Pragmatic functions of *I* in academic discourse: linguistic research articles

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ABSTRACT

This study presents comparative research focused on the frequency and usage of the 1st person singular pronoun *I* in linguistic research articles (RAs) written in English by native speakers of English and native speakers of Czech. Two specialized corpora, together comprising 80 RAs, were compiled for the purposes of this study. The study shows that in comparison to previous research, the use of *I* gradually increases in RAs of Czech authors but the device is still underused compared to RAs of native English speakers. The underuse is linked to longstanding traditions of Czech academic writing. Moreover, the pragmatic functions of propositions featuring *I* as an explicit authorial reference in the discourse (Stating opinions and claims, Discourse organisation and guidance, Research process recounting) were linked to the tenets of the Politeness theory, to show benefits and risks of exploiting implications that they carry.

KEYWORDS

comparative study, explicit authorial reference, personal pronoun I, politeness theory, research articles

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing a successful research article (RA) is a skill every researcher in any academic field should strive to master because even the best research may be rendered worthless when it is not communicated appropriately to the intended audience. The purpose of RAs is rarely to simply inform using cold hard facts. Their purpose is mostly to negotiate claims with the intended readership to persuade them of their validity. In order to do that, the authors need to establish interaction between themselves and the readers. One way to achieve a certain level of writer-reader interaction is to employ the 1st person singular personal pronoun *I* as the means of introducing authorial voice into their writing. This pronoun and its pragmatic roles within the academic discourse are the focus of this study. I aim to compare the ways and frequency of its use by native English authors of RAs in the field of linguistics and native Czech authors writing linguistic RAs in English. Furthermore, I would like to relate the pragmatic roles to the Politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987) and assess the effects they might have on the faces of the parties participating in the interaction. In this way, I would like to explain not only in what manner and how often the authors decide to use explicit authorial reference but also what probably motivates them to choose personal reference over other strategies and what are the risks and benefits they must bear in mind when employing it.

The assumption that there are differences between the two groups of authors (either quantitative or qualitative) in their use of the personal pronoun *I* is based

on the distinct conventions of academic writing from which the authors draw and the assertion that "the English texts of non-native speakers of English are inevitably influenced by the traditions of academic writing in their native tongue (Dontcheva-Navratilova 2014a: 43)". Finally, the importance of this comparison lies in the fact that the English language is "the lingua franca of science in the international context (Dontcheva-Navratilova 2014a: 50)" and in order for the non-native authors writing in English to persuade Anglophone academia of the validity of their work, they need to satisfy the audience's expectations when it comes to the conventions of Anglophone academic writing. The following section will offer a more detailed account of the existing conventions of Anglophone and Czech academic writing and their influence on the usage of the pronoun *I* in research articles.

2. CONVENTIONS OF ACADEMIC WRITING

There are different conventions governing the way an academic text should be structured and the way information should be conveyed to the readership stemming from traditional approach to academic writing based on language communities (e.g. Vassileva 1998; Tang and John 1999; Dontcheva-Navratilova 2013, 2014a, 2014b) and also from common practice in a particular discipline (e.g. Kuo 1999; Hyland 2008). Since I am comparing RAs within the field of linguistics, the interdisciplinary differences are not relevant here.

The focus is on the distinct features of Anglophone and Czech traditions. Anglophone academic writing is described as featuring marked authorial presence, being interactive and dialogic, exhibiting strict discourse norms, employing explicit discourse organisation and overall being reader-oriented. Czech academic writing, in comparison, is characterized by backgrounded authorial presence, monologic discourse with a focus on terminological and conceptual clarity, by the lack of explicit discourse organisation and by being primarily oriented on the writer. These differences, with a focus especially on the way Czech authors establish writer-reader interaction have influence on the features they employ in their RAs written in English (Dontcheva-Navratilova 2014b: 41). The preference to background authorial presence and focus on the topic rather than on the interaction with the reader could be the main reasons why "the frequency of occurrence of personal attribution decreases towards the east to German or Czech academic communities and why it is generally higher in the Anglophone academia (Čmejrková et al. 1999: 47)". In addition, Chamonikolasová notes that "In describing their research methods, or their intentions and conclusions, Anglophone authors usually indicate their identity by the use of pronouns of the 1st person singular and (that) the use of the 1st person singular in Czech texts is generally uncommon; it occurs only in more recent publications (Chamonikolasová 2005: 82)". The way authors employ the pronoun *I* to explicitly mark their presence within the discourse results in a number of pragmatic functions, which I will describe in the next section.

3. THE PRAGMATIC ROLES OF *I*

The use of personal pronouns in academic texts allows the authors to break out of the constraints of the impersonal style, which is still generally favoured in academic discourse since it lends the propositions an air of objectivity and grants the authors some distance from their claims and stances.

Personal reference forces the authors to take personal responsibility for their propositions and usually conveys "the desire to both strongly identify oneself with a particular argument and to gain credit for an individual perspective (Hyland 2005: 181)". This represents the motivation why an author would use explicit authorial reference in a text. Moreover, each use of *I* can be analysed as having an additional pragmatic function.

The taxonomy of functions used for the purposes of the present study is based on Harwood's brief recount of functions that include: organizing text and guiding the reader through the argument, stating personal opinions and knowledge claims, and recounting experimental procedure and methodology (Harwood 2005: 344). These functions are included in the widely employed Tang and John's (1999) model in Figure 1 to show how they relate to it. Even though the present classification is rather simple in comparison to other taxonomies (Ivanič 1998; Hyland 2002; Dontcheva-Navratilova 2013) it is sufficient for the purposes of the present study.
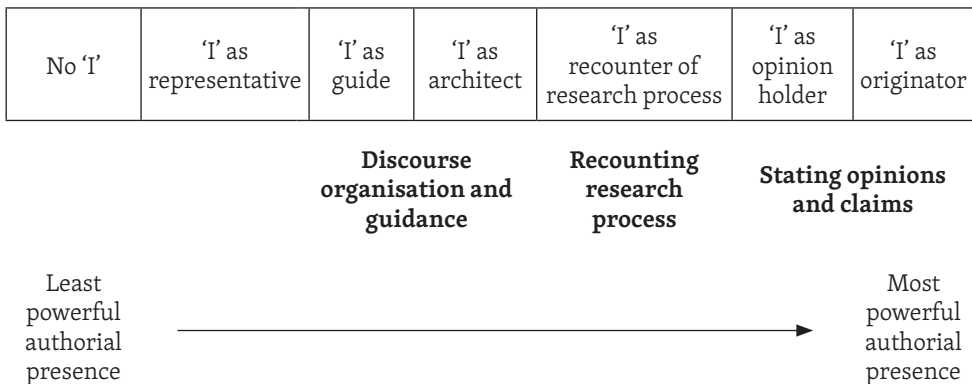
No 'I'	'I' as representative	'I' as guide	'I' as architect	'I' as recounter of research process	'I' as opinion holder	'I' as originator
		Discourse organisation and guidance		**Recounting research process**	**Stating opinions and claims**	

Least powerful authorial presence ⟶ Most powerful authorial presence

FIGURE 1. A typology of possible identities behind the 1st person pronoun in academic writing (Tang and John 1999: S29) with the current classification in bold type.

In the following section, I will briefly describe the three categories of the proposed taxonomy. At this point, it is important to stress that the pronouns cannot be analysed in isolation and that the decisive factor in determining the pragmatic function of a construction with a subjective pronoun heavily depends on the context in which it appears. Also, while the categories below are presented as distinctive, it is also important to note that the pragmatic functions may overlap.

3.1 STATING OPINIONS AND CLAIMS

Hyland notes that the decision to use *I* in a proposition conveying opinions and claims "is a clear indication of the perspective from which a statement should be interpreted, enabling writers to emphasize their own contribution to the field and to seek agreement for it (Hyland 2005: 181)".

> (1) **I argue that** their treatment is superficial because, despite appearances, it relies solely on a sociological, as opposed to an ethical, orientation to develop a response. (Hyland 2005: 181)

3.2 DISCOURSE ORGANISATION AND GUIDANCE

The second category comprises cases where the author embodies the roles of an architect and a guide (see Tang and John 1999: S28) who accompanies the reader throughout the text. The implications of an overt authorial presence in this category is to establish a shared position with the reader within the time and place of the particular RA and offer a guided tour through the text, highlighting important information, drawing the reader's attention where necessary, and preparing the ground for arguments by indicating where and when the argumentation will occur.

> (2) In this essay, **I will discuss** the bastard status of English from the pre-English period (–AD 450) to Middle English (c. 1100–1450) (Tang and John 1999: S28)

3.3 RECOUNTING RESEARCH PROCESS

The last category covers the propositions where the authors "describe or recount the various steps of the research process (Tang and John, 1999: S28)". While the present category might look similar to the category of *Discourse organisation and guidance,* there is one crucial feature that distinguishes them. While the previous category includes propositions conveying what the author is doing, has done, or will do within the text, the current category subsumes propositions recounting what the author did outside of the text.

> (3) To trace these areas **I first conducted an analysis** of 139 papers on the Web of Science which included 'metadiscourse' among their keywords using the visualising analysis programme CiteSpace (ENCORP_PR256)

Having described the taxonomy of functions used in this study, I would like to note that each time the authors choose to use explicit authorial reference in their texts, they inevitably enter a pragmatic framework with specific implications. *I* implies a direct involvement of the author and often also an implicit involvement of the reader, whether it is used in a proposition expressing the author's opinions or claims (1), in a proposition serving to organize discourse (2) or a proposition referring back to the research process (3). The direct involvement of the author further implies face-threatening acts (FTAs) both to the writer's and the reader's faces as well as negative politeness strategy towards the reader, while the implicit involvement of the reader

implies employment of a positive politeness strategy towards the reader. I will elaborate on this notion in the next section.

4. POLITENESS THEORY

Based on the Politeness theory developed by Brown and Levinson (1987) the authors, as well as the readers, have positive and negative faces, which is a figurative expression for their desire to be agreed with and to be unimpeded by others, respectively (Čmejrková et al. 1999: 53). For my purposes here, I will interpret the face wants of the participants in interaction in academic discourse in the following way:

— Writer's positive face is the desire to be agreed with
— Writer's negative face is the desire to avoid criticism
— Reader's positive face is the desire to participate
— Reader's negative face is the desire to decide independently

Myers (1989) was first to apply Brown and Levinson's model to written texts and academic writing in particular, in order to explain the interactions between writers and readers. He argued that "scientific discourse consists of interactions among scientists in which the maintenance of face is crucial (Myers 1989: 5)".

The use of the 1st person pronoun *I* either threatens the participants' faces to some degree and/or functions as a redressive strategy. In general, explicitly marked authorial presence will constitute a FTA to writers' positive face (risk of disagreement) as well as to their negative face (risk of inviting criticism). In relation to readers, the FTAs are aimed towards their positive face (not being included) as well as to their negative face (speakers imposing their inference). Now let us consider Hyland's notion: "reference to the writer explicitly marks a statement as an alternative view rather than as a definitive truth; allowing the reader to choose the more persuasive explanation (Hyland 1996: 20)" which "invites the reader to participate in a dialogue (Hyland 1996: 18)". Consequently, positive politeness strategy towards the reader evoked by the use of 1st person pronoun *I* thus lies in the conscious, yet implicit involvement of the readers into the discussion which minimizes the threat to their positive face (author invites the reader to participate in the inferential process), while the negative politeness strategy towards the reader lies in the fact that the writer does not present the claim as categorical, which mitigates the threat to the reader's negative face. To attenuate the FTAs to the writer's positive and negative faces it is often necessary to involve additional devices, such as hedges (epistemic verbs, adverbs, etc.). This account is mainly applicable to propositions from the *Stating claims and opinions* category as described above but it applies to the remaining categories as well in the sense that "some uses of *I* are low-risk, discrete instances of authorial intervention, while other uses, such as when the writer makes a claim, carry much greater threat to face, and are potentially points at which the writer exposes themselves to attack by the audience (Harwood 2005: 344)".

To conclude this section, it is important to note that the authors have at their hands more explicit and possibly more effective devices to achieve agreement, to avoid criticism, and to invite the reader to participate. However, there is a reason for explicit authorial presence in the discourse using *I*, which is mainly "emphasizing what you have done, what is yours in any piece of research (Hyland 2005:181)". Such an emphasis would be quite difficult to achieve while employing other devices and it depends entirely on the authors' conscious choice whether to take the risks described above with a particular proposition or to opt for safer strategies (passive constructions, abstract rhetors, inclusive pronouns, questions, etc.)

5. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study required a compilation of two specialized corpora, consisting of only single-authored research articles (RAs). The first corpus (CZCORP) comprises 40 RAs written in English by 40 Czech authors, extracted from Czech peer-reviewed academic journals with a total word count of 201 797 words. The second corpus (ENCORP) includes 40 RAs written by 40 native English speakers which were published in renowned, peer-reviewed, international academic journals. The second corpus reached 307 947 words. The native language of the selected authors was verified from information available in the RAs themselves as well as data obtainable on the internet. Drawing data from different journals might present a risk for consistency of the material due to varied requirements each journal imposes on the submitting authors. While this is true for overall formatting of the text, I have not encountered any limitations regarding the style of a RA, except for explicit suggestion not to use defamatory language in the journal Applied Linguistics[1] and to avoid sexist language in journals of the Elsevier publishing house[2]. Hopefully, the explicit authorial reference does not qualify as such. The following tables offer the composition of the corpora used for this study.

The CZCORP comprises seven different journals primarily because it was impossible to obtain single-authored linguistic RAs by 40 distinct authors from a lower number of journals. The scarcity of suitable RAs results in an additional compromise regarding the year of publication of the selected RAs. There are 6 RAs published before the year 2010, which is not ideal and has to be accounted for when drawing conclusions about the data. Nevertheless, I assume that the data are still comparable with previous research and may be used to observe gradual change.

Dontcheva-Navratilova's (2014a) research has revealed differences between RAs of Czech authors written in English published locally compared to international publications in terms of the frequency of personal pronouns. (Dontcheva-Navratilova 2014a: 49). However, her data also reveal that the differences are mostly caused by individual authors who either underuse or overuse a certain pronoun in a particular RA. This is relevant for further justification of the selection of Czech journals

1   https://academic.oup.com/applij/pages/General_Instructions
2   https://www.elsevier.com/journals/journal-of-pragmatics/0378-2166/guide-for-authors

Journal	Publisher	Year of publication	No. of articles
Brno Studies in English	Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno	2004–2016	16
Linguistica Brunensia	Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno	2016	6
AUC Philologica 1 — Prague Studies in English	Charles University, Karolinum Press	2017	6
AUC Philologica 3/2013 — Prague Studies in English XXVI	Charles University, Karolinum press	2013	5
Ostrava Journal of English Philology	Department of English and American studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ostrava	2014–2017	3
Linguistica Pragensia	Faculty of Arts, Charles University	2013–2014	3
Studies in Applied Linguistics	Faculty of Arts, Charles University	2011	1

TABLE 1. Composition of the CZCORP

Journal	Publisher	Year of publication	No. of articles
Applied Linguistics	Oxford University Press	2013–2016	10
Lingua	Elsevier	2016–2017	10
Language Sciences	Elsevier	2010–2017	10
Journal of Pragmatics	Elsevier	2016–2018	10

TABLE 2. Composition of the ENCORP

from which I draw my data. I assume that when writing a research article in English a Czech author would intend to aim at Anglophone audience and would not tailor the discourse consciously for it to fit local conventions of academic writing simply for the fact that the journal is published locally. This assumption is crucial for interpreting the data because underuse of the 1st person pronoun *I* in CZCORP can consequently be attributed to the underlying influence of the conventions of Czech academic discourse. Otherwise, it would stem simply from a deliberate adjustment of writing style to the expectations of the local audience (see Section 7. for a suggestion of further research).

It was necessary to manually clean the texts of unwanted material such as abstracts, footnotes, tables, references, or block quotations. I have decided to leave shorter direct quotations as well as paraphrases in the corpora, since the expected frequency of the pronoun *I* in such an environment is very low. The resulting texts

were converted into plain text and loaded into AntConc (Anthony 2017). Both the corpora were searched for instances of 1st person singular pronoun *I*. The results were again manually sorted and all irrelevant occurrences (e.g. *I* used as a numeral, *I* appearing in a citation, *I* used in examples, etc.) were removed. Finally, I have conducted an analysis of the pragmatic functions *I* represented in each of the instances and classified them according to the taxonomy described in Section 3. Due to the different size of the corpora, the results were normalized per 1000 words and the statistical significance of the results was determined using the log-likelihood statistical function[3] at $p < 0.01$, which means that any LL value higher than 6.63 signifies a statistically significant result.

6. ANALYSIS

In this section, I will present a comparison of results obtained from my corpora with the previous research and then offer a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the roles the authors perform in the discourse by using *I* in their RAs with regards to the politeness theory.

	Corpus size	1st person singular pronoun *I*	Relative frequency per 1000 words	log-likelihood $p < 0.01$
ENCORP	307 947	664	2.2	**150.41**
CZCORP	201 947	163	0.8	**significant difference**

TABLE 3. Overall results

The quantitative analysis shows statistically significant underuse of the 1st person pronoun *I* in research articles of Czech authors, which confirms the assumption made in the introductory section. Similar results were reached in previous studies which I describe next. The comparison between RAs written by Czech authors in English and RAs of native English speakers in terms of the frequency of their use of personal pronouns has been conducted by Dontcheva-Navratilova (2014a), who observed the frequency of 1st person pronouns (*I, me, we, us, our*) in a corpus consisting of 12 single-authored RAs for each group, published between 2001–2012. In her study, the frequency of the personal pronoun *I* normalized per 1000 words reaches 0.4 in the corpus of Czech authors and 1.68 in the corpus of native English speakers (Dontcheva-Navratilova 2014a: 49). In the same year, in a research including 15 RAs and chapters in internationally published books written by Czech linguists in English between 2002–2012, the frequency of *I* in the texts reached 0.37 per 1000 words (Dontcheva-Navratilova 2014b: 54). While comparing the previous findings with the results shown in Table 3, I must agree with the claim that "Czech authors are affected

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3   Log likelihood calculator available at: http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html was used to compare the data and determine significance of the results

by the tendency in Anglo-American academic writing towards an increased use of personal forms (Dontcheva-Navratilova 2014b: 55)". Nevertheless, while the frequency of *I* in RAs written in English by both groups of authors seem to be on the increase, Czech authors writing in English still fall short of native speakers of English.

6.1 FREQUENCY OF PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS

Table 4 shows the overview of the functional analysis of *I* in linguistic RAs of Czech authors writing in English and native speakers of English. While the frequencies are higher in all the categories in the ENCORP data, statistically significant differences were achieved only in the categories of *Discourse organisation and guidance* and *Stating opinions and claims*. The category of *Other* was not included in the calculation since it includes incomparable instances.

	ENCORP	frequency per 1000 words	CZCORP	frequency per 1000 words	log-likelihood p < 0.01
Discourse organisation and guidance	337	1.1	68	0.3	**99.15** significant difference
Stating opinions and claims	269	0.9	66	0.3	**60.98** significant difference
Recounting research process	42	0.1	27	0.1	0.01 difference not significant
Other	16	x	2	x	x

TABLE 4. Pragmatic functions and their frequency

The individual categories rank the same in terms of the frequency of their use in both corpora; however, each category shows underuse in the CZCORP. The *Discourse organisation and guidance* category is the most frequent function and it can be explained by the expected interactivity and dialogic nature of a RA. To establish an interaction with the reader the writer will often step into the discourse to navigate the reader through the text and the argumentation. The category of *Stating opinions and claims* that closely follows might owe its high frequency of use to the need to maintain authorial presence in the text to assert a level of authority as well as to imply subjectivity in order to invite readers in the inferential process. The least frequent function in my data is *Recounting research process*. The reason why authors resort to *I* so infrequently when talking about the research process and methods used prior to writing the RA might be due to other strategies being preferred to represent the scientific methods more objectively (passives, abstract rhetors) and also due to the fact that some of the RAs might focus on theoretical issues. The following sections will offer a description of each category as well as example sentences from both corpora.

6.1.1 DISCOURSE ORGANISATION AND GUIDANCE

For a proposition to be included in this category a consultation of a wider context was necessary. Some of the verbs that would otherwise belong to the category of *Stating opinions and claims* are featured here since the context in which they are used influences their pragmatic role within the discourse.

Consider the following examples featuring two propositions with the verb *to argue*:

(4) **I argue** that these terms are what the do-construction targets and attempts to other-correct through the indexation of a contrast. (ENCORP_S82)

(5) Then in section 3 I specify a working hypothesis about cancellability, and in section 4 **I argue** that it survives these objections relatively unscathed. (ENCORP_DO76)

In example (4) the proposition was analysed as an expression of the author's particular opinion. Again, the use of *I* marks the proposition as subjective and while it allows the author to grant it some air of authority, the final decision lies with the readership that would either be persuaded or not. Example (5) contains the same *that*-clause with the verb *argue* as its controlling element; however, this proposition was analysed as having a discourse structuring role. The difference here lies in the context since in example (5) it is explicitly specified that the argumentation will occur elsewhere. Furthermore, example (4) offers clearly defined argumentation, while example (5) offers only a vague summary. The role the author assumes using the pronoun *I* in example (5) is thus that of a guide, informing the reader what will happen next in the text.

The most frequently occurring verbs in this category in the ENCORPUS are *argue* (34)[4], *show* (19), and *discuss* (18). The personal attribution is often prefaced by expressions referring to a location in the text or the RA itself (e.g. *in section 3, in this article/paper, here, below)*. The three following examples of propositions with the verb *show* illustrate the grammatical variability regarding the verb tense the authors have at their hands within this category since they can move freely within the structure of the RA and point the reader's attention where necessary (cf. *Recounting research process category)*:

(6) This will provide the background for the discussion of slurs in Section 4, where **I show**, first, that in contrast with (e.g.) damn, a slur has descriptive content in the sense that it identifies an individual as a member of a group whose members share a particular identity […] (ENCORP_DO637)

(7) **I have shown** that discussions of language discovery or teaching through gesture, by both Wittgenstein and Quine, involve access to the linguistic hierarchy. (ENCORP_DO360)

(8) Then **I will show** how the phenomena can be better accounted for within a VT-inspired approach, where the literal meaning, personal stances, and

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4   The figures in brackets represent raw frequency of the verb in the corpus

discourse salience are considered different vantages at different levels of analysis. (ENCORP_DO845)

In the CZCORP data the most frequent verbs are the same as those that have been found in the ENCORP: *show* (10), *discuss* (6) and *argue* (6).

(9) In this article, **I discussed** two ways of negating comparative numerical NPs. (CZCORP_DO69)

I would argue that the use of the 1st person singular pronoun *I* in this function is a relatively safe strategy for the authors because the threat to their positive and negative faces (disagreement, criticism) is not direct. The argumentation itself occurs elsewhere in the text and the following proposition represents only a summary or an excerpt of what has been or will be done. The authors consciously interact with readers by navigating them through the discourse and the pronoun *I* represents the authors in terms of their roles as writers/architects of the texts. In this light, the propositions in the present category would mainly serve to convey a positive politeness strategy towards the reader's positive face (involvement). Reader involvement would not be elicited by employing passive constructions, abstract rhetors, etc.

6.1.2 STATING OPINIONS AND CLAIMS

The decision to involve explicit author reference when presenting claims, opinions and stances in academic discourse represents the most face threatening strategy, out of the categories presented here, both to the author and to the reader. The use of *I* in these cases, on one hand, constitutes an act of positive politeness by implicitly involving the reader in the process. On the other hand, it also serves as a negative politeness strategy in the sense that the acknowledged subjectivity alleviates much of any imposition that could be made to the negative face of the readers. To put the implicit motivation of the authors in words: *It is my subjective stance on the issue, so you, as the reader, are free to decide whether you agree with me or not, which is exactly what I invite you to do.* The most frequently occurring verbs in the ENCORP in this category were *believe* (25), *suggest* (24), and *assume* (21).

(10) In light of the above critique, it remains to be shown that linguistic modelling does fall in line with scientific practices so described. **I believe** that it does. (ENCORP_S114)

(11) Taking this approach, will, **I suggest**, remove some of the limitations inherent in a personal-level approach, and provide insight into a wider range of examples. (ENCORP_S654)

The CZCORP data show that the Czech authors prefer a slightly different set of verbs when overtly expressing their stance. The difference probably lies in the authors' tendency to maintain objectivity which would result in avoidance of subjective reporting verbs like *believe*. The most frequent verbs were *assume* (10), *propose* (9) and *follow* (6).

(12) In particular, **I assume** that in this structure, an agreement relation is established with the closest noun. (CZCORP_S33)

(13) Hence, **I propose** that A is present only in adjectival participles and that it is the locus of the stativizer. (CZCORP_S159)

(14) **I follow** Tredinnick (2005) and assume that if these expressions occur, they are not licensed by the ever FR itself (which is definite), but rather by the covert (generic) operator inferred to satisfy the variation requirement. (CZCORP_S85)

Accompanying the overt authorial reference by epistemic verbs or other expressions further mitigating the force of the proposition is consequently the only way the authors may attenuate the FTAs to their positive and negative face that come and remain with the use of a 1st person singular pronoun. The motivation to employ this strategy when presenting opinions and claims is driven by the need of the authors to take credit for their own contribution within the work, which would be difficult when using impersonal language and strategies. It comes with the benefit of reader involvement but leaves the authors vulnerable to disagreement and criticism.

6.1.3 RECOUNTING RESEARCH PROCESS

Research process recounting is the least represented category in my data with only 43 instances found in the ENCORP and 27 in the CZCORP. The results do not show any convincing preference regarding lexical choices as the most frequent verbs do not appear in more than three instances each in the ENCORP (*count, devise, read*) and they mostly come from an idiolect of a particular author. Verbs that appeared in the corpus and may most accurately represent this category include: *select*, *collect*, *examine* or *perform*. Since the propositions in this category recount what has been done outside of the text prior to writing it, it is not surprising that this category contains only predicates in the past tense.

(15) To ensure reliability, **I randomly selected** 10% of the students in the study and a doctoral candidate recorded the instances of unconventional segmentation in their first through third grade Spanish and English samples. (ENCORP_PR581)

(16) **I collected** other examples by hand from novels and other written materials which I read over the course of several years, recording all relevant instances. (ENCORP_PR149)

(17) In addition, **I further examined** such instances for existing patterns in the graphic position of words within the instances of unconventional segmentation. (ENCORP_PR268)

The selection of verbs used by the authors of the source texts in the CZCORP is also varied and individual items appear only in one or two instances at the most. The predicates pertaining to research process recounting include *conduct, check, examine, search* and the like.

(18) To check my intuitions, **I conducted** a small corpus research: **I extracted** all occurrences of negated comparative constructions from SYN2010 (the most representative corpus of contemporary Czech). (CZCORP_PR53)

(19) Next, **I checked** the translation of (1) into Polish, Bulgarian and Russian with native speakers of these languages and all of them again confirmed that the most salient reading they get is the interval one. (CZCORP_PR48)

(20) Using the Google search engine **I searched** for each of the 60 potential items and discovered that 25 of them were actually used by speakers (or more precisely, writers), mainly in the Internet discussions or articles. (CZCORP_PR168)

The decision to resort to overt authorial presence to recount the methods used to conduct the research or the research process as such allows the authors to gain credit for the actions performed and it seems that this is the only place where it is possible to do that relatively safely. Taking credit or overtly marking author's own contribution within a RA is an incredibly risky strategy (cf. the category of *Stating opinions and claims*), nevertheless the work that had to be done prior to writing an RA is the least the authors can explicitly claim as their own because it does not pose a threat to the negative face of the readership. However, the threats to the authors' faces remain. The redressive action of positive politeness towards the reader in order for them to feel included is not elicited here since the reader cannot possibly take a role in the research process that had already happened. Employing impersonal language to recount the research process would mitigate the FTAs to the authors' faces but would simultaneously deprive them of the chance to explicitly mark their own contribution within the work.

6.1.4 OTHER

There were several occurrences of *I* in propositions whose pragmatic role was not clear and consequently they were difficult to include in one of the categories used in the above classification. The ENCORP contained sixteen such instances. A majority of those instances come from only three RAs and their authors use the pronoun *I* to construct a hypothetical situation within the text:

(21) If **I say** John learned that it is going to rain, **I make** the claim that John has learned of coming rain[…] (ENCORP_OT615)

In the CZCORP there were two uncategorizable instances of explicit authorial reference, both the same and coming from one author. Harwood mentions this use as "ac-

knowledgment of funding bodies, institutions, and individuals that contributed to the study in some way (Harwood 2005:344)".

(22) Nevertheless, jump may be used in the induced action alternation (cf. ex. 8) and, albeit exceptionally, in the caused-motion construction (cf. ex. 9, which **I owe** to my colleague Stephen Hardy) (CZCORP_OT153)

7. CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude that the differences in the use of the 1st person pronoun *I* in research articles between native speakers of English and native speakers of Czech writing in English are mostly quantitative, with the exception of the category *Stating opinions and claims*, where the Czech authors underused verbs common in the EN-CORP, such as *think, believe, hope,* or *argue*. The reasons for that could be a high level of subjectivity implied in the first three verbs and overt assertiveness emanating from the last one. Not incidentally these reasons collide with what we (Czech authors) may consider appropriate practices in academic discourse, and propositions conveying a similar attitude would most likely be presented in a way that avoids direct personal attribution (passives, inclusive personal pronoun *we*, etc.). By highlighting that the differences are mostly quantitative, I would like to acknowledge that Czech authors are aware of the possibility to involve explicit authorial reference using the pronoun *I* and do so in ways similar to their native English speaker counterparts. What is more, in comparison to the previous studies of the subject (Dontcheva-Navratilova 2014a, 2014b), the frequency of the pronoun *I* seems to increase slightly, especially in RAs authored by native Czech speakers. The rise in frequency may be attributed to the "reflection of a constantly growing awareness of the role of the author" (Vassileva 1998: 167) in the case of native English speakers and ongoing assimilation of this trend by native Czech speakers writing in English in order to adapt to the changing Anglophone academic conventions.

The overall low occurrence of *I* in research articles of Czech authors should be explained. The most likely reason why the authors underuse this feature is the persistence of the conventions of Czech academic writing which were observed to include backgrounded authorial presence, with a focus primarily on a thorough description of the topic, and a low level of explicit organisation and structure. Such an approach to academic writing will generally result in a low interactivity of the text with regards to reader involvement and a low level of assertiveness of the presented claims. As far as the conventions of academic writing may be directive, they are by no means obligatory and it eventually depends solely on the authors whether they decide to employ personal or impersonal constructions in their texts. Nevertheless, the fact that RAs of native English speakers in the field of linguistics exhibit significantly more frequent use of *I* is something that we, as non-native speakers of English, should not ignore.

This led to the decision to relate pragmatic roles of *I* to the tenets of the Politeness theory in an attempt to reveal the effects particular propositions featuring explicit

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authorial reference might have especially on the reader and what risks the writers must acknowledge in terms of maintaining their own face. Based on this, it should be easier to decide whether using explicit authorial reference is suitable or not for a proposition that we, as the authors of RAs, want to include in the text. Informed use of the 1st person pronoun *I* as one of the devices that allow us to embody a more active role in our texts, to claim credit and to establish interaction between us and our readership should become a more regular feature of RAs so that we would be able to successfully participate in the international academic community.

While I have assumed that Czech authors would not adjust their writing style to suit locally published journals in English in contrast to internationally published journals in English based on the expected audiences, it would be desirable to conduct a research using two corpora, one consisting of RAs in English published in Czech journals and the second of RAs published internationally featuring the same authors in both corpora. Such a research would reveal whether the authors change their writing style consciously or are unknowingly influenced by the local conventions. Finally, the rather narrow scope of this study does not allow me to make any conclusions with regards to the overall effects English RAs authored by native Czech speakers have on the local and international academia and whether the low level of overt authorial presence actually results in a less successful research article.

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