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## Reshaping Authorial Presence in Translations of Research Article Abstracts

ABSTRACT

In multilingual settings, the abstract is the only part of the research article that is regularly translated. Although very brief, abstracts play an important role in academic communication, as they provide immediate access to research findings. Contrastive research has revealed considerable cross-linguistic differences in the rhetorical patterns of abstracts. The present paper focuses on how this variation is bridged in translation, by addressing an important rhetorical dimension of academic discourse, authorial presence. Specifically, it examines how authorial presence is reshaped in translated abstracts. An analysis of a small corpus of 150 Slovene research article abstracts from five disciplines and their English translations reveals several interesting types of recurring translators' interventions, most notably the tendency to replace personal authorial references with impersonal structures. Data collected in interviews with four experienced translators of academic texts is used to shed light on potential reasons for interventions with authorial presence in translation.

**Keywords:** academic discourse, authorial presence, corpus analysis, interview study, translation of abstracts

## Preoblikovanje avtorjeve prisotnosti v prevodih izvlečkov znanstvenih člankov

IZVLEČEK

V večjezičnih okoljih je izvleček edini del znanstvenega članka, ki se ga redno prevaja. Čeprav so zelo kratki, imajo izvlečki pomembno vlogo v akademski komunikaciji, saj omogočajo takojšen dostop do izsledkov raziskav. Kontrastivne raziskave so identificirale precejšnje medjezikovne razlike v retoričnih vzorcih izvlečkov. Pričujoči prispevek se osredotoča na to, kako se tovrstne razlike premostijo v prevodu, in sicer na primeru pomembne retorične dimenzije akademskega diskurza, to je avtorjeve prisotnosti v besedilu. Prispevek se ukvarja z vprašanjem, kako se prisotnost avtorja preobrazi v prevedenih izvlečkih. Analiza majhnega korpusa 150 slovenskih izvlečkov znanstvenih člankov iz petih različnih strok in pripadajočih angleških prevodov pokaže nekaj zanimivih ponavljajočih se posegov prevajalcev, med katerimi je najpomembnejša zamenjava osebnih referenc na avtorja z neosebniimi strukturami. Podatki, pridobljeni v intervjujih s štirimi izkušenimi prevajalci akademskega diskurza, osvetlijo potencialne razloge za posege v avtorjevo prisotnost v prevodu.

**Ključne besede:** akademski diskurz, avtorjeva prisotnost, korpusna analiza, študija na podlagi intervjujev, prevajanje izvlečkov



# 1 Introduction

Research article abstracts (RAAs) are frequently translated in multilingual contexts, where the source and target texts are published side-by-side. Translation of RAAs is typically carried out for two reasons: to increase the international visibility of local research, or to foster multilingualism in an increasingly monolingual world (cf. Morley and Kerans 2013). As a genre, RAAs perform a key function in academic communication, since they are, as Lorés-Sanz (2016, 133) points out, “a navigating tool, an essential time-saving and information-managing device”. Hyland (2003, 258) underlines the importance of the genre because “after the title, it is generally the readers’ first encounter with a text and the point where they decide whether to read on and give the accompanying paper further attention, or to ignore it”. Juxtaposing them with research articles, Hyland (2003, 258) furthermore identifies the most critical function of RAAs, which is to “persuade readers that the article is worth reading”. Nevertheless, their translation remains surprisingly under-researched, although a few studies on translation of academic abstracts (Van Bonn and Swales 2007; Perales-Escudero and Swales 2011; Alharbi and Swales 2011; Lorés-Sanz 2016) have shown considerable shifts in rhetorical patterns in translation. This corresponds to the findings of research into translation of other academic genres from Slovene, a peripheral language, into English, the academic *lingua franca* (see Paradiž 2020 for research grant proposals; Pisanski Peterlin 2016 for research articles), where rhetorical divergences between the source and target texts have been identified above all in terms of the author-audience interaction.

The aim of this paper is to investigate how authorial presence as an element of the author-audience relationship is transformed and reconstructed in translation of academic discourse. Using a corpus of Slovene RAAs and their English translations, and semi-structured interviews, this study examines the translation strategies used in translating authorial references from Slovene into English. In particular, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How is the authorial voice in translated English abstracts different from that in original Slovene abstracts?
2. What kind of shifts can be identified in translation in different disciplines?
3. What are the translators’ reasons for the shifts?

## 2 Authorial Presence

Over the past few decades, a substantial body of research into the construction of authorial presence in academic discourse has revealed the complexities associated with its discourse functions (Ivanić 1998; Tang and John 1999; Kuo 1999; Hyland 2001, 2002; Taylor and Goodall 2019), as well as variation in authorial presence across languages (Vassileva 1998; Breivega, Dahl, and Fløttum 2002; Mur Dueñas 2007; Molino 2010; Dontcheva-Navratilova 2013; Walková 2018), genres and disciplines (Breivega, Dahl, and Fløttum 2002; Seoane and Hundt 2018; Cheung and Lau 2020). While academic writing has traditionally been viewed as distant and impersonal to avoid associations with subjectivity (Lafuente Millán 2010, 36; Hyland 2001, 207–8), a number of studies have shown that personal authorial references are actually an important element of academic communication. In fact, Hyland (2002, 1091)

identifies “the ability of the writer to construct a credible representation of themselves and their work, aligning themselves with the socially shaped identities of their communities” as a key element of pragmatic competence.

To shed light on how authors use authorial references to draw attention to themselves or to obscure their presence, several researchers have attempted to classify the discourse functions of authorial presence in various academic genres. The proposed classifications vary depending on how broadly authorial presence is defined. Thus Tang and John’s (1999) classification covers both inclusive (i.e., referring to the author and the audience) and exclusive (referring to the author only) uses of personal authorial expressions. On the other hand, Hyland’s (2003) classification, developed using a sample of 80 research articles and 800 RAAs from eight different disciplines, is limited to exclusive use, distinguishing between the following discourse functions: *explaining a procedure*, *stating results or claim*, *elaborating an argument*, and *stating a goal/purpose*.

It is not surprising that a considerable amount of detailed information obtained through empirical research on the role of authorial identity is available for academic writing in English in general and for English RAAs in particular, as English is the indisputable global *lingua franca* of academic communication. Thus Hyland’s (2003, 257–58) juxtaposition of the frequencies of use of the discourse functions of authorial presence in two genres, research articles and RAAs, reveals that abstracts follow very specific rhetorical conventions of their own. In RAAs, the most frequently used function of authorial presence was *stating results or claim*, followed by *stating a goal/purpose* and *elaborating an argument*, while *explaining a procedure* was the least frequent function. Moreover, Hyland’s comprehensive corpus studies of academic writing have revealed variations in the expression of authorial presence among different disciplines, with personal authorial references being typically more frequent in the soft fields, i.e., the humanities and social sciences, than in the hard sciences, i.e., science and engineering (Hyland 2001, 2003). Moreover, considerable variation in the preferred forms of authorial presence was also identified: Hyland’s (2003) analysis shows that self-mentions in the singular are relatively rarely used in abstracts from the hard sciences compared to self-mentions in the plural form; in RAAs in the soft disciplines, on the other hand, self-mentions in the singular occurred somewhat more frequently than self-mentions in the plural. This difference is partly attributed to the fact that most texts in the hard sciences are multi-authored.

Much less empirical data on this topic is available for other languages, and often the main source of information for the preferred expressions of authorial voice may be language-specific style guides. However, a number of contrastive studies have contributed to a better understanding of how authorial identity is shaped across lingua-cultures. Vassileva’s (1998) influential study contrasting authorial presence in linguistics research articles across five languages identified some fundamental differences among English, German, French, Russian and Bulgarian, which have been further explored in subsequent research. Vassileva (1998) showed that while both the first person singular and plural were used to express authorial presence in English and German texts, Russian and Bulgarian texts relied almost exclusively on the plural, and in French texts personal authorial references were relatively rare. Subsequent contrastive studies juxtaposing English and Romance languages revealed similar tendencies: Molino’s (2010) analysis showed

that personal authorial references were used less frequently in linguistics research articles in Italian than in English, while Mur Dueñas (2007) reported a less frequent use of self-mentions in Spanish business management research articles than in English.

Research focusing on Slavic languages has, on the other hand, confirmed the preference for the plural form in expressing authorial identity (cf., for instance, Čmejrková 2007a for Czech; Bašić and Veselica-Majhut 2016 for Croatian; Walková 2018 for Slovak), which Čmejrková (2007b, 97) attributes to the influence of the Latin rhetorical tradition of using *pluralis modestiae* for self-presentation. Nevertheless, Čmejrková (2007b, 97) also highlights that the singular is increasingly gaining ground in Czech and Slovak academic writing due to the growing influence of English. It is important to note, however, that substantial divergences between the conventions of Slavic languages have also been identified in contrastive research. Balažić Bulc's (2020) corpus study of 160 RAAs in Slovene and Croatian from a range of different disciplines identifies pronounced differences between the two languages in terms of the frequency of self-mentions across the different fields, a striking finding given the systemic similarities between the two languages and the shared history of the lingua-cultures. Surprisingly, Balažić Bulc's (2020) results for interdisciplinary differences among Slovene research articles also show that personal authorial references occur most frequently in the natural sciences, somewhat less frequently in technology and social sciences and relatively infrequently in the humanities. Finally, Balažić Bulc's (2020) data also reveals the first person plural verb as the most frequent form of self-mention in both Slovene and Croatian.

Descriptions of Slovene also suggest that the first person plural is the traditionally preferred form of expressing the authorial voice in academic discourse. Toporišič (2004, 390) claims that the first person plural form can replace the singular to avoid highlighting the doer of the action, pointing out that this is used by some scientists, although he considers this type of use to be old-fashioned. Hladnik's (2002) online edition of his seminal style guide for Slovene underscores a simple, neutral, comprehensible style as the basic convention of Slovene academic writing. The first person plural is proposed as the norm for academic writing, since it includes both the writer and the reader; although the first person singular form is also recommended as the preferred form in the exclusive use (when the reference is to the author only) to avoid the awkward connotation of the *pluralis maiestatis* and glorification of the writer. Furthermore, Hladnik (2002) also discusses the use of two impersonal alternatives to personal authorial references, i.e., the passive voice and nominalization, noting for both that while they have often been proscribed, they cannot be avoided.

In this context, it must be noted that a direct contrastive comparison of personal authorial references may be difficult when systemic differences between languages may play a role in the choice of the form. In addition to deliberately opting for a personal authorial reference, two other reasons may also account for choosing a personal form in Slovene academic writing. The first is that the use of potential impersonal substitutes (the passive, non-finites) is more restricted in Slovene than in English (cf., Blaganje and Konte 1998, 295; Mikolič Južnič 2013, 76), and the second is that a null subject, i.e., a subject expressed only through verbal inflection, is less manifest than an overt subject (cf. Pisanski Peterlin 2016, 280); for similar arguments for Slavic languages in general, see also Walková (2018, 93–94).

### 3 Methods

A mixed methods approach, combining corpus analysis and semi-structured interviews, was used in the present study to provide complementary quantitative and qualitative perspectives on the process and products of translation of academic discourse.

#### 3.1 Corpus Analysis

The 42,500-word<sup>1</sup> specialized parallel corpus used in the study comprises 150 RAAs in Slovene and their corresponding 150 English translations. The abstracts are from five different disciplines, geography, linguistics, medicine, mechanical engineering and sociology, with 30 Slovene versions and the corresponding 30 English translations for each discipline. Details on the individual subcorpora are given in Table 1 in terms of the number of words.

TABLE 1. Corpus size with the subcorpora.

	Slovene RAAs	English RAAs
<i>Geography</i>	2,777	3,513
<i>Mechanical engineering</i>	4,038	4,790
<i>Medicine</i>	7,345	7,864
<i>Sociology</i>	3,185	3,692
<i>Linguistics</i>	2,414	2,977
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,759</b>	<b>22,836</b>

The texts were published between 1999 and 2019 in five international peer-reviewed journals (one per discipline), indexed in relevant international databases; all the journals were based in Slovenia. The source texts and their translations were published side-by-side. The abstracts were authored by researchers who were native speakers of Slovene. Data on translation was only available for 52 texts, specifically for all geography abstracts and 22 linguistics abstracts: all were translated from Slovene into English by several translators, some of whom were native speakers of Slovene, while others were native speakers of English. For other texts, no data on translation is available, but it is assumed that the Slovene-to-English translation direction was used, as there was a corresponding Slovene version of the research articles for each of the abstracts. It is also assumed that at least some of the abstracts from the fields of medicine, mechanical engineering and sociology were self-translated, since self-translation of academic writing is a fairly common practice in some disciplines (see Pisanski Peterlin 2019 for more details).

The corpus was analysed using Sketch Engine, a software tool for corpus management and analysis. The Slovene part of the corpus was searched for all occurrences of the first person singular, plural and dual verbs, all case forms of the first person personal pronouns, and all

<sup>1</sup> The importance of small corpora for research focusing on genre, pragmatics and translation has already been highlighted in the literature (see Vaughan and Clancy 2013; Koester 2010).

forms of first person possessive pronouns. The English part of the corpus was searched for first person singular and plural personal pronouns (*I, me, we, us*) and for first person possessive pronouns (*my, mine, our, ours*). All the examples identified electronically were subsequently examined manually, and all instances of homographs were removed.

The results for the Slovene and English versions were then examined by the first and third authors to determine whether the instances of authorial expression were retained, added or omitted in translation. The search results were thus classified into the following three categories: a complete match (a corresponding authorial expression was identified in both language versions), a partial match (a different reference to the author, often less overt, was identified in the corresponding text in the other language for instance, such instances were not necessarily identified as authorial references in corpus search) and additions/omissions (no corresponding expression was found in the corresponding text in the other language, the authorial expression was omitted or added in translation). Finally, the expressions of authorial presence were examined by the first and third authors to determine whether language-specific or discipline-specific preferences may be identified in the corpus.

### 3.2 Interview Study

The interview study was aimed to elicit data on the practices and perceptions of translators in the field of translating academic discourse, with an additional specific focus on their views on authorial presence in translated academic texts. An initial version of the interview guide<sup>2</sup> was developed by the third author, and tested in a preliminary interview with a translator conducted by the second author. The data from the preliminary interview was not included in the study. The interview guide was subsequently revised, and the final version of the interview guide comprised ten open-ended questions. The semi-structured interviews with four translators were carried out between 15 November 2020 and 30 November 2020 via the Zoom videoconferencing platform<sup>3</sup> by the second author. The interview study was part of a larger investigation into the experiences of translators with translation of academic discourse.

The interviewees, two of whom were male and two female, were all translators working from Slovene into English, and had extensive experience with translation of academic texts. Two of the interviewees were native speakers of Slovene, while two were native speakers of English, but all the interviewees were fluent in both languages.

Three of the interviews were conducted in Slovene and one was conducted in English. All four interviews were recorded using the recording function of the Zoom platform, and subsequently transcribed by the second and third authors. The transcripts were reviewed independently by the three researchers to identify emergent themes. A coding framework was devised, tested and refined, and any disagreements were resolved by discussion. Nvivo, a software tool for qualitative data analysis, was used to code the transcripts.

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<sup>2</sup> The English translation of the interview guide is available from the authors upon request.

<sup>3</sup> Because of the pandemic restrictions in force in Slovenia in November 2020, it was not possible to carry out face-to-face interviews. Videoconferencing technology was chosen because of its potential to replicate, to some extent, the face-to-face medium (cf. also Archibald et al., 2019 for more details on the use of Zoom in qualitative interview data collection).

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Results of the Corpus Study

Table 2 presents the basic data on the occurrences of personal authorial references in all the subcorpora.

TABLE 2. Personal authorial references in the individual subcorpora.

	Slovene RAAs			English RAAs		
	<i>No.</i>	<i>Per 100 words</i>	<i>Per text</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Per 100 words</i>	<i>Per text</i>
<i>Geography</i>	38	1.37	1.27	22	0.63	0.73
<i>Mechanical engineering</i>	48	1.19	1.60	13	0.27	0.43
<i>Medicine</i>	145	1.97	4.83	56	0.71	1.87
<i>Sociology</i>	48	1.51	1.60	29	0.79	0.97
<i>Linguistics</i>	16	0.66	0.53	6	0.20	0.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>1.49</b>	<b>9.83</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>0.55</b>	<b>4.20</b>

A comparison of the raw numbers, normalized frequencies and number of occurrences per text for the Slovene and English versions of the abstracts in Table 2 shows that the number of personal authorial references is considerably higher in Slovene source texts than in the corresponding English translations. This tendency can be observed in all disciplines, although the ratio for the normalized frequencies varies from just under 2:1 in sociology to 4:1 in mechanical engineering.

A direct juxtaposition of the individual instances of personal authorial references in the source and target texts revealed how many of them were retained (complete match), modified (partial match), omitted or added in translation. The results are given in Table 3 from the perspective of Slovene source texts and in Table 4 from the perspective of their English translations. The total number of occurrences and the percentages are provided for each subcorpus.

TABLE 3. Retention and omission of personal authorial references.

Slovene RAAs				
	<i>Complete match (%)</i>	<i>Partial match (%)</i>	<i>Omissions (%)</i>	<i>Total (100%)</i>
<i>Geography</i>	19 (50%)	2 (5.2%)	17 (44.8%)	38 (100%)
<i>Mechanical Engineering</i>	6 (12.5%)	1 (2%)	41 (85.5%)	48 (100%)
<i>Medicine</i>	34 (23.5%)	11 (7.5%)	100 (69%)	145 (100%)
<i>Sociology</i>	22 (45.8%)	5 (10.5%)	21 (43.7%)	48 (100%)
<i>Linguistics</i>	3 (19%)	2 (12.5%)	11 (68.5%)	16 (100%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>84 (30.2%)</b>	<b>21 (7.5%)</b>	<b>190 (62.3%)</b>	<b>295 (100%)</b>

Table 3 shows substantial differences among the five disciplines: more personal authorial references were omitted than retained or changed in translation in three disciplines, i.e., linguistics, mechanical engineering and medicine. In sociology and geography, omissions were still quite frequent, but occurred in just under 50% of the cases.

TABLE 4. Retention and addition of personal authorial references.

English RAAs				
	<i>Complete match (%)</i>	<i>Partial match (%)</i>	<i>Additions (%)</i>	<i>Total (100%)</i>
<i>Geography</i>	19 (86.3%)	0 (0%)	3 (13.7%)	22 (100%)
<i>Mechanical Engineering</i>	6 (46%)	0 (0%)	7 (54%)	13 (100%)
<i>Medicine</i>	34 (60.7%)	4 (7.1%)	18 (32.2%)	56 (100%)
<i>Sociology</i>	22 (75.9%)	1 (3.5%)	6 (20.6%)	29 (100%)
<i>Linguistics</i>	3 (50%)	0 (0%)	3 (50%)	6 (100%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>84 (63.9%)</b>	<b>5 (2%)</b>	<b>37 (34.1%)</b>	<b>126 (100%)</b>

The results in Table 4 show that additions of authorial references were relatively infrequent. While the percentages for additions seem relatively high in mechanical engineering and linguistics, the overall number of occurrences of personal authorial references in the English translations in these two disciplines was too low to draw any significant conclusions. Example 1<sup>4</sup> shows a complete match and that both the form and function are preserved in the English version of the abstract:

(1a) *Na podlagi strukturnega odziva enosmernega elektromotorja, ki smo ga dobili kot posledico harmonskega vzbujanja magnetnih sil z MKE, **smo ovrednotili** zvočno polje v okolici enosmernega elektromotorja. 'On the basis of the structural response of the DC electric motor obtained as a result of the harmonic excitation of magnetic forces using FEM, **we evaluated** the sound field surrounding the DC electric motor.'* (Mechanical Engineering)

(1b) *Based on the structural response of the DC electric motor that is the result of the harmonic excitation of magnetic forces, and was calculated with the FEM, **we evaluated** the sound field surrounding the DC electric motor.* (Mechanical Engineering)

The **omissions**, **additions** and **modifications** identified were further examined manually to identify the corresponding structures in the source and target texts. The examination showed that in cases of **omission** the authorial references from the source texts were replaced by the following three impersonal structures:

<sup>4</sup> All the examples quoted are from the corpus of research article abstracts used in this study. The Slovene source text examples are marked with the letter *a* and provided with an English gloss in inverted commas, while the published English translations are marked with the letter *b*.



*A passive form:*

The passive voice was the most frequent impersonal structure to replace a personal authorial reference from the Slovene source text in the English translation in all the disciplines except for linguistics, where the overall total number of occurrences was very low. Example 2 illustrates this type of shift in translation. The shift in translation from a personal reference to the passive voice seems to have been particularly frequent in descriptions of methodology.

(2a) *Uvodni del **smo oblikovali** na podlagi dejstev, raziskovalni del pa s pomočjo strukturiranega vprašalnika... 'We **formed** the introductory part on the basis of facts, and the research part with the help of a structured questionnaire...'* (Medicine)

(2b) *The introductory part **was designed** on the basis of facts, and the research work was carried out using a structured questionnaire... (Medicine)*

*A metonym:*

Some personal authorial references were replaced by a metonymic expression, i.e. inanimate subjects, such as *this study* or *this paper*, as in example (3).

(3a) *V raziskavi **smo ugotovili**, da so priložnosti za izboljšave pri preverjanih parametrih... 'We **found** in the study that there are opportunities for improvement in the parameters investigate...'* (Medicine)

(3b) ***The study revealed** that there is much space for improvement regarding the studied parameters of the ASP... (Medicine)*

*A non-finite form:*

Instances of non-finite verb forms, as in example (4), replaced personal authorial references relatively infrequently.

(4a) *Dno Dobropoljsko-Struškega polja, kraški ravniki v okolici Ponikve ter okoliška pobočja Mala gora, Suha krajina in Čušperške planote oblikujejo pokrajino, **ki smo jo po osrednji reliefni enoti poimenovali** Dobropoljsko-Struški kras. 'The bottom of the Dobropolje-Struge polje, the karst plain around Ponikve, and the neighbouring slopes of Mala gora, Suha krajina, and the Čušperk plateau form the Dobropolje-Struge karst, **which we named** after the central relief unit.'* (Geography)

(4b) *The bottom of the Dobropolje-Struge polje, the karst corrosion plain around Ponikve, and the neighbouring hillslopes of Mala gora, Suha krajina, and the Čušperk plateau comprise the Dobropolje-Struge karst, **so named** after its central relief unit. (Geography)*

However, not all omissions of personal authorial references involved substituting them with an impersonal structure. In several cases, the wording of a passage from the source text was completely altered in translation, leaving out some of the details from the original text, including the personal authorial reference.

(5a) *Guarana lahko v priporočenih odmerkih poslabša bolezen srca (predvsem motnje srčnega ritma, koronarno bolezen srca, srčno popuščanje) in sladkorno bolezen ter negativno vpliva na zdravje nosečnic, doječih žensk in otrok, **ki jim zato odsvetujemo** uživanje*

*guarana. 'Guarana may in recommended doses exacerbate cardiac disease (especially cardiac arrhythmias, coronary heart disease, heart failure) as well as diabetes and may negatively affect the health of pregnant women, nursing women and children whom **we do not advise** to consume guarana.'* (Medicine)

(5b) *Guarana in therapeutic doses can exacerbate underlying cardiac disease (especially cardiac arrhythmias, coronary heart disease, heart failure) and diabetes. Furthermore, **children, pregnant and nursing women should avoid** guarana as well.* (Medicine)

**Additions** were less frequent in translation than omissions; when they did occur, additions were mostly used to replace a passive form in the source text, as in example (6).

(6a) *Najprej **so izpostavljeni** ključni vidiki neenakosti med spoloma, iz katerih izhajajo argumenti v prid uvedbi UTD. 'First the key aspects of gender inequality that give rise to arguments in support of UBI **are highlighted**.'* (Sociology)

(6b) ***We first highlight** the key aspects of gender inequality that give rise to arguments in support of UBI.* (Sociology)

In other cases, a personal authorial reference was added in translation when substantial rewording occurred and certain details were added, as in example (7).

(7a) *Skupini TOT in TVT se med seboj nista statistično značilno razlikovali niti v rezultatih posega, niti v deležu zapletov po posegu. 'There was no statistically significant difference between the TOT and TVT groups with regard to either the results of surgical treatment or postoperative complications.'* (Medicine)

(7b) ***Our retrospective study has confirmed** that the efficacy and safety of TOT and TVT in the surgical treatment of SUI are comparable.* (Medicine)

**Modifications**, i.e., instances which involved some degree of change, but where the reference to the author was still present, were quite infrequent. In some modifications, only the grammatical form changed, for instance, instead of the first person subject in the original a possessive pronoun was used in translation, as in example (8), or a first person plural subject in the original was replaced by a first person singular subject, or similar. In other modifications, a personal authorial reference was replaced by a less explicit reference to the other (see for instance, example 9), where a first person plural in the original was translated as one, changing the meaning from exclusive reference to the author to generic. Instances such as 9b were not considered to be explicit personal authorial references, but it should nevertheless be acknowledged that some degree of authorial presence was retained in such cases.

(8a) *Čeprav je ocena pojavnosti zaradi retrospektivne analize najverjetneje podcenjena, **menimo, da omenjeni rezultati** potrjujejo naša klinična opažanja, da je FNAIT preredko diagnosticirana. 'Even though the evaluation of the incidence is likely to be underestimated due to retrospective analysis, **we believe that the results mentioned** confirm our clinical observations that FNAIT is underdiagnosed.'* (Medicine)

(8b) *We are aware that the obtained incidence may be underestimated due to retrospective analysis of the data; nevertheless, **our results** confirm our clinical observations that FNAIT is underdiagnosed in our area.* (Medicine)

(9a) *Na ravni tvorbeno-pretvorbena nepredvidljivih postopkov pa smo opredelili devet različnih skupin tvorjenk... 'At the level of unpredictable transformational-generative processes, we have defined nine different groups of derivatives...'* (Linguistics)

(9b) *At the level of unpredictable transformational-generative processes, one can define nine different groups of derivatives... (Linguistics)*

Because of such formal modifications that occurred in translation, the source and target texts differed to some extent in the use of individual forms of personal authorial reference. These differences are presented in Tables 5 and 6 in terms of the number of occurrences per 100 words, for the Slovene source texts and English translations, respectively.

TABLE 5. Frequency of forms of personal authorial reference per 100 words in the Slovene source texts.

	<i>1st p. sg. subject</i>	<i>1st p. pl. subject</i>	<i>1st p. du. subject</i>	<i>1st p. pl. object</i>	<i>1st p. pl. poss.</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Geography</i>	0.11	1.15	0.00	0.11	0.00	1.37
<i>Mechanical Engineering</i>	0.00	1.14	0.00	0.02	0.02	1.19
<i>Medicine</i>	0.00	1.80	0.00	0.05	0.12	1.97
<i>Sociology</i>	0.31	0.91	0.16	0.06	0.06	1.51
<i>Linguistics</i>	0.04	0.54	0.04	0.04	0.00	0.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.07</b>	<b>1.28</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>1.49</b>

There were no instances of object pronouns or possessive pronouns for the singular or dual.

TABLE 6. Frequency of forms of personal authorial reference per 100 words in the English translations.

	<i>1st p. sg. subject</i>	<i>1st p. pl. subject</i>	<i>1st p. pl. object</i>	<i>1st p. pl. poss.</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Geography</i>	0.09	0.43	0.09	0.03	0.63
<i>Mechanical Engineering</i>	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.06	0.27
<i>Medicine</i>	0.00	0.43	0.01	0.27	0.71
<i>Sociology</i>	0.16	0.51	0.03	0.08	0.79
<i>Linguistics</i>	0.07	0.10	0.03	0.00	0.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>0.35</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.12</b>	<b>0.55</b>

There were no instances of object pronouns or possessive pronouns for the singular.

While the first person plural subject was the preferred form of personal authorial reference in both languages in all the disciplines, a slight shift towards using a 1st person plural possessive pronoun to express authorial presence can be observed in translation. This shift is most pronounced in the abstracts of medical texts, where it accounts for over one third of the cases in English translations, but only 6% of the cases in Slovene originals.

## 4.2 Results of the Interview Study

The analysis of interview transcripts showed that all four interviewees had substantial experience with translation (from over 10 to over 20 years) of various academic genres (thesis abstracts, research articles, research article abstracts, research proposals were specifically mentioned) from different disciplines, including mechanical engineering, chemistry, Slovene language and literature, Latin language and literature, children's literature, healthcare studies, finance, pedagogy, linguistics, computer science, management and accounting, advertising, history, geography, urban planning, dermatology and medicine. In the context of the present study on authorial presence, the following themes emerged as central from the analysis of interview data: function of authorial presence, cross-linguistic differences, the role of discipline and translators' interventions.

### *Function of authorial presence*

Several different functions of explicit authorial presence emerged in the interviews. Interviewee B expressed the opinion that an overt personal reference to the author in a research article underlines the agency by focusing on the person who carried out the work. Furthermore, she argued that in research grant proposals the first person form is crucial when promises are made. Interviewee D pointed out that it is often important to state the facts objectively and avoid emotion or personal opinion in academic writing, yet he also singled out *nosism* (the use of the first person plural) to highlight teamwork. Interviewee A argued that a personal authorial voice contributes towards making the text more interesting and unique.

### *Cross-linguistic differences*

Three of the interviewees identified the first person plural as a common way of expressing authorial presence in Slovene as opposed to English. Interviewee A attributed this specificity to a tendency of Slovene texts being somewhat more indirect. "I think this collective *we* is used in your [culture] to avoid giving an order, to avoid being direct. So you don't give orders to your reader, but you soften your writing instead. It has to do with the language and the nation."

Similarly, Interviewee B underlined that the first person plural form seems to be preferred in Slovene, while the singular is avoided, as the authors "seem to be almost afraid to say I". She observed that in her experience the first person singular was used more frequently in English. In general, she argued that authorial presence was less "controversial" in English, but she also pointed out that there were also English-speaking authors who preferred a very objective, impersonal writing style, and Slovene-speaking authors who favoured a more personal style.

Interviewee D described the tendency of Slovene to prefer the first person plural from the point of view of translation into English. "I do certainly notice a lot of *nosism* in Slovenian writing, especially the authorial *we*... where one author is using the plural. And that is very peculiar from the standard English textual perspective. The reader is wondering who this *we* is all of sudden, who is the co-author and there isn't one. In most cases that is considered poor style and it's something I'll try to correct."

### *The role of discipline*

All four interviewees referred to certain specific features of various disciplines, also noting that individual authors' preferences may vary considerably, regardless of the discipline,

genre or culture. Both Interviewee A and Interviewee D observed that there are substantial differences between the hard sciences and humanities. Juxtaposing the examples of chemistry and the humanities, Interviewee A argued that “in the humanities, we can have nice long sentences with words and phrases belonging to a higher register, whereas that is not the case with chemistry, where you have sentences that are short, concise and to the point.” Interviewee D pointed out that in “hard science there’s very little authorial voice”, compared to a discipline such as participative ethnology, where a more personal writing style may be used. He furthermore noted that there may be variation within a single discipline, depending on the type of research that is reported. “In medicine you can have personal voice as well, if you’re doing a case study about an individual patient and you’re describing his emotional state, then, of course, you can implement more authorial voice than if it’s a study covering a thousand patients or a literature review”.

### *Translators’ interventions*

All of the interviewees confirmed that some sort of an adaptation was necessary in translation of academic discourse, including sometimes adaptations of the authorial voice. Both Interviewee C and Interviewee B highlighted that they have noted changes in academic writing in Slovene, possibly under the influence of English. Interviewee C reported that many of the texts that she has been asked to translate are already structured in Slovene in such a way as to enable easy translation.

Interviewee B also pointed out that when she intervenes in the text as a translator she attempts to justify those interventions to the authors. She reported that in her experience the authors often say something like “we were taught in school that you have to be completely objective, completely removed in academic discourse”.

Similarly, Interviewee C noted that she always asks the author to take a look at the changes to see if he or she agrees with the interventions. Interviewee C was the only one to report an experience with translating her own text. She observed that self-translation also involved a sort of an inner dialogue about the possible changes made in translation, although she did not explicitly refer to authorial presence.

Interviewee B highlighted that a translator has to be consistent in narration: “If you start with a personal, first person ‘we tried to do this and that, we therefore analysed’... if you are at that personal level, you have to continue in the same way, so that you don’t switch [to a different style] within the same sentence.”

Enhancing the fluency and smooth flow of the text were identified as the main reasons for intervening with the style of the text, including making changes to the authorial voice. Interviewee B pointed out that “the author may have written the text in a hurry, and the text needs improvement, and you can do this to make it more fluent.” She expressed a strong belief that it was the translators’ responsibility or even their duty to make the text fluent and readable. She argued that a number of different pairs of interventions may occur in both directions, such as changing nominalizations into clauses or vice versa, making the sentences shorter or connecting them, changing the active voice into the passive voice or the other way around.

Interviewee A also observed that “as a translator you have to transform [the text] into a softer, more readable form which means that you do not change authorial presence as much as you strengthen it”.

Making the text smoother was raised as a reason for intervening by Interviewee D as well: “I will change the author’s voice or presence in the text if it seems appropriate. By that I mean ... if the author would risk... if it would risk sounding impolite or arrogant. Obviously that’s not something an author wants to sound like in a research text.” Interviewee D identified the underlying connection between authorial presence and the flow of the text: “What I try to do in a research text is take off the rough edges if I’m adjusting the author’s voice. Um, I ... my thought is that if the author does have a presence in a text, the author should be some sort of a neutral, sympathetic figure. Not controlling or dominating the text. But if you can tell the author is there, the reader should at least like the person and have a positive attitude towards them.” In addition to authorial voice, Interviewee D singled out impersonalization and hesitancy as elements that may be adjusted in translation of academic texts from Slovene into English.

Interviewee D noted that his voice changes when he writes in another language. While he did not have experience with self-translation, he believed that “in theory, if I were translating my own material into another language, I’d be careful to make myself look good, whether that’s through looking important or friendly or whatever the norm is in that language if that were an issue in a particular text.”

## 5 Discussion

This study examined how authorial presence is reshaped in translation of RAAs from Slovene into English. The first research question explored how personal authorial references in translated English abstracts differed from those in the original Slovene abstracts. The results of the corpus study revealed considerable divergences in both the frequency and form of personal authorial references between the source and target texts. The normalized frequency of personal authorial references was almost three times greater in the Slovene texts than in the English translations (see Table 2). Not surprisingly, omissions of authorial references were very frequent (over 62% of instances from the Slovene texts were omitted), while additions were relatively rare (see Tables 3 and 4). When omission occurred, the personal authorial reference was most typically replaced with an impersonal structure, such as the passive voice. This seems to directly reflect the more restricted use of the passive voice in Slovene in general compared to English (see, Blaganje and Konte 1998, 295); see also Hladnik’s (2002) observation for Slovene that the passive is frowned upon by prescriptivists, although it cannot be avoided in academic writing.

Another important formal shift in translation needs to be noted: while the vast majority of personal authorial references in the Slovene source texts were in the form of the verb in the first person plural, which is very much in accordance with the findings of previous contrastive studies of Slavic languages (e.g., Vassileva 1998; Čmejrková 2007a; Bašić and Veselica-Majhut 2016), the possessive first person plural pronoun replaced some of these verbal forms in English translations. The interview data provides important information about the

translators' reasons for this formal shift. Three of the interviewees singled out the need to modify the many first person plural forms found in Slovene academic texts in translation into English one of the key changes in authorial presence. The interviewees suggested that Slovene is less direct, relying more on the collective *we*, whereas the singular form is usually avoided.

The second research question compared the shifts in the expression of authorial presence in individual disciplines. The corpus analysis revealed a considerable cross-disciplinary variation in the use of personal authorial references in both languages, as well as very different approaches to translating these references. These cross-disciplinary differences are very much in accordance with the results of applied linguistics studies focusing on English (most notably, Hyland 2003), and contrastive studies (see, e.g., Breivega, Dahl, and Fløttum 2002; Balažič Bulc 2020). The findings of the interview study confirm the interviewees' awareness of the divergent disciplinary conventions.

The shifts in translation were more pronounced in medicine and mechanical engineering than in the soft fields. Personal authorial references occurred most frequently in Slovene medical abstracts, with almost two instances of such references per 100 words. In their English translations about two thirds of the references were replaced by impersonal structures; impersonalization was particularly noticeable in descriptions of the methodology. When personal authorial references were retained in translated medical abstracts, they were sometimes modified in form, for instance first person plural verbs were occasionally translated using possessives. Medicine as a discipline was specifically addressed by Interviewee D, who pointed out that there was considerable variation among medical texts depending on the type of study described. The translation shifts occurring in mechanical engineering were even more pronounced: over 80% of the relatively frequent authorial references in the Slovene originals were omitted in translation. The English target texts were thus quite impersonal, which is quite similar to Hyland's (2003) findings for mechanical engineering abstracts. In the social sciences, geography and sociology, a far greater degree of retention of personal authorial reference was found; in both disciplines about one half of the references were retained in translation. Interestingly, sociology was also the discipline where the first person singular was used with some frequency, both in the source texts and in the translations. The greater retention of authorial presence in the two social science disciplines may reflect their argumentative nature, as they allow more room for comments and personal opinion. Somewhat surprisingly, both the Slovene linguistics abstracts and their English translations were marked by a very impersonal style and contained few personal authorial references. This is quite distinct from the findings for English reported by Hyland (2003), where self-mentions were found to occur relatively frequently in the applied linguistics abstracts, compared to science and engineering, but similar to the results obtained by Balažič Bulc (2020), who found that self-mentions occurred less frequently in Slovene humanities abstracts (including linguistics) than in the abstracts from the natural sciences, social sciences and technology. It is interesting that Interviewees A and D also expressed their belief that a personal writing style was particularly characteristic of the humanities.

The third research question addressed the translators' reasons for the observed shifts in translation. The interview study underlined a strong acknowledgement of the need to adjust

the translation to the conventions of the target culture. The interviewees' responses showed that their main reason for interfering with authorial presence was to enhance the fluency and the flow of the target text. Thus Interviewee B specifically mentioned the translator's responsibility to improve the accessibility of an academic text. While her comment referred to research proposals and their role in obtaining funding, the same principle can also be applied to abstracts. With appropriate interventions, which contribute to adapting target texts to target culture conventions, translated abstracts conform better to the expectations of the target audience. Interviewee A foregrounded a different aspect of interventions with the authorial presence in translation: in his opinion, a more personal, but less collective writing style can make an academic text more interesting. Conversely, Interviewee D stressed that the need for the author of an academic text to sound neutral and not to dominate the text. Although none of the interviewees raised the possibility that different discourse functions realized through personal authorial references may occasionally play a role in the shifts identified in translation, this possibility should not be ignored. The inclusive first person plural may no longer be suitable in the translated texts as the audience of the English texts is much broader (cf. Pisanski Peterlin 2016 for more details on translators' interventions to adapt the text to a new audience).

## 6 Conclusion

Although RAAs are frequently translated or self-translated in multilingual settings, relatively little is known about the challenges arising in translation of this pivotal academic genre. As they play a crucial role in disseminating new research findings, it seems particularly important to develop a thorough understanding of how the target texts are adjusted to the expectations of the audience in terms of their rhetorical patterns, including authorial presence. Our study has identified several important strategies occurring in translation of abstracts from Slovene into English, including a tendency to reduce the number of personal authorial references and a less pronounced reliance on the first person plural subjects.

In interpreting these findings, several limitations should be considered. The first is the corpus size and composition. While a small, specialized corpus is essential for an initial investigation into rhetorical phenomena, further research on a larger corpus with a wider selection of disciplines would be needed to enhance the validity of the findings. The second limitation is the lack of detail on the translation process available for some of the texts in the corpus. In future studies of translated abstracts, the availability of data on the translators should be one of the factors in selecting the materials for the corpus. Finally, a limitation of the interview study also needs to be noted: although our interviewees had considerable experience with translation of academic discourse, they were not the translators of the abstracts included in the corpus. In future research, additional discourse-based interviews with translators of the abstracts studied could contribute to a better understanding of the translation process and the actual translation decisions.

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