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Stance in Academic Discourse: A Conceptual Paper

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper examines stance in academic discourse, emphasizing that evaluation, self-positioning, and alignment with others are a part of the interactive process to build meaning. This paper is grounded in the framework of Hyland's Interaction Model (2005), Douglas Biber's Lexico-Grammatical Pattern (2006), and Du Bois' Stance Triangle (2007). The study observes stance as complex and doesn't stand alone. This study indicates stance as an essential part of meaning-making, strengthening writers' credibility, increase the writer's involvement in academic discourse by exploring these three frameworks. This conceptual paper explores an interactive approach that views stance as the result of the dialogue between the writer and the reader, and the grammatical approach highlights how stance is expressed through language choice, such as the use of modality and sentence arrangement. It can be understood that academic writers intentionally choose certain forms of language to convey knowledge, certainty level, and stance in their writing. Besides, this study proposes integrated conceptual frameworks that help the teacher and the researcher to comprehend stance concepts in a more structured way and easier to understand. It affirms that improving students' awareness of stance in language use can strengthen their critical thinking ability, writing skills, and academic communication.
Keywords: Academic discourse, academic literacy, critical thinking, stance

Introduction

Stance describes how people generally think, feel, or position themselves in the case of their participation in the interaction. According to Smirnova et al. (2025), Stance is academic discourse that is not only related to the dissemination of information or facts, following the definition proposed by Biber et al. (1999). Thus, Stance is understood as a

complex concept as it is realized through various linguistic resources which allow writer to show evaluation, alignment, or their position toward an idea or statement (Dong & Buckingham, 2020). This concept is frequently used to explain how people show their position or stance when communicating. According to Kiesling (2022), stance is the speaker's way to develop their position in signifying the level of politeness, degree of certainty, and affective and emotional attitudes.

The manner in which authors or speakers express their opinions and attitudes through language is known as their stance. It encompasses how authors portray themselves and convey their assessments, beliefs, and degree of dedication to what they say, either by outright claiming their own authority or by separating themselves from their arguments (Hyland, 2005). Stance is also seen as a social action, where individuals openly evaluate ideas, position themselves and others, and show agreement or alignment within a particular social and cultural context (Du Bois, 2007). More generally, stance is comprehensible as the way speakers and writers position themselves through the use of language, stance, feeling, and commitment level to a proposition or to an interlocutor (Du Bois, 2007; Kiesling, 2022). In academic discourse, stance also reflects how writers construct their identity while communicating attitudes, feelings, and evaluations toward their claims and readers (Alghazo et al., 2021).

Stance markers are language elements used to show the level of certainty, involvement, or uncertainty toward the information conveyed. According to Hyland (2005), these elements are parts of a wider stance framework that explains how writers build relationships with the reader and position themselves in academic discourse. By using stance markers, the writer can arrange how strong the claim is, display skill while still giving space for other views. In the academic context, stance markers have a pivotal role that can help writers convey their idea appropriately and carefully, supporting it with clear certainty. This is needed to maintain credibility and support effective involvement in academic literacy. Drawing on Hyland's Interaction Model (2005), Biber's Lexico-Grammatical Approach to Stance (2006), and Du Bois' Stance Triangle (2007), this study aims to investigate the stance frameworks and explain how stance functions in academic discourse, especially in expressing the writer's belief, identity, and level of certainty in constructing and conveying information. To provide a comprehensive understanding of *stance* in academic discourse, this study draws on three complementary frameworks: Hyland's (2005) Interaction Model, Biber's (2006) Lexico-Grammatical Pattern, and Du Bois's (2007) Stance Triangle. Together, these frameworks explain *stance* from interpersonal, linguistic, and interactional perspectives, offering a comprehensive basis for interpreting the findings.

Hyland's Interaction Model (2005)

According to Hyland's (2005) interactional framework, academic writing is a kind of communication between the writer and the reader. In this model, interaction is divided into two main parts: stance and engagement. Look at Figure 1 below:

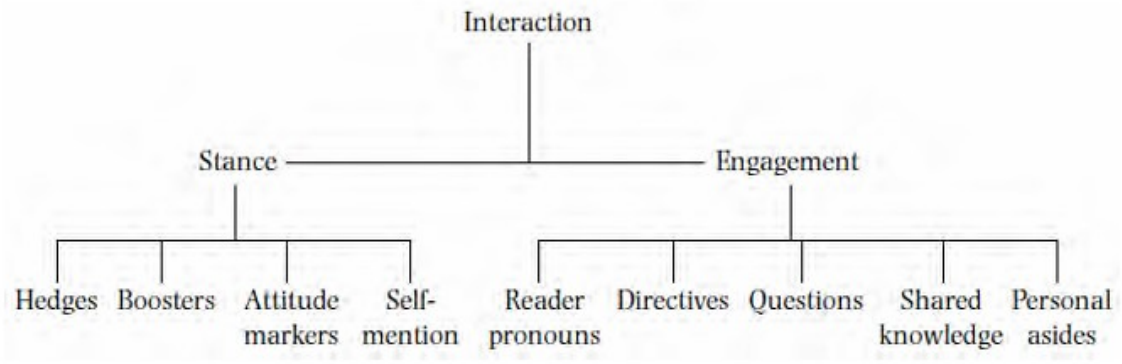


Figure 1. Hyland's Interaction Model (2005)

Hyland (2005) explains that interaction in academic writing has two main types: stance and engagement. Stance focuses on the writer and shows how the author expresses their position or viewpoint in a text. A writer's stance is revealed through the use of hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions. Hedges are word expressions used to show caution or uncertainty. Writers use hedges when they do not want to sound too strong or absolute about a claim. Common examples of hedges include may, might, possibly, seems, and suggests. Boosters are the opposite of hedges, which are used to show strong confidence and certainty about a statement. Writers use boosters when they want to emphasize that they strongly believe in a claim. Common examples are clearly, definitely, show, demonstrate, and in fact. Attitude markers express the writer's feelings, opinions, and evaluations, such as interestingly, surprisingly, and unfortunately. Meanwhile, self-mention refers to the explicit presence of the writer in the text to show their arguments or their decision through first-person pronouns such as I, we, my, or our.

Hyland (2005) claims that engagement elements are instruments used by authors to establish a connection with their audience. By using these components, authors demonstrate their audience awareness, engage readers in conversation, direct their focus, foresee questions, and motivate readers to actively participate in comprehending the work. Reader pronouns, instructions, questions, appeals to shared knowledge, and personal asides are the five categories into which Hyland (2005) divides interaction aspects. Reader pronouns are used to communicate directly with the reader. The most common ones are "you" and "your" that help the reader feel involved in the discussion. Directives are expressions that tell the reader what to do by guiding the reader in three ways, including textual acts which direct the reader to look at other parts of the text, physical acts which ask the reader to do something in real life, and Cognitive acts which encourage the reader to think about an idea or argument. An appeal to share knowledge refers to mentioning ideas or information that both the writer and reader already know to build and understand the argument together. Questions are used to involve the reader in a dialogue; they are mainly used to highlight important points or strengthen the writer's argument. Then, personal asides happen when the writer briefly stops the main argument and speaks directly to the reader.

Douglas Biber's Lexico-Grammatical Pattern (2006)

Biber's (2006) lexico-grammatical theory explains how writers express their opinions in academic writing through consistent words and language patterns. Writers

employ common language patterns like modal verbs, attitude adverbs, and sentence constructions with verbs, adjectives, or nouns to convey opinions or conviction rather than using single words. These patterns allow writers to communicate with readers in ways that adhere to discipline and academic standards, convey evaluation, and show how confident they are in their views. Biber's model shows that meanings related to knowledge, attitude, and communication are closely connected to grammatical choices. As a conceptual framework, this theory is useful for understanding how academic writers build arguments, express their voice, and construct knowledge across different academic texts clearly and systematically. The conceptual framework of stance is shown in Figure 2 below:

1. Modal and semi-modal verbs
- possibility/permission/ability: *may, might, can, could*
- necessity/obligation: *must, should, had better, have (had) to, got to, ought to*
- prediction/volition: *will, would, shall, be going to*

2. Adverbs
- **Epistemic**
  - **Certainty:** *actually, certainly, in fact*
  - **Likelihood:** *apparently, perhaps, possibly*
- **Attitude:** *amazingly, importantly, surprisingly*
- **Style:** *according to, generally, typically*

3. Complement clauses controlled by stance verbs, adjectives and nouns

3.1 Complement clauses controlled by stance verbs

3.1a Stance verb + *that*-clause
- **Epistemic verbs**
  - **Certainty:** *conclude, determine, know*
  - **Likelihood:** *believe, doubt, think*
- **Attitude verbs:** *expect, hope, worry*
- **Speech act and other communication verbs (non-factual):** *argue, claim, report, say*

3.1b Stance verb + *to*-clause
- **Probability verbs:** *appear, happen, seem, tend*
- **Mental (cognition/perception) verbs:** *believe, consider*
- **Desire/intention/decision verbs:** *intend, need, want*
- **Verbs of effort/facilitation:** *attempt, help, try*
- **Speech act and other communication verbs:** *advise, remind*

3.2 Complement clauses controlled by stance adjectives

3.2a Stance adjective + *that*-clause (often extraposed constructions)
- **Epistemic adjectives**
  - **Certainty:** *certain, clear, obvious*
  - **Likelihood:** *(un)likely, possible, probable*
- **Attitude/emotion adjectives:** *amazed, shocked, surprised*
- **Evaluation adjectives:** *essential, interesting, noteworthy*

3.2b Stance adjectives + *to*-clause (often extraposed constructions)
- **Epistemic adjectives**
  - **Certainty:** *certain, clear, obvious, sure*
  - **Likelihood:** *(un)likely, possible, probable*
- **Attitude/emotion adjectives:** *happy, pleased, surprised*
- **Evaluation adjectives:** *essential, important, necessary*
- **Ability or willingness adjectives:** *able, eager, willing*
- **Ease or difficulty adjectives:** *difficult, easy, hard*

3.3. Complement clauses controlled by stance nouns

3.3a Stance noun + *that*-clause
- **Epistemic nouns**
  - **Certainty:** *conclusion, fact, observation*
  - **Likelihood:** *assumption, claim, hypothesis*
- **Attitude nouns:** *hope, view*
- **communication nouns (non-factual):** *comment, proposal*

3.3b Stance noun + *to*-clause: *failure, obligation, ability, tendency*

Figure 2. Lexico-grammatical devices used for the study of stance (Biber, 2006).

Biber's (2006) theory of lexico-grammatical patterns explains that writers show their stance in academic writing through repeated and meaningful patterns of words and grammar, not just through single words. As shown in the table, stance is mainly expressed in three ways: by using modal and semi-modal verbs, stance adverbs, and clause structures that are controlled by verbs, adjectives, or nouns. Modal verbs like may, must,

and will assist authors in expressing their level of confidence, if something is required, or whether they are making a forecast. Stance adverbs can be used to convey attitudes, writing style, certainty, or possibilities. Additionally, complement clauses enable authors to incorporate their thoughts and assessments into sentence constructions using verbs (believe that, argue that), adjectives (it is necessary to, it is likely that), and nouns (the assumption that, the potential of). When combined, these linguistic patterns enable authors to carefully and academically convey their knowledge, opinions, and stance on the subject matter. Biber's framework is important in academic discourse because it offers a clear and systematic way to understand how academic writers build arguments, show certainty, and position themselves through common and recognizable language patterns.

The Stance Triangle of Du Bois (2007)

As the term *triangle* implies, stance-taking involves three related actions. Du Bois (2007) defines the concept of stance as three interrelated acts of evaluation, positioning, and alignment. Du Bois (2007) explains that the stance triangle is a model that shows how different parts of stance are connected. This model helps researchers understand meaning by linking what is clearly said to what is implied in interaction. In simple terms, it helps explain how people express attitudes, take positions, and relate to others in conversation. Through both explicit and implicit information, the model also helps identify how speakers build their identity in discourse. In order to describe how stances are created and constructed in linguistic exchanges, Du Bois (2007) proposed the idea of the stance triangle. This concept, which consists of three main elements, maintains that opinions are connected and do not exist in a vacuum: Stance Object (the subject of debate), Subject 1 (the first speaker), and Subject 2 (the second speaker). These three elements comprise the stance triangle, as shown in Figure 3 below.

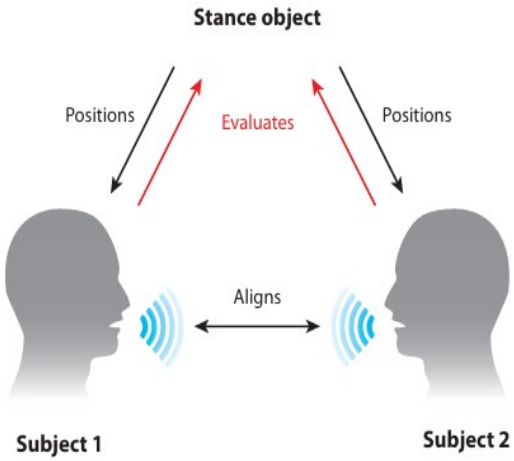


Figure 3. The Stance Triangle of Du Bois (2007)

Subject 1 refers to the first speaker who starts the conversation by uttering a sentence or statement. In the framework of Du Bois (2007), the first speaker not only conveys the information but also displays certain actions in the same moment. In the early stage of interaction, Speaker 1 usually introduces the topic by stating the moral value

and ideology, such as bad or good, feelings such as like and dislike, or levels of certainty, such as belief or doubt. By using this way, the speaker 1 indirectly take certain position, just like support, refusal, or belief in the idea. The beginning utterances also give a chance to Speaker 2 for giving the respond, both by stating agreement, rejection, or being neutral. Thus, 1 question from speaker 1 is quite enough to create a stance, a personal idea, and the pattern of early connection to the interlocutor.

Speaker 2's response is key to deciding the direction for further interaction. In shaping how the interaction develops. The way Speaker 2 responds is to show emotional attitude and things that they consider important in the conversation. By agreement, disagreement, or perception, the Speaker 2 can strengthen, question, or change the Speaker 1's viewpoint, and directly emphasize their position. At the same moment, this response also reflects the social relationship between the two speakers, such as adjacency, distance, or different perceptions. Overall, attitudes in conversation emerge from this back-and-forth exchange, not from one speaker alone.

Subjects 1 and 2 focus on the same thing, referred to as the Stance object. The object may be an idea, an occasion, or a particular subject under discussion. Language serves as a tool to convey the speaker's opinion, attitude, and social When people use language to communicate, these three things happen at the same time. Because of this, stance is more than just an individual's personal attitude; it is a process that constantly changes during engagement, assisting in the construction of meaning, revealing the speaker's identity, and promoting social connections in both academic and ordinary contexts. Standing regarding that item through this procedure. Subjects 1 and 2 offer an assessment, attitude, or evaluation of the same object since each participant assesses the stance of the object. Positive, negative, dubious, certain, agreeable, or disagreeable assessments or evaluations are all possible. According to Du Bois's theory (2007), evaluation is an essential component of stance because it enables the speaker to communicate both an epistemic stance, that also known as a degree of certainty, belief, or knowledge, and affective attitudes, such as emotions, feelings, or values. In other words, when someone speaks, they demonstrate how they evaluate the subject matter in addition to sharing their expertise.

Each issue demonstrates the speaker's social, ideological, and rational stance toward the stance object in addition to evaluating it. Positions can disclose a speaker's identity, level of experience, and social distance. For instance, one could present oneself as a critic, an expert, a layperson, or an impartial party. Here, posture plays a crucial role in the development of linguistic identities and social ties. The connection between Subjects 1 and 2 is the third element, aligns. Alignment refers to the extent to which the two subjects demonstrate alignment or misalignment with each other's attitudes. Subject 2 can align with Subject 1's evaluation and position, or conversely, reject and adopt an opposing position. This alignment process confirms that stances are formed through relationships between speakers, as one's stance emerges and is understood by observing the attitudes of others in interactions.

Overall, Du Bois's (2007) theory emphasizes that stance is how a person displays an attitude when interacting with others. This attitude is formed when someone evaluates a topic, positions themselves toward it, and responds to the other person's attitude simultaneously.

Conclusion

Stance is an important element in academic discourse that allows not only to convey the information but also show the personal view, the level of certainty, and one's professional identity. This conceptual paper indicates that stance is a key element in academic discourse in order to help the writer express their perception, give an opinion, show their certainty, and directly build the relationship between the speaker or writer-reader interaction. The study demonstrates that stance is not just about grammatical decisions but also about interaction and the construction of meaning by analyzing Hyland's Interaction Model (2005), Biber's Lexico-grammatical Patterns (2006), and Du Bois' Stance Triangle (2007). All three theories concur that stance helps writers position themselves, assess ideas, and establish credibility in academic works, despite the fact that each theory approaches stance from a different perspective.

These ideas differ mostly in what they emphasize. Using stance and engagement indicators in academic writing, Hyland's methodology examines how authors engage with readers. The grammatical and lexical patterns that writers frequently employ to convey viewpoint are given more consideration in Biber's framework. In contrast, Du Bois's Stance Triangle views stance as a social process in which speakers' or authors' assessment, alignment, and positioning create meaning. Although each theory focuses on a different aspect, all three agree that attitude is not passive; rather, it plays a significant and relevant role in how people develop knowledge and construct their identity through speech. However, there is currently a dearth of research that integrates interactional, grammatical, and social perspectives of posture because many previous studies simply used one theoretical approach rather than combining them.

This study is useful for academic discourse in order to clarify the understanding of stance in academic discourse by integrating these three ideas into a cohesive and understandable conceptual framework. Teachers can use the study's findings to design writing exercises that help students better comprehend and communicate their attitudes, which will help them write more confidently, critically, and successfully. Additionally, this paper gives the basic strong theory to further research related to stance in the academic context and English acquisition. To have a deep understanding of how learning that emphasizes attitudes can improve students' communication and academic writing skills. Future research is recommended to apply this integrated approach in classroom learning activities and corpus-based studies.

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