

## ReHearing *Voice* as a Productive Concept for Composition Studies

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### Abstract:

In this presentation, I propose that rhetors revisit audible voice as a viable medium for socio-epistemic approaches to understanding a relationship between language and thought, inner self and outer experience. Rather than referring to its origins in orality/aurality, *voice*, as a concept in composition studies, has been conventionalized as a metaphor for style in written discourse. Combining the work of Isocrates and Don Idhe, I propose that we re-conceptualize *voice* to afford scholars a way of accounting for complex negotiations within self and other through sound compositions. In his work *Antidosis*, written in 363 B.C. Isocrates argues that through speech we deliberate private thoughts just as we deliberate in public arguments. Isocrates' turn towards intrapersonal development represents an exception to a classical and neoclassical norm of focusing on outward measures of speech: articulation, tones, and gesture. This is a shift from focusing on rhetoric as outwardly persuasive for an *other* to speech as an act providing insight into self. Idhe extends Isocrates attention to voice in developing self as positioned among polyphonic influences, experiences and voices that inform our voice. A mingling of voices within and without inform ways humans use voice to create a *self-presence* within larger communities, presenting scholars with a dialogic concept of voice. ReHearing *voice* in a way that resonates in human sound brings scholars closer to understanding the phenomenology of sound in new media composition.

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Hearing a voice in the absence of any speaker is one of the most unusual, complex, and mysterious aspects of human experience. Typically regarded as a symptom of severe mental illness, it has been experienced by people from all cultures and eras. From the revelatory and inspirational voices of medieval mystics to those of imaginary friends in childhood, and from the inner voices of writers as they craft their characters to the stories of people from the international Hearing Voices Movement, the exhibition explores the complexity and diversity of the experience and interpretation of voice-hearing.