Applied Research on English Language

V. 13 N. 4 2024
pp: 49-70
http://jare.ui.ac.ir

DOI: 10.22108/are.2024.141502.2294
Document Type: Research Article

Promoting Authorial Voice Expression in Academic Writing of EFL Learners through Implicit and Explicit Instruction

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Received: 2024/05/16 **Accepted:** 2024/08/17

Abstract: With the significant increase in academic publications and the growing emphasis on academic writing in recent years, the exploration of writers' authorial voice has become essential in the academic community. Therefore, the present study examined language learners' preferences for the use of metadiscoursal elements of voice and the effectiveness of instruction in promoting the expression of authorial voice in academic writing among Iranian EFL learners. The participants were 143 intermediate English major university learners at Najaf Abad University of Isfahan who were randomly divided into a control group and two treatment groups. One group received explicit instruction and the other group received implicit instruction on the use of voice elements based on Hyland's (2005) interactional framework in the academic context. The control group did not receive any instruction on discourse markers. After an eight-session treatment, participants' writings in the three groups were analyzed. The findings revealed that the treatment groups demonstrated a more significant improvement in their ability to express authorial voice compared to the control group. The group receiving explicit instruction utilized more stance markers compared to the group receiving implicit instruction. The findings highlight the importance of consciousness-raising in improving the use of discourse markers in academic writing.

Keywords: Academic Writing, Authorial Voice, Explicit Instruction, Implicit Instruction.

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Introduction

Writing plays a crucial role in promoting communication within academic communities. Traditionally, writing was characterized by its impersonal, formal, and objective nature, intentionally concealing the author's presence in the text (Shaw & Ting-Kun Liu, 1998). However, it has evolved over time, challenging the conventional notions of impersonality and objectivity. While in the past the author's presence was often veiled, it has now become a focal point of discussion, encouraging researchers to express their opinions. Writing has become a powerful platform allowing authors to shape and portray their identities through diverse discoursal choices in various discourse studies (Hyland, 2008).

The concept of *voice* holds significant importance in discourse studies, as it serves as a means through which writers express their personal perspectives, presence, and authority, while readers engage with the author's ideas (Hyland, 2005). In the EFL academic writing context, overlooking authorial voice and identity can lead to adverse consequences. Without a distinct authorial voice, writers may struggle to effectively assert their expertise and position themselves within their field (Naimmah Hamdan & K Ahmad, 2023). The absence of interpersonal features in writing can make academic texts less accessible and less engaging for readers (Lehman et al., 2022). Moreover, when authors fail to establish a clear sense of identity in their writing, the resulting text may be less compelling to readers (Ivanic, 1998). An underdeveloped authorial voice can also result in impersonal and less effective communication of the writer's ideas (Matsuda, 2001; Zhao, 2013).

Authorial voice serves as a versatile tool that allows writers to establish their presence, effectively communicate ideas, and promote meaningful interactions (Hyland, 2008). The strategic use of authorial voice plays a pivotal role in enhancing the quality and impact of academic writing (Hyland, 2008). Through the employment of voice, writers can express their personal views, assert their presence, and demonstrate authoritativeness while sharing their ideas with readers (Hyland, 2008). By skillfully employing voice elements, authors can create engaging and persuasive works that successfully convey arguments and ideas to readers (Hyland, 2008). As Hyland (2008) argues, authorial voice empowers authors to articulate their ideas, navigate social relations in their fields, and cultivate a persona that resonates with readers while adhering to disciplinary boundaries. By utilizing authorial voice, writers can more effectively convey their thoughts and intentions throughout their work.

Research into voice in academic writing has focused on several key areas. The initial group of studies, exemplified by Clark and Ivanič (1997), Dobakhti and Hassan (2017), Hyland (2002), Hyland and Guinda (2012), Ivanič (1998), Ivanič and Camps (2001),

Matsuda and Tardy (2007), Wang and Nelson (2012), and Zhao and Wu (2022) focused on authorial voice and identity in academic writing. The second group of studies, represented by Al-Zubeiry and Assaggaf (2023), Bahrami et al. (2018), Cheung and Lau (2020), Dobakhti (2013), Hyland (2000, 2005), Rezaei et al. (2017), Seyri and Rezaei (2022), Zhang and Zhang (2023), and Zhang et al. (2024) scrutinized stance markers. The third group of studies by Alibabaee and Shahzamani (2013), Alward et al. (2012), Kaivanpanah and Khakbaz (2020), Abdul–Qadir and Shakir (2015), Zhang and Zhang (2021), and Zhang et al. (2023) explored how pedagogical interventions influence the incorporation of voice elements in academic writing.

Despite the extensive exploration of various dimensions of voice in academic writing, inconsistencies persist regarding the effect of different instructional approaches on the development of voice, as well as EFL learners' preferences for utilizing discourse markers in their writing. While some studies (Abdul–Qadir & Shakir, 2015; Alibabaee & Shahzamani, 2013; Kaivanpanah & Khakbaz, 2020; Zhang & Zhang, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023) have investigated the effect of explicit instruction on helping learners develop a strong authorial voice, there is lack of consensus on the extent to which different instructional approaches affect the use of elements which are essential for constructing arguments and engaging readers. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the impact of explicit and implicit instruction on the use of authorial stance in EFL learners' academic writing. By evaluating how these instructional approaches influence learners' ability to incorporate stance markers, the present study intends to provide valuable insights into effective teaching strategies.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Hyland's (2005) interactional framework (Figure 1) has been widely adopted as the theoretical framework for investigating how authors express their perspectives in academic discourse. Hyland's framework highlights the interplay between authorial stance and reader engagement in academic writing. It provides researchers with a robust analytical tool for examining the choices writers make in positioning themselves within their texts and engaging their audience. This framework provides a classification of stance resources allowing researchers to analyze and interpret various elements of authorial presence in written texts. Within this model, stance focuses on how writers portray themselves and convey their attitudes and judgments toward propositions, and engagement centers on how writers invite readers to actively participate in the discussion and negotiation of arguments presented in academic texts. Overall, the interaction model proposed by Hyland serves as a valuable

framework for understanding and analyzing how authorial stance is manifested in academic writing.

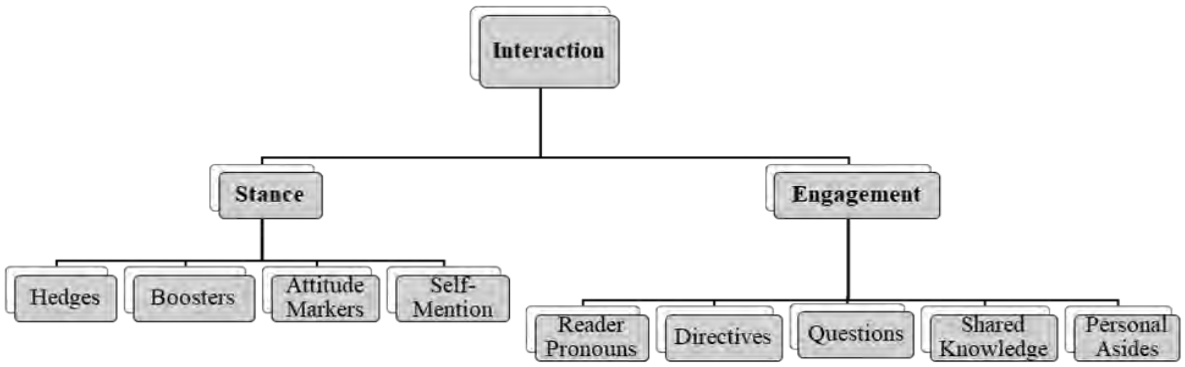

Fig 1. Key Resources of Academic Interaction (Adapted from Hyland, 2005).

According to Hyland's (2005) interactional framework, the stance system consists of four elements: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions. Hedges are stance expressions such as "*possible*," "*could*," and "*perhaps*" that writers employ to indicate a cautious or tentative commitment to a statement, thus avoiding complete responsibility for their claims. In contrast, boosters are used to demonstrate the writers' confidence toward propositions and the degree of certainty in their statements, employing words like "*clearly*," "*show*," and "*always*." Attitude markers enable writers to convey their perspectives towards statements, allowing them to express preferences or agreements, and may include words like "*agree*," "*appropriate*," and "*fortunately*." Self-mentions, involving the use of first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives like "*I*", "*we*," and "*our*," indicate the presence of the writer and convey propositional, affective, and interpersonal information.

Authorial Voice in Academic Writing

The authorial voice is key to achieving effective interaction in writing (Hyland, 2005). Numerous studies have emphasized the critical role of authorial voice, exploring how authors convey their unique perspectives in writing and interact with readers. Highlighting the significance of voice in academic writing as a means of self-representation, Hyland (2002) argued that "academic writing is not just about conveying ideational content, but also a representation of self" (p. 1091). Matsuda and Tardy (2007) also emphasized the importance of voice in academic writing, asserting that "voice does play a role in academic writing" (p. 235). Hyland (2008) emphasized that voice is an essential aspect of how authors position

themselves within their communities. Further underscoring the importance of authorial voice in academic writing, Cheung and Lau (2020) argued that "the presence of the writer is inevitable in writing and has been explored through the concepts of voice and stance" (p. 216). They emphasized that academic writers represent themselves in various ways within their texts to construct an authorial voice and strengthen their arguments.

Stance Markers in Academic Writing

Stance markers, including hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions, are vital in academic writing as they enable writers to express their perspectives and engage with readers (Hyland, 2005). These linguistic features play a critical role in manifesting authors' voices (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), empowering writers to convey their viewpoints on subjects (Barbara et al., 2024), and adopting positions within a text (Zhang et al., 2024). Limited use of stance markers could reduce readers' engagement with the writers' arguments (Al-Zubeiry & Assaggaf, 2023). Hedges and boosters, according to Hyland (1998) control the strength of statements and reflect the writer's certainty about a proposition. These rhetorical devices let authors control how directly they express their ideas, allowing them to be subtle or assertive (Escobar & Fernández, 2017). These devices signal claim strength and manage author-reader relationships among second-language (L2) English learners (Ningrum et al., 2024). Hedges, represent a means to reduce a writer's claim (Hyland, 1998), enable them to demonstrate cautious commitment and adhere to discourse community norms (Rezaie & Taki, 2014; Rezaei et al., 2017). Boosters, conversely, allow authors to assert confidence (Hyland, 1998), and leave a strong impression on readers (Demir, 2017), thus, a low frequency of boosters in L2 learners' academic writing can lead to a lack of assertiveness (Ningrum et al., 2024). This lack of assertiveness can raise doubts among readers about the claims, ultimately impacting the overall persuasiveness of the text. Attitude markers serve as a means to express the addresser's stance within a discourse (Abdul–Qadir & Shakir, 2015). These devices contribute to authors' credibility by allowing them to present their arguments (Qurniawati, 2023). Writers seek to persuade and improve readers' acceptance of the content by integrating their attitudes toward propositions within the text (Dobakhti, 2013); thus, without these markers, readers may face challenges in comprehending the writer's intended meaning (Hyland, 2005). This can lead to misinterpretation or misunderstanding of the writer's stance or perspective. Self-mentions are essential for ensuring that one's idea is well-received by the audience (Hyland, 2002), and play a crucial role in demonstrating authors' competence and developing a strong scholarly identity (Sheldon, 2009). The strategic use of personal

pronouns shapes a writer's identity within the context (Leedham & Fernández-Parra, 2017) and promotes reader engagement in academic writing (Dong & Qiu, 2018; Xao & Дугалич, 2024).

Promoting Authorial Stance in Academic Writing

Given the calls for the development of stance markers, several studies have demonstrated the efficacy of instructional interventions in improving voice expression and metadiscoursal features among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. For instance, Alibabaee and Shahzamani (2013) examined the impact of explicit instruction on hedging on EFL learners' understanding and use of linguistic elements in journalistic English. The study involved 85 Iranian university EFL learners from three universities in a pretest-instruction-posttest design. The findings revealed that raising L2 learners' awareness of metadiscoursal features can improve their performance in reading, translating, and writing journalistic texts. Expanding on this idea, Abdul–Qadir and Shakir (2015), examined the impact of instruction on stance markers. They employed a pretest-lecture instruction-posttest approach to investigate the use of attitude markers. Notable differences were found in the use of attitude markers between the pretest and posttest, suggesting that instruction affects students' use of these devices. In another study, Kaivanpanah and Khakbaz (2020) highlighted the crucial role of instruction in raising learners' awareness of voice. They argued that instruction assists learners in comprehending voice elements and equips them with the skills to effectively employ assertive, defensive, and modest voice elements in the construction of persuasive arguments. Highlighting the importance of stance-taking as a key component of successful academic writing, Zhang and Zhang (2021) investigated the impact of stance instruction on Chinese university learners. Their findings emphasized the efficacy of explicit teaching methods in enhancing learners' ability to effectively incorporate stance into their written work. In a recent study, Zhang et al. (2023) studied the impact of explicit stance metalanguage instruction, grounded in the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) Engagement framework on EFL students' perceptions of stance. The findings demonstrated that the intervention successfully improved students' stance awareness and their beliefs regarding transactional writing.

Previous research has investigated the effect of instruction on learners' use of authorial voice and stance markers. However, there is still insufficient information regarding how EFL learners balance self-expression and persuasive communication when using metadiscoursal features to express their authorial voice. In addition to the insufficient attention given to

learners' preferences, the current literature has not examined the impact of different types of instruction on the utilization of stance markers. Although some studies have demonstrated the benefits of explicit teaching methods for enhancing learners' use of stance markers, there is a need for further investigation into the effectiveness of different instructional approaches. To this end, the present study addresses the following questions:

1. What are EFL learners' preferences in using metadiscoursal elements of voice in L2 English writing?
2. Do implicit and explicit instruction significantly affect the expression of authors' voices in the writings of EFL learners?

Method

Participants and Sampling

The population from which the participants were selected included intermediate EFL learners. Based on the results of the Oxford Placement Test, 143 intermediate English major Freshmen at Najaf Abad University in Isfahan were recruited. They ranged in age from 18 to 25 years. Of the participants, 16% (n=23) were male, and 84% (n=120) were female. The study employed a pre-writing-post-writing control group design. The participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups: two experimental groups and one control group. The experimental groups consisted of 50 and 56 participants who respectively received implicit and explicit instruction for the expression of voice in academic writing. The control group included 37 participants who received regular academic writing instruction based on the university curriculum (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of Participants in Three Groups by Gender

	Explicit group	Implicit group	Control group
Male	9	8	7
Female	47	42	30
Total	56	50	37

Research Design

The current research utilized a quasi-experimental research design, with two experimental groups and one control group. The primary methodology employed was quantitative, utilizing a pre-writing-instruction-post-writing comparison design.

Instruments

The following instruments were employed to collect data.

- The Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) was utilized to measure participants' English language proficiency in vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension. It was used to select a homogeneous group of participants in terms of language proficiency. Based on the test results, learners scoring 30-47 participated in the study.
- Pre-writing assessed participants' use of voice elements before instructional intervention. The assignment involved 1. comparing and contrasting two medical advancements and 2. comparing and contrasting two types of illnesses.
- Post-writing examined the effect of instructional intervention on using voice elements. Counterbalancing was used to eliminate potential prompt order effects. In the post-writing, learners wrote on switched topics, so those who wrote about topic A in pre-writing wrote about topic B, and vice versa.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to conducting the main study, the participants were homogenized based on the results of the OPT. They were then randomly assigned to three groups: explicit instruction group (EG), implicit instruction group (IG), and control group (CG). All participants were required to complete a pre-writing assignment. During the intervention phase, the experimental groups received an 8-week writing intervention, while the control group received regular academic writing instruction based on the university curriculum. In the experimental groups, the teacher familiarized the learners with the features of academic writing. In the explicit group, the instructor explained the significance of authorial voice, provided relevant examples extracted from text samples, and encouraged learners to produce their own examples. In each session, the teacher provided definitions and examples of stance markers (Appendix 1) based on Hyland's (2005) interactional framework. For the implicit group, the teacher introduced stance markers based on Hyland's (2005) classification. Throughout eight 90-minute treatment sessions, stance markers including hedges, boosters, self-mentions, and attitude markers, were presented to the learners using the Input Flood (IF) procedure and Textual Enhancement (TE) technique. The learners were consistently exposed to the stance markers in the input through the IF procedure. The participants in the control group were instructed on fundamental aspects of writing, such as topic sentences, rhetorical organization, unity, and coherence. At the end of the intervention, learners in each group wrote on a topic; this

allowed the researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction. The researchers analyzed the texts in terms of linguistic devices such as hedges, boosters, self-mentions, and attitude markers based on Hyland's (2005) interactional framework. These devices were identified and counted in the texts. The data, including the frequency of linguistic devices of authorial voice in the two experimental groups and the control group, were analyzed using non-parametric tests, including Kruskal-Wallis tests and Mann-Whitney U tests.

Results

EFL Learners' Use of Metadiscoursal Elements of Voice

To investigate the utilization of meta-discourse elements of voice among EFL learners based on Hyland's (2005) interactional framework, the frequencies of the hedges, boosters, self-mentions, and attitude markers were recorded, tabulated, and compared. Table 2 displays the frequencies of metadiscoursal elements of voice used by the participants in the EG, IG, and CG in the pre-writing.

Table 2. Frequencies of the Use of Metadiscoursal Elements of Voice Usage by Learners in Pre-writing

	Groups	Hedges	Boosters	Self-Mentions	Attitude Markers
Pre-writing	EG	171	105	193	83
	IG	111	74	130	58
	CG	85	55	100	48
	Total	367	234	423	189

Distinctive patterns emerged in the utilization of voice elements among the explicit group (EG), implicit group (IG), and control group (CG). In the EG, self-mentions (SMs) were used most frequently, while attitude markers (AMs) were the least frequently used element. Similarly, in the IG, AMs were the least frequently used element, but participants in this group used more SMs compared to the other elements. Interestingly, the participants in the control group (CG) exhibited a preference for SMs, which were utilized more frequently than hedges, boosters, and attitude markers. Similar to the other groups, attitude markers (AMs) were used least frequently in the control group (CG). The data reveals a consistent trend across the three groups: Self-mentions (SMs) were utilized most frequently, while attitude markers (AMs) were the least frequently used meta-discourse elements of voice.

The Effect of Instruction on the Expression of Authors' Voice

The second research question examined the effect of implicit and explicit instruction on the expression of authors' voices. To answer this research question, the pre- and post-writings of the learners in the three groups were examined, and hedges, boosters, self-mentions, and attitude markers were counted in the writing of individual learners in each group. Since the assumptions underlying parametric statistical tests (e.g., the assumption of normality) were not met, the Kruskal-Wallis test and the Man-Whitney U test were employed to compare the groups on the pre-writing and post-writing.

First, Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted to examine the potential differences among the three groups in the use of hedges, boosters, self-mentions, and attitude markers in the pre-writing. The results are presented in Table 3:

Table 3. Descriptive Statistic Results of Hedges, Boosters, Self-Mentions, and Attitude Markers in the Pre-writing

Author's Voice/Groups		Participants	Frequency	Mean	Std. Deviation
Hedges	EG	56	171	3.05	2.818
	IG	50	111	2.22	1.854
	CG	37	85	2.29	1.777
	Total	143	367	2.56	2.284
Boosters	EG	56	105	1.87	1.897
	IG	50	74	1.48	1.656
	CG	37	55	1.48	1.366
	Total	143	234	1.63	1.689
Self-Mentions (SM)	EG	56	193	3.44	2.522
	IG	50	130	2.60	2.878
	CG	37	100	2.70	2.846
	Total	143	423	2.95	2.744
Attitude Markers (AM)	EG	56	83	1.48	1.128
	IG	50	58	1.16	.911
	CG	37	48	1.29	1.761
	Total	143	189	1.32	1.259

As seen in Table 3 there are slight variations in the use of voice elements among these three groups. To determine whether these differences are statistically significant or not, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used (Table 4).

Table 4. Kruskal-Wallis Results in the Pre-writing

	Hedges	Boosters	SMs	AMs
Kruskal-Wallis H	2.528	1.375	5.425	4.396
df	2	2	2	2
Asymp. *Sig.*	.283	.503	.066	.111

Table 4 indicates that there were no statistically significant differences among the three groups in terms of hedges (p = .283 > .05), boosters (p = .503 > .05), self-mentions (p = .066 > .05), and attitude markers (p = .111 > .05). For all voice elements, the p-values were greater than the significant level of .05 suggesting that the three groups were similar in terms of their use of hedges, boosters, self-mentions, and attitude markers. Once the homogeneity of the learners in the three groups was checked in their pre-writing assignments, their post-writings were examined for the frequency of the use of voice elements (Table 5).

Table 5. Descriptive Statistic Results of Hedges, Boosters, Self-Mentions, and Attitude Markers in the Post-writing

Author's Voice/Groups		Participants	Frequency	Mean	Std. Deviation
Hedges	EG	56	251	4.48	3.051
	IG	50	170	3.40	1.807
	CG	37	99	2.67	1.811
	Total	143	520	3.63	2.471
Boosters	EG	56	260	4.64	2.875
	IG	50	189	3.78	2.225
	CG	37	93	2.51	2.256
	Total	143	542	3.79	2.629
Self-Mentions (SM)	EG	56	267	4.76	3.682
	IG	50	175	3.50	3.202
	CG	37	126	3.40	2.813
	Total	143	568	3.97	3.348
Attitude Markers (AM)	EG	56	163	2.91	1.909
	IG	50	127	2.54	1.918
	CG	37	53	1.43	1.787
	Total	143	343	2.39	1.961

The results in Table 5 illustrate that participants in the explicit group used a higher number of hedges in their writing compared to the IG group who used more hedges than the

control group. In terms of boosters, the learners in EG used more boosters than the learners in IG who used more boosters than the learners in the CG. Regarding self-mentions, the learners in EG used significantly more self-mentions compared to the learners in the IG and CG groups, while the latter two groups, IG and CG, demonstrated similar use of self-mentions. With regard to attitude markers, there were small differences between EG and IG participants. IG participants used attitude markers slightly less frequently than EG participants, but both EG and IG were notably different from CG participants. In order to determine the statistical significance of the observed differences, the Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted (Table 6).

Table 6. Kruskal-Wallis Results in the Post-writing

	Hedges	Boosters	SMs	AMs
Kruskal-Wallis H	9.869	15.823	4.611	16.285
df	2	2	2	2
Asymp. *Sig*.	.007	.000	.100	.000

Table 6 reveals a statistically significant difference among the three groups (EG, IG, and CG) in terms of the use of hedges (p = .007 < .05), boosters (p = .000 < .05), and attitude markers (p = .000 < .05) in the post writings. However, no significant difference was observed among the three groups in relation to self-mentions (p = .100 > .05). The differences in the use of self-mentions did not reach statistical significance among the three groups. To determine where the differences in the use of hedges, boosters, and attitude markers lie, the results of the pair-wise comparisons from the Mann-Whitney U tests were examined.

Table 7. Man-Whitney U-Test Results Comparing Hedges, Boosters, and Attitude Markers

Elements of Voice	Statistical Tests	EG-IG	EG-CG	IG-CG
Hedges	Man-Whitney *U*	1156.00	651.50	718.00
	Wilcoxon W	2431.00	1354.50	1421.00
	Z	-1.56	-3.05	-1.80
	Asymp. *Sig*.	.118	.002	.071
Boosters	Man-Whitney *U*	1128.00	569.00	602.00
	Wilcoxon W	2403.00	1272.00	1305.00
	Z	-1.73	-3.69	-2.80
	Asymp. *Sig*.	.082	.000	.005
AMs	Man-Whitney *U*	1229.50	546.50	581.00
	Wilcoxon W	2504.50	1249.50	1284.00
	Z	-1.09	-3.90	-3.00
	Asymp. *Sig*.	.273	.000	.003

The results in Table 7 reveal a significant difference between the explicit group (EG) and control group (CG) in their use of hedges in the post-writing. Participants in EG used more hedges than participants in IG, who in turn, used more hedges than participants in CG. However, the differences in the use of hedges between EG and IG, as well as between IG and CG, were not statistically significant. In terms of boosters, significant differences were observed between EG and CG, as well as between IG and CG. Even though participants in EG and IG used more boosters than participants in CG, the difference in the use of boosters between EG and IG was not statistically significant. As for attitude markers, no significant differences were found between the participants in EG and IG groups. There was a significant difference in the use of attitude markers between EG and CG and IG and CG. Regarding the use of self-mentions, the differences among the three groups were not statistically significant.

Discussion

The present study examined the preferences of EFL learners regarding the utilization of metadiscoursal elements of voice and investigated the impact of explicit and implicit instruction on the articulation of authors' voices.

EFL Learners' Use of Metadiscoursal Elements of Voice

The analysis of metadiscoursal elements of voice focused on the frequencies of the use of hedges, boosters, self-mentions, and attitude markers in the pre-writing of the participants. The findings revealed that self-mentions were the most frequently used metadiscoursal element in pre-writing. The frequent use of self-mentions by EFL learners suggests their awareness of the importance of personal involvement and authorial presence in academic writing. This finding is similar to the findings of Alward (2019) who found that EFL learners extensively use first-person pronouns. The findings also revealed that attitude markers were the least frequently employed in the pre-writing stage. This finding is similar to the findings of Abdul–Qadir and Shakir (2015) who found that EFL learners used few attitude markers in their pretest. The findings revealed that attitude markers, such as evaluative expressions or explicit expressions of personal stance, are infrequently used by learners; this may indicate that EFL learners are not able to express their evaluative positions and engage with content critically. The low frequency of attitude markers suggests that EFL learners may require support to effectively utilize these elements in their writing in order to assert their opinions and engage in critical discourse. The distribution of hedges and boosters in the pre-writing

revealed that EFL learners used hedges more than boosters, indicating a tendency towards cautious language in pre-writing. This inclination might be attributed to their lack of awareness of the use of alternative stance markers. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that EFL learners may be hesitant to use boosters due to their uncertainty about projecting authoritativeness in academic writing (Hyland, 1998). Given the importance of boosters in establishing a confident and convincing authorial voice, EFL learners must receive guidance on their appropriate use in academic discourse. The findings emphasize the need for practicing metadiscoursal elements, particularly attitude markers, and boosters, to improve EFL learners' authorial voice in academic writing.

The Effect of Instruction on the Expression of Authors' Voice in the Writings of EFL Learners

The results of the study indicated that explicit and implicit instruction on stance markers improved writing performance. The instruction enabled learners to effectively employ stance markers in conveying their presence, evaluation, and engagement with the topic. The findings suggest that learners in the experimental groups consistently outperformed those in the control group in terms of using voice elements and their ability to establish a clear stance in their writing. The group that received explicit instruction used stance markers more frequently due to factors such as rule presentation, practice, and feedback involved in explicit instruction.

In the explicit instruction group, the use of hedges increased substantially from 171 to 251 in the pre-and post-writing stages. This notable improvement highlights the efficacy of explicit teaching in enhancing learners' understanding and application of hedging strategies in their writing (Alibabaee & Shahzamani, 2013; Petchkij, 2019). Boosters also showed a considerable increase in the explicit instruction group, rising from 105 to 260. This result emphasizes the benefits of explicit teaching in enabling learners to assert their claims, enhance persuasiveness, and establish authority in their writing (Kaivanpanah & Khakbaz, 2020). EFL learners preferred cautious language with more hedges in their pre-writings. After the instruction, they shifted to more assertive language using boosters. In line with the findings of Zhang et al. (2023), participants initially used tentative stances in their writing. After the writing instruction, they shifted to assertive stances, demonstrating a more critical and active stance selection. This shift implies that, initially, learners were less confident in projecting authoritativeness; however, after instruction on the significance and appropriate use of boosters in academic writing, they learned to use these linguistic devices in their

writings. This finding could shed light on EFL learners' development of epistemic and affective positioning in their post-writing. The explicit group exhibited a marked growth in the use of attitude markers, from 83 to 163, demonstrating the positive impact of explicit instruction on learners' ability to convey their personal attitudes and evaluations effectively (Abdul–Qadir & Shakir, 2015). Moreover, self-mentions increased significantly in the explicit instruction group, from 193 to 267, aligning with previous research that underscores the role of explicit teaching in promoting the appropriate use of self-mentions to establish an authorial presence and construct a credible representation (Hyland, 2002). These findings, in line with previous research, indicate that explicit instruction improves Iranian EFL learners' writing skills to use stance markers effectively (Dastjerdi & Shirzad, 2010; Kaivanpanah & Khakbaz, 2020; Zhang & Zhang, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). Explicit instruction increases learners' awareness of voice elements, enabling them to recognize their significance and effectively incorporate these components into their writing.

The findings suggested that implicit instruction also affected the use of stance markers (Yaghoubi & Ardestani, 2014); the group receiving implicit instruction also showed improvements in the use of all stance markers. The frequency of hedges increased from 111 to 170, demonstrating a positive impact of implicit teaching on learners' ability to incorporate cautious language in their writing. Boosters also showed a substantial increase, rising from 74 to 189; this underscores the effectiveness of implicit instruction in enabling learners to assert their claims and enhance persuasiveness. Attitude markers exhibited significant growth as well, from 58 to 127, indicating that the implicit approach fostered learners' ability to convey personal attitudes and evaluations effectively. Finally, self-mentions rose from 130 to 175, highlighting the benefits of implicit teaching in promoting authorial presence and credibility in learners' writing. Although the frequency of these elements increased from pre-writing to post-writing, it should be noted that the impact of implicit instruction was less significant compared to explicit instruction.

It can be argued that implicit instruction which primarily relied on exposure to target features and textual enhancement techniques did not result in the frequent use of stance markers suggesting that mere exposure may not be enough for EFL learners. The use of target features and textual enhancement techniques might not have been enough for EFL learners to effectively use stance markers in their writing due to the nuanced nature of these linguistic elements. Exposure alone is not enough for learners to develop an understanding of how to effectively incorporate stance markers into their writing. Additionally, unlike explicit instruction, implicit instruction may not have offered learners enough opportunities to

practice the use of stance markers in a guided and structured manner. This lack of practice could have hindered the learners' ability to confidently apply their knowledge of stance markers in their writing. Finally, the absence of explanation and focused attention on stance markers in implicit instruction might have resulted in a limited understanding of their roles and importance in academic writing. Without explicit guidance, learners could face difficulties in appropriate use of these markers.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the use of metadiscoursal voice elements by learners and examined the effect of implicit and explicit instruction in promoting the expression of authorial voice in academic writing. We found that EFL learners had a higher preference for self-mentions and used attitude markers less frequently. In terms of the effect of instruction on the utilization of stance markers, we discovered that instruction had a significant impact on increasing the use of stance markers, particularly boosters, among learners. The findings indicated that the intervention led to a positive change in learners' attitudes towards assertive claims, as they developed a greater sense of authoritativeness in their writing as a result of the instruction they received. We realized that explicit instruction significantly enhanced learners' understanding of voice elements, providing them with opportunities to appreciate their value and successfully incorporate these elements into their writing.

Informed by the findings, several pedagogical practices can be recommended for language teachers. Equipping learners with an understanding of linguistic devices and the appropriate contexts for their use, helps them make informed choices regarding language use (Barbara et al., 2024). By enabling learners to position themselves effectively in their writing, teachers can empower them to navigate academic discourse confidently by making intentional decisions about their language choices. Based on the findings, teachers are recommended to place greater emphasis on learners' use of attitude markers. This may involve targeted instruction on the use of attitude markers in appropriate contexts. Attitude markers are complex, requiring a deep understanding of language and context. Learners may need explicit teaching and targeted practice to grasp their functions and appropriate use in different situations.

Despite providing valuable insights into the use of voice elements in academic writing among Iranian EFL learners, an awareness of the limitations of the present study can inform further research. The primary limitation is its focus only on intermediate learners, which

limits the applicability of the findings to learners at different proficiency levels. It is also important to consider the applicability of these findings to other writing genres.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Stance Markers

Hedges					
About	Perceive	Partly	could	presume	Interpret
Almost	Perhaps	Unlikely	couldn't	probability	Likely
Appear	Plausible	unsure	doubt	probable	maybe
Approximately	Possibility	usually	estimate	probably	might
argue	possible	May	expect	relatively	more or less
around	Possibly	Should	suggest	seems	Often
assume	postulate	shouldn't	indicate	seemingly	Partially
assumption	predict	Would	guess	can be seen	suspect
conceivably	prediction	wouldn't	hypothesize	sometimes	tend
conjecture	presumably	think	hypothetically	somewhat	uncertain
Superficially	speculate	suppose	surmise		
Boosters					
actually	show that	basically	confirm	necessarily	surely
admittedly	it is clear	I believe	demonstrate	obvious	we think
always	clearly	believe	determine	obviously	I think
apparent	actually	certain extent	establish	patently	undoubtedly
apparently	indeed	certain that	evident	show	unmistakably
will	obvious	certainly	we find	show that	sure
won't	obviously	to be clear	generally	proved	we know
the fact that	of course	conclude	indeed	precisely	conclusive
show	assuredly				