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# I'm part of the collective: exploring the influence of L1 culture on communal representation through the use of we, us and our in Nigerian undergraduates' written texts.

## **Abstract**

This study explores the influence of L1 culture on Nigerian tertiary learners' use of first-person plural personal pronouns we, us and our in written texts to indicate the collective, i.e., the writers' social community. The quantitative and semantic analysis of the learners' use of the pronouns was done using the Nigerian learner English corpus (NLEC) in comparison to Louvain corpus of native English student essays (LOCNESS). The quantitative analysis indicates the overuse of first-person plural pronouns by Nigerian learners compared to their LOCNESS counterparts. The study reports on the semantic analysis and reveals that the learners' overuse of these pronouns can be traced to their cultural background of collective shared

experience, communality, inclusiveness and solidarity. This is evident in the collocates of the pronouns, e.g., 'we live,' 'we have,' 'technology has helped us,' 'it gives us', 'our society,' 'our nation.' The student-writers' use of these pronouns indicates their involvement in issues of discourse and they emphasize collective experience. The findings of the study confirm writers make discursual choices that align them with their L1 community which is traceable in their L2 written texts.

**Keywords:** pronouns; culture; undergraduates; academic writing; student-writers; second language

## Introduction

Academic writing has been described as an act of identity, which represents the writer and conveys disciplinary content (Hyland, 2002). A writer's identity in any text is created by and revealed through a combination of discursive choices, which include textual and linguistic elements as well as stance and engagement elements, which are also referred to as interactional metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005). The use of personal pronouns in academic writing and its importance to the author's visibility, the effect on the reader and the impact on the outcome of the discursive purposes have been established by scholars (Harwood, 2005; Hyland, 2001, 2002; Kuo, 1999; Rastall, 2003; Tang & John 1999). Academic writers make their presence visible in written texts differently. One of the most established and vital means of author's visibility in texts is through the explicit use of first-person pronouns. These pronouns are key pragmatic attribute of academic writing as they help writers construct their scholarly identities in their texts.

As observed by Roux-Rodriguez et.al (2011:97) writers' use of first person in academic texts differs in terms of frequency and functions they perform which includes various aspects: "writers' status (professionals or students); proficiency in the language in which they write (native or non-native writers of English); their cultural background (Finish, Dutch or French writers); the writing situation (educational or work setting); the topic and purpose of the text (giving an opinion or reporting research results); or the disciplinary community (mechanical engineering or psychology)." The pronouns play a crucial role in mediating the relationships between the writers' arguments and their discourse communities. Writers can create an identity as both members of a disciplinary or social community and as persuasive creators of ideas through self-mention. They use pronouns to emphasise their presence and manage writer-reader relationships (Chung & Pennebaker, 2007; Harwood, 2005).

According to Wu and Zhu (2014:134), social factors, like social practices, social relations, culturally relevant parameters, the writer's cognitive models, thinking patterns, social values and other culturally relevant features function simultaneously to condition the meaning construction in texts. It has been established that academic writers select and use linguistic features which they believe will facilitate their communication with the anticipated audience. Their choice and use of these discourse elements in writing do not only depend on the writer's personal choice and his/her style but this choice is also conditioned by the writing habits favoured in the writing culture to which the writer belongs (Kamimura & Oi, 1998; Uysal, 2008). Scholars have established that writers select and use linguistic features they believe will facilitate their communication with the anticipated audience. The choices of these discourse elements in writing do not only depend on the writers' personal choice and individual styles, but these choices are conditioned by the writing habits favoured in their writing culture. Studies in Contrastive rhetoric hold that stylistic preferences of writing are culturally embedded and that second language learners carry over the preferred rhetorical patterns of their native languages to their second language writing (Connor, 1987, 2002; Clyne, 1987; Kachru, 1988; Kaplan, 1966; Hinds, 1983, 1987, 1990; Hinkel, 2011 Mohamed, 1997, 2000; Mohamed-Sayidina 2010).

This study explores the influence of L1 culture on Nigerian university student-writers' use of *we*, *us* and *our*, in writing to indicate the collective, i.e., the writer and the reader/audience. The quantitative and semantic analysis of the students' use of the pronouns was done using the Nigerian learner English corpus (NLEC) in comparison to Louvain corpus of native English student essays (LOCNESS). The study aims to:

- 1) Extract and determine the frequency of *we*, *us* and *our* use in the students' texts.
- 2) Analyse the verbs used alongside the pronouns to determine their semantic connotation.
- 3) Explore the influence of L1 culture on the use of *we*, *us* and *our* in the students' texts.

The article is divided into six sections. In section 2, the use of pronouns in discourse is examined. Section 3 discusses the collectivist culture of Nigeria. Section 4 presents the methodology and research tools used in the study. The results and interpretation are presented in section 5, followed by the discussion of findings and conclusion in section 6.

## Pronouns in writing

Using a variety of linguistic and rhetorical resources at their disposal, one of which is pronouns, writers attempt to express their viewpoints, negotiate interactional meaning, engage with and claim solidarity with readers. Pronouns choice and usage are deemed important to signify authorial presence and involvement, which is expressed through the use of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> personal pronouns. Writers use pronouns to emphasise their presence, establish and manage writer-reader relationships in academic discourse (Chung & Pennebaker, 2007; Harwood, 2005; Hyland, 2002; Kuo, 1999; Tang & John, 1999). Pronouns are important interactional metadiscourse strategy in writing and they help to reveal how academic writers construct their relationship with readers and with their discourse community (Kuo, 1999). Pronouns are also powerful markers of affiliation (Chung & Pennebaker, 2007). Hyland (2002) believes the use of first person pronouns allow writers to emphasize, and to seek agreement for, their contributions. Thereby leaving readers with no doubt where the writers stand and how their statements should be interpreted. The use of pronouns enables writers to assert their claim and authority, which is essential to successful academic writing.

Personal reference is dependent on the use of personal pronouns (*I, me, you, he, him, she, her, it, they, them, we, us,*) and possessive pronouns / determiners (*his, her, my, your, our, its, their, hers, mine, yours, ours, theirs*). Personal pronouns represent specific people or things. Possessive pronouns attribute ownership to someone or something. In other words, they demonstrate ownership in communication. Like any

other pronouns, they substitute noun phrases and can prevent repetition. Possessive pronouns and determiners operate with personal pronouns to achieve personal reference in texts. They are anaphoric by reference to the possessor in discourse. Although pronouns on their own do not convey meaning, they help to facilitate the understanding of the sentence or even the perception of the writer depending on how they are used. The use of pronouns gives a clear direction to the reader the perspective from which the content of the text is to be interpreted (Hyland, 2001). They also indicate the relationship between writer and reader or between the writer and the context of discourse. For instance, the use of I, you, we, us, mine or our within particular discourse context can have rhetorical effects on the readers (see Harwood, 2005 & 2007; Hyland, 2002; Kuo, 1999). Hence pronouns can place or erode the distance between the writer and readers or a situation as well as express solidarity and unity. Their usage as metadiscourse devices in discourse help to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community. Pronouns are instrumental for writers to align and connect to others, acknowledge their presence and experience, include them as participants in discourse, and guide them to correct interpretations of the text (Hyland, 2005).

The plural pronouns *we* and *us* and the possessive form *our* have been referred to as “associative,” “collective” or “representative” pronouns (Quirk et al., 2008; Rastall, 2003; Tang & John 1999). Quirk et al. (2008: 340) point out that the meaning of first-person plural pronouns includes reference to “the originator of the message, speaker or writer..., the addressee, whether hearer or reader, whether singular or plural... [and]... any other referents”. They view their usage as implying a collective sense of a certain group, whether big such as that of a nation, community or small such as a political party. Rastall (2003: 51-52) also describes the use of the pronouns as an “associative sense in which the speaker or writer includes himself or herself and all of the addressee in a wider category...” The pronouns signify the generic reference to people which a speaker or writer makes to identify themselves with people together with whom they belong to the same discourse community. Their usage in text presupposes solidarity with the reader. The purpose of employing this type of specific reference is either to identify the writers with a certain group(s) or to recount events that they have experienced.

Writing, like any other form of discourse, is a social activity. Hence as observed by Duszak (1997), the writer’s construction of meaning may accommodate sociocultural values. It has been established that writers from different languages and cultures display distinctive literacy practices and preferences in writing. The need to discover and describe the causes for the preferences found in other cultures is based on the notion that people in different cultures not only write in contrastive styles but that they develop these ways because of the different ways of thinking, that is, viewing the world. Thus it has been established that there are differences in rhetorical patterns across time, disciplines, cultural groups and even sub-cultural groups (Connor, 2002; Matsuda, 2001; Matsuda *et al.*, 2009; Sasaki, 2001). Matsuda *et al.* (2009) explain that research on contrastive rhetoric has suggested that the norms and genres of writing

are often culturally determined and that different discourse communities use different rhetorical styles. Hence second language learners may carry over those preferred rhetorical patterns of their native languages in their second language writing.

The above assertions have been corroborated by scholars working on L2 student writing (Hyland 2005; Ivanic & Camps 2001; Javdan, 2014; Wu and Zhu, 2014). For instance, Ivanic and Camps (2001) state that writers express messages about themselves through different acts and through a range of resources that are culturally available to them. Wu and Zhu (2014) assert that social factors such as social practices, values and relations, culturally relevant parameters, thinking patterns, and other culturally relevant features function simultaneously to condition meaning construction in written texts. Hence texts reflect the writer's ideological schema which reflects culture-specific norms and values. Similarly, Javdan (2014) referring to Fox (1994)'s submission that "language use is both culturally and socially determined" affirms that written texts are shaped by factors that differ not only across culture but also within a single culture. Based on the established social practices and values of the discourse community to which they belong, writers make discursual choices that align them with their community. These choices account for why as stated by Ivanic & Camps (2001), writers "sound like" one social group or another, despite the absence of phonetic and prosodic features in written texts.

The studies of Tang and John (1999) and Hyland (2002) have proven that student writers use personal pronouns in their texts but differently from ways expert writers do. Research on writing in academic contexts in recent years have focused on the rhetorical features, such as interactional metadiscourse, that writers use to present their voice in writing and to explore the interactive nature of academic texts. Developments in academic writing have also considered the context in which specific genres are produced (Ramoroka, 2017). This study seeks to further explore the relationship between L1 culture and L2 undergraduate writing, focusing on the plural pronouns *we*, *us* and *our*. The study reports on the semantic connotation of the pronouns beyond their established function as reader engagement devices, to indicate their usage by the Nigerian students' to indicate collective identity and communal representation, which is influenced by the collectivist culture of the Nigerian society.

## **The Collectivist culture of Nigeria.**

Collectivism is a social pattern that consists of individuals who view themselves as an integral part of one or more collectives or in-groups (Chiu & Hong, 2013; Breinlinger & Kelly, 2014; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010; Jenkins, 2014). Collectivist societies are communal societies characterized by diffuse and mutual obligations and expectations based on ascribed statuses. Social units with common fate, common goals, and common values are centralized; the personal is simply a component of the social, making the in-group the key unit of analysis in these societies, (Chen, Peng & Saporito, 2002; Hofstede, 2014; Schwartz, 1999). This manifests in the commitment to the member "group" relationships. Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount and over-rides most

other societal rules and regulations. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group (Hofstede.com, 2014).

Some studies such as Joyce et al. (2013); Valchev et al. (2013); and Kitayama and Markus (2014) state that African culture is collectivist. According to Ogbujah (2014:209), "Traditional Africans share much of their life in common." For example, they have communal farmlands, barns, trees, streams and markets. The communal ownership and relationships guarantee the prosperity of a town which, in the African sense, concomitantly guarantee the prosperity of the individual. The collective culture of Nigeria has been documented by scholars (See Akingbade, 2010; Esiowu, 2016; Hofstede, 2014; Okey, 2017; Ogbujah, 2006). The strong communal bond has been attributed to Nigeria's struggle for independence. It is believed that colonialism brought the various ethnic groups together to fight for liberation. The collective fight for independence has strengthened the culture in the societal and communal aspect. The cultural background of collective shared experience, communality, inclusiveness and solidarity permeates every aspect of the Nigerian society and culture.

Hofstede's (2014) study, on dimensions of national culture, indicates Nigeria is a collectivist society. According to the report of the study which used six dimensions of national culture, one of which is individualism, Nigeria's score of 30 out of 100 for individualism indicates that its culture is collectivistic. Because Nigeria is a collective society, individualism is highly discouraged. As a result, people are collectively orientated in their values and behaviour. Children are taught to interact collectively and the meaning of community is fundamental. The typical character of collectivistic culture is "we" mentality which is in contrast to "I" mentality in an individualist society. In traditional Nigerian society, individuals have close ties and the family system is very important because they live together in compounds. The sense of communality showcased in the everyday acts of living together is the basis of the extended family system as well as the understanding that everyone is his brother's keeper. The broad conception of the family coupled with the proximity of residences makes it easy for people's lives to regulate and be regulated by others. This, in turn, promotes the transmission of cultural norms and reinforces communal living. Members derive life and sustenance from the community, and in consequence, must maintain a vital relationship with the members of the community (Ogbujah, 2014).

## **Methodology**

The study adopts a corpus linguistics approach. The data was sourced from the Nigerian Learner English Corpus (NLEC) and the Louvain Corpus of Native British and American Students' Essays (LOCNESS). The NLEC was compiled in 2012 using the ICLE (The International Corpus of Learner English) guidelines for a study in Nigerian tertiary students' written English essays. It contains 467 essays of 188,094 words written by

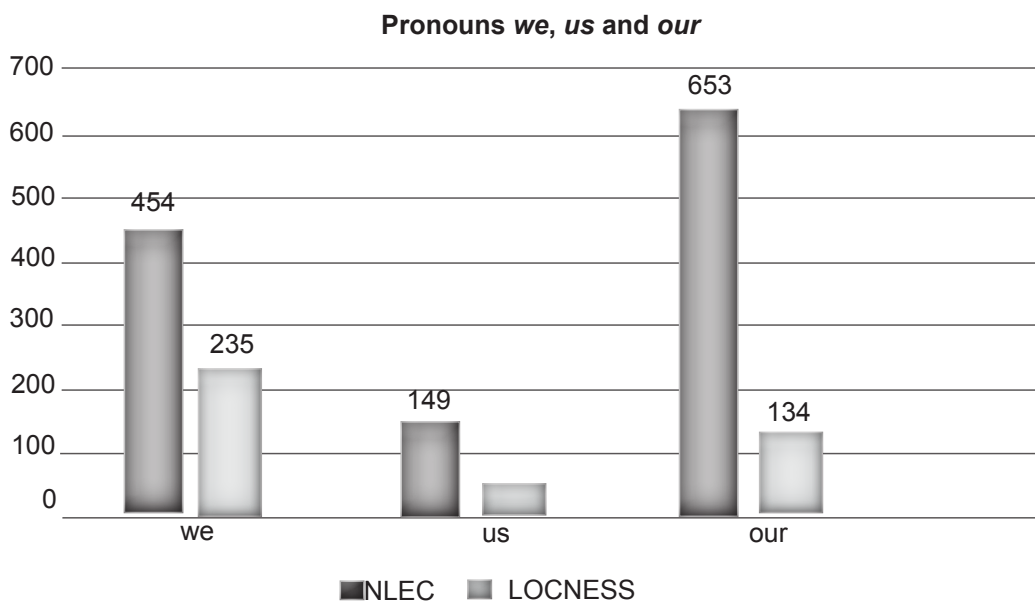
first-year students from three Nigerian universities. Due to the disparity in the size of the two corpora compared in the study, the Star Trek online Random Number Generator was used to remove 25 essays from LOCNESS corpus. Thus, 164 essays from the LOCNESS corpus with the total of 188,507 words were used for the comparative analysis. The corpus search was carried out using WordSmith Tools 7.0 by Scott (2016). The wordlist was used to extract the three pronouns (*we*, *us*, *our*). The frequency numbers were normalised to 100,000 words to ensure a notionally common scale for both data groups and to eliminate any similarity or disparity due to data size, thereby enhancing the result accuracy. A log-likelihood test was also carried out to determine if statistically significant differences exist between the two corpora (Rayson & Garside 2000). The log-likelihood (LL) wizard shows a plus or minus symbol before the log-likelihood value to indicate overuse or underuse respectively in corpus 1 relative to corpus 2. The quantitative analysis serves as the basis for the semantic analysis of the pronouns.

## Analysis and Results

The results of the analysis are presented below. Table 1 shows the raw, normalised frequency and the log-likelihood value of *we*, *us* and *our* extracted from the two corpora. This is followed by the bar graph displaying the frequencies of occurrence in NLEC and LOCNESS (per 100,000 words).

**Table 1: Raw/ normalised frequency and number of texts containing *we*, *us* and *our***

PRONOUNS	FREQUENCY				LOG-LIKELIHOOD VALUE
	NLEC		LOCNESS		
	RAW	NORM.	RAW	NORM.	
<b>we</b>	<b>854</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>+70.83*</b>
<b>us</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>+47.52*</b>
<b>our</b>	<b>1228</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>+182.84*</b>



**Figure 1:** Bar graph displaying the frequencies of *we, us* and *our* occurring in NLEC and LOCNESS (per 100,000 words).

The quantitative analysis indicates the significant overuse of the pronouns by Nigerian learners compared to their LOCNESS counterparts. This presentation reports on the semantic analysis of the roles the pronouns play in the students' texts. The students use *we* to refer to the writer and their target audience as members of the same discourse community. Some examples of the use of the pronouns are presented below:

1. Maybe *we* use as an excuse the morality, or the good character. But it is the same theory: *we* take advantage of the people *we* think are weaker than ourselves, and *we* try to manipulate them so *we* can reach *our* goal. Advertising has the same roll. It gives *us* information that is trying to manipulate *us*, so that the company can gain benefits, it is human nature... But *we* need to realize that, in order to sell a product, the company will do everything to attract the customer and to fool them to buy their products. Another example, if a celebrity is advertising for a product, *we* go and buy it just because the celebrity has it too. <NLEC - 032>
2. In my own view technology advancement is a curse rather than a blessing to *our* society because we live in a technologically advanced world where more and more electric gadgets are going wireless. We have



mobile phones, wireless computers and even mobile television... It is obvious to know how much technology has helped us in our daily lives. It is now very convenient to move from places to places, if we look around, technology is almost everywhere. We can send email to our friends rather than the old fashioned letters which take so long to reach the receivers... <NLEC - 088>

3. Secondly, we live happier, due to technology advancement in the area of agriculture we now practice mechanized and intensive agriculture. Today the government allocates huge sums of money every year to boost agriculture. We now engage in co-operative farming to reuse enough capital to buy machinery to boost production. Today we export cash crops such as cocoa and coffee to other advanced countries of the world. This means taking part in international trade, so we live happier because we enjoy better standard of living due to technology advancement. <NLEC-384>

As seen in the examples, *we*, *us* and *our* in the texts denote the plural members of the community. They express shared experience, and collective practices and ownership. Although few instances of their metadiscoursal use are seen in the examples, the majority use of the pronouns indicates collective representation in the context of the text. The use of the pronouns as seen above differs from the use of the plural to indicate the writer and reader.

### ***Semantic domain of verbs used with we in students' essays.***

The syntactic and semantic functions of verbs guide the interpretation of sentences and the discourse in general. To determine the semantic connotation of the pronouns, the verbs used alongside them were analysed to understand the role the pronouns perform in the discourse. Using Biber *et al.*'s (1999:360-364) semantic classification of verbs, the seven categories are activity, communication, mental, occurrence, existence, causative and aspectual verbs. The analyses show that activity verbs are used most frequently alongside *we*, followed by mental verbs and communication verbs respectively. Occurrence, existence, causative, and aspectual verbs have no significant usage. The three most frequent groups of verbs use alongside *we* in the texts are presented in Table 2 below:

**Table 2: Semantic domain of verbs used with we**

Semantic domain	Verbs
<b>Activity verbs</b>	<i>create, drive, eat, export, extract, face, find, follow, found, get, go, got, groom, make, meet, move, practice, post, receive, spend, take, tell, travel, use(d), watch and won.</i>
<b>Mental verbs</b>	<i>discover, decided, expected, assume, enjoy, know, learn, mean, realize, regard, suppose, see, think, trust, and understand.</i>
<b>Communication verbs</b>	<i>call, complain, communicate, define, discuss, say, talk and write.</i>

The use of activity verbs helps the readers to visualize the described actions, engages the readers, enhance quality reading as well as maximize clear understanding of the events described by the writer. The students' use the verbs to express the collective participation of the Nigerian society in the described activities as seen in the examples below:

- 4 ...but if **we extract** our oil and refine it ourselves then it will be at low cost for the masses but a great income if exported to other country for sale which will boost the economy<**NLEC-036**>
- 5 ...due to this reason **we export** our crude oil to other countries to refine it for us <**NLEC-137**>

The second most frequently semantic category used alongside *we* by the students is the mental verbs. Mental verbs show the collective involvement depicted by the writer. With the help of these verbs, the communal representativeness is made visible. Examples of the usage are seen below:

- 6 So far the nation has faithful leaders, the subsidy will serve the purpose **we expected**. <**NLEC-159**>
- 7 Today we export cash crops such as cocoa and coffee to other advanced countries of the world. This means taking part in international trade, so we live happier because **we enjoy** better standard of living due to technology advancement. <**NLEC-384**>

The third most frequently semantic category used alongside *we* by the students is the communication verbs. Communication verbs are a subcategory of activity verbs that involves communicating activities (Biber *et al.*, 1999:362). Some examples of this usage are presented below:

- 8 We Nigerians are still looking forward for our electricity to stand upright cause as we are right now the electricity is still what we complain for all day and for we not to be in darkness we decided to get a generator and it makes use of a petrol before it can start working. <NLEC-144>
- 9 Now tell me how else on earth can we call it a blessing to our society. <NLEC-187>

### ***The use of us in students' essays***

The concordance display shows that the pronoun *us* functions in the object position referring to the collective recipient of action in the students' essays.

Examples of the use of *us*]:

10. Advertising has the same roll. It gives us information that is trying to manipulate us, so that the company can gain benefits, it is human nature... Another example, if a celebrity is advertising for a product, we go and buy it just because the celebrity has it too. It is all a trick from the companies to sell their products and to manipulate us. But it depends on *us*, if we let ourselves be manipulated. <NLEC-032>

The use of the plural pronoun *us* in the text indicates the collective shared experience represented in the text. It denotes the collective, the society being represented as an entity to which the writer is a member in the text. Hence the notion of *us* against them permeating the text.

### ***Nouns that co-occur with our in the two corpora***

Possessive pronouns demonstrate ownership or belongingness. Possessives in written texts are used as rhetorical and interactive features to address the readers and draw them into the discourse (Hyland, 2005). Table 3 shows that out of the three pronouns analysed in this study, *our* has the highest frequency of 1228 (51.96%) out of a total of 2363 in NLEC texts. The most frequent noun collocates of *our* in NLEC corpus and their frequency are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Noun collocates of *our* in NLEC**

<b>Nouns used with <i>our</i></b>	<b>Frequency in the corpus</b>
<b>our society</b>	<b>444</b>
<b>our country</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>our nation</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>our leaders</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>our lives</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>our day</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>our world</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>our environment</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>our work</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>our people</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>our present</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>our children</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>our youths</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>our friends</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>our economy</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>our health</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>our road</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>our industries</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>our schools</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>our president</b>	<b>5</b>

The use of *our* in the texts signifies the collective ownership that alludes to the communal orientation of the students. This is evident in the noun collocates of the possessive pronoun (see example 1 & 2). Influenced by the communal and collective culture, the context in which the students write, collective ownership is highly prominent in their texts. As seen in Table 3, the three collocates of *our* with the highest frequency in the texts which are society, country and nation speaks to the collectivist culture of Nigeria. Significantly, the total frequency of *our* society at 444 is 36% of the total number. Hence the students' texts indicate their affiliation and belief of communal ownership.

The collective mentality of the Nigerian student writers is very much evident when compared to collocates of *our* in LOCNESS presented in Table 4 below:

**Table 4: Noun collocates of *our* in LOCNESS**

Nouns used with <i>our</i>	Frequency in the corpus
<b>our sovereignty</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>our own</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>our society</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>our life</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>our lives</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>our children</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>our freedom</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>our memories</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>our world</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>our death</b>	<b>5</b>

## Discussion of findings and Conclusion

According to Hyland (2002a:1091), “a central element of pragmatic competence is the ability of writers to construct a credible representation of themselves and their work, aligning themselves with the socially shaped identities of their communities.” The findings of this study differ from other existing studies on the use of plural pronouns for interactional metadiscourse purposes or the inclusive “we” to refer to the writer and the reader (Harwood, 2005; Hyland, 2001; Quirk *et al.*, 2008). Rather it reports on the use of these pronouns to signify a cultural influence of collective mentality of the Nigerian student writing. As seen from the extracts and analysis above, the students’ use of the plural pronouns express the sense of communality, solidarity and display affiliation between the writer and the community referred to as a collective (Quirk *et al.*, 2008). These communal pronouns indicate the existence of a set of mutual understandings and shared experience. The writers speak to the collective, expressing their actions, experiences and positioning themselves as part of the whole. This confirms the assertions of scholars that people in different cultures differ in rhetorical styles because of the different social practices and values of the discourse community to which they belong (Connor, 2002; Fox, 1994; Matsuda, 2001; Matsuda *et al.*, 2009; Sasaki, 2001).

The use of the pronouns in texts is traced to the student-writers' cultural background of the Nigerian society. Sperling and Appleman (2011) opine that how an individual represents their identities is influenced and shaped by their society and cultures. The Nigerian culture places emphasis on interpersonal involvement in the society. This culture reflects in daily interaction, ensuring inclusiveness, communality and solidarity in discourse. These findings concur with Connor's (2002) assertion that texts are functional parts of ever-changing cultural contexts. Also as Nelson (1997) opines that cultures differ in numerous areas, such as behaviors, communication styles, functions of language, purposes of human interaction, etc. This differences in rhetorical patterns across time, disciplines, cultural groups and even sub-cultural groups have been the focus of many studies in contrastive rhetoric. These studies have established that writers in different languages and cultures make distinguished literacy practices and preferences in writing. The need to discover and describe the causes for the preferences found in other cultures is based on the notion that people in different cultures not only write in contrastive styles but that they develop these ways because of the different ways of thinking, that is, viewing the world.

This study reveals that the Nigerian students' use of these pronouns can be traced to their cultural background. Although the quantitative analysis indicates the overuse of the pronouns, the semantic analysis shows that the reason for this is the students' "we" mentality which is characteristic of a collective society. The choice of the personal and possessive pronouns indicates inclusivity regarding experience and context of discourse. This stylistic preference for the collective identity and relationship between the speaker and the audience I believe accounts for the significant difference in the number of pronouns used by the two groups of student-writers. This study confirms the link between culture and writing and how the former reflects in L2 written product, beyond the L2 learners' engagement and emerging mastery of the conventions of academic writing. The findings of this study validate the assertions made by scholars on the intertwine between culture and language use. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide teachers and learners with an understanding of the link between culture and writing and how the former reflects in written texts.

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