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Exploring Authorial Presence through the Use of First Person Pronouns: Evidence from a Saudi University

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Abstract

Authorial presence in academic writing is a fluid and multi-faced concept with its construction a troublesome challenge for both L1 (first language) and L2 (second language) writers of English. Authorial presence is particularly challenging for NNSs (Non-Native Speakers) who tend to avoid overly presenting their ideas, expressions and thoughts in their writing. This paper uses a specialized corpus of 45 student essays from a female multi-disciplinary university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to identify and examine the presence and use of first person pronouns in shaping the author's presence in academic writing. Findings show that learners use a wide range of first person pronouns to show their presence in academic texts and that these pronouns partner important verb, noun and prepositional phrases to achieve varying degrees of authorial power and presence. The paper concludes with pedagogic implications and suggestions for EAP (English for Academic Purposes) writing instructors who hope to tackle the use and function of first person pronouns more confidently in their classrooms.

Keywords: authorial presence, Arab learners, corpora, academic writing

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