Sentence-Initial This and These in Academic Prose

Bu ve *Bunlar* Sözcüklerinin Akademik Yazında Adıl ve Belirteç Olarak Kullanımı

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Abstract

This corpus-based exploratory study investigates the use of sentence-initial (SI) *this* and *these* as pronouns and determiners in a corpus of research articles (RAs) by American writers and MA theses by novice Turkish academic writers in the field of Applied Linguistics. The study reveals that authors use sentence-initial *this* and *these* both as pronouns (unattended) and determiners (attended). Contrary to expectations, prescriptions of style manuals and guide-books, overall both groups used sentence-initial *this* and *these* as pronouns and determiners, yet with lower ratios than previous studies. The findings indicate a close relationship between the writers' educational background, their field of study, and their employment of SI *this* and *these* as pronouns. The findings are discussed with reference to the relevant literature. The knowledge gained from this study can contribute to our understanding of the uses and purposes of these structures in academic prose.

Keywords: Academic writing, sentence initial this, these, pronoun, determiner

Öz

Bütünce temelli bu çalışmada uygulamalı dilbilim alanında Amerikalı yazarlar tarafından yazılan akademik makaleler ile aynı alanında deneyimsiz Türk akademisyenler tarafından yazılmış olan yüksek lisans tezlerinde *bu* ve *bunlar* sözcüklerinin cümle başında adıl ve belirteç olarak kullanımları incelenmiştir. Akademik yazım kılavuzlarının yönergelerinde önerilenin aksine genel olarak her iki gruptaki yazarların bu sözcükleri cümle başında hem adıl hem de belirteç olarak kullandıkları saptanmıştır. Bu bulgular ilgili alanyazın doğrultusunda sunulmuştur. Bu çalışmadan elde edilen bulguların, hedef dilde akademik makale yazanların ve bu alanda eğitim verenlerin akademik yazılarda belirteç ve adıl olarak "this" ve "these" kullanımı ile ilgili farkındalıklarının artmasına ve hedef dilin anadili konuşucusu olmayan tecrübesiz yazarların daha anlaşılır metinler üretmelerine katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Akademik yazın, bu, bunlar, adıl, belirteç

Introduction

The widespread use of the anaphoric *this* and *these* is already well-documented in academic prose. This finding is particularly so in the case of the anaphoric *this* (Hyland, 2000; Swales, 2005; Wulff, Romer, & Swales, 2012). *This* occupies the fifteenth place among the most common words, while *these* is the thirty-second most frequent word in Hyland's corpus of 240 articles (Hyland, 2000). The importance of such common use of these two anaphoric references could well be underlined given their contribution to 'text cohesion' (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) and 'text comprehensibility and readability' (Amaral, 1985; Kossowska, 2004). Yet, the use of these two ubiquitous terms is not without problems, both as a demonstrative determiner and as a demonstrative pronoun. This is especially true for sentence-initial (SI) *this* and *these* as demonstrative pronouns due to their "potential ambiguity" (Swales, 2005, p.2).

On top of the imprecise nature of SI demonstrative pronouns, henceforth unattended *this* and *these* (Geisler, Kaufer, & Steinberg, 1985)-, what is even more confusing and therefore disheartening for novice academic writers, especially for non-native English speaking academic ones, is the contentious nature of the advice given by style guides and manuals and contradictory research findings on their use, which academic writers have no choice but to increasingly rely on. Calling what has been said about whether to follow this with a noun phrase as "a curiously muted academic and pedagogical history", Wulff, Römer and Swales (2012, p. 131) trace the root of the issue as far back as Strunck and White's (2000) injunction against using needless swords.

From a stylistic standpoint, the use of SI unattended *this* and *these* has largely been

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discouraged because of their ambiguous nature (Steinberg, Kaufer, & Geisler, 1984; Strunk & White, 2000; APA, 2001; Lunsford, 2003; Markel, 2004; Johnson-Sheehan, 2005; Raman & Sharma, 2005; Riordan, 2005; Woolever, 2005; Faigley, 2006; Pfeiffer & Adkins, 2010). The main reasoning behind this prescription stems from the fact that SI unattended *this* and *these* could easily lead to ambiguous reference. Two of the proponents of this view, Strunk & White (2000, p. 61), for example, underline that SI unattended *this* refers "to the complete sense of the preceding sentence or clause" and "may produce an imprecise statement". Using demonstratives referring to something other than a nominal antecedent- labeled as 'broad reference' (Moskovit, 1983) or 'vague-reference (Roberts, 1952)-disrupts clarity and confuses the reader (Gray, 2010). Seeing the overuse of SI unattended *this* as the main cause of "short, choppy, and disjoined sentences", Raman and Sharma (2005, p. 190) contend that such writing is "jerky and irritating-a feature of elementary writing". To minimize such potential ambiguity and create professional impression on their readers, Swales & Feak (2000, 2004) recommend that non-native speakers of English avoid using SI unattended *this* in academic writing. In a similar vein, Raman and Sharma (2005) advised against using unclear pronoun references to avoid responsibility (p. 204).

A handful of researches have been conducted on attended and unattended *this* and *these*. In one of these studies, Swales (2005) found that academic writers from eight research fields employed about 25% to 50% of SI *this*, serving as pronominal uses in their articles. In a more recent study on the same issue, Gray and Cortes (2011) also showed that academic writers from the fields of Applied Linguistics and Materials and Civil Engineering used both attended and unattended *this* with pronominal uses, constituting one-fifth of all occurrences. In their study on 'shell' nouns as cohesive devices, Aktaş and Cortes (2008) draw our attention to two important aspects of use of them: first and foremost, they have underlined that SI *this* and *these* pattern was used to create inter-sentential cohesion. Besides, it was employed by expert writers and surprisingly by novice writers-students as well. As these studies indicate, pronominal uses of *this* and *these* constitute a substantial amount of academic texts. In another study, Charles (2003) investigated SI *this* which is used to express epistemic and attitudinal stance. Concentrating mainly on the stance-expressing functions of nouns following SI *this* and *these*, Charles (2003) has underlined that nouns following SI *this* and *these* give writers the opportunity to express their own stance towards propositions in hand, to organize their texts, and how to interpret the text. Looking at the issue from the reader's perspective, Biber et al., (1999) emphasize that writers can modify noun phrases more by using demonstratives as determiners, which in return will lead to more clarity and more information.

Those adopting the opposite stance on the use of SI unattended *this* and *these* argue that prescriptive approaches to writing are mostly based on incomplete research and institutionally held beliefs about what good writing is (Gray & Cortes, 2011). In their study on the relationship between features of cohesion and expert reader judgments of persuasive writing quality, Witte and Faigley (1981) found that high quality essays included more cohesive devices, including unattended demonstratives, than low quality ones. Similarly, in their study on discourse cohesion in reading and writing, Crossly et al. (2016) discovered that unattended demonstratives are positively associated with greater essay quality, while unattended demonstratives serving as anaphoric references are disadvantageous to both reading time and referent identification. Yet in another study with a similar scope, McCulley (1985) has drawn attention to the relationship between human judgments of persuasive writing and overall cohesion, underlying the finding that the total number of cohesive devices in an essay indicated essay quality. In addition to the contribution of cohesive devices to essay quality, some researchers hypothesized that unattended demonstratives would be processed more quickly than attended demonstratives, basing their claim on studies (See Anderson et al., 1983; Ehrlich &

Rayner, 1983; Hudson et al., 1986; Kossowska, 2004), which showed that cohesive devices lead to faster text processing.

As has been underlined, few studies have been conducted on the use of SI attended and unattended *this* and *these* and their functions in academic prose. Yet, we have almost no study on the purposes and benefits of using SI unattended *this* and *these* but for Swales (2005) and Boettger and Wulff (2014). Swales (2005, p. 13) explains that SI unattended *this* can be associated with main verbs that "are syntactically and semantically simple." Looking at the use of (un)attended *this* and *these* in academic writing and novice writing from a functionalist perspective, Boettger and Wulff (2014) found that (un)attended *this* and *these* were used for two important rhetorical purposes: summarizing and commenting on previous statements. What Boettger and Wulff (2014) underline is the fact that the use of (un)attended *this* and *these* is a neither coincidental nor random. Rather it requires real engagement in thought processes when deciding whether to follow a demonstrative with a noun. In short, it seems that the source of this dilemma emanates from the competing demands of economy and clarity in academic prose (Geisler et al., 1985), which spotlights the view that stylistics, rhetoric or even information-processing are to decide whether to use (un)attended determiner, not just grammarians (Wulff et al. 2012).

As we have seen, there are very few studies on the use of SI (un)attended *this* and *these* in academic writing. Even scarcer is the number of research on the use of SI (un)attended *this* and *these* by novice writers. In a similar vein, studies on the use of SI (un)attended *this* and *these* by novice Turkish academic writers have yet to be conducted. Driven by this apparent need, this study aims to investigate the use of SI (un)attended *this* and *these* in RAs by AWs (American writers) and MA theses by NWs (novice writers). Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How frequently do AWs and NWs in the discipline of applied linguistics use SI *this* and *these* as demonstratives and pronouns?

2. What are the frequently occurring linguistic contexts of SI *this* and *these* as pronouns, including the types of nouns and verbs that follow the pronominal use of SI *this* and *these*?

By answering these two specific questions on the use of SI *this* and *these* by writers from two culturally diverse backgrounds, belonging to the same global discourse community, this study sets out to deepen our knowledge of this issue.

Methodology

The Corpus

This corpus-based qualitative and quantitative study aims to investigate the use of SI attended and unattended *this* and *these* in research articles by AWs and MAs theses by NWs. The corpora consist of 50 research articles (RAs) by AWs, published in well-known journals between 2005 and 2015, and 50 MA theses by NWs from the field of Applied Linguistics. Initially, a corpus of 100 RAs published by AWs in reputable journals was collected. Factors such as the journals' reputation, impact factor and online availability were considered when choosing them. Then, the articles by multi-authored ones were excluded. 50 RAs were randomly chosen from the remaining 80 articles: 4 articles from Applied Linguistics, 5 articles from Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 3 articles from Journal of English for Specific Purposes, 7 articles from Journal of Second Language Writing, 3 articles from Journal of Pragmatics, 15 articles from TESOL QUARTERLY, and 13 articles from Written Communication. Authors' names and surnames, location of their present institutions, the bio information in their articles, and the information in their CVs were taken into consideration while constructing the corpus. A similar path was followed in forming the NWs corpus; MA

theses by NWs. The non-native English speaker writer corpus was compiled from NWs' MA theses to be able to see the impact of learning English consciously in a formal setting on their language use as implied by Boettger and Wulff (2014).

After downloading 100 MA theses in the field of Applied Linguistics from the official website of Turkish Council of Higher Education Thesis Center, only one MA thesis from the same university was chosen. MA theses which native speaking English teachers served as thesis advisors were also excluded. Finally, 50 MA theses were randomly chosen from the remaining 70 MA theses to form the NWs corpus.

Data Coding

All the articles and MA theses were first converted to word files by using AntFileConverter, a freeware tool to convert PDF and Word (DOCX) files into plain text for use in corpus tools like AntConc (Anthony, 2006). Then table of contents, charts, figures, footnotes, tables, acknowledgements, and references were removed. The data collection began with a case-insensitive search of all attestations of *this* and *these* using AntConc, a freeware, multiplatform tool for conducting corpus linguistics research (Anthony, 2011). Table 1 below shows the composition of the corpus.

Table 1: Corpus composition

	Number of texts	Number of words
Articles by AWs	50	467.394
MA theses by NWs	50	1.578.216
Total	100	

As both corpora consisted of unequal number of words, frequencies of SI *this and these* were normalized by 100.000 to make quantitative comparisons. The normalized number of occurrence of *this* is 61.4, and the normalized number of occurrence for *these* is 30.7 in AWs' corpus. When it comes to MA thesis corpus, the normalized numbers are lower. The normalized numbers of occurrence are 48.7 and 20.7 for *this* and *these*, respectively in MA thesis corpus. Two points merit attention here. For one thing, AWs employed more SI unattended *this* and *these* than NWs. For another, both groups used *this* twice more than *these*.

After the normalization process, all instances of SI *this* and *these* were identified and located in the two corpora by using concordance software from AntConc, a freeware, multiplatform tool for conducting corpus linguistics research (Anthony, 2011). Then they were retrieved from both corpora and examined in their context to make sure that they were SI pronoun or determiner. Only SI *this* and *these* acting as agents were considered, excluding all the other instances of *this* and *these* in sentence-medial/final positions. Instances of *this* and *these* that were not written by the author of the text, such as examples from other texts or reported dialog, were also excluded from the analysis. Then all occurrences of *this* and *these* were coded either as a pronoun or a determiner and their frequencies were calculated. Their percentages were then calculated based on the total number of their occurrences. Pronominal instances of *this* and *these* were further analyzed for their grammatical role in the sentence, excluding uses of *this/ these* as determiners. The antecedents of the remaining SI *this* and *these* were analyzed through close reading of the preceding discourse. The verb phrase of each *this* and *these* that serve as the subject was also identified and coded as copular or non-copular/lexical, since "copular verb acts as a sort of mental equal sign linking what comes before and after the verb" (Gray &Cortes, 2011, p.37). The major syntactic patterns that were used with copular verbs were also analyzed, as well as the major semantic categories of frequent lexical verbs.

Antecedents

Once the pronominal uses of SI *this* and *these* were identified, their antecedents were determined following Gray's (2010) *Taxonomy of Antecedents Types* through reading closely the preceding discourse. Gray (2010) divides the preceding discourse as global vs local discourse. She then classifies antecedents as local discourse "if a specific segment of text could be identified as the antecedent and that text did not span sentence boundaries" (p. 173), as in the following example.

(Ex 1)

Reviewers should take the time (albeit already generously donated) to compose well-considered, constructively critical, collegial reviews, even of papers that appear unlikely ever to be accepted. This does not mean (as noted above) that reviewers should offer false hope, but… (AWs 2)

Gray (2010), on the other hand, considers "antecedents as global discourse units of the preceding text if a specific segment of text could be identified, and that segment of text encompassed multiple sentences or crossed sentence boundaries" (p.173), as in example 2.

(Ex 2)

…There was no main effect of topos on overall evaluation scores: $F(3, 8) = 2.6$, $p = .12$. There was also no significant effect of topos choice on grade earned on papers: $F(3, 8) = 1.1$, $p = .387$. This may mean that the student writers whose papers the TAs graded highly did not gravitate toward what could be considered a more sophisticated and harder to execute topos, the paradigm topos, or… (AWs 49)

Following Gray's (2010) *Taxonomy of Antecedents Types,* the researcher himself identified and coded all the antecedents of pronominal uses of SI initial *this* and *these* in the corpus. An experienced lecturer with a PhD in ELT was consulted in instances when the writer was not completely sure. After this laborious process, statistical computations were performed and the results were tabulated as seen below.

Results and discussion

Frequencies of SI *this* and *these* as determiners and pronouns

A total of 2874 *this* and 1436 *these* were identified in AWs' corpus. On the contrary, a total of 7656 *this* and 3163 *these* were found in NWs' corpus. Then only SI *this* and *these* were chosen, excluding all the others. The results reported here, in connection with our first research question, displayed both slight differences and similarities between the two corpora. Out of the total data sample of 2874 hits, 235 (8%) were instances of SI unattended *this* by AWs. Out of 1436 hits of *these*, 32 (0.02%) were instances of SI unattended *these* by the same group. A similar distribution was seen in NWs' corpus. 829 (10.8%) of SI *this* out of 7696 and 128 (0.04%) of SI *these* out of 3163 were found in NWs' corpus. As we have seen, AWs employed SI *this* and *these* as pronouns more than NWs. Yet, only 30% of them chose to use them as pronouns. In contrast to AWs, more than 86% of NWs employed them as pronouns. This interesting finding reminds us Wulff et al.'s suggestion that writers should make informed choices by taking into account stylistics, rhetoric or even information-processing when deciding whether to use (un)attended determiner, not just grammarians (Wulff et al. 2012). The findings has also revealed that, contrary to prescriptive rules, pronominal *this* and *these* does appear in AWs' corpus of research articles and in NW's thesis corpus.

Table 2: Frequency of occurrence of (un)attended *this* and *these*

		AWs		NWs	
		#	%	#	%
This	Attended	2639	91.8	6827	89.1
	Unattended	235	8.1	829	10.8
	Total	2874		7656	
	Attended	1414	98.4	3035	95.9

These	Unattended	22	0.01	128	4.5
	Total	1436		3163	

Overall, as seen in Table 2, SI *this* occurs as a pronoun 8.1% to 10.8% of the time in the corpora. This percentage is even lower when it comes to the use of SI unattended *these*. This finding diverges from previous findings from other studies on (un)attended *this* and *these*. For example, while 25% to 56% of all SI *this* constituted pronominal use in Swales' (2005) study, 35% and 34% of SI *this* and *these* were used as pronoun in Gray's (2006) study. This variation seems to be closely related to the writers' fields of study and area of expertise and "author-related variables like academic discipline, academic proficiency level, native speaker status, and gender" (Wulff et. at., 2012, p. 129).

In AWs' corpus, 91.8% of the occurrences of SI *this* was used as a determiner while 8.1 % of the instances constitute pronominal use. The distribution is similar in the use of *these*; with 98.4% of them as determiner and the rest, 2.5%, as a pronoun. When it comes to NWs' employment of them, we see a slightly dissimilar distribution. NWs used 10.8% of SI *this* as a pronoun and 95.9% of them as a determiner. In a similar way, they used 4.5% of SI *these* as a pronoun and 72.2% of them as a determiner. This overall finding that both corpora included SI *this* and *these* as pronouns seems to constitute a mismatch between prescriptive guidelines and actual language use and yields support to the conclusion of previous research that underlines the common practice that actual language use challenges prescriptive guidelines (See, Gray, 2010; Gray & Cortes, 2011; Swales, 2005).

The finding that pronominal use of SI *this* and *these* constitute one-tenth of all SI occurrences of *this* and *these* reminds us Gray and Cortes' (2011) observation that pronominal uses are not random instances of going against prescriptive rules and guidelines but rather there are good "reasons as to why and how pronominal this and these are employed" (p. 37).

Yet, the findings of this study also differ from the previous ones in that the percentages of SI unattended *this* and *these*, especially the percentage of SI *these* is quite low. These lower percentages seem to be related to the area of research and with the writers' area of expertise. Unlike writers of the corpus in other studies, the writers of this corpus are experts in Applied Linguistics. They are writers of English textbooks and course-books. It is my belief that as experts, English textbook writers, prominent researchers and academics in ESL/EFL, these writers paid particular attention to and showed conscientiousness in their use of SI *this* and *these* as pronouns. Similarly, NWs whose MA theses were analysed in this study are people with a few years of English study background. As learning English as a foreign language in a formal setting in Turkey is mostly an explicit and conscious process, it is highly probable that NWs have been offered prescriptive instruction on this issue. In other words, what distinguishes these writers is the fact that English is both a means and a goal for them, whereas English was only the means for the writers whose academic prose was investigated in the previous studies. A closer look at the linguistic surrounding and functional description of pronominal uses of SI *this* and *these* is hoped to further explain these two phenomena.

Pronominal uses of SI *this* and *these*

The contexts in which SI *this* and *these* occurred were analyzed to identify the verb patterns they occurred in. These verb patterns were divided between copular and non-copular/lexical verbs, paying attention to their function of linking characteristics or attributes with the subject.

Table 3: Distribution of copular vs. non-copular verb patterns

	SI this				SI these			
	Copular verbs		Non-copular verbs		Copular verbs		Non-copular verbs	
	Raw	%	Raw	%	Raw	%	Raw	%

	frequency		frequency		frequency		frequency	
AWs	118	50.2	117	49.9	9	40.9	13	59
NWs	279	33.6	550	66.3	70	54.6	58	45.3

The analysis of verb types reveals that more than 40% of all pronominal instances of *this* and more than 50% of *these* by AWs are followed by a copular verb. These percentages are a bit lower when it comes to NWs' corpus. The ratios of AWs' use of copular be after unattended *this* and *these* are in line with the findings of previous studies. In her study on the use of demonstrative pronouns and determiners as cohesive devices, Gray (2010) found that 38% of all SI unattended *this* in her corpora was followed by copular verb *be* while *this* percentage was 61% when it comes to SI unattended *these*. In addition to the copular verb 'be', two other copular verbs 'seem' and 'appear' were found in both corpora, with copular verb *be* with any frequency, as seen in example 3 below.

(Ex 3)

…But, there are certain differences between speaking and writing. Although a speaker can make use of gestures, body language, tone of voice, or he can convey his message by repeating, hesitating, starting again, and so on. , **this** *is* not the case in writing… (NW 4)

6 lexical verbs appear five or more times in AWs' corpus (*include, indicate, mean, seem, show*, and *suggest*), with the verb *mean* having the highest frequency of appearance. NWs' corpus, on the other hand, includes 8 lexical verbs, which appear five or more times 'affect', 'happen', 'indicate', 'occur', 'mean', 'result', 'show', and 'suggest'. What is striking about the use of these lexical verbs is that the verb *mean*, which has the highest frequency of usage in both corpora, has almost always been used to explain, elaborate or comment on the issue in question as seen below.

(Ex 4)

…In order to help language learners acquire standard, polite and universal English, Li (1984) argues that language learners should be exposed to 'Authentic Language' of English. **This** *means* that to teach successful communication learners should deal with authentic materials, so… (NW 12)

Three main syntactic patterns were used with copular verbs (See Table 4): a copular followed by a word indicating an explanation that follows (be + because, e.g., 'This is because X' or 'This is due to X' or 'This may be due to X', or 'This might be due to X'), a copular verb followed by an adjective (be+ adj.), and all other patterns (other be, copular verb followed by a noun or noun phrase).

The distribution of be+ because, be+ adjective, and be+ other merits our attention because of the similar distribution of them between the two corpora. As seen in Table 4 below, one-tenth of all copular verbs in AWs' corpus are of the syntactic pattern be+ because and almost one-fifth of them are of the syntactic pattern be +adjective, this ratio is very similar in NWs' corpus. In both corpora, the be+ because syntactic pattern, together with be+ due to, was employed mainly to make an (additional) explanation, mostly about findings of studies in question as in example 3.

(Ex 5)

 …it is true that some language minority students may not yet be able to understand instruction and perform all tasks in grade-level classrooms using English alone, but **this** *is because* they have yet to develop the English language proficiency necessary to do so… (AW 8)

As Gray (2010) underlines, this syntactic pattern is an integral part of academic prose, which inherently sets out to the causes of observed phenomena in question.

Table 4: Distribution of copular verb patterns following SI *this/these*

	Be + because	Be + adjective	Other be	Total

	Raw frequency	%	Raw frequency	%	Raw frequency	%	
AWs	10	7.8	22	17.3	95	74.8	127
NWs	33	9.4	68	19.4	248	71	349

Another syntactic pattern displaying similarity is be+ adjective. As seen in table 4, both groups employed this pattern to comment on, evaluate, or express their stance towards the antecedent as seen in example 4.

(Ex 6)

…It is also interesting to note that the function of mitigating face threats, while an infrequently occurring function of well in conversations, is completely absent in the interviews. This is a *logical result*, as one expects fewer face threats in more structured interactions between relative strangers (such as interviews)… (AW 20).

As seen in this example, the writer expresses his/her own stance towards the issue in question by describing it with "logical". Other adjectives with a considerable frequency of usage are 'surprising', 'true', 'understandable', 'important', 'significant,' and 'unexpected'.

Antecedents in Pronominal *this* and *these*[SEP]

When it comes to the antecedents of the pronominal use of SI *this* and *these*, we see variations between the groups. Overall, the antecedents of pronominal uses of *this* and *these* were mostly longer stretches of discourse rather than a simple noun phrase in NW's corpus as in example 7, whereas a balanced distribution was seen in AW's corpus.

(Ex 7)

…To summarize, If text coverage is related to the strands of learning from meaning focused input and fluency development, then learners would need to have 95% coverage for learning from meaning-focused input, and 98-100% coverage for fluency development. This means that learners need to have simplified learning material of various levels in order to learn from meaning-focused input and to develop fluency in reading if they are to learn from these strands at all stages of their second language development….(NWs 30)

As seen in this example, the antecedent of SI this spans sentence boundary, referring to more than one clause. In other words, a substantial number of SI *this* by NWs refer to global discourse, spanning sentence boundaries, which causes ambiguity as in example 8.

(Ex 8)

…The scheme was established in its present form in 1996 with the coming together of separate quality assurance schemes for private and state sector providers which had been set up under the auspices of the British Council in the early 1980s. The aim of the scheme is to protect international students who are studying or planning to study English language in the UK. This is achieved by external inspection, ensuring that providers that are accredited through the scheme meet agreed quality standards. …

The underlying cause of adopting this pattern seems to be related to English language proficiency of NWs. It seems that NWs employed pronominal use of SI *this* and *these* mostly because it is "difficult to find a single noun to encompass the meaning of the prior discourse" (Gray, 2010, p. 179). Such cases were infrequently seen in NW's corpus.

Conclusion

This corpus-based explanatory study has aimed to investigate the employment of SI *this* and *these* as pronouns in a corpus of research articles by AWs and MA theses by NWs in the field of Applied Linguistics. This investigation has shown that although the use of SI *this* and *these* as a determiner is more frequent than their use as a pronoun, pronominal employment of them also constitute an important portion—one-tenth of the total use of these words. This investigation has also revealed several important trends about the use of SI *this* and *these* as

pronouns and the linguistic contexts of the pronominal use of SI *this* and *these*. First of all, the percentages of the pronominal use of SI *this* and *these* are lower than the percentages reported in previous studies. The study has also indicated that the choice of SI *this* and *these* as pronoun or determiner seems to be partly dependent on the type of antecedents and choice of the accompanying verb. The two most common verbs, *be* and *mean,* were employed mainly to comment on, evaluate, interpret, or discuss the issue at hand. It has also shown that pronominal uses of SI *this* and *these* most overwhelmingly refer to antecedents that are complete clauses in AWs' corpus. However, a substantial number of SI *this* by NWs refers to extended discourse, spanning local discourse, which causes ambiguity.

Although the groups displayed differing frequencies of SI *this* and *these* as pronouns, copular verb, and lexical verbs following SI pronominal *this* and *these*, the findings draw our attention to the actual practice that both experienced and novice published writers have reasons to employ pronominal uses of SI *this* and *these*. Hovever, while we can confidently say that the use of SI *this* for pronominal purposes is a common practice for NWs, it is a matter of a choice for AWs. This generalization underline the close relationship between the writers' educational background and their employment of these two structures.

Pedagogical implications

Sytnhesizing the ambigious and contentious remarks about the use of SI *this* and *these* in the literature are synthesized with the findings of this sudy underlines the need to address this issue in advanced and academic writing and in EAP courses, both at undergraduate and graduate levels. Given that both BA and MA students in Turkey are not offered enough opportunities to study these kinds of issues, these young academics' needs should be given due consideration. In these courses, students could be sensitized to the use of SI *this* and *these* and their functions through pedagogical tasks. In such tasks, student research can be encouraged and supported through activities that can encourage them to explore and reflect on their own writing and the writing practices of others, so that they can make informed choices. In academic and advanced writing courses, students' consciousness could be raised on key structures and their associated functions as identified in the present study, such as pronominal use of SI *this*/*these* + be + adj as a way of indicating stance/evaluation, or *this*/*these* + be + because/due to offer explanations and interpretation. In addition to advanced and academic writing courses, materials designers and coursebook writers could accept their fair share of this responsibility and help raise novice writers' consciousness on the use of SI inintial *this* and *these* as a determiner and pronoun.

This corpus-based study investigated the use of SI *this* and *these* as pronouns by AWs and NWs and has provided detailed information about the lexico-grammatical patterns of them. So the findings reported here reflect only the practices identified in this particular corpus and enabled us to only scratch the surface, leaving it to be breached. Therefore, we need more data to breach the use of SI *this* and *these* in academic prose to make broad generalizations. Further studies with more data are needed to fully grasp such a complex issue. One avenue for further research might be to investigate the use of *this* and *these* as pronouns and determiners by experienced Turkish writers both in Turkish and English. Also the use of *this* and *these* as pronouns and determiners in other fields other than applied linguistics might be investigated. Finally, the use of *this* and *these* in academic prose by writers from diverse educational and cultural backgrounds could be scrutinized in order to deepen our understanding of the possible impact of educational background and English proficiency level.

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