on the other hand, addresses issues such as the cultural derivatives of language learning, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and the identity of second language learners.
The psychological manifestations of intersubjectivity in language learning

The question of how language learners perceive themselves in relation to others (mainly native speakers, NS) has attracted a great deal of theorizing over the years. Some years ago, Weinreich (1953) proposed that bilinguals can be of three types: coordinate, compound, and subordinate. Starting with coordinate bilinguals, they have separate concepts for different words. Thus, they correspond to the addition of two monolinguals. For example, an English-French bilingual would have two distinct concepts for “book” and “livre” and two corresponding phonetic forms /buk/ and /livr/. This is mostly relevant, according to Weinreich, to bilinguals who have experienced two distinct cultures. Compound bilinguals, on the other hand, combine the conceptual levels while keeping the phonetic level separate. Thus, to carry on from the previous example, “livre” and “book” only form one mental image in the bilingual’s mind, which is then realized as the French form /livr/ and the English form /buk/.

The third case, namely subordinate bilinguals, concerns cases where one language is more powerful than the other, and the words of the weaker language are interpreted through the words of the dominant one. This would mean that the bilingual in this case has learned the FL through the first language. This model, despite its simplicity, can tell us something about the degree of relatedness of the two languages for the learner, and can therefore illuminate us on this inter-subjectivity dimension.

The learner’s psyche in relation to the degree of assimilation of, and adaptation to, the TL norms, has been conceptualized variously in the second language acquisition (SLA) literature. In one of the classical models of SLA, for example, namely Schumann’s Acculturation Model (e.g., 1978), it is suggested that distance from the TL and its speakers, whether psychological or social distance or both, often leads to very little mastery of this language. Schumann’s classic example in this connection is his Puerto Rican subject Alberto, who opted not to mix with American NS and to lead his own life almost in isolation, except for meeting a few Puerto Rican friends. The result of this isolation, as is made clear in Schumann’s report, is that Alberto spoke basic English akin to some pidginized varieties. This again shows that the language learner can feel that his/her identity might be at stake when learning another language. In other words, there is very little intersubjective space, which leads to almost zero adaptation.

The affective dimension has also been proposed as an influential factor in SLA. The most well-known theory in this respect is perhaps
Krashen’s affective filter (e.g., 1981, 1982), which represents one of five hypotheses comprising Krashen’s model. In outline form, the theory suggests that if the filter is high, it will be hard for the input to pass through; however, if it is lower, the learner will successfully assimilate this input. This psychological dimension is clearly related to identity questions, as learners with a high affective filter will generally feel that their identities are threatened by the presence of a new language, which brings with it new values that may be at odds with the learners’ own values and norms.

These three models thus attempt to see how the learner’s personality and psychology intersect with the TL and its speakers in positive or negative ways. This is obviously also relevant to other personality dimensions such as motivation, attitude, and cognitive styles, which have been studied extensively in the SLA literature (Oxford 1990; Ellis 1994; O’Malley and Chamot 1990; Dornyei 2001, 2009). Consider motivation, for instance. It has been repeatedly emphasized (e.g., Dornyei 2001, 2009; Gardner 1985; N. Ellis and Larsen-Freeman 2006) that success or failure in mastering the TL is not simply a matter of proficiency or aptitude, but exceeds that to include questions of “readiness” or “willingness” to embark on this endeavor. As Smaoui (2017, 131) put it:

In the case of unmotivated or weakly motivated learners, the latter would feel that they cannot be part of (or belong to) this new system, among other things for fear that they get alienated and compromise their “authentic” identities. Motivation in this sense can be clearly connected to the notion of “inhibition,” defined as “the extent to which individuals build defences to protect their egos” (Ellis 1994, 518). Learners would, thus, have varying degrees of adaptable “language egos”; in other words, not all learners are able to deal with the identity conflict involved in language learning (Guiora et al. 1980).

The question of identity, then, is at the heart of inter-subjectivity in language learning (see part 3). An intrinsically motivated learner (someone who embarks on the task without expectation of a reward or any other gain), for instance, will not sense any threat to their identity; on the contrary, they will find this a very enriching experience, and will therefore think about it as an addition rather than a loss. Conversely, a negative attitude to the TL and its speakers will lead learners to stick to their identity reference points, one important manifestation of which is language. Smaoui (2017, 133–34) summarizes these various configurations thus:
These tendencies clearly show that the bilingual speaker might be placed at different points along the language/identity scale. This state of “bi-longing” (i.e., belonging to two different spheres at the same time) can be either proportional, where the two (or more) languages/cultures are almost equally represented, or rather disproportional, with dominance of one language/culture over the other(s).

The state of “in-betweenness” and “hyphenation” characteristic of language learners can also be seen in other contexts, like bilingual education (in Canada or the United States most prominently). In one of its forms, for example, referred to as “submersion” (instruction entirely through the medium of the host language), these learners can experience much frustration from being discouraged to use the L1, the feeling of insecurity when studying everything in the TL, and a lack of parental involvement in the school. As Spolsky explains, forcing the learner to learn the L2 in replacement of the L1 is a “direct assault on identity” (1986, 188). Thus, despite some of the benefits in terms of immersion in the TL and focus on communication rather than the language form per se, there are undeniable threats to learners’ personality and identity. Smaoui (2017, 134) summarizes some of these pitfalls:

It is clear, thus, that submersion, as one manifestation of bilingual education, does not cater for learners’ (children in particular) personality and identity. Its concern is exclusively with the development of the linguistic and communicative competence of these learners, irrespective of the cost that this will lead to. As Cummins suggests, “L2 submersion programs for minority students involve virtually no concessions to the child’s language or culture and have well-documented negative effects for many children” (1988, 161).

In short, the learning of a second language hinges on several psychological variables that can direct this learning in one way or another. These psychological dimensions certainly combine with other social and cultural dimensions to determine the kind of inter-subjectivity the learner is involved in. It is to this second perspective that I now turn.

**The socio-cultural manifestations of intersubjectivity in language learning**

Language learning does not occur in a vacuum. Whether we study it from a naturalistic perspective, that is, where the subject picks up the language in an untutored context, or from an instructed perspective, that is, where
the subject studies the language in a classroom with a teacher, there is more to it than an aggregate of psychological variables. The broader socio-cultural context is also extremely important, and can affect learning in important ways.

One illustration of this socio-cultural perspective can be seen in adaptations of Vygotsky’s constructivism to the second language research field. This is clearly seen, for example, in work targeting the zone of proximal development (ZPD) of language learners, in which issues of scaffolding, collaboration, and joint effort gain special importance. There is thus work on inter-subjectivity at the heart of this approach. As an example of peer interaction in the performance of classroom activities with a focus on form, Donato (1994) refers to three learners collaborating to construct the past compound tense of the French reflective verb se souvenir:

Speaker 1: ... and then I’ll say ... tu as souvenu notre anniversaire de marriage ... or should I say mon anniversaire?
Speaker 2: Tu as...
Speaker 3: Tu as...
Speaker 1: tu as souvenu... “You remembered?”
Speaker 3: Yeah, but isn’t that reflexive? Tu t’as...
Speaker 1: Ah, tu t’as souvenu
Speaker 2: Oh, it’s tu es
Speaker 1: tu es
Speaker 3: tu es, tu es, tu...
Speaker 1: T’es, tu t’es
Speaker 3: Tu t’es
Speaker 1: Tu t’es souvenu

Donato points out that no single member of the group has the ability to produce this complex form without help, but through their successive individual contributions the verb form is collectively found: Speaker 3 provides the reminder that the verb is reflexive; Speaker 2 corrects the choice of auxiliary, and finally Speaker 1 integrates these separate items of information in order to produce the correct form. Thus, language learning from this perspective goes beyond the simple view of adding to knowledge in a linear way, or the effort deployed by one individual independently of the larger context of interaction, collaboration, and joint construction.

Beyond this issue of inter-subject negotiation and construction, there is the broader question of ownership of English, and whether the learner of an additional language (principally English) is simply an “intruder” into the language or can also claim ownership. This has generally been framed in discussions on English as a lingua franca (ELF),
where the major argument has been that speakers of the outer and expanding circles (Kachru 1985) largely outnumber speakers of the inner circle, and it is therefore their utmost legitimate right to impose their own norms rather than simply follow NS norms. This is also compounded by the argument that “genetic nativeness” can be replaced by “functional nativeness” (Kachru 1998). In this connection, the expression “world Englishes” is being used more and more frequently (Jenkins 2006; Kachru et al. 2009) “to stress the new identity that is being shaped by this global code” (Smaoui 2017, 137). It has to be noted, however, that this might be easier said than done, as there are several challenges to this claim, not least of which are issues of intelligibility (Smith and Nelson 2009; Smaoui 2014), assessment (Chalhoub-Deville and Wigglesworth 2005; Smaoui 2014), and pedagogy (Baumgardner 2009, Brown 2009; Smaoui 2014).

Finally, the question of inter-subjectivity in relation to language learning at the socio-cultural level is to a large extent intricately connected to the question of identity, as language is one distinctive feature of this identity; indeed, “language needs to be investigated not as a set of idealized forms independent of their speakers, or their speaking, but rather as situated utterances in which speakers, in dialogue with others, struggle to create meanings” (Norton and Toohey 2002, 117).

The work of Bonny Norton is particularly illuminating in this regard (e.g., 2001, 2013). Influenced by post-structuralists such as Bakhtin and Bourdieu, Norton tried to understand how relations of power might affect the way language learners see themselves and others. The learner’s identity is at the heart of Norton’s research, as Norton and Toohey (2002) explain:

Language learning engages the identities of learners because language itself is not only a linguistic system of signs and symbols; it is also a complex social practice in which the value and meaning ascribed to an utterance are determined in part by the value and meaning ascribed to the person who speaks. (115)

Language learners, Norton argues, can claim “the right to speech” and “the power to impose reception” (Bourdieu 1977, 684).

There is in this model a clear concern for social inequalities, marginalization, and struggle. This would in turn call for integrating the individual language learner and the larger social world (Norton 2013). Norton thus calls for paying more attention to social relations as these positively or negatively affect learners’ interaction with members of the TL community. As she put it (2013):
SLA theorists need to address how relations of power in the social world affect learners’ access to the target language community; learners who may be marginalized in one site may be highly valued in another. Identity theorists are therefore concerned about the ways in which opportunities to practice speaking, reading and writing, acknowledged as central to the SLA process (cf. Spolsky, 1989), are socially structured in both formal and informal sites of language learning. This has important implications for the conditions under which learners speak, read or write the target language, and hence opportunities for language learning. (3)

The learner, in Norton’s view, is not conceived of as a monolithic, one-sided entity with a stagnating and fixed personality; s/he is rather seen as a pluralized human being with his/her identity occurring in the process of change and revision. As Norton (2013, 3) proposes, “a fully developed theory of identity highlights the multiple positions from which language learners can speak, and how sometimes marginalized learners can appropriate more desirable identities with respect to the target language community.” Norton, in this respect, talks about “the contingent, shifting and context-dependent nature of identities.” These identities are therefore not simply given by established social structures, but are rather “negotiated” by people who want to position themselves.

This concept of “positioning” is a recurrent theme in Norton’s work, along with other key notions such as “investment” and “imagined communities.” Norton departs from the traditional concept of “role,” referred to in developing a social psychology of selfhood in order to challenge it, arguing that identities are negotiated and renegotiated and not simply ascribed by others. It is thus the learners’ absolute right to “claim voice” and to question dominant meanings and “resist essentialized identities.” This positioning in social structures is concomitant with individual agency according to Norton. This is clearly a much more dynamic view of language learners, a view of the self as “a site of struggle” and as an entity in search of recognition and appreciation.

Furthermore, Norton proposes replacing the traditional concept of “motivation” with the more encompassing notion of investment, which is “a construct that signals the complex relationship between language learner identity and language learning commitment” (2013, 3). A motivated learner will not necessarily have any investment in the classroom or in community language practices, perhaps because the classroom is elitist or racist. However, an invested learner will most likely be ready to learn. As Kramsch (2013, 195) rightly puts it, “unlike motivation, investment carries connotations of hopes of returns and benefits; it accentuates the role of human agency and identity in engaging
with the talk at hand in accumulating economic and symbolic capital, in having stakes in the endeavor and in persevering in that endeavor.”

Norton also puts forward the concept of “imagined communities” to account for the various aspirations that language learners might have with regard to learning languages. For Norton, “imagined communities refer to groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination” (2013, 8). Drawing on the work of Wenger (1998) and others, she attempts to show that a community is not necessarily concrete and accessible, one with which we have direct contact, but can also be “aspirational” (Kramsch 2013), in the sense of “a desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future” (Norton 2013, 3) (see also Norton 2001). These imagined communities are, therefore, necessarily linked to imagined identities, what one aspires to be/become while going through the experience of learning and using the new language.

**Conclusion**

In this short paper, I tried to investigate the question of intersubjectivity in relation to additional language learning. This task of mastering a second language is so complex that we cannot come to grips with it unless we tackle it from a variety of perspectives. Two angles have been the subject of this chapter: the psychological and the socio-cultural. While the first looked at the psychology of the learner through constructs such as motivation, attitude, and integration, in order to grapple with this state of hyphenation, the second investigated the broader context, focusing on collaboration, joint construction, belonging to a community, and identity formation. It remains to be seen, however, how inter-subjectivity manifests itself in other areas of learning such as in output situations as opposed to input situations, in inter-language pragmatics, and in child learning compared with adult learning.

**Works Cited**


CHAPTER 2

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN THE EFL ACADEMIC WRITINGS OF MA AND PHD TUNISIAN RESEARCHERS

EMNA FENDRI

Introduction

Writing has long been regarded as a “solitary” act (Elbow 177) contrary to the social and interactive nature of speaking. Although this view is still supported by some scholars, it is criticized by many others who see that writing is as interactive as speaking. Ivanič and Camps argue that although writing does not have such characteristics as phonetic and prosodic components like speech, it conveys the addresser’s voice and self. This assumption became popular with the rise of social views of language use.

Prior to the social perspective, two main approaches dominated writing theories and pedagogies (Raimes; Matsuda); the first is the product approach, which focuses on the text as a product; student-writers are trained to adopt the formal features of an ideal text. The role of the reader is restricted to the assessment of the final product. The second trend is the process approach, the interest of which is to study the processes a person goes through when he/she produces a text. Writing is “writer-oriented” (Hyland, Writing Theories 102), “decontextualized” (Ivanič 96), and “asocial” (Atkinson 4) with a focus on the individual’s free and personal expression of thought and voice. The role of the reader is to interpret the final product according to Ivanič. Social approaches, however, assume that writing is both individual and social (e.g., Cheng and Steffensen). Meaning does not emanate either from the writer or from the reader solely; individuality doesn’t serve meaning creation. It is rather the dialogue—or the intersubjective relationship between the writer and the reader—that makes meanings.
Such approaches are especially promoted by the social constructivist view of language use; it sees utterances as a result of the writer’s internal processes as well as the social, cultural, political, and historical context of text production. An exclusive focus on the writer’s personal voice is replaced by an approach that considers both the writer’s and the reader’s voice. One of the most significant changes that social constructivism brought to the perception of writing is that it brings both the writer and the reader to the text. It thus becomes a site where the writer and the reader meet and engage in a process of knowledge construction or creation (Cherry 266). Writing is no longer about the writer’s and/or the reader’s subjectivity as separate from each other but as the intersubjective exchange they engage in.

Indeed, the act of writing is considered to be a “rhetorical transaction” (Bowden 175) between a writer and a reader over a text. The rhetorical transaction involves a negotiation and a change in both the writer’s and the reader’s identity(ies) (Ivanič; Norton). Hence, written texts in general, and more particularly academic texts, are meant to represent both the addresser and the addressee. It is, as Canagarajah states “performative” (602) or representational in addition to being “constitutive” concerning the application of linguistic rules (602). Adopting this view questions the long-supported idea of the objectivity of academic writing (Thetela; Gray and Biber; Marta). Marta goes as far as to describe it as a “myth” (897). On the contrary, it is an interactive genre that guarantees the researcher’s and the audience’s voice, on one hand, and factual informativity, on the other hand. The present chapter is concerned with the writer’s rather than the reader’s representation of him- or herself throughout academic texts, and more particularly, thesis writing. The movement back and forth between stating facts and expressing one’s voice opens different spaces for the writer to express his/her subjectivity. This is especially true when the thesis macro-structure is considered: different sections have different communicative purposes and functions (e.g., Swales and Feak; Salager-Meyer; Kwan) that make the writer’s subjectivity dynamic rather than static.

**A social view of academic writing and the writer’s identity**

Broadly speaking, academic writing can be defined as “Any writing that fulfils a purpose of education in a college or university” (Thaiss and Zawacki 3). It can be an essay, a report, a research project, an article, a case study, a dissertation, and so on. The current study takes MA and PhD dissertations as an example. In their book *Successful Academic Writing*,...