Mapping Stance Adverbials in Pakistani Academic Discourse: A Corpus Based Interdisciplinary Study

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Abstract

The present research reports a study on how Pakistani university students project their feelings and assessments into research dissertations through the use of stance adverbials. Based on a special purpose corpus developed with 235 research dissertations of M.Phil and PhD graduates, the present research follows Biber's (1999) framework of stance adverbials (epistemic adverbials, attitudinal adverbials, style adverbials) and explores disciplinary variation on the use of stance adverbials in Pakistani academic writing. The corpus is divided into three sub-categories of academic disciplines: Humanities, Social Sciences and Sciences and is tagged for adverbials expressing stance to measure the frequency count of each stance adverbial marker out of 1000 words. The frequencies of stance adverbial markers are separately calculated for each discipline and one way ANOVA is administered. Statistically significant differences among disciplines on the use of stance adverbials. The findings reveal that there are statistically significant differences among disciplines on the use of stance adverbials and that humanities and social sciences are more inclined towards the stance expression as compared to sciences. The findings will help inform student writers and supervisors about the use of stance markers and presenting opinion based discourse in thesis writing.

Keywords: stance adverbials, disciplinary variation,
Pakistani academic discourse

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Introduction

Academic writing is generally considered to be an objective and neutral presentation of information. However, researchers (Crismore & Farnswarth, 1990; Hyland, 1998; 2004; Hunston,1994; Hyland & Tse, 2004; 2005) have recognized that academic writing does not constitute impartial presentation of investigation rather authorial stance projection seems to be playing an important role in the construction of academic discourse. As Crismore and Farnswarth (1990) state, "it is a very generous myth that sees professional scientific writing as the impersonal statements of facts that add up to the truth" (1990: 118). These and many other researches indicate that academic writing not only presents information about investigated facts and truths but also contains linguistic material, as stance adverbials, to help project author's stance towards the information presented to make their writing more interactive and evaluative.

One common way to express personal point of view and judgments in academic writing is the use of stance adverbials. Stance adverbials are considered as overt markers of writer's attitude towards a proposition and are widely used in academic discourse. "Speakers use stance adverbs to convey their judgments and attitudes, to claim the factual nature of what they are saying, and to mark exactly how they mean their utterances to be understood" (Biber et al., 1999: pp. 766-767).

Seen in this context, the present research paper seeks to explore how Pakistani academic writers from different disciplines project their stand point through the use of stance adverbials in research dissertations. Pakistani academic writing is least explored area so far. Only little research has been conducted on the discrete linguistic features of Pakistani academic writing e.g. by Azher and Mehmood (2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2018). However, no research has been conducted on the expression of author's stance in Pakistani academic writing. It seems relevant to explore how Pakistani academic writers from different disciplines project their viewpoint and maintain their position to persuade the readers through the use of stance adverbials.

The present research mainly seeks to answer the research question: What stance adverbials do Pakistani academic writers frequently use across Humanities, Social Sciences and Sciences? Are there any interdisciplinary differences?

Review of Related Literature

Stance refers to the expression of writer's viewpoint and perception about the information presented in the academic discourse. The use of stance expressions enables the writers to maintain a powerful position to influence the reader and to "pull the reader into a conspiracy of agreement so that it can often be difficult to dispute these judgments" (Hyland, 2005: 176). Authors construct their stance in academic writing through multiple lexico-grammatical devices and expressions "grammatical devices, word-laden word choice, and paralinguistic devices" (Biber et al. 1999: 966-969).

Expressions of stance embrace: stance adverbials (Biber and Finegan, 1988; 1989), and (Fraser, 1996); hedges (Hyland, 1998); stance verbs (Hunston, 1994; Hyland, 2002); and meta-discourse markers (Hyland, 2002; 2004). Stance adverbials have the primary function of commenting on the content or style of a clause or a particular part of a clause.

Several studies have been conducted to explore the use of stance adverbials in academic writing. One of the earlier studies was conducted by Biber et al. (1999: 859-860) in the Longman Spoken and Written English where the usage of stance adverbials was examined in four different registers: conversation, news articles, fiction, and academic prose. The study was corpus based in nature and the frequencies of stance makers were calculated across registers. The study revealed that stance adverbials were most common in conversation, followed by academic prose, then fiction, and news.

Another research on stance adverbials has been conducted particularly with reference to variation across research sections and disciplines. Adams and Toledo (2013) explored the use of stance adverbials in research articles in the discipline of law written by native British speakers and mainly focused on differences in the sections of introduction and discussion. For this purpose they followed the semantic categorization of adverbial stance markers into (i) epistemic, (ii) attitude and (iii) style as proposed by Biber (1999). Their study revealed that the epistemic stance adverbials with high frequency rate are evidently predominant in both sections, with significantly higher occurrences in the section on conclusions. The expression of certainty was more favored in the section on conclusion, as this section generally contains possible explanations for the results of the research and gives recommendations for future lines of action.

Stance Adverbials and Disciplinary Variation

Disciplines vary in the construction of stance. As Hyland (2008: 549-555) suggests that different disciplines project various sorts of arguments and differ in terms of their readers knowledge and the way they might be persuaded. Therefore, writers from different disciplines do not write in the same way, rather they employ different techniques and devices to interact with and persuade the readers.

This very idea, how academic writers express their stance across a range of disciplines, has been widely studied across the world. Most of the researches (e.g. Hyland, 1998, 2001; Becher, 1989) have focused on the difference between hard and soft disciplines in exploring opinion based discourse through the use of stance adverbials. Soft sciences refer to the disciplines of Social Sciences and Humanities comprising of Sociology, Psychology, Linguistics and Political Science etc. On the other hand, hard sciences refer to the disciplines like Biology, Physics, Chemistry etc. Becher (1989) in his study on disciplinary variation on stance adverbials revealed the presence of

subjectivity and personalized discourse in soft sciences, while objectivity and impersonalized discourse in hard sciences.

Thus, many studies have examined the use of different types of grammatical expressions to determine author's stance in scientific discourse particularly in academic research articles (Hyland 1998, 1999, 2005; Hunston & Thompson, 2000; Conrad & Biber, 2000; Silver, 2003); and abstracts (Stotesbury, 2003; Hyland & Tse, 2005; Ekoç, 2008; Çakir, 2011; Ahmad & Mehrjooseresht, 2012).

Peacock (2015) analysed the use of eight categories of stance adverbials across twelve disciplines, six sciences and six non sciences to see how stance adverbials play their role in putting forward authors' claims and propositions across disciplines. By using the WordSmith Tools, he calculated the frequencies and functions of different stance adverbials and concluded that those of limitation and doubt and certainty were more abundant in research articles. On disciplinary variation, his results revealed that sciences employed significantly lesser instances of stance adverbials than non-sciences.

Cakir (2016) investigated the use of stance adverbials in the research articles written by Turkish and native writers across soft and hard disciplines based on the corpus of 240 abstracts of research articles. He followed Biber's (2006) classification of adverbials expressing stance. He ended up with the conclusions that academic writers in soft sciences tend to use more stance adverbials as compared to hard sciences. "While the hard sciences tend to build knowledge on the basis of experimental observation and evidence, soft sciences seek for alternative ways to construct scientific knowledge" (Cakir, 2016: 91). He also concluded that the academic writers are more prone to the use of style adverbials when seen with reference to the frequency of each stance adverbial.

Theoretical Framework

The present research mainly adheres to Biber's definition and framework of stance, who takes stance as "the expression of personal feelings, attitude, and value judgments. Or assessments". The theoretical framework is based on the semantic categorization of adverbial stance markers proposed by Biber (2003) into a) epistemic, b) attitude, and c) style.

Epistemic Adverbials

Epistemic stance adverbials tend to express writer's evaluation about the information presented in a proposition. Epistemic adverbials have six key areas of meanings: "certainty and doubt, actuality and reality, source of Knowledge, limitation, viewpoint or perspective, and imprecision." Author, P.no?

Doubt and certainty

Epistemic adverbials indicating certainty or doubt qualify the writer's level of confidence in the truth of the proposition expressed ranging from "absolute judgments of certainty to indications of belief in various levels of probability" (Biber et al., 1999: 854). The doubt and certainty adverbials include: certainly, no doubt, undoubtedly, decidedly, definitely, may be etc.

Actuality and Reality

Actuality and reality adverbials give the proposition the status of real life fact. Actuality and reality adverbials include: in fact, really, actually, in actual fact, truly, for a fact.

Source of Knowledge

Stance adverbials of source of knowledge inform about the actual source of the information, where the reported claim comes from. These adverbials allude to evidence and include: apparently, arguably, evidently, according to X, as X reports.

Limitation

Limitation stance adverbials indicate that there are limits to the validity of proposition. They mainly include: in most cases, in most instances, typically, in general, on the whole, largely, mainly.

Viewpoint or perspective

Viewpoint or perspective stance adverbials stand for the perspective from which the proposition is claimed to be true. These adverbials include in our view, from our perspective, in my knowledge, to the best of our knowledge.

Imprecision

The imprecision stance adverbials suggest that the proposition is imprecise. Imprecision adverbials include like, sort of, kind of, so to speak, if you can call it that.

Attitude Adverbials

Attitude adverbials indicate the writer's attitude towards the proposition by expressing importance, assessment and evaluation and judgment and expectations about the proposition. Attitude adverbs which express expectations include: surprisingly, as might be expected, inevitably, naturally, as you may guess, of course, astonishingly, predictably.

Attitude adverbials expressing evaluation include unfortunately, conveniently, wisely, quite rightly, ironically, disturbingly, sensibly.

Attitude adverbials expressing importance include importantly, even more importantly, significantly.

Style Adverbials

Style stance adverbials express comments on the ways as the message is communicated or conveyed, e.g. frankly, literally, technically speaking, generally speaking, in short, truthfully, to put it, to tell you the truth, confidently etc. moreover, if clauses as subordinator are also considered style adverbials.

With this framework discussed above the present study aims to explore the frequency and use of stance adverbials across Pakistani academic writing and to investigate if there are any disciplinary variations in the use of stance adverbials.

Research Methodology

Collection of Data and Corpus Compilation

The current study is corpus based in design. Its major objective is to find out whether humanities, social sciences and sciences significantly differ in the use of stance adverbials and includes the analysis of stance adverbials that are frequently reported to occur in Pakistani academic writing. Three sets of data were constructed with the collection of 235 M.Phil and doctoral theses written by Pakistani university students between 2006 and 2014. The theses were collected from different universities of Pakistan personally as well as from HEC research repository available on HEC Website. The discipline of Humanities employs interpretative methodology focusing on text analysis, and reflective thinking that distinguish them from social sciences (as extensions of sciences) and sciences that employ empirical, rational, objective and quantitative methodology. However, humanities and social sciences are concerned with human behavior and events and tend to be more interpretive and detailed in description.

The corpus includes all the main research sections of research theses, namely: introduction, review of literature, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion. Table1 shows the size of the corpora investigated throughout this study.

Table 1. Corpus Size

Description of Corpus in Terms of words

Sr. #	Discipline	No of words
1	Humanities	3,852,622
2	Social Sciences	2,663,503
3	Sciences	1,868,875
4	**Total**	**8,385,000**

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data went through two different phases.

Phase I

In the first phase the analysis of the data went through the following steps.

Tagging of the Corpus

The corpus of Pakistani academic writing was tagged by employing Biber's tagger for all the linguistic features used to indicate stance, namely epistemic stance adverbials, attitude stance adverbials, and style stance adverbials as presented in the framework given by Biber (2006).

Turning Raw Counts of Linguistic Features into Normalized Frequencies

Biber's tag count program was used for the raw counts of the frequencies of different linguistic features and normalized frequencies. The raw frequencies of linguistic features were obtained from all texts (235) and computed out of 1000 words.

Analysis of Variance

ANOVA was applied to see statistically significant differences among disciplines in the use of stance adverbial devices.

Phase II

Frequency Count of Stance Adverbials

Locating all the occurrences of stance markers in each discipline was the first step to count the frequency of each stance device. This process was accomplished using AntConc (Anthony, 2011). AntConc was considered to be a good choice to analyze the stance markers, calculate their frequency, and Antconc 3.4.4 was used to count the frequency of each stance device taken from Biber in the corpus of Pakistani academic writing and differences were calculated across disciplines. Antconc generated the lists of the targeted items along with their concordance lines. In order to keep a record of frequencies, Excel documents for humanities, social sciences and sciences were created. The number of times and the instances of the texts in which stance markers appeared, were all documented in the Excel files and used for further analysis. However, the instances which seemed to be irrelevant and least associated with the objectives of the present research were excluded from the final analysis. Additionally, this process of

keeping a record of stance markers in Excel files enabled the manual analysis of the stance devices as well.

Results

The table given below presents the ANOVA results of comparison among disciplines on the use of stance adverbials

Table: 2 Comparison of means among disciplines on stance adverbials

Group	advl_style	advl_att	advl_epistemic
Humanities	0.763±0.060A	0.068±0.008A	0.773±0.064A
Sciences	0.507±0.039B	0.016±0.006C	0.113±0.019C
Social sciences	0.781±0.082A	0.047±0.007B	0.463±0.037B

The ANOVA results indicate that there are statistically significant differences among disciplines on the use of stance adverbials.

Discussion

This section discusses variation across disciplines on the use of stance adverbials in Pakistani academic discourse.

Stance Adverbials in Pakistani Academic Writing

The figure given below compares the mean score of stance adverbials in the discourse of three Pakistani academic disciplines.
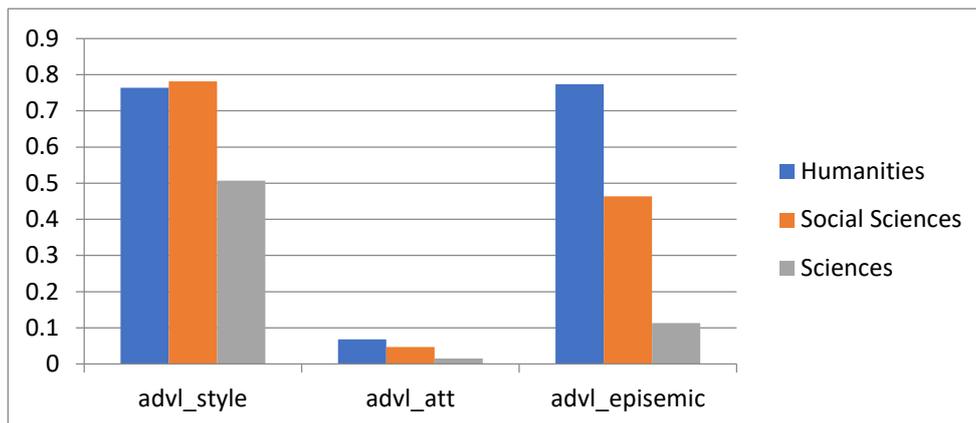

Figure 1 Distribution of stance adverbials across disciplines

The figure displays the use of stance adverbials in Pakistani academic writing and draws comparison across disciplines. The results shown above reveal a significant predominance of style adverbials followed by epistemic adverbials in Pakistani academic writing. The Attitude stance adverbials with the minimum mean score have been found least frequent in all the three disciplines. The high frequency of style adverbials shows that Pakistani academic writers are more inclined towards using style adverbials, thus making comments on the way message is communicated.

The results on disciplinary variation reveal the humanities with highest accumulative mean scores (0.535) rely more on epistemic stance adverbials in comparison with the other two disciplines. Sciences have been shown as least inclined to the use of epistemic stance adverbials with minimum accumulative mean score (0.211), whereas, social sciences stand in the middle (0.430). Humanities in comparison with other two disciplines exhibit highest tendency in the use of stance adverbials as compared to social sciences and sciences. The frequent use of stance adverbials in humanities indicates the presence of most opinion based and evaluative discourse in this discipline. Social sciences are comparatively slightly less prone to the presentation of opinion based discourse. Sciences are shown as the least evaluative in the presentation of academic discourse. These findings are in line with previous researches (Samraj, 2002; Stotesbury, 2003; Yakhontova, 2006; Çakır, 2011) on comparing disciplines on stance adverbials. The results are also consistent with Cakir (2016), who also concluded that the frequency of stance adverbials was higher in soft sciences (represented by humanities and social sciences) than hard sciences.

Epistemic Stance Adverbials

Figure 2 given below exhibits the frequency of epistemic stance adverbials in Pakistani academic writing and draws comparison among disciplines on the key areas of epistemic adverbials. Epistemic adverbials tend to express writer's evaluation about the information presented in a proposition. Epistemic stance adverbials convey a number of meanings which include actuality and reality, doubt and certainty, source/ evidence, limitation, viewpoint and imprecision.
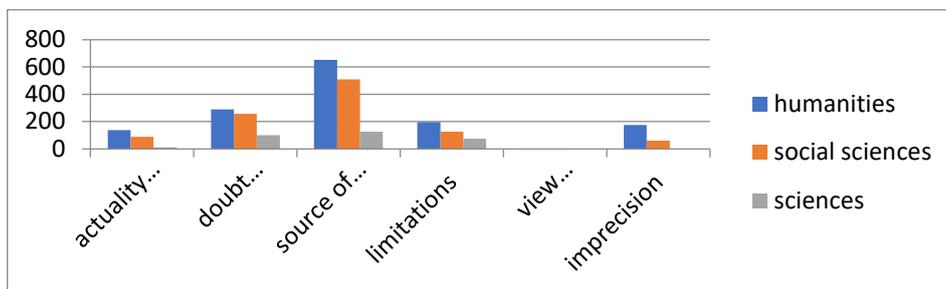
Figure 2 Distribution of epistemic stance adverbials across disciplines

Figure 3 exhibits the comparison among disciplines on the use of epistemic adverbials. Seen with reference to different categories, it is revealed that Pakistani academic writers most frequently rely on the actual sources of knowledge and evidence (1288), followed by doubt and certainty (646) more than any other key element in epistemic stance adverbials. Viewpoint and perspective have been found the least frequent (1), almost equal to none, in the whole corpus of Pakistani academic writing.

Source of Knowledge

The highest frequency of source of knowledge in Pakistani academic writing indicates a neutral way of presenting information by using expressions like 'according to' with highest frequency rate or "as X states" and that Pakistani academic writers tend to remain as objective and impartial as possible. The writers tend to rely on the evidence by making comments on the information presented as shown in the examples below.

Examples
1. According to the report of the Commonwealth Observer Mission for the general elections 2013, One hundred and forty eight political parties contested the National and Provincial Assembly elections.
2. According to Tankard (2001) media frame can also be compared to the frame of a house, given that the structure around which everything else fits, and influencing the overall style of the construction (Tankard, 2001).
3. Cohen (1963) states agenda setting that press may not be successful in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling people what to think about.
4. According to a very old report [161], the biggest fraction of total phthalates was observed in the form of biphthalate ions at pH, 4.1.

The above given examples reveal much reliance of Pakistani academic writing on the expressions like, "according to" and "as X states". The primary function of the expressions "according to" and "as X states" is to show the type of evidence in presenting information and "to establish a persuasive epistemological and social framework for the acceptance of their arguments" (Hyland, 2004:22). The abundant use of such expressions is an indication of the fact that Pakistani academic writers remain neutral by using the expressions like "according to" and "as X states" and specify the source of knowledge followed by an indirect or direct quotation. In doing so, they tend to minimize the manipulation of the information and remain objective. In other words, the writers keep themselves detached by depending on the sources of knowledge to assert propositions and to persuade readers for the acceptance of their stance.

Disciplinary variation on this very epistemic stance adverbial reveals that humanities with higher frequency are more prone to refer to the sources of knowledge and mainly rely on the other sources to project their stance and to persuade the reader think in line with the author. Sciences, on the other hand, rely less on the evidence from external sources of knowledge and maintain objectivity in the presentation of information.

Doubt and Certainty

The doubt and certainty are the second frequently occurring epistemic stance adverbials in Pakistani academic writing and indicate author's beliefs at various levels of probability.
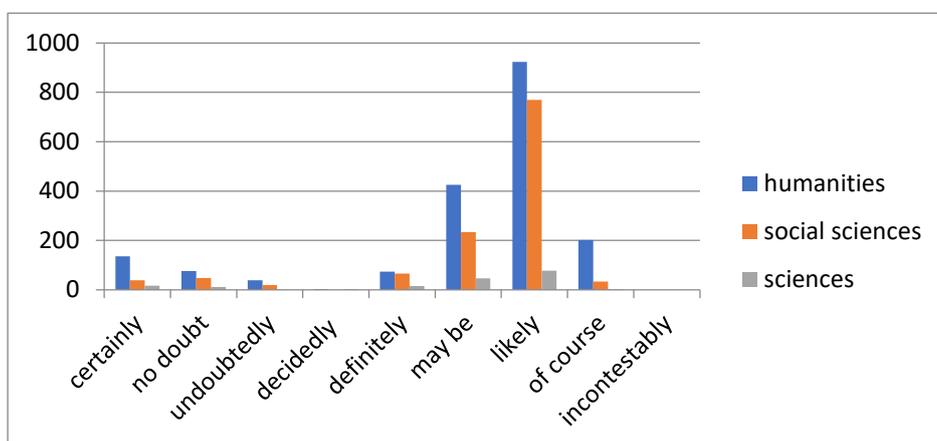

Figure 3 Distribution of epistemic stance adverbials across disciplines

At the level of discrete analysis, the expressions like 'likely' (1770) and 'may be' (705) were found more frequent in the corpus as compared to 'incontestably' (0)'decidedly' (05) and 'undoubtedly'(59), 'certainly' (191), and 'off course' (237). That shows Pakistani academic writers tend to favour the expressions of doubt rather than certainty and shows a lower degree of confidence with regard to the truth of a statement. As shown in the examples below.

Examples:
1. It is more likely that The News give more space to peace dialogue process as compare to Dawn and The Nation.
2. It is very much likely that any type of language could become acceptable to the speakers of the language, whether native or non-native.

3. Such general effects may be moderated by personal factors.
4. Teachers' experience of burnout and their commitment to the organization may be affected if their personal disposition is not supported by the environment of the workplace.

The word likely in the examples 1 and 2 is used in the sense of probability. 'It is more likely' in example 1 means that there are more chances that the News gives more space to peace dialogue process as compared to the other two newspapers. In example 2 likely is used in the same sense as in example 1. Both these examples communicate a sense of probability rather than certainty and decidedness on the situations.

In the examples 3 and 4 "may be" is used to indicate the moderation of effects by personal factors and effect on university teachers' commitments due to environment respectively. The two examples are declarative sentences and could be considered as statements if, 'may be' had been replaced with expressions like 'can be', or 'are'. The use of "may be" has increased the level of doubt rather than certainty. The use of 'may be' in such instances indicates that Pakistani academic writers prefer an expression of doubt and uncertainty where they could easily state their point of view. The results of the present research are different from Adams and Toledo (2013), where the expressions of certainty were found more frequent as compared to those of doubt and probability.

Among disciplines, humanities have been found more inclined to the use of doubt and certainty adverbials. Although humanities, in line with the other two disciplines, use expressions of doubt like, 'likely', and 'may be' more frequently, yet they tend to use the expressions of certainty more than social sciences and sciences. As 'certainly' and 'off course' occur 135 and 202 times respectively in humanities, whereas only 17 and 2 times in sciences.

Limitation

The limitation stance adverbials constitute third most frequent group in the corpus of Pakistani academic writing. The limitation stance adverbials indicate limitations to the validity of proposition. The most frequent limitation stance adverbials include "mainly" followed by "in general" and "largely" respectively.

View Point and Perspective

Pakistani academic writing, as the results indicate is marked by minimum use of view point and perspective adverbials. View point and perspective adverbials stand for author's standpoint through expressions like, "in my view", "from my perspective" etc. The discipline of sciences is marked by zero frequency on these adverbials, whereas, the other two disciplines have minimum scores on this stance adverbial. The Pakistani

academic writers tend to avoid the expressions where their personal view point is directly communicated.

As far as the variation among disciplines on epistemic stance adverbials is concerned, humanities are shown consistently employing the highest frequency of epistemic stance adverbials as compared to sciences and social sciences. However, in doing so, humanities mainly rely on actual sources and evidence. The excessive use of sources of knowledge in humanities shows that humanities tend to be more careful in the presentation of stance and rely on the evidence. Sciences are shown as least inclined to the use of epistemic stance adverbials, whereas, social sciences are close to humanities in using epistemic stance adverbials. With reference to variation among disciplines, humanities are shown more prone to the use of expressions of uncertainty and doubt.

Attitude Stance Adverbials

Table 2 given earlier reveals the frequency of attitude adverbials in Pakistani academic writing and draws comparison among disciplines on the use of attitudinal adverbs. Attitude adverbials indicate writer's attitude towards proposition in terms of importance, evaluation and expectations.
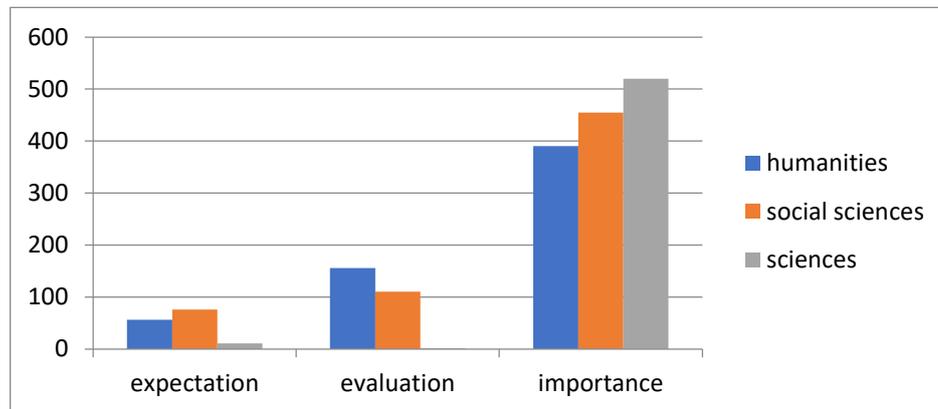

Figure 4: Distribution of attitude stance adverbials across disciplines

The figure demonstrates the use of attitude adverbials in Pakistani academic writing by exhibiting the distribution of attitude stance adverbials across three disciplines. The figure reveals that importance adverbials are more frequent in Pakistani academic discourse than evaluation and expectation. In other words, Pakistani academic writers are less inclined to give evaluations and expectations about the propositions expressed. As, there were a few instances of evaluation and expectation adverbials found in the corpus of Pakistani academic writing. That shows Pakistani academic writers

avoid offering their personal evaluation of the matters being discussed and tend to attach importance to the proposition through importance adverbials to persuade readers. Among evaluation adverbials, expressions like "unfortunately" and "disturbingly" were found more frequent in the corpora than "wisely', "quite rightly" and "ironically"; whereas, "naturally" and "surprisingly" among expectation adverbials were more common and frequent.

On disciplinary variation, the results exhibit that over all humanities in comparison with the other two disciplines have been found the most inclined to the use of attitude adverbials. However, sciences have been shown less prone to the use of attitude stance adverbials. Though, adverbials of importance are more frequent in sciences in comparison with humanities and social sciences.

Adverbs expressing evaluation have been found more frequent in humanities. Attitude adverbials can be regarded as playing an important role in academic discourse, by creating effective appeals to the reader's emotions, inviting them to accept his stance and discourse in the same perspective. Pakistani academic writers, particularly in sciences, tend to do so by attaching importance to the proposition by using expressions like "significantly" and "importantly".

Examples
1. The intended environment of college may significantly vary from university setting primarily due to difference in level of education (e.g., higher education) to offer and the level of research output expected from teachers.
2. The study highlighted that personality variables relate significantly to burnout more than demographic and work condition variables.
3. The examples above indicate the way Pakistani academic writers attach importance to the proposition by using the expressions like 'significantly' to persuade the reader in the same directions.

Style Stance Adverbials
Style stance adverbials are found the most frequent in the corpus of Pakistani academic writing. Style stance adverbials indicate the manners of stating an argument by using the expressions like literally, confidently, to put it, if clauses, etc.

In such cases, new propositional materials are not added and the academic writers try to make them understandable through paraphrasing to enable the reader to interpret the conveyed meaning. Style adverbials are more frequent due to abundant use of if clauses in Pakistani academic writing. Humanities with 3384, social sciences with 2345 and sciences 468 occurrences of if clauses are making style adverbials as the most frequently opted stance device by Pakistani academic writers. social sciences are the

leading discipline in making use of style stance adverbials, followed by humanities and sciences respectively.

Examples

1. <u>In short,</u> advertisement means "to draw attention" towards something or to inform someone about something
2. The Agenda-Setting Theory comes from a scientific perspective, because it predicts that *if people are exposed to the same media,* they will place importance on the same issues.
3. However, if more and more people want their children to study in the private sector schools, the social capital of the elites impairs the public education system.
4. In the instances given above, if-clauses are used as conditional clauses. In comparison with if-clauses, whether- clauses are more common in academic writing as shown in Biber, 1999, as they tend to be more formal. If clauses, on the other hand, are indicators of an informal style and are generally favoured in conversations.
5. The results of the present study are consistent with the previous researches (e.g.Cakir, 2016 on stance adverbials in native and non - native research articles) in the most frequent occurrences of style adverbials in both writings.

Conclusion

The present research has addressed one major question: What stance adverbials do Pakistani academic writers frequently use across humanities, social sciences and sciences? Are there any interdisciplinary differences? The adverbial marking of stance has been presented to be realized by selections from different semantic categories of stance, namely: epistemic, attitudinal or stylistic. The study concludes that Pakistani academic writers tend to use stance adverbials in the category of style adverbials in comparison with the other two categories. The dense presence of style adverbials is marked by if clauses in Pakistani academic writing. Among epistemic stance adverbials, expressions of source of knowledge and, doubt and uncertainty rather than certainty were found more favoured by the Pakistani academic writers. Which shows that Pakistani academic writers remain neutral and mainly rely on references and evidences in the projection of their viewpoint. However, the higher frequency of doubt stance adverbials as compared to certainty indicates the lower level of confidence of Pakistani academic writers in the academic discourse. This style is further strengthened by the lowest frequency of viewpoint and perspective stance adverbials among epistemic adverbials. Which clearly indicates the least tendency of Pakistani academic writers to the expression of opinion based discourse and subjectivity. It also indicates that

Pakistani academic writers don not form their own opinion and judgments about the variables they are working on as well as about their research findings.

On disciplinary variation, humanities followed by social sciences have been found as the most inclined towards the use of stance adverbials, whereas, sciences have been found least inclined to the use of stance adverbials. This suggests that academic writers in humanities and social sciences in comparison with sciences adopt different stance adverbial devices to validate their stance and voices.

Among the most frequent stance adverbials include, "according to", "likely", "may be" and "significantly", whereas among the least frequent stance adverbials include, "in my perspective", "decidedly", "incontestably" and "off course". It is evident from the stance adverbials more frequently used in Pakistani academic discourse that Pakistani academic discourse remains objective to a great extent. The projection stance and opinion based discourse remains inexplicit and less confident.

Way Forward

The present research can help academic writers understand how they construct stance in their writing. Learning the features of academic discourse can help writers understand how language works in any academic setting. This type of awareness would give academic writers a repertoire of voices that they would be able to choose from depending on the type of writing they needed to create and could help them integrate better into the academic community.

Stance adverbials prove to be among important linguistic resources. They are employed by Pakistani academic writers to interact with the reader and to specify the degree of validity and certainty about the information presented. The stance adverbials are also used as communicative strategies to enhance or reduce the strength of statements. However, further research can be conducted on the use of stance adverbials across research sections in Pakistani academic writing to see the authors' stance projection in different research sections, particularly across introduction, discussion and conclusion sections. Moreover, the findings can be compared with the stance projection in academic writing of other countries to see the differences and similarities. The present research can help academic writers to focus on maintaining their stance in the production of academic writing.

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