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STANCE MARKERS: AN UNDERDEVELOPED ASPECT OF SERBIAN EFL WRITERS' COMPETENCE**

Abstract: The topic of the current study is the interactional dimension of metadiscourse, as expressed through lexico-grammatical devices in beginner L2 writing of L1 Serbian/L2 English learners. The participants' use of metadiscourse devices was chosen due to its particular relevance for the beginner L2 writing process at the tertiary level. The sample of participants included a total of 70 English language majors attending the University of Niš. The corpus consisted of the students' expository paragraphs collected over a period of nine weeks during the 2019/2020 schoolyear. The taxonomy used in this particular study was that of Biber (2006) and Min et al. (2019), with a particular focus of hedges, stance adjectives, stance adverbs, and stance verbs. The results obtained imply that stance markers deserve a more prominent place in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: *Stance, academic writing, tertiary education, EFL students, lexico-grammatical devices.*

INTRODUCTION

Metadiscourse, as one of the linguistic means used to convey stance (Jiang, 2017), consists of 'self-reflective' expressions (Min et al., 2019) used to forge a connection between the speaker/writer and the hearer/reader (the interactional dimension of metadiscourse), and between the content/proposition and the hearer/reader (the interactive dimension of metadiscourse). According to the same

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group of authors, metadiscourse can include hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions and engagement markers (ibid). The definition of stance as an evaluative attitude expressed by the writer is a difficult one to give. Man & Chau (2018) based their definition on the work of other more prominent authors, such as Biber (2006), Hyland & Tse (2005b) and Jiang and Highland (2015), who stated that stance represents the personal feelings, or attitudes, even value judgments expressed by the writer. A more widely acknowledged definition of stance is one that was provided by Biber & Finegan (1989: 93–94), who indicated that stance is a way for a writer to express their ‘value judgment on knowledge’, in particular on “its reliability, the mode of knowing, and the adequacy of its linguistic expression”, along with “a broad range of personal attitudes”.

Much like metadiscourse, stance is used to facilitate reader-writer communication. As a result, it has a potential impact on overall writing quality. For example, Min et al. (2019) claim that metadiscourse features are used twice as much by ‘good ESL undergraduate writers’ as opposed to those qualified as ‘poor’. Stance has also been singled out as a challenging topic for L2/FL learners (Biber, 2006; Hyland, 2005a; Min et al., 2019), and can help determine the level of proficiency or native-like usage of the language adopted by the writer. The more comfortable they are with their L2, the more likely they are to make comments pertaining to how they ‘feel’ about a particular proposition. Furthermore, providing evaluative judgments by using stance markers is also a means of facilitating interpretation for the reader. This features well within the context of academic writing, which is seen as a form of ‘social interaction’ that clearly indicates the viewpoint of the writer (Hyland, 2005a). As a result, Man & Chau (2018) have indicated the need for studies of stance in general, not only for the purpose of benefitting L2 instruction, but for aiding teachers of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). When choosing stance devices, FL writers are not only drawing from the scope of their personal feelings and attitudes, but are also drawing from their cultural background (Jiang, 2017). It is therefore possible to assume that much could be learned from the type and frequency of stance markers in L2 writing.

The influence of cultural background can be seen in situations where the author himself is the source of a proposition. In such circumstances, they may revert to either expressly stating so, emphasizing it in fact, known as ‘emphasized averral’, or may choose to completely hide their presence, known as ‘hidden averral’ (Charles (2006) and Hunston (2002), quoted in Jiang, 2017: 87). In addition to stating their own attitude to the source of the proposition, writers can convey their perceptions of the proposition, and establish a rapport with their audience, rendering their content ‘plausible’ and ‘persuasive’, in an attempt to anticipate the readers’ response. All this is achieved within the scope of their L1 and L2 cultural background.

The academic writing style of the Serbian linguistic community and that of the Anglo-American one differ to a considerable extent, as the former predominantly relies on means of ‘hiding’ one’s presence behind the first person plural pronoun

‘we’, whereas this feature is rarely found in the latter. This issue alone further renders studies on stance relevant to EAP and L2/FL writing.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There are a variety of stance devices that have been studied by EFL researchers. In this study the main focus is on stance adjectives, stance adverbs and stance verbs, as used to indicate epistemic certainty, epistemic likelihood, attitude and emotion, evaluation, ability and willingness, ease or difficulty, causation and effort, style, communication, and desire and intent. The seminal classification stems from Biber’s 2006 taxonomy, which is based on semantic categories that include:

1) **epistemic certainty**

(e.g., *certain, obvious, apparent* for adjectives; *naturally, surely* for adverbs; *conclude, find* for verbs),

2) **epistemic likelihood**

(e.g., *likely, probable* for adjectives; *seemingly, probably* for adverbs; *seem* for verbs),

3) **attitude and emotion**

(e.g., *sad* for adjectives; *sadly, fortunately* for adverbs; *consider, believe* for verbs),

4) **evaluation**

(e.g., *important* for adjectives),

5) **ability or willingness**

(e.g., *able* for adjectives),

6) **and ease or difficulty**

(e.g., *easy, hard* for adjectives),

7) **hedges**

(e.g. *a bit, a little*).

This taxonomy was broken down into more detail in Min et al. (2019), and provided the basis for the classification of the lexico-grammatical stance markers identified in this study. The specific categories of analysis can be found in the Results section of this paper.

When it comes to academic writing at the tertiary level in Serbia, the course curriculum for English language majors includes instruction on

argumentative/persuasive types of writing. They are introduced to it through expository paragraphs, with the expectation of hedges and stance devices (Min et al., 2019), which play a role in persuading the audience. In the Serbian EFL setting, not a lot of work has been done on determining which linguistic resources students of English use to express evaluation in their writing. A notable exception is the work of Blagojević (2004; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012). However, although focused on academic EFL writing, her work was mostly aimed at academic discourse and research papers, and not as much on the writing of EFL learners at the tertiary level. This notably led to a gap in the field of study.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

A variety of stance devices have been studied over the years, in many L1 and L2 combinations, and a range of student/academic writing. Biber & Finegan (1989) provided an exhaustive overview of overt markers of affect and evidentiality in English. Hyland (1998; 1999; 2000) studied hedges and boosters in argumentative writing. Van Hell et al. (2005) evaluated stance-taking and support in writing, along with genre and modality. Baratta (2009) studied the passive voice as a stance marker. Ryshina-Pankova (2011) determined that FL writers hesitated to use explicit markers of personal opinion. Lee & Deakin (2016) cited frequent occurrences of interactional metadiscourse in student academic writing. Jiang (2017) studied noun + *that* clauses as stance markers, Man & Chau (2018) studied *that*-clauses,¹ and Min et al. (2019) studied hedges and stance devices in L2 argumentative writing.

Veličković & Danilović-Jeremić (2020) studied the scope of stance devices used in a sample of argumentative essays written by a group of L1 Serbian fourth-year university students. They concluded that they focused on achieving distance and objectivity in their academic writing, predominantly using indefinites/impersonal structures, and verbs in the passive voice. Although a substantial use of stance devices can be an indication of more advanced language proficiency, no direct link between the use of stance devices and FL knowledge was determined, which led them to conclude that Serbian EFL learners' choice of stance devices could be taught.

Considering the strong connection between hedges, stance devices and persuasive communication in argumentative writing, we attempted to identify which lexico-grammatical stance devices are preferred by a beginner group of L1 Serbian FL writers. Based on the previously outlined findings, the following research questions were chosen:

¹ This particular group of authors has put forth the claim that phrasal structures are more revealing of stance than clause structures, which may be the reason behind such choices of linguistic devices as stance markers.

1. Of all the lexico-grammatical stance devices, notably adjectives, adverbs and verbs, which type did the participants most often use in their expository paragraph writing?
2. Which of the subcategories of stance adjectives, adverbs and verbs did the participants use the most in their expository paragraph writing?

THE METHOD

Original FL (L1 Serbian) writing was used in this study, in part due to the fact that it does not undergo the same rigorous process of revision and proofreading as academic writing meant for publication. A sample of 218 expository paragraphs were compiled from a group of approximately 70 second-year students, B2 level of proficiency. They are all English language majors at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš. The paragraphs were written and compiled during the fall semester of the 2019/2020 schoolyear. This was the students' first semester learning about academic writing. The students had not received any previous formal instruction on stance, stance markers, or how to use them, nor had any of the feedback that they received during their course mentioned stance.

The paragraphs were collected over a period of nine weeks. They are the product of in-class work, and cover a range of topics: television/the media, dieting/diets, education, holidays, home decoration, physical activity, an item of great significance, family/family life and finally a topic of the students' own choosing. The average number of words per paragraph was ~126, bringing the total number of analyzed words in this corpus close to 27,500.

All of the paragraphs were analyzed by the authors. The analysis was based on the classification provided by Biber (2006) and Min et al. (2019). It focused on the following: hedges, stance adjectives, stance adverbs, and stance verbs. These lexico-grammatical stance devices are used to indicate epistemic certainty, epistemic likelihood, attitude and emotion, evaluation, ability and willingness, ease or difficulty, causation and effort, style, communication, and desire and intent. Only examples of stance markers approved by both authors were included in the analysis.

The categories of analysis were based on the work done by Min et al. (2019: 10–12):

Stance adjectives refer the adjectives that express someone's stance, including the following subcategories:²

² All of the examples provided to illustrate the various categories were extracted from the analyzed expository paragraphs.

• **Epistemic certainty adjectives:** adjectives that show levels of certainty or doubt about the proposition (e.g., *apparent, certain, obvious*).

There are many more types of these creations, but one thing can be certain, they are all made for the sake of more dramatic and creepy movie scene.

• **Epistemic likelihood adjectives:** adjectives that imply probability of the idea (e.g., *likely, possible, probable*).

It also has nonsensical food restrictions that are very damaging to the body and almost impossible to retain for long periods of time.

• **Attitude and emotion adjectives:** adjectives that indicate writer's feeling about the proposition (e.g., *annoyed, disappointed, nervous*).

Taking into account that she always learns from my mistakes, it is not surprising that she is always there to listen to me.

• **Evaluation adjectives:** adjectives that represent writer's judgments about the idea (e.g., *appropriate, bad, important*).

When I started high school, my father advised me to start studying at least a week before a test since it would be much easier to study a subject in parts rather than all at once.

• **Ability or willingness adjectives:** adjectives that express the ability and readiness (e.g., *able, anxious, careful*).

They explained to me how to put myself first in order to be able to love other people around me.

• **Ease or difficulty adjectives:** adjectives that show evaluation on the idea (e.g., *difficult, easy, hard*).

At school, for example, I've always tried my best to have good grades, to show her that it isn't that hard.

Stance adverbs refer to the adverbs representing the writer's stance:

• **Epistemic certainty adverbs:** adverbs that comment on the actuality of ideas (e.g., *actually, certainly, definitely*).

A fad diet is a type of diet that is only popular for a short amount of time, similar to fashion fads, so their effects are undoubtedly not viable.

• **Epistemic likelihood adverbs:** adverbs that indicate the probability and likelihood of ideas (e.g., *apparently, perhaps, probably*).

Next, our body language is important for our future job because we will probably work with people/children.

• **Attitude adverbs:** adverbs that show the writer’s emotional attitude about a proposition (e.g., *amazingly, essentially, fortunately*).

There are, surprisingly, non-food stores where you can buy chocolate snacks too.

• **Style adverbs:** adverbs that express the writer’s manner of speaking (e.g., *according to, generally, usually*).

Scientific programs generally attract people who are educated and who want to broaden their knowledge in a particular field.

Stance verbs include the particular verbs that show the writer’s stance, including the following:

• **Epistemic certainty verbs:** verbs that express conviction or certainty (e.g., *conclude, notice, prove*).

There are three zodiac signs which are believed to have a large number of positive traits.

• **Epistemic likelihood verbs:** verbs that imply questionable assertions (e.g., *assume, guess, seem*).

Vlach holidays and rituals seem very odd when compared with more common, place holidays but are, in my opinion, just as jolly.

• **Attitude verbs:** verbs that show the writer’s personal attitudes (e.g., *agree, expect, feel*).

I find it truly relaxing when I’m in a new place surrounded by new people.

• **Desire and intention verbs:** verbs that express the writer’s desire, decision, and intention about the idea (e.g., *decide, hope, want*).

In conclusion, these wildfires have brought a lot of pain and torment to the people of Australia, but we all hope that they will have enough strength to overcome the obstacles.

• **Causation and effort verbs:** causation, modality, and effort verbs that indicate the facilitated action (e.g., *enable, manage, require*).

This allows you to gang up with other players and complete quests together.

• **Communication verbs:** verbs that describe speech acts, communicative activities and source of information about the proposition (e.g., *claim, insist, say*).

Secondly, the say that the lyrics is too violent and maybe sometimes Satanistic.

THE RESULTS

For clarity, research questions 1 and 2 will be discussed simultaneously.

Of the 218 analyzed paragraphs, as many as 94 (~43.12%) contained no examples of stance devices, indicating the unmistakably low level at which this group of participants manages metadiscourse.

The most frequently used type of lexico-grammatical stance device were stance adjectives (~44.17%). They are followed by stance adverbs (~27.18%), and a close third are stance verbs (~26,21%). By far the least frequently used stance device were hedges (~2.4%).

Table 1. The frequency of occurrence of the analyzed stance devices

Stance device	~percentage of total number of stance devices (100%)
Stance adjectives	~44.17%
Stance adverbs	~27.18%
Stance verbs	~26,21%
Hedges	~2.4%

The results can further be broken down in the following manner.

Of the types of stance adjectives identified by Min et al. (2019), the most frequently occurring type were adjectives that represent the writer's judgment (~48.26%). The most frequently used stance adjective in particular belongs to this group: the adjective *important* (~25.27%). The second most frequently used type are stance adjectives that show evaluation of an idea (~26.37%), of which the most frequently occurring adjective was *difficult/hard* (~17.58%). It is also the second most frequently used stance adjective. The third most frequently used type were stance adjectives that show levels of certainty or doubt (~10.93%), of which the most frequently occurring adjectives were *certain* and *apparent* (~2.19%). The fourth were stance adjectives indicating the writer's ability or readiness (~8.78%), of which the most frequently occurring adjective was *able* (~7.69%). This group is followed by adjectives that imply probability, (~5.48%), with *impossible* having the highest occurrence rate (~4.39%). And finally, only one adjective was found that indicates the writer's feelings, *sad*, with a frequency of ~1.09%.

Table 2. Frequency of occurrence of the various stance adjectives

Stance adjectives	~ percentage of all stance adjectives used (100%)
Adjectives that represent the writer’s judgment	~48.26%
Adjectives that show evaluation of an idea	~26.37%
Adjectives that show certainty or doubt	~10.93%
Adjectives that express the writer’s ability and readiness	~8.78%
Adjectives that imply probability of the idea	~5.48%
Adjectives that indicate the writer’s feelings	~1.09%

Table 3. provides an overview of the all the different adjectives used in the expository paragraphs.

Table 3. The frequency of occurrence of particular examples of stance adjectives³

Stance adjective	~ percentage of individual type of used stance adjectives (100%)
Adjectives that represent the writer’s judgment	
IMPORTANT	~25.27%
GOOD/BEST	~6.59%
BAD	~5.49%
ESSENTIAL	~3.29%
NATURAL, DISAPPOINTING, SURPRISING, VITAL, ANNOYING, EXCELLENT, SURPRISING	~1.09%
Adjectives that show evaluation of an idea	
DIFFICULT/HARD/HARDEST	~17.58%
EASIER/EASY	~8.79%
Adjectives that show certainty or doubt	
APPARENT, CERTAIN	~2.19%
OBVIOUS, SURE	~1.09%
Adjectives that express the writer’s ability and readiness	
ABLE	~7.69%
UNABLE	~1.09%
Adjectives that imply probability of the idea	
IMPOSSIBLE	~4.39%
LIKELY	~3.29%
POSSIBLE	~1.09%

³ Note: the approximate percentages indicate the overall frequency of the occurrence of each lexico-grammatical device.

Adjectives that indicate the writer’s feelings
 SAD ~1.09%

Of the types of stance adverbs identified by Min et al. (2019), the most frequently occurring type were adverbs that express the writer’s manner of speaking (~42.84%). The most frequently used stance adverb in particular belongs to this group: the adverb *usually* (~30.35%). The second most frequently used type were stance adverbs that show the writer’s emotional attitude (~23.17%), of which the most frequently occurring adverb was *basically* (~7.14%). However, after *usually*, the second most frequently used stance adverb in general was *probably*, (~14.28%), which belongs to the group of adverbs that indicate the probability and likelihood of an idea (frequency of occurrence ~16.06%, the lowest among the adverbs).

Table 4. Frequency of occurrence of the various stance adverbs

Stance adverbs	~ percentage of all stance adverbs used (100%)
Adverbs that express the writer’s manner of speaking	~42.84%
Adverbs that show the writer’s emotional attitude about a proposition	~23.17%
Adverbs that comment on the actuality of ideas	~17.82%
Adverbs that indicate the probability and likelihood of ideas	~16.06%

Table 5. provides an overview of the all the different adverbs used in the expository paragraphs.

Table 5. The frequency of occurrence of particular examples of stance adverbs⁴

Stance adverb	~ percentage of individual type of used stance adverbs (100%)
Adverbs that express the writer’s manner of speaking	
USUALLY	~30.35%
GENERALLY	~7.14%
ACCORDING TO	~5.35%
Adverbs that show the writer’s emotional attitude about a proposition	
BASICALLY	~7.14%
TRULY	~3.57%
MASTERFULLY, DRASTICALLY,	~1.78%

⁴ Note: the approximate percentages indicate the overall frequency of the occurrence of each lexico-grammatical device.

Stance adverb	~ percentage of individual type of used stance adverbs (100%)
SURPRISINGLY, NORMALLY, SADLY, FORTUNATELY, ESSENTIALLY	
Adverbs that comment on the actuality of ideas	
SURELY, NATURALLY	~5.35%
EXPECTEDLY, ACTUALLY, UNDOUBTEDLY, OBVIOUSLY	~1.78%
Adverbs that indicate the probability and likelihood of ideas	
PROBABLY	~14.28%
SEEMINGLY	~1.78%

Of the types of stance verbs identified by Min et al. (2019), the most frequently occurring type were verbs that describe speech acts, communicative activities and source of information (~46.25%). The most frequently used stance verb from this particular group is the verb *say* (~5.55%). However, one of the two most frequently used stance verbs belongs to a second group, that of verbs indicating causation, modality or effort verbs (~27.75%): the stance verb *manage* (~9.25%). The third most frequently occurring type were stance verbs that show the writer’s personal attitude (~12.95%), of which the most frequently occurring verb was *consider* (~7.40%). The fourth were stance verbs that imply questionable assertions (~11.1%). The second most frequently occurring stance verb belongs to this group: the verb *seem* (~9.25%). And finally, only one verb was found that expresses the writer’s desire, decision and intention, *hope*, with a frequency of ~1.85%.

Table 6. Frequency of occurrence of the various stance verbs

Stance verbs	~ percentage of all stance verbs used (100%)
Communication verbs	~46.25%
Verbs indicating causation, modality, effort verbs	~27.75%
Verbs that show the writer’s personal attitude	~12.95%
Verbs that imply questionable assertions	~11.1%
Verbs that express the writer’s desire, decision, intention	~1.85%

Table 7. provides an overview of the all the different verbs used in the expository paragraphs.

Table 7. *The frequency of occurrence of particular examples of stance verbs*⁵

Stance verb	~ percentage of individual type of used stance verbs (100%)
Communication verbs	
SAY	~5.55%
DESCRIBE, MAINTAIN, SHOWCASE/SHOW	~3.70%
SUGGEST, RECOMMEND, REPORT, BELIEVE, ESTEEMED, QUESTION, RANKED, JUDGED, EXPLAIN, PROMISE, STATE, CONCLUDE, DETERMINE, CLAIM	~1.85%
Verbs that indicate causation, modality, effort verbs	
MANAGE	~9.25%
ALLOW	~3.70%
INDUCE, EASE, LET, REQUIRE, OVERCOME, FORCES, ENABLE, DEMAND	~1.85%
Verbs that show the writer’s personal attitude	
CONSIDER	~7.40%
FIND	~3.70%
BELIEVE	~1.85%
Verbs that imply questionable assertions	
SEEM	~9.25%
CONSIDER	~5.55%
Verbs that express the writer’s desire, decision, intention	
HOPE	~1.85%

Of all the lexico-grammatical devices that were analyzed in the corpus, the fewest were hedges with only five in total. They accounted for merely ~2.4% of all the identified stance devices. The most frequently example was *a bit* which accounted for 80% of all the hedges used in the paragraphs, and *a little*, which accounted for 20%.

⁵ Note: the approximate percentages indicate the overall frequency of the occurrence of each lexico-grammatical device.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results, stance adjectives occurred almost twice as much as stance adverbs and stance verbs, while the frequency of occurrence of stance adverbs and verbs is almost the same. Even though the frequency of occurrence of adjectives is greater than that of adverbs, the number of tokens for each is quite similar, 23 to 20. Overall, the range of individual words that are used to convey stance is low. This particular group of beginner writers tended to prefer vocabulary items which are to a considerable extent a part of their everyday vocabulary: the adjective *important*, the adverb *usually*, and the verbs *say*, *manage* and *seem*. By not using more diverse stance makers, they give off the impression of hiding both their presence and their attitudes towards the propositions, and never clearly state the sources of the propositions.

Considering that hedges, as indicated by Hyland (1994) and Min et al. (2019), are devices which have proven to be particularly difficult for EFL writers, our findings are not surprising. As suggested by Hinkel (2004) and Min et al. (2019), the diversity of their functions, the potential influence of L1 on their use, and the extent to which they permeate academic and/or business writing might indicate that their analysis should be the subject matter of a separate study. In this particular case their frequency and range are too low to allow either a quantitative or qualitative analysis.

In the case of stance devices, it is possible to assume that linguistic proficiency is a pertinent issue, at least to a certain extent; however, we are inclined to consider this can account for only a fraction of the results. In our view, their overall performance is more likely the result of a feeling that it is inappropriate to ‘insert themselves’ in such a way in their writing, perhaps as a result of the impersonal ‘shared responsibility’ style of writing in their L1. Furthermore, not having benefited from any explicit instruction on stance, or implicit for that matter, and since their coursebook makes no reference to it, they may not have even considered it a relevant option. It seems likely that the detected occurrences of stance devices are more a reflection of the writers’ own personal budding styles than that of an existing awareness of stance.

The current findings to an extent do compare to those of Veličković & Danilović-Jeremić (2020). A lack of variety or range of linguistic devices was noted in both studies without, however, an indication of the extent to which their exclusion was voluntary. The predominant impersonal style previously recorded by these authors is not uncommon in FL writing. Similar findings have been reported by Biber & Finegan (1989), Hyland (2012), and Reilly et al. (2005), irrespective of the written material they were analyzing. In brief, the so-called ‘faceless stance’ is an increasingly more present feature of FL writing.

Yet another point needs to be taken into consideration. In a study of six different fields Jiang (2017) outlined some of the main features of the ‘soft’

sciences, i.e. the humanities and social sciences. These include, but are not limited to: their being discursive in nature; that writers in these sciences are more likely to make their presence ‘felt’ by clearly providing comments on the content/propositions; that they rely considerably on ‘cognitive understanding’, that in these sciences most claims rely on personal interpretations which leave writers more freedom to provide their judgments than in the ‘hard’ sciences; that arguments in the ‘soft’ sciences are ‘necessarily explicitly interpretative’, etc. In such a context, the lack of stance devices in the FL writing of the studied population must be addressed appropriately, and explicitly. As part of their tertiary education, English language majors are expected to write term papers and a bachelor thesis; the majority of them will go on to write their master’s thesis, some even doctoral dissertations. As a result, any instruction they receive, which so far has focused mostly on form, must also make room and make time to address content with a view to the writer’s perspectives on the content and its sources, and address their relationship with the audience. As previously indicated, both Lee & Deakin (2016) and Min et al. (2019) stated that the increased use of stance devices is a recognized quality of ‘good ESL undergraduate writers’, hence our teaching must reflect this requirement as well. As Hyland (2012) and Kärkkäinen (2003) both stated, allowing personal perceptions into a body of writing is a choice, and EFL learners need to be made aware that such a choice is available to them, irrespective of what they may perceive as the “confines” of the academic genre.

These assumptions leave room for specific pedagogical implications. It is not simply an issue of teaching FL writers to include more stance devices in their writing. A delicate balance must be established between the features of ‘soft’ sciences and the requirements of academic writing, primarily that of the ‘convention of impersonality’. If our goal is to make our students more proficient writers, well-versed in the characteristics of academic writing in their particular ‘soft’ science, an initial step might be to introduce well-worded examples from naturally occurring language produced by their own peers at the initial stages of learning to write, much at the same time as the information pertaining to paragraph structure. This may require certain ‘adaptations’ of the existing coursebooks, but overall could prove beneficial. This would mean relying on the ‘genre approach’ when teaching FL writing (Gee in Luchini, 2002). This approach is mostly based on modelling other people’s writing (Harmer, 2004; Nunan, 1989), which when analyzed, could be used as a model of the type, number and overall function of the stance devices used.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The way to challenge the persistent lack of stance devices lies in both adaptations of the teaching process/material and in increasing the scope of research. One of the issues that should be addressed is the fact that existing work (Blagojević, 2004; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012 and Veličković & Danilović-Jeremić, 2020) on academic discourse and stance devices in the Serbian linguistic environment has so far been descriptive in nature rather than interpretative. It would be quite useful, to the learners, to their teachers, as well as to researchers themselves, to take a longitudinal look at how and whether the use of particular stance markers changes over time and in what direction. The influence of explicit instruction could also be monitored and quantified. Furthermore, additional variables should be included in any further analyses, such as L2 proficiency and writing competence. As Man & Chau (2018) indicated, differences in the linguistic devices could occur as a result of various topics, which means that a controlled writing task could also potentially be included in future studies.

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ИЗРАЖАВАЊЕ СТАВОВА У ПИСАЊУ: НЕДОВОЉНО РАЗВИЈЕНА ВЕШТИНА КОД УЧЕНИКА ЕНГЛЕСКОГ ЈЕЗИКА КАО СТРАНОГ

Резиме

Циљ овог рада је испитивање интеракцијске димензије метадискурса, изражене лексичко-граматичким формама, код ученика енглеског језика као страног. Употреба одговарајућих форми којима се изражава став говорника значајна је, у истраживачком смислу, јер се може довести у везу са наставом академског писања на универзитетском нивоу. У истраживању је учествовало 70 студената енглеског језика који наставу похађају на Филозофском факултету у Нишу. Корпус студентских радова (тачније, пасуса), прикупљен је током девет недеља током академске 2019/2020. године док је анализа прикупљеног материјала спроведена на основу радова Бајбер (2006) и Мин и сар. (2019). Анализа је укључивала идентификацију форми које служе за оградавање говорника, као и врста речи којима се изражавају његови ставови (нпр. придеви, прилози и сл.). Добијени резултати указују да је поменути језичким формама потребно посветити више пажње у настави енглеског језика.

Кључне речи: *ставови, академско писање, лексичко-граматичке форме, ученици енглеског језика као страног.*