



AUTHORIAL IDENTITY IN RESEARCH ARTICLES

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Abstract

The present study investigates the employment of self-mentions and their functions in English articles in the field of architecture. To this end, a compiled corpus, composing of the post-method sections of 50 articles, was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The results shed light on various functions used by English-language writers to express their authorial identity through explicit employment of self-mentions. The findings provide some insights into the rhetorical conventions of the academic discourse community of architects and into employment of these discursive features which are of great importance to EAP teachers and learners.

Keywords: Self-mentions, academic articles, academic genre analysis.

1. Introduction

In the last decades there has been a growing interest in studying the interaction between the readers and the writers in academic written texts (Adel, 2010; Bakhtin, 1981; Cao & Hu, 2014; Hyland, 2017; Thomson & Thetla, 1995). Scholars view academic writing as a process of constructing and sharing knowledge among the members of the same academic discourse community. The fundamental elements in such reader-writer interactions are non-propositional explicit linguistic tools called metadiscourse markers which assist the writers to organize their ideas and to offer a credible representation of their work and themselves (Vande Kopple, 1985). Crismore (1983) considers metadiscourse markers as non-propositional discursive features which enables the audience to understand, interpret, and evaluate the intended meaning of the writer. Hyland (2005) defined them as “the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writers (or the speakers) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community (Hyland, 2005, p.37).

Drawing on Halliday’s metafunctions of language and earlier classifications of metadiscourse, Hyland (2005) proposed an interpersonal model of metadiscourse and divided them into two classification of “interactive” and “interactional”. According to his model, interactive metadiscourse are the explicit linguistic devices which assist the writers to organize the text in a coherent way, including transition markers, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and code glosses. On the other hand, interactional markers are those linguistic elements which enables the writers to display their persona and stance throughout the text. They include hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers and self-mentions.

Self-Mentions are one of the interactional devices which have recently been the focus of a number of studies in the field (Munoz, 2013; Karahan, 2013; Salas, 2015; Sheldon, 2009).

According to Hyland (2005), self-mentions enable the authors to explicitly present their identity through using first person pronouns (I, me, exclusive we, us), possessive adjectives (mine, ours), and using expressions such as the author, the writer. The employment of these devices in the texts reveals the conscious choice of the writers to emphasize on their authorial identity. Moreover, self-mentions are multi-functional devices which assist the writers to organize the ideas, to reinforce their impression on the readers and at the same time to reveal their positions towards the propositions (Munoz, 2013). It is discussed that the key in successful academic writing is to properly develop the academic identity (Yang, 2015; Wang & Lv, 2017). The use of pronoun “I”, for instance, is an indicator of the writers’ responsibility to the claims they proposed (Ivanic, 1998). Or exclusive first person plural pronouns ‘we’ and its objects and possessives are used to show the active involvement of the writer in the research process and emphasizing on his role as an active member of the disciplinary community (Carciu, 2009).

Research has revealed discipline-specific features in the employment of self-mentions in research articles (Ariannejad, et al., 2019; Dong & Qiu, 2018; MurDuenas, 2011; Hyland, 2001). In this regard, some researchers have conducted cross-disciplinary investigation on the employment of these features in academic articles (Munoz, 2013; Salas, 2015), while others have had more in-depth investigations on the use of self-mentions and merely focus on a specific discipline (Yang, 2015). Detailed investigation of these markers at the functional and lexico-grammatical levels provides valuable information about the specific functions and rhetorical features of self-mentions in different academic genres.

In the light of the issues raised, the current study follows a corpus-based approach to explore the lexico-grammatical realizations and the functions of self-mentions used in research articles published in the field of architecture. The study sheds light on the preferred and most frequently used discipline-specific conventions and norms used by native English-speaking writers who published in international leading journals in the field. Results of such studies are believed to have significant influence on increasing our knowledge of the preferred discursive features and their associated functions in internationally published research papers. The findings are of advantage specifically for the writers who are willing to publish in international English-medium high-stakes journals, in this case in the field of architecture, to become aware and meet the demands of the expert members, who are the reviewers and readers of articles, in the target language discourse community. It is also worth noting that this study only focuses on the discipline of architecture due to the fact that, to the best knowledge of the researcher, architecture is one of the fields which have been widely ignored in academic genre analysis studies and little is known about the rhetorical features and their employment in this field. Considering the above mentioned issues, the present study probes into the following questions:

1. What are the most frequently used self-mention markers and their functions in the post-method sections of the architecture articles?

2. Literature Review

Research on the employment have identified various functions of self-mention devices across different academic genres (Afsari & Kuhi, 2016; Millán, 2010; Mur-Dueñas & Šinkūnienė, 2016) Hyland (2001), for instance, investigated the forms and functions of self-mentions used in English research articles published in eight different disciplines. The results revealed significant differences across disciplines in the employment of these features. It was

found that the decision to use self-mentions is closely associated with the desire of the writer to identify oneself with an idea or proposition and to receive acknowledgement for the research decisions or personal viewpoints. Writers were shown to use self-mentions to discuss the procedures they followed to reassure the readers of the professional abilities and to underline their authorial self. The results of the study also illustrated that the singular first person pronoun “I” is the most frequently used self-mention markers in English academic articles.

In another study, MurDuenas (2011) argued that writers use self-mentions to “present themselves as original contributors” (p. 3074) in the field to gain credibility from the expert members of the academic community. MurDuenas further discussed the significance of the issue of “readership” and its effects on the employment of metadiscourse markers, and specifically self-mentions, in articles published in English in high-stake international journals. In other words, writing for the heterogeneous community of international readers might incline the authors to underscore their authorial identity and their specific contributions.

Furthermore, McGrath (2016) investigated the employment of first-person pronoun “I” in English articles across the two disciplines of history and anthropology. It was found that in anthropological articles, writers tend to use I mainly to emphasize on their social selves and observers of the research procedures. In history studies, however, writers prefer to emphasize on their role as an originator of claims through using expressions such as “I think” and “I believe”. Yet, in both disciplines, writers avoid using “I” to explicitly express their opinions about the propositions.

Studies on the employment of self-mentions in the academic genres are not limited to research articles. Afsari and Kuhl (2016), for instance, investigated the employment of self-mentions in the discussion sections of master theses published in soft sciences in English. Similar to Hyland’s (2001) research, their results illustrated that “I” was the most frequently used self-mention marker in the MA theses. The functional analysis, which was based on Tang and John’s (1999) taxonomy of self-mention functions, demonstrated that in soft sciences the English writers tend to use self-mentions to show themselves as the recounters of the research process rather than the originators of the new concepts in the disciplines. It was shown that English writers also tend to use self-mentions to guide the readers and draw their attentions to specific points in the text and to share some opinions associated with some facts with their readers.

Considering the significant role of self-mentions in showing the stance of the writers towards the propositions, and other issues such as diversity of academic genres, and varieties of soft and hard disciplines in the academic contexts, there is a need to conduct more investigations on the functional role of self-mentions and to explore the rhetorical conventions and preferences of English writers in different disciplines to gain a better understanding of the discursive features they use to express their authorial identity in academic texts.

3. Method

This study adopts an exploratory-descriptive paradigm as its primary purpose is to explore the rhetorical features, in this case self-mentions, used in the academic genre of research articles. To do so, a corpus of 113,300-token was compiled, including the post-method sections of 50 architecture articles written by English-language writers in the field of

architecture. The corpus was then analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively to provide an in-depth description of self-mention features, of their functions, and their linguistic representations in research articles.

Considering the fact that the corpus is required to be edited and annotated manually, the number of articles was limited to fifty. Moreover, the corpus only contained articles which follow Swales' (1990) IMRD – Introduction, Method, Result, Discussion- pattern which led to explicitness in corpus description. However, variations were observed in the patterns compiled articles followed. Some articles coalesced the results and discussion sections, others contained other sections such as applications and conclusions (Lin & Evans, 2012). Focusing on the “post-method” sections of the articles, however, enabled the researcher to offer a comprehensive view of the persuasive and argumentative language used in research articles (Ariannejad, et al., 2019; Cao & Hu, 2014). The next issue which needs to be added is that the compiled articles were all published in the leading international journals of architecture to reassure the high quality of the academic language. To increase the balance between the components of the corpus, the articles were selected from a five-year time period, between 2010 and 2015. Moreover, two criterial of having English name and surname and affiliation to an English-speaking country were met to ensure that the writers of the articles were native speakers of English.

The employment of self-mention markers were investigated using the software of WordSmith (Version 6.0; Scott, 2015) which provided the opportunity to analyze the corpus quantitatively and qualitatively, through illustrating the frequency counts and lexico-grammatical and functional analysis, respectively.

4. Results and Discussion

The statistical analysis revealed that self-mentions constitutes nearly 10% of the total number of interactional metadiscourse markers used in the post-method sections of architecture articles. In other words, from the total number of 3412 interactional metadiscourse markers found in the corpus 313 were found to be self-mentions. Table 1 illustrates the frequency and percentage of the self-mentions found in the corpus. As it is shown, exclusive first-person plural pronouns of we and our, are the most frequent items (53.0% and 39.0%). These pronouns seem to be the main linguistic devices used by the English-language writers to explicitly show their presence in the discussion and presented propositions. The objective pronoun us, however, constitutes only 9.0% of the total number of self-mentions in the English corpus. In fact, exclusive first-person plural pronouns constitute 95% of the total number of self-mentions used in this sub-corpus. It is worth noting that the lexico-grammatical analysis is followed by some examples from the concordance lines to offer a deeper understanding of how these features were used in the English corpus.

Table 1. The Most Frequent Self-mention Markers

Linguistic items	English post-method corpus	
	Frequency	(%) percentage
Pronouns		
We	166	53.0%
Us	9	2.9%
Our	122	39.0%
I/my/mine/me	0	0.0%
Nouns		
The author(s)	14	4.5%
The writer(s)	0	0.0%
Other Observed Nouns		
The researchers	1	0.32%
Total	313	

(1-Eng. /Self-mentions)

We defined an “active core” as a neighborhood that has a 50% higher rate of active transportation (walking or cycling) than the overall average for the CMA.

(2-Eng. /Self-mentions)

Our results do not suggest that streetscape enclosure should be considered a silver bullet for improving safety perceptions.

(3-Eng. /Self-mentions)

The landscape and habitat visualisations helped us to understand the complex dynamics we have described here, and deeply influenced our resulting engagement with policy makers.

Moreover, according to our results presented in Table 1, the English-language writers used the first-person plural pronouns of exclusive we, our, and in some cases us, in their propositions and totally avoid using the pronoun I. The non-appearance of the pronoun I in the English articles in this study contradicts with the findings of the previous studies (Fløttum, Dahl, & Kinn, 2006; Hyland, 2001; Mur-Dueñas & Šinkūnienė, 2016) who found that pronoun I is the most frequently used self-mention marker in English articles. It is more likely that such a preference arises from the norms and conventions of professional-academic culture of architects (Atkinson, 2004). This might stem in the inclination of architects to conduct their research in groups and thus publish articles which usually have more than one authors.

It is also found that English writers used 15 self-mention nouns in their articles. In fact, English-speaking writers used the term author 14 times and do not use its equivalence, writer, in their academic texts (4- and 5-Eng./Self-mentions). Moreover, they used the term ‘researcher’ only once in their articles (6- Eng. /Self-mentions). In other words, noun self-mentions only constitutes 4.7% of the total number of self-mention features used in the

articles. It seems that the English-language writers prefer to use self-mention pronouns, rather than nouns, to show their authorial stance in their texts.

(4-Eng. /Self-mentions)

In order to assess whether the Loveland impact-fee program resulted in exclusivity, the author conducted an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA).

(5-Eng. /Self-mentions)

The author fitted a different regression model for each city for each response variable.

(6-Eng. /Self-mentions)

The researchers had to probe and prompt to encourage respondents to think about the influence of design, and they were much happier discussing the design of homes other than their own.

4.1. Self-mentions: Functional Analysis

The results of the functional analysis illustrated that the English writers use self-mentions to highlight varieties of rhetorical functions, such as describing the steps they have taken in the data analysis section (7-Eng./ Self-mentions), highlighting their contributions in the field (8-Eng./ Self-mentions), discussing the limitations and delimitations of their study (9-Eng./ Self-mentions), and expressing their stance on the propositions (10-Eng./Self-mentions).

(7-Eng. /Self-mentions)

We tested the built-form definitions proposed by Statistics Canada (Turcotte, 2008a, 2008b, 2009) and our pilot study in 10 CMAs using 2006 data.

(8-Eng. /Self-mentions)

We recommend that planners and policymakers begin to view shrinkage as an opportunity and not as a hindrance.

(9-Eng. /Self-mentions)

Third, our personalized approach to landscape visualization may have disadvantages.

(10-Eng. /Self-mentions)

In our attempts to produce a classification model that would reproduce the results on the ground, we drifted further and further from the slender theoretical bases of the built-form literature.

Multi-functionality of self-mentions in the English articles might be due to the fact that English culture embraces individualistic values of English academic writing style (Abdollahzadeh, 2011) which encourages writers to explicitly show their authorial identity and to express their personal perspectives for varieties of functions and in different sections of the articles (Hyland, 2005). In addition, Mur-Dueñas (2011) considers the context of publication as one of the influential factors which may affect the multi-functionality of self-

mentions in research articles arguing that writing articles for diverse groups of international audience urges the writers to underscore their contributions and authorial identity in an explicit way through using linguistic devices such as self-mentions.

4.2. Self-mention Bundles

The concordancing software of WordSmith also provided a list of the most frequently used self-mention bundles (Table 2). The analysis demonstrated that self-mention bundles are mainly realized by prepositional phrases such as in our sample, from our analysis of (the), and in our study and noun phrases such as our analysis of the, our results suggests that, we found that, we were unable to, and we used the results of to assist the writers to emphasize on their researcher identity and highlight the research procedures and findings of their research.

Table 2. Frequent Self-mention Bundles

3-word	Freq.	Multi-word	Freq.
in our sample	10	from our analysis of	3
We did not	7	our analysis of the	3
our analysis of	5	We have made some	3
our results suggest	4	our results suggest that	3
We found that	4	nonusers in our sample	3
in our study	4	We were unable to	3
from our analysis	3	from our analysis of (the)	2
our method was	3	perceived in our method	2
our approach met	3	only as we stated	2
as we have	3	We used the results of	2

(11-Eng./Self-mention Bundles)

However, only about a third of the houses in our sample were fronted by street trees.

(12- Eng./ Self-mention Bundles)

Therefore, the lessons that we can draw from our analysis of past and prospective urban growth in Cairns can be placed in an international context to provide useful planning guidance to other regions experiencing similar tourism-driven development pressures.

(13- Eng./ Self-mention Bundles)

Our analysis of the semi-variograms suggested the presence of spatial dependence in the price equation up to about 2000 ft (609.6m) (Fig. 2).

(14- Eng./ Self-mention Bundles)

Our results suggest that Port-land planners and park managers could benefit by differentially interpreting what users' and nonusers' behaviors signal with respect to their attitudes about parks.

(15- Eng./ Self-mention Bundles)

We found that the number of street trees fronting the property and crown area within 100 ft (30.5m) of a house positively influence sales price.

(16-Per./ Self-mention Bundles)

Moreover, we were unable to account for complex buildings' geometry such as peaked roofs or setbacks at upper levels.

(17- Eng./ Self-mention Bundles)

In our project, we used the results of research conducted by Millward and Sabir (2010) to adjust our final STRATUM estimates downward using a multiplicative correction of 0.9.

5. Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

This study investigated the use of self-mentions in the post-method sections of fifty academic articles published in the field of architecture from lexico-grammatical and functional aspects. The results revealed that first-person plural pronoun exclusive “we” was the most frequently used self-mention marker in the English architecture articles. This finding was in contrast with other genre-analysis studies which found that first-person singular pronoun “I” was the most preferred and the commonly used self-mention element in English academic articles published in some other disciplines (Hyland, 2001; Mur-Dueñas & Šinkūnienė, 2016). Such a difference was discussed to be attributed to the professional-academic culture of architectural research and the nature of research in this specific field. Moreover, the results of the functional analysis of self-mentions and their associated bundles revealed that these linguistic devices assist English writers to underscore their personal stance on the propositions, and to emphasize on their researcher identity and contributions in the field. The findings were ascribed to the international context of publication of English articles and the conventions of the genre in such contexts.

Pedagogically speaking, such results are specifically valuable for those native and non-native writers who are willing to publish in high-stakes English-medium international journals. Having a clear perception of the convincing rhetoric of academic English articles enables the writers to construct themselves successfully as the plausible members of the discipline who are aware and committed to the norms and expectations of the expert members of the international academic community. Moreover, our results have significant implications for English language teaching (ELT) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers and students. Such studies can raise the awareness of second and foreign language teachers and learners to the interactions between readers and writers and the strategies used by writers to show their authorial self in academic texts. Teaching such strategies and including text analysis tasks in teaching writing classes will assist the non-native language learners to better understand the role of these features in increasing the coherence and stylistic appropriacy of their L2 texts (Hyland, 2005).

Further studies need to be carried out to investigate the forms and functions of other interactional metadiscourse markers, namely hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and engagement markers used in architectural articles written in English. This study only investigated the employment of self-mentions in the post-method sections of architecture articles. Investigations need to be conducted to study the functions of self-mentions in other sections of articles such as introduction and method. Comparative studies could be conducted to study the similarities and differences between the rhetorical features used in articles written in other languages to offer a deeper insight to the effects of cultural factors in

academic texts and the rhetorical conventions and norms of non-English communities of writers in the field of architecture.

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