# Authority or Invisibility?: Indexing Authorial Identity Through Referential and Discourse Markers in the Abstracts of Central Mindanao University Journal of Science

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## Abstract

*This paper attempted to define authorial identity in terms of the use of referential and discourse markers used by authors of Central Mindanao University Journal of Science. A total of 73 articles were considered with 135 minimum T-units which were analyzed using Ivanic's (1998) concept on authorial identity, Hyland's (2002) functions of referential markers, and Fraser's (1999) concept on discourse markers and functions. From the analysis, we would like to convey that the writers of this academic journal are largely leaning towards invisibility as manifested by the limited, if not repetitive referential markers such as "it", "this", "these", and "there" which were used either to state a purpose, elaborate an argument, or state the results or claims. Moreover, the writers of this academic journal manifest abundance of discourse markers that either show contrasting, collateral, inferential relationship, and elaborated linguistic, semantic, and pragmatic concepts in academic writing that function either to relate a segment or argument, to introduce a clause or a separate message, or to show coherence of ideas and concepts. However, these discourse markers somehow failed to mark authority of claims or strength in the arguments, which could be generalized as leaning towards writers' invisibility.*

Keywords: *Authorial identity, referential and discourse markers*

## I: Introduction

### A. Rationale

In academic writing, the issue on ideational content is not only confined to "content" alone. Rather, it also projects how the academic writers position themselves in their claims and justifications, displaying their confidence in the evaluation and commitment to their ideas. Thus, the writer's authorial identity is therefore conveyed and embedded in each clause or word they used so that the readers are either drawn in, persuaded, or influenced by the writer's ideas. Writer's identity is constructed in the possibilities of self-hood (Ivanic, 1998; Ivanic & Weldon, 1999), and how they position and express judgments to explicitly affirm their role in the discourse through personal pronouns (Hyland, 2001a; 2001b). Moreover, the way writers begin a clause, not only foregrounds important information as a source of the associated statement but also help themselves control the social interaction.

Academic writing is manifested in academic journals, which according to Murray (2009), is a term applied to a scholarly publication relating to a particular <u>academic discipline</u>. Murray added that academic journals serve as forums for the introduction and presentation for scrutiny of new idea or thesis, and the <u>critique</u> of the same. Content of academic journals typically takes the form of articles presenting <u>original research</u>, <u>review articles</u>, and <u>book reviews</u>.

In the Philippines, a good number of universities and colleges nurture the value of research and publication of academic journals, commonly termed as a research journal. The University of the Philippines in Diliman, for example, has ***University of the Philippines (U.P.) Diliman Journals Online (UPDJOL)***, while Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) published quarterly the *Philippine Studies*, whereas, the University of Santo Tomas, has a lot of research journals. To mention a few, they have *Acta Manilana*, a journal for the natural and applied sciences; *Res Socialis*, a journal of the Social Research Center; *Ad Veritatem*, a multi-disciplinary research journal of the UST Graduate School; *Unitas*, and many others in every field of discipline.

Whether big or small, universities and colleges across the country have been trying to provide a forum for scholarly discoveries through publication of research journals. Even the remote universities such as Central Mindanao University (CMU), an academic institution for higher learning in Southern Mindanao, has also published a *Journal of Science*, which serves as repository of noteworthy contributions of the university scholars in the field of research. Relative to these, it is indeed interesting to know how these journals contribute either to society reform, policy-making, decision-making, knowledge building, and addressing key points and issues within and among society. To date, very scanty linguistic investigations have been done in the Philippine setting, relative to authorial identity among academic writers. This is the gap that thus study hopes to address.

### B. The Research Questions

With this, the study attempted to examine how the research writers of Central Mindanao University Journal of Science position themselves in their claims in their research abstracts. Specifically, the study hoped to answer the following questions:

1. What referential and discourse markers do writers employ in their research abstracts across fields of discipline; and
2. How do these referential and discourse markers function in the academic texts?

### C. The Theoretical Framework

This paper is largely patterned after the framework of Ivanic (1998) on his concept on authorial identity, Hyland's (2002) concept on authorial identity in academic writing, and Fraser's (1999) concept of classes and functions of discourse markers. Ivanic (1998) stressed that writers represent themselves, and find themselves represented by their rhetorical choices are constructed in the possibilities of self-hood. To him, there are three aspects of identity interacting in writing, namely: a) the *autobiographical self*, as influenced by the writer's history; 2) *discoursal self*, reflecting the image or voice the writer projects in a text; and 3) *authorial self*, as manifested in the extent to what a writer intrudes into a text and claims responsibility for its content. As to how these referential markers function in the text, Hyland's (2009) concept on functions of the referential markers are adopted: stating a goal or purpose, explaining a

procedure, stating results or claims, expressing benefits, and elaborating an argument. On the other hand, the second framework used in the study of the discourse markers is that of Fraser (1999) who mentioned that there are four classes of discourse markers: contrastive, collateral, inferential, and elaborative. These markers may either relate a segment to another, introduce an independent clause, or share coherence determination between independent clauses.

This study also considers various views on social positioning mentioned by Hyland (2002) that research writers have to develop the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and expressing their claims and arguments that define the discourse of the community. Research writers must speak with authority, and to do this, they must use another's voice and another's code, weakening their rootedness to their home culture and established writing styles to adopt the values and language of their accustomed ones. He added that student research writers must position themselves in relation to the material they discuss, finding a way to express their own contentions and arguments. Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) stressed that research writers are required to establish a stance towards their propositions, to get behind their words and stake out a position, representing an additional factor in acquiring appropriate academic identity. Related to positioning, ideas of some scholars were also considered in the study. For instance, Spencer and Arbon (1996) mentioned that traditional formal writing does not use the pronoun "I" or "we" in the body of the research paper; and that academic writing should eliminate the first person pronouns, as far as possible. Some contemporary scholars encourage research-writers to make their own voice through the use of the first person pronouns. Day (1994), for example, encouraged young scientists to renounce the false modesty of previous generations of scientists by mentioning the agent of the action through the first personal pronoun "I" or "we". In addition, Swales and Feak (1994) stressed that the use of "I' or "we" does not make a piece of writing informal. With these theoretical underpinnings at hand, we then put forward this conceptual framework in Figure 1.
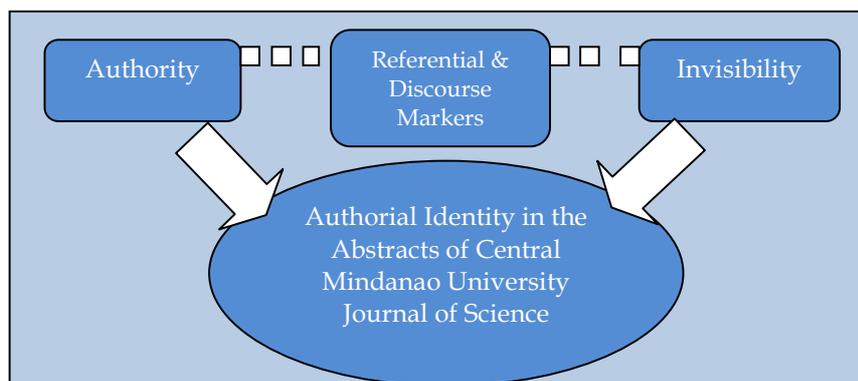


*Figure 1.* A diagram showing the concepts underlying the study

## II. Methodology

The data were taken from Central Mindanao University Journal of Science (CMUJS), which is a repository of outstanding researches of the CMU scholars of the University. The CMUJS, with ISSN 0116-7847, is a peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary journal published annually

by the University. This journal is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) under category B. It publishes quality research outputs in the field of natural sciences, mathematics, engineering, and social sciences from local, national and international contributors To date, it has published nineteen issues, of which the nine are accessible online. This study randomly chooses issues published online and in print as these are seen by the readers and other scholars worldwide.

Minimum terminable unit or the T-unit were used as the unit of analysis. Overall, we counted a total of 1,260 T-units, with 135 minimum T-units present in the research abstracts. These were then analyzed and answered the objectives set for the study.

Finally, descriptive statistics, particularly the frequency counts and percentages, were also used in determining frequency and percent distribution of the referential, discoursal, and authorial markers across field of discipline in the research abstracts.

## III. Results and Discussion

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Author's Referential and Discourse Markers across Fields of Discipline*

Of the 73 research articles across nine disciplines, a total of 1,260 minimum T-units were noted to have used the different referential and discourse markers indicating authorial identity. Table 1 contains these quantitative data.

Table 1

*Minimum T-units and percentage distribution of referential and discourse markers across fields of discipline*

| FIELD OF DISCIPLINE | OVERALL MINIMUM T-UNITS | MINIMUM T-UNITS IN ABSTRACTS | PERCENT DISTRIBUTION |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social Sciences | 405 | 51 | 37.78 % |
| Applied and Basic Sciences | 855 | 85 | 62.22 % |
| TOTAL | | | 100.00 % |
| | 1260 | 135 | (10.71 %) |

The combination of the applied and basic sciences research articles dominated, followed by the social sciences research articles. As shown, there are 37.78 % occurrences of authorial discourse markers used in the study are in the field of social sciences. Authors of these abstracts are predominantly professors in the humanities, education, and the arts. As such, they are expected to possess good leadership skills which may include the ability on using the English language; hence, their ability to use discourse markers are evident in their piece of writing. Percent use of authorial discourse markers within the discipline though, would indicate that these research writers are undeniably at hand in using these referential markers in writing, although

quite overruled by the biology education research writers whose percent use of authorial discourse markers is relatively higher than that of language educators. It could be surmised that the readings of the research writers from biology education field have somehow influenced them the way they write as research articles from this field are most often dynamically enriched with authorial referential markers.

On the other hand, the most number of occurrences (62.2 %) of authorial discourse markers are manifested in the field of applied and basic sciences, which is a combination of the various major fields such as biology, forestry, environmental science, entomology, animal science, plant pathology, agronomy, horticulture, and veterinary medicine. Writers of these research articles are usually practicing biologists, foresters, veterinarians, engineers, agriculturists of various agriculture-related agencies within the province and some are even working at the department of agriculture to where research is part of their major tasks. Hence, research writing may prove handy with them as manifested by the number of occurrences where discourse authorial markers are noted.

It is worthwhile to note that on the whole, the entire minimum T-unit only gave an average of 10.71 % or only 135 out of 1,260 total number of t-units, which could be translated as a 'scanty use' of referential and discourse markers, and which could be further generalized as leaning towards 'invisibility' of the writers in terms of using referential and discourse markers. Considering Ivanic's (1998) notion of authorial identity, that there is an autobiographical self, discoursal self, and authorial self, which are intertwined within the writer as he or she writes the text. Thus, the autobiographical self of the writers are seemingly not strongly grounded on certain degree of authority. This is conveyed by the way the writers stipulated their claims, as in the following:

(1) "**Results show that** the treated oil with 10 % lime sludge and curing period of 28 days demonstrated a higher CBR and UCS" (Daleon and Lorenzo, 2017)

(2) "**This study revealed that** the Filipino elderly are confronted with poverty and other pressing issues." (Dadang and Mendoza, 2016)

(3) "**Results revealed that** lower levels of yam flour and margarine but with high levels is preferred by most panelists pertaining to taste, aroma, texture, and general acceptability except he color of the loaf bread." (Lodevico, Arroyo, and Nasol, 2016)

(4) "**The comparison of posttest results revealed that** there is a significant difference in the comprehension level of the respondents between groups" (Nueva and Fabricante, 2015)

(5) "**The results showed that** the compressive strength of concrete, usng bagasse ash and lime sludge as the partial replacement of OPC, ailed to meet the minimum requirement of 21 MPa which is set by the National Strucral Code of the Philippines (NSCP, 2010)"(Opiso, Supremo, and Silabay, 2014)

From these excerpts, it is evident that the writer tends to be invisible by simply allowing the data speak of itself as conveyed by the phrase '*results that that…UCS*", or '*this study revealed that… issues*", or "*the comparison of posttest results revealed that… groups*". The author seemed to be covering themselves, cast only under the shadow of the data, perhaps afraid of being questioned in terms of the validity and authenticity of the data. From the concept of authorial identity in Ivanic (1998), the autobiographical self of these writers seem to have influenced them the way they write. This is quite similar to what Hyland noted in 2002 that neophyte researchers often see academic writing as an alien form of literacy designed to disguise the author and deal directly with facts.

In addition, the academic training gained by some neophyte researchers indicate a particular style guide in writing theses, dissertations, and journal articles, to which all graduate students must apply. This is another consideration why authors in the journal seemed to be detached and impersonal in their tone as signaled by the referential markers they used. However, according to Hyland (2002), style guides and textbooks commonly portray scholarly writing as a kind of impersonal, faceless discourse and EAP teachers direct students to remove themselves from their texts. Further, Spencer and Arbon (1996) mentioned that traditional formal writing does not use the pronoun "I" or "we" in the body of the research paper; thus, I would rather say that CMU Journal of Science writers, especially the budding researchers are leaning on traditional academic writing tones. However, Hyland (2002) also stressed that research writers, although novice, have to develop the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and expressing their claims and arguments that define the discourse of the community. Therefore, it is indeed a challenge for the authors, especially in this academic journals, to come up with their own identity, and slowly fade away from authorial invisibility.

*Referential and Discourse Markers Used by the Authors*

Table 2 contains the different referential and discourse markers used by the authors of Central Mindanao University Journal of Science across fields of discipline. With reference to the same table, it is very evident that there are at most only five (5) referential markers used by the authors. These are the following pronominals: *we*, *it, this, these* and *there. We* is a plural referential used only by authors from the field of mathematics education. The remaining referential pronouns *it, this, and these* are commonly used by authors across the nine fields of discipline. The third person singular *it* and the demonstrative *this* are both singular referentials indicating or pointing out either a subject or an object of interest; whereas the demonstrative pronominal *these and those* are referentials used by the authors to point to a plural thing or idea or a claim, with *these* referring to proximal references and *those* referring to distal references. On the other hand, Table 2 also showcases a robust list of discourse markers which are either, conjunctions, adverbs, adjectival phrases and clauses, adjectival phrases and clauses.

For conjunctions, the authors use some coordinating conjunctions such as: *for, and, yet, and so*; the authors also use some subordinating conjunctions like *although, though, however, but, so, rather, in order that, in addition, in addition to, when, if, further, furthermore, moreso, moreover, likewise, nevertheless, hence, in fact, despite, afterall, indeed, therefore,* and *while*. Adverbs were also explored by the authors such as: *clearly, essentially, economically, numerically, finally, unmistakably, generally, similarly, more importantly, consequently, obviously, equally, accordingly, lastly, initially, certainly,* and *apparently*. Adjectival and adverbial phrases were also used by the authors like: *in addition, in addition to, in order that, in*

*contrast with, on the other hand, in this view, without a doubt, in general, in total, in sum, and summing up.*

Table 2

*Referential and discourse markers used by authors across fields of discipline*

| FIELD OF DISCIPLINE | REFERENTIAL MARKERS | DISCOURSE MARKERS |
|---|---|---|
| Applied and basic Sciences | We, it, this, these, and there | thus, however, moreover, in addition to, yet, essentially, likewise, in contrast, further, furthermore, on the other hand, similarly, consequently, although, on the average, but, generally, apparently, while, in addition, therefore, economically, otherwise, although, on the other hand, finally, in addition, and, further, furthermore, similarly, consequently, on the average, afterall, nonetheless, in fact, clearly, by this, but, as expected, as false starters, thus, to sum up, generally, in this view, without a doubt, hence, rather, also, obviously, equally, for example, because of its importance, summing up, accordingly, in general |
| Social Sciences | It, this, these, and there | however, although, recently, thus, further, moreso, with, more importantly, also, generally, hence, and, with this, similarly,, but, while, therefore, numerically, in totality, initially, in general, rather, perhaps, so, on the bases of, by this token, despite, also, probably |

The question is, how do these referential and discourse markers function in the academic text? From the five referential markers: *this, we, these,* and *there,* we largely based the analysis from Hyland (2002) that there are five (5) discourse functions of referential markers. These are: stating a goal or purpose, explaining a procedure, stating results or claims, expressing benefits, and elaborating an argument. We dealt with the individual function one by one with the excerpted data marked accordingly.

(6) "**This** paper presents the production of quality hydroxyapatite (HAp) powders from tilapia bones using thermal treatment" (Butanas, 2017)

*(7) "**It** is important to give utmost attention to these plant taxa considered threatened, endemic and economically important" (Lumista, et al., 2016)*

(8) "Thus, **there** is a need for a language intervention program" (Nueva, 2016)

(9) "In **This** paper, **we** derived the exact formula of a ceratain class of polynomials on the unit disc" (Detalla, et al., 2014)

(10) **"These** are essential for cost-effective and profitable crop production….**Those** in 2,500 pph with 100 % nutrient had widest stems at flowering stage" (Valleser, 2016)


From the excerpts above, the pronoun *this* in excerpt (6) is used in stating a purpose, i.e. *"this paper presents … treatment"* and the pronoun *it* from excerpt (7) is also used in stating a purpose, i.e. *"It is important … important"*, in that these pronouns were used to guide the readers on what the studies have intended to do. This kind of purpose is commonly found in the abstracts across fields of discipline and which is very apparent in this genre as abstracts are meant to guide the readers. Excerpt (9), on the other hand, is more of elaborating an argument, i. e., *"We derived the exact formula…unit discs"*, whereby the writer seems to argue and justify the need. Finally, the last discourse function noted in the study is stating results or claims, as shown by excerpts (8) and (10), i. e. *"there is a need for … program"* and *"These are essential … production."* Apparently then, there are only three discourse functions of the referential pronouns used by the authors in the abstracts of the CMU Journal of Science. Again, this might be accounted to the style guide that some of the novice writers might have been trained to write in their postgraduate trainings that could have set for the novice authors to follow which deters them to use referential pronouns, particularly the use of first person. The authors seemed to be very cautious in using referential markers that conform to the institutional standards such that they are limiting themselves to use first person referential pronouns "*I, my,* and we", rather, they opted to use the third person *"It"*, and the demonstrative pronoun "*this* and *these*" as well as the evidential *"there"*. These pronouns being used by the authors in the journal are rather weak in asserting authority, and are thus, again leaning towards invisibility among authors in pointing out their claims. As Johns (1997), pointed out, writers, whether novice or not, must speak with authority, and to do this, they must use another's voice and another's code, weakening their affiliations to their home culture and discourses to adopt the values and language of their disciplinary ones. Furthermore, Hyland (2002) added that student research writers must position themselves in relation to the material they discuss, finding a way to express their own contentions and arguments. Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) in Hyland (2002) stressed that research writers are required to establish a stance towards their propositions, to get behind their words and stake out a position, representing an additional factor in acquiring appropriate academic identity.

As regards to the discourse markers used in the abstracts of the CMU Journal of Science, and considering the discourse functions adopted by Fraser (1999) who mentioned that there are four classes of discourse markers: contrastive, collateral, inferential, and elaborative. These markers may function either relate a segment to another, introduce an independent clause, or share coherence determination between independent clauses (Fraser, 1999).

Contrastive markers are those words that show contrasting idea, collateral markers are those that show quasi-parallel constructions, inferential markers are those that show inferences and synthesis, and finally elaborative markers are those that show further discussion and point out further explanation and justification. Common examples of contrastive markers are *however, but, although;* for collaborative markers are *similarly, equally, likewise;* for inferential markers are *generally, thus, therefore, hence;* and elaborative markers are *additionally, further, furthermore,* and *moreover* (Fraser, 1999).

Table 2 further shows that the authors of Central Mindanao University Journal of Science used these classes of discourse markers, meaning, they exhibited use of contrastive markers. Fraser (1999) further enumerated three (3) functions of discourse markers in an academic texts. These are: relate a segment to another, introduce an independent clause, or share coherence determination between independent clauses. As to how do authors use these discourse markers in the Central Mindanao University Journal of Science, consider the following excerpts:

(11)    *"**On the other hand,** treated soils with lime sludge contents above and below 10% regardless of curing periods have indicated lower CBR and UCS values; **thus**, yielding enferior engineering qualities. **Therefore,** the expansive clay in Bukidnon can be stabilized using the locally available sugar mill lime sludge at optimumlime sludge content of 10% cured at a minimum of 28 days" (Daleon and Lorenzo, 2017)*

(12)    *"Determination of these seed plants was based mainly on existing literature **Likewise,** field observations were done in selected mountains in Mindanao to validate the occurrence and conservation status of these plants listed in the Philippine database" (Lumista, et al., 2016)*

(13)    *"Results of the evaluation of goat farm performance showed that the major problems in goat raising n the region are poor kid performance, poor dam performance, and high mortality. **However**, a lot of technological options which are products of researches are already available and can be delivered to goat raisers " (Intong, Pepito, and Callejo, 2016)*

(14)    *"**Moreover**, the blending ratio of 40% bagasse ash to 60% lime sludge as partial replacement of OPC shoed promising results" (Opiso, Supremo, and Silabay, 2014)*

(15)    *"**Overall,** GeoWEPP performed satisfactorily implying applicability in catchment with intensive cultivation and steeper hillslopes" (Puno, 2014)*

(16)    *"**Consequently,** two community service models have been formulated" (David, et al., 2013)*

From these excerpts, it can be inferred that the three functions of discourse markers elaborated by Fraser (1999) are used by the authors of Central Mindanao University Journal of Science. All of the excerpts relate to a previous segment, as marked by the words *consequently,*

*on the other hand,* and *likewise*. Meanwhile, excerpts (14), (15), and (16), (17) exhibit the second function, that of introducing an independent clause or a separate message with its propositional content as marked by the words *moreover, overall,* and *consequently.* Finally, excerpts (11), (12), and (13) exhibit the third function, that of showing coherence determination as marked by the words *on the other hand, likewise,* and *however*.

With this data, we would like to say that discourse markers used in this study have a core meaning which is procedural, not conceptual, and their more specific interpretation is 'negotiated' by the context, both linguistic and conceptual. This was also mentioned by Fraser (1999) in his study about discourse markers. The writer is thus not much concerned of his own identity but more for the desire for protection from the possibility of error is, as in attributed by the use of these markers, generally to hedge, and to be authoritative is perhaps of less importance for students' academic writing under the condition of the setting of the study. Hyland (1996) said that oftentimes, the line between hedging confidence in the accuracy of statements and hedging commitment to them is often blurred and in core cases, where protection on the identity of the writer is given more emphasis. Contextual and formal considerations can only identify the predominant function, rather than offer a definitive categorization.

Referential and discourse markers are abundant in academic writing and they play a critical role more generally as they constitute an essential element of argumentation in presenting new claims for ratification, and are among the primary features which shape the research article as the principal vehicle for new knowledge, and authorial identity.

## IV. Conclusions

On the basis of the foregoing, the study subsumes that the limited use of referential pronouns from the academic texts somehow signifies more of invisibility rather than authority among these group of academic writers. In addition, these academic writers portray at least three functions of referential markers, namely: stating a purpose, elaborating an argument, and stating results or claims, which fall short from the five classification of functions by Hyland (2002), implying that these group of writers are indeed leaning towards invisibility rather than authority. Finally, although there is abundance of discourse markers used by these academic writers although such abundance does not signify strong authority or claim in their scientific discovery.

## V. Recommendations

Given the limited time and data for the analysis, the researchers would take it a challenge to conduct a more in-depth study on academic writing from various university refereed journals in the country, with a reliable corpus and a more sophisticated data analytical tools, for a more generalized results, and for possible formulation of unified style guide among research-oriented universities.

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