CHAPTER 2

Self-mentions as interactional metadiscourse strategies in Slovene and Croatian research article abstracts

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Abstract

One of the primary communicative functions of scientific texts is to attract the attention of as many members of a discourse community as possible and convince them of the accuracy and acceptability of the author's claims. To this end, the author uses a variety of rhetorical strategies, which are, in part, conditioned by their individual style of writing, and to a certain extent also by specific features of their cultural background. This paper presents the results of a study focusing on the strategy of self-mentions, i.e., the author's direct engagement in the text, in Slovene and Croatian research article abstracts sourced from four fields of research: social sciences, humanities, natural sciences and technology. Research attention is devoted to explicit as well as implicit self-mentions. For the purposes of the study, two corpora containing 80 research article abstracts

in Slovene (the SLAB corpus) and 80 abstracts in Croatian (the CRAB corpus) were compiled, both of which were manually annotated. In its first part, the paper focuses on the types and frequency of self-mentions and the definition of specific genre conventions related to the use of self-mentions in Slovene and Croatian. In its second part, a contrastive method is applied to reveal similarities and differences (i.e., variations) between the corpora. Although the two languages are related and come from a similar cultural backdrop, our results show that the strategy of using self-mentions in Slovene and Croatian research article abstracts does differ, and that this could suggest a degree of cultural specificity in the languages under consideration.

Keywords: academic discourse, scientific discourse, research article abstracts, rhetorical strategies, elements of interactional metadiscourse, self-mentions, cultural characteristics

Izvleček

Ena temeljnih sporazumevalnih funkcij znanstvenega besedila je pritegniti pozornost čim večjega števila članov diskurzne skupnosti in jih prepričati v pravilnost in, posledično, sprejemanje avtorjevih stališč. Da bi to dosegel, avtor uporablja različne retorične strategije, ki so delno pogojene z individualnim stilom, delno pa so rezultat kulturoloških značilnosti. V prispevku obravnavamo strategijo samoomemb oz. avtorjevega neposrednega pojavljanja v besedilu v slovenskih in hrvaških izvlečkih znanstvenih člankov s štirih znanstvenih področij: družboslovja, humanistike, naravoslovja in tehnike. V središču raziskovalne pozornosti so tako eksplicitne kot implicitne samoomembe. Za namen raziskave sta zgrajena korpusa 80 izvlečkov znanstvenih člankov v slovenščini (korpus SLAB) in 80 v hrvaščini (korpus CRAB), ki sta ročno označena. V prvem delu raziskave določimo vrste in pogostnost samoomemb ter opredelimo žanrske značilnosti pri rabi samoomemb v slovenščini in hrvaščini. V drugem delu s kontrastivno metodo ugotavljamo podobnosti in razlike oz. odstopanja med korpusoma. Čeprav sta jezika sorodna in izhajata iz podobne kulturne tradicije, rezultati kažejo, da je strategija rabe samoomemb v slovenskih in hrvaških izvlečkih znanstvenih člankov različna, kar bi lahko nakazovalo kulturno specifičnost v obravnavanih jezikih.

Ključne besede: akademski diskurz, znanstveni jezik, izvlečki znanstvenih člankov, retorične strategije, interakcijski metabesedilni elementi, samoomembe, kulturološke značilnosti

1   INTRODUCTION

Ever since the 1980s, there has been a prevailing idea in the investigation of academic discourse that in academic writing the communication between the author of the text at one end and its recipient or reader at the other is bi-directional (see, e.g., Sinclair 1981; Swales 1990), as scientific texts serve not only a referential or informative purpose, but also a communicative purpose. In every part of the text, the author strives to convince the reader of the plausibility of the stated claims (see, e.g., Hunston 1994; Ornatowski 2007), while at the same time having to keep in view the target audience and present the content in a responsible manner, crediting other authors who have conducted similar studies, while also presenting themselves and their own ethical values in a suitable way (Ornatowski 2007, 2). To achieve the highest possible degree of persuasion, the author uses various methods, arguments and rhetorical strategies (Hyland 2005, 66–67) which can be defined, in a similar way to that in Blagojević (2007, 127), as a set of various linguistic elements through which the author attempts to present their ideas to the reader as they see fit, and persuade the reader as efficiently as possible of the plausibility of these claims. Such strategies are, e.g., the strategy of explicitly guiding the reader through the text, the strategy of addressing the reader, the strategy of the author's own presence in the text, etc.

In postmodern societies, the role of the academic community has undergone significant changes, which has, along with the development of modern technologies, had a significant impact on the language of science. Fairclough (1995, 230–231) notes that in modern societies, under the influence of the Internet, the boundaries between academic discourse and informal, personal communication are becoming increasingly blurred, with elitism being gradually replaced by a more informal and personal style. Similarly, Kuteeva and Mauranen (2018, 2) argue that over the past two decades the rise of information and communication technologies has had a profound influence on academic discourse. It has brought about new methods of interaction and consequently given rise to new genres, while new ways of self-representation on the web have, in turn, also affected language use. With its growing presence in the general media (and popularization of scientific research), academic discourse is shifting from specialized to public discourse, which means that the perceptions of the language of science are changing as well. Thus, as stated by Crystal (2006, 23), a non-emotional, neutral and objective language of science has become little more than a myth. The fact is that scholars are constantly striving to have their ideas and views accepted, thereby introducing into their studies, consciously or not, their own sociocultural, economic and other subjective beliefs, which they express through the use of various linguistic elements.

It seems remarkable that in both Slovene and Croatian linguistics there is still a prevalent belief that the objectivity of academic discourse requires the use of objective, impersonal, and non-emotional linguistic structures. According to Pogorelec (1986, 20), even though a scientific text does entail a type of covert subjectivity which tries to present the topic in an objective manner, the terms referring to the author (e.g., possessive pronouns, first person singular, various qualitative adjectives, specific sentence structure, choice of wording) are rarely used. A similar line of thought can also be observed in more recent literature. Skubic (2005, 104), for example, regards scientific texts as markedly impersonal and objective, both in terms of discourse strategies and syntax, as well as in terms of strictly defined and non-emotional vocabulary. This view is also present in Croatian linguistics. Silić (2006, 63–64) maintains that scientific communication is above all communication with the content rather than with the people creating and formulating this content, which is why the language of science must be in strict alignment with the scientific content. In effect, this means that the author of a scientific text should avoid using subjective and expressive linguistic elements. However, research into Slovene and Croatian academic discourse suggests, as will be shown below, a slightly different state of affairs (see, e.g., Balažic Bulc and Požgaj Hadži 2016; Balažic Bulc and Požgaj Hadži 2017). According to Logar (2019, 14), if we are to define the characteristics of the language of science, we must more clearly define the concepts of non-emotionality, precision, neutrality, impersonality, etc., in terms of the exact words and/or syntactic structures through which they are realized.

2 SELF-MENTIONS IN ACADEMIC WRITING

As mentioned above, one of the basic communicative characteristics of written academic discourse, or the research article as its most prestigious genre, is the fact that in presenting their research findings the authors are also attempting to persuade the reader of their relevance and accuracy. To this end, they use a variety of rhetorical strategies, which have been most thoroughly explored within the context of metadiscourse (Hyland 2005). Hyland (2005, 44–46) distinguishes between the elements of interactive and interactional metadiscourse. Through the use of the former, the author guides the reader (or listener) through the text, thereby facilitating the reader's comprehension of the stated propositional matter, while through the use of the latter, the author expresses their own opinion and attitudes related to the propositional content, thus establishing direct communication with the reader, while at the same time enabling the reader to form a different opinion. According to Hyland (2001, 211),

the linguistic choices writers make not only affect the conceptual or ideational meaning that they convey, but can also influence the impression they make on their readers. The decision to adopt an impersonal rhetorical style or to represent oneself explicitly would seem to have significant consequences for how one's message is received.

Our study focuses on one of the elements of interactional metadiscourse, namely self-mentions, which Hyland (2005, 49) regards as indications of the author's presence in the text, which can be measured by the frequency of first person structures in the text (Hyland 2005, 57). Such signals of the author's presence in the text may be explicit or personal, i.e., the author chooses the linguistic elements indicating their direct appearance in the text (e.g., personal and possessive pronouns in the singular or plural); implied or impersonal, which suggest the author's indirect presence (e.g., passive verb structures); or, conversely, the author may not appear in the text at all (see, e.g., Ivanič 1998; Hyland 2001; Molino 2010). In terms of establishing a relationship with the reader, personal linguistic structures may be inclusive (first person plural), which means that the author directly addresses the reader or the general discourse community, or exclusive (first person singular or plural), which indicate the author's personal presence in the text (see, e.g., Bašić and Veselica-Majhut 2016; Harwood 2005; Pisanski Peterlin 2017b).

Self-mentions in academic discourse have been at the centre of scholarly studies for decades, and most research attention has been devoted to English academic discourse, often in contrast with that of other languages (for a more detailed review, see, for example, Pisanski Peterlin 2017a, 9–11). However, very few studies have focused on contrasting Slovene and Croatian academic research. For example, Zrnec (2016) compares the use of self-mentions in Slovene and Polish research articles in the field of linguistics and literary studies and notes that self-mentions are more frequent in Slovene than in Polish texts, and are more common in older texts, while their representation in Polish texts is similar in the two analysed time periods. Self-mentions in older Slovene texts are dominated by personal linguistic elements (first person plural), while impersonal linguistic elements are more common in more recent texts. According to the results obtained in the study, the author concludes that the contemporary culture of academic writing is increasingly following the trend of using an objectified impersonal form through which the author's presence is least pronounced (Zrnec 2016, 40). Bašić and Veselica-Majhut (2016) examine the use of personal pronouns in Croatian and English research articles from the field of linguistics. They find that, compared to English texts, the use of first person singular pronouns is not frequent in Croatian texts, and that first person plural pronouns include inclusive and exclusive personal pronouns to a similar extent, while inclusive personal pronouns are predominant in English. Similar findings are reported by Varga (2016), who examines

elements of metadiscourse in English and Croatian research articles from the field of psychology. Based on a survey on the use of personal and impersonal linguistic elements in research articles conducted on a sample of linguistics scholars, Bašić and Veselica-Majhut (2016) also find that authors of scientific texts find it more appropriate to use impersonal forms in Croatian, with the author being the one who decides on the exact forms to use, and conclude that the author's choice is based "both on the cultural conventions of the community and the status of the individual within that community" (Bašić and Veselica-Majhut 2016: 241).

As the research conducted to date suggests potential differences in the use of the strategy of self-mentions between the Slovene and Croatian academic discourse, the question arises whether these differences do in fact exist. Our aim in this study is to answer the following two questions: 1. Are there any discrepancies between the two languages in the use of self-mentions in academic discourse, and if so, 2. Are they culturally or professionally conditioned?

Unlike previous research, which focuses on the study of complete scientific articles, our focus will be limited to self-mentions in research article abstracts. According to Busch-Lauer (2014, 43), abstracts are one of the most important genres of academic discourse today, as they accompany a wide variety of activities of the academic community: they are an important part of research articles and research grant proposals, they are pivotal in applications to scientific conferences, and form a crucial part of bachelor's, master's and doctoral theses and dissertations, grant applications, and so on. This genre therefore deserves more attention in Slovene linguistic research.

3   CORPUS AND METHOD

Slovene and Croatian are related languages, which both belong to the South Slavic language family. This means that the differences between them, at least at the grammatical level, are minor (see, e.g., Balažic Bulc 2004). At the same time, their rhetorical development has taken place within a similar (partly also the same) cultural context and social circumstances; however, these were dissimilar enough for the respective conventions to also show certain differences. It is precisely these small differences that are potentially the most problematic, both in writing and translating. In fact, as argued also by Pisanski Peterlin (2017a, 9), the skill of composing texts is essential for successful communication in any culture that has developed writing. Since numerous studies have confirmed the existence of differences not only between languages but also between individual scientific disciplines, this study was conducted on Slovene and Croatian texts from four fields of research: humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and technology.

As stated above, the present study focuses on self-mentions, investigating the use of explicitly and implicitly expressed exclusive self-mentions. Unlike English, in which the most common elements of metadiscourse in the context of self-mentions are personal and possessive pronouns such as *I*, *we*, *mine*, *our*, etc., Slovene and Croatian are classified as null-subject languages (Golden 2001, 261), which means that the subject in the sentence is not necessarily explicitly expressed, but can be expressed in the inflection of the verb. According to Toporišič (2004, 607), the subject may only be implied through the verb form, or not even that, whereby it can only be understood from the context. The same applies to Croatian. Silić and Pranjković (2005, 286), for example, argue that subject personal pronouns are unnecessary unless they are used for a specific reason. Pisanski Peterlin and Mikolič Južnič (2018) note that with the increasing formality of discourse in Slovene, the number of subject personal pronouns has been markedly declining and reached its lowest level in periodicals and technical texts. The analysis of self-mentions in these two languages must therefore also include verb forms, both personal and impersonal (as in Grad 2017, 66–67).

3.1   Corpus

For the purposes of the study, two specialized corpora were created: a corpus of Slovene research article abstracts (SLAB) containing a total of 11,421 tokens, and a corpus of Croatian research article abstracts (CRAB) containing a total of 12,309 tokens. Each corpus consists of 80 abstracts from the fields of humanities (20 abstracts), social sciences (20 abstracts), natural sciences (20 abstracts) and technology (20 abstracts) (see Table 1 and the Appendix). In investigating the use of singular and plural personal and possessive pronouns in the metadiscoursal elements, it is important to take into account the number of authors. However, in the compilation of these corpora we did not use this criterion and are aware of the fact that the corpora should be suitably upgraded for the purposes of future research.

Table 1: The number of tokens in SLAB and CRAB and their subcorpora

	SLAB		CRAB	
	No. of abstracts	No. of tokens	No. of abstracts	No. of tokens
Humanities	20	2,626	20	2,829
Social sciences	20	2,266	20	3,259
Natural sciences	20	3,469	20	3,400
Technology	20	3,060	20	2,821
Total	**80**	**11,421**	**80**	**12,309**

The corpora are rather limited in size, which is in fact necessary for this kind of research, as the texts must be manually examined. This is because, as argued also by Pisanski Peterlin (2007, 12), metadiscoursal elements form an open set, which makes it impossible to predict all the potential occurrences for most of its categories. Consequently, the data obtained through automatic annotation could be deficient or lacking.

When selecting the abstracts to be included in the corpora, we observed the following criteria: 1. international recognition of the journal (inclusion in any of the current scientific databases, such as Scopus, WoS, etc.); 2. abstracts published in Slovene or Croatian (which often proved problematic, as a high number of internationally recognized national scientific journals publish abstracts and research articles in English only); 3. the author's affiliation with domestic research institutions, which was intended to ensure that the abstract in Slovene or Croatian was an original work rather than a translation, as the translator's intervention in the text would produce additional variables (see, e.g., Limon 2007, Pisanski Peterlin 2016).

3.2   Method

In the first stage of the study we manually annotated the SLAB and CRAB corpora for all the occurrences, both explicit and implicit, of exclusive self-mentions, i.e., those which do not address the reader or the entire academic community. Based on the results thus obtained, we performed a quantitative and a qualitative analysis. The paper presents the results obtained in terms of the occurrences of explicit exclusive self-mentions, in which the author appears directly in the text and which clearly refer only to the author of the text. In the second part of the study, we performed a contrastive analysis of the two corpora and determined the differences between them.

4   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the analysed corpora, explicit exclusive self-mentions appear primarily as first-person singular and plural personal and possessive pronouns (e.g., Slo: *me bo vodilo / will guide me*, *kot nam kaže / as we can see*; Cro: *naš cilj je / our goal is*) and personal verb forms (e.g., Slo: *smo analizirali / we analysed*; Cro: *analizirali smo / we analysed, zbog toga ih smatram izvrsnim / this is why I consider them excellent*), while implicit self-mentions appear as impersonal verb forms (e.g., Slo:, *v prvem delu je predstavljena / in the first part, … is presented;* Cro: *dobivena su eksplicitna rješenja / explicit solutions were obtained, u radu se promatra / the paper investigates*).

4.1   Self-mentions in Slovene research article abstracts

In the SLAB corpus, self-mentions appear in all the scientific fields analysed. As illustrated in Figure 1, their occurrence is slightly more frequent in the natural sciences (1.7 self-mentions per 100 words) and technology subcorpora (1.5 self-mentions per 100 words), and is, surprisingly, smaller in the subcorpus of humanities abstracts (0.72 self-mentions per 100 words). Similar results for the humanities are given by Zrnec (2016) for scientific articles in the field of linguistics and literary sciences.
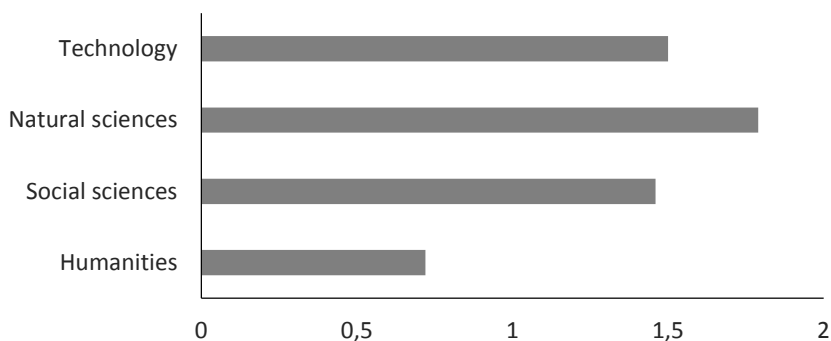
Figure 1: Frequency of self-mentions in the SLAB corpus per 100 words

In terms of the occurrence of personal and impersonal linguistic structures in individual abstracts (Table 2), we can see that self-mentions are most commonly used in the natural sciences (70% of abstracts), slightly less in the social sciences (55% of abstracts) and humanities (45% of abstracts) and least of all in the technology subcorpus (30% of abstracts), where the representation of personal and impersonal linguistic structures is approximately equally distributed (self-mentions in 30% of abstracts, impersonal structures in 35% of abstracts). The results also show that the authors of abstracts from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences mostly opt for a single rhetorical strategy, either personal or impersonal (only 10% of abstracts contain both strategies), while technology abstracts show a similar occurrence of a combined strategy (35% of abstracts). What seems striking in this context is that in about a quarter of the abstracts from the social sciences (25% of abstracts) and humanities (30% of abstracts) none of these strategies are used, and other self-mention strategies should therefore be explored. This points, in particular, to the process of personification, through which another, usually inanimate, object assumes the role of the author (e.g., *Članek obravnava kompleksno ozadje nastanka poslikave / The article examines*

the complex circumstances in which the painting was created), which should be further examined. Given that the focus of the research was limited primarily to the use of pronouns and verbs, we did not place such cases into the category of self-mentions. However, it might be reasonable to include them as elements of impersonal self-mention in further research.

Table 2: The frequency of personal and impersonal structures in individual abstracts in the SLAB corpus

	HUM		SOC		NAT		TECH	
	No. of abstr.	%	No. of abstr.	%	No. of abstr.	%	No. of abstr.	%
Self-mentions	9	45	11	55	14	70	6	30
Impersonal structures	3	15	2	10	4	20	7	35
Both	2	10	2	10	2	10	7	35
Other	6	30	5	25	-	-	-	-

Given that in Slavic languages it is the verb which expresses the categories of person, number and gender (rather than the pronoun, as is typical in English), the verb was, as expected, found to be most common type of self-mention. Table 3 lists the types of self-mentions which occur in the SLAB corpus, their frequency per 100 words, and their distribution across the corpus.

By far the most common form of self-mentions in the SLAB corpus is the first-person plural verb (in the present tense: *predstavljamo / we demonstrate*, *izpostavljamo / we highlight*, *obravnavamo / we examine*; in the past tense: *smo analizirali / we analysed*, *smo raziskali / we investigated;* in modal structures: *lahko pokažemo / we can show,* etc.*)*, which all contain the pronominal category *mi (we)*. As can be seen in Table 3, it occurs in all four fields of research, but most notably in the natural sciences (1.79 per 100 words, in 16 of the 20 abstracts analysed) and in technology (1.5 per 100 words, in 12 of the 20 abstracts analysed). It is also the only self-mention strategy which appears in the abstracts of the journal *Ars Mathematica Contemporanea*. A unique feature among self-mentions found in the subcorpus of social sciences is the third person verb in the singular or dual (the grammatical number depends on the actual number of authors of the paper) containing the pronoun category *he, she, they*, etc., (*avtorica predstavlja / the author presents, avtorica izpostavi / the author argues, avtorici obravnavata / the authors examine*). This strategy even appears as the only one in the abstracts of the journal *Dve domovini*. Other types of self-mentions, such as the first person singular verb (*bom orisal / I will outline, bom sklenil / I will conclude*, etc.), the first person

Table 3: Types of self-mentions and their representation by research field in the SLAB corpus

Type of self-mention	HUM		SOC		NAT		TECH	
	/100 words	abstr. of 20	/100 words	abstr. of 20	/100 words	abstr. of 20	/100 words	abstr. of 20
verb, first person plural	0.5	8	0.53	3	1.79	16	1.5	12
verb, first person singular	0.11	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
verb, third person (singular/dual)	0.04	1	0.84	8	-	-	-	-
personal pronoun, first person singular	0.04	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
personal pronoun, first person plural	0.04	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
possessive pronoun, first person singular	-	-	0.04	1	-	-	-	-
possessive pronoun, first person plural	0.08	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
adjective *lasten* 'svoj'	-	-	0.04	1	-	-	-	-

singular personal pronoun (*me bo vodil / will guide me*) and the first person plural personal pronoun (*se nam kaže / it seems to us*), the first person singular possessive pronoun (*po mojem mnenju / in my opinion*) and the first person plural possessive pronoun (*v ospredju našega zanimanja / at the forefront of our interest*) appear only with individual authors, and could therefore be attributed to the authors' individual style.

4.2   Self-mentions in Croatian research article abstracts

In the CRAB corpus self-mentions also occur in all the research fields analysed, but to a much lesser extent than in the SLAB corpus. As can be seen from Figure 2, their occurrence is slightly more frequent in the social sciences subcorpus (0.8 self-mentions per 100 words), while being almost negligible in the abstracts from the humanities, natural sciences and technology (natural sciences 0.29, humanities and technology 0.21 self-mentions per 100 words).
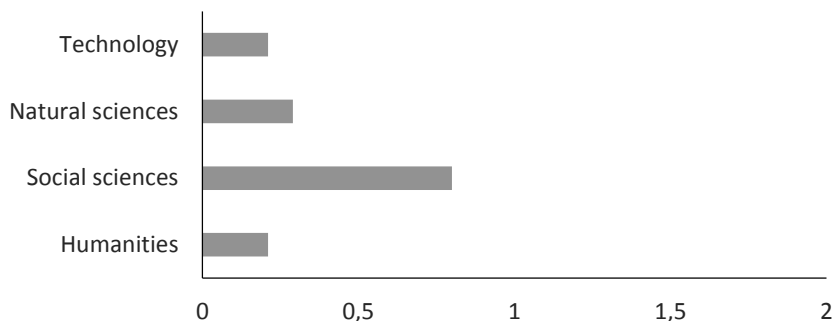
Figure 2: Frequency of self-mentions in the CRAB corpus per 100 words

On the basis of the results, we can conclude that explicit self-mentions are not a common strategy in Croatian research article abstracts. As shown in Table 4, all four subcorpora are dominated by impersonal structures, which are most commonly expressed by a passive verb structure *(dobivena su eksplicitna rješenja / explicit solutions were obtained, razmotren je / was considered, predložen je / was proposed,* etc.) and impersonal verb forms with a reflexive pronoun *se (određuje se / is defined, u radu se promatra / is observed in the paper,* etc.). Bašić and Veselica-Majhut (2016) reach a similar conclusion in the analysis of research articles from the field of linguistics. Abstracts in the social sciences subcorpus show a somewhat more diverse structure (self-mentions in 20% of abstracts, passive structures in 40% of abstracts). In case of Croatian authors, too, we can observe the choice of a single rhetorical strategy, i.e., the use of either personal or impersonal explicit and implicit structures of metadiscourse. There is a slight discrepancy in the use of a combined strategy in the social sciences (25% of abstracts with the occurrence of both strategies).

Table 4: The frequency of personal and impersonal structures in individual abstracts in the CRAB corpus

	HUM		SOC		NAT		TECH	
	No. of abstr.	%	No. of abstr.	%	No. of abstr.	%	No. of abstr.	%
Self-mentions	2	10	4	20	1	5	1	5
Impersonal structures	14	70	8	40	15	75	17	85
Both	2	10	5	25	3	15	2	10
None of the above	2	10	3	15	1	5	-	-

If we look at the types of self-mentions occurring in the CRAB corpus, their frequency per 100 words and their distribution across the corpus (Table 5), it is clear that the number of different types of self-mentions and their frequency in the CRAB corpus is much lower than in the SLAB corps. Given that they mostly occur in individual authors, they cannot be claimed to form a part of the overall strategy of the author's presence in research article abstracts, but could instead be attributed to the author's individual style.

Table 5: Types of self-mentions and their representation by research field in the CRAB corpus

Type of self-mention	HUM		SOC		NAT		TECH	
	/100 words	abstr. of 20	/100 words	abstr. of 20	/100 words	abstr. of 20	/100 words	abstr. of 20
verb, first person plural	0.12	2	-	-	0.24	3	0.18	3
verb, first person singular	0.04	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
verb, third person (singular/dual)	0.04	1	0.8	9	-	-	-	-
possessive pronoun, first person plural	0.04	1	-	-	0.06	2	0.04	1

Similar to the SLAB corpus, first person plural verbs appear in the role of self-mentions (in the present tense: *predlažemo / we propose, proučavamo / we study*, and in the past tense: *izgradili smo / we constructed, pokazali smo / we showed, analizirali smo / we analysed*), specifically from individual authors in the natural sciences (0.24 per 100 words in three abstracts), technology (0.18 per 100 words in three abstracts) and humanities subcorpora (0.12 per 100 words in two abstracts), while this form is not represented in the social sciences subcorpus. Further research should examine the occurrence of this form in the light of the actual number of authors of the text. In one abstract from the humanities subcorpus, the first person singular verb appears as a self-mention (*i zbog toga ih smatram izvrsnim / which is why I consider them excellent*). A similar frequency was observed for the first person plural possessive pronoun (*naš cilj / our goal, naš pristup / our approach*), which was found in the natural sciences (0.06 per 100 words in two abstracts), technology and humanities subcorpora (both 0.04 per 100 words in one abstract). What stands out among the self-mentions is the third person verb (*autor razmatra / the author considers, autori zaključuju / the authors conclude, autorice se zalažu / the authors advocate*, etc.), which, as in Slovene, appears as an important strategy in the social sciences subcorpus (0.8 per 100 words in nine abstracts).

4.3 Self-mentions as a cultural metadiscourse strategy in Slovene and Croatian research article abstracts

The results show that there are considerable differences in the frequency of self-mentions between the Slovene and Croatian research article abstracts examined in this study. The contrastive comparison of personal and impersonal structures between the two languages reveals a rather dissimilar situation, shown in more detail in Figure 3.
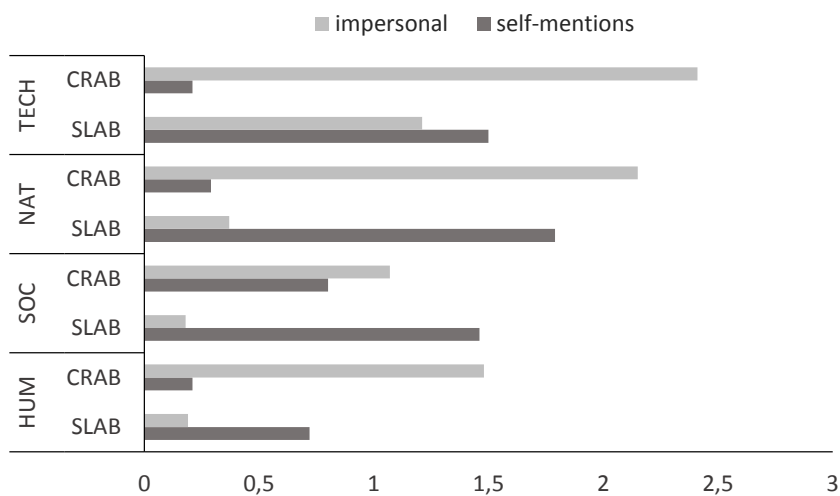
Figure 3: The frequency of self-mentions and impersonal structures per 100 words in the SLAB and CRAB corpora

In the corpus of Croatian abstracts (CRAB), the strategy of impersonal communication with the reader is dominant in all fields of research, while the corpus of Slovene abstracts (SLAB) is dominated by the self-mentions which establish personal communication with the reader. Even though the use of such strategies in Slovene academic discourse is often attributed to the influence of Anglo-American academic writing, a study conducted by Pisanski (2002) on a corpus of articles from mathematics and archaeology shows that, for example, compared to their use in the 1950s, the use of previews and reviews in the analysed texts originating in the 1990s had decreased. Moreover, in the grammar of the Slovene language, we find that the use of the passive is common in professional, popular-science or scientific texts. Yet even in these fields of discourse excessive use of the passive is not advisable (Toporišič 2004, 359). On the other hand, Silić and Pranjković (2005, 197) claim that passive structures are particularly common in

Croatian scientific and administrative texts. We can therefore conclude that there exist certain culture-specific differences between the two languages in the use of self-mentions. It would certainly be worth conducting a more detailed exploration of the strategy of self-mentions in Slovene and Croatian research articles, as well as comparing the results with other Slavic languages.

5   CONCLUSION

Our study focused on explicit self-mentions in Slovene and Croatian research article abstracts. Despite the fact that the languages of Slovene and Croatian are related and have been in close cultural contact for centuries, our findings show that there exists a considerable variation in the strategy of the author's presence in the texts of the analysed corpora. Whereas in Croatian research article abstracts explicit self-mention is not a generally accepted strategy, as scientific objectivity is still strongly associated with linguistic objectivity, in Slovene research article abstracts it represents a dominant strategy, although there are certain discrepancies between individual research fields. On these grounds we can conclude that the differences between the analysed corpora could reflect a degree of cultural specificity present in Slovene and Croatian academic discourse, while also affirming the existence of certain differences between individual fields of research.

Since this study marks the beginning of research focused on Slovene and Croatian scientific texts, many questions remain unaddressed. It would be interesting to conduct a more detailed investigation of the functions of explicit and implicit self-mentions occurring in the analysed corpora. Such research should also include a diachronic perspective so as to determine the extent to which cultural differences associated with the strategy of self-mentions in the languages under consideration are time-bound. Furthermore, the study should certainly be repeated on a larger corpus and extended to also include other genres of scientific discourse. Given the fact that there are differences in the use of self-mentions between individual fields of research, as has also been confirmed for other languages (see, e.g., Bondi 2006: 29), in the future, it would be interesting to perform a more detailed investigation of the strategy of the author's presence in the text in various disciplines within each field of research.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix

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