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The 'I' in identity: Exploring writer identity in student academic writing through the first person pronoun ☆

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Abstract

Academic writing has traditionally been thought of as a convention-bound monolithic entity that involves distant, convoluted and impersonal prose. However, recent research has suggested a growing recognition that there *is* room for negotiation of identity within academic writing, and thus academic writing need not be totally devoid of a writer's presence. In this article, we explore the notion of writer identity in academic essays by focusing on first person pronouns, arguably the most visible manifestation of a writer's presence in a text. Our main argument is that the first person pronoun in academic writing is not a homogeneous entity. Accordingly, we set up a typology of six different identities behind the first person pronoun in academic writing. We then apply this framework to a specific examination of the essays of 27 first-year undergraduates at the National University of Singapore. We focus on how the identities of these student writers are revealed through uses of the first person pronoun, and reflect on the implications of our results on issues of critical thinking and writing education at the tertiary level.

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1. Introduction

Students beginning tertiary education may find themselves in an academic environment which is very different from what they are used to. They are quickly placed in a position where they have to 'appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse' (Bartholomae, 1985, p. 135), often before they have learned how to properly utilize this 'specialized discourse' of higher education. With academic writing conventions rarely taught explicitly (a problem noted by several researchers, including Lillis, 1997; Delpit, 1986), many students approach their assignments with a vague notion of academic writing as some monolithic entity, involving dry, convoluted, distant and impersonal prose that must be mastered in order to gain membership into the 'academic discourse community' (see Clark (1992) for a good introduction to this concept). Recent research (Clark, 1992; Ivanic, 1994, 1995, 1998; Ivanic & Simpson, 1992; Lillis, 1997), however, suggests a growing trend away from the traditional notion of academic writing as distant and impersonal, towards a recognition that academic writing need not be totally devoid of the writer's presence. The issue of *how* writers create identities for themselves in their academic writing thus emerges as a very pertinent area of research. Recognising that a writer's identity in any text is created by and revealed through a combination of his or her many discoursal choices, we have decided to focus on just one of these aspects—the writer's use of first person pronouns.

2. Writer roles and writer identity in academic writing

The phrase 'creating identities' implies a whole philosophy of thinking that has become increasingly accessible and accepted through the work of Michael Halliday and others of the Systemic school of linguistics (Halliday, 1994, 1998; Martin, 1989). In this school of thought, 'reality' is not something that exists independently as an objective entity, but is instead a construct of human creation through language. In other words, language does not merely *reflect* an existing reality, but actually *creates* that reality. If we see the notion of self as one of the aspects of 'reality', we can then extrapolate from the above viewpoint to say that the idea of the self, too, is not fixed. Language does not serve merely as a tool to express a self that we already have, but serves as a resource for creating that self. This view is shared by Roland Barthes and William Coles (Harris, 1987), and Robert Brooke (1991).

If the self is not a fixed pre-language entity, then writers can be sensitized to the possibilities of inventing their 'selves' through their writing. They can, as it were, break free from the real or imagined moulds of behaviour imposed upon them by their discourse situations to inhabit different, *chosen* roles in their writing.

The study of writer identity in academic writing is a relatively unexplored area of research. Cherry (1988), one of the few researchers who has specifically addressed this issue, distinguishes between *ethos* and *persona* in writing, with *ethos*

referring to the personal characteristics (e.g. intelligent, funny, responsible, etc.) that a reader attributes to a writer based on textual evidence, and *persona* referring to the roles which a writer adopts while producing a particular piece of writing. As Cherry does not explicitly discuss the range of possible roles a person can hold, often simultaneously, we would like to suggest three main levels at which people can hold or perform roles—the societal level, at the discourse level, and at the genre level. Ivanic (1998, p. 46) distinguishes between *discourse* and *genre* as follows:

> Any piece of language might be categorized as primarily belonging to a particular genre (for example poem genre, or newspaper editorial genre), and can be shown to have characteristics of a particular discourse (for example, 'anti-war discourse' or 'natural science discourse'). So a single discourse can be found in several different genres. In the same way, a single genre (for example, undergraduate essay genre), also provides the container for a wide variety of discourses (for example, philosophy discourse, natural science discourse).

Societal roles are the identities that are, in a sense, inherent to a person (e.g. mother, father, son, daughter, American, Singaporean). *Discourse roles* are the identities that a person acquires by participation in a particular discourse community (e.g. a lawyer or a client in the legal discourse community, a doctor or a patient in the medical discourse community). Generally, these roles only hold within the confines of that discourse community. For example, a person is not 'a client' outside of the courtroom or the lawyer's office. In some cases, however, a person's job might come to define him or her so well that the society defines them by it. When this happens, what began as a discourse role might develop into a societal role, as when a prominent medical doctor is identified as such even when he or she is picking up a head of lettuce at the supermarket.

Genre roles are specific to a particular genre within the discourse community. For example, in this article, when we speak of the writer as *a guide through the essay* or *the architect of the essay*, we are discussing genre roles, identities that are created within the *genre* of the undergraduate academic essay or academic research article. A genre role will generally not develop into a societal role. One does not identify a person as *a guide through the essay* in any context outside of academic writing. It is important to note that identities at all three levels can be created linguistically in writing.

Taking up Cherry's (1988) challenge for more writing researchers to investigate the phenomenon of self-representation in writing, Ivanic (1994, 1995, 1998) has developed a well-articulated framework comprising four interrelated aspects of writer identity (Table 1).

Ivanic's work is particularly revealing with respect to the *discoursal* (or *textual*) *selves* of her participants (not to be confused with what we have called 'discourse roles'). In exploring the textual selves of her participants, she focuses on their societal and discourse roles, but not genre roles. Our present study, therefore, addresses genre roles, focusing only on one genre, namely the academic essay.

Table 1
Ivanic's (1998) four aspects of writer identity

Autobiographical self	'The identity which people bring with them to any act of writing' (Ivanic, 1998, p. 24)
Discoursal self	The image a writer projects in the writing
Self as author	The self who originates a position or stand in the writing
Possibilities for self-hood in the socio-cultural and institutional context	'In any institutional context there will be several socially available possibilities for self-hood: several ways of doing the same thing. Of these some will be privileged over others, in the sense that the institution accords them more status' (Ivanic, 1998, p. 27)

3. Possible identities behind the first person pronoun in academic writing

In this section, we look at the various ways in which the first person pronoun may be used in academic writing. Most of us are probably aware at some level, that not all instances of the authorial 'I' are exactly alike, though few researchers have articulated this explicitly. When we conducted a brief survey of handbooks for college and university writers, we found that while many do address the question of whether the first person should be used in writing student essays, few seem to appreciate the fact that the first person pronoun in academic writing is not a homogeneous entity, and that there is a range of roles or identities that may be fronted by a first person pronoun.

We took as our starting point a comment made by Ivanic (1998, p. 307): '[t]here is a continuum from not using 'I' at all, through using 'I' with verbs associated with the process of structuring the writing, to using 'I' in association with the research process, and finally to using 'I' with verbs associated with cognitive acts'. Ivanic does not expand on her idea of a continuum of 'I's, nor does she state explicitly the criteria by which she has ordered the first person pronouns along this continuum. However, it seems reasonable to suggest, given her past research (see especially Ivanic, 1995), that what she had in mind was a cline showing the degree of power wielded by the authorial presence through a particular instance of use of the first person pronoun.

Here, therefore, we develop Ivanic's idea of a continuum of 'I's, first introducing the various roles that we have identified for the first person pronouns within academic essays, and next ordering these roles along a continuum in terms of the degree of authorial power. By a powerful authorial presence, we mean that the writer displays a high level of authority within the text, where 'authority' has elements of both its common meanings of 'a right to control or command others' and 'knowledge or expertise in a particular field', as well as a meaning more specific to this article—the quality belonging to an 'author', where 'author' is used in Ivanic's (1994, p. 12) very specialized sense of 'a maker of meaning'.

Our setting up of the categories involved a preliminary analysis of our 27 student essays, and a sampling of published academic articles and books in linguistics to determine the different identities foregrounded by the first person

pronouns. It should be noted that we labelled our categories *'I' as the representative, 'I' as the guide*, etc. for the sake of uniformity and ease of reference. When we devised our continuum of roles, we considered all the various forms of the first person pronoun (*I, me, my, mine, we, us, our*, and *ours*).

3.1. 'I' as the representative

This is a generic first person pronoun, usually realized as the plural *we* or *us*, that writers use as a proxy for a larger group of people. For instance, in the sentence *It resulted in the English we know today (Script 10)*, 'we' refers to people in general. In a sentence like *At least for French, we know that it solely belongs to the Romance languages (Script 10)*, however, the 'we' refers to a smaller group, members of the linguistics discourse community perhaps. In the following sentence, *The English language that we have today reflects many centuries of development (Script 16)*, it is especially clear that what appears to signal ownership of some universal or common property (in this case 'English') in reality simply denotes the existence of a particular state of affairs. Thus, a noun phrase like *the English language that we have today* simply means *the English language that exists today*. Used this way, the first person pronoun, far from giving the reader information about the writer, effectively reduces the writer to a non-entity. Therefore, in terms of the potential power wielded by an authorial presence, this is the least powerful role that the first person pronoun can front. [More examples of the first person pronoun used in this and the other roles are provided in the appendix.]

3.2. 'I' as the guide through the essay

The best way to understand this role is to think of the essay as a foreign country, with the writer as the guide during the reader's journey through that unfamiliar territory. With this overriding metaphor of 'Essay = Foreign Country' in place, we can see the role of guide being the person who shows the reader through the essay (much as a tour director would take a traveller through a foreign country), locates the reader and the writer together in the time and place of the essay, draws the reader's attention to points which are plainly visible or obvious within the essay (usually from examples that are cited within the text itself), and arrives at a conclusion (destination) that he or she presumes is shared by the reader. This particular role is often signalled explicitly by the use of verbs like *see, note*, and *observe* (in Halliday's (1994) terms, mental processes of perception, specifically visual perception), as in the following examples:

> Let us now look at some examples of J[amaican] C[reole] compared to Standard British English (SBE) (Script 26).
> Moreover, from example 1, we observed that there is an absence of the determiner article, 'the' and pronoun, 'that' (Script 26).

It should be clear from this discussion that since the writer as guide is always implicitly or explicitly accompanied by the reader, this particular usage of the first person pronoun is usually realized in the plural, inclusive form of *we* or *us*.

3.3. 'I' as the architect of the essay

Usually realized as the first person singular, this usage of the *I* foregrounds the person who writes, organizes, structures, and outlines the material in the essay, as in the following example:

> In this essay, I will discuss the bastard status of English from the pre-English period (-AD 450) to Middle English (c. 1100–1450) (Script 16).

Some might argue that the role of the architect exhibits similarities to that of the guide. We agree that this is so, but we also believe that there is a crucial difference between the two. Where the architect has the responsibility of organizing and outlining the material in the writing (creating structure, as it were, in the writing process), there is a sense in which the guide merely seems to be showing the reader through an already existing terrain. Given that the former appears to be the more powerful role of the two, we think it best to maintain two separate categories.

3.4. 'I' as the recounter of the research process

The person behind this first person pronoun is the one who describes or recounts the various steps of the research process. This work done by the writer prior to the writing might include such things as reading source texts, interviewing subjects, collecting data and so on. This particular role is often signalled by the pairing of first person pronouns with what Halliday (1994) calls material process verbs (i.e. 'doing' verbs like *work, read, interview, collect*), frequently used in the past tense. A good example would be when Ivanic (1998, p. 118) writes 'The data I collected included written texts, transcripts of discussions and notes made as a result of observation'.

3.5. 'I' as the opinion-holder

The 'opinion-holder' is the person who shares an opinion, view or attitude (for example, by expressing agreement, disagreement or interest) with regard to known information or established facts. While not always signalled by the use of 'I', this role when it does involve the use of the first person pronoun, often co-occurs with verbs depicting what Halliday (1994) terms mental processes of cognition, as in *I think Kushwant Singh has managed to succinctly convey the essence of the English Language with his phrase 'bastard language' (Script 8)*.

3.6. 'I' as the originator

This role, we suggest, is the most powerful role that a writer can create and inhabit within his or her writing. It involves the writer's conception of the ideas or knowledge claims which are advanced in the essay. Crucially, it calls for the writer to present or signal these as *new* in the essay. It maps largely onto Ivanic's term 'author', the self that 'claim[s] authority as the source of the content of the text' (1998, p. 26). We like this particular quote from Ivanic, as it highlights an important point with respect to this role—what is important is that the writers 'claim authority' and exhibit some form of ownership of the content of their writing, showing that they perceive themselves as people who have the *right* and the *ability* to originate new ideas, even if, at present, time constraints or inexperience might make truly original contributions unlikely.

Having described in detail the six possible roles we have identified behind the first person pronoun, we now order these along a continuum (Fig. 1).

In the next part of our article, we report on our application of this continuum to a specific examination of a sample of undergraduate academic essays.

4. Our study

We collected the essays written by 27 students for a first-year English Language module, EL1102 *Studying English in Context*. Students were required to complete a 1000-word essay, explaining a given quotation using material taught on the course. The question read: 'English quite obviously is the richest language in the world today because it has never succumbed to the purist like the French have purists—they're the worst enemies of language. English is a bastard language. That's why it's virile. It's healthy. It's absorbed every language that it has come into contact with.' (Kushwant Singh, Indian writer and former newspaper editor,

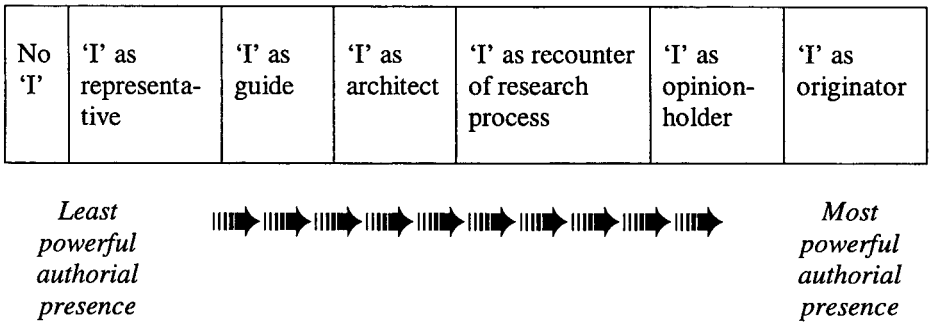

Fig. 1. A typology of possible identities behind the first person pronoun in academic writing.

in a radio programme.) What does Kushwant Singh mean when he describes the English language as a 'bastard language'? You may focus on any aspect of its 'bastard' status (e.g. just one period of history, or just lexis or grammar) and show this has affected the language.

We had two central concerns in looking at the essays: (1) to determine if the students use first person pronouns in their writing; and (2) to ascertain the roles that are behind these first person references. The main findings of our research are highlighted below.

Table 2 shows the distribution of the various first person pronouns (fronting the six roles we identified) in each of the 27 essays.

We found that a fairly large percentage of our students (approximately 81%) do use the first person pronoun in their writing, though somewhat sparingly. The average number of first person pronouns per script is just 3.41. In terms of actual numbers, there was one script with 16 occurrences of the first person pronoun (the highest number), and five scripts with no instances of first person pronoun use at all.

5. Discussion

5.1. Representative

Out of a total of 92 instances of the first person pronoun used (across all 27 scripts), 39 fall into this category. This translates into 42.39% of the total number of occurrences, the highest percentage taken up by a single role.

This role, as we have highlighted, is the least powerful role our students inhabit in their writing. Clark, Cottey, Constantinou and Yeoh (1990, p. 91) write that 'students are in a position of weakness relative to those who assess their work'. It is not surprising then that some students, feeling that they do not have a right to exist in academic writing, adopt a role which carries the least information about themselves as individuals. For example when a student writes *Ranges of languages have come together over the centuries to produce now what we call the English Language (Script 12)*, the 'we' in the sentence says nothing specific about the writer but makes a rather vague reference to 'people' in general.

It is possible, however, to see a positive side to this role. When our students inhabit the role as representative, it may be an attempt on their part to signal their (desired) membership in the linguistics discourse community. This is seen when they display knowledge of the facts and opinions that are generally accepted by other members of this discourse community. Therefore, when a student writes *Thus we get an inflection of the noun that we have today (Script 12)*, or *Besides the lexis, hypotaxis in our grammar was also adapted from Latin (Script 6)*, these sentences indicate shared knowledge between the writer and the reader, and a presupposition of the writer's acceptance in the linguistics discourse community. As Ivanic (1995, p. 15) points out, '[w]hen someone uses a particular discourse

Table 2
Distribution of first person pronouns across scripts

Script	Role						
	Representative	Guide	Architect	Recounter of research process	Opinion-holder	Originator	Total per script
1	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
4	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
5	2	0	1	0	0	0	3
6	4	1	1	0	2	0	8
7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
9	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
10	12	4	0	0	0	0	16
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	5	1	0	0	0	6
13	3	1	0	0	0	1	5
14	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	2	2	1	0	0	0	5
17	3	0	2	0	0	0	5
18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
20	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
21	4	2	0	0	0	0	6
22	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
23	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
24	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
25	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
26	1	6	2	0	0	0	9
27	1	0	1	0	1	1	4
Total per role	39	31	13	0	4	5	92

type, they identify themselves with the interests, values, beliefs and power relations which are associated with it'. She also suggests that students create the impression that they are members of the discourse community because they assume it will 'bring [them] good grades'.

Although students' alignment of themselves with established members of the discourse community should be viewed as positive, we suggest that, in comparison to the other roles along our continuum, the representative is not a very demanding role. Unlike the *architect* who creates structure for the text, the *recounter of research* who relates steps in the research process (thus recreating the backdrop to the research), and the *opinion-holder* and *originator* who formulate thoughts and ideas in the writing (creating the 'content' as it were), the

representative merely positions himself or herself alongside other creators of meaning rather than doing any actual creation at all. Therefore, although we have a high number of instances of the first person pronoun in this category, it does not point to a strong authorial presence.

5.2. Guide

There are 31 instances of the first person pronoun used in conjunction with this role. This accounts for 33.7% of the total, again a fairly high percentage. One striking similarity between this role and the role of the representative is that the role of guide, too, is realized by the plural form of the first person. (There are 29 instances of *we* and two of *us* used in conjunction with this role.) This tendency of students to signal their presence in their texts with the plural person is significant, as it suggests that students may be operating with a 'safety in numbers' mentality, and that they are reluctant to assert their individuality in their writing.

Another possible reason for students' apparent confidence with this role is that it is, in a sense, an 'external' role. Although written in at the time of composing, the guide seems in some essays to be a rather fleeting presence, surfacing only at strategic moments in the essay to lead the reader through the text. Further, as a guide, the writer appears to momentarily stand apart from the writing he or she is otherwise creating to view the direction that the text is taking, and to show the reader this direction, almost as if the text were an entity unrelated to him or her.

The guide, thus, is a fairly non-threatening role to inhabit, as it allows students to provide direction in their writing while remaining fairly distant from it. In addition, the writer as guide presupposes the congenial accompaniment of the reader and backgrounds the 'author' of the ideas (who might be the subject of attacks from discerning readers).

5.3. Architect

In our students' scripts, we found only 13 instances of the first person pronoun in the role of the architect. This low occurrence was somewhat disturbing as the architect's duty is to signpost and provide an overall outline of the essay for the reader, a very important feature in good writing. Returning to the scripts, however, we discovered that students are in fact present as architects of their writing, but do not use the first person to realise this role. Instead, students use one or more of three other strategies:

1. Passivisation, which allows students to remove themselves as the agent of any actions performed (e.g. the action of *showing* in the example below):

   The sources of the English lexis will be shown and in reality, the English language has been affected in an enriching fashion (Script 13).

2. Making an inanimate object (e.g. *this essay*) the agent of the actions performed:

> This essay looks at the variation and development of English lexis—one aspect of its 'bastard' status (Script 11).

3. Nominalisation, whereby an action done by the writers (*discuss* in the example below) is turned into an abstract noun which is then portrayed as the agent of another action (*explain* in the example below):

> A discussion on lexis can explain the 'bastard' status of the English language (Script 24).

If it is true that the social meanings language carries with it are 'embodied in ... lexical and syntactic structures', as Fowler et al. (1979, cited in Clark, 1992, p. 121) suggest, then students by making other lexical and syntactic choices instead of using the first person pronoun reveal something important about the way in which they perceive themselves at the university and in their writing. Their notion that academic writing is necessarily distant and impersonal may in fact be part of a higher overriding 'ideolog[y] of knowledge making' (Ivanic, 1998, p. 303). Ivanic (1998) refers to a continuum from a *constructivist* view to a *positivist* view of knowledge-making in academia. Table 3 summarizes the differences between these two views.

Given that our students seem to 'objectify' knowledge, one goal of writing education then should be to make students aware that there is an alternative to this positivist view of meaning, while still leaving to them the ultimate decision of which view to subscribe to.

5.4. Recounter of the research process

None of our students used first person pronouns in conjunction with this role in their essays. This is perhaps not surprising, given the nature of the task that was

Table 3
The constructivist and positivist view of knowledge-making in academia

Constructivist	Positivist
Represents the belief: —that reality is dependent on the social context —that knowledge is created by and inseparable from the individual —that knowledge is subjective	Represents the belief that there are 'objective, generalisable, universal' (Ivanic, 1998, p. 309) truths that exist independently of context and individuals

set for them. The assignment called for students to evaluate a quotation using course material to which they had access. Apart from reading, students were not required to engage in other activities that might be necessary with a larger scale research project, such as collection of data, interviewing of subjects, and so on. Our survey of academic literature reveals that this role is prevalent when the writer has conducted an experiment or study of some sort, and wishes to detail the various steps undertaken during the course of research. This element was absent in the task assigned to the students in this study. The question that we cannot answer is whether or not our students would have exhibited this role of recounter if this element had not been absent, and would they have then fronted this role explicitly with the first person, or realized it in some other way?

5.5. Opinion-holder and originator

We discuss these two roles together because we have noted that there is often a natural progression from the role of opinion-holder (expressing an opinion of someone else's views) to the role of originator (venturing one's own take on an issue) in mature academic writing.

In our sample, we found that students do use the first person to front both these roles, though in relatively small numbers. Out of 92 instances of the first person, only four (4.49%) fall into the opinion-holder category, and five (5.61%) into the original category.

This low occurrence could stem from the fact that these are fairly demanding roles, requiring writers to be accountable for the propositions raised. Using the first person pronoun for these roles is arguably even more daunting, as it means explicitly bringing the writer-as-thinker into the writing, exposing their thoughts to the scrutiny of the reader. Peritz (1993, p. 380) notes that:

> Normally, my students read texts as though they were instructive collections of authoritative information. Small wonder, then, that they also tend to think of published writers as authorities who know it all and of their own academic writing as little more than a report of what such authoritative others already know.

For students to originate their own ideas and opinions might appear to them to involve aligning themselves with textbook writers and lecturers in terms of their right to be 'authors'. It means exposing their original views to such 'authoritative others' as their tutors and lecturers for evaluation. This is understandably an intimidating process, and it is possible that students feel insecure about the validity of their claims, seeing themselves to be at one of the lowest rungs of the academic ladder.

Given that the first person is used so infrequently in conjunction with the roles of opinion-holder and originator, a useful area for future research would be how our students realize these roles in other ways. As Kirsch (1993, p. 64) says,

'Creating a distance from one's text—denying ownership—is one mechanism for coping with inhibiting audiences'. It is possible therefore that the picture is not as bleak as it appears, and that students do actually venture opinions and originate ideas, hiding behind a cloak of passivisation and seeming 'objectivity', instead of overtly signalling their presence with the first person (c.f. architect role findings).

In addition, we feel it is important to recognise that it is the student's perception of their right and ability to be originators that is crucial. For example, we at times find that students create certain positive expectations in their readers by signalling their intention to prove or examine a proposition. These are verbs with a strong element of mental cognition in them, and readers will understandably be disappointed if the students then fail to fulfil those expectations by merely presenting material, with no attempt at evaluation or argumentation. Where some might view this entirely negatively, we suggest that there might be a positive angle to this occurrence. Although certainly not ideal, it suggests that students see themselves in this powerful position, and their perception of their right to inhabit this role could be a first step to fully and legitimately following through with a role they have introduced.

6. Concluding remarks and pedagogical implications

We have explored the different kinds of identities that students can bring into their writing when they use the first person pronoun. In addition, we have highlighted some of the difficulties students face when they enter the academic discourse community of the university. In this final section, we make use of the insights introduced in this article to offer some perspectives on writing education in the university classroom.

Our study has shown the wide-ranging nature of the identities that the first person pronoun can front. Taking care not to veer into a new kind of prescriptivism, we suggest that it is vital for students and teachers alike to be aware of the very real presence of these different ways in which the first person pronoun can be used in academic writing. For students, an understanding of the choices available to them may help them decide how best to present themselves in their writing. At present some students may be avoiding the use of the first person simply because of some vague preconceived notion that academic writing should be distant and impersonal. For teachers, the results of this study imply the need to recognise that the question is not simply whether or not the first person pronoun should be allowed or encouraged in academic writing. Rather, the issue becomes which specific type of the first person pronoun, if any, writers should use, when, and for what purpose. This may also involve recognising that the writer in a text is seen less in the presence versus the absence of first person pronouns per se than in the presence of certain types of first person pronouns.

We believe that any writing education programme at the university should include issues of writer identity, and draw the attention of students to the fact

that their language choices reflect who they are in their writing. This focus on *critical language awareness* seeks to *empower* students such that they are no longer 'naively manipulated by [conventions]' (Clark, 1992, p. 118), thus paving the way for their *emancipation*, when students 'us[e] the power gained through awareness to act' (Clark, 1992, p. 119). This conversion of what could be at present 'subconscious' choices into conscious, well-informed decisions in their writing is a first step to creating confident writers with a good sense of themselves. The responsibility of making these options known to the students lies with effective writing education programmes that encourage students to be critical thinkers and writers, people who are able and eager to create the meaning that they want to create, and the self that they want to present in their writing.

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Appendix

A1.1. More examples for each category from student scripts and published academic articles

'I' as the representative

- The differentiation of British and American English causes us to ponder about the right form of Standard English (Script 2).
- In the ecclesiastical sphere, we have words like *abbot, bishop, martyr, psalter* and so forth (Script 13).
- We know that all dialects of English, whether standard or non-standard, are capable of conveying complex thought (Bizzell, 1992).

'I' as the guide

- As we examine the various classes of loan words from French, we can see the different ways French civilisation and culture has influenced English (Script 12).
- In example 1 we see the tendency for SAE to form interrogative constructions without changing the position of the subject 'you' and auxiliary items 'would' (Script 26).
- So far we have said nothing about the 'senses' of words, mentioned in point 4 of the Proposal (Graddol, Leith & Swann, 1996).

'I' as the architect

- I will concentrate on the period Renaissance and its influence on the English language (Script 6).

- In my essay, I shall look into the contributions made by the different languages to the lexis of the English language (Script 17).
- In the next four sections of the paper I[1] explain what I mean by each of these issues in more detail, giving examples from the experience of my nine co-researchers (Ivanic, 1995).

'I' as the recounter of the research process

- All of the papers I read were built around one of three commonplaces: (1) creativity is self-expression; (2) creativity is doing something new or unique; and (3) creativity is using old things in new ways (Bartholomae, 1985).
- I tape recorded a conversation with each co-researcher about the role of literacy in their lives, past and present (Ivanic, 1998).
- Although I discuss only three students in this essay, my information about them is drawn from a two year period, when I interviewed eight seniors, four each a year, on a weekly basis (Chase, 1988).

'I' as the opinion-holder

- Looking back at Kushwant Singh's words, we can determine from this period that English did indeed absorb the languages it came into contact with (Script 2).
- Secondly, I would like to show that, *contrary to what Kushwant believes*,[2] the development of English is not merely because that it is part of an upward evolution. That would be an over-simplification. Rather, the development of English is better evaluated as a history of changes (Script 27).
- I agree with Fairclough (1992b) that cross-disciplinary theory and research on the way in which discourse functions in society needs more sophisticated linguistic and intertextual analysis to show more precisely *how* discourse constructs identity (Ivanic, 1998).

'I' as the originator

- Hence, I will examine the factors contributing to the rise of and continued dominance and variety in the modern world, *with the understanding that the meaning of Kushwant Singh's description can only be fully appreciated within these parameters*[3] (Script 4).
- To me the phrase embodies the whole evolution process of the language to its present day status (Script 8).
- Part of the impetus here is, as I see it, to place writing in a larger context and

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[1] Where more than one first person pronoun occurs within a single example, the pronoun relevant to the role is the one underlined.

[2] This italicised portion helped us decide that the writer *is* inhabiting the role of the opinion-holder, although the rest of the sentence and the subsequent two sentences indicate that there are elements of the originator identity present as well.

[3] Although there are hints of the architect role in this example, we feel the italicised portion tips the balance in favour of the originator identity.

to highlight it as a social activity (Chase, 1988).

- My idea rested on the assumption that at each of these stages students face different problems, and that their successes in solving these problems need to be measured separately if they are to develop as writers (Lynch, 1982).

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