

UDC 801.8-028.14:[371.1:811.111]:001.818
801.8-028.14:811.111'373:[001.818
[811.111'42+801.73]:808-047.43 Martin J. R.
[811.111'42+801.73]:808-047.43 White P. R. R.
<https://doi.org/10.18485/bells.2025.17.2>

Katarina Ilić*

University of Niš
Faculty of Philosophy
Niš, Serbia
<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-2409-0861>

HETEROGLOSSIA IN ELT AND ESP RESEARCH ARTICLE ABSTRACTS: INSTANTIATION AND REALIZATION ACROSS RHETORICAL STRUCTURE**

Abstract

This study investigates how authors construct evaluative stance and engage readers in research article abstracts, drawing on the Engagement subsystem of Appraisal Theory (Martin & White 2005). Focusing on heteroglossic expressions, it examines how writers manage dialogic space through strategies of contraction and expansion across rhetorical moves. The sample includes 50 abstracts – 25 from English Language Teaching (ELT) and 25 from English for Specific Purposes (ESP). A mixed-method approach combines quantitative corpus analysis using UAM CorpusTool with qualitative interpretation. The results indicate that dialogic expansion predominates in introduction, purpose, method, and conclusion sections, while contraction is more frequent in product sections. The findings clarify how Engagement choices shape disciplinary identity, guide readers, and support knowledge-building in academic writing.

Key words: Appraisal Theory, Engagement, dialogic communication, heteroglossia, research article abstracts

* katarina.iiilic@gmail.com

** The research was conducted within the scope of a doctoral dissertation at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš.

1. Introduction

Bearing in mind the complexity of scientific texts, the analysis of academic discourse can be diverse and layered, in linguistic and sociolinguistic terms. The language of science has been explored by researchers mainly from the following four perspectives: 1) applied linguistics; 2) information studies; 3) historical linguistics; and 4) sociological studies (Hyland & Salager-Meyer 2008).

In applied linguistics, Appraisal theory, developed within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), provides an important framework for analyzing scientific language. Unlike rule-based views of language, SFL emphasizes speakers' meaning potential and focuses on texts rather than sentences, treating grammar as the realization of discourse (Halliday & Martin 1993). It views language as a system for construing meaning, not merely expressing it. SFL identifies three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The interpersonal metafunction—central to Appraisal theory—examines how language shapes social relationships, reflecting attitudes toward discourse as dialogue (Halliday & Matthiessen 1999). From this perspective, scientific texts also engage in dialogue with their academic communities.

Appraisal theory analyzes the meaning-making resources used to enact interpersonal metadiscourse, encompassing evaluation through “positive and negative assessments, by which the intensity or directness of such attitudinal utterances is strengthened or weakened and by which speakers/writers engage dialogistically with prior speakers or with potential respondents to the current proposition” (White 2015: 1). It distinguishes three categories: Attitude, which maps and expresses feelings (Martin & White 2005; Babaii, Reza Atai & Saidi 2017); Engagement, which captures dialogic positioning through different stances toward propositions and audiences; and Graduation, which modulates meaning by intensifying, mitigating, or adjusting category boundaries (Martin & White 2005; White 2015).

The system of Engagement is concerned with linguistic mechanisms used by speakers/writers to adopt a stance towards the attitudinal propositions in a text and their addressees and thus engage the addressees in the process of evaluation (Martin & White 2005; Stojičić & Figar 2018). The meanings grouped together as Engagement are not understood in truth functional terms but as possibilities for the authorial voice to position

itself towards alternative viewpoints and other voices in a communicative event (Martin & White 2005; White 2015). The abovementioned linguistic mechanisms consist of a variety of lexical and grammatical forms which achieve a specific rhetorical effect in context. According to Martin and White (2005), Engagement is concerned with whether the authorial voice is neutral, undecided or stands with or against other speakers/writers and their value positioning. In other words, authors negotiate their alignment or disalignment with such positionings referenced by the text. Therefore, they engage with other speakers/writers and prior utterances in the same sphere, thus creating a community of shared beliefs and values. Engagement encompasses meanings that position a text in dialogue with prior knowledge, alternative perspectives, and the anticipated audience. This creates a heteroglossic background, acknowledging multiple voices or viewpoints. In contrast, some statements are presented as intersubjectively neutral, objective, and factual, focusing solely on truth conditions without addressing their dialogic role. These are referred to as bare assertions. As monoglossic or single-voiced propositions, they are considered dialogically inert, lacking acknowledgment of alternative viewpoints (Martin & White 2005). We can deduce that the broad classification of Engagement involves *monoglossia* ('single voice'), in which the utterances do not allow for alternative viewpoints, and *heteroglossia* ('diversity of voices'), by which the voice in the text invokes other voices.

According to Martin and White (2005, p. 102), *heteroglossia* refers to the presence of dialogic diversity within a text and is a central feature of the Engagement system in Appraisal Theory. This diversity is broadly classified into two categories: dialogic contraction and dialogic expansion, based on the extent to which an utterance permits or restricts alternative viewpoints (Loghmani et al. 2019). Dialogic contraction involves linguistic choices that limit or suppress dialogic alternatives, and includes two main strategies: disclaim and proclaim. Disclaim covers formulations that explicitly reject other perspectives, either through denial, where alternative views are directly negated (e.g. *never*, *not*, *no* etc.), or counter, where a new proposition is introduced to replace an existing one (e.g. *but*, *yet*, *however* etc.). Proclaim, on the other hand, affirms the author's position while marginalizing opposing views. It includes concurrence, which signals agreement with an assumed or actual dialogic partner (e.g. *naturally*, *obviously*, *clearly*, etc.), pronouncement, where the author strongly asserts or emphasizes their stance (e.g. *really*, *ultimately*, *indeed*, etc.), and

endorsement, which involves referencing external sources to validate the proposition being advanced (e.g. *show*, *demonstrate*, *find*, etc.) (Martin & White 2005; Stojičić & Figar 2018). Dialogic expansion, by contrast, allows space for alternative voices and viewpoints, and includes the strategies of entertainment and attribution. Entertainment reflects the author's openness to multiple possibilities and is realized through expressions of epistemic modality, indicating likelihood (e.g. *can*, *possibly*, etc.) and evidentiality, which points to knowledge based on evidence or appearance (e.g. *apparently*, *obviously*, *indicate*, etc.). Attribution introduces external perspectives into the text, either through acknowledgment where an external viewpoint is cited without overt authorial evaluation (e.g. *according to*, *in X's view*, etc.), or distance, where the author deliberately signals detachment from the attributed material (e.g. *claim*) (Loghmani et al. 2019; Martin & White 2005; Stojičić 2016). This taxonomy offers a nuanced understanding of how authors manage dialogic space in texts, enabling them to align with, resist, or entertain various positions in relation to their readers and the broader academic discourse.

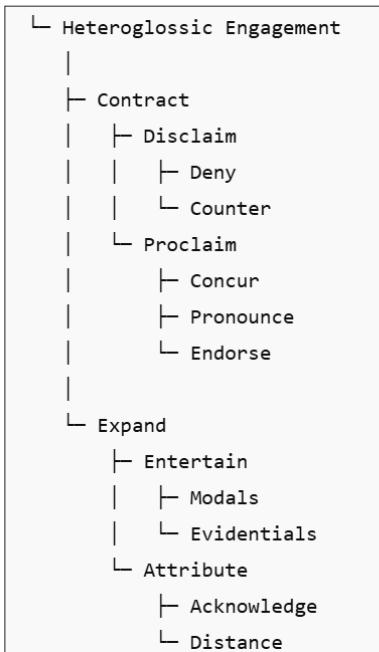


Figure 1. Classification of heteroglossic Engagement strategies

The purpose of this study is to investigate the heteroglossic Engagement subsystem of Appraisal in research article abstracts from English Language Teaching (ELT) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Monoglossic utterances were excluded, as they do not establish a dialogic relationship between the writer and the reader. Abstracts were chosen because they condense the article's main content, serving both to summarize research and to guide readers' decisions about full-text engagement (Salager-Meyer 1990; Hyland & Tse 2005; Swales & Feak 2009). An effective abstract typically reflects the IMRAD structure, presenting introduction, methods, results, and discussion.

This study focuses on how authors construct indirect dialogue with their academic community by deploying Engagement resources across rhetorical moves. Following Hyland's (2004) framework, the analysis traces the distribution of these resources through the abstract's structure – introduction, purpose, method, product, and conclusion—using both statistical and qualitative approaches. Here, the terms *rhetorical move* and *section* are used interchangeably to denote functionally distinct parts of the abstract that guide readers through the text.

2. Material and Methods

This study analyzes heteroglossic Engagement in 50 research article abstracts – 25 from English Language Teaching (ELT) and 25 from English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Only journal article abstracts were included, excluding book, conference, or thesis abstracts. ELT and ESP, both within the soft sciences, are meaning-focused disciplines emphasizing language use and communicative practices (Hyland 2006a, 2006b; Khansir 2013). ELT centers on language learning and teaching across educational levels, while ESP focuses on language use in specific professional and social communities. Given their shared grounding in linguistic theory and practice, these fields provide a relevant context for examining how academic writers employ Engagement resources to construct knowledge.

The sample was drawn from journals published by the Taylor & Francis Group, selected for three reasons: (1) consistent editorial and peer-review standards, (2) indexing in reputable academic databases (e.g., Web of Science, ERIC, DOAJ), and (3) high citation impact according to Web of

Science. The abstracts analyzed were published between 2015 and 2023 and retrieved electronically from the Taylor & Francis platform (<https://www.tandfonline.com>) using the 'Advanced Search' option. For ELT, the terms *ELT* and *EFL* were used; for ESP, the search began with *ESP* and was refined with terms such as *English for Specific Purposes*, *Business English*, *Academic English*, *EAP*, *Medical English*, *English for Tourism*, and *English for Aviation*. This procedure yielded 50 abstracts from 33 journals. The corpus contains 8,258 words, averaging 165 words per abstract, with lengths ranging from 79 to 245 words.

As Xiaoyu (2017) observes, annotating Engagement resources is complex and subjective, since the taxonomy provides only a preliminary framework and meanings often vary with context. In this study, annotation was conducted manually using UAM CorpusTool (version 6), which supports multi-layered linguistic coding. Each abstract was carefully read to classify Engagement instances, and dictionaries were consulted in cases of uncertainty to ensure contextual accuracy.

Three annotation schemes were applied in UAM CorpusTool: one for Engagement resources, one distinguishing ELT and ESP samples, and one for rhetorical moves. The abstracts were first categorized as ELT or ESP, after which each was segmented into rhetorical moves based on Hyland's (2004) model: introduction (context and importance), purpose (aims or hypotheses), method (design and procedures), product (results or arguments), and conclusion (interpretation and significance). Finally, heteroglossic Engagement resources were manually annotated within each abstract in accordance with Martin and White's framework.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied in the analysis of the sample. The quantitative approach was used to calculate the frequency of Engagement strategies and conduct statistical analyses. The qualitative approach, by contrast, was employed to explore whether the presence of certain phenomena reflects broader patterns of language use (Xiaoyu 2017). As Hood (2004) observes, the qualitative method privileges depth over breadth and complexity over generality, offering insights into the text that are not attainable through quantitative analysis and enabling the examination of multiple dimensions of meaning as realized through interconnected lexical and grammatical choices.

3. Results

This section presents the results concerning the instantiation and realization of heteroglossic Engagement resources, focusing on their distribution across the rhetorical moves of research article abstracts – introduction, purpose, method, product, and conclusion – following Hyland's (2004) framework. The analysis combines quantitative examination with qualitative interpretation of interpersonal meanings, illustrated by representative examples from the sample.

3.1. Introduction Sections

According to Hyland (2004), the purpose of introductions is to establish the context of the article, provide its essential background, indicate the importance of the topic and motivate the research or discussion. In our sample, we identified 114 instances of heteroglossic Engagement in introductions (RF=55.8 per 1,000 words), with 61 (RF=29.9; G=53.5%) classified as expansion and 53 instances (RF= 25.9; G=46.5%) as contraction. Table 1 summarizes Engagement subtypes in introductions ranked by global selection probabilities, including the number of instances, frequency of occurrence per 1,000 words and most common realizations.

Table 1. Heteroglossic Engagement subtypes in introduction sections

Engagement Subtypes in Introduction Sections	G%	No. of instances	RF/1000 words	Most Common Realizations
Acknowledge [expansion: attribution]	28.9	33	16.2	view (n.), perception (n.), report on, review (v)
Modals [expansion: entertainment] ¹	22.8	26	12.7	about, attempt (n., v), whether, evaluate (v)

¹ Within Appraisal Theory, *modals* refer broadly to modalizing expressions, rather than exclusively to modal verbs.

Counter [contraction: disclaim]	20.2	23	11.3	however, still, although, conflict with (v.)
Deny [contraction: disclaim]	11.4	13	6.4	little, as opposed to
Pronounce [contraction: proclaim]	7.9	9	4.4	significant, importance, mostly, necessary
Endorse [contraction: proclaim]	4.4	5	2.4	represent, exhibit (v.)
Concur [contraction: proclaim]	2.6	3	1.5	widely accepted
Distance [expansion: attribution]	1.8	2	1.0	attempt (v.)
Evidentials [expansion: entertainment]	0.0	0	0.0	/

The resources of *acknowledgment* emerge as the most dominant category in introductions, with a global selection probability of 28.9%. The prevalence of acknowledgment strategies can be explained by their function of attributing a proposition to an external source, thereby making the authorial voice less overt. In introductions, this external voice typically represents other authors who establish the foundation of prior research, which is illustrated in:

- (1) Given the Malaysian English curriculum emphasis on learners' intercultural skills, the question that arises is whether imported coursebooks meet local learners' needs.

In this example, the external voice is not attributed to any author in particular, but to the policymakers of the Malaysian English curriculum, whose perspective is being challenged by the authorial voice further in the article. In any case, the external voice originates from an external source, wherein the authorial voice remains backgrounded.

The second most prominent Engagement subtype in introductions is modality ($G=22.8\%$). The prominence of modals in introductions can be associated with the shift in focus from previous to current research, where the authorial voice does not attribute the proposition to an external source but grounds it in their subjecthood (Fryer 2019), as in:

- (2) This paper describes a structured attempt to integrate the flipped classroom model into a senior-level course at the higher education level.

With a global selection probability of 20.2%, countering resources rank third in introduction sections. According to Fryer (2019), one of the key phases of introductions is identifying the gap in the field, which is realized by contrastive features, such as counter or deny or their pairing, as in:

- (3) One of the major changes that scholars have called for is the need to incorporate the diversity of the form, user and culture of English into the existing ELT curriculum. However, this still remains at a theoretical level.

With a global selection probability nearly half that of the preceding category, the feature of deny ranks fourth ($G = 11.4\%$). In introductions, the purpose of denials is to strengthen the position regarding the research gap in a particular field, especially when combined with countering resources. Even when denials appear independently, they serve a similar purpose, thus legitimizing the author's need for pedagogical intervention or further study, as in:

- (4) Although some studies have attempted to uncover the practicality of this call, they are mostly based in Inner Circle and Expanding Circle countries as opposed to Outer Circle countries with a colonial past.

In this instance, the sentence implicitly contrasts where studies are conducted, specifically negating or rejecting the inclusion of Outer Circle countries. The use of *as opposed to* establishes this contrast by denying or rejecting the possibility that Outer Circle countries have been equally represented.

Concerning pronouncement resources, the analysis reveals that they rank fifth in the introduction sections, with a global selection probability of 7.9%. Pronouncements increase the interpersonal risk by strengthening the authorial commitment to a proposition, which may explain their relatively

infrequent use in the introduction sections. One of the examples where the authorial voice employs pronouncement features without posing much threat to the writer-reader solidarity is shown below:

- (5) Teacher learning is of significant importance in mainstream education and a number of attempts have been made to measure the quality of teacher learning across different contexts.

With a global selection probability nearly two times lower than pronouncement ($G = 4.4\%$), the endorsement feature holds the sixth position in introductions. It is typically used to establish the overall field of study (Fryer 2019), as we can see below:

- (6) The correct use of frequently occurring word combinations represents an important part of language proficiency in spoken and written discourse.

The verb *represent* demonstrates the author's strong commitment to the preposition, which is expected to be more commonly seen in the product section, when the authorial voice presents the research results, rather than in the introduction, where the topic is introduced.

The least frequently employed Engagement resources in the introduction sections are concurrence ($G=2.6\%$), distance ($G=1.8\%$) and evidentials ($G=0.0\%$). Concurrence markers function to reinforce the acceptance of explicit instruction in the context of learners' strategy development, as seen below.

- (7) The effectiveness of explicit instruction, within the context of strategy development in learners, has been widely accepted for several years.

Regarding distance, its low frequency may be explained by the fact that it signals explicit disalignment from the proposition, as in:

- (8) Although some studies have attempted to uncover the practicality of this call, they are mostly based in Inner Circle and Expanding Circle countries as opposed to Outer Circle countries with a colonial past.

In this example, the verb *attempt* detaches the author from the proposition by attributing it to other authors. Furthermore, the author does not maintain a neutral position by indicating the limitations of the study, which are mostly based in Inner Circle instead of encompassing Outer Circle as

well. In addition to the context that primarily indicates the distancing effect, it is further reinforced by the countering resource realized by the subordinating conjunction *although*. In other contexts, the verb *attempt* can be classified as acknowledgment in the case when the author preserves the neutral position.

Finally, with respect to evidentials, no instances were identified in the introductions. Since the use of evidentials relies on evidence-based postulations, it is not typical to employ such a deduction process in introductions, which serve to set the article's context, provide background information, highlight the importance of the topic and motivate the research or discussion.

In summary, we could observe that the distinction in frequency between dialogic contraction and expansion is minimal in introduction sections. Therefore, the extent to which frequency alone influences the dialogic expansion or contraction of a text is open to debate. From a more fine-grained perspective, introductions are characterized by a high frequency of acknowledgment strategies attributing the preposition to an external source, which often represents previous researchers who lay the groundwork for the study. This heteroglossic position creates the dialogic space for alternatives, which is further in the abstract filled by the authorial perspective. The high frequency of modals serves to introduce elements of the present research or to evaluate previous findings while avoiding categorical assertions. Dialogic contraction is reinforced by the frequent deployment of countering resources. Notable frequency of counter is explained by their role in identifying gaps in the research field, which are subsequently addressed by the authorial voice. The use of denials, pronouncement and endorsement is moderate, whereas concurrence, distance and evidentials appear considerably less frequently in introductions.

3.2. Purpose Sections

The purpose section serves to outline the aim of the article, as well as its objective, thesis, or hypothesis (Hyland, 2004). Our sample contains 86 instances of heteroglossic Engagement in this move, with a relative frequency (RF) of 47.2 per 1,000 words. Among these, 61 instances (RF=33.5; G=70.9%) were categorized as expansion, and 25 instances (RF=13.7; G=29.1%) as contraction. Table 2 provides the summary of the Engagement subtypes in purpose sections, ranked by global selection

probability. The table includes the number of instances, relative frequency per 1,000 words, and the most common realizations.

Table 2. Heteroglossic Engagement subtypes in purpose sections

Heteroglossic Engagement Subtypes in Purpose Sections	G%	No. of instances	RF/1000 words	Most Common Realizations
Modals [expansion: entertainment]	38.4	33	18.1	attempt (v.), aim at, prospect, potential (adj.), whether, estimate (v.)
Acknowledge [expansion: attribution]	31.4	27	14.8	draw on, observation, reveal, report (v.), belief
Endorse [contraction: proclaim]	15.1	13	7.1	validate, establish, validity, reliability
Pronounce [contraction: proclaim]	7.0	6	3.3	determine, confirm, the most prominent
Deny [contraction: disclaim]	5.8	5	2.7	not, un-, non-
Evidentials [expansion: entertainment]	1.2	1	0.5	implication
Concur [contraction: proclaim]	1.2	1	0.5	but also
Distance [expansion: attribution]	0.0	0	0.0	/
Counter [contraction: disclaim]	0.0	0	0.0	/

As Table 3 indicates, modals stand out as the most frequently occurring category in the purpose sections, with a global selection probability of 38.4%. Since modality indicates likelihood stemming from the author's subjectivity, the authorial voice employs modalizing locutions in the purpose sections to convey the authors' effort to achieve a specific research goal, which may or may not be successful. In doing so, the author expands the dialogic space for an alternative outcome, which is illustrated below.

- (9) To capture the unique nature of collective teacher efficacy as reflected in ELT settings, the current study attempted to develop and validate a context-specific collective efficacy scale and use it in exploring collective efficacy beliefs in different ELT contexts.

The category of acknowledgment ranks second in the purpose sections (G=31.4%). Like in introductions, the role of acknowledgment in explaining the purpose involves recognizing the previous body of knowledge, which is then further evaluated in the text, as in:

- (10) The current study aimed at exploring the most prominent constituent elements of collective teacher efficacy beliefs and their contributing factors in the specific context of English language teaching.

In this example, the previous body of knowledge belongs to the teachers and refers to the beliefs they hold about their collective ability to impact student learning and success. The authorial voice is not explicitly present in the statement, suggesting a neutral stance towards it.

In purpose sections, the endorsement feature ranks third, with a global selection probability of 15.1%, roughly half that of the higher-ranked acknowledgment. While endorsement typically serves to present a preposition as highly warrantable by attributing it to an external source, in the purpose section it is not necessarily related to an explicitly stated external voice, which can be seen in:

- (11) The present study aimed to develop a new motivational teaching instrument and provide indication for the scale's validity and reliability of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers' basic psychological need fulfillment in online teaching (BPNOT), using samples of Indonesian novice and experienced ESP teachers across genders.

In the given example, *validity* and *reliability* are implicitly associated with established conventions in the field of educational measurement, instead of particular external research or author. Either way, the proposition is considered fully credible, leaving no space for alternatives.

The fourth-ranked category is pronouncement, with a global selection probability of 7.0%. Consistent with its overall function, in purpose sections it serves to amplify the authorial commitment to a preposition, as in:

- (12) The current study aimed at exploring the most prominent constituent elements of collective teacher efficacy beliefs and their contributing factors in the specific context of English language teaching.

Denials hold the fifth position, with a global selection probability of 5.8%. They are typically realized by morphological negations, resulting in minimal contextual influence and a moderate dialogic effect, as in:

- (13) This study's purpose is to examine and compare the impact of flipped classrooms versus non-flipped as a means to contribute to the growing line of research on flipped teaching through an evaluation of both methods' academic outcomes, along with students' perceptions for their learning experience.

Evidentials and concurrence occupy the sixth and seventh position in purpose sections, with a global selection probability of 1.2%. One of the typical realizations of evidentiality is the noun *implication*, which is most commonly found in conclusions. However, when identified in purpose sections, it is used to indicate that potential consequences or effects of the research analysis will be discussed.

- (14) This qualitative study investigates the qualities of the professional ELT TE and what implications such qualities have for achieving accountable and quality Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE).

Consistent with its general usage, concurrence in purpose sections operates persuasively by first presenting an obvious or widely accepted claim, thereby facilitating the reader's acceptance of an additional claim, as in:

- (15) Through their own personal and professional accounts and rationales, it seeks to comprehend how they construct their work experiences in the light of previous professional trajectories,

prior expectations and future mobility plans, but also against the backdrop of a highly precarious job market.

In purpose sections, we did not identify the resources of counter and distance.

Overall, in purpose sections, dialogic expansion predominates over dialogic contraction, with global selection probabilities of 70.9% and 29.1%, respectively. From a more detailed perspective, we can observe that modals are the predominant Engagement resource, suggesting that authors choose to present their voice as one of the available alternatives and reflects their attempt to accomplish a particular research objective. A high frequency of acknowledgment can be attributed to their role of referencing established knowledge or prevailing perceptions, which is then critically assessed throughout the text, opening the dialogic space for various interpretations. These two resources are followed by moderate use endorsement, pronouncement and deny. Evidentials and concurrence are only occasionally employed. Finally, the resources of distance and counter were not identified. The absence of distance can be explained by the fact that such resources signal the writer's detachment from a proposition, whereas the purpose section presents the study's aim in a direct, certain, and authoritative manner. Similarly, counter resources signal an anticipated opposing view or contradiction; however, in purpose sections, the writer does not engage in debate or evaluate alternative perspectives, but simply articulates the research objective.

3.3. Method Sections

The method section outlines the design, procedures, data, assumptions, approach, and other elements related to the study. The sample includes 29 instances of heteroglossic Engagement in this move (RF of 24.8 per 1,000 words), which is relatively lower compared to other moves. Among these, 21 instances (RF=18.0; G=72.4%) are classified as expansion, while 8 instances (RF=6.8; G=27.6%) fall under contraction. Table 3 summarizes the Engagement subtypes in the method sections, ranked by global selection probability. It details the number of instances, frequency of occurrence per 1,000 words, and the most common realizations.

Table 3. Heteroglossic Engagement subtypes
in method sections

Heteroglossic Engagement Subtypes in Method Sections	G%	No. of instances	RF/1000 words	Most Common Realizations
Acknowledge [expansion: attribution]	44.8	13	11.1	obtain, propose, perception
Modals [expansion: entertainment]	20.7	6	5.1	try, effort, perspective
Endorse [contraction: proclaim]	17.2	5	4.3	verify, validate
Evidentials [expansion: entertainment]	6.9	2	1.7	implication, suggest
Deny [contraction: disclaim]	6.9	2	1.7	not
Pronounce [contraction: proclaim]	3.4	1	0.0	the most prominent
Counter [contraction: disclaim]	0.0	0	0.0	/
Concur [contraction: proclaim]	0.0	0	0.0	/
Distance [expansion: attribution]	0.0	0	0.0	/

Acknowledgment emerges as the most dominant Engagement resource in the method sections, with a global selection probability of 44.8%. It serves to present methodological choices and instruments as credible, by attributing them to an external source, which is the case with the verb *obtain* in Example 16. The verb *obtain* attributes the preposition to a qualitative analysis, which is considered neutral by the author and thus warrantable.

(16) Based on the seven-component initial model obtained from qualitative content analysis, a 32-item questionnaire was developed and tried on 405 EFL teachers and instructors.

In this rhetorical move, modalizing expressions, which rank second (G=20.7%) are employed to convey the degree of authorial investment in the preposition, indicating an outcome that is not entirely certain, as the verb *try* in the same example. This verb indicates that the questionnaire was not definitively successful or fully established but was instead put into practice to observe its effectiveness. Despite its investment, the authorial voice includes the possibility that the questionnaire could be refined, opening the dialogic space for an alternative outcome.

Endorsement occupies the third position in the method sections (G=17.2%). In this rhetorical move, it is associated with confirming the reliability of particular methodological practices, presenting them as unquestioned research standards, as illustrated below.

(17) After developing the scale and administering it to 184 ELT teachers, it was validated through both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses which resulted in a few alterations.

The verbs *validate* and *result* serve to frame the methods as conclusive and beyond dispute, thereby eliminating alternative viewpoints, which is a characteristic feature of endorsement resources.

Evidentials and denials appear with a global selection probability of 6.9%, ranking fourth and fifth. The rhetorical function of evidentials in method sections is to signal the outcomes associated with the application of specific methodological procedures, which are supported by evidence inherent in the method itself, as observed in Example 18. The noun *implications* refers to the effects resulting from a particular action and the broader significance of its outcome.

(18) Data analysis applies the framework of complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF) to bring to the forefront the lexical features that delineate the presence of two varieties of English and the implications of their choice.

In denials, we could observe the instances of local negation, which does not entail the negation of an entire clause and therefore does not produce a significant syntactic effect, as in:

(19) This article reflects on the first author's action research, using student presentations as a pedagogical practice with first year postgraduate students not majoring in English in a Chinese university.

As with previous rhetorical moves, pronouncements in method sections (G=3.4%) serve to reinforce authorial commitment to a proposition, as in:

(20) To achieve this goal, guided by the related literature, the most prominent constituent elements of collective teacher efficacy were identified through a series of semistructured interviews with English language teachers and instructors in educational contexts of school, institute, and university.

In the method sections, we did not identify the resources of distancing, concurring and countering.

In short, the statistical analysis reveals that the density of Engagement resources in the method sections (RF of 24.8 per 1,000 words) is substantially lower than in other sections, suggesting that authors tend to favor monoglossic expressions in this rhetorical move. This trend can be attributed to the neutral role of the method section, where the authorial voice adopts an impartial tone to present methods and materials, leaving little space for dialogic interaction in the method sections. In this rhetorical move, dialogic expansion outweighs dialogic contraction, with global selection probabilities of 72.4% and 27.6%, respectively. A closer look reveals that authors typically choose the resources of acknowledgment, followed by modals and endorsement, which exhibit a more significant relative frequency per 1,000 words, whereas all other resources are represented to a lesser extent.

3.4. Product Sections

The product section, which presents information on research findings, exhibits the highest relative frequency per 1,000 words of Engagement strategies among all rhetorical sections, with an RF of 88.3 per 1,000 words (199 instances). Out of these, 120 instances (RF=53.3; G=60.3%) are categorized as contraction whereas 79 instances (RF=35.1; G=39.7%) as expansion, which is the opposite of introduction, purpose, and methods sections, where dialogic expansion prevails. Table 4 provides a summary of the Engagement subtypes in the product sections, arranged by global selection probability. It includes the number of instances, frequency of occurrence per 1,000 words, and the most frequent realizations.

Table 4. Heteroglossic Engagement subtypes
in product sections

Heteroglossic Engagement Subtypes in Product Sections	G%	No. of instances	RF/1000 words	Most Common Realizations
Endorse [contraction: proclaim]	30.7	61	27.1	find, finding, result (n.), show (v.), validity, validation, reveal, display (v.), demonstrate
Acknowledge [expansion: attribution]	17.6	35	15.5	note (v.), belief
Deny [contraction: disclaim]	11.6	23	10.2	un-, no, non-, lack
Modals [expansion: entertainment]	11.1	22	9.8	proposed (adj.), may, can, perspective, tend to, propose

Evidentials [expansion: entertainment]	11.1	22	9.8	indicate, emerge, suggest, lead to
Counter [contraction: disclaim]	9.0	18	8.0	though, while, but
Pronounce [contraction: proclaim]	7.5	15	6.7	remarkably, significantly, significant
Concur [contraction: proclaim]	1.5	3	1.3	not only... but also, certainly
Distance [expansion: attribution]	0.0	0	0.0	/

Endorsement is by far the most dominant Engagement resource in products, with a global selection probability of 30.7%, compared to 17.6% of acknowledgment, which ranks second. Since the resources of endorsement serve to attribute the preposition to an undeniable external source, thus offering no space for alternative positions, they are suitable for framing research results. This indicates that, in presenting results, the authorial voice adopts a dialogically contractive position, asserting the results with firm assurance of their correctness. This is illustrated with the verb *demonstrate* in the example below. The verb signals the author's strong agreement with the research results, whose credibility is not subject to doubt.

(21) Results demonstrated that there is a significant relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their teaching styles.

Acknowledgment, which ranks second in the product sections, functions to attribute propositions to an external voice considered in the analysis, as illustrated by the use of the noun *view* in Example 22. The reference to *participants' views* indicates that the positions expressed are those of the participants, not the author. This attribution thus delineates a clear boundary between authorial stance and reported stance.

(22) Although the findings indicate an overall Anglophone-centric attitude among the participants, particularly in terms of the choice of teaching model, they also reveal differences in the participants' views and experience of language use depending on their education level, age and occupational background.

The resources of deny rank third, with a global selection probability of 11.6%. We identified the instances of both morphological and noun phrase negation. Since their character is local, they do not perform the role of addressing and rectifying misconceptions, as exemplified in:

(23) Though some relative differences were found between the published and unpublished studies in the areas and contexts researched, both types of studies were similar in the research methods used and nature of the topics covered.

Modals and evidentials occupy the fourth and fifth position in the product sections ($G=11.1\%$). The purpose of modalizing locutions in product sections is to avoid overstating authorial certainty and showing openness to alternative interpretations, as in Example 24. In this example, the adjective *proposed* positions the preposition *collective efficacy model* as one of the possible options, whereas the scale mentioned in this sentence can fit other models, which invites the readers to consider alternative positions.

(24) The results of the confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the scale showed indices of construct validity and suitably fit the proposed collective efficacy model.

With regard to evidentials, whose use is grounded in evidence-based postulations, their function in this rhetorical move is typically to present research results. This is illustrated in Example 22, where the verb *indicate* signals that the conclusion is derived from data analysis and that the statement is substantiated by empirical evidence.

In the product sections, counter occupies the sixth position ($G = 9.0\%$), as illustrated in Example 22. In this case, the subordinating conjunction *although* serves to acknowledge one finding while countering it by introducing an alternative perspective that nuances or qualifies the initial generalization.

Pronouncement ranks seventh, with a global selection probability of 7.5%. Consistent with its function in other sections, pronouncement in the product sections serves to draw attention to a proposition and

emphasize the authorial stance, as exemplified by the adverb *particularly* in Example 22. This example demonstrates the density of heteroglossic Engagement in product sections, as a single sentence incorporates the resources of endorsement, evidentiality, counter, pronouncement, and acknowledgment.

Concurrence resources rank second to last in the product sections (G=1.5%). Within this rhetorical move, their function is to express the author's explicit alignment with a projected dialogic partner, consistent with their broader role in academic discourse, as seen below.

(25) The findings of the analysis suggest that the global ELT textbook not only presents a particular neoliberal worldview as common sense, but also encourages students to implement techniques of self-government to become entrepreneurial individuals and responsible consumers.

Similar to other rhetorical moves, distancing resources were not observed in the product sections.

Overall, our analysis indicates that, unlike in other rhetorical moves, dialogic contraction strategies are especially salient in product sections, with endorsement strategies demonstrating marked prominence. This tendency can be accounted for by the communicative purpose of the product section, which is to present the author's research findings grounded in systematic and empirical research. The results obtained in this manner are not open to negotiation by the authorial voice, thereby limiting the dialogic space for alternative perspectives.

3.5. Conclusion Sections

In conclusions, which interpret the results, discuss implications, draw inferences, highlight applications, and explicitly emphasize the broader significance of the research, we found 84 instances of heteroglossic Engagement, with a relative frequency of 75.7 per 1,000 words). Among these, 55 instances (RF=49.5; G=65.5%) are classified as dialogic expansion, whereas 29 instances (RF=26.1; G=34.5%) fall under dialogic contraction, showing the prevalence of the former category. Table 5 summarizes the Engagement subtypes in conclusions, detailing their global selection probabilities, frequencies and most common realizations.

Table 5. Heteroglossic Engagement subtypes
in conclusion sections

Heteroglossic Engagement Subtypes in Conclusion Sections	G%	No. of instances	RF/1000 words	Most Common Realizations
Acknowledge [expansion: attribution]	25.0	21	18.9	perception, belief
Modals [expansion: entertainment]	21.4	18	16.2	interpretation, can be considered, may, evaluate
Evidentials [expansion: entertainment]	19.0	16	14.4	suggest, indicate
Endorse [contraction: proclaim]	11.9	10	9.0	result (n.), findings, portray
Pronounce [contraction: proclaim]	9.5	8	7.2	largely, notably, conclude, highlight (n.)
Deny [contraction: disclaim]	6.0	5	4.5	not
Counter [contraction: disclaim]	6.0	5	4.5	however, but
Concur [contraction: proclaim]	1.2	1	0.9	clear
Distance [expansion: attribution]	0.0	0	0.0	/

In conclusions, acknowledgment is the most prevalent Engagement resource, with a global selection probability of 25.0%. The prominence of the acknowledgment feature can be attributed to the instances where claims are not directly linked to the authorial voice, but rather to the study, research, or any other entity. As a result, the author's voice is not explicitly foregrounded. In the instance below, the noun *perceptions* presents a subjective viewpoint, which does not belong to the author, but to senior-year ELT students, as reflected throughout the text. Therefore, the author maintains neutrality toward it.

(26) Results indicate largely positive perceptions and satisfying learning experiences.

Modals rank second, with a global selection probability of 21.4%. The role of modality in conclusions is to signal that research results are not absolute but rather subject to further investigation or interpretation, as in:

(27) The findings can be considered a milestone and have important implications for preparing professional English language teachers and achieving quality and accountability in SLTE.

The modalizing locution *can be considered* helps to soften the assertiveness of a statement, allowing the reader to disagree with the importance of the findings discussed.

Evidentials occupy the third position in the conclusion sections (G=19.0). Similar to the product section, the purpose of evidentials in conclusions is to demonstrate that the conclusion is derived from data analysis and is supported by evidence, while also leaving space for alternative interpretations. In the following example, the verb *suggest* signals that the author is offering ideas and recommendations, rather than presenting them as definite.

(28) In light of these results and interpretations, the author suggests some steps for reforming ELT research practices in Egypt.

The category of endorsement occupies the fourth position in conclusions (G=11.9%). It serves to add weight to the credibility of the results previously revealed, thus limiting the dialogic space for other positions. In Example 27, the noun *findings* suggests credibility of the research conducted, making the conclusion persuasive.

Pronouncement ranks fifth, with a global selection probability of 9.5%. Consistent with its function in other sections, pronouncement serves to

foreground the authorial stance, thereby reinforcing the plausibility of the author's conclusions. In the example below, the authorial voice employs two different pronouncement resources to lend greater authority to its claim.

(29) Therefore, our findings confirm that the translational business English in our corpus did indeed reflect TU claims, as the collocations in the translated text appeared to be both 'simpler' in form and more 'explicit' in meaning than native-speaker business English.

The resources of deny and counter occupy the sixth and seventh position, both with a global selection probability of 6.0%. Example 30 illustrates a moderate denial rather than a strong one, given that the negated modal verb signals a possibility rather than a categorical negation.

(30) Replacing a local textbook with an imported coursebook, therefore, may not necessarily be in the best interest of the country's English language agenda.

With respect to the countering resources, their role in conclusion sections is to override a given claim, thereby highlighting how the research addresses an existing gap.

(31) Consequently, it is suggested that tourism and hospitality courses should incorporate components that focus mainly on these skills, but not to the detriment of English reading and writing, which were also perceived as important.

Concurrence occupies the penultimate position in the conclusion sections, with a global selection probability of 1.2%. These strategies serve to naturalize a proposition by presenting it as self-evident. This, in turn, reinforces the author's conclusion as the only logical outcome, restricting the reader from interpreting the findings differently, as illustrated in the example below.

(32) Such a practice, it is believed here, is a clear instance of 'inculcation' (Fairclough N. [2001]. Language and power (2nd ed.). London: Routledge) whose effect needs to be counterbalanced by reflective teaching and critical pedagogy.

The instances of distancing were not identified in the conclusion sections.

In summary, the comparison of dialogic contraction and expansion strategies in conclusion sections reveals that authors tend to favor dialogic expansion when formulating their closing remarks. This preference reflects an inclination to refrain from definitive claims and instead allow space for alternative interpretations. Among these, acknowledgment emerges as the most frequently employed, followed by modality and evidentiality, suggesting that authors aim to ground their conclusions in the research, ensure they are evidence-based, and avoid drawing definitive conclusions.

4. Discussion

The statistical analysis of the density of Engagement resources across rhetorical moves of abstracts reveals that the product sections display the highest rate ($RF=88.3$ per 1,000 words), followed by the conclusions ($RF=75.7$ per 1,000 words), introduction ($RF=55.8$ per 1,000 words), purpose ($RF=47.2$ per 1,000 words), and method sections ($RF=24.8$ per 1,000 words). Compared to product sections, which narrow the dialogic space by limiting alternative perspectives, the introduction, purpose, method, and conclusion sections maintain a more open dialogic space. Such a pattern in the product section reflects authors' tendency to employ an authoritative stance in reporting research findings. Furthermore, the analysis shows that heteroglossic Engagement is most prevalent in product sections and least evident in methods. This suggests that authors typically employ a strong authoritative voice in products, while method sections are predominantly monoglossic, as the description of procedures and materials does not necessitate dialogic interaction with readers. Finally, the prevalence of dialogic expansion in the conclusion sections aligns with the intention to allow space for readers to disagree and offer alternative interpretations of the results.

A closer inspection of the distribution of Engagement resources in rhetorical moves individually shows the prevalence of acknowledgment resources in introduction, method and conclusion sections, such as the nouns *view*, *perception*, *belief* and the like, which are all attributed to an external source. In introductions, their role is to reference external sources, existing literature and the general body of knowledge. In methods, acknowledgment serves to present the selecting methods as credible, by attributing them to an external source, whereas in conclusions

it is employed to demonstrate how the authorial voice acknowledges alternative viewpoints while interpreting research results. In purpose sections, we observed the dominance of modality resources, which reflects the author's effort to achieve a specific research goal and their investment in the proposition, while also leaving the space for the possibility of failure, thus expanding the dialogic space for alternative perspectives. In products, endorsement resources are most frequently employed to link research findings with authoritative external sources, thereby asserting the credibility and accuracy of those findings with confidence.

5. Conclusion

The combined statistical and qualitative analysis demonstrates that Engagement resources are central to structuring research article abstracts, as they shape the author's rhetorical and interpersonal stance. These resources position claims within the wider academic dialogue, aligning with or distancing from existing perspectives. Their distribution across rhetorical moves reflects authors' intentions to assert a stance, negotiate meaning, or invite reader interpretation.

This study makes several interrelated contributions to both linguistic theory and academic writing pedagogy. By mapping Engagement resources across the rhetorical moves of research article abstracts—introduction, purpose, method, product, and conclusion—it demonstrates that dialogic positioning is strategically adapted to the communicative function of each section. These findings help educators and researchers better understand the rhetorical expectations of academic discourse in the abovementioned fields, particularly for non-native English-speaking authors navigating international publishing standards. In the context of Systemic Functional Linguistics, the study provides concrete evidence of how linguistic choices within the Engagement system construct disciplinary identity, guide reader positioning, and facilitate knowledge-building. By situating these findings within the context of research article abstracts, the study underscores the socially situated and meaning-making role of evaluative language in disciplinary communication.

This study is limited by its exclusive focus on heteroglossic Engagement, excluding monoglossic expressions. Future research could benefit from incorporating both heteroglossic and monoglossic resources to provide

a more comprehensive account of stance-taking in academic discourse. Secondly, even though abstracts provide useful insights into academic writing, analyzing full research articles would offer a more comprehensive understanding of Engagement strategies. Addressing these limitations in future studies could deepen knowledge of how Engagement functions across genres and further strengthen the theoretical and pedagogical contributions of Appraisal Theory.

References

Babaii, E., Atai, M.R. and Saidi, M. (2017). Are scientists objective? An investigation of appraisal resources in English popular science articles. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 5(1), 1–19. (5 January 2025) <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312580984_Are_scientists_objective_An_investigation_of_appraisal_resources_in_English_popular_science_articles>

Fryer, D.L. (2019). *Engagement in Medical Research Discourse* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Gothenburg.

Halliday, M. A. K. and Martin, J. R. (1993). *Writing Science: Literacy and Discursive Power*. London: The Falmer Press.

Halliday, M. A. K. and Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (1999). *Construing Experience Through Meaning: A Language-based Approach to Cognition*. London; New York: Continuum.

Hood, S. (2004). *Appraising Research: Taking a Stance in Academic Writing* (PhD Thesis). Faculty of Education, University of Technology, Sydney.

Hyland, K. (2004). *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interactions in Academic Writing*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Hyland, K. and Tse, P. (2004). Metadiscourse in academic writing: A reappraisal. *Applied Linguistics*, 25(2), 156–177.

Hyland, K. (2006a). Disciplinary differences: Language variation in academic discourses. In K. Hyland & M. Bondi (eds.), *Academic Discourse across Disciplines*, Frankfort: Peter Lang, 17–45.

Hyland, K. (2006b). English for Specific Purposes: Some Influences and Impacts. In A. Cummins & C. Davison (eds.), *The International Handbook of English Language Education Vol. 1*, Norwell, MA: Springer, 379–390.

Hyland, K. and Salager-Meyer, F. (2008). Scientific writing. *Review of Information Science and Technology*, 42(1), 297–338.

Khansir, A. A. (2013). Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching. *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research*, 15(8), 1140–1146.

Martin, J. R. and White, P. R. R. (2005). *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Loghmani, Z., Ghonsooly, B. and Ghazanfari, M. (2019). Textual engagement of native English speakers in doctoral dissertation discussion sections. *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics*, 10(1), 78–101. (7 June 2024) <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333043113_Textual_engagement_of_native_English_speakers_in_doctoral_dissertation_discussion_sections>

Salager-Meyer, F. (1990). Discoursal flaws in Medical English abstracts: A genre analysis per research- and text-type. *Text – Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse*, 10(4), 365–384.

Stojičić, V. (2016). Heteroglossia in George Orwell's essays through appraisal theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics. In *English Studies Today: Words and Visions* (pp. 431–443). Novi Sad: University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Philosophy.

Stojičić, V. and Figar, V. (2018). Dialogic space in Aldous Huxley's essays. *Jezik, književnost, prostor*, 737–748. (7 June 2024) <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325203448_Dialogic_Space_in_Aldous_Huxley's_Essays>

Swales, J. and Feak, C. B. (2009). *Abstracts and the Writing of Abstracts*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

White, P. R. R. (2015). Appraisal theory. In K. Tracy, C. Ilie, & T. Sandel (eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 1–8.

Xiaoyu, X. (2017). *An analysis of stance and voice in research articles across Chinese and British cultures, using the appraisal framework* (Doctoral dissertation). Coventry, United Kingdom: Coventry University.

Received: 2 September 2025

Accepted for publication: 30 October 2025