



## Metadiscursive Nouns in Doctoral Dissertations: A Comparison of Native and Nonnative Speakers of English

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## Doktora Tezlerinde Üstsöylem İsimleri: Anadili İngilizce ve Anadili İngilizce Olmayan Yazarların Karşılaştırılması

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## Metadiscursive Nouns in Doctoral Dissertations: A Comparison of Native and Nonnative Speakers of English

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### Abstract

In today's academic world, speaking to readers and creating a credible authorial self in academic texts by means of linguistic devices are essential to become a competent member of an academic discipline. Among these linguistic devices, metadiscourse receives a prominent place. Studies have suggested the key role of metadiscourse in achieving a persuasive academic claim-making. Surprisingly, far too little attention has been paid to the role of nouns in this process. Considering this gap, this study explicated the use of metadiscursive nouns in doctoral dissertations written by American academic writers of English and Turkish-speaking academics of English in a corpus of 60 doctoral dissertations by using the taxonomy of metadiscursive nouns suggested by Jiang and Hyland (2016). Specifically, it focused on how these nouns were employed by native and nonnative academic writers of English to signal their authorial stance in their doctoral dissertations. The frequency analysis was performed through Wordsmith Tool 6.0. Log likelihood statistic was applied to find out whether there was a statistical difference between these two groups of academic authors regarding the use of metadiscursive nouns. The results showed that both groups of academic writers displayed similarities on the overall use of metadiscursive nouns. In terms of categorical use, similar employment of metadiscursive nouns was also observed between the two corpora. Entity was the most frequently applied category, which was followed by attribute and relation. The frequency counts of these linguistic devices revealed their prominent role in establishing interaction in academic genres by offering writers a way of organizing their texts and mitigating their stance. Hence, they might be integrated to the curricula of academic writing courses.

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## Doktora Tezlerinde Üstsöylem İsimleri: Anadili İngilizce ve Anadili İngilizce Olmayan Yazarların Karşılaştırılması

### Öz

Günümüz akademik dünyasında, çeşitli dilsel ögeler kullanarak okuyucularla iletişim kurmak ve akademik yazılarda kabul edilir bir yazar duruşu sağlamak, akademik disiplinlerde etkin bir üye olmak için gereklidir. Bu dilsel ögeler arasında üstsöylem ögeleri önemli bir yere sahiptir. Araştırmalar üstsöylem ögelerinin ikna edici sav desteklemedeki anahtar rolünü ortaya koymuştur. Fakat isimlerin bu süreçteki rolü çok az incelenmiştir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmada üstsöylem isimlerinin rolü Amerikalı akademik yazarlar ve Türk akademik yazarlar tarafından yazılan 60 doktora tezinden oluşan bir derlemde Jiang ve Hyland (2016) tarafından oluşturulan bir taksonomi kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Özellikle, üstsöylem isimlerinin anadili İngilizce olan ve anadili İngilizce olmayan yazarlar tarafından yazar duruşunu sağlamak amacıyla nasıl kullanıldığı araştırılmıştır. Analiz Wordsmith Tool 6.0. programı kullanılarak yapılmıştır. Log-likelihood analizi de bu iki grup yazar arasında üstsöylem ögelerinin kullanımına yönelik istatistiksel fark olup olmadığı bulmak amacıyla yapılmıştır. Sonuçlar bu iki grup yazar arasında üstsöylem isimlerinin genel kullanımında fark olmadığını göstermiştir. Kategorik açıdan da benzer kullanımlar görülmüştür. Tüzellik kategorisi en çok kullanılan kategoridir ve bu kategoriyi atıf yapma ve ilişki kurma kategorileri takip etmiştir. Bu dilbilimsel ögelerin derlemdeki sıklıkla kullanımı, onların akademik yazım türlerinde organizasyonu ve yazar duruşunu oluşturarak iletişimi sağlamadaki önemli rolünü ortaya göstermiştir. Bu nedenle, bu ögeler akademik yazım derslerinin müfredatlarına eklenebilir.

### Makale Bilgisi

#### Anahtar Kelimeler:

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## Introduction

Much of the literature regarding academic writing has investigated the linguistic features that authors apply to convey the ideational content, to create a solidarity with their readers, to signal their authorial stance and to get a credible place in their discipline. Among the array of these linguistic features which are rested on disciplinary and cultural conventions metadiscourse (MD) has emerged as an effective means in the maintenance of these academic purposes in academic writing. Adel (2006) defines MD as “text about text... a discourse about the evolving discourse, or the writer’s explicit commentary on his/her own ongoing text” (p. 2). For Bunton (1999), MD means metatexts, which refer to the writer’s self-awareness of organizing the text and guiding readers to figure out the intended organization. Hyland (2005b) uses it as a catch-all term to refer to the organization of the interactions between writers and readers. It is also a dynamic process in which authors plan the effects of their talk on readers or listeners.

In the literature on MD, the analyses of academic genres such as research articles, postgraduate students’ writings, MA and PhD theses have been subjected to considerable attention. One major issue in MD research in academic context is concerned with cross-cultural variations in different genres (Abdi, 2009; Blagojevic, 2004; Burneikaite, 2008; Mur-Duenas; 2011). MD features have also been studied among various disciplines (Cao & Hu, 2014; Dahl, 2004; Hyland, 1998b, 2004, 2010; Özdemir & Longo, 2014; Rezaei Zadeh, Baharlooei, & Simin, 2015; Salas, 2015). The issue of gender has also been paid attention in the literature (Yavari & Kashani, 2013). There is a growing body of literature that focuses on the analysis of particular genres or particular features of MD (Adel, 2010; Abdi, Rizi, & Tavakoli; 2010; Bondi, 2010; Bunton, 1999; Gillaerts & Van de Velde, 2010; Ifantidou, 2005; Halabisaz, Pazhakh, & Shakibafar, 2014; Kondowe, 2014).

In these studies mentioned above, metadiscourse has been studied by using different taxonomies. Vande Kopple’s (1985) taxonomy is a prior work from which other taxonomies have emerged. In 2012, he renewed the taxonomy and suggested 6 main categories: 1. *Text connectives* show readers how the parts of the text are connected to one another and how texts are organized. 2. *Code glosses* help readers grasp the appropriate meaning of elements in texts. 3. *Illocution markers* explain readers what speech or discourse act writers are performing at some points. 4. *Epistemology markers* indicate writers’ stance on epistemological status of the ideational material they convey. 5. *Attitude markers* express writers’ attitude toward ideational material. 6. *Commentary* is used by the writers to address their readers (p. 40).

Influenced by Mauranen (1993), Bunton (1999) creates a taxonomy having six categories: *text reference, nonlinear text references, inter-text references, text act markers, text connectors and text glosses*. Adel’s (2006) taxonomy is centered on the text, the writer and the reader triangle. She mainly identifies two categories: *meta-text* and *writer-reader interaction*. *Metatext* is related to writers’ comments on their own writing, whereas *writer-reader interaction* refers to linguistic features used to engage reader into the text. Hyland’s taxonomy (2005b) consists of two categories: *interactive* and *interactional*. *Interactive* categories are pertinent to textual organization. By contrast, *interactional* resources “involve readers and open opportunities for them to contribute to the discourse by alerting them to the author’s perspective towards both propositional information and readers themselves” (p. 52).

What is common in all the taxonomies of metadiscourse is the absence of nouns to accomplish author’s academic purposes. Indeed, nouns have been the subject of some previous studies in the literature (Charles, 2003, 2007; Flowerdew, 2003, 2015). Recently, Jiang and Hyland (2016) claimed that previous studies are usually concerned with the importance of nouns in the organization of content. Thus, they suggested a new category of metadiscourse features including nouns. Whilst some studies analyzed metadiscursive nouns in research articles (Jiang and Hyland, 2015, 2016, 2017), no previous studies have followed a contrastive analysis approach to investigate the use of metadiscursive nouns on the construction of authorial stance in the genre of doctoral dissertations. Considering this gap, this study aims to compare the use of metadiscursive nouns in a corpus consisting of 60 doctoral dissertations of Turkish-speaking academic writers of English and American academic writers of English by using the taxonomy of metadiscursive nouns suggested by Jiang and Hyland (2016). This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What types of metadiscursive nouns do American academic writers of English and Turkish-speaking academic writers of English employ to build their stance in their Ph.D. dissertations?

2. Do American academic writers of English and Turkish-speaking academic writers of English significantly differ in the use of metadiscursive nouns to build their stance in their Ph.D. dissertations?

### Literature Review

Broadly speaking, scientific writing is considered to be objective and impersonal. However, the importance of authorial stance in academic writing has been debated recently. Hyland (2011) states that academic writing is persuasive since it is rested on the discourse of truth emerging from observable facts in the real world. While arguing their claims, academics have one ultimate aim: to persuade their readers about the truth of their claims in the academic discourse. In order to cope with the risk of readers' objection of these claims, academics tend to lessen the possible negative reactions to their claims by using the persuasive practices of their disciplines. Hyland (1994) draws our attention to another aspect of academic writing: academic writers also present their attitude in their statements. Namely, linguistic aspects of language enable writers to express their identity, so any writing represents the self of the writer, which is based on cultural norms. It would be wrong to mention "impersonal writing" since writers convey messages about themselves through their texts (Ivanic and Camps, 2001).

Hyland (1999) defines stance as "the ways that writers project themselves into their texts to communicate their integrity, credibility, involvement, and a relationship to their subject matter and their readers" (p. 101). Biber (2006) calls stance as the expression of "many different kinds of personal feelings and assessments, including attitudes that a speaker has about certain information, how certain they are about its veracity, how they obtained access to information, and what perspective they are taking" (p. 99). From the definitions, it can be inferred that stance involves how writers present themselves and their texts.

Data from several studies have shown the importance of stance-taking in academic writing. Biber is among the leading figures on this issue. In 2006, he investigates three kinds of grammatical structure (modal verbs, stance adverbs and stance complement clauses) that express stance and concludes that stance is prominent for all university registers. The frequent use of grammatical devices is reported in university speech rather than written texts. Epistemic stance expressions are utilized more commonly in speech than writing. Several attempts have been made to explain the functions of epistemic stance in different registers (McNamara 2013; Arrese, 2015; Mayes, 2015).

Hyland has contributed to the literature on the use of metadiscourse to build author stance with his many studies. Much of his work has been devoted to interactional metadiscourse markers and their role in building author stance (Hyland 1994, 1995, 1998b, 2005a). To illustrate, In 1998b, he analyzed the functions and distributions of hedges and boosters and suggested that they were not only complex linguistic features having many functions in a text of different disciplines but also the most common resources used to manage author stance. In 2005a, he examined stance and engagement practices of academics in a corpus of 240 research articles across eight disciplines. The use of stance markers was found to be more common than the use of engagement markers. Hedges were reported to be the most frequent categories in the corpus. It was evident from the disciplinary distribution that each discipline had its own use of these features.

The role of nouns in signaling authorial stance in academic writing has also received attention in some studies. Jiang and Hyland (2015) examined the functions of a noun complement structure on stance-taking in a corpus of 160 research articles in eight disciplines and reported that academic authors not only presented their stance but also evaluated their academic texts with the help of this structure. In two corpora of theses across two disciplines, Charles (2003) examined the role of nouns in signaling author stance. She specifically focused on the nouns preceded by sentence initial deictic *this* and found that this grammatical pattern of nouns enable authors to organize their text and lead their readers to some particular conclusion about their claims in their texts. In this way, authors take a stance as a member of their discipline. In 2007, she investigated the role of nouns followed by *that* and a complement clause in two corpora of theses in two disciplines. She observed some disciplinary variations in the employment of this grammatical pattern which was three times more common in politics/international relations than in materials science.

Recently, the lack of nouns in the taxonomies of metadiscourse has been debated in some studies. Questioning the absence of signaling nouns in the concept of metadiscourse, Flowerdew (2015) points out that they are a key feature of discourse that convey authors' intended meaning to readers clearly. In another study, Jiang and Hyland (2015) examined the construction of stance through a noun complement structure in a corpus of 160 research articles in eight disciplines. Emphasizing the attitude meaning, this pattern provides the authors with an explicit evaluation of the proposition.

Jiang and Hyland (2016) coin a new term in the concept of metadiscourse and add this category to Hyland's (2005b) taxonomy of metadiscourse. They define metadiscursive nouns as "those which refer to the organization of the discourse or the readers' understanding of it (p. 3). These abstract nouns have both a constant meaning in a particular context and a pragmatic meaning based on contextual lexicalization. In addition to highlighting a point in a context, they tend to shape the readers' response to it. They describe the metadiscursive functions of these nouns as organizing the cohesion in the text, signaling the authors' viewpoints on the content and establishing interaction with the readers. There always exists a link between a metadiscursive noun and additional information, which enables writers to organize ideas cohesively and readers to figure out the connected meanings clearly. They further identify two dimensions of metadiscursive nouns: *interactive* and *interactional*. The first is associated with the organization of the cohesion, the accommodation of the propositional content and writers' attempts to shape the content according to their readers. In the *interactional* dimension, writers aim to stamp their views and to engage their readers to their texts. Additionally, Schmid (2000) calls these metadiscursive nouns as *shell nouns* and suggests four lexico-grammatical points in which shell nouns are used frequently: *N+ post-nominal clause*; *N+ be + complementing clause*; *Demonstrative +N*; *Demonstrative + be +N*.

In a corpus of 120 research articles in six disciplines, Jiang and Hyland (2016) analyze another grammatical form: metadiscursive noun + post-nominal clause and reveal that this form plays a key role in establishing the link between the parts of the text and to mark author stance. In another study, Jiang and Hyland (2017) examine the use of all four grammatical patterns of metadiscursive nouns in a corpus of 240 research abstracts in six disciplines. *Determiner + N* is the most frequently occurred pattern in their corpora followed by *N + post-nominal clause*, and *N + be + post-nominal clause*. *Determiner + be + N* is the least frequent pattern. They conclude that metadiscursive nouns enable writers to organize their ideas coherently and to meet the needs of their readers in their disciplines.

## Method

### Corpus Design

This study draws on the analysis of an electronic corpus consisting of 60 doctoral dissertations written between 2010-2015. All the dissertations were included in the corpus after getting the consents of the authors via e-mail. The corpus of this study included two corpora: CTAW (the Corpus of Turkish Academic Writers of English) and CAAW (the Corpus of American Academic Writers of English). The former included 30 dissertations totaling 659,062 words across 3 disciplines (English Language Teaching, English Language and Literature and Linguistics), which were selected randomly from the Thesis Center of Council of Higher Education. The latter consisted of 30 dissertations, totaling 658,755 words. The dissertations in CAAW were selected randomly from many disciplines regarding English language such as Education, English literature, Linguistics, Comparative Literature, Cognitive Science. The reason underlying this change is that there are various departments regarding English language in the USA. The doctoral dissertations in this corpus was selected randomly from the Proquest database.

### Data Collection

The analysis was performed through the sections "introduction, findings and discussion, conclusion, suggestions for further studies". It is assumed that authors mostly reflect their authorial stance in these sections. Additionally, all titles, tables, figures, quotations and paraphrases were excluded. The present study adopted Jiang and Hyland's taxonomy of metadiscursive nouns (2016) as an instrument to analyze metadiscursive nouns in the corpus. As seen in Table 1 below, this taxonomy basically consists of 3 categories: **entity**, **attribute** and **relation**. Nouns in **entities** reflect "the writers' judgment of texts, events, discourses, or aspects of cognition" (p. 9). This category has four sub-categories. **Text** nouns are concerned with "metatext or concrete instances of text" (p. 9); **event** nouns "refer to either occurrence of actions and processes or mention of real-world cases" (p. 9); **discourse** nouns refer to "verbal propositions and speech acts (p. 9)" and **cognition** nouns is associated with "beliefs, attitudes and elements of mental reasoning" (p. 9).

Nouns in the **attribute** category are concerned with "writers' evaluation of the quality, status and formation of entities" (p. 9). Nouns in the **quality** sub-category are related to "whether something is admired or criticized, valued or appreciated, with assessment falling on a scale of plus or minus" (p. 10); **manner** nouns "identify the circumstances and formation of actions and states of affairs" and **status** is pertinent to "the authors' judgments of epistemic, deontic,

and dynamic modality" (p. 10). Finally, writers reflect the relationship in a propositional content by applying the nouns in the **relation** category.

**Table.1** Functional classification of metadiscursive nouns (Jiang and Hyland, 2016).

Entity	Description	Examples
Text	Concrete metatext	report, paper, extract
Event	Events, processes, and evidential cases	change, process, observation
Discourse	Verbal propositions and speech acts	argument, claim, conclusion
Cognition	Cognitive beliefs and attitudes	decision, idea, belief, doubt
Attribute	Description	Examples
Quality	Traits that are admired or criticized, valued, or depreciated	advantage, difficulty, value
Manner	Circumstances of actions and state of affairs	time, method, way, extent
Status	Epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modality	ability, capacity, possibility, potential
Relation	Description	Examples
Cause-effect, difference, etc.	Cause-effect, difference, Relevance	Reason, result, difference

### Data Analysis

Based on the metadiscursive nouns taxonomy of Jiang and Hyland (2016), the analysis was performed through Wordsmith Tool 6.0. This tool showed us the occurrences of metadiscursive nouns in the corpus. "Word Smith Tools provide almost an instantaneous display of word frequency lists; concordances, which allow all the uses of a given word in its contexts; and lists of keywords, words that appear more often in a corpus than chance alone would dictate" (Ghadessy et al. 2001, p. xix). Each set of corpus was uploaded to the Wordsmith program and the occurrence of each noun in the taxonomy was individually searched across each corpus. A manual reading of the concordance lines was also conducted to make sure whether they had a metadiscursive function. The raw frequencies were also normalized per 10.000 words to compare each corpus, which enabled us to figure out how often we could come up with a particular item per 10.000 words. Log likelihood (LL) statistic was applied as the second tool for analysis in this study. Baker, Hardie, and McEnery (2006) define it as a test to calculate statistical significance that is commonly applied in corpus analysis. It is a practical test used to calculate statistical significance. In order to find out whether there was a statistical significance between the two corpora regarding the use of each category of metadiscursive nouns, log likelihood statistic was conducted to the findings.

**Table 2.** Overall distribution of MD nouns in the two corpora

	CTAW	CAAW
Corpus size in words	659.062	658.755
Number of MD nouns used(n)	11025	11225
n /10.000	167.2	170.3
Number of MD nouns used	161	160
Number of MD nouns not used	9	10

n: raw frequency of MD nouns

n /10.000: frequency of MD nouns per 10.000 words

### Findings and Discussion

This section provides the analysis of metadiscursive nouns in each corpus and shows how TAWEs (Turkish-speaking academic writers of English) and AAWEs (American academic writers of English) used MD nouns in their doctoral dissertations.

Table 2 illustrates the overall distribution of MD nouns in the two corpora. Apparently, TAWEs and AAWEs displayed a striking similarity in the use of MD nouns in their dissertations. They were employed 11025 and 11225 times in CTAW and CAAW, respectively. The normalized frequencies were quite similar. They were seen 167.2 times per 10.000 words in CTAW and 170.3 times per 10.000 words in CAAW. 9 items of MD nouns were not observed in CTAW while 10 items were not utilized in CAAW.

The log likelihood analysis was calculated to see whether the two corpora significantly differed in the frequency counts of MD nouns. As regards to the findings of log likelihood (LL) statistics which is shown in Table 3, no statistically significant difference between the two corpora was calculated (LL: -1.89). O1 and O2 display the overall frequency counts of MD nouns in two sets of corpora. 1 % refers to relative frequency of MD nouns in CTAW. It displays that 1.67 MD nouns were employed in CTAW per 100 words while 1.70 MD nouns were used per 100 words in CAAW, as 2 % shows.

**Table 3.** LL ratio of MD nouns in the two corpora

	CTAW		CAAW		LL Ratio	ELL
	(O1)	%1	(O2)	%2	(p< 0.05)	
MD nouns	11025	1.67	11.225	1.70	- 1.89	0.00000

O1 is observed frequency in Corpus 1

O2 is observed frequency in Corpus 2

% 1 and %2 values show relative frequencies in the texts.

+ indicates overuse in O1 relative to O2

- indicates underuse in O1 relative to O2

Table 4 below displays the categorical distribution of MD nouns in the two corpora. It was seen that some categories of MD nouns were employed much more frequently than the others in each corpus. *Entity* was the most frequented category in both corpora with 53 % and 47% in CTAW and CAAW, respectively. The normalized frequencies were quite similar. It was applied 88.3 times per 10.000 words in CTAW and 87.9 times per 10.000 words in CAAW. It might be concluded that both groups of academic writers mitigated their stance by conveying their judgment of the proposition. *Attribute* formed 25 % of MD nouns in CTAW. It was seen 41.7 times per 10.000 words in this corpus while it was observed 59.9 times per 10.000 words in CAAW. In this corpus, it made up 39 % of MD nouns. Apparently, AAWEs utilized the items of *attribute* more frequently than TAWEs. Seemingly, they sought to present their own evaluations of the propositions. In contrast, *relation* was observed more frequently in CTAW with 22 % whereas it comprised 14 % of MD nouns in CAAW. It is likely that TAWEs paid more attention to establish a connection or relationship among the propositions than AAWEs. This finding is in agreement with Jiang and Hyland (2016, 2017), who observed that *entity* was the most frequented category of MD nouns which were followed by *attribute* and *relation*.

Regarding the subcategories of *entity* in CTAW, *event* and *cognition* made up 30 % of nouns in the category of *entity* with 24.8 and 24.3 times per 10.000 words, respectively. *Text* was the third most frequently applied subcategory with 21.9 times per 10.000 words. *Discourse* appeared with the lowest frequency in this corpus (n/10.000 = 17.1). Similarly, *event* was used with a higher frequency than the other subcategories of *entity* in CAAW with 31.1 times per 10.000 words. It formed 20 % of nouns in the category of *entity*. With 13 %, *cognition* was the second most frequented subcategory. *Text* and *discourse* shared the same percentage in this corpus (7 %). They appeared 708 and 730 times, respectively. These results are in accord with Jiang and Hyland's studies (2015, 2017). It seems that both groups of writers referred to their beliefs and attitudes towards the proposition by using the items of *cognition* and focused on the occurrences of their findings with the use of *event*. The frequency counts of *text* in both corpora reflected a less assured representation of claims. In a way, writers distanced themselves from their texts. This strategy might be an attempt to leave readers with the text itself to persuade readers about the truth of the proposition. As

Hyland (1998a) claims, the main reason for authors' creating a distance between themselves and their texts is "the suppression of author's voice and the creation of a discourse where the research appears to speak for itself" (p. 18).

**Table 4.** Frequency distribution of the categories of MD nouns in the two corpora

	CTAW			CAAW		
	n	n/10.000	%	n	n/10.000	%
<b>Entity</b>	<b>5825</b>	<b>88.3</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>5792</b>	<b>87.9</b>	<b>47</b>
Text	1445	21.9	13	708	10.7	7
Event	1640	24.8	15	2049	31.1	20
Discourse	1136	17.2	10	739	11.2	7
Cognition	1604	24.3	15	1296	34.8	13
<b>Attribute</b>	<b>2753</b>	<b>41.7</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>3947</b>	<b>59.9</b>	<b>39</b>
Quality	948	14.3	9	698	10.5	7
Manner	1209	18.3	11	1979	30.0	19
Status	596	9.0	5	1270	19.2	12
<b>Relation</b>	<b>2447</b>	<b>37.1</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1486</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>14</b>

n: raw frequency of MD nouns

n /10.000: normalized frequency of MD nouns per 10.000 words

#: percentage of each sub-category to overall frequency of MD nouns

With respect to the subcategories of *attribute* in CTAW, *manner* was employed as the most frequent subcategory with 18.3 times per 10.000 words which was followed by *quality* with 14.3 times per 10.000 words. As the least frequent subcategory, *status* was seen 9.0 times per 10.000 words. Similarly, *manner* had the highest frequency counts in CAAW with 30.0 times per 10.000 words. *Status* occurred 19.2 times per 10.000 and got the second range on the list. The least frequent subcategory of *attribute* in the corpus was *quality* with 10.5 times per 10.000 words. Jiang and Hyland (2016) found that *manner* was the least frequently applied sub-category which were followed by *status* and *quality*. Both groups of academic writers were inclined to describe how they formed their study or data with the use of *manner*. AAWs reflected their judgments of the propositions with the employment of *status* while TAWs assessed their findings based on a scale of plus or minus by applying the items of *quality*. Seemingly, TAWs took a more objective and impersonal stance, which might be a linguistic convention of their disciplines in Turkish context. On the contrary, AAWs emphasized their own judgments of the propositions and got a place in their discipline. Dontcheva-Navrotilova (2013) explains that Anglo-American academic community is quite competitive, so academic authors of this community mark their authorial stance to convince their potential readers.

**Table 5.** LL ratio of categorical MD nouns in the two corpora

	CTAW	CAAW	LL Ratio (p< 0.05)	ELL
<b>Entity</b>	<b>5825</b>	<b>5792</b>	<b>+0.08</b>	<b>0.00000</b>
Text	1445	708	+257.11	0.00003
Event	1640	2049	-45.63	0.00000
Discourse	1136	739	+84.51	0.00001
Cognition	1604	2296	-123.76	0.00001
<b>Attribute</b>	<b>2753</b>	<b>3947</b>	<b>-214.48</b>	<b>0.00002</b>
Quality	948	698	+38.00	0.00000
Manner	1209	1979	-188.19	0.00002
Status	596	1270	-249.35	0.00003
<b>Relation</b>	<b>2447</b>	<b>1486</b>	<b>+236.76</b>	<b>0.00002</b>

n: raw frequency of items of hedges in the corpus

(-): indicates underuse in CTAW relative to CAAW

(+): indicates overuse in CTAW relative to CAAW

As seen in Table 5, LL statistics were conducted to calculate whether the differences between the two corpora was statistically significant. Clearly, TAWEs and AAWEs differed significantly in terms of the use of *attribute* with -214.48 LL and *relation* with +236.76 LL. TAWEs were more inclined to establish a kind of reason and result relationship whereas AAWEs were more concerned with the evaluations of their claims and the proposition. A closer inspection of the table with respect to subcategories of MD nouns revealed that *text* was overused by TAWEs (LL: +257.11), while *cognition* was significantly underused with the LL value of -123.76. Regarding the subcategories of *attribute*, *status* and *manner* were significantly underused by TAWEs with the LL value of -249.35 and -188.19, respectively.

A quick glance at Table 6 below shows that certain nouns appeared as the most frequent items in the two corpora. The noun *study* occurred as the most frequent item in CTAW and the second most frequented item in CAAW. *Case* and *fact* were among the 10 most frequented items in both corpora. These three items belongs to *event* subcategory of MD nouns. It is worth to add that *fact* is an item which is included in the *event* and *status* subcategories of MD nouns. It sometimes refers to a clear representation of the truth of the proposition. It also assists writers to present a contrast between the accepted knowledge of the field and their findings (Jiang and Hyland, 2016). It was observed that both TAWEs and AAWEs employed the item *fact* to refer to their own findings (what actually happened during their study) rather than emphasizing a contrast. As an item of *cognition* category, *idea* was applied frequently in both corpora. *Time* and *way* were the most items of *manner* category in both corpora. In CTAW, *insistence* which is an item of *discourse* category was employed more frequently while *relationship* as item of *relation* category was seen more frequently in CAAW. Another striking item of *relation* was *difference* which was observed more frequently in CTAW than in CAAW. Apparently, both groups of writers utilized a wide range of items belonging to different subcategories of MD nouns.

**Table 6.** The 10 most frequent MD nouns in two corpora

Item	CTAW		Item	CAAW	
	n	n/10000		n	n/10000
study	1355	20.5	way	542	8.2
difference	946	14.3	study	533	8.0
insistence	469	7.1	case	370	5.6
way	397	6.0	time	300	4.5
analysis	280	4.2	relationship	264	4.0
case	280	4.2	difference	242	3.6
result	266	4.0	fact	203	3.0
fact	252	3.8	idea	184	2.7
idea	245	3.7	result	179	2.7
time	236	3.5	sense	172	2.6

n: raw frequency of MD nouns

n /10.000: normalized frequency of MD nouns per 10.000 words

Looking at the examples below, one may infer that both groups of academic authors tended to emphasize the unique nature of their research with the use the item *study*. As Jiang and Hyland (2017) state academic writers employ *study* to focus on the “novelty and the worthiness of their claims” (p. 7). In (1), the use of *I* as a self-mention highlighted the original contribution of the writer to the field. In (2), the writer mitigated a more impersonal stance with the use of a bundle (*it can be seen ...*).

(1) However, this study also showed how various influences made it difficult for the participants to act on their understandings and beliefs regarding working with struggling readers while focusing on nonfiction

reading comprehension. One of the goals I had for this study was to understand how my participants defined struggling readers and what led to the development of their definitions.

(2) Considering the present study, it can be seen that explicit devices in the research articles were studied, but establishing interaction with readers can be achieved in various ways, such as using punctuation or underlying meanings of propositions they make.

In the examples below, it is shown how *idea*, *way*, and *time* as items of *manner* were used. In example (3), the use of *idea* assisted the author to revisit a specific knowledge of his/her discipline and to persuade their readers about the truth of their claims by establishing a link between the claim and the knowledge. In (4), the author explained the formation of a circumstance with the use of *way* while in example (5) *time* referred to a connection to a certain time.

(3) The significance placed upon this fact is the **idea** that Stapleton is actually an atavistic throwback "which appears to be both physical and spiritual" to his cruel ancestor.

(4) This, in turn, provides a **way** to re-examine the dominance of psychology in Gothic criticism reconcile its existence within the scientific framework of the modern Constitution.

(5) The 20th century was also a **time** in which these new types of students helped support new, populist ideas in higher education, ideas that temporarily provoked new kinds of composition textbooks.

Regarding the most frequented items of *relation*, it may be necessary to focus on the use of *difference* and *relationship*. In example (6), the reason behind a propositional content is pointed out. In (7), the writer emphasized a specific finding the research by invoking the differences between the participants.

(6) Such a **difference** provokes compelling questions about the anthologies' and the nation's investment in particular wars.

(7) This also leads to a different **relationship** within the groups of students that did try ASR.

All in all, MD nouns were employed to perform a wide range of recognizable functions in the doctoral dissertations written by Turkish-speaking academic writers of English and American academic writers. At the same time, they enabled writers to take different stance towards the propositional content and to assist readers to recognize the intent of the writers. Another point is that, MD nouns enabled writers to construct an implicit stance towards their claims. This might be specific to this genre since doctoral students as novice academic writers might be reluctant to reveal an overt representation of their claims.

### Conclusion

One of the major linguistic devices that academic writers use to stamp their stance in various academic registers is metadiscourse (MD). The use of MD across disciplines, cultures, and genres has been highlighted in the literature. More recent attention has focused on the employment of MD nouns in academic genres. In this study, MD nouns were analyzed in the two corpora consisting of doctoral dissertations in the field of English Language written by Turkish-speaking academic writers of English (TAWEs) and American academic writers of English (AAWEs). The aim of the present study was twofold: Firstly, this study aimed to explore what types of MD nouns AAWEs and TAWEs employed to build their stance in their Ph.D. dissertations. It was observed that the use of MD nouns by TAWEs approximated to the standards of native-like use of MD nouns. Both groups of academic writers applied *event* category at the highest frequency which was followed by *attribute* and *relation* categories. However, the use of the sub-categories of MD nouns showed some differences in the two corpora. Secondly, it was intended to find out whether AAWEs and TAWEs significantly differed in the use of MD nouns to build their stance in their Ph.D. dissertations. No statistical difference was calculated between the two corpora regarding the overall distribution of the MD nouns in both corpora. However, *attribute* category was underused in CTAW while an overuse in the employment of *relation* category was seen in CTAW against CAAW.

In the globalized world where English is used as a lingua-franca, academic writing is closely linked to the universally accepted linguistics conventions of disciplines. Thus, it is imperative for nonnative academic writers to be aware of the pragmatic functions of these linguistic devices to adopt a position in their discipline. In this sense, academic writing courses in postgraduate programs crucially influence the ways that writers typically organize their

texts and stamp their stance. Thus, the appropriate use of linguistic devices, one of which is MD nouns, plays an important part in the curriculum of academic writing courses.

As Hyland (2004) states, MD is a means of presenting the disciplinary-sensitive writing practices for teachers. He further suggests the prominence of consciousness-raising in these courses to assist students to acquire the preferred patterns of their disciplines and the pragmatic functions of them. Additionally, Can (2012) explains that the content of academic writing courses and the methods used in these courses paves the way for the development of students' academic writing skills. In this regard, a stance corpus compiled from the studies of scholars might be a teaching material in academic writing courses. The present study proves how the analysis of a corpus might be useful for academic writing courses. This said, the examination of a corpus consisting of doctoral dissertations enabled us to suggest that both native and Turkish-speaking academic writers of English employ MD nouns frequently, which shows that these linguistic devices are an integral part of the linguistic conventions of academic writing in the global world. Thus, the inclusion of MD nouns in the curricula of academic writing courses may contribute to academic students' awareness of linguistic conventions of their discipline.

As Jiang and Hyland (2016) claim MD nouns are an important means of maintaining interaction in academic genres by enabling writers to organize their texts and to mitigate their stance. The evidence from this study suggests that native academic writers of English and Turkish-speaking academic writers of English generally employ MD nouns in similar ways to build their stance. However, there is also the possibility of cross-cultural differences in other academic genres. Hence, specialized corpora including different academic genres written by native and nonnative academic writers of English may reveal how these devices are applied in particular academic genres. In addition, it is not the task of this study to examine the grammatical patterns of MD nouns. Establishing the functions of these grammatical patterns would be a fruitful area for future work. A further study could also assess the use of MD nouns in the moves of academic genres.

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