






“I have known....” A Corpus-driven Study of Personal Pronouns in Letters of Recommendation in an L2 Context

Osei Yaw Akoto¹, Benjamin Amoakohene² & Juliet Oppong-Asare Ansah¹

¹ Department of English, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.

² Department of General and Liberal Studies, University of Health and Allied Science Ghana.

ABSTRACT

In recent times, there has been an upsurge of scholarly attention on hitherto occluded genres such as the Letter of Recommendation (LoR). Although several studies have been conducted on the LoR, studies on lexico-grammatical features are rare. This study, therefore, adopts a corpus-driven approach to examine the use of personal pronouns (PPs) in LoRs written by Ghanaian academics. A specialized corpus of LoR, totalling approximately twenty thousand (20, 000) running words was created for this study. The concordance tool in *AntConc* (v. 3.2.4.) was employed to search for all instances of PPs in the corpus. The concordance lines were manually examined to determine the referents of the PPs. The study revealed the diversity of PP resources in LoRs. It was also found that the PPs were mainly recommender-oriented, recommendee-oriented, or requester-oriented, culminating in a proposed model of discourse-internal and external participants in LoRs. Again, the study revealed that LoR is typified by singular PPs, reflecting the fact that it is mainly authored by an individual for an individual. The findings have implications for the pragmatics of PPs and the scholarship on LoR. It is thus recommended that an intercultural study of LoR be undertaken to establish variations in the use of personal pronouns.

Correspondence

Osei Yaw Akoto

Email:

oseiyaw.akoto@yahoo.com

Publication History

Received: 26th March, 2024

Accepted: 30th May, 2024

Published online:

19th June, 2024

Keywords: *Corpus Linguistics, L2 Context, Letter of recommendation, English for Specific Purposes*

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) practitioners have paid unprecedented attention to the letter genre, which constitutes part of what Swales and Freak refer to as ‘supporting genres.’¹ The letter genre involves a myriad of subgenres: direct mail letters, birthmother letters, letters of appeal, letters of application, letters of negotiation, sales letters, request letters, letters to the editor, editorial letters, fundraising letters, and letters of recommendation.² Generally, these letter subgenres are similar and

¹ John M Swales and Christine B Feak, *English in Today’s Research World: A Writing Guide* (University of Michigan Press, 2000).

² Thomas A. Upton, “Understanding Direct Mail Letters as a Genre,” *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 7, no. 1 (2002): 65–85; Thomas A. Upton and Mary Ann Cohen, “An Approach to Corpus-Based Discourse Analysis: The Move Analysis as Example,” *Discourse Studies* 11, no. 5 (2009): 585–605; Vahid Sadeghi and Moses Samuel, “Genre Analysis of the Letters of Appeal,” *Discourse Studies* 15, no. 2 (2013): 229–45; Alex Henry and Robert L Roseberry, “A Narrow-Angled Corpus Analysis of Moves and Strategies of the Genre: ‘Letter of Application,’” *English for Specific Purposes* 20, no. 2 (2001): 153–67; V.B.M Pinto Dos Santos, “Genre Analysis of Business Letters of Negotiation,” *English for Specific Purposes* 21, no. 2 (2002): 167–99; Jane Frank, “On Conversational Involvement by Mail: The Use of Questions in Direct Sales Letters,” *Text-Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse* 9, no. 2 (1989): 231–59;

dissimilar in the “communicative questions why, what, who, when, where, and how (5W1H)”, which correspond with the “purpose, content, participants, timing, location, and form of communicative action.”³

The LoR is unique among the letter subgenres considering that it is an epideictic genre which seeks to project the positive self of a recommendee to make him/her the preferred choice among other potential competitors for an opportunity in the corporate world.⁴ It captures crucial information required about applicants from a recommender for employment, scholarship, admission and the like. It is written by someone upon the request of someone about someone for someone. It thus involves a triad of participants (the recommender, the recommendee and the recipient/requester). Schall argues that the LoR “offers us lessons about relationships, growth, power and empowerment, professionalism, attitude, protocol, communication, ethos, and trust.”⁵ Hence, the LoR usually serves as a supporting document, which “works with other materials such as transcripts, application forms, and résumés to represent the candidate.”⁶

In the last three decades, LoR has witnessed tremendous growth in terms of research. Studies have generally focused on trust, gender, and race.⁷ Little attention, however, has been paid to linguistic investigations.⁸ Much, therefore, remains to be examined on the lexico-grammatical resources, particularly personal pronouns (PPs), which allow the writers of LoRs to effectively establish interactions and construct identities of the participants for the intended rhetorical effect. Zhang notes that the “personal pronoun is an important indicator of how audiences are conceptualized by speakers or writers” in all kinds of discourses.⁹ The pronoun is considered a heterogeneous class of items.¹⁰ Its heterogeneity is arguably one of the factors that have sparked pronominal argumentation, and widespread scholarly attention.¹¹ It is conceptualized as personal markers, self-mentions, participation markers, or stance markers.¹² Pronouns play pragmatic roles in discourse; hence, they are labelled as key interpersonal resources in both written

Abbas Monfared and Mohammad M. Safarzadeh, “Where the Difference Lies: British and Iranian Rhetorical Choices in English Business Request Letters,” *The Asian ESP Journal* 11, no. 2 (2015): 171–209; Su-Jen Lai and Ming-i Lydia Tseng, “Genre Analysis of Requesting Letters in Business Communication Textbooks and the Workplace,” *The Asian ESP Journal Autumn Edition October 2012 Volume 8 Issue 3*, 2012, 5; Monique Mémet, “Letters to the Editor: A Multi-Faceted Genre,” *European Journal of English Studies* 9, no. 1 (2005): 75–90; John Flowerdew and Tony Dudley-Evans, “Genre Analysis of Editorial Letters to International Journal Contributors,” *Applied Linguistics* 23, no. 4 (2002): 463–89; Joseph B. Afful, “Rhetorical Analysis of Philanthropic Fundraising Letters in a Ghanaian University,” in *Approaches to Specialized Genres* (London: Routledge, 2020), 121–33; Joseph B. Afful and Emmanuel Kyei, “Move Analysis of Letters of Recommendation Written by Lecturers in a Ghanaian University,” *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* 2, no. 5 (2020): 1–11; Takeshi Yoshioka et al., “Genre Taxonomy: A Knowledge Repository of Communicative Actions,” *ACM Transactions on Information Systems (TOIS)* 19, no. 4 (2001): 431–56.

³ Yoshioka et al., “Genre Taxonomy: A Knowledge Repository of Communicative Actions.”

⁴ Roger Rees, “Letters of Recommendation and the Rhetoric of Praise,” in *In Ancient Letters. Classical and Late Antique Epistolography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 149–68; Afful and Kyei, “Move Analysis of Letters of Recommendation Written by Lecturers in a Ghanaian University”; Emmanuel Kyei and Joseph Benjamin Archibald Afful, “Schematic Structure of Letters of Recommendation Written by Lecturers of a Public University in Ghana,” *Iranian Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 10, no. 2 (2021): 37–54.

⁵ Joe Schall, *Writing Recommendation Letters Online: A Faculty Handbook* (Penn State College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, 2010).

⁶ Swales and Feak, *English in Today's Research World: A Writing Guide*; Elizabeth Tomlinson and Sara Newman, “Epideictic Rhetoric Born Digital: Evolution of the Letter of Recommendation Genre,” *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 32, no.1(2018):3–37.

⁷ Christopher L Grote, William N Robiner, and Allyson Haut, “Disclosure of Negative Information in Letters of Recommendation: Writers' Intentions and Readers' Experiences,” *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 32, no. 6 (2001): 655; Juan M Madera, Michelle R Hebl, and Randi C Martin, “Gender and Letters of Recommendation for Academia: Agentic and Communal Differences,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 94, no. 6 (2009): 1591; Arika Hoffman et al., “Gendered Differences in Letters of Recommendation for Transplant Surgery Fellowship Applicants,” *Journal of Surgical Education* 76, no. 2 (2019): 427–32; Madera, Hebl, and Martin, “Gender and Letters of Recommendation for Academia: Agentic and Communal Differences”; Lars J. Grimm et al., “Gender and Racial Bias in Radiology Residency Letters of Recommendation,” *Journal of the American College of Radiology* 17, no. 1 (2020): 64–71; Kristen Precht, “A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Letters of Recommendation,” *English for Specific Purposes* 17, no. 3 (1998): 241–65.

⁸ Afful and Kyei, “Move Analysis of Letters of Recommendation Written by Lecturers in a Ghanaian University”; Judith C French et al., “Gender and Letters of Recommendation: A Linguistic Comparison of the Impact of Gender on General Surgery Residency Applicants,” *Journal of Surgical Education* 76, no. 4 (2019): 899–905.

⁹ Baoya Zhang, Quyen Bui Thi Thuc, and Issra Pramoosook, “Moves and Linguistic Realizations: English Research Article,” *The Asian ESP Journal Autumn Edition October 2012 Volume 8 Issue 3*, 126.

¹⁰ Katie Wales, *Personal Pronouns in Present-Day English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹¹ Osei Yaw Akoto, “Individualities in the Referents of I, We, and You in Academic Lectures across Disciplines,” *Iranian Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 9, no. 4 (2020): 1–14.

¹² Ken Hyland, “Humble Servants of the Discipline? Self-Mention in Research Articles,” *English for Specific Purposes* 20, no. 3 (January 2001): 207–26, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(00\)00012-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(00)00012-0); Annelie Ädel, “Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English,” *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English*, 2006, 1–255; Douglas Biber et al., *Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (John Benjamins, 2021).

and spoken genres.¹³ Consequently, they are employed to maintain a good interchange among participants in “situations of communication.”¹⁴ Pronouns are considered as part of the resources employed to manage writer-audience interaction in text. Writers, therefore, use personal pronouns to express their opinions and stances toward propositions made in texts.¹⁵ They enable writers to create a friendly in-text environment for their readers.

Hence, the present study investigates the forms, discourse functions and number of PPs in LoRs, using a corpus of LoRs written by Ghanaian academics. The study is considered corpus-driven (not corpus-based) because it does not use a pre-tagged text, but rather the raw text nor adopt any existing model on personal pronouns.¹⁶ Tognini- Bonelli also states that “in a corpus-driven approach the commitment of the linguist is to the integrity of the data as a whole, and descriptions aim to be comprehensive with respect to corpus evidence.”¹⁷ Sinclair thus asserts that “in corpus-driven linguistics, you do not use pre-tagged text, but you process the raw text directly and then the patterns of this uncontaminated text are able to be observed.”¹⁸

On the Letter of Recommendation

The Letter of Recommendation (LoR) is considered an evaluative, persuasive, personal and epideictic genre¹⁹ that is expected to provide unbiased, critical and factual information about the general personality of an individual (i.e. recommendee) for consideration in a job offer, scholarship, promotion and leadership position.²⁰ It provides a professional link between the recommender and the recipient since it is seen as an individual’s testimonial about an applicant. The LoR provides a “link between the educational and occupational world” and it is regarded as a crucial part of the hiring process.²¹ The LoR is expected to be a true reflection of the state of an individual as unknown by the recommender. However, it is sometimes considered a subjective genre because some characteristics attested to by the recommender may be immeasurable and unscientific.²² Notwithstanding, it is perceived to be objective because there are some traits of the individual, which are verifiable and measurable.²³ The measurable ones mostly concern the general academic competence or performance of the applicant usually communicated in one’s curriculum vitae, transcripts and certificates.

LoRs can be written by a superior to a subordinate, and vice versa, though some scholars like Trix and Psenka doubt the legitimacy of the latter.²⁴ They argue that the LoR constitutes part of gatekeeping therefore, a subordinate cannot *open the door for a superior*.²⁵ It is written upon request (by an applicant or organization), but recommenders are not legally bound to write such letters. Hence, it is said to be a

¹³ Akoto, “Individualities in the Referents of I, We, and You in Academic Lectures across Disciplines”; Ramona Tang and Suganthi John, “The ‘I’ in Identity: Exploring Writer Identity in Student Academic Writing through the First Person Pronoun,” *English for Specific Purposes* 18 (1999): S23–39.

¹⁴ Hyland, “Humble Servants of the Discipline? Self-Mention in Research Articles”; Hala El Saj, “Discourse Analysis: Personal Pronouns in Oprah Winfrey Hosting Queen Rania of Jordan,” *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* 2, no. 6 (2012): 529; Ädel, “Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English.”

¹⁵ Ute Römer, “Progressives, Patterns, Pedagogy,” *Progressives, Patterns, Pedagogy*, 2005, 1–342.

¹⁶ Ute Römer, “Progressives, patterns, pedagogy.” *Progressives, Patterns, Pedagogy* (2005): 1-342; Osei Yaw Akoto, “Geographical Markers in Church Names: A Synergy of Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Landscape Methodologies,” *Onoma* 51 (2021): 213–34.

¹⁷ Elena Tognini-Bonelli, “The Role of Corpus Evidence in Linguistic Theory and Description” (University of Birmingham, 1996).

¹⁸ John Sinclair, “Current Issues in Corpus Linguistics,” *R. Rossini Favretti. Linguistica e Informatica. Corpora, Multimedialità e Percorsi Di Apprendimento. Roma: Bulzoni Editore*, 2000, 29–38.

¹⁹ Rees, “Letters of Recommendation and the Rhetoric of Praise .”

²⁰ Grote, Robiner, and Haut, “Disclosure of Negative Information in Letters of Recommendation: Writers’ Intentions and Readers’ Experiences”; Kuncel, Kochevar, and Ones, “A Meta-analysis of Letters of Recommendation in College and Graduate Admissions: Reasons for Hope.”

²¹ Gloria Cowan and Jill H Kasen, “Form of Reference: Sex Differences in Letters of Recommendation.,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 46, no. 3 (1984): 636; Toni Schmader, Jessica Whitehead, and Vicki H Wysocki, “A Linguistic Comparison of Letters of Recommendation for Male and Female Chemistry and Biochemistry Job Applicants,” *Sex Roles* 57, no. 7 (2007): 509–14.

²² Jeremy D Prager et al., “Improving the Letter of Recommendation,” *Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery* 143, no.3 (2010): 327–30.

²³ Aashish Rajesh et al., “What Are We Really Looking for in a Letter of Recommendation?,” *Journal of Surgical Education* 76, no. 6 (2019): e118–24.

²⁴ Frances Trix and Carolyn Psenka, “Exploring the Color of Glass: Letters of Recommendation for Female and Male Medical Faculty,” *Discourse & Society* 14, no. 2 (2003): 191–220.

²⁵ Trix and Psenka, “Exploring the color of glass”

letter by choice.²⁶ The choice can be seen from two directions: the applicant chooses who must write, and the potential recommender decides to write or not to write it. Sometimes, as noted by Schall, some academics inform people who ask them for letters of recommendation to draft one and submit it for review, and onward endorsement.²⁷ This type is supported by people who uphold the flexible principle of confidentiality.

Schall notes that writing LoR has both ethical and legal implications.²⁸ Consequently, LoR writers take into cognizance the factuality and accuracy of the information they provide.²⁹ It is thus considered a true record of the life of the recommendee from the perspective of the recommender. Recommenders are, therefore, advised to avoid both inflationary and deflationary rhetoric in the LoRs, which may mar the reliability of the documents and the credibility of both the recommender and recommendee.³⁰ In other words, writers of LoRs are advised to be careful not to overstate or understate the qualities, qualifications and competencies of the recommendees.³¹

The LoR is regarded as a trustworthy document, especially as it is provided by a self-selected referee –usually mentioned in one’s curriculum vitae. The importance of the LoR concerns three key discourse players: the recommender, the recommendee and the requester/recipient.³² For the recommender, it is an opportunity to provide a critical perspective on his view on the recommendee. This helps display the writer’s sense of criticism, and upon this, people can judge the principles of the person, and also his/her membership in the general academic discourse community.³³ More so, it offers the requester a verifiable basis for their decision on an applicant. It is believed that most LoRs are written and submitted at the blind side of the recommendee.³⁴

LoRs contain writer-based knowledge about the general competence and personality of the individual. Schall notes that the recommender and the recommendee both have rights and responsibilities regarding the content of LoRs.³⁵ It is noted that the former has the responsibility not to include some sensitive information about the applicant, especially private information that has ethical and legal implications.³⁶ Schall, therefore, notes that in some universities, the recommendee is required to waive his/her access rights.³⁷ This indicates that writers have restrictions on the information that can be included in LoRs. However, the recommendation may be positive or negative, based on the information revealed about the recommendee. Surprisingly, the present corpus did not contain any negative LoRs, though, in three of them, the recommenders were quite hesitant. It is said that sociocultural norms influence the writing of LoRs such that in societies where it is regarded as taboo for one to say evil about another, negative LoRs are rare. However, it should be noted that socio-cultural beliefs, norms, or practices must not override the principles of honesty, fairness, trustworthiness, and meritocracy. Thus, the answer is affirmative to Callahan’s question, “When friendship calls, should truth answer?”³⁸

JIS Schall proscribed discriminatory language that is based on the gender, religion, or ethnicity of both the recommender and the recommendee.³⁹ Studies have confirmed that the gender of either the recommender or the recommendee significantly influences the content of LoRs.⁴⁰ These studies noted that males write favourably about their co-males than about females, and vice versa. Further, LoRs must not

²⁶ Stacy E Palmer, “What to Say in a Letter of Recommendation? Sometimes What You Don’t Say Matters Most.,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 27, no. 2 (1983): 21–22.

²⁷ Schall, “*Writing Recommendation Letters Online.*”

²⁸ Schall, “*Writing Recommendation Letters Online.*”

²⁹ Alison Schneider, “Why You Can’t Trust Letters of Recommendation.,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 46, no. 43 (2000).

³⁰ Schall, “*Writing Recommendation Letters Online.*”

³¹ Gregory L. Larkin and Catherine A. Marco, “Ethics Seminars: Beyond Authorship Requirements—Ethical Considerations in Writing Letters of Recommendation,” *Academic Emergency Medicine* 8, no. 1 (2001): 70–73.

³² Lynn L Brown, “Fourteen Ways to Write a Better Letter of Recommendation,” *Professional School Counseling* 3, no. 2 (1999): 141.

³³ Kyei and Afful, “Schematic Structure of Letters of Recommendation Written by Lecturers of a Public University in Ghana.”

³⁴ Schall, “*Writing Recommendation Letters Online.*”

³⁵ Schall, “*Writing Recommendation Letters Online.*”

³⁶ Larkin and Marco. “Ethics seminars: beyond authorship requirements.”

³⁷ Schall, “*Writing Recommendation Letters Online.*”

³⁸ Daniel Callahan, “When Friendship Calls, Should Truth Answer?,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 7 (1978).

³⁹ Schall, “*Writing Recommendation Letters Online.*”

⁴⁰ Susan E Bell, C Suzanne Cole, and Liliane Floge, “Letters of Recommendation in Academe: Do Women and Men Write in Different Languages?,” *The American Sociologist* 23 (1992): 7–22.

contain unqualified glorification or exaggerative/hyperbolic praises.⁴¹ Writers are, therefore, cautioned to avoid overly inflated and/or deflated language in LoRs as it will have future repercussions on both the recommender and the recommendee.⁴²

CORPUS AND PROCEDURE

Sixty-seven (67) LoRs written by Ghanaian academics constituted the corpus for the study. The entire corpus has approximately twenty thousand words (20, 000). The soft versions of the LoRs were gathered from the writers themselves. It is, therefore, assumed that recommendees do not own personal copies of LoR written about them although Schall posits that in some countries and/or institutions there are laws that permit recommendees to have access to the content of their LoRs.⁴³ In such cases, recommenders are to indicate whether or not recommendees were privy to the information captured in the letters of recommendation. This brings to bare the strict and flexible principles of confidentiality in LoR writing.⁴⁴

In processing the corpus, the researchers anonymized the data to remove all information pointing to the identities of the recommenders, the recommendees or the recipients/requesters. Hence, all personal names of the recommenders and recommendees were initialized; the recipient's addresses, letterheads, signatures, and dates were deleted. The texts were then converted into plain text format using Microsoft Word to ensure that it is *AntConc*-readable. *AntConc*, a text analysis software, is an agglomeration of tools (e.g. concordance, cluster/N-grams, and collocates) developed by Anthony.⁴⁵ Anthony describes the software as “a freeware, multiplatform tool for carrying out corpus linguistics research and data-driven learning”.⁴⁶ The concordance, one of the tools in *AntConc*, was used to search for all instances of PPs in the corpus. The electronic analysis was complemented manually to ensure that all the occurrences of the PPs met the following criteria: referred to a human being and referred to the discourse internal or external world.⁴⁷

The categories of the pronominal item were determined based on the linguistic context, and or co-text, indicating that the principle for categorizing the PPs in the corpus is context and/or co-text dependent.⁴⁸ The PPs identified were examined qualitatively to determine their discourse functions and referents. The qualitative analysis was supplemented by “the quantitative power of computerized corpus analysis”⁴⁹ in accounting for the distributions of the PPs and their functions.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the results of the use of the PPs in the corpus, concerning the kinds, functions and numbers.

PPs in LoR

The researchers examined the PPs in the corpus to identify the PPs that typify this key academic and professional genre. In all, one thousand seven hundred and twenty-three (1723) PPs were identified in the corpus. The distributions of the PPs are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequencies of PPs in the corpus

S/N	Personal Pronouns	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	I	421	24.4
2.	His	308	17.9
3.	He	300	17.4
4.	Her	203	11.8

⁴¹ Schall, “*Writing Recommendation Letters Online*.”

⁴² K. Paul Kasambira, “Recommendation Inflation,” *The Teacher Educator* 20, no. 2 (1984): 26–29; Schneider, “Why You Can't Trust Letters of Recommendation”.

⁴³ Schall, “*Writing Recommendation Letters Online*.”

⁴⁴ Schall, “*Writing Recommendation Letters Online*.”

⁴⁵ Laurence Anthony, “*AntConc (Version 3.4. 3)*[Computer Software]. Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University,” 2014.

⁴⁶ Anthony, “*AntConc (Version 3.4. 3)*[Computer Software].

⁴⁷ Ädel, “Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English”; Hyland, “*Metadiscourse: Exploring interaction in writing*.”

⁴⁸ Akoto, “Individualities in the Referents of I, We, and You in Academic Lectures across Disciplines.”

⁴⁹ Upton, “Understanding direct mail letters as a genre.”

5.	She	150	8.7
6.	Him	122	7.1
7.	My	93	5.4
8.	Me	57	3.3
9.	Your	50	2.9
10.	You	13	0.8
11.	Their	3	0.2
12.	Our	2	0.1
13.	We	1	0.5

Thirteen PPs were identified in the LoR corpus, suggesting that LoRs are characterized by pronominal diversity. In the discussion, *he* and *she* are combined since they are both the subjective forms of the 3PP, and what distinguishes them is gender which has already received sufficient attention in the literature on LoRs.⁵⁰ Table 1 shows that *s/he* recorded 26.1% (i.e. 17.4 + 8.7), making it the PP with the highest frequency. *S/he* designates the one being recommended; hence, it is not surprising that it has recorded the highest frequency because LoR is markedly recommendee-centred.⁵¹ The 3PP is used to refer to the person about whom the recommendation is written because *s/he* is the third party in the discourse (see corpus evidence LoR0001 and LoR0002).

1. While in my ENG 399 (*Research Methods*), LIN 306 (*Sociolinguistics*), ENG 402 (*Varieties of English & Advanced Writing Skills*), and LING 403 (*Discourse Analysis*) classes, **he** demonstrated a clear understanding of concepts, research approaches as well as a high sense of critical acumen, necessary for undergraduate work in a Humanities department.

LoR0001

2. I first got to know R when **she** enrolled in the MPhil (English language) programme at the University of Cape Coast in 2009.

LoR0002

Thus, the first party, who is the recommender, writes about the third party (the recommendee) who is represented as *he* and *she* in LoR0001 and LoR0002 to the second party, who is the requester. The direct consumer of the LoR is, therefore, the requester who requires it as the basis of decision-making. The degree of presence or representation of the three parties through the distribution of the PPs is very significant. In terms of the diversities of the PPs, those that concern the recommendee are more pervasive than in the cases of the two others. Additionally, in terms of frequencies, the sum of those pronouns significantly exceeds that of the two others. These observations support the fact that the recommendee is at the centre of the recommendation discourse.⁵² Next to the recommendee is the recommender, both in terms of diversity and frequency.

3. I have known Mrs. RT variously as **my** student, supervisee, and a member of a research team.

LoR0003

4. If you have further questions regarding Mr. N's ability or this recommendation, please do not hesitate to contact **me** through the above address and e-mail (xxx). LoR0004

5. I have known Mr. M for seven years as one of **my** former postgraduate students and currently a Senior Research Assistant in **my** department.

LoR0005

The recommender, referred to as *I*, *my* and *me* (see the corpus evidence LoR0003, LoR0004 and LoR0005) positively projects him/herself in the text to enact a persuasive persona of the recommendee.⁵³

⁵⁰ Hoffman et al., "Gendered Differences in Letters of Recommendation for Transplant Surgery Fellowship Applicants"; Madera, Hebl, and Martin, "Gender and Letters of Recommendation for Academia: Agentic and Communal Differences"; Anna H Messner and Erika Shimahara, "Letters of Recommendation to an Otolaryngology/Head and Neck Surgery Residency Program: Their Function and the Role of Gender," *The Laryngoscope* 118, no. 8 (2008): 1335–44.

⁵¹ Stephen B Knouse, "The Letter of Recommendation: Specificity and Favorability of Information," *Personnel Psychology* 36, no. 2 (1983): 331–41; Stephen B Knouse, "The Letter of Recommendation: Writer Familiarity with the Recommendee," *Management Communication Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1988): 46–62; Schall, *Writing Recommendation Letters Online: A Faculty Handbook*.

⁵² Schall, "Writing Recommendation Letters Online."

⁵³ Larkin and Marco. "Ethics seminars: beyond authorship requirements."

Finally, the second party is represented through the second person pronouns (2PP) *you* and *your*. The emphasis placed on the requester as the third most projected party through the 2PP (as shown in the corpus evidence LoR0006 and LoR0007) is based on the fact the recommender and the recommendee know each other more than they know the requester.⁵⁴

6. I highly commend xxx for the program she desires to pursue because I am certain that she will excel in **your** reputable university. Please feel free to contact me via xxx if **you** need any additional information or clarification about xxx. LoR0006

7. As **you** may notice from his curriculum vitae, this work has since been co-published. LoR0007

Contrary to the view that the 2PP is used to show attachment, in the LoR the third person pronoun (3PP) rather reveals a greater attachment to the writer.⁵⁵

The PPs used for the recommendee and the requester have two key implications bordering on the discourse-internal and external relations. Within the text, the 2PP for the requester and the 3PP for the recommendee suggest that the recommender and the requester are closer to each other than they are to the recommendee. This relationship which is officially ‘faceless’ hinges on the fact that the recommendee initiates this discourse. The second relation is the discourse-external one which existed between the recommender and the recommendee before the creation of the triad network among the three parties in the LoR. The discourse-internal relation appears more prominent and crucial because the first party directly communicates to the second party about the third party. The dimensionalities of the interrelation among the three parties in LoR can be represented in Table 2.

Table 2: Discourse internal and external worlds relation among the three parties in LoR

	Recommender vs. Recommendee	Recommender vs. Requester	Recommendee vs. Requester
Discourse-internal world	–	+	–
Discourse-external world	+	–	–

The – sign indicates the absence of an explicit relationship while + sign shows the presence of an explicit relationship. As has already been intimated, the use of the 3PP by the recommender for the recommendee is evident in the distance and absence of an explicit relationship between him and the recommendee.

8. **Her** performance at the *viva voce* left no one in doubt that **she** had really worked hard. LoR0008

9. Mr. KOB, a former student whom I have known for the past five years, has asked me to say a few words about **him**, as **he** seeks to pursue postgraduate education in your reputable institution. LoR0009

The recommender distances himself through the use of 3PPs (as in LoR0008 and LoR0008) to establish credibility and trustworthiness.⁵⁶ This positioning enables the recommender to appropriately represent the recommendee to the requester to achieve the intended rhetorical effect.⁵⁷ While the 3PP marks an absence of an explicit relationship between the recommender and the recommendee in the text, the pattern *I have known...* in the corpus signals the relationship that existed between the two.

⁵⁴ Kyei and Afful, "Schematic structure of letters of recommendation"; Schneider, "Why You Can't Trust Letters of Recommendation."

⁵⁵ Erdem Akbas, "Commitment-Detachment and Authorial Presence in Postgraduate Academic Writing: A Comparative Study of Turkish Native Speakers, Turkish Speakers of English and English Native Speakers" (University of York, 2014).

⁵⁶ Schall, "Writing Recommendation Letters Online."

⁵⁷ Kyei and Afful, "Schematic structure of letters of recommendation"; Ädel, "Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English."

Hit	KWIC	File
1	feel that he is a deserving candidate. I have known D as my student and	LoR Corpus.1
2	Mr. CA, former student whom I have known for some years, has asked	LoR Corpus.1
3	Coast. Mr. EF, a former student whom I have known for the past five years,	LoR Corpus.1
4	/xxx). Miss JDD, a former student whom I have known for the past three years,	LoR Corpus.1
5	admission. Mr. KOB, a former student whom I have known for the past five years,	LoR Corpus.1
6	a few words about Mrs. RATM, whom I have known for several years as a	LoR Corpus.1
7	him. Miss SR, a former student whom I have known for the past four years,	LoR Corpus.1
8	staff. Miss BMF, a former student whom I have known for the past five years,	LoR Corpus.1
9	her. Miss SFA, a former student whom I have known for the past three years,	LoR Corpus.1
10	a few words about Miss ABA, whom I have known for the past four years,	LoR Corpus.1
11	xxx. Miss MOA, a former student whom I have known for the past two years,	LoR Corpus.1
12	admission. Miss BMF, a former student whom I have known for the past five years,	LoR Corpus.1
13	admission. Miss GB, a former student whom I have known for the past five years,	LoR Corpus.1
14	. Miss J AA, a former student whom I have known for the past six years,	LoR Corpus.1
15	for admission. Mr. BA, a former student I have known for the past three years,	LoR Corpus.1
16	appointment. Mr. EA, a former student whom I have known for the past four years,	LoR Corpus.1
17	a few words about Mr. EKN, whom I have known for several years as my	LoR Corpus.1
18	xxx. Mr. FM, a former student whom I have known for the past three, has	LoR Corpus.1
19	admission. Mr. GM, a former student whom I have known for the past three years,	LoR Corpus.1
20	admission. Mr. JO, a former student whom I have known for the past five years,	LoR Corpus.1
21	. JO. Mr. TA, a former student whom I have known for the past three years,	LoR Corpus.1
22	about Miss ZM, a former student, whom I have known for the past six years	LoR Corpus.1
23	her. Mr PDM, a former student whom I have known for some years, has asked	LoR Corpus.1
24	him. Miss S, a former student whom I have known for the past four years,	LoR Corpus.1
25	for admission. Miss EY, a former student I have known for the past five years,	LoR Corpus.1
26	services. Mr. PKB, a former student whom I have known for the past four years,	LoR Corpus.1
27	/xxx) Miss CAS, a former student whom I have known for the past three years,	LoR Corpus.1

Figure 1: Concordance output of I have known

These patterns, with 52 occurrences in the corpus, reveal the discourse-external world relationship between the recommender and the recommendee. The recommender through this pattern does not only demonstrate his familiarity with the recommendee but also projects himself as a credible person whose testimonies about the recommendee are experience-based.⁵⁸

Furthermore, Table 2 shows that there is an explicit relationship between the recommender and the requester in the discourse-internal world but none in the discourse external. Cowan and Kasen describe this relationship as a professional one that is faceless.⁵⁹ This attachment between the two parties is shown through the 2PP as shown in LoR000x and LoR000x.

10. I believe that Mrs. RM will not disappoint, and will exceed **your** expectations.

LoR0010

11. Should you require any further information, please contact me via the above postal address and e-mail address xxx.

LoR0011

The use of 2PP for the requester demonstrates the recommender's attachment to the requester in the discourse-internal world. This rhetorical strategy enables the recommender to establish the closeness needed for interaction with the requester. It allows him to disclose information about the recommendee to assure the requester of his readiness to provide further information upon the requester's demand as evident in LoR00011. While 2PP indicates the explicit relationship between the recommendee and the requester, there are, however, no pronominal or rhetorical resources that express an explicit relationship between the two in the discourse-external world. Finally, there are no pronominal resources that reveal recommender-requester interaction in both the discourse-internal and external worlds. This kind of interaction could have been instantiated through the use of *we* and its variations such as *our*.

12. **We** were just satisfied to witness M complete the process of his induction into the academia.

LoR0012

13. M continues to be a cherished member of this department, available at a very short notice, very resourceful and creative, able to take up responsibilities in quite challenging situations, adept at using ICT for teaching, full of humour and very approachable by all, especially by **our** students, some of whom already find in him a mentor. LoR0013

⁵⁸ Larkin and Marco. "Ethics seminars: beyond authorship requirements."

⁵⁹ Cowan and Kasen, "Form of reference: Sex differences in letters of recommendation."

14. Mr. A served as a teaching assistant and a demonstrator where he assisted in the teaching of language courses to **our** undergraduate students. LoR0014

However, there was only one occurrence of *we* and two of *our* which mainly designated the recommender and his colleagues as shown in LoR0012-14. In LoR0012, for instance, *we* refer to the viva voce panel when the candidate (now the recommendee) defended his master's thesis.

Discourse Functions of PPs

It has been established that PPs are context-dependent and hence perform polypragmatic functions.⁶⁰ The researchers found in the corpus that the PPs perform four functions, which revolve around their referents identified in the corpus (i.e. recommender, recommendee and requester). The PPs employed in the corpus to enact these identities and to perform these functions are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Classification and functions of PPs in LoRs

Personal Pronouns	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Recommender-oriented PPs		
I	421	11.8
My	93	2.6
Me	57	1.6
Our	2	0.06
We	1	0.03
Total	1086	30.6
Recommendee-oriented PPs		
His	308	8.7
He	300	8.4
Her	203	5.7
She	150	4.2
Him	122	3.4
Their	3	0.08
Total	574	16.2
Requester-oriented PPs		
Your	50	1.4
You	13	0.4
Total	63	1.8
Others-oriented PPs		
Their	3	0.08
Total	3	0.08

The first three categories correspond with Jeremy et al.'s observation on the LoR that "We all write them. We all receive them. We all solicit them."⁶¹ The discourse functions of PPs can be classified into metadiscursive and non-metadiscursive, which respectively comprise recommender-oriented, recommendee-oriented and requester-oriented, and others-oriented. The metadiscursive functions concern participants that belong to the text-internal world.⁶² This affirms the assertion that LoRs are written by, for and to. The 'by', 'for' and 'to' roles are performed by the recommender, the recommendee and the requester respectively.

⁶⁰ Akoto, "Individualities in the referents of I, we, and you"; Hyland, "Humble servants of the discipline?"; Ädel, "Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English."

⁶¹ Prager, Myer III Charles M, and Pensak, "Improving the Letter of Recommendation."

⁶² Ädel, "Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English"; Hyland, "Metadiscourse: Exploring interaction in writing."

Table 3 shows that recommendee-oriented PPs are almost twice that of recommender-oriented. Some factors may have accounted for this marked difference. One, the genre is recommendee-centered⁶³ such that what is said and unsaid directly and indirectly project the recommendee to the requesters for their judgments or evaluations.⁶⁴ It is a recommendation of the recommendee; hence, their identity must be projected above all other participants. This classification consists of PPs that are related to the one about whom the LoR is written. PPs found in the corpus include *he, she, his, her*, and what we term recommendee-inclusive *their*. Further, it is noted that LoR is a genre by the recommender, about the recommendee, for the requester. Therefore, the recommendee needs to be foregrounded, and this is evidenced by the percentage of the recommendee-oriented pronouns.

The next highest category is the recommender-oriented category. This category comprises the PPs that directly designate the writer of the LoRs. They comprise first-person pronouns (1PP) such as *I, my*, and *me*. The author establishes credibility through his authorial presence, voice and stance since it is “a function associated with promotional genres and persuasion.”⁶⁵ The credibility of the recommender will be to the advantage of the recommendee. It is, therefore, in the right direction for the recommenders, after projecting the image of the recommendee, to make themselves prominent. The recommenders draw on these PPs “to add some personal experience to the discourse”.⁶⁶ The authors, through the PP *I*, established themselves, among other things as teachers/lecturers, supervisors, mentors, examiners/assessors and advisors. These roles are cast in the frequent *PP + Verb* patterns in the corpus.⁶⁷ The verbs that collocate with the 1PP manifest the explicit roles of the recommenders, or the relationship between the recommender and the recommendee.

Line	Text
405	... concepts, deep perceptiveness, and insightfulness. I also supervised his undergraduate dissertation e
406	and exposure as well as social graces. I believe that he will not disappoint. If
407	LETTER OF REFERENCE: MR. MN I have known Mr. MN since 2009/2010 academic year
408	as one of his lecturers. The courses I taught him include, LIN 203: Intermediate Phonet
409	. Besides, his moral standard is phenomenal and I am cocksure that he will do very
410	: MRS. HOA In response to your request, I should like to say a few words
411	for further studies in her alma mater. I have known H for five years as
412	I feel that she is a deserving candidate. I have known Mrs. H A as my
413	. H A as my student and supervisee. I first got to know H when she
414	in the course was below expectation as I thought she could have done better. H\
415	. A\92s qualifications and research abilities, I believe that she will not disappoint when
416	disappoint when admitted into the PhD programme. I thus highly recommend her. Yours faithfully,
417	a position as lecturer in your college. I have known him for almost ten years
418	him for almost ten years during which I have served as his lecturer and his
419	served as his lecturer and his supervisor. I can confirm that M was a very
420	both in his undergraduate and graduate studies. I was the principal supervisor for his research
421	learning needs, and prepares well before class. I believe that he will be a valuable
422	be a valuable addition to your staff. I rate him in the top 10 percent of

Figure 2: Concordance output of IPP + verb patterns

Figure 2, hits 405, 408 and 422 These project the identities of the recommenders as supervisors, teachers and examiners respectively. These authorial roles are strategic because they help strengthen the persuasiveness of the text to increase the recommendee’s chance of being considered for the offer. Recommender-oriented pronouns are, therefore, important as they evidence the author’s attachment to the recommendee, and their familiarity with the personality, traits, competencies and weaknesses of the recommendee. The recommender-oriented PPs are used to express “personal feelings, attitudes, value

⁶³ Knouse, "The letter of recommendation: Specificity and favorability of information"; Knouse, "The letter of recommendation: Writer familiarity with the recommendee."

⁶⁴ Daniel L Beskind et al., “Does the Experience of the Writer Affect the Evaluative Components on the Standardized Letter of Recommendation in Emergency Medicine?,” *The Journal of Emergency Medicine* 46, no. 4 (2014): 544–50; Palmer, “What to Say in a Letter of Recommendation? Sometimes What You Don’t Say Matters Most.”

⁶⁵ Hyland, "Humble servants of the discipline?"; Francisca Suau-Jiménez, “Closeness and Distance through the Agentive Authorial Voice: Construing Credibility in Promotional Discourse,” *International Journal of English Studies* 20, no. 1 (2020): 73–92.

⁶⁶ Ädel, "Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English."

⁶⁷ Akbas, "Commitment-detachment and authorial presence in postgraduate academic writing."

judgements, and assessments".⁶⁸ They allow recommenders to pass their judgements on the recommendee.⁶⁹

The penultimate category in terms of frequency of occurrence is the requester-oriented category. This class involves PPs that directly address the one to whom the LoR is written (e.g. educational institution, business entity/firm, scholarship body, customer, etc.). *You* and *your* were found in the corpus to be requester-oriented. As already mentioned, LoR is written by an individual, about an individual, for people (person or organization) whom Beard refers to as a narratee or a group of narratees.⁷⁰ The one for whom the LoR is written is third on the list as shown in Table 2. It is justified to have the requester appear after the recommender and recommendee. LoRs are largely about the recommendee, whose consideration, to some extent, is dependent on the credibility of the recommender. The essence of requester-oriented PPs is mainly for interaction between the recommender and the requester. Recommender-requester interaction in LoR is mediated through the PPs *you* and *your* which are employed as engagement markers,⁷¹ as shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Concordance output of you

As can be observed from Figure 3 *you* is generally used by the recommender to address the requester in anticipation of seeking further information about the recommendee. This supports Adel's finding that 'you' is sometimes used to anticipate the reader's reaction.⁷²

The final function of the PP is what is described as Others-oriented. This function is non-metadiscursive because the PPs are used to refer to people who are not one of the primary participants in the LoR. This concerns text-external participants who are referred to in the LoRs. It includes recommendee-exclusive *their*. We identified two forms of *their* in the corpus (i.e. recommendee-inclusive and recommendee-exclusive). These are exemplified by the concordance output in Figure 4.

⁶⁸Biber et al., "Longman grammar of spoken and written English".

⁶⁹Adel, "Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English."

⁷⁰ Adrian Beard, *The Language of Sport* (Psychology Press, 1998).

⁷¹ Hyland, "Metadiscourse: Exploring interaction in writing."

⁷²Adel, "Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English."

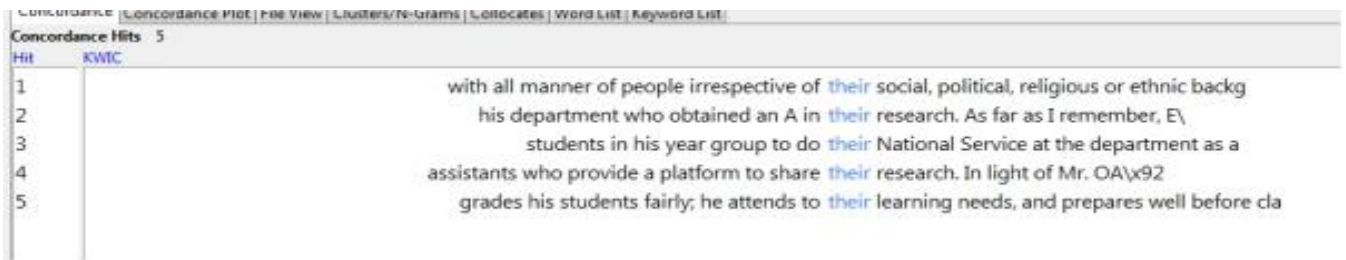


Figure 4: Concordance output of *their*

In hits 2, 3, and 4 in Figure 4, *their* included the recommendee, while in 1 and 5 *their* excluded the recommendee. However, both cases perform a rhetorical and communicative function as they both project a persuasive ethos of the recommendee. The exclusive *their* reveals the class of the recommendee and the discourse community the recommendee belongs to.

The use of singular and plural PPs

It is shown in Table 1 that plural PPs are very much limited in this genre. The high frequencies of the singular PPs (*I* and *s/he*) reveal the LoR as a highly subjective genre.⁷³ The recommender-oriented category recorded only three instances of plural pronouns. This is revealing since LoRs are written by an individual (not a group or on a group's behalf). Therefore, individual voices, stances and identities are required. The recommender thus presents what he knows about the recommendee. This is confirmed by the fifty-seven (57) *I have known...* (see Figure 5) structures in the corpus.

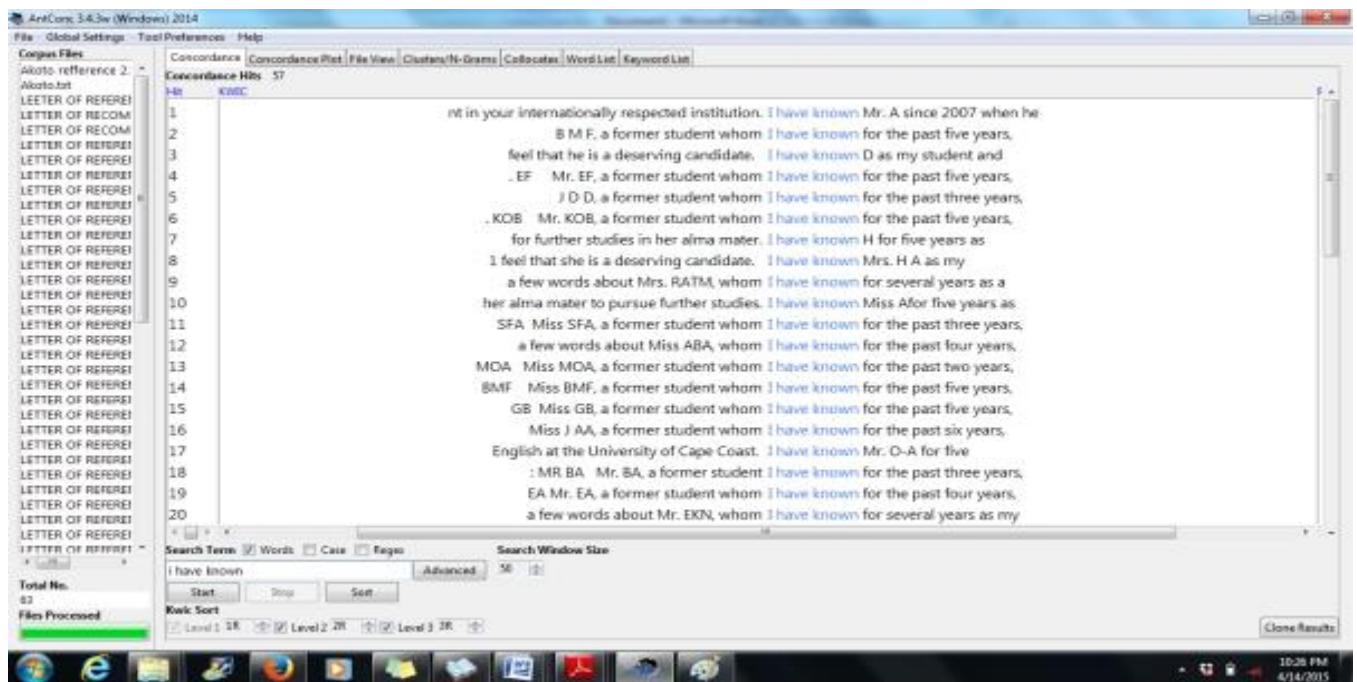


Figure 5: Concordance output of *I have known* structures

The prevalence of the singular recommender-oriented categories affirms the view that the LoR is always characterized by the first-person point of view.⁷⁴ *We* occurred once, and even that it referred to the text/discourse external world.⁷⁵

⁷³Rajesh et al. "What are we really looking for in a letter of recommendation?"

⁷⁴Schall, "Writing Recommendation Letters Online."

⁷⁵Adel, "Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English"; Hyland, "Metadiscourse: Exploring interaction in writing."

Hit	KWIC
1	of the field, and level of confidence. We were just satisfied to witness M complete

Figure 6: Concordance output of *we*

We (self-inclusive) refers to the panel at the viva voce of the recommendee. This occurred once, and in a sense, it is used to buttress the author's conviction about the competence of the recommendee. In the last paragraph of the LoR, the individual writer writes: *I highly recommend him*. This means that the recommendation is the responsibility of an individual, not a group of people. LoR writers, therefore, provide their subjective views about the personality of the recommendee. This suggests that in case of "recommendation inflation" or deflation, the recommender alone will be held liable. The prevalence of recommender-oriented pronouns demonstrates the writers' explicit manifestation of their authorial presence and their attachment and relationship with the recommendee.⁷⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study is one of the few studies on LoRs in Ghana. LoRs play crucial roles in linking academia and industry given that academics, among others, usually write LoRs for potential employees in the corporate world. It is suggested that academia and industry develop a legal framework that outlines the rights and responsibilities of the recommenders, the recommendees and the requesters. This will enable the parties to comply with such regulations and laws mindful of the socio-legal implications. Further, it is recommended that the model developed in this study be adopted to guide recommenders to ensure a balanced and realistic representation of recommendees to avoid inflating or deflating their identities in the LoRs.

CONCLUSION

The paper investigated pronominal choices in LoRs written by Ghanaian academics. As identity and engagement markers, PPs are classified as being recommender-oriented, recommendee-oriented, requester-oriented and others-oriented. The analysis revealed that PPs performed fourfold functions. For instance, *their* was seen to contextually function as recommendee-oriented or others-oriented. Further, the study has revealed that the subjective nature of LoR is evidenced by the dominance of singular recommender-oriented PPs. It demonstrates the individuality of the writer as he aims to provide his voice, stance, judgment and assessment on/of the recommendee. This shows that any positive or negative ethical or legal implications will be directed to the person, but not the group they belong to.

The study has three main implications. One, it supports the fact that prescriptive teaching of PPs is unhelpful to both teachers and learners of ESP. The findings reveal that corpus-driven teaching or data-driven learning/teaching should be employed and encouraged in the teaching of PPs as they are context-dependent.⁷⁷ Moreover, the categories of PPs in LoRs have theoretical significance. It suggests that function-based models of PPs are not conclusive and that pronominal argumentation and theorization have not ended. The theoretical implication justifies the corpus-driven approach of the study as "[. . .] the corpus-driven linguist attempts to keep in constant touch with the evidence and to build up the theory step by step in the presence of massive corpus testimony."⁷⁸ Finally, the findings point to further research on letters of recommendation from other geopolitical settings to test the reliability of the present PP categories. Hence, an intercultural study of LoR can be undertaken to ascertain how different contexts influence the use of PPs in LoR.

⁷⁶ Kasambira, "Recommendation inflation"; Akbas, "Commitment-detachment and authorial presence in postgraduate academic writing"; Sue Starfield and Louise J Ravelli, "'The Writing of This Thesis Was a Process That I Could Not Explore with the Positivistic Detachment of the Classical Sociologist': Self and Structure in New Humanities Research Theses," *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 5, no. 3 (2006): 222–43.

⁷⁷ Tim Johns, "Contexts: The Background, Development and Trialling of a Concordance-Based CALL Program," in *In Teaching and Language Corpora* (London: Routledge, 2014), 100–115.

⁷⁸ Tonini-Bonelli, "The role of corpus evidence in linguistic theory and description."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ädel, Annelie. "Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English." *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English*, 2006, 1–255.
- Afful, Joseph Benjamin Archibald. "Rhetorical Analysis of Philanthropic Fundraising Letters in a Ghanaian University ." In *Approaches to Specialized Genres*, 121–33. London: Routledge, 2020.
- Afful, Joseph Benjamin Archibald, and Emmanuel Kyei. "Move Analysis of Letters of Recommendation Written by Lecturers in a Ghanaian University." *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* 2, no. 5 (2020): 1–11.
- Akbas, Erdem. "Commitment-Detachment and Authorial Presence in Postgraduate Academic Writing: A Comparative Study of Turkish Native Speakers, Turkish Speakers of English and English Native Speakers." University of York, 2014.
- Akoto, Osei Yaw. "Geographical Markers in Church Names: A Synergy of Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Landscape Methodologies." *Onoma* 51 (2021): 213–34.
- . "Individualities in the Referents of I, We, and You in Academic Lectures across Disciplines." *Iranian Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 9, no. 4 (2020): 1–14.
- Anthony, Laurence. "AntConc (Version 3.4. 3)[Computer Software]. Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University," 2014.
- Beard, Adrian. *The Language of Sport*. Psychology Press, 1998.
- Bell, Susan E, C Suzanne Cole, and Liliane Floge. "Letters of Recommendation in Academe: Do Women and Men Write in Different Languages?" *The American Sociologist* 23 (1992): 7–22.
- Beskind, Daniel L, Katherine M Hiller, Uwe Stolz, Hans Bradshaw, Matthew Berkman, Lisa R Stoneking, Albert Fiorello, Alice Min, Chad Viscusi, and Kristi J H Grall. "Does the Experience of the Writer Affect the Evaluative Components on the Standardized Letter of Recommendation in Emergency Medicine?" *The Journal of Emergency Medicine* 46, no. 4 (2014): 544–50.
- Biber, Douglas, Stig Johansson, Geoffrey N Leech, Susan Conrad, and Edward Finegan. *Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. John Benjamins, 2021.
- Brown, Lynn L. "Fourteen Ways to Write a Better Letter of Recommendation." *Professional School Counseling* 3, no. 2 (1999): 141.
- Callahan, Daniel. "When Friendship Calls, Should Truth Answer?" *Chronicle of Higher Education* 7 (1978).
- Cowan, Gloria, and Jill H Kasen. "Form of Reference: Sex Differences in Letters of Recommendation." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 46, no. 3 (1984): 636.
- Flowerdew, John, and Tony Dudley-Evans. "Genre Analysis of Editorial Letters to International Journal Contributors." *Applied Linguistics* 23, no. 4 (2002): 463–89.
- Frank, Jane. "On Conversational Involvement by Mail: The Use of Questions in Direct Sales Letters." *Text-Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse* 9, no. 2 (1989): 231–59.
- French, Judith C, Samuel J Zolin, Erika Lampert, Alexandra Aiello, Kalman P Bencsath, Kaitlin A Ritter, Andrew T Strong, Jeremy M Lipman, Michael A Valente, and Ajita S Prabhu. "Gender and Letters of Recommendation: A Linguistic Comparison of the Impact of Gender on General Surgery Residency Applicants☆." *Journal of Surgical Education* 76, no. 4 (2019): 899–905.
- Grimm, Lars J, Rebecca A Redmond, James C Campbell, and Ashleigh S Rosette. "Gender and Racial Bias in Radiology Residency Letters of Recommendation." *Journal of the American College of Radiology* 17, no. 1 (2020): 64–71.
- Grote, Christopher L, William N Robiner, and Allyson Haut. "Disclosure of Negative Information in Letters of Recommendation: Writers' Intentions and Readers' Experiences." *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 32, no. 6 (2001): 655.
- Henry, Alex, and Robert L Roseberry. "A Narrow-Angled Corpus Analysis of Moves and Strategies of the Genre: 'Letter of Application.'" *English for Specific Purposes* 20, no. 2 (2001): 153–67.
- Hoffman, Arika, Wendy Grant, Melanie McCormick, Emily Jezewski, Praise Matemavi, and Alan Langnas. "Gendered Differences in Letters of Recommendation for Transplant Surgery Fellowship Applicants." *Journal of Surgical Education* 76, no. 2 (2019): 427–32.
- Hyland, Ken. "Humble Servants of the Discipline? Self-Mention in Research Articles." *English for Specific Purposes* 20, no. 3(January 2001):207–26.[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(00\)00012-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(00)00012-0).

- Johns, Tim. "Contexts: The Background, Development and Trialling of a Concordance-Based CALL Program." In *In Teaching and Language Corpora*, 100–115. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Kasambira, K Paul. "Recommendation Inflation." *The Teacher Educator* 20, no. 2 (1984): 26–29.
- Knouse, Stephen B. "The Letter of Recommendation: Specificity and Favorability of Information." *Personnel Psychology* 36, no. 2 (1983): 331–41.
- . "The Letter of Recommendation: Writer Familiarity with the Recommende." *Management Communication Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1988): 46–62.
- Kuncel, Nathan R, Rachael J Kochevar, and Deniz S Ones. "A Meta-analysis of Letters of Recommendation in College and Graduate Admissions: Reasons for Hope." *International Journal of Selection and Assessment* 22, no. 1 (2014): 101–7.
- Kyei, Emmanuel, and Joseph Benjamin Archibal Afful. "Schematic Structure of Letters of Recommendation Written by Lecturers of a Public University in Ghana." *Iranian Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 10, no. 2 (2021): 37–54.
- Lai, Su-Jen, and Ming-i Lydia Tseng. "Genre Analysis of Requesting Letters in Business Communication Textbooks and the Workplace." *The Asian ESP Journal Autumn Edition October 2012 Volume 8 Issue 3*, 2012, 5.
- Larkin, Gregory L, and Catherine A Marco. "Ethics Seminars: Beyond Authorship Requirements—Ethical Considerations in Writing Letters of Recommendation." *Academic Emergency Medicine* 8, no. 1 (2001): 70–73.
- Madera, Juan M, Michelle R Hebl, and Randi C Martin. "Gender and Letters of Recommendation for Academia: Agentic and Communal Differences." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 94, no. 6 (2009): 1591.
- Mémet, Monique. "Letters to the Editor: A Multi-Faceted Genre." *European Journal of English Studies* 9, no. 1 (2005): 75–90.
- Messner, Anna H, and Erika Shimahara. "Letters of Recommendation to an Otolaryngology/Head and Neck Surgery Residency Program: Their Function and the Role of Gender." *The Laryngoscope* 118, no. 8 (2008): 1335–44.
- Monfared, Abbas, and Mohammad Meisam Safarzadeh. "Where the Difference Lies: British and Iranian Rhetorical Choices in English Business Request Letters." *The Asian ESP Journal* 11, no. 2 (2015): 171–209.
- Palmer, Stacy E. "What to Say in a Letter of Recommendation? Sometimes What You Don't Say Matters Most." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 27, no. 2 (1983): 21–22.
- Prager, Jeremy D, M D Myer III Charles M, and Myles L Pensak. "Improving the Letter of Recommendation." *Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery* 143, no. 3 (2010): 327–30.
- Precht, Kristen. "A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Letters of Recommendation." *English for Specific Purposes* 17, no. 3 (1998): 241–65.
- Rajesh, Aashish, Mariela Rivera, Malke Asaad, Abhishek Chandra, Mohamed S Baloul, Courtney M Backstrom, Nizamuddin Shaikh, Rafael U deAzevedo, and David R Farley. "What Are We Really Looking for in a Letter of Recommendation?" *Journal of Surgical Education* 76, no. 6 (2019): e118–24.
- Rees, Roger. "Letters of Recommendation and the Rhetoric of Praise ." In *In Ancient Letters. Classical and Late Antique Epistolography*, 149–68. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Römer, Ute. "Progressives, Patterns, Pedagogy." *Progressives, Patterns, Pedagogy*, 2005, 1–342.
- Sadeghi, Vahid, and Moses Samuel. "Genre Analysis of the Letters of Appeal." *Discourse Studies* 15, no. 2 (2013): 229–45.
- Santos, V B M Pinto Dos. "Genre Analysis of Business Letters of Negotiation." *English for Specific Purposes* 21, no. 2 (2002): 167–99.
- Schall, Joe. *Writing Recommendation Letters Online: A Faculty Handbook*. Penn State College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, 2010.
- Schmader, Toni, Jessica Whitehead, and Vicki H Wysocki. "A Linguistic Comparison of Letters of Recommendation for Male and Female Chemistry and Biochemistry Job Applicants." *Sex Roles* 57, no. 7 (2007): 509–14.
- Schneider, Alison. "Why You Can't Trust Letters of Recommendation." *Chronicle of Higher Education*

46, no. 43 (2000).

- Sinclair, JOHN. "Current Issues in Corpus Linguistics." *R. Rossini Favretti. Linguistica e Informatica. Corpora, Multimedialità e Percorsi Di Apprendimento. Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 2000, 29–38.*
- Starfield, Sue, and Louise J Ravelli. "'The Writing of This Thesis Was a Process That I Could Not Explore with the Positivist Detachment of the Classical Sociologist': Self and Structure in New Humanities Research Theses." *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 5, no. 3 (2006): 222–43.
- Suau-Jiménez, Francisca. "Closeness and Distance through the Agentive Authorial Voice: Construing Credibility in Promotional Discourse." *International Journal of English Studies* 20, no.1(2020):73–92.
- Swales, John M, and Christine B Feak. *English in Today's Research World: A Writing Guide*. University of Michigan Press, 2000.
- Tang, Ramona, and Suganthi John. "The 'I' in Identity: Exploring Writer Identity in Student Academic Writing through the First Person Pronoun." *English for Specific Purposes* 18 (1999): S23–39.
- Tognini-Bonelli, Elena. "The Role of Corpus Evidence in Linguistic Theory and Description." University of Birmingham, 1996.
- Tomlinson, Elizabeth, and Sara Newman. "Epideictic Rhetoric Born Digital: Evolution of the Letter of Recommendation Genre." *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 32, no. 1 (2018): 3–37.
- Trix, Frances, and Carolyn Psenka. "Exploring the Color of Glass: Letters of Recommendation for Female and Male Medical Faculty." *Discourse & Society* 14, no. 2 (2003): 191–220.
- Upton, Thomas A. "Understanding Direct Mail Letters as a Genre." *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 7, no. 1 (2002): 65–85.
- Upton, Thomas A, and Mary Ann Cohen. "An Approach to Corpus-Based Discourse Analysis: The Move Analysis as Example." *Discourse Studies* 11, no. 5 (2009): 585–605.
- Wales, Katie. *Personal Pronouns in Present-Day English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Yoshioka, Takeshi, George Herman, JoAnne Yates, and Wanda Orlikowski. "Genre Taxonomy: A Knowledge Repository of Communicative Actions." *ACM Transactions on Information Systems (TOIS)* 19, no. 4 (2001): 431–56.
- Zhang, Baoya, Quyen Bui Thi Thuc, and Issra Pramoolsook. "Moves and Linguistic Realizations: English Research Article." *The Asian ESP Journal Autumn Edition October Volume 8 Issue 3*(2012).

ABOUT AUTHORS

Osei Yaw Akoto (PhD) is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana. He teaches courses in English for Academic Purposes, Sociolinguistics, Discourse Studies, and Pragmatics. His research interests include Linguistic Landscape, Onomastics, Corpus Linguistics, and ESP. He is the Founding President of Ghana Name Society. He has published articles in high-ranking journals such as *Onoma*, *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *Corpus Pragmatics*, and *Linguistic Landscape*.

Benjamin Amoakohene (PhD) is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of General and Liberal Studies of the University of Health and Allied Sciences, where he teaches Academic and Communicative Skills. He had his terminal degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. He has had the privilege to serve as the Examination Officer and the Head of Department at the Department of General and Liberal Studies of the University of Health and Allied Sciences at different times. His areas of research are Genre Studies, Discourse Analysis and Sociolinguistics. He is a member of the Systemic Functional Linguistics Group, Ghana, and Linguistic Association of Ghana.

Juliet Oppong-Asare Ansah is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Language and Communication Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana. Master of Philosophy in Ghanaian Language. Currently, she is a PhD candidate in Linguistics at the University of Ghana. She teaches Semantics, Aesthetics of Oral Literature, Translation, Creative Writing, Pragmatics, and Akan Written Expression. Her research focuses on Ethnographic Linguistics, Diachronic Studies, Semantics and its interfaces, Language Contact and Translation Studies.