

AUTHORIAL VOICE IN ISLAMIC COLLEGE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS' ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

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Abstract: While considered elusive and abstract, authorial voice is paramount in English writing. Unfortunately, many of Indonesian EFL learners found it is highly challenging to show their voice in their writing. The importance of voice is even exaggerated in argumentative writing, since this kind of writing needs obvious stance of the writer. This study investigates the authorial voice students made in their argumentative writing. The purpose of this study is to gain the picture of students' writing ability especially in authorial voice to map the road in guiding the next writing classes. The object of the study is the argumentative writing made by English department students at one Indonesian State College of Islamic Studies in their writing III course. Using Hyland's interactional model of voice (2008) the data analysis results the authorial presence in the essays is in position 2 at 0 - 4 scale which means the reader feels somehow weak presence of the authorial voice in the essay. This result confirms the findings of some previous studies that EFL learners especially from 'interdependent' cultural background tend to find this authorial voice difficult in writing English essay.

Keywords: authorial voice, self voicing, argumentative writing

INTRODUCTION

Authorship voice, self voicing in some other terms, is said to be a crucial factor in L2 learning. In English writing culture, authoritativeness and presence is highly important (Hyland, 2008). To write an acceptable English text, an EFL learner must be able to show their voice in the text (Stapelton 2001 and Li 1996). Therefore, EFL learners need to learn how to make their voices heard in their writing since an acceptable English writing must show the authorial voice otherwise the essay will be considered as substandard. This is obviously not an easy task, especially for those whose culture is different from English culture. Indonesian EFL learners also face the same problem, since we have been raised in “interdependent culture whose values are hierarchial” that diminishes our individual voice.

Authorial voice is defined in many ways, voice in a written text is considered as ‘the expression of the essential individuality of a particular writer’ (Stewart, 1992 : 283) and ‘an ideal metaphor for individualism’ (Elbow, 1999: 334). And despite of its intangible existence, it is regarded as ‘the fundamental quality of good writing’ (Stewart, 1992 : 283). Matsuda (2001) asserts that ‘voice is the amalgamative effect of the use of discursive and non-discursive features that language users choose, deliberately or otherwise, from socially available, yet ever changing repertoires’ (Matsuda, 2001 : 40). Most recently, Hyland (2008: 5) defines voice in written text as ‘the way writers express their personal views, authoritativeness and presence’. So, voice shows what is the writer’s view and stance towards the issue under discussion.

Since showing voice in English writing is considered as difficult, especially because this is tenuous, teaching writing need to follow certain steps to achieve the purpose, i.e., showing authorial voice. Hyland (2008) believes that showing voice in writing could be drawn on ‘culturally available resources’. Therefore, he proposes a comprehensive model that considers voice in academic writing as interaction between writers and readers. By this he further make a model comprises of two ‘system’ in which one is about the writer stance dimension and the other is the engagement with the readers. These two systems is then realised through some linguistics devices as we can see in figure 1.

Essay writing course is also offered to the students in semester 4 at one Indonesian State Collge in which this study is conducted. As a part of writing sequence, essay writing continues the process of writing in English after the students had paragraph writing and sentence writing in the previous semesters. In essay writing, the students are taught and exercising how to expand their already existing knowledge about paragraph writing into a longer piece of writing. The students are always encouraged that the essay writing takes similar steps and efforts as paragraph writings, but with different size. Therefore, the students feel familiar with the structure of essay writing from their knowledge in paragraph writing. This feeling of familiarity give the students capital and confidence in essay writing class.

There are four types of essay writing presented in the course. They are: comparison and contrast, cause and effect, classification and argumentative essays. The selection of this three genres of writing over the others have several rationale. The first one is for curriculum sustainable reason. In the previous writing course they have already taught about how to make a process, descriptive and narrative paragraphs. Since essay writing has many similarities with paragraph writing, the genres taught in the paragraph writing will not be delivered again in essay writing. This is due to the variation of genres that need to be introduced and exercised to and by the students cannot be covered in one semester. The second is for equipping students with skills that are necessary for writing their thesis at the last semester. At the end of their study, students must write a research report in which they must write it in English. This research report requires the students' skills in comparing and contrasting, giving causes for some effects, classifying things and presenting and defending their arguments. Therefore, the students are taught how to do those required skills in the essay writing.

From those four genres delivered in essay writing, argumentative essay seems more challenging for the students than the others. In argumentative essay, students must provide an issue and show their stance towards the issue. This is quite different with the other type of writing. In the other three types the students need only to make description about something. And the result of the description will then

be presented in various ways whether to make a comparison and contrast, to investigate the case and the effect or to classify something based on certain criteria. In argumentative writing, the students need to take a position over an issue. They also must give strong rationale of their stance. This kind of writing, requires more than just describing something. It includes the process of describing something to various extent and at the same time proposing the writer opinion and idea which supports the taken stance. In short, argumentative writing requires the students to show their voice; the voice of the position and the voice of why the writer take the position over the other.

Voice is an abstract concept coming from Bakhtin's (1996) belief that voice shows the views and intention of someone. Therefore, voice must be heard not only in speaking but also in writing. Afterwards, voice has become a debatable issue in second language writing. However, educators believe that teaching students to show their voice in L2 writing is important (Connor and Kaplan 1987, Li 1996, Matsuda 2001 and Stapleton 2002).

The nature of argumentative writing about self voicing is difficult for students for several reasons, mainly because of cultural reason. The first one is from student side. As a matter of fact, we are Indonesian are brought up in a different cultural situation from westerners with regards to self voicing. In most of our culture, children don't show their opinion on something as much westerner children show their voices. In school especially, teacher is considered as the source of knowledge and must be regarded as if they never wrong. Showing our voice, especially the one which is different from the teacher voices is also considered as not polite. Even though students have different opinion with the teacher they tend to keep their opinion rather than showing it to the class. This is because being different with the teacher is considered as not good. This is similar to previous studies done by Matsuda (2001), Kaplan (1987) and Ivanic (2001) in which they found 'interdependent culture' in which collective value overweight individuality which further weaken individual voice. Secondly, at the teacher side, since they live their life in such a culture, they tend to consider themselves as the prototypical teacher made by our society, i.e., source of knowledge, always correct and most importantly

they are not ready to the challenges of different opinion from their students. These two factors seems complementing to each other in shaping the "silent" culture in our society.

However, our cultural background cannot be the excuse of the lack of voice in our argumentative writing. Hyland's interactional model of voice need to be implemented in our teaching writing as to reach one of paramount requirements in English writing, i.e., authorial voice. This study investigates the authorial voice of English Department students in their argumentative writing. By revealing the characteristic of the students' voicing, the department then can map the road to guide the students writing argumentative text in which their voice is heard loudly.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research is a qualitative study aimed at finding out the way EFL learners in Islamic college show their voice in their argumentative writing. This design suits the nature of this study since the data are in the form of written expressions showing the students voice and the analysis was done qualitatively.

Object of the research

The object of this study is students' argumentative writing produced during writing III course in English Department of one Indonesian state college in 2014 academic year. There are 54 pieces of argumentative text written by 54 students from two classes.

Instrument of the Research

The main instrument of this study is the researcher herself as she conducted all the process of collecting the data. In collecting the data, the researcher used some tools such as commonly used stationary for conducting teaching-learning process. As the data can only be obtained by eliciting them from the source, i.e., the students taking writing III, a test is administered to guide the eliciting process. However, the test comprised only a single instruction asking the students to write an argumentative essay.

Data Collection Method

The process of collecting the data was initiated with giving instruction to the students in writing III to write argumentative essay. Since the test is carried out in writing III classes, the students has previously taught about argumentative text, including the characteristics and elements that differ argumentative texts from any other writing genres. Therefore, the students have knowledge about argumentative essay but they are still novice in writing argumentative essay.

Data Analysis

The data analysis is then carried out to find out the characteristics of voice in English Department's students argumentative writing. The framework used to analyse the data was of Hyland's interactional model of voice (2008). The rubric based on the model is the main reference to analyse the data.

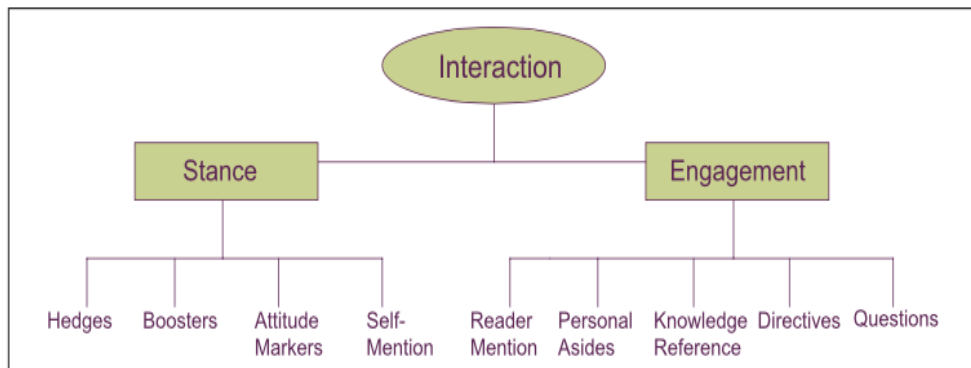


Figure 1. Hyland's (2008) interactional model of voice.

Definitions of voice elements

Hedges are words, phrases or clauses that is meant to give some distance between the writer and the proposition they said. Some of the most commonly used hedges include: *can/ could, may/might, perhaps, maybe, probably, possible/possibly, suppose/supposedly, sometimes, seem, appear, relative/relatively, tend to, tentatively, likely, about, more or less, to some extent, in some case, etc.*

Boosters, or Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003) label it as “intensifier” , are used to show the writer’s degree of confident in their proposition. According to Hyland (2008), it is also used to ‘mark [the author’s] involvement with the topic’ (p. 9). Some of the commonly identified boosters include: *very, certainly, clearly, definitely, enormously, never, extremely, always, apparently, indeed, etc.*

Attitude markers, according to Hyland (2008), are defined as verbs, adjectives and adverbs that expressing personal or professional affective attitude of the delivered proposition. Such markers are used to show the writer’s stance on an issue. Here are some examples of the use of attitude markers: ‘This *bad* strategy has resulted in massive failures at the exams, making the process of finding a job much harder for the dropouts;’ ‘This has *fortunately* changed over the course of the last century.’

Authorial self-mention refers to the use of first person pronouns and possessive adjectives in an information presentation. As Hyland (2008) points out, ‘[t]he presence or absence of explicit author reference is a conscious choice by writers to adopt a particular stance and ... authorial identity’ (p. 10). It could therefore include *the use of I, me, my, mine*, and sometimes also *we, us, our*, and *ours*.

Reader pronoun use, while authorial self-mention use first personal pronoun, this device uses second person pronouns and possessives such as *you, your, and yours*. However, the use of ‘*we*’ (and *us, our, ours* here) is a more implicit way of ‘weaving the potential point of view of the reader into the argument’ (Hyland, 2008, p. 11).

Personal asides are comments made by the writer in the middle of a statement. This insertion is used not only for briefly interrupting the proposition but also for interpersonal engagement made by the writer to the reader.

Reference to shared knowledge can be used to make the reader engagement in the proposition being made. Some of commonly used phrases for this include ‘*of course,*’ ‘*it is obvious,*’ ‘*it is quite common that...*’ or ‘*as we all know,*’ to just name few.

Directives are used to direct the reader to the information in particular place. It includes imperatives, obligation modals, or other phrases that are used for that purpose. It could also be the writer’s

instruction of how to comprehend propositions they say or will say. These could be parenthetical citations of other sources, or the use of such linguistic devices as ‘note...’, ‘consider...’, ‘refer to...’, ‘think about...’, ‘let’s/let us...’ and other similar words or phrases that serve as direct reader signposts

Rhetorical or audience directed questions are seen by Hyland (2008) as ‘the main strategy of dialogic involvement, inviting engagement, encouraging curiosity and bringing interlocutors into an arena where they can be led to the writer’s viewpoint’ (p. 12).

The articulation of the central point refers to ‘the clarity and frequency of the central point stated in a piece of writing, which is also a way of expressing author stance.’ (Zhao: 225)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study obtained from the data analysis using Hyland’s framework which is developed into a rubric (the rubric is in the appendix). The rubric consists of eleven characteristics (thus labeled as C1,C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9, C10 and C11) developed from those nine factors of interaction in Hyland’s model.

Category	Students																											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
C1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
C2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
C3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C4	1	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0
C5	2	2	1	3	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	2	0	0	3	4	4	1	4	4	3	3	4	2	2	4	3
C6	0	4	4	0	2	0	0	2	2	2	0	1	0	0	2	1	1	3	3	2	4	2	4	1	1	0	0	2
C7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	2	0	2	1
C8	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C10	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
C11	2	2	3	2	1	0	0	2	3	1	1	0	2	1	1	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Total	6	9	12	7	7	0	0	7	11	3	4	2	5	2	3	10	12	11	7	10	14	13	14	8	10	5	9	9

Category	Students																									
	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54
C1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
C2	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
C3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
C4	2	1	4	2	1	3	2	2	2	0	1	0	2	4	1	3	1	1	4	1	2	2	2	4	1	2
C5	2	3	4	3	1	1	4	3	2	4	1	2	2	3	3	2	2	1	4	2	4	2	1	4	1	4
C6	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	0	3	2	3	4	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	3	4	0	0
C7	1	2	2	1	0	3	1	0	2	0	1	1	2	3	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0
C8	0	1	1	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	2	3	2	1	0	0	1	0
C9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C10	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
C11	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	2	3	3	4	0	3	2	2	4	3	3	3	3	4	2	3
Total	12	10	17	12	8	12	14	9	14	7	9	8	13	20	5	13	5	6	21	10	11	12	11	18	5	9

From the findings, we can count the total score of each category, as follows:

- C1 (Use of Hedges) = 7
- C2 (Use of Boosters) = 12
- C3 (Use of Attitude Markers) = 5
- C4 (Authorial Self-mention) = 70
- C5 (Articulation of the central point) = 126
- C6 (Use of Reader Pronoun) = 75
- C7 (Use of Personal Aside) = 40
- C8 (Reference to Shared Knowledge) = 21
- C9 (Use of Directives) = 0
- C10 (Use of Rethorical Questions) = 13
- C11 (Overall Authorial present and reader engagement) = 128

Hyland’s interactional model of voice comprises two main branches, the first is STANCE which is further elaborated into hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mention and the second is ENGAGEMENT which consists of reader mention, personal aside, knowledge reference, directives and questions. The first element, i.e., the stance is the main concern in this study, however, the engagement is also scrutinised for additional information. The stance is then elaborated into

5 categories in the rubric i.e., use of hedges (C1), use of boosters (C2), use of attitude markers (C3), authorial self-mention (C4), and articulation of the central point (C5). The additional C5 is important since the authorial voices can be achieved through the explicit main points expressed throughout the essay.

The scoring is in 0 – 4 scale for each category. For C1, C2, C3, C4, C6, 0 is given when there is no occurrence, 1 is for 1 – 2 occurrences, 2 is for 3 – 4 occurrences, 3 is for 5 – 7 occurrences and 4 is for 8 or more occurrences. For C5, 0 is for no occurrences, 1 is for 1 occurrence, 2 is for 2 occurrences, 3 is for 3 occurrences and 4 is for 4 occurrences. For C7 – C10, 0 is for no occurrences, 1 is for 1 occurrence, 2 is for 2 – 3 occurrences, 3 is for 4 – 5 occurrences and 4 is for 6 or more occurrences. For the last category, C11, the scoring is given based on the readers' sense as follows:

0 is for the reader feels no sense of authorial presence in the writing, 1 is for the reader feels very weak authorial presence, 2 is for the reader feels a somewhat weak sense, 3 is for the reader feels fairly strong authorial presence and 4 is for a strong sense felt by the readers.

The result shows that the highest total score is C11 which is 128, followed by C5, C6, C4, C7, C8, C10, C2, C1, C3 and no one scores in C9. It means that the mean of sense of writer voice presence in the students' argumentative writing is $128 : 54 = 2.3$ which means "the reader feels somewhat weak sense of authorial presence in the writing". This is not surprising for Indonesian EFL learners since we culturally have been brought up not to "spell loud" our thinking and respect much to others (Stapleton 2001: 509, Widodo 2012 : 88). Another reason is that EFL learners might be viewed as incompetent to show their voice since they have been minimally exposed to the target language (Benesch 1999 in Widodo 2012: 88). This does not mean that the Indonesian EFL learners have failed in incorporating voice in their English writing since authorial voice is considered as vital in writing English (Hyland 2002: 5), they are still learning to do so as well as their teachers do. Some other researches on this topic also find that L2 writers often sound weak in authorial voice (Fox 1994, Matsuda 2001, Ramanathan and Kaplan 1987, Cadman 1997). However, there are two students that the texts make no sense at all about

arguing something. The text is plainly describing something without giving any central point of what their stance and voice over the issue. These two students not only gaining 0 for C11 but for all of the category they get 0. This is because their essay is purely descriptive.

The articulation of the central points in the students writing is relatively high. This makes sense since to express the main point in an argumentative writing is a must otherwise the text will have no soul. Moreover, expressing the central point is far more familiar than mentioning personal pronoun (C4 and C6) to make their voice heard. This is also because of most of us believe that scientific writing is better impersonal than showing personal pronoun throughout the text.

The fact that the use of directives in this study is 0 is also interesting. The use of directives in an argumentative text is to direct the reader to particular information in particular place in the text. This could also be a direction of how to comprehend part of the text by other part of the text. Experts tend to use directive for those purposes. However, to use directive in scientific essay is challenging especially for novice L2 writers. They are still struggling with the main features of argumentative writing such as to make a sound thesis statements and to support the thesis with as logical details as possible. Therefore, directive in this study scores 0 since as I said in the method section, that the subject of the study is beginner in writing English essay.

Similarly, the use of hedges in this study also score a low mark. The total score is only 7. This means most of the essay did not use hedges. While hedges is very common in English native texts, to use hedges in argumentative writing is not an easy task for Indonesian EFL learners. The use of hedges in argumentative writing is tricky for the subject of this study. They believe that in a scientific text the writer is demanded to give true information, while hedging is considered as uncertainty. This uncertainty is similar to false information for some students, therefore, the use of hedges in their writing is low. This is similar to the use of attitude-markers. In the students' opinion, personal pronoun, attitude markers, hedging as well as boosters make the scientificness of the essay decreased. For the subjects of the study, those elements tend to be personal and does not fit into a scientific -

argumentative writing. Student believe about what is scientific writing – which is impersonal, must be in passive voice, full of certainty – to some extent has hinder them to use such linguistics devices which in English culture used as devices to show the authorial voice.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Writing as one of productive skill seems to be the last proficiency to acquire by the EFL learners. This is due to the nested cultural sense which always appear in the students' writing. Many researchers has come to conclusion that cultural influence in writing is evident and to turn this influence into other culture is not an easy task. However, this might to some extent give enrichment to the study of world Englishes in written form.

The lack of authorial voice devices in the argumentative essays made by English department students in this college which is further affect the overall authorial voice of the text has encouraged several previous studies that L2 EFL learners found the self-voicing in English writing is difficult.

More than a half of the subjects found argumentative writing as the most challenging, and s the result, instead of writing argumentative essay they tend to describe an issue that make the essay argumentative in form by descriptive in sense.

Therefore, it is highly recommended that the students must be to some extent trained to neable them writing sound argumentative essay since this genre of writing is the one they will produce in completeing their study, i.e., writing their thesis.

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Appendix :

The Hyland's Interactional model of voice rubric

	C1: Use of hedges	C2: Use of boosters	C3: Use of attitude markers	C4: Authorial self-mention	C5: Articulation of the central point
4	Hedges are used always or almost always in the author's claims. 8↑	Boosters are used always or almost always in the author's claims. 8↑	Attitude markers are used always or almost always in the author's claims. 8↑	First person pronouns are used extensively. 8↑	A clear central point is articulated more than three times in the essay. 4↑
3	Hedges are used frequently in the author's claims. 5-7	Boosters are used frequently in the author's claims. 5-7	Attitude markers are used frequently in the author's claims. 5-7	First person pronouns are used frequently. 5-7	A clear central point is articulated three times in the essay. 3
2	Hedges are used occasionally in the author's claims. 3-4	Boosters are used occasionally in the author's claims. 3-4	Attitude markers are used occasionally in the author's claims. 3-4	First person pronouns are used occasionally. 3-4	A clear central point is articulated twice in the essay. 2
1	Hedges are rarely used in the author's claims. 1-2	Boosters are rarely used in the author's claims. 1-2	Attitude markers are rarely used in the author's claims. 1-2	First person pronouns are rarely used. 1-2	A clear central point is articulated once in the essay. 1
0	Hedges are never used in the author's claims. 0	Boosters are never used in the author's claims. 0	Attitude markers are never used in the author's claims. 0	First person pronoun is never used. 0	A clear central point is not present. 0
	C6: Use of reader pronouns	C7: Use of personal asides	C8: References to shared knowledge	C9: Use of directives/reader signposts	C10: Use of rhetorical/audience directed questions
4	Reader pronouns are used extensively. 8↑	Personal asides are used extensively. 6↑	There are extensive references to the shared knowledge. 6↑	Directives are used extensively. 6↑	Rhetorical or audience-directed questions are used extensively. 6↑
3	Reader pronouns are used frequently. 5-7	Personal asides are used frequently. 4-5	There are frequent references to shared knowledge. 4-5	Directives are used frequently. 4-5	Rhetorical or audience-directed questions are used frequently. 4-5
2	Reader pronouns are used occasionally. 3-4	Personal asides are used occasionally. 2-3	There are occasional references to shared knowledge. 2-3	Directives are used occasionally. 2-3	Rhetorical or audience-directed questions are used occasionally. 2-3

	C6: Use of reader pronouns	C7: Use of personal asides	C8: References to shared knowledge	C9: Use of directives/reader signposts	C10: Use of rhetorical/audience directed questions
1	Reader pronouns are rarely used. 1-2	Personal asides are rarely used. 1	There are few references to the shared knowledge. 1	Directives are rarely used. 1	Rhetorical or audience-directed questions are rarely used. 1
0	Reader pronouns are never used. 0	Personal asides are never used. 0	There is no reference to shared knowledge. 0	Directives are never used. 0	Rhetorical or audience-directed questions are never used. 0
CI I: Overall authorial presence and reader engagement					
4	The reader feels a strong sense of authorial presence in the writing				
3	The reader feels a fairly strong sense of authorial presence in the writing				
2	The reader feels a somewhat weak sense of authorial presence in the writing				
1	The reader feels a very weak sense of authorial presence in the writing				
0	The reader feels no sense of authorial presence in the writing				

(Zhao: 223-224)