Studii de lingvistică 7, 2017, 207 - 227

Interactive practices and identity construction in W. Wordsworth's "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800): a historical pragmatic scrutiny

Daniela Francesca Virdis[1]

Abstract: This article analyses the linguistic practices utilised by W. Wordsworth in the "Preface" to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) in order to construct his own identity as an innovative writer and his interaction with his reader. Within the aims and scope of the new discipline of historical pragmatics, the "Preface" is examined as a dialogic text and several interactive strategies it features are identified and investigated. This historical pragmatic scrutiny demonstrates that these dialogic devices represent the figure of the writer as authoritative and persuasive. Moreover, they also lead his addressee to share the writer's viewpoint on Romantic poetry and language by means of positive politeness building a common context directly involving the reader.

Key words: historical pragmatics, identity construction, interactivity and dialogic practices in non-fictional prose, Late Modern non-fictional discourse, "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800).

1. "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* as an interactive text: introduction and objectives[2]

In "Preface" to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), W. Wordsworth theorises and describes the linguistic features of English Romantic poetry: in short, "fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation"[3]. He thereby consciously creates and codifies an innovative poetic language against the background of the conventional poetry of the same period. An articulate system of dialogic strategies in the text reveals the writer's

[1] University of Cagliari; dfvirdis@unica.it.
[2] I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of this article for their invaluable comments and advice. All remaining shortcomings are mine.
[3] All quotations from "Preface" are from Wordsworth (2005 [1800]), a Project Gutenberg online version.

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

awareness of both his own identity and his interaction with his reader. Actually, when scrutinised within the theoretical framework of academic discourse as an instance of historical professional writing, the text shows a continuum between the two extremes of conventionality, or accountability to disciplinary rules and genre practices, and individuality, here the interactive traits expressing the writer's identity and his relation with his reader (Hyland 2000, Gotti 2009, Hyland 2012).

The investigation in this article falls within the aims and scope of historical pragmatics, *i.e.* written discourse is considered as communicative and social involvement. The model provided by this discipline presupposes interactivity between the writer/speaker and the reader/hearer which, in turn, presupposes the presence of both of them in the text. These participants are present not only at a discursive level as the addresser and the addressee of a written or spoken text, but also at a textual level, where their presence and identity, particularly the addresser's, are conveyed by a number of linguistic practices and markers (see below). In identity studies and socio-cultural linguistics, identity is defined as the positioning of self and other in society. Linguistic exchange shapes it as an intersubjective phenomenon with distinct and articulate aspects. Culture, society and the interpersonal relationships of a single member of a social class or group consistently construct that member's identity; hence, it is regarded as an accomplishment changing in discourse and emerging in communication and interaction (Bucholtz & Hall 2010; for pragmatic and stylistic approaches to identity construction, see Nevala *et al.* 2016).

In this article, I analyse the dialogic structure of "Preface" and the complex system of interactive strategies employed by the writer to construct and perform his own individuality and identity and to directly address his reader. More precisely, I examine the dynamic interplay of pragmatic devices the writer utilises, on the one hand, to represent himself as a ground-breaking poet and theorist and, on the other hand, to explicitly refer to the dialogic organisation of the discourse and his stance towards his reader. Several markers of interactivity have recently been identified by historical pragmatics, including those studied in this article: interrogative clauses, clause-level *and*, terms of address, performative verbs, interpersonal metadiscourse (comprising modality and pragmatic markers), demonstratives, personal, possessive and reflexive deictic pronouns (Jucker, Fritz & Lebsanft 1999; Fitzmaurice & Taavitsainen 2007; Mazzon 2009; Culpeper & Kytö 2010; Jucker & Taavitsainen 2010; Mazzon & Fodde 2012; Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013).

The broader research purpose of this article is to develop a research project on interactivity and dialogic strategies in Late Modern

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

fictional and non-fictional prose with the theoretical framework and methodology of historical pragmatics. The main objective of the project is to gather linguistic and pragmatic data so as to acquire further knowledge of Late-Modern interactive practices in fictional and non-fictional discourse (see Virdis 2012 and 2016). The specific research purpose of this study is twofold: 1. From a quantitative viewpoint, to detect what identity-shaping and interactive items are statistically more frequent in this Late Modern text and can therefore be regarded as characteristic of the author's prose style in the text itself; 2. From a qualitative viewpoint, to investigate in what ways and with what aims these items and the resulting dialogic structure are utilised in this non-dialogic text. Special attention is given to creative and articulate combinations of items and how they foreground the philosophical issues on Romantic poetry and poetic language raised in the text. The research hypotheses to be tested here are also twofold: 1. That the writer's idiosyncratic style, along with his assertive identity, is crafted by the recurrent use of markers of interactivity; 2. Whether interactivity and assertiveness result in: a) a favourable disposition towards his reader and positive politeness, or the need to be connected with that reader; or b) a condescending attitude to his addressee and negative politeness, or the need to be independent from that addressee (Brown & Levinson 1987 [1978]). In other words, this article tries to prove that it is mainly by means of dialogic practices that the writer's identity as a poetic innovator is constructed, and his relationship with his reader is gradually formed as either close or distant.

2. Historical pragmatics

As Kádár (2014: 1) notes, "Historical pragmatics is an area engaged in the study of language use in historically situated settings; hence it brings a historical perspective into pragmatics and a pragmatic perspective into research on historical language". Historical pragmatics is therefore potentially interesting to both scholars investigating language from a diachronic viewpoint and researchers in historically contextualised communicative situations.

In this article, the diachronically situated language to be researched pragmatically is that of the Late Modern non-fictional prose of "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*. Historical pragmatics is relatively new as an independent field of academic research, since the term seems to have been first utilised by Bax (1981) in an article on the speech conventions among medieval knights in Middle Dutch texts. Nevertheless, it has meanwhile become one of the most recognised sub-disciplines in pragmatics: this is demonstrated by the appearance of several scholarly articles and volumes (for essential references, see Section 1) and by the *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, founded by A.

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

H. Jucker and I. Taavitsainen in 2000, currently edited by D. Archer and S. Fitzmaurice and published by John Benjamins.

Historical pragmatics is multidisciplinary in its different research methodologies and approaches to data. The investigations falling within the remit of the area are actually undertaken by means of distinct theoretical frameworks ranging from linguistics proper to sociopragmatics. As a result, some of them consist of microlevel scrutinies of given linguistic features, like the present analysis; some others are macrolevel wide-ranging examinations reconstructing historically situated interactional phenomena along with their sociopragmatic usages and contexts.

With regard to the problem of the data to be deployed in historical pragmatics, quoting Jucker and Taavitsainen (2013: 25), Kádár (2014: 2-3) points out that both oral language use and written language use, not only naturally-occurring speech, are necessarily contextualised and depend on situational restrictions. That is to say, they are exchanges conveyed by certain addressers to certain target addressees with certain communicative intentions (see also Short's (1996: 39) prototypical discourse situation or structure of texts, with an addresser conveying a message, namely a written or oral text, to an addressee). Consequently, provided that sufficient contextual details have survived and have been supplied, all language use can be regarded as suitable data for historical pragmatic study.

When investigating historical exchanges and their norms and manifestations, researchers should take the notion of historicity into account. This complex philosophical notion entails that all entities and actions have their own time and place and belong to history; worldviews and human behaviours, also linguistic and pragmatic ones, are hence historically-situated and should be scrutinised as such. The temporal relativity of interactive strategies and phenomena directly follows from the concept of historicity. Value systems and the normative usages and schematic practices they require are subject to diachronic change; those of participants in historical interactions are commonly not easily accessible to contemporary analysts. Accordingly, the examination of pragmatic and social appropriateness in the there-and-then, as different from the here-and-now, needs the specific approach of historical pragmatics (Kádár & Haugh 2013, chapter 8). Historicity also affects the validity of metapragmatics and pragmatic metaterms across time and place. Therefore, a historical perspective, complemented with a cross-cultural/intercultural perspective, must also be brought into the exploration of the history, development and historically-situated meanings of metaterms. This allows researchers to correctly interpret interpersonal pragmatic phenomena in historical contexts (Kádár & Paternoster 2015). Section 3 applies historical pragmatics to the investigation of the

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

"Preface" and presents and defines the various interactive strategies included in the text.

3. Definition of the interactive practices, data and analysis

As mentioned in the introductory Section 1, this article investigates the interactive practices used by Wordsworth in the Late Modern non-fictional prose of "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*. The full text consists of 6,572 tokens; it comprises three block quotes of poems by other authors (155 tokens), which are not taken into consideration here; consequently, only the resulting 6,417 tokens (with a total vocabulary of 1,451 types) in prose written by Wordsworth are scrutinised. The interactive strategies were retrieved by applying the following methodology: 1. Firstly, a concordancer (Reed 1997-2016) was utilised to derive a wordlist from the text, which was in turn utilised to preliminarily identify the key strategies; 2. Secondly, the text was computer-searched by means of the concordancer and the Find tool of a word processor[4]; 3. Subsequently, the search results and their cotexts were read carefully to check whether the former were indeed interactive practices; 4. Finally, the text was read closely to ascertain that all the principal practices had been retrieved. In this section, they are presented in ascending order of frequency, viz. from the least recurrent to the most recurrent. It follows that the practices examined in the very first sub-sections below are not extremely frequent; their presence, though, particularly when added to the other strategies and combined with them, significantly contributes to the overall dialogic structure of the text.

This examination combines quantitative and qualitative analyses of the dialogic practices in the sub-sections presenting and defining them. The quantitative investigation provides and discusses the following figures for the various practices: 1. The number of occurrences per 1,000 words for all the strategies; 2. The number of types and tokens for the strategies retrieved by the concordancer (see Note 3); 3. The percentage on the whole vocabulary and on the total wordcount for the above strategies. With regard to the qualitative scrutiny, all the eight instances of interrogative clauses are quoted and analysed; this is feasible because these are the practices with the lowest frequency. Selected samples of the strategies with higher frequencies are examined qualitatively; the samples usually feature clusters of the same or different practices to show and investigate complex combinations of those practices and their effects on the reader. The quantitative section 3.5, about interpersonal metadiscourse, in its second half offers a

[4] More precisely, the concordancer was deployed to retrieve the following strategies and recognise them from their cotexts: terms of address; performative verbs; the items in interpersonal metadiscourse, including modality and pragmatic markers; demonstratives; personal, possessive and reflexive deictic pronouns. The Find tool was used to distinguish demonstrative *that* from subordinating *that*, and to search for the question marks in interrogative clauses and the strings semicolon plus *and* in clause-level *and*.

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

qualitative scrutiny of two metadiscourse strategies, viz. modality and pragmatic markers. Like other high-frequency practices, and given the large number of items belonging to these two strategies, only a few representative examples are presented and discussed.

In the analysis, reference is often made to Halliday's (2014) functional model of language and grammar, which is sometimes preferred to 'traditional' grammar. This is because, from this perspective, the clause has an interpersonal metafunction, since it performs both an interactive role and a personal role. To be more exact, the clause, both spoken and written, is regarded as a potential item in an exchange enacting the social and personal connections between the participants in the exchange: as Halliday (2014: 30) states, this is "language as action".

3.1. Interrogative clauses

"Preface", which contains 127 total sentences, is nearly entirely constituted by positive and negative declarative sentences, which amount to 119 (93.70% of the total sentence count). In Hallidayan terms (2014: 23), declarative clauses are realised by the order Subject before Finite and characteristically give information, described as a commodity, by means of statements. However, there is a small number of exceptions: eight interrogative clauses, realised by the order Finite before Subject. They add up to 6.30% of the total sentence count and 1.25 interrogative clauses per 1,000 words:

(1) (a) *Is there* then, it will be asked, no essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition? I answer that there neither is nor can be any essential difference. […] where *shall we* find bonds of connection sufficiently strict to typify the affinity betwixt metrical and prose composition? They both speak by and to the same organs […]

(b) It will now be proper to answer an obvious question, namely, why, professing these opinions *have I* written in verse? To this in the first place I reply […] why *am I* to be condemned if to such description I have endeavoured to superadd the charm which by the consent of all nations is acknowledged to exist in metrical language? To this it will be answered […]

(c) Whence *arises this difference*? […] Why [*should you*] trouble yourself about the species till you have previously decided upon the genus? Why [*should you*] take pains to prove that an Ape is not a Newton when it is self-evident that he is not a man [?]

(d) The Reader will say that he has been pleased by such composition and what *can I* do more for him?

8 total interrogative clauses, 1.25 interrogative clauses per 1,000 words

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

Interrogative clauses have the typical speech function of demanding information from the addressee through a question; in Halliday's words (2014: 101), "from the speaker's point of view asking a question is an indication that he [sic] wants to be told something". In the text, the eight interrogative clauses are drawn from four sequences arguing about the following theoretical issues: the lack of difference between the language of prose and that of poetry (example 1.a.), the author's decision to write in verse (1.b.), the suitable subject matter of poetry and how to deal with unsuitable verse (1.c.), the pleasure produced by reading poetry (1.d.). Seven of the eight clauses (those in sequences 1.a.-1.c.) are found in the same paragraph as other interrogative clauses or are immediately followed by them. The three sequences and their topics are hence foregrounded and salient to the reader, whose answers are structurally required by the interrogative patterns. The answers are offered by the author himself, given that the text is a short treatise in written prose, *i.e.* a text-type where a subject is formally and methodically discussed and where no questions are usually left unanswered.

However, the text is explicitly interactive, and the eight clauses and their cotexts include several dialogic devices. Since they openly hint at and underscore the interrogative structures, the most prominent are the performative noun *question* (example 1.b.) and the performative verbs *asked*, *answer* (1.a.), *answer*, *reply*, *answered* (1.b.), *say* (1.d.). In addition, example 1.c. is typified by the ellipsis of Finite and Subject *should you* (twice). Quirk *et al.* (1985: 848-849) state that elliptical sentences commonly occur in both oral conversation and written dialogue. Their function is to avoid repetition; they thereby emphasise the non-omitted parts of the interrogatives, here the philosophical points at issue. Because of these conversational aspects, although comparatively limited, the presence of the speech function of demanding information highlights the open exchange between writer and reader and requires the latter to be actively engaged in it.

3.2. Clause-level *and*

According to Quirk *et al.* (1985: 1622), the fact that two sufficiently-related independent clauses belong to one sentence may be shown in writing by a comma followed by a coordinating conjunction or, alternatively, by the asyndetic use of a semicolon without a coordinating conjunction. Consequently, the string semicolon followed by *and* as a clause-level coordinator is non-standard. "Preface", yet, includes 19 foregrounded occurrences of this string; they amount to 2.96 instances per 1,000 words. Here are three sample sequences featuring the string, 2.c. consisting of the concluding clauses of the text:

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

(2) (a) […] feelings*; and* from the necessary character of rural occupations are more easily comprehended*; and* are more durable; *and* lastly, because in that situation the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature
(b) […] derived*; and* because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse […]
(c) he [the Reader] will determine how far I have attained this object*; and*, what is a much more important question, whether it be worth attaining*; and* upon the decision of these two questions will rest my claim to the approbation of the public.

19 total strings, 2.96 strings per 1,000 words

As Culpeper and Kytö (2010: 158-183) have proven, the coordinator *and* is a marker of cohesion which has historically had linking functions not only at a syntactic level but also at a pragmatic level. These and previous researchers have actually shown that clause-level *and*, mostly its multiple usages, has a remarkable function in spoken communication and a reduced incidence in written communication. In this respect, the text under investigation seems to be characterised by a notable trait of spoken discourse sparking off a dialogue between the author and his addressee.

Moreover, in Hallidayan terms (2014: 428), *and* as a clause-level coordinator introduces the repetition of the same grammatical unit resulting in a clause complex. That is to say, it introduces a sequence of process configurations realising a series of logico-semantically related arguments to convince the reader of the writer's position. The persuasive function of the string semicolon plus *and* appears to be testified to by the fact that two occurrences of it have been employed by the author in example 2.c. to finish off his text with three sequential coordinated clauses, *i.e.* three key consequential concepts: (a) it is the addressee who will judge whether "a species of poetry would be produced, which is genuine poetry", (b) whether this type of poetry is worth writing, (c) eventually, whether the writer is worth public approbation.

3.3. Terms of address

"Preface" does not feature any direct terms of address or vocatives utilised to indicate that a spoken or written utterance is addressed to one or more given participants in an interaction, such as *dear professor*, *granny*, *my lady*, *wicked villain*. The writer, though, employs the lemma READER<freq 35> (*Reader*<28>, *Reader's*<6>, *Readers*<1>)[5] (0.21% of

[5] I comply with the presentation conventions described in Stubbs (2005: 7): lemmata and phrases are given in UPPER-CASE, their forms in *lower-case italics* and frequencies in <diamond brackets>.

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

the whole vocabulary, 0.55% of the total wordcount, 5.45 tokens per 1,000 words). The first letter of the lemma is always capitalised and the lemma is often preceded by the determiner/possessive pronoun *my* (MY READER<freq 11> (*my Reader*<9>, *my Reader's*<1>, *my Readers*<1>)). Example 3 shows its first instance and two sample instances from the first part of the text:

(3) (a) I knew that on this occasion the *Reader* would look coldly upon my arguments
(b) I will not take upon me to determine the exact import of the promise which by the act of writing in verse an Author in the present day makes to his *Reader*
(c) I point *my Reader's* attention to this mark of distinction

3 types (0.21% of the whole vocabulary), 35 tokens (0.55% of the total wordcount), 5.45 tokens per 1,000 words

From a quantitative standpoint, the word *Reader*<freq 28>, along with *poems*<freq 28>, is the third most frequent word in the entire text when only content words are counted in and extremely recurrent function words are excluded, such as *the*, *of*, *and*, *a*, *in* – namely, in corpus linguistics terms, when a stop-list is applied. Such a frequent presence of the reader presupposes the existence of the writer, referred to by first-person personal pronouns (see Section 3.7). His primary concern is expressed by the seven most recurrent words in the text: to construct his own identity as the creator of a *language*<freq 31> for a new type of *poems* or *poetry*<27> openly addressed to his *reader* for their *pleasure*<25> and dealing with human *feelings*<24>[6].

From a qualitative standpoint, the three instances of the word *Reader* shown in example 3 are derived from sequences focusing on key issues: the author's need to provide his collected poems with a theoretical introduction (example3.a.), the standard expectations of a reader of poetry (3.b.), the importance of the topics in the Romantic poetry advocated by the author (3.c.). The examples abound in interactive devices: personal and possessive pronouns (*I*, *me*, *my*), factive presupposition triggers indicating viewpoint (*knew*), demonstrative pronouns (*this*), modal verbs (*would*, *will*), deictic phrases (*in the present day*), performative verbs (*point*). This is because, given the forward-looking nature of these issues, the addressee must be directly involved in the philosophical discussion. Accordingly, as the writer explicitly observes, all of these devices aim to start a conversation with his addressee and to capture and hold their attention.

[6] The second most frequent word is the function word *upon*<freq 29> which, as such, is not taken into account here.

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

3.4. Performative verbs

In Austin's words (1962: 6-7), a "performative sentence" or "performative utterance" or simply "performative" "indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action – it is not normally thought of as just saying something". Performative verbs are deployed in this type of utterance and openly name the action being carried out; they therefore directly suggest spoken words and verbal action also in non-dialogic text-types. The "Preface" includes several performative expressions, namely performative verbs plus the nouns corresponding to those verbs (*answer*, *estimate*, *promise*, *question*, *request*); to be more exact:

> REQUEST<freq5>, SAY<5>, ANSWER<4>, POINT<3>, SPEAK<3>, CALL<2>, CENSURE<2>, CONTEND<2>, ILLUSTRATE<2>, PROPOSE <2>, QUESTION<2>, ABUSE<1>, ACKNOWLEDGE<1>, DENY<1>, DESCRIBE<1>, ESTIMATE<1>, EXPLAIN<1>, PROMISE<1>, RECOMMEND<1>, REQUIRE<1>
>
> *20 types (1.38% of the whole vocabulary), 41 tokens (0.64% of the total wordcount), 6.39 tokens per 1,000 words*

As Mazzon (2009: 96) maintains, "it is not enough to give a list of performatives […]; we should also go a little further in the attempt to define the pragmatic value of each". As a result, four selected samples from the text are examined, the first three in the same sequence (example 4.a.), the fourth in a clause already quoted in Section 3.1. (example 4.b.):

(4) (a) and I *acknowledge* that this defect, where it exists, is more dishonourable to the Writer's own character than false refinement or arbitrary innovation, though I *should contend* at the same time that it is far less pernicious in the sum of its consequences. […] Not that I *mean to say*, that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formally conceived

(b) I *point* my Reader's attention to this mark of distinction

In example 4.a., the performative verb *acknowledge* mentions the verbal action of owning knowledge, confessing or admitting the truth of something. The performative verbs *contend* and *say* are not included in prototypical explicit performative sentences featuring the structure "I + Vp" (first-person singular pronoun + unmodalised performative verb). The former, though, clearly signals the meaning of arguing, maintaining, asserting, and the latter hints at the basic activity of uttering, pronouncing or speaking words or articulate sounds. Moreover, in the example, the basic activity of saying is reinforced by the presence of *mean* in the same verbal group *I mean to say*: this adds in the more assertive meaning of having a purpose or

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

intention, having something in mind. *Point*, in example 4.b., indicates the figurative action of directing the reader's mind or thought in a certain direction, here the importance of Romantic poetic topics. By explicitly naming the acts being undertaken, the performative verbs in the text trigger a communicative exchange between the author and the addressee, consequently increasing the force of the former's argument and its impact on the latter.

3.5. Interpersonal metadiscourse: modality and pragmatic markers

Of the several sub-disciplines in pragmatics, interpersonal pragmatics is the one that can "be conceptualised first and foremost as offering a pragmatics perspective on interpersonal aspects of communication and interaction" (Haugh, Kadar & Mills 2013: 2). On the one hand, such a perspective involves the careful investigation of how language is deployed by social actors to build up their relationships, and how communication and interaction create and mediate not only their mutual social connections, but also their very identities and the positioning of the self *vis-à-vis* others. On the other hand, interpersonal pragmatics entails the scrutiny of how the language social actors utilise is influenced by their relationships, wider social group and conceptions of appropriate linguistic behaviour (*ibid.*: 2013). The area of interpersonal pragmatics, which is interdisciplinary in nature and works at disciplinary interfaces, can neatly incorporate the notion of interpersonal metadiscourse.

As mentioned in the introductory Section 1, "Preface" can be scrutinised as a historical instance of academic discourse. In accordance with this paradigm, Hyland (2000: 109-113) calls "interpersonal metadiscourse" the items in a text directly hinting at its author's stance towards the content and the reader: "because it [metadiscourse] is based on a view of writing as a social and communicative engagement, it offers a very powerful way of looking at how writers project themselves into their work to manage their communicative intentions" (*ibid.*: 109). As this scholar acknowledges, approaches to metadiscourse have been considerably affected by Halliday's (2014) functional view of grammar and concept of interpersonal metafunction. As a result, interpersonal metadiscourse denotes non-propositional discursive elements signalling the author's linguistic and rhetorical presence as well as their identity, professional reputation and connection with their reader and message.

Hyland's (2000: 110-113, 191-193) classification scheme of interpersonal metadiscourse is constituted by a list of commonly-used items organised into five functions: hedges (e.g. *might*, *perhaps*), boosters (*actually*, *definitely*), attitude markers (*unfortunately*, *agree*),

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

relational markers (*frankly*, *note*), person markers (*I*, *we*). This author employed his list to study metadiscourse in a corpus of academic textbooks of eight hard- and soft-knowledge disciplines (*ibid.*: 113-116). Extremely frequent use of interpersonal metadiscourse turned out to be made in philosophy. The textbooks in this field comprise twice, in a case three times, as many interpersonal features as any other field, viz. 51.9 per 1,000 words; this is especially due to the substantial number of personal pronouns utilised (5.7 per 1,000 words). Table 1 below shows the figures for interpersonal metadiscourse in the textbooks about philosophy, applied linguistics (featuring the second highest occurrence) and electronic engineering (featuring the lowest occurrence).

In order to examine the interpersonal metadiscourse of "Preface" and to compare it with Hyland's findings, a concordancer was deployed to carry out an analysis of the metadiscourse items he investigated. His list (*ibid.*: 191-193) was adapted to meet the technical needs of concordancers by excluding the items that cannot be computer-searched: punctuation marks (exclamation mark, brackets, question mark) were not included; strings constituted by Subject followed by Finite (e.g. *I agree*) were simplified to the Finite (*agree*); verbal groups (e.g. *appear to be*), adjectival groups (*certain that*) and thematised comment clauses (*it is clear*) were reduced to the key words (*appear*, *certain*, *clear*).

Discipline or text	**Interpersonal metadiscourse**	**Personal pronouns**
Philosophy	51.9	5.7
Applied linguistics	28.2	1.8
Electronic engineering	18.7	0.8
Preface	83.37	19.32 (*I* only)

Table 1: Interpersonal metadiscourse and personal pronouns per 1,000 words in Hyland's (2000) model (academic textbooks) and in the "Preface"

Of the 124 interpersonal metadiscourse items in the adapted list, the following types were retrieved in "Preface", along with their tokens:

- 61 types (4.20% of the whole vocabulary),
- 535 tokens (8.34% of the total wordcount),
- 83.37 tokens per 1,000 words (see Table 1).

These are the data for first-person singular *I*:

- 1 type (0.07% of the whole vocabulary),
- 124 tokens (1.93% of the total wordcount),
- 19.32 tokens per 1,000 words (see Table 1).

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

Given this large number of occurrences, Section 3.7. is entirely devoted to deictic pronouns. As mentioned above and presented in Table 1, the use of interpersonal metadiscourse in the philosophy textbooks (51.9 items and 5.7 personal pronouns per 1,000 words) is striking in comparison with the other disciplines. Consequently, the higher frequency of interpersonal metadiscourse in the text under investigation (83.37 items and 19.32 instances of *I* per 1,000 words) is even more impressive. Such a frequency reveals that the writer has established an intimate, not at all remote, relationship with his addressee and is concerned with setting up an interpersonal context for the negotiation of his theoretical meanings and presentation of Romantic poetry.

As can be noticed, Hyland's classification scheme of interpersonal metadiscourse covers a broad array of interactive practices, including modality and pragmatic markers. Both of them have been thoroughly scrutinised in a number of linguistic disciplines; the most relevant to this article are historical pragmatics and functional grammar (among others, see Mazzon 2009: 51-89 and Halliday 2014: 176-193 for modality; Brinton 2010 and Culpeper & Kytö 2010: 361-397 for pragmatic and discourse markers). Accordingly, this section briefly defines them and furnishes a qualitative analysis of chosen samples.

In functional linguistics, modality is one of the interpersonal resources of the clause; more precisely, it is the scale between positive and negative polarity, or "the speaker's judgement, or request of the judgement of the listener, on the status of what is being said" (Halliday 2014: 172). In "Preface", modal verbs, adverbs and adjectives convey the diverse types of modality as identified by Halliday (*ibid.*: 176-178). These are: (a) modalisation (for propositions, concerning information exchanges), with the sub-types of probability (or likelihood: *possibly*, *probably*, *certainly*) and usuality (or oftenness: *sometimes*, *usually*, *always*); and (b) modulation (for proposals, concerning goods-and-services exchanges), with the sub-types of obligation (in a command: *allowed to*, *supposed to*, *required to*) and inclination (in an offer: *willing to*, *anxious to*, *determined to*). Here are four sample occurrences of the sub-types:

(5) (a) [Modalisation: usuality] *chiefly* as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement
(b) [Modalisation: probability] in that situation the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they *can* attain their maturity
(c) [Modulation: obligation] I *cannot* be insensible of the present outcry
(d) [Modulation: inclination] I *will* not suffer a sense of false modesty to prevent me from asserting […]

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

As clausal interpersonal resources, modal operators are an expression of the speaker's or writer's opinion: they hence reflect pragmatic stance and add performative characteristics to any text, spoken or written, dialogic or non-dialogic, containing them. Because the main communicative macrofunction of "Preface" is to give information to the reader, modalisation, namely modality regarding what is being conveyed, is particularly noteworthy in the text. Its role appears to be that of clarifying the author's position and giving prominence to the argumentative speech event, thus making his message more effective.

According to Culpeper and Kytö's (2010: 361-362) definition, in semantic-pragmatic terms, pragmatic markers have an interactive nature and tend to be frequent in everyday spoken conversation. They "have little or no propositional meaning but tell us about the pragmatic relationships between a speaker, their message(s) and its context. Discourse markers have the additional feature that they specifically mediate between one speaker's utterance and another" (*ibid.*: 361). The ten most recurrent pragmatic and discourse markers identified in these researchers' *Early Modern English corpus* are (in order of frequency): *some*, *very*, *about*, *though*, *I think*, *a little*, *well*, *why*, *I am sure*, *may* (*ibid.*: 373-374).

Among other pragmatic and discourse markers, "Preface" contains four occurrences of the booster *indeed*:

(6) (a) if the views, with which they [these poems] were composed, were *indeed* realized, a class of Poetry would be produced, well adapted to interest mankind permanently
(b) The language too of these men is adopted (purified *indeed* from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust)
(c) For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are *indeed* the representatives of all our past feelings
(d) The subject is *indeed* important!

The booster *indeed* in example 6.a. is a synonym of "in reality, in real nature", denoting what pertains to the realm of fact, and opposed to what is merely appearance, probability or opinion. Accordingly, its use unconditionally supports the realisation of an innovative type of poetry. In example 6.b., the booster follows the past participle *purified* and introduces further details on the 'purification' of the new Romantic poetic vocabulary. It hence contributes to expressing contrast between the allegedly unqualified adoption of that vocabulary and its actual purification, thereby preventing possible criticism from the addressee. The instances of *indeed* in examples 6.c. and 6.d. can be appropriately rephrased as "in truth, really, without doubt". They

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

are therefore utilised for emphasis, the latter being also reinforced by the only occurrence of an exclamation mark (an attitude marker in Hyland's (2000: 191) scheme) in the entire text. As a result, the four boosters have the communicative functions to confirm the writer's stance, underline the main concepts in the text and explicitly point them out to the reader.

3.6. Demonstratives

Demonstratives and personal, possessive and reflexive deictic pronouns are listed among Hyland's (2000: 193) metadiscourse items as relational and person markers. Nevertheless, these interactive strategies are the most recurrent, accordingly among the most interesting and effective pragmatic means in "Preface"; specific sections are hence dedicated to each of them. With regard to demonstratives, *this*, *that*, *these* and *those* realise four types (0.28% of the whole vocabulary), 134 tokens (2.09% of the total wordcount) and 20.88 tokens per 1,000 words:

this<freq 64>, these<35>, that<23>, those<12>

4 types (0.28% of the whole vocabulary), 134 tokens (2.09% of the total wordcount), 20.88 tokens per 1,000 words

Quirk *et al.* (1985: 372) argue that the use of demonstratives "may be considered under the headings of situational reference (reference to the extralinguistic situation), anaphoric reference (coreference to an earlier part of the discourse), and cataphoric reference (coreference to a later part of the discourse)". The demonstratives in the text mainly belong to the anaphoric category of reference; example 7 shows the first instances of the four of them. They all occur in the first two paragraphs, which suggests that the text is dialogic from its very beginning:

(7) (a) The First Volume of *these* Poems has already been submitted to general perusal
(b) *that* sort of pleasure and *that* quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a Poet may rationally endeavour to impart
(c) I had formed no very inaccurate estimate of the probable effect of *those* Poems
(d) The result has differed from my expectation in *this* only

Of the three categories of reference, the most interactive is that of situational reference, which is normally absent from a written text. However, according to Quirk *et al.* (1985: 375), "the anaphoric and cataphoric uses of the demonstratives are extensions of their

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

situational use". Their reference relies on and is determined by the context shared by the addresser and the addressee in both spoken and written communication. Hence, the linguistic and pragmatic practice of reference presupposes the existence of a communicative situation common to all of its participants, here the writer and all his readers. Furthermore, demonstratives contrast in terms of 'nearness' (*this* and *these*) and 'distance' (*that* and *those*), which are addresser's subjective concepts (*ibid.*: 374); in other words, they are linguistic indicators of the author's 'presence' in the text, above all of his viewpoint and identity.

3.7. Personal, possessive and reflexive deictic pronouns

Deictic markers can be defined as "a category of expressions whose very purpose is to link uses of language to the context in which they occur" (Chapman 2011: 40), therefore to the participants uttering them during an exchange taking place in a context of utterance or speech event. The use of personal, possessive and reflexive deictic pronouns, principally first-person pronouns, is the most recurrent interactive device in "Preface":

> I<freq 124>, MY<42>, OUR<20>, WE<16>, MYSELF<14>, ME<13>, US<4>, OURSELVES<1>, YOU<1>, YOURSELF<1>
>
> *10 types (0.69% of the whole vocabulary), 236 tokens (3.68% of the total wordcount), 36.78 tokens per 1,000 words*

Here is a selection of samples featuring the deictic pronouns included in the text:

(8) (a) *I* believe that *my* habits of meditation have so formed *my* feelings
(b) by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of *our* nature
(c) *we* discover what is really important to men
(d) The principal object then which *I* proposed to *myself* in these Poems […]
(e) It has therefore appeared to *me* […]
(f) Shakespeare's writings, in the most pathetic scenes, never act upon *us* as pathetic beyond the bounds of pleasure
(g) the understanding of the being to whom we address *ourselves*
(h) Why trouble *yourself* about the species till *you* have previously decided upon the genus?

Culpeper and Haugh (2014: 23) assert that "personal, as a deictic category, refers to the identification of three discourse roles in the speaking situation: the speaker (the first person), the hearer (the second person), and the party being talked about (the third

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

person)". In the text, the figure and personality of the writer are clearly foregrounded, whereas that of the reader is backgrounded: first-person (or proximal) singular pronouns amount to 193 total instances (82% of the total pronoun count), first-person plural pronouns to 41 (17%), second-person (or distal) pronouns to two only (1%). Furthermore, "deictic expressions signal a perspective relative to a particular deictic centre" (*ibid.*: 21), which is usually realised by the *I-here-now* of the speaker or speaking voice. It follows that the more proximal pronouns in a spoken or written text, the more explicit emphasis on the author's standpoint, here the philosophical theories on Romantic poetry. This is reinforced by the use of the reflexive proximal pronoun *myself* in the text. Of its 14 total occurrences, six (42%) can be found in the following pattern (see example 8.d.):

which/what/Ø + I + have proposed/proposed/propose + to myself

In the six strings with the above pattern, the two proximal pronouns *I* and *myself* frame and underscore the performative verb *propose*; as a result, the pattern communicates the author's intention and resolution to write ground-breaking poems and present them as such to his audience.

As mentioned above, the distal deictic pronouns hinting at the reader are only present twice; both of them can be found in the sentence in example 8.h. Here, the deictic markers *yourself* and *you* are utilised non-deictically; that is to say, they are deployed generically, not referring to any addressee in particular, and can be replaced with the impersonal pronouns *oneself* and *one*. Despite this generic use, the author employed the only two instances of personal *you* rather than impersonal *one* in two of the few interrogative clauses in the text in order to directly demand information from his reader; this gives further prominence to the two clauses, together with the sequence they belong to and the theories they convey (see Section 3.1.).

Although distal deictic pronouns are rare in the text, the frequent occurrence of the proximal deictic pronouns hinting at the writer implies a context and speech event necessarily common to his reader. Moreover, of the 41 total instances of the first-person plural pronouns *our*, *we*, *us*, *ourselves*, 38 (93%) are utilised inclusively, *i.e.* referring to the author and including the addressee, whilst the remaining three (7%) are deployed exclusively, viz. referring to the author and excluding the addressee[7]. Quirk *et al.* (1985: 350-351) distinguish several special uses of *we*, three of which variously apply to the text under investigation. As these scholars claim about the "inclusive authorial *we*" in formal writing, this proximal pronoun "seeks to involve the reader in a joint

[7] Two occurrences of exclusive *our* refer to Wordsworth and Coleridge, the co-author of *Lyrical Ballads*; one occurrence of exclusive *we* is a part of the title of the poem "We Are Seven".

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

enterprise" (*ibid.*: 350) and has more "intimate" appeal than *you*. The "editorial *we*" "is prompted by a desire to avoid *I*, which may be felt to be somewhat egoistical" (*ibid.*: 350). Consequently, the first two uses of the inclusive *we* in the text have the function of assimilating the reader's ideas and way of thinking and acting to the writer's.

The "rhetorical *we*", the third use detected by Quirk *et al.* (*ibid.*: 350), "is used in the collective sense of 'the nation', 'the party'"; in the text, the collective sense acquired by the pronoun is "the human species, human beings in general". Actually, the possessive pronoun "our", as a determiner, occurs in such phrases as "*our* continued influxes of feeling", "*our* thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all *our* past feelings", "*our* notion of death, or rather *our* utter inability to admit that notion", "*our* taste and *our* moral feelings", "*our* decisions upon poetry". In other words, the possessive pronoun collocates with nouns denoting human nature, primarily the mental, cognitive and emotional skills required to properly understand poetry and get pleasure from it.

4. Conclusions

This article has investigated the linguistic practices utilised by W. Wordsworth in the "Preface" to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* to construct both his own identity and his interaction with his addressee. The general quantitative findings of this scrutiny are summarised in table 2 below. For the sake of completeness, table 3 separately presents the figures for the first-person singular pronoun *I*, demonstratives and personal, possessive and reflexive deictic pronouns. This is because these three strategies are interpersonal metadiscourse items, and the data for all interpersonal metadiscourse items are already jointly shown in Table 2.

Interactive practice	**Types**	**Percentage on the whole vocabulary**	**Tokens**	**Percentage on the total wordcount**	**Occurrences per 1,000 words**
Interrogative clauses	N/A	N/A	8	N/A	1.25
Clause-level *and*	N/A	N/A	19	N/A	2.96
Terms of address	3	0.21	35	0.55	5.45
Performative verbs	20	1.38	41	0.64	6.39
Interpersonal metadiscourse	61	4.20	535	8.34	83.37
Grand total	**84**	**5.79**	**638**	**9.53**	**99.42**

Table 2: Figures for the interactive practices in "Preface"

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

Interactive practice	Types	Percentage on the whole vocabulary	Tokens	Percentage on the total wordcount	Occurrences per 1,000 words
First-person singular *I*	1	0.07	124	1.93	19.32
Demonstratives	4	0.28	134	2.09	20.88
Deictic pronouns	10	0.69	236	3.68	36.78

Table 3: Figures for the first-person singular pronoun *I*, demonstratives and personal, possessive and reflexive deictic pronouns in "Preface"

From a quantitative perspective, this historical pragmatic analysis has disclosed that "Preface" comprises 638 total dialogic practices (see table 2, Tokens column) out of a total wordcount of 6,417 tokens. This amounts to 99.42 occurrences of these practices per 1,000 words (see table 2, Occurrences per 1,000 words column), that is to say, almost one word out of ten is an interactive strategy. Hence, such an extremely high frequency confirms the first research hypothesis of this examination: the writer's prose style in the text is unquestionably typified by these markers of interactivity.

From a qualitative perspective, the role of the interactive strategies appears to be that of shaping the author's style as highly individualised and self-aware. "Preface" has an argumentative and persuasive macrofunction, since it develops and positively evaluates a Romantic philosophy of poetry and poetic language. It has been demonstrated that the dialogic devices which have been recognised and their distinctive usages are specifically employed to represent the writer as the authoritative source of these innovative ideas on poetry and to express guidance and orientation for the reader.

Furthermore, with regard to the second research hypothesis, these devices contribute to creating a context and speech event shared by the writer and his reader and to establishing positive politeness and an 'addressee-friendly' attitude. This common ground facilitates communication: it requires the reader's active participation, influences their response and encourages them to readily share the author's theoretical perspective on Romantic poetry and language.

References

Austin, J. L. (1962), *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Bax, M. (1981), "Rules for Ritual Challenges: A Speech Convention among Medieval Knights", *Journal of Pragmatics*, 5/5, p. 423-444.

Brinton, L. (2010), "Discourse Markers", in Jucker, A. H., Taavitsainen, I. (eds), *Historical Pragmatics*, De Gruyter Mouton, Berlin-New York, p. 285-314.

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

Brown, P., Levinson, S. C. (1987 [1978]), *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
Bucholtz, M., Hall, K. (2010), "Locating Identity in Language", in Llamas, C., Watt, D. (eds), *Language and Identities*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, p. 18-28.
Chapman, S. (2011), *Pragmatics*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.
Culpeper, J., Haugh, M. (2014), *Pragmatics and the English Language*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.
Culpeper, J., Kytö, M. (2010), *Early Modern English Dialogues: Spoken Interaction as Writing*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
Fitzmaurice, S. M., Taavitsainen, I. (eds) (2007), *Methods in Historical Pragmatics: Recovering Speaker Meaning and Reader Inference*, De Gruyter Mouton, Berlin-New York.
Gotti, M. (ed.) (2009), *Commonality and Individuality in Academic Discourse*, Peter Lang, Bern.
Halliday, M.A.K. (2014), *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 4th edition, revised by C.M.I.M. Matthiessen, Routledge, London.
Haugh, M., Kádár, D. Z., Mills, S. (2013), "Interpersonal Pragmatics: Issues and Debates", *Journal of Pragmatics*, 58, p. 1-11.
Hyland, K. (2000), *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interactions in Academic Writing*, Longman, London.
Hyland, K. (2012), *Disciplinary Identities: Individuality and Community in Academic Discourse*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
Jucker, A .H., Taavitsainen, I. (2013), *English Historical Pragmatics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.
Jucker, A. H., Taavitsainen, I. (eds) (2010), *Historical Pragmatics*, De Gruyter Mouton, Berlin-New York.
Jucker, A. H., Fritz, G., Lebsanft, F. (eds) (1999), *Historical Dialogue Analysis*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam-Philadelphia.
Kádár, D. Z. (2014), "Historical Pragmatics", in Chapelle, C. A. (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, Blackwell, Hoboken (NJ).
Kádár, D. Z., Haugh, M. (2013), *Understanding Politeness*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
Kádár, D. Z., Paternoster, A. (2015), "Historicity in Metapragmatics: A Study on 'Discernment' in Italian Metadiscourse", *Pragmatics*, 25/3, p. 369-391.
Mazzon, G., Fodde, L. (eds) (2012), *Historical Perspectives on Forms of English Dialogue*, Franco Angeli, Milan.
Mazzon, G. (2009), *Interactive Dialogue Sequences in Middle English Drama*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam-Philadelphia.
Nevala, M., Lutzky, U., Mazzon, G., Suhr, C. (eds), (2016), *The Pragmatics and Stylistics of Identity Construction and Characterisation* (Studies in Variation, Contacts and Change in English 17), VARIENG, Helsinki (http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/series/volumes/17).
Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., Svartvik, J. (1985), *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, Longman, London.
Reed, A. (1997-2016), *Simple Concordance Program 4.09*, available at http://www.textworld.com/scp/.
Short, M. (1996), *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose*, Longman, London.

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)

Stubbs, M. (2005), "Conrad in the Computer: Examples of Quantitative Stylistics Methods", *Language and Literature*, 14/1, p. 5-24.

Virdis, D. F. (2012), "Interactive Dialogue Sequences in *The Romance of Lust* (1873-1876)", in Mazzon, G., Fodde, L. (eds), *Historical Perspectives on Forms of English Dialogue*, Franco Angeli, Milan, p. 116-135.

Virdis, D. F. (2016), "Interactive Strategies in Victorian Academic Discourse: Citation in J. Ruskin's *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (1884)", in Nevala, M., Lutzky, U., Mazzon, G., Suhr, C. (eds), *The Pragmatics and Stylistics of Identity Construction and Characterisation* (Studies in Variation, Contacts and Change in English 17), VARIENG, Helsinki (http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/series/volumes/17/virdis).

Wordsworth, W. [& S.T. Coleridge] (2005 [1800]), *Lyrical Ballads, With Other Poems, In Two Volumes, 1800, Vol. I, Second Edition*, produced by Ingram, J., Prince, R. & the DP Team, release date: September, 2005 ([EBook #8905] http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/8905).

BDD-A27754 © 2017 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:37 UTC)