"In This Paper I Will Prove …": The Challenge Behind Authorial Self-Representation in L2 Undergraduate Research Paper Writing

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Abstract Developing expertise in EAP writing is a time-consuming endeavour, entailing not only mastery of advanced language forms and functions, but also extensive domain knowledge accumulated through interaction with a large body of reading material. By way of practice, academic writing assignments engage students with textual input from multiple sources to be synthesized, analysed, critically evaluated, responded to and, ultimately, creatively transformed. Writers of academic prose are then not only expected to provide an objective account of the data and perspectives of experts, but also to position themselves in relation to them and mark their own presence in the discourse they create. The experience of many practitioners has shown that projecting one's own identity in the process of developing a thesis, especially when working with source texts in L2 as reference is one of the most challenging academic literacy tasks for novice writers. Discrepancies between L1 and L2 writing cultures, the learners' status in the academic discourse community and their rigid conceptions of academic writing, often enhanced by inconsistent advice offered by instructional materials, might contribute to the excessive dependence of inexperienced L2 writers on source material and to linguistic choices which reduce their agency. This paper looks into the distribution, rhetorical functions and semantic connotations of first person pronouns employed as identity signals by undergraduate students in source-based research papers.

1 Introduction

The writer's identity is an elusive and complex concept in academic writing, which is traditionally associated with the impersonal and neutral transmission of objective content knowledge by a distant researcher. In popular consciousness academic texts are construed as heavily convention-bound and characterised by the detachment of the author from the issues under investigation. This well-established view of academic

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prose has its roots in the positivist conception of knowledge and knowledge-making, which, with the dynamic development of the natural sciences, for many years influenced scholarly thinking as well as the perception of scholarly activity by outsiders. According to this conception, knowledge is a body of generalizable universal truths that exist independently of the context and individuals. Positivists see academic research as objective and purely empirical, and academic expository writing by extension, as devoid of subjective, personal interventions. Geertz (1988, as cited in Hyland, 2002a, p. 1095) refers to it as "author-evacuated prose". In the alternative, constructivist view, knowledge is subjective, created by the individual and inseparable from the social context (Ivanić, 1998). The constructivist perspective, with its emphasis on subjectivity, makes more room for the person behind the ideas and in the writing context it recognizes the writer's persona as a significant element of any serious academic text.

A growing body of research (Ivanić, 1994, 1995, 1998; Lillis, 1997) reveals that much currently published academic writing is not completely devoid of the writer's presence and that this presence manifests itself in ways that can be either very subtle or overt and explicit. In the light of these findings, the view of the author as detached from the text and operating from the background is an oversimplification. As a communicative act, writing conveys content and carries a representation of the writer, seeking recognition by and affiliation with the reader (Hyland, 2002b). Writers perform a range of manoeuvres in their texts in addition to transmitting a message, e.g., they evaluate their own and others' claims and they display greater or lesser confidence in their assertions. Awareness of the writer's voice and the ability to project it in academic writing is an important aspect of academic literacy. The decisions that academic writers take with regard to the degree of personal commitment in their own texts may have a significant impact on their credibility as knowledge-makers in the eye of the reader.

2 Writer Identity in Academic Writing

The concept of identity does not denote a static or fixed phenomenon. On the one hand, it is the self which writers have and express through their texts; on the other, it is the self that emerges from the text in the process of its creation (Brooke, 1991; Tang & John, 1999). Writers are thus free to temporarily suspend their existing selves and choose to invent new ones to project to their readers. The notion of identity was extensively explored by Ivanić (1998), who identified three aspects of this notion: the autobiographical self—"the identity which people bring with them to any act of writing" (p. 24), i.e., identity composed of the life experience, values and beliefs of the person who writes; the discoursal self, i.e., the author's image projected in the writing; and the authorial self, which becomes evident when the writer originates claims of position and takes responsibility for them. Additionally, Ivanić (1998) distinguishes "possibilities for self-hood in the socio-cultural and

institutional context" (p. 27), i.e., selves that are possible within a given context, which may be more or less privileged, depending on how much status they receive in that context.

In addition to its multi-faceted nature, the writer's identity manifests itself in academic texts in varying degrees because conventions of impersonality in academic writing across disciplines differ. Hyland (2000) and Johns (1997) note that academic writing is not homogenous: different disciplines have different practices and discourse conventions. In some disciplinary writing or in different parts of the same text within a given discipline, this authority of the writer as "a maker of meaning" (Ivanić, 1994, p. 12) can be powerfully projected whereas in others it may be subordinated to the objective presentation of data. For example, scholars in the hard sciences tend to assert their presence less strongly, bringing the issues under discussion to the foreground to create a sense of objectivity. In soft disciplines, i.e., the humanities and social sciences, whose domains are not as clear-cut or amenable to precise measurement, writers' commitment to their contributions can be demonstrated more explicitly, thus enhancing an impression of authority (Hyland, 2002b). Projecting the writer's identity by means of explicit signals has also an interpersonal dimension in how it affects the readers' perception of the writer' credibility, competence, authority and potential to influence: "Interpersonal aspects of writing are not (…) an optional extra (…) [but] are central to academic argument and to university success" (p. 357).

3 The Identity of L2 Learners as Writers

The writer's identity is particularly problematic for those directly involved in developing writing expertise in academic discourse in a foreign language—writing instructors and university students. As Hyland (2002b) observes, professional writers were found to make personal interventions in their writing several times more frequently than students, especially in the soft disciplines (as opposed to the hard sciences), with both singular and plural reference, and in all discourse functions (e.g., stating a goal, explaining a research procedure, stating results/claims, elaborating and argument). The academics' commitment to claims is seen particularly in those aspects of texts which entail the greatest risk of judgment and those for which they can be most credited (i.e., presenting and developing an argument). Raimes and Zamel (1997) found, however, that even L1 writers may have problems finding an appropriate voice in their writing.

For L2 writers of academic prose, the task of conveying their authorial self is complex in multiple ways. Like all university students, L2 writers are confronted with a new dominant literacy, and have to employ a different code and find a new voice in which to convey ideas. In order to align themselves with other members of the academic discourse community and successfully engage in its practices, novice academics need to be able to master new types of discourses. When discourses of a

given community are employed, there is strong pressure to take on a new identity—that of a member of that community (Hyland, 2002a, p. 1094). For any new member undergoing the process of enculturation into a given discourse community, this identity may be in conflict with, or at least vastly different from, the roles he or she is familiar with from previous life or educational experience.

Additionally, L2 writers are further constrained in a number of ways. Firstly, they have to learn how to express highly complex content using advanced specialist language while they are still developing their general proficiency in L2. Secondly, they may be influenced by their home writing cultures and have different expectations about the reader's and the writer's roles. Anglo-American academic prose is essentially a writer-responsible one (Hyland, 2003), in which it is the writer who takes it on himself or herself to effectively, i.e., clearly and convincingly, argue his/her stance for the reader. This may be not be the case in learners' own cultural contexts. Thirdly, learners may be confused as to the extent to which the author can safely demonstrate his/her personal involvement because the criteria for the acceptability of personal intervention are not clear-cut. Hyland (2002b), for example, observes that instructional materials offer no or conflicting guidelines concerning this aspect of writing. Some style guides do not address this textual aspect at all, while others offer prescriptive recommendations such as to avoid first person pronouns, to remain objective, opt for tentative claims and adopt an impersonal tone through the use of passive constructions, it-subject sentences, nominalisation, use of hedges, etc. As Tang and John (1999) observe, few manuals seem to address the fact that the first person pronoun is not a uniform category and it can in fact serve to project a range of writer roles in the text. Not surprisingly, all these factors make the use of the first person pronoun particularly suspect from the students' perspective, and adds to a sense of helplessness and uncertainty on the part of learners (Ivanić, 1998). Nevertheless, while it is clearly a problematic area for L2 writers of academic prose, the question of authorial stance in student writing has attracted less attention than that of writer identity in professional academic writing.

4 The Study

4.1 Aims

Although a wide range of linguistic means can be employed by writers to make their presence felt, their identity is the most strongly affirmed by the use of first person pronouns: I and we and their respective determiners: me, my (mine), us and our (ours). Many researchers point to their role in expressing commitment to the statements that follow, and establishing a relationship with the reader (Hyland, 2002a; Tang & John, 1999). Contrary to popular myth, the distribution of the first person pronouns in academic writing should not be viewed merely in absolute terms, i.e., their presence or absence, but rather, as Ivanić (1998) claims, in terms of a continuum of their uses conveying different degrees of authorial power.

The principal aim of the study was to find out to what extent and how L2 undergraduate students signal their authorial presence in their research papers. The focus was on the students' use of explicit markers of authorial stance, i.e., first person pronouns and their related forms, which arguably are the most visible manifestations of the authorial self in the text. Specifically, the research questions addressed were:

1. What is the distribution of first person pronouns in student writing?
2. What rhetorical functions are performed by sentences containing first person pronouns?
3. What types of verbs are used with first person pronouns?
4. What are the semantic referents of first person pronouns in student writing?

4.2 Method

The study involved the quantitative and qualitative analysis of 49 final drafts of 3rd-year students' research papers written over the course of one semester in 2013 and 2014. The papers were composed on topics of the students' choice and approved by their supervisors in a variety of fields: literature (33 papers), culture studies (8 papers), linguistics (5 papers) and applied linguistics-TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) (3 papers). The mean number of words per paper was 2095 and the total number of running words in the whole corpus was approximately 102,700.

The papers students produced were based on library research. The assignment required the students to make a choice of relevant reading material and provide its effective synthesis in the light of their proposed thesis. The maximum number of sources to be consulted and referred to was five. The students were not expected to design and conduct an experimental study for the purpose of their paper, but to analyse and evaluate existing research, finding links between different topic-related publications relevant to the debate. In the process, they were expected to put forward an arguable thesis or position statement and then provide logical and coherent argumentation to support it, also with adequate citations. The writing process consisted in creating an outline, followed by drafting, revision and redrafting so that the majority of students produced and submitted three versions of their texts. The final versions were subjected to the analysis. Due to the nature of the assignment (i.e., engagement of learners with subjective perceptions, interpretations and opinions rather than objective data found in a typically experimental format), there was some reason to expect a higher frequency of authorial self-references in students' texts compared to that found, for example, by Hyland (2002a) in his students' research reports on studies which followed a typically experimental pattern.

4.3 Results

4.3.1 Distribution of First Person Pronouns

The results obtained for the first research question are presented in Table 1. The average number of overt references to self per paper in the analysed corpus was 6.6 which roughly equals 3 occurrences per 1000 words. Huge discrepancies were observed in the distribution of personal pronouns in individual papers, with as many as 42 first person references in a single paper on the one hand, and 14 papers (approximately a third of the corpus) with no self-identification through pronouns at all, on the other. A high proportion of the first person pronouns, both singular and plural, occurred in the subject position—83.6 and 70.5 % of all first person pronoun occurrences respectively. A high incidence of the plural form we was also noted in the students' papers, all of them single-authored. On the whole, the students do not shy away from using the first person pronoun but they prefer to disguise themselves as a group.

With regard to the location of the self-mentions, as can be seen from Table 1, the largest number of them was found in the main bodies of the texts, and the overwhelming majority of these were realized by the first person plural pronoun. These sections of the research papers were devoted to the review of literature in which the writers summarized and commented on the sources. The students had been instructed that in the process they were supposed to provide some critical evaluation of the material they referred to—a potentially threatening act, which made the writers resort to a defocusing tactic, i.e., using the plural pronoun form, as in the following sentences:

Table 1 First person pronoun occurrences in student writing

Personal reference	Research paper section			All papers
	Introduction	Main body (literature review)	Conclusion	
First person singular pronoun (incl. I, me, my, mine)	40	17	23	80 (24.9 %) (67 in subject position)
First person plural pronoun (incl. we, us, our, ours)	39	148	54	241 (75.1 %) (170 in subject position)
Totals	79	165	77	321

(1) Losing manners and forgetting our rational side is not the right way to stand for what we consider correct or incorrect, and respect should be placed on the top, whichever our ideological tendency is.
(2) Generally speaking, among the traits that we value are decisiveness and stability, especially as far as our opinions and beliefs are concerned.
(3) We are still probably somewhere in between affirmation and rejection of conventions, it was the counterculture that questioned whatever oppressing there was in our civilisation and that dealt with searching for some new ideas but being inspired by the old ones.

As for introductions and conclusions, authorial self-references were almost equally distributed between them. Singular pronouns were as common as plural ones in the opening sections of the papers, and were primarily used to state the purpose, preview the content of the work, and set the background for the discussion, for example:

(4) Therefore, in the following paragraphs, I will elaborate on both similarities and differences between the two accounts.
(5) In this paper I am going to examine how the progress of science, especially astronomy, changed the understanding of traditional Gothic themes between the times of Poe and Lovecraft, which were, respectively, the first half of the XIX century and early XX century.
(6) To test this hypothesis and its consequences for linguistic theory, we will launch a cross-linguistic study into the nature of focus and ellipsis remnants in languages.
(7) There is some indication that the remnant can be contrastive focus, new information focus or contrastive topic in English, but we need to study if these types are attested cross-linguistically, too.
(8) The fantasy novels that I will focus on will be Andrzej Sapkowski's The Witcher Saga, J. R. R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings and Hobbit, R. E. Howard's Conan the Barbarian, C.S. Lewis's The Chronicles of Narnia, M. L. Kossakowska's Siewca Wiatru and J. K. Rowling's books about Harry Potter.
(9) My examination of the relationship between history and culture will concern works of four authors: Wilfred Owen, Virginia Woolf, Julian Fellows and Pat Barker.
(10) Tales are literary works which we derive basic wisdom about life from.
(11) More often we can hear the opinion that women are more confident and 'manly' than men who seem less and less resourceful.

The concluding sections of students' papers were devoted to summarizing the key points, expressing opinions and reactions, making evaluations and stating the limitations of the work, for example:

(12) I have chosen rock and metal music to describe their methods of conveying emotions and whole stories, because I find those genres the best at doing so, I wanted to explore their tools and explain how they work and of course interest readers with phenomena occurring in rock and metal music.
(13) In the course of my analysis, some differences between the four works studied in this paper have become apparent.

(14) In conclusion, I think that because the poetic genre is so author-dependent, packed with emotion and inseparable from the original linguistic form it is impossible to translate poetry properly.
(15) Having read the two dramas I was deeply moved by the representation of the man's desperate desire to find the meaning that would brighten his existence.
(16) Despite the fact that the dominant overtone of the two dramas is utterly pessimistic, I strongly believe that the characters' efforts to change their stagnant situation serve as a proof that human beings have a profoundly ingrained internal force which can guide them and help them in any—even the most hopeless—circumstances.
(17) I do hope that this analysis would prove illuminating and the reader will feel inclined to do a bit of his own research afterwards.
(18) There are many more parallels which I didn't manage to mention in this paper.

4.3.2 Rhetorical Functions of 1st Person Pronouns

The second research question focused on the functions that the student authorial self-mentions perform in discourse. Analysis of the data allowed the researcher to identify four major categories of discourse functions, which are listed in Table 2, together with their frequencies in the students' papers. The categories broadly correspond to those identified by Hyland (2002a), but some modifications to his typology were necessary. One difference is the absence of two rhetorical functions, i.e., explaining a procedure and expressing self-benefits. These two were excluded from the present analysis because of the nature of the assignment the participants were engaged with. The first one, explaining a procedure, is connected with a step by step presentation of the aspects of methodology adopted for a study, and the second, expressing self-benefits, pertains to statements of personal gains obtained through the research process.

The findings indicate that students' use of self-mention by means of both I and its related determiners is preferred for the role of the writer as navigator through the text. In this role the writer performs relatively safe and low-stake discourse functions, like stating the purpose of the text (which, incidentally, was previously consulted with and agreed on by the supervisor), presenting his or her intentions, providing a structure for or signposting the text through meta-discourse, like

Table 2 Rhetorical functions of self-references in student papers

Function	1st person sing. pronouns	1st person pl. pronouns
Stating the purpose of writing	31	1
Making a claim (stating a position/expressing an opinion)	29	68
Providing a structure for the text	20	14
Elaborating an argument (justifying, illustrating claims)	0	144
Totals	80	241

previewing the upcoming content or reviewing what has been said in earlier sections. The majority of I uses is connected with the role of writer-as-discourse-organizer (74.6 %); that is, the role in which no claims are imposed on the reader, e.g.,:

(19) In my work I will mostly focus on the cultural representation of one of the phenomena whose origin is attributed to the 1914–1918 period—shell-shock.
(20) In this paper I will demonstrate how Hardy uses nature to bring out Tess's traits, express her emotions, and reinforce the theme of her unwarranted suffering.
(21) In order to determine in what way Kerouac's vision of Buddhism is flawed, I need to establish sources of his inspiration.
(22) Firstly, however, I must define what is meant by the term "modern fantasy" in this paper.
(23) Now I would like to move on to demonstrate how various sceneries contribute to the presentation of the heroine in changing physical and mental situations.
(24) I shall comment on these one by one.
(25) In this excerpt, Kerouac establishes the main source of inspiration as Mahayana Buddhism, but he also belittles the impact of Zen on his writing, of which I will give some examples later on.

For more demanding and face-threatening functions, like making and justifying a claim, elaborating on arguments, providing illustrations and examples, and formulating a conclusion, with a few notable exceptions, the plural form is preferred. For example, a considerable proportion of these occurrences (32.6 %) consist in general statements, containing facts and truisms about the world, discipline-specific common knowledge (e.g., definitions of specialist terms) as well as source citations, character descriptions and plot summaries, all relatively low-risk actions. This is also the case with final sections of papers where conclusions are drawn—another role in which writers expose themselves to potential judgement by the reader. The grammatical choice in all these situations implies defocused agency and dilutes the authority of the writer. The following examples illustrate this tendency in pronoun use:

(26) While discussing the asymmetry, we can clearly notice that women are here in a worse situation.
(27) Taking into consideration both Mr. Elliot and Lady Russell's figures and their influence upon the lives of people that surrounded them, we can easily reach the conclusion that they were exceptional characters.
(28) Here we can draw a direct parallel to the life of soldiers in the trenches of Western Europe.
(29) When we look at the lower branches of commanding officers, the ones who actually sat in the trenches alongside their troops, we can see an even starker contrast with Beowulf.
(30) Still, if we take a closer look at some of their characteristics, e.g. association with the elements or spheres of life, we will see the resemblance they bear to the particular gods of Asgard.

To finish this section, it should be noted that all of the rhetorical functions identified in student texts were also realized without direct authorial reference, by means of alternative strategies, like passivisation or nominalisation. Their closer examination is, however, beyond the scope of this paper.

4.3.3 Verbs Used with 1st Person Pronouns

The next research question concerned the types of verbs that co-occur with first person pronouns in student papers. Since the writer's agency is most strongly emphasised by means of first person pronoun in the subject position, only combinations of verbs and pronouns in this position were analysed. Table 3 presents the distribution of first person pronouns with different verb categories in the analysed corpus.

The use of 1st person pronouns with verbs denoting cognitive acts like think, believe, assume, consider, suppose, etc. constituted approximately one third of all self-references (both singular and plural). These pronoun-verb combinations are connected with the role of writer-as-a-thinker, which entails the greatest amount of authorial power. Two manifestations of this role can be distinguished: the first one consists in critically commenting on or expressing an attitude towards claims made by other writers referred to in one's paper; the other one concerns advancing a new, original claim. Only a few instances (3.24 %) were found of first person pronouns followed by verbs explicitly and firmly making a stance on an issue under discussion or expressing interest in, or agreement or disagreement with opinions of or facts established by the cited authors. Examples 31–33 below illustrate this use of the pronoun.

(31) Faulkner and Steinbeck were ones of the first writers who employed such characters as the main ones in their major works but they did it in two totally different ways, and as much as I do not want to derogate Steinbeck's work, I believe that Faulkner is for some reasons more of a literary advocate of mentally challenged people than Steinbeck.

(32) I dare say it seems presumptuous to claim the capability of translating someone's feelings—and those are inseparable from the author when it comes to the majority of literary works.

(33) Taking all what has been said up to this point into consideration, I think there needs to be a discussion on what can be truly translated and what is the outcome of translation.

Table 3 Verbs used with 1st person pronouns in student writing

Verb types	1st person sing. pronouns	1st person plural pronouns
Cognition/evaluation/expositive verbs	35.5 %	41.7 %
Cognition/evaluation/expositive verbs hedged by modals	55.2 % (mostly *will* and *would like to*)	35.8 % (mostly *can*)
Other	9.3 %	22.5 %

No cases were found of the writers' contributing their own unique content in the way mature writers do. This seems to confirm what other studies have also demonstrated, that inexperienced L2 writers of academic prose refrain from making overt judgments for fear of being exposed to critical judgment coming from more knowledgeable members of the discourse community, i.e., their tutors and supervisors. Taking on roles which entail distance to one's own text is a way of coping with such intimidating audiences (Kirsch, 1993).

The high incidence of modal verbs used as hedges in company of expositive verbs (e.g., *observe*, *notice*, *see*) which follow the first person pronoun, especially in its plural form, indicates a high degree of caution on the writers' part and a message that the claims put forward are fallible. The modal verbs that most frequently followed first person singular included will and would like to, and were used to state the writer's intentions and purposes. The first person plural pronouns were followed by a greater variety of verbs, including can, should/ought to, may, might and could, most frequently used to elaborate on arguments and draw conclusions. Some modal verbs were also followed by verbs like attempt and try, with both singular and plural pronouns, further implying tentativeness or lack of confidence in the claims made.

4.3.4 First Person Pronouns Reference

The fourth question sought to establish the semantic connotations of the first person plural pronoun we in students' papers, or specifically, the types of identities behind the pronoun. Analysis of the corpus data reveals that the first person plural pronoun has a wider distribution in student writing, but also that a greater range of its referents can be identified. The largest number of occurrences of the first person pronoun (48.5 %) pertained to people in general and were typical of statements conveying generally accessible knowledge about the world, a particular state of affairs, as well as facts that are hard to disprove or challenge. Such references to the self were used to justify and illustrate claims in a general way by referring to universal collective experiences shared by human beings and they revealed no information about the writer's persona. This writer, representing humanity in general, is in fact a non-entity and as such projects very little or no power. The following sentences are typical manifestations of this meaning of the pronoun we:

(34) When somebody does us a favor, we should at least try to repay it.
(35) Why do we have the need of having someone or something intangible that we cannot see, even that we cannot touch?
(36) We constantly repeat the same patterns, no matter if we live in the 19th or 21st century.
(37) We all have an image of "a hero" in our heads.

The second largest semantic category (47.3 %) was comprised of the uses of we implying a smaller, specific but not identified group of fellow members of the same discourse community (e.g., the linguistics, literature/culture studies, and applied linguistics discourse communities). This use of we was evident in statements

developing arguments, justifying claims, and drawing conclusions. In the subject literature, such pronouns are referred to as vague (Kittagawa & Lehrer, 1990). Vague uses of pronouns betray an attempt on the writer's part to portray him/herself as one who belongs to or aspires to belong to a group of like-minded people who share the same specialist knowledge. By referring to disciplinary knowledge, known and accepted by insiders, the novice writers may want to communicate their intention to align themselves with established members of the group. The following examples illustrate this aspect of meaning:

(38) What we should consider, then, is the status of the AAVE as an independent variety of Standard English.
(39) The topic becomes more problematic and interesting at the same time when we regard poetry as a potentially translatable text.
(40) If we analyse his stories in the context of the state of geology back then, they attain an additional aura of probability.
(41) A schema is a permanent element of our knowledge.
(42) Still, we can attempt to apply modern theories of persuasion to situations illustrated in the 19th century novel, written under the expressive title Persuasion, in order to prove that the art of persuasion is something universal, regardless of the age and social reality.

These two semantic dimensions of first person plural pronoun were by far the most prevalent. However, two more meaning categories can be identified in the analysed corpus, although the range of their distribution was low. The first one, which accounted for 4.2 % of all first person plural occurrences, is we meaning no one in particular, as in the following sentences:

(43) In the marriage of Jane and Bingley we have the triumph of romantic love over social obstacles.
(44) In the Lord of the Rings we have Gandalf, a character so clearly based on Merlin that he seems to be almost his twin brother.
(45) Do we find the same variation in the marking of focus remnants in ellipsis?
(46) First we have Oedipus, who unknowingly kills his father, the king of Thebes.

In all such contexts the personal in question can be replaced by the structure there is/there are, or the indefinite pronoun one without a significant change in meaning. The least numerous semantic category (3.7 %) that was identified in the students' papers consisted of the plural pronoun meaning the author herself/himself. This referential use of the pronoun was typically used when no commitment was involved, as in the following examples of metadiscoursal signposts:

(47) We will investigate how these ingredients of meaning are related to each other and how they influence the syntactic expression of the remnant.
(48) Having discussed the process of the emergence of stereotypes we can proceed to the research which addresses this phenomenon.
(49) However, as we discussed several types of texts and approaches to the topic, we can clearly see that translation is a very complex process involving much skill and consideration.
(50) The novel is not dependent on systemic forces, since it exists above them—and when it comes to the understanding of the characters' behaviour we shall take into consideration their inner predispositions to, simply putting it, do good or evil.

5 Conclusions and Implications

Although the study reported above is limited in scope, of local character and not free from various context-specific limitations, certain tentative conclusions and pedagogical implications suggest themselves. Firstly, L2 writers feel reluctant to declare their authorial selves and choose to reduce the number of explicit attributions to the self in high-stakes roles. Their presence as authors is primarily exposed through rhetorical choices which carry little or no threat of criticism. Considerably less numerous are cases of writers who tend to overuse the first person pronoun. These findings confirm what was earlier established by Hyland (2002a) for Hong Kong and Vergaro (2011) for Italian writers of academic English. This might mean that L2 writers' strategies for positioning themselves in their academic texts are similar regardless of their first language backgrounds. The preference for affiliation with some collective entity through pluralisation implies lack of assertiveness and a wish to share responsibility for the claims, creates a distance to the content, dilutes the authority of the writer and sheds little light on the individuality of the writer who chooses to give up his or her own voice and hide in the company of others. This more or less deliberate choice clearly contrasts with what expert writers have been found to do. Putting forward a claim and then providing arguments in its support is where professional writers speak with their unique and undisguised voices and align themselves with their assertions, implying ownership of ideas and authority. L2 writers, as aspiring members of an academic discourse community, tend to approach academic texts as sources of authoritative information, which should be taken for granted and not challenged by a novice. The nature of the assignment genre might also have contributed to enhancing this attitude, as the students were not required to contribute and comment on their own original content, but on what experts have already discovered. However, a similar trend has been observed for writing tasks reporting a study designed and conducted by students themselves (Hyland, 2002a). It is rather unsurprising that inexperienced L2 writers feel reluctant to declare their independent authorial selves and choose to reduce the number of attributions to the self, also for fear of being made accountable for their assertions or being perceived as overly and unjustifiably self-confident. Indeed, the overuse of both singular or plural personal pronoun forms, especially side by side with common knowledge or in the company of trite and trivial observations makes student writing sound bland and pretentious. An interesting direction of further research would be exploring how the distribution of first person pronouns affects the quality and effectiveness of student texts.

Secondly, the amount of source reading, usually print or on-line professional journals, done by students for the completion of their assignment seems to have affected their writing in diverse ways with regard to authorial presence in their texts, regardless of the topic or discipline. By engaging with texts written by professionals

in order to select appropriate passages to be used as evidence to support a stance in their own texts, students were exposed to ways in which expert writers project their personas, thus learning about them implicitly. It can be expected the students will attempt to emulate these models or follow suit unwittingly; there are those, however, who consistently and deliberately avoid any explicit references to themselves despite the evidence of authorial self-mentions in the consulted sources. On the other hand, assuming that students of and by themselves pay attention to such textual "nuances" as the writer's persona is probably setting one's expectations too high. More likely, student writers are preoccupied with comprehension and interpretation of complex content expressed in a specialized jargon, struggling to summarise, paraphrase and reference this content satisfactorily. Their limited language proficiency and scant experience of academic discourses make it a daunting task in itself, in the face of which the preconceived notion of academic writing as being "objective" and impersonal is a convenient principle to rely on.

Thirdly, the results seem to indicate that identity as conveyed through explicit markers like first person pronouns is a highly complex and fluid notion. The impact of the writer's authority depends on the persona behind the pronoun and the function of a given statement. Certainly, it is not simply a matter of using or avoiding these grammatical forms in academic prose but rather of being sensitive to the connotations and subtle messages attached to them. To make well-informed decisions and gain better control over their writing, L2 learners need to be aware of rhetorical preferences in specific situations. Therefore, rather than having them rely on the prescriptivism of general purpose academic writing manuals addressed to broadly defined student populations, they need to be engaged in surveying their own texts as well as publications in their special fields and specific genres, analysing how often, at which points in the text and to what extent they themselves as authors on the one hand, and disciplinary experts as writers, on the other, choose to make their presence felt by the reader. In other words, at the core of any recommendations should be the necessity to "(…) be sensitive to the struggles of novice writers seeking to reconcile the discursive identities of their home and disciplinary cultures" (Hyland, 2002a, p. 1111).

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