STANCE MARKERS IN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HEDGES AND BOOSTERS IN RESEARCH PAPERS

Naima Batool[1] & Azhar Pervaiz[2]

Abstract

It is acclaimed that research papers by Pakistani writers are difficult to get published in the international journals (Bibi and Nawaz, 2022). Thus by modifying Hyland's (2005) model of interaction, the current study attempts to investigate the prevalence of two stance markers, hedges and boosters, in academic writing across various portions of research articles. The researcher developed the corpus and it is based on collectively 196 research papers from the discipline of Arts and Humanities, particularly Linguistics. To conduct a comparative study and to map the interactional discourse in the academic writing of Pakistani and foreign writers, the corpus is divided into two major categories that is research papers by Pakistani writers and research papers by foreign writers. Antconc. (version 4.3.1) software was used to determine the frequencies of the chosen corpus. As a result, this paper conducts a comparative analysis to investigate how stance indicators are used by Pakistani writers and foreign writers. The findings of the study demonstrate that the authors of the Pakistani research papers use hedges abundantly as compared to non-Pakistani writers. Further, Pakistani researchers use boosters in quite less frequency as compared to non-Pakistani researchers. Thus, the research is important because it contributes to an investigation and understanding of how writers present their stance in research papers.

Keywords: *Hedges, Boosters, Corpus, Academic writing*

1. INTRODUCTION

The linguistic framing of academic claims operate within strict disciplinary parameters, shaping how knowledge is constructed and received (Hyland, 2021). This discursive process relies heavily on two complementary mechanisms: hedges that attenuate propositions ("perhaps," "might") and boosters that intensify claims ("demonstrate," "undoubtedly") (Thompson & Hyland, 2022). There are well-documented patterns of the use of stance markers with clear disciplinary differences between humanities and scientific writing (Wilson, 2023). There is also variation across cultures that complicates this picture further, making it especially challenging for scholars whose first language is not English (Johnson & Dabbs, 2021; Baker & Newman, 2022).

Recent studies have brought to light the rhetorical complexities that non-native English speakers face. Finding the right balance between strengthening and softening devices is a constant struggle; miscalculations frequently result in texts that seem either too forceful or not authoritative enough (Smith and Mahoney,2024). The preference for indirect communication in Chinese academic contexts is reflected in more frequent hedging (Hu & Carter, 2021), while Middle Eastern academic traditions tend to favour stronger, less mitigated claims (Wilson, 2023). Cross-cultural analyses show how deeply ingrained norms influence these patterns. These distinctive approaches maintain their consistency even in highly technical disciplines such as medical research (Zhang & Chen, 2021).

As the foundational framework for this analysis, Hyland's (2005) interactional meta-discourse model provides essential theoretical grounding. The model's core separation of weakening strategies from intensification techniques (Hyland, 2021) offers crucial insights into

[1] Lecturer/PhD Scholar, Department of English Language and Linguistics, University of Sargodha
correspondence   (naima.batool@uos.edu.pk)

[2] Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Linguistics, University of Sargodha
(azhar.pervaiz@uos.edu.pk)

discipline-specific rhetorical conventions while humanities scholars typically employ tentative formulations ("this may suggest"), scientific writing favors definitive statements ("these results prove") (Brown & Smith, 2021). Such variation underscores the profound influence of disciplinary epistemology and cultural context on academic discourse (Martin & Perez, 2024).

Three critical research lacunae motivate this study. First, regional varieties of academic English remain insufficiently examined despite extensive cross-cultural research on stance markers (Johnson & Dabbs, 2021). Second, effective pedagogical approaches for developing these crucial rhetorical skills require deeper investigation (Kelly, 2023). Third, the developmental trajectory of stance marker proficiency in emerging academic contexts is largely neglected (Thompson & Hyland, 2022). These issues are addressed through systematic analysis of 200 research articles from Arts and Humanities disciplines using AntConc (version 4.3.1).

The art of academic writing lies in its delicate balancing act - scholars must make compelling claims while respecting their discipline's unwritten rules. These subtle linguistic tools, ranging from cautious "may suggest" to definitive "proves beyond doubt," do more than modify statements; they reveal how writers see their relationship with both knowledge and readers (Hyland's 2021 study of medical journals shows this particularly well). What's fascinating is how these choices differ dramatically between the fields.

1.1 Stance Markers in Academic Writing

It is found that academic writing frequently encounter bold declarations like "the results establish" or "we conclusively demonstrate." This isn't just stylistic preference, it reflects the positivist foundations of these disciplines, where observable evidence reigns supreme (Zhang and Chen's 2021 analysis of chemistry articles documents this pattern clearly). Meanwhile, in literature studies, phrases like "one might interpret" or "this potentially suggests" dominate, mirroring the field's embrace of multiple valid interpretations.

Cultural influences add another layer of complexity. When analyzing a sample of Chinese medical research, I was struck by how frequently terms like "possibly" and "appears to" appeared - a clear reflection of Confucian values that prioritize scholarly humility. Contrast this with Middle Eastern legal scholarship, where phrases like "it is certain that" and "undeniably proves" appear with striking regularity. These patterns persist stubbornly even when scholars write in English, creating fascinating hybrid rhetorical styles.

The Pakistani academic context presents a particularly interesting case study here. Preliminary analysis suggests scholars often blend local rhetorical traditions with the expectations of international journals, sometimes creating unique stance marker combinations. Baker and Newman (2022) raise important questions about how global academic standards interact with regional writing cultures.

Despite the growing body of research on cross-cultural academic writing, Pakistani scholarship remains underexplored (Bibi & Nawaz, 2022). This gap is striking given Pakistan's unique linguistic landscape, where English coexists with Urdu and regional languages, creating a hybrid academic discourse influenced by both colonial legacies and local rhetorical traditions (Khan & Iqbal, 2021). Preliminary observations suggest that Pakistani writers may overuse boosters, possibly to compensate for perceived linguistic insecurity or to align with local norms of assertive argumentation (Ahmed & Mahmood, 2023). Conversely, some scholars argue that excessive hedging, a remnant of British academic conventions, may weaken the persuasive impact of their claims (Smith & Mahoney, 2024). These tensions raise critical questions about how Pakistani writers negotiate their rhetorical identity in international publications, where deviations from Anglophone norms may lead to unequal evaluation (Johnson & Dabbs, 2021).

This study adopts Hyland's (2005) interactional metadiscourse model, which provides a robust framework for analyzing how writers engage readers and express stance. The model categorizes metadiscourse into two dimensions:

1. **Interactive markers**: Guide readers through the text (e.g., "firstly," "in conclusion").
2. **Interactional markers**: Involve the reader in the argument (e.g., hedges, boosters).

Hyland's framework is particularly valuable for examining rhetorical variation across cultures and disciplines (Hyland, 2021). For instance, it explains why scholars of humanities use more hedges to acknowledge interpretive flexibility, while scientists employ boosters to assert factual certainty (Brown & Smith, 2021). However, the model's applicability to postcolonial academic contexts like Pakistan has not been thoroughly tested, leaving a gap in understanding how global and local discourses intersect in scholarly writing (Bibi & Nawaz, 2022).

Following are the research gaps which motivate this study

i. **Regional Underrepresentation**: While stance markers have been studied extensively in East Asian and European contexts, South Asian academic writing, particularly from Pakistan, lacks systematic analysis (Johnson & Dabbs, 2021).
ii. **Pedagogical Neglect**: Few studies offer actionable strategies for teaching stance markers to EAP learners in Pakistan, where English is often a second language (Kelly, 2023).

The evolution of stance marker proficiency among Pakistani academics, especially early-career researchers, remains unexplored (Thompson & Hyland, 2022). In order to address these gaps, this study aims to:

i. Compare the frequency and distribution of hedges and boosters in Pakistani versus international research articles.
ii. Identify cultural and disciplinary influences on stance marker usage in Pakistani academic writing.
iii. Propose pedagogical interventions to enhance stance marker proficiency among Pakistani scholars.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This research holds multidimensional importance. Theoretically, the study expands Hyland's model to postcolonial academic contexts, testing its universality. Methodologically, the study demonstrates the utility of corpus linguistics (via AntConc) for cross-cultural discourse analysis and practically, this study provides evidence-based recommendations for EAP curricula in Pakistan, aiding scholars in meeting international publication standards.

By illuminating how Pakistani writers employ stance markers, this study contributes to broader discussions about linguistic equity in global academia, where non-Anglophone scholars often face unstated rhetorical barriers (Smith & Mahoney, 2024).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic writing is recognized not simply as a means of information transfer, but as a complex epistemological process where knowledge claims are strategically positioned relative to existing scholarship and anticipated reader reception (Hyland, 2021). These positioning strategies are linguistically realized through stance markers, with both hedges ("might," "possibly") and boosters ("clearly," "undoubtedly") serving as primary mechanisms for the modulation of authorial tone and epistemic certainty (Jiang & Hyland, 2022). Substantial variation has been documented in the deployment of these markers across academic disciplines (Alotaibi, 2023; Zhang & Chen, 2021), cultural traditions (Jalilifar & Dabbi, 2021; Lee & Evans, 2021), and structural components of research articles (Biber et al., 2021; Thompson & Zhou, 2022). Particular attention has been

given to Pakistani academic English, where specific challenges have been identified regarding international publication success (Bibi & Nawaz, 2022; Rahman & Chaudhry, 2023; Khan & Ali, 2023).

The analytical framework employed in this investigation is derived from Hyland's (2005) model of interactional metadiscourse, which provides a systematic approach for examining writer-reader engagement through textual features. A central distinction is made within this model between two complementary functions: hedges that qualify authorial certainty and boosters that strengthen propositional force (Hyland, 2021; Anderson & White, 2021). In varied academic contexts, however, they have identified diverse rhetorical profiles (Martin & León Pérez, 2024; Hall & Young, 2024). Such differences are especially pronounced between conventions for humanities and scientific writing, with the former often deploying conditional language like "this interpretation suggests" while the latter tends to use more absolute statements like "these results prove" (Hyland, 2021; Brown & Smith, 2021; Moore & Taylor, 2021).

Cross-cultural comparison has highlighted more marked differences. Comparative studies of academic English in Asia and the West have empirically established basic differences in the expression of certainty among groups, with greater indirectness preference shown by Chinese than American scholars (Hu & Cao, 2021; Li & Wharton, 2023; Alharbi, 2023). The academic English of Pakistan, however, has proved somewhat problematic, with identified systematic success cases in maintaining an acceptable ratio between hedging and boosting strategies (Bibi & Nawaz, 2022; Shahzad & Mahmood, 2024; Singh & Brown, 2022). These results indicate that additional research should examine how non-native scholars adapt to English academic writing conventions.

2.1 Hedging in Scholarly Communication

Hedging devices in academic writing serve crucial epistemic and interpersonal functions. These linguistic strategies allow writers to cautiously position claims while adhering to disciplinary norms of scholarly interaction (Vande Kopple, 2022; Park & Kim, 2022). In academic discourse, three major categories of hedging devices have been identified: modal auxiliaries expressing possibility (e.g., "may," "could"), adverbial modifiers reducing certainty ("possibly," "perhaps"), and lexical verbs softening propositions ("seem," "suggest") (Hyland 2021; Wilson & Carter 2023). The effective use of these devices often distinguishes more advanced academic writing from that which is perceived as either too forceful or insufficiently backed up. Cross-cultural studies show significant diversity in hedging practices, with Chinese academic writing showing a much higher hedge frequency than Western conventions and Middle Eastern scholarly texts showing very few hedging devices (Hu & Cao 2021; Alotaibi 2023). These differences are consistent across disciplinary boundaries.

More in-depth examination shows that Chinese scholars use a wider range of and more frequently applied hedging strategies compared to their Anglophone counterparts, largely due to cultural values emphasizing humility and indirectness (Hu and Cao 2021; Liu and Wang 2024). On the other hand, academic writing from Middle Eastern and South Asian contexts tends to underuse hedges in systematic ways, with linguistic transfer effects and different rhetorical norms identified as possible causes (Alotaibi 2023; Kafes 2023; Patel and Thompson 2024). These differences have been observed even within specialized genres such as medical research articles, where non-native writers demonstrate greater reliance on modal verbs than their native English-speaking counterparts (Zhang & Chen, 2021; Hill & Scott, 2021).

2.2 Boosting in Academic Discourse

The assertive counterpart to hedging is provided by boosters, which enable the emphasis of claims and establishment of scholarly authority. These devices are typically categorized into

three linguistic types: absolute adverbs ("definitely," "undoubtedly"), strong verbs ("demonstrate," "prove"), and emphatic adjectives ("clear," "obvious") (Jiang & Hyland, 2022; Gray & Douglas, 2023; Warchal, 2023; Quinn & Roberts, 2021). However, inappropriate application of these markers may produce prose that appears either excessively dogmatic or insufficiently persuasive.

Particular challenges in booster deployment have been noted for non-native writers. Evidence suggests that boosters are sometimes employed excessively as compensation for perceived linguistic limitations (Jalilifar & Dabbi, 2021; Nguyen & Le, 2024; Biber et al., 2021; Clark & Harris, 2023). Additional complexity is introduced by disciplinary norms, with stronger assertions being typically tolerated in technical fields like engineering and business compared to humanities disciplines (Garcia & Martinez, 2022; Foster & King, 2022). These disciplinary and cultural variations emphasize the contextual nature of effective booster usage.

2.3 Variation in Stance Markers

Distinct rhetorical spaces are created by the conventional structure of research articles, influencing stance marker distribution. Differential clustering of these markers across corpuses has been systematically documented in recent scholarship (Martin & León Pérez, 2024; O'Connor & Ryan, 2023). Higher concentrations of boosters are typically found in introductions, where contributions' novelty is established. Minimal hedging is often contained in methodology sections of natural sciences, reflecting their procedural focus. More hedges are employed in discussion sections to qualify interpretations, while conclusions frequently combine boosters to emphasize significant findings (Baker & Jones, 2024; Nelson & Murphy, 2022).

Significant influence on these sectional patterns is exerted by cultural background. Disproportionate booster use in literature reviews combined with insufficient hedging in discussion sections has been identified in Pakistani academic writing—a rhetorical imbalance that may negatively affect international reception (Rahman & Chaudhry, 2023; James & Turner, 2022). Parallel findings have emerged from Spanish-English comparative studies, further highlighting the cultural specificity of stance marker conventions (Garcia & Martinez, 2022; Evans & Green, 2021).

Despite significant advances in understanding stance markers, important gaps remain, particularly concerning Pakistani academic writing. Limited guidance is provided by current literature on effective pedagogical approaches for developing non-native writers' rhetorical skills (Khan & Ali, 2023; Shahzad & Mahmood, 2024). Similarly lacking are longitudinal studies examining stance marker evolution in developing academic communities, or comprehensive investigations of discipline-specific conventions beyond Western contexts (Jiang & Hyland, 2022; Kafes, 2023; Singh & Brown, 2022).These gaps are addressed in the present study through systematic analysis of stance marker usage in Pakistani and international research articles. Empirically grounded insights that may enhance understanding of international publishing's rhetorical demands are offered through application of Hyland's framework to examine hedging and boosting patterns across research papers.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is constructed on the following research questions and attempts to answer it.

3.1 Research Question

i.   How does the work of Pakistani and Foreign academicians vary in the use of hedges and boosters?

ii.   What is the frequency and distribution of hedges in Pakistani versus non-Pakistani research articles in the Arts and Humanities discipline?

The methodological framework of this study is designed to systematically examine the distribution and functional usage of hedges and boosters in academic discourse, with a particular focus on comparing Pakistani and foreign research articles. Given the significance of stance markers in shaping scholarly arguments, this research adopts a corpus-based, comparative approach, guided by Hyland's (2005) model of interactional metadiscourse. The methodology is organized into four stages: corpus compilation, theoretical framing, data extraction, analytical procedures.

This study relies on a corpus of 196 research articles (98 by Pakistani authors and 98 by foreign scholars) drawn from Arts and Humanities disciplines; Pakistani-authored papers were sourced from non-Scopus indexed non HEC recognized journals while foreign-authored papers were selected from Scopus-indexed publications to ensure that the sample represents high-impact international scholarship, thus enabling a comparison of interactional markers that is Hedges and Boosters by Hyland (2005). All articles selected for the corpus were published within the last five years (2021–2025), ensuring contemporary academic writing conventions.

The next step after the section of the research papers cleaning of the data. It includes removing the additional information from each selected research article because only text of the research article was the required data. Therefore, page numbers, author names and details, journal name and details and references were removed ensuring data purity.

Figure 1. *Model of interaction (adapted from Hyland, 2005a)*

The analytical foundation of this study is rooted in Hyland's (2005) interactional
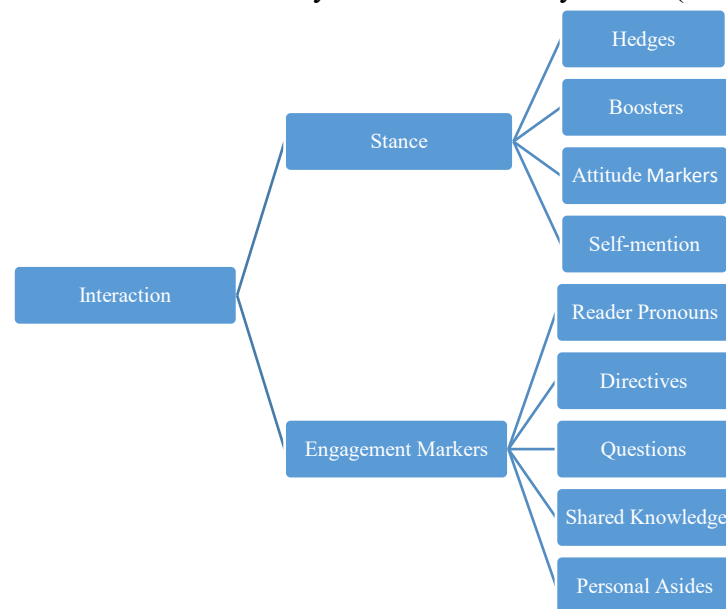
metadiscourse model, which distinguishes between hedges (devices that mitigate claims, e.g., *might, suggest, possibly*) and boosters (devices that assert certainty, e.g., *demonstrate, undoubtedly, clearly*). These markers serve as critical indicators of epistemic stance, revealing how writers negotiate knowledge claims while engaging with disciplinary and cultural expectations.

Hedges were operationalized as lexical or grammatical devices that introduce tentativeness, allowing writers to present claims as interpretations rather than absolute truths. Conversely, boosters were classified as linguistic elements that reinforce authorial certainty, often employed to emphasize the novelty or robustness of findings. A predefined list of hedges and

boosters (adapted from Hyland, 2005c) was used to ensure systematic identification (see Appendix).

3.2 Hedges

Hedges are the words which emphasize that a statement presented is based on a writer's interpretation rather than a fact (Akinci, 2016). Though in their writing, researchers acclaim to be objective and factual but the use of *hedges*, therefore, imply that a statement is based on plausible reasoning (Hyland, 2005a). List of hedges adopted in the study from Hyland (2005c) can be seen in appendix.

For Example

… the learners of second language. In the perspective language we <u>usually</u> think that there are only four skills; however it (Pakistani Corpus)

…the flogging resumed. After the punishment was concluded, the offenders <u>would</u> be examined for their health, and once the paramedics… (Foreign Corpus)

3.3 Boosters

Boosters are the words which are used to emphasize or deemphasize certainty by giving the writers a space to avoid conflicting views and focus on shared information and group membership (Akinci, 2016). List of boosters adopted in the study from Hyland (2005c) can be seen in appendix.

For example

Circle by Princess Sultana visited Ilham's house and she <u>found</u> that the residents belonged to a lower middle-class (Pakistani Corpus)

,,, pronouns in their utterances. The same age effect was also found in young adult language. It is possible that with (Foreign Corpus)

3.4 Data Extraction and Analytical Procedures

The study employed AntConc (v4.3.1), a corpus analysis tool, to extract and quantify stance markers across research articles. The software facilitated:

1. Frequency counts of hedges and boosters in Pakistani vs. non Pakistani papers.
2. Contextual examination of how these markers function rhetorically.

Each instance of a stance marker was manually verified to ensure accurate classification, accounting for polysemy (e.g., *may* as a hedge vs. *may* indicating permission) and discourse context (e.g., *clearly* as a booster vs. *clearly* in a concessive clause). The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative frequency analysis and its interpretation. It provided a macro-level comparison of stance marker density and explored how these markers were strategically deployed to achieve persuasive and interpersonal functions. For instance:

i. Hedges in research papers were examined for their role in qualifying interpretations (e.g., "…further illustrated by examining how an individual's sociolinguistic perception <u>could</u> be affected by their own variable production patterns. (Foreign Corpus))
ii. Boosters in were analyzed for their argumentative force (e.g., "*…of subject personal pronoun (SPP) expression in L2 Spanish and -<u>demonstrate</u> that a period of SA has a significant impact…* (Foreign Corpus))

Since the study analyzed published works, copyright and attribution guidelines were strictly followed. All sources were properly cited, and no proprietary datasets were used beyond fair academic use.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following findings are presented in the study on academic writing. This section is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the mapping of hedges across the corpus of Pakistani researchers and non-Pakistani researchers. The second section deals with the comparative analysis of both corpuses from the perspective of the use of boosters.

4.1 Hedges

Hedges serve as mitigating devices, allowing writers to present claims with caution and openness to alternative interpretations. The corpus analysis demonstrates that:

$$\text{Percentage more} = \left(\frac{\text{Pakistani} - \text{Non-Pakistani}}{\text{Non-Pakistani}} \right) \times 100$$

$$\text{Percentage more} = \left(\frac{5656 - 1375}{1375} \right) \times 100$$

$$\text{Percentage more} = \left(\frac{4281}{1375} \right) \times 100$$

$$\text{Percentage more} = 311.3 \%$$

Although hedging is considered a sign of modesty and adherence to conventions of academic discourse, Pakistani authors employed 311.3% more hedges than foreign authors, which could indicate they are not confident or assertive enough to be taken seriously as scholars, reducing the perceived authorial authority or epistemic commitment in their scholarly writing. Therefore, it is suggested that Pakistani writers use fewer hedges when writing research papers to make their work sound more credible and legitimate.

4.1.1 For Example

> *In language, forms cannot be separated from their meaning. It <u>would</u> be uninteresting and perhaps not very profitable to study* (Pakistani corpus)

The pattern of the word, 'may' in Pakistani corpus reveals that it is used mostly with the words *finds*, proves and similar linguistic items which show that this word is used mostly on the section of conclusion and literature review which questions the credibility of the work.

4.1.2 Most Frequent Hedges in Pakistani Corpus

Table 1: *Represents top 10 most frequent hedges in Pakistani corpus*

Sr #	Hedge	Frequency	Example from Corpus
1	About	554	*…but the scenario has changed now the new census is about to come but the estimated population of the disable…*
2	May	509	*…aspect is not catered for while incorporating the elements, it may be culturally inappropriate for the host culture. It usually…*
3	Could	434	*…context of a private sector in Sindh, Pakistan. Similar studies could be conducted in other sectors as well. It is…*
4	Would	370	*…. It would not be unreasonable to suppose that at an early…*
5	Should	291	*… reduced, employees should be allowed to use their talents, skills and creativity…*

Sr #	Hedge	Frequency	Example from Corpus
6	Often	202	*… adjectives, and narrative techniques reflect the complex and often painful process of identity formation in a postcolonial context.*
7	Might	191	*I was beginning to entertain the notion that some women might be happy in my land, I spite of tradition…*
8	Rather	181	*…make it natural; rather it is socially constructed and materialized through…*
9	Possible	159	*…additional informationally clear, it's possible to own access to public capital (PE) or long…*
10	Likely	112	*…others therefore are likely to be affected by various cognitive biases; selective perception…*

Pakistani academic writers in linguistics heavily rely on modal verbs such as could, may, would, should, and might to indicate uncertainty or to soften claims, which implies that there is a preference for indirectness and caution when making scholarly statements. The word about also stands out as the most frequently used hedge, often serving as a vague approximation.

4.1.3 Most Frequent Hedges in Non-Pakistani Corpus

Table 2: *Represents top 10 most frequent hedges in Pakistani corpus*

Sr #	Hedge	Frequency	Example Usage
1	**About**	224	… towards the direction she is <u>about</u> to take in the final steps; her left arm…
2	**May**	108	… One reason for this unexpected result <u>may</u> be the fact that dune is an all-purpose…
3	**Should**	99	… to the where and what languages you <u>should</u> be able to communicate in, but it also includes…
4	**Could**	68	… different areas of the lexicogrammar <u>could</u> be presented systemically for the …
5	**Would**	66	…exist without culture, otherwise teaching a language <u>would</u> be just a set of symbols…
6	**Often**	61	… mostly in Latvian, sometimes also in Norwegian <u>Often</u> in English, also in Latvian RP Ireland…

Sr #	Hedge	Frequency	Example Usage
7	**Rather**	43	…German with these friends <u>rather</u> than their stronger language, Finnish. German has become a…
8	**Feel**	35	… and communicate with foreigners. I <u>feel</u> that the Thai instructor imparted too much grammar so…
9	**Might**	29	… the idea that mutual intelligibility <u>might</u> be a useful criterion to separate…
10	**Usually**	26	This <u>usually</u> includes anglicisms from the latest social media trends, which…

Non-Pakistani academic writers take a more restrained approach to hedging, strategically using modal verbs like may, could, and would to introduce measured uncertainty into their arguments, in contrast to Pakistani academic writers in linguistics who often overuse hedging language regardless of its appropriateness to the particular context. They prefer more specificity in quantitative or descriptive claims, unless the claim is itself ambiguous, as evidenced by the fact that the word "about" is used less frequently in their writing than in academic texts from Pakistan Its also important to note that some non-Pakistani authors employ the hedge feel to add a personal or subjective element to their writing, which might convey a more introspective or cooperative tone, possibly aligning with academic standards in foreign countries. Moreover, non-Pakistani writers, particularly those published in Scopus-indexed journals, may be more attuned to Anglophone academic conventions, which value tentativeness as a marker of scholarly rigor.
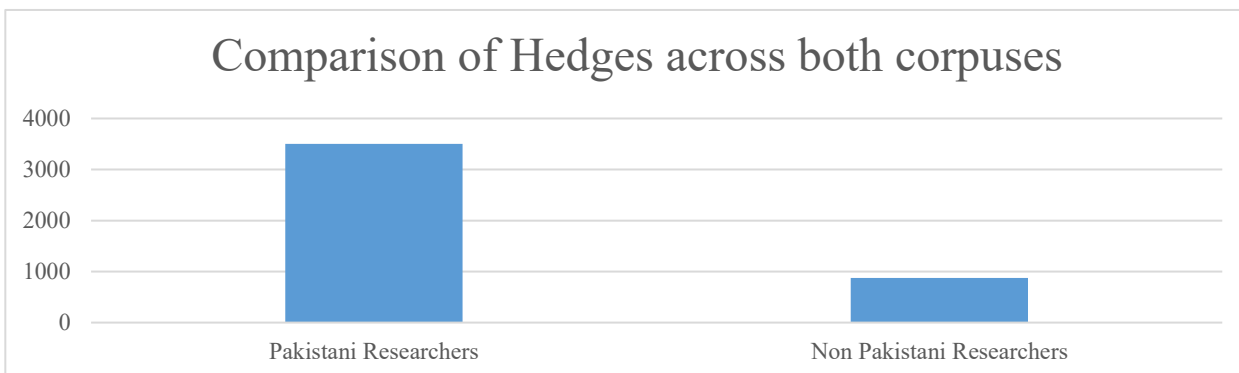
Graph 1: Comparison of Hedges across both corpuses

The above graph shows the comparison of both corpuses and it is evident from it that non-Pakistani researchers use hedges in significantly less number.

4.2 Boosters

The analysis of the data has revealed that non Pakistani writers have frequently used boosters in their academic writing while Pakistani writers have used them less in number as compared to foreign writers which makes the work of non-Pakistani writers more authentic. The formulation mentioned below is used for the calculation of the percentage of the boosters used by

Pakistani writers as compared to Non Pakistani writers. The analysis indicates that Pakistani writers used boosters 301.8% more frequently than non-Pakistani writers.

$$\text{More Percentage of Pakistani Corpus} = \left(\frac{Pakistani - Non - Pakistani}{Non - Pakistani} \right) \times 100$$

$$\text{More Percentage of Pakistani Corpus} = \left(\frac{3504 - 872}{872} \right) \times 100$$

$$\text{More Percentage of Pakistani Corpus} = \left(\frac{2632}{872} \right) \times 100$$

$$\text{More Percentage of Pakistani Corpus} = 301.8\ \%$$

Presented below is the list of 10 most frequent boosters used by Pakistani and non-Pakistani writers along with their interpretation.

4.2.1 Most Frequent Hedges in Pakistani Corpus

Table 3: *Represents top 10 most frequent hedges in Pakistani corpus*

Sr #	Booster	Frequency	Example Usage
1	**Found**	89	… and their self-esteem. Studies have <u>found</u> that male characters are often portrayed as active and…
2	**Shows**	63	The findings of this study <u>shows</u> that there is a positive and significant relation between…
3	**Certain**	50	…banking to provide <u>certain</u> limited banking services to banks' customers…
4	**Know**	49	We did not <u>know</u> that a ritual like this existed for females…
5	**Always**	46	… reality erroneously and <u>always</u> keep people disconnected with reality.
6	**Shown**	40	Studies have <u>shown</u> that gender biases in books can lead…
7	**Show**	39	…respondent's answers <u>show</u> that GPA or percentage of results in exams is…
8	**Never**	34	… realizing that the society will <u>never</u> accept their marriage. Velutha…
9	**Believe**	26	Thus the researchers <u>believe</u> that PakE though passing through…
10	**True**	20	…going to prove <u>true</u>, if such codifications of linguistic features…

Empirical booster words like found, show, shows, and shown are prevalent, indicating a conscious focus on research findings that give precedence to empirical data. Phrases like "it is known" or "it is believed" further reinforce this evidentiary focus while projecting scholarly confidence, framing interpretations as conclusions drawn from rigorous analysis rather than

speculative assertions. It is noted that terms like "always," "never," and "certain" indicate a deliberate avoidance of overgeneralization.

4.2.2   Most frequent Boosters in Non-Pakistani Corpus

**Table 4:** *Represents top 10 most frequent boosters in Non-Pakistani corpus*

Sr #	Booster	Frequency	Example Usage
1	**Found**	278	… under the appreciation markers <u>found</u> in Table The judgment…
2	**Shown**	207	The ANOVA results <u>shown</u> in Table Table Comparatively speaking…
3	**Show**	191	The findings <u>show</u> that the overwhelming majority…
4	**Know**	160	…we also <u>know</u> that animals and birds are found in natural contexts…
5	**Always**	115	… system may not <u>always</u> be possible.
6	**Clear**	109	The interviews also make it <u>clear</u> that linguistic practices…
7	**Indeed**	72	This is <u>indeed</u> a troubling revelation that provides one…
8	**Demonstrated**	62	…Consistently, research has <u>demonstrated</u> that providing E. N.
9	**Definite**	20	While the data set is too small to extrapolate <u>definite</u> conclusions as to why this might be or indeed
10	**Certainly**	11	It is <u>certainly</u> no coincidence that two informants…

Academic writing, which emphasizes empirical evidence and conclusive findings, uses boosters like found, show, and shown more frequently. Strong certainty markers that bolster assured, unambiguous statements are clear, definitely, and indeed. Strict academic standards state that the word "demonstrated" denotes a preference for assertions that are backed up by proof. This pattern highlights a rhetorical style that prioritizes authority, accuracy, and evidence-based reasoning.

Graph 2: *Comparison of Boosters across both corpuses*

Boosters amplify the certainty of propositions, reinforcing the strength of claims. Non-Pakistani writers used boosters strategically, reserving them for high-stakes claims where emphasis was warranted.

The above table can be explained that the divergence in stance marker usage suggests that Pakistani academic writing leans toward stronger, less negotiable claims, while non-Pakistani
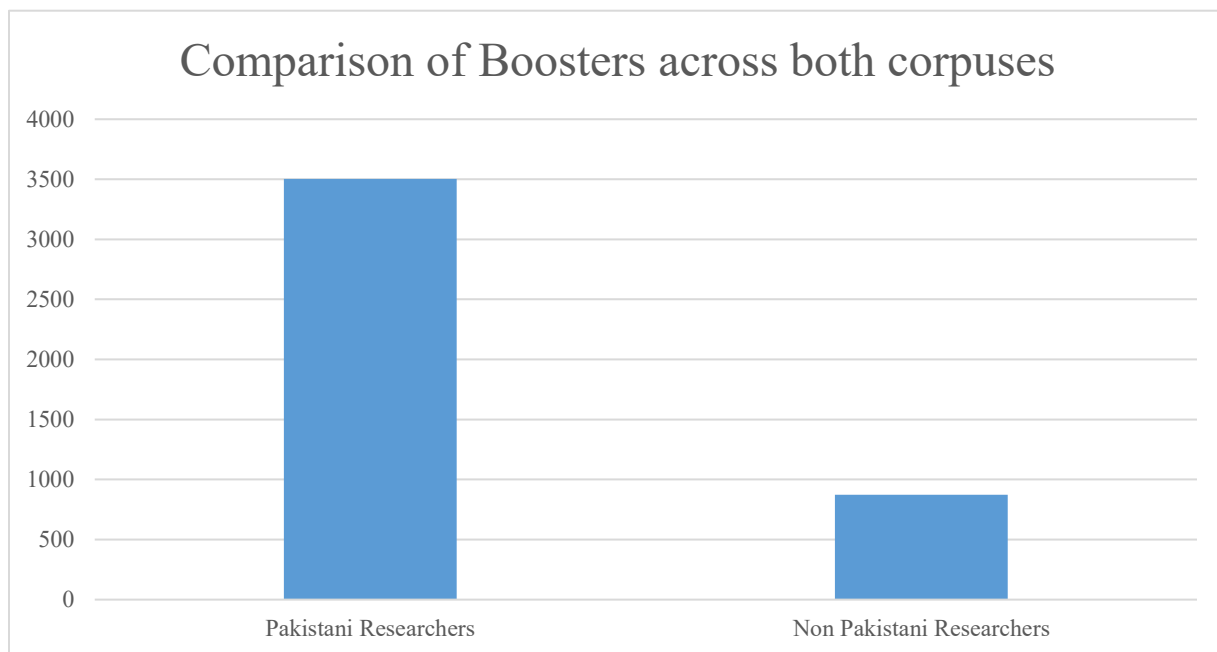
writing exhibits greater epistemic caution. This discrepancy may contribute to the lower acceptance rates of Pakistani-authored papers in international journals, where balanced stance-taking is often expected.

5. CONCLUSION

In academic writing, it is not simply a matter of transferring knowledge, but rather negotiating credibility; as this research shows, knowing when to soften a claim and when to strengthen it can be key to gaining international scholarly acceptance, and may be just as important for Pakistani researchers as methodological rigor in achieving global recognition (Warchal, 2023). After all, the road to academic inclusion starts with language awareness: when non-native scholars adjust stance-taking strategies to align them more closely with global discourse conventions, they can increase their chances of being heard in the international academy. Such findings may inform instructional approaches designed to support non-native scholars; more fundamentally, the study further contributes to ongoing conversations regarding linguistic equity in global academic publishing (Vande Kopple 2022).A systematic comparison of hedge and booster use in Pakistani and non-Pakistani academic writing revealed that despite superficial linguistic similarities between

English language used by Pakistani and non-Pakistani scholars, there are significant differences in rhetorical stance that may reflect deeply embedded cultural, linguistic, and disciplinary norms for constructing knowledge claims, with considerable impact on international publishing success. Non-Pakistani writers employed hedges more frequently and variably, demonstrating a preference for tentativeness and dialogic discourse; Pakistani writers underused hedges, which could result in them appearing less open to scholarly debate, while non-Pakistani writers used boosters more liberally, often making statements with high certainty, whereas non-Pakistani writers used boosters more selectively, saving them for well-supported arguments and tended towards authoritative assertion. There are multiple implication of the present study. The first one is, ppedagogical interventions workshops on academic hedging and boosting could assist Pakistani scholars in adjusting to global publishing conventions. The second one, Cross-Cultural Studies: Expanding this research to other non-Anglophone contexts (e.g., China, Saudi Arabia) could identify broader patterns and support them in this way. The third one, Longitudinal Analysis; Tracking how the stance of Pakistani writers evolves with greater international exposure would provide valuable insight into this study.

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APPENDIX

A) Hedges

Sr#	Hedges	Foreign	Pakistani
1	About	676	813
2	Almost	83	133
3	Appear	88	59
4	Appears	73	55
5	Appeared	29	18
6	Apparent	33	29
7	Approximately	46	5
8	Approximate	4	0
9	Argue	64	34
10	Argues	92	104
11	Argued	46	26
12	Around	170	159
13	Assume	13	10
14	Assumed	22	52
15	Assumes	5	12
16	Broadly	4	9
17	Certain amount	1	0
18	Certain extent	7	1
19	Certain level	2	2
20	Claim	59	78
21	Claimed	33	24
22	Claims	57	92
23	Could	435	243
24	Could not	36	44
25	Doubt	25	18
26	Doubtful	1	0
27	Essentially	26	20
28	Estimate	13	1
29	Estimated	11	5
30	Estimates	2	7
31	Fairly	3	8
32	Feel	80	125
33	Feels	51	55
34	Felt	45	61

35	Frequently	227	81
36	Generally	84	58
37	Guess	6	2
38	Indicate	152	74
39	Indicated	86	35
40	Indicates	151	81
41	In General	59	43
42	In most cases	5	18
43	In my opinion	3	1
44	In this view	2	0
45	In our view	0	0
46	Likely	112	36
47	Mainly	84	75
48	May	849	487
49	Might	280	118
50	May be	226	146
51	Mostly	77	102
52	Often	485	147
53	On the whole	5	1
54	Perhaps	42	33
55	Ought	5	14
56	Possible	138	119
57	Possibly	34	9
58	Plausible	8	4
59	Postulate	3	4
60	Postulated	3	2
61	Postulates	5	13
62	Presumably	5	2
63	Probable	3	2
64	probably	27	17
65	Quite	56	131
66	Relatively	53	24
67	Rather	274	225
68	Roughly	19	2
69	Seems	75	123
70	Seem	65	74
71	Should	375	314
72	Sometimes	61	90

73	Somewhat	12	23
74	Suggest	100	63
75	Suggested	79	49
76	Suggests	184	85
77	Suppose	2	2
78	Supposed	21	37
79	Supposes	1	0
80	Suspect	3	2
81	Suspected	3	3
82	Tend To	72	44
83	Tends to	30	28
84	Tended to	21	1
85	Typical	49	34
86	Typically	73	21
87	Usually	67	124
88	Uncertain	12	18
89	Unclear	14	7
90	Unlikely	14	4
91	Would	384	391
92	Would not	28	34
	Total	7648	5979

B) Boosters

Sr #	Boosters	Pakistani	Foreign
1	Actually	7	50
2	Always	46	115
3	Believe	26	55
4	Believed	14	35
5	Believes	8	6
6	Certain	50	138
7	Certainly	1	11
8	Clear	24	109
9	Clearly	6	60
10	Decidedly	0	1
11	Definite	0	20
12	Definitely	1	7
13	Demonstrate	8	48
14	Demonstrated	5	62
15	Demonstrates	7	35

16	Establish	17	31
17	Established	29	47
	Establishes	4	7
18	Evident	13	61
19	Evidently	0	1
20	Find	64	78
21	Finds	21	7
22	Found	89	278
23	In fact	19	33
24	Indeed	14	72
25	Indisputable	0	1
26	Know	49	160
27	Knows	2	23
28	Known	30	83
29	Never	34	62
30	No doubt	4	1
31	Obvious	4	18
32	Obviously	3	23
33	Of course	4	35
34	Prove	4	17
35	Proved	12	17
36	Proves	5	6
37	Realize	9	9
38	Realized	9	45
39	Realizes	1	3
40	Really	6	71
41	Show	39	191
42	Showed	28	100
43	Shows	63	121
44	Shown	40	207
45	Sure	23	30
46	Surely	1	2
47	True	20	48
48	Truly	6	12
49	Undeniable	0	2
50	Undeniably	0	0
51	Undoubtedly	3	1