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Research Paper

Epistemic Features of Generality in Conclusions: The Case of Applied Linguistics and Power System Engineering

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Abstract

This comparative corpus-based study was launched to analyze the use of intensifiers and indefinite pronouns indicating generality in two disciplines of applied linguistics (AL) and power system engineering (PSE). Accordingly, four corpora were considered in this study: two corpora representing English articles written by L1-English writers in applied linguistics (L1-English AL corpus) and power system engineering (L1-English PSE corpus), and two other corpora (L1-Persian AL corpus and L1-Persian PSE corpus) belonging to English articles written by L1-Persian writers in the same two disciplines. The findings revealed that the indefinite pronouns were used more frequently than intensifiers in all corpora; on the other hand, the use of qualified-generalization markers in the two L1-Persian corpora exceeded that in the L1-English corpora. As for disciplinary differences, the AL conclusions contained more generalization and qualified-generalization stance markers, as compared to their PSE counterparts. The study concludes with some implications regarding the representation of authorial voice.

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The linguistic mechanisms employed to represent writers' stance and attitudinal representations have received much attention in the last decades (Gray & Biber, 2012; author, 2009). A relatively large number of works have accordingly addressed a wide range of stance expressions in diverse registers and genres (author, 2013; Hyland & Guinda, 2012). Researchers have been drawing on a wide range of terms to address stance; these are such as *metadiscourse* (Hyland, 2005), *hedges* (Hyland, 1996; Brown & Levinson, 1987), *modality* (Palmer, 1986), and *evaluation* (Hunston & Thompson, 2000). The evidence obtained by the previous studies documents the wide variety of possibilities based on which speakers and writers express themselves, commenting on the subject discussed and representing their attitudes toward the content and their audience, with all these contributing to the fulfillment of the intended communicative purposes (Hyland & Guinda, 2012; Schemeleveva, 2019). Therefore, it is widely accepted that stance features play an important role in the representation of different meanings and the engagement of the interlocutors; it has also been revealed that the use of stance expression is largely determined by community conventions, in addition to the personal preferences of the writers (Hyland, 2008a, 2008b).

Academic writing could be regarded as one of the high-stakes registers (Hyland 2008a); this register is commonly described as one which is very objective, being mostly concerned with communicating facts, excluding all personal attitudes or feelings related to the writer(s) (Biber, 2006a). However, the discourse analysis research previously carried out has shown that the evaluative language is quite commonly

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applied to communicate different stance features in academic writing; this has been such that evaluation is a building block of academic discourse (Thompson, 2012; Schemeleva, 2019). Several researchers (e.g., Biber & Gray, 2010; Hyland, 2005) have shown that persuasion and assessment are, in fact, an integral part of the discursive practices of academic writers; thus, the former impression that academic writing is solely objective and depersonalized has been shown not to be true (Hyland, 2005, 2008a, 2008b).

Meanwhile, it is essential to study different academic genres under professional perspectives analytically in order to fulfill the pedagogical goals, such as improving students' writing ability and producing appropriate texts (Bhatia, 2002; Martin, 2003; Biber, Connor, & Upton, 2007; Cortes, 2011; Wingate & Tribble, 2012). Therefore, we need to employ a variety of complementary methodologies to analyze academic writing, especially in such high-stakes genres as research articles; in fact, we should investigate and describe specific and detailed elements of a single text and its general patterns in large corpora, for the purpose of revealing different stance meanings and devices employed to express them.

Despite the considerable research previously done, the vast majority of the works on stance features have been concerned with certainty, not generality, which is the degree to which a statement can be generalized (Aull, Bandarage & Miller, 2017; Schemeleva, 2019). According to Aull et al. (2017), there are two prominent reasons for the paucity of research on generality: (a) classifying generalized reference (e.g., indefinite pronouns) under the umbrella of evidentiality, and (b) considering complexity in using stance markers due to their both epistemic and attitudinal features. The present research, therefore, chose to focus on markers of generalization and qualified generalization in the conclusion section of research articles as a very high-

stakes genre. More specifically, this study zoomed on two categories of generalization stance markers: intensifiers (e.g., *extremely*, *fully*, *empirically*, and *always*) and indefinite pronouns (e.g., *both*, *no one*, *every*, *any*, and *most*), which are applied to convey the generality of claims. Therefore, this study set out to address the research questions brought below:

1. Which generalization and qualified-generalization markers are used in the conclusions of Applied Linguistics (AL) research articles by native and Iranian non-native speakers of English?
2. Which generalization and qualified-generalization markers are used in the conclusions of Power System Engineering (PSE) research articles by native and Iranian non-native speakers of English?
3. How do the corpora differ in regard to the use of stance devices?

Before we describe the study and the results obtained, a brief review of the related literature is presented to better understand where we are now in regard to the study of stance and how this work can contribute to filling the research gaps existing in this area.


Literature Review

It has been well shown that writers or speakers use diverse lexico-grammatical devices to communicate their stance, such as their feelings and attitudes, value judgments, and evaluations, toward the proposition in a context (Biber et al., 1999). As described by Biber (2006a, 2006b), stance expressions can serve to communicate a wide range of personal feelings and attitudes; these also include how a speaker feels about or assesses some given information; stance also relates to how certain speakers or writers can be regarding the veracity of the propositions, the way they get access to the information, and the perspective they hold in regard to it.

According to Norton (2000), people use language as a means to interact and communicate successfully, express their individual identities and opinions, and convey their relationship. In the academic arena, publishing in internationally renowned journals whose language is English is a need for the members of this discourse community (Lores, 2004), given that English, an academic lingua franca (Hyland, 2013), is the primary language to maintain communication in different academic settings (Flowedrew & Dudley-Evans, 2002; Zhang, 2013). Therefore, the study of different stance devices in such high-stakes genres as research articles can contribute to a better understanding of academic writing, especially for those who want to join this discourse community (Biber 2006a, 2006b).

In the study of different stance expressions, different research methods have been employed; this range, in terms of size, from analysis of one single text to large-scale studies based on corpus analysis, zooming on different structural/functional patterns in a large number of texts produced by different writers (Biber, 2006b). Despite this diversity of methods used, the vast majority of the works have been dependent on using a lexico-grammatical method which involves employing automatic tools and analyzing the lexical items with specific grammatical structures, all for the purpose of revealing specific attitudes and meanings which represent stance (Gray & Biber, 2012; Schemeleva, 2019).

In regard to features marking stance, a commonly applied distinction is made between meanings indicating personal attitudes, emotions, and assessments of a speaker/writer and those which reflect or evaluate the epistemic status of a given entity or proposition (Biber & Finegan, 1988, 1989; Biber, 2006a, 2006b; Schemeleva, 2019). Biber and Finegan (1988, 1989), for example, divided stance features into affective and evidential meanings. On the basis of this framework, features


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encoding affect refer to positive or negative meanings; on the other hand, evidential meanings reflect a given level of certainty (e.g., *improbable, substantiate, sure, would*) or doubt (e.g., *unsure, assume, ought to*).

Biber et al. (1999) also drew on this classification to accommodate meanings that are more specific; thus, epistemic meanings (evidentiality) were differentiated from the attitudinal ones (affect). The former characterizes those meanings related to doubt, certainty, factuality and a state of definiteness, in addition to showing the perspective or source from which a given kind of knowledge is introduced and expressed. The latter, on the other hand, represents attitudinal and evaluative meanings, as well as feelings or emotions personally communicated (Gray & Biber, 2012; Biber 2006a, 2006b).

The choice of stance devices could, therefore, have important consequences for both L1-English and L2-English writers (Wu, 2007). From another perspective, stance markers are divided into two main groups, including deontic (attitudinal) and epistemic markers (Uccelli, Dobbs & Scott, 2013). The expert writers use deontic markers to convey their judgment toward a statement in a text. The epistemic markers are employed to express the extent to which a given statement is true, reliable, and possible. In fact, writers can draw on various forms to epistemically maintain their stance (Holmes 1988; Biber 2006; Englebretson 2007; Brezina 2012). Generally speaking, writers employ modal verbs, adverbs, or lexical verbs to express epistemic stance meanings (Biber et al. 1999).

According to the above, in line with the previous studies (Aull et al., 2017, Schemeleva, 2019; Auria, 2008; Pho, 2008; Abdollahzadeh, 2011; Hyland, 2011; Taki and Jafarpour, 2012), this research chose to focus on markers of generalization and qualified generalization in the conclusion section of research articles. Conclusion as a sub-genre can be considered as

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an important part of research articles, given that writers may convey their positions in this section more explicitly. Generalization and qualified-generalization markers, collectively called qualifiers, are classified into intensifiers and indefinite pronouns, according to the model developed by Aull et al. (2017). Generally, expert writers use intensifiers such as *never* and *always* to convey certainty in regard to their claims (Aull & Lancaster, 2014; Hyland, 2005). Qualified-generalization markers, referred to as qualifiers (e.g., *not*, *quite*, *rather*, *so*, *somewhat*, *partially*, *potentially*, *almost*, *mostly*, *often*, *nearly*, *virtually*, *near*, *close to*, *approximately*, *practically*, *closely*), appear before generalization markers to change the epistemic meaning of generalization markers within a sentence or a paragraph (Hyland, 1998; Aull et al., 2017). In the next part, we describe the methodology employed to address the research questions posed in this study.

Method

The Corpora

Applied Linguistics Corpora (L1-English and L1-Persian AL Corpora)

The sampling technique used to get applied linguistics articles was availability and ease of access to the electronic version of research articles. The journals selection was according to the *Web of Science* ranking, categorizing international journals on the basis of their impact factors. All articles published in high-impact-factor journals served as a model of advanced writing in this discipline. Tables 1 and 2 represent the detailed description of the journal articles in applied linguistics as written by L1-English and L1-Persian writers, respectively.

Table 1.

Corpus of Research Articles Conclusions Written by L1-English Writers in Applied Linguistics

Journals	Impact factor	Number	Word count	Mean length
Applied Linguistics	3.225	11	5865	533
English for Academic Purposes	1.420	11	7039	639
English for Specific Purposes	1.362	8	5183	647
Linguistic and Education	0.892	6	2712	452
Language Teaching Research	2.086	8	5398	674
Second Language Writing	3.324	19	13595	747
Pragmatics	1.039	5	2630	526
TESOL Quarterly	2.256	16	8932	558
System	1.547	5	2634	526
Annual Review of Applied Linguistics	4.88	5	1079	215
Total		94	55067	585

The two applied linguistics corpora comprised 159 conclusion sections of articles covering the 2010-2018 time period, of which 94 had been written by L1-English authors affiliated with universities in English-speaking countries, including USA, UK, and Australia. Sixty-five other articles had been written by Iranian L1-Persian research article writers affiliated with top state universities in Iran. As can be seen, the number of selected journals in the L1-Persian AL corpus was obviously less than that in the L1-English AL corpus as there were not as many research articles written by L1-Persian writers in high-impact international journals.

Table 2.

Corpus of Research Article Conclusions Written by L1-Persian Writers in Applied Linguistics

Journals	Impact factor	Number	Word count	Mean length
Language Learning	1.655	12	4211	351
Pragmatics	1.039	5	2099	419
System	1.547	13	5630	433
Assessing Writing	1.906	1	518	
Ampersand		1	237	
English for Specific Purposes	1.362	2	1198	599
Language Science	0.832	1	318	
English for Academic Purposes	1.420	8	5923	740
Second Language Writing	3.324	1	381	
Studies in Education Evaluation	1.099	2	458	229
TESOL Quarterly	2.256	1	688	
Linguistic and Education	0.892	1	240	
Procedia- Social and Behavioral Science	0.40	3	1447	482
English Language Teaching	1.276	2	422	211
Language and Communication	1.051	1	315	
Lingua	0.864	1	271	
Applied Linguistics	3.225	3	1110	370
Language Teaching and Research	0.26	1	664	
Language Teaching Research	2.086	6	3296	549
Total		65	29396	464

Power System Engineering Corpus (PSEC)

Research articles in this category were selected from the issues published during the 2010-2018 period in power system engineering journals. This could provide the opportunity to analyze the most recent research papers and to access a variety of articles in this discipline. All the research articles in this field were extracted from the IEEE website, which includes the most reliable


and high-rank journals in this discipline. Each of these articles could act as a model of advanced writing for PSE discourse community members. Tables 3 and 4 represent the detailed description of the PSE papers as written by L1-English and L1-Persian writers, respectively.

The two PSE corpora consisted of 170 research articles. Half of these articles had been written by L1-Persian writers affiliated with top state universities in Iran. The next half had been written by writers affiliated with the universities located in countries such as USA, UK and Australia.

Table 3.

Corpus of Research Article Conclusions Written by L1-English Writers in Power System Engineering

Journals	Impact factor	Number of articles	Word count
IEEE Transactions on Circuits and Systems I	2.823	1	74
IEEE Sensors Journal	2.617	1	84
IEEE Journal of Quantum Electronics	2.069	1	219
IEEE Power and Energy Technology Systems		1	351
IEEE Transactions on Image Processing	5.071	1	218
Electric Power Systems Research	2.856	1	104
Applied Energy	7.900	1	364
IEEE Transactions on Industrial Informatics	5.43	1	162
IEEE Transactions on Power Delivery	3.35	5	1203
IEEE Transactions on Computer-Aided Design of Integrated Circuits and Systems	2.089	1	109
IEEE Transactions on Smart Grid	7.364	6	1111
IEEE Transactions on Industry Applications	2.743	1	116
IEEE Transactions on Microwave Theory and Techniques	3.176	1	91
IEEE Transactions on Power Systems	5.255	30	7910
IEEE Transactions on Computational Imaging		1	327
IEEE Access	3.557	2	733
IEEE Transactions on Energy Conversion	3.767	1	122
IET Generation, Transmission & Distribution	2.618	1	164
IEEE Transactions on Wireless Communications	5.888	5	1112


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Journals	Impact factor	Number of articles	Word count
IEEE Transactions on Very Large-Scale Integration (VLSI) Systems	1.744	1	99
Reliability Engineering and System Safety	4.139	1	323
Power Sources	6.945	1	189
Lightwave Technology	3.652	3	617
Proceedings of the IEEE	9.107	1	177
IEEE Transactions on Vehicular Technology	4.432	2	274
IEEE Transactions on Industrial Electronics	7.05	1	61
IEEE Transactions on Power Electronics	6.812	6	1529
IEEE Transactions on Components, Packaging and Manufacturing Technology	1.66	2	458
IEEE Transactions on Sustainable Energy	6.235	1	204
IEEE Transactions on Audio, Speech, and Language Processing	1.877	1	103
IEEE Wireless Communication	9.202	1	163
Journal of Modern Power Systems and Clean Energy	1.532	1	150
Total		85	18921

Table 4.

Corpus of Research Article Conclusions Written by LI-Persian Writers in Power System Engineering

Journals	Impact factor	Number	Word count
Electrical Power and Energy Systems	3.610	1	259
IEEE Transactions on Power Delivery	3.35	9	2071
IEEE Transactions on Smart Grid	7.364	6	1044
IEEE Transactions on Power Systems	5.255	14	2686
Energy	4.968	2	655
IET Generation, Transmission & Distribution	2.618	7	1513
IEEE Transactions on Instrumentation and Measurement	2.794	2	244
IEEE Transactions on Microwave Theory and Techniques	3.176	5	778
IET Renewable Power Generation	3.488	1	424
IEEE Systems Journal	4.337	3	560
Journal of Lightwave Technology	3.652	2	382

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Journals	Impact factor	Number	Word count
IEEE Transactions on Industrial Electronics	7.05	3	422
IEEE Transactions on Power Electronics	6.812	4	552
Canadian Journal of Electrical and Computer Engineering	0.973	1	102
IEEE Journal of Photovoltaics	3.075	1	223
IEEE Sensors Journal	2.617	1	112
IEEE Transactions on Automatic Control	5.007	1	64
IEEE Transactions on Very Large-Scale Integration (VLSI) Systems	1.744	1	92
IEEE Transactions on Vehicular Technology	4.432	1	94
IEEE Transactions on Transportation Electrification	---	1	208
IEEE Transactions on Sustainable Energy	6.235	2	410
IEEE Transactions on Circuits and Systems I	2.823	6	1002
IEEE Transactions on Circuits and Systems II	2.45	3	352
IEEE Transactions on Energy Conversion	3.767	4	909
IEEE Transactions on Industrial Informatics	5.43	3	632
IEEE Transactions on Industry Applications	2.743	1	119
Total		85	15909

Instrumentation

Computer Programs

In this study, the identification and analysis of generalization stance markers were studied using three computer programs. All these were affordable, accessible, available, and free online programs. In the following sections, the detailed description of three computer programs used in this analysis can be seen.

Adobe Acrobat Reader, an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software, has been developed by Adobe Inc. It was used to view, read, print, scan, and manage Portable Document Formats (PDF) files. Also, it served as a strong format converter tool converting PDF files to editable ones, including text and word. In this research, Adobe Acrobat Reader was employed to read PDF files and produce plain texts which could be uploaded to AntConc 3.5.7. (Anthony, 2018).


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AntConc 3.5.7. is an accessible and free online concordancing program to find specific words or phrases and count the occurrence of keywords in a corpus. In this study, AntConc 3.5.7 (Anthony, 2018) was used to identify target generalization markers in all corpora. The texts were uploaded to this computer program to locate and count all occurrences of target stance markers, showing the distribution of generalization and qualified-generalization markers (Aull et al., 2017). It allowed us to look up individual words or phrases in their contexts of occurrence (Akinci, 2016). This program also presented the name of the articles in which the target stance markers were identified, thereby showing the repetitive use of stance features by a single writer. It was also used to rank target intensifiers and indefinite pronouns based on their frequency and to determine the occurrence of each of them in research article conclusions.

Excel 2016. is an affordable and commercial computer program providing an opportunity for researchers to upload quantitative data to manipulate and make charts or graphs representing the statistical information. In this study, the frequencies were uploaded to Excel 2016 to generate statistical data and to normalize frequencies in the four corpora. Data, functions, and frequencies could be compared as well.

Data Analysis

Once the text formats of conclusion sections were produced by Adobe Acrobat software, they were uploaded to AntConc 3.5.7 (Anthony, 2018). As the total number of words in each corpus was less than one million words, the number of occurrences of the two groups of generalization markers would be less than the normalized frequency of 20 per one million words. While some grammatical phrases implied the generality of claims, they were not included in the category of target generalization markers, as analyzing such idiomatic

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phrases could be a challenging and time-consuming task (Aull et al., 2017). Table 5 shows the list of such idioms in both disciplines. To do concordance analyses, the list of generalization and qualified-generalization markers, as represented in table 6, was adopted from the model proposed by Aull et al. (2017). This model was selected as it included both indefinite pronouns and intensifiers acting as generalization and qualified-generalization devices in academic writing.

Table 5.

Idiomatic Phrases Excluded from the Two Corpora

Applied linguistic corpus	Power System Engineering corpus
<i>In this very journals, what matters most, have all been judged, at all, (not) after all, be all right, if this study suggests anything, as always, at the very least, in all, first of all, above all, not after all, as many as, as many times as, all we can say</i>	<i>First of all</i>

Table 6.

Classification of Epistemic Stance Markers Indicating Generality (Adopted from Aull et al. (2017))

Generalization Markers	
Intensifiers	Indefinite Pronouns
<i>Extremely, Fully, Most, Really, Remarkably, Very, Empirically, Usually, Always, Never, Typically, Globally, Optimally, Essentially, Actually, Clearly.</i>	<i>Both, No one, Nothing, Neither, None, Everyone, All, Every, Anything, Many, Any, Most, Plenty, Whatever, Several, Much, Others, Either, Ones.</i>

Each category of generalization and qualified-generalization markers contained different numbers of target items. The recurrence of indefinite pronouns and intensifiers was quantitatively examined in the conclusion sections of all corpora. The use of each target stance marker was also compared. The function of each stance marker was examined by analyzing the

target key terms. Finally, the frequency and rhetorical use of stance markers were analyzed and compared in the conclusion sections of the corpora.

Results

Epistemic Stance Markers in the AL Corpora

To address the first research question posed in this study, Tables 7 and 8 represent the lists of all stance markers in the L1-English and L1-Persian AL corpora, respectively. As all had a minimum frequency of 18 times per million, they were selected for analysis. As can be seen, totally, the L1-English AL corpus included 413 generalization markers and 22 qualified-generalization markers. Therefore, generalization markers approximately comprised 0.8% of this corpus. In addition, qualified-generalization markers approximately comprised 0.03% of this corpus. Most of them were indefinite pronouns rather than intensifiers. The following examples represent the use of intensifier, indefinite pronoun, and qualifier in the L1-English AL corpus, respectively:

- (1) While this question is beyond the scope of the current discussion, these data corroborate findings that academic language, when taught as isolated words and in top-down ways, can disengage and distance students further from the very forms and structures of language that serve as criteria for their future academic success. (E1-AL, intensifiers)
- (2) That is not to say, however, that flexible WIL pedagogy that balances writing to learn and learning to write in response to linguistic diversity and in ways that address all students' needs cannot be successful. (E1-AL, indefinite pronouns)
- (3) However, not all of the writing in doctoral dissertations is completely appropriate and apt, and hence EAP instructors, ideally in consultation with disciplinary experts, may need to distinguish between

extracts which are suitable for students to emulate and other non-standard cases. (E1-AL, qualifiers)

Table 7.

Distribution of Generalization Stance Markers in the L1-English and L1-Persian AL Corpora

Intensifiers	L1- English AL corpus			L1-Persian AL corpus		
	Frequency	Range	Frequency	Range	Frequency	Range
	target corpus	Per one million words	target corpus	target corpus	Per one million words	target corpus
<i>Extremely</i>	8	145.2	4	0		
<i>Fully</i>	3	54.4	3	3	87.2	3
<i>Really</i>	2	36.3	2	0		
<i>Remarkably</i>	1	18.1	1	0		
<i>Very</i>	10	181.5	9	19	552.7	16
<i>Most</i>	34	617.4	24	18	523.6	16
<i>Empirically</i>	2	36.3	2	3	87.2	3
<i>Usually</i>	1	18.1	1	2	58.1	2
<i>Always</i>	4	72.6	4	2	58.1	2
<i>Never</i>	1	18.1	1	3	87.2	2
<i>Typically</i>	11	199.7	8	3	87.2	3
<i>Globally</i>	0			1	29.0	1
<i>Optimally</i>	0			0		
<i>Essentially</i>	1	18.1	1	2	58.1	2
<i>Actually</i>	5	90.7	5	4	116.3	4
<i>Clearly</i>	6	108.9	6	5	145.4	4
Indefinite pronouns						
<i>Both</i>	92	1,670.7	45	56	1,629.0	34
<i>No one</i>	0			1	29.0	1
<i>Nothing</i>	0			1	29.0	1
<i>Neither</i>	3	54.4	1	2	58.1	2
<i>None</i>	1	18.1	1	0		
<i>Everyone</i>	0			0		
<i>All</i>	53	962.4	29	24	698.1	21
<i>Every</i>	4	72.6	4	8	232.7	5
<i>Anything</i>	0			0		
<i>Many</i>	38	690.0	22	11	319.9	8

Intensifiers	L1- English AL corpus			L1-Persian AL corpus		
	Frequency		Range	Frequency		Range
	target corpus	Per one million words	target corpus	target corpus	Per one million words	target corpus
<i>Any</i>	31	562.9	22	23	669.07	16
<i>Most</i>	19	345.0	17	9	261.8	8
<i>Plenty</i>	0			1	29.0	1
<i>Whatever</i>	3	54.4	3	3	87.2	3
<i>Several</i>	30	544.7	23	10	290.9	9
<i>Much</i>	17	308.7	14	11	319.9	10
<i>Others</i>	22	399.5	10	3	87.2	2
<i>Either</i>	7	127.1	7	6	174.5	6
<i>Ones</i>	4	72.6	4	7	203.6	7

On the other hand, the L1-Persian AL corpus consisted of 34,376 words. Overall, there were 241 generalization markers and 14 qualified generalization markers in this corpus. Hence, the generalization markers and qualified-generalization markers accounted for around 0.7% and 0.04% of this corpus, respectively. Most of them were indefinite pronouns rather than intensifiers. The following examples represent the use of intensifier, indefinite pronoun, and qualifier in L1-Persian AL corpus, respectively:

- (4) As the analysis amply illustrates, the two participants' voices *clearly* indicate that their language use and learning were propelled by vivid visions of how they saw themselves in relation to English.
- (5) *Both* groups of teachers need to be exposed to the relevant theoretical and empirical literature on EAP instruction.
- (6) It is *not always* easy to determine the developmental readiness of individual learners.

As can be seen, L1-English writers in applied linguistics used 14 of all target intensifiers and 16 of target indefinite pronouns. More specifically, L1-

English AL writers used *very*, *most*, *typically*, *both*, *all* and *many* more frequently, as compared to other intensifiers and indefinite pronouns. In addition, there were 10 qualified-generalization markers in the L1-English AL corpus. These writers used *not always* and *not all* more frequently than other qualified-generalization markers. On the other hand, there were 12 different intensifiers and 15 indefinite pronouns in the L1-Persian AL corpus. Specifically, L1-Persian writers used *very*, *most*, *clearly*, *both*, *all* and *any* more frequently than other intensifiers and indefinite pronouns. In addition, there were nine qualified-generalization markers in the L1-Persian AL corpus. These writers used *not always*, *not usually*, *almost all* and *so many* more frequently than others.

Table 8.

Distribution of Qualified-Generalization Stance Markers in the Two AL Corpora

List of items	L1-English AL corpus			L1-Persian AL corpus		
	Frequency		Range	Frequency		Range
	target corpus	Per one million words	target corpus	target corpus	Per one million words	target corpus
<i>Not usually</i>	2	36.3	2	2	58.1	2
<i>Not always</i>	8	145.2	8	3	87.2	2
<i>Not clearly</i>	0			1	29.0	1
<i>Not fully</i>	2	36.3	2	0		
<i>Almost all</i>	1	18.1	1	2	58.1	2
<i>Not all</i>	4	72.6	4	1	29.0	1
<i>% of all</i>	0			1	29.0	1
<i>Virtually all</i>	1	18.1	1	0		
<i>Not every</i>	0			1	29.0	1
<i>Almost every</i>	1	18.1	1	0		
<i>So many</i>	1	18.1	1	2	58.1	2
<i>Not much</i>	0			1	29.0	1
<i>Not so much</i>	1	18.1	1	0		
<i>Not others</i>	1	18.1	1	0		

Epistemic Stance Markers in the PSE Corpora

To address the second questions raised in this research, Tables 9 and 10 summarize the detailed information related to generalization and qualified-generalization markers in the L1-English and L1-Persian PSE corpora, respectively. All had the minimum frequency of 52 times per million; therefore, they were selected for analysis. As mentioned, the L1-English PSE corpus consisted of 18,921 words and included a total of 164 generalizations and two qualified-generalization markers. Therefore, generalization markers approximately comprised 1.0 % of this corpus. In addition, qualified-generalization markers almost accounted for 0.01 % of the L1-English PSE corpus. Most of them were indefinite pronouns rather than intensifiers. On the other hand, the L1-Persian PSE corpus consisted of 15,909 words. It had a total of 99 generalizations and 4 qualified-generalization markers. As a result, generalization markers and qualified generalization markers accounted for 0.5 % and 0.02 % in this corpus, respectively. Most of them were indefinite pronouns rather than intensifiers. In addition, the list of 5 typical qualified-generalization markers in the PSE corpora has been represented.

Table 9.

Distribution of Generalization Stance Markers in the PSE Corpora

Intensifiers	L1-English PSE corpus			L1-Persian PSE corpus		
	Frequency		Range	Frequency		Range
	target corpus	Per one million words	target corpus	target corpus	Per one million words	target corpus
<i>Extremely</i>	2	105.7	2	0		
<i>Fully</i>	4	211.4	4	8	502.8	5
<i>Really</i>	0			0		
<i>Remarkably</i>	0			0		
<i>Very</i>	13	687.0	11	8	502.8	7
<i>Most</i>	6	317.1	5	8	502.8	8
<i>Empirically</i>	0			0		

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Intensifiers	L1-English PSE corpus			L1-Persian PSE corpus		
	Frequency		Range	Frequency		Range
	target corpus	Per one million words	target corpus	target corpus	Per one million words	target corpus
<i>Usually</i>	3	158.5	2	0		
<i>Always</i>	0			0		
<i>Never</i>	3	158.5	3	0		
<i>Typically</i>	1	52.8	1	0		
<i>Globally</i>	1	52.8	1	2	125.7	1
<i>Optimally</i>	3	158.5	3	1	62.8	1
<i>Essentially</i>	0			0		
<i>Actually</i>	0			0		
<i>Clearly</i>	2	105.7	2	1	62.8	1
Indefinite pronouns						
<i>Both</i>	19	1,004.1	16	31	1,948.5	23
<i>No one</i>	0			0		
<i>Nothing</i>	0			2	125.7	2
<i>Neither</i>	0			1	62.8	1
<i>None</i>	0			0		
<i>Everyone</i>	0			0		
<i>All</i>	14	739.9	13	15	942.8	13
<i>Every</i>	1	52.8	1	1	62.8	1
<i>Anything</i>	0			0		
<i>Many</i>	11	581.3	11	3	188.5	3
<i>Any</i>	16	845.6	12	5	314.2	5
<i>Most</i>	1	52.8	1	1	62.8	1
<i>Plenty</i>	0			0		
<i>Whatever</i>	1	52.8	1	0		
<i>Several</i>	14	739.9	12	7	440.0	7
<i>Much</i>	3	158.5	2	4	251.4	4
<i>Others</i>	0			1	62.8	1
<i>Either</i>	3	158.5	3	2	125.7	2
<i>Ones</i>	2	105.7	2	2	125.7	2

As can be seen in the above two tables, L1-English writers in the field of power system engineering used 10 of all target intensifiers and 11 of target indefinite pronouns. More specifically, L1-English writers in this field of

engineering used *very*, *most*, *fully*, *both*, *any*, *all* and *several* more frequently than other intensifiers and indefinite pronouns. There were two qualified-generalization markers in the L1-English PSE corpus with more than 18,000 words. These writers used *not very* and *not globally* to guard against the generalizations that may not be necessarily true according to the claims made. The results also revealed that generalization stance markers and qualified-generalization stance markers included 0.62 % and 0.01 % of the L1-English PSE corpus, respectively. The following examples represent the use of intensifiers, indefinite pronouns and qualifiers in this corpus, respectively:


Table 10.

Distribution of Qualified-Generalization Stance Markers in the PSE Corpora

List of items	L1-English PSE corpus			L1-Persian PSE corpus		
	Frequency		Range	Frequency		Range
	target corpus	Per one million words	target corpus	target corpus	Per one million words	target corpus
<i>Not very</i>	1	52.8	1	1	62.8	1
<i>Often very</i>	0	-	-	1	62.8	1
<i>Nearly</i>	1	52.8	1	0	-	-
<i>globally</i>	0	-	-	1	62.8	1
<i>Not many</i>	0	-	-	1	62.8	1
<i>Almost all</i>						

(7) Evaluating the algorithm with real data will be performed in the future, once the proposed CT system is *fully* operational

(8) Furthermore, although the analysis is done for only one 50-kW distribution transformer, the results are scalable to a general distribution circuit *supplying several* distribution transformers.

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(9) A small "gap" between the SOCP lower bound and the AC-QP solution indicates that a nearly globally optimal outcome has been achieved.

On the other hand, there were six different intensifiers and 13 indefinite pronouns in the L1-Persian PSE corpus. Specifically, L1-Persian writers used *fully*, *very*, *most*, *both*, *all* and *several* more frequently than other intensifiers and indefinite pronouns. In addition, there were 4 qualified-generalization markers in this corpus with over 15,000 words. L1-Persian published writers frequently drew on *not very*, *often very*, *almost all* and *not many* as qualified-generalization markers. The results also revealed that both generalization stance markers included 0.62 % of the L1-Persian PSE corpus; however, qualified-generalization stance markers made up 0.02 % of this corpus. The following examples represent the use of intensifiers, indefinite pronouns and qualifiers, respectively:


(10) The results show that the double-star coupler, decentralized ring and hybrid topologies are the most reliable architectures compared with others.

(11) In addition to the base case scenario simulation and stochastic simulation considering the wind speed uncertainty, sensitivity analysis to important market parameters, regulations, and strategic behaviors in both electricity and TGC markets have been done.

(12) The estimation error is far below 1% for almost all faults, including those occurring on lines that are not equipped with any measuring device.

Comparison of the Two Corpora

In regard to the third research question, this study compared the total frequency and range of generalization and qualified-generalization stance

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markers in the conclusions of AL and PSE articles. Tables 11 and 12 display the normalized frequency and the range of generalization and qualified markers in the AL and PSE corpora, respectively. The results of this comparison indicated that generally, the occurrence of generalization stance markers in L1-English corpora was more than that of L1-Persian corpora in both disciplines. Moreover, L1-Persian writers tended to use qualified-generalization markers more than their English counterparts. There was also a discrepancy in the occurrence of target stance markers in the two fields. More specifically, the AL corpus included a total of 14,191 generalization markers and 788 qualified-generalization markers per one million words, as compared to a total of 12,481 generalization markers and 357 qualified-generalization markers per one million words in the PSE corpus.

Table 11.

Frequency (Normalized by 1 Million Words) of Generalization and Qualified Generalization Markers in the AL Corpora

items	L1-English AL corpus	L1-Persian AL corpus	Total Per one million words
	Frequency In target corpus/ Per one million words	Frequency In target corpus/ Per one million words	
generalization stance markers			
intensifiers	89/ 1,615.4	65/ 1,890.1	154/ 3,505.5
indefinite pronouns	324/ 5,883.1	176/ 5,118.9	500/ 11,002
Qualified- generalization stance markers	22/ 399	14/ 406.5	36/805.5

Table 12.

Frequency (Normalized by 1 Million Words) of Generalization and Qualified Generalization Markers in the PSE Corpora

items	L1-English corpus	PSE	L1-Persian corpus	PSE
	Frequency In target corpus/ Per one million words		Frequency In target corpus/ Per one million words	Total Per one million words
Generalization stance markers				
Intensifiers	38/ 2,008		28/ 1,759.7	66/ 3,767.7
Indefinite pronouns	85/ 4,491.9		75/ 4,713.7	160/ 9,205.6
Qualified- generalization stance markers	2/ 105.6		4/ 251.2	6/ 356.8

Rhetorical Comparison

Generalization Markers

To further address the third research question, some rhetorical comparison was also made between the corpora used. Accordingly, each stance marker was analyzed in order to identify its rhetorical use. The results revealed 65.7 % of L1-English AL corpus included generalization stance markers that "emphasize wide applicability of claims", and 29.1 % "project shared ideas of claims or beliefs" (Aull et al., 2017. p.36). In comparison to the L1-English AL corpus, 61.9 % of L1-Persian AL corpus consisted of generalization stance markers revealing the extensive coverage of their claims, and 32.3 % of them yielded the common belief or opinion in particular contexts.

Furthermore, analysis of generalization stance markers showed that L1-English PSE writers emphasized the wide applicability of their claims in 61.1 % of cases; they also maintained a common belief or opinion in 37.1 % of the

contexts. However, L1-Persian PSE writers used generalization markers to highlight the wide acceptance of their claims in 59 % of cases, as well as conveying a common belief or opinion in only 37.1 % of contexts.

As illustrated below, examples 13 and 14 represent an intensifier and indefinite pronouns, respectively, to yield the applicability of claims in the larger community. More specifically, the writer used the term *always* in excerpt 13 to state that the integrative written tasks are used before discrete point items at all times in that study to have valid and reliable results. Moreover, excerpts 15 and 16 include an intensifier and indefinite pronoun to emphasize the acceptance of claims in a vast academic setting, respectively. More specifically, the writer(s) used the term '*most*' in 16 to highlight the fact that learners are mostly silent in the EFL classrooms. The first two examples were borrowed from the L1-English AL corpus, and the third and the fourth ones were extracted from the L1-Persian AL corpus in this study:

(13) Third, in this study, discrete-point items *always* preceded the integrative written task; a different sequence may have led to different results due to potential practice effects.

(14) Although *most* would welcome a more reflexive and context-sensitive attention to the construction on interview interaction, there may be a danger that we focus too much on the how rather than the content of what the interviewer is saying.

(15) Moreover, the results of the survey revealed that while the NES raters perceived grammar as the *most* difficult and organization as the *most* important criterion to rate, the Iranians found these criteria as the least difficult and the least important, respectively.

(16) Currently, in *most* of the EFL classes in Iran, learners are regarded as passive recipients of knowledge and the main focus of language


teaching in these classrooms is based on learning language through grammar, memorization, and vocabulary.

Qualified-Generalization Markers

Expert writers also use qualified-generalization markers called qualifiers to convey the idea that their positions are true in most cases or "to make near-generalization" (MNG) (Aull et al., 2017. p. 38). In addition, qualifiers are used to guard against possible generalization. Thus, in the continuance of addressing the third research question, 3.6 % of L1-English AL corpus included qualifiers that "made near-generalization" (MNG), and 5.3 % of them were used to "counter possible generalization" (CPG) (Aull et al., 2017. p.36). In comparison, 2.42 % of the L1-Persian AL corpus consisted of qualified-generalization stance markers that made near generalization, and 3.2 % of them "countered possible generalization".

Moreover, the use of qualified-generalization markers in the PSE conclusion sections indicated that L1-English writers employed qualifiers to convey the applicability of claims in nearly all settings and to refuse possible generalization of claims in 9.5 % of cases. However, 1.9 % of the sentences containing qualifiers made near-generalization and counter possible generalization of claims in the L1-Persian PSE corpus.

As illustrated, L1- English AL writers used qualifiers that preceded immediately before *all*, as a generalization stance marker, to make near generalizations, as in example 17. More specifically, the writer used the term '*almost all*' in 17 in order to emphasize that comprehension speech is a goal for a large group of learners, not all of them. In addition, the writer used the term '*not*' in order to negate the meaning of the sentence and state that learners' exposure to language is not enough in most cases. In addition, L1-Persian AL writers utilized qualifiers preceding before an intensifier and indefinite

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pronoun to counter possible generalization. Example 17 was extracted from the L1-English AL corpus, and the last two ones were obtained from the L1-Persian AL corpus:

(17) Pronunciation is an essential component for comprehensible speech, a goal for *almost all* language learners.


(18) This fact would underline the importance of direct approaches to teaching vocabulary, particularly in EFL contexts where learners do *not usually* have enough exposure to the language to learn words incidentally.

(19) *Not every* learner is equally adept at using communication strategies or commands the same range of communication strategies.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study compared the stance markers expressing generality in the conclusions of research articles published in AL and PSE international journals. Notably, it was predicted that different clusters of generalization and qualified-generalization would be associated with L1-English writers rather than their L1-Persian counterparts. The study also compared the structural and rhetorical uses of stance markers clusters by L1- English and L1-Persian AL and PSE writers in the conclusion sections.


Overall, the results suggested that the use of stance markers could be considered as an important part of the research articles conclusions. L1-English authors tended to use generalization stance markers rather than qualifiers. However, L1-Persian writers exercised caution in employing generalization stance markers and tended to use qualified-generalization markers even when they were sure regarding the truth and generalizability of the claims made (Schemeleva, 2019). Cultural differences could be regarded

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as one of the more plausible reasons why these writers faced difficulty and had special reservations in academic settings (Biber 2006a, 2006b).

Furthermore, the frequency of generalization stance markers in the AL corpus was generally more than that of the PSE corpus; this could be because AL writers had passed some English writing and grammar courses, showing expertise in academic writing, as compared to their PSE counterparts. In addition, the mean length of words in the PSE conclusion sections was less than that of the AL ones; it should also be noted PSE and AL belong to hard and soft sciences, respectively. Similar to this study, Abdollahzadeh (2011) revealed that American English writers utilized attitude markers, a subcategory of stance markers, more frequently than Iranian L1-Persian counterparts in the discussion sections of research articles. It was postulated that the variations occurring in the use of attitude markers could be ascribed to the cultural discrepancies of writers. In addition, Hyland (2011) showed that academic authors used stance devices more frequently in soft sciences than they did in hard ones, while Taki and Jafarpour (2012) identified fewer occurrences of attitude markers and more frequent application of hedges in chemistry as well as sociology articles, whose authors were native speakers of English, as compared to their Iranian L1-Persian counterparts.

The results, therefore, revealed that both L1-English and L1-Persian writers used indefinite pronouns rather than intensifiers to convey the generality of their claims. The rationale was that the number of indefinite pronouns observed in the current analysis was more than that of intensifiers. In addition, the authors did not tend to use intensifiers as frequently as indefinite pronouns since the latter did not enhance the propositional meaning of a clause in all contexts. In other words, they mostly served as modifiers improving the emotional meaning of clauses in different contexts. Similar to this study, Pho (2008) indicated that academic writers tended to use first-

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person pronouns to show their authorial voice in applied linguistics and educational technology. In addition to target qualifiers in this study, there were other discursal elements like prepositions (e.g., *without*) at writers' disposal to convey certainty and generality conceptually; however, prepositions were not as frequent as qualifiers or generalization stance markers in each discipline.

Furthermore, the analysis of the rhetorical uses of generalization stance markers revealed that it was not an easy task to distinguish the certainty and generality of claims (Schemeleva, 2019). As a matter of fact, the rhetorical uses of stance markers depend on the academic and textual context in which they occur (Hyland, 2005). Academic authors tended to use generalization stance markers and qualifiers to emphasize the wide acceptance of their claims in a bigger community and show their negative stance toward possible generalization of claims. The authors aimed at persuading and engaging readers who read the conclusion sections. Thus, they used those stance markers which had more persuasive characteristics instead of employing statements of shared ideas or the near-generalization possibility of claims. It should be noted that certainty and generality characteristics of generalization stance markers may overlap with each other (Aull et al., 2017; Schemeleva, 2019; Hyland, 2008a, 2008b); therefore, most of the previous studies were concerned with certainty rather than generality.

Similar to Aull et al. (2017), this analysis indicated that the authors used different discursal features, including hyperbolic impressions, to emphasize the applicability of their claims. These clusters contributed to communicating negative or positive propositional meanings of statements. Notably, L1-English AL writers used these clusters more frequently than L1-Persian AL or PSE writers did. The reason could lie in cultural differences and awareness of how to use various discursive features in an appropriate manner (Cortes,

2011). Moreover, AL writers used them more frequently because of the nature of their discipline, which was a soft one. In other words, PSE writers rarely used these markers due to the nature of writing in hard sciences. Therefore, academic writers need to use various types of stance markers to improve the persuasive quality of their writings and to engage readers in the relevant contexts.

The results obtained in the present study suggest that linguistic entities expressing stance, the way they are distributed, and the functions to which they are associated should be all brought to the attention of students in the writing courses, especially those intended to prepare students for writing research papers (Cortes, 2011, Hyland 2008a). As also emphasized by Hyland (2008b), different disciplines rely on different linguistic choices to argue and persuade their readers. Therefore, EAP course designers, material developers and teachers should help novice writers to be exposed to the stance expressions commonly applied in their target genres. By learning different stance expressions, novice writers can better find the relationships between the writer, audience, and propositional meaning.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest for this study.


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