The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Investigating the Use of Stance Markers in Egyptian and American MA Theses: A Corpus-Based Study

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Applied Linguistics

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

By

Sandra Adel Elfiky

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The American University in Cairo

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**Investigating the Use of Stance Markers in Egyptian and American MA Theses:
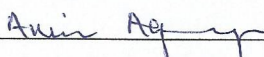A Corpus-Based Study**

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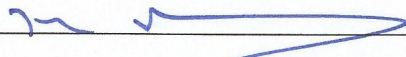

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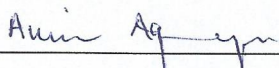
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DEDICATION

To my parents

Adel Elfiky & Lamia Helal

And

To my brothers

Ahmed & Hossam

Thank you for always being there for me.

ABSTRACT

This is a corpus-based study that investigates the use of stance markers in MA theses written by Egyptian and American graduate students. It is a descriptive and exploratory study, utilizing a quantitative and qualitative design. A compiled corpus of 15 Egyptian theses was examined and compared to that of 15 American theses in terms of the writers' use of stance markers. The study explored the use of self-mention through utilizing first person pronouns *I, my,* and *me,* and the more impersonal *"it…that"* structures and detected the patterns of the frequency and function of their use in both corpora.

The findings of the study suggest that Egyptian thesis writers tend to be more distant and cautious in their writings. They prefer to employ more detached linguistic strategies to express their stance. This is illustrated in their avoidance of the use of first person pronouns and their high frequency of utilizing the impersonal "*it…that*" structures, passive constructions, and doubt adverbs. Another finding is that Egyptian thesis writers display a great deal of linguistic competence in utilizing "*it…that*" structures; however, they show a lack of variety in their choice of lexical items and syntactic structures in this stance feature.

Differences in the use of stance markers in both corpora were highlighted and patterns of the "standard" use, represented in The American Thesis Corpus (ATC), were listed in order to help Egyptian thesis writers voice their views in a more confident manner so as to gain acceptance in their disciplinary communities.

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Abbreviations and Terms

MA: Master's degree

L2: Second language

NS/s: Native speaker/s

NNS/s: Non-native speaker/s

NR/s: Native researcher/s

NNR/s: Non-native researcher/s

ETC: Egyptian Thesis Corpus

ATC: American Thesis Corpus

Chapter One: Introduction

Academic writing has been traditionally perceived as a means of reporting findings and transferring knowledge without showing the writer's personal attitude; academic writers used to be regarded as the "humble servants of the discipline" (Hyland, 2001, p. 207). Although they are still serving their disciplines, academic writers now have the space to express their opinions while performing this function. Over the past few years, it has become increasingly difficult to label academic writing as objective. It can no longer be considered a "faceless and impersonal type of discourse" (Hyland, 2005, p.174). This view takes academic writing far beyond simple text production to the writers' ability to use language in constructing and negotiating relations with their readers. Such negotiation involves positioning which is why writers seek to provide readers with a trustworthy representation of their work and persona by critically evaluating alternative views and predicting adverse reaction toward their arguments (Hyland, 2005; 2008).

In the past decade, the literature has emphasized the importance of using rhetorical practices in order to produce persuasive academic discourse (Hyland, 2005; 2008). Biber (2006) also agrees that revealing stance is crucial to all academic registers. Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999) define stance as the expression of the writer's "personal feelings, attitudes, value judgments, or assessments" (as cited in Charles, 2003, p. 314). Hyland (2005) views stance as the mechanisms writers employ to communicate their judgments, attitudes, or feelings, which can be used either to show or hide the writers' involvement. Such mechanisms include self-mentions (Harwood, 2005; Henderson & Barr, 2010), hedges and boosters (Hu & Cao, 2011), attitude markers (McGrath & Kuteeva, 2012), reporting verbs (Bloch, 2010), and passive voice (Baratta, 2009).

Flowerdew (2001) focuses on the problematic aspects of the academic contributions made by non-native speakers (NNSs) and shows that lack of authorial voice, namely stance, is a major issue for NNS researchers. However, Elbow (1994) believes that expressing stance in academic writing is a difficulty faced by any graduate student whether they are NSs or NNSs (as cited in Flowerdew, 2001). Researches, whose second language (L2) is English, may find it challenging to voice their opinions, especially if they are disagreeing with the propositions of other established researchers. Therefore, it is essential for academic writers -especially novice researchers- to learn how to reflect their stance or evaluation in order to be accepted as members of any disciplinary community.

Purpose of the Study

Based on the literature, many studies offer frameworks for non-native academic writers to follow in terms of expressing stance. In some cases, these frameworks may not match the individual differences of non-native researchers (NNRs) so they tend to exert individualistic efforts and imitate the strategies used by native researchers (NRs) (Cargill, O'Connor, & Li, 2012). Therefore, it is important to provide NNRs with the different linguistic options that the English language offers to express their stance within a generally accepted framework (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005).

There are many studies that have examined stance markers or authorial voice in academic research articles (Attarn, 2014; Baratta, 2009; Bloch, 2010; Gillaerts & Van De Velde, 2010; Harwood, 2005; Molino, 2010; Orta, 2010; Silver, 2003; Stotesbury, 2003; Yagiz & Demir, 2014). Only few studies (Chan, 2015; Charles, 2003; 2006; Hewings & Hewings, 2002; Hyland, 2004; Musa, 2014; Wang & Chen, 2012) have examined stance markers in theses but none in the

Egyptian context. The rationale behind my study is to explore and compare how Egyptian and native-speaking academic writers express their stance in Applied Linguistics MA theses. In this study, I compile and examine two corpora: Egyptian Theses Corpus (ETC), which consists of theses written by Egyptian graduate students, and American Thesis Corpus (ATC), which consists of theses written by native speakers of English, to offer a framework that is tailored to the needs of Egyptian academic writers. The findings of this study are intended to be used pedagogically to help Egyptian graduate students, and non-native academic writers in general, reveal their stance, and project their credibility.

Research Questions

In light of the aforementioned, this study aims to address the following research questions:

1- What linguistic strategies do Egyptian and Native English-speaking thesis writers employ to express their stance?

2- What are the differences in terms of the frequency and function of stance strategies between MA theses written by Egyptians and Native English speakers?

Definitions

(a) Theoretical Definition of Constructs:

Stance: The term *stance* refers to the act of taking a position towards a certain proposition, evaluating it, and thereby aligning or disaligning oneself with it (Du Bois, 2007).

Discourse: It is a "systematically-organized set of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution. Discourses are texts that are socially produced in particular communities and depend on them for their sense" (Kress, 1989, p.7).

Genre Analysis: It is the analysis of a certain "type of discourse that occurs in a particular setting, that has distinctive and recognizable patterns and norms of organization and structure and that has particular and distinctive communicative functions" (Paltridge, 2008, p.54).

Thesis: A thesis is a "long piece of writing based on your own ideas and research that you do as part of a university degree, especially a higher degree such as a PhD" (Collins Online Dictionary).

Corpus: A corpus is a "large computer-held collection of texts (spoken, written, or both) collected together to stand as a representative sample of a language or some part of it. Corpora provide easily accessible and accurate data, useful to descriptive and theoretical linguists. They may also be used to calculate the frequency of occurrence of items and, as repositories of actual instances of language use (Johnson & Johnson, 1998, p.89).

Concordance: It is a "list usually derived from a corpus, showing all instances of a chosen lexical item and indicating its immediate context (before and after). Concordances may be used as a tool in language teaching, to assist learners (or trainee teachers) to become aware of how chosen items behave" (Johnson & Johnson, 1998, p.84).

(b) Operational Definition of Constructs:

Stance: In this study, the term *stance* refers to certain language items (first person pronouns, *it....that* clauses, passive voice, and certainty and doubt adverbs) that show the writer's position, opinion, or judgment toward a given proposition.

Discourse: This study is concerned with academic discourse, namely academic writing, which represents texts that follow specific writing conventions related to the academic context.

Genre Analysis: In this study, the genre being examined is Egyptian and American MA theses in the field of applied linguistics. It is analyzed for a pedagogical purpose, which is offering a framework for non-native researchers to follow.

Thesis: Although the terms *thesis* and *dissertation* are treated as synonyms in many sources, in this study the term *thesis* is used to refer to the collected data which represents MA publications of graduate students at Egyptian and American universities.

Corpus: In this study, a corpus is a collected set of written texts, namely MA theses, that is used for examining authentic language use and providing pedagogical implications for future thesis writers.

Concordance: In this study, concordances or concordance lines refer to the instances retrieved from the two collected corpora that help in calculating the frequency and examining the context of the stance markers investigated.

(c) *Definition of Variables:*

Self-mention: The term *self-mention* refers to the use of first person pronouns (singular "*I*" and plural "*we*") to express opinions about the information presented (Hyland, 2005). In this study, the focus is on first person singular pronouns *I, me, and my*.

Anticipatory *'it'*: This impersonal pronoun helps writers express their opinions and show their position "in a way that allows them to remain in the background" (Hewings & Hewings, 2002, p. 368).

Evaluative *'that'*: It is a grammatical structure in which "a complement clause is embedded in a host super-ordinate clause to complete its construction and to project the writer's attitudes or ideas" (Hyland & Tse, 2005, p. 124)

Passive Voice: It is a grammatical structure in which the subject is deleted in order to place emphasis on the object. It shows the writers' personal evaluation as they decide what is worth focusing on. This is referred to as 'passive stance' (Baratta, 2009, p. 1406).

Hedges: They refer to devices such as *possible, perhaps, might*, or other lexical or grammatical structures that show a lesser degree of commitment to one's proposition (Hyland, 2005).

Boosters: They are words such as *clearly* and *obviously* that show the writers' involvement with one's proposition (Hyland, 2005).

Delimitations

This study only examines theses submitted to the Department of Applied Linguistics at the two aforementioned universities; it does not explore stance in different disciplines. Furthermore, since most of the collected theses are written by females, differences in expressing stance across gender are not examined. Moreover, the study does not cover all stance markers employed by thesis writers; it rather focuses on the most frequent stance strategies present in the collected data. Finally, it is a descriptive study, which means that I offer no assumptions about the reason behind employing a certain stance strategy or the frequency of its use.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature in the area of expressing author stance or evaluation with a focus on academic writing. In this literature review, previous research relating to the addressed topic is presented in a thematic order. The review starts with presenting the broad theoretical framework of the study which is *genre analysis*. The second section examines the notion of *stance* and its various strategies. Finally, the following three sections discuss the differences in expressing stance across *disciplines, cultures,* and *gender.*

I.   Genre Analysis

Over the past two decades, increased attention has been given to genre analysis in discourse studies. Genre analysis has become the most dominant approach in analyzing and dealing with academic texts (Dudley-Evans, 2000). It classifies segments of texts according to their prototypical functions. In this respect, genre analysis focuses on the examining and teaching of the spoken and written language required of non-native speakers in academic and professional settings (Hyon, 1996). Swales (1990) defines genre as "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes" (p.58). These communicative purposes are influenced by many factors such as the social and cultural contexts in which the genres occur (Paltridge, 2008). The communicative purposes and the rationale behind them are decided by the expert members of each discourse community. Swales (1990) lists certain elements that any discourse community members must share, which are common goals, mechanisms for communication, particular genres, specialized terminology and vocabulary, and expertise in a particular area. Similarly, Paltridge (2008) includes all these elements in his

definition of discourse community as a "group of people who share some kind of activity…[and] have particular ways of communicating with each other. They generally have shared goals and may have shared values and beliefs" (p.24).

Paltridge defines genres as "the ways in which people ''get things done'' through their use of language in particular contexts" (Cited in Johns et al., 2006, p.235). He clarifies his definition using the example of academic essays in which writers use their linguistic capabilities according to the purpose of this specific genre and the relationship between them and the audience. In other words, the way of writing in a genre depends on the context in which the text is being produced and on the author's understanding of the needs of the reader and the extent of their knowledge of and familiarity with the subject matter. Therefore, genre analysis assumes that texts of the same genre have specific characteristics that distinguish them from other texts of other genres (Dudley-Evans, 2000). However, this does not mean that genres are static in nature; they can change if the values underlying them do. Paltridge (2008) provides an example for this which is the change that happened in the office memo because of the technological changes; office memos used to be written in a certain form on paper, but now its form changed because of the use of computers. According to Paltridge (2008), although one of the previously mentioned forms could be less typical than the other, they are both examples of the same genre.

Theses and research articles represent an example of a discourse community that has a common aim, namely academic discourse. However, even within the same discourse community, the language used is not the same in all genres. For example, the type of language of research articles in a certain discipline will definitely be different from the type of language used for textbooks in the same discipline (Paxton, Pletzen, Archer, Arend & Chihota, 2008). To support this argument, Dudley-Evans (2000) examined the use of hedges in two different genres in the

same discipline, which is medicine. The two genres compared were medical academic research articles and popular scientific magazines. The study showed that there were differences in the use of hedges in the two samples; the differences were traced and brought back to the fact that the samples did not have the same purpose nor the same intended audience.

Thus, the function of genre analysis is to set a model for each genre in a specific discipline so as to measure the individual capabilities of writers by the extent to which they abide by the set model (Dudley-Evans, 2000). Hyland (2002) states that the study of *genre* or *specificity* adds to the success of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) pedagogy. In this sense, the study of genres provides researchers with better writing skills in order for them to gain acceptance in different discourse communities.

II.   Stance in Academic Discourse

In academic discourse, it is no longer the case that writers convey content without revealing their position towards it either explicitly or implicitly (Riellya, Zamora & McGiverna, 2004). Academic writing has become a socio-political process, rather than a linguistic one, where authors attempt to claim power in their disciplinary communities by demonstrating their authorial voice, namely, stance (Tas, 2010). Stance can be defined as "the writer's textual voice or community recognized personality; it is an attitudinal, writer-oriented function and concerns the ways we present ourselves and convey our judgments, opinions, and commitments" (Hyland, 2008, p.5). Bassiouney (2014) also believes that stance-taking is about how authors give themselves an identity and try to impose it on others by using language. Through different linguistic forms, authors take stances and create alignments and this is what gives the linguistic forms their social meaning (Jaffe, 2009).

Berman (2004) describes discourse stance as a threefold notion: epistemic, deontic, and affective. Epistemic stance is concerned with the degree of possibility or certainty for one's belief of a certain proposition; deontic stance entails an assessment or evaluation to what is being reported while affective stance is about the author's feelings towards a given proposition. This means that the traditional view of academic writing as a mere vessel of information has been proven to be inaccurate. In academic writing, authors are now expected to interact with their readers and project their credibility in order to gain acceptance into their disciplinary communities.

The literature shows that, over the past two decades, many researchers have been concerned with exploring stance and its markers in academic discourse; however, some studies have been conducted under using different labels other than *stance* such as *modality* (Hoye, 2005), *evidentiality* (Nuyts, 2001), *metadiscourse* (Hyland, 2005), and *evaluation* (Hunston and Thompson, 2000). Hunston and Thompson (2000) define *evaluation* as a "broad cover term for the expression of the speaker's or writer's attitude or stance towards, or viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about" (p.5). Similarly, Hyland (2005) views *metadiscourse* as the "cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community" (p.37). According to these definitions, *stance, evaluation* and *metadiscourse* seem to be equivalent concepts. They can sometimes be used interchangeably as they refer to the same construct and aim at achieving the same goal which is determining the writers' position (Jafarpoure & Taki, 2011).

Self-mention

Self-mention is the use of first person pronouns and possessive pronouns to present information. Tas (2010) believes that first person pronouns play "a crucial role through which writers communicate with their audiences and construct their authorial identity" (p. 122). Self-mention is the focus of Hyland's (2002) and Harwood's (2005) studies in which they examine the use of first person pronouns in undergraduate reports and academic research articles, respectively.

Hyland (2002) explored the notion of identity in L2 writing by examining the use of personal pronouns in a corpus of 64 project reports written by senior-year Hong Kong undergraduates. The corpus was searched for the first person pronouns, using concordancing software and all cases were examined in context. The study found that most students sought to disguise their responsibility when they provided arguments and gave opinions. The students showed "a clear preference for strategies of author invisibility" (Hyland, 2002, p. 1105). Students were found not to express their stance directly; they would use other grammatical options to avoid accountability for their propositions. However, based on interviews with those undergraduates, Hyland (2002) showed that many students regarded the use of the first person as subjectivity, which is inappropriate for academic discourse and this was due to the pedagogical practices they were exposed to.

On the other hand, Harwood (2005) examined the use of self-references in 40 research articles from four disciplines: Business and Management, Computer Science, Economics, and Physics. The design of the study was qualitative, examining the personal pronouns in context and identifying their usage. Harwood (2005) concluded the study by creating a list of functions in which researchers seemed to employ first person pronouns. He showed that researchers most

frequently used personal pronouns to promote their own contributions in the research work, at the beginning of a research article, or to self-cite. They also used it to report other claims either for accepting or refuting them, and to show procedural innovations and methodological pitfalls. This study designed a model that was referred to by many researchers later on and became one of the most cited articles in the studies addressing the use of self-mention.

Passive Voice

Baratta (2009) pointed to the fact that although the passive voice is traditionally thought of as a means of having an objective tone in academic writing, it can also be used to reveal a writer's stance. He explained how stance is revealed through the use of passives by discussing examples from the essays of three undergraduate students in the School of Education at the University of Manchester. Baratta (2009) demonstrated the role of passive voice in terms of expressing stance yet stressed the importance of examining the context in which these constructions are used so as to distinguish between passive stance and a passive use whose function is simply to help maintain textual cohesion or delete a redundant subject.

Likewise, Reilly, Zamora, and McGivern (2005) examined the development of stance by comparing the use of certain distancing devices such as passive constructions in the written texts of English speaking children, adolescents, and adults. The authors stated that although the semantic roles of the arguments are the same, the passive voice allows writers "to convey their evaluation of the significance of a particular nominal by foregrounding or backgrounding its clausal prominence or by omitting it altogether" (p. 191). This is illustrated, in the article, in the instances where the agents of adult use of passives frequently took the form of abstract nominals as opposed to those of younger children's texts where animate agents were used.

Anticipatory "*it*" & Evaluative "*that*"

Apart from being interested in passive constructions indicating stance (as in '*It is believed that*…'), research has been conducted on other grammatical features of stance as the evaluative *that* and anticipatory *it*. Hyland and Tse (2005) explored the use of evaluative *that* (as in 'We acknowledge *that*…') in two corpora of 465 abstracts across six disciplines from published research articles and post-graduate (masters and doctoral) dissertations written by L2 students. All instances of *that* were examined and all cases where it was used to perform other grammatical functions, such as a demonstrative or relative pronoun, were eliminated. The frequency count revealed the importance of evaluative *that*-clauses in academic writing, with 563 cases overall, 291 in the thesis abstracts and 272 in the journal corpus. It was found that the experienced writers used over 56% more *that*-clauses per 1000 words than the students, with higher frequencies in all disciplines. Both the expert writers and the students employed *that*-clauses largely in abstracts to express their attitudes or feelings toward the reliability of their findings.

Meanwhile, Hewings and Hewings (2002) explored the anticipatory *it*-clause with an extraposed subject (as in '*It is interesting to note that*…'). This feature was compared in two computerized text corpora: one of published journal articles from the field of Business Studies (Jourcorp) and one of MBA student dissertations written by non-native speakers of English (Discorp). Using concordancing software, all *it*-clauses were isolated and categorized into four main interpersonal roles of hedging, marking the writer's attitude, emphasis, and attribution. It was found that student writers used *it*-clauses more frequently than published writers; however, this greater use was not consistent across the four functional categories. While student writers used *it*-clauses more in indicating attitude (28% more), emphatics (91% more) and attribution

(113% more), they used it less in hedging (17% less). The corpora Jourcorp and Discorp showed similarity in the writers' choice of the adjectives used after *it*-clauses, with the same most frequent adjectives (*difficult, important, easy* and *surprising*), although not in the same order of frequency. This consolidates the findings of Biber and Finnegan (1989) regarding the association of "*it…. that*" structure with certainty and doubt verbs, certainty and doubt adjectives, and affect expressions.

The "*it…that*" structure seems not to be investigated by many studies in the literature of stance markers in academic discourse. This could be due to its relative complexity as it is formed of more than one lexical item belonging to different syntactic categories. Myers (1989) calls it a "coy" structure that can be used as an alternative to the direct reference to one's feelings or assessment (p.22). One may argue that this gap in stance literature is surprising as the *"it….. that"* structure is used by many academic writers.

Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2001) compared the structures used by authors of scientific texts in expressing stance in two different discursive contexts. They compared between orally delivered papers in an international physics conference and the corresponding proceedings on the same lectures to guarantee that the producers and the content of knowledge were the same in both. The corpora were compiled of nine lectures delivered by native speakers of English (NSs) and their nine corresponding proceedings. In the study, the structures that were found to be most used were *passive, extraposition, inversion, "it' cleft* and *"wh" cleft.* In terms of frequency, *anticipatory "it"* was the second-top structure used in research articles after the *passive* construction, which highlights its importance in academic discourse.

III.   Stance across Disciplines

Previous research in academic discourse has examined various ways in which writers in different disciplines express stance. For example, in one study on stance in eight disciplines, Hyland (1999) found that the "choices of rhetorical strategy depend on relations between participants, and that the writer's stance is at least partially influenced by the social practices of their academic discipline" (p. 99). This means that the degree and frequency of expressing stance differs depending on the discipline (Williams, 2006). The term *discipline* in relation to academic writing was first introduced by Becher (1989). He described disciplines as academic tribes where each has common concepts, similar aims, and shared epistemological ground. According to Becher (1989), being accepted into a specific academic discipline makes it obligatory for the new member to abide by its rules and conventions that are revealed through the use of the language. Hyland (2002) believes that new members are required to show to the "gatekeepers" of the discipline that they are aware of its "communicative conventions" (p. 389).

In his 1999 study of stance in 56 research articles from eight disciplines, Hyland found that "writers in the soft disciplines were more likely to indicate the subjectivity of evaluations with the use of verbs such as *believe, suspect,* and *suppose*, which conveyed a sense of personal conjecture to the accompanying statement," while writers in engineering and the sciences tended to use modal verbs (p.116). Another broad study in terms of the disciplinary scope is Hyland's (2005), where he analyzed 240 research articles from eight different disciplines. The articles were compiled in an annotated corpus of 1.4 million words. The instrumentation consisted of 320 search terms from previous literature. The purpose of his study was to identify the characteristics of stance and engagement markers in each discipline, and how frequently they were used. The results of Hyland's (2005) study showed that the soft sciences as humanities and applied

linguistics employed evaluative language as much as three times as hard knowledge disciplines. The highest discipline in employing stance markers was philosophy and the lowest was mechanics.

Although Hyland's (2005) study was somehow general in terms of showing the aspects of the high frequencies of stance markers across disciplines, it did provide a great deal of ground for further exploration. Hyland's (1999) and (2005) results were later consolidated by Chan (2015) who investigated inter-disciplinary differences in the use of stance markers in a corpus of acknowledgements collected from 256 PhD dissertations written by students at three Hong Kong universities. The corpus consisted of 77,180 words in the disciplines of Applied Linguistics, Business Studies, Public Administration, Biology, Computer Science, and Electronic Engineering. A separate search on each stance marker was done and the concordance lines were checked manually to eliminate any items that did not express stance. The study found that adverbs and complement constructions were more commonly used in the soft disciplines, and modals were more common in the hard disciplines.

IV.   Stance across Cultures

Thompson and Hunston (2000) reported that *evaluation* in discourse is affected by the ideological backgrounds of different groups. According to Flowerdew (2001), editors of peer-reviewed journals noticed that, in many instances, NNRs were distant from their arguments and did not show their authorial voice. Similarly, Orta (2010) reported that the Spanish researchers she was sampling had difficulties in establishing a proper "tenor" when they wrote in English (p.78). Henderson and Barr (2010) investigated the area of establishing an authorial voice in their corpus-based research on undergraduate French students of psychology in their final year of

university. The study was done by comparing three corpora; the first was a collection of papers written by the French students (NNS sample), research introductions in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) (NNS sample) and the British Academic Written English corpus (BAWE). The size of the sample of this study was relatively small; 46,084 words for the NNS, 41,454 for the DOAJ and only 12, 837 for the BAWE. This was justified by the authors who stated that the study was more of a pilot study; hence, there was no need for a large corpus.

The results of the study supported the hypothesis that there are differences in the degree of using evaluative language among different groups of different cultural backgrounds. The researchers reported that although there was a variety in the usage of stance markers by NNS, a problem occurred in the accuracy of the meanings of those verbs. The defect with the NNS writing was that the evaluative markers were less accurate than the researchers expected. However, Henderson and Barr (2010) did not take into consideration that their sample consisted of university students who were not experienced writers. I believe the expertise of the students acted as an extraneous variable in this study; this was evident since one of the findings of the study was that NNS writers showed inability to evaluate the works of other researchers.

Orta (2010) avoided the previously mentioned methodological pitfall by using two samples that are highly comparable. He made sure that all the samples were written by university-affiliated researchers in order to ensure that they were all familiar with academic writing conventions. The corpus consisted of 48 research articles of more than 390,000 words. The number of articles was distributed evenly among two sub-corpora: American and Spanish. Orta (2010) reported that the corpus analysis showed that Spanish researchers tended to use modal verbs as stance markers differently from the way they are used in NS research articles. For example, the modal *can* was overused and mistaken for *may* and *might*. In this study, Orta

pointed out to the fact that, in the Spanish language, the equivalent of *can* is inherently obscure and that the Spanish writers use *can* believing that they are giving the effect of *may* and *might.* This study did not only detect the difference in frequencies of using stance markers, but also showed the differences in usage of the same lexical items. Orta (2010) concluded that, in the case of Spanish speakers of English as an L2, in writing research "English is conditioned by the writing conventions of their national culture" (p.24).

V.   Stance across Gender

There are very few studies that have explored gender as one of the factors that affect the writer's construction of stance in academic discourse; however, many studies have examined the relation between gender and rhetorical choices in oral communication. Lakoff (1973) conducted a study comparing between men and women in terms of expressing their authorial identity in speech. She concluded that the "personal identity of women is linguistically submerged" (p. 45). The study found that, in speech, women had a tendency of displaying uncertainty and avoiding the strong expression of feelings. Similarly, in Tannen's (2003) investigation of male and female interaction styles, it was found that men showed dominance and competition while women showed facilitation and connection in their speech.

Some researchers investigated the relation between gender and constructing the writer's stance in academic discourse. Ädel (2006) asserted that gender has a significant influence on the writers' rhetorical choices and the type of metadiscourse features they choose. Also, Francis, Robson and Read (2001) found that males were more emphatic than females and used a more confident writing style. More recently, Yeganeh and Ghoreyshi (2015) examined the use of hedges and boosters in the abstract and discussion sections of 40 research articles which were

published in international journals by Persian native speakers: 20 males and 20 females. Chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference in types of booster and hedge employed by male and female. In addition, it was found that the Iranian males used more boosters while the Iranian females tended to use more hedges. The results of Yeganeh and Ghoreyshi (2015) lend support to Tse and Hyland (2008) where the gender factor was examined in a corpus of 56 reviews of single-authored academic books. The reviews were written by both male and female authors in the disciplines of Philosophy and Biology. The study showed that male reviewers used more of almost every interactional stance feature in both disciplines.

Conclusion

It is clear from the above discussed literature that the disciplinary communities, cultural backgrounds, and gender of L2 academic writers play an important role in determining the degree and frequency of marking the author's stance. The differences in using stance markers between NRs and NNRs need further exploration, as it is essential for NNRs to use the rhetorical choices that are represented in the standard model. These choices will allow NNRs to "conduct interpersonal negotiations and balance against the convictions and expectations of their readers" (Hyland, 2005, p.178).

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Design

This is a descriptive study that employs a corpus-based methodology to answer the research questions posed in the study. It examined and compared the use of stance strategies in two corpora of MA theses: Egyptian Thesis Corpus (ETC) and American Thesis Corpus (ATC). This chapter presents the data used in the study, the corpora compilation process, target stance markers, data analysis procedures, means of answering the research questions, and finally methods of reporting results.

Corpora

The data used in this study was MA theses written between the years of 2010 and 2017 by graduate students in the Department of Applied Linguistics at a North American state university and a Middle Eastern private university where English is the language of instruction. The theses were divided into two corpora: Egyptian Thesis Corpus (ETC) and American Thesis Corpus (ATC). The ETC consists of 15 theses (266,097 words) written by Egyptian graduate students and the ATC consists of 15 theses (264,685 words) written by American graduate students. After calculating the average number of words analyzed in several studies in the literature, I decided to include 15 theses per corpus in order to be able to obtain a representative sample. The decision to focus on this type of discourse was because, based on the literature, theses have not been examined by many researchers compared to academic research articles and students' essays. Initially, my aim was to compare theses in the ETC to peer-reviewed journal articles in the ready-to-use academic section of the Corpus of Contemporary American English

(COCA). Later on, I decided to compile the ATC in order to avoid the methodological pitfall that researchers fall into when they lack equivalence in their samples (Connor, 2004).

Corpora Compilation Process

In order to compile the two corpora, the theses were collected from the online libraries of the two universities in PDF format and then converted into plain text files to become readable by a concordancing program. *MonoConc Pro 2.2* software was used in this study to analyze the collected data. This software allows researchers to look up specific lexico-grammatical structures and detect the frequency of their use; this is used for analyzing the data quantitatively. Also, the software displays keywords in context (KWIC), which is essential to examining and analyzing the data qualitatively.

While downloading the theses, my main focus was on checking the nationalities of the graduate students who have submitted these publications. Being a graduate student at the Middle Eastern university mentioned, it was easy for me to collect theses written by Egyptian researchers. I either knew some of them personally, or confirmed with faculty members and former MA graduate students that they are in fact Egyptians. As for the theses collected from the North American university, it was somehow challenging to know the nationalities of the thesis writers. After going through the theses available on the website from 2010 till 2017, any thesis writer whose name was of a non-native origin (Arab, French, etc…) was excluded from the study. As for the other thesis writers, I searched for their names on Google and managed to find either their biographies, or Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn profiles. After careful examination of the thesis writers' backgrounds, 15 theses were chosen to be included in my study. Although this investigation might not be 100% accurate, I did my best to avoid this methodological pitfall.

Finally, for compiling these corpora, no permission or request for IRB approval was needed as no human participants were involved.

Target Stance Markers

Based on the literature, it was decided to search for and compare the following stance markers in the two corpora:

- Self-mention represented in the use of first person singular pronouns (*I, me,* and *my*)

- Anticipatory "*it*" and Evaluative "*that*" represented in the use of impersonal "*it…..that*" structures

- Passive Voice

- Hedges represented in the use of doubt adverbs

- Boosters represented in the use of certainty adverbs

Data Analysis Procedures

After compiling 15 theses for each corpus, tables, figures, appendices, quotations, and examples were deleted from the theses so as to avoid or minimize the risk of false hits. Afterwards, the target stance markers mentioned above were searched for and examined in both corpora.

Answering Research Questions

To answer the research questions posed in this study, a corpus-based approach was adopted. My aim was to examine the use of stance markers in both corpora and observe the

difference between non-native thesis writers (Egyptians) and native thesis writers (Americans) in using certain evaluative structures.

The two research questions posed in my study were answered through the following procedures:

1- What linguistic strategies do Egyptian and Native English-speaking thesis writers employ to reveal their stance?

To answer this question, the two corpora ETC and ATC were searched for the target stance markers mentioned above. This was done quantitatively by detecting the frequency of each search term as well as qualitatively by looking into their contexts and examining their functions.

2- What are the differences in terms of the frequency and function of stance strategies between MA theses written by Egyptians and Native English speakers?

To answer this question, both corpora were searched for the target stance markers and a comparison was drawn between the frequency and function of these markers in the non-native "Egyptian" corpus and the native "American" corpus. In this study, the American corpus (ATC) was regarded as the model that represents the standard use of language from which NNRs can learn.

Methods of Reporting Results

The results of the quantitative analysis were presented in tables showing frequencies, and samples from ETC and ATC were compared numerically. As for the results of the qualitative

analysis, differences in meaning and function between stance markers in both corpora were reported verbally.

<center>**Chapter Four: Results**</center>

This chapter, quantitatively and qualitatively, presents the results of the use of the stance markers listed in Chapter Three in the two corpora: the American Thesis Corpus (ATC) and the Egyptian Thesis Corpus (ETC). The frequencies and functions of the singular personal pronouns (*I, my, me*), the impersonal "*It.....that*" structure as well as other stance markers including passive voice, hedges, and boosters that appeared in the two corpora were investigated. The results of this investigation directly answer the first research question posed in the study, which aimed at identifying the linguistic strategies Egyptian and Native English-speaking thesis writers employ to express their stance. A comparison was also made between the native "standard" use represented in ATC and the non-native "Egyptian" use in ETC. The results of this comparison directly answer the second research question of the study which aimed at exploring the differences in terms of the use of stance strategies between MA theses written by Egyptians and Native English speakers.

I.   **Use of First Person Singular Pronouns in ATC and ETC**

Before checking the figures displayed in the following section, it is important to note that the ETC consists of 266,097 words and the ATC consists of 264,685 words.

a. **Frequency of First Person Pronouns *I, My,* and *Me***

Table 4.1

The Frequency of Self-mention Pronouns in ETC and ATC

Self-mention pronouns	No. of occurrences in ATC	No. of occurrences in ETC
I	2,000	171

My	905	212
Me	261	105

Looking at each self-mention pronoun in isolation, it is obvious that the personal pronouns *I, my,* and *me* are more recurrent in the theses of English native speakers compared to those of Egyptian writers. As shown in Table 4.1, the number of occurrences of the pronouns *I, my,* and *me* in ATC was 2,000, 905, and 261, respectively, while, in ETC, the number of occurrences was only 171, 212, and 105, respectively, which shows a noticeable difference in the frequency of use of the first person singular pronouns in both corpora. It is worth noting that the first search attempt for the singular pronoun *I* was slightly problematic for me since the corpora were not tagged for parts of speech (POS); the search included all results of the search key "*I*" such as numerical references, abbreviations, and *i.e.* instances. After examining the concordance lines manually, I managed to reduce the number of occurrences of the pronoun *I* from 2,031 to 2,000 in ATC and from 271 to 171 in ETC.

b. Function of First Person Pronouns *I, My,* and *Me*

Having examined the frequency of occurrences of the pronouns *I, my,* and *me* in both corpora, I focus in this section on the functions and the contexts in which they were used. Harwood (2005) and Hyland (2002) proposed several discourse functions of the use of personal pronouns in academic writing, which include stating personal claims, explaining procedures, highlighting novelty of contributions or introducing innovation, self-promoting, reporting on literature, stating goals or purposes, stating results, expressing self-benefits, elaborating arguments, stating methodological pitfalls, and acknowledging others. There is also another function, which is self-citing; however, it is not applicable to the sample collected in this study as

it consists of theses written by novice researchers, who, at that time, have not yet published other studies. In this section, the aim is to identify the functions of self-mention in both the ATC and ETC corpora.

Before displaying the findings of the qualitative analysis conducted on the concordance lines, it is worth noting that the 15 thesis writers of ETC utilized the pronouns *I, my* and *me* in the Acknowledgment section in their theses; however, only three thesis writers used first person pronouns in the remaining sections of their studies. This means that, apart from the acknowledgement section, all the discourse functions present in the analysis of ETC concordance lines were extracted from three theses only.

Functions of Self-Mention in ETC and ATC

Reporting on Literature

Harwood (2005) proposed that one of the functions of using first person pronouns in academic writing is to criticize the literature related to a given topic, either by agreeing or disagreeing with it or by identifying a research gap that is not tackled in previous studies.

- ETC#1: There were no studies, **to my knowledge**, which examined the identity of Twitter users through exploring the relationship between stance and Twitter replies.
- ETC#2: **To the best of my knowledge**, there are no studies that have examined CS between Arabic and English in Egyptian novels. The only study that may be

related to this area is one by Albakry and Hancock (2008), but the novel they analyzed was written in English and Arabic was the embedded language.

After careful examination of the ETC concordance lines, I was not able to find instances where Egyptian researchers used the pronouns *I, my,* or *me* to agree or disagree with propositions in the literature. However, they used first person pronouns to highlight research gaps and to evade the responsibility of not finding enough literature covering their topics such as in examples ETC#1 and ETC#2.

- ATC#1: **I agree** that not only is lived space a place for "subaltern identities" to emerge, but also can be a place that fosters or shapes the possibilities of the more expansive concept of "imagined identities," as described by Kanno and Norton (2003).

- ATC#2: As far as **I know**, no study has examined the identities of LESLLA learners (Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition) who are taking mainstream adult ESL classes, and how their imagined identities, the lived space of the classroom, and the social context of their lives are related to their investment in learning English.

Similar to what was found in the ETC examples, the author, in example ATC#2, used the first person pronoun *I* in the literature review chapter to evade the responsibility of not finding enough literature covering their topic. However, in example ATC#1, the author used the pronoun *I* to express agreement towards the reported literature.

Introducing Innovation

According to Harwood (2005), another function of using first person pronouns in academic writing is for authors to highlight the novelty of their contributions or, in other words, introduce the innovative aspects of their studies.

- ETC#3: There is no literature about the code which **I called** Arabized English (AE). It would be interesting to examine this code further to see when, how and why it was developed and when and why people use it.

This example shows the author's innovation in coining a new term for the purpose of her/his study. As shown above, Arabized English (AE) is a term that he/she introduced to the readers and kept referring to throughout their study.

- ATC#3: By using a mixed-methods approach in my research design, **I increased** the reliability and validity of my data by obtaining not only the quantitative assessment of intelligibility and comprehensibility/accent ratings, but a qualitative assessment of intelligibility by the participants explaining their answers.
- ATC#4: In an attempt to provide stimuli that were not already existing words in American English, **I created** artificial words that, while permitted by English phonology, may not have sounded like natural English.
- ATC#5: This could serve to confirm the results of qualitative analysis and conclude whether the variation is a form of generational shift, age grading, or what **I have termed** generational blips.

These examples show the authors' innovation either in coining a new term for the purpose of her/his study as in example ATC#5, coming up with a new procedure or strategy as in example ATC#4, or adding to the validity of their results as in example ATC#3.

Stating Methodological Pitfalls

Authors may also use first person pronouns to state the methodological difficulties or problems they fall into while conducting their studies. They claim responsibility for the pitfalls that might affect the reliability of their data or results.

- ETC#4: Unfortunately, **I was not able to analyze** school curricula because of time constraints. However, these parents **have provided me** with some background about school curricula and textbooks, and it would be beneficial in the future to see studies done in Egypt on school curricula of different school systems in Egypt and compare between them.

In this example, the author claimed responsibility for the methodological pitfall that occurred in his/her procedures. They also stated the reason behind it which is "time constraints." Then, the author informed the reader of how they attempted to recover from this pitfall by requesting background information from the participants in order to ensure the validity of their results.

- ATC#6: While the fact that the stimuli were skewed in favor of deck officers is certainly **a drawback to my study**, it does significantly highlight the role that position on board a vessel plays in how mariners are able to understand various speakers of English.

- ATC#7: Efforts were made, for example, to ensure a healthy and equal representation of each demographic category combination (e.g., posting a link to the survey on the Facebook page of a magazine geared toward a specific demographic), but **I was unable to recruit** additional participants in certain categories.

- ATC#8: Due to the magnitude of the undertaking that is program evaluation today, **I could not feasibly conduct** a full-scale evaluation and had to instead considerably **narrow my focus**.

In the previous examples, the authors claimed responsibility for the methodological pitfalls that occurred either in their procedures as in example ATC#8, sampling as in example ATC#7, or the finding they came up with as in example ATC#6.

Stating Personal Claims

In academic writing, authors can use first person pronouns to state their own claims by personalizing their statements.

- ETC#5: However, since there were many more cases of disagreement than agreement expressed in the replies to the tweets, **I can conclude** that respondents accommodated not to reduce dissimilarities with the tweet authors but likely to ensure understanding of the message.

- ETC#6: **Piloting my study rendered** valuable insight into few issues which were taken care of during the actual study.

- ETC#7: **<u>From my own observation</u>** of social media platforms, it is mostly used in a sarcastic way and usually along with another code.

In ETC#5, the author reached a conclusion based on their data analysis process; the same applies to ETC#6 but based on the author's piloting study while, in ETC#7, the author proposed a claim based on their personal observations.

- ATC#9: By allowing participants to listen to the phrase multiple times, **<u>I believed</u>** it affected the validity of their intelligibility ratings.
- ATC#10: I chose the remaining three scales because they represented spectrums of judgment that have commonly polarized society, areas that **<u>I believed</u>** would also illustrate common divides among age groups and between genders.
- ATC#11: Because all my participants were mariners, **<u>I expected</u>** that in accordance with the STCW requirements for English language use on board vessels, they would have adequate general Maritime English language knowledge to understand the phrases.

In examples ATC#9, ATC#10 and ATC#11, the authors proposed claims based on their personal assumptions.

Explaining Procedures

Harwood (2005) and Hyland (2002) proposed the function of using first person pronouns to recount experimental procedures and methodology.

- ETC#8: **I used** Du Bois' (2007) framework of analyzing three kinds of stance acts: epistemic, affective, and evaluative.

- ETC#9: This study is descriptive and exploratory utilizing a qualitative design where **I counted** frequency to add descriptive data. First, like Kosoff (2014), different codes used by the participants were identified, and their frequency was counted.

- ETC#10: When **I asked** her about her role in her children's literacy practices she replied that she thinks that no matter how much effort you exert to encourage them to read, they won't read unless they themselves really want to read.

Examples ETC#8, ETC#9 and ETC #10 show the use of the first person singular pronoun *I* to provide the readers with a detailed description of the procedures followed in their studies. After examining the concordance lines, it was found that this kind of use occurred mostly in the methodology chapter as in examples ETC#9 and ETC #10 but sometimes in the abstract section as in example ETC#8.

- ATC#12: Using these DVs and the Kruskal-Wallis H test, **I measured** the effect of participants' education level, their number of years working maritime industry, and their position on board on their responses.

- ATC#13: **I asked** my participants to identify the L1 of the speaker to determine whether their familiarity with the speakers might affect the intelligibility or comprehensibility of the phrase.

- ATC#14: However, they were audio recorded, which **allowed me** to focus on interviewing instead of taking excessive notes, as well as to review the recordings as many times as was necessary to ensure the accuracy of the reported findings.

- ATC#15: **I recorded** in **my** field notes during one class period to illustrate **my** analysis.

Here, the authors used the first person singular pronouns *I, my* and *me* to provide the readers with a detailed description of the procedures carried out in their studies.

Elaborating on Arguments

Hyland (2002) introduced another function of using first person pronouns in academic writing which is offering more details or elaborating on a certain argument.

- ETC#11: **I have noticed** two particular aspects about the use of Twitter which could render some interesting findings if explored deeply. These are the highly excessive use of sarcasm in the replies and the reference to mothers as a way of insulting the person one is replying to.

- ETC#12: Finally, **I have also noted** that there were differences in the use of English and Arabizi codes between males and females. Females used English for ~56% of the replies, whereas males used it for ~41.5%. Arabizi, on the other hand, was used by males (~29.2%) more than females (~16.8%).

In examples ETC#11 and ETC#12, the authors used the first person singular pronoun *I* to offer more details about a certain proposition that they had previously stated in their studies. This way, they added to the credibility of their claims and results.

- ATC#16: **<u>I chose</u>** to only use the first four options on the scale because they were sufficient to capture the necessary information about the participants' word knowledge for the purposes of this study.

- ATC#17: **<u>I should note</u>** here that the accentedness ratings used in **<u>my</u>** study were holistic, and due to this, it is not possible to define precisely how much contribution each of the above elements makes in the accent in a non-native speaker of Japanese.

The authors used first person singular pronouns to elaborate on the arguments they had previously stated in their studies in order to show the reliability of their claims and results.

Stating Goals or Purposes

According to Hyland (2002), authors use first person pronouns to state the goals or purposes either behind their studies in general or behind certain procedures followed while conducting their research.

- ETC#13: **<u>I will explain</u>** the research design, the sample used for this study, the instruments used to address the research questions, and the data analysis techniques used to reach the results.

- ETC#14: Thus, **<u>my aim was to examine</u>** CS between English, SA, and ECA in the Egyptian novel Zaat. My focus was on the indexes of each code the author used to reflect the stance characters took towards each other or in opposition to surrounding events.

In these two examples, the authors used first person pronouns to state the main purpose of what they presented in their studies. In ETC#13, the author used the pronoun *I* to state what

he/she was going to tackle in what seems to be the methodology chapter of their study, which gave the reader a clear idea of what was going to be covered in the chapter. As for ETC#14, the author concluded by restating the main aim behind their study.

- ATC#18: Following this study, **I will use** stimuli from three NNS varieties (two speakers of Japanese, Chinese, and Russian) and two NS (US and Canadian) to assess these speakers' intelligibility and comprehensibility of spoken Maritime English as perceived by Chinese mariners.

- ATC#19: **I endeavored** to provide a rich, descriptive, and complex picture by investigating what different groups of stakeholders consider to be true regarding former IELP students' readiness for regular college coursework.

- ATC#20: This is precisely what **I looked** for in **my** study: rich, thick description of experience, beliefs, and informal learning practices, from a small number of participants.

Here, the authors used first person pronouns to state the main purpose of their studies. In example ATC#18, the author used the pronoun *I* followed by *will* (future tense) as he/ she was stating the aim of what they were going to do later on in the study. As for examples ATC#19 and ATC#20, the authors employed the past tense represented in *endeavored* and *looked* to show the purpose that they had already tried to achieve.

Acknowledging Others

Harwood (2005) introduced another function of utilizing first person pronouns which is acknowledging funding bodies, institutions, and individuals that offered contributions to the researchers while carrying out their studies.

- ETC#15: First, **I would like** to acknowledge the help of DR. Amira Agameya, **my** academic idol, without whose sincere support, guidance, patience and feedback throughout the multiple stages of thesis writing, this work would have been impossible.

- ETC#16: **I would like** to record **my** appreciation to Dr. Robert Williams, the Chair of the TESOL Department, whose valuable comments on the methodology design have taught **me** the significance of examining research design at a much deeper level.

- ETC#17: Finally, **my** caring and loving family, it was a great comfort knowing that at the end of any rough day, **I have** your unconditional love and encouragement which kept **me** going and pushed **me** beyond **my** limits.

After careful examination of the concordance lines, it became clear that the most frequent use of first person pronouns in ETC is in the Acknowledgment section. In this section, authors acknowledge the contributions of those who helped and encouraged them during conducting their studies. Since this section is of a personal nature to any author, it makes a lot of sense that it relies heavily on the use of first person singular pronouns to express gratitude.

- ATC#21: **I must** also acknowledge **my** family and friends who took care of **me** during this difficult year, for they are the reason **I was** able keep moving forward.

- ATC#22: **I am** also incredibly thankful to **my** committee members, Susan Conrad and Linnea Spitzer for sharing so much of their time, insight, and experience.

- ATC#23: Your dedication to the field and your willingness to actively listen (to other teachers, the community, and especially to your students) has taught **me** much.

In these examples, the authors expressed gratitude to those who supported them while carrying out their studies.

After careful examination of the concordance lines of both corpora and applying the previously mentioned functions to each, I managed to detect three other functions of the use of first person singular pronouns available in ETC and ATC, which are narrating personal experiences, citing references, and presenting actions. The following examples illustrate these functions:

Narrating Personal Experiences

Examples from ETC

- ETC#18: Before developing interest in understanding Twitter and how people use it, **I used** Twitter rarely and had few posts over a whole year. After developing an interest in Twitter, **I began** to use it more and posted around 1000 tweets in less than a year.
- ETC#19: In 2002 when **I joined** the Department of English Language at the Faculty of Al-Alsun (Languages) at Ain Shams University (an Egyptian public university), it was obligatory to take a course in SA for the four years that focused heavily on grammar.

Examples from ATC

- ATC#24: Through tutoring at the IELP, **I connected** with many of the students, instructors, staff, and administrators in the program, so **I have** a personal interest in its success.

- ATC#25: **I became** involved at Stumptown during 2011 and 2012 when **I volunteered** in and observed various classes at the institution. In January, 2013, **I joined** a volunteer tutoring program that offers supplemental literacy instruction for ESOL students either through one-on-one or group tutoring at Stumptown and other learning centers throughout the greater Portland area. Through this program, **I was** assigned to teach a group of about 12 students at the highest-level organized literacy group available at this institution.

- ATC#26: In addition to **my** interactions with this program, **I have** regularly volunteered as a conversation partner for students from the Japanese university exchange program over the last several years, and have been introduced to the staff at the office they maintain on campus on several occasions.

In the previous examples, the authors of both ETC and ATC used first person pronouns to narrate personal experiences that had affected their interest or involvement in their studies.

Citing References

Examples from ETC

- ETC#20: **I shall** draw upon Hong et al.'s (2011) study which aimed at examining the use of different languages on Twitter and how speakers of different languages behaved on it.

- ETC#21: However, for the purpose of this study, **<u>I retain</u>** the definitions of Baker (2001) and Grosjean (1989) who defined bilingualism as the ability to speak two languages in different contexts.

Examples from ATC

- ATC#27: As this is not a particularly helpful definition, **<u>I will turn</u>** to a definition offered by Dewey (1933), who said that beliefs "cover all the matters of which we have no sure knowledge and yet which we are sufficiently confident of to act upon and also the matters that we now accept as certainly true…but which nevertheless may be questioned in the future…" (as quoted in Barcelos, 2000, p. 32).

In the previous examples, the authors of both ETC and ATC used first person pronouns to cite or define a certain proposition from studies found in the literature related to their topics. They were not agreeing or disagreeing with a given idea; they were merely citing it.

Presenting Actions

Examples from ETC

- ETC#22: **<u>I investigated</u>** how polyglossic Egyptian users of Twitter replied to existing tweets, and in doing so, which code they used. The aim from doing this was to understand their strategies of taking stance.

Examples from ATC

- ATC#28: In this chapter, **<u>I have elucidated</u>** the site and research participant, **<u>my</u>** background and role in the study, **<u>my</u>** data collection and analysis procedures, and ethical issues, benefits to the participant, and limitations to **<u>my</u>** study.

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Example ETC#22 is from the conclusion of the literature review chapter in one of the theses. The author was reporting on what she/he had done in the chapter and highlighting the scope of their study to the readers. As for example ATC#28, it was taken from the conclusion of the methodology section as the author was stating the points that he/she had already covered in the chapter. In both examples, the authors presented their actions, namely, what they had actually done in those chapters.

II.   Use of Impersonal the *"it…… that"* Structure in ETC and ATC

In this section, I investigated the use of *"it……that"* structures in ETC and ATC. Unlike the use of first person pronouns, this type of structure provides authors with the opportunity to express their views in a more detached manner, thus allows them to distance themselves from the propositions being expressed. This structure can be used in the form of one-slot as in "*it appears that…*", two-slot as in "*it might be that….*", or more slots as in "*it can therefore be argued that….*" In my study, I looked into the concordance lines of both corpora and examined "*it…..that*" clauses with up to seven slots by adding asterisks in-between in the search term.

a. Frequency of the Impersonal "*it…..that*" Structure

Table 4.2

The Frequency of "It….that" structures in ETC and ATC

No. of slots in *It*-clauses	No. of occurrences in ETC	No. of occurrences in ATC
1 slot	29	37
2 slots	104	109
3 slots	75	67
4 slots	36	39
5 slots	15	18

6 slots	5	6
7 slots	3	4

Looking at the results presented in Table 4.2, there seems to be no noteworthy difference in the frequency of using *it*-clauses in both corpora. It is interesting to note that both Egyptian and American thesis writers have a preference for the two-slot *it*-clauses compared to the other types. It is used in ETC and ATC 104 times and 109 times, respectively. Also, it seems clear that, apart from the first type (one-slot form), the number of occurrences of the structure decreases in both corpora as we add more slots between anticipatory *it* and evaluative *that.* Perhaps this happens because the more slots we add, the more linguistically complex the structure becomes. The findings are somehow surprising as I expected that non-native researchers might have difficulties in dealing with such linguistically complex structures.

b. Function of Impersonal "*it…..that*" Structures

Although many authors employ the "*it…..that*" structure to show a detached voice in their writings, such clauses still manage to provide the readers with an evaluative tone due to the presence of various stance markers within the structure itself such as "*it **seems** that…*" which shows the author's uncertainty towards a given proposition or "*it is **obvious** that….*" which shows the complete opposite. Hewings & Hewings (2002) proposed four interpersonal roles for "*it….that*" structures, which are: (1) hedges, (2) attitude markers, (3) emphatics, and (4) attributions. Hedges are devices that writers use to withhold their full commitment to one's proposition, while attitude markers are used to express the authors' evaluation of a specific content. As for emphatics, they are used to highlight the certainty of the authors in what they are saying. Finally, attributes are used to "lead the reader to accept the writer's judgments as being

soundly based" (Hewings & Hewings, 2002, p.373). My aim in the following section was to examine and apply this framework to the concordance lines of *it*-clauses in both corpora.

Hedges

In their framework, Hewings & Hewings (2002) divided hedges into two categories: (1a) those which express likelihood or possibility and (1b) those which show what seems to be the case. "*It…that*" hedges were used 59 times in ATC and 54 times in ETC.

> ATC (1a): ***It is likely that*** L1 students who are still obtaining their undergraduate education underuse this feature compared to writers at the professional level.
>
> ATC (1b): Furthermore, ***it seems that*** providing current students more perspective and more exposure to authentic university settings, assignments, and in-class tasks could reduce some of the perceived difficulties and surprises currently associated with the transition from the IELP to PSU.

In example ATC (1a), the author proposed a reason that might be behind the fact that undergraduate students use a certain linguistic feature less than professional writers do; however, he/she used the adjective *likely* to express the degree of possibility of the claim without taking full responsibility for it. The same goes for the ATC (1b) example; the author provided students with a way to deal with transition difficulties, but he/she was not entirely sure about it so they used the hedging device *seems*.

> ETC (1a): ***It is possible that*** students in the UAF group resorted to using less complex structures while writing the pretest and posttest in order to commit fewer errors.

ETC (1b): According to these definitions, ***it appears that*** the communicative function of abstracts is to help the readers filter the hundreds of studies they have to cover in order to conduct or keep up to date with the most recent research

In ETC (1a), the author offered a proposition regarding the participants' use of less complex grammatical structures; however, he/she used the adjective *possible* to express the likelihood of the reason behind this phenomenon without claiming full responsibility for it. In the ETC (1b) example, the author was not certain about his/her claim and this was shown by the verb *appears*. The author expressed lack of certainty and presented a modest stance in light of the "definitions" he/she had mentioned in the literature.

Attitude Markers

Hewings & Hewings (2002) also divided attitude markers into: (2a) those which show what the writer believes to be noteworthy and (2b) those which express the writer's evaluation. "*It…that"* attitude markers were used 73 times in ATC and 55 times in ETC.

ATC (2a): ***It is also worth noting that*** no appropriacy errors related to the criterion "information is not firmly established, highly typical, and widely generalizable" were found in the control or treatment groups.

ATC (2b): ***It is interesting that*** both the control and treatment group gave a higher proportion of equivalent meaning responses than nonequivalent meaning responses for the high-frequency words than they did for the low-frequency words.

In ATC (2a), the author stated one of the findings of his/her study that they believed was worth mentioning to the readers, but they did not offer their attitude towards it. As for example

ATC (2b), the author commented on the findings of the study and showed his/her evaluation by adding the adjective *interesting* in the *it….that* clause.

> ETC (2a): ***It is worth noting that*** the Arabic of the Qur'an is referred to as classical Arabic and is hardly used by anyone, so sheikhs resort to SA to explain and interpret Qur'anic verses after reciting them in classical Arabic.
>
> ETC (2b): ***It was interesting that*** the advanced students undervalued their relatively improved performance in the slow conditions mainly because the techniques were not similar to the speeds of the final exam.

In ETC (2a), the author stated what he/she believed was an important note that would add to the readers' understanding. As for example ETC (2b), the author commented on the findings of the study and showed his/her evaluation by adding the adjective *interesting* in the *it….that* clause.

Emphatics

As far as emphatics are concerned, Hewings & Hewings (2002) categorized them into three sets: (3a) those which indicate that a certain conclusion should be reached, (3b) those which strongly draw readers' attention to a certain proposition, and (3c) those which express the writer's strong conviction. "*It...that*" emphatics were used 101 times in ATC and 70 times in ETC.

> ATC (3a): Viewed in the light of a proficiency-based sensitivity to MI, ***it follows that*** the most proficient language users, professional academics and advanced graduate students would exhibit this sensitivity to phrasal association, whereas the other two groups would not.

ATC (3b): However, ***it must be recognized*** that participants were communicating in a second language and to be sensitive to them, given the potentially exhausting nature of an overly long interview, I chose to cap the sessions at one hour.

ATC (3c): It ***cannot be claimed*** that the result of this study is a holistic description of disordered language among people with schizophrenia; rather, it is an assessment of the accuracy of a (substantial) subset of existing claims about the language of individuals with schizophrenia who are undergoing psychopharmacological intervention.

In these three examples, the authors used a more confident voice in stating their claims. In ATC (3a), the author used the verb *follows* to express that his/her conclusion was logical and justifiable based on what was mentioned in their study. In ATC (3b), the author strongly grabbed the readers' attention to his/her claim by adding the modal verb *must*. Finally, in ATC (3c), the author strongly expressed his/her conviction that a certain proposition was impossible using the negated form of the modal verb *can*.

ETC (3a): ***It is widely accepted that*** successful communication does not merely depend on grammar and vocabulary, but also on pragmatic competence.

ETC (3b): ***It is important to note that*** ten instructors represented the sample of the study, among which five were Americans and five were Egyptians.

ETC (3c): Thus, according to the previous studies, ***it is clear that*** learners' insufficient pragmatic competence or their awareness of power relations are crucial factors in their construction or production of disagreement.

In these three examples, the authors showed a more confident tenor in stating their evaluations. In ETC (3a), the author used the expression *widely accepted* to show that the proposition, he/she mentioned, was not a mere claim rather it was a fact that is widely known and accepted by the readers. In ETC (3b), the author strongly drew the attention of his/her readers to a certain claim by stressing on the importance of noting it. Finally, in ETC (3c), the author strongly expressed his/her conviction that a certain proposition was evident based on the findings of "previous studies."

Attributions

Finally, attributions are divided into (4a) propositions with a reference and (4b) general propositions without referencing. "*It…that*" attributions were used 47 times in ATC and 88 times in ETC.

> ATC (4a): While passive construction can also be formed with the verb get and the past participle, ***it has been argued*** by Mitkovoska & Buzarovska (2012) ***that*** this construction is categorically different.
>
> ATC (4b): Overall, ***it is estimated that*** 20-25 percent of Algeria's population speak some form of Tamazight to some degree.

In the first example, the author employed a specific attribution to support his/her claim. He/she mentioned an argument then added a reference to the person who stated it. This added to the credibility of his/her claim. As for the second example, the author stated a claim and added a general attribution to back it up by saying "*it is estimated*…"; however, they did not state the reference.

ETC (4a): Moreover, ***it has been stated*** by Pho (2008) that Hyland's model is not accurate because the names given to the moves in this model do not reflect their functions.

ETC (4b): After many years of research, ***it has been established*** that the two categories of teachers complement each other, where each category has both strengths and weaknesses.

In the first example, the author employed a specific attribution to support his/her claim. He/she mentioned an argument then added a reference to the person who stated it. This added to the credibility of his/her claim. As for the second example, the author stated a claim and added a general attribution to support it by saying "*it has been established…*" He/she did not state the reference, but rather argued that his/her proposition was a well-established fact based on "many years of research," not their own personal opinion.

Table 4.3

"It…..that" Clauses in ETC and ATC

Interpersonal Role	ETC Examples	ATC Examples
Hedges	It seems that	It is possible that
	It appears that	It is plausible that
	It suggests that	It is likely that
	It may be that	It may be that
	It can be concluded that	It may appear that
	It can be suggested that	It is conceivable that
	It can be seen that	It seems that
	It could be inferred that	It appears that
		It appears likely that
		It may be possible that
		It may be relevant that
		It seems unlikely that
		It suggests that
		It can be assumed that

		It can be surmised that
Attitude Markers	It is worth mentioning that It is noteworthy that It is notable that It is important that It is better that It is interesting that It was surprising that It is significant that	It is worth mentioning that It is worthwhile to note that It is worth noting that It is noteworthy that It is critical that It is imperative that It is crucial that It is unsurprising that It is paramount that It is natural that It is interesting that It is of interest that It is unusual that It is unfortunate that It is troubling that
Emphatics	It is widely accepted that It is expected that It is clear that It is evident that It is apparent that It should be noted that It must be noted that It is safely assumed that	It is widely acknowledged that It is widely believed that It has long been common knowledge that It follows that It is realistic to assume that It is unrealistic to assume that It is reasonable to assume that It is safe to assume that It would be logical to presume that It is logical to speculate that It stands to reason that It is reasonably inferred that It is expected that It is apparent that It is known that It is essential that It should be noted that It must be noted that It should be acknowledged that It must be recognized that It is important to note that It is important to point out that It is/became clear that It is/became evident that It is salient that It cannot be that

		It cannot be concluded that
		It cannot be claimed that
Attribution	It is found that	It has been argued that
	It is assumed that	It has been suggested that
	It is argued that	It has been shown that
	It is observed that	It has been maintained that
	It is noted that	It has been noted that
	It is recommended that	It has been hypothesized that
	It was reported that	It is thought that
	It was suggested that	It is estimated that
	It was stressed that	It was found that
	It is believed that	It is assumed that
	It has been established that	

After detailed and careful examination of the concordance lines of both corpora, I managed to compile all the "*it…that*" structures used by Egyptian and American researchers in the collected data of my study. It was mentioned earlier that there were no notable differences in the total frequency of using these structures in both corpora; however, after carefully looking into Table 4.3, it came to my attention that there is a major difference between American and Egyptian researchers regarding the variety of the lexical items they use in *"it….that"* clauses. As shown in Table 4.3, American researches showed a wide variety of lexical items and syntactic structures while Egyptian researchers seemed to choose from a limited collection of words or structures when they use "*it….that*" clauses. For example, in the attitude markers category, American researchers used adjectives like *worth noting, noteworthy, critical, imperative, unsurprising, paramount, natural, crucial, interesting, of interest, unusual, unfortunate,* and *troubling* while Egyptian researches used *worth mentioning, noteworthy, important, better, interesting, surprising,* and *significant*. Not only did American researchers use a wide variety of adjectives to express their stance, but they also used different synonyms to express the same point such as *imperative, crucial, critical,* and *paramount* in comparison to the adjective

important used by Egyptian researchers. The same applies to the two other categories: hedges and emphatics in both corpora.

III. Use of Other Stance Markers in ATC and ETC

Passive Voice

　　Reilly, Zamora, and McGivern (2005) believe that there is a range of rhetorical choices to reveal writers' stance that moves from "the personal to the general, from the concrete to the abstract, from the specific to the general, from the immediate to the distanced, and from the involved to the detached" (p.187). They propose that the active voice represents the involved and immediate form of expressing stance while the passive voice represents the more distanced perspective. After analyzing the frequency and function of using first person singular pronouns in ETC and comparing it to that of ATC, it became evident that Egyptian researchers prefer to employ detached forms of expressing stance. In an attempt to confirm these findings, the frequency of using passive voice in both corpora was examined and compared. Since the corpora were not tagged for POS, it was slightly challenging to detect the frequency of passive voice structures. It was not efficient to depend entirely on the concordancing program; therefore, a manual search was carried out as well.

Table 4.4

The Frequency of Passive Voice in ATC and ETC

Self-mention pronouns	No. of occurrences in ATC	No. of occurrences in ETC
Present Simple (Singular)	416	833
Present Simple (Plural)	380	629
Past Simple (Singular)	488	984
Past Simple (Plural)	621	1101

Present Perfect (Singular)	64	92
Present Perfect (Plural)	66	76

As shown in Table 4.4, there is a clear difference in the frequency of using the passive voice in both corpora. The frequency in ETC substantially exceeded that of ATC in all the examined tenses. Egyptian researchers in ETC used the singular and plural present simple passive structures 833 and 629 times respectively, which represents almost double the number of occurrences of those used by the American researchers in ATC. Similarly, Egyptian researchers used the singular and plural past simple passive structures 984 and 1101 times compared to 488, and 621 times used by the American researchers. As for the plural present perfect passive structures, the difference between using it in both corpora was not vast; Egyptian researchers used it 76 times which exceeded those of American researchers by 10 occurrences only. The results of this search provide further evidence to the fact that non-native researchers tend to use more distanced means of expressing their evaluation than native researchers do.

Hedges and Boosters

Hu and Cao (2011) define hedges as "self-reflective linguistic expressions employed to express epistemic modality and modify the illocutionary force of speech acts" (p. 2796). As for boosters, Silver (2003) refers to them as devices which help the writer regulate her/his attention more, either by placing emphasis on or by diminishing a given proposition. Therefore, hedges and boosters can be regarded as complete opposites; they either withhold or strengthen commitment to a position. In my study, I investigate the use of hedges, represented in doubt adverbs, and the use of boosters, represented in certainty adverbs, in both corpora. Biber and

Finnegan (1989) identified these two categories of adverbs that subtly reflect the writers' certainty or uncertainty towards the statements they modify.

Table 4.5

The Frequency of Certainty Adverbs in ATC and ETC

Certainty Adverbs	No. of occurrences in ATC	No. of occurrences in ETC
Actually	40	13
Absolutely	4	1
Certainly	15	3
Clearly	58	25
Definitely	16	2
Indeed	13	10
In fact	61	26
No doubt	2	0
Obviously	15	0
Of course	14	6
Surely	14	0
Undeniably	12	0
Undoubtedly	11	0

From Table 4.5, it is obvious that ATC researchers showed a higher frequency of using certainty adverbs while ETC researchers tended not to express certainty toward their claims. There were considerable differences in the use of *actually, clearly, definitely,* and *in fact* in both corpora. ATC researchers used these adverbs 40, 58, 16, and 61 times, respectively compared to 13, 25, 2, and 26 occurrences in ETC. Also, it is important to note that some certainty adverbs were used by ATC researchers but were not employed at all by the Egyptian researchers in ETC such as *no doubt, obviously, surely, undeniably,* and *undoubtedly*.

Table 4.6

The Frequency of Doubt Adverbs in ATC and ETC

Doubt Adverbs	No. of occurrences in ATC	No. of occurrences in ETC
Apparently	2	6
Likely	16	21
Perhaps	5	19
Possibly	10	25
Probably	15	15
Seemingly	1	17
Theoretically	1	16

It is evident from the frequencies illustrated in Table 4.6 that Egyptian researchers showed a higher frequency of using some doubt adverbs. They used the adverbs *perhaps, possibly, seemingly, and theoretically* 19, 25, 17, and 16 times, respectively compared to 5, 10, 1, and 1 occurrences in ATC. This consolidates the findings drawn from Table 4.5 that American researchers in ATC showed more confidence and certainty toward their proposed claims while Egyptian researchers in ETC expressed doubt toward their propositions more often.

This chapter presented the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the use of stance markers in Egyptian and American MA theses. The following chapter will discuss the interpretation of these results and their implications for teaching.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Corpus-based studies have contributed a great deal to the area of academic writing. The corpus-based approach to language analysis focuses on the actual language used in naturally occurring texts rather than what is theoretically possible in a language. This approach is more than merely counting the frequencies of occurrence of linguistic items. It can be rather used in analyzing and detecting certain patterns that are present in our authentic use of language. In this study, I explored the use of stance strategies in a genre of academic writing, namely, MA theses. Two research questions were posed. The first question aimed at identifying the linguistic strategies Egyptian and Native English-speaking thesis writers employ to express their stance while the second one aimed at exploring the differences in terms of the use of stance strategies between MA theses written by Egyptians and Native English speakers. The answers for the two questions were provided by examining the stance markers employed by Egyptian and American thesis writers and then detecting the similarities and differences between them regarding the frequency and function of their use. This chapter presents the discussion of the main results, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and finally suggestions for further research.

Use of Stance Markers in the American Thesis Corpus (ATC) and the Egyptian Thesis Corpus (ETC)

Looking into the results reported in Chapter 4, it is clear that using singular first person pronouns is a widely employed strategy by American thesis writers to present their authorial voice and align or disalign themselves with any given proposition, unlike Egyptian writers who used this feature much less frequently. ATC and ETC thesis writers utilized first person pronouns for several discourse functions which were first proposed by Harwood (2005) and

Hyland (2002). After examining the different contexts in which singular first person pronouns (*I, my*, and *me*) were used, the proposed functions were found in the two corpora and three more functions were added to the list based on the findings of the study.

From the ATC and ETC contexts, both American and Egyptian thesis writers used first person pronouns to report on the literature related to their area of study, introduce innovation or highlight the novelty of their contributions, state methodological pitfalls, personalize claims, and explain procedures. They also used those pronouns to elaborate on arguments, state goals, or purposes and acknowledge others. As for the new functions that were identified in this study, first person pronouns were used in both corpora to narrate personal experiences that have affected their interest or involvement in their topics, cite or reflect on references and other authors' contributions, and finally present actions, namely, the steps they have covered or have gone through in their studies.

One of the main findings highlighted in this study is that Egyptian thesis writers in ETC avoided the use of first person singular pronouns in their writing. This is remarkably noticed when the frequencies of *I, my,* and *me* were compared in both corpora. This suggests that Egyptian researchers tend to be more cautious while writing by using more detached strategies to express their views rather than direct self-reference. This conclusion is reinforced by the results that showed a higher frequency of using the passive voice by Egyptian MA thesis writers. This comes in line with the literature (Attarn, 2014; Çandarlı, Bayyurt, & Martı, 2015; Henderson & Barr, 2010; Molino, 2010; Mur Dueñas, 2007), which show that non-native researchers tend to use passive constructions and nominalisations more than self-mention to express their stance in academic writing.

The reasons behind this phenomenon could be that non-native researchers lack the linguistic awareness needed to employ self-mention in their writing. It could also be due to the instruction they received from their academic discourse communities or the department policy of their graduate programs. In the Egyptian context, the second reason seems more logical. As a former student at an Egyptian university where English was the medium of instruction, it has been the case that undergraduate students were required not to use first person pronouns when writing academic papers. We were advised to express our views using passive constructions or referring to ourselves as *one* as in "*one may argue that……*" This means that instruction and department policies are perhaps the reason behind the difference between Egyptian and American thesis writers in using this stance feature.

Regarding the impersonal "*it…that*" structures, they were frequently used by American and Egyptian thesis writers in both corpora. They were employed in different forms which were categorized in this study according to the number of slots between *it* and *that* in the structure. The functions of these structures were examined as well based on the framework provided by Hewings & Hewings (2002). It was found that American and Egyptian thesis writers used "*it…that*" structures as hedges, attitude markers, emphatics, and attributions.

One of the findings underscored in this study is that the Egyptian and American thesis writers showed similarities in their use of the *"it….that"* structure. The same functions were applied to the "*it…that*" structures used in ATC and ETC. There was a very slight difference in the total frequency of using this structure in both corpora. This contradicts the findings of Hewings & Hewings (2002), which show that non-native writers tended to utilize more "*it...that*" structures than native writers did. Another important finding to note is that the difference in the frequency of using the "*it...that*" structure in both corpora was not consistent across the four

functional categories. It was found that the American thesis writers showed a higher frequency in using "*it…..that*" structures as hedges, attitude markers and emphatics. As for the Egyptian thesis writers, they used more *"it…that"* attributions than the American writers did. This does not go in line with the findings of Hewings & Hewings (2002), which demonstrate that non-native writers showed a greater use of *it*-clauses as attitude markers and emphatics than native writers did. However, my findings agree with Hewings & Hewings (2002) in the fact that non-native writers used more "*it…that*" structures as attributions and less as hedges.

The slight difference in the total frequency of using the "*it…that*" structure in both corpora is very interesting to note because it demonstrates that Egyptian thesis writers have linguistic competence and are aware of the syntactic complexity of such structures. The Egyptian thesis writers in ETC were able to add up to seven slots between *it* and *that* in these structures. The linguistic competence shown by Egyptian thesis writers, in their use of such complex structures, can be linked back to the fact that the Arabic language is known for its complexity; the Arabic sentence structure often contains embedded clauses and modifiers.

Although the Egyptian thesis writers showed a great deal of linguistic competence and syntactic complexity in their use of the "*it…that*" structure, the problem of the lack of lexical diversity became evident after examining the concordance lines of those structures in ETC and ATC. The American researchers used a wide variety of lexical items and syntactic structures. For instance, they used a variety of adjectives or different synonyms for the same adjective while the Egyptian researchers seemed to choose from a limited collection of words (See Table 4.3). Another feature that was utilized by the American researchers, and not by the Egyptian ones, is the use of the verb *became* instead of verb *to be* as in *"it became evident that…."* The reason behind this could be that Egyptian thesis writers are not aware of the lexical alternatives present

in the English language or that they tend to stick to the lexicon they know well in order to guarantee its correct use.

Finally, the American thesis writers displayed a higher frequency of using certainty adverbs while the Egyptian thesis writers used more doubt adverbs. The reason behind this could be that the Egyptian writers, as novice and non-native researchers, did not want to seem overconfident while presenting their arguments or did not want to impose their propositions on the readers. Using doubt adverbs might have been a face-saving strategy that made it safer for them to report results, highlight findings, or critique studies in the literature. Furthermore, some of the doubt adverbs in ETC are commonly used in Arabic, the native language of the thesis writers, and this could link their use of certain doubt adverbs to L1 interference.

It can be concluded from the results of the study that Egyptian researchers tend not to express their stance in a direct manner. They rather disguise their commitment toward certain propositions. They prefer to use detached linguistic strategies in order to express their evaluation in a more impersonal way. This is displayed in a) their avoidance of using first person pronouns; b) their high frequency of using the impersonal "*it…that*" structures; and c) their high frequency of using passive constructions and doubt adverbs. Since the aim of this study was to provide a pattern drawn from the findings in order to help Egyptian graduate students express their stance and project their credibility in academic writing, the following section offers some pedagogical implications that can help novice researchers establish an authorial voice in their academic writing.

Pedagogical Implications

This study aimed at investigating a problematic area in the writing of many non-native researchers, which is establishing an authorial voice. It is essential for academic writers - especially novice researchers- to learn how to communicate their stance or evaluation both explicitly and implicitly in order to be accepted as members of any disciplinary community. Having examined the stance patterns used by Egyptian thesis writers and compared them to those of American thesis writers, namely, the standard use of language, I discuss the following implications that should be taken into consideration in the Academic Writing courses offered for Egyptian graduate students.

a) **Utilizing First Person Singular Pronouns**

Egyptian researchers, especially the novice ones, should be encouraged to use first person singular pronouns *I, my,* and *me* to express their views. Before doing this, it would be better to expose them to authentic material where authors use first person pronouns such as theses written by native speakers of English or internationally published journal articles. Also, it would be useful to introduce them to the discourse functions of first person pronouns that were proposed by Harwood (2005) and Hyland (2002). Understanding the pragmatic function behind using these pronouns would encourage them to utilize it in writing. Instructors of Academic Writing courses could integrate corpus materials and corpus-based language tasks into their teaching. For example, they could provide novice researchers with instances of the concordance lines and ask them to rewrite them using the first person pronoun. This would address the issue of overusing passive constructions and "*it…that*" structures by Egyptian researchers. In addition, they can provide researchers with instances where first pronouns are used and ask them to identify their

discourse functions to make sure that they grasp the concept of utilizing first person pronouns in different contexts.

      b) Acquiring Lexical Diversity in Using "*it…that*" Structures

Addressing the issue of lack of variety in the Egyptian researchers' use of lexical items and structures can be done by providing novice researchers with lists of compiled words and structures from ATC. For example, they can be provided with Table 4.3 which will help them notice the difference between the adjectives that can be used in "*it…that*" structures. Another way is to provide novice researchers with extracts from ATC and ask them to find synonyms for certain words or verbs. There are many ways in which instructors can integrate authentic material from ATC or any other academic corpus to help novice researchers develop their lexical repertoire. Other than the previously mentioned explicit means of teaching lexical items, instructors can use the ATC theses as a resource for academic reading which would help novice researchers familiarize themselves with the genre and acquire some lexical items and structures implicitly (Li & Schmitt, 2009).

Limitations of the Study

As mentioned in Chapter Four, the main limitation of the study was that searching for some language items had been a real challenge for me. The corpora were not tagged for parts-of-speech and this significantly limited my search options. After each search, I had to manually examine the concordance lines to make sure that there were no false hits. Indeed, I managed to exclude many instances that were not related to the search keys entered. If the corpora had been tagged, it would have saved me a lot of time and effort and made my results less subject to human error.

Suggestions for Further Research

For further research examining stance features in academic writing, I think it would be beneficial to conduct interviews with the writers themselves to see whether they are aware of the stance patterns they are following or not. In addition, researchers can use interviews to try and understand the writers' reasons behind preferring certain stance strategies.

As for further research concerning academic writing in general, one of the aspects that drew my attention while examining the concordance lines in both corpora was the thesis writers' choice of tense, especially simple past and present perfect. Future studies could investigate the writers' preferences for a certain tense over the other and the reason behind it.

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Appendix A

A list of discourse functions of using personal pronouns generated by Harwood (2005):

1- Organizing the text and guiding the reader

2- Stating personal opinions and knowledge claims

3- Recounting experimental procedure and methodology

4- Acknowledging funding bodies, institutions, and individuals that contributed to the study

5- Highlighting the novelty of contribution

6- Discussing methodological pitfalls

7- Self-citing

8- Reporting on literature

A list of discourse functions of using personal pronouns generated by Hyland (2002):

1- Stating a goal or purpose

2- Explaining procedures

3- Stating claims

4- Expressing self-benefits

5- Elaborating an argument

A classification of interpersonal functions of *"it…that"* clauses generated by Hewings &

Hewings (2002):

Classification of *it*-clauses

Interpersonal functions of *it*-clauses	Subcategories	Example realisations
1 hedges	1a likelihood/possibility/certainty; importance/value/necessity etc. 1b what a writer thinks/assumes to be/will be/was the case	it is likely, it seems improbable, it would certainly appear it could be argued, it seems reasonable to assume, it was felt
2 attitude markers	2a the writer feels that something is worthy of note 2b the writer's evaluation	it is of interest to note; it is worth pointing out; it is noteworthy it is important; it was interesting; it is surprising
3 emphatics	3a the writer indicates that a conclusion/deduction should be reached; that a proposition is true 3b the writer strongly draws the reader's attention to a point 3c the writer expresses a strong conviction of what is possible/ important/necessary, etc.	it follows; it is evident; it is apparent it is important to stress; it should be noted; it must be recognised; it is essential to understand it is clear; it is impossible; it is safe to assume; it would be strongly desirable
4 attribution	4a specific attribution (with a reference to the literature) 4b general attribution (no referencing)	it has been proposed (+reference) it is estimated (+no reference)

A figure of classification of it-clauses. Adapted from "It is interesting to note that. . .": A comparative study of anticipatory '*it*' in student and published writing," by M. Hewings and A. Hewings, 2002, *English for Specific Purposes, 21*, p. 372.