Intermediate and Advanced EFL Learners' Identity Reflection

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Abstract

Although scientific forum has obliged its members to hide their presence particularly while they are discussing research outcomes to avoid personal biases, a recent trend is encouraging writers to demonstrate their identity as the author of the text through the use of first person pronouns in order to take responsibility for the content. Therefore, the present study focuses on intermediate and advanced EFL learners' adoption of first person pronouns so as to manifest their identity in argumentative and narrative writings. A total of 30 EFL intermediate and advanced students attending an IELTS preparation course were requested to write essays on narrative and argumentative topics. The comparison between their uses of self-mention pronouns revealed that there was not a significant difference between the use of first person pronouns which are adopted by advanced and intermediate learners in the use of pronouns in both modes of writing (argumentative and narrative essays). Moreover, by tallying first person pronouns, it is shown that advanced learners have exploited first person pronouns less than intermediate learners within narrative writings. In addition, it was found that learners used more first person pronouns in narrative writings than in argumentative ones. Findings imply that since argumentative writing requires logical reasoning, learners prefer to be cautious about the adoption of first person pronouns and revealing their presence to show their credible self. English language teachers are suggested to make language learners aware of the uses of self-mention pronouns while practicing different writing modes. Since the overuse of the personal pronouns as well as the absolute absence of the mentioned pronouns is not recommended in writing, explicit instruction concerning the use of self-mention in witting is recommended.

Keywords: Argumentative Writing, Authorial Self, Narrative Writing, Self-mention Pronouns

1. Introduction

Recently there has been a debate on how writers should construct a credible representation of themselves and their work. Discussing scientific works or published papers, it is a norm between academicians that research findings or scientific claims of members of academic area should be expressed in an objective way excluding personal biases in order not to influence the results (Arnaudet & Barrett, 1984, Lester, 1993; Spencer & Arbon, 1996). Such a tradition has been transferred from university professors to their students so far. As a consequence, most of the university professors advise their students to apply this yardstick when writing and not to display their presence as a writer even in their classroom assignments. The demonstration of the presence of the writer in a body of a text should be avoided by preventing the writer from using first person pronouns, declaring personal opinions, and active voice sentences (Gong & Dragga, 1995; Arnaudet & Barrett, 1984; Lester, 1993).

Encouraging academicians to take an objective position as a norm requires writers to "leave their personalities at the door, and subordinate their views, actions and personality to its rigid conventions of anonymity" (Hyland, 2002b, p.351). The way writers present themselves within the text reflects how they portray their identity. Hyland (2000) also notes that academic members of different fields of study have different worldviews regarding how to communicate their opinions within the body of the text of their scientific studies. Therefore, they convey their ideas through adopting different manners so as to be understood by their peers. According to him, a tool that is most representative of the writer's identity is the use or absence of first person pronouns. Using first person pronouns, *I* and *we*, shows the presence of a writer in the text. As the writers hide their existence in the text through the use of passive voice and deletion of the subject in order to be objective about the

results of their research or, the presence of the writer in the text indicates that the writer takes on responsibility for the content of the writing through the adoption of first person pronouns.

1.2. Identity in the Socio-cultural Setting of Writing

The literature has shown that identity is not a unidimensional and a stable concept (Miyaharay, 2010). Ivanič (1998) lists aspects of the identity of an actual writer "autobiographical self" which is the writer's life-history, the "discoursal self" which is the impression of the writer projected in the text, and the "authorial self" refers to the degree of authoritativeness established by the writer to claim responsibility over the context. Interestingly, the most salient technique to show the authorial identity in a text is the use of first person pronouns (Kou, 1999; Tang & John, 1999). The fourth aspect of identity in Ivanič's word is concerned with "possibilities for the self-hood". These possibilities for the self-hood/ positioning exist in the social context of writing. Positionings are simply numerous ways of accomplishing certain tasks in people's lives (Ivanič, 1998).

There are empirical researches studying textual features which writers have at their disposal to construct authorial identity, among which are the studies investigating authorial voice, specifically the use of first person pronoun *I*, in academic writings in various disciplines. Studying both quantitative and qualitative data from the participants majoring in various disciplines, Hyland (2001) observed that self-mention varies across disciplines. Students of hard sciences such as electronic and mechanical engineering has claimed that playing down the writer's role and active contribution gives a sense that conducting the same research with the same procedures under the same situation will culminate in the same results which adds to the credibility of the

research. On the other hand, an extent to which writers involve in the text through the use of self-mention in soft sciences such as marketing establishes a more convincing and confident face for the author which leads to the augmentation of the trustworthiness of the results among peers and colleagues. Overall, 75% of the first person pronouns as a rhetorical option for self-mention occurred in humanities papers which signals that author are not completely invisible in hard sciences. As a consequence, adoption of self-mention differs in various fields depending on beliefs and social practices (Hyland, 2001).

The Literature has shown that the use of first person pronouns with the purpose of demonstrating author's self is accomplished by authors having differing inventions. Searching for different identities highlighted by the first person pronouns *I, me, mine, we, us, our*, and *ours*, Tang and John (1999), based on genre role of the academic essay, suggested a typology of purposes set out by first person pronoun *I* which are listed from the least powerful to the most powerful as follows:

- representative
- guide
- architect
- recounter of the research process
- opinion-holder
- originator

I as the representative is mostly realized as plural form of *we* and *us* and is adopted to refer to the whole group of people in general. Therefore, it decreases the author's role and presence in the body of the text to the least amount. Having been realized as plural *we* and *us*, the next function is *I* as the guide through the essay which acts as a tour director showing readers different

parts of the essay. *I* as the architect, which is usually realized as singular, is indicative of the organization, structures, and the outline of the material of the essay and is critically different from the previous function. Completing readings, conducting interviews, and collecting the data, writers mention their role by means of first person pronoun functioning as *I* as the recounter to describe the stages the research has undergone. Still another function of *I* is opinion-holder expressing an attitude based on information and facts. Lastly, *I* as the originator which is the one considered by Ivanič (1998) functioning as the author claiming responsibility over the contents of the writing is presumed to be the most powerful with respect to the extent writers express ownership to raise new ideas.

In a similar way, Kou (1999) studied the use of first person plural pronouns (*we, us, our*) adopted by writers demonstrating the way they perceive themselves. Through analyzing the corpus of scientific research articles, Kou (1999) proposed discourse functions of plural self-referential pronouns according to their occurrences.As Kou's (1999) classification of authorial self-reference pronouns is concerned, the proposed taxonomy regards authors' roles which they fulfill while writers are writing a research paper:

- explaining what was done
- proposing a theory, approach, etc.
- stating a goal or purpose
- showing results or findings
- justifying a proposition
- hedging a proposition or claim
- assuming shared knowledge, goals, beliefs, etc.
- seeking agreement or cooperation
- showing commitment or contribution to research

- comparing approaches, viewpoints, etc.

- giving a reason or indicating necessity

- expressing wish or expectation

The results of the analysis showed that 65% of the pronoun *we* was adopted by the writers so as to "refer to themselves" (Kou, 1999, p. 131) and 59.7% of these occurrences were adopted for the purpose of explaining what was done. While Kou (1999) admits that other types of pronouns (second person pronouns or indefinite pronouns *one* and *ones*) are also used by writers to position themselves within a specific discourse community and identify themselves among their peers, the analysis of his study revealed that first person pronouns are the most frequently used ones in scientific articles.

Added to Tang and John (1999) and Kou's (1999) classifications of the purposes that self-referential pronouns perform is Hyland's (2002b) typology of purposes. Comparing 62 L2 Hong Kong undergraduate theses with a large corpus of research articles and interviewing students and their supervisors for analyzing the use of personal pronouns, Hyland (2002b) found that experience plays a remarkable role in the use of self-references in published texts admitting that considering the disciplinary variations in adopting personal pronouns, experienced writers make use of these pronouns for the purpose of authority manifestation over their claims while they are engaged with readers. Meanwhile, such an explicit involvement is more in soft sciences than in hard sciences in which variables are less precisely measurable and the degree of the acceptability of an interpretation is approximate. In addition, Hyland (2002b) proposed a category consisting of discourse functions of authorial reference which differs from that of Tang and John (1999) in a way that it does not include generic uses of first person pronouns and mostly focuses on discoursal functions. More importantly, the proposed functions are listed differently

reflecting differing priorities taken by professionals in research articles in various disciplines opposing students. What follows is the category of functions suggested by Hyland (2002b) which is listed irrespective of any pattern of frequencies and preferences:

- expressing self-benefits

- stating a purpose

- explaining a procedure

- exploring an argument

- stating results/ claims

According to Hyland (2002b), *expressing self-benefits* which is absent in research articles is adopted as a departmental rubric in the Conclusion for the purpose of learning and it is the least face threatening function. Helping to organize and direct the structure of the research and the argument, *stating a purpose* which is low in threatening the writer role constitutes one third of all cases students have employed first person pronouns to project their intentions. Yet another function which is the second most frequent is *explaining a procedure*. This function proposes that the adoption of personal pronouns to exhibit authorial presence by student writers have been unintentional due to their being unaware of the emphasis on the writer's role. However, such a high frequency of the use of personal pronouns in expert essays has happened deliberately. Moreover, utilizing first person pronouns for the purpose of *exploring an argument* by students to avoid taking a position is rare in scientific papers. Lastly, the most powerful function of the self-reference is stating results/ claims which is one fourth of all pronouns expert writers have used and is absent in student writings.

It is worth noting that opinions are mixed concerning the use of first person pronouns. Since Hyland (2002) reported an underuse of authorial self-

referential pronouns, the study which was conducted by Martínez (2005) did not confirm the results obtained by Hyland (2002). Through the corpus analysis of specific sections of scientific papers, according to Hyland's (2002) typology of purposes, scientific texts (i.e., Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion sections) written by native English-speaking (NES) and non-native English-speaking (NNES) writers disclosed an underuse and an overuse of personal pronouns reflecting authorial identity. Regarding the comparison of native and non-native writers, the results revealed that NES writers' personal pronouns perform high risk and face-threatening functions .However, NNES writers preferred to use personal pronouns to state functions which were not of any risk. On the other hand, the analysis of various sections showed that personal pronouns which were adopted in Introduction sections were more frequent than those in Methods sections. Additionally, repetitive use of face-threatening personal pronoun functions in Introduction sections were attributed to NES writers. While the most frequently adopted function within Results sections was *explaining a procedure*, NNES writers' use of authorial first person pronouns was significantly higher (i.e., six times) than those of NES writers. This underuse was attributed, by Martínez (2005), to NNES writers' unfamiliarity with the structures to write effective Discussions sections.

Finally, writing is considered to be a complex process. The complexity is related to taking into account the rules of the language as well as considering the content. Thus, writers have an opportunity to express their presence within the text through the use of discursive or non-discursive features depending on the genre of the writing or the writer's institutional preferences (Stapleton, 2002). Presence of the writer within the text helps readers to better understand the text since what has been claimed, argued, or discussed would be more straightforward on the writer's part. It is also suggested for writers so as to keep

their face because to claim responsibility for the content of their texts would demonstrate a stronger and a more confident character as a member of their social community (Hyland, 2002a).

American teachers believe that a good writing is the one in which "writer's unique perspective on life" is projected (Li as cited in Stapleton, 2002). Simply put, this means that a standard writing is the one which reveals writer's identity (Stapleton, 2002). As a consequence, writers who live in societies, specifically Asian countries, in which individualism is considered to be improper due to hierarchical values and power relationships, may be alien to expressing themselves as writers when writing English essays (Stapleton, 2002). As far as foreign language writing is concerned, not only does the need to demonstrate the writer's self exist, but also it is strongly required by the language learners due to the above-mentioned reasons. Therefore, this issue is also present in Iran in case of Iranian EFL writers whose culture is bound with certain values and relationships which limits them from showing the presence of the author and casting a sense of individualism as a writer to make an impression on readers.

By the same token, Iranian English language learners mostly have the same problem of the portrayal of their selves in English writing, since claiming responsibility for what they are writing about or even manifesting their identity would be considered rude by their teachers or professors. Therefore, it is estimated that the way Persian speakers of English write down their ideas within a text would be different from that of English language learners in other societies regarding the reflection of their identities.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

The study employed a quasi-experimental research design. A total of 30 Iranian learners of English attending IELTS courses have participated in the present study. Participants were Persian speakers of English who were being prepared for the IELTS exam for migration purposes. Moreover, they were given Michigan proficiency test prior to the course in order to be placed in different groups. Participants were divided into two groups based on their proficiency level (intermediate and advanced). Advanced participants were 15 (4 female and 11 male) and intermediate participants (n=15) included 6 female and 9 male EFL learners.

2.2. Data Collection Procedures

The present study aimed at investigating the use of first person pronouns in narrative and argumentative essays through comparing two groups of students with two different proficiency levels. Therefore, it focused on making a comparison between intermediate and advanced EFL learners' use of first person pronouns across narrative and argumentative essays. To achieve this end, topics for these two modes of writing had to be chosen considering participants' age range so that they could develop their ideas easily. Since participants were university students or university graduates, topics were mainly educational. As a result, each student was provided with argumentative and narrative topics to write across two sessions. During the first data collection session, participants were given an argumentative topic to write. So they had roughly half an hour to write at least 250 words about the topic. Then, narrative topics were given to participants and they were asked to write at least

200 words within approximately 30 minutes. Finally, the collected papers were analyzed for the number of first person pronouns adopted by participants according to Tang and John's (1999) typology of first person pronouns' purposes listed in the previous part.

2.3. Data Analysis

As for the present research, narrative and argumentative essays were counted for the number of self-reference pronouns which were deployed by intermediate and advanced participants. Therefore, in order to explore the relationship between the two categorical variables (i.e., self-reference frequencies adopted by intermediate and advanced essays across two types of essays) a Chi-Square test of independence has been employed to analyze the data.

3. Results

The results of the data analysis revealed that intermediate and advanced groups do not differ significantly in the use of first person pronouns when writing an argumentative and a narrative essay. The dependent variable, which is the number of first person pronouns adopted in narrative as well as argumentative writings by participants is measured in order to compare the use of these pronouns by language learners with two different proficiency levels (i.e., intermediate and advanced), which is the independent variable. The results of the analysis are as what follows:

Table 1. *First Person Pronoun Frequencies by Intermediate and Advanced Language Learners*

Writing mode	Intermediate	Advanced	Total number of pronouns across writing qualities
Narratives	270	196	466
Argumentatives	40	45	85
Total number ofpronouns across proficiency levels	310	241	551

Moreover, argumentative as well as narrative essays were analyzed and personal pronouns (*I, we, my, our…*) were classified according to Tang and John's (1999) Typology of first person pronoun discourse functions. As can be seen in Table 1, first person pronouns adopted by participants (intermediate and advanced) across both writing modes (narrative and argumentative essays) were tallied (n=551). According to Table 1, intermediate participants (270) have adopted first person pronouns across writing modes more abundantly than advanced participants (196). As far as the frequency of first person pronouns across writing modes is concerned, it is clear from Table 1 that the number of self-reference pronouns adopted in narrative essays (466) is significantly higher than those adopted in argumentative essays (85).

Table 2. *First Person Pronouns Distribution according to Discourse Functions*

Functions	Percentage
"*I*" as opinion holder	6%
"*I*" as representative	12%
"*I*" as originator	79%
"*I*" as guide	3%
"*I*" as architect	0%
"*I*" as the recounter of the research process	0%

Clearly, the large number of first person pronouns was classified as "*I*" as an originator. As the graph depicts, 79% of first person pronouns were used for this purpose mostly in narrative essays.

"… I was crazy about poems…" (originator)

"… *I* have been studying for about seven years…" (originator)

" … *I* could not imagine that …" (originator)

"… knowing these facts was a watershed in my life and changed my attitude towards stress…" (originator)

The second position belongs to "*I*" as a representative (i.e., 12%), which is the mostly used in argumentative essays.

"…These days *we* do not have grades in primary schools…" (representative)

"… *we* have to pay attention to this fact that sometimes it is better to…" (representative)

"…I think *we* should not worry about the lack of food in the future…" (representative)

Surprisingly, a minor percentage of first person pronouns, i.e., .06%, has been adopted as an opinion holder. Finally, .02% of first person pronouns served the purpose of guide in all essays.

" … *In my opinion* it is good to have some exams and tests to classify students…" (opinion holder)

"… *I believe* that with the advent of technology, computers have facilitated learning and education…" (opinion holder)

" …*I* can say this sentence was the most meaningful sentence that I have heard…" (guide)

Following statement which has been extracted from an argumentative essay written by advanced subject is the only sample which includes a personal pronoun serving as the *architect*:

"… *I* will discuss both points of view later..." (architect)

In addition, the analysis of personal pronouns within argumentative and narrative essays across two levels of proficiency (intermediate and advanced) based on Tang and John's (1999) proposed typology of discoursal functions that personal pronouns serve as it is demonstrated in Table 3.

As it is illustrated in Table 3., the *representative* role (the least powerful role) of first person pronouns is mostly adopted by advanced writers (53). "*I*" as the representative, which is a generic form of first person pronouns, is adopted in narrative essays more than argumentative ones. Besides, the use of "*I*" as the guide through the essay, which attracts reader's attention to some points within the body of the text, is approximately used equally by advanced and intermediate learners.

However, the personal pronoun as outlining and organizing the material in the text, which is referred to as "*I*" as the architect of the essay, is deployed only once by an advanced subject in an argumentative essay. Such a result may be attributed to the nature of the task in the present study. Similarly, first person pronouns referring to the steps of the research process ("*I*" as the recounter of the research process) was absent within the texts written by the participants of the present study since the structure of the required essays were different from those of research papers.

Table 3. *First Person Pronouns' Frequencies across Proficiency Levels in Two Modes of Writing According to the Discoursal Functions*

	Intermediate Argumentative	Intermediate Narrative	Advanced Argumentative	Advanced Narrative	Total number of pronouns
Representative	4	9	17	36	66
Guide	2	4	4	1	16
Architect	0	0	1	0	1
Recounter of the research process	0	0	0	0	0
Opinion-holder	9	2	19	3	33
originator	25	255	4	156	435
Total number of pronouns	40	270	45	196	551

Moreover, viewpoints and opinions of the author through the use of "*I*" as the opinion-holder have been shared more repetitively (22) in argumentative essays. Because authors are required to declare their attitude on a certain topic based on argumentations, it was expected that argumentative writings include more of these pronouns than narrative essays. Finally, "*I*" as the originator, which is the most powerful role claiming responsibility for what has been discussed and argued within the body of the text, is adopted significantly more in narrative essays rather than argumentative ones. It is worth noting that first person pronouns serving this role have occurred more frequently within the essays written by intermediate subjects.

Since the data is in the form of frequency counts (i.e., categorical data) and not in the form of scores, χ^2 is the most appropriate measure to examine whether the frequencies, which are obtained from two groups of participants, are significantly different. Therefore, in order to look for the association between the participants' proficiency level (intermediate and advanced) and the number of first person pronouns deployed in two types of writings

(narration and argumentation) a Chi-Square test of independence was runin SPSS.

As shown in Table 4., there is not a significant difference between the use of first person pronouns in narrative and argumentative writing of advanced and intermediate students (Chi-Square=18.66, p=66>0.05). Therefore, it is concluded that intermediate and advanced students do not differ significantly in the use of first person pronouns across narrative and argumentative essays, was accepted.

Table 4. *Chi-Square Tests - Proficiency Level* Modes of Writing*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.66	22	.666
Likelihood Ratio	25.266	22	0.285
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.201	1	.273
N of Valid Cases	60		

4. Discussion

The analyses of the results of Chi-Square test for independence indicated that both groups of language learners (intermediate and advanced) did not differ significantly with reference to the adoption of first person pronouns to demonstrate their presence while writing an argumentative and a narrative essay. Thus, it is concluded that there is no difference between intermediate and advanced learners in the use of first person pronouns. Moreover, it is useful to consider that previous studies regarding this issue have researched writer identity with respect to the use of self-mention pronouns by analyzing corpora of research papers and theses within academic contexts (Hyland, 2001, 2002a, 2002b). These studies have ignored participants' levels of proficiency except Abbuhl (2012), who has divided participants to high proficiency and low proficiency levels. In addition, as the first person pronouns have been tallied up

(Table 1), a marked difference have been found between the self-referential pronouns frequencies in narrative essays and those in argumentative essays. As the total number of the self-reference frequencies across writing qualities is concerned, the significant overuse of these pronouns should be attributed to the originator function of first person pronouns, according to Tang and John's (1999) taxonomy. This function, which is mostly adopted by participants while writing narrative essays, is not useful when writing an argumentative essay. As Jeong (2017) has elaborated, the use of personal pronouns is the distinguishing feature of narrative essays. However, since narrative writings are chosen to describe events, personal pronouns serve as the agent of the actions. On the other hand, because the significant low number of first person pronouns in argumentative writings signifies author's credentials for the validity of their assertions as well as their claiming responsibility for the claims, language learners prefer not to deploy first person pronouns excessively. This scarce use of first person pronouns in argumentative essays by intermediate and advanced learners is demonstrated since it is face-threatening and it reveals writer's presence within the text which is of high risk for them.

Besides, the classification of first person pronouns according to Tang and John's (1999) typology of purposes indicated that 79% of participants' use of first person pronouns belongs to the originator role of *"I"*, which were found mostly in narrative essays since personal pronouns which were adopted in narrative essays are characterized as the agent of the actions which were being narrated within the essay. Further, participants used 12% of the first person pronouns serving the *representative* purpose in argumentative writings. Tang and John (1999) consider the *representative* role of first person pronouns as the least powerful of all. However, these pronouns have been optimistically viewed to serve as a mean to show writer's alignment with a specific discourse

community. Although the *representative* role of first person pronouns is not face-threatening, it is used by writers to show their membership within certain communities.

In addition, the *opinion-holder* role of first person pronouns is adopted for about 6% of the personal pronouns, which is mainly observed in argumentative essays. The relatively high adoption of this role in comparison with others is surprising since Tang and John (1999) found that first person pronouns serving the *opinion-holder* role occur rarely (4.49%) because they are the ones revealing writer's presence and dispose them as the ones being accountable for the stated claims. It is worth noting that the difference between the adoption of personal pronouns in Tang and John's (1999) study and those in the present study originates from the instruction that the participants of the present study have received across IELTS preparation course since approximately all of these pronouns were found in the final paragraphs of the argumentative essays, which function as the concluding paragraph to make a sound conclusion based on the arguments that have been listed within body paragraphs.

Moreover, the adoption of first person pronouns as a *guide* within the text accounts for the 3% of the total number of self-referential pronouns which were observed only within argumentative essays. This result is not comparable with Tang and John's (1999) because they found the use of first person pronouns serving as a *guide* to lead the readers within the parts of the text 33.7% of the total number of first person pronouns, which is relatively high. This may have happened since writing an argumentative essay requires language learners to write 250-400 words. However, a research paper consists of several pages with thousands of words composed under various headings and sub-headings, which may call for the author's showing the direction taken within the text. By the same token, an argumentative essay written by the

language learners in the present study was not long enough to necessitate the author so as to lead the reader within the text.

As far as the *architect* role of the personal pronouns is concerned, this rarely-occurring function shows the overall structure of the essay which is replaced by other rhetorical options such as passivation, animating inanimate objects, by positioning in the agent place,etc. (Tang & John, 1999). The only instance of this function of personal pronouns deployed by a language learner in an argumentative essay has been included in previous parts. Similarly, personal pronouns serving as the *recounter of the research process* were absent in the present study as well as in Tang and John's (1999). Such function of personal pronouns is useful when one is explaining steps of doing a research. Therefore, due to the nature of the task in the present study, this role of personal pronouns was not observed in collected essays at all.

Additionally, Hyland (2002a) showed, through comparing 64 graduate theses with a corpus of research articles, that novice writers have used personal pronouns mostly to state a goal/purpose (36%), which is considered as a low-threatening function. To note the methodology of the research, 31% of the participants have deployed first persons for stating an argument or a claim, which is the second most frequent role adopted by novice authors. This marked difference in the adoption of first person pronouns could be as a result of signifying modes of writing since the present study investigated narrative and argumentative essays. On the other hand, Kou (1999), Tang and John (1999), Hyland (2001, 2002a, 2002b), and Martínez (2005) examined the issue in academic contexts through corpora analysis.

5. Conclusion

Identity which is considered as an inseparable element of people's characters is better to be represented by the authors while writing to claim responsibility for what they have argued and to show their credibility among their peers. The present study investigated this issue by comparing the self-referential pronouns which were deployed by participants with two differing proficiency levels (intermediate and advanced) across two writing modes (argumentative and narrative essays). Learners were chosen from two differing proficiency levels so as to investigate whether levels of proficiency would be a cause for either overuse or under use of first person pronouns. Then, essays were analyzed for the functions that first person pronouns served within the text, based on Tang and John's (1999) typology of purposes to specify the strength of learners' portrayal of their selves by adopting first person pronouns in different parts of the text.

By conducting the present study indicates, we concluded that impersonal writing not only is appropriate but also is inevitable in helping writers keep their face in certain socio-cultural contexts. Moreover, the results of the present study may provide some implications for EFL teachers, material developers, and EFL learners. EFL teachers can improve their teaching process by attending to the findings of the present study. As for the results of the results of the present study are concerned, first person pronouns were classified according to Tang and John's (1999) typology of purposes that these pronouns serve. It can be concluded that this typology may be accounted for when developing materials for EFL learners specifically when they have to write narrative and argumentative writings. For example, materials which are developed to prepare language learners for IELTS or TOEFL exam are better to include these functions since of the writing tasks of these tests requires test

takers to write an argumentative essay. Therefore, this may lead to writing a more authoritative argumentation.

EFL teachers can facilitate the process of teaching writing since, through the inclusion of the mentioned typology while teaching writing skills, they can easily teach language learners various purposes that personal pronouns serve within essays. Consequently, the results would benefit language learners as well to make an appropriate and efficient use of self-referential pronouns according to Tang and John's (1999) typology of first person pronoun discourse functions. Various sections of research articles and theses require writers to perform certain roles. Therefore, making university students aware of these functions may result in writing essays which declare claims more effectively in a way to convince peers and those within the same social context. Thus, students majoring in different disciplines should be familiar with roles as well as the appropriate frequencies of self- referential pronouns. As a result, modifications in essay writing courses provided for university students should be made to discard the rule of thumb that authors' presence within the body of the text through the use of rhetorical options is not acceptable and should be replaced by passivized sentences, placing inanimate concepts in the subject position. Encouraging students to write assertively through the use of pronouns showing authorial selves collocated with appropriate verbs will result in making more convincing and stronger claims which are needed in order to write professional research articles representing the authors more appropriately.

Although the results of the present study could be beneficent for the above-mentioned groups, future studies are suggested to choose topics and writing modes so that more updated taxonomies of first person pronoun functions, such as Hyland's (2002a) could be adopted to analyze personal

pronouns. In addition, future studies are better to examine the effect of instruction on writers' use of these pronouns revealing authors' identity.

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