



---

## **A Comparative Analysis of Self-Mentions in Applied Linguistics PhD Dissertations Written by Native and Non-Native English Writers**

**Mitra Pourmohammdi\* (Corresponding Author),**

*MA in TEFL, Department of English, Islamic Azad University,  
Maragheh Branch, Maragheh, Iran*

Email: mitra.pourmohammadi@gmail.com

**Dr. Davud Kuhi**

*Assistant Professor of TEFL, Department of English,  
Islamic Azad University, Maragheh Branch, Maragheh, Iran*

Email: davudkuhi@yahoo.com

### **Abstract**

The purpose of the present study was to compare the PhD dissertations written by native and nonnative English writers in the field of Applied Linguistics with regard to the use of self-mentions. To this end, 40 Applied Linguistics PhD dissertations (20 written by native English writers and 20 by non-native English writers), were selected randomly among academic texts written in 2007-2017. The present study analyzed only the introduction and discussion sections of these PhD dissertations. The results of the chi-square analyses revealed that native English writers used more self-mentions in the introduction and discussion sections of Applied Linguistics PhD dissertations than their non-native counterparts. In the light of the findings of the study, it was recommended that Iranian writers in general and PhD candidates in particular have to move away from positivist impersonalized writing presentation towards more socialist performance of knowledge claims and authors' voice and stance.

**Keywords:** Meta-Discourse Markers, Self-Mentions, Ph.D. Dissertations, Applied Linguistics, Native English Writers, and Non-Native English Writers

---

### **ARTICLE INFO**

#### Article history:

Received: Saturday, March 17, 2018

Accepted: Saturday, April 7, 2018

Published: Tuesday, August 21, 2018

Available Online: Tuesday, July 31, 2018

DOI: 10.22049/jalda.2018.26165.1051

## Introduction

English is recognized as the language of academic world, and most of the non-native English writers may prefer to publish their research findings in English language. Thus, non-native writers need to be familiar with the conventions of writing academic texts in a particular discourse community and also it is important for second/foreign language teachers to consider these conversions in their instruction to provide appropriate guidance for their learners or non-native academic writers who want to communicate and share their information in international discourse.

Academic writing is one of the most important worries of the researchers and the present study tried to examine one of the main branches of academic writing which is dissertation. Dissertation, based on *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, is a long piece of writing about a particular issue that a candidate does as part of an advanced university degree. Moreover, according to Swales (1990, p. 125), “the key product of knowledge manufacturing industry” is research article, which makes an appropriate situation for the researchers to examine academic texts. Research texts are viewed as a shared fact by which readers and writers try to cooperate and exchange their intentions.

Usually in academic texts, writers quote the others, arrange their writings, utilize diagrams and tables, state their own attitudes as to different topics, show their opinion as to their intentions, and finally, it can be said that they exchange their ideas with readers. In order to accomplish these, the writer uses some rhetoric elements which are named metadiscourse markers. Meta-discourse is recognized as a novel concept in various fields such as language education and discourse analysis. According to Hyland (2005), meta-discourse mainly deals with the association between a) authors of the texts and their texts and b) authors of the texts and their addressees. Moreover, meta-discourse is recognized as “discourse about the evolving discourse, or the writer's explicit commentary on her own ongoing text” (Adel, 2006, p.2).

Thompson (2001) believes that authors primarily try to predict and respond to their readers by the use of metadiscourse markers which are divided into two types of resources, namely, interactive resources which consist of five categories of Transitions markers, Frame markers, Endophoric markers, Evidentials, Code glosses, and Interactional resources that consist of the categories of Hedges, Boosters, Attitude markers, Engagement markers, and Self-mentions. Concerning this taxonomy, self-mention is a significant feature among interactional resources, whose main function is signaling the authorial identity of the scholars. Self-mention mainly “refers to the degree of overt author presence in the written text measured by the frequency of first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives (e.g., *I, am, mine, exclusive we, our, ours*)” (Kuhi, Tofigh, & Babaie, 2012, p. 36).

Recently, as pointed out by Hyland (2001), academics have come to understand that authors' self-mention is an essential aspect of interaction due to the fact that it plays a significant role in negotiating the association between authors'

arguments and discourse communities, leading authors to generate an authorial identity. Generally speaking, as aptly pointed out by Hyland (2005), the absence or presence of explicit writer's self-mentions can be regarded to be a mindful choice by authors in the sense that the use of self-mention is a reflection of authors' mindful projection into text and supporting of authorial self.

Therefore, due to the importance of self-mentions in academic writing as well as the significant role of PhD dissertations in students' academic and non-academic life, this study tried to compare the dissertations written by native and non-native English writers in the field of Applied Linguistics with regard to the use of self-mentions.

## **Review of the Related Literature**

### **Meta-Discourse Markers**

Since the coinage of the term '*meta-discourse*' by Zellig Harris in 1959, several scholars and linguists (e.g., Halliday, 1973; Hyland, 1998; Vande Copple, 2002; Hyland & Tse, 2004) have provided various definitions for this term. Throughout discourse literature, several definitions have been given for the term '*meta-discourse*'.

For instance, Williams' (1981, p. 211) definition of meta-discourse is very broad, since Williams defines the term meta-discourse as "writing about writing" while others such as Vande Kopple (1985, p. 83) defines meta-discourse as "discourse about discourse or communication about communication". However, there are other specific definitions for the term meta-discourse. In this respect, Swales (2004, p. 121) defines meta-discourse as "writing about the evolving text rather than referring to the subject matter".

Furthermore, according to Vande Copple (2002) meta-discourse is referred to as the elements in texts that mainly convey and express meanings rather than those elements that are predominantly referential. Meta-discourse, as stated by Dafouz-Milne (2008), refers to different features that authors include in their writings so that their readers can easily decode message, share the authors' viewpoint and furthermore ponder the specific conventions and rules followed in any specific culture. Assuming the all-encompassing definition of meta-discourse, Vande Kopple (1985) proposes that meta-discourse conveys textual and/or interpersonal meanings.

As pointed out by Hyland (1999) "textual meta-discourse is used to organize propositional information in ways that will be coherent for a particular audience and appropriate for a given context" (p. 7). Furthermore, Hyland (1999) also argues that interpersonal meta-discourse "allows writers to express a perspective toward their propositional information and their readers. It is essentially an evaluative form of discourse and expresses the writer's individually defined, but disciplinary circumscribed, persona" (pp. 7-8). Textual meta-discourse is applied to organize and form propositional material in such a way which is coherent and comprehensible for

a specific addressee and proper for a particular objective. However, Interpersonal meta-discourse allows authors to convey a standpoint in relation to their propositional information and their audiences.

Due to different meanings of meta-discourse elements, there are several classifications for these elements in the literature. The classifications of meta-discourse markers have also varied: some earlier models such as Crismore, Markkanen, and Steffensen (1993) have categorized meta-discourse markers into 'textual' and 'interpersonal' markers, while some later models such as Hyland and Tse (2004), have grouped meta-discourse markers into 'interactional' and 'interactive' elements. Furthermore, Ifantidou (2005) classifies meta-discourse markers as 'inter-textual' and 'intra-textual' markers. Hyland and Tse's (2004) model assumes two main categories for meta-discourse markers: interactive and interactional.

According to Hyland (2005), the interactive aspect concerns the author's awareness of involving reader and the means the writer pursues to accommodate its possible interests, knowledge, rhetorical anticipations, and handling skills. Furthermore, Hyland (2005) states that the interactional aspect concerns the ways interaction is done through various ways such as intruding and commenting on writers' message. The interactional part contains of boosters, hedges, attitude markers, and engagement markers and self-mentions strategies; whereas, the interactive part comprises transitions, endophoric markers, evidentials, frame markers, and code glosses the strategies.

### **Self-Mentions**

Thompson (2001) believes that authors primarily try to predict and respond to their readers by the use of metadiscourse markers which is divided into two types of resources, namely, interactive resources which consist of five categories of Transitions markers, Frame markers, Endophoric markers, Evidentials, and Code glosses, and interactional resources that consist of the categories of Hedges, Boosters, Attitude markers, Engagement markers, and Self-mentions.

According to Kuo (1999), interactional resources can play an important role in revealing the authors' relationship with the reader and also their discourse community. It is believed that knowing how to effectively make use of personal pronouns is of great significance as are giving them the chance to underscore their own contributions to their field of study and also reinforce the unity with their addressees (Kuo, 1999). In actual fact, as pointed out by Hyland (2008), self-mentions aid the authors distinguish their voice from the perspectives of others and transfer the distinctiveness of their contribution to establish authority and commitment and improve connection with addressees.

Let us remind ourselves of the definition of self-mention as provided by Kuhl, Tofigh, and Babaie (2012): "[it is] the degree of overt author presence in the written text measured by the frequency of first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives

(e.g., *I, am, mine, exclusive we, our, ours*)” (2012, p. 36). Additionally, as pointed out by Hyland (2005, p.53), self-mentions mainly refer to the degree of explicit presence of the writer in a written text. Moreover, items of self-mentions are the first person pronouns and possessive adjectives (i.e., I, me, mine, exclusive we, our, ours). Hyland (2005) believes that the first person pronouns usage is the utmost influential means of self-representation. Authors basically make use of self-mentions in order to demonstrate how they stand in relations to their own discussions and arguments.

Generally speaking, as aptly pointed out by Hyland (2005), the absence or presence of explicit writer’s self-mentions can be regarded to be a mindful choice by authors in the sense that the use of self-mention is a reflection of authors’ mindful projection into text and supporting of authorial self. Overall, according to Hyland (2002), authors attain “credibility mainly by projecting an identity invested with individual authority, displaying confidence in their evaluations and commitments to their ideas” (p. 1091).

### **Dissertations**

*Thesis*, based on *Longman dictionary of contemporary English*, is a long piece of writing about a particular issue that a candidate does as part of an advanced university degree. On the other hand, *Dissertation*, also, is a long piece of writing that is conducted on a particular subject for university degree. Based on these definitions, thesis and dissertation have identical meanings and can be used interchangeably. However, Paltridge (2002) states that, all around the world, these two words are used in different ways. In some countries 'thesis' and 'dissertation', as a road to the degree, are conducted by MA and PhD candidates, respectively. In addition to the purpose of the writing, Thomas and Brubaker (2000) believe that despite thesis, *dissertation* is conducted on a completely novel and original subject, it contributes greater to the fund knowledge of the world.

Thomas and Brubaker (2000) stated that two main purposes of thesis and dissertation writing are (1) to enable the graduate students in conducting and presenting research, (2) to contribute to the knowledge of the world. The main focus of the former dimension (*practice*) is on equipping students with the necessary skills and experience in carrying out an academic and publishable piece of work. However, the later (*contribution-to-knowledge*) aspect is aimed "to make the student's study more than just a learning exercise by using this opportunity to produce valued information or to introduce a point of view not available before" (p.1). The distinction between MA thesis and PhD dissertation is inspired by contribution-to-knowledge aspect since PhD dissertation contribution to the knowledge of the world is greater than that of MA thesis.

### **Research Questions**

The main objective of this study was to examine the use of self-mentions in academic texts such as PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers. To this end, attempts were made to answer the following research questions:

**RQ<sub>1</sub>:** Is there any statistically significant difference in the use of self-mentions in the introduction section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers?

**RQ<sub>2</sub>:** Is there any statistically significant difference in the use of self-mentions in the discussion section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers?

For each of the stated research question, a null hypothesis was assumed.

## **Method**

### **Corpus**

Due to the foremost importance of choosing authentic texts written by native and non-native English writers, an effort was made to choose PhD dissertations. Forty PhD dissertations were selected as the corpus in order to pinpoint and analyze the use of self-mentions. The PhD dissertations were chosen from one discipline, namely, Applied Linguistics. The writers of research dissertations were native speakers of Persian and English. The corpus of the study was selected among academic texts written in 2007-2017.

Twenty dissertations written by native English writers were randomly selected from [www.oatd.org](http://www.oatd.org) (a website that provides free access to theses and dissertations from different countries in any languages and fields). It is worth noting that the plausible differences between American and British English were not regarded in selecting these PhD dissertations and no specific dialect of English language was typically in focus. Moreover, 20 dissertations written by non-native English writers were selected from Iranian universities.

### **Procedure**

The main aim of this study was to compare the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers in the field of Applied Linguistics with regard to the use of self-mentions. Twenty dissertations written by native English writers and twenty dissertations written by non-native English writers were selected from the aforementioned field (i.e., Applied Linguistics). In order to identify self-mentions (i.e., I, me, my, mine, we, us, our, ours, the researcher, and the author) of the aforementioned academic texts, Hyland and Tse's (2004) model of metadiscourse was used as a model of the study. To do this, the introduction and discussion sections of the selected academic texts were carefully read word by word, and based on Hyland and Tse's (2004) classification of self-mentions, the frequency and types of self-mentions were counted in all of the selected academic texts manually. In order to check the reliability of the data, two different raters compute the self-mentions of the corpus of the study. Due to the fact that it was not feasible to have texts with exactly the same length, the researchers standardized the results to a

common basis by making use of 1000-word approach (elements per 1000 words) in order to compare the frequency of occurrence.

$$F \text{ per } 1000 \text{ words} = \frac{\text{Number of self-mention}}{\text{Word count in introduction or discussion section}} \times 1000$$

Furthermore, the researchers also made use of the percentage figures by means of the following formula

$$\text{percent} = \frac{\text{Number of self-mention}}{\text{Word count in introduction or discussion section}} \times 100$$

### Statistical Analysis

The statistical analyses were conducted by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. In order to analyze the data Chi-square tests were run. The alpha value was set up at 0.05. The frequency of self-mentions in this study were calculated per word. As stated earlier, in order to enhance the reliability of the computed self-mentions, two different raters computed the frequency of self-mentions separately. The value for inter-rater reliability for the frequency of self-mentions was 0.947 showing a good and acceptable reliability index.

### Results

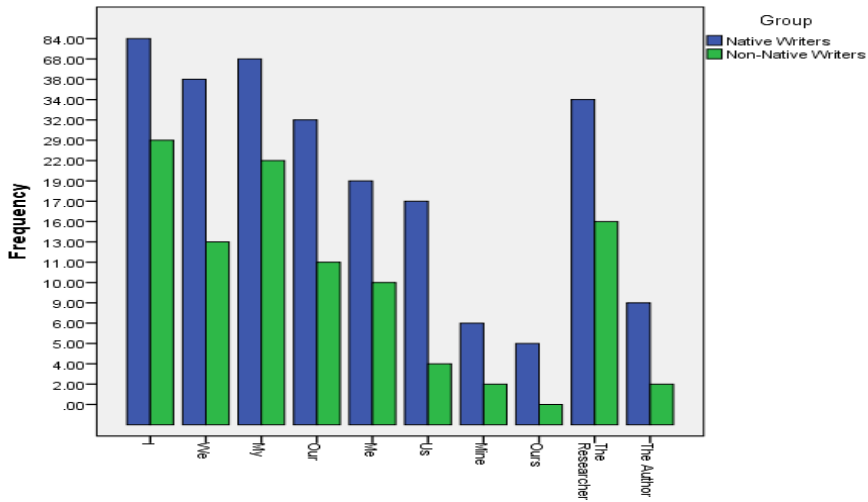
#### Research Question 1: Is there any statistically significant difference in the use of self-mentions in the introduction section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers?

Table 1 below displays the frequency of the self-mentions used in the introduction section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers in the field of Applied Linguistics.

**Table 1.** Frequency of Self-mention References in the Introduction Section of Applied Linguistics PhD Dissertations Written by Native and Non-Native English Writers

Self-Mentions	I	We	My	Our	Me	Us	Mine	Ours	The Research	The Author	Total
<b>Native Writers</b>	84	38	68	32	19	17	6	5	34	9	312
<b>Non-Native Writers</b>	29	13	22	11	10	4	2	0	16	2	109
<b>Total</b>	113	51	90	43	29	21	8	5	50	11	421

The above scores are represented in the following figure for clearer understanding.



**Figure 1:** Frequency of Self-mention in the Introduction Section of Applied Linguistics PhD Dissertations Written by Native and Non-Native English Writers

As the figure clearly shows, all forms of first person pronouns and possessive pronouns occurred in the corpora, however their frequencies were different. It is clear that in all the cases, the native English writers made use of self-mentions more frequently than the non-native English writers. In order to test the first hypothesis, i.e., *whether there existed any statistically significant difference in the use of self-mentions in the introduction section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers*, a chi-square was run, whose results are summarized in Table 4.2 below.

**Table 2.** Chi-Square Tests for Difference between the Frequency of Self-mention in the Introduction Section of Applied Linguistics PhD Dissertations Written by Native and Non-Native English Writers

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	40.000 <sup>a</sup>	14	.000
Likelihood Ratio	55.452	14	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	30.256	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	40		

As demonstrated by Table 2 above, the results of Chi-square analysis revealed that there existed a statistically significant difference between the frequency of self-mention in the introduction section of Applied Linguistics PHD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers. Thus, the first null hypothesis was rejected. In other words, native English writers used more self-mentions in the



introduction section of Applied Linguistics PhD dissertations than their non-native counterparts.

**Table 3.** Number of Words and Frequency of Self-mentions in the Introduction Section of Applied Linguistics PhD Dissertations Written by Native and Non-native Writers

Introduction Section	Texts	Words	Self-mention Row Number	Percent of Self-mention	Per 1000 Words
Native Writers	20	82365	312	0.37	3.78
Non-Native Writers	20	79654	109	0.13	1.36
Overall	40	162019	421	0.25	2.59

It can be obviously seen in Table 3 that the overall frequency of self-mention in the introduction section of these corpus was 421 (0.25%; 2.59 per 1000 words). Moreover, native writes with the frequency of 312 (0.37%; 3.78 per 1000 words) used self-mentions more frequently than non-native writes with the frequency of 109 (0.13%; 1.36 per 1000 words) in the introduction section of the corpus.

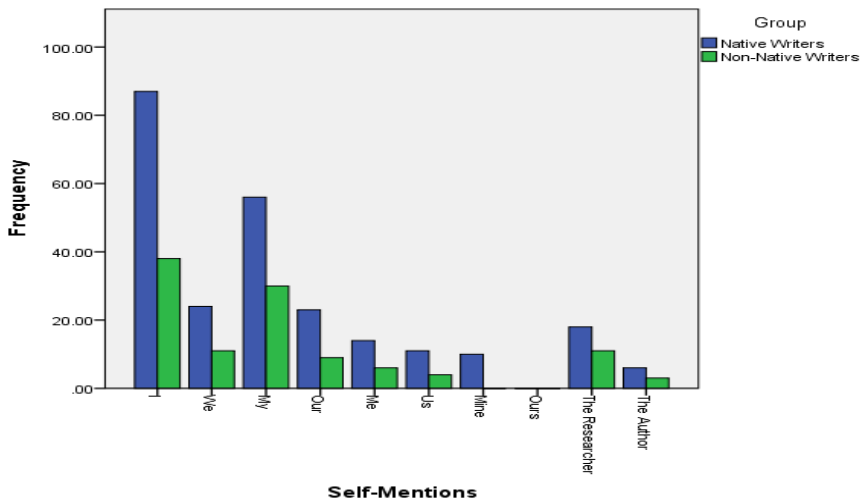
**Research Question 2: Is there any statistically significant difference in the use of self-mentions in the discussion section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers?**

Table 4 below displays the frequency of the self-mentions used in the discussion section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers in the field of Applied Linguistics.

**Table 4.** Frequency of Self-mention References in the Discussion Section of Applied Linguistics PhD Dissertations Written by Native and Non-Native English Writers

Self-Mentions	I	We	My	Our	Me	Us	Mine	Ours	The Research	The Author	Total
Native Writers	87	24	56	23	14	11	10	0	18	6	249
Non-Native Writers	38	11	30	9	6	4	0	0	11	3	112
<b>Total</b>	125	35	86	32	20	15	10	0	29	9	361

The above scores are represented in the following figure for clearer understanding.



**Figure 2:** Frequency of Self-mention in the Discussion Section of Applied Linguistics PhD Dissertations Written by Native and Non-Native English Writers

As the figure clearly displays, all forms of self-mentions occurred in the corpora except the ‘ours’, however, their frequencies were different. It is clear that in all the cases, the native English writers again made use of self-mentions more frequently than the non-native English writers. In order to test the second null hypothesis, i.e., *whether there existed any statistically significant difference in the use of self-mansions in the discussion section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers*, a chi-square was run, whose results are summarized in Table 5 below.

**Table 5.** Chi-Square Tests for Difference between the Frequency of Self-mention in the Discussion Section of Applied Linguistics PhD Dissertations Written by Native and Non-Native English Writers

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	30.000 <sup>a</sup>	11	.002
Likelihood Ratio	41.222	11	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	22.565	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	40		

As demonstrated by Table 5 above, the results of Chi-square analysis revealed that there existed a statistically significant difference between the frequency of self-mention in the discussion section of Applied Linguistics PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers. Thus, the second null hypothesis was also rejected. In other words, native English writers used more self-mentions in the

discussion section of Applied Linguistics PhD dissertations than their non-native counterparts.

**Table 6.** Number of Words and Frequency of Self-mention in Discussion Section of Applied Linguistics PhD Dissertations Written by Native and Non-native Writers

Discussion Section	Texts	Words	Self-mention Row Number	Percent of Self-mention	Per 1000 Words
Native Writers	20	88565	249	0.28	2.81
Non-Native Writers	20	86793	112	0.12	1.29
Overall	40	175358	361	0.20	2.05

It can be obviously seen in Table 6 that the overall frequency of self-mentions in the discussion section of these corpora was 361 (0.20%; 2.05 per 1000 words). Moreover, native writes with the frequency of 249 (0.28%; 2.81 per 1000 words) used self-mentions more frequently than non-native writes with the frequency of 112 (0.12%; 1.29 per 1000 words) in the discussion section of the corpus.

## Discussion

The present study intended to compare the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers in the field of Applied Linguistics with regard to the use of self-mentions. The first aim of this study was to systematically investigate the difference in the use of self-mentions in the introduction section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers. The findings of the study in this regard revealed that there existed a statistically significant difference in the use of self-mentions in the introduction section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers. In other words, the results indicated that the native English writers used self-mentions more frequently ( $n = 312$ ) in the introduction section of applied linguistics PhD dissertations in comparison to their non-native counterparts ( $n = 109$ ).

The significant difference between the use of self-mentions in the introduction section of PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers might be justified by Hyland's (2001) argument that "self-mentions might vary with different assumptions about the effect of authorial presence and rhetorical intrusion in different knowledge-making communities" (p. 213). Moreover, in the case of native English writers of PhD dissertations, the dominance of the use of self-mentions in the introduction section might be attributed to the writers' cultural background emphasizing the significance of establishing reader-writer association in their academic texts.

The findings of the present study might also be justified by the argument made by some scholars such as Ohta (1991) and Scollon (1994) that Asian learners mainly

prefer to use collective ways for expressing their own view or identity. As pointed out by Scollon (1994), Asian learners typically avoid self-mention in order to hide direct participation in the academic text as the author. Likewise, in Iranian culture, learners and authors are frequently recommended to avoid direct participation in their academic texts. Learners are sometimes taught by instructors in Persian essay classes to be more respectful and formal by avoiding self-mentions in their academic writings. Thus, this cultural difference seems to be reflected in employing self-mention indications in academic texts such as PhD dissertations.

Additionally, concerning the fact that both native and non-native writers frequently used different types of self-mentions in the introduction section of Applied Linguistics PhD dissertation, it can be argued that academic texts are not “the faceless, formal prose [they are] often depicted to be” (Hyland, 2001, p. 212). As pointed out by Biber (1988), academic texts might well be characterized by high information production and abstraction; however, human agents are essential to their meaning.

The findings of present study in this regard are congruent with those of Karimi, Maleki, and Farnia (2017) who found that English researchers had more tendencies towards the use of self-mentions, while Persian researchers did not have a preference for mentioning the author in their academic texts. Furthermore, the findings of the present study are also in line with those of Keshavarz and Kheirieh (2011) who found that native English writers used self-mention more than non-native English writers.

The second aim of this study was to systematically investigate the difference in the use of self-mentions in the discussion section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers. The findings of the study revealed that there existed a statistically significant difference in the use of self-mentions in the discussion section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers. In other words, the results showed that native English writers used self-mentions more frequently ( $n = 249$ ) in the discussion section of Applied Linguistics PhD dissertations in comparison to their non-native counterparts ( $n = 112$ ).

The significant difference between the use of self-mentions in the discussion section of PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers might be justified by Mur-Duenas and Sinkunien’s (2016) argument that basically native English writers have a tendency to have a much more obvious presence in their academic texts. As pointed out by Mur-Duenas and Sinkunien (2016), previous research findings in this respect also emphasized that the frequent use of self-mentions is, in actual fact, a matter of disciplinary and culture-specific conventions and inclinations, and also of context and setting of publication. Moreover, according to Burgess (2002), the frequent use of self-mentions in the discussion section of academic texts might be subject to whether native English writers want to enter ‘intimate gatherings’ or ‘packed houses’. That is to say, with the intention of claiming “a space in the ‘packed’ competitive sphere of international publication” (Mur-Duenas & Sinkunien, 2016, p. 86), it is essential to writers to make a robust

authorial presence in their own academic texts manifesting their contribution to the their field, in this case Applied Linguistics, which might lead them to a more recurrent use of self-mentions.

Another justification for the findings of the second research question is that in Iranian context there existed a general trend to avoid using self-mentions in academic texts, and this fact, as stated earlier, has been confirmed in several research studied conducted by Iranian researchers such as Zarei and Mansoori (2011), Fatemi and Mirshojaee (2012), and Taki and Jafarpour (2012). According to Taki and Jafarpour (2012), Iranian writers typically tend not to make use of self-mentions in their academic texts, and once they do, they more willingly use the term ‘the researcher’ to refer to themselves; that is why some researchers such as Fatemi and Mirshojaee (2012) suggest that Iranian authors have to “move away from positivist impersonalized text performance towards more socialist presentation of knowledge claims and writers’ stance and voice” (p. 261).

The findings of the present study are in agreement with the findings of Ohta (1991), Scollon (1994), Keshavarz and Kheirieh (2011), and Karimi, Maleki, and Farnia (2017) who found that there existed a statistically significant difference between the use of self-mentions in academic texts written by native and non-native English writes.

## **Conclusion and Implications**

Having in mind the significance and substantial role of PhD dissertations in candidates’ life (Chinneck, 1999), as well as the significance of self-mentions in academic writing, this study intended to compare the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers in the field of Applied Linguistics with regard to the use of self-mentions. To be more precise, in the present study attempts were made to identify the use of self-mansions in the introduction and discussion sections of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers.

Concerning the difference in the use of self-mansions in the introduction section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers, the findings revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the use of self-mansions in the introduction section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers. That is to say that the results showed that the native English writers used self-mentions more frequently in the introduction section of Applied Linguistics PhD dissertations in comparison to their non-native counterparts.

With regard to the difference in the use of self-mansions in the discussion section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers, the findings of the study indicated that there was a significant difference in the use of self-mansions in the discussion section of the PhD dissertations written by native and non-native English writers. That is to say that the results indicated that native English

writers used self-mentions more frequently in the discussion section of Applied Linguistics PhD dissertations in comparison to their non-native counterparts.

This study, according to its objectives and findings, would make its greatest contribution to the PhD candidates who are struggling in the challenging process of dissertation writing. For PhD candidates, an understanding of the choices accessible to them might aid them to come to a decision as to how best to present themselves in their academic text. As stated earlier in the discussion section, some learners might be avoiding the use of different self-mentions available merely due to some vague preconceived idea that academic texts such as PhD dissertations must be impersonal and distant. As shown in the present study and also pointed out by Taki and Jafarpour (2012), writers in the context of Iran typically tend not to make use of self-mentions in their academic texts; thus it is recommended that Iranian writers in general and PhD candidates in particular have to move away from positivist impersonalized writing presentation towards more socialist performance of knowledge claims and authors' voice and stance. Moreover, according to Afsari and Kuhi (2016), for instructors of academic writing courses, the question is not merely whether or not the self-mention must be allowed or fortified in academic text. They argue that the issue is which particular type of the self-mention authors should use, and when and for what aim.

Based on the findings of the present study a number of implications could be recommended for teachers and instructors to shed more light on improving the use of self-mentions and writing quality of the EFL students. Generally speaking, the findings of the present study might positively contribute to the field of the successful writing classes in the context of Iran. To introduce the use of different metadiscourse markers in general and self-mentions in particular within ELT writing programs, teacher training centers and institutions apparently need to familiarize teachers with such aspects. This training could be done both for teachers who are being trained to become teachers or those already engaged in the practice of pedagogy in the form of in-service courses.

Alongside EFL instructors and teachers, syllabus designers and materials developers have to provide the content of teaching material with comprehensible and proper tasks and exercises to familiarize learners with different aspects of metadiscourse markers in general and self-mentions in particular. They may aim to design and compile the university curricula and materials in a way that paves the candidates' way as it regards the use of self-mentions in academic texts such as PhD dissertations.

## References

- Adel, A. (2006). *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins
- Afsari, S. & Kuhi, D. (2016). A functional investigation of self-mention in soft science master theses. *The Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 9(18), 49-64.
- Biber, D. (1988). *Variation across speech and writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Burgess, R. G. (2002). *In the field: An introduction to field research*. Routledge.
- Chinneck, J. W. (1999). *How to Organize Your Thesis*. [Online]. [Sce.carleton.ca/faculty/chinneck](http://Sce.carleton.ca/faculty/chinneck) (Doctoral dissertation, thesis. html).
- Crismore, A., Markkanen, R. & Steffensen, M. S. (1993). Metadiscourse in persuasive writing: A study of texts written by American and Finnish university students. *Written Communication*, 10(1), 39-71.
- Dafouz-Milne, E. (2008). The pragmatic role of textual and interpersonal meta-discourse markers in the construction and attainment of persuasion: Across-linguistic study of newspaper discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 40, 95-113.
- Fatemi, A., & Mirshojaee, S. B. (2012). Interactional metadiscourse in English and Persian research articles; A contrastive rhetoric study. *Iranian EFL Journal*, 8, 246-268.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1973). *Explorations in the Functions of Language*. Edward Arnold, London.
- Harris, Z. S. (1959). The transformational model of language structure. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 27-29.
- Hyland, K. (1998). Persuasion and context: The pragmatics of academic metadiscourse. *Journal of Pragmatics* 30, 437-455.
- Hyland, K. (1999). Disciplinary discourses: Writer stance in research articles. In C. Candlin & K. Hyland (Eds.), *Writing: Texts, processes and practices* (pp. 99–121). London: Longman
- Hyland, K. (2001). Humble servants of the discipline? Self-mention in research articles. *English for Specific Purposes*, 20, 207-226.
- Hyland, K. (2002). Authority and invisibility: Authorial identity in academic writing. *Journal of pragmatics*, 34(8), 1091-1112.
- Hyland, K. (2005). *Metadiscourse: Exploring interaction in writing*. Oxford: Continuum.
- Hyland, K. (2008). Genre and academic writing in the disciplines. *Language Teaching*, 41(4), 543-562.
- Hyland, K., & Tse, P. (2004). Metadiscourse in academic writing: A reappraisal. *Applied Linguistics*, 25(2), 156–177.
- Ifantidou, E. (2005). The semantics and pragmatics of metadiscourse. *Journal of pragmatics*, 37(9), 1325-1353.
- Karimi, K., Maleki, M., & Farnia, M. (2017). Metadiscourse Markers in the Abstract Sections of Persian and English Law Articles. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 5(18), 69-83.
- Keshavarz, M.H., Kheirieh, Z. (2011). Metadiscourse elements in English research articles written by native English and non-native Iranian writers in Applied Linguistics and Civil Engineering. *J. Engl. Stud*, 1(3), 3-15.
- Kuhi, D., Tofigh, M., & Babaie, R. (2012). Writers' self-representation in academic writing: The case of computer engineering research articles by English versus Iranian writers. *International Journal of Research Studies in Language Learning*, 2(3) 35-48.
- Kuo, C. H. (1999). The use of personal pronouns: Role relationships in scientific journal articles. *English for Specific Purposes*, 18(2), 121 138.

- Mur-Dueñas, P., & Šinkūnienė, J. (2016). Self-reference in research articles across Europe and Asia: are view of studies. *Brno studies in English*, 42(1), 1-22.
- Ohta, A. (1991). Evidentiality and politeness in Japanese. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 2(2), 183-210.
- Paltridge, B. (2002). Genre, text type, and the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classroom. *Genre in the classroom: Multiple perspectives*, 73-90.
- Scollon, R. (1994). As a matter of fact: The changing ideology of authorship and responsibility in discourse. *World Englishes*, 13, 34-46.
- Swales, J. (1990). *Genre Analysis: English for specific purposes in academic and research setting*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swales, J. (2004). *Research Genres*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taki, S., & Jafarpour, F. (2012). Engagement and stance in academic writing: A study of English and Persian research articles. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(1), 157-168.
- Thomas, R. M. & Brubaker, D. L. (2000). *Theses and dissertations: a guide to planning, research, and writing*. London, Bergin and Garvey.
- Thompson, G. (2001). Interaction in academic writing: Learning to argue with the reader. *Applied Linguistics*, 22, 35-49.
- Vande Kopple, W. J. (1985). Some exploratory discourse on meta-discourse. *College Composition and Communication*, 36(1), 82-93.
- Vande Kopple, W. J. (2002). Metadiscourse, discourse, and issues in composition and rhetoric. In E. Barton and G. Stygall (Eds.), *Discourse studies in composition* (pp. 91- 113). NY: Hampton Press.
- Williams, J. (1981). *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. Boston: Scott Foresman. [www.oatd.org](http://www.oatd.org)
- Zarei, G. R., & Mansoori, S. (2011). A contrastive study on metadiscourse elements used in humanities vs. non humanities across Persian and English. *English Language Teaching*, 4(1), 42-50.

### Authors Biography

---



**Dr. Davud Kuhi**, a full-time member of English Language Department in Islamic Azad University, is mainly interested in analyzing academic/scientific discourses. A distinctive aspect of his work is that the analyses penetrate into deeper sociocultural process behind the academic/scientific discourses.



**Mitra Pourmohammdi** is an MA student of TEFL, Department of English, Islamic Azad University, Maragheh Branch, Maragheh, Iran. She is mainly interested in investigating academic discourse.

---