

DIGITAL NARRATIVES AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN POSTMODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Abstract:

The present study explores the process of creating identity in digital narratives from the perspective of postmodern English literature by analysing the relation between the structure of the narrative and the linguistic elements in digital narratives. In the digital age, the notion of identity is now articulated as performative, fragmented and fluid, rather than stable and fixed, with digital mediums like social media narratives, interactive fiction, and multimodal texts emerging as new forms of digital storytelling. In this study, adopting a mixed method approach the research integrates quantitative corpus-based analysis and qualitative discourse analysis to analyze the pattern of identity representation within a structured corpus of 1000 instances of narratives. Some of the important factors analyzed are: type of the story, type of identity, language characteristics, fragmentation, interactivity, use of pronouns, and sentiment. The results show that the most prevalent identities are fluid and fractured, and that narrative discontinuity and dynamic linguistic expression are high. The use of pronouns in particular, with a particular emphasis on first- and second-person pronouns, underscores the interactive and self-referential aspects of identity construction; code switching and intertextuality are also features that help to shape hybrid identity formation. The study overall brings empirical evidence for the postmodern theories of identity and is a valuable contribution to the interdisciplinary discourses of literature, sociolinguistics, and digital discourse studies by providing a detailed account of the ways in which identity is constructed in digital stories in the present.

Keywords: Digital narratives; Identity construction Postmodern literature; Discourse analysis; Sociolinguistics

1. Introduction

The active development of digital technologies has significantly altered the nature of the storytelling as it has brought many new forms of narration expression that is sometimes referred to as digital narratives. They are hypertext fiction, social media storytelling, interactive narratives and other multimodal forms that break the normal linear forms of literary representation. Digital narratives are non-linear, interactive, and multimodal (that is, the reader actively engages in the process of reading) as opposed to traditional ones. The implications of this change to constructing and representation of identity are huge since digital spaces are fluid spaces where individuals can continue constructing and enacting their identity (Arshad et al., 2025; Vohidova, 2025). Here, identity ceases to be understood as fixed and stable but fluid and changing as a result of linguistic options as well as digital engagement.

This transformation is also supported by the notion of identity in the context of contemporary digital and postmodern. The concept of identity is being perceived as a product of discourse and influenced by the evolving social, cultural, and technological conditions. These features and the disintegrated structure of digital narratives offer an appropriate context within which these properties can be studied. The instability of identity is manifested in the discontinuous narrative forms, multiple voices, and changing perspectives, and emphasizes that the identity is a result of the narrative and linguistic processes (Georgakopoulou, 2016; Blommaert, 2018). Besides, the trans-digital space makes people negotiate cultural and linguistic identity in various settings, which once again highlights the fluid and dynamic character of identity-building (Boumaza & Baker, 2026).

The key to this process of identity construction is played by language. Sociolinguistically, identity is not a given characteristic, but it is created by means of discourse and communicative action. The use of pronouns, code-switching, intertextuality, and multimodal are used as the main characteristics by which identity is manifested and negotiated (Georgalou, 2017; Leppana et al., 2017). Online communication also enhances those processes as it allows new modes of interaction and expression where identity is constantly made by the decisions of individuals as well as the audience. The combination of discourse and critical methods can offer a handy model to comprehend how linguistic decisions can be used to represent an identity within a digital narrative (Jones et al., 2015; KhosrowNik, 2017).

Besides the linguistic aspects, there are new visions of the identity construction presented by the new technologies appearing, like artificial intelligence and computational analysis. The digital platforms are more based on data-driven systems and algorithm-driven systems, which shape the identities representation and perception. Investigations into identity formation using computational discourse analysis and artificial intelligence emphasize the mediatory role played by technological infrastructures and computer interfaces in identity formation (Santo, 2024; Pournaki and Willaert, 2024). The developments also widen the identity construction field as it goes to prove that the identity is not merely socially and linguistically constructed but also technologically constructed.

Although the research on digital narratives and identity is growing, there is still a gap in the research that would integrate a literary analysis with a data-based, systematic approach. A large portion of the literature that has already been written is either theoretical explanations of identity or descriptive explanations of digital discourse, with little concern on systematic examination of linguistic and narrative patterns. Moreover, the connection between narrative fragmentation, linguistic, and identity construction has not been addressed in an integrated form (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2015; Androutsopoulos, 2017). It is necessary to address this gap to gain a better understanding of identity in digital contexts.

To address this requirement, the current paper examines the construction of identity in digital narratives by analyzing the structure of the narrative elements and linguistic characteristics. It pays attention to significant characteristics such as fragmentation, interactivity and discourse features and their significance for identity representation. The research will thus try to offer a better understanding of the dynamics and performativity of identity in digital space.

The relevance of this study is that this is not only interdisciplinary but additionally it is a collection of the perspectives of literature, sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. The paper addresses two topics: the identity in the narrative and the linguistic form, which offers a general overview of digital narratives' identity. It has also been part of the larger conversation of the use of language in the digital age and the need to explore how and in what ways identity is constituted and negotiated in the present communication. In general, this study is very useful for understanding a changing language, identity and narrative in the digital era.

2. Methodology

A. Research Design

The research design in this study is mixed-method research design since the study involves quantifying the two research methods: quantitative and qualitative research to comprehend the identity construction in online stories. Quantitative Dimension is based on the corpus based statistical analysis that allows determining patterns, distribution and correlation of linguistic and narrative variables. In this case, the qualitative part takes the assistance of discourse analysis approach to analyze identity construction, negotiation, and representation through the use of language. The research will consist of both empirical and interpretative studies to try to answer the question of identity in the digital postmodern environments holistically.

B. Dataset Description

The work is anchored on a corpus that is organized and consists of 1000 examples of narratives representing different types of digital storytelling. Each of the entries will have a textual extract with a set of annotated variables pertaining to identity construction. These variables are narrative type and identity type that define the type of narration and the manner of identity description. The characteristics of linguistic and discourse level such as linguistic feature, secondary feature and tone show the stylistic and pragmatic features of language usage. Furthermore, quantitative measures like fragmentation score and interactivity level indicate the level of discontinuity of the story and interest in the reader. The

dataset also contains information on sentence length, sentiment score, lexical diversity, and the use of pronouns to make the linguistic patterns and identity markers in the texts more detailed. The multi-dimensional information enables a systematic search of the interconnection of language, narrative structure and identity.

C. Data Selection and Scope

The corpus is aimed to represent a diverse spectrum of digital narrative space, such as social media discourse, interactive fiction and digital literature. The different types of narratives, in addition to the linguistic options, offer coverage of the different modes of identity construction (fragmented, fluid; more stable; hybrid). The range of the dataset will be able to be compared with various narrative settings and the study will be able to incorporate the interactive and ever shifting nature of identity in the internet realm.

D. Analytical Methods

Both the discourse-analytical methods and the statistical methods are applied to analyse it. The distribution of the types of the narratives; the identity categories and the linguistic features used as the whole corpus is also analyzed by frequency analysis. Correlations and regressions are used in the application to find the relationship between the variables, specifically, the relationship between the variables of fragmentation, interactivity and linguistic characteristics in the construction of identity. Further, qualitative discourse analysis is also undertaken in a manner that it gets to know how some of the linguistic characteristics such as use of pronouns, intonation and discourse marking are incorporated in the identity representation and negotiation process. This type of analytical combination can both quantitatively justify and qualitatively explain identity construction in digital discourses.

3. Results

A. Descriptive Statistics

The corpus analysis demonstrates a wide range of the narrative forms, types of identity, and linguistic characteristics. The representation of identity consists mostly of fluid and fragmented identities, with the second category being performative, hybrid, and stable-shifting identities. This allocation brings out the prevalence of dynamism and non-fixed identity constructions in digital stories. Linguistic elements, including the code-switching, intertextuality, and multimodal aspects, are broadly represented, which means the hybrid and stratified character of the digital discourse. Table 1 reveals the frequency distribution of the types of identity where fluid (212) and fragmented (205) identities are more common compared to performative (198), hybrid (192) and stable-shifting identity (193).

Table 1: Distribution of Identity Types

Identity Type	Frequency
Fluid	212
Fragmented	205
Performative	198
Hybrid	192
Stable shifting	193

Equally, Table 3 depicts the use of pronouns whereby the use of first person pronouns (I) is predominant and closely by the use of second person (you) which implies that there is a great inclination to self-refer and interactive identity construction. Figure 1 illustrates the proportion of identity types in a graphical way, and it validates the dominance of fluid and fragmented identities.

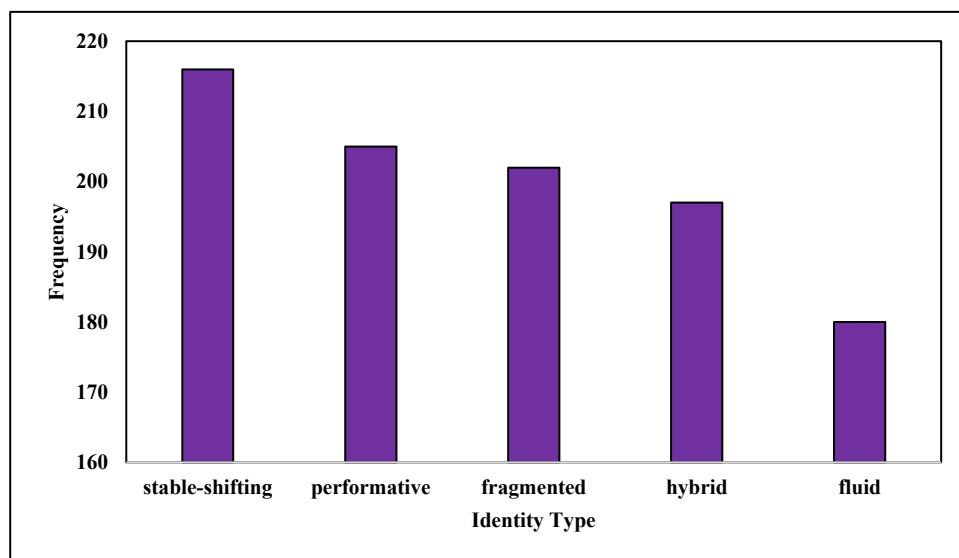


Figure 1. Distribution of Identity Types in Digital Narratives

B. Fragmentation and Identity Construction

The findings show a definite correlation of narrative fragmentation and the identity representation. Greater fragmentation is linked to type of fluid identity, performative identity and hybrid identity whereas lesser fragmentation is linked with more to stable-shifting identity. This trend supports the idea of fragmentation as one of the characteristic aspects of postmodern identity construction.

Table 2 shows the average score of fragmentation by type of identity with fragmented identities scoring the highest (0.68), hybrid identities (0.66), performative identities (0.64) and fluid identities (0.61), and the last having a score of 0.55, stable-shifting identities.

Table 2: Mean Fragmentation Score by Identity Type

Identity Type	Mean Fragmentation Score
Fluid	0.61
Fragmented	0.68
Performative	0.64
Hybrid	0.66
Stable shifting	0.55

A graphical representation of the distribution of the fragmentation scores is shown in Figure 2 and it indicates that most of the values fall within the mid-to-high range. The distribution verifies the fact that narrative discontinuity is among the prominent aspects of digital stories.

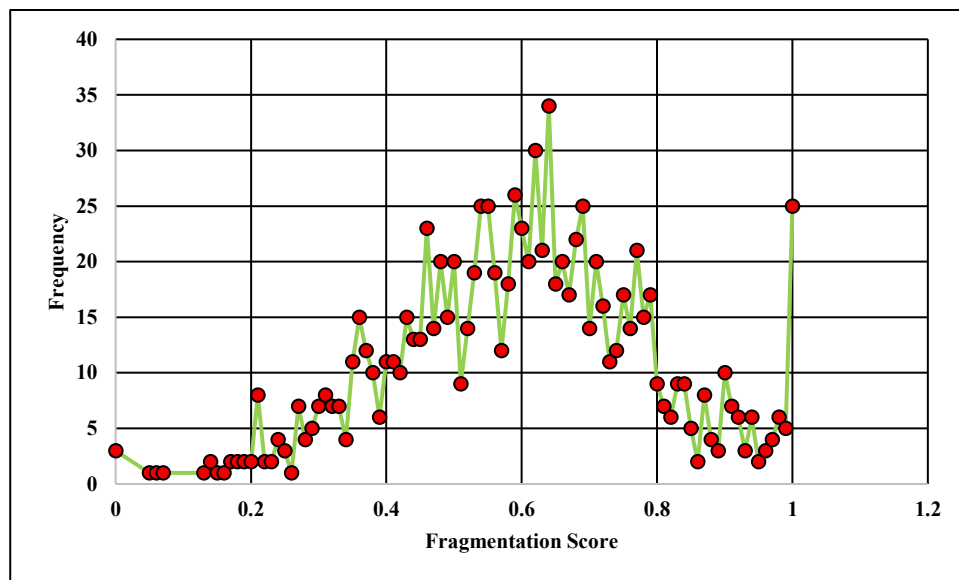


Figure 2. Distribution of Fragmentation Scores

C. Linguistic Features and Identity Representation

The discussion shows that linguistic characteristics are important in identity building. The application of the pronouns turns out to be one of the significant indicators of identity, and the first-person, second-person, and third-person use demonstrates the multiplicity and the permeability of the identity roles. Such features as code-switching and intertextuality are also used to construct hybrid identities through the play with various linguistic and cultural components.

The patterns in Table 3 are consistent with the importance of the application of the usage of pronouns in identity construction, and Table 1 also validates the dominance of fluid and fragmented identities. Taken together, the findings demonstrate the significance of the language as among the primary arenas where the identity is represented and negotiated.

Table 3. Distribution of Pronoun Usage

Pronoun	Frequency
I	260
You	255
We	245
They	240

Figure 3 contributes to these results by visually representing the use of pronouns distribution, where the use of self-referential and interactive discourse is predominant in digital narratives.

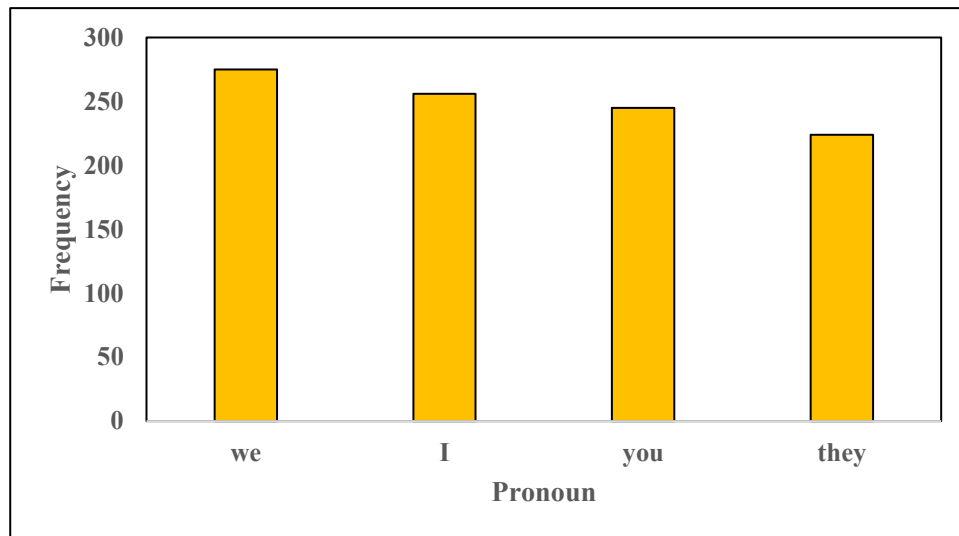


Figure 3. Distribution of Pronoun Usage

D. Platform and Interactivity Effects

It also comes out of the results that interactivity is a major factor in identity construction. Stories that are more interactive are more likely to have more performative and fluid identities and this is an indication that the audience participation helps in identity co-construction. Conversely, less interactive stories are characterized by comparatively more consistent patterns of identity.

This tendency is not directly presented in table format, but it follows the distribution tendencies of Figure 1, where dynamic identity types are more common. The results show that more adaptive and flexible identity performances are promoted through digital spaces that facilitate interaction.

E. Tone and Sentiment in Identity Construction

Tone and sentiment analysis discloses that identity construction is directly related to the expression of emotion and attitudes. First-person narratives are often connected with introspective and confessional tones and are more focused on the personal identity and introspection. Conversely, ironic and detached tones tend to be more related to fragmented and performative identities, which are characteristics of postmodern discourse that are reflexive and distancing.

The support of these findings is supported by the larger patterns of Table 1 and 2 that emphasized the prevalence of fluid and fragmented types of identity and their correlation with the increased level of fragmentation.

On the whole, the findings indicate that identity in online stories is fluid, fragmented and performative. The overall presentation of Tables 1-3 and Figures 1-3 indicates the key contribution of linguistic characteristics, fragmentation of the narrative, and interactivity to the formation of the identity. These results can support empirically postmodern theories of identity and emphasize the role of digital discourse in the formation of modern narrative practices.

4. Discussion

The findings of this discussion provide a sufficient explanation to the postmodernism ideas of identity as mobile, discontinuous and continuously recreated within the framework of digital narratives. The reality that fluid and fragmented forms of identity are dominant in the results is reflective of the fact that the contemporary digital narratives are no longer attached to the constant and consistent images of the self. Rather, identity is seen to be dynamic and changing and is molded by gaps in narrative form and the plurality of views inherent in digital storytelling. The above positive correlation between higher scores on fragmentation and performative, hybrid, and fluid identities is another strong step in proving the point that fragmentation is not a mere style feature but a key process in the creation of postmodern identity (Kaloï et al., 2025; Eve, 2024). This is consistent with theoretical approaches that consider the subject as decentered and decentered, with instability and change instead of coherence (Murray, 2017).

The language is an important part of this identity construction process, and evidence of this process is that certain linguistic features are predominant in the corpus. Especially the use of pronouns comes out as a major indicator of identity positioning. The dominant usage of the first-person pronouns demonstrates a high degree of self-referentiality, whereas the significant proportion of the usage of the second-person forms points to the interactive and dialogic approach to identity building. The changing pronoun usage is the symbol of the plurality of the identity positions, which allows people to alternate between the personal, collective, and external viewpoints. Such fluidity between the categories of the pronouns demonstrates how identity is negotiated in discourse and is not determined in a unique narrative voice (Page, 2018; Zappavigna, 2015). Secondly, the presence of such features as code-switching and intertextuality also lead to the creation of the hybrid identities due to the inclusion of various linguistic and cultural allusions, which further supports the notion that the idea of identity is constructed through the interaction of a number of discursive forces (Hnit & Almann, 2025).

The performativity of identity is further increased by the role of digital environments. The findings reveal that the more the interactivity, the more dynamic and adaptive forms of identity, and the identity is co-constructed in terms of engagement with the audiences. Digital stories, especially the ones integrated into interactive platforms, offer users an

opportunity to engage in the construction and revision of identity and turn the narrative process into an interactive and emerging practice (Kaloi et al., 2025; Randazzo and Ammari, 2025). This underscores the importance of the presence of the audience on identity construction since people constantly change their self-representation to adapt to feedback, interaction and the contextual needs. Identity, in turn, is a performance that is continually repeated and re-performed in digital spaces, as opposed to a fixed point that exists outside of the discourse (Kianpour et al., 2026).

Fragmentation from the distribution of fragmentation scores is important in facilitating this performative and fluid conception of identity. The fact that the scores are concentrated in the mid-to-high range suggests that the majority of the stories are characterized by high rates of discontinuity and prove the idea that fragmentation is one of the defining features of digital storytelling. The fragmented narrative forms make possible a variety of perspectives, time-related variations, and non-linear development which all lead to the identity being portrayed as a multifaceted and complex entity (Eve, 2024). This complexity of structure reflects the unsteadiness of identity, itself, implying that the form of the narrative is closely connected to identity formation (Singh, 2024 cited in Kianpour et al., 2024).

The affective aspect of the identity building can also be seen in the tone and sentiment patterns that are observed in the results. The first-person narratives are closely connected with the introspective and confessional tones, which focus on the importance of individual consideration of identity development. Such tones produce the feeling of immediacy and authenticity, and people can express their experiences and form a coherent idea of themselves in the story. On the other hand, it is ironic and detached tones, which are attributed to more frequently fragmented and performative identities and which are more reflexive and self-conscious mode of engagement. This means that identity is not just made by the formulation of linguistics but also it is made by basing it on emotion and attitudinal positioning (Hnit & Almann, 2025). The results also add to the larger discourses in the field of literary studies, as well as applied linguistics. Literature-wise, the findings can be used to highlight the importance of the narrative form in identity formation, particularly, the role of fragmentation and interactivity in the postmodern narrative (Murray, 2017). The digital stories are an extension of the current literary practices, but they bring in the interactive and multimodality nature of the stories hence creating a new option of identity formation (Kaloi et al., 2025). In terms of linguistic analysis, the research shows that identity is created in a discourse, and language plays a crucial role in mediating social and cultural meanings (Page, 2018). Moreover, social media and other digital platforms are important in the process of collective and individual identity development since they offer platforms through which people can share their stories and build communities (Abir et al., 2025).

The latest advances in the area of digital technologies only broaden the limits of identity building, with new aspects of it, including AI-mediated stories and digital legacies. Research on digital afterlife and identity reconstruction points to the technological environment that allows new identity persistence and transformation that extend the conventional narrative frameworks (Lei et al., 2025). On the same note, the identity reconstruction concept in the online worlds shows that people actively redefine their identities based on the digital engagements and experiences (Randazzo and Ammari, 2025). These trends support the thesis that identity is fluid and performative in addition to being technologically mediated more and more (Kianpour et al., 2024).

Overall, the discussion indicates that it is a complex process since identity is created in the digital stories due to the combination of the narrative structure, language features, and the virtual reality. The identity is developed as fluid, performative, and constantly negotiated in respect of the conditions of postmodernity as a whole and the impact of digital technologies on the practices of narratives. Such findings substantiate not only the current theoretical views but also add to them by giving empirical data about the process of identity formation in the modern digital space.

5. Conclusion

This paper has examined the formation of identity in digital stories by conducting a combined analysis of structure and linguistic characteristics of the narrative. The results show that identity in the digital world is fluid, fragmented, and performative as a result of the combination of language, narrative form, and digital interaction. The prevalence of fluid and fragmented types of identity suggests the transition between stable images of the self to more dynamic and changing ones, which is the characteristics of the modern digital space. The narrative fragmentation turned out to be one of the factors of identity construction, and the greater the discontinuity, the looser and more numerous identity positions. The linguistic aspects especially the use of pronouns, the code-switching and the intertextuality were discovered to be instrumental in the expression of identity and negotiation of the identity with great importance of discourse in developing self-representation. Moreover, interactivity was depicted to play an important role in the identity formation since digital platforms facilitate users to engage in identity co-construction. The prominence of the tone and sentiment also highlighted the affective aspect of identity, which proved that the emotional manifestation is part of the identity representation. The research also has a contribution in literary study and linguistic studies since it is able to merge the theoretical perspective and empirical research, in order to present a complete picture of identity in a digital narrative. The study is, however, constrained by its use of structured data and future studies need to use real world digital texts and investigate the cross-cultural aspects. In sum, the results highlight the relationship between language, narrative, and identity in the digital age that is changing.

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