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DIFFERENT PRONOUNS, SAME REFERENTS: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF *I*, *WE* AND *YOU* IN L2 LECTURES ACROSS DISCIPLINES

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Abstract

In recent times, studies on *I*, *we* and *you* (tri-PP) in academic lectures have focused on the L1 context. This paper, however, investigates the commonalities in the discourse reference of *I*, *we*, and *you* across three disciplinary supercommunities (DSs): Humanities (HS), Social Sciences (HS), and Natural Sciences (NS), using a corpus from an L2 context. The concordance tool in *AntConc* was used to search for all instances of the tri-PP. The referents of the tri-PP were identified based on the contextual and co-textual clues. The study revealed three referents –lecturer, students, and lecturer + students – which were common to all the three investigated pronouns. Furthermore, the above referents were also noted to be common to all the three broad knowledge domains. In a nutshell, the study revealed cross-pronominal and disciplinary commonalities in the discourse referents in academic lectures. The implications for the theory of referentiality are also discussed.

Keywords: classroom discourse, academic lectures, personal pronouns, discourse referents, corpus-based approach

1. Introduction

Interpersonal or interactive resources constitute part of the language of academic lectures (see Crawford Camiciottoli 2007), which are generally employed to foster interaction between the discourse participants (i.e. lecturers and students). Among the available interactive resources are questions, imperatives, lexical bundles, metadiscourse, and personal pronouns (see Friginal, Lee, Polat & Roberson 2017; Lee & Subtirelu 2015; Liu

& Chen 2020, Nashruddin & Ningtyas, 2020; Sánchez-García 2020), which have engendered the attention of scholars in recent times. Personal pronouns, particularly *I*, *we* and *you* (the triumvirate personal pronouns, referred to hereafter as ‘tri-PP’) are key interactive resources in academic lectures (Akoto 2020; Akoto et al. 2021 a, b). Friginal, Lee, Polat and Roberson (2017, 95) note that ‘personal pronouns play important roles in the classroom, as these markers reflect levels of learner and teacher involvement, engagement, and interaction in classroom events’. Consequently, a number of studies have focused on various aspects of their use in spoken academic genres such as classroom lectures, supervisory sessions, and tutorial sessions. Most of such studies (e.g. Ädel 2010; Connor 2008; Dafouz, Nunez & Sancho 2007; Fortuño & Gómez 2005; Milne 2006; Rounds 1987b, and Zhang, Gao & Zheng 2014) explore the referents of the tri-PP, which play significant roles in lecturers’ interaction with their students.

Some studies considered the effect of disciplinarity on the discourse referents of the tri-PP in academic lectures (Akoto 2020; Akoto et al. 2021a, b; Yaakob 2013; Yeo & Ting 2014)). For instance, Yaakob (2013) and Yeo and Ting (2014) investigated the semantic referents of the tri-PP in university classroom lectures across disciplinary supercommunities (DSs). Yeo and Ting (2014) adopted the dipartite view on classification of disciplines into arts and science, while Yaakob (2013) adopted the quadripartite approach (arts and humanities, social sciences, life sciences, and physical sciences). Yeo and Ting (2014) observed that *you* was used to refer to speakers only, audience only and speakers + audience. Yeo and Ting’s (2014) study was generally confirmed by Friginal et al. (2017) who identified similar referents for *I*, *we* and *you*. Based on a similar lecture-introduction corpus from MICASE, Yaakob (2013) also examined the referents of the tri-PP across Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Life/Physical Sciences. He discovered that *I* as a lecturer, and *I* as a student were common to all broad knowledge domains. On the other hand, *we* recorded five semantic referents: lecturer, students, lecturer + students, people in general, and people in the field. Furthermore, *you* was used to refer to students, anyone, and anyone in the field. Unlike Yeo and Ting (2014), Yaakob (2013) noted both qualitative and quantitative differences in the semantic referents of the tri-PP. For instance, he realized that *I* for people in general and *we* as *people in the field* were limited only to Life/Physical Sciences. Again, *you* for anyone in the field was identified to be common to Arts and Humanities, as well as Social Sciences only.

Furthermore, Rounds (1987a), in her study on the use of PPs in Mathematics lectures, identified other referents of *I* and *we* beside their ‘prototypical uses’ (p. 16) or ‘traditional semantic mappings’ (p. 17). She noticed that semantically *I* designated lecturer,

Mathematicians (where she argues can be replaced with *they*) and anyone who studies Mathematics (which she contends can be replaced with the indefinite pronoun *one*). On *we*, Rounds (1987a) noted that it has a traditional semantic mapping inclusive *we* (*I + you*) and exclusive *we* (i.e. *I + they*) –which she identified in the corpus. She noted what she termed discourse-defined inclusive and exclusive *we* which respectively alluded to lecturer + students, and lecturer + mathematicians. Additionally, Rounds found *we* as *I* (lecturer), *we* as *you* (students) and *we* as *one* (anyone who does Mathematics). She remarked that *we* is in free variation with *I* and *you*, a realization confirmed by latter studies (e.g. Yaakob 2013; Yeo & Ting 2014; Zhihua 2011).

Furthermore, Fortanet (2004), in her study comprising lectures from education, Japanese Literature, Anthropology and Medical Anthropology, identified eight referents of *we*. She also used the traditional semantic mapping exclusive/inclusive *we* (Rounds, 1987a) as a basis. Besides, she identified *we* for a larger group of people including speaker and audience, speaker + audience, *we* for *I*, *we* for *you* (audience), speaker + other people, *we* for indefinite *you* or *one*, *we* for *they*, and then *we* for *you*. Similarly, Gomez (2006) compiled a corpus from the MICASE, totaling 54,529 words. She also realized two referents for *I* (i.e. *I* for fixed speaker, usually lecturer, and *I* for changing speaker). *You* also recorded the following as referents: audience (plural), interlocutor in dialogue (usually singular), interlocutor in reported speech (usually singular), *they*, *people*, *we*, and *I*.

The previous studies generally used corpora from the L1 context (contra Yeo & Ting, 2014). Finally, few of the studies (e.g. Akoto, 2020; Akoto et al. 2021a, b; Yeo & Ting 2014; Yaakob 2013) considered disciplinarity as a factor to the referents of the tri-PP. Moreover, they either adopted the quadripartite (e.g. Yaakob 2013), or di-partite (e.g. Yeo & Ting 2014) views to disciplinarity. This study, however, adopts the tripartite view that classifies disciplines into Natural Sciences (NS), Social Sciences (SS) and Humanities (HS) (see Hyland 2009) in order to establish how disciplinary commonalities inform the same referents across the tri-PP. Specifically, the paper examines the discourse referents common to the tri-PP across the three broad knowledge domains in academic lectures.

In the ensuing sections, we examine issues on methodology; discuss findings, and finally conclude with the implications of the findings, and recommendations for further studies.

2. Corpus and Analysis Procedure

There are several kinds of lectures in academia classroom lecture, inaugural lecture and

plenary lecture. The present study focused on classroom lecture which is regarded as part of classroom genres (Fortanet 2005). Consequently, we audio-recorded undergraduate academic lectures from two of the leading public universities in Ghana: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and University of Cape Coast as the data for the study. All the included lectures were from Ghanaian lecturers from the two English-medium universities under study, large classes, regular undergraduate students, spontaneous (not scripted) lectures, first semester introductory courses. The lectures were manually transcribed (guided by transcription conventions adapted from Jefferson 2004; Simpson et al. 2002) and processed into computer readable form. Given that the focus of the paper is the tri-PP used by lecturers, only lecturer-inputs in the lecturer-student classroom interaction were included in the corpus.

Table 1: Details on the corpus

Disciplinary Supercommunities	Number of Lectures	Word Counts
Humanities	7	36,586
English Language	3	
Philosophy	2	
Religious Studies	2	
Social Sciences	8	43,916
Law	2	
Communication Studies	2	
Political Science	2	
Educational Foundations	2	
Natural Sciences	3	34,622
Electrical Engineering	1	
Mathematics	1	
Biology	1	
Total		115,124

Table 1 shows the DSs and the individual disciplines, the sizes of the subcorpora and overall corpus size.

We used the concordance tool in *AntConc* (v. 3.5.7) Anthony, 2018) to search for the tri-PP in the corpus. Baker et al. (2008, 279) observe that “concordance analysis affords the examination of language features in co-text, while taking into account the context that the analyst is aware of and can infer from the co-text”. We then manually examined each

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‘occurrence’ to determine: a) its ‘pronounness’ as in ‘I’ in the name ‘I K Abban’ from the SS subcorpus referents in Figure 1.

Concordance Hits 542		File
Hit	KWIC	
198	Of course somebody like David and other people I can tell them because I just want to kill their voice. When I do that I do that as a joke. The point is	pssocsciknu
199	president in consultation with the council of state appointed a new justice I. K. Abban who was then a supreme court judge as a chief justice and it w	edufnsocsci
200	and set against the Attorney General as the first defendant and the Justice I K Abban as the second defendant. And this was the release it was seeking	edufnsocsci
201	stitution. The president should not have abrogated and appointed justice I K Abban as he was not a person of high moral character and proven integ	edufnsocsci
202	er and proven integrity. Thus a declaration that the appointment of justice I K Abban as Chief Justice by the president as well as the advice from the c	edufnsocsci
203	uld declare his appointment as null and void. An injunction issuing justice I K Abban for acting or for wanting to act in the office of chief justice. What	edufnsocsci
204	nothing. And also a declaration that the warrant of appointment of Justice I K Abban was null and void and therefore he should be delivered for Supr	edufnsocsci
205	the case was application. The court stated that the appointment of Justice I K Abban a non-justiciable political question and that it was a duty that wa	edufnsocsci
206	ority whatsoever to restrain the second defendant who is the chief justice I K Abban erh to erh be appointed as the chief justice, let alone cancelling r	edufnsocsci
207	president in consultation with the council of state appointed a new justice I. K. Abban who was then a supreme court judge as a chief justice and it w	lawsocsciucc
208	and set against the Attorney General as the first defendant and the Justice I K Abban as the second defendant. And this was the release it was seeking	lawsocsciucc
209	stitution. The president should not have abrogated and appointed justice I K Abban as he was not a person of high moral character and proven integ	lawsocsciucc
210	er and proven integrity. Thus a declaration that the appointment of justice I K Abban as Chief Justice by the president as well as the advice from the c	lawsocsciucc
211	uld declare his appointment as null and void. An injunction issuing justice I K Abban for acting or for wanting to act in the office of chief justice. What	lawsocsciucc
212	nothing. And also a declaration that the warrant of appointment of Justice I K Abban was null and void and therefore he should be delivered for Supr	lawsocsciucc
213	the case was application. The court stated that the appointment of Justice I K Abban a non-justiciable political question and that it was a duty that wa	lawsocsciucc
214	ority whatsoever to restrain the second defendant who is the chief justice I K Abban erh to erh be appointed as the chief justice, let alone cancelling r	lawsocsciucc

Figure 1: Concordance shot of pseudo-I from SSC

Concordance Hits 720		File
Hit	KWIC	
1	free body diagram to consider. I think in class I also said this is for, you use it per	ergnatsciknu
2	also going to be one one one one. So I am concentrating on this. Are you following?	matnatsciknu
3	on. Alright. And when that happens, what is that I am doing? Am I not changing the space between	ergnatsciknu
4	this with your calculator and not go through what I am doing. Now! Having understood the factorial a	matnatsciknu
5	rial two factorial are you all following all that I am doing? The n factorial can be written like	matnatsciknu
6	equal to zero y is equal to zero and I am done. And I know are going to ask	ergnatsciknu
7	remaining will be theta. Right? Once I have, if I am done. At this point, I know where n	ergnatsciknu
8	there must be a difference. That is all. so I am done. So one one, two two. I am	ergnatsciknu
9	force. Alright so I am done. The friction so I am done so I am not going to talk	ergnatsciknu
10	e, the sense of the frictional force. Alright so I am done. The friction so I am done so	ergnatsciknu
11	, this then will be equal to n one. So I am done with this. No contribution. I get here	ergnatsciknu
12	these things to answer the question. Alright, so I am done with that. We are going to do,	ergnatsciknu
13	want y raised to the power four. That means I am expecting six combination four times x raised	matnatsciknu
14	. so I am done. So one one, two two. I am finished with the free body diagrams for this	ergnatsciknu
15	it, and they will all move to where? So, I am going to the fifty, so, to the fifty,	ergnatsciknu
16	, this is my x and y because for equilibrium, I am going to talk about x is equal to	ergnatsciknu
17	two is also ninety degrees and that is what I am going to do. Alright. Now, I know this	ergnatsciknu
18	have. N two do I have it? no, so, I am going to take my time, between this line	ergnatsciknu

Figure 2: Sample concordance lines of I for lecturer from NSC

All cases of *I*, *you* and *we*, and their corresponding variants were searched and examined to determine their referents. The discourse referents were mainly identified based on the

contextual and co-textual information surrounding the tri-PP. In Figure 2, I + be + main verb pattern reveals that the lecturer is using *I* to refer to himself.

We closely examined the concordance lines of each of the tri-PP, guided by “the collocating verbs associated with the pronouns ... to obtain contextual and linguistic cues” (Yeo & Ting, 2014, 29). Ädel (2010, 79) observes: “there are oftentimes contextual clues present in the data which reveal something about the scope of a pronoun”. After we identified the referents of each of the tri-PP across the subcorpora, we identified those common to the tri-PP across the disciplinary supercommunities (DS). The steps for the analysis can therefore be summarized as follows:

- Step 1: Use the concordance tool in AntConc to search for the occurrences of a PP across the subcorpora.
- Step 2: Examine the concordance lines to determine the referent of the PP by drawing on the co-text and the context.
- Step 3: Determine whether the referent is common to the PPs across the subcorpora.

Thereafter, we counted the occurrences of the referents of the tri-PP, and these were normalized to occurrences per 1,000 words (ptw), given that the subcorpora, as shown in Table 1, had unequal sizes. Normed frequency (NF), according to McEnery and Hardie (2012), is obtained by dividing raw frequency (RF) by the total corpus size (CS), and then multiply by the normalization base (NB). The formula can be stated as:

$$NF = \frac{RF}{CS} * NB$$

The base is determined by the size of the corpus. The NB for this study is 10, 000 as the sizes of the subcorpora were between 30, 000 and 45, 000. Finally, we conducted a log-likelihood analysis, using Rayson’s (n.d.) Log-likelihood Calculator to determine whether the observed differences were statistically significant. We used 95th percentile; 5%; $p < 0.05$, with log-likelihood value =3.84 as the “cut-off point of statistical significance” (Baker et al., 2008: 277), implying that any value equal or above 3.84 was deemed statistically significant.

Extracts from the subcorpora were then coded as HSC, SSC and NSC for Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences respectively. Thus, an extract from NS subcorpus was, therefore, numbered as NSC 0001, 0002, 0003.... More so, in the analysis,

speakers from HS, SS and NS were labelled as HSL (Humanities Lecturer), SSL (Social Sciences Lecturer) and NSL (Natural Sciences Lecturer). All instances of the tri-PP in the extracts in the discussion section are **bolded** and underlined for purposes of visibility.

3. Results and Discussion

This section discusses the results, by focusing on the three identified tri-PP across the three disciplinary supercommunities (DSs). In all, three referents were identified from the corpus to be common to *I*, *we*, and *you* (tri-PP) across the DSs. Arguably, these three referents can be said to be “core to the register and can reflect the register nature as well” (Liu & Chen, 2020: 125). The discussion is organized around the three referents common to the tri-PP: lecturer, students, and lecturer + students.

3.1 Tri-PP for Lecturer

Across the three DSs –Humanities (HS), Social Sciences (SS), and Natural Sciences (NS)—, we found that *I*, *we*, and *you* all designated lecturer, hence, *trip-PP for lecturer*. Table 2 provides details on the distribution of *I*, *we* and *you* as lecturer.

Table 2: Tri-PP for lecturer across DSs

Tri-PP	HS: RF(NF)	SS: RF(NF)	NS: RF(NF)	HS vs SS LL	HS vs NS LL	SS: NS LL
I	309(84.46)	433(98.60)	319(92.14)	4.35	1.19	0.85
We	51(13.94)	69(15.7)	79(22.8)	0.42	7.72	5.14
You	3(0.82)	13(2.96)	5(1.44)	5.05	0.62	2.03

*A log-likelihood greater than 3.84 indicates a p-value less than 0.05.

It can be observed from Table 1 that *I* was used to designate lecturer more than *we* and *you* across all the DS. This was followed by *we* and then *you*. The order is consistent with the proximal and distal principles on the use of the tri-PP (Kamio 2001).

3.1.1 *I* as lecturer

Lecturers mostly engage in self-mentioning in their classroom talks. This is reflected by the use of the first-person pronoun to designate themselves across the subcorpora.

Concordance analysis reveals that *I* for lecturer frequently co-occurs with the verb ‘to be’. The context and co-text of the *I*-type show that it designates the speaker (i.e. the lecturer). Similarly, Yeo and Ting (2014), and Yaakob (2013) also discovered that *I* as lecturer was common to Arts and Science; and all the four broad knowledge domains (Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Life Sciences, and Physical Sciences) respectively. The use of *I* for lecturer is not surprising as it is consistent with the grammar, semantics and pragmatics of the first-person pronoun. The use of *I* as lecturer reflects lecturers’ desire to project their independent selves in order to enhance their authorial visibility in the ongoing classroom discourse. It, thus, highlights the centrality of the lecturer as a discourse participant in classroom lectures (Biber & Conrad 2009; Crawford Camiciottoli, 2007). The instances below illustrate the use of *I* for lecturer.

HSL: **I** am sure in Egypt there were intermarriages and so definitely people with that kind of colour might have been produced. [HSC 0001]

SSL: Good! **I** agree with that but the constitution itself said it. [SSC 0001]

NSL: But **I** said you will have to draw lines that are parallel to your x and y, isn’t it? [NSC 0001]

All the marked *I*-forms in the above extracts explicitly make reference to the lecturer. This discursive strategy thus helps lecturers to make their voices pronounced in their lectures. It also demonstrates how lecturers construct their individualities, and ‘extract’ themselves from the collectivity of lecturers in the discourse communities (Lerner & Kitzinger, 2007). Lecturer’s emphasis on their personhood reveals their authority in their relationship with the students in the classroom. They, therefore, make obvious their agency that arguably presents them as being responsible and accountable for their knowledge claims (Lerner & Kitzinger, 2007). It is, thus, a rhetorical means of “claiming authority and exhibiting some form of ownership for the claims stated...” (Martín-Martín, 2003: 8). Yaakob (2013, 217) notes that *I for lecturer*:

confirms the nature of the relationship between the lecturer and student whereby the lecturer is in a position of giving knowledge or delivering information to the students and exerting this authority figure by owning the lecture and explicitly imparting information to students and leading the lecture.

3.1.2 *We for lecturer*

All the three broad knowledge domains recorded instances of *we* for lecturer. *We* for lecturer corroborates the concept of intrapersonal pronoun shift, whereby a speaker uses different pronouns for self-designation (Whitman 1999) –which can be contrasted with *interpersonal pronoun shift*. This rhetorical use of *we* has been referred as nosism (that is, the situation where the referent of *we* is a single speaker) (Maxey 2016). Quirk et al. (1985) and Wales (1996) described this nosistic type of *we* (used not for collective speakers but individuals) as editorial *we*. It should be noted that the speaker-*we* (exclusive *we*) found in the subcorpora is the editorial type. In fact, collective *we* indicating several speakers was completely absent since all the courses recorded were taught by individual lecturers.

Across the subcorpora, this *we*-type generally collocates with the verb *said*. Using the editorial *we*, the lecturers sought to project their DS-specific ethos (Afful 2010; Hyland 1999) and also enhance their visibility in the discourse. DS (disciplinary)-specific ethos indicates how lecturers portray themselves in their speeches as having a good moral character, practical wisdom, and a concern for the audience in order to achieve credibility and thereby secure persuasion (Cherry 1988). This also projects the individual lecturer as a representative for all the scholars in the discipline. This is apt because the lecturer is the immediate authority the students have access to in the classroom. Students, therefore, consider their lecturers as all-in-one in their relatively short-lived classroom interaction. More so, the editorial *we* is used as an *I* substitute to avoid being egoistic (Quirk et al., 1985), thereby projecting themselves as humble servants in the scholarly community (Hyland, 2001a).

- HSL: But one key thing we said about the derivational morpheme is that it helps us arrive at what? New words. [HSC 0002]
- SSL: But we are saying that to remove the ambiguity in the text, this is the way we are going to capture it. [SSC 0002]
- NSL: But the only one as at now but not completely explain the erh the function of the membrane relating to the structure as we have described is what we call the fluid mosaic model. [NSC 0002]

The use of *we* for *I*, as exemplified in extracts HSC 0002, SSC 0002 and NSC 0002, supports findings in the previous studies (e.g. Rounds 1987a; Yaakob 2013; Yeo & Ting 2014; Zhihua 2011). This *we* for *I* is adopted across the disciplinary supercommunities as a politeness strategy thereby projecting the lecturers as unauthoritative (Quirk et al. 1985). Aside from the cross-DS employment of *we* for *I* (lecturer), there are variations statistically.

3.1.3 *You for lecturer*

This type of *you*, self-referential or exclusive *you*, is employed by lecturers to de-personalize their stance. Fairclough (1989, 180) argues that this enables speakers to lower themselves to the status of common experience. This largely enables them to present “perceptions as shared, not merely individual” (Myers & Lampropoulou 2012, 1206). This is clearly seen in HSC 0011. Although it is used to refer to the individual speaker, it evokes a sense of shared practice by all lecturers in the discourse community. Again, this *you* is used when lecturers shift footings or perspectives (Brunye, Ditman, Mahoney, Augustyn, & Taylor 2009) in their discourse. In SSC0015 and NSC 0010, the lecturer and students exchange position (Goffman 1981).

HSL: And it’s true, because some of the things we mark, especially level hundred, two hundred, there are some papers we mark every line **you** have problems. [HSC 0003]

SSL: Many of you went there and call me and say ANON thank **you** because I miss **you**. [SSC 0003]

NSL: Then I say expand x plus y raised to the power thousand and fifty and you say ooo sir what time are **you** going to give us, I can give you three hours, five hours. [NSC 0003]

The exchange enables lecturers to speak with the voice of the students, thereby using *you* for themselves. This practice is akin to Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of ventriloquation which is “a specialized type of voicing ...when a speaker speaks through the voice of another for the purpose of social or interactional positioning...” (p. 52).

Aside from the qualitative commonalities across the subcorpora, there are some quantitative differences. First, it is shown in Table 2 that SS (2. 96) is rated first in terms

of *you* for lecturer (=I); and followed by NS (1.44) and then HS (0.82). Social Scientists' comparatively more use of this type of *you* suggests that it engages in lecturer-student rhetorical interchange more than their HS and NS lecturers. This can be supported by the fact that SS is situated in the middle of the objective/interpretive paradigm (Hyland, 2009) and, thus, appears not to be completely subjective (by using *I*) or objective (by using *we*). Instead, it resorts to using *you* to provide a neutral ground, or construct an identity inspired by the ideologies of both positivism and social constructivism.

3.2 Tri-PP for students across DSs

Another common referential trajectory realized regarding the tri-PP across the DSs is that they pointed to, and represented students. Quantitative details on this are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Tri-PP for students across DSs

Tri-PP	HS: RF(NF)	SS: RF(NF)	NS: RF(NF)	HS vs SS LL	HS vs NS LL	SS: NS LL
I	7(1.91)	10(2.28)	120(34.66)	0.13	128.21	137.70
We	48(13.12)	24(5.5)	39(11.2)	13.14	0.50	8.06
You	494(135.02)	495(112.72)	597(172.43)	8.05	16.25	49.20

*A log-likelihood greater than 3.84 indicates a p-value less than .05.

Table 3 indicates that there are cross-DS variations in tri-PP for students. We observe that NS has the highest NFs for both *I* and *you* for students, while HS recorded the highest NF for *we* for students. *You* was greatly used to refer to students than *I*, and *we* across all the DS.

3.2.1 *I* for students

Pronoun switch is common in academic speech for the positioning of selves (speaker, audience, and others) (Yates & Hiles 2010). There are, therefore, instances where different pronouns are used for the same referent (Ädel 2010; Yaakob 2013; Zhihua 2011), and situations when a pronoun conjures different referents (Ädel, 2010; Fortanet 2004; Rounds 1987; Yaakob, 2013; Yeo & Ting 2014; Zhihua 2011) – what Anderson (2007) termed

referent shift. A usage found in this study, affirming the former, is the use of *I* for students, which corresponds with the notion of interpersonal pronoun shift, where the speaker uses a particular pronoun to designate the audience (Whitman 1999).

The concordance analysis indicated that several *I*-forms (e.g. subjective, objective, and reflexive) were used to designate students. We can observe from extract SSC 0003 how the lecturer shifts footing and uses *myself* as though it was a student talking. We refer to this as empathetic *I*, following the notion of empathetic identification (Whitman 1999). It is important to note that this realization is not new in the literature. Yeo and Ting (2014) identified *I* for students (=you) in the corpora from both Arts and Sciences. Additionally, Fortanet (2004) and Zhihua (2011) also noted this in their studies, but Yaakob (2013) did not. Fortanet (2004) posits that the use of first and second person pronouns is an important indicator of how audiences are conceptualized by speakers and writers in academic discourse. The similarity between the present study and Yeo and Ting (2014), on one hand, and the differences between them and Yaakob (2013) borders on native-nonnative variability. Both the present and Yeo and Ting's (2014) studies used corpora L2 context (i.e. Ghana and Malaysia respectively) while Yaakob (2013) used MICASE, which is from a native context. See corpus instances of *I* for students below:

HSL: You say, for this essay, **I** choose to discuss the scholar called Herbert Spencer. [HSC 0004]

SSL: I was even expecting that some of you who are standing would actually take the pain and write ...After all **I** did not get a chair so why bother **myself**? Let **me** just fan **myself** or take my phone. [SSC 0004]

NSL: This is what I will do, I will expand that and then I am going to pick where I have the xs and that is where **I** have to be wise to rewrite this one like this. [NSC 0004]

The use of this *I* can be described as a rhetorical transfer of the students from the status of lower power (novices) to the position of high power (experts), corresponding to the concept of osmosis in Physics. Thus, the students are psycho-rhetorically rankshifted to a near-expert (lecturer) position on "power ranks" (Brown & Gilman, 1960: 256) as depicted on the disciplinary membership cline (Afful, 2010). This practice is expressed by Goffman (1981):

we represent ourselves through the offices of a personal pronoun, typically ‘I,’ and it is thus a figure—a figure in a statement—that serves as the agent, a protagonist in a described scene, a ‘character’ in an anecdote, someone, after all, who belongs to the world that is spoken about, not the world in which the speaking occurs. And once this format is employed, an astonishing flexibility is created. (p. 147)

More so, it bridges the *I-they* gap which is created by the physical environment in the lecture hall where the lecturer stands, while the student sits. *Standing* and *sitting* in the lecture hall alone evoke the asymmetric power relation between an expert (lecturer) and novice (student) (Csomay 2002; Brown & Gilman 1960). Therefore, lecturers attempt to create a rhetorical equality to facilitate teaching and learning in a “collegial atmosphere” (Csomay 2002, 220) through the use of this type of *I* is apt. The “equalitarian” (Goffman, 1981, 126) rhetorical strategy helps lecturers to minimize the threat to the students’ positive face since “talking in front of a big lecture hall can be intimidating for some students” (Yaakob, 2013, 217). Unsurprisingly, Brown and Gilman (1960, 258) described pronouns in this context as “the pronoun of condescension and intimacy”. *I* for students helps students to manage the unequal power relations (Csomay 2002) which “increase students’ conceptions of isolation and alienation” (Archer & Leathwood 2003, 261) in the classroom. Thus, their sense of belongingness is enhanced and deepened since lecturers strive “to establish common ground” (Dafouz, Nunez & Sancho 2007, 647).

3.2.2 *We for students*

We discovered that lecturers in HS, SS and NS used *we* to designate students in their lectures. Ädel (2006) refers to *we* for students as the audience type. This *we* type is metadiscursive as it is limited to the audience in the discourse internal world (Ädel 2006, 2010; Hyland 2005). This type of *we* has a -speaker feature + current audience feature, as exemplified in extracts HSC 0007, SSC 0010, and NSC 0006. The lecturer used *we* in the interrogative structures to refer to the students. It, thus, shows the lecturers’ awareness and recognition of the students in the ongoing discourse.

HSL: Are we ready for the lecture?...Everything we are learning here and even those we are not learning are not for here and now. [HSC 0005]

- SSL: Then you are lost. Find yourself. I think that is clear now. Are **we** getting the argument? We said we made a statement which we said was ambiguous. [SSC 0005]
- NSL: So I pick that part and then I extract wherever the I see x, and where do I see x? I see x raised to the power six minus r times one over x all raised to the power r. Can **we** all see that? [NSC 0005]

This *we* explicitly recognizes the presence of the audience who are co-participants in the lecture discourse. So, in SSC 0010, *we* is synonymous to *you* (students) such that the question can be recast ‘Are you getting the argument?’ The empathetic *we* is employed by the lecturers to rhetorically relate with students to share their (students’) responsibilities. This type of pronoun reveals the speakers’ self-lowering strategy to studentship (Csomay 2002; Brown & Gilman 1960). It is akin to the concept of diffusion (in Physics), where lecturers move from the region of higher power (experts) to the region of lower power (novice), as presented in the “hierarchical power structures among the community members” (Chang 2012, 113). Brown and Gilman (1960) appropriately described this rhetorical diffusion as “a shift from power to solidarity” (p. 260) realized through the ‘pronoun of solidarity’ (p. 260). This may inspire the students and allay their fears for lecturers (Navaz 2013), as they may psycho-emotionally perceive lecturers as partners in learning. Eventually, the presence of this type of pronoun will push the lecture genre forward on the monologic-dialogic cline (Navaz 2013), thereby increasing the level of interactivity (Csomay 2002).

This finding is congruent with previous studies such as Fortanet (2004), Rounds (1987a & b), Yaakob (2013), Yeo and Ting (2014), and Zhihua (2011) who also discovered that *we* was used to designate the students. It has been pointed out that several factors determine pronominal choices in discourse (Rounds 1987b): user’s role, perceived relationship to hearers, speaker’s idiosyncrasies, disciplinary ideology, norms, cultures and practices, institutional ideology, etc. Rounds (1987b, 650) further argued that “the use of inclusive pronoun is a positive factor in terms of interactivity”. This has implication for the disciplinary discourse community’s view on the role of power in lecturer-student interaction (Csomay 2002; Csomay & Wu 2020).

3.2.3 *You for students*

Grammatically, *you* is always regarded addressee-oriented. *You*-for students is the central pronominal address term for students in classroom lectures to create a student-friendly classroom (Parkinson 2020); to enhance lecturer-student interaction (Crawford Camiciottoli 2007), and to increase students' involvement (Hyland 2009). Kamio (2001, 1118) maintains that it "is located in the distal domain of the conversational space, which corresponds to the hearer's territory".

This *you*-type has +students –lecturer feature, hence, audience-oriented. Guided by Lerner and Kitzinger's (2007) concepts of extraction and aggregation, and individual self-reference, and collective self-reference, we observed six student-oriented metadiscursive *you*-referents: students, one student, a cross-section of students, two students, male students, and female students. The identification was based on the "local reference context" (Schegloff 1996: 450, cited in Lerner & Kitzinger, 2007: 534) bounded by "'locally initial' and 'locally subsequent'" signals/information (Lerner & Kitzinger, 2007: 534). The rhetorical strategies of extraction, and aggregation regarding *you* showcases the semantico-rhetorical *membership* of student-oriented explicit recognitional *you*-types (Lerner & Kitzinger, 2007).

To some extent, *you* for students corresponds with Yeo and Ting's (2014) *you*-generalized used to aggregate the students into a collectivity (Lerner & Kitzinger 2007); and quantified referents (i.e. one student, and two students) to "enumerated reference" (Lerner & Kitzinger, 2007, 534). Thus, we can talk about *you* that generalizes, and *you* that particularizes an individual, selected individuals (e.g. two), unspecified individuals (a cross-section of students), male, and female students. As Lerner and Kitzinger (2007) explained, the *you*-type that particularizes is used "to extract an individual [or a group of individuals] from a collectivity" (p. 533). *You* in this regard individually performs the functions of 'mate' and 'guys', which according to Parkinson (2020) are used as address terms in classroom discourse to address one person, and many people respectively. This reinforces lecturers' discursive *micro* and *macro* student-referencing strategies for some targeted 'interactional accomplishment' (Sprain & Black 2017). The corpus extracts below exemplify *you* for students in the subcorpora.

HSL: So **you** have all these theories erh last week I ask **you** to do er erh small research, and the a few did. [HSC 0006]

SSL: So **you** are not just learning to pass the examination and after that **you** discard all that **you** have learnt. No. No [SSC 0006]

NSL: We have all the other materials that we can think about, the microtome, and then **you** solve the problem by **yourself**. [NSC 0006]

The marked *you*-types in extracts HSC 0006, SSC 0006 and NSC 0006 above are metadiscursive (i.e. they explicitly refer to the students in the ongoing discourse). In HSC 0012, for instance, the lecturer reminds them of the theories (in religion) that he had exposed them to, and continues to remind them of the task he has assigned them in their previous lectures. The *you*-types here meet Ädel's (2010, 75) audience qua audience criterion. This realization affirms the fact that students are principally the recipients in classroom lectures (Biber & Conrad 2009; Crawford Camiciottoli 2007). Thus, more use of the metadiscursive *you* may "facilitate students' understanding of subject content" (Sadeghi & Heidaryan 2012, 168) since direct recognition of their presence will cause them to be attentive during lectures. Essentially, the use of *you* for students makes lectures more interactive (conversational), and contributes to students' attentiveness and responsiveness (Crawford Camiciottoli 2007).

3.3 Tri-PP for Lecturer + Students across DSs

In this section, we turn to lecturer + students, which was noted to be common to *I*, *we* and *you* across the disciplinary supercommunities (see Table 4 for quantitative information on this).

Table 4: Tri-PP for lecturer + students across DSs

Tri-PP	HS: RF(NF)	SS: RF(NF)	NS: RF(NF)	HS vs SS LL	HS vs NS LL	SS: NS LL
I	6(1.64)	5(1.14)	150(43.33)	0.37	173.46	207.36
We	86(23.51)	128(29.1)	312(90.1)	2.41	149.08	129.32
You	30(8.20)	20(4.55)	120(34.66)	4.26	62.90	105.0

*A log-likelihood greater than 3.84 indicates a p-value less than .05.

In classroom interaction, lecturer(s) and student(s) arguably constitute the central discursal participants. We found that the tri-PP are used to enact identities that merge.

Unsurprisingly, Table 4 shows that *we* markedly leads *I* and *you* in designating lecturer + students across the DSs.

3.3.1 *I* for Lecturer + Students

Kamio (2001) argues that there are two extreme levels of information territory: the speaker and audience territories. In classroom discourse, the speaker and the audience are experts and novices respectively (Adel 2010; Hyland 2005). The first-person pronoun is grammatically said to be speaker-oriented, what is considered its prototypical use which is informed by “traditional semantic mappings” (Rounds 1987a, 17). However, it has been established that pragmatically it can perform polyreferential functions across genres (e.g. Yaakob 2013, Rounds, 1987a & b; Yeo and Ting, 2014). In this study, we found that *I* designated lecturer (speaker) + students (audience). This *speaker + audience I* has socio-rhetorical implication. Through this, lecturers move students away from the receiving end, less powerful position, the realm of reception, or epistemic consumption to the level of knowledge production. The lecturers bring the students closer to themselves by entering the first-person pronoun with them to establish a more collegial relationship with the students, as demonstrated in extracts HSC 0007, SSC 0007, and NSC 0007.

- HSL: That is, they uhm important lesson that I want all of us to learn from this okay? Not to do follow follow I learnt that you can copy something good about somebody but try to make it your own.
HSC 0007
- SSL: Now, we can say that assuming that the second version so this is the second version... Now this is what I can easily use to depict what he what he said during the content, isn't something that is worth listening to. SSC 0007
- NSL: First of all if I understood what we all just did, then I'll say that four x minus five should be less than minus nine or four x minus five should be greater than nine. NSC 0007

From extracts HSC 0007, SSC 0007 and NSC 0007, the lecturer uses *I* to designate himself and the students. This usage is equivalent to the inclusive *we* (I + you) employed to demonstrate to the students that they are both partners in teaching and/or learning as they jointly solved the mathematical problem and therefore have a common understanding. It

demonstrates the lecturer's willingness to share his defined territory with the students through enacting a common self through the more perceived lecturer-oriented. This bridges the power play gap between the lecturer and the students, as the students may consider themselves as having been rankshifted upwards. Two forms of ranking shifting are at play in this paper: lecturer and students rankshifting, which involves the lecturer lowering to the students' level, and the students raised to the lecturer's level respectively. The former is realized through *you* for lecturer, and *you* for lecturer + students, and the latter, *I* for students, and *I* for lecturer + students.

A number of researchers have explored the referents of *I* (e.g. Rounds 1987a & b; Yeo and Ting 2014; Gomez 2006) but this type was identified by Yaakob (2013) and Zhihua (2011). Yaakob (2013) noted that *I* for lecturer + students was common across DSs (arts and humanities, social, life, and physical sciences). The present finding, therefore, confirms Yaakob (2013).

3.3.2 *We* for lecturer + students

The commonality among the three disciplinary discourse communities is further conveyed in the lecturer/student-oriented *we*. Inclusive *we* is used in this case to reveal the interpersonal relationship between the lecturer and the students in the discourse communities, as conceptualized by Crawford Camiciottoli (2007). The immediate collocational context and co-text of the *we*-type shows that it has a + lecturer + students feature. Although lecturers and students have asymmetric power relations (Afful, 2010; Crawford Camiciottoli 2007; Csomay 2002), the use of *we* to enact solidarity and interaction is a positive rhetorical strategy of recognizing students as legitimate members in the discourse communities. Milne (2006) thus posits that the lecturer-student *we* suggests the lecturers' twofold intention: to shorten the distance with students and to establish common ground. As seen in extract NSC 0008, the lecturer explicitly recognized and addressed the students as members not just in the physical setting but as members in the discourse community.

HSL: In the second word what we have is *play* plus /s/. Right? So the morpheme is /s/. [HSC 0008]

SSL: So here **we** are looking at that contribution of education the contribution of education to economic growth as well as economic development. [SSC 0008]

NSL: Now **we** are two in this class, me and my students. [NSC 0008]

We for lecturer + students is somewhat consistent with grammar, semantics and pragmatics (see Wales 1996). It is naturally construed as designating discourse participants. It is, therefore, not surprising that it is shown in Table 4 as having the highest NFs across the DSs. This finding is consistent with Rounds (1987a, b), Yaakob (2013), Yeo and Ting (2014), and Zhihua (2011). Biber (1995) proposed involvement/detachment continuum; the finding, therefore, shows the degree of involvement rather than detachment in classroom lectures, which is akin to conversation and thus shares a lot of its features (Biber, 2006a & b; Biber & Conrad, 2009; Csomay, 2002).

3.3.3 *You for lecturer + students*

Lecturer + students-oriented *you* occurred with a certain collocational co-text, as shown in the extracts below. This *you*-type is metadiscursive, given that it designates the lecturer and students in the ongoing lectures.

HSL: But this afternoon I want **you** to proceed from where I left off yesterday and I remember stopping at where Nkrumah and his CPP supporters were so much unhappy about the Cossey report and this unhappiness with the Cossey report was evident in how he described the Cossey report. [HSC 0009]

SSL: Now **you** see that the, this tells **you, you** the number of minutes, the duration of this news is three point what? [SSC 0009]

NSL: That's what **you** have just shaded, the shaded portion **you** can read the results there three is less than x and x is less than four. [NSC 0009]

From HSC 0009, the lecturer desired that *you* proceed from where the previous lecture ended. It is evident from the context of use that this *you*-type conjures a collective lecturer

+ students referencing (Lerner and Kitzinger, 2007). This finding coincides with Gomez (2006), Rounds (1987a) and Zhihua (2011) who also identified lecturer + students *you*-type. Gomez (2006) reveals that this *you*-type is used to approximate the distance between lecturers and students in classroom encounters. Thus, lecturers rhetorically rankshift from their experthood rank and cooperate with students in this asymmetric power relational genre (Crawford Camiciottoli, 2007; Csomay, 2002).

4. Conclusion

The paper explored the effect of disciplinary shared knowledge on the discourse referents on *I*, *we* and *you* (tri-PP). Although studies on the referents on personal pronouns generally adopt a pragmatic approach, most of them adopted a relatively predetermined approach that can be said to be more grammatical than pragmatic (e.g. Friginal et al. 2017; Yeo & Ting 2014). Such studies generally adopted *I* for the addresser, *we* for either the addresser plus audience, or addressers, and *you* for the addressee. For instance, in relation to *I*, Friginal et al. (2017) noted that our attention shifts to the first-person singular pronoun. Obviously, this pronoun refers to the speaker only, and it marks a clear distinction between the speaker and the hearer. On the other hand, there are some studies that allow the context to reveal the pragmatic import of personal pronouns. Such studies, like this one, explore pronoun in context to establish their referents (Yaakob 2013).

Using an academic lecture corpus from the L2 context, this paper found three discourse referents (i.e. lecturer, students and lecturer + students) shared by the tri-PP across the disciplinary supercommunities (DSs): Humanities (HS), Social (SS) and Natural (NS) Sciences. The present paper reaffirms the assertion that the referents of the tri-PP are “not ‘fixed’, but is[are] multi-faceted, adapting to and being shaped by particular contexts and types of interaction” (Hyland, 2012, vii). This has implication for both language and content lecturers. Language teachers, particularly, those in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) are expected to draw students’ attention to the effect of the tri-PP on understanding propositions made by content lecturers in their respective disciplinary context. More so, content lecturers must be able to draw on their pronominal competence informed by their respective disciplinary norms and conventions in employing the tri-PP in their interaction with their students in the classroom.

The study provides some theoretical insights into pronoun reference in academic speech. It has been established that *I*, *we*, and *you* can designate common referents (e.g. students), resulting in multireferentiality conceptualized in Figure 3.

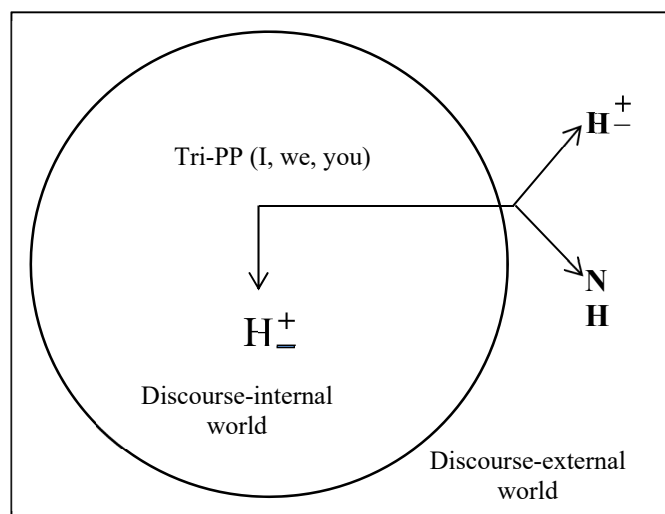


Figure 3: Multireferentiality I, we and you

Multireferentiality concerns the use of different pronouns to designate a common referent. Thus, the arrow representing the tri-PP simultaneously or unidirectionally points to **H**, which could mean a monoreferent (e.g. lecturer + students). EAP teachers must, therefore, emphasize this and help students to appreciate the socio-rhetorical effects of the use multireferential use of the tri-PP in lecturer talks. Furthermore, the diagram shows the metadiscursive-non/metadiscourse paradigm of tri-PP reference. We observe that *I*, *we* and *you* are used to designate participants inside the discourse. The down-pointing arrow thus demonstrates this. As can be seen, **H⁺** shows that the tri-PP could be lecturer-oriented (+lecturer-students), and student-oriented (+ students-lecturer), and lecturer/student-oriented (+ lecturer + students). These referents are metadiscursive (See Ädel 2006, 2010). One the other hand, the tri-PP as a discursive strategy points to non-discourse participants in the real world. It could be either human or non-human referents. The + and – denotes that the human agents could be with or without the other selves (see Brooke 1987) of the lecturer and the students.

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