

# Authority or Impersonality: A Mixed-Methods Study of Au- thorial Identity in Iranian Con- text

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## Abstract

The current study aimed at investigating the authorial identity of Iranian academic writers, who came from three different fields of English, Biology, and Engineering, plus examining the influence of disciplinary conventions on their stance taking in research articles. The main objectives of this study were achieved by going through two main phases, viz. survey administration and corpus study. First, the authorial identity questionnaire was administered to 150 academic writers, 50 from each of the selected fields. Following that, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run to locate the difference between authorial identities of academic writers among these groups. Second, as a complementary phase to survey administration, NVivo was utilized to conduct the corpus study phase. In so doing, Hyland's (2005) model of interaction in academic discourse was

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applied to analyze academic writers' stance taking in a corpus comprising 90 articles from the three selected fields. Triangulating the findings, we concluded that academic writers in the field of English rely more on authority, self-representation, and personal projection, while those in the fields of biology and engineering try to take less stance markers and portray their findings more impersonally.

**Keywords:** Authorial Identity, Authorial Stance, Academic Writing, Corpus, Questionnaire, NVivo

## Introduction

Academic writing has been of utmost importance in recent years, since it has been viewed as a platform enabling students to participate successfully in academic discourse community, share their knowledge with others, and have their own voice and identity (Ivanič, 1998). As Maguire et al. (2013) have noted, academic writing is the primary medium through which students of various disciplines engage with the knowledge base of those disciplines. Coming up with a definition of academic writing is like asking people to define an apple; most of them will define it simply as a fruit. Similarly, dictionaries are not of much help, as they define academic writing as an abstract, impersonal, cold, and objective type of writing that is limited to the conveyance of scientific findings (Hyland, 2018). As also stated by Hyland (2005), academic writing cannot be limited to content delivery, but it can be viewed as the "act of identity", a process of self-reflection showing the authors' ability to construct a valid self and represent themselves in their texts (p. 1092). From a different theoretical perspective, Clark and Ivanič (1997) considered the politics of writing as one of the core elements that helps writers to reflect their identity as an author and signal their presence in their texts. As a psychological construct, authorial identity is defined as "a sense a writer has of themselves as an author and the textual identity they construct" (Pittam et al, 2009, p. 154).

In any academic milieus, students need academic writing contexts to support them in joining the "academic enterprise" (Bartholomae, 1986, p. 11) and to help them adopt the identity of an academic writer. According to Olmos Lopez (2015), academic writing is an enterprise involving a socialization process through which individual writers learn to take part in academic discourse community in which performing their identity as a writer is highly important. As Hyland (2018) has indicated, academic writing can be understood as a specialized type of writing in which, through incongruent use of language, academic writers represent ideas in order to facilitate efficient communication among academic insiders. Moreover, it is a social and communicative engagement through which academic writers use discoursal resources such as stance markers to project themselves in their texts and manage their communicative engagement (Hyland, 2005). As Hyland and Jiang (2017) have also reflected, the importance of authorial stance in academic writing is widely acknowledged, since it plays a vital role in "negotiating the acceptance of arguments, allowing writers to adopt positions, and persuade readers to accept them" (p. 1). Fur-

thermore, it should be noted that stance involves placing one's "personal stamp" (Hyland, 2000, p. 23) on the page, which helps writers to reveal themselves, their authorial identity, and authorial voice in academic texts.

Traditionally, academic writing has been viewed as a special type of writing including features like impersonality, hedging, and formality (Shaw & Liu, 1998) in which adopting a personal stance and using personal pronouns are prohibited. In such a view towards writing, it was believed that academic writers' task was to use conventionalized features such as referencing to other studies and using technical lexis to convey propositional meaning (Hyland, 2000). More recently, academic writing gradually lost its traditional tags as impersonal, objective, and faceless and came to be seen as an interactive act involving identity choices. This shift has been mainly motivated by the emergence of new genres in academic discourse including research articles. Swales (1990) and Swales and Feak (2004) have extensively dealt with this change in their books. As a consequence of this radical shift, the current view sees "academics as not simply producing texts that plausibly represent an external reality, but also using language to acknowledge, construct and negotiate social relations" (Hyland, 2005, p. 173).

When researching authorial identity, the concept of voice plays a significant role. Bowden (1995) viewed voice as a special and distinct quality playing an important role in writing research agenda. Like identity, authorial voice has been conceptualized differently by researchers. The large number of publications covering the concept of voice (Elbow, 1994; Matsuda, 2001) demonstrates the importance of investigating it from various perspectives. Bazerman (2001, p. 23) argued that students establish and present their "distanced and refined selves" while engaging in the process of academic writing. The problem is that in order for students to make their voice heard in academic milieu, it should be recognized as "legitimate" in the discipline they belong to (p. 26). Olmos Lopez (2015) re-conceptualized Matsuda's (2001) definition of voice as "the individual use of discursive and non-discursive features, conscious or otherwise, for the expression of the self in relation to given social context(s) and (re)shaped in accordance with the constantly evolving social repertoires" (p. 36).

Quite in line with this problem, Iranian academic writers should also overcome the linguistic injustice (Clavero, 2010; Hyland, 2016) for being published in international journals, since they are not native speakers of English. As stated by Habibie and Hyland (2018), although publishing in prestigious journals enhances writers' profile and credibility, it is a risk-laden (Watts, 2012) activity in which writers face several challenges. In the competitive atmosphere of scholarly publication, novice writers usually see themselves in a high-pressure situation where they cannot represent their true 'selves' in their academic writing (Ivanič 1998).

One other issue hassling novice academic writers is their being prone to accusations of plagiarism. In other words, academic writers' lack of proficiency in L2 writing can jeopardize their future academic performance and promotion because they might be penalized for plagiarism. That means the slim borderline

between authors' authority and borrowed sentences may blur the real and legitimate author. That is why sometimes differentiating between intertextuality and plagiarism is a very serious decision. Therefore, one of the significant roles of studying authorial identity among academics is to lessen plagiarism cases and instead nurture authorial presence and voice in texts. In other words, academic writers' unawareness of their role and identity as an academic writer, disciplinary conventions, plagiarism charges, and negative consequences of not being able to be a member of academic discourse community more seriously adds to the significance of research on authorial identity.

As for the relationship between authorial identity and plagiarism, the literature (e.g., Pittam et al., 2009) indicates that there is an inverse relationship between authorial identity and unintentional plagiarism in a way that the more the former is developed, the less the latter is likely to happen. Furthermore, honor codes and interventions focusing on citation, referencing and paraphrasing are mostly oversimplifying the complex issue of unintentional plagiarism, in which students' unawareness of their identity as an academic writer and 'politics of writing' plays the most important role (Clark & Ivanič, 1997). Therefore, given the salient role of identity and voice in academic writing, the present study aimed to see how disciplinary differences shape the way writers present themselves as academics. This study can therefore provide academicians with an insight about authorial identity and stance taking of academic writers from various disciplines. Accordingly, curriculum designers can make revisions in traditional writing courses according to the need of academic writers in different disciplines.

### Theoretical Framework

Ken Hyland is one of the key figures in this research agenda who is famous for his corpus-based approaches and models in exploring interaction in academic discourse. By using corpus-based approaches, he has conducted a number of studies analyzing academic writers' interaction in academic writing through their discursal choices in texts (Hyland, 2000; 2002; 2012; Hyland & Jiang, 2017; Jiang & Hyland, 2015).

Hyland is also well-known for his model of metadiscourse. It is important to know that "metadiscourse is identified as the writer's reference to the text, the writer, or the reader and enables the analyst to see how the writer chooses to handle interpretive processes as opposed to statements relating to the world" (Hyland, 2018, p. 169). The interpersonal model of metadiscourse proposed by Hyland (2005) and Hyland and Tse (2005) distinguishes between *interactive* and *interactional* resources. In this model, interactional resources focus on participants and involve readers in the argument by making them aware of the author's perspective towards both the propositional content and the readers themselves (Hyland & Tse, 2005). The interactional resources allow the writers not only to express their interpretation and voice, but to engage with the reader through the text. It can be said that metadiscourse influences the expression of

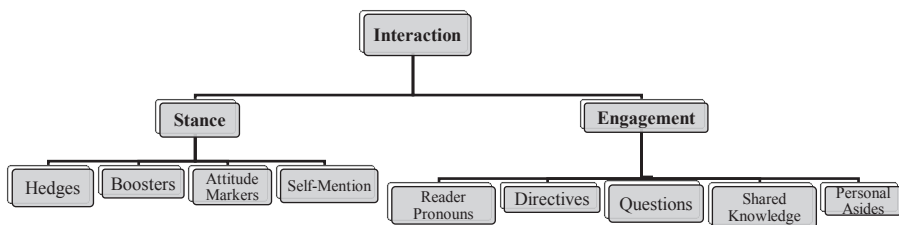
attitude, degree of reader involvement, degree of intimacy, and epistemic judgments (Hyland, 2018).

Drawing on the above-mentioned model, Hyland (2005) developed his model of interaction in academic discourse (Figure 1). In developing this model, he believed that “writers seek to offer a credible representation of themselves and their works by claiming solidarity with readers, evaluating their material and acknowledging alternative views” (p. 173). Furthermore, he viewed ‘positioning’—which is concerned with adopting a point of view in relation to issues and to others’ points of view—as an integral part of academic writing. According to this model, academic writers manage such interactions via *stance* and *engagement*, which are two sides of the same coin contributing to the interpersonal dimension of discourse. Hyland defined stance as:

An attitudinal dimension and includes features which refer to the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgements, opinions, and commitments. It is the ways that writers intrude to stamp their personal authority onto their arguments or step back and disguise their involvement (p. 176).

As the other side of the coin, engagement was also defined by him as:

An alignment dimension where writers acknowledge and connect to others, recognizing the presence of their readers, pulling them along with their argument, focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties, including them as discourse participants, and guiding them to interpretations (Hyland, 2005, p. 176).



**Figure 1.** Key resources of academic interaction (Adapted from Hyland, 2005, p. 177).

The focus of this study has been narrowed to stance markers. According to this model, stance is a writer-oriented feature of interaction which is concerned with the ways academic writers comment on the credibility and accuracy of their claim, and the extent to which they commit themselves to it, to an attitude, or the reader. It was further mentioned that, three components of evidentiality, affect, and presence constitute the notion of stance, which is comprised of four main elements of hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions. As Hyland (2005) stated, “evidentiality refers to the writer’s expressed commitment to the reliability of the propositions he or she presents and their potential im-

pact on the reader”, while affect involves personal and professional attitudes, including emotions and beliefs about what is being said, and presence concerns the extent to which academic writers project themselves in their texts (p. 178). Hyland (2015, p. 4) defined the four elements constituting stance in a nutshell:

- **Hedges** mark the writer’s reluctance to present propositional information categorically.
- **Boosters** express certainty and emphasize the force of propositions.
- **Attitude markers** express the writer’s appraisal of propositional information, conveying surprise, obligation, agreement, importance, and so on.
- **Self-mentions** suggest the extent of author presence in terms of first-person pronouns and possessives.

Firstly, according to Hyland (1998), hedges are devices such as *possibly*, *might*, and *perhaps* which “represent a weakening of a claim through an explicit qualification of the writer’s commitment” (p. 2). They indicate doubt and signal that information is presented as an opinion rather than an accredited fact. He further argued that hedges imply that an argument is based on reasoning rather than being a fact, allowing the writers to open a discursive space in which readers can discuss their arguments. Secondly, boosters are devices such as *clearly*, *obviously*, and *demonstrate* which pave the way for the writers to express conviction and write a proposition with strong confidence (Hyland, 1998). According to Hyland (2005), boosters are of great help for writers to present their work with assurance while effecting “interpersonal solidarity, setting the caution and self-effacement suggested by hedges against assertion and involvement” (p. 179). Thirdly, according to Hyland (2018), attitude markers indicate the writers’ affective attitude towards what they write, conveying surprise, agreement, importance, frustration, and so on. Attitudes can be signaled through verbs (e.g. *agree*), adverbs (e.g. *fortunately*, *hopefully*), and adjectives (e.g. *logical*, *remarkable*) in academic writing. Finally, self-mention is concerned with the explicit presence of the author in the text measured by the frequency of personal pronouns and possessive adjectives (*I*, *me*, *mine*, *exclusive we*, *our*, *ours*) (Hyland, 2005). Hyland (2001) also noted that self-mention refers to the personal pronouns and possessive adjectives to present propositional and interpersonal information. As Ivanič (1998) mentioned, all writing conveys information about the writer and personal pronoun usage is the most powerful means of self-representation. Viewing presentation of discursal self as a central issue in academic writing, Hyland (2018) argued that “writers cannot avoid projecting an impression of themselves and how they stand in relation to their arguments, their discipline, and their readers” (p. 142).

### Previous Research

Authorial identity and authorial stance have been the focus of a plethora of studies in recent years as a large number of books and articles have been main-

ly devoted to this topic from different theoretical and methodological perspectives (e.g., Cheung et al., 2015; Hyland, 2001; Ivanič, 1994; Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Pittam et al., 2009). Corpus analysis as well as questionnaire development and survey administration can be observed as the commonest methodological approach to the study of authorial identity and authorial stance. In the same vein, viewing personal pronouns as the most visible manifestation of authorial stance, Tang and John (1999) argued that language cannot be considered merely as a tool to express a self that we already have; however, it plays a crucial role in creating self. By examining the essays of 27 undergraduate students who were required to complete a 1000-word essay, the researchers identified six roles for first person pronoun, viz. *I* as the representative, *I* as the guide through the essay, *I* as the architect of the essay, *I* as the raconteur of the research process, *I* as the opinion holder, and *I* as the originator.

Analyzing a corpus of 240 research articles from different disciplines, Hyland (2001) stated that the significant difference in the frequency of personal pronouns among different disciplines is epistemologically rooted in the fact that students of hard sciences downplayed their personal role as the writer, whereas students of soft sciences project their role as an academic writer and signal their stance in their academic texts. In another seminal study, Hyland (2002) examined the frequency of personal pronouns in 64 Hong Kong undergraduate theses comparing them with a large corpus of articles. The results of his study indicated a significant underuse of authorial references on the part of the students. The author eventually concluded that the use of 'I' pronoun for students is a problematic issue in academic writing. Expanding the research in this agenda, Harwood (2005) investigated the writers' use of personal pronouns to create a self-promotional tenor in their texts. The results revealed that personal pronouns play a vital role in writers' self-promotion at the start of research articles in marketing the findings of the study from the beginning and showing the novelty of their study. Furthermore, it plays an undeniable role in making the text more accessible plus succinctly summarizing the achievements at the closing of the study.

Hyland and Tse (2005) similarly investigated *evaluative that* construction as one of the most important interpersonal feature allowing academic writers to present their findings, comment on them, evaluate them, and interact with their readers. As many studies (Hyland, 2005; Jiang & Hyland, 2015; Hyland & Jiang, 2017) implied, *evaluative that* plays a crucial role in academic writing, enabling writers to express their opinion and stance, project their attitude, and evaluate the presented entity in their writing. The study further indicated that Biology and Computer Sciences had the highest number of *evaluative that* examples, suggesting that disciplinary variations did not correspond to preferences for explicit evaluations as an important characteristic of academic writing in soft disciplines. The writers further noted that such a lower frequency in soft sciences could be attributed to the academic writers' ability to use alternative resources to express their attitudinal meaning.

Investigating authorial identity through a different approach, Pittam et al. (2009) developed and validated students' authorship scale (SAQ) comprising

six factors in two groups. The first group of factors were *confidence in writing*, *understanding authorship*, and *knowledge to avoid plagiarism*, and the other group, conceptualized as approaches to writing, were *top-down*, *bottom-up*, and *pragmatic approaches to writing* (p. 162). In the same line, Ballantine and McCourt Larres (2012) investigated UK students' perceptions of authorial identity using SAQ. Stressing the significant difference among the first, second, and third year students' perceptions of authorial identity, the researchers explored the difficulties the students faced in writing in their own words. Viewing authorial identity as a psychological construct and in the same line with Pittam et al. (2009), Cheung et al. (2015) delved more deeply into the issue by developing a robust measure of authorial identity as an alternative to student authorship scale. Like other researchers (Ballantine & McCourt Larres, 2012) they viewed authorial identity as one of the most influential factors in plagiarism prevention. Using the same operational definition as Pittam et al. (2009), they developed a new model of authorial identity with smaller number of factors. By going through a number of stages like item generation, model development, and validation, they developed a 17-item model named students' attitudes and beliefs about authorship scale (SABAS) comprising three factors, namely, *authorial confidence*, *valuing writing*, and *identification with author*.

All the above-mentioned studies investigated authorial identity through corpus-based approaches as well as survey research; however, little research has been conducted to investigate authorial identity and authorial stance through a mixed-methods approach in an Iranian context. Mixed-methods research (MMR) involves the implementation and utilization of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, tools, and analyses in two or more phases (Riazi, 2016). Addressing the paucity of this line of research and its significance to raise our awareness of academic writers' authorial presence, the current study aims to analyze the relationship between disciplinary conventions and academic writers' authorial identity plus stance taking in their research articles. Therefore, the following research questions make up the core of the present study:

1. Are there any significant differences in the authorial identity of Iranian academic writers in the fields of English, Biology, and Engineering? Which group tends to have a more significant authorial presence in their texts?
2. How do Iranian academic writers in the fields of English, Biology, and Engineering differ in the way they take authorial stance markers in their research articles?

## The Study

The present research is comprised of two phases: 1) Authorial Identity Survey Administration 2) Corpus Analysis. In the following sections, these two phases as well as the steps taken to answer the research questions are reported in detail.



## Survey Administration Phase

### Participants

The participants of the survey phase were 150 Iranian male and female M.A. and PhD students from three different disciplines of English, Biology, and Engineering who were studying at the University of Tehran, Sharif University of Technology, Alzahra University, Allameh Tabataba'i University, and University of Mazandaran (see Appendix 1). The participants were selected based on a combination of availability and snowball sampling. They were initially selected through availability sampling in the above-mentioned universities. We had to recruit the participants who had experience in academic writing, meaning that those who had prior publication experience were invited. Later, the first few participants introduced more participants (i.e., snowball sampling). Table 1 below shows the demographic information of these participants.

**Table 1.**  
*Demographic Information of the Participants in the Survey Administration Phase*

Field	Number	Gender	Educational Level	University
English	50 (25 male / 25 female)	Male/Female	M.A. / PhD	SUT/UOM/UT/ATU /Alzahra
Biology	50 (25 male / 25 female)	Male/Female	M.A. / PhD	SUT/UOM/UT/ATU /Alzahra
Engineering	50 (25 male / 25 female)	Male/Female	M.A. / PhD	SUT/UOM/UT/ATU /Alzahra

### Instrument and Procedure

As was mentioned earlier, the current study is a follow-up research and part of a larger project (Jamshidi, 2018) which aimed at developing and validating a model and a questionnaire of authorial identity. The 20-item questionnaire used in the current study (see Appendix 1) as the instrument was developed and validated by the researchers by going through some rigorous steps according to the instructions in Dörnyei (2010). The questionnaire included four main components namely *authorial voice and identity* (items 1, 2, 6, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20 & 11), *authorial persona* (items 5, 8, 10 & 19), *authorial background* (items 3, 7 & 9), and *authorial style* (4 and 12) on a seven-point Likert-type scale including *strongly agree*, *agree*, *slightly agree*, *uncertain*, *slightly disagree*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree* options. Before conducting the survey phase, the reliability of the questionnaire was checked through Cronbach's Alpha, the results of which indicated that the internal consistency of the whole questionnaire was 0.80. The validity of the questionnaire was also checked and confirmed through both exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (Jamshidi, 2018) which finally confirmed the presence of four factors in this questionnaire. In this questionnaire, the main purpose was to see how academic writers project their voice and identity through discursal features. Therefore, the highest points achieved would represent more authorial identity. Moreover, the focus was on the authorial identity of the writers in their L2 (i.e. English)

and not their mother tongue. In other words, we intended to explore how academic writers present themselves in their English academic writing.

### **Data Analysis and Findings**

The authorial identity questionnaire was completed, either online or by hand, by 150 participants who were M.A. and PhD students of English, Biology, and Engineering in Iran. Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics for the participants' responses based on their fields of study. As can be seen in this table, there were 50 participants from English ( $M=126.20$ ,  $SD=4.46$ ), 50 from Biology ( $M=41.10$ ,  $SD=12.14$ ), and 50 others from Engineering ( $M=38.32$ ,  $SD=5.47$ ) fields.

**Table 2.**  
*Descriptive Statistics of the Participants*

Field	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error
English	50	126.20	4.46	.63
Engineering	50	38.32	5.47	.77
Biology	50	41.10	12.14	1.71
Total	150	68.54	41.71	3.40

In order to address the first research question, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run through SPSS. Following that, the Tukey Post-hoc test was run in order to locate the exact differences between the authorial identity of academic writers from three disciplines of English, Biology, and Engineering. As it is shown in Tables 3 and 4, there is a statistically significant difference at  $p < .05$  level in the authorial identity of the three groups:  $F(2, 147) = 1.89$ ,  $p = .00$ . Post-hoc comparisons made using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for English group ( $M=126.20$ ,  $SD=4.46$ ) was significantly different from Biology ( $M=41.10$ ,  $SD=12.14$ ), and Engineering groups ( $M=38.32$ ,  $SD=5.47$ ). Biology ( $M=41.10$ ,  $SD=12.14$ ) and Engineering ( $M=38.32$ ,  $SD=5.47$ ) groups did not differ significantly from each other.

**Table 3.**  
*One-way ANOVA Comparing Authorial Identity Level of the Participants*

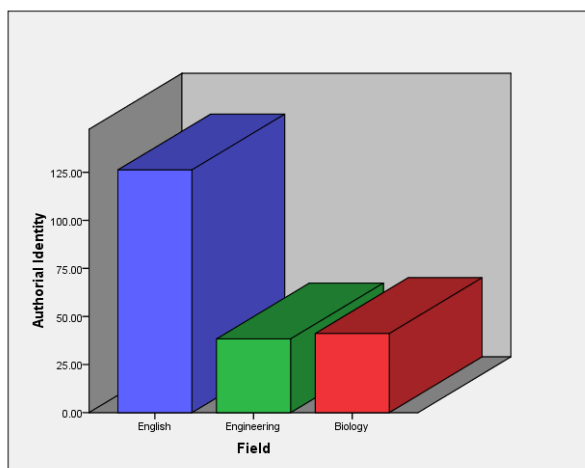
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	249543.88	2	124771.94	1.89	.00
Within Groups	9679.38	147	65.84		
Total	259223.26	149			

**Table 4.***Tukey Post-hoc Test Indicating the Exact Difference in the Authorial Identity Level of the Participants*

(I) field	(J) field	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
English	Engineering	87.88*	1.62	.00	84.03	91.72
	Biology	85.10*	1.62	.00	81.25	88.94
Engineering	English	-87.88*	1.62	.00	-91.72	-84.03
	Biology	-2.78	1.62	.20	-6.62	1.06
Biology	English	-85.10*	1.62	.00	-88.94	-81.25
	Engineering	2.78	1.62	.20	-1.06	6.62

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As the bar chart in Figure 2 indicates, academic writers from the English field tend to have more authorial presence in their academic writing. On the other hand, academic writers from Biology and Engineering fields, who are not statistically different in their authorial identity, have a significantly lower level of authorial identity than the English group and have less tendency to have their voice and authority in their texts.

**Figure 2.** Bar chart of the authorial identity level of participants

In brief, the results obtained from the survey administration showed that Iranian academic writers in the English group tend to be more present in their texts in comparison to the Biology and Engineering groups. Given that the survey results per se cannot give conclusive evidence for the presence of authorial identity among academic writers, a follow-up corpus-based research was conducted to further probe into authorial identity among researchers in these three fields. As stated by Mackey and Gass (2005), although questionnaires have many advantages including eliciting large amount of information in a short period, eliciting comparable and processable information, and being easy

to administer, they suffer from some potential problems. The most important problem with survey-based studies using questionnaires is that “responses may be inaccurate or incomplete because of the difficulty involved in describing learner-internal phenomena such as perceptions and attitudes” (p. 96). In this sense, questionnaires usually do not provide a complete picture of the complex constructs. Therefore, as a complementary phase, in the corpus research, we investigated the way Iranian academic writers—from hard and soft disciplines—take authorial stance based on metadiscoursal features in their research articles. Below, the corpus research procedure and its results are presented.

## Corpus Study Phase

### *Corpus*

As Table 5 shows, the corpus of the current study is comprised of 90 research articles, written by Iranian academic writers, from 30 leading international journals in the fields of English, Biology, and Engineering published from 2005 to 2018 (see Appendix 2 for the list of journals). The above-mentioned fields were selected intentionally by the researchers following the literature (Hyland, 2002; 2005) in order to indicate a representative cross-section of academic practices. The salient point of selecting such a corpus is that it provides a copious number of target features in texts that differ substantially in their epistemological roots. In the current phase, we selected the single-author research articles because it would be practically impossible to track stance taking of a specific author in multiple-author articles. Following that, the texts were converted into an electronic corpus of 700.000 words and then stance markers were detected using NVivo.

**Table 5.**  
*The Corpus of the Study in a Nutshell*

Field	Number of Articles	Time Span	Nature
English	30	2005-2018	Soft
Biology	30	2005-2018	Hard
Engineering	30	2005-2018	Hard

### *Corpus Analysis Procedure*

In order to conduct the corpus study, NVivo 12 was utilized. NVivo is a computer software that provides researchers with a set of tools that will assist them in undertaking an analysis of qualitative data. As stated by Bazeley and Jackson (2013), this software is developed by researchers, and will continue to be developed with researchers’ feedback in several ways as they work with the data. Since conducting a corpus study is next to impossible without a computer software and the use of a computer for qualitative analysis can contribute to a more rigorous analysis, a good software can play an undeniable role in providing more accurate results. Therefore, Nvivo was employed due to its availability and applicability in the current research.

In order to conduct the corpus study, at first, the corpus was inputted into NVivo. Subsequently, nearly 300 words and collocations known as stance markers in four groups of hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions (see Appendix 3 for the list of stance markers) were analyzed in these articles to investigate the writers' stance taking in their articles. The software provided us not only with the frequency of stance markers, but also with the context in which they were used. Following that, the researchers analyzed the results to distinguish the words that had different functions in the texts.

As the results in Table 6 indicate, the most frequent subcategory of stance markers belonged to hedges regardless of the field of study. As Hyland (2018) noted, the highest frequency of hedges reflects the "critical importance of distinguishing fact from opinion in academic writing and the need for writers to evaluate their assertions in ways that are likely to be persuasive" (p. 172). Similarly, the frequency of boosters were nearly two times more in the English group in comparison to the Biology and Engineering groups. In the same vein, the frequency of attitude markers in research articles of hard sciences was significantly lower than research articles in soft sciences. As Table 6 further shows, self-mention is the least frequent stance marker in Biology and Engineering research articles. It means that academic writers in hard sciences do not have much tendency to take an authorial stance towards what they write. Moreover, the frequency of self-mention is nearly three times more in the English group suggesting their tendency to reflect their own voice and signal their authorial presence in their articles.

**Table 6.**  
*Stance Features by Discipline (per 1000 words)*

Discipline	Hedges	Boosters	Attitude Markers	Self-mention
English	35.2	9.7	11.4	6.3
Biology	21.5	4.2	5.3	2.8
Engineering	20.8	3.4	3.2	2.3

As Table 6 illustrates, there were also substantial variations in the use of stance markers across disciplinary communities. Supporting the findings of the main survey administration, the results of the corpus study revealed that academic writers from soft sciences had the highest frequency of stance markers in comparison to their counterparts in hard sciences. With a glance at the results of the corpus study, it can be inferred that academic writers in different disciplines present themselves and take an authorial stance in their texts differently with those in the English group and soft sciences taking far more explicitly involved and personal positions than those in the biology and engineering fields.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The current study aimed to investigate the impact of disciplinary conventions on Iranian academic writers' stance taking in their research articles as well as

their authorial identity. To this end, the researchers went through two main phases including a survey administration and a corpus study. In the survey administration phase, the authorial identity questionnaire was administered to 150 Iranian academic writers from three different fields, namely English, Biology, and Engineering. Following that, the results of ANOVA indicated a significant difference in the authorial identity of academic writers within these fields. As a complementary phase to the survey administration, a corpus study was run using NVivo to investigate how academic writers from these three different fields differ in the way they take an authorial stance in their research papers.

Rejecting the traditional tags of academic writing, the findings of the current study are in line with those of Hyland (2001, 2005, 2018) and Jiang and Hyland (2015). The results of the study revealed that the tendency shown in the authorial identity questionnaire results and the frequency of stance markers were significantly higher in the English group than the Biology and Engineering groups. In this sense, it can be argued that the observations made in the current study are in line with Hyland's (2001) in that the different frequencies of first person usage among disciplines indicates different ways of conducting research and persuading readers among academic writers of various fields. That is, students of hard sciences downplayed their personal role and focused on the systematic measurement and replicability of the study, believing that research outcomes would be the same irrespective of the writer. The high proportion of personal pronouns in soft sciences, by contrast, suggested a different approach and perspective that involves establishing a more authorial role toward entities that are less clear-cut and measurable than hard sciences.

Akin to Hyland's work (2018), in the current study, the frequency of hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions were more in English papers in comparison to biology and engineering ones. Based on the findings of the survey administration and the corpus study, it can be argued that "judgements and hedges are found in all academic writing, for instance, but are particularly important in the more discursive soft fields where interpretations are typically more explicit and the criteria for establishing proof less reliable" (Hyland, 2018, p. 174). As the results indicated, self-mentions also played a more visible role in soft disciplines than in hard sciences. As Hyland (2002) noted, "academic writing, like all forms of communication, is an act of identity: it not only conveys disciplinary 'content' but also carries a representation of the writer" (p. 1092). Accordingly, personal pronouns are the most visible manifestation of the writer's stance and representation.

According to Hyland (2018, p. 174), in soft disciplines, academic writers are "exhorted by style guides and supervisors to present their own 'voice' and display a personal perspective, suitably supported with data and intertextual evidence, towards the issues they discuss, weaving different kinds of support into a coherent and individual argument". In contrast, in hard disciplines, "the community tends to value competence in research practices rather than those who conduct them, and so a personal voice is subsumed by community knowledge and routines".

The findings of the current study are also in line with Hyland's (2005), illustrating that hedges were found to be the most frequent stance markers showing the importance of presenting ideas with caution for academic writers. Regarding disciplinary distribution, the results further revealed that soft sciences contained a higher proportion of interactional markers than hard sciences. This suggests that those involved in humanity and soft sciences have more freedom to take interpersonal positions and reflect their authority than those in hard sciences. Supporting the findings of this study, Hyland (2005) argued that the cumulative and structured nature of hard sciences makes authors just emphasize the demonstrative generalizations rather than individual interpretations by contributing to strong claims of science. On the other hand, writers in soft sciences are less able to rely on the quantitative results to establish their claims; therefore, it necessitates their greater involvement in creating a convincing discourse regarding their claims.

In conclusion, as Jiang and Hyland (2015) have noted, such differences are rooted in different epistemological preferences in different disciplines. These authors believe that "soft knowledge domains rely to a much greater extent on cognitive understanding and the construction of theoretical modes of understanding and argument than the hard sciences" and on the other hand, "knowledge in the hard sciences relies far more on empirical evidence and the creation of facts through experimentation and observations" (p. 12). Therefore, as writers in soft disciplines are more likely to take a stance towards their claims and evaluate both their own and others' works, the frequent use of stance markers is justified completely. Therefore, academic writers in soft disciplines, i.e., the English group, have a stronger tendency of having authorial presence, an authorial stance, and an inclination to construct a valid representation of themselves in their texts in comparison to their counterparts in hard disciplines—i.e., Biology and Engineering groups—who prefer to present their findings as facts rather than reflecting themselves in their texts as academic writers.

By rejecting the impersonal, objective, and cold nature of academic writing, this study makes academicians, curriculum designers and course developers aware of the importance of authorial identity expression as constructed in written discourse. Such an awareness benefits academics in making students reflect on their academic practices and their available options for entering the academic community. Being aware of the importance of authorial identity and authorial stance in academic writing, academic writing course designers and instructors can design writing courses in which novice writers can adopt the identity of an academic writer and learn to project a valid representation of themselves in their writing. The current study also broadens the understanding of academicians about the disciplinary conventions and their effects on shaping academic writers' authorial voice and identity. Hence, the current study provides course developers and curriculum designers with an insight about the way they should design academic writing courses for hard and soft sciences, how academic writers from these disciplines act differently, and how they can measure academic writers' authorial identity in different disciplines.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Questionnaire Components, Their Related Items, and Reliability Indices

<i>Component</i>	<i>Questionnaire items</i>	<i>Reliability</i>
<i>Authorial voice and identity</i>	1. It is important for me to have my own voice in academic writing as an author. 2. Academic writing is all about writer's self-representation through language. 6. I take a strong authorial stance in my academic writing. 13. As an academic writer, I make my voice heard more than others in academic writing. 14. I do not limit myself to communicating some messages in academic writing. I also like to present my voice and identity as an academic writer. 15. If someone reads my academic writing, they can recognize my reflected voice and identity as an author in it. 16. I enjoy conveying ideas through my own voice in academic writing. 17. I have my own identity as an academic writer. 18. My presence in my academic writing is affected by my authorial identity. 20. Using academic writing strategies, I project my authoritative voice and identity as an author in texts.	0.92
<i>Authorial Persona</i>	5. It is a useful strategy to remove yourself from your text as an author in academic writing. 8. I think I have nothing worth saying in my words in academic writing. 10. It is not important for me to reflect myself in academic writing. 19. I find it difficult to express ideas in my own words while I am writing academically.	0.77
<i>Authorial Background</i>	3. My self-representation in academic writing is affected by the discourses I have been exposed to in my life. 7. My previous life experiences gradually shaped my authorial identity. 9. My identity as an academic writer has been always in a process of reshaping through my life history and experiences.	0.79
<i>Authorial style</i>	4. Using my unique academic writing style, I can reflect my identity as an author in texts. 12. Writing academically in my own style helps me to establish a valid self as an academic writer.	0.73

## Appendix 2

### List of Journals

<b>English</b>	
Journal of Pragmatics	English for Academic Purposes
Applied Linguistics	TESOL Quarterly
Journal of Second Language Writing	Discourse Studies
English for Specific Purposes	Journal of Academic Ethics
Second Language Learning and Teaching	Journal of Discourse Studies
<b>Biology</b>	
Human Fertility	Virus Genes
Molecular Biology Research Communications	Medical Genetics
Agricultural Communications	Journal of Cell Biology
The Plant Cell	Plant, Cell, and Environment
Molecular and Cellular Biology	Mycological Research
<b>Engineering</b>	
Analog Integrated Circuits & Signal Processing	Solid State Electronics
Journal of Micro-electromechanical Systems	Annals of Nuclear Energy
Materials Today Communications	Microwave Theory and Techniques
Transportation Research Record	Energy sources
Journal of Materials Chemistry	Chemical Engineering Journal

### Appendix 3

#### List of Stance Markers

##### Hedges

About	Perceive	Partly	could	presume	Interpret
Almost	Perhaps	Unlikely	couldn't	probability	Likely
Appear	Plausible	Unsure	doubt	probable	maybe
Approximately	Possibility	Usually	estimate	probably	might
argue	possible	May	expect	relatively	more or less
around	Possibly	Should	suggest	seems	Often
assume	postulate	shouldn't	indicate	seemingly	Partially
assumption	predict	Would	guess	can be seen	suspect
conceivably	prediction	wouldn't	hypothesize	sometimes	tend
conjecture	presumably	think	hypothetically	somewhat	uncertain
superficially	speculate	Suppose	surmise		

##### Boosters

actually	show that	Basically	confirm	necessarily	surely
admittedly	it is clear	I believe	demonstrate	obvious	we think
always	clearly	believe	determine	obviously	I think
apparent	actually	certain	establish	patently	undoubtedly
apparently	indeed	certain that	evident	show	unmistakably
will	obvious	certainly	we find	show that	sure
won't	obviously	to be clear	generally	proved	we know
the fact that	of course	conclude	indeed	precisely	conclusive
show	assuredly				

##### Attitude Markers

unfortunately	surprisingly	hopefully	I prefer	I believe	agree
I agree	disagree	appropriate	logical	remarkable	fascinating
extraordinarily	interesting	it is important	interestingly	important	I wish that
fortunately	truly	I hope	It is clear that		

##### Self-Mentions

I	me	Mine	we	our	ours
us					