

Authorial Stance in Academic Writing by EFL Arab Postgraduates

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Abstract

Several studies have focused on the use of stance, particularly in linguistic-based writing research. However, adopting an assertive stance toward the research being reviewed or reported is considered a challenging task for second language writers. Therefore, this study aims at exploring the use of stance in the introductory chapters of EFL Arab postgraduates' theses employing SFL approach at UniSZA. Data were collected qualitatively based on 22 introductory chapters of doctoral and master theses. The writers' stance was analysed using the SFL approach, whereas the interviews were analysed manually. The findings showed frequent and different use of finite modal operators, less and different use of adjuncts expressing modalisation and other purposes, and less frequent use of comment adjuncts and subjective, rather than the objective orientation of the soft and hard domains. The findings revealed that many participants showed unfamiliarity with the use of modality markers and appropriate social and linguistic conventions. The study concluded that authorial stance is very important to be explicitly taught to postgraduate students to enrich the quality of academic writing. This study provides significant resources for academic writing instructors, supervisors, and academic writers.

Keywords: academic writing, authorial stance, SFL, EFL Arab students, qualitative

1. Introduction

Stance can be seen as an attitudinal dimension and contains structures that indicate the ways writers introduce themselves and convey their judgments, opinions, and commitments. It is the way that writers intrude to stamp their personal authority onto their arguments or step back and disguise their engagement (Hyland, 2005b, 2018). A great focus has been on the authorial stance in academic writing, particularly in linguistics-based writing research (Gray & Biber, 2012; Hyland, 2012; Liu, 2013; Hamoy, 2014; Akinci, 2016). Besides, many categories have been employed to reflect stances like appraisal (Martin & White, 2005), evaluation (Hunston & Thompson, 2000; Cheung, 2017), metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005c; Vande Kopple, 1985), evidentiality (Chafe & Nichols, 1986; Rhee, 2016), and positioning (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999; Chiluba, 2017). Consequently, stance has been shown as an essential concept that deserves to be tackled seriously

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(e.g., Hood, 2004; Hyland, 2004; Gross & Chesley, 2012; Ağçam, 2015). Varied studies have been conducted on the authorial stance (Chang & Schleppegrell, 2011; Gray & Biber, 2012; Hyland, 2012; Hyland & Guinda, 2012; Liu, 2013; Hamoy, 2014; Chang, 2015; Akinci, 2016; Jomaa & Bidin, 2017; Hyland & Jiang, 2018; Jomaa & Alia, 2019; Alia, Jomaa & Yunus, 2020). These studies have explored the authorial stance adopting several taxonomies by Crismore, Markkanen, and Steffensen (1993), Thompson and Tribble (2001), Hyland (1999), and Hyland (2005a). However, adopting an assertive stance toward research being reviewed or reported is considered a challenging task for second language writers (Hood, 2010; Chang & Schleppegrell 2011; Gray & Biber, 2012). In addition, a common reason for second language writers to write less successfully is ascribed to their lack of linguistic and discursive resources (Chang & Schleppegrell, 2011; Gray & Biber, 2012). Besides, studies on the perspectives of postgraduate students have not been investigated widely excluding Jomaa and Bidin (2017) who combined the functional analysis of the authorial stance in academic writing under SFL and exploring the perspectives of participants about the authorial stance under New Rhetoric Studies. Therefore, this study explores the use of metadiscourse markers by EFL Arab postgraduates utilizing the Systemic Functional Linguistics approach.

2. Literature review

Adopting an authorial stance forms a central issue to the interaction between writers and readers, and argues for the significance of his or her research. Writers should adopt interactional and evaluative positions in presenting informational content. Since the level of personality in a text is crucial to maintain successful interaction with readers and establish a convincing argument, writers annotate their claims explicitly or implicitly to correspond with the context and the audience's mentalities. The preliminary characterization of academic stance, thus, brings to light some of the rhetorical knowledge needed for effective argument in various disciplines. Writers need to engage with the readers' expectations and convince the readers to accept their views (Swain, 2007). Thus, academic literacy practices entail complex power relations in which negotiating identities in writing is often considered challenging for novice writers (Chang, 2010; Cheung, 2017; Chang & Schleppegrell, 2011; Tardy, 2012; Hood, 2010; Ağçam, 2015; Hyland & Sancho Guinda, 2012). In one of the studies, Hamoy (2014) showed that the participants were incapable to form a voice consistent with the Western academic writing, and he suggested some changes to the existing ESL pedagogical practices to better prepare academic studies at the university level. Besides, a study conducted by Akinci (2016), aiming at the disciplinary differences and academic level of the writer, found that participants made use of several expressions of stance. Polarity, as explained in (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), "is the opposition between positive (It is. Do that!) and negative (It isn't. Don't do that!)" (p. 172). Modality, on the other hand, can be explained as the speaker's judgment, or request of the judgment of the listener, on the status of what is being said (It could be. Couldn't it be?). Polarity and Modality are realized through the Mood element, either through the Finite element (It is/ It isn't; It is/ It must be) or through a separate mood Adjunct (It is/ It is not; It is/ It certainly is). Interpersonal judgments, or assessments, however, extend beyond the 'core' grammatical system of modality to include assessments of temporality and intensity realized like modality through mood Adjuncts (e.g. It is/ It already is/ It almost is). There are also other

types of assessments beyond the mood itself that relate either to the proposition being exchanged (e.g. Fortunately it is: ‘it is, which is fortunate’) or to the act of exchanging it (e.g. Frankly it is: ‘I’m telling you frankly it is’)(Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). MOOD and RESIDUE. MOOD involves the ‘Subject’ and the ‘Finite’, whereas the RESIDUE consists of a ‘Predicator’, a ‘Complement’, and an ‘Adjunct’

As stated by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), polarity is a choice between yes and no, but there are intermediate degrees that reveal that these are not the only possibilities. These degrees can be described as different sorts of indeterminacy that fall in the middle like ‘sometimes’ or ‘maybe’. These intermediate levels, between the positive and negative poles, are known collectively as MODALITY. What the modality system does is to construe the region of uncertainty that lies between ‘yes’ and ‘no’. Novice students consider adopting a stance, enacting a stance and voice towards authoritative texts, and evaluating knowledge highly challenging (Cheung, 2017; Hyland, 2009). Hyland (2009), for example, reveals that the experience of facing the challenge of enacting stance and voice in academic writing is authentic, especially in some non-native English cultures. This often leads to confusion among students, which is reflected in novice writers’ writing. These challenges implicate varying expectations on how identity and authority should be negotiated. The lack of exposure to meaning-making resources for expressing stance forms another difficulty (Wharton, 2012).

Dreyfus et al. (2016) also state that academic literacy support usually concentrates on lower levels of lexical and grammatical features, such as format, vocabulary, and tense use. Thus, this leads to detaching language use from its functions in the context. Such detachment often results in obscurity in how rhetorical demands of the tasks can be achieved in academic writing, especially the complex nature of showing stance and voice. These conceptions show the importance of stance in academic writing, which is interactive and dialogic between the writer, the reader, and other intertextual voices and a reflection of the authoritative identity. Effective management of interpersonal meaning for expressing stance and voice is one of the keys to achieving success in academic writing (e.g. Lee, 2015; Swain, 2010; Thomas, 2014). Tardy (2012) adds that stance and voice are not simply the property of the author, but they are parts of all texts and created by the social contexts that the author works within. These viewpoints show that academic writing instruction demands more interest in the discursive manifestation of stance.

In the investigation of stance devices across two parameters: disciplinary differences and academic level of writers, Akinci (2016) conducted her study based on a corpus of 39 academic research articles. This comparative study, following Hyland’s (2005b) framework, investigated whether four categories of stance features (hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions) show any likenesses or contrasts across the disciplines of Civil Engineering and Applied Linguistics and student and expert writing. The findings revealed cross-disciplinary differences in terms of the recurrence of stance markers. More specifically, Applied Linguistics research articles contained more stance markers than those in Civil Engineering with an extensive discrepancy, particularly

in utilizing self-mentions. However, comparing the hard and soft domains needs to be tackled more widely by including more disciplines.

Another study was conducted by Akbas (2014) which investigated how postgraduate academic writers from specific contexts express their academic stance and voice by employing a set of linguistic devices. The findings stressed the significance of the language factor in displaying commitment detachment across groups. In addition, the Turkish L1 writers and the Turkish writers of English seemed to express less personal academic prose compared with the native writers. This appeared to reflect a cultural distinction. In terms of the authorial roles determined in relation to the accompanying verbs, the postgraduates are inclined to occur in their discourse mostly as research conductors, secondly by discourse creator and participant, then opinion holders. The rhetorical role of signifying the membership of the postgraduates to a community was the least frequent role taken by them in their discussion chapters.

Another notable study was conducted by Aull and Lancaster (2014) utilizing corpus methods to inspect linguistic devices of stance in more than 4,000 argumentative essays composed by first-year university students in comparison with the writing of higher-level undergraduate students and published academics. In spite of differences in students' educational settings, the results displayed linguistic stance markers shared across the first-year works, with larger differences rising between first-year writers and advanced writers. The specific aspects of the stance that indicate a developmental trajectory are approximative hedges/ boosters, code glosses, and adversative/contrast connectors.

In the Malaysian context, a study was conducted by Lo, Othman and Lim (2020) to address the disciplinary metadiscourse gap. This recent study, quantitatively and with a corpus-based approach, explored, described, and compared how eight Malaysian first-year ESL doctoral students across four research areas in education employed the disciplinary metadiscourse. The study focused on the frequency of three dimensions of academic discourse in their writing, which are textual, engagement, and evaluative. The results of this analysis showed that, among the three dimensions in written work, the engagement was the lowest, reinforcing the argument that first-year ESL doctoral students are less experienced at using textual metadiscourse, and frequency of all three dimensions of academic discourse in their writing differed across time between first written drafts and the final written drafts. Consequently, it can be implied that teaching and learning disciplinary metadiscourse should include an explicit explanation, demonstration, and practice of its use in the academic writing process. Similarly, Jomaa and Bidin (2017) conducted a study to explore the perspectives of students on citing information challenges. Participants showed that they face challenges in adopting a stance towards the information cited. The researchers conducted discourse-based interviews after analysing students' literature review chapters. However, this study was limited to students from one discipline which is Information Technology. Comparing the hard and soft domains, however, needs to include more disciplines such as IT, Economics, linguistics, etc.

Another recent study by Alia, Jomaa, and Yunus (2020) was conducted to explore the use of metadiscourse in the abstracts of 100 journal articles published in ten scopus-indexed journals listed as the top free access journals based on the Scientific Journal Ranking (SJR) website. Five journals belong to the hard domain, whereas the other five journals belong to the soft domain. The Systemic Functional Linguistics approach (SFL) was adopted to analyse the frequency and wordings of modality within the 100 abstracts. Data were analysed manually qualitatively and quantitatively in order to highlight the possible similarities and differences between the abstracts of the hard domain and the soft one. The findings showed that the writers of both sets of abstracts employed finite modal operators, verbs, mood adjuncts, and comment adjuncts in expressing modality. These metadiscourse markers expressed different types, value, and orientation regarding modalization and modulation. Consequently, these findings could be employed pedagogically to equip novice writers with the linguistic skills that basically contribute to their academic success in writing academic genres.

In recent years, much attention has been paid to expressing stance and voice in academic written texts (Gray & Biber, 2012; Hyland, 2012; Hamoy, 2014; Akinci, 2016; Liu, 2013). Managing stance and voice, however, is often considered challenging for novice writers (Chang, 2010; Cheung, 2017; Chang & Schleppegrell, 2011; Tardy, 2012; Hood, 2010; Hyland & Sancho Guinda, 2012). The challenge mainly results from factors such as cultural differences, lack of exposure to interpersonal meaning-making resources, and resistance to the teaching voice. Though metadiscourse analysis has received much attention in various contexts, few studies have focused on disciplinary metadiscourse (Lo, Othman & Lim, 2020), particularly the modality used in dissertations under the Systemic Functional Linguistic approach (Jomaa & Alia, 2019). Moreover, university students (Donahue, 2004; Morton & Storch, 2018) particularly EFL postgraduates (Jomaa & Bidin, 2017) seem to have difficulties in academic writing, especially the Arab postgraduates at UniSZA (Almatarneh, Rashid & Yunus, 2018), in adopting a stance and projecting their voice due to having insufficient guidelines on using evaluative expressions and/or being unaware of using metadiscourse markers. Therefore, this study explores the use of metadiscourse markers by EFL Arab postgraduates utilizing the Systemic Functional Linguistics approach.

3. Research methodology

The current study employed a qualitative approach to enable the researcher to understand the authorial stance as shown and experienced by the participants when writing their Ph.D. and MA theses in English. In order to answer the research questions, a need arises for a research design. Creswell (2009) refers to research design as “*the plan or proposal to conduct research, involves the intersection of philosophy, strategies of inquiry, and specific methods*” (p. 5). The current study followed the qualitative method as the research is categorized by the way it is designed to gather and analyze data in order to reach the intended results. Qualitative research has the tendency to be more exploratory in nature; it aims at providing insights into how individuals, groups, or organizations understand aspects of their worlds. Furthermore, Burns and Grove (2001) indicate

that a good research design supports researchers to plan and implement the study in a way that helps them address the research objectives.

3.1 Sampling

The sampling of the current study consisted of participants chosen purposefully to get rich information about this research (see Table 1). Therefore, twenty-two Arab postgraduate students who are conducting their studies at UniSZA from different colleges participated in this study. The participants come from different Arab countries; Syria, Yemen, Egypt and mostly from Jordan. The participants' first language is Arabic. The introductory chapters of 22 Arab Ph.D. and Master students' theses, who are studying at UniSZA and had already defended their proposals, were analysed.

Table 1 displays the profiles of Arab Ph.D. and Master students.

Table 3. 1 Participants' profiles

Student	Nationality	Major	MA/PhD	Pages	Words	Gender
S1	Egypt	Islamic Education	MA	17	4040	Male
S2	Egypt	Islamic Education	MA	19	3925	Male
S3	Jordan	Chemistry	MA	4	938	Male
S4	Syria	IT	PhD	13	3085	Male
S5	Syria	Linguistics	MA	8	1901	Male
S6	Syria	Linguistics	MA	7	1974	Male
S7	Yemen	IT	PhD	14	2550	Male
S8	Jordan	Economics	PhD	21	4776	Male
S9	Jordan	Design	MA	14	3038	Male
S10	Jordan	Design	MA	11	2845	Male
S11	Syria	Applied Linguistics	PhD	18	4110	Male
S12	Syria	Applied Linguistics	PhD	20	4169	Male
S13	Jordan	Literature	PhD	28	5895	Male
S14	Jordan	Economics	MA	8	1894	Male
S15	Jordan	Economics	MA	12	2545	Male
S16	Jordan	Applied Linguistics	PhD	20	4166	Male
S17	Jordan	Economics	PhD	14	2496	Male
S18	Syria	Pharmacy	MA	7	1755	Male
S19	Syria	Applied Linguistics	MA	6	1443	Male
S20	Egypt	Pharmacy	MA	6	1511	Female
S21	Syria	Maths	MA	7	1681	Male
S22	Jordan	Maths	PhD	11	2700	Male

3.2 Data collection

A step in the process of qualitative research is gaining data that address the research questions posed. In qualitative research, researchers usually pose general, broad questions to participants and allow them to share their opinions comfortably (Creswell, 2012). Researchers can collect various types of information and may add new forms of data during the study to answer their questions. In the current study, the document analysis technique was used to collect data. It is considered a valuable source of information in qualitative studies. As Creswell states, documents involve “public and private records that qualitative researchers obtain about a site or participants in a study, and they can include newspapers, minutes of meetings, personal journals, and letters.” (p. 223). By employing these techniques, the researcher can get useful information that allows him or her to understand the phenomenon under exploration. Moreover, such methods help the researcher gain documents that represent a good source for text (word) data for a qualitative study. The introductory chapters of 22 participants were analysed to detect authors’ stance using modality under Systemic Functional Linguistics. Under modality, both modalisation and modulation were detected to reveal certainty, usuality, obligation, and inclination.

3.3 Data analysis

The researchers utilised two strategies for organizing and analyzing the data which are the manual analysis strategy, and the office word process. The analysis of data began after the first document was collected. The researcher read the introductory chapters of the participants three times and highlighted modality markers used by participants. The markers then were included in a table designed by the researcher following Halliday and Mathiessen’s modality framework. The researcher read the documents and coded the items manually to assure including the items that reflect modality only.

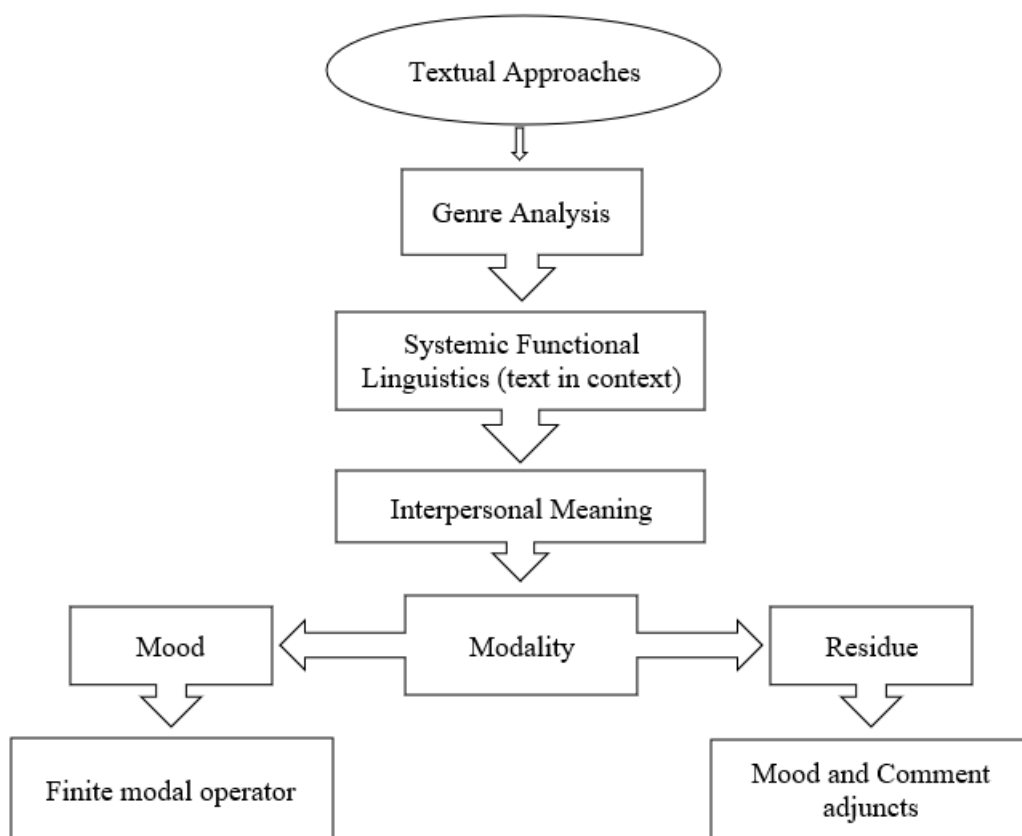


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Text is the production of people's speaking or writing, and text is what the audience draw in and interpret. The term 'text' denotes any instance of language, in any medium, that can be understood by a person who knows the language; it is preferable to describe a text as language functioning in context. Hence, language is a resource for making meaning and text is a process of producing meaning in context (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Providing a thick and rich description of the settings, participants and themes could be considered a procedure for establishing credibility in this study. To utilize this technique for establishing credibility, the researchers employed a constructivist perspective to contextualize the people or sites studied by using thick descriptions in writing and providing all the possible details.

4. FINDINGS

The results can be summarised in Table 2 showing the components of the clauses that included modality markers, constituents used to express modality and their frequencies, and the value of modalisation and modulation. The number of the modality markers equals the number of the

clauses analysed. Table 4.1 shows the findings of the markers expressing modality based on 22 introductory chapters produced by the 22 participants.

Table 2. Stance markers by EFL postgraduates

Clause components: MOOD and RESIDUE				
<i>Finite modal operators</i>	Mood adjuncts for modalisation	Mood adjuncts	Comment adjuncts	Verbs and Adjectives
<i>modalisation</i> (71.78% /379) <i>and</i> <i>modulation</i> (28.22% /149)	usuality (81.9% /86) and probability (18.1% /19)	presumption (8.3% /27), time (20.4% /66), degree (45.7% /148) and intensity (25.6% /83)	146	Few
Value: high, median and low				

The findings related to the analysis of the chapters of EFL Arab postgraduates are introduced which include mainly MOOD and RESIDUE. MOOD involves the ‘Subject’ and the ‘Finite’, whereas the RESIDUE consists of a ‘Predicator’, a ‘Complement’, and an ‘Adjunct’. The constituents found to express modality are finite modal operators, mood adjuncts for modalisation, various mood adjuncts other than modalisation, comment adjuncts, and few verbs and adjectives. The value of modalisation and modulation ranged from high, through median to low. Table 3. presents sentences extracted from students’ introductory chapters showing the components of the clause.

Table 3. Examples of the components of the clause

Example 1		Example 2
Mood	Subject	Building owners
	Finite	Should
Residue	remind us of certain acts ...	put more effort into caring ...
	(S1/ Egy/ IE /Pg.7/ Pr.1/ L.9)	(S10/ Jor/ ID/ Pg.4/ Pr.6/L.2)

The examples in Table 3. show that the components of the participants’ clauses are mainly two, mood and residue. The two components of the mood are the subject and the finite.

4.1. Mood Component of the Clause

The MOOD component of the clause consists of two constituents which are the ‘Subject’ and the ‘Finite’, as in the following examples in Table 4.

Table 4. The Mood Component Examples

	Example 3	Example 4
Mood	In addition, the increased functions and total system transparency approach	Readers of Kafka's biography
Subject	Finite will	May
Residue	make it easier for top management to control processes	notice two simple facts
	<i>(S17/ Jor/ M/ Pg.5/ Pr.2/ L.4.5)</i>	<i>(S13/ Jor/ Lit/ Pg.6/ Pr.2/ L.1)</i>

The second essential constituent of the MOOD in full declarative clauses is the 'Finite', which is the verbal type element. The functional role of the 'Finite' is to make the proposition definite and arguable. In other words, the 'Finite' is used to express modalisation (probability/certainty) and modulation (obligation/inclination). The next example demonstrates the 'Finite' as a constituent in the clause.

Table 5. shows the number and frequencies of using the 'Finite' to express modality in the documents collected.

Table 5. The Use of 'Finite' Modal Operators by EFL Arab Postgraduates

Modality	Finite	
	F	%
Modalization (probability and usuality)	379	71.78%
Modulation (obligation and inclination)	149	28.22%
Total	528	

The first chapter of students' theses and dissertations showed different occurrences of the use of finite modal operators to express modalisation and modulation (71.78%) and (28.22%), respectively.

Figure 2. below demonstrates the use of finite modal operators in numbers in each work. The highest occurrences of the finite modal operator were recorded in the chapters of S 2, S 13, S 8 and S 16, and they were as follows: 62, 61, 60 and 45, respectively. The other chapters showed different numbers ranging from 2 to 30. These results can be ascribed to many reasons. First, the participants got different levels of familiarity with the employment of the finite modal operators as a modality marker. Secondly, these conclusions may reveal the influence of tenor that is represented by the authors of each domain, the soft and the hard (Halliday, 1985; Halliday & Martin, 1993; Eggins, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Jomaa & Alia, 2019). Thus, the

highest occurrences belong to the participants who belong to the soft domain rather than the hard domain as shown in the next figure, which presents the use of finite modal operator to show stance in each participant's introductory chapter. This can be ascribed to the authors' tendency to make their discussion arguable.

Morton and Storch (2018) revealed the same result. In other words, their findings showed that students in the social sciences and humanities used more 'self-mentions' compared to students from the hard sciences due to the epistemological differences of the disciplines. The participants in the current study expressed many concerns about stance-taking. They reflected a lack of adequate knowledge in the implications of using the finite modal operators (Bartley & Hidalgo-Tenorio, 2016) which can express modality (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

The following examples show the use of the finite modal operator in some students' chapters.

(5) Specialists in the educational realm **can** benefit from this Islamic worldview about moral values and ethics. (S1/ Egy/ IE/ Pg.23/ Pr.3/ L.2)

(6) No matter how tactful a student is, getting a teacher to change his or her style **may not** work. (S2/ Egy/ IE/ Pg.19/ Pr.2/ L.1)

(7) It **might be** necessary for oil companies to eliminate selective aromatic portion from diesel fuels to reduce aromatic discharges. (S3/ Jor/ Che/ Pg. 6/ Pr. 3/ L.2).

Figure 4.1 presents the occurrence of the finite modal operator in the first chapter of the participants by frequency.

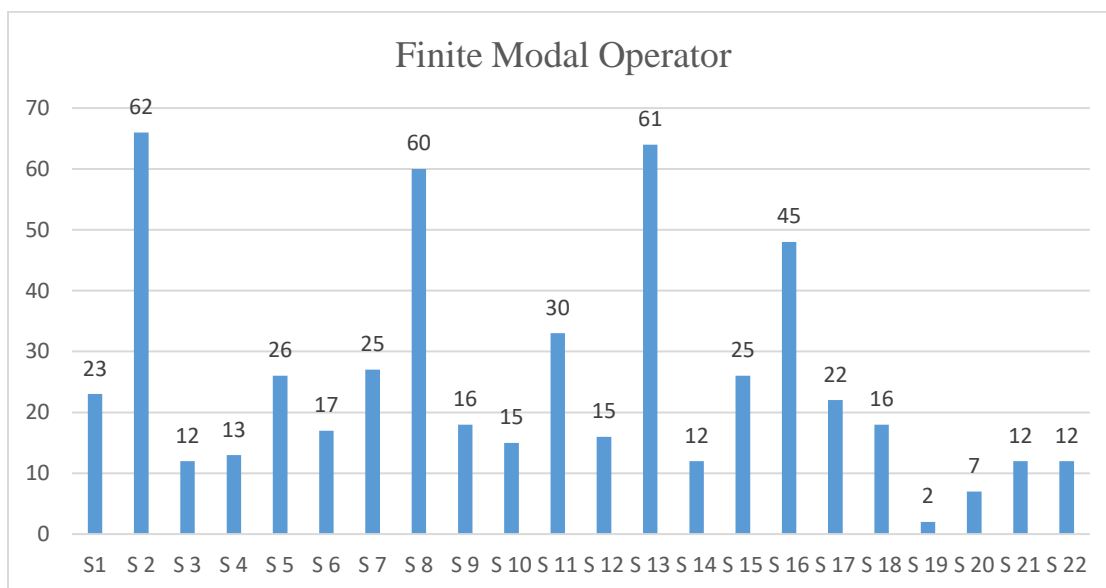


Figure 2. Finite modal operators by EFL Arab postgraduates

The highest occurrences of the use of the finite modal operators were found in the chapters of participants who belong to the soft domain. The participants who belong to the hard domain, on the other hand, occupied the lowest percentages in the use of the finite modal operator S20 (7), S21 (12), S22 (12), S3 (12), and S4 (13), except for S19 (2) who belong to the soft domain, Applied linguistics. That may be ascribed to his unfamiliarity with the importance of the use of modal operators to express stance and the hard domain community's preference to depend on facts more than arguments (Jomaa & Alia, 2019). Figure 2 also shows that some participants who belong to the humanities and social sciences employed finite modal operators less than what some of those in the hard sciences did. That can be ascribed to their unfamiliarity with the implications of the finite modal operator and its importance in showing stance.

4.1.1 Identifying the 'Finite' Constituent

Identifying the 'Finite' constituent is based on the sequence. In other words, when there is a group of verbal elements, the 'Finite' constituent is the first part of the verbal group, as in example (8).

(8) Face detection and feature extraction **should** manage several well-known difficulties. (S4/ Syr/ IT/ Pg. 11/ Pr. 1/ L. 5)

In some examples, there is no explicit 'Finite' constituent in the clause. Rather, the 'Finite' is fused with the predicator, as in example (9).

(9) This problem **stands out** in the clarity of the level of detection features and establishing an effective face model. (S4/ IT/ Pg. 13/ Pr. 2/ L. 2)

In example (9), the sentence has no explicit ‘Finite’ constituent. Rather, the ‘Finite’ is fused with the Predicator ‘*stands out*’. Hence, the ‘Finite’ constituent is of two kinds; ***Temporal Finite Verbal Operators*** anchor the proposition by reference to time. These give tense to the finite, including the past, present or future. Examples (11-13) demonstrate the use of ‘Finite’ as a ‘*Temporal Finite Verbal Operator*’:

(11) A number of studies **reported** the increase in library use. (S9/ Jor/ ID/ Pg. 15/ Pr. 2/ L. 5)

(12) After that, it **delves** into the problem statement. (S19/ Syr/ AL/ Pg. 1/ Pr. 1/ L. 3)

(13) Once this attribute meets the primary pragmatic needs of students, they **will** then look to see if the space also meets their ascending needs of varied learning and social activities. (S9/ Jor/ ID/ Pg.6/ Pr. 1/ L.1)

In examples (11) and (12), the ‘finite verbal operator’ in ‘**reported**’ refers to the simple past and the ‘finite verbal operator’ in ‘**delves**’ refers to the simple present. However, in example (13), the ‘finite verbal operator’ represented by ‘*will*’ refers to the future tense explicitly.

The other kind of Finite is called ‘***Finite Modal Operators***’. These kinds of ‘Finite’ make the proposition arguable by allowing the writer to adopt a stance and project his/her voice. To put it differently, the writer can express his/her attitude through either modalisation involving probability and/or usuality or modulation involving obligation and/or inclination. This stance can range from high, through median to low (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Examples (14) and (15) demonstrate such use of the ‘Finite Modal Operators’ to express modalisation (probability and certainty).

(14) The mantra ‘prevention is better than cure’ **can** help to prevent damaging situations from becoming worse. (S10/ Jor/ ID/ Pg. 16/ Pr. 6/ L. 1)

(15) Readers of Kafka’s biography **may** notice two simple facts. (S13/ Jor/ Lit/ Pg. 34/ Pr. 2/ L. 1)

(16) This **will** increase the motivation level of language learners and successfully bring about a rich language learning environment. (S16/ Jor/ AL/ Pg. 44/ Pr. 2/ L. 12)

In examples (14) and (15), the Finites ‘*can*’ and ‘*may*’ reveal a low stance of probability. Similarly, the Finite Modal Operator ‘*will*’ in example (16) expresses a median stance of probability. Consequently, three degrees of probability were found between positive and negative clauses, including median and low, as in Figure 4.2.

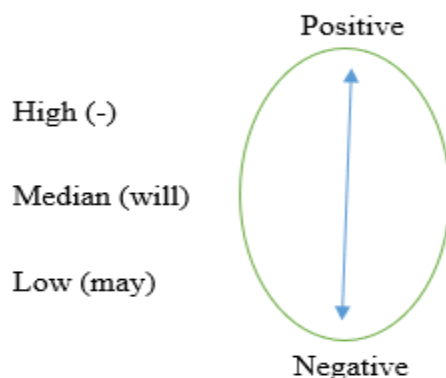


Figure 3. Finite modal operators to express degrees of probability

Expressing probability is not the only purpose of the use of the Finite Modal Operators, but they are also employed to express Modulation with different rates of stance ranging from high through median to low. Modulation included expressing either obligation and/or inclination, as in examples (17) and (18).

(17) It **must** be organized, managed and disseminated effectively to achieve quality. (S17/ Jor/ Mg/ Pg. 23/ Pr. 3/ L. 1)

(18) Building owners **should** put more effort into caring for their buildings. (S10/ Jor/ ID/ Pg. 16/ Pr. 6/ L. 2).

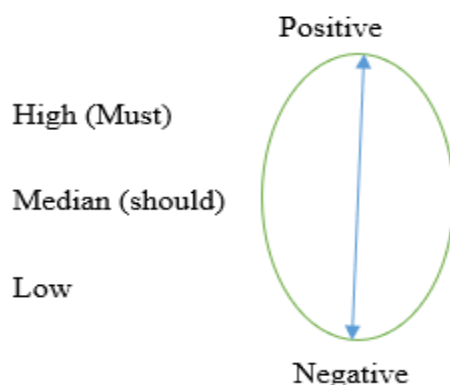


Figure 4. Finite modal operators to express degrees of obligation

In example (17), the Finite Modal Operator ‘*must*’ is used to express a high stance of obligation. Similarly, the Finite Modal Operator ‘*should*’ in example (18) expresses a median stance of obligation, as displayed in Figure 4.3.

These Finite Modal Operators are also used to express inclination, as in example (19).

(19) The research **will** try to develop answers for the following questions.

Finite constituents can carry another semantic feature which is *polarity*. This polarity makes the proposition either positive or negative, as in example (20).

(20) It is because they are poor that they **cannot** afford to be without it. (S7/ Ye/ IT/ Pg. 5/Pr. 1/L 3)

However, in non-finite clauses, there is no ‘finite’ constituent. This includes perfective and imperfective clauses as in example (21).

(21) The hotel industry being a service oriented industry involves people dealing with people. (S8/ Jor/ Eco/ Pg.4/ Pr.1/ L7)

To, conclude, ‘finite’ constituents were either explicitly used or Implicitly fused with the predictor. These ‘finite’ constituents significantly indicate the tense, make the proposition arguable, and

imply polarity. This meets with Halliday & Matthiessen’s SFL framework (2014), Jomaa and Alia’s findings (2019) and Alia, Jomaa and Yunus’s findings (2020).

4.1.2 Residue Component of the Clause

The second component of the clause is RESIDUE, which is less essential to clause arguability. Similar to MOOD, the RESIDUE includes more than one constituent, including a ‘Predicator’, a ‘Complement’, and an ‘Adjunct’. As a lexical part of the verbal group, the predicator conveys the lexical meaning and specifies the type of the processes that are involved in the clause, as demonstrated in examples (22) and (23).

(22) This specific field **started** to gain more interests in the early days of World War II. (S22/ Jor/ Math/ Pg. 15/ Pr. 1/ L. 4)

(23) One of the major problems **resides** in their inability to write cohesively and speak the language appropriately. (S16/ Jor/ AL/ Pg. 14/ Pr. 3/ L. 8)

In both examples (22) and (23), when analyzing the clause based on the constituents used, the predicator ‘**started**’ is divided into two parts; half a part is in the MOOD component of the clause, whereas the other part is in the RESIDUE component of the clause, as in table 4.5.

Table 6. Example of the intermingled finite and predicator

<i>Subject</i>	Task performance	
<i>Finite</i>		Mood
<i>Predicator</i>	involves	
<i>Complement</i>	activities like producing manufactured goods or proving a service	Residue

(S8/ Jor/ Eco/ Pg. 7/ Pr. 1/ L. 8)

The ‘Complement’ constituent that follows the predicator is the second constituent of the RESIDUE, as in example (25).

(25) I detailed *the statement of the problem*. (S11/ SYR/ AL/ Pg. 2/ Pr. 1/ L. 2)

The main function of the ‘Complement’ is for enhancing the clarification of the communicated information. ‘Adjunct’ is another constituent of the RESIDUE that is either adverbial or prepositional rather than a nominal constituent and adds additional information that is not essential to the clause.

(26) Currently, it has a total of 29,000 students from all over the country and abroad.

In example (26), the sentence includes two adjuncts, ‘currently’ and ‘from all over the country’, the former is an adverbial constituent and the latter is a prepositional one.

Adjuncts that add information to the interpersonal meaning encompass two types: **Mood Adjuncts** and **Comment Adjuncts**, and both of them fall under the Modal Adjunct category. The two types of Modal Adjuncts were employed in the theses and dissertations of Arab students. **Mood Adjunct** is considered as a constituent of the MOOD component of the clause, thus revealing a meaning that is related closely to the Finite Modal Operators. In other words, Mood Adjuncts were used to express modalisation (probability and usuality). For more clarification, in example (27), the Mood Adjunct ‘*always*’ expresses a high degree of the usuality of the action, whereas example (28) includes the Mood Adjunct ‘*likely*’ to reveal a median stance of probability.

(27) For these details, writing has **always** been a necessary characteristic of the syllabus of English whether as EFL. (S11/ SYR/ AL/ Pg. 9/ Pr. 2/ L. 5)

(28) It suggests that when employees have high job satisfaction, they remain with the organization and are **likely** to provide better performance in the organization. (S8/ Jor/ Eco/ Pg. 4/ Pr. 1/L. 4)

Figure 4.4 demonstrates the number of Mood Adjuncts used in Modalisation to reveal either probability or usuality. (105) Mood Adjuncts expressing modalisation were used in the theses and dissertations of the participants. (83) of them were used in the soft domain works, whereas (23) were used in the hard domain.

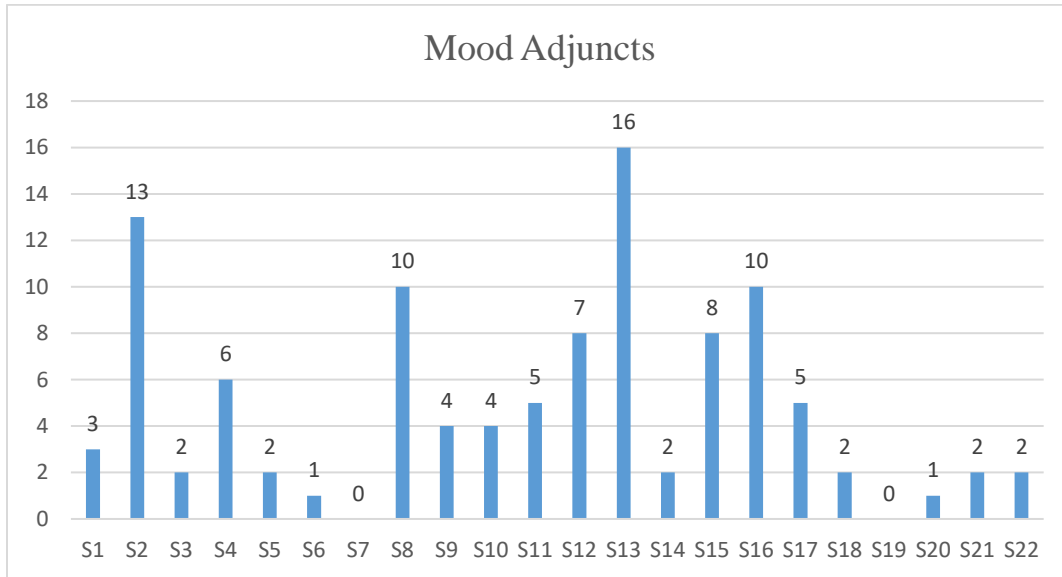


Figure 5. Mood Adjuncts expressing Probability and Usuality

The majority of these Mood Adjuncts expressing modalisation were used to reveal usuality (86), whereas (19) were employed to express probability. The high use of usuality markers can be due to the focus on the importance of mood adjuncts in teaching English tenses.

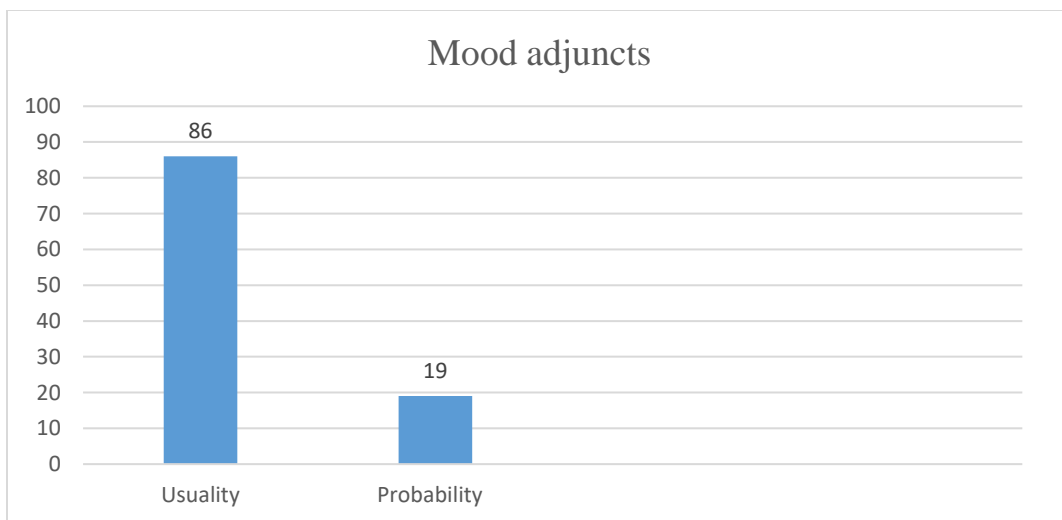


Figure 6. Mood Adjuncts Expressing Probability and Usuality

The stance of revealing probability by means of the Mood Adjuncts was of different degrees ranging from high through median to low, as in the following examples.

(29) By trying to marry Freida, **probably** a fictional portrait of Felice, George is, in a way trying to assert his manhood. (S13/ Jor/ Lit/ Pg. 10/ Pr. 2/ L. 6)

(30) Kafka is **undoubtedly** one of the most important writers in the 20th century and his literature has been a constant subject to literary endeavors and investigations. (S13/ Jor/ Lit/ Pg. 28/ Pr. 2/ L. 1)

The Mood Adjunct '*probably*', was employed to and express a median stance of probability, and the Mood Adjunct '*undoubtedly*' revealed a high stance of probability. Similarly, Mood Adjuncts were also used to reveal the stance of frequency and usuality. This stance has different grades, ranging from high through median to low, as in examples (31), (32), and (33), respectively.

(31) For these details, writing has **always** been a necessary characteristic of the syllabus of English whether as EFL. (S11/ SYR/ AL/ Pg. 9/ Pr. 2/ L. 5)

(32) Terengganu traditional house are **usually** being builtd by cengal wood (S10/ Jor/ ID/ Pg. 10/ Pr. 1/ L. 4)

(33) In some cases they would fail and **sometimes** lose the properties of global convergence. (S21/ SYR/ Maths/ Pg. 4/ Pr. 2/ L. 2)

Figure 4.7 illustrates the Mood Adjuncts of probability and frequency and their different degrees used in the students' theses and dissertations.

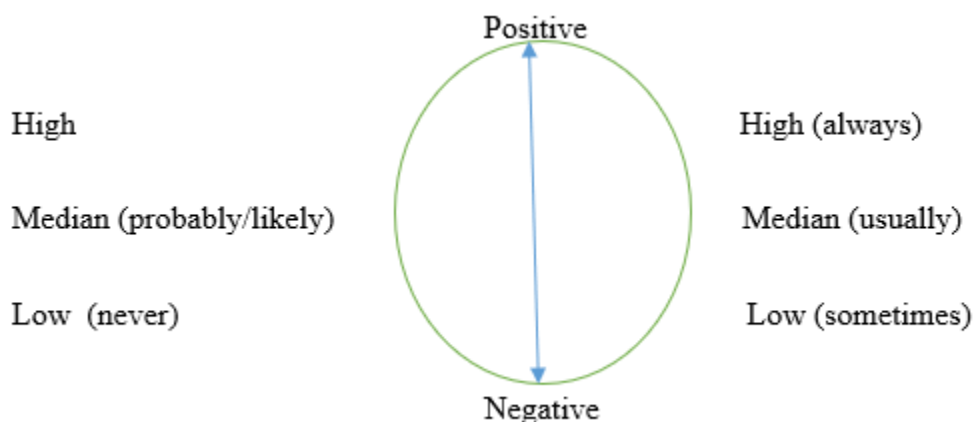


Figure 7. Mood Adjuncts of Probability and Frequency

Mood Adjuncts were also used to express other aspects of stance. These included expressing **PRESUMPTION** through using the Mood Adjunct '**clearly**', as in example (34).

(34) Linear programming science developed **clearly** after 1950. (S21/ SYR/ Maths/ Pg. 2/ Pr. 3/ L. 5)

Another type of Mood Adjunct was used to express **TIME** by means of using the adverbial '*still*', as in example (35).

(35) In the same time, oral insulin administration which may solve these problems is **still** until today considered as a challenge. (S20/ Egy/ Ph/ Pg.4/ Pr. 3/ L. 4)

Mood Adjuncts can express **DEGREE** by using the adverbial '*fully*' as in example (36).

(36) As well as, despite the difficulties in reaching teachers, the researcher did not cover certain regions in Aleppo Governorate due to some **fully** demolished regions and some war zones. (S19/ SYR/ AL/ Pg. 7/ Pr. 1/ L. 1)

Other Mood Adjuncts can also express **INTENSITY** by using the adverbials '*only*' in example (37).

(37) Also, the current study is confined **only** to the correlation between writing and speaking performance generated by 150 EFL male and female students (S16/ Jor/ AL/ Pg. 19/ Pr. 2/ L. 1)

Table 7. demonstrates the number of Mood Adjuncts; (429) Mood Adjuncts were used. A total number of 313 (73 %) Mood Adjuncts were used in the chapters of the participants who belong to the soft domain, whereas 116 (27%) Mood Adjuncts were employed in the chapters belonging to the hard domain.

Table 7. Mood adjuncts used by EFL Arab postgraduates

Student	Probability and usuality	Presumption	Time	Degree	Intensity
S1	3	3	1	5	4
S2	13	4	1	8	9
S3	2	1	1	6	-
S4	6	-	3	3	2
S5	2	2	1	5	2
S6	1	-	-	1	2
S7	-	-	4	3	1
S8	10	1	3	16	2
S9	4	3	1	8	1
S10	4	2	2	9	2
S11	5	-	17	15	2
S12	7	-	4	10	8
S13	16	5	1	16	17
S14	2	-	2	-	1
S15	8	-	2	4	6
S16	10	1	10	6	6
S17	5	1	3	6	3
S18	2	-	1	4	2
S19	0	-	2	6	7
S20	1	-	1	4	1
S21	2	1	2	4	2
S22	2	3	4	9	3
Total	105	27	66	148	83

Table 7 reveals that the students are mostly familiar with employing adjuncts expressing degree (148) then modalisation (105). However, they used adjuncts expressing presumption (27), time (66), and intensity (83) insufficiently.

Figure 8 demonstrates the number of Mood Adjuncts used in the chapters collected from each thesis or dissertation in the soft and hard domains.

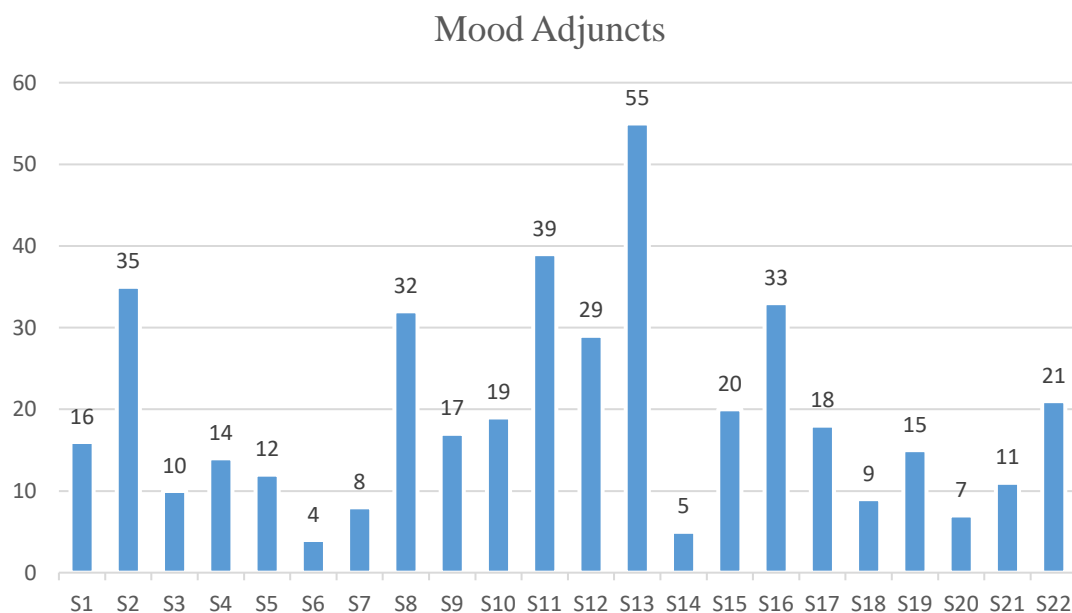


Figure 8. The use of mood adjuncts by EFL Arab postgraduates

The highest use of mood adjuncts was in S13 (Lit 55), followed by S11, S2 and S8, AL, IE and AL 39, 35 and 32 respectively), S12, S16 and S8 in AL, AL and Eco, 35, 33 and 32 respectively. The least use was recorded in the chapters of S6 (4) in AL, S 14 (5) in Eco, S18 (7) in Ph, S19 (8) in AL, S20 (8) in Ph and S7 (8) in IT. These findings probably demonstrate the effect of tenor that is represented by EFL postgraduates. Participants who belong to the academic community of the soft domain tended to use a higher frequency of mood adjuncts since the soft domain depends on the strength of the arguments. On the other hand, those who belong to the academic community of the hard domain employed mood adjuncts with a lower frequency since the hard domain rests on facts rather than arguments. As a result, mood adjuncts were used with a lower percentage. These findings are in line with Halliday and Matthiessen’s SFL framework (2014) and Jomaa and Alia’s (2019) findings (2019).

Comment Adjunct is another type of Adjunct that can add to the interpersonal meanings of the writers. These types of Adjuncts express the writer’s stance about the whole clause, thus occurring in an initial position or directly after the ‘Subject’. These adjuncts express different types of meanings. For example, some Comment Adjuncts express **ASSERTION** by using the adverbials ‘*importantly*’ in the following example.

(38) Most **importantly**, all aspects of curriculum design such as needs analysis, syllabus design, and course evaluation, were absent. (S12/ SYR/ AL/ Pg. 10/ Pr. 1/ L. 9)

Some Comment Adjuncts express **HOW DESIRABLE** something is through using the adverbial ‘*unfortunately*’, as in example (39).

(39) **Unfortunately**, teachers’ feedback in both types of writing approaches, namely conventional and innovative, suffers. (S19/ SYR/ AL/ Pg. 2/ Pr. 1/ L. 3)

Some Comment Adjuncts reveal the **VALIDITY** of something by using the adverbials ‘*generally*’ in example (40).

(40) **Generally**, teachers of higher education in Saudi Arabia are highly interested in their English as foreign language students’ language.... (S11/ SYR/ AL/ Pg. 16/ Pr. 2/ L. 5)

The total number of comment adjuncts used in the data collected was (146). Figure 9 shows the percentage of using Comment Adjuncts in the introductory chapters of each domain.

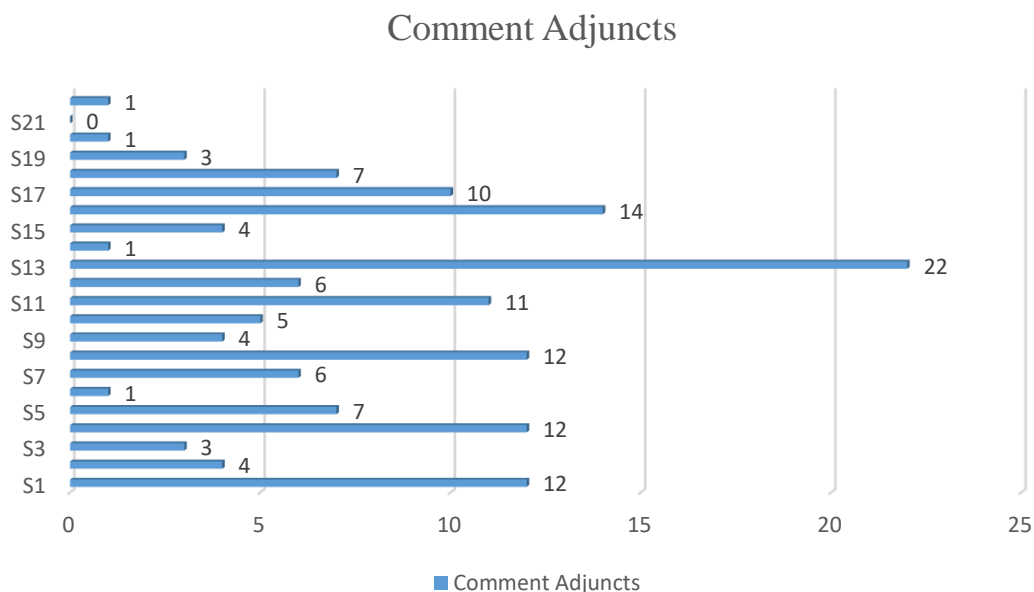


Figure 9. The Use of Comment Adjuncts

Figure 9. shows great differences in the use of comment adjuncts by EFL Arab pos. The highest occurrence was recorded in S13 (22), followed by S16, S1, S4, S8, S11, and S17, (14), (12), (12), (12), (11), and (10) respectively. The least employment occurred in S21 (0), S22 (1), S20 (1), S14 (1) and S6 (1). The use of the mood adjuncts in other chapters ranged from (3) to (7). These findings may reflect that some participants are to some extent familiar with the use of these adjuncts, and they may also reflect the role of the tenor that is represented by EFL postgraduates. Participants who belong to the academic community of the soft domain utilized a higher frequency of comment adjuncts (39/ 73.3%) since the soft domain depends on the strength of the arguments. On the other hand, those who belong to the academic community of the hard domain employed comment adjuncts with a lower frequency (39/ 26.7%) since the hard domain rests on facts rather than arguments. Consequently, comment adjuncts were used with a lower percentage.

Few verbs were used in students' writings to express obligation and inclination as shown in examples (41) and (42) respectively.

(41) While formal institutions **require** more serious involvement from individuals, third places evoke playful moods, (S9/ Jor/ ID/ Pg. 4/ Pr. 1/ L.3)

(42) To meet the objective, this research **aims to** compare the barriers and obstacles of implementing BSC from literature and practical perspective. (S14/ Jor/ Eco/ Pg. 5/ Pr. 4/ L. 2)

Hyland and Tse (2004) and Hyland (2005a) point out that metadiscourses that involve adverbs, such as hedges and boosters, and stance adverbs (Çakır, 2016) are used to reveal the writer's stance and establish his/her membership to a certain academic community. Like Jomaa and Alia's (2019) findings, the findings of the present study show the high density of comment adjuncts and mood adjuncts (Çakır, 2016) in the soft domain compared with the low number in hard domain which might reflect the effect of tenor on the interpersonal meanings (Halliday, 1985; Halliday & Martin, 1993; Eggins, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The soft domain writers tend to use more modality markers since their fields, unlike the hard domain', depend largely on arguments rather than facts as in the hard domain. The second one could be that the hard domain writers may not have good competence related to the modality markers. The findings also imply that some of the participants, who belong to the soft domain and are thus supposed to employ a good deal of modality markers, used very few markers.

Figure 10. shows the total number of modality occurrences in the introductory chapters of EFL Arab postgraduates' theses and dissertations. Generally, both domains show a higher percentage in the objective orientation compared with the subjective one, (66.9%) for the soft domain and (79%) for the hard domain. However, the writers in the soft domain show more subjectivity in their use of modality than those in the hard domain. The percentage of the former was (20.3%) whereas the latter was (15.9%). This could be because of the fact that, unlike the soft domain, the

hard domain depends on facts more than arguments and personal opinions. Consequently, the participants in the soft domain were less objective than those in the hard domain.

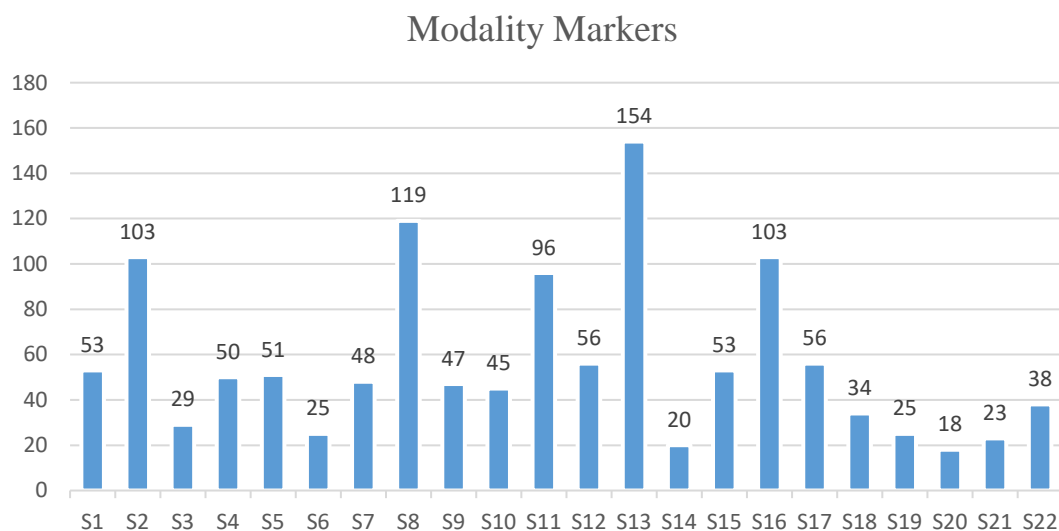


Figure 10. Modality Markers by EFL Arab Postgraduates

Figure 10 presents the occurrences of modality markers in each work. The highest number was found in S13 (158/ 12.37%/ Literature), followed by S8 (119/ 9.32%/ Eco), S2 (107/ 8.38%/ Islamic Education), S16 (106/ 8.3%/ Applied Linguistics) and S11 (99/ 7.75%/ Applied Linguistics). The least use of modality markers occurred in S20 (18/1.41%), S14 (20/ 1.57%), S21 (24/1.88%), S19 (25/ 1.96%), S6 (25/ 1.96%) and S3 (29/ 2.27%). These participants study at Pharmacy, Economics, Mathematics, Applied linguistics, Applied linguistics, and Chemistry departments, respectively.

Table 8. Modality Orientation by EFL Arab Postgraduates

Student	Subjective/imp	Subjective/exp	Objective/imp	Objective/exp
S1	20	-	6	2
S2	61	2	13	1
S3	11	-	5	2
S4	12	-	16	2
S5	25	-	6	3
S6	16	-	5	-
S7	27	-	7	3
S8	64	-	19	2
S9	20	-	9	2

S10	15	-	9	1
S11	35	-	14	-
S12	18	-	13	-
S13	60	1	31	1
S14	12	-	4	-
S15	26	-	11	-
S16	45	1	21	-
S17	23	-	9	-
S18	16	-	4	-
S19	2	-	5	-
S20	7	-	4	-
S21	12	-	2	-
S22	14	-	3	1
Total	541	4	216	20

The results showed different orientations in each chapter. The highest orientation use that was recognized was implicit subjectivity; the total number of the modality markers by which the student showed their stance as a subjective one was the implicit one (541/ 69.27%) followed by the implicit objectivity in modality orientation (216/ 27.66%), then explicit objectivity (20/ 2.56%) and the smallest number was in the explicit subjective orientation (4/ 0.51%) as shown in Figure 11.

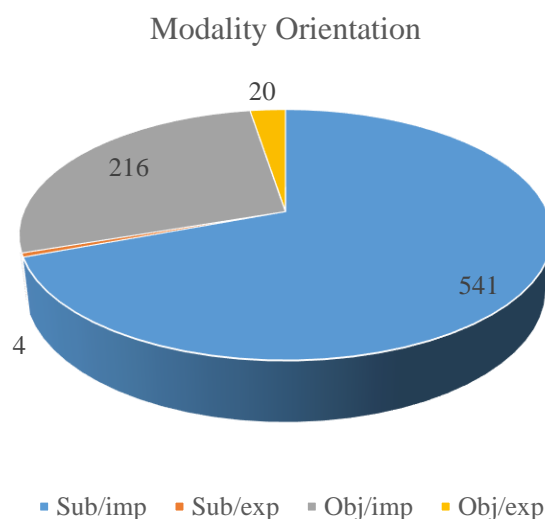


Figure 11. Modality Orientation by EFL Arab Postgraduates

Examples (43, 44, 45 and 46) show the four types of modality orientation that were found in the chapters analysed.

(43) These difficulties can be ascribed to some elements such as pose variation. SUBJECTIVE/ IMPLICIT (S4/ SYR/IT/Pg. 5/ Pr. 1/ L. 7)

(44) I'm sure teachers dream of the perfect student, SUBJECTIVE/ EXPLICIT (S2/ EGY/IE/Pg. 3/ Pr. 3/ L. 1)

(45) By trying to marry Freida, probably a fictional portrait of Felice, George is, in a way trying to assert his manhood. OBJECTIVE/IMPLICIT (S13/ JOR/ Lit/ Pg. 10/ Pr. 3/ L. 6)

(46) It is hoped that Unisza can produce leaders in various fields through knowledge, openness, OBJECTIVE/EXPLICIT (S10/ JOR/ ID/ Pg. 10/ Pr. 4/ L. 1)

Figure 12 illustrates the modality orientation of the participants in both domains.

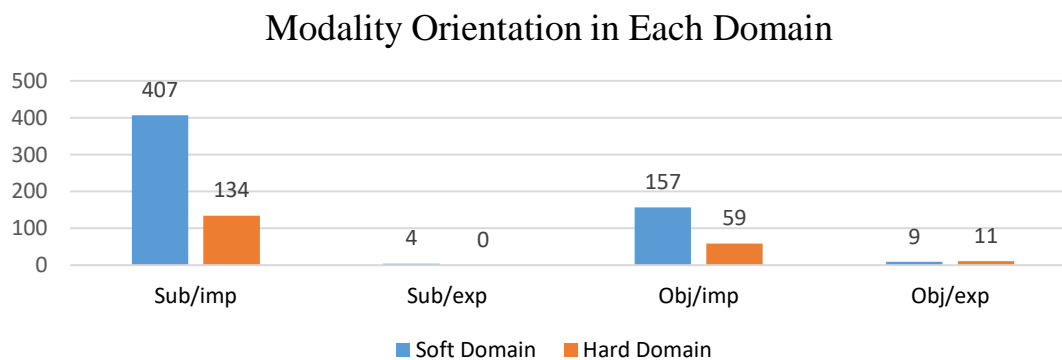


Figure 12. Modality Orientation in Each Domain

The total number of modality markers used in the soft domain is 914, whereby 407 (70.43%) markers were used to express implicit subjectivity in the hard domain, whereas 157 (27.3%) were used to express implicit objectivity in the same domain. 4 (0.7%) were used to express explicit subjectivity in the soft domain, whereas 9 (1.57%) were used to reveal explicit objectivity in the same domain.

The total number of modality markers used in the hard domain is 332, whereby 134 (65.7%) were used in the hard domain to reveal an implicit subjectivity in modality orientation, whereas 59 (28.9%) were used to reveal an implicit objectivity in orientation in the hard domain. However, no markers were used to reveal an explicit subjectivity in the hard domain, and 11 (5.4%) markers revealed an orientation of explicit objectivity in the hard domain. These results demonstrate the tendency of soft and hard domain writers to be more subjective than objective. This may reflect the tenor that is represented by EFL Arab postgraduates. Participants who belong to the academic community of the soft domain tended to be subjective more than objective (71.23% and 28.77% respectively) since, unlike the hard domain which is concerned with facts more than arguments, the soft domain is based, to some extent, on the arguments strength and writers' views. The hard domain writers also were found to be more subjective than objective (65.7% and 34.3% respectively). The subjectivity of the soft domain was slightly higher than the same orientation in the hard domain (71.23% and 65.7%, respectively). For more clarification, see Table 9.

Table 9. Modality Orientation by EFL Arab Postgraduates

Orientation	SD	%	HD	%
Sub/imp	407	70.54%	134	65.7%
Sub/exp	4	0.69%	0	0%
Obj/imp	157	27.21%	59	28.9%
Obj/exp	9	1.56%	11	5.4%
Total	577		204	

The total number of pages collected from students is 286; 198 (69.2%) for the soft domain and 88 (30.8%) for the hard one. The total number of the modality markers is (1246), whereby 914 (73.35%) were collected from participants belonging to the soft domain and 332 (26.65%) belonging to the hard one. Generally, this reveals that the soft domain writers used markers more than those in the hard domain. This can be attributed to two factors; the first one is that the soft domain writers tended to use more modality markers since their fields, unlike the hard domain ones, depend largely on arguments rather than facts as in the hard domain. The second one could be that the hard domain writers may not have good competence concerning the modality markers. These findings are in line with Alia, Jomaa, and Yunus's (2020) findings. Their study also showed that participants were more subjective in the soft domain than those in the hard domain and the authors in the soft domain showed less objectivity than those in the hard domain. However, the ratio of subjectivity and objectivity in both domains in their study differs from the same ratios in the current study; the participants were much more subjective rather than objective in their use of the modality markers in the current study.

5. Discussion

The present study adopted the modality of the Systemic Functional Linguistics Approach which aimed at exploring the use of the metadiscourse markers in the introductory chapters of EFL Arab postgraduates. This study focused on identifying the mood adjuncts, comments adjuncts, and finite modal operators to communicate modalisation and modulation. In examining the stance of the writers, it was found that Finite Modal Operators as ‘Finite’ constituents and adverbials as Mood adjuncts were used to reveal modalisation and modulation. Modalisation included probability and usuality, whereas modulation included obligation and inclination. The stance that was expressed ranged from a high stance through median to low. In addition, Mood adjuncts were used to express different stances like degree, intensity, presumption, and time. Comment Adjuncts were also employed revealing varied stances. The results of the document analysis are in line with the study of Jomaa and Alia (2019) which analyzed the frequency and wordings of modality within the citations of the literature review chapters of 20 PhD theses employing the SFL.

According to Dunleavy (2003), since the English language is ‘writer-responsible’, a thesis writer should meet the expectations of their readers. That is, the writer or the speaker is responsible for clarifying and organizing the concepts to make readings/speeches easily understood by the readers/listeners (Hinds, 1987). One significant key to acknowledging their roles as writers responsible is through using metadiscourse (Dahl, 2004) to organize the text and interact with the reader. Hence, metadiscourses play these highly significant roles by revealing the academic voice which is rather challenging for non-native speaker writers (Jomaa & Bidin, 2017; Alia, Jomaa & Yunus, 2020).

The findings reported that EFL postgraduates showed a lack of knowledge in academic writing and difficulties in adopting an authorial stance. Consequently, students’ weaknesses in adopting a stance need further emphasis and enhancement (Hei & David, 2015). Hence, a lack of knowledge of the significance of using modality markers resulted in limited use of these markers. Most of the studies on EFL and ESL related to adopting a stance found that writers face difficulties in this issue especially in the employment of the Metadiscourse to reveal their stance (Shen, 1989; Jomaa & Bidin, 2017; Jomaa & Alia, 2019). Metadiscourses that involve adverbs, such as hedges and boosters, are used to reveal the writer’s stance and establish his/her membership in a certain academic community (Hyland, 2005a; Hyland & Tse, 2004). The high density of mood adjuncts, comments adjuncts, and finite modal operators in Applied Linguistics compared with the low number in Information Technology (Jomaa & Alia, 2019) showed the effect of tenor on the interpersonal meanings (Halliday, 1985; Halliday & Martin, 1993; Eggins, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In other words, each field has its own readers who expect certain expressions and vocabulary from the writers. Consequently, these findings could be employed pedagogically to equip novice writers with the linguistic skills that basically contribute to their academic success in writing academic genres.

6. Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal the importance of metadiscourse in academic writing, particularly the employment of modality to reveal the writer's stance. Supervisors and institutions could provide students with suitable academic writing textbooks to help postgraduates focus on the norms and conventions of each discipline such as using metadiscourse markers and other discipline-specific linguistic structures. Such textbooks can expand students' knowledge and experience about academic writing. Although this study presented significant information about the field of stance and academic writing, it focused only on EFL Arab postgraduates who shared relatively similar socio-cultural and educational backgrounds, which had an effect on academic writing and stance-taking. Thus, including other cultural and educational backgrounds may provide more evidence of the effect of language backgrounds on authorial stance in academic writing. In addition, challenges in academic writing in general and adopting a stance, in particular, were experienced in writing the introductory chapter of Ph.D. and Master's proposals. Therefore, analyzing other genres such as journal papers, essays, and other thesis chapters might result in more essential information about the challenges in the authorial stance and academic writing challenges.

Future research can also include a comparison between Arab international postgraduate students and Native English students to understand the extent to which Arab students face challenges in their writing and help researchers boost their knowledge about EFL academic writing. In addition, future research could be conducted in exploring, analyzing, and understanding the perspectives and the role of the supervisors in supervisees' academic writing progress. In addition, more research could be done to explore the ways and methods of teaching and learning the use of metadiscourse.

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