



“I am now satisfied with all changes ...”: a corpus analysis of self-mentions in transparent peer review reports across review rounds

Erdem Akbaş^{a,*}, Betül Bal-Gezegin^b, Nur Yiğitoğlu-Aptoula^c

^a erdemakbas@erciyes.edu.tr, Department of Foreign Languages Education, Erciyes University, Türkiye

^b betul.balgezegin@omu.edu.tr, Department of Foreign Languages Education, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Türkiye

^c nur.yigitoglu@bogazici.edu.tr, Department of Foreign Languages Education, Bogaziçi University, Türkiye

* Corresponding author, erdemakbas@erciyes.edu.tr

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how interpersonal communication is established between parties involved in transparent peer review reports (TPR). Although traditional peer review is a long-standing practice, TPR is considered an emerging genre because the recent institutional practice of making reports publicly accessible alters the rhetorical context and the reviewer’s authorial visibility compared to traditional ‘hidden’ reviews. In this study, we investigated how reviewers construct their authorial identity in the TPR genre through self-mentions. To this end, we used corpus tools to examine 150 TPRs on the same published articles across three consecutive rounds. The findings show that reviewers employed self-mentions to fulfill a range of rhetorical functions, from highlighting flaws and requesting clarifications to suggesting structural changes,

	expressing approval, and offering praise. Additionally, the data suggest that reviewers tend to be more critical in the initial review rounds, gradually adopting a more appreciative tone in subsequent rounds. Based on the results of the study, we offer pedagogical implications for reviewer training sessions, exploring how transparency and constructive criticism are conveyed through language, thereby contributing to a healthier discourse in the scientific community. We suggest that analyzing these changes through the lens of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) offers valuable insights into the specialized language and discourse patterns emerging within these contexts. Keywords: interpersonal communication, transparent peer review reports, corpus, self-mentions
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Introduction

The Open Science (also referred to as open scholarship or research) movement, which has recently gained momentum, is grounded in the views of sharing, openness, accessibility, replicability, inclusiveness, and reliability for the sake of science (Vicente-Saez & Martinez-Fuentes, 2018). Such practices have significantly influenced how scientific knowledge is created and shared. This movement highlights that every phase of the research process, from data collection to publication, should be open and shared to make it accessible to a wide variety of users globally; thus, scientific knowledge can be reproducible.

One of the realizations of open science is open peer reviews (OPR) (also referred to as transparent review or open review). Although there is no consensus on the definitions of OPR, one distinction between OPR and transparent peer reviews (TPR) is that in the former, both the reviewers and the authors might be aware of each other's identities, whereas in the latter, it is not required to reveal reviewers' identities (He et al., 2023). Conceptually, the distinctive feature of TPR as a genre compared to traditional peer review is its *public accessibility*; the reviewer's feedback is published alongside the accepted article, shifting the audience from exclusively the authors and editors to the wider scientific community, thereby making the reviewer's stance and rhetorical choices visible to the public. It should be noted that these two terms have been used interchangeably in the literature.

With TPRs, the anonymous review process is made public. Although the number of journals that operate a TPR process is limited, the future is promising since it will likely continue to grow. There have been many studies on TPR with various scopes. For example, previous studies have explored

differences in reviewer comments between closed and open peer review journals (Bornmann et al., 2012), examined author and reviewer attitudes towards TPR (Mulligan et al., 2013), and highlighted the advantages of TPR (Wang et al., 2017). In recent years, in contrast to 'hidden' peer review reports, the investigation of transparent peer review reports as an emerging genre has received a considerable amount of scholarly attention (Lin, 2024; Sönmez & Akbaş, 2023) to explore how interpersonal communication is established between the parties involved. Although peer review itself has existed for decades, TPR functions as an emerging genre specifically because the institutional practice of making reports publicly accessible is a relatively recent shift. This openness repositions the rhetorical context and the reviewer's authorial visibility compared to traditional, anonymous reviews. As an example, previous studies on peer review reports (Fortanet, 2008; Hyland & Jiang, 2020) have shown that authors seem to have received considerably discouraging comments; however, recent work on TPRs has indicated that transparency in the genre has established a relatively healthier communication with a more encouraging and constructive tone of criticism (Sönmez & Akbaş, 2023).

Hyland (2020) emphasized that, despite criticisms of the peer review process, it is crucial for maintaining the integrity and progress of academic disciplines. It is important for authors to receive constructive criticism and for reviewers to contribute to the academic integrity of scholarly work. Despite criticisms and questions surrounding the open science movement (Hyland, 2023), research has shown that the shift toward transparency fosters healthier discourse between reviewers and authors, often leading to more constructive and less discouraging feedback. As Sönmez and Akbaş (2023) noted, this transparent approach enables a direct and open dialogue, potentially minimizing misunderstandings and enhancing the overall review process. Additionally, the accountability associated with transparent reviews has been shown to reduce biases and improve review quality (Lin, 2024). This contrasts with earlier studies (Fortanet, 2008; Hyland & Jiang, 2020), highlighting the negative tone found in traditional peer review feedback, defined here as single or double-blind confidential reports shared only with authors and editors, which could linguistically often exhibit a harsher, more direct, and more discouraging tone due to the protection of anonymity.

These changes have introduced new practices and expectations for professionals across academic and professional settings, particularly in terms of communication strategies. Theoretically, authorial identity refers to the way writers project themselves into their texts to establish authority, credibility, and a relationship with their readers (Hyland, 2002b). In the context of peer reviews, it is the discursive construction of the reviewer's persona, such as an expert, mentor, or gatekeeper, achieved through specific

linguistic choices. To address this, our study examined the use of the personal pronoun 'I' as a marker of reviewer identity and authority in TPRs. Given the growing emphasis on transparency in the peer review process, it is crucial to investigate how reviewers construct and signal their roles and expertise, with the pronoun 'I' offering a key linguistic resource for such positioning. This exploration can provide deeper insights into the interpersonal dynamics and rhetorical strategies employed in transparent peer review practices. Moreover, this study is significant since it drew on a larger dataset with a detailed comparison across review rounds. In line with this, this study investigated how reviewers construct their authorial identity in TPRs through the explicit use of self-mentions as metadiscourse elements. The study seeks to find answers to these research questions:

1. How frequently and in what ways do reviewers use the first-person pronoun 'I' to construct authorial identity and establish authority in transparent peer reviews?
2. What specific rhetorical functions do self-mentions serve within this genre?
3. To what extent does the use of the pronoun 'I' vary across different rounds of the review process?

Literature Review

Peer review is an indispensable part of scientific publishing, as it ensures that a manuscript submitted to a target journal is evaluated before the final decision on acceptance, revision, or rejection. The peer review genre has been analyzed from various perspective in previous studies such as the linguistic and rhetorical elements of the reviews (Englander & López-Bonilla, 2011; Fortanet, 2008; Paltridge, 2017, 2020), the communicative functions of peer reviews (Yakhontova & Franko, 2019), the content of the reviews (Bornmann et al., 2012; Coniam, 2012), authors' experience and opinions of peer reviews (Mulligan et al., 2013), politeness in reviews (Paltridge, 2017; Sönmez & Akbaş, 2023), evaluation (Hewings, 2004), and author responses to peer reviews (Feak, 2009).

The interpersonal relationship between the reviewer and author, and the language used for this relationship, has recently drawn attention in several studies. For example, Samraj (2021) investigated interpersonal relationships in 94 reviewer reports from the same journal and compared writer/reader relations across reviews with three different reviewer recommendations: 'reject', 'major revision', and 'minor revision'. Due to not publicly available reviews in her study, Samraj (2021) concluded that the language in private academic genres is not as 'polite' as we might think.

Self-mentions in review reports have been found to play a significant role in showing the reviewer's presence in a few studies. A study by Kourilová (1998) on 80 review reports showed that criticism was more direct in reviewers' reports than in other academic genres. It was found that the reviewer held an authoritative role and wielded power, as evidenced by the frequent use of the pronoun 'I' in the data. Paltridge (2020) also analyzed the engagement strategies in 97 reviewers' reports from one journal and found that there was frequent use of self-mentions as a stance marker in the reviews, which might indicate the reviewer's authority. Recently on reviewer reports, Paltridge (2024) concluded that reviews are often indirect and difficult to understand.

Hyland and Jiang (2020) analyzed extracts from reviews that authors had received and discussed how reviewers positioned themselves in their comments. They found that self-mentions, which constituted a large part of the stance markers identified, were used to present a negative statement harshly. Unlike previous studies, this study found that self-mentions were not hedged or accompanied by positive statements; instead, they reflected a tone of "disparagement" (Hyland & Jiang, 2020, p.7).

Another significant study of peer reviews was that of Englander and López-Bonilla (2011), focusing on five reviewer reports of two manuscripts written by non-native speakers of English to understand the reviewers' interactions with the editor and the author. They analyzed specific elements, such as questions, directives, and personal pronouns, and identified three identities of reviewers (i.e., *Guardian*, *Ally*, and *Ringmaster*) in their interactions with the authors. As its name suggests, the *Guardian* guards community standards; it does not engage directly with the author through questions or directives. The *Ally* is the most helpful and communicates directly with the author without showing any scorn. *Ringmaster*, on the other hand, manages the performance of the reviewed author, points out the good in the text, and directs the author to the discourse community for help.

Though traditional peer review has long been established as an occluded academic genre, TPR represents a specific and recent institutional practice that has transformed this occluded genre into a public one (Sönmez & Akbaş, 2023). This practice has opened a new door for researchers who want to analyze these available and accessible reports and gain insight into this genre. Although the studies discussed above have raised crucial issues regarding the peer review genre, there is still a need to research a relatively recent type of peer review, namely, transparent peer reviews. To go beyond research articles and expand the scope to other academic texts, such as transparent peer reviews, it is important to understand how not only authors but also reviewers construct interpersonal relationships with their readers (the authors of the manuscripts). As we know, there are various ways to convey

how authors and readers construct their relationship and show their attitudes and stances. The use of rhetorical strategies, epistemic modality, and directives (Hyland, 2002a, 2005, 2012) illustrates how this can be achieved. Additionally, the use of personal pronouns, one of these strategies, is regarded as a “powerful means by which writers express an identity by asserting their claim to speak as an authority” (Hyland, 2002b, pp. 1093-1094). Theoretically, these concepts are known to be deeply intertwined, and self-mentions function as a key interpersonal metadiscourse device. Through this metadiscourse device, reviewers are likely to take a specific stance (e.g., authoritative, supportive, or critical) toward the manuscript and the author. Such a repeated expression of stance ultimately constructs the reviewer’s professional and authorial identity within the discourse community. However, earlier studies on how personal pronouns can contribute to academic texts as a discursive feature are limited to particular text types such as research articles (Hyland, 2005), review genres such as book reviews and grant proposal reviews (Moreno & Suárez, 2008), academic web pages and bio statements (Hyland, 2012), and author rebuttal letters (Lin, 2024), to name a few. Although some recent studies have focused on criticism in digital peer review genres (Breeze & Gerns, 2024), relatively few studies have analyzed the use of the first-person pronouns in transparent reviews. Building upon such observations, we adopt a corpus-informed discourse analysis to examine rhetorical roles signalled via first-person pronouns in TPRs across review rounds.

Methodology

Data of the study

The data of the present study came from the Corpus of Transparent Peer Review (Akbaş et al., 2023). The full corpus comprises 596 reviewer reports in Nature Communications from the Biological Sciences and 607 from the Physical Sciences, written for 280 published articles in the two domains. Additionally, the dataset contains 529 author response reports in the Biological Sciences and 531 in the Physical Sciences. Given the complexity and depth of the research goals, particularly the identification and analysis of rhetorical and functional units within the reviewer reports, we focused on a subset of the corpus, selecting only the reviewer reports from the Biological Sciences domain to examine the dynamic nature of reviewer comments, which require a detailed manual analysis. This subset was specifically selected to ensure disciplinary homogeneity and control for cross-disciplinary variations in rhetorical practices, while keeping the scope manageable for a detailed manual analysis. Some articles in the dataset

received only two review rounds, whereas others had as many as five or six (though infrequently). We focused on those with three consecutive rounds to maintain consistency in the manual analysis of the evolution of reviewer identity and self-mention use across the review process. In the final subset of the TPR corpus (see Table 1), the data comprised 150 reports, covering three consecutive review rounds for 50 published articles. The data did not include author rebuttals. With approximately 165,000 words across three rounds, the corpus provided a substantial foundation for examining how interpersonal communication and reviewer identity evolved during the peer review process.

Table 1

Number of Reviewer Reports, Words and Mean Text Length

	<i>Number of reviewer reports</i>	<i>Number of words</i>	<i>Mean text length (words)</i>
Round 1	50	115,827	2,316.54
Round 2	50	38,582	771.64
Round 3	50	8,246	164.92
ALL	150	162,655	1,084.37

Data coding

In this study, we conducted both qualitative and quantitative analyses using the UAM Corpus Tool (Version 3.3, 2009), a corpus analysis software enabling manual coding. Guided by the theoretical intersections of metadiscourse, stance, and identity, we operationalized first-person singular pronouns as explicit indicators of reviewer identity. We annotated the data iteratively, tagging each sentence at different functional layers to reach a more comprehensive analysis. We believe that such multi-layered tagging was critical for capturing a range of rhetorical functions of self-mentions, from providing critical feedback to offering praise across rounds. Three independent coders, all experienced researchers in applied linguistics and academic discourse, were involved in the data annotation process, which was repeated three times. We ensured reliability in this heavily manual qualitative annotation by following an inter-rater reliability check (Cohen's Kappa of 0.84) in Phase 2, before moving to a fully collaborative consensus model in Phase 3.

Phase 1: Getting familiar with the data

Initially, each coder independently developed his/her own set of functional categories based on a contextual analysis of the same data. In this pilot analysis, the coders focused mainly on the functional as well as the pragmatic aspects of self-mentions, considering both the context of the feedback and the relationship between the reviewer and the author. Following this phase, the coders discussed their individual annotations and decisions and refined the functional categories and labels that they had identified in the reports.

Phase 2: Consistency and reliability of the coding scheme

After coding the data independently for the second time, using the refined categories agreed upon in the pilot analysis, the coders compared and discussed their decisions on every single self-mention in the dataset until they reached a final decision on each case. The second independent coding process strengthened the consistency and reliability of the analysis, as certain coding rules, such as those concerning verbs following self-mentions, were decided.

Phase 3: Collaborative main coding

In the third phase, the three coders did collaborative coding in which all three discussed each instance of self-mention to avoid disagreements. This phase of collaborative coding, based on the refined categories from phase 2, ensures the consistency and reliability of the entire analysis and results.

Analytical Approach

Adopting qualitative and quantitative approaches, enabling us to see how self-mentions functioned as metadiscourse elements to project the reviewer's identity, we interpreted the rhetorical and contextual functions of self-mentions, whose use led to an interpersonal dialogue between the reviewers and the authors. In addition, we conducted a quantitative analysis by generating concordances for all first-person pronouns prior to manual coding to determine the overall frequency and distribution of self-mentions across the three consecutive review rounds for the sake of statistical considerations. As detailed in the Results section, all quantitative frequencies were normalized to per 10,000 words to establish a consistent threshold for cross-round comparison despite variations in text length. This helped us determine whether participants used more self-mentions in earlier rounds-when evaluators' feedback was likely to be more critical-or in the later rounds, when their comments tended to shift toward approval and praise. We believe that the combination of these two approaches provided a comprehensive

understanding of how reviewers' authorial identity changed during the transparent peer review process.

Results

Analytical Framework based on Reviewer Roles

From the analysis of self-mentions (including 'I' as well as closely related first-person singular possessive forms such as 'my', which equally signal reviewer stance) in TPRs across three review rounds, we identified five major reviewer roles spanning a continuum from lenient to critical stances, each characterized by distinct rhetorical and functional strategies employed by reviewers. These roles were derived inductively from the corpus data, informed by existing frameworks (e.g., Englander & López-Bonilla, 2011). While Evaluating involves critically assessing the content and methodology of the manuscript, Gatekeeping is distinctly characterized by the reviewer explicitly directing comments to assist the editor in making acceptance, revision, or rejection decisions. Table 2 shows some examples.

Table 2

Reviewer Roles and Examples

<i>Reviewer Roles in the data</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Mentoring	● I think it would be more appropriate to use the term 'bias' instead of 'preference' throughout the manuscript. ● The one thing I would do is put the S7G figure in the main figure run as part of Figure 6, as an extension to 6H.
Advising	● I think it would be valuable to state in the main text (line 441ff) that the four core ASW were quite variable in abundance ● I think the authors should provide more evidence to support this conclusion
Monitoring	● I think they ignored some of my comments ● I still believe that the main message, 'the mechanistic link between naïve and cancer', is not well supported
Evaluating	● I am neither convinced nor impressed by this paragraph ● Based on difficulties in identifying all peptides in mass spec, I am not comfortable with such a strong conclusion – the authors should soften their statements on this

Gatekeeping	● I think the paper is a bit immature to be accepted as it is ● I am not convinced that all of the conclusions drawn here are valid ● I am now satisfied with the newly added data and authors' responses and recommend this manuscript for acceptance
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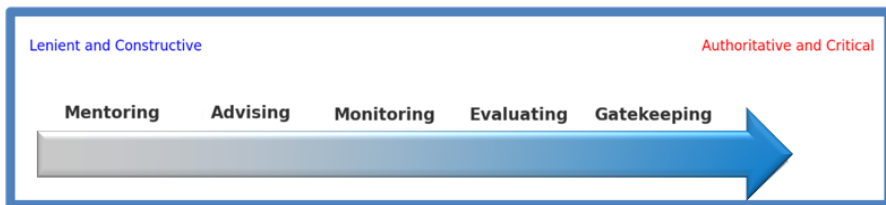
In Mentoring, reviewers provide developmental feedback that helps authors, particularly early-career researchers, to improve not only their current manuscript but also their broader academic research skills. The Advising role focuses on offering recommendations and suggestions to enhance the clarity, rigor, and impact of the research. The reviewer's Monitoring role involves checking whether authors have adequately addressed earlier feedback, ensuring that changes enhance the manuscript's quality and clarity. In the Evaluating role, reviewers critically assess the content and quality of a submitted manuscript. The reviewer recommends whether submissions should be accepted, revised, or rejected based on these criteria, thereby maintaining the standards and credibility of the journal. In Gatekeeping, the reviewers embody a deeper level of consideration by making decisive judgments regarding the manuscript's suitability for publication. Accordingly, they recommend whether submissions should be accepted, revised, or rejected based on these criteria, helping to maintain the journal's standards and credibility.

A continuum of reviewer criticality in the peer review genre

Following a functional analysis of self-mentions in TPRs across three consecutive rounds, we identified a continuum of reviewer criticality, ranging from lenient and constructive roles to more authoritative and critical roles, as shown in Figure 1. We suggest that such a continuum could capture various roles realized through explicit use of self-mentions, which reviewers might adopt throughout the review process.

Figure 1

A Continuum of Reviewer Criticality



On the lenient end of the spectrum, roles such as Mentoring and Advising can be characterized by a supportive, guiding approach to help authors incorporate constructive feedback; these roles typically focus on offering suggestions for improving articles and research designs. In both Mentoring and Advising, the reviewers attempt to offer suggestions for the improvement of the manuscript and the research without imposing their views, but providing guidance so that authors can refine the manuscript while maintaining the author's original vision, as in the following examples.

(1) **I think the dropping of the 'toast' aspect** is positive and gives the manuscript a more neutral but convincing tone. (NC_BS_ZO_014_RR2)

(2) Otherwise, auditory processing could influence the baseline in the coercive condition (although **I am aware that** this would not have an effect on between-group comparisons) (NC_BS_NE_005_RR1)

(3) **I'd suggest** identical image sizes and analysis procedures for both image types. (NC_BS_EV_006_RR1)

Moving towards the center of the continuum, we believe that the monitoring role could involve a more balanced approach in which reviewers closely track the manuscript's development, offering feedback that might be both objective and aimed at improving the clarity as well as the robustness of the manuscript:

(4) **I am content with** the newly added discussion of the terminology issues. (NC_BS_ZO_002_RR3)

(5) The only aspect **I still found somewhat unsatisfying** was the novel LL37 staining (NC_BS_CBIO_014_RR2)

Regarding the more critical roles, evaluating and gatekeeping, reviewers tend to engage critically with the manuscript's methodology, argumentation, and contributions to the field, providing feedback that could often challenge the authors' choices and conclusions, leading to substantial changes or requiring solid explanations (see examples 6, 7, 8 & 9). At the far end of the continuum, similar to Evaluating, Gatekeeping is marked by a critical stance in which reviewers take on a more authoritative role, scrutinizing the research and manuscript in detail and emphasizing its potential in terms of disciplinary standards, considering the prestige of the journal. Throughout this continuum, reviewers' rhetorical strategies realized through the explicit use of self-mentions could vary, from directives such as

‘I suggest ...’ to more objective commentary about the paper’s theoretical contributions and requested changes. Such a shift from lenient to critical roles is likely to reflect the reviewers’ understanding of the manuscript’s weaknesses, their adaptation to its evolving needs, and the expectations of both authors and editors.

6) Based on difficulties in identifying all peptides in mass spec, **I am not comfortable with** such a strong conclusion – the authors should soften their statements on this. (NC_BS_PS_002_RR1)

(7) Until **I am proven wrong**, authors’ major idea will only be speculative and should be presented this way. (NC_BS_BIOCH_014_RR2)

(8) However, **I don’t think the article is currently outstanding enough** to publish in Nature Communications. (NC_BS_DBIO_12_RR1)

(9) For these reasons, **I am still cautious to recommend this manuscript for publication** in Nature Comms. (NC_BS_CAN_002_RR3)

Reviewer roles signaled via self-mentions across review rounds

The manual analysis illustrated remarkable shifts in how they assumed different roles across the three rounds. Owing to the number of words in texts in each round, the results are normalized to per 10,000 words for each round to account for variations in text length (see Table 3).

Table 3

Frequency Analysis of Reviewer Roles across Rounds

<i>Roles</i>	<i>R1</i>	<i>per 10,000</i>	<i>R2</i>	<i>per 10,000</i>	<i>R3</i>	<i>per 10,000</i>
Advising & Mentoring	163	14.07	30	7.77	16	19.41
Monitoring	0	0.00	32	8.20	41	49.72
Evaluating & Gatekeeping	296	25.55	36	9.33	37	44.88
Total	502	43.33	98	25.20	94	114.01

When self-mentions in Round 1 were examined, the most dominant roles were found to be evaluating and gatekeeping, with a normalized

frequency of 25.55 per 10,000 words. It indicates that reviewers in this round primarily focused on critically assessing the methodology and making authoritative decisions regarding the manuscripts. Advising and mentoring occurred at 14.07 per 10,000 words, reflecting a significant proportion of reviewers providing constructive feedback to improve the manuscripts. As expected, monitoring did not appear as a distinct role in this initial round, as the reviewers did not have any revised material to assess.

By Round 2, there was a noticeable increase in monitoring activity, with a normalized frequency of 8.29 per 10,000 words. This suggests that reviewers began to emphasize the consistency and adherence to academic standards as the manuscripts developed. The evaluating and gatekeeping roles declined to 9.33 per 10,000 words, reflecting a reduced emphasis on critical assessments as some initial concerns were addressed. The advising and mentoring roles also decreased to 7.77 per 10,000 words, indicating a shift away from guidance-focused feedback as the review process progressed.

In Round 3, the monitoring role became the most prevalent, with a normalized frequency of 49.72 per 10,000 words. This indicates a strong focus on ensuring final quality and adherence to standards before publication, which is a standard practice in the peer review process. Evaluating and gatekeeping also remained prominent, with a normalized frequency of 44.88 per 10,000 words, showing a sustained emphasis on maintaining the scholarly rigor of the manuscripts. The advising and mentoring roles decreased further to 19.41 per 10,000 words, indicating a lesser focus on guiding the author's development as the manuscripts approached their final form.

Overall, we revealed a progression from a more critical and evaluative stance in Round 1 towards a balanced approach of monitoring and evaluation in the later rounds. These trends could highlight how reviewers accomplished their roles throughout the review process, shifting from initial critique to ensuring that the final manuscripts meet academic standards.

In example (10), it can be observed that the reviewer here adopts a mentoring role via a supportive and cautious tone, which can emphasize a potential gap and issue in the data, although also openly acknowledging the reviewer's own expertise limitations ("I am not an expert ..."). This phrasing aligns with mentoring because it provides constructive feedback without imposing harsh judgment, suggesting a willingness to guide the author toward refinement while maintaining respect and a non-authoritative stance. This can be considered a hallmark of the mentoring role since by combining a call for clarity with humility, the reviewer humbly opens a dialogue that might be developmental and collegial rather than critical or corrective.

(10) reactions were performed for chimeric (PB1 missing domain) proteins, and to get more convincing assumption the data for the native proteins are needed. **I am not an expert**, but from the data shown, it is hard to follow the statements given in the manuscript. (NC_BS_PS_002_RR1)

(11) of patterns with different Fourier slope backgrounds (e.g., Menzel, Hayn-Leichsenring, Langner, Wiese, & Redies, 2015; Menzel, Hayn-Leichsenring, Redies, Németh, & Kovács, 2017; Wu, Xu, Dayan, & Qian, 2009). **I am not asking for being cited** but would like to point out that there exist studies on the perception of the similarity of statistical... (NC_BS_EV_006_RR1)

(12) the interest of general readers because the specific questions, hypotheses, and motivation for each statistical test, and the greater impact of each finding, remain obscure. **I think the manuscript would benefit** significantly from extensive restructuring and rewriting to highlight the most important findings and implications for the field. (NC_BS_DDIS_014_RR1)

(13) ... is, I think, quite high. Since there is no good evidence that TRIM25 is lost or mutated in tumors, and by itself, would cause tumors, **I think it would be more accurate to say that it has tumor suppressive properties**. Not everything that suppresses proliferation is a tumor suppressor. (NC_BS_BIOCH_014_RR1)

Similarly, in example (11), the reviewer's mention of 'I' has drawn attention to an issue in the referenced studies while avoiding an authoritative or self-promotional stance. This essentially aligns with the monitoring role because the reviewer appears to keep the focus on rigor in the manuscript's literature base, thereby helping uphold academic standards without directing criticism toward the author. In example (12), we can see how the reviewer's use of 'I' lies at the intersection of advising and mentoring. However, rather than simply providing step-by-step restructuring of the manuscript's key area for improvement, the reviewer attempts to recommend that the author(s) complete an extensive revision to enhance the impact of the manuscript for a better outcome. This also signals a more lenient, constructive tone in the reviewer's criticality.

As mentioned earlier, Round 1 did not include any monitoring role, as the nature of the genre makes the primary focus at this stage more on broad and foundational guidance rather than on detailed adherence to specific standards or consistency checks, which seems to be a common practice in the following rounds. Regarding gatekeeping and evaluating in Round 1, the reviewers appear to give greater prominence to these roles in identifying both conceptual and methodological issues before announcing their decision to the

editors. Example (14) addresses the soundness of the research by providing specific points of critique. By doing so, the reviewer actively engages in the evaluating role to prompt recalibration and avoid unrealistic assumptions or speculation.

(14)be straightforward to validate this hypothesis? 2) Why are Col-0 and flm-3 so far off the spectrum measured within *A. thaliana* and across species (Fig.4b)? **I think there is something unrealistic there.** Why should *thaliana* display the LES range of all herbaceous species (it is not a succulent)? (NC_BS_EV_002_RR1)

(15) This also leads to lower splicing efficiency. This likely compromises the ability to detect PPIs at physiological protein expression levels. Taken together these considerations, **I do not feel it appropriate for this paper to be published in Nature Communications.** (NC_BS_CHBIO_005_RR1)

Example (15) shows many gatekeeping examples in Round 1, as reviewers tend to ensure a broader assessment of the manuscript and overall value. Such use of a personal presence allows the reviewer to adopt a gatekeeping role with a more holistic assessment regarding the suitability of the paper with respect to its originality, significance, and rigor, leading to a decisive and authoritative tone. Combining examples 14 and 15, we suggest that reviewers engage relatively more critically with the manuscript and offer their evaluation to refine it, signaling a more conclusive and critical assessment of the article. The latter example also stands out for engaging the editor(s) in dialogue by taking a considerably definitive stance on fundamental issues and helping them assess the quality of the manuscript.

When the reviewer roles in Round 2 were examined, we found that reviewers evolved to focus on refinement and alignment with the initial and to-the-point feedback provided in the previous round. In example (16), the primary role of the reviewer appears to be to check whether the author(s) have effectively responded to the reviewer's prior feedback. Here, the reviewer simply monitors the quality and appropriateness of the author's response to a specific question (C3). What is significant about such a role might be linked to an overall assessment of the technical and factual accuracy of the content and revision as well as to ensuring the extent to which the authors have engaged with the revision requests or suggested changes. We, therefore, suggest that monitoring, unlike more critical roles, is likely to serve as a quality assurance measure to check for any potential disconnect between the issues raised by reviewers and how authors have interpreted and responded to them.

(16) The authors added a short, helpful statement to the revised introduction. **I am concerned though that they responded to my question C3 as if a more detailed analysis of the N1 would amount to a “fishing expedition”.** (NC_BS_NE_005_RR2)

(17) **I am sorry to emphasize this point so much, but I think much of the here-presented chain of arguments strongly relies on this pore formation.** (NC_BS_CBIO_014_RR2)

(18) ...they still observe the unwanted DSBs events in the absence of induction and claim that those are due to the leakiness of the inducible promoters. **I think the authors should provide more evidence to support this conclusion, and/or they should provide a more detailed clarification of the observed results.** (NC_BS_BIOTEC_011_RR2)

Although less prominent than in the first round, advising and mentoring roles also emerged in Round 2. These roles can be considered developmental, based on how supportive the reviewers are in fostering authors' growth and improving articles. As can be seen in example (17) from Round 2, the reviewer attempts to reiterate a key point in a substantially considerate manner, adopting a more mentoring stance, and helps the authors recognize a foundational aspect of the research field. We believe that such an empathetic and patient tone illustrates a polite and respectful approach to assist rather than critique. By providing specific constructive guidance, the reviewer in example (18) clearly adopts a more advisory role via his/her authorial presence and offers a solution-oriented pathway to improve the quality of the argument (that is, by providing additional evidence or clarification).

The reviewers' roles of evaluating and gatekeeping appear in relatively positive and encouraging forms to indicate their strong support and communicate with the editors, signaling that the work is worthy of publication. Example (19) reflects an evaluative role and acknowledges the manuscript's scientific value, while also identifying a crucial area that requires improvement in clarity and interpretability. By communicating with the authors in such a supportive tone, the reviewer establishes a dialogue to focus on specific aspects that require refinement. Similarly, example (20), in which the reviewer adopted a gatekeeping role signaled by explicit use of the self-mention, serves as a holistic approach confirming the manuscript's overall merit. The use of self-mention and the accompanying role differ from other roles (advising and mentoring, monitoring) owing to its nature of a definitive judgment rather than suggesting improvements or offering guidance.

(19) Without this it's very hard for me to understand the metabolic results being presented here. That said, **I still think this manuscript represents great science-** it just needs to be strengthened to ensure the data are interpretable within the current diagnostic framework. (NC_BS_PH_013_RR2)

(20) Let me preface this review by saying **that I still think this is a wonderful data set that I think deserves to be published without needing to collect more new data.** (NC_BS_EV_006_RR2)

Round 3 can be considered as the focus of reviewer roles shifting significantly towards monitoring, reflecting the transitional nature of the final stage as the manuscript nears its final form. As shown in Table 3, the frequencies of the roles show key trends in how reviewers engage with a manuscript. It was found that evaluating and gatekeeping remained relevant in the final round, but their focus narrowed to ensure the manuscript's contributions were sound and worthy of publication. It was found that the roles of advising and mentoring diminished in Round 3, reflecting the reduced need for broad developmental feedback as the manuscript nears its final form. These shifts could highlight the dynamic nature of reviewer engagement with authors, as they adapt to the specific needs and expectations at each stage of the review process.

Discussion and Conclusion

Considering peer review as the cornerstone of scholarly publishing and knowledge dissemination, previous research has shown that it is significant in terms of ensuring the rigor, validity, and integrity of academic work by reviewers, editors, and authors. With the rise of Open Science practices, the traditional peer review process has undergone a significant transformation, evolving into more transparent formats. TPR, which can be seen as a subset of OPR, is likely to shed light on the review process by making reviewer reports publicly accessible, fostering accountability, and promoting healthier academic dialogue and discourse. Unlike traditional 'hidden' reviews (accessible by the editors and only partly by other parties), TPR has emerged as a genre that emphasizes constructive and open dialogue between authors and reviewers. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that reviewer comments are directed at a dual audience: while mentoring and advising comments primarily target the authors, many evaluative and gatekeeping comments may be intended for journal editors to assist in publication decisions. This shift could not only enhance the visibility of the reviewers' and authors' identities and their linguistic practices but could also reveal and redefine the roles that reviewers might adopt throughout the

process. In this study, we explored how reviewers project their authorial identity and adapt their rhetorical strategies across three rounds of TPR

We investigated the authorial stance by the use of self-mentions, particularly the first-person pronoun 'I' and its associated forms (e.g., 'my', 'me'), found in TPRs across three review rounds. As previous studies have highlighted, first-person use in academic discourse plays a significant role in showing authors' presence and how they position themselves in academic texts. It is indeed considered the most effective tool for showing the author's voice, stance, and attitude (Biber et al., 1999). Regarding the use of 'I', it was found that the first-person singular pronoun was used extensively in the review reports analyzed in this study. The reviewers explicitly referred to themselves and did not use alternatives, such as the third person (e.g., 'this reviewer' or 'the reviewer') instead of 'I'. This finding indicates that the reviewers took responsibility for their statements, and this aligns with what Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990) and Englander and López-Bonilla (2011) found, as stated earlier.

Another significant finding of the study is that we identified a detailed typology of reviewers' roles based on the uses of 'I' in the data. These roles included gatekeeping, evaluating, monitoring, advising, and mentoring. Some of these roles have been recognized in previous studies, such as the gatekeeping function highlighted by Starfield and Paltridge (2019) and the Guardian, Ally, and Ringleader roles proposed by Englander and López-Bonilla (2011), but the findings of the current study revealed the need to expand the typology by incorporating additional categories.

Building on the roles of reviewers discussed earlier, we identified a continuum of reviewer criticality based on these roles. This continuum spans from a lenient and constructive reviewer to one who is more authoritative and critical. A similar framework was proposed by Tang and John (1999), who categorized author roles such as representative, guide, architect, recounter, opinion holder, and originator, positioning them along a continuum ranging from low to high levels of authorial presence and authority. Similar to this continuum, Hyland (2002b) also proposed a typology of author roles identified through the use of 'I'. These roles comprised stating a goal/purpose, explaining a procedure, elaborating an argument, and stating results/claims, with the first two reflecting a lower degree of authorial exposure and the latter two demonstrating a much stronger and more explicit authorial presence, akin to the framework of Tang and John (1999). It is important, however, to note that their continuum was derived from research articles rather than reviews. Our continuum could therefore reflect the distinct features of reviewing as a genre, such as gatekeeping, which inherently involves strong authoritative roles absent in research articles. It can be seen that reviewers can be explicitly treated as decision-makers and can change the

overall publication process for a manuscript by making their decisions explicit.

The observation that criticism may comprise up to half of all comments in the genre (Fortanet, 2008) is supported by the current findings that evaluating and gatekeeping, signaled by explicit authorial references, seemed to dominate the first round. As anticipated, in the initial stages, reviewers are expected to focus on identifying gaps in the research, methodology, or framing of a manuscript (Coniam, 2012). Taking such a critical stance can underscore the extent to which the manuscript meets a journal's standards for originality and rigor. Although the critical focus of early review rounds could be dominant, previous studies (Coniam, 2012; Hyland & Jiang, 2020; Sönmez & Akbaş, 2023) have documented that an element of advising and mentoring can be achieved through the use of constructive feedback. We also suggest that this combination of critique and mentorship could well ensure that the review process not only evaluates but also contributes to the development of scholarly writing, particularly in earlier stages when manuscripts might be less polished.

As our findings show, monitoring becomes relatively dominant in the later rounds, reflecting a potential shift away from evaluative criticism towards ensuring that the manuscript has aligned with prior feedback. Previous discussion (Hyland & Jiang, 2020; Sönmez & Akbaş, 2023) on softened criticism and indirect suggestions (such as through hedges and questions) could also align with the monitoring role, in which reviewers aim to validate authors' revisions rather than emphasize further critique. Hyland and Jiang (2020) discussed the use of attitude markers and self-mentions to assert reviewer certainty and authority, and we also found that self-mentions were employed to achieve evaluating and gatekeeping roles in the first rounds (e.g., 'I recommend rejection' or 'I think this approach is flawed'). However, as revisions progressed and a level of relationship was established in the TPRs, we observed that self-mentions appeared to shift toward validating earlier feedback, such as 'I see the authors have addressed my concerns', which matches the monitoring role in subsequent rounds. This progression could both illustrate a shift in the reviewer's focus - from critical evaluation to procedural validation – and reinforce Hyland and Jiang's (2020) assertion that reviewers seem to adapt their tone and focus to maintain a positive and constructive relationship with authors. We argue that such relational shifts also contribute to the dynamic nature of the peer review roles, supporting the idea that later rounds might prioritize quality assurance and alignment with academic and editorial standards over critical evaluative and gatekeeping attitudes of reviewers. We acknowledge that these shifting frequency patterns and changes in reviewer language across rounds are not solely driven by identity construction; they could naturally reflect the procedural structure of

the peer review process and the improving quality of the manuscript over time. The prominence of gatekeeping in early rounds and the shift toward monitoring in later rounds could be largely predictable outcomes as reviewers evaluate revisions and check compliance with earlier feedback; yet, our findings are likely to confirm such predictability.

The findings about transparent peer reviewer roles indicate more fluid and more visible reviewer roles. We argue that when peer review is transparent, reviewers are more accountable for their decisions and feedback, which encourages a broader approach to their roles, such as mentoring and advising. Instead of focusing solely on evaluating a manuscript's content, they can also become mentors, guiding authors through constructive criticism. TPR allows the reviewer's authorial self to be visible, often through self-mentions, hedging, or stance-taking. This visibility demonstrates the personal and professional identity that reviewers bring to the process, and they become more responsible every time they use the 'I' pronoun. For example, in the present study, the results indicated that the visibility of the reviewers changed across rounds. In the initial rounds, they might focus on the content more while indicating their recommendations for revisions, whereas reviewers tend to write more briefly in the third round and become more visible in their gatekeeping role. As the reviewers' personalities become visible in the TPR process, they may become more responsible for their comments and criticisms and more aware of their roles' responsibilities, such as gatekeeping and mentoring.

We believe that the methodological rigor of the current study lies in its focus on a specialized corpus of 150 TPR reports spanning three review rounds to see how reviewers exhibited their authorial presence throughout the process. Benefiting from the UAM Corpus Tool for both qualitative and quantitative analysis, we identified authorial roles in the use of self-mentions as metadiscourse markers. In addition, our iterative annotation process, involving multiple independent and collaborative coding phases, could be considered a robust analytical procedure that can enhance the reliability and validity of the findings. The analysis of the evolution of reviewer roles (advising, mentoring, monitoring, evaluating, and gatekeeping) across review rounds could underscore the significance of this study. By normalizing role frequencies across rounds, we identified a distinct shift in reviewer roles: the critical roles of evaluating and gatekeeping dominate earlier stages, while supportive roles, such as monitoring, become more prominent in later rounds. We suggest that these findings not only advance our understanding of the peer review genre but also provide pedagogical insights for training novice reviewers to adopt effective and ethical feedback practices by signaling their presence. We also suggest that the conceptual framework developed in the analysis (i.e., the continuum of reviewer criticality) can provide a valuable

and expanded lens through which to examine the interplay among reviewer roles, transparency, and rhetorical strategies. Despite existing discussions/frameworks of reviewer roles in the literature, we believe this continuum integrates these roles specifically within the shifting dynamics of transparent, multi-round peer review. We have highlighted how reviewers adapt their roles and linguistic choices to meet the evolving demands of the manuscript and the expectations of editors and authors, thereby contributing to the broader discourse and communicative nature of the peer review genre.

Based on the results of this study, we also offer pedagogical implications for developing feedback literacy in peer review. First, it is important to increase awareness of the peer review genre for the peer review process. Novice reviewers, for example, should be encouraged to analyze TPRs as a distinct genre of academic writing and develop an awareness of the language that is being used in each role. It is also important to investigate whether particular roles are triggered by various rhetorical and linguistic patterns, such as metadiscourse markers and hedging. Similarly, training sessions in peer review writing could be organized to help reviewers understand the review structure, foster ethical standards, and promote consistency across TPR rounds. It is also important for all peer reviewers, novice and experienced alike, to participate in and observe TPR practices. This can give some insight into the roles that they take on in the publication process.

There are some implications for future TPR studies. The present study analyzed reviewer reports only from the Biological Sciences domain. The study was also limited to the analysis of self-mentions as metadiscourse markers in TPRs. The dataset was restricted to reviews published by a single publisher, which makes peer reviews publicly available alongside research articles. Notably, the authors' responses to the reviews fall outside the scope of this investigation. It is, however, possible that TPR roles across reviews may also change across disciplines. For this reason, it would be important to promote the TPR model, which allows authors to optionally make their peer review reports publicly available alongside the final paper, providing transparency in the review process. Once TPR expands to more fields, future researchers could conduct comparative analyses of transparent review practices across disciplines, examining variations in feedback style, rigor, and ethical considerations among different scientific communities.

Additionally, based on our results, there are implications for future feedback literacy research. To improve the efficacy of the TPR process, it is also important to deepen our understanding of how to provide, interpret, and use feedback effectively in scholarly contexts. Chong and Gao (2024) reported first-hand accounts of crafting and handling feedback, focusing on the perspectives of editors, authors, and early-career researchers. They

explored the development of feedback literacy among scholars engaged in peer review in education and applied linguistics. It is, however, possible to argue that reviewers develop their identities over time through their experiences of writing, revising, and reviewing. Future peer review studies could explore how reviewers' feedback practices develop over time, shaped by their own writer and reviewer identities throughout the peer review process. These studies could focus on in-depth longitudinal explorations of peer reviewers' feedback practices from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, both in transparent and traditional (closed) peer review.

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About the Authors

Erdem Akbaş: An associate professor holding his PhD from University of York, UK (2015) and now working at the Department of Foreign Languages Education at Erciyes University, Türkiye. Presenting his research extensively at various reputable international conferences, he published his in prestigious journals, i.e., *English for Specific Purposes*, *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, *Applied Linguistics*, *Lingua* and *Iberica*. Dr. Akbaş co-organized the first-of-its-kind conference on Metadiscourse in 2017, 2019 & 2021; published an edited book and an edited special issue on Metadiscourse

Betül Bal-Gezegin: An associate professor in the Department of English Language Teaching in Türkiye. She earned her Bachelor's and PhD degrees in Foreign Language Education from Middle East Technical University and holds a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics from Georgia State University, USA. Her primary research interests are Corpus Linguistics, data-driven learning (DDL), and English for Specific/Academic Purposes (ESP/EAP).

Nur Yiğitoğlu Aptoula: An associate professor in the Department of Foreign Language Education at Boğazici University, Istanbul, Türkiye. Her current research focuses on L2 writing and L2 teacher education. She is one

of the recipients of the 2023 Turkish Academy of Sciences (TÜBA) Outstanding Young Scientists Awards (GEBİP).

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