Research Paper

Writer Visibility in Applied Linguistics Research Articles and Thesis Proposals: Analysis of Introduction and Methodology

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Abstract

Seeking to appear cogent and communicative, rather than self-evident or detached, is one of the main features of academic writing which has mostly gone unnoticed or devalued by some novice and even seasoned writers (Adel, 2006; Hyland, 2005a; 2005b). Thus, this study set out to explore how authorial presence markers work in the introduction and method sections of 50 research articles and 50 graduate thesis proposals. The coding process included the identification of *I, my*, *me*, *we*, *us*, *our*, *self-citations*, and *meta-comments* in the as well as assigning appropriate pragmatic functions based on the categories suggested by Hyland (2002) and typologies proposed by other researchers in this regard (e.g., Harwood, 2005; Sheldon, 2009; Vessileva, 1928). The results revealed that we should not ascribe similarities to the concerned genres in relation to strategies employed by writers. More precisely, whereas academics tended to connect themselves to their writings, students are inclined to be more cautious about situating their own views and arguments in the text through personal authorial references. The study does not suggest that writers extend and generalize research findings but rather invites academics and researchers to make a connection between elements of the study and their own experience.

Keywords: *Academic Writing, Research Articles, Thesis Proposals, Pragmatic Functions, Personal Authorial References.*

Introduction

Being an integral part of academia, writing has gradually been welcomed as a communicative art rather than an objective and faceless form of discourse that represents only facts detached from feelings and beliefs (Hyland, 2005b). Academics do not just report factual information but try to bridge between independent and shared experiences (Hyland, 2011)

Indeed, academic writing is viewed as "a persuasive endeavor that owes as much to a writer's development of an appropriate relationship with his or her readers as the demonstration of absolute truth, empirical evidence, or flawless logic" (Hyland, 2001, p. 549). A great deal of research has now established that written texts embody interaction between writers and readers. According to Hyland (2011), "Interaction in academic writing essentially involves positioning, or adopting a point of view in relation to both the issues discussed in the text and to others who hold points of view on those issues" (p.197). Academics can employ choices that suggest writer presence to carry both ideational meaning and to create an impression (Hyland, 2001). These studies have shed light on this feature of academic discourse that it is impossible to make a text convincing and understandable without the expression of the writer's identity and their manifestation in the text (Adel, 2006).

Academic discourse as a uniform entity provides researchers with real insights into writing conventions and interactive choices in various disciplines and genres (Hyland & Bondi, 2006). Among all types of academic writing, research articles (RAs), as an effective means of communication, have attracted much more attention in genre-based studies. In fact, this *prestigious genre* has been "valorized and ratified by the very fact of being published" (Ann & Swales, 2002, p. 13). It is noteworthy that the patterns of interaction between writers and readers in some genres such as thesis proposals—as a significant stage in thesis and RA writing—remain largely blurred. Therefore, the interaction between the writer and the reader should play a central role. In addition, "It is important that students should be involved in the analysis of communicative events as much as they are in the investigation of textual features" (Hyland, 2005a, p. 184).

Unfortunately, this significant feature has either gone unnoticed or has been devalued by some novice and even experienced writers (Adel, 2006; Hyland, 2005a). Writer visibility has brought about controversial debates in the domain of academic writing due to several issues such as the variation of impersonal style, genre variation, the context and the co-text of written literature. Recent research has shown that academics mind the challenging task of projecting themselves in the text, creating interaction with the readers without disguising or hiding factual information (Cmejrkova, 2007; Hyland, 2001, 2012; Mei, 2006). According to Alcoff (2006), "Identity is today a growth industry in the academy. Generic man has been overthrown by scholars and researchers who have realized the importance of taking identity into account" (p. 5).

A growing body of research has dealt with writer visibility in different genres. Genre-based studies suggest that "literacies are community resources which are realized in social relationships" (Hyland, 2003, p. 24). Some studies have centered on writer visibility features in textbooks (e.g., Bondi, 1998, 2002; Hyland, 2005a; Poppi, 2004, 2009), theses (e.g., Bunton, 1999; Charles, 2003; Swales, 1990; Thompson, 2001), undergraduate reports and essays (e.g., Hyland, 2004, 2012; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007), and thesis proposals (e.g., Kilbourne, 2006; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Given the number of MA and PhD proposals that are presented to departments, further research on the specifications of a proposal is warranted (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Aiming to explore the role of writers in thesis proposals, Paltridge and Starfield (2007) drew on the social and cultural context of writing. In their words, undergraduate students should welcome proposal and thesis writing as a communicative act. Kilbourne (2006) also provided a comprehensive perspective on writer presence in thesis proposals by introducing the self-conscious method. In his view, the concept of the self-conscious method can be explored in relation to author claims which are supported by argument and evidence.

Studies concerning RAs have focused on either individual devices, such as self-mention and hedges (Harwood, 2005; Hyland, 1995, 2001; Karahan, 2013; Jalilifar & Marashi, 2011;

Martin, 2003; Molino, 2010; Sheldon, 2009), or have explored the whole systems of stance and engagement (e.g., Hyland, 2005b, 2011; MCGrath & Kuteeva, 2012).

Aiming to provide a cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary analysis of personal pronouns and examine how writers modify their claims in their disciplinary specialty, Hyland (1995) scanned 26 celled molecular RAs. The study showed that three kinds of markers are mainly realized through reference to experimental conditions, namely a model, theory or methodology. In sum, Hyland (1995) recognized the need to sharpen writer awareness about this feature. Hyland (2001) investigated the use of self-citation and exclusive first person pronouns in eight disciplines, namely Mechanical Engineering (ME), Electrical Engineering (EE), Marketing (MK), Philosophy (Phil), Sociology (Soc), Applied Linguistics (AL), Physics (Phy) and Microbiology (Bio). All in all, he acknowledged that academic writing is not faceless and that there are disciplinary variations in how writers employ different forms of self–mention, especially pronouns. This was similar to Harwood's (2005b) paper which analyzed the use and function of the personal pronouns *I* and its self-promotional effect across four disciplines. The study also explored three ways of employing *I* and *we* for self-promotion: personalizing claims, procedural soundness and uniqueness, and self-citation.

In relation to the cross disciplinary analysis of RAs, Jalilifar and Marashi (2011) also analyzed 329 RAs in education and physics from international and Iranian journals. They distinguished between exclusive and inclusive pronouns by adopting the model by Martin (2003) and Vladimirou's (2006) classification. In addition, they explored new categories such as author as innovator that were not included in the employed model. Concerning disciplinary variations, more plural pronouns were identified in physics texts to disguise writer authority and to distance the writers from their claims while authors in Education preferred using singular pronouns to mark their expertise in their knowledge domain.

Regarding cross-linguistic studies on RAs, Martin (2003) and Sheldon (2009) investigated similarities and differences in the distribution and manifestation of self-mention in English and Spanish research article abstracts. The studies revealed that depersonalization strategies were favored by both English and Spanish academics. Unlike the contrastive analyses carried out by Martin (2003), the careful examination done by Sheldon (2009) revealed that Spanish writers were less in favor of projecting themselves than English authors. Equally important, Martin (2003) made a distinction between exclusive and inclusive first person plural pronouns. Notably, he proposed a classification of the inclusive *we* semantic references, namely the author as describer of the research, experiment conductor, opinion holder, cautious claim maker, and fully committed claim maker.

Molino (2010) investigated the difference between English and Italian research articles in the field of linguistics in terms of their use of personal authorial references as well as objectivity and subjectivity in the two languages. The study revealed that both personal and impersonal authorial references contributed to the visibility of authors.

Aiming to explore authorial presence in single authored RAs written by Turkish and Non-Turkish authors, Karahan (2013) conducted a qualitative and quantitative analysis. This study investigated the variations in the use of the *I* versus *we* perspective in the concerned corpus. With regard to semantic references and discourse functions of first person singular and plural pronouns, both Turkish and Non-Turkish authors mostly preferred to use first person plural pronouns instead of singular pronouns. With respect to the inclusive and exclusive functions of the *we* perspective, the use of inclusive *we* in Turkish RAs outnumbered the Non-Turkish ones. On the other hand, it was found that Non-Turkish authors adopt a more personal style than Turkish ones.

Elaborating on the whole systems of stance and engagement, Hyland (2005b) analyzed 240 RAs from eight disciplines. He acknowledged that stance markers comprised hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mentions. Engagement markers consisted of reader pronouns, directives, questions, shared knowledge and personal asides. In fact, Hyland (2005b) offered "a typology of the resources writers employ to express their positions and connect with readers" (p. 173).

In the light of these studies, McGrath and Kuteeva (2012) explored the disciplinary writing practices of the pure mathematics academic community by applying Hyland's model on 25 articles. This study suggested "that writers are conscious of the need to situate oneself within the norms of the discourse community by adhering to disciplinary writing convictions" (p. 161).

Despite the number of studies into the use of writer visibility features, more work needs to be done to compare academic texts, for instance, research articles and graduate thesis proposals, especially those sections which are common between the two genres. Therefore, this study, as one of the first of its kind, sets out to explore how authorial presence markers work in RAs and graduate thesis proposals. Hence the study attempts to answer the following questions:
1. Is there any significant difference between the introduction and method sections of RAs and thesis proposals in terms of frequency and use of authorial identity markers?
2. What role do visibility markers play in the construction of the writer's stance in RAs and proposals?
3. How do writers foreground their knowledge claims and represent themselves to readers within the RAs and proposals?

Methodology

Data Management

To provide a comprehensive analysis of writer visibility features in Applied Linguistics, this study relied on two sets of RAs and graduate thesis proposals. "Together these parts depict the knowledge and community-constructing functions of the university; the key genres through which knowledge is negotiated, transmitted, acquired and created" (Guinda & Hyland, 2012, p. 2).

RAs, having a high-quality representation of texts, were drawn from a list of ISIjournals in the field of Applied Linguistics. Relying on RAs with descriptive and empirical orientation, we selected a total number of 50 RAs which were restricted to the last issues of 10 leading journals after visiting and consulting experienced researchers in the field. The articles were selected from Applied Linguistics (APPL LINGUIST), Discourse Process, Discourse and Society (Discourse SOC), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Journal of English for academic purposes (JEAP), Journal of Second Language Writing (JSLW), Language and Communication (LANG COMMUN), Language Learning (LANG LERN), Functions of Language (FOL), and Language Testing (LANG TEST). To ensure balance, 5 articles were selected from each journal. These journals were selected for their representativeness, reputation, and accessibility (Neoga, 1997). In addition, the impact factor in the journals citation reports and their indexing lists were taken into account.

Table 1

Indexing Lists and Impact Factors of Journals

Journals	Impact Factor	Indexing List
APPL LINGUIST	1,469	ISI-indexed, Linguistic Bibliography, British Education Index,Social Sciences Citation Index ...
DISCOURSE PROCESS	0,887	ISI-indexed, Current Index to Journals in Education/ Ca bell's Directory of publishing Opportunities in psychology and Marketing, Social Sciences Citation Index ...
DISCOURSE SOC	1.41	ISI- indexed, Indexing Academic Search Elite, Indexing Academic Search Premier, Social Sciences Citation Index ...
ESP	1,659	ISI-indexed, British Educatio Index, CCc Bibliography, communication Abstracts, Current Contents / Social & Behavioral Sciences, Social Sciences Citation Index ...
FOL	0.200	ISI-indexed, Arts and Humanities Citation Index, Australia Educational Index, Current Contents/Social & Behavioral Sciences, Social Sciences Citation Index ...
JSLW	1,773	ISI-indexed, Communication Abstracts, Contents Pages in Education, Social Sci Search, Social Sciences Citation Index ...
LANG COMMUN	0,658	ISI-indexed, Abstracts in Anthropology, Communication Abstracts
LANG LERN	1,612	Art and Humanities, Social Sciences
LANG TEST	1,019	ISI-indexed, Academic Search

It is worth acknowledging that review articles, book reviews, notes and critiques were excluded from the study. Afterwards, the introduction and method sections were carefully analyzed to gain insight into how writer visibility features were employed.

In fact, in developing a comprehensive awareness of changes in language in response to social, economic and political development, we need to look at textual patterns which are subject to evolution with a critical eye (Li & Ge, 2009). Academic discourse as a uniform entity provides researchers with real insights into writing conventions and interactive choices in different disciplines and genres (Hyland & Bondi, 2006). Among all types of academic writing, RAs, as an effective means of communication, have attracted much more attention of genre-based studies. Actually, this prestigious genre has been "valorized and ratified by the very fact of being published" (Ann & Swales, 2002, p. 13). As the result of expert performance, writing in this genre demands the writers' awareness of central ways of imposing their own lens onto their works and conveying their personal attitudes appropriately. It seems that the significant issue of authorship in applied linguistics is still "among the most contested and ambiguous" issues (Guinda & Hyland, 2012, p. 1). Therefore, it seemed wise to keep an eye on RAs in the present study.

The challenges and convolutions of advanced academic writing, creating interpersonal connections in particular, are associated with claiming responsibility for the content and authorial projection to establish a credible piece of literature. These challenges range from word usage to delivering effective meaning (Hyland, 2004, 2012). To supplement the sparse knowledge in this area (Blommaert, 2005; O'Brien, 1995), our investigation took up the issue of graduate understanding of the critical role of making interpersonal meaning in terms of manifesting a credible persona. Therefore, the other set of our data comprised 50 graduate thesis proposals written in a number of major subfields in Applied Linguistics such as pragmatics, language testing, second language learning and teaching. The proposals were drawn only from the local academic context, namely the English language department of Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz. This meant that we had access to 50 ratified proposals in the concerned discipline. Their recency was also of importance to our research.

Adopting a parallel sampling design as our strategy of inquiry, we were required to analyze an adequate sample size—not overwhelmingly large and not too small—to achieve data saturation (Flick, 1998; Morse, 1995; Onwvegbuzie & Leech, 2007). According to Martinez (2005), "the size of a corpus should be related to its representativeness" (p. 177). In sum, the length of the corpus proved to be appropriate by other relevant studies (e.g., Harwood, 2005; Sheldon, 2009; Tayyabi, 2012). In addition, we were not trying to extend and generalize the research findings, but rather to invite academics to make a connection between the elements of this study and their own experiences. Moreover, consulting an experienced researcher in this field ratified our sample adequacy for reaching data saturation.

To identify instances of writer visibility quickly and easily and to observe the writers' anonymity, we decided to code and number them according to the genre and section from which they were taken. For example, *RA: M*1 refers to the examples extracted from the method section of the first article and *P: I6* refers to the instances from the introduction section of the sixth proposal.

Descriptive Accounts

Our next task was to detect and classify writer visibility items**.** First, a careful analysis of the text and context for the instances of writer visibility, namely *I, me, my, we, us and our,* was carried out. To explore various rhetorical strategies employed by writers to acknowledge their distinct contribution, we also took into account *metacomments* and *self-citations*. "Meta text spells out the writer's (and/or the reader's) discourse acts, or refers to aspects of the text, such as its organization and wording, or the writing of it" (Adel, 2006, p. 36). In this study, we focused on two neighboring metadiscursive expressions, namely writer-oriented and text-oriented expressions. Regarding self-citations or explicit references, we took into account notes, parenthetical citations with the name and year of the publication and quotations. In so doing, we were not merely trying to identify different items as dissociated and discrete entities, but attempted to uncover a relationship between the syntactic structure and the structure of the situation for a broader perspective. "In linguistic and discourse analysis, the term context more specifically refers to surrounding words, sentences, text or talk of a given linguistic structure, on the one hand, or with the social situation, event or encounter in which language is being used, on the other hand" (Van Dijk, 2010, p.6). Afterwards, we attempted to classify the items into more abstract categories which were independent of each other:

The Analytical Framework

Finding the right coding scheme was of extreme importance in order to more fully answer the research questions targeted in the study. Adjusting previous typologies of authorial roles, Hyland (2002) proposed a model which shaped the main theoretical framework of the current study since it seemed to be more applicable to the sections under analysis, namely introduction and methodology. This model excludes all-inclusive uses of the first person and tokens of exclusive first-person pronouns are closely examined to determine their rhetorical functions and specify their roles in academic discourse. This framework comprises five major roles. We assigned numbers to these pragmatic functions to differentiate the individual categories:

1. Stating a goal/purpose
2. Explaining a procedure
3. Stating results/claims
4. Expressing self-benefits
5. Elaborating an argument.

Explanatory Accounts

We worked through the data sets and explored the emerging phenomena. We conducted a pilot study to assess the proposed data analysis techniques and to uncover potential problems. More precisely, 5 RAs and 5 proposals were analyzed in this phase by assigning potential roles to the identified items based on Hyland's model (2002). The process of coding ranged from recognizing writer visibility items, identifying them in the texts by taking text and context into account, and then assigning appropriate functions based on categories suggested by Hyland (2002) while acknowledging the typologies suggested by other researchers in this regard (e.g., Harwood, 2005; Martin, 2005; Sheldon, 2009; Vessileva, 1998). To have a clear picture of the path we journeyed, the following examples can be mentioned:

1. **We believe** that this amount of data will be sufficient for conducting the research study. (P: M10)

In this example, the writer expresses her commitment to the argument not only through the use of personal pronoun but also through the explicit use of a cognitive verb. As you see, the writer is taking responsibility for her decision. Thus, we can say this example is congruent with one of Hyland's categories (2002), namely *elaborating an argument.*

After the mentioned coding scheme was applied, we noticed some points. Firstly, we recognized that some writers employed exclusive pronouns whose discourse functions were not congruent with Hyland's typology (2002). In fact, these pronouns conformed to a function proposed by Jalilifar and Marashi (2011), namely *the author as an innovator.* Note the following example extracted from the data of this study:

2. In the current work, **we developed** a task instruction manipulation designed to encourage novice readers to engage in more expert-like reasoning when reading literary works. (RA: M4)

Secondly, in some cases, we recognized that a sentence containing a metacomment was followed by another sentence containing the pronoun *it.* Although *it* referred back to the metacomment, we did not consider it as a meta comment. Notably, in these cases, it was regarded as an anaphoric reference.

3. **The present study** aims at determining thematic organization in the argumentative writing of Iranian learners, of English representing two levels of language proficiency, and the introduction section of pub. Moreover, **it** tends to highlight the problems that Persian learners of English may face in terms of theme selection and thematic progression while writing an argumentative text. (P: I4)

Thirdly, regarding self-citations, we made a distinction between single and multi-authored texts. Put simply, in multi-authored texts, citations and notes referring to one or a number of authors were not taken into account.

Importantly, identifying writer visibility items and specifying appropriate functions in 10% of the corpus was ratified by an experienced researcher to make a sound analysis and comparison. The experienced researcher in this field scanned and analyzed the mentioned portions of the texts, and the inter-coder reliability was calculated using Kappa correlation. Actually, "the calculation is based on the difference between how much agreement is actually present ("observed" agreement) compared to how much agreement would be expected to be present by chance alone ("expected" agreement)" (Viera & Garret, 2005, p. 361). Being pertinent to test qualitative categorical and nominal items, we used this measure of correlation to determine if a significant relationship exists in the bivariate association. The comparisons between the raters' coding and the researcher were significant ($p < 0.01$).

Table 2
Correlation

	Value	Asymptotic Standardized Error[a]	Approximate T[b]	Approximate Significance
Measure	of Kappa .888	.104	8.232	.000

Agreement	
N of Valid Cases	10

This pilot study increased the chance of reaching clearer findings in the main study. Considering the ideas provided by this pilot, we applied our theoretical framework to the main study. To account for the possible differences and to determine how instances of visibility are distributed, we performed a quantitative analysis. The frequency of concerned items in the mentioned sections was calculated. The length of the whole corpus was estimated as well by running a word count on the electronic versions of the articles and proposals. However, some of the proposals were not electronically available. Therefore, we scanned hard copies and installed the software Readiris Pro11 Middle East to convert scanned images into Microsoft Word format so that we could count the words in the introduction and method sections. The RA and proposal sections considered comprised a total of 189974 and 146080 words respectively. Then, the frequency and percentage of each item in the entire corpus was calculated. In order to determine the significance of observed discrepancies across the two sets of data, a chi-square test was administrated. The analysis revealed that some personal references, namely *my, me,* and *self-citation* in proposals and *me* in RAs, were absent. Concerning pragmatic functions, no personal reference was used to state results or manifest the writer as an innovator in thesis proposals. In sum, academics and students employed different rhetorical strategies to convey interpersonal meaning. In addition, our findings make sense with current knowledge about writer authority and visibility in general (e.g., Hyland, 2002, 2005 a; Martin & Rose, 2003).

General results

The exact number of words in the concerned sections of RAs and thesis proposals were 189974 and 146080 respectively. More precisely, a total of 1218 writer visibility items in RAs (189974) and 588 items in thesis proposals (146080) were exploited by academic and students respectively. It is also worth noting that because two data sets with different lengths were analyzed, we could not compare them directly. To make sense of their relative impact on the objective function, the data were normalized.

As Table 3.1 illustrates, whereas academics used a higher proportion of writer visibility items intending to connect themselves to their writing, students were inclined to be more cautious about situating their own views and arguments in the text through personal authorial references.

Table 3
Frequency and Percentage of Writer Visibility Items

Items	Papers		Proposals	
	F	%	F	%
I	85	0.04	5	0.00

My	9	0.00	0	0.00
Me	0	0.00	0	0.00
We	377	0.20	30	0.02
Us	12	0.01	9	0.00
Our	110	0.06	12	0.01
Self-citation	61	0.03	0	0.00
Text-oriented	520	0.27	421	0.22
Writer-oriented	44	0.02	111	0.06
Total	1218		588	

Figure 1
Writer Visibility Items in RAs and Thesis Proposals
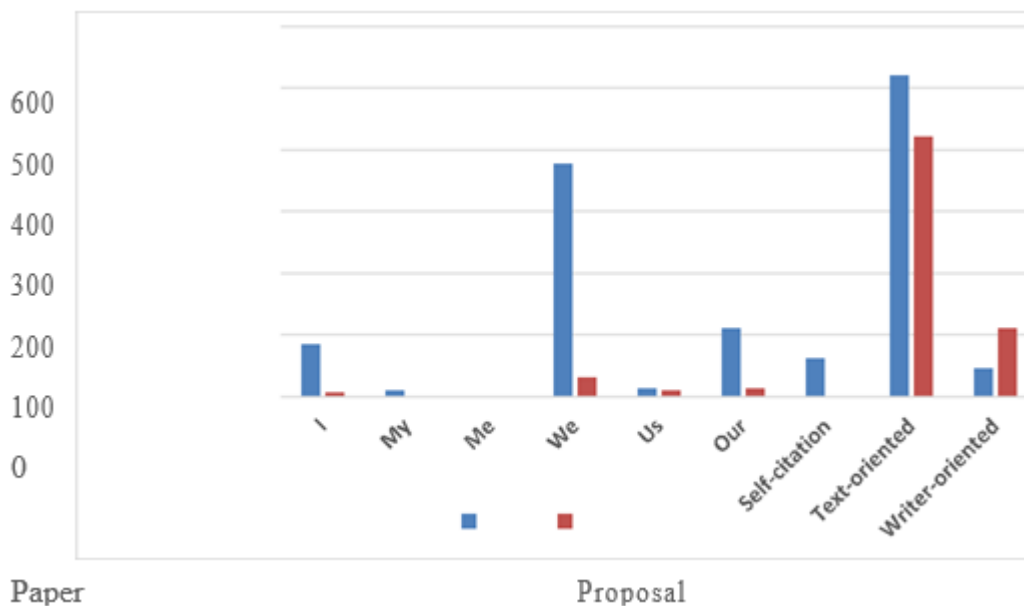
According to Table 3.1, *me* is the only pronoun which is absent from both genres. In proposals, the virtual absence of two other items attracts attention, namely *my* and *self-citation*. Although students did not highlight their presence as writers, they refrained from completely separating themselves from their texts. Although academics also took advantage of metacomments by shedding light on "the relationships between parts of the text and between the

author and the text" (Hyland, 2005a, p. 28), their beliefs about the conventions of academic texts could not shake their confidence in their views, abilities, and responsibilities as writers. Therefore, in RAs, the use of personal pronouns (0.31%) outnumbered references to the text or the writer in the third person (0.29%). Testing the existence of a significant relationship between the concerned genres in terms of frequency and use of authorial identity markers, we administrated a chi-square test:

Table 4
Chi-square Results for the Significance of Self-references variation in RAs and Thesis Proposals

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	382.228[a]	7	.000
N of Valid Cases	1806		

As the p value for writer visibility items (0.000) was less than the probability level, the null hypothesis was rejected which shows a significant difference in relation to the use of visibility items by academics and students. To prove or reject such differences, we also worked through pragmatic functions:

Pragmatic Functions of Exclusive Pronouns
Expressing Self-Benefits
In personal statements, some writers remark on advantages, insights and gains that the project has brought them. In so doing, they do not need to project themselves as originators, innovators or claim makers. This function is not a high risk one and was absent in the thesis proposals under study. Although Hyland (2002, p. 1100) believes that this function "does not occur in the professional research texts", we identified 9 instances of self-benefits in RAs, as exemplified below:

4. The website was specifically developed for non-native speakers of English. It was deemed appropriate for the selection of the target items because it **allowed us** to provide students with an easy-to-use and accessible source of academic FS. (RA:I11)

Table 5

Frequency of Exclusive First Personal Pronouns Expressing Self-benefits in RAs and Proposals

| Pronouns	Papers		Proposals	
	F	%	F	%
I	1	0.00	0	0.00
My	0	0.00	0	0.00
Me	0	0.00	0	0.00
We	1	0.00	0	0.00
Us	4	0.00	0	0.00
Our	3	0.00	0	0.00
Total	9		0	

Stating a purpose

Concerning our study, writers not only employed exclusive personal pronouns as an interpersonal strategy, but also associated them with verbs stating aims or the direction of the research, such as *focus, interest, hope, outline, ask, develop, elaborate extend, examine, present, seek, and aim*:

5. We were interested in whether task instructions that suggested the appropriateness of literal versus interpretive stance would change non expert readers' representation of short stories. (RA: I4)

In this example, in the introduction section, writers employed the personal pronoun *we* to provide a clear picture of what they hope to achieve by doing the research. This function is realized through accompanying plural first person pronouns with the verb *interest*.

Table 6

Frequency of Exclusive Personal Pronouns Stating goals in RAs and Proposals

Pronouns	Papers		Proposals	
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**
I	25	0.01	4	0.00
My	2	0.00	0	0.00
Me	0	0.00	0	0.00
We	101	0.05	13	0.01
Us	3	0.00	4	0.00
Our	41	0.02	5	0.00
Total	167		26	

Figure 2

Employed Personal Pronouns to State Goals in RAs and Proposals
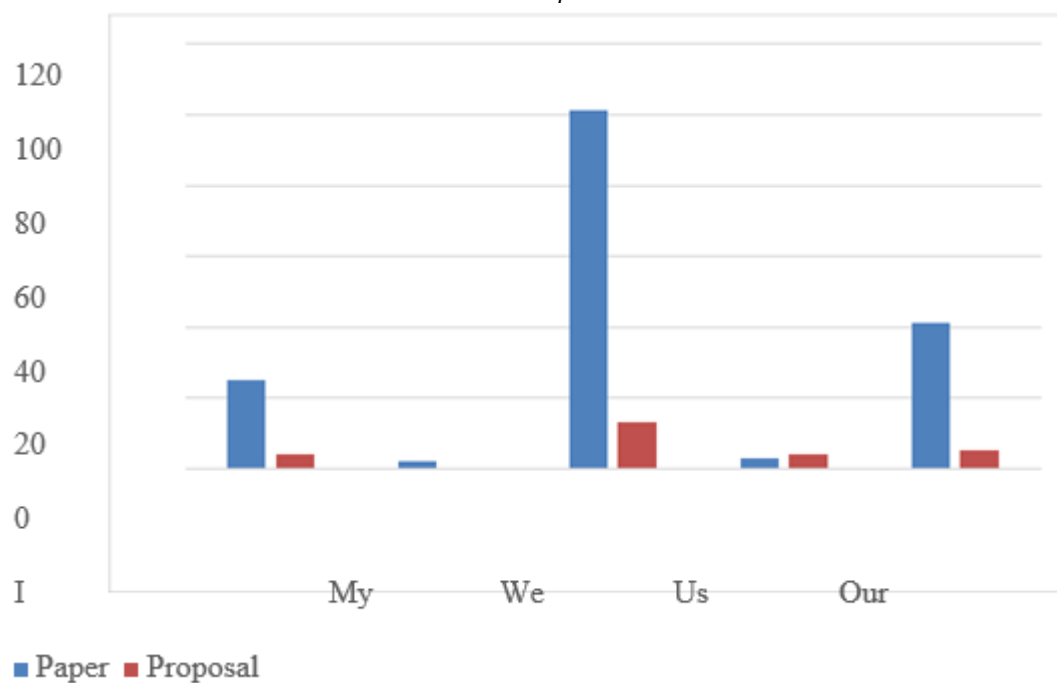
According to the figure above, stating goals was mostly realized through the use of *we* in both genres.

Table 7

Chi-square Results for the Significance of Self-references Variation Stating goals in RAs and Thesis Proposals

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.705[a]	4	.013
N of Valid Cases	198		

As shown in Table 3.5, although both academics and students employed visibility references in their writings, stating the purpose of writers in RAs and thesis proposals was statistically significant since the obtained p value is less than the probability level (0.05).

Explaining a Procedure

Although this function approximately exceeds other functions in both genres, the visibility of identity through illustrating steps in carrying out the research does not entail ascription of sameness to RAs and thesis proposals. Firstly, academics utilize this function both in the introduction and methodology sections. Actually, in the introduction sections of RAs, some writers could clarify their goals only by proceeding to shed light on the procedure utilizized. The following example (8) illustrates how *I* was used to fulfill this function in an RA:

6. It focuses on the data and results from two separate yet related studies **I conducted** on this topic with two groups of university learners of Spanish as a foreign language at two distinct levels of language proficiency. (RA: I3)

It seems that students mostly stuck to the macro-structure and were unaware of the diversity of rhetorical strategies available to them. Therefore, they used interpersonal resources to reveal their experiences and adopted procedures just in the methodology section which is the typical place for recounting the process of doing the research:

7. **We** chose the press conferences which revolve around the subject of Iran nuclear case. (P: M 10)

Only here in the methodology section does the writer divulge some aspects of data management as one of the preliminary steps carried out.

Secondly, academics and students employed tense as one of the important resources differently. In RAs, personal pronouns co-occurred only with past tense verbs, since the writers described the steps that had been taken. This is illustrated in Example (10):

8. **We elicited** 960 responses, which were annotated by two trained judges (the first author and a research assistant who was naive to the goal of the experiment) for coherence relations holding between the eventualities described by the sentence prompts and the elicited continuations, following a procedure similar to one described in Rohde (2008). (RA:M2)

On the contrary, students simply tried to communicate the proposed and intended approaches and instruments. Therefore, they mostly tended to use the present or simple future tenses.

In both genres, personal pronouns were mostly associated with *material process verbs* to provide a clear picture of "the process being referred to, the participants in these processes, and the circumstances" (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p. 45). In the current study, the most typically employed verbs were: *collect, choose, adopt, analyze, ask, conduct, elicit, attend, manipulate, start, control, run, code, and select.*
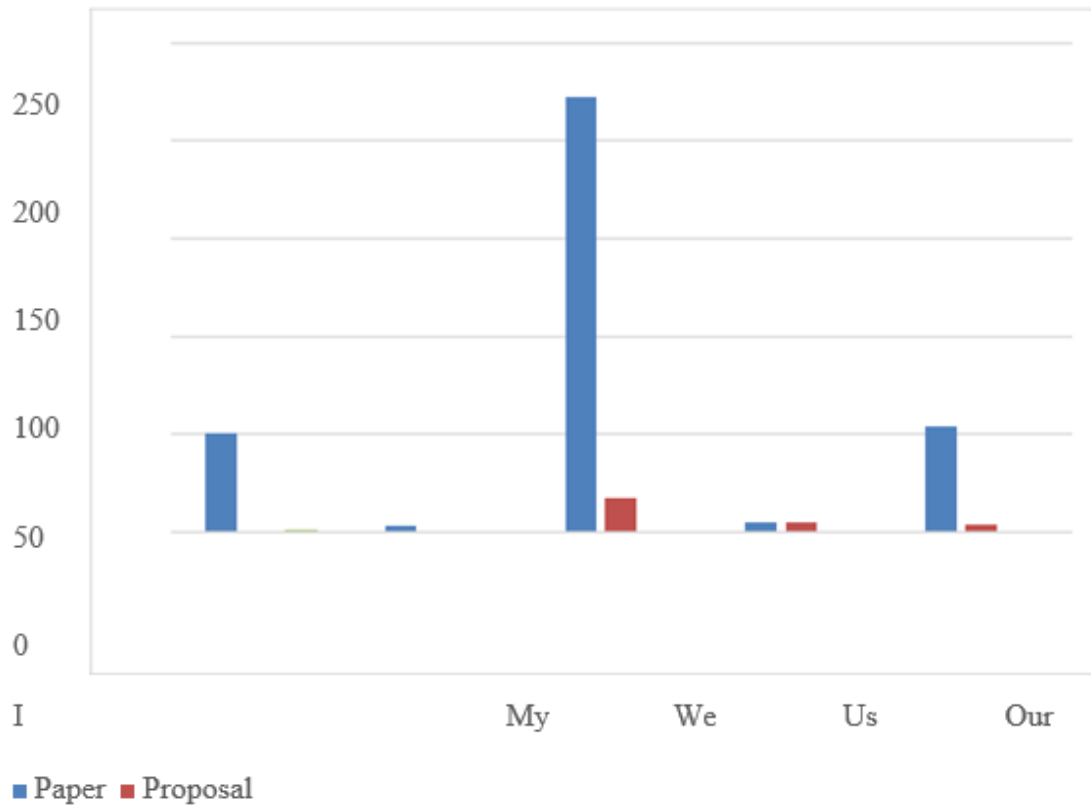
Table 8
Frequency of Exclusive First Personal Pronouns Explaining procedures in RAs and Proposals

Pronouns	Papers		Proposals	
	F	%	F	%
I	50	0.03	0	0.00
My	3	0.00	0	0.00
Me	0	0.00	0	0.00
We	222	0.12	17	0.01
Us	5	0.00	5	0.00
Our	54	0.03	4	0.00
Total	334		26	

Figure 3
Employed Personal Pronouns to Explain Procedures in RAs and Thesis Proposals

Table 9
Chi-square Results for the Significance of Self-references Variation Explaining procedures in RAs and Thesis Proposals

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	31.449[a]	4	.000
N of Valid Cases	360		

As exhibited in Table 3.7, the relationship between RAs and thesis proposals with regards to explaining procedures through the use of personal pronouns is significant.

Elaborating an Argument
According to Hyland (2005a, p. 124), writers should be competent enough to "intervene in their texts not only to present their findings, but also to evaluate these findings, comment on them and build solidarity with their readers". Our text analysis revealed that cognitive verbs were the best choice to collocate with personal pronouns to expand on an argument. Actually, these

epistemic verbs suggest higher order thinking, such as reasoning: *propose, acknowledge, assume, predict, expect, believe, argue, perceive,* as in the next example:

9. **<u>We predicted</u>** that mothers and daughters would talk more overall and use more affiliative language than fathers and sons but that fathers and sons would use more assertive language than mothers and daughters. (RA: M6)

As can be seen, the writers avoided complete allegiance to the proposed statement. Using the verb *predict*, they understated their claim. Some verbs and expressions are used as a device to "allow information to be presented as an opinion rather than fact and therefore open that position to negotiation" (Hyland, 2005b, p. 52). In other words, they used hedging as a *metatextual* and *metapragmatic* strategy (Silver, 2003). In our data, writers associated personal pronouns with verbs and expressions such as *argue, assume, seem, opinion (in my/our opinion),* and *knowledge (to my knowledge),* and *aware (as we are aware).* A notable example can be mentioned:

10. However, so far **<u>as we are aware</u>**, the linguistic landscape of Iran is yet to feature in the literature (P: I12).

Table 10
Frequency of Exclusive First Personal Pronouns Elaborating an Argument in RAs and Proposals

| Pronouns	Papers		Proposals	
	F	%	F	%
I	5	0.00	1	0.00
My	3	0.00	0	0.00
Me	0	0.00	0	0.00
We	39	0.02	0	0.00
Us	0	0.00	0	0.00
Our	8	0.00	3	0.00
Total	55		4	

Table 11

Chi-square Results for the Significance of Self-references Variation Elaborating an Argument in RAs and Thesis Proposals

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significant (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.292a	3	0.010
N of Valid Cases	59		

Figure 4

Employed Personal Pronouns to State Results in RAs and Thesis Proposals
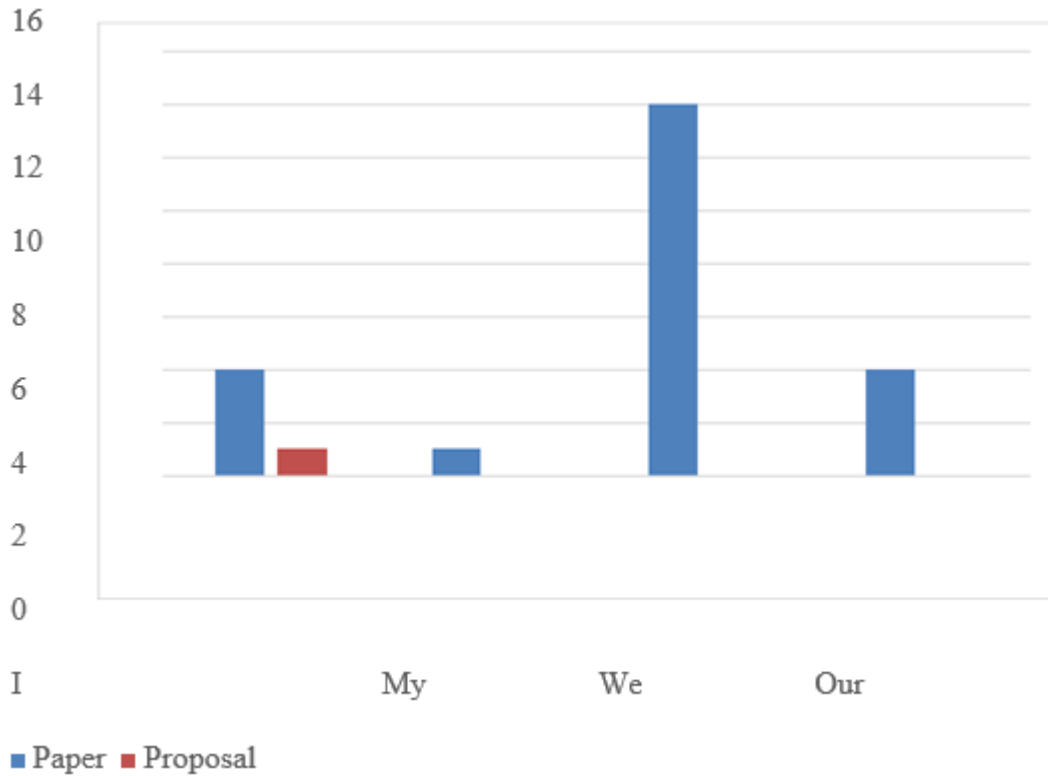
Table 13

Chi-square Results for the Significance of Self-references Variation Stating Results in RAs and Thesis Proposals

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.965[a]	3	.265
N of Valid Cases	23		

The findings revealed that the existing discrepancy was not significant since the obtained p value was more than 0.05.

The Author as an Innovator

In some cases, writers used exclusive pronouns to touch on their own definitions and innovations. However, this function was not congruent with the typology suggested by Hyland (2002). In fact, these pronouns conformed to a function proposed by Jalilifar and Marashi (2011), namely *the author as an innovator. "*By offering an innovation, the writer may highlight identity and competency in the research and receive more admiration from discourse members or readers" (Jalilifar & Marashi, 2011, p. 79). Finding only three instances, we recognized it as the least frequent function in RAs:

13. A fourth condition left the level of interpretation relatively open by using a task instruction that asked what the story was about, which **we labeled** the ambiguous task instruction. (RA:I4)

It seems that students could not assert themselves as an innovator since this role requires deeper insight on the topic under analysis and creativity.

Table 14
Frequency of Exclusive First Personal Pronouns Stating innovation in RAs and Proposals

pronouns	Papers		Proposals	
	F	%	F	%
I	0	0.00	0	0.00
My	0	0.00	0	0.00
Me	0	0.00	0	0.00
We	3	0.00	0	0.00
Us	0	0.00	0	0.00
Our	0	0.00	0	0.00
Total	3		0	

In sum, the results indicate that although writers of both genres took the position that could manifest their presence, the strategies and pragmatic functions employed by them were not identical. The next figure illustrates this dissimilarity:

Figure 5.
Functions of Exclusive First Personal Pronouns in RAs and Thesis Proposals
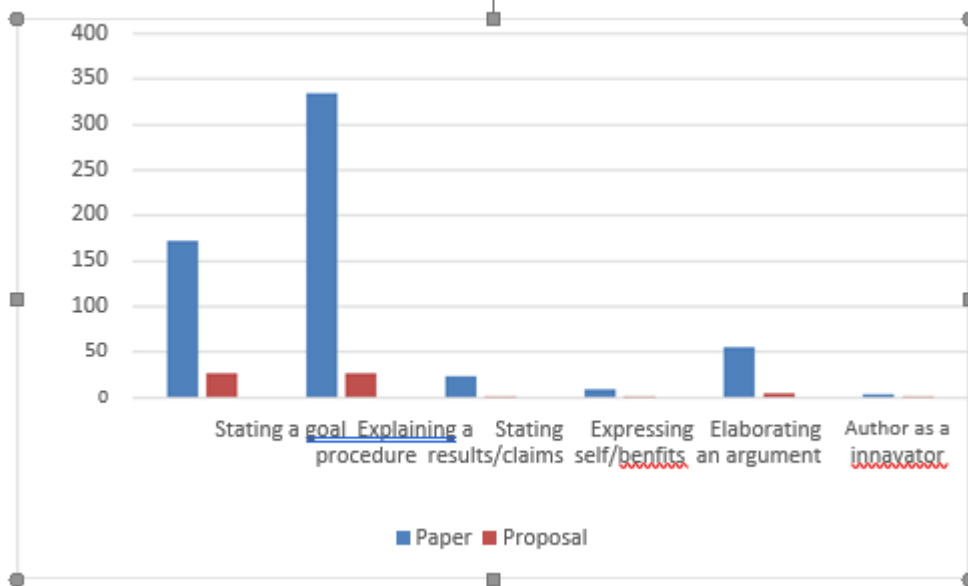
Discussion

We showed that the papers of our study contained more visibility items than did the proposals. Actually, academics provide readers with purposes of the study, factual information, results, and related arguments while reaping the benefits of their metacognitive skills in building credentials. As "the ability of writers to control the level of personality in their texts, claiming solidarity with readers, evaluating their material, and acknowledging alternative views, is now recognized as a key feature of successful academic writing" (Hyland, 2004, p. 133), Academics' awareness of word power is not out of sight. It seems that RAs are the best channel through which writers could communicate with readers who are mostly members of the same discourse community. This kind of socialization seems inevitable since we, as academics and researchers, "learn about what other fellow academics value about us as a professional member through our interpretations of experiences and interaction in the scholarly community, and accordingly craft a self-portrait which matches the qualities that are appreciated in the academic context" (Tse, 2012, p. 71). Diversity and frequency of employed self-references reflects intentional choices for establishing interpersonal meaning.

Secondly, academics, having previously been engaged in the issue under analysis, have the opportunity to cite their own work. On the other hand, students mostly rely on the editorial *we* and metacomments to adopt a less intrusive strategy. Different reasons for adopting impersonality can be mentioned. In addition to lack of competency, awareness, and experience, "perhaps the one thing that is safe at this point is the nature of the contract between the writer persona and the imagined reader varies across genres" (Adel, 2006, p.142). For Crismore (1989), an important reason for genre variation in relation to visibility also lies at the root of reader expectations. Regarding students, it seems that they experience their first true academic endeavor

when dealing with their proposal. Not only do students, but many supervisors support such a view. Consequently, students unmasking their presence may be reproached by the thesis committee. However, employing a high frequency of visibility items in a corpus is of little significance unless they are exploited to convey the writer's communicative aims (Gray & Biber, 2012). In so doing, academics make use of self-references to fulfill appropriate pragmatic functions and even high risk ones, namely elaborating an argument and stating results or claims which call for the writer's knowledge, competency and self-esteem, as in:

14. In line with Experiment 1, **we predicted** that discrimination should be module at Sonority distance. (RA: M 3O)

Justifications for risk taking roles and functions may "depend heavily on the account one gives of identity's relation to the self, that is, the relationship between ascribed social categories and the lived experience of consciousness. Those who take identity to be a priori problem assume a certain understanding of what consciousness is, or what of the self is" (Alcoff, 2006, p. 87). Regarding elaborating an argument, the difference between academics and students was significant. It seems that students do not see themselves as experts with the capacity to originally think or reason with readers, so they resort to other analyses and comments. Explaining procedures exceeds other functions. In other words, this metapragmatic strategy allows writers to both elaborate on purpose and to portray methods and theoretical frameworks:

15. To test whether properties more fine grained than the distinction between states and events influence temporal update, **we made use** of the difference between so-called temporary and permanent states. (RA: I2).

The authorial markers used by students come into view to fulfill just a single function at a time. Being insensitive to academic conventions and variations of rhetorical strategies, they cannot bridge the gap between metapragmatic functions to convey a broad range of concepts. Instead, they stick to macrostructures. Therefore, we found instances of explaining a procedure only in the methodology part, which is a typical section for throwing light on the applied procedures. Regarding the mentioned differences, we considered genre variations from another perspective. "Identity is said to be created from the texts we engage in and linguistic choices we make, thus relocating it from hidden processes of cognition to its social construction in discourse" (Hyland, 2015, p. 11). In our study, authors of RAs could mostly mark their prominence and expertise through roles which neither imposed much threat to them nor represented the bare bones of their empirical research, namely stating goals, explaining procedures, and elaborating an argument so other differences could be indulged.
Apparently, expert writers try to put some life into their writing by creating reality, not just presenting its public image. Thus, not all instances of knowledge claiming are the same (Duenas, 2007; Tang & John, 1999). Among the writers, academics pioneered in gaining the most credit through representing a confident, responsible, and knowledgeable self. Firstly, they prefer personal pronouns as the most salient form of self-mention over other visibility items to strongly and closely link themselves to their arguments. By contrast, students mostly use references to the text or the author in third person to gradually distance themselves and highlight the issue under discussion. As mentioned in the previous sections, even when they decide to use personal pronouns, they avoid *I* in favor of the editorial *we* to down play their roles. Secondly, among the personal pronouns, authors of RAs mostly tend to employ first person pronouns. It seems that

authors of RAs appreciate the conventions of academic writing and know that the grammatical positioning of words convey different levels of significance and authority. More precisely, they know "that clausal-initial positions in declaratives are suited for signaling the importance of some lexical elements and the addressers mental states to the addresses" (Mehregan & Alipour, 2010, p. 93). They notify readers of their knowledge, and experience. On the other hand, students fail to apply thematization to impress addressees because they may have not yet internalized their metalinguistic knowledge, thus focusing on the structure of the text.

Thirdly, in the RAs, we noticed that some pragmatic features were used to heighten and boost the writers "alignment to the proposition which allowed them not only to express conviction and to mark their involvement and solidarity with an audience" (Hyland, 2010, p.179) but also to provide a more visible picture of themselves and demonstrate their linguistic competence and knowledge (Hu & Cao, 2011). The following example illustrates this issue:

16. **To ensure** that our monosyllabic and disyllabic stimuli were **<u>indeed</u>** produced as intended, **<u>we</u>** asked five native Russian speakers to complete the auditory syllable count task (Experiment) and the discrimination task (Experiment 2) in a counter balanced order (data from one additional participant was excluded because he reported difficulties understanding the task, and his overall performance was close to chance level, $M = 54\%$). (RA: M31)

In this example, the authors use both boosters and personal pronouns in the subject position to assure readers of the procedures not through claiming but by assuring themselves and taking on the responsibility of the result. Although academics are successful in influencing readers, they do not mark themselves down as the only authority on the concerned issue. As they are taking positions, arguing, expressing their own ideas, and convincing not just narrating or reporting, they know that they might be subject to some criticism so they sometimes employ hedges in an attempt to "imply that a claim is based on the author's plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge "(Hyland, 2012, p. 145). Such devices serve as a channel between the writer and the reader through conducting a constructive dialogue (Jalilifar, 2009), as in:

17. **<u>We propose</u>** a different approach to temporal update, one where readers rather than making use of general principles are making use of particular expectations engendered by properties of the situation that was just described. (RA: I2)

As can be seen, the writers employ compound hedges to express their uncertainty about their experimental manipulations. Although academics employ a variety of hedges, students simply use <u>one type of hedge to distance</u> themselves from the proposition:

18. **The present study aims at** determining thematic organization in the argumentative writing of Iranian learners of English, representing two levels of language proficiency, and the introduction section of pub. (P: I4)

Also, some academics kept their distance from readers through the clever manipulation of metadiscursive features, while students completely removed themselves. Note the following examples:

19. **We examined** two-parent, opposite-sex U.S. families with at least one child between the ages of 9 and 12 years designated as the target child for **our study**. **We chose** this age because as children are entering adolescence, gender and identity
become critical developmental tasks, and thus this is an age where **we might ██████ expect**

emerging gender differences in language use as well as effects of parental language socialization. (RA:M6)

20. The short stories which **will be utilized in this study** will be "A Chrismas Carol" (Charles Dickens, 1996) and "The love Story" (Erich Segal, 1990). After considering such factors as length, difficulty level, and inclusion of story grammar structure which is the main focus of **the study**, **the researcher** decided to utilize these stories. The stories are in the form of a CD-ROM which the two groups will listen to. (P: M 13)

   In 19, the position of the exclusive first person plural pronouns in the clauses calls the reader's attention to the writers' presence and their prominent role in adopting the procedures. On the other hand, the use of hedges impedes the monologue's progress and invites readers to challenge the authority of the writers. Therefore, up to the end of the research, there would be a serious exchange between the authors and thoughtful readers. In 20, by contrast, the use of passive voice focuses the reader's attention on the material rather than the intelligence of the writer for choosing it. Moreover, references to the text and the author in third person characterize the writer simply as a narrator or reporter and consequently relegates her position.

Conclusion

   In the current study, we dealt with writer visibility items in the introduction and method sections of two interrelated academic genres, namely RAs and thesis proposals. The overall aim of the research was to investigate the ways in which advanced writers who have mastered formal language build credentials, make claims and adopt different pragmatic roles. Engaging in the continuous processes of data analysis and interpretation, we realized that RAs and proposals were characterized by different degrees of visibility. According to the findings, academics were more successful at exploiting interpersonal resources and using a variety of them to project an appropriate authorship. The discrepancies between the writers can be associated to the competence of the writer and the genre of the text.

   Our study can be of interest to academics and students who cannot inevitably reflect on each other. In the current study, we approached the issue of visibility in written discourse by taking up a contrastive analysis which encourages critical thinking, elaboration and reasoning. Therefore, this approach can be broadened to compare and contrast other genres in relation to authorial projection.

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