

## **An Exploration of Discoursal Construction of Identity in Academic Writing**

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The view that academic writing is purely objective, impersonal and informational, which is often reflected in English for Academic Purposes materials, has been criticized by a number of researchers. By now, the view of academic writing as embodying interaction among writers, readers and the academic community as a whole has been established. Following this assumption, the present study focused on how second/foreign language writers enact, construct, and invent themselves through writing. In this study, the theoretical stance on identity is grounded on Ivanič's (1998) four interrelated aspects of writer identity, namely autobiographical self, discoursal self, authorial self, and possibilities for self-hood in the socio-cultural and institutional contexts. Hyland's model of metadiscourse (2004a) was used as the analytical tool for analyzing texts. Based on a corpus of 30 research articles, the overall distribution of evidential markers, hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions were calculated across four rhetorical sections (Abstract, Introduction, Methodology, Discussion and Conclusion) of the research articles. According to the results of this study, identity is a critical aspect of writing which should be brought into the mainstream of second/foreign language writing pedagogy through consciousness-raising or the specific teaching of certain features.

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Keywords: Academic Writing, Identity, Self, Metadiscourse Resources, English for Academic Purposes

One of the most important social practices in academic contexts is writing. When social interactions occur in the academic community, text is a place where knowledge and writer's identities are constructed, negotiated, and created. Accordingly, academic writing is what academics do most, through publishing, communicating, and contributing their knowledge. Traditionally, writing has been viewed as a mental and cognitive activity, with the image of an individual working in a quiet, isolated place. However, this study is not limited to this internal view of writing, but sees a text as historically and socially situated (Canagarajah, 2002, pp. 4-6).

The functions of writing in academic context are based on the understanding of writing as socially constructed. Academic writing is not just a tool of communication, but a powerful social practice. Good writing may be a matter of individual reader's taste, but good academic writing is evaluated in a shared professional context. As Faigley said, "writing can be understood only from the perspective of a society rather than a single individual" (1986, p. 535). Academic writing is a collective social practice in the academic discourse community. When writing papers, academics are expected to produce knowledge, make claims, and reveal epistemic beliefs and institutional structures in ways recognized by the discourse community. That is, social interactions occur through academic writing in the academy.

When people are producing texts, they are not only doing writing-presenting ideas in textual form-but are also being writers-creating a variety of meanings in the writing context. Especially when people enter a new social context (e.g., higher education), they notice that certain styles and practices are identified or preferred, which are different from those they bring with them from the past (Casanave, 2002; Fox, 1994).

## Identity in Academic Writing

The abstraction “identity” is rather tricky to define. This is largely because the term can be used in a variety of ways (Casanave, 2002, p.21), and because related words such as self, person role, persona, position, subject (Ivanič, 1998, p.10) are used interchangeably by researchers in diverse disciplinary contexts, which may carry differently nuanced connotations depending on those contexts. The obvious and most straightforward meaning of identity is an individual’s sense of self. However, this implies a somewhat static, ‘singular self’ (Ivanič, 1998, p.15) which does not equate with notions of multiplicity, the importance of context, and change over time. Norton (1997, p. 419), commenting on articles in a 1995 issue of the TESOL Quarterly focusing on language and identity, notes how all the contributors to that publication saw identity as a ‘complex, contradictory and multifaceted’ notion ‘dynamic across time and place’. This understanding of the concept of identity is echoed by researchers such as Angéilil-Carter (1997), Ivanič (1998) and Norton (2000).

Writer’s identity is one of the dimensions in which the use of metadiscourse in academic writing can be studied. In conceptualizing identity in this study, we will acknowledge the comments made above. We also draw heavily on Ivanič (1995 and 1998) and Ivanič and Camps (2001) whose work has made a significant contribution to our understanding of issues of identity in both first and second language academic writing. According to Ivanič (1998) identity is a plural, dynamic concept encompassing four interrelated strands of selfhood:

*Autobiographical self:* What a writer brings into his or her act of writing is “autobiographical self,” which refers to the writer’s self-history – the sense of the writer’s roots that reflect who he or she is in text. It is historically constructed and shaped by the past experiences and literacy practices with which he or she has been familiar (Ivanič, 1998, p.24).

*Discoursal self:* Discoursal self is the self-representation in text, which emerges from the text that a writer creates. It is

“constructed through the discourse characteristics of a text that reflect values, beliefs and power relations in the social context in which they were written” (p. 25). It is the persona the student-writer adapts when writing –the ‘voice’ they want their audience to hear (Ivanič, 1998, p.24-29). This is a writer’s voice that he or she conveys consciously or unconsciously in the text. The rhetorical term *ethos* is related to “autobiographical self” and “discoursal self” because *ethos* refers to a writer’s credibility and morality, which the audience perceive, and it is a somewhat accurate reflection of a writer’s characteristics, which will influence the writer’s credibility (Cherry, 1988, p. 268).

*Authorial self:* It represents a sense of self-worth or a writer’s voice in the sense of the writer’s position, opinions, and beliefs that enable him or her to write with authority, to establish an authorial presence in the text. It relates to the student-writers’ willingness to make claims and/or their reliance on external authorities to support those claims (Ivanič, 1998, p.24-29). In particular, the sense of authoritativeness is an important characteristic of a writers’ discoursal self in academic writing. Authoritativeness in academic writing has been considered with the following questions: How do people establish authority for the content of their writing? To what extent do they present themselves or others as authoritative (Ivanič, 1998, p.27)?

*Possibilities for self-hood in the socio-cultural and institutional contexts:* This aspect is a more abstract notion of writer identity concerning the “socially available possibilities for self-hood” within sociocultural and institutional contexts and how they shape and constrain individual acts of writing. It relates to the circumstances in which students are expected to write. (Ivanič, 1998, p.24-29). A writer can construct the “discoursal self” and the self as author” by choosing one type of possibility that is supported by particular sociocultural and institutional contexts where he or she is writing. A writer may struggle to choose one among many possibilities and eventually learn to use preferred language over time as he or she takes on a particular discoursal identity. For example, ESL writers are exposed to many “possibilities for selfhood,” and eventually they work toward situating themselves in

a particular discourse community by adopting appropriate and beneficial writer identities.

These four elements or strands are intertwined to make up the concept of a writerly Self (Starfield, 2007, p.881; see also Ouellette, 2008). We have chosen only two aspects of writer identity namely discursal and authorial self for this theory.

### Metadiscourse

Metadiscourse has been used in research over 20 years and characterized with linguistic and rhetorical sensitivity in order to construct a particular interpersonal relationship with readers to support writers' positions. Starfield (2004) emphasized the importance of metadiscursive or metatextual markers and said, "Metadiscourse is central to writers' representations of themselves and to the organization and presentation of their arguments in their texts" (p. 153). So metadiscourse is a suitable linguistic and rhetorical analytic tool in understanding academic writer identity in relation to readers.

One way to understand how writers establish a certain attitude toward readers or content is to look at metadiscourse. The term metadiscourse is understood as a main feature of communication, referring to linguistic or rhetorical manifestation in text. Hyland (2004a) explains metadiscourse as "an essential element of interaction because of its role in facilitating communication, supporting a writer's position and building a relationship with an audience" (p. 110) and has studied writer identity through linguistic features in texts from different disciplines. It is questionable whether ESL/EFL writers are aware of the importance of authoritative voice with the use of metadiscourse. If they are, what are the metadiscourse features used to achieve their authoritative voices in their texts? If not, do they resist it or create their own authoritative voice?

Overall, the term metadiscourse, defined as "the cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community" (Hyland, 2005a, p.37), is an essential element. In

other words, metadiscourse in writing helps writers utilize language effectively for their authoritativeness and their communicative purposes when claiming, denying, and synthesizing ideas throughout the paper.

Academic writing is a complex social act that requires use of various discourses that meet academic expectations, and one of the most important things in academic writing is to show academic authority. The metadiscourse devices are very important in academic writing because the collective and social practice reflects disciplinary culture, and its discourses using these devices help writers show their awareness of social negotiation of knowledge and their efforts to pursue their claims and gains in the community's acceptance in the disciplines (Hyland, 2004a, p. 89). Table 1 presents Hyland's models of metadiscourse (2004a) used for this study, containing the names of categories, functions, and examples of linguistic markers.

In Hyland's models of metadiscourse (2004a) evidentials are among interactional or textual metadiscourse which refers to writer's presence in organizing and directing texts. Hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions are interactional or evaluative metadiscourse which refer to writer's attitude toward propositional ideas or readers in convincing or denying their argument.

In keeping with modern intellectual trends, the question of identity has become a 'central matter for inquiry' (Sieber, 2004, p. 131) within social science research generally. The relationship between identity and language learning is also of increasing interest to people working in the field of applied linguistics (Norton, 2000, p. 5; Norton & Toohey, 2002, p. 122; Block, 2007, p. 2), and researchers whose focus is the field of second language academic writing has similarly embraced a discussion of identity in their studies. Such discussion has led to a more explicit focus on the social nature of writing. There has also been, as Harklau (2003, p.155) puts it, an acknowledgment that 'learning to write in a second language is not simply the accrual of technical linguistic abilities but rather is intimately related to identity –how one sees

oneself and is seen by others as a student, as a writer, and as an ethnolinguistic minority’.

Table 1

*Hyland's Models of Metadiscourse (2004a, p. 111)*

Categories	Functions	Markers
Evidentially	Refer to the source of information	(Name)/ (date), according to, said...
Hedges	Withhold writer's full commitment to statements Include epidemic uncertainty signals	fairly, almost, partly, usually, Sometimes, often, probably, perhaps, may...
Boosters	Emphasize force or writer's certainty in message Include certainty markers	certainly, really, believe demonstrate, totally, always...
Attitude markers	Express writer's affective values towards readers and the content Include affective signals	Important, interesting, even, Unfortunately, I agree...
Self-mentions	Explicitly refer to author(s)	I, we, our, us, my, me, mine, the author, the author's, the writer, the writer's

### Empirical Studies on Identity Construction

Second language writing research with a focus on identity typically involves autobiographical accounts, or ethnographic case studies of individuals or small groups of students. An early autobiographical study, and one which is often referred to in the literature, is Shen's (1989) narrative of his 'mental struggle' to become an academic writer in a composition class at an American university. Shen describes how he was able to devise strategies in

the form of creative visualizing “games” which enabled him to move between one identity and the other, and the potentially liberating effect of this.

Hawkins (2005) observes that developing an appropriate writer identity is important, but adds that individuals might resist taking up a particular position. This issue of resistance is an interesting one that is noted by Zamel and Spack (2004, p. x) and discussed by other researchers such as Ivanič (1998) and Currie (2001). Brooke (1991), Ivanič (1998) and Newkirk (1997) have aimed to move beyond the binaries of expressivism and social constructivism by investigating the complex performances of writer identity under a variety of pressures, following the social theories of Goffman (1969). Banjeni and Kapp, drawing on the work of other researchers in the field of second language academic writing note that ‘individuals also have some agency in their choices of which positions to take up within discourses and in resisting the constraints imposed by discourses’ (Banjeni&Kapp, 2005, p.4). This is a point frequently made by Ivanič. Canagarajah’s (2001) article introduces another dimension to the notions of resistance and agency. He describes how one student, “Viji”, challenged the conventions of her university in Sri Lanka and successfully refused to compromise her strong religious beliefs and conform to academic expectations.

Recent commentators remind us, however, that discourse is not the only-nor even the most salient- consideration in identity formations. While the relationship between identity and language is well accepted in the field, the idea that language is intimately connected with a range of other identity factors is also compelling. In his study of first-year law students, Gee (2008) observed that students from middle and upper socioeconomic classes have an easier time acclimating to law schools because the pedagogy followed up on what those students had been exposed to in their earlier literacy education. Gee’s work highlighted the reality that the educational experiences of students are dependent on the socioeconomic and ethnic constitution of the neighborhoods in which they live.



In the fields that focus on second language learning, research on linguistic identity has traditionally held a critical perspective, focusing on concerns of power and access. Influenced by the works of Halliday (1973), Bourdieu (1977), Anderson (1991), Weedon (1987), and Fairclough (1989), among others, contemporary scholarship in these fields begins with the premise that second language users are in profoundly unique identity situations (also see Block, 2006, 2007). Their notion is that ‘all linguistic practices are measured against the legitimate practices’ which may be ‘defined as the practices of those who are dominant’ (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 53).

Norton, a specialist in applied linguistics and literacy, has long led the call for a theory of identity for second language learners, noting that language is both “constitutive of and constituted by a language learner’s identity” (2000, p. 5). Norton’s study (2000) on immigrant women in Canada exemplified the ways in which language can serve as a gatekeeper, either providing or denying second language learners access to networks for further learning. She argues that any research on the identity positions of second language users must acknowledge uneven power dynamics, social structures, and social interactions that exist between language learners and target language speakers.

Harklau (2000) and Ortmeier-Hooper (2008) noted similar concerns with the institutional representations of ESOL students as they transitioned from high school to college ESL and writing classrooms. Harklau found that while L2 students were often praised by their high school teachers, the same students were seen as challenging in their college ESL classrooms. Often, as noted by Ortmeier-Hooper (2008), these shifts in representation were fueled by students’ rejection of being identified as ESL students and their discomfort with being deemed “outsiders” to North American culture and the English language. As Harklau (2000) argues, when “sociocultural categories of culture and identity” are established, those categories are “intrinsically unstable,” “heterogeneous,” and “problematic” (p. 37). But despite that reality, the identities of second language writers are often characterized as “stable, homogenous, and taken-for-granted” in many educational settings

(Harklau, 2000, p. 37). It is this dubious concept of a “stable” and “homogenous” L2 identity that Nero (2006) interrogates in her body of research. Drawing on Le Page and Tabouret-Keller’s (1985) “acts of identity” framework, Nero considers how second language users adapt their linguistic use and behavior to identify with a desirable group. Like Harklau, Nero finds that the “dynamism” of identity is often obscured by educational institutions’ “intent to ascribe fixed ethno-linguistic identities to students” (p. 195).

The notion that second language writers have “fixed identities” has become increasingly problematic. In the past decade, scholars in second language writing have pointed to the increasingly complex nature of the L2 student/user community. Canagarajah (2002) highlights the range of English users that exists in today’s global economy, from English users in postcolonial nations to those individuals using English for international business, politics, and education. As Canagarajah writes,

It is becoming more and more difficult to “essentialize” students in ESOL – that is, to generalize their identity and character according to a rigidly definable set of linguistic or cultural traits. We are unable to define them in ways that are diametrically opposed to the language and culture of L1 students. ESOL students are no longer aliens to the English language or Anglo-American culture anymore. (Cited in Matsuda, Cox, Jordan, & Ortmeier-Hooper, 2006, p. 216)

In spite of these sizable and resultant researches on second/foreign academic writing and identity previous research has some limitations like lack of contextualization or limited focus on method. So it seems that studies which employ corpus based studies with careful linguistic analysis will promote our comprehension of a complicated issue like identity in writing.

### Objectives of the Study and Research Questions

The main objective of the present study, hence, was to investigate how writers construct their identities in the English academic discourse community. On the other hand, it examined

how the discorsal features of a specific text convey various impressions of the writer in text. In addition, it tended to examine their use of metadiscourse in the development of an academic writer identity in their English academic research papers. To this end, the following three research questions are asked:

1. How do foreign language writers enact, construct, and invent themselves as writers in the English academic discourse community?
2. How do the discorsal features of a specific text convey various impressions of the writer?
3. How do writers use metadiscourse in order to develop academic writer identity in their English papers in terms of the interrelations with the readers?

## Method

### *Corpus*

This study is based on an analysis of a written text corpus of 30 research articles published in international journals (see Appendix). The disciplinary scope of the corpus is limited to applied linguistics as defined by Wilkins (1999) and as outlined in handbook chapters of applied linguistics (e.g., Davies & Elder, 2004; Kaplan, 2002; Schmitt, 2002). This study focused on four rhetorical sections of research articles: Abstract, Introduction, Methodology, Discussion and Conclusion .

For the purpose of the study, only the body part of each article has been included in the search. This means that all footnotes, quotations, bibliographies, linguistic examples, tables and figures which appeared in the research articles were excluded from the data. They are an integral part of the articles and according to Dahl (2004, p.1817), "...they may easily skew the results for this category, as one or a few articles may yield a very high total number of such item".

The corpus of this research was selected and sampled according to accessibility and informant nomination as it is usual

in other metadiscourse studies (e.g., Harwood, 2005a, 2005b; Hyland, 1999a, 2001a, 2002a, 2002b, and 2007). Three leading journals in applied linguistics were selected for analysis. Ten articles were chosen from each journal.

### *Procedure*

To analyze the corpus, Hyland's model of metadiscourse (2004a) provided the initial guidelines. Hyland's framework has been chosen over others, such as Crismore et al's (1993) and Vande Kopple's (1985) after a detailed comparison has been carried out. Hyland's (2004a) framework is seen as the most comprehensive and pragmatically grounded means of investigating the interpersonal resources in texts. It seems that, this model overcomes many of the limitations of other models and tries to move beyond exterior and superficial forms or assays about metadiscourse as a self-sufficient stylistic scheme. This framework however is seen as evolving and opens in the sense that studies into metadiscourse could still contribute to the building up of the metadiscourse categories. As such, metadiscourse features that are considered to be not fitted in the model will definitely be extricated as building upon the model adopted. Considering Ivanič's (1998) model of identity, which is the theoretical framework for this study, adapting some of fitting metadiscoursal features can expand our understanding of the issue. Evidentials, hedges, boosters, self-mentions and attitude markers are those categories of Hyland's (2004a) model which are analyzed in this study. The articles were selected based on three criteria: date of research article publication, having Abstract, Introduction, Methodology, Discussion and Conclusion, and the number of authors.

The first criterion was the date of research article publication or time span. As Widdowson (1998), states genres change, evolve and decay through time. In order to take care of time factor, which influences the styles of the writers, the selected journals span during 2001-2007.

The second criterion was having Abstract, Introduction, Methodology, and Discussion/Conclusion. According to Gosden

(1993), immense writer intrusion, argumentation, decisions, claims and justifications are usually created in these sections.

The next criterion was choosing research articles among those which had single authors. Writer identity as a complex and multidimensional process is constructed differently in single-authored texts rather than multiple-authored texts.

Once the research articles were selected, all of them were read carefully. Then, the type and frequency of chosen metadiscoursal categories were identified manually several times. However, it should be mentioned that it is very difficult to determine all of these metadiscoursal features used by an author in a research article. Because according to Hyland (1996b, p. 437) "the choice of a particular device does not always permit a single, unequivocal pragmatic interpretation". As one of the universal properties of human language is creativity, it is to be expected that writers have a wide mental list of lexicons to express their thoughts. In other words, each category of metadiscourse can be realized linguistically through a variety of forms. It is also this very characteristic of human language that the analysis of any metadiscourse features needs to be done in context as any linguistic realization can be interpreted as having either propositional or metadiscoursal meaning.

After determining the frequency of mentioned metadiscoursal features in four rhetorical sections of research articles, the total words used in each section were also counted. Since the size of the research articles in each discipline and across four rhetorical sections varied, we decided to calculate the frequency of these categories per 1,000 words (as was the case in Hyland, 1998, 2002a, 2002b; Harwood 2005a, 2005b).

## Results

The results of this study are presented in three sections. First "the overall distribution of metadiscourse resources in the research article", is presented as a whole. Second, "rhetorical distribution of metadiscoursal resources in four rhetorical sections of Abstract, Introduction, Method, Discussion and Conclusion" is presented.

Finally, "the categorical distribution of metadiscourse resources" is presented in detail.

*The Overall Distribution of Metadiscourse Resources in the Research Articles*

In order to find out how writers construct their identities in the English academic discourse community, first, the overall distribution of five metadiscourse resources in four rhetorical sections of research articles was calculated. The results of the analysis showed that the frequency of these resources was 30.4. It appears that academic writers were obviously attentive to setting up their identities through metadiscourse resources in their texts. This is an admissible finding since metadiscourse is recognized as an important means of facilitating communication, supporting a writer's position and building a relationship with the audience (Hyland, 2005). Table 2 presents the distribution of these metadiscoursal features.

Table 2

*Distribution of Metadiscourse Categories in the Corpus*

Categories of Analysis	Frequency (Per 1,000 words)	Percent
Hedges	11.9	39.15
Evidentials	8.9	29.28
Boosters	3.5	11.51
Self-mentions	3.5	11.51
Attitude markers	2.6	8.55
Total	30.4	100

Among analysed elements, hedges with the frequency of 11.9(39.15%) were the most prioritized stance markers while attitude markers with the frequency of 2.6(8.55%) were the least favored elements used by the authors. The first one reveals that writers are thoughtful in preceding the probable contrary outcomes

of their assumptions and giving authorization to readers which provides the ground for their identity to be kept safe. The second one indicates that authors did not find attitude markers or sentiment devices stronger tools to be used for identity construction through text. These points are depicted in Figure 1.

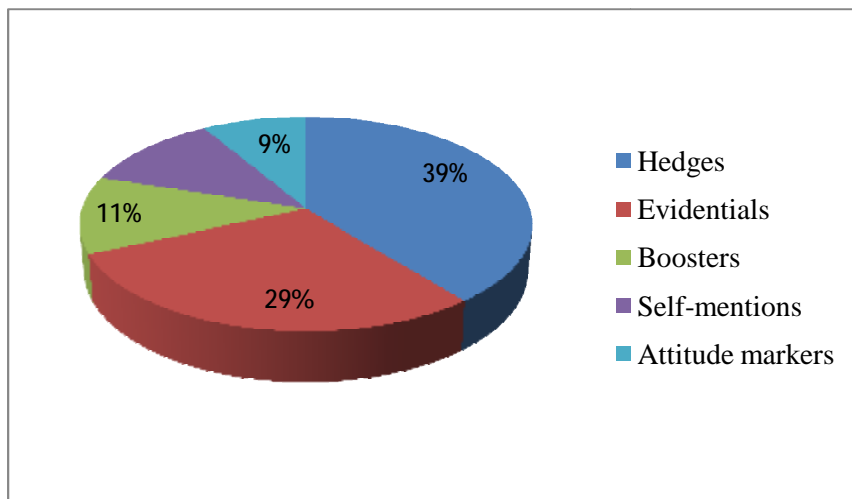


Figure 1. Types of metadiscourse categories used in the corpus

#### *Rhetorical Distribution of Metadiscoursal Resources*

The frequency of metadiscoursal resources was calculated per 1,000 words in four rhetorical sections of research articles: Abstract, Introduction, Method and Result / Discussion. Table 2 presents the distribution of these resources in four sections of research articles. According to the table 2, the Introduction section in articles has the highest incidence of metadiscoursal resources (56.39 per 1,000 words; 27.38%) followed by Result and Discussion (54.67 per 1,000 words; 26.53%), Abstract (49.58 per 1,000 words; 24.06%) and Method (45.37 per 1,000 words; 22.03%). To better illustrate these findings, the results are shown in Figure 2.

Table 3  
*Frequency of Metadiscourse Resources across Four Rhetorical Sections of Research Articles*

	Abstract	Introduction	Method	Results & Discussion
Frequency per 1,000 words	49.58	56.39	45.37	54.67
Percent	24.06	27.38	22.03	26.53

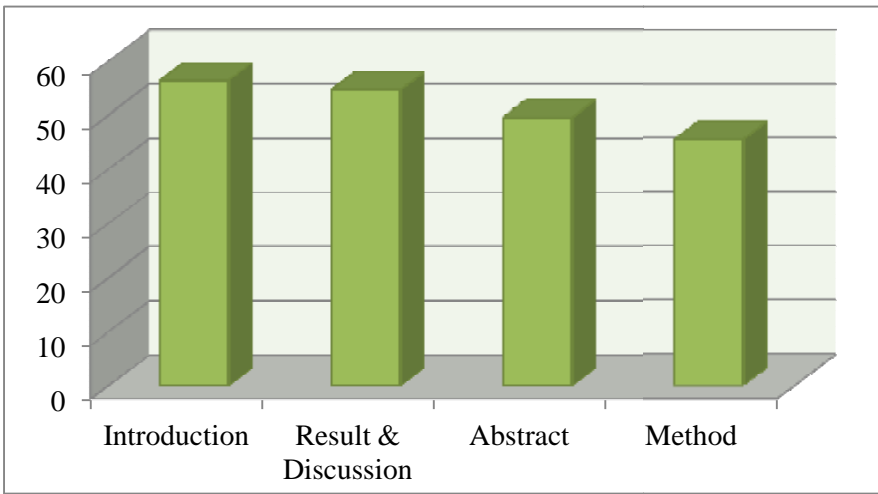


Figure 2. Distribution of metadiscourse resources across four rhetorical sections

*The Category-based Distribution of Metadiscourse Resources*

The category-based distribution of metadiscourse resources is presented under five headings: hedges, evidentials, boosters, self – mentions and attitude markers.

*Hedges*

In this investigation, hedges are the most frequently used interactional metadiscourse categories with the frequency of 11.9 per 1,000 words (39.15%). The use of hedges or ‘markers of



uncertainty' makes it possible for the writer to support his or her identity with withholding from full commitment to a certain proposition and with leaving some opportunity for the reader to reject or accept or comment the accuracy or inaccuracy of a particular argumentation . With this conception of 'hedges' in the mind, our writers prevented giving full commitment, provided approximately the same amount of space for their readers to recognize alternative voices and viewpoints as the following examples from our corpus show:

(*Example1*): Research investigating the effects of reading on vocabulary acquisition has found that both L1 learners (Jenkins et al. 1984; Nagy et al. 1985; Nagy et al. 1987; Shu et al. 1995) and L2 learners (Day et al. 1991; Dupuy and Krashen 1993; Hulstijn 1992; Pitts et al. 1989) may incidentally gain knowledge of meaning and form through reading.

(*Example2*): They suggested that the meaningfulness of the context and the degree of similarity between the form of the L1 and L2 may affect acquisition.

(*Example3*): This offers support to the view that the expression of stance in the natural sciences may be more extensive than is frequently supposed.

### *Evidentials*

The results of analysis showed that the frequency of evidential markers is 8.9 per 1,000 (29.28%) words across four rhetorical sections of research articles (see Table 2).According to the results, the writers made far more use of evidential markers because citations in research papers provide reasonable justification in argument and demonstrate the writers' knowledge on topics and provide a strong ethos for writers (Hyland, 2004 b).

Finding support for one's arguments and merging the credibility by reflecting to another's work or by directly or indirectly quoting them is an indispensable part of academic discourse which in turn results to consolidating identity. In this way, the writer persuades the audience of his or her arguments, obviates any abjection on the part of the audience and enriches his contribution the present state of knowledge by referring to other's work in the related discipline as the following examples from the corpus show:

(*Example 4*): According to Brown and Levinson (1987), social and interpersonal factors, namely interlocutors' power difference, the social distance between them, and the degree of imposition, influence the directness levels of speech act expressions.

(*Example 5*): As Kasper (2001) states, pragmatic competence refers to the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge and to gaining automatic control in processing it in real time.

(*Example 6*): As Burton (1988) rightly points out, "the most carefully designed experiment reflects the bias and values of the experimenter.

(*Example 7*): We adopt a constructivist, sociocultural-historical framework (Bakhtin, 1986; Vygotsky, 1986; Wertsch, 1998) to examine the discourses, texts, and voices of three 8-year-old Muslim girls, Heddie, Sada, and Emma, as they learn to write English.

### *Boosters*

According to the results, the frequency of boosters is 3.5 per 1,000 words (11.51%). In this study, boosters along with self-mention are the second interactional category used by writers. These devices are used to obviate any alternative viewpoints on the part of the audience and emphasize the mutual experience needed to draw the same conclusion as the writer. With this in their minds, writers capitalized on instances of this category to show that their identity is mediated by certainty and confidence which leads to making an interactional relationship with their readers as the following examples from the corpus clarify the point:

(*Example 8*): Communicative tasks are always socially constructed.

(*Example 9*): Although in the 1980s writing process researchers demonstrated strong support for examining journal writing in classroom-based studies, this method needs to be reconceptualized as a discursive research tool and as a teaching practice.

(*Example 10*): Studies exploring learners' and teachers' attitudes to English varieties often reflect multiple voices: for example recent study of students in Germany showed that while some were neutral or apparently unconcerned about the variety of English they were learning, most showed a preference for 'native-like' varieties (British or American English), on grounds of 'authenticity' and

'non-artificiality'; motivations were primarily pragmatic and instrumental (rather than integ- rative), to be able to use English effectively across Europe and elsewhere as a tool for inter cultural communication in study/work contexts. (See also Timmis 2002.)

(*Example 11*): In another study which examined the effects of reading a graded reader on vocabu- lary learning, Waring and Takaki (2003) found that learners would need to meet target words at least eight times to have a 50 per cent chance of recognizing the words after three months.

### *Self-mentions*

The results indicate that the frequency of self-mentions is 3.5 per 1,000 words (11.51%). Self-mentions play an important role in presenting the writers' voice and expressing their points of view on issues that they discuss. We searched the corpus for I, me, my, we, us, ours, the author, the author's, the writer, and the writer's , and then, examined each case to ensure it was an exclusive first person use, i.e., referred only to the writers and was therefore a genuine author pronoun. These examples are chosen from our corpus:

(*Example12*): Nevertheless, treating interpreter-mediated police interview discourse as interaction among three parties allowed the researcher to address relatively underexplored aspects of problems related to interpreting in such a context.

(*Example13*): My article shows problems with transplanting Lakoff and Johnson's discourse-level approach to a CDA register-level one.

(*Example14*): However, as we can see, inexperienced interpreters may be assigned for such a task.

(*Example15*): In doing so, I offer the concept of 'register prosody' as well as a corpus-based metmethod for checking over-interpretation of linguistic data as metaphorical, in relation to regular readers of a range of registers.

(*Example16*): When we examine the interpreted version, the lengthy original turn seems to lead to numerous omissions.

(*Example17*): First, let us examine an extract from the Melbourne case.

*Attitude Markers*

Attitude markers with the frequency of 2.6 per 1,000 words have the lowest frequency among interactional metadiscourse features (see Table 2). Attitude markers (e.g., admittedly, amazingly, curiously, remarkably, proffered) show writers' affective attitudes including emotions, perspective, and beliefs. There are attitude verbs (e.g. Agree, like, prefer), necessity modals (e.g., should, must), sentence adverbs (i.e., interestingly, surprisingly, unfortunately), and adjectives (e.g., appropriate, logical, hopeful, important). Similar to the findings on other categories of interactional metadiscourse, the writers used a lesser overall number of attitude markers but a greater variety of them, such as significantly, important, effectively, and strongly.

(*Example18*): Having appropriate background knowledge may have helped learners to more efficiently direct attention to input while reading the more familiar story.

(*Example19*): In the search for literature and stories that motivate children and provide language-rich experiences it is important to find tales which are of interest and also are linguistically accessible to beginning language learners.

(*Example20*): The results consistently demonstrated that as passage sight vocabulary increased so did ability to correctly infer TW meanings.

### Discussion and Conclusions

The present study focused on how second/foreign language writers enact, construct, and invent themselves through writing. The findings of the study revealed that identity in academic writing transpires through social interaction in the academy. This verification is in line with Spivey (1997), who claimed that, in addition to cognitive factors, social and affective factors are indispensable parts of identity construction in academic writing. From this prospect, writing is an act of identity construction in which “discourse-as-carrier-of-social values” and “discourse-as-social interaction” (Ivanic, 1998, p. 104) both play a part.

The present research reveals that one of the most salient ways of achieving such an interaction is using strategies on an interpersonal level through special metadiscourse features. Text is

a place where writers construct their discorsal identities through textual and rhetorical choices. The role of metadiscourse in discorsal construction of identity resides in its intermediary nature in the sense that with special use of its elements like evidentials, hedges, boosters, self-mentions and attitude markers writers can reflect their ideologies and identities. This finding is in line with Hyland's (2005) study who claimed that writers create authority, integrity and credibility through choices from stance markers.

The general findings from this study reveal that metadiscourse markers play a key impact in the discorsal construction of identity in academic writing. The augmentation of metadiscorsal features can lead to exposing of writers' identity in the sense that such categories equip them with adequate metalinguistic supplements and cues for constructing, exhibition and securing their identities.

The results of this study demonstrated that writer identity is mainly constructed in introduction sections of research articles in which social interaction happens through metalinguistic manipulation. Because of the critical characteristics and purposes of introduction sections in research articles, writers try to make best use of metadiscorsal resources in order to present the writer's acceptable academic picture in their disciplinary community. Thanks to managing metadiscorsal devices; this atmosphere is a pleasant place for authors to show their authority, self-promotion, and persuasion.

For example in providing the gap for stating the novelty of a work, using evidential markers in introduction section support identity by stamping others' theories. In such a case, the writer is not the isolated person whose identity is constructed in a social vacuum; rather his/her academic identity is strengthened through statements of elite members of this discourse community:

As mentioned in the findings section, with regard to the frequency of metadiscorsal features, hedges or markers of uncertainty stood out as the most dominant category, confirming their decisive role in construction of identity, where the writer needs to strike a difficult balance between commitment to his/her

ideas, respect and dialogue with the reader. In other words, by means of this feature writers can anticipate possible opposition to their claims (by expressing statements with precision but also with caution and modesty), while simultaneously, enabling the reader to follow the writer's stance without the writer appearing too assertive. These quantitative results correspond with other studies where hedges also hold a supreme position, irrespective of the genre and the languages analyzed. Hedging, for example, has come to be seen as a key characteristic of academic discourse (Hyland, 1998), be it in economic texts (Moreno, 1998), biology research articles (Hyland, 1996a), linguistics research articles (Vassileva, 2001), medical research papers (Salager-Meyer, 1994), and Fallahati's (2006) study on hedging in three disciplines where indirectness is highly valued for different reasons.

Using evidential markers in papers seems overwhelming, but it seems writers insist that quotations and in-text citations make their papers stronger as they can provide their knowledge and evidence in them. This was one way of showing their academic authoritativeness and identity. As elite members of academic discourse community, writers establish or rebut claims to prove their academic identity, and then, support their claims with using evidential markers. Using evidentials is a criterion for making their assertions picturesque and it is a discursive feature which strengthens writers' discursive identity. Writers' identity gains credibility with appropriate utilizing of a 'highly valued convention' (Ivanič, 1998, p.48) like evidentials.

Boosters or certainty markers can create solidarity in text and engagement with readers and construct an authoritative persona. They are complex devices with a variety of functions, and they are central to the negotiation of claims and effective argumentation in academic writing. Professional using of boosters is one of the common metalinguistic tools, which reinforce construction of identity with the impact of argument and evaluation of academic competence of the writer by members of academic discourse community. One possible explanation for the frequent use of this subcategory by writers is making their view

accurate and providing admissible evidence for what they feel the audience will find unjustifiable.

The finding of this investigation distinctly illustrates that self-mentions or promotional devices are the most visible indications of authorial identity which promote both writers and their works. By incorporating this category into their texts, the writers tended to leave more traces of themselves. One possible explanation is that making author's presence noticed (one means of which is the insertion of this subcategory) in any written academic discourse gives a community-approved persona and consolidate his or her credibility among other practitioners and community members. The findings of the study conducted by Harwood (2005) support the use of self-mentions as promotional devices and thus, is consistent with the upshot of the present study. The outcomes of the study conducted by Hyland (2002) also support this result with indicating the point that "self-mention constitutes a central pragmatic feature of academic discourse since it contributes not only to the writer's construction of a text, but also of a rhetorical self. The authorial pronoun is a significant means of promoting a competent scholarly identity and gaining acceptance for one's ideas" (Hyland, 2002, p.110).

The underuse of attitude markers or sentiment devices reveals the dominance of reason over emotion or sensual perception in academy. One possible explanation for this seems to be the point that writers tried to construct their identities through vindicating their knowledge with scientific assumptions and isolating it from uncertain emotions. It seems that in research articles in which audiences have high logical and critical capacity this emotion-based strategy is not that much efficient in identity construction. It appears that writers regard themselves as sophisticated, savant and users of reason. These discourse markers yield a less authoritative voice and less personal involvement because it indicates that writers have a "lack of confidence, reluctance to express opinion, poor/no tradition of critical evaluation" (Burneikaite, 2008). It seems that writers did not feel comfortable using some affective attitude markers (surprisingly) that might have interfered with establishing their objective voice in

their papers. This identity does not signify that feelings or sensual stimuli are absent from academic writing. Rather, it indicates highly sensual experience in a context of the relevant experiences of others and of the history of academic analysis of the topic. In the academic world, the emotions and sentiments must always be subject to control by reason. Controlling emotions by reason means avoiding "impressionism": merely expressing "feelings" or opinions. It could be construed, thus, that the key to an effectively persuasive text is the artful combination of weakening expressions (i.e., hedges) and strengthening ones (i.e., certainty markers and/or attitudinal markers) with the final intention of producing a discourse that is neither too assertive nor too vague.

#### Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for further Research

The process of the identity construction is dynamic and varies individually. Metadiscoursal resources are at least evidences of some aspects of intended voice of authors which reflect opinions, power relations and values of academic disciplinary community. It is the point that the role and effect of these features show themselves in discorsal construction of identity as it is defined by Ivanič (1998). It can be asserted from the results of analysis that these choices reveal impressions of writers trying to sound to the readers. Writers' attitude and goals in the level of the program, their strategic and discorsal positioning of academic identity and awareness of the academic writing game are key elements in developing their academic writer identities.

In second/foreign language writing classroom, writing educators need to provide explicit discussion and teaching of academic discourse in class so that students who hold myths associated with academic discourse or poor writer identities change their attitudes and become aware of a wide range of its characteristics. Writing teachers should help students to be acculturated into the academic community and be participating members in their disciplines, with a broad understanding of academic discourse and with strong rhetorical confidence.

We are suggesting that various natural inquires on qualitative approach and a large amount of corpus in qualitative



and quantitative metadiscourse analysis would bring a rich understanding about construction of writer identities. Both students and teachers can benefit from genre analysis that provides more knowledge of discourse, rhetorical preferences, and a world view in a particular genre of writing. The consideration of diversity in the participants' backgrounds and technologically infused education in the academic discourse community might expand our knowledge of students' writer identities in multicultural and multifaceted learning environments.

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## Appendix

### Bibliographical Information of Texts Used in the Analysis

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