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# Discourse Patterns in Spoken and Written Corpora

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Volume 120

Discourse Patterns in Spoken and Written Corpora

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# Interaction in written economics lectures

## The meta-discursive role of person markers

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### 1. Introduction

For a long time, academic writing has been viewed as impersonal and objective — characterised by lexico-grammatical features such as nominalization and the passive voice — reflecting the positivist assumption that academic research is purely empirical and, therefore, more credible if explanation and analysis are allowed to speak for themselves. Eradication of the self, as Hyland (2001) states, has the function of emphasising the sharing of knowledge with the whole community, while stressing that a text can communicate directly to the reader without human mediation.

By contrast, recent research on meta-discursive devices in research articles (Meyers 1989; Hyland 1998; Salager-Meyer 1998; Breivæga et al. 2002), in student academic writing (Crismore and Farnsworth 1990; Thesen 1997; Ivanić 1998; Tang and John 1999; Hyland 2002), in university textbooks (Hyland 1994, 1999, 2000; Bondi 1999; Samson forthcoming) or in historical economics lectures (Del Lungo 2001, 2002), suggests that academic writing does not only convey an ideational content through the use of impersonal language, but that it gains credibility from writers' projecting themselves into the text, and displaying commitment to their ideas. However, among the different academic genres which have been investigated, contemporary written economics lectures, developed into their written form from a spoken version, have received little attention, though they seem to be particularly suitable for exploring the projection of the author in the text.

Most recent studies have focussed on spoken academic discourse, specifically on topic identification (Flowerdew 1994; Hansen 1994), on the role of lexical phrases, asides and anecdotes in the classroom (Shrodt-Lopez 1987, 1991; DeCarrico and Nattinger 1988), on schematic phasal patterning (Young 1990, 1994), questions and

answers, repetition and reformulation (Thompson 1997; Bamford 2000). They often, however, seem to neglect the author's presence in the text.

In this paper, therefore, I will investigate how academic economic writers convey their knowledge of economics and construct their written published lectures by adopting a personal stance and projecting themselves in their texts, thus challenging what according to many should be written, detached, decontextualised, and autonomous academic language.<sup>1</sup>

By means of interpersonal meta-discursive devices — in particular person markers — writers show, on the one hand, authorial presence which plays an important role in securing the correct interpretation of the text and, on the other, academic prestige, in the attempt to construct a successful relationship with their interlocutors, taking into consideration their expectations. As Nystrand (1986) observes, the process of writing consists of elaborating a text in accordance with what the writer assumes the reader knows and expects, and the process of reading is a matter of predicting what the text means according to what the reader assumes the writer's purpose to be. As a result, written communication depends on what either the writer or the reader assumes the other will do or has done. A central aspect of this relationship is that writers, who are social actors, are aware of the need to find out about each other's purposes and share the knowledge about how texts signal and represent them. Thus, interaction in the texts may be seen as a result of actions of socially situated writers, who use both the linguistic and the social conventions not only to achieve an increasing social participation in their disciplinary community, but also to persuade the reader into accepting the constructed text (Kress 1989).

The examination of person markers, then, serves the purpose of underscoring the functional choices economists/academics make in their written economics lectures relative to their different needs and to the requirement of adopting different identities in their texts. On one hand, they may adopt the role of expert/teacher with an expository and explanatory function which characterises written economics lectures as a pedagogic genre. On the other, the writers may use the lecture form to promote their own research results, thus introducing features of an advertising-marketing genre. This study has the further purpose to show that contemporary written economics lectures are a mixed genre, and that with certain features they subscribe to values distinguishing them from other pedagogic texts within the academic economic community.

## 2. Corpus and methodology

The reflections presented in this paper are based on some partial results of a qualitative and quantitative analysis of a specialised corpus of ten written economics

lectures,<sup>2</sup> produced by different contemporary economists, on various topics of macroeconomics that exemplify academic discourse in this field.

All the lectures examined have been expanded, by their authors, from their original spoken version, and have mature students and professionals as their target readers.

The lectures have a common macro-structure: that is an introduction, in which the writer announces the direction the lecture will take, a middle, in which the writer develops his theses, by formulating hypotheses and creating model-worlds, and a conclusion. This macrostructure is repeated throughout the lectures in each chapter.

All the texts were scanned to produce a specialised electronic corpus of about 130,000 words and analysed by means of Wordsmith Tools. A frequency analysis was conducted to provide quantitative data for the interpretation of the person markers in the written lectures, whereas semantic and discursive functions of the person markers were analysed qualitatively in the texts.

An initial analysis indicated that the lectures display mainly three aims: first, to familiarise less professional readers with the norms and assumptions of the discourse community, while updating them on the concepts, the methodology and the practices of the economic discipline; second, to help readers focus their attention on the important points of the issues discussed in the texts in accordance with the norms of pedagogic texts; third, to try, as in research articles written to be read by one's peers, to emphasize the originality and importance of the writer's economic research, while promoting oneself and seeking the acceptance and recognition of the scientific community constituted by a range of values, assumptions and practices.

It may be surprising to find a high display of interpersonal meta-discursive features in an academic genre traditionally considered merely monologic, and in which accepted knowledge is arranged into a coherent form. However, in this paper I seek to establish how, in written economics lectures, person markers have a high frequency and more than one function. They are used to express not only authorial and authoritative prominence, through self-mention, but also to take on different meta-discursive roles with the function of helping the less expert reader to understand the different parts of the lectures, in order to reinforce the interactional relationship with the addressee and create a sense of solidarity.

## 3. Person markers: a functional choice

Person markers seem to have three main interpersonal meta-discursive functions which overlap with textual ones. They express the writer's socially defined persona circumscribed by his/her disciplinary community, they underscore interactional aspects of authorial presence that contribute to the variability in tenor, and they appear to have a promotional academic and professional purpose.

The choice the academic writer makes to be present or absent in the text, by choosing a specific person marker, is related to his/her attitude toward the propositional material. It is a conscious choice that contributes to ego involvement, to the degree of intimacy or remoteness, and to the ways the writer wishes to be represented in the text. However, the choice of a specific person marker may also be viewed according to Iyanic (1998: 98) as an aspect of the context. Texts simultaneously enact what Halliday (1994) calls the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions of language. In contrast with a conception which denotes it as an autonomous system, language may be viewed as a socio-culturally context-dependent means of communication. If viewed as a dynamic concept, language is always constitutive of social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge, and is socially shaped and shaping (Fairclough 1993). This results in a greater manipulation of the genre conventions with the consequent tendency to mix private intentions with socially recognised communicative purposes (Bathia 1997), a phenomenon widely used in many professional genres.

Similarly, texts, which are both pedagogic and present research results, cannot be seen as decontextualised for they reflect methodologies, rhetorical strategies and arguments constructed to engage and persuade the readers of the claims that are made. Trying to convince not only less professional readers but also colleague economists, involves deploying disciplinary and genre-specific conventions that make the lectures in the corpus into a multi-layered hybrid co-produced by the authors and the readers (Hyland 2000). Therefore, the stance the economists/writers adopt towards their texts indicates a socially defined *persona*<sup>2</sup> who has acquired authority by speaking and using the codes and the identity of a community member, but it is also related to the writer's convictions and engagement with the reader.

In the corpus, the choice of the first person pronoun corresponds to a multiple discourse identity (Fetzer and Akman 2002) reflected in various degrees of authority within the text, where authority means not solely the writer's possession of knowledge and expertise, or the right to control and command others, but the more specific meaning of maker of meaning in Iyanic's (1998: 12) sense<sup>4</sup>. A written utterance, in fact, has meaning only if and when it communicates a *who* and a *what*. Following Gee (1999), *who* means a kind of person one is seeking to be and enact whereas *what* is a socially situated activity that an utterance helps to constitute, as can be seen in examples (1) and (2):

- (1) I will follow a modeling strategy that implies dropping the representative firm as used by Marshall. Thus I am asking about the importance of what Marshall called the "eddies" when one is thinking about events that will occur some time in the future. First I will describe a simple example of a model that tries to come to grips with some of the issues of modeling time

explicitly. Then I will turn to empirical work to underscore the importance of simultaneous consideration of these different factors. (Diamond)

- (2) That we present alternative theories as honestly as we can does not imply that we are theoretical wimps. We believe that most (not all) current theories do capture important aspects of reality; we do not believe in monocausal or monodistortion accounts of fluctuations. We believe that eclecticism in the pursuit of truth is no crime; we are sure, however, that our preferences, which are obviously reflected in *our* research, will be clear to the careful reader. (Blanchard and Fischer)

The examples show how the writers textualise their work as a contribution to the field while constructing themselves as competent members of the discipline; the examples also show by the use of the person marker how the academic authors are constrained by complex interpersonal relationships, differences in status and power, which entail their identity being constructed by their membership of, and identification with, the values and practices of one or more communities (Iyanic 1998: 83). The economic discourse community can thus be considered a socio-rhetorical network, which is formed in order to work toward a set of common goals (Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995). In this community the choice of personal reference may be viewed as a clear indication of the academics' aim to balance objective data, hypothetical worlds, and a sense of disciplinary solidarity while influencing the perspective from which their texts should be interpreted.

Person markers (italicised) are first person personal pronouns characteristically used in a situational context, in that they 'shift' according to the situation, and point, deictically speaking, to 'the one who is speaking' and also 'the one who is reading' — *I* and *we* (Wales 1996). For the purpose of my investigation of the interactional use of person markers, I follow overall Hyland's definition, which defines person markers as items of a subcategory of interpersonal meta-discourse which contribute to the writer-reader relationship (Hyland 1994, 2000).

As shown in Table 1, the lectures in the corpus present a high frequency of the first person pronouns — *I* and *we* — revealing the decision on the part of the writers to take a stance and adopt different roles in their texts. A plural first person pronoun can have either inclusive or exclusive semantic reference. An inclusive *we* includes both writer and reader, whereas the latter excludes the reader.

More specifically, *I* and exclusive *we* (4,408 *I* vs 720 *we*) may often overlap in indicating: (1) a clear choice to establish an authoritative self as a member of the economic community; (2) the writer's prominent position towards less expert readers; (3) the roles adopted in the dialogue which help enforce asymmetry; (4) promotion of research and the writer's self-image; (5) that written economics lectures form a mixed academic genre.

Table 1. Frequency of person markers

type of person marker	frequency
I	4,408
me	95
my	84
we	720
our	90
Total	5,397

In Section 4, I will start by analysing the roles the writers/economists adopt in the construction of their lectures; then I will investigate how the same person markers may have different or overlapping functions in accordance with the writer's purposes, thus often becoming the expression of personal intentions. Consequently, the use of specific person markers may be viewed as a demonstration of research prominence whilst signalling a complex relationship between particular instances of language use in dynamic academic/professional communication.

#### 4 Person markers: instances of authorial roles

The presence or absence of explicit author reference is a conscious choice made by writers who want to adopt a particular stance and have a particular role in their text. In the corpus, person markers vary according to the sections of the lecture, to the function and role<sup>5</sup> the writer wants to adopt whilst interacting with the reader, and according to the degree the reader is to be included in the text. The focussing on the specific needs and requirements of the discipline emphasizes that academic writing should not be considered monolithic or shaped in a mechanical way; on the contrary, as documented in several instances of genre-mixing, there is an extensive restructuring of boundaries between discursive practices (Bathia 1997). This feature is also found in these economics lectures which are characterised by a wider use of interpersonal meta-discursive devices to promote the academic's research as underlined by the roles adopted in the corpus which I have broadly classified as: 'author', 'organiser' and 'guidance' role.

##### 4.1 Author role

Of the roles adopted by the writers, the author role is amongst the primary ones in the corpus. The writer adopts this role in order to provide the reader with the knowledge background which demonstrates the writer's research experience in the field, before presenting his/her own research.

As in the introductions of research articles, in the lectures, the writers first define the field of study and then establish a niche for their research in the integral part of the text. In doing so, they claim their authority as a source of knowledge, positioning themselves asymmetrically in relation to their readership. However, to mitigate their superiority and show deference towards the scientific community members, the authors maintain a colloquial style, often by expressing a personal view on established facts.

The use of a colloquial style is underscored by the presence of *I*, a signal of a restricted referential field since it refers to the self and, more specifically, has come to be a prototypical index of subjectivity (Wales 1996); *I* signals also the responsibility for a critical claim which is simultaneously a form of hedging, of what may be a face-threatening claim, as in (3):

- (3) *I* have been researching the inadequacies of conventional approaches of the modelling of time since 1968. *My* dissatisfaction with treatments of stability led *me* to think about price adjustments in real time, with individuals aware that they are partaking in a process in real time. [...] (Diamond)

This example illustrates how reference to the writer's previous research is emphasised by the possessive determiner *my*, with reference to *I*, whilst declaring his *dissatisfaction with the inadequacies of conventional approaches of the modelling of time since 1968*. *Me* is used when the writer wants to reconsider the question because he holds his own opinion on the topic. By using the first person pronoun with the cognitive verb *think*, the writer on one hand weakens his claim, yet allows the reader to judge and criticise his statement.

In (4), the writer introduces his topic as if writing a research article, emphasising the centrality and reason for his current research by detaching himself from the topic and beginning with the impersonal *there has been a flurry of activity* in order to state established facts:

- (4) [...] over the last fifteen years, [...] *there* has been a flurry of activity [...] particularly the life-cycle theory of Modigliani and Brumberg (1954, 1979) which is the basis for essentially all modern research on consumption and saving. In these chapters *I* try to tell the story of the most recent burst of research. [...] (Deaton)

Impersonalisation is usually seen as a contribution to the objectivity of scientific discourse; however, it may be a face-saver to protect the writer from his peers. Such an attitude is underlined, in example (4), by a 'non-integral' citation (particularly the *life-cycle theory of Modigliani and Brumberg*) which shows, on one hand, the

writer's familiarity with the research field, and, on the other, helps to create a personal research space for the writer. In the hedged statement *I try to tell the story* he addresses his peer readership more directly.

In (5) the academic writer once again deploys his knowledge of the field, referring to an integral citation of Marshall, acknowledging his work, showing deference to the whole scientific community. While sharing Marshall's conception of time, he acknowledges that this may nevertheless result in problems. By using *I* the writer takes up a personal stance, thus hedging a claim which may be seen as the expected one

- (5) In the Preface to the first edition of his *Principles of Economics*, Alfred Marshall refers to the "element of Time" as "the centre of the chief difficulty of almost every economic problem" (1948, p.ii). *I* share Marshall's view of time as a source of difficulty (Diamond).

#### 4.2 Organiser role

In exploring the lectures of the corpus, I noticed that the first person pronouns, singular or plural, mainly occur when academic writers, in the introduction of a chapter or of a section of their lectures, assume the role of 'organiser'. In such a role writers have to decide how to structure the material by outlining and organising it, in order to achieve their communicative purposes.

In the role of authorial prominence, found mainly in the introduction and middle sections of the lecture, *I* collocates with verbs indicating both the organisation of the issue presented, thus creating a text frame, and a commitment to what the reader expects to read ahead in the text. In these sections, the person markers serve also as a textual meta-discursive device, which often overlaps with the interpersonal function to explain hypotheses, models and illustrations. For this purpose, the person markers co-occur with verbs referring to the analysis of non-linear texts such as equations, charts, figures, etc or with verbs that direct the attention of the reader to what follows in the text. The most frequent verbs found in these two sections are listed in Table 2:

Table 2. Verbs in introduction /middle sections

<i>analyse</i>	<i>examine</i>	<i>present</i>
<i>assume</i>	<i>explore</i>	<i>return</i>
<i>consider</i>	<i>extend</i>	<i>see</i>
<i>demonstrate</i>	<i>focus</i>	<i>show</i>
<i>develop</i>	<i>include</i>	<i>start</i>
<i>discuss</i>	<i>introduce</i>	<i>study</i>

As I found in a previous study (Samson forthcoming), the verbs occur mainly in the present tense. There were no instances of present progressive, which was to be expected since the progressive forms would introduce a narrative element in the academic presentation that would move the reader's attention away from what is argued or claimed about the performance of the activity itself.

The awareness on the part of the academic/writer of how to employ different personal pronouns to increase or decrease the reader's inclusion in the text is exemplified by the use of the person marker *we* in the corpus. The frequent use of exclusive *we* reinforces the writer's power when it refers to the author in the lectures, as can be seen in Blanchard and Fischer's example (6).

- (6) In this chapter and the next *we* focus on the fundamentals of consumption and capital accumulation in dynamic nonmonetary equilibrium models. *We* introduce basic models — in this chapter, the Ramsey infinite horizon optimizing model, and in the next, overlapping generations models with finite horizon maximizers — and begin to analyse economic issues such as how much interest rates affect savings and whether the choice between tax and deficit financing affects capital accumulation (Blanchard and Fischer)

The authors use *we* to show that they take full responsibility for their utterances. They tell the reader what they will focus on, and what their goals will be. *We* like *I*, in the previous examples, is related to the function of describing the writer's procedural choice at the beginning of a chapter or section or at the end when announcing what follows. The organiser role of the academic/writer is reinforced, as in example (7), by the co-occurrence and the repetition of the future tense *will* indicating the intention of the writer to carry out certain activities.

- (7) In these lectures *I* will examine how time is modeled in various economic analyses. *My* focus will be on the modeling of equilibrium, particularly equilibrium with many economic agents. *I* will present a leisurely tour through some economic analyses, with an eye on their treatment of time. The first lecture considers models of a single industry; the second, models of an entire economy. (Diamond)

*Will* co-occurs with the verbs *examine*, *focus*, *present* which the reader expects to be found in the text. Thus there is a close relation between the agent and the main predicate, which predicts a future completion of the activity. The writer reinforces his commitment to the reader and to the text by specifying the content of the two lectures he will focus on — *models of a single industry and models of an entire economy* — and by using the two textual meta-discursive sequencers (Tadros 1994) — *first and second* — which show the reader how the parts of the text are related to

one another, and help to construct an appropriate mental representation of what is said in the reader's memory. The present tense refers to an action taking place in the immediate context of interaction. Also the grammatical and lexical repetition — as in *I will examine, I will present, models* — has two functions in the lecture: it enables the reader to process the propositional content more easily, and it signals the economist's familiarity with the linguistic conventions of the discourse community for giving a reasoned account of one's thinking.

### 4.3 Guidance role

Another role that may be viewed as highly interpersonal, although the writer maintains his asymmetrical, expert position, is the guidance role. This role is characterised by the usage of inclusive *we*, with 1st person verbs, in the middle of the lecture when the topic is summarised. It demonstrates personal confidence based on the author's command of the arguments as when the writer develops his/her theses by formulating hypotheses and by creating model-worlds. In example (8) the person marker *we* is clearly inclusive as the writer previously refers to *you*, the reader.

- (8) *I started by reminding you of the familiar atemporal short and long-run Marshallian models. I then introduced a model set in real time. As we will see in a moment, this is true of US industries.* (Diamond)

The author first draws the reader's attention to the points he has discussed — *the short and long-run Marshallian models* followed by a *real time model* — and arrives at the decision of what he will examine next. The writer's prominent role is reaffirmed by the use of the 1st person singular *I* followed by a switch to *we* in order to create a sense of togetherness with the reader. *We* is followed by the verb *see*, which signals the writer's role to help the reader to see something relevant in the text. By using inclusive *we*, and involving both writer and reader in the same activity, the writer presupposes that the reader has a certain background knowledge and ability that will allow him to follow the arguments. The use of inclusive *we* can therefore be seen as a tool to shorten the distance between writer and reader and stress solidarity between the two as when, for instance, the author develops and explains the concepts he will use.

However, there are instances, as in example (9), in which the use of *we* is not clear-cut:

- (9) [...] Include EBRD forecasts of output for 1996 when available, so that Fig. 1.1 gives the behaviour of output [...] GDP is normalized to be equal to 1 in year 0, the year before transition. With these preliminaries out of the way, we return to the behaviour of GDP as shown in Fig. 1.1 [...] (Blanchard)

Especially when a single author has used *I* while explaining a particular model, the sudden switch to the plural may indicate commonality with the reader, but it may simultaneously, as Pennycook (1994) observes, be interpreted as a claim of authority. Example (9) suggests how the writer can reduce his personal intrusion in the text while emphasizing the importance that should be given to the procedure itself. By referring to himself, as *I*, the writer guides the reader to an explanation of his *GDP* thesis. Significantly, he uses present tense verbs (*include, return*) which indicate immediate action and presuppose visual perception when the reference is to a figure or a non-linear text. In example (9) the figure is referred to by a noun phrase ('Fig. 1.1'), collocating with a textual meta-discursive marker — *as shown in Fig. 1.1* — (cf. Samson forthcoming).

In other instances the academic writer seems to seek agreement and cooperation from his readers by using *let us* before starting to explain a model world as in extract (10).

- (10) *Let us consider this industry under the assumption that the demand curve has a multiplicative factor that follows a sine wave* (Diamond).

*Let us* behaves like a pragmatic particle with the illocutionary force of a polite request. In the corpus it functions as a device to involve the reader and it strategically fronts a clause where the writer explains what he will discuss next.

### 5. Person markers and self-mention: a promotional role

Clearly, from the analysis of the corpus, person markers appear to be a means by which academics writers display various identities in different parts of the lectures. Person markers are a powerful signal of self-mention, a rhetorical strategy to demonstrate personal contribution to the economic community and to establish a claim to achieve a recognition of academic priority.

In the corpus, the economists frequently cite definitions by previous researchers — not only in the preface or in the introductions, but also in the middle sections — and adopt personal stances with the clear intent of demarcating their work from that of others in order to emphasise their innovative contribution to the discipline. In (11), (12) and (13) the authors refer to arguments and methodologies that are established norms of the discipline in order to signal their subjective evaluation (*I contrasted; I think this description is basically right*) and in order to relate their work to that of their colleagues:

- (11) Eric Lundberg (1937) devotes considerable attention to the difficulty of defining a period for sequence analyses. He makes it clear that his "day" is



not a chronological day; so while there is discussion of alternative lags, there is not an empirical statement about applicability. In *my* view, continuous-time modelling of this process is conceptually cleaner, but has considerable mathematical difficulties, especially when different factors have different lag structures and different speeds of response (Diamond)

- (12) It is unlikely that anyone would have noticed, but in the first lecture I avoided the word “dynamic”. Instead, I contrasted explicit-time and atemporal models, implicitly making a case for both of them, one for theoretical analysis, the other for exposition and applications. This is in contrast with the way that the term “dynamic” is often used. (Diamond)

- (13) I see the transition as being shaped by two main mechanisms. The first is reallocation. A typical description of what happened at the beginning of transition is that price liberalisation and the removal of subsidies triggered a collapse of state firms and that growth in the new private sector was simply insufficient to take up the slack. I think that this description is basically right (Blanchard).

The persuasive use of self-mention overlaps with the organiser role when the writers use *I* or *we* to insist on their contribution to the field; cf. *I discussed*, *I assumed*, *we identified*, *we noted*, *I focussed*, *I argued*, *I looked* in examples (14), (15) and (16).

- (14) *I discussed* the optimal contract written by an entrepreneur who raises capital from an investor (or set of investors). *I assumed* that the entrepreneur obtained significant (private) benefits from a running a firm [...] (Hart)

- (15) *We identified* lots of reasons why firms are slow to change prices. And *we noted* that there are generally many different prices at which homogenous goods are available (Diamond)

- (16) *I focussed* on the U-shaped adjustment of output and unemployment during transition. *I argued* that the two main forces shaping transition were reallocation [...]. *I looked* in particular at the interaction between restructuring and labour market conditions (Blanchard).

The person markers may be seen also from the utilitarian perspective, that how the text is constructed is useful in promoting one’s academic position. This strategy can be stressed by the use of possessive adjectives in combination with nouns such as *point*, *attempt*, *models* as in examples (17), (18), (19), which serve to highlight the writer’s contribution to the academic discipline:

- (17) *My point* is that the process of selection of the “right” atemporal model involves thinking about the resource allocation process over time, and that some of that thinking may be done better in an explicit model (Diamond)

- (18) *Our models* rarely generate such simple messages. The analysis of transition is very much an analysis of the best-second, and comes with the typical attendant ambiguities (Blanchard)

- (19) These lectures reflect *my attempt* to think about behaviour of an economy over time... They also reflect *my attempt* to think coherently about micro and macro... (Hart)

Self-mention has not only the function to demonstrate that one belongs to the academic community and the ‘cutting edge’ of one’s research. Another function is rhetorical timing (Benkenkötter and Hucklin 1995); the speaker chooses a topic at a moment when it can be expected to be well received by the academic community because of its newness and the background knowledge it presupposes. This feature distinguishes written economics lectures from their oral form and from economics textbooks, and indicates that they should be classified as a mixed academic genre.

In extract (20), for instance, it is understood that the economist thinks this is the appropriate moment to discuss his research since his conclusions could be irrelevant in few years.

- (20) In these chapters *I* try to tell the story of the most recent burst of research. ... *I* do not know whether now is the best time to try. ... But the story as it now stands is a good one; a great deal has been learnt that we did not know before, ... So the tale is worth telling, even at the risk that the conclusions will be transparently wrong only a year or two from now. (Deaton)

The example shows that these lectures have both a pedagogic purpose and the purpose of promoting the writer’s own research. The genre can therefore be described as a mixed one. Similarly in (21) the writer explains the reasons and background knowledge for his research. The future changes of an economic transition in Eastern Europe represent a challenge which he is going to take up:

- (21) Transition in Central and Eastern Europe has led to a U-shaped response of output, that is, a sharp decline in output followed by recovery. Six years after the beginning of transition, most of the countries of Central Europe now seem firmly on the upside. Most of the countries of Eastern Europe are still close to the bottom of the U [...]. One of the challenges facing those working on transition, however, is whether they can convincingly explain the differences between Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and China. *I* shall take up this challenge as *I* go along (Blanchard)

Furthermore, in (22), the two economists Blanchard and Fischer promote their own research strategy by stating that alternative strategies have been unsuccessful:

- (22) The Keynesian framework embodied in the "neoclassical synthesis", which dominated the field until the mid-1970s, is in theoretical crisis, searching for microfoundations; no new theory has emerged to dominate the field, and the time is one of explorations in several directions with the unity of the field apparent mainly in the set of questions being studied. [...] We believe that looking at their effects as rising from deviations from a well-understood benchmark is the best research strategy. Alternative strategies that have started squarely from a different benchmark have for the most part proved unsuccessful (Blanchard and Fischer)

## 6. Concluding remarks

From this investigation, it seems clear that written economics lectures, as any other academic discourse, do not occur in a social vacuum. On the contrary, they always have to be understood in the context of their discipline. The use of person markers is a significant meta-discursive device. Self-mention can for instance be used to build authorial authority, promote one's research and self, and persuade readers, and thus it fulfils needs within the disciplinary community.

The distribution of specific person markers in different parts of the lecture indicates that any decision on the part of the writers is linked, on one hand, to the necessity to conform to the norms of the discipline in order to be accepted as a member of the academic community; on the other, the person markers are a strategy writers use to appear more prominent in the discourse or to adopt a stance towards their texts and readers. If addressing peer readers, the function of self-mention will be mainly that of self-promotion, of persuasion and of boosting one's credibility and authoritativeness. The use of *I* (or *my*) to refer to one's research procedures act as a means of promoting one's research. When addressing less knowledgeable readers, the writer uses *I* and inclusive *we* to persuade the addressee and to render the text more understandable and interesting through the use of a more colloquial style. The adoption of different personal pronouns reveals that academics are well aware of how to use rhetorical strategies to negotiate their knowledge while maintaining an asymmetrical position.

In their different roles, writers/academics not only help readers through the text by taking them on a sort of 'tour', but indirectly promote themselves. The choice of a specific personal pronoun may be seen as a deliberate decision, on the part of the writers, to promote their research and results, a feature which helps to

differentiate written economics lectures from the other academic genres.

The conscious choices writers/economists/academics make in their text therefore do not merely reflect the age and position of the writers, as claimed by Luukka and Markkanen (1997), but are more likely a result of the mixture of private intentions, institutional requirements of generic academic conventions. Written economics lectures may be viewed, then, not as empirical, impersonal and objective texts or as purely pedagogic tools, but they may be classified as a mixed genre, in which the writers show a certain freedom to be innovative by exploiting resources belonging to the research article genre and the economics textbooks genre within the broad framework of the specialist economics community.

## Notes

1. By contrast, spoken language has been characterised as 'involved' and context-dependent, that is as affecting and affected by the social relations of the interlocutors (Chafe 1982; Tannen 1985).
2. The written economics lectures analysed are included in:  
Blanchard, O. (1997). *The Economics of Post-Communist Transitions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
Blanchard, O. and Fischer S. (1997). *Lectures on Macroeconomics*. London: MIT Press.  
Deaton, A. (1992). *Understanding Consumption*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.  
Diamond, P. A. (1994). *On Time. Lectures on Models of Equilibrium*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
Hart, O. (1996). *Firms, Contracts, and Financial Structure*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
3. Cherry (1988) distinguishes *persona* from *ethos* in writing, with *ethos* referring to the personal characteristics e.g. funny, interesting, intelligent, etc., that a reader attributes to a writer based on textual evidence; whereas *persona* refers to both the personality and roles which a writer adopts while producing a piece of writing.
4. Ivancic (1998) takes up Cherry's (1988) work in exploring the phenomenon of self-representation in writing and focuses on the societal and discourse roles of the textual selves of her participants. Tang and John (1999) add a third role which they call genre role. Genre roles are specific to a particular genre within the discourse community.
5. In this paper I refer to Tang and John's (1999) taxonomy of the various degrees of different genre roles assumed by a writer in his/her text. However, because the data of this corpus differs from theirs, reference to their classification is generic and has been adapted to suit the written lectures under exploration.
6. Citations can be integral and non-integral (Swales 1990). An integral citation contains the name of the cited author as part of the text, whereas a non-integral citation shows the cited author in parentheses or in a footnote or endnote.

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## PART III

## Text and information structure