



Lidil

Revue de linguistique et de didactique des langues

73 | 2026

**La formation à l'écrit des étudiant·e·s universitaires en
exil : enjeux et perspectives didactiques**

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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/lidil/16248>

ISSN: 1960-6052

Publisher

UGA Éditions - Université Grenoble Alpes

Printed version

ISBN: 978-2-37747-603-9

ISSN: 1146-6480

Electronic reference

Pauline Jadoulle, "Stance in Contrast: A Corpus-Based Study of English and French Academic Writing", *Lidil* [Online], 73 | 2026, Online since 06 May 2026, connection on 07 May 2026. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/lidil/16248>

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Stance in Contrast: A Corpus-Based Study of English and French Academic Writing

« Stance » en contraste : étude de corpus de l'écriture académique en anglais et en français

Pauline Jadoulle

1. Introduction

- 1 Academic writing has traditionally been associated with objectivity and impersonality, especially in the French-speaking context, where a tradition of 'enunciative effacement' discourages overt evaluation and authorial presence markers (Vion, 2001). However, research over the past decades has challenged this view, showing that academic texts are more rhetorically charged and authorially engaged than previously assumed (e.g. Biber, 2006; Fløttum et al., 2006; Tutin, 2010). In this context, 'stance', understood as the linguistic ways writers express their assessment and commitment, and attitudes and value judgments towards the information presented, has emerged as a central concept, playing a key role in how academic writers convey information and interact with readers.
- 2 Stance has been studied in both French and English academic writing (e.g. Biber, 2006; Tutin, 2010). However, linguists from the French tradition and linguists from the Anglo-Saxon tradition tend to base their investigations of stance in academic writing on different conceptualizations and operationalizations of the concept. For example, French linguists tend to adopt a more theoretically grounded approach, drawing on concepts such as Amossy's 'argumentation' or Maingueneau's 'writer's image' (e.g. Grossmann, 2010; Fløttum & Vold, 2010). These studies typically involve corpus-based analyses of specific features, such as personal pronouns or lexical verbs (Tutin, 2010), or more qualitative, close readings of individual texts (Donahue, 2002). By contrast, the

Anglo-Saxon tradition typically adopts a more global perspective, decomposing stance into semantic or functional categories (e.g. epistemic stance) and sub-categories (e.g. boosting, hedging), each associated with specific linguistic markers (e.g. *of course*, *perhaps*). This line of research typically employs corpus-based, quantitative methods on a large set of lexico-grammatical features (e.g. Biber, 2006; Hyland, 2005b).¹

- 3 Due to the divergent theoretical frameworks and methodological preferences of the French and Anglo-Saxon traditions, findings on stance in French vs English academic writing remain largely non-comparable. To date, no systematic cross-linguistic study has compared the stance practices of expert academic writers in both languages using a unified analytical framework. This limitation is particularly important as, given its pragmatic nature, stance is said to be culture-dependent, shaped by rhetorical traditions and academic norms (Hyland & Sancho-Guinda, 2012). Against this backdrop, the present study adopts a unified cross-linguistic framework to compare the use of stance in English and French expert academic writing, offering new evidence on how cultural and linguistic traditions shape expert writers' rhetorical practices.

2. Literature review

- 4 Cross-linguistic stance research on English and French expert academic writing has mainly focused on personal pronouns. Studies suggest that the use of *we/nous* is the norm in both languages, and that experts favor it over the pronoun *I/je* (Fløttum et al., 2006; Tutin, 2010; Wang & Jiang, 2018). In addition, these pronouns are usually linked to the 'researcher' role taken on by the writer, which is reflected in verb collocates such as *observe*, *find*, *show* and *observer*, *noter*, *constater* (Carter-Thomas & Chambers, 2012; Hartwell & Jacques, 2014). Overall, however, English expert writers are more overtly present in their texts than French expert writers (Hartwell & Jacques, 2014; Tutin, 2010). In fact, both the first-person singular pronoun and the first-person plural pronoun are more frequent in English academic texts than in French academic texts (Fløttum et al., 2006).
- 5 Cross-linguistic research on stance devices beyond personal pronouns remains limited. One exception is Chuquet and Solano's (2019) study of *-ly/-ment* adverbials in English and French academic writing. Despite the exploratory nature of their study, the authors venture the hypothesis of a "different relationship to marks of subjectivity in academic writing" (Chuquet & Solano 2019, p. 15). English expert writers appear to favor evidentiality markers like *clearly* and *obviously* and attitude markers like *interestingly*, indicating a higher degree of 'intersubjectivity'. French expert writers, by contrast, seem to favor 'enunciative modality adverbs' like *à vrai dire* and *d'ailleurs*.
- 6 A key contribution to cross-linguistic stance research is Vold's (2008) study on hedging in English and French academic writing. The researcher found English experts to hedge more frequently than French experts. As she notes:

[...] hedging, which is so often presented as characteristic of academic writing, is not necessarily a salient feature of all academic writing, although it undoubtedly is for Anglo-American academic writing.² (Ibid., p. 298)
- 7 Despite this difference in frequency, Vold (2008) notes a high degree of correspondence in the types of markers used across languages. For example, adverbial hedges like *perhaps*, *probably*, *apparently* in English and *peut-être*, *probablement*, *apparemment* in French are commonly employed. Moreover, English and French experts seem to rely on

similar devices to express uncertainty and caution, especially perception verbs (e.g. *seem*, *seemler*), modals (e.g. *might*), sentence adverbials (e.g. *peut-être*) and epistemic verbs (e.g. *indicate*). Epistemic adjectives (e.g. *probable*) and nouns (e.g. *hypothèse*) are, in contrast, more rarely used in both languages.

3. The current study

- 8 As shown above, cross-linguistic research on stance in academic writing remains scarce, and most comparisons between English and French academic writing have focused on a narrow subset of features—most notably personal pronouns—thereby offering only a partial picture of how writers in each academic culture express commitment and attitude. To address these limitations, the present study undertakes a corpus-based comparison of stance in English and French academic writing using a unified analytical framework that integrates epistemic (boosting and hedging) and attitudinal meanings. The following research question is formulated, i.e. “To what extent do English and French expert academic writers share stance features?” Building on previous research, two hypotheses are put forward:

- H1: English expert writers use more stance markers (hedges, boosters and attitudinal markers) than French expert writers.
- H2: English expert writers exhibit similar stance lexical preferences (hedges, boosters and attitudinal markers) as French expert writers.

4. Data and methods

4.1. Data

- 9 The research question is answered through an analysis of the *Kulturell Identitet i Akademisk Prosa: nasjonal versus disiplinavhengig* (KIAP), a corpus of peer-reviewed research articles across three languages and disciplines. This study focuses on two sub-corpora of the KIAP. The KIAP-LING-EN (henceforth KIAP-EN) is made up of research articles written in English and in the field of linguistics. It is made up of 50 texts and amounts to 530,809 words. The KIAP-LING-FR (henceforth KIAP-FR) comprises 50 research articles written in French and in linguistics. The corpus totals 303,432 words. Although relatively small, the KIAP was selected for its high degree of cross-linguistic comparability. The English and French sub-corpora were compiled within the same research project using a shared sampling frame, ensuring parallel design across languages (Fløttum et al., 2006). As a result, the corpus is particularly well suited to cross-linguistic and intercultural comparisons, unlike many corpora compiled independently for each language. The corpus is also carefully controlled for discipline, an important consideration given the disciplinary sensitivity of stance (Gray, 2015). These features make it possible to complement earlier KIAP-based studies focusing on other linguistic phenomena, such as personal pronouns (Fløttum et al., 2006) or (in)direct questions (Curry, 2023).

4.2. Operationalization of stance

- 10 In this study, ‘stance’ is defined as the lexico-grammatical resources writers use to express their assessment and commitment, and attitudes and value judgments towards the information presented (Biber et al., 1999; Hyland, 2005a). Stance is therefore treated as a functional category encompassing epistemic stance and attitudinal stance. Epistemic stance concerns the writer’s assessment of the certainty and reliability of information, and is further categorized into boosters—marking certainty, confidence and commitment—and hedges—indicating caution and uncertainty (Hyland, 2000, 2005a, 2005b). In other words, while boosters “allow writers to express their certainty in what they say and to mark involvement with the topic and solidarity with their audience”, hedges “indicate the writer’s decision to withhold complete commitment to a proposition, allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than an accredited fact” (Hyland, 2005b, pp. 178–179). Attitudinal stance captures the writer’s personal attitudes and value judgments, including meanings related to importance (*crucially, important*), relevance (*pertinent, appropriate*), necessity (*nécessaire, require*), and agreement (*agree, admettre*) (Hyland, 2000, 2005a, 2005b).
- 11 Following the Anglo-Saxon tradition, this study focuses on metadiscursive stance markers—those that explicitly qualify a proposition within the same sentence, as in (1) or (2) (Gray & Biber, 2014). Unlike lexical evaluation, where stance is inferred implicitly from evaluative meaning alone (e.g. *this investigation is interesting*), metadiscursive stance marking operates at an extra-predicative (*de dicto*) level and involves a structural separation between the stance marker and the propositional (clausal) content (Vold, 2008). This study examines two key metadiscursive devices: stance adverbials (e.g. *maybe*) and complement clause constructions controlled by adjectives, nouns, and verbs (e.g. *likely, advantage, assert + clause*) (Biber et al., 2018).

(1)

Interestingly, this sentence has a sloppy reading [...]. (KIAP-EN, 0045)

(2)

*[...] il me paraît **essentiel** d’aller plus loin en insistant sur le fait que les emplois des prépositions spatiales sont conditionnés par des valeurs tout autres que configurationnelles.* (KIAP-FR, 0014)

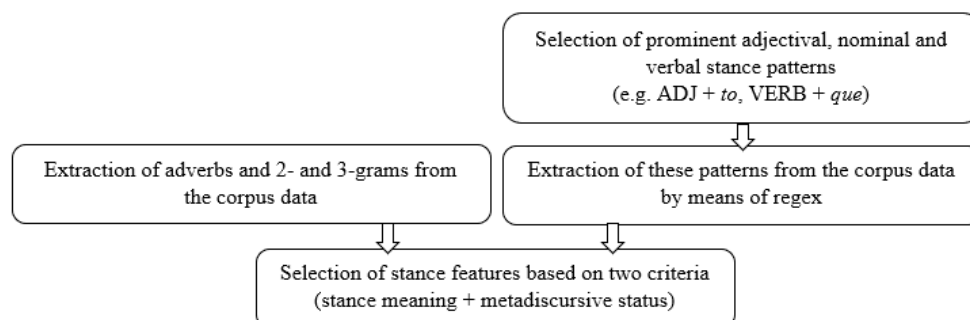
“[...] I believe it is **essential** to go further by emphasizing the fact that the uses of spatial prepositions are conditioned by values that are entirely different from configurational ones.”

4.3. Stance marker identification and disambiguation

- 12 The identification of stance markers is based on Jadoulle (2023), who developed a cross-linguistic methodology to select stance markers based on five corpora of English and French academic writing (expert and novice).³ Adverbials were identified by extracting adverbs (tagged as [tag="RB.?"] for English and [tag="*.R"] for French) and 2- and 3-grams (min. freq. = 3) using Sketch Engine (Kilgarrieff et al., 2014), and then manually selecting those items that met the operationalization of stance outlined in section 4.2. Complement clause constructions were identified by extracting common adjectival, nominal, and verbal stance patterns (e.g. ADJ + *to*, verb + *que*) using Sketch Engine (e.g. [tag="J.*"] [word="that|to"], [tag="V.*"] [word="que|qu|de|d"]), and then retaining

those adjectives, nouns, and verbs that met the same operationalization (e.g. *important*, *penser*) (see Figure 1 for an overview of the identification method).

Figure 1. – Identification of stance markers based on Jadoulle (2023: p. 192).



- 13 Table 1 summarizes the distribution of stance marker types across languages and word classes.

Table 1. – Number of stance marker types under study (distribution by language and word class).

Word Class	English	French
Adverbials	65	49
Adjectives	105	62
Nouns	63	40
Verbs	75	66
TOTAL	308	217

- 14 These items were automatically extracted from the KIAP-EN and KIAP-FR using Sketch Engine (Kilgariff et al., 2014), then manually disambiguated in context based on the syntactic and semantic criteria presented in Jadoulle (2023) (namely, metadiscursive status and stance meaning). Specifically, syntactically, adverbials were included when they modified a clause or sentence and were not part of verbal dependency, while complement clauses were included when they framed clausal content. Semantically, markers had to convey epistemic or attitudinal meanings. For example, *possible* in example (3) was coded as a hedge, whereas *possible* in (4) was removed from the analysis as it denotes ability rather than caution.

(3)

*Indeed, it is **possible** that the speaker's intention in producing the utterance in (22) was to get the hearer to abandon this assumption [...].* (KIAP-EN, 0004)

(4)

*However, although it is pragmatically plausible, it is not **possible** to interpret the waiting as occurring at the time of Speech [...].* (KIAP-FR, 0000)

- 15 Note that some markers may be classified into various semantic categories depending on the context in which they are found. For example, the adverb *necessarily* typically

serves as a booster (see (5)), but when preceded by negation, it shifts to convey caution and uncertainty and thus functions as a hedge (see (6)).

(5)

*My interpretation of this state of affairs will **necessarily** be more speculative than were the remarks of the previous sections.* (KIAP-EN, 0003)

(6)

*The fact that (21) can be interpreting an emotional attitude does **not necessarily** show that and encodes emotional involvement.* (KIAP-EN, 0004)

4.4. Statistical methods

- 16 Since stance marker frequencies were not normally distributed (as shown by Shapiro-Wilk tests), comparisons between the English and French corpora were carried out using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test. Stance marker frequencies were normalized per 1,000 words and calculated per text, so that each text constituted one observation. Following the recommendations of Field et al. (2012), effect sizes are reported as r . For the analysis of lexical preferences, individual stance markers (e.g. *difficult*, *difficile*) occurred too infrequently per text to allow for Mann-Whitney U tests; therefore, specific marker frequencies were compared using chi-square tests of independence by aggregating raw frequency counts at corpus level. In line with Gries (2013), ϕ is reported as the effect size for these chi-square tests. All statistical analyses were conducted in R (R Core Team, 2021).

5. Results

5.1. Stance marker frequencies

- 17 Table 2 shows that English academic writing is more stance-laden than French academic writing across the three semantic categories, namely boosters ($W = 1796.5$, $p = 0.001634$; $r = 0.38$), hedges ($W = 2073$, $p = 1.391e-08$; $r = 0.57$), and attitudinal markers ($W = 1682.5$, $p = 0.0002455$; $r = 0.37$). The difference is particularly marked for hedges, with a median of 7.10 items per 1,000 words in the KIAP-EN compared to 3.35 items per 1,000 words in the KIAP-FR (and an effect size of 0.57 for hedges vs 0.37–0.38 for boosters and attitudinal markers).

Table 2. – Descriptive statistics of stance marker frequencies in English expert and French expert writing (based on the number of stance marker per texts, normalized per 1,000 words).

	English expert writing (KIAP-EN)	French expert writing (KIAP-FR)
Boosters	Median: 3.10 IQR: 2.100 Mean rank: 39.5	Median: 2.15 IQR: 1.275 Mean rank: 61.5
Hedges	Median: 7.10 IQR: 3.225 Mean rank: 34.1	Median: 3.35 IQR: 2.350 Mean rank: 66.9

Attitudinal markers	Median: 2.05	Median: 1.25
	IQR: 1.050	IQR: 0.875
	Mean rank: 38.8	Mean rank: 62.2

5.2. Stance lexical preferences

5.2.1. Boosters

- 18 As shown in Table 3, out of the ten most frequent boosters, there are six verbs in English and in French.⁴ These verbs account for c. 55% and c. 59% of all boosters respectively. Among these verbs we find the pairs of markers *show|montrer*, *see|voir*, *conclude|conclure*, and *know|savoir*.⁵ *Show* and *montrer* (e.g. (7)) are particularly frequent compared to the rest of the markers, with a relative frequency of c. 94 and 57 occurrences per 1,000 words respectively ($\chi^2 = 7.2797$, $p = 0.00697$, $\phi = 0.00295$). The pair *of course|bien sûr* (e.g. (8)) is also apparent, though *bien sûr* is much less frequent in French than *of course* ($\chi^2 = 14.039$, $p = 0.0001791$, $\phi = 0.00410$). The rest of the markers appear to be language-specific, with on the one hand *clearly*, *find*, *evidence*, *demonstrate*, and *clear* in the KIAP-EN, and on the other *constater*, *nécessairement*, *évidemment*, *affirmer*, and *vrai* in the KIAP-FR.

(7)

a. Recent work on the syntax of tense **shows** that there is a principled relationship between the meaning and the phrase structure representation of temporal information. (KIAP-EN, 0000)

b. Ci-dessous, nous reprendrons un certain nombre d'exemples discutés en 6. en **montrant** que la configuration est la même [...]. (KIAP-FR, 0047)

“Below, we will repeat a number of examples discussed in 6., **showing** that the configuration is the same [...].”

(8)

a. **Of course**, New Zealand English did not just develop in the late 19th century and then come to a halt. (KIAP-EN, 0005)

b. La réponse réalisée au tour suivant est **bien sûr**, comme le signale Frank (1990), capitale. (KIAP-FR, 0034)

“The response made in the next round is, **of course**, as Frank (1990) points out, crucial.”

Table 3. – The ten most frequent boosters in English and French expert writing and their absolute frequencies, relative frequencies (per 100,000 words), and percentages of all boosters.

ENGLISH EXPERT WRITING (KIAP-EN)					FRENCH EXPERT WRITING (KIAP-FR)				
	BOOSTER	ABS. FREQ.	REL. FREQ.	% OF ALL BOOSTERS		BOOSTER	ABS. FREQ.	REL. FREQ.	% OF ALL BOOSTERS
1	show	498	93.8	26.6%		montrer	172	56.7	24.6%
2	see	234	44.1	12.5%		voir	82	27.0	11.7%
3	clearly	135	25.4	7.2%		savoir	60	19.8	8.6%
4	of course	93	17.5	5.0%		constater	51	16.8	7.3%
5	find	84	15.8	4.5%		nécessairement	40	13.2	5.7%
6	evidence	83	15.6	4.4%		évidemment	34	11.2	4.9%
7	conclude	78	14.7	4.2%		conclure	25	8.2	3.6%
8	demonstrate	69	13.0	3.7%		affirmer	22	7.3	3.1%
9	know	66	12.4	3.5%		bien sûr	22	7.3	3.1%
10	clear	61	11.5	3.3%		vrai	15	4.9	2.1%
Total		1,401	263.8	75.6%			523	172.4	74.8%

- 19 Given the prominence of boosting verbs, a qualitative examination was conducted on a random sample of 200 occurrences of the verbs presented in Table 3 (100 in KIAP-EN and 100 in KIAP-FR). The occurrences were coded for construction type (e.g. verb + *that*-clause) and subject (e.g. animate). Findings suggest that, in both corpora, boosting verbs predominantly occur with *that*-clauses (over 50% of the occurrences). Differences nevertheless emerge in subject realization. In KIAP-EN, verbs such as *show*, *see*, and *demonstrate* are most often preceded by animate subjects referring to other scholars or the authors themselves (e.g. *X argues that, we show that*) (46%), or by inanimate subjects denoting textual or methodological entities (e.g. *results, analysis*) (38%). In KIAP-FR, boosters such as *montrer*, *voir*, and *constater* more frequently (45%) occur with impersonal subjects (e.g. *on*).

5.2.2. Hedges

- 20 As shown in Table 4, out of the ten most frequent hedges, English and French exhibit seven and six verbs, two and one nouns, and one and two adverbials respectively. Similarly to boosters, in both languages, hedging is predominantly carried out by verbs, which account for roughly half of all hedges (50% in English and 54% in French).
- 21 Apart from the shared pair *seem|sembler* ($\chi^2 = 4.1348$, $p = 0.04201$, $\phi = 0.00223$), the top-ranked items show clear cross-linguistic differences. In English, for example, *suggest* and *assume* rank second and fourth, whereas their French equivalents *suggérer* and *supposer* appear much lower in the frequency list (29th and 18th) and occur only 1.6 and 4.0 times per 100,000 words (*suggest* vs *suggérer*: $\chi^2 = 184.95$, $p < 2.2e-16$, $\phi = 0.01489$; *assume* vs *supposer*: $\chi^2 = 135.63$, $p < 2.2e-16$, $\phi = 0.0128$). By contrast, the French ten most frequent hedges include *considérer*, *penser*, and *proposer*. Two items also appear to be strongly language-specific, namely *argue* in English (e.g. (9)) and *considérer* in French (e.g. (10)).

(9)

As Dudley and Dudley-Evans (1999) and Thompson (1999) **argue**, given the increasing numbers of international students undertaking research degrees in English, much more work needs to be done to establish the particular characteristics of the genre they are required to write. (KIAP-EN, 0010)

(10)

Sur cette base [...] Genette oppose le Discours Immédiat [...] au DD ; pour les mêmes raisons, et comme Strauch, il **considère** que, sous l'angle de la subordination, le DDL est au DD [...] ce que le DIL est au DI [...]. (KIAP-FR, 0024)

“On this basis [...] Genette opposes Immediate Discourse [...] to direct discourse; for the same reasons, and like Strauch, he **considers** that, from the point of view of subordination, free direct discourse is to direct discourse [...] what free immediate discourse is to immediate discourse [...].”

Table 4. – The ten most frequent hedges in English and French expert writing and their absolute frequencies, relative frequencies (per 100,000 words), and percentages of all hedges.

ENGLISH EXPERT WRITING (KIAP-EN)				FRENCH EXPERT WRITING (KIAP-FR)				
HEDGE	ABS. FREQ.	REL. FREQ.	% OF ALL HEDGES	HEDGE	ABS. FREQ.	REL. FREQ.	% OF ALL HEDGES	
1	seem	399	75.2	10.5%	sembler	190	62.6	17.2%
2	suggest	348	65.6	9.1%	considérer	185	61.0	16.8%
3	argue	338	63.7	8.9%	paraître	80	26.4	7.3%
4	assume	290	54.6	7.6%	susceptible	67	22.1	6.1%
5	appear	225	42.4	5.9%	sans doute	64	21.1	5.8%
6	claim (v.)	189	35.6	5.0%	hypothèse	58	19.1	5.3%
7	claim (n.)	132	24.9	3.5%	penser	53	17.5	4.8%
8	interpret	130	24.5	3.4%	proposer	51	16.8	4.6%
9	perhaps	109	20.5	2.9%	apparaître	41	13.5	3.7%
10	view (n.)	98	18.5	2.6%	certes	32	10.5	2.9%
Total		2,258	425.5	59.2%		821	270.6	74.4%

- 22 Given that hedging verbs make up the majority of hedges, a qualitative analysis was conducted on a random sample of 200 occurrences of the verbs presented in Table 4 (100 from KIAP-EN and 100 from KIAP-FR), and coded in the same way as the 200 boosting verbs (section 5.2.1). In both corpora, hedging verbs predominantly occur with *that*-clauses, and with inanimate subjects (e.g. *such facts*, *ces constructions*). However, subject realization differs cross-linguistically. In addition to inanimate subjects (c. 50% in both languages), French displays a preference for impersonal subjects (34%), whereas English more frequently relies on animate subjects (43%), including first-person plural pronouns and references to other scholars.

5.2.3. Attitudinal markers

- 23 Table 5 lists the ten most frequent attitudinal markers in the KIAP-EN and KIAP-FR. As expected from the overall frequencies, attitudinal markers are far less common than hedges and boosters. The ten most frequent attitudinal markers contain more adjectives than the ten most frequent boosters and hedges, with four adjectives in English and three adjectives in French (compared to one booster in English and in French for instance). In addition to adjectives, verbs are still commonly used to express attitudinal stance (with four verbs in the ten most frequent attitudinal markers in the KIAP-EN and KIAP-FR).
- 24 The two groups' ten most frequent attitudinal markers share the pairs *difficult*|*difficile* and *necessary*|*nécessaire*, which occur at comparable frequencies (e.g. *difficult* vs *difficile*: $\chi^2 = 0.99711$, $p = 0.318$, $\phi = 0.001$; e.g. (11)). Beyond this similarity, the ten most frequent attitudinal markers differ cross-linguistically, with a preference for items like *require*, *fail* and *crucially* in English and *intéressant*, *se contenter* and *juger* in French (e.g. (12), (13)).

(11)

a. In fact, in many respects it was often **difficult** to differentiate between letters written by native and non-native speakers of English based on grammatical features. (KIAP-EN, 0013)

b. Mais si nous acceptons cette proposition, il devient alors assez **difficile** de caractériser le langage par son unique fonction de communication. (KIAP-FR, 0010)

“But if we accept this proposition, it becomes quite **difficult** to characterize language by its sole function of communication.”

(12)

*An account of infinitives of result in this view, therefore, **requires** us to specify the argument structure of the modifying predicate and its conditions on reference.* (KIAP-EN, 0001)

(13)

*Dans la version de 1964, Morris **se contente** de résumer brièvement la taxinomie behavioriste précédente pour passer à un développement sur les valeurs [...].* (KIAP-FR, 0038)

“In the 1964 version, Morris **settles for** briefly summarizing the previous behaviorist taxonomy and then moves on to a development of the values [...].”

Table 5. – The ten most frequent attitudinal markers in English and French expert writing and their absolute frequencies, relative frequencies (per 100,000 words), and percentages of all attitudinal markers.

ENGLISH EXPERT WRITING (KIAP-EN)					FRENCH EXPERT WRITING (KIAP-FR)				
	ATT. MARKER	ABS. FREQ.	REL. FREQ.	% OF ALL ATT.		ATT. MARKER	ABS. FREQ.	EEL. FREQ.	% OF ALL ATT.
1	require	92	17.3	8.4%		difficile	44	14.5	10.6%
2	difficult	62	11.7	5.6%		admettre	37	12.2	8.9%
3	fail	62	11.7	5.6%		nécessaire	17	5.6	4.1%
4	problem	42	7.9	3.8%		intéressant	15	4.9	3.6%
5	necessary	40	7.5	3.6%		se contenter	14	4.6	3.4%
6	crucially	36	6.8	3.3%		juger	14	4.6	3.4%
7	recognis/ze	36	6.8	3.3%		reconnaître	14	4.6	3.4%
8	easy	31	5.8	2.8%		problème	12	4.0	2.9%
9	need (n.)	31	5.8	2.8%		difficulté	11	3.6	2.6%
10	important	30	5.7	2.7%		nécessité	11	3.6	2.6%
Total		462	87	42.0%			189	62.2	45.4%

- 25 Additional qualitative analyses were carried out on a random sample of 100 attitudinal adjectives drawn from the attitudinal markers presented in Table 5 (50 in French and 50 in English). Each occurrence was coded for construction type (e.g. *wh*-clause), and for the lexical verb introduced by the adjective (e.g. *consider*, *noter*) following the taxonomy proposed by ‘Base LST SHS’ (Base LST SHS). Findings show that, when using attitudinal adjectives, both languages predominantly rely on the anticipatory-*it* construction (e.g. *it is difficult to*) (80% in French and 72% in English). With respect to lexical verbs, French shows a stronger preference for analysis verbs (e.g. *étudier*) (32%) and communication verbs (e.g. *dire*) (20%), while English relies more on observation verbs (e.g. *notice*) (30%).

6. Discussion and conclusion

- 26 Research on stance in academic writing in the French and Anglo-Saxon traditions rests on divergent conceptual and methodological foundations, which impedes systematic cross-linguistic comparison. Moreover, the limited body of cross-linguistic research

that does exist has focused mainly on the use of personal pronouns as markers of authorial presence (e.g. Fløttum et al., 2006; Hartwell & Jacques 2014), offering only a partial view of how academic writers express evaluation and commitment across languages. The present study addresses these gaps by applying a unified cross-linguistic operationalization of stance integrating boosters, hedges, and attitudinal markers. This approach makes it possible to compare English and French expert academic writing systematically and to provide a more comprehensive picture of how stance operates across linguistic and cultural traditions.

- 27 The findings confirm the hypothesis that English academic writing is more stance-laden than French academic writing (H1), as the KIAP-EN was found to display higher frequencies of stance markers (boosters, hedges, and attitudinal markers) than the KIAP-FR. Hedges, in particular, are about twice as frequent in the KIAP-EN as in the KIAP-FR. This pattern is consistent with Vold (2008), who also reported greater use of hedging in English academic writing compared to French academic writing. Findings from qualitative analyses also reveal that French academic writing has a preference for impersonal subjects with boosting and hedging verbs compared with English, reflecting a tendency to background the source of (un)certainly. Based on these results, it appears that remnants of the tradition of ‘enunciative effacement’ are still visible in French academic writing. It seems that this tradition might go beyond the use of personal pronouns, and that, as stated by Boch (2013), we sometimes have the impression that “facts [...] tell themselves” (p. 545) in French academic texts. These findings also align with broader rhetorical norms, whereby Anglo-Saxon academic cultures prioritize explicit, interactive communication to engage readers and mitigate criticism, while French academic culture relies more on implicit, high-context communication, explaining its more limited stance use (Dahl, 2004; Hall & Hall, 1990).
- 28 The findings on lexical preferences (partly) contradict H2, according to which “English expert writers exhibit similar stance lexical preferences (hedges, boosters and attitudinal markers) as French expert writers”. Results reveal that English and French academic writing tend to rely on distinct lexical items to express stance, especially hedging and attitudinal stance. For instance, English expert writers tend to use hedges such as *suggest*, *argue*, and *assume*, whereas their French counterparts favor *considérer* and *susceptible*. This suggests that writers in each language draw on different lexical resources to fulfill similar rhetorical functions, and highlights once again the highly culture- and language-dependent nature of academic writing. It should nonetheless be noted that the study also uncovered several cross-linguistic similarities in terms of lexical preferences. For example, both English and French academic texts primarily express boosters and hedges through stance verbs—such as *conclude*, *savoir*, *suggest*, and *considérer*—which account for over 50% of markers in each epistemic category.
- 29 Together, these results help move toward a better understanding of stance in English vs French academic writing. They show that, despite some cross-linguistic similarities, what is expected of English academic writers differs from what is expected of French academic writers. These findings can inform academic writing instruction by helping teachers and students understand how stance expectations differ across academic cultures, supporting writers in adapting their rhetorical practices when writing for English-medium or French-medium publication. Beyond these theoretical and pedagogical implications, the study also contributes methodologically: the unified cross-linguistic operationalization of stance developed here can be applied to other

languages and corpora, providing a replicable framework for comparing stance practices across diverse linguistic settings (e.g. typologically different languages, wider range of disciplines). In a similar vein, future research could go beyond metadiscursive stance markers and examine other resources, such as implicit stance or phraseological stance patterns. Such work would offer a more comprehensive account of how evaluation and authorial positioning are constructed across languages.

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NOTES

1. Although this paper focuses on the (arguably) most influential framework in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, namely the stance framework proposed by Biber et al. (1999) and Hyland (2005b), I acknowledge the existence of the Evaluation and Appraisal frameworks in the Anglo-Saxon context (Hunston & Thompson, 2000; Martin & White, 2005).

2. All translations are mine.

3. While Jadoulle (2023) focused on hedging, this study applies the same corpus-driven method to boosters, hedges, and attitudinal markers.

4. The analyses of lexical preferences in section 5.2 focus on the ten most frequent items. As these items represent a considerable proportion of the total number of markers in each category (e.g. the ten most frequent boosters in the KIAP-EN account for c. 75% of all boosters in the corpus), they are a good point of reference to determine the extent to which English and French experts make use of similar lexical items to express stance.

5. The pairs of markers were operationalized by considering those items that were offered as the first translation of each other in Linguee (see Jadoulle, 2024 for more information).

ABSTRACTS

While previous research has highlighted the importance of stance in academic writing, cross-linguistic research on academic stance remains limited and often focuses on a narrow set of features, offering only a partial view of how writers express evaluative meanings across languages. Using a unified framework, this study examines epistemic and attitudinal markers in two corpora of English and French research articles. Stance markers were identified and disambiguated through a corpus-driven method based on Jadoulle (2023), and their frequencies and lexical preferences were compared. Results show that English writers use stance markers, especially hedges, more frequently than French writers, and that both groups rely on distinct lexical resources to express epistemic and attitudinal meanings. These results suggest that English and French academic writing are shaped by different rhetorical expectations and underscore the need for culturally informed approaches to academic writing pedagogy.

Malgré l'importance de « stance » dans l'écriture académique, les études contrastives restent limitées et portent souvent sur un ensemble restreint de marqueurs, offrant une vision partielle des moyens par lesquels les chercheurs expriment des valeurs évaluatives à travers les langues. Cette étude analyse les marqueurs épistémiques et attitudinaux dans deux corpus d'articles de

recherche en anglais et en français. Les marqueurs ont été identifiés et désambiguïsés à l'aide d'une méthode fondée sur corpus et basée sur Jadoulle (2023), puis leurs fréquences et préférences lexicales ont été comparées. Les résultats montrent que les experts anglophones utilisent plus de marqueurs de « stance » que les experts francophones, et que les deux groupes mobilisent des ressources lexicales distinctes. Ces observations suggèrent que les écrits anglophones et francophones reposent sur des attentes rhétoriques différentes et soulignent l'intérêt d'approches pédagogiques sensibles aux cultures d'écriture.

INDEX

Keywords: stance, academic writing, cross-linguistic, French, English

Mots-clés: stance, écriture académique, linguistique contrastive, français, anglais

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