

# Authorial presence in academic discourse: functions of author-reference pronouns

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## ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the issue of authorial presence in contemporary academic discourse. It considers factors influencing authorial presence choices and compares traditional assumptions to current practice in writing academic articles. While exploring the hypothesis that recently there has been a shift from the so-called scientific paradigm established by academic writing style guides to a more subjective mode of academic writing, the study discusses the results of a corpus-based research into authorial presence choices in a corpus of research articles in applied linguistics written by native speakers of English. The findings of the investigation show that the authors exploit various rhetorical functions of author-reference pronouns for maintaining the writer-reader relationship and construing an authoritative authorial voice. The paper also reports the results of a cross-cultural investigation into the ways Anglo-American linguists and Czech linguists approach writer-reader interaction and manifest their authorial voice. It suggests that the lower rate and limited range of functions of author-reference pronouns used by Czech linguists can be explained by their non-native speaker status and the influence of the Czech academic writing literacy.

## KEY WORDS

authorial presence, academic discourse, author-reference pronouns, genre, research article, cross-cultural variation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Academic written interaction involves the conveyance of knowledge and the negotiation and evaluation of views and opinions, in which the participants try to create a niche for their research and to persuade their audience of the relevance, validity and novelty of their claims and views. While positioning their work in the context of previous disciplinary knowledge, the authors endeavour to construct a coherent and credible representation of themselves and their research and to create a dialogic space for the negotiation and acceptance of the suggested extension of disciplinary knowledge by their discourse community. It is therefore not surprising that in the last two decades authorial presence — the degree of visibility and authoritative-ness writers are prepared to project in their texts for personal support of their statements when expressing their attitudes, judgements and assessments — has become a widely debated issue both in the works of discourse analysts scrutinizing different academic genres and disciplines (e.g. Swales, 1990, 2004, Gosden, 1993, Kuo 1999, Hyland, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, Harwood, 2005) and in more cross-culturally oriented re-

search which compares the writing of native and non-native speakers (e.g. Tang and John, 1999, Hyland, 2002a, Charles, 2006, Mur-Dueñas, 2007, Samraj, 2008).

Despite the existing variation in the theoretical frameworks suggested for the study of authorial voice, such as metadiscourse (Hyland, 2002b, 2005), evaluation (Hunston and Thompson, 1999), appraisal (Martin and White, 2005), and stance (Biber et al., 1999), they generally concur that the rhetorical and linguistic choices which writers have at their disposal perform two major functions: (1) stance, conveyed by the marked or disguised involvement of the author in the argument, and (2) engagement, associated with the alignment of the writer with the readers, who may be included as participants in the discourse and guided towards intended interpretations (Hyland, 2005). Both aspects of authorial presence help the writers to create a dialogic space for the negotiation of their views by constructing a coherent argument and by providing cohesive clues for the readers in discourse processing.

The degree of visibility and authoritativeness writers opt for when constructing an authorial voice depends on the interplay of several external and internal factors which are related to the aspects of author identity interacting in academic discourse, namely the autobiographical self, the discursal self and the authorial self (cf. Ivanič, 1998). The external factors comprise the social and cultural background of the author, the epistemological and literacy tradition he/she has experienced, and knowledge of genre and disciplinary conventions; hence, they tend to forge authorial presence preferences shared by most, if not all, members of an academic discourse community defined by culture and discipline. The internal factors are related to the extent to which the author is prepared to claim authority and present him/herself as the source of knowledge and position expressed in the text and affect the related selection of rhetorical and stylistic devices. Since these preferences are of a more subjective character, they are likely to transcend national and disciplinary constraints and exert centrifugal influences resulting in some divergences in the authorial presence choices of the members of an academic discourse community.

This paper explores the use of author-reference pronouns for the construal of authorial presence in the genre of research articles in the field of linguistics. The aim of the study is twofold: firstly, to analyse the occurrence and functions of author-reference pronouns in experienced native-speakers' academic discourse, and secondly, to carry out a cross-cultural comparison of tendencies in the use of author-reference pronouns in published research articles written by Anglo-American and Czech linguists. The investigation uses a functional taxonomy of authorial roles expressed by author-reference pronouns, which draws on the classifications suggested by Kuo (1999), Tang and John (1999), Hyland (2001, 2002a, 2002b) and Harwood (2005) and presents the results of ongoing research carried out on two specialized corpora of research articles authored by Anglo-American and Czech linguists and published in academic journals. While exploring the frequency of occurrence and functions of author-reference pronouns in single-authored and co-authored research articles by native speakers, the investigation tries to substantiate the claim that despite the influential role of the so-called scientific paradigm advising objectivity and avoidance of personality, in the last three decades there has been a shift to a more subjective mode of academic writing which exploits the pronoun system for negotiating the writer-reader relationship and

construing an authorial voice. From a cross-cultural perspective the paper discusses differences in the ways Anglo-American linguists and Czech linguists approach writer-reader interaction and manifest their authorial presence and endeavours to explain reasons for divergences in the distribution and functions of author-reference pronouns by considering differences between the Central European academic literacy and its Anglo-American counterpart, the level of expertise of the authors and their expectations towards the intended readerships of the journals in which the articles are published.

## 2. ACADEMIC LITERACY AND AUTHORIAL PRESENCE

A traditional assumption which greatly influenced the Anglo-American academic literacy in the second half of the twentieth century claimed that academic research was purely empirical and objective; therefore, it was seen as related to “clarity, economy, rational argument supported by evidence, caution and restraint” (Bennett, 2009, 52) and best presented as if human agency was not part of the process (Hyland 2001). The consolidation of this academic writing tradition has been guaranteed by the educational system and academic style manuals targeted at a readership of novice writers undergoing their socialization into the academic discourse community and further secured by the system of peer-reviewing practiced by most academic journals (Hyland 1998).

As far as authorial presence is concerned, academic writing courses and style manuals typically advise novices to avoid the use of personal forms and to opt for passive voice, abstract rhetors (Hyland, 1998, 172) and other impersonal constructions. However, Bennett’s (2009) survey of academic style manuals indicates that there is some disagreement about the use of personal or impersonal forms, which often reflects an awareness of the existence of cross-disciplinary variation in authorial presence on the part of authors of style manuals. While presenting academic discourse as essentially impersonal, some authors, e.g. Allison (1997) and Fairbairn and Winch (1996) as quoted in Bennett (2009, 48), point out that personal pronouns are acceptable in the humanities and social sciences and associate their use with qualitative research. Moreover, Cottrell (2003) acknowledges the apparent emergence of alternatives to the scientific paradigm which allow some subjectivity and reference to personal experience (Bennett, 2009, 49). This tendency is also evidenced by current practice in published academic articles in the field of humanities and social sciences. If we consider the field of linguistics as explored in this paper, a brief glance at recent issues of *Applied Linguistics*, *Journal of Pragmatics* or *English for Academic Purposes* clearly shows that “contrary to advice given in some style guides to maintain an objective, impersonal style, the pronoun system is exploited by writers of RAs [research articles] for maintaining the writer-reader relationship and allowing the writer an authorial voice” (L. Flowerdew 2012). It is therefore not surprising that recent research has addressed the issue of the use of personal structures in academic discourse, focusing on their potential to show explicitly the author’s attitude to disciplinary practices and disciplinary knowledge (Ivanič, 1998, Hyland 2005), highlight key problems, emphasize the author’s contribution to the field (filling a gap) and seek agreement for it (Kuo, 1999), and to organize the text for the reader (Harwood, 2005).

This tendency in the academic literacy of Anglo-American soft sciences towards a higher degree of subjectivity can be tentatively interpreted as a signal that the soft sciences have to a large extent overcome their academic inferiority complex, often referred to as “physics envy”; now they appear to have a well-established territory and methodology and are managing to make their voice heard. Thus the academic writing conventions professed by academic style manuals are beginning to acknowledge the existence of a more subjective way of argumentation which may involve personal intrusions on the part of the author in the discourse.

With the spread of English as the *lingua franca* of the global academic world, the Anglo-American academic literacy has begun to interact with other academic literacies, as numerous non-native speakers who are striving to become part of the international academic discourse community are forced to publish in English. In order to present their views and interact with their readers using a foreign language, these authors also need to accommodate themselves to a different epistemological and literacy convention. This heterogeneity and dynamism of the modern academic world, which may also be seen as generating a centre-periphery tension (cf. J. Flowerdew, 2000, Canagarajah, 2002, Salager-Meyer, 2008, Curry and Lillis, 2004), has produced a growing interest in cross-cultural studies of academic discourse conventions aimed at explaining reasons for the existing variation and which considers the influence of these on international academic norms.

Since this investigation explores cross-cultural variation in the construal of authorial presence in research articles in applied linguistics by native speakers of English and Czech authors, it is now necessary to compare the Anglo-American and the Czech (as part of the Central European) academic writing traditions. As previous research has shown (e.g. Clyne, 1987, Čmejrková and Daneš, 1997, Chamonikolasová, 2005, Duszak, 1997, Kreutz and Harres, 1997, Mauranen, 1993, Povolná, 2009, Stašková, 2005), these traditions differ considerably in the way they approach writer-reader interaction. Due to its large size and cultural heterogeneity, the Anglo-American academic discourse community is highly competitive. Consequently, when addressing their depersonalized readership, its members invest a greater persuasive effort and adopt a more reader-friendly attitude associated with a higher level of dialogicity, marked authorial presence and explicit discourse organization. In contrast, the small Czech academic community is characterized by avoidance of tension resulting from the considerable amount of common knowledge and methodological principles shared by its members. This allows Czech authors to opt for rather monologic, more implicit and less structured discourse, which shows a marked preference for a low level of interactivity and backgrounded authorial presence (Čmejrková and Daneš, 1997, Chamonikolasová, 2005). When negotiating their claims and debating their views with the implied audience, Anglo-American authors tend to express a higher degree of authoritativeness and writer visibility conveyed by personal and impersonal attitudinal markers modifying the force of the argument and appealing to the reader in seeking agreement with the viewpoint advanced by the author. On the other hand, the tendency to background authorial presence typical of Czech academic discourse concurs with the use of impersonal structures, and, in the case of personal structures, with the use of first person plural forms (Chamonikolasová, 2005, 82). It is therefore the aim

of this investigation to find out to what extent Czech linguists writing in English have adopted Anglo-American academic writing conventions and to explore possible signs of interference from the Czech academic literacy in their discourse.

### 3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study explores the use of author-reference pronouns for the construal of authorial presence in research articles published in English written by Anglo-American and Czech linguists. The aim of the quantitative analysis is to find out the frequency of use of author-reference pronouns in the material and to identify cross-cultural differences in their rate of occurrence and distribution within the different structural parts of research articles written by Anglo-American and Czech scholars. The qualitative analysis studies how Anglo-American and Czech linguists project authorial presence into their discourse by examining the functions of author-reference pronominal structures. The results of the analysis serve as the basis for a comparison of tendencies in the construal of authorial presence in the Anglo-American and Czech academic literacies and a discussion of the issue of cross-cultural variation in contemporary academic discourse.

The investigation is carried out on two corpora comprising research articles written by native speakers of English and published in the journal *Applied Linguistics* in the period 2000–2010, and research articles written by Czech linguists and published in the journal *Discourse and Interaction* in the period 2008–2011 (i.e. since the foundation of the journal). *Applied Linguistics* is a well-established international academic journal published by Oxford University Press with a current impact factor of 1.885 (2011); the journal is highly influential and its readership comprises the global applied linguistics discourse community. *Discourse and Interaction* is a new English medium linguistics journal published by Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. Although it also has an international character, the authors publishing in it and the intended readership typically represent the Central European linguistics discourse community. Despite obvious differences in the authority and readership of the two journals, they are regarded as providing representative samples of research articles produced by the Anglo-American and Czech academic discourse communities respectively and, therefore, as appropriate sources of texts for the purposes of the present research.

The analysis of the frequency of occurrence, authorial roles and distribution of pronominal author-reference pronouns is performed on samples of texts selected so as to represent approximately the same number of articles (authors, in the case of the Czech corpus), although the Anglo-American and Czech corpora differ from each other in terms of word number. This is due to the considerable difference in average article length: 7,500 words in the native speakers' corpus and 4,500 words in the Czech corpus. The native speakers' corpus sample consists of twelve research articles (six are single-authored and six co-authored), totalling 90,500 words, while the Czech corpus sample comprises thirteen articles by ten authors (all articles are single-authored and three authors are represented by two articles to compensate for the lower word-count of their texts), totalling 58,000 words; i.e. the total size of the material is 148,500 words. Obviously the corpora of Anglo-American and Czech academic articles

used in this study are rather small. It is considered, however, that despite their limitations in terms of size, representativeness and generalizability of the results, small specialized corpora are convenient for comparative studies of academic and professional discourse as they “allow for more top-down, qualitative, contextually-informed analyses than those carried out using general corpora” (L. Flowerdew, 2004, 18).

The corpora were searched for the target author-reference personal pronouns *I/me/my* and *we/us/our* using the freeware Antconc concordance programme. Prior to the analysis, the corpora were cleaned to eliminate block quotes and long examples; in order to preserve the coherence of the texts, however, integral citations and integral examples were not deleted. Firstly, the rate of occurrence of the personal pronouns *I/me/my* and *we/us/our* were obtained for the purposes of an analysis of cross-cultural variation. Then the raw data were normalized to frequencies per 1,000 words to allow for comparison between the corpora, which as mentioned above differ in their word-count, and with data reported by previous studies. The concordance lists were checked manually to exclude occurrences of target structures in integral citations and integral examples.

The analysis of the functions of author-reference pronouns in the *Applied Linguistics* and *Discourse and Interaction* corpora uses the functional taxonomy summarized below, which draws on Tang and John (1999), Harwood (2005) and Hyland (2002a) and considers five major authorial roles, which can be seen as reflecting a continuum from the lowest to the highest degree of authority:

- 1) Representative — positions the author as a member of a larger community; this is the least authoritative role, typically expressed by the plural first person pronoun
  - a) describing disciplinary knowledge/practices — *nowadays we consider English as the lingua franca of the academic world*
  - b) seeking reader involvement — *here we have a perfect example of*
- 2) Discourse-organiser — guides the reader through the text
  - a) at the macro-level of the whole text outlines the structure of the discourse — *in this article I briefly explore*
  - b) at the micro-level of rhetorical moves and thematic segments indicates intra-textual connections and transition points in the discourse — *let us now turn to the issue of*
- 3) Recounter of the research process — comments on the collection of data and research procedures used — *we have collected the data*
- 4) Opinion-holder — assumes a higher degree of authority associated with expressing attitudes and elaborating arguments — *I think that the best way of conceptualizing coherence is*
- 5) Originator — this is the most authoritative and face-threatening role as it is related to putting forward claims, commenting on findings and highlighting the author’s contribution to the field — *I have provided evidence for*

Obviously author roles are not identified only in accordance with the author-reference pronouns used; rather they are defined by the structures in which the pronouns occur, i.e. the semantics of the verb phrase and the larger co-text. However, in accordance with the approach adopted in previous studies on author-reference pronouns

(e.g. Kuo, 1999, Tang and John, 1999, Hyland, 2001, 2002a and 2002b, Harwood, 2005), this investigation also relates author roles to the personal pronouns used.

The results of the analysis of the rate of occurrence and functions of author-reference pronouns in the *Applied Linguistics* and *Discourse and Interaction* corpora were used as the basis for a comparative cross-cultural study of the ways Anglo-American linguists and Czech linguists approach writer-reader interaction and manifest their authorial voice. Variation in the frequency and functions of author-reference pronouns in the *Applied Linguistics* and *Discourse and Interaction* corpora is examined in relation to the generic structure of the research article as suggested by Swales (1990, 2004) and the literacy traditions the authors represent.

#### 4. ANALYSIS OF THE FREQUENCY AND FUNCTIONS OF AUTHOR-REFERENCE PRONOUNS IN THE APPLIED LINGUISTICS CORPUS

The analysis of the use of author-reference pronouns in the *Applied Linguistics* corpus undertakes to find out whether expert writers opt for a higher degree of subjectivity in their discourse and to identify the main rhetorical functions performed by author-reference pronouns in different parts of research articles.

As the frequency data summarized in Table 1 and Table 2 shows, all Anglo-American authors use author-reference pronouns to construe their authorial presence, although there is considerable variation in the rate of self-mentions across the different research articles. The average frequency of author-reference pronouns per paper is 57, i.e. 7.3 per 1000 words, ranging from 15 to 104 in the co-authored texts and from six to 132 in the single-authored texts (highlighted in grey in Table 1). This rate is considerably higher than the rate of 3.2 per 1000 words reported by Hyland (2001), who analysed self-mentions in a corpus of 30 research articles published in the 1997 and 1998 issues of *Applied Linguistics*. In addition, while in Hyland's (2001) data the rate of singular author pronouns per paper is slightly higher than the rate of plural author pronouns (17.2 and 15.0 respectively), in my corpus the overall average occurrence of *we/us/our* (47.6) exceeds considerably the average occurrence of *I/me/my* (24.6), and even in the single-authored texts the frequency of plural forms per paper (30.0) is substantially higher than the frequency of singular ones (18.6). (It should be mentioned, however, that Hyland does not specify the proportion of single-authored and co-authored articles in his corpus.) It is therefore possible to claim that in recent years a tendency towards a more subjective way of expression has been firmly established in the field of applied linguistics. This seems to be in consonance with the specificity of knowledge in soft sciences, which is less precisely measurable and often depends on subjective interpretation. Thus in order to enhance their authority and credibility the authors tend to get behind their claims and positions personally and to open a dialogic space for the negotiation of their views with the applied linguistics discourse community. The high rate of inclusive *we* seems to reflect the efforts of the writers to involve the readers in their argumentation, to position their views within the existing disciplinary knowledge and to seek agreement for their contribution to the field. In agreement with Harwood (2005, 347) this can be inter-

Text	<i>I</i>	<i>my</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>our</i>	<i>us</i>	Total
1	0	0	0	50	14	0	64
2	0	0	0	47	1	13	61
3	0	0	0	5	2	1	8
4	35	3	1	14	0	0	56
5	0	0	0	51	16	4	71
6	5	0	0	1	0	0	6
7	0	0	0	57	20	0	77
8	0	0	0	72	25	7	104
9	18	2	0	80	10	22	132
10	0	0	0	11	2	2	15
11	12	1	0	8	2	7	24
12	34	1	0	8	18	2	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>684</b>

**TABLE 1** — Frequency of author pronouns in the *Applied Linguistics corpus*\*

\* The lines highlighted in grey indicate data from single-authored texts.

preted as a sign of communality and positive politeness, as the authors acknowledge the readers as disciplinary equals with whom they negotiate their contribution to disciplinary knowledge while trying to persuade the audience to accept their views and claims.

The results of the quantitative analysis also show that there are differences in the distribution of inclusive and exclusive author-reference pronouns and their forms in research articles with individual and multiple authorships. The subject forms *I* and *we* are the most frequent in all research articles. This supports Gosden's (1993) findings and substantiates the view that when occurring in thematic position in the clause author-reference devices identify the writer as the source of knowledge, opinion or attitudes expressed and thus enable him/her to control the social interaction with the reader and the academic discourse community (cf. Gosden, 1993, Hyland, 2005). The object forms of author-reference pronouns are considerably less frequent. While the rate of the singular form *me* is practically insignificant (a single occurrence in the whole corpus), the plural form *us* is typically used inclusively to create reader involvement. There is considerable difference in the rate of singular and plural possessive forms, which have the potential "to promote the writer's contribution by associating them closely with their work" (Hyland, 2001, 223). The rare occurrences of the singular possessive form *my* in the single-authored texts are restricted to reference to data and the research process. The frequency of the plural possessive form *our* is substantially higher: apart from its exclusive use referring to the researchers themselves, when used inclusively, *our* may refer to the researchers and the readers, to the discourse community as the holder of shared disciplinary knowledge, and in broad generalizations to humans in general.

In the co-authored texts, all writers use the exclusive *we* to refer to themselves and the inclusive *we* to refer to their discourse community and audience. In the sin-



Texts	Single-authored		Co-authored		Total	
	Raw No	Norm. rate	Raw No	Norm. rate	Raw No	Norm. rate
<b>I</b>	104	2.21	0	0.00	104	1.15
<b>my</b>	7	0.15	0	0.00	7	0.08
<b>me</b>	1	0.02	0	0.00	1	0.01
<b>we</b>	116	2.47	288	6.62	404	4.47
<b>our</b>	32	0.68	78	1.79	110	1.19
<b>us</b>	32	0.68	26	0.60	58	0.60
<b>Total</b>	292	6.2	392	9.0	684	7.3

TABLE 2 — Rate of author pronouns in single- and co-authored *Applied Linguistics* articles

gle-authored texts, five of the six authors (text 3 shows no occurrences of *I/me/my*) use the exclusive pronoun *I* to refer to themselves, while all six use the inclusive *we* to refer to themselves and their readers. This indicates that the plural form *we*, both in its inclusive and exclusive use, is considered less face-threatening as it assumes shared responsibility for the claims and views expressed in the discourse and as a result is used more systematically to construe authorial presence. A comparison of the normalized rates of author pronouns in single-authored and co-authored texts (Table 2) — 6.2 and 9.0 respectively — suggests that the possibility of opting for the plural form *we* generally leads to a higher frequency of personal structures.

The lower rate of and considerable variation in the occurrence of the exclusive forms *I/me/my* (from 0 to 39) suggest that apart from a tendency to use these more carefully, the writers differ in the degree of authoritativeness they are ready to assume. This reflects the fact that the first person pronoun is associated with high-risk rhetorical functions and presupposes a clear attribution of views and claims to the author, which is perceived as threatening to face as it may expose the writer to attack by the audience (cf. Harwood, 2005). It should be mentioned, however, that the author reference pronoun *I* may appear in structures functioning as hedges (e.g. *I suggest, I think*) and thus actually reduce the risk the authors take by indicating commitment to the position expressed in the text by inviting alternative views and opinions. In addition, as Hyland's (2010) analysis of the discourses of John Swales and Deborah Cameron clearly shows, individual authors may use different devices to construct their authorial identity, while managing to project an authoritative and powerful authorial presence in their discourse. This suggests that authorial choices are affected not only by cultural and disciplinary conventions, but also by the personality, experience and individual preferences of the writer.

The distribution of author-reference pronouns across the structural parts of the research articles is associated with the rhetorical functions which they perform. The least authoritative function of Representative, which is performed by the plural author-reference pronoun *we* referring to the author and the disciplinary discourse community or a group of fellow researchers, occurs often in the Introduction section in descriptions of existing disciplinary knowledge or practice (1), thus enabling authors to establish research territory and claim relevance to the field.

- (1) *Idioms are a type of multi-word unit (MWU). In order to define idioms, we must first define MWUs. An MWU can be loosely defined as a fixed and recurrent pattern of lexical material sanctioned by usage. At one end we have collocations which Firth (1957: 14) describes as ‘actual words in habitual company’, or words which can be predicted to combine with each other. (AL/8 Introduction)*

The “shifting signifier” of *we*, which may have “many potential scopes of reference even within a single discourse” (Wales 1996: 62), often leads to multifunctionality, as in (1), where the first occurrence of *we* may be interpreted as exclusive, i.e. referring to the authors, or as inclusive, i.e. seeking reader involvement, or in (2), taken from a single-authored article, where the inclusive *we* referring to the author and the readers is used to indicate discourse structure and seek cooperation and reader involvement in the interpretation of findings in the Results section.

- (2) *From each of these sets of findings, we can conclude that there is a commonality about these texts, despite the fact that they represent 144 different and, in some ways, strikingly contrasting life stories. (AL/11 Results)*

The role of Discourse-organizer is twofold: at the macro-level the use of author pronouns is related to the stating of research aims and purposes and the outlining of textual structure, while at the micro-level self-mention structures indicate move and topic boundaries and intra-textual reference. These functions of author reference pronouns are closely associated with the marked tendency towards explicit discourse organisation in the Anglo-American academic literacy. Personal structures conveying research aims and purposes refer exclusively to the author(s); they are typically located in the Introduction section of research articles and related to the ‘occupying the niche’ rhetorical move, as in

- (3) *In the present paper we turn to the use of lexical bundles in university level courses. Specifically, we analyse the use of lexical bundles in university classroom teaching and textbooks. (AL/7 Introduction)*
- (4) *In the next part of the paper, therefore, I present examples to illustrate the kinds of problems that arose, to outline the steps in the redrafting process, and to show how making the textual interaction overt resulted in more satisfying versions. On the basis of this, I argue that students training to improve their proficiency as writers can benefit from explicit attention to the ways in which interaction can be performed in text. (AL/4 Introduction)*

The use of personal structures for conveying research aims and purposes achieves a high level of author visibility and presupposes a certain level of threat of criticism or rejection of the choice, scope or claimed novelty of the research problem. The authorial interventions involved in the signposting of the text for the reader by the indication of topic shift (5), section structure (6) and intratextual reference (7) are not associated with a particular section of the research article, although they occur pri-

marily in the Methods and Discussion sections. Due to their essentially metadiscour-  
sual character, these functions of author pronouns represent low-risk for the writer;  
it is interesting to note, however, that in the *Applied Linguistics* corpus personal intru-  
sions for organizing discourse are not very frequent.

- (5) *Before we look at some case studies that might throw empirical light on the problematics of assigning communicative purpose, it would be useful to consider the position of Bhatia (1993), where he offers this extension of Swales' definition of genre (...)* (AL/2 Methods)
- (6) *I will begin with a discussion of three pairs of examples drawn from the data.* (AL/6 Methods)
- (7) *Above I noted that the 'women's speech is more standard' generalization no longer accurately represents the consensus view among variationist linguists.* (AL/12 Discussion)

A slightly more authoritative role is the one that authors adopt when describing procedure and involvement in the research process. The exclusive personal forms indicating the alignment of the researchers with the methodology adopted (8) and the description of data collection, selection and processing (9) are typically found in the Methods section of research articles. Although the Methods section is considered crucial for the credibility and replicability of the research, it is not always marked off in articles published in the field of applied linguistics. (As Swales (2004, 219) points out, only eight of the 18 articles published in the 2001 issues of *Applied Linguistics* had a distinct Methods section; in my corpus, four of the twelve research articles comprise a section labelled 'Method', 'The study' or a variation of these.) While featuring the writers as the agents of the research process, the use of author-reference pronouns for describing methodology and data can also indicate subjective judgements concerning procedural choices which present the author as a competent member of the disciplinary community who has the authority to change the methods used. In (8), the use of *our earlier descriptions of lexical bundles* is supported by a self-citation; this achieves high author visibility and asserts the authoritativeness of authors who have already published their research and thus are presented as well-established, competent members of the disciplinary community.

- (8) *To provide a baseline for the analysis of university registers, we compare the patterns of use to our earlier descriptions of lexical bundles in conversation and academic prose, based on analysis of the Longman Spoken and Written English Corpus (c.4 million words of British English conversation; c.3 million words of American English conversation; c.5.3 million words of academic prose; see Biber et al. 1999, ch. 1).* (AL/5 Methods)
- (9) *For each interviewee, information is available about place of birth, age, sex, occupation, level of education, marital status, and religious affiliation. The interviews were transcribed as part of the original project, in which I was not directly involved, but (with the support of a small grant) I oversaw the post-editing of the texts to make them suitable for corpus analysis.* (AL/11 Methods)

The most powerful and face-threatening authorial roles are those of Opinion-holder and Originator. By expressing attitudes, elaborating arguments, putting forward claims and commenting on findings the writers show a high degree of commitment to the views and claims made. The persuasive force of personal intrusions realized by exclusive author pronouns stems from the fact that while manifesting explicitly their presence, the authors also address the readers and make them co-participants in the ongoing debate initiated by the author (cf. Hyland, 2001, 221), as in (10) where the inserted clause *I would argue* functions as a hedge:

- (10) *These socially based accounts of sex/gender variation are, I would argue, preferable to the competing biological explanations on two main grounds. First, they are better able to deal with the empirical evidence showing that the relevant sociolinguistic patterns are not uniform cross-culturally and historically.* (AL/12 Discussion)

While in most cases the conveyance of attitudes and opinions is expressed rather indirectly and often hedged, there are also instances of direct expression of (dis)agreement with the views of others (11) and with shared disciplinary knowledge (12). The rejection of the established disciplinary procedures in (12) is a pre-condition for the main knowledge claim made by the authors — the reconceptualization of the category of idioms, which is summarized in the Conclusion section marked by numerous personal intrusions on the part of the authors intended to highlight their novelty claim. At the same time, by using the hedge *we believe* and by indicating possible limitations of the applicability of the suggested model in practice the authors open a dialogic space for the discussion of their views; the interactive dimension of the discourse is further emphasized by the possessive *our*, which in this case has a general reference (humans).

- (11) *We agree with Swales that these occluded genres are worthy of study, and that, as they are relatively straightforward with a clear and limited purpose, the components are easily identified.* (AL/5 Introduction)
- (12) *We have rejected the over-elaborate classifications and definitions of idioms previously given, and focused on the most important part of idioms — the fact that they are non-compositional. We have aimed to remove most of the ambiguity and give a tighter, more restrictive definition of what an idiom is. (...) We have moved this ‘important group of expressions which have figurative meanings’ to our newly created and much larger category of ‘figuratives’. We believe that while this category is far from problem-free for language learners, it can be dealt with more easily by teaching the L2 learner the conceptual metaphors which underlie our thoughts and speech and giving the L2 learner the tools to ‘unpick’ the figurative language.* (AL/8 Conclusion)

When summarizing their findings in the Conclusions section, the authors often use author reference pronouns to stress their position of active research subjects committing themselves to a subjective interpretation of a phenomenon and to a discussion of strengths, limitations and future research perspectives. Extract (13), taken

from a co-authored research article, provides another example of the rhetorical potential of the 'shifting' signifier of *we*: while in the first three sentences the authors use the exclusive *we* to assume responsibility for the limitations of their interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation, in the last two sentences the reference of *we* is extended to comprise the writer and the reader as members of the disciplinary community. Thus the writer claims the authority to express an opinion which is presented as shared by the whole disciplinary community and prepares the ground for the acceptance of his/her views.

- (13) *There is of course a danger that we are, for the purposes of discussion and clarification of the genre, exaggerating the problem of comprehension. Indeed, we believe that most authors are capable of understanding the intent of the editorial letters and the guidance that they provide about reading the reviews and revising the manuscript. We must affirm again that because our study is of the letters of one single editor we cannot make any generalizations concerning the editorial letter genre. Nevertheless we believe that our study may go some way towards demystifying the editorial process and contribute to our understanding of the nature and function of the genre in question. At least we now have a baseline against which further research can be measured, the next step, of course, being a study of a corpus of letters from a range of journals. (AL/5 Conclusions)*

To summarize the discussion of the use of author-reference pronouns in the *Applied Linguistics* corpus, the above analysis has shown that expert writers convey a relatively high degree of subjectivity in their discourse, although there is considerable variation across the individual texts. While the writers use all rhetorical functions performed by author-reference pronouns, most of which may be associated with specific sections of the research articles, they tend to assume more powerful authorial roles when making explicit their presence in their discourse.

## **5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE RATE AND FUNCTIONS OF AUTHOR-REFERENCE PRONOUNS IN THE DISCOURSE AND INTERACTION AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS CORPORA**

The cross-cultural analysis of the use of author-reference pronouns in the *Discourse and Interaction* and *Applied Linguistics* corpora aims at exploring differences in the rate and functional specialization of author reference pronouns as used by Czech and Anglo-American linguists and at explaining reasons for the existing divergences.

A comparison of the two corpora shows some important differences concerning the type of authorship and size of the language material which have to be taken into consideration. Firstly, all research articles by Czech linguists are single-authored, which indicates that despite the small size of the Czech linguistics community and the considerable extent of shared knowledge and methodological principles, its members rarely team up to produce joint research. Consequently, in the comparative analysis of the use of author reference pronouns by Czech and Anglo-American linguists only the single-authored research articles from the *Applied Linguistics* cor-

Text	<i>I</i>	<i>my</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>our</i>	<i>us</i>	Total
1a/b	9	2	1	6	0	0	18
2a/b	0	0	0	34	2	0	36
3a/b	0	0	0	8	2	0	10
4	1	0	0	12	6	3	22
5	0	0	0	42	13	1	56
6	1	0	0	2	0	0	3
7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	13	5	2	20
9	24	14	1	3	0	0	42
10	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>208</b>

TABLE 3 — Frequency of author pronouns in the *Discourse and Interaction* corpus

pus are used as a reference corpus. Secondly, since there is a considerable difference in the size of the corpora, the comparative frequency tables use normalized rates of occurrence of the target structures.

The results of a quantitative analysis of the occurrence of author-reference pronouns in the *Discourse and Interaction* corpus (thirteen articles by ten authors) are summarized in Table 3. The average rate of author-reference pronouns per author is 21 (16 per paper), ranging from 0 to 56. As a comparison of the overall frequency of singular and plural author pronouns in the *Discourse and Interaction* and the *Applied Linguistics* corpora suggests (see Table 4), expert native speakers writing in the field of applied linguistics tend to use personal structures for constructing an authorial presence nearly twice as frequently as Czech linguists (6.13 vs. 3.60 occurrences per 1000 words). Only four of the ten Czech authors use both singular and plural author pronouns, while one of them does not use personal structures at all. The use of the exclusive pronoun *I/me/my* is rare (0.91 per 1000 words compared to 2.38 in the *Applied Linguistics* corpus) and highly idiosyncratic: it is used consistently only by two authors; the other two authors who opt for the exclusive singular pronoun use the subject form *I* just once in their texts. However, the exclusive plural pronoun *we* is used by two Czech linguists (the authors of Text 2 a/b and Text 5) as a self-reference device — a practice which has not been observed in the *Applied Linguistics* corpus. This seems to result from interference from the Czech academic writing style, where, similarly to the practice in most central European academic literacies (e.g. Slovak, Polish, Russian, German), the use of exclusive editorial *we* for self-reference is conventional and intended to express authorial modesty. As Chamonikolasová (2005) points out, this use of the authorial plural, which is motivated by cultural and geographical factors rather than linguistic ones (cf. Čmejrková et al., 1999), is “one of the most common mistakes in English academic texts written by native speakers of Czech” (Chamonikolasová, 2005, 82).

It is significant that the frequency of occurrence of the plural forms *we/us/our* is the highest in research articles which use the exclusive *we* for author reference (Text 2 a/b and Text 5). This indicates that while in the *Discourse and Interaction* corpus occur-

Corpus	<i>I</i>		<i>we</i>		Total	
	Raw No	Norm. rate	Raw No	Norm. rate	Raw No	Norm. rate
Native speakers — single authored RA	112	2.38	176	3.74	288	6.13
Czech NNS	53	0.91	155	2.68	208	3.60

**TABLE 4** — Comparison of the rate of author pronouns in the Applied Linguistics and *Discourse and Interaction* corpora

Texts	AL corpus single-authored RA	DI corpus
<i>I</i>	2.28	0.61
<i>my</i>	0.15	0.28
<i>me</i>	0.02	0.03
<i>we</i>	2.47	2.08
<i>our</i>	0.64	0.48
<i>us</i>	0.60	0.12

**TABLE 5** — Comparison of the occurrence of the forms of pronouns in the *Applied Linguistics* and *Discourse and Interaction* corpora

rences of the forms of *we* are considerably less frequent than in the *Applied Linguistics* corpus (cf. Table 4), the actual rate of inclusive plural author pronouns in research articles by Czech linguists is even lower. The infrequent use of inclusive author pronouns, the functions of which are to enhance dialogicity by referring to shared disciplinary knowledge and achieving reader involvement in the argumentation for anticipating possible criticism, makes the research articles written by Czech linguists low on interactivity. These findings show that despite their efforts to adapt to Anglo-American writing conventions, when writing in English Czech authors tend to transfer into their English-language academic texts some features of the generally more monologic Czech academic discourse, which is marked by a preference towards backgrounded authorial presence (Čmejrková and Daneš, 1997, Chamonikolasová, 2005).

As for the forms of the author pronouns (cf. Table 5), the most striking difference is evidenced in the case of the subject form *I*, which Czech authors use four times less frequently than expert native writers. This is hardly surprising since, on the one hand, the subject position conveys high author visibility by presenting the writer as the source of knowledge and opinion expressed, and on the other hand and for the very same reason, it is a very face-threatening choice, which is in conflict with the basic principles of the Czech academic literacy. The frequency of the object singular pronoun *me* is insignificant in both corpora. Surprisingly, the possessive form *my* shows a slightly higher rate in the research articles by Czech linguists, where it co-occurs with discourse and research nouns, e.g. *study*, *analysis*, *data*, thus highlighting the close association of the writer with the material under analysis and the research process, which seems not to be perceived as face-threatening.

In the *Discourse and Interaction* corpus, the distribution of author-reference pronouns is not strictly associated with specific structural parts of the research articles, although they rarely appear early in the Introduction. While Czech linguists use the whole spectrum of author roles conveyed by author pronouns, there are considerable differences both in the frequency of use of the rhetorical functions they perform and in the way they are expressed. The most prominent functions of author pronouns in the *Discourse and Interaction* corpus are: presenting results and interpreting findings, which are associated with the powerful authorial role of Originator; reader involvement, pertaining to the low-risk role of Representative; and stating goals and purposes, elaborating argument and describing procedure and data, related to the roles of Discourse Organiser and Recounter of the research process.

The use of exclusive author pronouns to present results and interpret findings gives high prominence to the author as the agent of the research process as it allows him/her to report objective data in a personal way. In the *Discourse and Interaction* corpus, these functions are conveyed by both singular (14) and plural (15) exclusive author pronouns, which occur primarily in the Results and Discussion sections of the articles. It is noteworthy that while in (14) the interpretation of findings is first presented from a subjective perspective framed by the personal structure *I do not consider*, in the following sentence the author opts for an impersonal structure (*it can be said*) to make a more general knowledge claim. Extract (15) provides an example of an exclusive *we* referring to the author, who provides further support for the validity of his/her findings by citing previous research reporting similar results.

- (14) *I have not found* any greeting sequences inappropriate to the IRC environment even if they vary significantly from oral interaction. That is, *I do not consider* no response to a greeting on IRC impolite or as a face-threatening act but rather view this conduct as specific of cyberculture. It can be said that for the conversation to be successful, chat participants have to struggle more and utilize more opening strategies than in face-to-face conversation. (DI/9 Discussion)
- (15) Regarding the number of sentences necessary for such a summary *we have arrived* at 31.4 per cent which is in harmony with de Oliveira et al. (2002) who claim for around 3 per cent of the size of the original text. (DI/4 Results)

The exclusive author pronoun *we* is also used to state goals and purposes in the ‘occupying the niche’ move of the Introduction (16). After delimiting the scope of the research (*we focus mainly on ...*) the author in example 16 aligns with a particular methodology (*[we] argue for the inferential approach*), which in this case seems to be one of the main contributions of the study to the field. The justification of the approach adopted in the research is framed by the hedge *we believe*, which creates dialogicity and anticipates possible criticism.

- (16) In this paper *we focus* mainly on the possible interpretations of particular phenomena and *argue* for the inferential approach to interpretation. *We believe* that interpretation is largely influenced by the readers’ existing views and values, previous experience,



*other articles they have read about similar events, but also age, place of living, social background, social and cultural context, and many other factors.* (DI/5 Introduction)

Although the level of interactiveness in the research articles by Czech linguists is generally not very high, the Representative authorial role is fairly frequent. However, rather than using the exclusive pronoun to describe disciplinary knowledge or practices or seek acceptance for novelty claims, Czech linguists create reader involvement by assuming shared experience or practice in statements where the referent of *we* is fairly general, e.g. humans or language users (17). An important difference between the use of the inclusive *we* in the *Discourse and Interaction* and *Applied Linguistics* corpora is that the Czech authors practically do not use the persuasive potential of *we* as a 'shifting' signifier.

- (17) *We would not use swear words during a job interview but when describing it in the relaxed atmosphere of a pub to a group of friends, we are likely to utter a few crude expressions, simply to spike the narrative and make it more appealing to our audience.* (DI/8 Introduction)

In the *Discourse and Interaction* corpus the role of Recounter involves describing data and explaining procedure, primarily in the Methods section of articles. Most of the occurrences of exclusive singular and plural author pronouns conveying this authorial role refer to data description and processing. Thus in (18), *my data* positions the author as the compiler of the material, while *I have transformed* stresses the personal involvement and agentive role of the author in processing the data.

- (18) *My data are in the form of a transcript of conversations (...). I have transformed the original printout into a record using the Microsoft Word programme and numbered the lines/messages to make the conversational threads easier to follow and clearer to present in examples.* (DI/9- Method)

The relatively frequent use of author pronouns for description of data and procedure may be interpreted as an attempt on the part of the Czech authors to approximate the Anglo-American conventions of the genre of the research article, which require a clear description of methodology. The role of Recounter seems to be perceived as a low risk role, as Czech authors seem to be reluctant to take responsibility explicitly for qualitative judgements, thus suggesting that different decisions could have been made. In this respect the use of pronouns for description of data and procedure in the *Discourse and Interaction* corpus shows some features of similarity with novice writers' discourse (cf. Hyland, 2002). The motivation for the choices made by Czech linguists stems rather from their non-native status, interference from Czech academic writing conventions and, to some extent, a subjective perception of a lesser degree of expertise, resulting from their more restricted readership and scarce opportunities to publish in high-impact international journals.

A comparison of the functions performed by singular and plural author pronouns in the *Applied Linguistics* and *Discourse and Interaction* corpora (Table 6) shows that Czech and Anglo-American linguists diverge in the prominence they give to different

Rhetorical function	DI corpus		AL corpus single-authored	
	We	I	WE	I
Describing disciplinary knowledge	3	0	3	0
Reader involvement	32	0	82	0
Stating a goal/purpose	9	1	0	11
Structuring discourse	4	4	9	34
Describing data	3	2	0	2
Explaining procedure	25	13	6	11
Expressing (dis)agreement	0	1	0	8
Presenting results	33	4	3	10
Self-citation	1	1	1	2
Interpreting findings	18	23	3	6
Elaborating arguments	17	0	44	10
Stating a claim	5	3	0	12
Presenting strengths	0	0	1	1
Stating limitations	3	1	1	4
Outlining future research	1	0	2	0

**TABLE 6** — Comparison of the functions of author pronouns in the *Applied Linguistics and Discourse and Interaction* corpora (listed from the least powerful to the most authoritative)

functions, as well as in extent of their preference for the use of plural and singular author pronouns for the expression of these.

In agreement with the dialogical and reader-oriented character of the Anglo-American academic literacy, in the *Applied Linguistics* corpus the authors strive to achieve a high level of reader involvement as well as to signpost discourse structure for their audience. The least face-threatening function of reader involvement of author pronouns is also a prominent feature of the articles by Czech linguists; however, it is used there considerably less frequently than in the native speakers' texts. In addition, while in the *Applied Linguistics* corpus the reader is positioned as a competent member of the disciplinary community, in the *Discourse and Interaction* corpora the commonality between the reader and the writer is of a more general nature, as they are presented as readers, speakers of a foreign language or simply humans. Nor are the divergences between the two corpora in the use of author pronouns to indicate discourse organisation just quantitative. While native speakers use exclusively first person pronouns to state goals and purposes and show a strong preference for the singular form when marking discourse structure, Czech linguists typically use plural author pronouns to express these functions. This reflects the above-mentioned tendency in the Czech academic literacy towards the use of the exclusive plural author pronoun to indicate modesty and distance. As to the conveyance of the role of Recounter of the research process, Czech authors often opt for a personal approach in the description of data and procedure, while native speakers tend to use personal intrusions primarily when taking responsibility for procedural

choices which reconsider existing approaches and contribute new insights to disciplinary methodology.

Turning to the more powerful author roles of Opinion-holder and Originator, the most prominent function of author pronouns in the *Discourse and Interaction* corpus is that of presenter of quantitative results, which allows the authors to highlight their agentive role in the research process. When interpreting findings, Czech authors use both singular and plural forms, but in agreement with the tendency towards authorial modesty in the Czech academic literacy, they show a marked preference towards lower writer visibility and opt for the plural form *we* when reporting results, elaborating arguments, stating limitations and putting forward claims. In contrast, Anglo-American authors tend to express these high-risk functions by structures including the exclusive singular pronoun to achieve high author visibility. Thus they clearly align themselves with their views, positions and claims and assume an authoritative position based on confident command of their arguments. This authoritative position is particularly visible when authors present the strengths of their research, a function of author pronouns which is rare and occurs only in the native speakers' corpus. The only function conveyed more frequently by the inclusive plural pronoun in the *Applied Linguistics* corpus is that of elaborating arguments. This choice stems from the multifunctionality of the plural pronoun, which allows authors to involve readers in their argumentation, while anticipating possible criticism and preparing the ground for the acceptance of their claims.

Summarizing the differences between the use of author-reference pronouns in the *Applied Linguistics* and *Discourse and Interaction* corpora, it is obvious that native speakers use exclusive and inclusive personal forms more systematically to construe a marked authorial presence in their discourse. A high level of dialogicity and carefully elaborated argumentation enables the authors of the research articles in the *Applied Linguistics* corpus to anticipate possible criticism and thus gives them a better chance of persuading readers to accept their novel claims. The mere occurrence of personal forms in the *Discourse and Interaction* corpus shows that under the pressure of the necessity of publishing in English in the context of the globalized academic discourse community, Czech authors make efforts to adapt to the predominant Anglo-American academic literacy. Logically enough, however, their English-language academic discourse bears the traces of their original academic literacy, which results in a preference for reduced personal attribution by the use of exclusive *we*, less explicit discourse organization, and a tendency to a more descriptive approach to the explaining of procedure and the presentation and interpretation of results.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this investigation into the use of author-reference pronouns for the construal of authorial presence in the genre of research articles in the field of linguistics was twofold: to verify the hypothesis that recently there has been a shift to a more subjective mode of academic writing in the field of applied linguistics and to

compare ways in which Czech and Anglo-American authors manifest authorial presence in their academic discourse.

The findings have evidenced that despite the influential role of a scientific paradigm advising objectivity and avoidance of personality in academic writing, in the last decade a tendency towards a more subjective way of expression has been firmly established in the field of applied linguistics. Native speakers publishing in the *Applied Linguistics* journal actively exploit the pronoun system for maintaining the writer-reader relationship and allowing the writer an authoritative authorial voice. This analysis of the function of author pronouns has shown that personal structures in academic discourse can function as powerful means of showing the author's attitude to disciplinary practices and disciplinary knowledge, highlighting key problems, emphasizing and negotiating the author's contribution to the field, describing methodology and organizing the text for the reader.

Cross-cultural analysis of differences in the ways Anglo-American linguists and Czech linguists approach writer-reader interaction and manifest their authorial presence has indicated that while clearly showing awareness of Anglo-American academic discourse conventions, Czech writers construct an authorial presence marked by a lower level of interactiveness and authoritativeness and backgrounded authorial presence. The choices of Czech linguists bear signs of interference from the Czech academic literacy and reflect a lower level of self-confidence resulting from their non-native speaker status and a subjective perception of a lesser degree of expertise stemming from the small size of the Czech linguistics community and restricted access to publication in an international context. The main ways in which the Czech academic literacy diverges from its Anglo-American counterpart reside in the lower frequency of use of author pronouns on the part of the Czech writers, in their preference for the use of exclusive plural pronouns in cases in which native speakers would opt for singular forms — e.g. presenting and interpreting findings, elaborating arguments — and in the predominant use of less powerful authorial roles.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the results of this study have evidenced that a diachronic analysis of the devices used for the construal of authorial presence can reveal new tendencies in the development of disciplinary academic discourse. Within the context of globalized academia, the knowledge gathered from such investigations together with the findings of cross-cultural studies on academic writing can clearly contribute to a better understanding of reasons for the existing variation in academic discourse conventions across disciplines, languages and cultures. The results of this research, however, should not be overgeneralized. They should be verified by a larger-scale study exploring a more extensive corpus and considering the interplay of a wider range of means for constructing an authorial voice in order to explore in greater detail how factors such as genre, discipline, different academic literacies and epistemologies, and idiosyncratic choices affect academic discourse conventions.

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