

Stances in Research Article Abstracts: An Analysis of Abstracts in Literary Journals

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Abstract

In academic discourse, research article abstracts are often considered objective; however, they are inherently evaluative and frequently encode subjectivity through linguistic choices. Although abstracts have been extensively studied, literary research article abstracts (LRAs) have not received the same level of attention. This study investigates the rhetorical structure and use of stance in one hundred LRAs from high-impact journals. We employ Tankó's (2017) revised move-structure model and Hyland's (2005) interactional metadiscourse framework to analyze the corpus of abstracts. The rhetorical analysis shows no dominant structure, contrary to conventional accounts. LRA writers prefer to assert their interpretations using boosters, which show the highest density in the Outcome (0.63), Background (0.58), and Purpose (0.56) moves. Attitude markers are used most frequently in the Background move (0.65). Consistent with academic conventions, the use of self-references is typical of the Methodology move (0.43). The use of these devices indicates that LRAs are intentionally subjective and contain evaluative language and strategic rhetorical choices deployed to engage readers and enhance the authors' credibility. The findings underscore the need for EFL/ESL students and novice writers to recognize academic discourse as strategically evaluative rather than purely objective.

Keywords: literary research article abstracts, stances, interactional metadiscourse, genre analysis, disciplinary variation

Scientists, experts, and scholars share their ideas, establish authority, and gain recognition as members of their academic and scientific communities by writing and publishing research articles. Originating from this social and cultural context, research article writing is not simply a matter of information transmission; rather, it is an

interactive process between writers and readers. Ken Hyland (2005) asserts that this interaction is realized through metadiscourse and evaluative language, which provide authors with a means of managing the text to engage readers, signal their attitudes toward the content, and acknowledge the potential complexities of the issues raised. Ken Hyland and Hong Jiang (2016) further argue that academic writing involves not only the transmission of information but also its evaluation. This evaluation enables writers to project stance, which is critical for constructing disciplinary identities and gaining acceptance within academic communities.

Within research articles, the abstract plays a unique role in shaping first impressions and promoting research visibility. The standards issued by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) state that abstracts should be brief, factual, and neutral. However, John Swales (1990) and Vijay Bhatia (1993, 2017) argue that abstracts are not merely neutral or objective representations of research articles. Instead, their subjectivity is encoded through the linguistic choices made by authors. The objective of an abstract and its rhetorical strategy are therefore intertwined. The tension between neutrality and evaluation provides a useful framework for studying abstracts as a distinct academic genre.

In academic discourse, the term “stance” refers to how authors express their judgments, attitudes, and degree of commitment to their propositions through linguistic resources such as boosters, hedges, and attitude markers (Hyland, 2005). The use of these resources enables writers to position themselves in relation to their work and their readers, and to participate in ongoing disciplinary conversations. The study of stance markers is important because their frequency and distribution are not random; rather, they are shaped by the rhetorical purposes of each section of an abstract. In research article abstracts, stance markers may therefore play a key role in presenting research while signaling its value, credibility, and significance.

Despite the growing body of research on stance in academic discourse, most studies have focused on the sciences and social sciences. Relatively little attention has been paid to stance in LRAs (Tankó, 2017). Previous research shows that the use and distribution of stance markers vary across disciplines due to differences in epistemological orientations and knowledge-making practices. From a disciplinary perspective, these differences may also be linked to knowledge structures. In Karl Maton’s (2015) Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), for example, the humanities are described as having horizontal knowledge structures, in which knowledge develops through the accumulation of multiple perspectives and interpretations. In such disciplines, scholars frequently propose arguments, interpretations, and theoretical positions, which may require more overt evaluative positioning in academic writing. Disciplinary characteristics may also influence the rhetorical structure of abstracts. For these reasons, literary studies provide a particularly interesting context for exploring stance, as the discipline is largely interpretive and argument-driven. Investigating both rhetorical patterns and the distribution of stance markers across moves in LRAs can therefore contribute to a more nuanced understanding of stance in academic discourse.

Literature Review

In the last two decades, research on metadiscourse and stance in academic writing has been extensively conducted, and Hyland's (2005) interpersonal model has become the analytical framework. Well-known for its role in demonstrating that stance resources such as hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions are key to how writers build their own identity, back up their claims, and manage relationships with their readers, this body of work has been thoroughly investigated across various disciplines, genres, and levels of language proficiency. However, existing studies reveal uneven theoretical attention to how stance is distributed across rhetorical moves, particularly in LRAs (Tankó, 2017).

Stance, Writer Expertise, and Disciplinary Contexts

When comparing how experienced and novice writers express themselves, it is evident that the use of stance is an important aspect, representing the relationship a writer has with their writing. Research studies have provided insights into how experts consciously employ stance markers to conform to the conventions of their field. For example, Wang and Zeng (2021), in their study of four disciplines in hard applied and hard pure science, found that Chinese PhD students and expert authors skillfully combined boosters and self-mentions to introduce their research, whereas novice writers relied more heavily on hedged self-mentions, especially when explaining methods or arguments. Similarly, Farahanynia and Nourzadeh (2023), examining applied linguistics, reported that expert authors demonstrated a high degree of self-assurance in writing, supported by attitude markers and self-mentions, while novice writers employed interactional resources less selectively. Thus, these findings suggest that stance use is not merely a matter of frequency but of functional alignment with rhetorical purpose.

Looking at the disciplinary context of scientific writing, the stance taken in articles can be very different. McGrath and Kuteeva's (2012) examination of pure mathematics research articles revealed a comparatively lower frequency of hedges and attitude markers. This suggests an orientation that is more objective and less concerned with expressing personal stance. The findings indicate that the use of stance is largely determined by the epistemology and writing practices of a discipline, and that writers adjust their writing to suit the expectations of their disciplinary community.

In the study by Nawawi and Ting (2023), which explored differences in political science journals, Q1 authors were found to be more confident and to use boosters and self-mention in their methods sections, whereas Q3–Q4 authors relied more on hedges and distributed attitude markers more evenly. In a recent study of undergraduate argumentative essays in four disciplines, Khamkhien (2025) reported that science and engineering students preferred a more precise, less personal style, while their counterparts in the liberal arts and the health disciplines were more likely to use evaluative language and personal pronouns. These findings demonstrate that the use

of metadiscourse is not only discipline-sensitive but also influenced by the rhetorical and educational context in which writing is produced.

Abstracts as Sites of Stance Construction

In condensing the complexities of their research, writers of academic articles also have the task of establishing their credibility, and this is where abstracts play a key role. Studies in applied linguistics, education, and related fields show that abstracts effectively use markers to engage readers and project authority (Al-Shujairi, 2016; Chang, 2016; Li, 2021; Nguyen Thi Thuy Loan, 2018; Vatannasakha & Tangkiengsirisin, 2018). A diachronic examination by Šandová (2021) highlighted the increasing use of hedges and boosters over time in abstracts, indicating that the conventions of abstract writing evolve alongside disciplinary expectations.

When analyzing abstracts, researchers have found that stance is crucial in making content more cohesive; however, existing studies often treat abstracts as homogeneous units, without accounting for the relationship between specific rhetorical moves and stance markers. Nur et al. (2021), drawing on Swales and Feak's (2009) five-move model, found that interactional markers are often located in moves 3 and 4 of an abstract, yet these resources remain relatively limited. Saidi and Karami (2024) showed that Iranian history abstracts differ in the moves they prefer and the tone they use. Their analysis emphasized general structure but did not examine in depth the interaction between moves and stance realization.

Literary Research Article Abstracts and an Unresolved Gap

With respect to literary studies, LRAs have not received sufficient attention. According to Tankó (2017), these abstracts exhibit the use of self-reference and active voice. More recently, Geng and Wei (2023) found that LRAs use interactive resources more frequently than interactional ones, with significant differences in the use of self-mention compared to linguistics abstracts. More broadly, research on humanities discourse indicates that scholars in fields such as literary studies are more likely to adopt an interpretive, evaluative position that emphasizes personal stance and allows for greater rhetorical flexibility (Bondi, 2010; Hyland, 2005). Taken together, these findings suggest that LRA writers may use distinct rhetorical and metadiscursive patterns. However, the limited amount of focused research on LRAs highlights the need for further investigation into how stance and engagement are realized in this disciplinary context.

Regarding the analysis of stance in LRAs, researchers have not yet fully explored how stance resources are distributed across different rhetorical moves in these texts. The absence of move-sensitive analyses limits accounts of stance in abstracts, particularly in explaining how interpersonal communication operates in highly condensed genres. This gap also has pedagogical implications, as EAP instructors may lack clear guidance for students in literary studies—not only on which stance markers to use, but also on where and when to use them within abstract structures.

Positioning the Present Study

Existing research shows that abstracts play a crucial role in shaping research visibility and disciplinary participation. However, move-based analyses of stance in LRAs remain limited from both theoretical and pedagogical perspectives. A fuller understanding of how stance aligns with rhetorical functions in LRAs is largely absent. As a result, novice writers who rely on generalized conventions from other disciplines may overuse or mismanage evaluative language, weakening their authorial presence.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the interaction between rhetorical move structure and the use of stance as interactional metadiscourse, that is, how authors express their attitudes and engage with readers. By examining move frequencies and stance distributions, the study aims to clarify discipline-specific patterns of evaluation and engagement and to explore the stylistic and functional dimensions of abstract writing in literary studies, with the goal of informing targeted pedagogical practices in EAP contexts. The results shed light on how scholars in literary studies balance factual analysis with authorial voice.

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the features of the move structure of LRAs in terms of move frequencies and patterns?
2. How do writers in literary studies employ stance as interactional metadiscourse across rhetorical moves?

Method

The Construction of the Corpus

The corpus for this study consists of 100 LRAs published between 2021 and 2022 in *Poetics, Language and Literature*, and the *International Journal of Stylistics and Comparative Literature*. These journals were selected because they are indexed in Scopus (Q1), are accessible online through Mahidol University, and consistently publish empirical studies that follow the IMRD organizational pattern.

The decision to use a 2021–2022 corpus is based on the widespread adoption of generative AI tools in academic writing in late 2022. The selected corpus therefore serves as a pre-AI baseline of author-generated rhetorical and metadiscursive patterns. Establishing such a baseline has both theoretical significance and pedagogical value. First, from a theoretical perspective, a pre-AI reference point enables future research to determine whether changes in abstract writing over time reflect disciplinary evolution or the influence of increasingly formulaic patterns associated with AI use. Second, from a pedagogical perspective, EAP instruction should continue to teach students the rhetorical practices found in published research. Pre-AI abstracts can therefore serve as a foundation for instruction grounded in authentic academic writing.

By using a 2021–2022 corpus, this study provides a snapshot of the end of the human-authored era and a baseline against which post-AI-generated abstracts can be compared. The sampling strategy thus offers both contemporary relevance and historical value.

Sampling criteria were defined to include only empirical research articles in the dataset. Conceptual, theoretical, commentary, and review papers were excluded, as these do not typically follow an IMRD structure. Articles were randomly sampled from each journal issue, and any non-empirical articles were replaced. Table 1 presents an overview of the research article abstract corpus.

Table 1
Overview of the Research Article Abstract Corpora

Journals	Poetics	Language and Literature: <i>International Journal of Stylistics</i>	Comparative Literature
Number of RA abstracts	35	30	35
Length of RA abstracts (range of words)	100-286	105-328	72-292
Total number of words in RA abstracts	6,763	6,500	6,017
SJR (2024)	1.176 (Q1)	0.275 (Q1)	0.186 (Q1)

Subject area and category: Arts and Humanities/ Literature and Literary Theory

Number of research article abstracts: 100 research article abstracts

Year of publication: All articles were published from 2021-2022

The corpus consisted of 100 abstracts from the three journals, of which 30 were from *Language and Literature: International Journal of Stylistics* and the remaining 70 were from the other two journals (35 abstracts from each). This number was determined based on the availability of suitable empirical studies within the selected timeframe and was intended to maintain a balanced and methodologically manageable dataset for comparative analysis.

Identification of the Move Structure

Various models have been proposed for analyzing the structure of research article abstracts. One of the most widely cited is Santos's (1996) five-move model, along with Hyland's (2000) IMRD-based model. More recently, Tankó (2017) proposed an eight-move framework specifically for LRAs, which is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Revised Move Structure Model (Tankó, 2017)

Move	Rhetorical Function
M1	Topic
M2	Background
M3	Niche
M4	Purpose
M5	Method
M6	Outcome
M7	Conclusion
M8	Implications

The pilot testing revealed that the model's separation of Topic (M1) and Background (M2) presented challenges when applying Tankó's genre-specific framework to LRAs. Because these moves are closely related and often appear within the same sentence, they were rhetorically indistinguishable in highly condensed abstracts. To address this issue, the research team adopted a simplified procedure by merging Topic and Background into a single category, labeled Background. This decision was intended to reduce coder disagreement and improve reliability.

The seven moves in the revised framework were operationalized as follows:

- B – Background
- N – Niche
- P – Purpose
- M – Method
- O – Outcome
- C – Conclusion
- I – Implication

Given the condensed nature of research article abstracts, the sentence was selected as the unit of analysis. Because a single sentence may encode more than one move, sentences were allowed to receive multiple labels.

Stance Coding

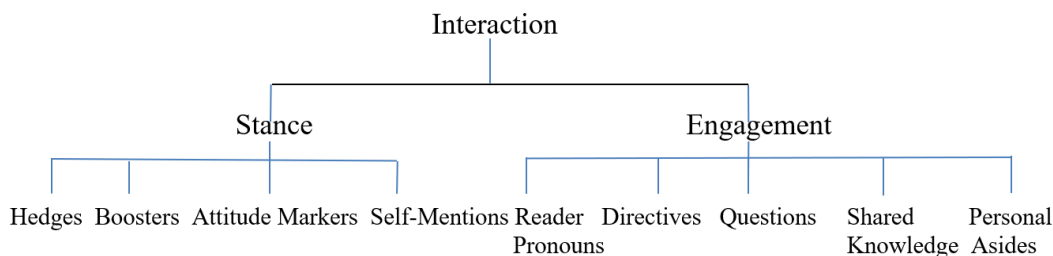
Various frameworks have been proposed for coding stance in texts, including the Appraisal framework developed by Martin and White (2005) and several metadiscourse models (e.g., Crismore et al., 1993; Hyland, 1998; Ädel, 2006). The Appraisal framework offers a detailed account of evaluative language by distinguishing affect, judgment, and appreciation, and it also addresses engagement resources for dialogic negotiation. However, its primary focus on extended discourse and media texts makes it less suited to the compact and patterned nature of abstracts. Crismore et al. (1993)

distinguish between textual and interpersonal markers but do not fully address the author–reader relationship. Similarly, Ädel’s (2006) reflexive model limits metadiscourse to explicit self-referential expressions and is less appropriate for genres in which implicit stance plays an important role.

Hyland’s (2005) interactional metadiscourse framework provides a well-defined approach to analyzing how authors position themselves and their research. This framework emphasizes the interpersonal dimension of academic writing and highlights how writers construct authorial identity, negotiate commitment, and guide readers toward intended interpretations, particularly in humanities texts. Hyland (2005) distinguishes two main components: stance, through which writers evaluate and express commitment to propositions, and engagement, through which they involve or distance themselves from readers. The stance component includes four categories: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions. Each category reflects a distinct aspect of intersubjective positioning. Hedges indicate tentativeness, boosters convey certainty, attitude markers express evaluation, and self-mentions make the author’s presence explicit, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Key Resources of Academic Interaction (Hyland, 2005, p. 177)



Hyland’s interactional metadiscourse framework was selected as the analytical tool for examining LRAs. Its empirical grounding and widespread use in metadiscourse research make it sensitive to the rhetorical demands of academic writing, including those associated with LRA construction. Because LRAs typically include interpretive claims, evaluations, and authorial perspective, Hyland’s stance model offers a systematic approach for mapping how writers in literary studies express commitment and construct interactional meaning while producing rhetorical moves. Accordingly, Hyland’s interactional metadiscourse framework, as outlined in *Stance and engagement: A model of interaction in academic discourse* (Hyland, 2005), was employed for the qualitative analysis to examine the use of stance markers in the LRA corpus.

To clarify how stance markers were identified and categorized, Table 3 presents the operational definitions, typical realizations, and illustrative examples from the corpus, with stance markers explicitly highlighted.

Table 3

Operational Definitions and Linguistic Realizations of Stance Markers with Corpus Examples

Category	Operational Definition	Typical Realizations	LRAs examples
Attitude Marker	Expresses evaluation, affect, importance, or value judgment	important, significant, useful	“This made it increasingly difficult to sustain substantive rationality ...”
Booster	Signals certainty and authorial confidence	clearly, demonstrate, must	“This framework is leveraged to shed light on ...”
Hedge	Indicates caution or limited commitment	may, might, can	“... a hybrid approach may produce a richer understanding ...”
Self-mention	Explicit reference to the author(s)	I, we, our	“ I argue that we can better realize the full potential ...”

Rater Training and Reliability

A detailed coding manual was developed, outlining the inclusion and exclusion criteria, decision rules, and example sentences for each move category. Before formal coding began, coders completed a comprehensive training period, working together to code a sample of abstracts and review ambiguous cases. This training ensured that both coders shared an understanding of the coding scheme and its guidelines, as outlined in Appendix A.

Discrepancies between coders were resolved through structured discussion. Each case was checked against the coding manual and sample annotations. When consensus could not be reached, a third expert coder—an instructor in academic English specializing in discourse analysis—was consulted to determine the final classification. Full coding procedures, criteria boundaries, and training and verification samples are provided in Appendices A and B, while the rater training protocol is described in Appendix C.

To reduce potential subjectivity, 25% of the corpus ($n = 25$ abstracts) was independently coded by a second coder, a university teacher with formal training in discourse analysis and research writing. Inter-rater agreement was calculated using Cohen’s kappa, a statistic that adjusts for chance agreement and is widely used in linguistic annotation. The resulting κ values indicated a high level of agreement between coders for both coding tasks ($\kappa = .942$ for moves and $\kappa = .866$ for stance), suggesting consistent identification of move patterns and stance categories. A summary of inter-rater reliability is presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Inter-Rater Reliability Summary

Coding Stage	% Agreement	Cohen's κ	Interpretation
Move Coding	95.2%	.942	Strong
Stance Coding	89.5%	.866	Strong

The Process of Analysis

1. Data Preparation: A total of 100 research article abstracts were collected from *Poetics* (n = 35), *Language and Literature: International Journal of Stylistics* (n = 30), and *Comparative Literature* (n = 35). The abstracts were labeled “Poetics 1–35,” “Lang. Lit. 1–30,” and “Com. Lit. 1–35” to facilitate reference and coding.

2. Move Identification: Each sentence was coded according to Tankó's (2017) revised move model. Attention was given to cases in which a single sentence encoded more than one rhetorical move.

3. Stance Coding: The identified moves were then analyzed using Hyland's (2005) stance framework. Interactional metadiscourse features—hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions—were identified. Stance features were coded on a presence basis: for each type of stance, a count of one was assigned per move, even if multiple instances of that type occurred within the same move.

4. Inter-coder Reliability: To ensure reliability and reduce subjectivity, a portion of the data was independently coded by a second coder. Agreement between coders was assessed using Cohen's κ , which indicated strong agreement for both move coding ($\kappa = .942$) and stance coding ($\kappa = .866$).

5. Distribution Analysis: The distribution of stance markers across rhetorical moves was examined to identify patterns of similarity and variation in their use across the corpus.

6. Data Consolidation: The results of move identification and stance coding were compiled and prepared for subsequent quantitative and qualitative analysis. In addition to identifying and categorizing stance markers, the analysis also examined the linguistic realizations through which these markers are expressed.

Results

Move Analysis

The rhetorical organization of LRAs was investigated using Tankó's (2017) revised move-structure model. Overall, the abstracts exhibited considerable variation in move sequencing, and no single pattern was dominant across the corpus.

Table 5

*Frequency of Rhetorical Move Patterns in Literary Research Article Abstracts
(Frequency ≥ 3)*

Rhetorical Move patterns	The frequency of rhetorical move patterns
P-M-O-C	10
B-M-O-C	9
P-M-O	7
B-P-M-O, B-M-O	5
P-O-C, P-O	4
B-P-M, B-P-M-O-C, B-M-C, P-M-O-I, B-N-P-M-O, B-N-M-O-C	3

Beyond the dominant structures shown in Table 5, a variety of less frequent patterns were observed. Five distinct patterns occurred twice each, including variations such as P-B-M-C, P-B-M-O, and B-N-M-O. Furthermore, a significant number of unique sequences appeared only once in the corpus (e.g., P-M-C, B-N-P-M-C-I, P-B-M-O, B-N-P-M-O-C, B-N-P-C, P-M-P, P-N-M-O-I, B-P-M-O-I, B-N-P-M-O-I, P-N-M-O-C-I, P-B-M, B-P-M-C, N-P-M, P-B-M-O-C-I, B-P-C, B-P, P-B-O, P-M, B-O-C, B-N-P-O, N-P-M-O, N-M-O-C-I, N-P-O-C-I, N-B-P-M-O-C, B-N-P-M-I, N-M-O-C, and P-B-M-O-C). These patterns reflect a degree of individual stylistic variation among writers in literary studies. As shown in Table 5, the most frequent move patterns were P-M-O-C ($n = 10$), B-M-O-C ($n = 9$), and P-M-O ($n = 7$). However, each of these patterns occurred in fewer than half of the abstracts, indicating the absence of a dominant move sequence. Beyond these patterns, many sequences appeared infrequently, often only once or twice, further highlighting the considerable variation in abstract move structure within the field.

Analysis of individual move frequencies showed that Method (83), Outcome (81), Purpose (70), and Background (60) were the most prevalent moves, while Niche (23) and Implication (12) occurred far less frequently. Overall, this suggests that LRAs tend to emphasize methodological orientation, research aims, and outcomes rather than establishing research gaps or implications.

Overview of Stance Distribution Across Moves

To examine authorial positioning in the abstracts, each rhetorical move was analyzed in terms of four types of stance markers: attitude markers, boosters, hedges, and self-mentions. Because move frequencies were unequal, the analysis employed normalization. The total number of stance markers was divided by the number of move occurrences to calculate stance density. This approach enabled a fair comparison of stance use across the seven rhetorical moves, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Stance Markers Density across Moves

Moves	Occurrence Count	Attitude Marker (N/Density)	Boosters (N/Density)	Hedge (N/Density)	Self-Mention (N/Density)	Total
Background	60	39/0.65	35/0.58	13/0.22	3/0.05	90
Niche	23	20/0.87	11/0.48	3/0.13	1/0.04	35
Purpose	70	28/0.4	39/0.56	8/0.11	7/0.1	82
Method	83	16/0.19	30/0.36	5/0.06	36/0.43	87
Outcome	81	19/0.24	51/0.63	21/0.26	24/0.3	115
Conclusion	52	8/0.15	21/0.4	9/0.17	17/0.33	55
Implication	12	2/0.17	5/0.42	3/0.25	5/0.42	15

Note. *N* denotes the total number of stance markers.

Background Move

Sixty research article abstracts were analyzed, all of which contained a Background move. The analysis of this section identified four types of stance markers and their frequencies: attitude markers (39), boosters (35), hedges (13), and self-mentions (3). Overall, Background moves relied primarily on attitude markers and boosters to emphasize the importance and credibility of the research topic, while hedges and self-mentions appeared less frequently.

Representative examples

- (1) Attitude marker: “This made it increasingly **difficult** to sustain substantive rationality ...” (Poetics 3)
- (2) Booster: “Such choices **must** *however be assessed* in the context of an understanding...” (Lang. Lit. 16)
- (3) Hedge: “Interdisciplinarity **may** disrupt these disciplinary norms ...” (Poetics 15)
- (4) Self-Mention: “...where **we** meet the Welshman Captain Fluellen, ...” (Lang. Lit. 13)

Niche Move

Only 23 abstracts contained a Niche move, indicating that identifying a research gap was not consistently foregrounded. Stance markers in these moves included attitude markers (20), boosters (11), hedges (3), and self-mentions (1). Overall, Niche moves relied most on attitude markers to convey evaluative judgments, while boosters were used selectively to highlight the significance of scholarly developments.

Representative examples

- (1) Attitude marker: “However, **few** studies have focused on ...” (Poetics 13)
- (2) Booster: “Researchers have **increasingly** used the concept of ‘logics’ ...” (Poetics 16)
- (3) Hedge: “... an obvious first step, one **might** think, in designing an approach.” (Lang. Lit. 17)
- (4) Self-mention: “... the qualities **we** prefer in **our** friends?” (Poetics 34)

Purpose Move

In 70 abstracts, a Purpose move was identified, with authors most frequently using boosters (39) and attitude markers (28) to emphasize the importance and value of their work. Hedges (8) and self-mentions (7) occurred less frequently. Overall, the Purpose move was characterized by a relatively assertive stance, as boosters and attitude markers foregrounded novelty and contribution. Hedges and self-mentions were present, but they were not central to the writers’ persuasive strategy.

Representative examples

- (1) Attitude marker: “... the context of one **persistent and prolific** metaphor: ...” (Poetics 18)
- (2) Booster: “This article **recovers** the lost history of the family novel ...” (Com. Lit. 6)
- (3) Hedge: “... different semiotic modes (music, vision and language) **may** rely on the same grounding levels ... (Lang. Lit. 1)
- (4) Self-mention: “**I** argue that **we** can better realize the full potential ...” (Poetics 25)

Method Move

Of the 83 abstracts containing a Method move, authors most frequently used self-mentions (36) and boosters (30), with fewer attitude markers (16) and hedges (5). The Method move contained the highest number of self-mentions, indicating that writers explicitly presented their role in the methodological procedures. Overall, the Method move displayed a distinct pattern: writers combined explicit self-reference with assertive language to legitimize their methodological choices.

Representative examples

- (1) Attitude marker: “While the video provides **considerable** relevant data ...” (Lang. Lit. 12)
- (2) Booster: “This framework is **leveraged to shed light on** ...” (Poetics 8)

- (3) Hedge: "... a hybrid approach **may** produce a richer understanding ..."
(Lang. Lit. 10)
- (4) Self-mention: "**We** econometrically investigate the effect on career dynamics ..." (Poetics 1)

Outcome Move

The Outcome move was identified in 81 abstracts. Within this move, authors most frequently used boosters (51) and self-mentions (24), followed by hedges (21) and attitude markers (19). This pattern suggests that writers generally reported findings with confidence while also using hedges to indicate tentativeness.

Representative examples

- (1) Attitude marker: "This last finding points to **the importance** , as well as **the challenges**, of further investigating the role of contextual ...".
(Lang. Lit. 4)
- (2) Booster: "The structure of personal culture becomes **relatively more** aligned ..." (Poetics 7)
- (3) Hedge: "The individuals' cultural behaviour was **possibly** affected by ..." (Poetics 13)
- (4) Self-mention: "**We** will show how the words tending to co-occur ..." (Lang. Lit. 13)

Conclusion Move

The Conclusion move was found in 52 abstracts – about half of all of them – and so implies that final remarks were optional for writers in literary studies. It was found boosters (21) and self-mentions (17), with fewer hedges (9) and attitude markers (8).

Representative examples

- (1) Attitude marker: "The article thereby **modestly** contributes ..." (Poetics 17)
- (2) Booster: "Our analysis **highlights** a sharp contrast ..." (Poetics 11)
- (3) Hedge: "These findings **would appear to** reflect ..." (Lang. Lit. 7)
- (4) Self-mention: "**My** main findings suggest that the deceptively simple style ..." (Lang. Lit. 3)

Implication Move

The Implication move was identified in only 12 abstracts and was therefore a relatively infrequent rhetorical option. The use of stance markers was limited, with boosters (5), self-mentions (5), hedges (3), and attitude markers (2). Overall, stance in Implication moves was characterized by both low frequency and cautious deployment.

Representative examples

- (1) Attitude marker: "... a **new** perspective not just to interpret ..." (Lang. Lit. 3)
- (2) Booster: "... it **also** draws on theoretical insights into spoken grammar ..." (Lang. Lit. 28)
- (3) Hedge: "These ideas **can be** useful in ..." (Lang. Lit. 12)
- (4) Self-mention: "**I** then provide some practical guidelines for collecting ..." (Poetics 16)

Taken together, these patterns indicate that the use of stance markers is closely aligned with the communicative purposes of each rhetorical move. Boosters and attitude markers predominated in moves where writers needed to persuade readers (Background, Purpose, Outcome). Self-mentions were used more frequently in procedural and interpretive sections (Method, Outcome, Conclusion). Hedges were less frequent but tended to cluster in moves involving methodological caution and the expression of claims.

Linguistic Realizations of Stance Markers

The analysis also reveals that different stance categories are realized through a range of linguistic features. Table 7 gives an overview of these linguistic realizations.

Table 7

Distribution of Linguistic Realizations Across Stance Markers

Stances	Linguistic Features
Boosters	adverbs, adjectives, lexical verbs, modal verbs, correlative conjunctions, transition markers
Attitude Markers	adverbs, adjectives, and present participles used as adjectives
Hedges	modal verbs, verbs, adverbs
Self-mentions	personal pronouns, possessive pronouns

Attitude markers were largely realized through adjectives, adverbs, and present participles. Boosters, however, were expressed through a wider range of forms, including adverbs, adjectives, lexical verbs, modal verbs, paired conjunctions, and transition markers. Hedges were most often realized through modal verbs, verbs, and adverbs. Self-mentions were expressed through personal and possessive pronouns.

Discussion

The study was conducted to explore how stance markers are distributed across rhetorical moves in LRAs and how writers use them to position themselves and engage readers. The results show that abstracts are key rhetorical spaces in which writers

express evaluation, certainty, and authorial presence, rather than simply providing details of research content.

Using Tankó's (2017) revised move-structure model revealed that Method (83), Outcome (81), Purpose (70), and Background (60) moves appeared in over 60% of the abstracts, illustrating that these parts make up the main structure of LRAs. The result aligns with Tankó's characterization of stable moves, even though a sequencing pattern was not found across the whole corpus. This suggests a high degree of rhetorical flexibility among writers in literary studies.

According to Table 6, the density of stance markers varied systematically across moves. Attitude markers were highest in Background moves (0.65), which means that authors often employ evaluative language to make judgments when describing research contexts and showing the importance of previous studies. Boosters occurred most often in Outcome (0.63), Background (0.58), and Purpose (0.56) moves. This implies that researchers emphasize certainty and the strength of their claims when presenting results and explaining the aims of their work. Hedges occurred less frequently in Outcome (0.26) and Background (0.22) moves, where authors express commitment with some caution. Self-mentions were most obvious in Method moves (0.43), where authors describe research methodology and analytic decisions. This rhetorical practice highlights how disciplinary knowledge practices shape the interpersonal dimension of academic writing.

Stance markers are distributed unevenly across rhetorical moves, with the highest concentration occurring in the Outcome move (see Table 6). In addition to this variation, the overall distribution indicates that boosters are the most frequently used stance markers across the corpus, dominating most moves except Background and Niche. This predominance of boosters suggests that writers of literary research article abstracts tend to adopt a more assertive stance, particularly when presenting findings and advancing interpretations. Such a pattern may be attributed to the epistemological characteristics of literary studies, which emphasize argumentation and interpretive claims. These findings highlight the importance of considering disciplinary conventions when analyzing stance in academic discourse.

Suntara and Chokthawikit (2018) studied interactional metadiscourse in research article abstracts from a public health journal. They found that self-mentions were the most interesting finding, as they were the only stance type used within Method moves. The omission of attitude markers, boosters, and hedges in the Method section suggests that writers in public health tend to focus on objective reporting of their research methodology and avoid making personal judgments or showing authorial commitment. In the present study, however, self-mentions occurred in all seven moves, with the highest frequency in Method moves, as shown in Table 6. According to Becher and Trowler's (2001) disciplinary domains, public health falls under a hard-applied domain, whereas literary studies falls under a soft-pure domain. This may help explain the difference in the use of self-mention and other stance markers. The extensive use of stance among writers in literary studies may convey

a more subjective tone for both writers and readers. This concept of disciplinary domain is supported by Maton's (2015) Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), which argues that humanities disciplines have horizontal knowledge structures that affect how humanities scholars propose arguments, interpretations, and theoretical positions.

Recently, Zhang and Cheung (2023) also found that researchers in soft disciplines tend to be tentative, discursively elaborate, and interpersonally engaged in their writing, while researchers in hard disciplines prefer a more formalized style focusing on consensual knowledge to maintain objectivity by minimizing authorial voice. Disciplinary variation has also been highlighted by previous studies on stance (Chang, 2016; Gilbert & Van de Velde, 2010; Hu & Cao, 2011; Hyland, 1998; Liu & Huang, 2017). These studies found that hedges were commonly used in biology, applied linguistics, marketing, and architecture, whereas boosters frequently occurred in pragmatics and economics. This aligns with the present study's findings, which indicate that LRAs exhibit distinctive configurations of stance markers, reinforcing the role of disciplinary knowledge practices in shaping rhetorical choices.

As shown in Table 7, an important result of the study relates to the prominent role of transition markers used as boosters. According to Hyland (2005), transition markers, such as "moreover" and "furthermore," are types of interactive metadiscourse, meaning that they guide readers and make propositional connections between ideas clearer. Their frequent use in the corpus indicates that writers in literary studies do not simply use transitions to organize discourse, but also to make their arguments more forceful and draw attention to how ideas are understood. Moreover, previous studies have indicated that these kinds of markers present difficulties for EAP learners and novice writers, as they might overuse or misuse them stylistically and semantically (Walková, 2020). From a pedagogical perspective, the results of this study imply that authentic LRAs are useful as teaching resources, showing how transition markers function as boosters in both conjunctive and adverbial forms and helping support more refined teaching in stance-taking and rhetorical control.

From a pedagogical perspective, the results imply that the way writers present themselves in LRAs is not limited to specific lexical choices but is embedded in broader rhetorical and disciplinary practices. The combination of boosters and attitude markers with selective hedging and self-mention is used strategically to foreground interpretation and authorial voice while maintaining scholarly credibility.

Conclusion

The present study contributes to research on academic writing by examining how writers express their stance through a systematic analysis of stance markers across rhetorical moves in literary research article abstracts (LRAs). By combining move analysis with an examination of interactional metadiscourse, the study demonstrates that stance is unevenly distributed across rhetorical moves and functionally aligned with the communicative purposes of each move.

Several limitations should be noted. First, the corpus was limited to abstracts published between 2021 and 2022 and drawn from three high-impact journals. This could affect the generalizability of the results. Second, the study focused on abstracts and did not address the occurrence of stance across other sections of literary research articles.

Further research in this area might expand the corpus to include more recent works, especially considering the growing impact of AI-assisted writing on academic writing, to investigate whether stance patterns are evolving. Comparative studies across academic fields and genres would also help establish how disciplinary conventions affect authors' use of stance patterns. Longitudinal analyses could also reveal diachronic shifts in authorial presence and evaluative language.

The present findings have useful pedagogical implications for teaching English for Academic Purposes, especially in literary studies. The findings emphasize that stance is patterned across rhetorical moves rather than functioning as isolated linguistic features. Within this corpus, boosters and attitude markers were noticeable in the Background, Purpose, and Outcome moves, where authors set up their research and pointed out contributions, while self-mentions were most often found in the Method move. These findings illustrate that effective stance-taking is closely related to the communicative function of each move.

For instance, students could be guided to examine how boosters (e.g., “further suggests,” “not only ... but also”) and attitude markers (e.g., “new,” “crucial”) are used in Purpose moves to draw attention to novelty and originality. Hedges (e.g., “may,” “could”) are strategically employed in Implication moves to signal interpretive openness. Thus, students could identify stance markers and explain how these choices fit the move's rhetorical goal.

The notable use of transition markers as boosters has discipline-specific pedagogical implications. Writers in literary studies often use conjunctive and adverbial transitions (e.g., “moreover,” “further,” “also”) to strengthen the flow of interpretation and argumentation. As a result, classroom activities could include rewriting tasks in which students revise transition markers across abstract moves and then discuss how these revisions change the sense of authorial presence and reader involvement.

In conclusion, incorporating corpus-based analyses of LRAs into instruction can help students in literary studies gain greater awareness of the disciplinary conventions of stance and evaluation. When learners compare stance distributions across moves, they can observe strategies for balancing assertiveness and interpretive caution, thereby enhancing their ability to craft language according to disciplinary expectations. Move-based instruction in stance-taking can help students in literary studies develop a stronger and more rhetorically effective persuasive voice in their academic work.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Move Coding Scheme for LRAs

Move Code	Move Label	Operational Definition
B	Background	Introduces the general research context, topic importance, or disciplinary background
N	Niche	Identifies a gap, limitation, or unresolved issue in previous research
P	Purpose	States the main aim, objective, or research question of the study
M	Method	Describes data, materials, analytical framework, or research procedures
O	Outcome	Presents main findings or results of the study
C	Conclusion	Interprets results or summarizes overall outcomes
I	Implication	Highlights theoretical, methodological, or pedagogical implications

Note. This coding scheme was taken from Tankó (2017). Moves were coded at the sentence level. Sentences realizing more than one move were coded as separate analytical units.

Boundary Rules

1. Moves are coded at the sentence level.
2. A sentence may label as multiple move labels.
3. If coders are not sure, the coders refer to Tankó's (2017) definitions and examples.
4. Move decisions must be justified with linguistic cues.

Table 2

Sample Coded Extract (for manual)

Sentences	Move(s)	Rationales
Recent studies in stylistics have increasingly focused on the evaluative dimension of literary language.	B	Establishes general context
However, little attention has been paid to how stance is distributed across rhetorical moves in LRAs.	N	Identifies a gap
This article examines how stance markers are deployed across moves in literary research article abstracts.	P	States aim
Sixty research article abstracts from leading literary journals were analyzed using a move–stance framework.	M	Method description
The analysis reveals that boosters occur most frequently in Outcome and Purpose moves.	O	Results
These findings suggest that stance is strategically aligned with the communicative function of each move.	C	Interprets findings or restates key results at a general level
The results have implications for academic writing instruction in literary-focused EFL contexts.	I	Indicates theoretical, pedagogical, or practical implications

Appendix B

Table 3

Stance Coding Scheme Based on Hyland (2005) and Sample Annotation

Stance Code	Category	Operational Definition	Typical Realizations
ATT	Attitude Marker	Expresses evaluation, affect, importance, or value judgment	important, significant, useful
BOO	Booster	Signals certainty and authorial confidence	clearly, demonstrate, must
HED	Hedge	Indicates caution or limited commitment	may, might, can
SM	Self-mention	Explicit reference to the author(s)	I, we, our
Ø	None	No stance marker present	—

Appendix C

Rater Training Protocol

This appendix provides the training protocol and enhances reliability in the move analysis and stance coding.

C.1 Purpose of the Training Protocol

The aim of the rater training process was to:

1. Ensure that all coders share the same understanding of the move categories.
2. Minimize subjective interpretation.
3. Improve reliability prior to the formal coding stage.
4. Provide documented procedures to support methodological transparency and replicability.

C.2 Materials Provided to Coders

Each coder received:

1. The Move Coding Scheme, in Appendix A
 2. The Stance Coding Scheme, in Appendix B
 3. A set of 10 practice abstracts
 4. A coding sheet template
 5. A decision tree for stance identification
 6. Boundary rules for ambiguous cases
 7. Examples of sentences which had more than one move
- Coders were instructed to read all materials before training.

C.3 Training Procedures

Step 1: Familiarization

Coders reviewed:

1. Move definitions
2. Boundary conditions
3. Stance categories
4. Example-coded sentences

The lead researcher answered clarifying questions.

Step 2: Guided Practice Coding (Session 1)

Coder jointly coded five practice abstracts while discussing:

1. Difficult cases
 2. Multi-function sentences
 3. How to handle context-dependent moves
 4. Distinguishing Outcome, Conclusion and Implication
- Disagreements were flagged and resolved collaboratively.

Step 3: Independent Practice Coding (Session 2)

Second coder independently coded another five abstracts, without collaboration. After completion, they compared coding decisions and documented discrepancies.

Step 4: Consensus Meeting

The coder met with the lead researcher to:

1. Review all disagreements
2. Refer to the coding manual for justification
3. Update definitions if needed
4. Record clarifications in the “Coding Notes Log”

Revisions were incorporated into the final coding manual.

Step 5: Pilot Reliability Check

The coders independently coded a subset of 25 abstracts (25% of the corpus).

Cohen’s κ was calculated in SPSS.

Step 6: Final Refinement

If κ had been below .70, retraining or manual refinement would have been conducted.

Because κ exceeded .80, full corpus coding proceeded.

A third coder resolved disagreements.

C.4 Final Coding Workflow

1. Code moves sentence-by-sentence.
2. Double-code sentences containing multiple functions.
3. Apply stance markers after move identification.
4. Enter coding into the shared coding sheet.

C.5 Documentation and Storage

All coding files, including:

1. Raw coded abstracts
2. Reliability calculations
3. Consensus notes
4. Updated manual

were stored in a secure institutional repository for transparency and replicability.

Figure 1

Decision tree for identifying stance markers

