Universalistic handbook discourse and the local needs of writers*

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Abstract

Drawing on a cross-disciplinary framework combining insights from discourse analysis, pragmatics, critical educational theory, cultural theory, and new literacy studies, this article describes how two American handbook series—the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers *and the (Chicago)* Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*—construct academic writing and articulate their educational ideology. On the basis of a close analysis of content, language, and textual patterns, the article shows how the two series are nearly antithetical. Through their liberal instructive discourse, the MLA handbooks aim at socializing writers and guiding them towards membership in the community of academic writers, while the more conservative Chicago manuals strive to protect the institutionally valued research text from its writers. However, the handbooks are also similar in certain respects: in addition to providing instructions that can be quite empowering, they also delimit the options writers can have. From this perspective, the article also argues that particularly for non-native writers of English, handbook discourse can be quite problematic. The article concludes by arguing that in today's heterogeneous academia, the purposes and aims of handbook discourse merit critical reevaluation so that they show more awareness and tolerance of difference and plurality.*

Keywords: *American handbooks for writers; discourse analysis; pragmatics; educational ideology; academic writing in English; non-native writers of academic English.*

1. Introduction

Academic writing in English draws on and contributes to the establishment and maintenance of particular cultural, disciplinary, and institutional

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conventions, values, and norms of correctness and appropriateness, and bestows on writers particular kinds of possibilities for agency and voice. On the one hand, proficiency in English academic writing can ideally provide writers, native and non-native alike, with access into the community of practice of a particular field or discipline (for the notion of community of practice, see, e.g., Lave and Wenger 1991; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992). From this perspective, the non-native user's position can even be seen as a particularly privileged one. As Kramsch (1993: 239) has argued, this is because learning and using a foreign language can open up a 'third space' between two languages and cultures—a critical and empowering awareness of difference and similarity. Sometimes this position can even be a fundamentally pleasurable and exciting one, involving almost playful 'crossings' to and 'poaching' in the Other's linguistic and cultural territory (Rampton 1995; Kramsch 1993: 239). On the other hand, the conventions and norms of academic writing in English can also delimit the possibilities writers have to express their personal selves and cultural, gendered, and ethnic identities in writing. Sometimes this can even involve the disciplining and suppression of voice. This view is put forward by, for example, Canagarajah (1993; 1996: 436), who has argued that, particularly in the case of Southern non-native academic writers, what are sometimes ethnocentrically considered universal academic discourses can, in fact, 'involve ideological imposition and cultural hegemony'.

The conventions and norms of academic writing are laid out, maintained, and mediated by a variety of institutional discourses. In this article, I will focus on one particular discourse of this type—American writing handbooks. Writing handbooks are widely used by educational institutions, academic writers, and students all over the world. In the ways sketched above, they can simultaneously be very useful as a source of information on the conventions of academic writing, and problematic in constraining and delimiting the possibilities and options that writers have. In short, they can have a great deal of influence on both writers and their texts. Because of their universal popularity and considerable power in marketing particular types of writing and styles as the preferred ones, they also merit critical investigation. In this article, I will attempt to provide such an appraisal: through a detailed investigation of selected content, pragmatic and discourse features, and of the educational tenets of four handbooks for writers, I will show how the handbooks can simultaneously empower and constrain academic writers by constructing the nature, aspects, goals, and value of academic writing and by instructing writers in particular ways. In addition, I will discuss the implications that the discourse of the handbooks may have for academic writers of English, for non-native writers of English, in particular. The non-native perspective is adopted here because, despite the facts that handbooks are most often designed as 'universally' relevant and applicable,

and that in some respects native and non-native writers may be faced with quite similar challenges when planning and writing their research texts, they may also pose problems that are particular to non-native writers alone. For this reason, I want to argue that a more 'local' perspective to instructive discourse in English is both timely and of cultural, social, and political importance. In this sense, the present study aligns with the recently invigorated interest in the discourses of teaching and using English as a second/foreign language in particular cultural and social locations in the world (see, e.g., the articles in Burns and Coffin 2001; Ammon 2001).

2. Writing handbooks as historical, ideological, and moral discourse

Handbooks for academic writers are a highly specialized and elaborate form of textual, discursive, and social practice. They have a clear mission—to instruct writers in how to produce a formally acceptable research paper. They rely on an established set of norms and conventions and are supported, marketed, and used by powerful and high prestige institutions. As indicated by their sheer number, widespread use, and devotion to the formal minutiae of the production and form of the research paper, they in their own way also contribute to the attribution of institutional, cultural, and social value to academic practices (including writing) and objects (such as the research paper), and to the establishment and maintenance of 'appropriate' writer identities. This they do from particular perspectives and for particular interests. Handbooks are thus very much ideological, historical, and moral in nature.

For example, in her study on the development of the style guide of *The Times,* Cameron has shown how stylistic preferences are always historical and variant, and how they serve vested ideological and political interests and insist on the necessity of guarding the uniformity and consistency of style and, consequently, of maintaining a horde of style experts capable of ensuring this uniformity (Cameron 1995: 63–72; 1996: 332). A similar observation has also been made by Régent (1985) who points out, on the basis of a comparative study of French, American, and English handbooks of style for scientists, that handbooks present very similar recommendations to writers, thus foregrounding a shared belief between publishers and scholars that there is a set of universal and culture-neutral criteria for good writing.

Along with dictionaries, grammars, and school textbooks, handbooks are a specific type of unofficial—and often quite conservative—language authority very much concerned with language policy, planning, and prescription (see, e.g., Baron 1986; Nichols 1988; Fasold 1988; Fasold et

al. 1990; Crittenden 1994; and Meyer 1994 on style handbooks; Watts 1999; Bex 1999 on grammars; and Luke and Luke 1989; Colebrook 1996; and Stubbs 1999 on textbooks). In this sense, they can be seen as one particular linguistic expertise 'service' of which there has recently been a veritable upsurge in many western societies (Fairclough 1992: 5). In the name of 'effectiveness', these services offer 'skills or techniques . . . which are designed (and can be redesigned) for particular purposes, and can be applied in various domains and institutions more or less independently of context'. In Fairclough's view, the demand and need for such texts, practices, and services is actually one sign of widespread 'technologization' of language in contemporary society.

Like instructive and pedagogic discourse in general, handbooks are also moral in nature. In an essay on an American style handbook, Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* (1979), the American philosopher Lang (1991; see also Cameron [1995: 67–68] for a detailed discussion of Lang's views) shows how there is a strong analogy between stylistic norms and moral norms. Adhering to stylistic norms is equal to constructing an acceptable moral self. In Lang's words (1991: 17),

> to summarize the ideals of written style for Strunk and White . . . is to compose a model of human character: honest, plain, forthright, patient, simple. Through the adherence of the stylistic preferences suggested by Strunk and White's style guide, a writer also builds up an acceptable and appropriate social and moral self.

Despite the fact that many scholars have emphasized that handbooks are one influential discourse shaping writing and directing writers of research papers as well as contributing to the meaning and value of academic writing, they have not been investigated much in detail. This may be due to the fact—as Cameron also points out when referring to journalists' views of stylistic precepts as 'an inherited body of professional lore' (1996: 331)—that in practice, style handbooks have been seen as basically unproblematic tools for writers containing neutral and readily applicable practical and technical information.

3. Theoretical and methodological framework, aims, and data

3.1. *A cross-disciplinary theoretical and methodological framework*

For its theoretical and methodological orientation, the present study makes use of a cross-disciplinary framework combining insights from discourse analysis, pragmatics, critical educational theory, cultural theory, and new literacy studies. The multidimensional framework is motivated by the

extensive scope of the analysis in which attention will be paid to the particularities of language use at a number of levels of text organization, to the kinds of contents selected in the books, the type of social action they do, and the educational ideology they articulate.

Firstly, in the model set by recent critical discourse analytic work on the ways in which language and textual patterns build up particular representations of the world, identities, and relationships (see, e.g., Fairclough 1989, 1992, 1995; Gal 1989; Wodak 1989, 2001; Hodge and Kress 1993; van Dijk 1993; Woolard and Schieffelin 1994; Houston and Kramarae 1991; Talbot 1995; Bergvall and Remlinger 1996; Mills 1994), the present study focuses on the *means* with which the handbooks construct aspects of academic writing and their relations to one another. An important aspect of the present analysis is also the investigation of texts in relation to *context.* On the one hand, as has already been argued in section (2), this means that handbooks are seen as both shaped by their institutional, cultural, and historical contexts and as shaping them by their own discourse (see, e.g., Gee 1999: 20; Wodak 2001: 67). On the other hand, the text-in-context focus means that the discourse of the handbooks will be discussed from the perspective of, and in relation to, a particular social group—non-native academic writers of English.

The selected framework also makes it possible to examine how the particular language and discourse choices made in the handbooks serve to accomplish *social action.* For instance, this involves paying attention to how they make assertions about writing, texts and writers, and suggestions for writer action, and how these kinds of actions are related to the broader social functions of the handbooks of providing instructions and advice in the specific domain of academic writing in English (see, e.g., Scollon 2001: 146). More specifically, this means that texts are seen to relate to and address their potential readers with a variety of pragmatic means which can range from very explicit ones (such as questions, commands, and addresses to the reader) to quite indirect ones (such as the particular selection and organization of content and style) (see, e.g., Hyland 1999; Chafe 1985; Lakoff 1990; Myers 1989). The text and reader relationship will also be viewed from the perspective of how text is inscribed with an ideal reader position from which it appears 'natural' or to make most sense. (Different formulations of this view are Althusser's [1971] notion of interpellation, and Fairclough's [1992] and Mills's [1994] notions of positioning.) In the present study, this kind of pragmatic positioning of the reader will be examined for the purpose of identifying the kind of 'ideal' reader at whom the handbooks are aimed, and the stance the handbooks display towards this reader and other aspects of academic writing.

For the purpose of reinvestigating the findings of the discourse and pragmatic features of the handbooks from the perspective of what they suggest about their educational ideology and goals, the present study will also make use of findings and theorizations of critical educational theory, new literacy studies, and cultural theory.

3.2. *Aims and analytic questions*

In this article I have two main aims. Firstly, I will describe and compare the discourse of the four handbooks, paying particular attention to how their context of production, or, more simply, editor(s), their implied readers and their relation to the texts, and academic writing and research are textually built up. Secondly, I will also describe how the handbooks articulate their educational goals and ideologies. Naturally, the investigation of only four texts does not allow for any broad generalizations. Rather, this article aims at illustrating and discussing how handbooks—through their descriptions of appropriate academic style and instructions on appropriate writer action—suggest ideologies of academic writing and strive to direct actual writers in different ways.

More specifically, I will examine how linguistic, textual, and pragmatic patterns are used in the handbooks to create meanings and to fulfill particular functions. In order to analyze these, I will pay attention to the following, partly overlapping, questions:

i. *How is content verbalized?* Here I will describe what aspects of academic writing are selected as part of the content of the handbooks and how these topics are verbalized. In other words, attention will be paid to what kinds of wordings and grammatical patterns (e.g., modality, active/passive constructions, transitivity roles [for transitivity, see, e.g., Halliday 1994]) are used in the references to, and descriptions of, aspects of academic writing.
ii. *How are texts organized and what text type characteristics do they have?* In this aspect of analysis, I will examine what text type features and patterns the handbooks display (see, e.g., Werlich 1982; Biber 1995). For example, I will investigate how narrative strategies, recognizable event structures, and participant roles in particular, are made use of in the handbooks (see, e.g., Propp 1968; Greimas 1966; Labov and Waletzky 1967).
iii. *How is the text reader relationship constructed?* The handbooks will also be viewed from the pragmatic perspective of how they address their readers, and what kind of relationship is created between the text and the reader. This will include an investigation of how the action

of instructing and advising is carried out. Further, it will be examined how the handbooks, through a particular selection of lexical, grammatical, and textual features, display a particular stance towards their producers, recipients, and subject matter—whether it can be characterized as 'involved', 'detached' (see Chafe 1985: 117), 'proximal', or 'distal' in nature (for these terms, see Lakoff 1990). According to Chafe, there are three kinds of involvement: ego, recipient, and subject-matter involvement. Ego involvement shows in the use of references to, comments on, or evaluations of the author and her/his text or views, whereby a sense of shared experience or solidarity between the writer and the readers can be created, or through transitivity choices where the author's presence or responsibility can be shown. (See also Hyland 1999: 102; Myers 1989). Analogously, an involved and a proximal relationship with the recipient is evident in the making visible of her/his presence in the text through the use of second-person pronouns, addressing her/him by name, responding to or posing questions from/for the reader, making requests, asking for confirmation, commenting on the reader's possible reactions or views, and directing her/him to particular aspects of the discourse. Finally, involvement with the subject matter is revealed in, for example, the use of expressive or affective vocabulary and utterances, the historical present tense, and direct quotations, all of which contribute to a sense of immediacy and commitment with the subject matter at hand (cf. Chafe 1985: 117). Detachment, in turn, can be defined negatively as a lack of features of involvement, i.e., as a stance where the writer is less concerned with foregrounding her/himself in discourse, with striving to create a sense of contact or interaction with the recipient (i.e., foregrounding a distal relationship with her/him) or involvement with the subject matter. Typical devices that indicate detachment in discourse are, in particular, the use of passive voice, nominalization (Chafe 1982: 45–46), and nonspecific subjects (Hyland 1999: 102).

iv. *How are the educational goals and ideologies of the books articulated?* Guided by the findings about the discourse and pragmatic features of the handbooks, I will use critical education theory (Giroux 1988), new literacy studies (Cope and Kalantzis 1993) and cultural theory (Foucault 1973, 1977, 1980, 1983) to identify their implicit educational goals and tenets.

3.3. *Data*

The texts selected as materials for this study are American writing handbooks, the third (Gibaldi and Achtert 1988) and the fifth (Gibaldi 1999)

edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, and the fifth (Turabian 1987) and sixth (Turabian 1996) edition of the (Chicago) *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations,* which are well known and widely used by academic writers all over the world. These four texts are both similar (purpose, audience) and different (different authors and publishers) in interesting ways that allow a fruitful comparison. Further, the selection of two editions from both series allows an investigation of whether and in what ways their discourse has changed between the late 1980s and the 1990s. Both series of handbooks present instructions on the formal properties of the research paper, give advice on compiling bibliographies and citing different types of sources. There are more differences between the two MLA editions than there are between the editions of the Chicago handbook. This is mainly because the fifth edition of the MLA handbook was already able to address the issues of information technology and online sources.

4. Handbook discourse: Socializing and policing the academic writer

4.1. *The image of, and stance towards, the editor(s) of the MLA handbooks*

In both editions of the MLA handbook the editor(s) of the books have a clear textual presence. In other words, the handbooks show clear ego involvement. This is manifest, for example, in their references to the community of instructors and researchers behind the book and in their frequent use of the inclusive pronoun *we.* Further, in both editions it is emphasized that the handbook is the product of a communal effort (Gibaldi 1999: xvii) involving contributions from MLA committees and staff members, editors, scholars, librarians, teachers, and students and reflecting the interests of the MLA members — 'some 25,000 instructors of English and other languages' (Gibaldi and Achtert 1988: viii). The editors of the handbooks thus have a clear textual presence in the discourse and are presented as a collective, part of which the handbooks' readership are also assumed to become. Shared interests between the editors and readers of the books and a sense of belonging in the same world are thus strongly suggested in the MLA handbooks.

4.2. *The image of, and stance towards, the author of the Chicago handbooks*

In contrast, the prefaces of the Chicago manuals both emphasize that the initiative of one single individual, Kate Turabian, was decisive in the

production of the first version of the handbook. For example, despite the fact that the book has later been edited by a number of editors, the sixth edition still states Turabian's role in shaping the book as a fundamental one. She is represented as 'part of the folklore of American higher education'; as 'the Emily Post of scholarship', such a legendary being 'that some believe she is an invention'. At the same time, it is stated that Kate Turabian was a 'long-time dissertation secretary' (Turabian 1996: vii), in other words, not herself a university teacher or academic writer. It seems likely then, that, as the 'original' producer of the handbook, Kate Turabian really performed (to use Goffman's [1981: 144] term) as the animator of views that are in reality established and maintained by the university as an institution.

However, in their running text, the Chicago manuals insist that academic writing is constrained, in fact, by a number of other authorities. For example, the manuals include references to a number of authors or authorities on academic writing, as well as to the institutional context of writing in which the writer is presumed to work (e.g., 'staff members', 'department', 'discipline', 'dissertation secretary', 'dissertation offices' [1987: 119, 111, 239, 240], 'curators', and 'librarians' [1996: 21]). They suggest that the writers should pay attention to the conventions of the institutional context(s) within which they write their papers. The manuals thus evoke a complex network of institutional authorities to whose expectations writers need to pay attention.

The Chicago manuals display ego detachment. This shows, for example, in their avoidance of first-person pronouns, and in their use of the passive voice, nonspecific subjects, nominalizations, nouns and noun phrases (e.g., 'long-established scholarly practice' [1996: 82], 'the trend', 'the best American usage', [1987: 38; 1996: 39], and 'the conventions governing the arrangement of the various elements of a statistical table' [1987: 88]). In these ways, which in a way reify actual practices as conventions and trends, the manuals also emphasize the existence of a general tradition that they communicate to writers, but for which they are not solely responsible.

The existence of tradition, conventions, or even fashions 'governing' writing is in fact emphasized at several points in the Chicago manuals. For example, the fifth edition puts it as follows:

> The conventions governing the arrangement of the various elements of a statistical table, though not immutable, are accepted by many who make frequent use of them. Consequently, follow existing fashion when it comes to the basics of tabular presentation. (Turabian 1987: 88)

In this sample, various strategies are used to assure the writer of the value of following 'conventions'. Firstly, placing 'conventions governing the arrangement of . . . a statistical table' in thematic position in the sentence

establishes it as given information whose truth is taken for granted. Secondly, it is asserted that these conventions are accepted 'by many who make frequent use of them'—thus not only stating that there is some (undefined) body of experts who follow such conventions but also that they follow these conventions 'frequently'—authority and the norm in writing are thus multiply established. After authority is thus established, it is only logical ('consequently') to require of the novice writer that she or he also follow such good practice.

4.3. *The image of, and stance towards, the recipients of the MLA handbooks*

It seems that all of the handbooks consider American novice writers, working within a variety of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, as the audience at whom the handbooks are aimed. The kinds of writers the two series have in mind, are, however, quite different kind of creatures.

The MLA handbooks repeatedly refer to 'students' and 'instructors'. These terms imply that the writer they have in mind is not a really a solitary being, but someone who is working in a pedagogical setting. Most likely, the implied reader of the MLA handbooks is also fairly young—someone who may even be faced with the task of writing a research paper for the very first time—a high school or college student. The assumption of a young addressee is clear in the following sample:

> A research paper is, first and foremost, a form of written communication. . . . But when students are asked to write research papers, they often become so preoccupied with gathering material, taking notes, compiling bibliographies, and documenting sources that they forget to apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired through previous writing experiences. (Gibaldi and Achtert 1988: 1)

The addressee implied by the MLA handbooks also seems a rather naïve and gullible person who, when struggling with a new and challenging task, is prone to forget what she or he has already learnt and to rush prematurely into conclusions, and who consequently needs to be explicitly guided. Further, she or he is fallible, as can be seen in the following extract:

> Eliminating material is often painful since you might have a natural desire to use everything you have collected and to impress your readers (especially teacher readers) with all the work you have done and with all you know on the subject. But you should resist these temptations, for the inclusion of irrelevant or repetitive material will detract from the effectiveness of your paper. (Gibaldi 1999: 36)

Writing is depicted here as a 'painful' struggle against 'natural' tendencies, and part of the education of a budding academic writer is thus described as

becoming capable of resisting 'these temptations'. In the same way as Lang's (1991) and Cameron's (1995) studies on style guides have shown, in this type of handbook discourse writing is thus assigned a fundamental morality. In this particular case, the morality consists of the need to suppress childish and instinctual 'natural' tendencies. In a way, this could even be seen as one particular reworking of one of a fundamental western moral imperative according to which 'nature' (seen as perennially 'bad') has to be converted by nurture.

The image of the novice writers in the MLA handbooks is far from negative, however. This is because the writers are not depicted as totally ignorant or incapable of learning. Through following the recommendations of the handbooks, they can gradually move forward in their journey towards expertise. As the fifth edition puts it, the handbook is designed to 'introduce you to the customs of a community of writers who greatly value scrupulous scholarship and the careful documentation, or recording, of research' (Gibaldi 1999: xiii) and it 'will help you become a writer whose work deserves serious consideration' (Gibaldi 1999: xiii). By following the instructions of the handbooks, novice writers can thus hope to gain access to the 'community' of writers of research papers. This can be seen in, for example, the ways in which personal pronouns are used strategically in the handbooks:

> When we consult a printed book or article, we expect to find prominently displayed the name of the author and the name of the publisher of the work. Whenever you consult a source, print or electronic, make sure that the author of the document or the person or group responsible for the publication or site is identified. Once you establish authorship, consider the authoritativeness of the work. (Gibaldi 1999: 27)

The first personal pronoun, *we*, in a way sets up a hypothetical community of research writers. In the next sentence, the text moves on to giving specific instructions to the novice writer—*you*—who is thus explicitly shown one means through which she or he can ensure membership of the community. It could be argued, however, that the implicit depiction of progression from the status of the novice to expertise is rather idealistic. This is particularly clear in the following extract:

> Researchers need to evaluate the quality of any work before using and citing it. Students writing their first research papers often find it difficult to evaluate sources. Not all sources are equally reliable or of equal quality. In reading and evaluating potential sources, you should not assume that something is truthful or trustworthy just because it appears in print or on the Internet. Some material may be based on incorrect or outdated information or on poor logic, and the author´s knowledge or view of the subject may be too limited. Weigh what you read against

your own knowledge and intelligence as well as against other treatments of the subjects. (Gibaldi 1999: 25–26)

While this extract tries to teach novice writers to review potential sources critically, it remains at a rather abstract level and does not include suggestions as to how exactly they are to distinguish reliable sources from unreliable ones. The outcome is a rather superficial instructive discourse which merely warns writers of the dangers of being uncritical and stops short of giving more detailed and concrete criteria for distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad' sources.

As has perhaps by now become obvious, reader involvement is quite explicit in the MLA handbooks: the books try to create an impression that they identify with the reader's predispositions, situations, and concerns. For example, some of their language choices that indicate this are their use of fairly informal, everyday, Anglo-Saxon wording and simple syntax, their use of the second-person pronoun to refer to the reader, and repeated comments on her/his situation and possible reactions as a young student writing one of her/his first research papers. Further, by emphasizing interaction, close connections, and common interests between the text (and the 25,000 instructors and scholars behind it) and its readers, the books also display a proximal pragmatic relationship with their recipients (Lakoff 1990: 38–39). The following extract from the fifth edition of the MLA handbook is a good illustration of this:

If you are writing your first research paper, you may feel overwhelmed by the many tasks discussed here. This handbook is designed to help you learn to manage a complex process efficiently. As you follow the book's advice on how to locate and document sources, how to format your paper, and so forth, you may be tempted to see doing a paper as a mechanical exercise. (Gibaldi 1999: 3)

The degree of reader involvement in the MLA handbooks also shows in their heterogeneous text-type orientation: the text alternates between narrative, instructive, and descriptive text chunks. Firstly, by picturing the whole process of producing a research paper, they indirectly also end up telling the story of the inexperienced writer-protagonist who is struggling with her/his research task. The implicit narrator of the story—the source of the words on the pages of the books—is naturally the Modern Language Association (MLA); but the point of view is often that of the novice writer through whose eyes and actual situation the books try to represent the task of producing a research paper.

From this perspective, it could be argued that the handbooks build up a classic hero story (see, e.g., Propp 1968; Greimas 1966) in which the hero(ine) is pushed to action (to design and write a research paper), because she or he lacks something deemed valuable in her/his community (in this

case, proficiency in academic writing). Through following the instructions of the helper (the handbook), the hero(ine) can, however, progress in her/his quest (the process of research) and achieve the valued object (effective research text), thereby ending her/his quest in some kind of institutional success. The active role of the writer-protagonist is further emphasized in the handbooks by presenting her/him (as suggested in functional grammar; Halliday 1994) as an active doer by assigning her/him the role of the 'senser' in mental processes of thinking about and planning the paper, and of the 'actor' in material processes of actively composing the paper:

> Your instructor may let you choose what to write about in your paper or may assign a topic. Even if the topic is assigned, you will probably need to decide which specific idea to explore or which approach to use. Selecting an appropriate topic is seldom a simple matter. Even after you discover a subject that attracts your interest, you may still find yourself revising your choice, modifying your approach, or changing topics altogether after you have begun research. (Gibaldi 1999: 4)

Secondly, by using a variety of linguistic means conventionally associated with instructive discourse (such as directive speech acts and deontic modality of obligation; see, e.g., Werlich 1982), the MLA handbooks carefully spell out the steps that the novice writer needs to take in order to produce an appropriate research paper. In this respect, there is an interesting difference between the two editions—the latter edition is clearly less directive when it comes to the depiction of the research process itself. For example, the third edition puts the importance of formulating a thesis statement quite categorically as follows:

> When you have concluded your research for the paper; it is time to shape the information you have at hand into a unified, coherent whole. Begin by framing a thesis statement . . . . (Gibaldi and Achtert 1988: 26)

In contrast, when discussing the research and writing process, the fifth edition makes more use of the epistemic modality of possibility and other means for conveying the idea that there are several options in writing. This suggests that the writer has, in fact, a choice all through the process; the following extract illustrates this idea:

> As you get closer to writing, you can begin to shape the information you have at hand into a unified, coherent whole by framing a thesis statement for your paper . . . . (Gibaldi 1999: 35)

Both editions also include descriptive text. After the initial section in both books, the remainder is devoted to a description of the appropriate mechanics and format of a research paper and to the instruction of the reader on how to ensure that her/his paper conforms to these conventions.

A research paper does not need a title page. Instead, beginning one inch from the top of the first page and flush with the left margin, type your name . . . . (Gibaldi 1999: 105)

4.4. *The image of, and stance towards, the recipients of the Chicago manuals*

As in the case of MLA handbooks, the implied recipient of the Chicago handbooks is most likely a student writer. The books' title as well as occasional instructions to the writer to consult 'the appropriate staff member' (Turabian 1987: 97) or 'the dissertation office' (Turabian 1996: 103) indicate that the writer at whom the books are primarily aimed is, however, neither a very young (high-school) student nor a mature and experienced scholar, but most likely an American (university) student in the process of producing her/his written assignments. It may also be that, for the Chicago handbooks, the implied writer is slightly more autonomous than for the MLA handbooks. This can be seen, for example, in the preface to the fifth edition, which states that

the manual has always championed the cause of the individual producing a finished manuscript, often serving as researcher, writer, typist (or now a word-processing specialist), graphic artist, proof- reader, and printer or photocopier operator, all in one. (Turabian 1987: iix)

The handbook represents itself as a 'how to' (1987: iix) book with whose help the individual writer can manage the complexity of the task of writing a research paper. In the manuals, she or he can find detailed descriptions of the ideal ingredients of a research paper, such as the following:

In the acknowledgements, the writer thanks mentors and colleagues, lists the individuals or institutions that supported the research, and gives credit to works cited in the text for which permission to reproduce has been granted (see 5.1). Although one might wish to acknowledge special assistance such as consultation or technical matters or aid in securing special equipment and source materials, one may properly omit formal thanks for the routine help given by an adviser or a thesis committee. (Turabian 1987: 3)

On the whole, there are very few explicit cues in the Chicago manuals as to how they see their implied audience, thus showing very little explicit involvement with the recipient. For example, they very seldom address the reader directly as *you*, but refer to her/him with more indirect means (e.g., by using 'the writer', the passive voice, or nonspecified subjects). At the same time, they frequently give direct orders or explicit recommendations to the writer, for example, as follows:

> In the titles of works in English, capitalize the first and last words and all words except articles, prepositions, the word to be used as part of an infinitive, and coordinate conjunctions . . . . (Turabian 1996: 65)

However, the following extract makes an exception:

> Commenting on the more than eleven thousand theses and dissertations [Kate Turabian] inspected for the university, she told the *Chicago Tribune* 'I learned early that modern young people have ideas of their own on grammar and punctuation.' It was to correct and guide these ideas that she wrote the instruction sheets that were given out to graduate students at the university. (Turabian 1996: vii)

The wording in this sample is quite interesting. The fact that Kate Turabian labels novice writers as 'modern, young people' implies that there is a fundamental difference between herself and the audience for which she originally wrote the manual. Obviously, she herself is not a 'modern, young' person. In this sample, the task of the handbook is also presented as a disciplinary one—it is described as the correction and guidance of the ideas of modern young people. Thus, while the MLA handbooks depict novice writers as naïve and forgetful, the Chicago manuals see them as far more subversive—having 'ideas of their own'. The voice of a well-meaning, but conservative and authoritarian 'Emily Post of scholarship' can indeed be heard here.

In short, the Chicago handbooks seem to impose on writers a body of rather categorical conventions. The task of the novice writers seems simply to internalize these canonical conventions in order to be able to produce a conventionally and institutionally 'correct' paper. Again, this image of the writer is quite different from the one suggested in the MLA handbooks, which basically strive to facilitate the socialization of the student-writer into 'the customs of a community of writers' in order to become 'a writer whose work deserves serious consideration' (Gibaldi 1999: xiii). Further, unlike the MLA handbooks, the Chicago manuals do not try to place themselves in the position of the novice writer or anticipate his or her reactions or difficulties in writing. They thus suggest a far less immediate contact with their implied readers.

One indication of this is also the formality of their wording and syntax. The relationship between the manuals and their implied readers could thus be characterized as a detached one. To put it otherwise, as they avoid any sense of contact with their recipients, the stance of the books towards their readers is therefore a clearly distal one (Lakoff 1990: 35). As will be seen in the next section, this reader detachment is actually contrasted with an intense and extremely detailed attention to the characteristics of the ideal research paper.

4.5. *The image of, and stance towards, academic writing and research in the MLA handbooks*

Both of the MLA editions include a section on writing and research. In fact, both of them quite systematically construct writing as something emergent, involving a variety of choices and decisions by the writer. Both editions also set up their task as introducing to novice writers what they see as the 'customs of a community of writers' (Gibaldi 1999: xiii). The MLA handbooks thus present academic writing as social and institutional practice, involving a communally shared set of conventions or customs.

There are some interesting differences between the two MLA editions, however. Most significantly, their descriptions of the process of writing and research display somewhat different attitudes towards conventions. The third edition builds up writing and research as a process involving a carefully choreographed sequence of 'logical steps' (Gibaldi and Achtert 1988: viii), passing through a variety of stages, and ending up with the finished product. The following are two formulations of this view:

> This discussion . . . begins with a brief review of the steps often outlined for expository writing. Although few writers follow such formal steps, keeping them in mind can suggest ways to proceed as you write . . . . (Gibaldi and Achtert 1988: 1)
> The first stage in research is discovering where to look for information and opinions on your topic. Begin by compiling a working bibliography . . . . (Gibaldi and Achtert 1988: 18)

Through the consistent use of the metaphors of 'steps' and 'stages' to describe the different aspects of academic writing and research, the handbook draws up a detailed map for novice writers. The complexity of the task of planning, composing, and editing a research paper is reduced and simplified by suggesting that writing is really a safely check-listed progression of steps. In other words, the book pictures writing as a uniform and largely predestined activity which does not leave much room for variety or individual choice.

It may very well be that the insistence on the process-like nature of academic writing in the third MLA edition echoes the writing process movement in vogue in the USA in the 1980s. In particular, like the cognitivist process writing theory (e.g., Flower 1989; Flower and Hayes 1980), the handbook focuses on the intellectual or 'logical' analytical procedures involved in writing (see also Santos 1992: 2). Further, its emphasis on passing on 'the conventions' of academic writing to new generations of writers, and its focus on writing as communication, point to certain allegiance with writing process approaches (Grabe and Kaplan 1996: 87).

While also depicting writing and research as a process, the fifth edition lays less emphasis on its uniformity and unidirectionality. Instead, it suggests that they are processes which can proceed on 'different paths':

> Because this handbook emphasizes the mechanics of preparing effective papers, it may give you the mistaken impression that the process of researching and writing a research papers follows a fixed pattern. The truth is that different paths can and do lead to successful research papers. Some researchers may pursue a more or less standard sequence of steps, but others may find themselves working less sequentially. In addition, certain projects lend themselves to a standard approach, whereas others may call for different strategies. Keeping in mind that researchers and projects differ, this book discusses activities that nearly all writers of research papers perform, such as selecting a suitable topic, conducting research, compiling a bibliography, taking notes, outlining, and preparing the paper. (Gibaldi 1999: 3)

Even though this edition of the MLA handbook thus acknowledges that no single norm can be assumed to govern the process of writing and research, it still leaves it open exactly what kinds of researchers 'may pursue a more or less standard sequence of steps' and who 'may find themselves working less sequentially'. On the one hand, the handbook seems to take into account recent (poststructuralist and postmodern) developments within many fields of humanist and social scientific enquiry which see research in these fields as theoretically, methodologically, and even politically heterogeneous, and consider that no single model of writing or research can thus claim universal validity. On the other hand, since the book is meant to be a handbook, it cannot give its users any more specific advice on the limits and possibilities for researchers actually choosing themselves which path they 'may' follow. No doubt it is helpful for novice writers to be made aware of the plurality of options available, but for more specific signposts they again need to turn elsewhere.

Unlike its predecessor, the fifth edition of the MLA handbook also emphasizes the excitement of research writing:

> Actually, a research paper is an adventure, an intellectual adventure rather like solving a mystery: it is a form of exploration that leads to discoveries that are new --- at least to you if not to others. The mechanics of the research paper, important though they are, should never override the intellectual challenge of pursuing a question that interests you. This quest or search should guide your research and your writing. Even though you are just learning how to prepare a research paper, you may still experience some of the excitement of pursuing and developing ideas that is one of the great satisfactions of research and scholarship. (Gibaldi 1999: 3–4)

The research paper is here described with an eruption of metaphors—it is seen as an 'adventure', 'a mystery', 'an exploration', 'a discovery', and even

as 'a quest' or 'a search'. The research process is thus no longer seen as a fixed and predestined progression but something far more unpredictable which can even lead to results not anticipated at all. Here the writer is also assigned a different kind of role and agency to those set up by the third edition of the handbook that more or less places the novice writer on a fixed path. In contrast, the fifth edition opens up a wholly new terrain with a number of possible and different paths, and even a promise of mystery, adventure, and excitement. The novice writer, at least in principle, is offered a choice—something that, at least explicitly, was not an option in the third edition of the handbook. Further, it seems that the writer implied by the fifth edition is someone who has individual goals, who 'pursu[es] a question that interests' her/him. In these formulations, one can perhaps again detect the influence of a particular theory of writing, namely the 'expressivist' theory (Santos 1992: 2; Grabe and Kaplan 1996: 87) according to which authorial 'voice' is a central element in writing.

At the same time, the bulk of the fifth edition of the MLA handbook looks very much like the third edition—it consists of advice and instructions on the format and mechanics of a research paper. This means that the new tenets of choice, variety, and difference it spells out in its preface have no practical consequences in the kind of instructions it gives on the actual composition of the research paper. Apparently, then, the mechanics is something that is not affected by changed theoretical conceptions of research and writing.

In both editions, academic writing is also seen primarily as communication of ideas and persuasion of audiences. Both editions also repeatedly assert that the research paper, as a form of communication between the writer and reader, needs to be 'clear' and 'effective'. The following extract can be found in both editions in almost exactly in the same form:

> A research paper is a form of communication. Like other kinds of nonfiction writing—letters, memos, reports, essays, articles, books—it should present information and ideas clearly and effectively. You should not let the mechanics of gathering source materials, taking notes, and documenting sources make you forget to apply the knowledge and skills you have acquired through previous writing experiences. (Gibaldi 1999: 4)

Another window onto how the handbooks picture research is provided by the examples with which they illustrate techniques related to source references, citations and bibliographies. A particularly interesting example of this is the inclusion of academic sources and other texts by male and female authors. In the two MLA handbooks the distribution of sources on the basis of the sex of the author is given in Table (1). These results must, however, be seen as tentative, because occasionally it was impossible for me

Table 1. *Works used as examples in the MLA handbooks, grouped according to the sex of the author*

Book	Raw number			Percentage	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
MLA, 1988 ed.	330	98	426	77.0	23.0
MLA, 1999 ed.	491	226	717	68.6	31.4

to discern the sex of the author. Still, I think they show convincingly enough that in both of the MLA handbooks, it is indirectly suggested that research or materials worthy of research are primarily produced by men.

The types of sources included in the handbooks can also be investigated from the perspective of what they imply about appropriate fields and topics of research. In the 1988 MLA edition the sources used as examples could be characterized as primarily canonical literary works (e.g., Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens), classical and modern European and North-American culture, and the English language, with some inclusions of sources on film, popular culture (e.g., jazz), African-American, native, and exotic cultures (e.g., black drama, Hopi stories, the learning of the Navajo language, and Balinese music). Also sources on social and societal problems in the US are included. The majority of the sources are in English. On the basis of this, it could be argued that the for the 1988 edition of the MLA handbook, the scope of worthwhile topics and fields of study is thus fairly broad and is not restricted to the study of canonical, classical, or highbrow topics and materials but that research can also be conducted on popular culture and contemporary materials, for example.

The 1999 edition of the MLA handbook includes even more varied sources: in addition to sources on North-American and European 'high' culture, art, language, music, and society, there are also sources on popular culture (in addition to jazz, also rock and pop music are noted, for example) and on non-European or non-Anglo-American cultural products (e.g., Latin-American literature, Japanese film). In addition, sources which could be labeled as postmodern and feminist are also included. As these examples indicate, in terms of its topics, materials, theories and even politics, the field of humanist and social research according to the 1999 edition appears to be quite heterogeneous. As in the 1988 edition, most of the research work used as illustrations in the 1999 edition are, however, in English.

Both MLA handbooks thus construct writing and research as a multidimensional process, shaped by contextual forces and involving not only formal textual decisions but also, to some extent, social considerations. Most research seems nevertheless to be conducted by men on materials produced by men, but on a fairly broad range of topics, canonical and

noncanonical. Where the two MLA handbooks differ is their view of the writing process: while the third edition emphasizes it as a process involving a definite set of steps, the later edition suggests, at least in theory, that there is no one predetermined route to produce a research paper. In a way, it could be argued that the close attention the handbooks pay to the writer's process or quest for academic writing and their clear reader involvement, also convey a sense of involvement with the subject matter at hand. Their main concern is the novice writer's process of planning and producing a research paper, and the books want to create an impression of closely following and identifying with this process.

4.6. *The image of, and stance towards, academic writing and research in the Chicago handbooks*

In contrast to the emphasis on academic writing as a process in both editions of the MLA handbook, the two editions of the Chicago handbook focus exclusively on the product, the research text. More specifically, the Chicago manuals meticulously describe the ideal qualities of the research paper and instruct the writer on how to ensure that her/his paper has these qualities, too. At the same time, the sixth edition states quite unequivocally that the purpose of the book is *not* 'to offer advice on how to select a topic, undertake research, and write up the results' (1999: viii) and suggests that for information on the research process the reader should consult *The Craft of Research* by Booth, Colomb, and Williams (1995) or other more specialized style manuals prescribed by academic departments. The Chicago manuals thus explicitly exclude the research process as a topic. In this way, they may in fact avoid the problem detected in the MLA handbooks, namely that their advice on the research process sometimes remains on too general a level to be actually helpful to writers working within specific academic contexts.

The emphasis of the Chicago manuals on the product shows, for instance, in the systematic presentation of the paper, through relational processes, in the role of having or needing to have certain, very specific characteristics:

> A paper has three parts: the front matter, or preliminaries; the text; and the back matter or reference matter. In a long paper, each of these parts may consist of several sections, each beginning a new page. (Turabian 1996: 2)

Through explicit descriptions, relatively straightforward syntax, and a great deal of technical detail, the Chicago manuals specify the properties of the research paper. Often these take the form of a statement of a general rule followed by qualifications of and exceptions to the rule, for example, as follows:

Each kind of research paper must include references giving full publication data for works cited in the text, and each is to be submitted as finished copy rather than as a manuscript prepared for typesetting. Before beginning work on such a research paper, the writer should consult the department or degree-granting institution to determine any special requirements. To the extent that these do not conflict with the guidelines offered in this manual, or if no special requirements exist, the style presented here is recommended. (Turabian 1996: 2)

Further, descriptive text alternates with instructive text that tells the writer—mostly through short, unambiguous sentences and direct speech acts—how to build up her/his text appropriately. The following extract illustrates both of these strategies typical of the Chicago manuals:

Fragments of classical and biblical texts (some only recently discovered) are often not uniformly numbered or may have no numbering whatever. The same is true of some modern manuscripts. In citing such materials, indicate any ordering of pages that has been added, whether by an individual or an institution holding the collection, by setting added numbering in the exact style in which it is written on the original manuscript (letters, arabic or roman numerals, uppercase or lower case, subscript or superscript, etc.) and enclosing this notation in brackets. Put a space after the final bracket, then give the full name of the person or institution that ordered the text. In subsequent references the name may be abbreviated. (Turabian 1996: 30)

Jointly, the detailed descriptions of the properties of the research text and the explicit and unambiguous instructions to the writer, contribute to the idea that it is of utmost importance to get the form of the paper right. The following extract on advice on the margins of the research paper from the fifth edition of the Chicago manual illustrates this concern of the handbooks for the correctness of the formal characteristics of the written product:

MARGINS

14.2. Leave a margin of at least one inch on each of the four sides of the sheet. Some institutions require more than this, particularly on the left, since binding reduces the margin. The only margin that may be shortened by one or two lines is the bottom margin, where an extra line of text may be permitted to avoid beginning the next page with a very short line.

14.3. In general, a ragged right margin is preferable to a justified margin. Justifying right margins should be done only if this can be achieved without leaving large gaps of white spaces, or 'rivers', on the printed page. When lines are automatically justified by a computer, all hyphenation must be proofread carefully and adjusted to the standards set forth in chapter 3. (Turabian 1987: 247)

Despite the fact that the Chicago manuals do not give any explicit advice on the research process, like the MLA handbooks, they do imply a great deal of

Table 2. *Works used as examples in the Chicago handbooks, grouped according to the sex of the author*

Book	Raw number			Percentage	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Chicago, 1987 ed.	515	70	585	88.0	12.0
Chicago, 1996 ed.	569	77	646	88.0	12.0

what research is like through the kind of examples they include. Table 2 shows, again tentatively, that the examples or sources that they include in fact imply that research is done clearly in the majority of cases by men on materials produced by men.

As far as the selection of sources is concerned, there are very few differences between the two editions of the Chicago handbook. The topics of the sources deal primarily with canonical high culture, including, for example, European literature, art, history, philosophy, religion and music, US society, and, to some extent, medicine and natural sciences. Further, there are very few examples of non-Western sources or topics. On the whole, the Chicago manuals could be said to suggest a classicist, conservative, elitist, European and North American high culture primarily produced by male authors in English as the ideal object of research.

In sum, through a variety of means, the Chicago manuals display a sense of intense involvement with the research text. Their explicit and detailed descriptions of the features of the research paper and careful and categorical instructions to the writer suggest that their primary concern is not the need fulfillment of the writer, but the formal correctness of the research text. At the same time, the formality, unemotionality, and matter-of-factness of their style indicates a certain kind of detachment from the subject matter. It is as if the whole issue of research writing is viewed from a distance, neutrally and coolly. From this perspective, the discourse of the Chicago manuals could, in fact, be argued to resemble legal English (for a characterization of legal English see, e.g., Hiltunen and Varantola 1987). Their normative and regulatory discourse could thus be read as laying down one law of academic writing, a law which is partly geared towards the protection of the culturally and institutionally valued object from its producers. In this, the manuals do not, however, claim to be the only or even the most important authority, but through their frequent references to other institutions (the university, departmental, disciplinary requirements; other handbooks, dictionaries, and reference books) they make it clear that the business of academic writing is a highly and multiply policed business.

4.7. *The educational goals and ideology of the two handbooks series*

As the analysis of the different facets of the two handbook series shows, in terms of discourse they are almost antithetical. This is also true of their educational goals and ideologies. In short, the MLA handbooks clearly seem to draw on and rearticulate an educational ideology that is liberal in essence, whereas the Chicago handbooks are equally clearly conservative in nature.

As in liberal educational ideology generally (see for example Giroux 1988; and Cope and Kalantzis 1993 for more details), the MLA handbooks take as the starting point for developing their discourse the needs and cultural experiences of students. In this view, education is basically seen as need fulfillment to remedy 'absence of a particular set of experiences' (Giroux 1988: 126)—such as the lack of the skill to design and write academically appropriate prose. Further, as was shown above, by insisting on identifying with the novice writers' position and anticipating their problems and reactions, the MLA handbooks place the individual learners with their personal experiences and needs at the center and strive to establish and maintain a good rapport with them, which, again, could be seen to be in accordance with the ideology of liberal education (see Giroux 1988: 129). Finally, the social objective of the educational discourse of the handbooks could also be seen as a particular reformulation of liberal education, the assimilation of students to modernity (Cope and Kalantzis 1993: 83–84). In the MLA handbooks this objective is manifest in their mission to enable novice writers to gain access into the community of practice of 'professional' academic writers. Despite its initial postmodern ethos emphasizing individuality, plurality, and difference, it could be argued that even the 1999 edition pursues this goal. Most significantly, this shows in the fact that, even though the 1999 edition of the MLA handbook aligns itself with postmodern pedagogy which has typically been hesitant to 'state curriculum intention explicitly for fear of irrelevance or cultural insensitivity' (Cope and Kalantzis 1993: 84), in practice the handbook is not at all reluctant to state its quite unequivocal and uniform intentions as far the particularities of the research text are concerned. In sum, the discourse of the MLA handbooks could be called 'enabling' (Foucault 1983: 220) and it clearly aims at producing 'knowing bodies' (Foucault 1973: 64), writers who are provided particular possibilities for agency and identity through the proficiency of academic writing skills.

As was seen above, the Chicago manuals emphasize formal correctness, the norms and conventions of academic writing, and consider academic texts with a great deal of reverence. This kind of stance towards academic texts could be interpreted as a particular reformulation of conservative educational ideology according to which knowledge is considered 'part of

a storehouse of artefacts constituted as canon' (Giroux 1988: 117). As is characteristic of conservative educational ideology in general, the Chicago handbooks aim at conveying to or even imposing this knowledge on writers, for them to reproduce. In its most extreme form, this kind of educational discourse views the experiences or personal knowledge by students as a threat of disruption; canonical knowledge is, in contrast, privileged as 'true' or 'valuable'. Consequently, the social and political ends of this kind of discourse are to 'instil respect for received truths, discipline and stable hierarchy' (Cope and Kalantzis 1993: 83). That the Chicago manuals have an allegiance with this type of educational ideology shows, for example, in their depiction of novice writers as having incorrect 'ideas of their own', from which they need to be weaned with the help of detailed and careful instructions on (and descriptions of) the ideal qualities of the research text. The Chicago manuals could perhaps be characterized as a type of discourse which, to use Foucault's term (1977: 90) again, through repressive and prescriptive practice, aims at producing 'docile bodies' (Foucault 1977)—writers who reproduce the ideal research text, without critically interrogating or questioning the particular requirements, their historicity, motivations, causes, and effects.

4.8. *Summary*

Since the analysis of the four handbooks is quite multifaceted and extensive, a summary of the main findings are presented in a tabular form (see Table 3). The summary is accompanied by a discussion of handbook discourse in relation to non-native academic writers of English, and the implications, challenges, and problems handbooks pose for them. For reasons that have to do with my own experiences as both a non-native academic writer of English and as a teacher of future writers of this kind, the particular group of non-native writers that I will use as an illustration is that of Finnish writers of academic English.

5. Handbooks and Finnish non-native writers of academic English

Finnish non-native writers of academic English have usually had a thorough and extensive training in writing in Finnish at school and university and are thus quite competent at producing appropriate academic prose in this language. In writing in English their background is, however, much less substantial. At the same time, both Finnish university students and scholars are increasingly expected to produce written work in English. In fact, in

Table 3. *The overall profiles of the handbooks*

	MLA, 1988 and 1999 editions		Chicago, 1987 and 1996 editions
Voice and authorship	The communal voice of MLA instructors and researchers		Kate Turabian as the animator of the institutional voices of the university
Audience and image of writer	Young, inexperienced American (high school) students, able to learn the socially ratified conventions of academic writing		Relatively inexperienced American university students, prone to corrupt the research text
Text-writer relationship	Writers given access to and socialized into the community of practice of expert writers Explicit ego, reader, and subject involvement Relationship of instruction between 'us' (authors) and 'you' (novice writers)		Writers subjected to institutional norms Explicit detachment from the author, reader and subject Describing and prescribing the ideal qualities of the research text and writer action
Image of writing and research	MLA, 1988 edition	MLA, 1999 edition	
	Focus on the process: writing as a uniform, logical process Clarity and effectiveness Humanistic and social scientific research mainly by men on materials produced primarily by men on a fairly broad range of topics, relating to canonical and noncanonical, popular, American, European, and non-Western cultures	Focus on the process: writing as a process of discovery that can progress 'on different paths' and produce something unexpected Clarity and effectiveness Humanist and social scientific research mainly by men on materials produced primarily by men on a broad range of topics, relating to canonical, noncanonical, popular, American, Euopean, non-Western cultures	Focus on the product: Emphasis on the formally correct research text Mainly humanist and social scientific research by men on materials produced by men on topics relating to western classical and canonical European and American high culture

Table 3. *Continued*

	MLA, 1988 and 1999 editions	Chicago, 1987 and 1996 editions
Educational goals	Socialization of novice writers into full membership in the community of practice of academic writers Main goal ambiguous: to instruct on research writing *and* on the format of the paper	Protection and reproduction of the institutionally valued object, the research text Main goal unambiguous: to describe and instruct on the format of the research paper
Educational ideology	Liberal: focus on the individual needs of students Through its enabling discourse aims at the productions of 'knowing subjects'	Conservative: focus on the canonical body of knowledge and the institutionally and culturally valued research text Through its disciplinary discourse aims at the production of 'docile bodies'
Changes between the editions	No major changes between the 1988 and 1999 editions, except that the 1999 edition includes information on citing electronic sources and takes into account some tentes of postmodern reasearch	No substantial change between the two editions

some disciplines it has even been complained that Finnish scholars are now publishing too little in Finnish and too much in English.[1] What is also typical of Finnish academic writers is that they are often acutely aware of their (real or imagined) shortcomings as communicators in English and are worried that their use of the language reveals that they are not native or native-like (see, e.g., Leppänen and Kalaja 2002). Consequently, they are very anxious to find and use any instructive materials—such as writing handbooks—which can help them in their writing.

However, the kinds of handbooks investigated in the present study could be argued to offer both too much and too little for Finnish non-native writers of English. They offer too much in the sense that these writers are most probably more experienced and already have more knowledge of the general principles of academic writing than the young American students at whom the handbooks are aimed. For example, in the case of the MLA handbooks the information they offer can be excessive and redundant in the sense that their instructions and advice are too 'hands-on', introductory, and straightforward in nature. The extremely detailed and careful instructions and advice on the technical aspects of the research paper in the Chicago manuals, in turn, can be too specific in detail and too regulatory and constraining in nature for the non-native writer.

On the other hand, that the handbooks offer too little for the non-native writers shows in, for example, their assumption that the information they give is relevant across the humanities and social sciences. In fact, none of them contains any instructions relating to conventions and norms specific to particular disciplines and orientations of study. In principle, the Chicago manuals seem to be at least aware of this problem, and refer to a variety of other sources of information that the writer should consult, whereas the MLA handbooks do not say anything at all about it. In this sense, the handbooks may not be very helpful to more advanced academic writers, such as the Finnish ones, who need to be given a good sense of the conventions and preferences of their particular field of study.

For such writers this may in fact be a serious shortcoming, as they often have to rely much more on instructional materials for help with their writing than do native scholars. One reason for this is that there may be just a handful of scholars working within a particular field, and non-native writers may thus have no or very limited access to the professional and informal networks within which important but often 'unofficial' professional information is passed on. Another reason for this is that the expectations and preferences of the particular institutional setting (e.g., journal) for whom the non-native writers are writing may well be given in a very limited and superficial form, forcing them to look elsewhere for information on what an appropriate research article should look like.

In addition, because of their lack of supportive networks it may be quite difficult for the Finnish non-native writers to obtain a realistic view of how seriously they need to take the handbooks' instructions. As was shown in section 4, despite their different discourses and educational ideologies, both handbook series present writers with very distinct and detailed sets of conventions and norms. However, this normativity does not apply in the same way to everyone, partly because different writer positions are inscribed with different rights and obligations. For experienced academic writers, and, I would argue, for experienced native writers in particular, the norms and conventions so carefully laid out by the handbooks are perhaps not such a challenge at all. As can be readily observed when examining scholarly books and journals within the humanities and social sciences, not even within one and the same field do all native writers in fact follow the same conventions; rather, in their own ways they bend and mix them to an extent. In contrast, novice writers, and—again—non-native novice writers in particular, may consider the normativity of this type of instructive discourse an absolute obligation which they need to take very seriously in order to appear as credible and convincing scholars.

The emphasis on norms and conventions in the handbooks also means that they either totally gloss over or only superficially touch upon the question of individuality, diversity, and difference in academic writing. As was shown above, all of them (despite the few concessions to postmodern plurality in the 1999 edition of the MLA handbook) suggest that both research texts and writing are a rather uniform business. To what extent individuality and difference is allowable in academic writing may again be difficult to figure out for any academic writer—native or non-native. Nevertheless, for non-native writers of academic English it can be a particularly thorny issue, because, in the model set by foreign-language teaching institutions, they often see difference—or the absence of native-likeness—very negatively, and uniformity—or native-likeness—very positively, indeed as the ultimate aim of their learning a foreign language.

In sum, because handbooks offer particular images of academic writing and its various aspects emphasize uniformity, and are quiet about difference and diversity in academic writing, writers may be persuaded to see the norms and conventions suggested by these authorities as a safe choice or as the only option they have. Consequently, their individual, original, creative, or cultural ways of writing may not have much chance of surfacing in their English language academic texts.

6. Conclusion

As was argued in the beginning of the article, the type of instructive discourse illustrated by the MLA and Chicago handbooks can be seen as

both enabling and constraining. On the one hand, by providing writers with detailed instructions on the format and technical aspects of the research paper, the handbooks can in their own way assist them towards a better proficiency in academic writing. This can be all the more successful when handbooks — as was, to some extent, found to be the case with the traditional Chicago manuals—are very explicit about what norms and conventions there are in academic writing, and—as was shown to be typical of the liberal MLA handbooks—when they also take into account their intended audience's needs and goals and are able to respond to them in appropriate ways. On the other hand, through suggesting certain particular sets of style preferences, the handbooks can also delimit writers' options and possibilities of expression. As has been shown above, this is again true of both of the series investigated in this study. Through their respective socializing and disciplinary discourses, both either background or are quiet about other options and possibilities for academic writing. From this perspective, handbooks could even be seen as an instrument of power with which the order, stability, and hierarchy within academic writing practice is partly maintained (cf. Chesterman 1995: 209).

Both handbook series, regardless of their educational ideology, are problematic in another way, too. This is because, despite their being aimed at specific groups of American users, their instructive discourse is also built in a way that suggests that it is relevant to writers across a broad range of humanities and social science disciplines, and in varied cultural and linguistic contexts. In fact, as a concept, *handbook* already entails the idea that a manual can, ideally, be used anywhere, at any time, by anyone, to get a writing job done efficiently. However, as is argued in section 5, their universality, technicality, and transparency are often only apparent, especially for non-native writers of academic English.

Against this background, for the producers of handbooks the findings of the present study suggest, in fact, that the goals of handbook discourse now merit critical reevaluation, and that more substantial changes than those detected in the two handbook series between the late 1980s and 1990s are perhaps needed. One such change might be that handbooks could offer writers, native and non-native alike, more diverse and localized maps. In other words, handbooks could tell writers as much as possible about the diverse expectations of the disciplines in question (e.g., how one is expected to write in English academic prose in different factions of applied linguistics, literary studies, or cultural studies). In more practical terms, this means that handbooks could provide writers with thorough descriptions, explanations, and justifications of the norms and conventions particular to specific fields and disciplines as well as instructions on how writers can apply this information to their own writing. In addition, as is also suggested in critical literacy studies (see, e.g., Clark and Ivanič 1997, and Cope and Kalantzis 1993,

2000), literacy pedagogy, including handbooks, needs to convey to writers a good sense of the plurality of options available to them in their particular field and encourage and enable them to critically investigate and weigh these in relation to what they themselves want to do and to the ways of writing they want to use.

Further, for handbooks, along with other institutions that have responsibility over and power in shaping the norms and conventions of academic writing, another conclusion on the basis of the present study could be that they also need to show more tolerance of difference and diversity in writing, in particular of the difference of non-native writing in English. That this is now an important issue is also indicated by the growing number of studies by scholars working in, for example, cross-cultural rhetoric (Mauranen 1993; Clyne 1987; Y. Kachru 1996; B. B. Kachru 1996, 1997), 'political', post-structuralist and post-colonial applied linguistics (Pennycook 1994), foreign language learning (Kramsch 1993), critical literacy (see, e.g., Clark and Ivanič 1997; Cope and Kalantzis 1993, 2000), and research on English as a European lingua franca (see, e.g., Jenkins and Seidlhofer 2001; Seidlhofer 2001; House 2001). All of these studies have in their own ways emphasized the importance of showing more awareness of and tolerance for the 'otherness' of the non-native user of English.

For advanced non-native writers of academic English, the present study suggests that they also need to recognize that their (potentially) different styles in writing academic English are not always a problem, and that they may, in fact, have other options than the strict adherence to the norms and conventions put forward by the handbooks. In this respect, the European writers of English have long been in a less advantageous position than other groups of academic writers. For example, non-native writers of English in post-colonial settings may already have more leeway in terms of how they can write in English. This is because in post-colonial linguistic and literary interrogations it has for some time been argued that post-colonial subjects need to and can redefine their identities in relation to the language and language practices of the former colonizers (see, e.g., Ashcroft et al. 1989; Pennycook 1994, 1998). Interestingly enough, even in the Anglo-American 'center' something similar seems to be evolving: the current debates on the role and significance of the standard language in English as a mother tongue and in second language education also focus on issues of power, identity, and voice. Which or whose English is, can and should be used in institutional contexts of different types is seen as having important consequences in terms of social, cultural, and ethnic identity and equality (Milroy 1999; Cameron 1995; Bex and Watts 1999; Lippi-Green 1997).

Fortunately, as is also demonstrated by these on-going debates and discussions, new possibilities for redefining the English voices of European writers of academic English may now also be emerging. Hopefully, the

critical investigation of the discourses shaping and constraining academic writers in the present study can also be seen as one small step in this direction.

Notes

* I am grateful to the anonymous referees for their extremely helpful suggestions and criticisms—thanks to them, the article is no doubt much better than it would otherwise have been. All the problems that remain are naturally mine.

1. In Finland, as in other European countries, English has for a long time been the foreign language par excellence that every Finnish citizen has had to learn at some point in her/his learner's career. Despite occasional protests against what is seen as the 'Americanization' of culture, the value and usefulness of English has rarely been questioned. By educational authorities, teaching institutions, parents, and learners alike it has been seen as valuable symbolic capital and important in terms of future profession, economic advancement, and international communication (see, e.g., Takala and Havola 1983). In the same way as in many other European countries, the use of English as the medium of communication is, however, now rapidly increasing in such specific contexts as higher education, business, and computing (Phillipson 1992: 25; Graddol 1999: 64), which means that, at least in some settings and domains within Finnish society, English really has become a second language.

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Universalistic handbook discourse and the local needs of writers. Article. Full-text available.Â Through their liberal instructive discourse, the MLA handbooks aim at socializing writers and guiding them towards membership in the community of academic writers, while the more conservative Chicago manuals strive to protect the institutionally valued research text from its writers. However, the handbooks are also similar in certain respects: in addition to providing instructions that can be quite empowering, they also delimit the options writers can have. From this perspective, the article also argues that particularly for non-native writers of English, handbook discourse can be quite proble Universalistic handbook discourse 55. and that in some respects native and non-native writers may be faced with quite similar challenges when planning and writing their research texts, they may also pose problems that are particular to non-native writers alone. For this reason, I want to argue that a more â€˜localâ€™ perspective to instructive discourse in English is both timely and of cultural, social, and political importance. In this sense, the present study aligns with the recently invigo-rated interest in the discourses of teaching and using English as a second/ foreign language in particular According to one of the paradigms, literary discourse is a specific kind of discourse. It was offered by Jacobson, who wrote: â€œliterary discourse is an organized violence committed on ordinary speech.â€ (because stylistic devices are difficult to interpret). There is another approach produced by cognitive scholars and scientists. They believe it is better to dismiss these differences as such, but actually we should discuss these differences in terms of a scale. Literature may be considered not only as discourse, but also a discourse (a piece of discourse), which shares characteristics with some