

Self-Mentions Lesson Plan

General Information	
Lesson Title	Self-Mentions
Class/Student Information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. upper-level undergraduates in an ecology course OR 2. multi-major undergraduates in an introductory or advanced technical writing course OR 3. multi-major graduates in a writing-intensive course
Length of Class/Activity	26 mins
Overall Instructional Goal	To teach students how to use self-mentions in their writing based on various discipline applications.
Lesson Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the main functions of self-mentions. • Identify when writers should insert themselves into their own scientific and professional text. • Distinguish often self-mentions are used in the hard sciences versus the soft sciences.
How will you measure each objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The in-class activities measure if students can identify the functions of self-mentions. • The homework assignments measure if students can independently (a) identify the functions of specific self-mentions, and (b) revise sentences to include self-mentions.
Justification for Lesson	Self-mentions are an interpersonal device that can make claims appear more reasonable and persuasive to readers. Students need to understand when to insert themselves into their own texts and the associated risk and benefits of doing so.
Materials	<p>You will need access to the following –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This file, which outlines the lesson. 2. Presentation slides for the Orientation and Presentation stages (URLs linked in Canvas). 3. In-class activities for the Engagement stage (on blue paper) 4. Homework file for the Expansion stage (DOC file linked in Canvas). 5. Fact sheet for the Expansion stage (URL linked in Canvas). <p>In addition, students will use AntConc and the Professional Writing data set for this unit.</p>

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<p>Orientation (10 min.) Before the lesson begins, ensure that AntConc as well as the Professional Writing data set are loaded. (NOTE: Data sets will be housed in the My Documents folder of TECM lab computers).</p> <p>Display Slide 1 of the presentation as students enter the lab or as you orient students to the lesson (see below). Distribute a copy of the in-class activities.</p> <p>Announce the topic of the lesson. Orient students to the examples of self-mentions on the first slide. Ask students what function self-mentions, such as <i>I, me, my, and we</i> serve in technical and scientific communication.</p> <p>Transition into the first in-class activity (Take a Look). Read the directions to students, emphasizing that you want them to relate the examples in the right-hand column with the different functions: state personal opinions, organize text and guide the reader, and recount experimental procedure and methods.</p> <p>Give the students about 3–4 minutes to complete this activity. Discuss the connections that students made. Key takeaways are presented in the right column.</p>	<p>Your students will recognize the list of pronouns on the slide, but they might be unfamiliar with the term <i>self-mentions</i> and their respective the rhetorical functions.</p> <p>Self-mentions are used in a text to help communicate arguments in ways that readers find acceptable and convincing. Technical and scientific texts still need to be primarily objective; however, aspects of a text (e.g., methods sections, recommendations, calls to action) can be rhetorically enhanced with a self-mention. In other words, self-mentions function as an interpersonal device that helps connect the writer with the reader with the purpose of convincing the reader to act in some way (e.g., accept the validity of a scientific discovery or accept proposed recommendation).</p> <p>Below are the key takeaways for the “Take a Look” activity:</p> <p>The state personal opinions function connects to examples b, f, and i.</p> <p>The organize text and guide the reader function connects to examples c, d, and h.</p> <p>The recount experimental procedure and methods function connects to examples a, e, and g.</p>
<p>Transition</p> <p>“Let’s looks at some of the primary and secondary uses of self-mentions in scientific and technical texts.”</p>	
<p>Presentation (5 min.)</p> <p>Transition to Slide 2 in the presentation.</p> <p>The use or avoidance of self-mention allows writers to be more or less visible in their texts, stepping in to explicitly signal their presence and take responsibility for claims and actions and credit for their interpretations.</p>	<p>Students gravitate toward expressive and interpersonal language patterns, such as self-mentions. However, these interpersonal patterns are more frequent in academic speech – when speakers are connecting with their audience – than in academic/professional writing.</p> <p>In part, the persuasive power of in-text self-mentions is that they are used sparingly. Strategic applications of self-mentions connect an idea of</p>

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<p>In fact, writers primarily use self-mentions to originate ideas – research hypotheses or calls to action – and state opinions that are supported by credible secondary sources or the writer’s own primary research findings. Here are a few examples of how writers have used self-mentions in both scientific and professional communication texts, including critical reviews, proposals, and correspondence.</p> <p>Transition to Slide 3 in the presentation.</p> <p>The secondary uses of self-mentions include organizing a text, recounting procedures and methods, and delivering negative information. As you can see in the examples, the writers step into their own text to help readers follow the flow of ideas. In some ways, these writers function in the same way a narrator in a novel might or the character voiceovers you hear in TV shows or movies – they tell the audience what’s happening so they can advance the plot/progression of ideas.</p> <p>Transition to Slide 4 of the presentation.</p> <p>The presence of self-mentions in published, professional writing correlates with discipline. In the sciences, writers have typically downplayed their personal role to highlight the phenomena under study, the replicability of research activities, and the generality of findings, circumventing first person to subtly convey an empiricist position, where research outcomes do not depend on authorial intrusion.</p> <p>However, trends in the disciplines, particularly in the STEM fields, are moving toward an increased frequency of the exclusive <i>we</i> (i.e., when the writers refer to themselves in the text). These types of self-mentions projects a more personal stance and signals an overt authorial role in interpretations of data and for claims. The use of <i>we</i> (rather than <i>I</i>) also suggests the collaborative nature of STEM research. You see more <i>I</i>'s in the humanities because those researchers tend to be the sole writer.</p>	<p>request with an emotional punch that is often absent in an abstract piece of writing.</p> <p>Additionally, self-mentions can organize the text for readers. Imagine the writer taking the reader by the hand and literally walking them through the text (e.g., “first, I’ll explain X... then I’ll explain Y... finally, I’ll recommend Z...”). This application primes the readers about the organization of the text. This lessens their anxiety because they can prepare for what they’re about to read. Therefore, the reader’s focus is more likely on the content than in determining organization of ideas.</p> <p>Self-mentions are sometimes considered a “bad writing habit,” but research shows that their frequency has increased in published writing. Self-mentions, particularly the use of <i>we</i>, have increased in science writing. <i>We</i> is used to describe hypothesis, results, and discussion but also reflect the collaborative nature of writing in the sciences.</p> <p>Students might get distracted trying to write down all the examples. All this information is on the related Fact Sheet.</p>

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<p>Transition</p> <p>“Let’s explore some of these applications of self-mentions in professional writing.”</p>	
<p>Engagement (7 min.)</p> <p>Review the “Data Digging” instructions with students.</p> <p>Read the activity to students and ask them to identify functions of <i>we</i> and <i>I</i> in the Professional Writing data set. You will need to demonstrate the Case options in AntConc for the <i>I</i> part of the activity.</p> <p>Remind students to write down the discipline where the example comes from (they can find this is the far-right column of AntConc).</p>	<p>Let the student work through this activity on their own but prompt them to write down their findings as they complete the activity. As students work, walk around the classroom to help them stay on task and to troubleshoot technology issues. The RA can also help troubleshoot technology issues and answer individual questions.</p> <p>Give students about 7 minutes to work through this activity. It’s okay if students don’t have time to identify examples for every function within <i>we</i> and <i>I</i>. In fact, encourage students to jump to the next section mid-way through the activity.</p> <p>Some students will spend more time on a specific word, reading and laughing at the associated concordance lines – this is a good thing and is engaging them with the material. Others will just run through the activity and log the frequencies. This is fine too – you can’t engage everyone!</p>
<p>Transition</p> <p>“Let’s discuss some of your findings.”</p>	
<p>Evaluation (6 min.)</p> <p>Lead the class discussion.</p> <p>The key takeaways for this activity are listed in the right-hand column.</p>	<p>There are 4,845 instances of <i>we</i> in the Professional Writing dataset. Below are a few examples to show students (but they should have many other options to choose from).</p> <p>Originate ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line 2672, <i>We</i> hypothesize that acid shock of the cell generates two distinct signals affecting RNA abundance... (cell-biol-9704). Line 472, <i>We</i> argue that the US military is an institution fraught with concern for its legitimacy... (sociology-S9708). <p>State opinions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line 9, Adjunction would require that <i>we</i> accept the conjunction of these basic statements, however many there were.

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	<p>This seems unreasonable (philopshy-9722).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line 4037, In our opinion, <i>we</i> should face the reality of the treatment of angles (physics-9710). <p>Organize text and guide readers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line 2893, If <i>we</i> look at the first paragraph of Text 1, <i>we</i> notice that the whole paragraph operates as a series of markers... (linguistics-9705). Lines 3462 and 2767, First, <i>we</i> offer evidence to support our claim... Second, <i>we</i> introduce and discuss... (linguistics-9719). <p>Recount experimental procedure and methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line 15, <i>We</i> accomplish this by explicitly modeling the effect of information about the performance of forgone alternatives... (marketing-9710). Line 2673, When <i>we</i> interviewed students about their difficulties in comprehending their lectures... (linguistics-9730). <p>There are 3,315 instances of <i>I</i> in the Professional Writing dataset. Make sure that students click the Case box in AntConc before searching – this will ensure students are looking for the pronoun <i>I</i> rather than any word that include the letter <i>i</i>.</p> <p>The 3,000+ hit of <i>I</i> is not an account count because some of the <i>Is</i> are roman numerals or parts of an equation (e.g. Lines 1–18, Lines 3305–3315). Also, students will probably recognize that many of the <i>Is</i> are direct quotes/transcriptions from participant interviews. Of the remaining hits of <i>I</i>, students should hopefully observe that they are all in the fields of philosophy, linguistics, marketing, and sociology. None of the hard sciences use the first-person pronoun.</p> <p>Originate ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line 233, <i>I</i> argue that Ferguson does not successfully explain the neglect of very cognitively disabled people... (sociology-S9704).

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line 480, As I claimed in the first part of this article, we can expect... (linguistics-9729). <p>State opinions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line 21, As I acknowledged at the outset, Murphy's Cooperative Principle seems sensible for cases of mutual advantage (philosophy-9730). Line 322, But I believe that the evidence presented so far is enough to make the case that... (linguistics-9718) <p>Organize text and guide readers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line 134, Second, I am not claiming that every probabilistic method can legitimately be used...(philopshy-9702). <p>Recount experimental procedure and methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line 2752, Once such an interview has finished, I transcribe it (or simply listen and take notes) and then extract... (linguistics-9714). Line 2487, To this end, I superimposed the three internal activity modes on to a five part general systems organisational model formulated by Kast and Rosensweig (1970). (marketing-9711).
<p>Summary Statement(s)</p> <p>All three of these words appeared in the professional speech data more frequently than in the professional writing data.</p> <p>Hedges and boosters are certainly used in writing, but you need to be aware that both are used with less frequency than in speech.</p> <p>You should also note that these language patterns are often used as filler. We use them in speech communication because we're trying to buy some time to think about what we're going to say next, but in writing, overusing hedges and boosters can clutter the clarity of our ideas.</p> <p>Finally, you'll notice that why it's acceptable to use words like <i>really</i>, <i>totally</i>, and <i>literally</i> in professional speech, we should find more formal alternatives to use in our professional writing.</p>	
<p>Expansion (2 min.)</p>	<p>The first homework assignment was designed to measure if students can identify how specific words are used to hedge or boost a claim or idea.</p>

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<p>Tell students there is a brief homework assignment associated with this lesson, which they can find linked on Canvas (as a Word document).</p> <p>The homework should only take 15-20 minutes to complete, but the first activity will require students to use AntConc and the Professional Writing data set. Make sure students know where these files are stored in the Canvas section.</p> <p>Refer students to the Fact Sheet for this task. Students can consult this sheet when working on homework and assignment drafts.</p>	<p>The second homework assignment was designed to measure if students can identify hedges and boosters that are more appropriate for professional and technical writing.</p> <p>The Fact Sheet for this unit should provide students with all the information they need to complete the homework.</p>