CERLIS
Centro di Ricerca sui Linguaggi Specialistici
Research Centre on Languages for Specific Purposes

Stefania Consonni / Larissa D'Angelo / Patrizia Anesa (eds.)

Digital Communication and Metadiscourse

Changing Perspectives in Academic Genres

9
2020

CERLIS Series

Each volume of the series is subjected to a double blind peer-reviewing process.

CERLIS Series
Volume 9

Stefania Consonni / Larissa D'Angelo / Patrizia Anesa (eds.)

Digital Communication and Metadiscourse
Changing Perspectives in Academic Genres

CELSB
Bergamo

CERLIS SERIES Vol. 9

CERLIS
Centro di Ricerca sui Linguaggi Specialistici
Research Centre on Languages for Specific Purposes
University of Bergamo
www.unibg.it/cerlis

Digital Communication and Metadiscourse: Changing Perspectives in Academic Genres
Editors: Stefania Consonni / Larissa D'Angelo / Patrizia Anesa
ISBN: 9788897413257
Url: http://hdl.handle.net/10446/27156

Published in Italy by CELSB Libreria Universitaria
Via Pignolo, 113 - 24121, Bergamo, Italy

Contents

PART 1. PAGE TO SCREEN: TRANSITIONING GENRES

JAMES JACOB THOMSON

Attitude markers in upper secondary pupil essays across educational contexts and genres

Abstract

The concept of interactional metadiscourse, which refers to linguistic resources that writers use to express their opinions and interact with their readers, has been a subject of growing interest in recent research on written communication. While many metadiscourse-related studies have focused on professional-level genres, few have analysed features of pre-tertiary writing. Furthermore, attitude markers, words that offer the author's affective evaluation, constitute a category of metadiscourse that arguably remains undertheorized. This study thus aims to investigate the types of attitude markers that upper secondary pupils rely on, and how the use of these types varies across educational contexts and genres. To address these aims, I collected and analysed a corpus comprising of 135 essays belonging to five genres written at Norwegian, Swedish and British schools. In total, 216 attitude marker types belonging to four sub-categories were identified. The frequencies of these sub-categories were then compared across educational contexts and genres. In contrast to previous studies, pupils in all three educational contexts offered their personal evaluations more frequently and with a greater range of types than would be expected in professional genres. The results also indicated that the pupils varied their use of attitude markers according to the purposes of the target genre. These findings may be relevant for guiding novice writers to adapt their expression of attitude to the communicative context.

1. Introduction

Essay writing is a central part of upper secondary education as pupils are frequently assessed via written assignments (Prosser/Webb 1994). In their essays, pupils not only have to prove their knowledge but also express their "attitude", a term referring to words that offer an affective evaluation, in an appropriate manner. Drawing on the concepts of "stance" or "metadiscourse" (e.g. Gray/Biber 2012; Hyland 2019), a number of studies have investigated how professional authors and university students express their attitude across a range of contexts (e.g. Mur Dueñas 2010; Lee/Deakin 2016). While studies have found that attitude markers are infrequent in certain contexts, such as in academia, where authors strive to remain objective (Hu/Cao 2015), other studies have found attitude markers to be relatively frequent in contexts such as journalism (Dafouz-Milne 2008), which illustrates the genre-specific demands to which authors have to adhere. Studies of novice writing have found that university students tend to avoid expressing their attitudes, emulating the impersonal style of academic writing (e.g. Ho/Li 2018). However, studies have mainly focused on "high prestige genres in academia" (Ädel 2018: 55), and little research has investigated attitude in pre-tertiary writing (e.g. Qin/Uccelli 2019). Furthermore, studies of metadiscourse have tended to address a large number of linguistic resources. Consequently, attitude often remains undertheorized, and discussions pertaining to attitude are often limited. By analysing the types[1] and frequencies of attitude markers in a corpus of upper secondary essays, this study offers a more comprehensive operationalisation of attitude in order to investigate how pre-tertiary writers express their affective evaluations.

For the purposes of this investigation, I collected a corpus of 135 English essays written across five genres at upper secondary schools situated in Norway, Sweden and the UK. Using these data, attitude markers were quantified and compared across educational contexts and genres. To clarify, this study does not compare how first and foreign-

[1] The term "type" is used to refer to "each graphical word form" in a text (McEnery/Wilson 2003: 32).

language speakers of English express their attitudes. Instead, pupils were grouped based on the country in which they study English, regardless of their first language. The UK was chosen because English is taught as a first language. Norway and Sweden, in which English is taught as a foreign language, were chosen because these countries are highly ranked in terms of general English proficiency (EF 2018). At the upper secondary level in these educational contexts, pupils are expected to be at a B2-equivalent level or higher (Council of Europe 2018: 77). This study therefore considers how different practices across educational contexts might affect pupils' writing practices. The research questions for this study are:

- Which attitude marker types are used in a corpus of upper secondary pupil essays?
- How do attitude markers in upper secondary essays vary across educational contexts and genres?

This paper outlines relevant theory and previous research on the expression of attitude in various written contexts before presenting the present study's contribution to the field.

2. Previous research

Although, as Biber (2006: 99) puts it, "it is difficult to operationalize [a] study of value-laden word choice", many studies of written communication have investigated how writers express their "attitude" (Mur Dueñas 2010) or "evaluation" (Martin/White 2005). Previous research has tended to focus on professional (e.g. Fu/Hyland 2014; McCabe/Belmonte 2019) and tertiary contexts (e.g. Ozdemir/Longo 2014) and a number of studies have compared metadiscoursal features in texts written by authors with various language backgrounds (e.g. Gholami/Ilghami 2016). However, little attention has been given to attitude in pre-tertiary writing and those few existing studies have

tended to compare attitude in high and low rated essays (e.g. Dobbs 2014). Furthermore, analyses have tended to rely on taxonomies of attitude that incorporate around just 70 attitude marker types (e.g. Lee/Deakin 2016; Hyland 2019). However, more elaborate operationalisations have been proposed, such as Mur Dueñas (2010), who reported using corpus-driven methods that involve considering the content of the corpus itself (Baker 2010). Consequently, she found 118 types of attitude marker in a corpus of research articles within the field of business. This raises questions as to whether previous studies may have overlooked a number of attitude marker types by relying more on corpus-based methods, in which a corpus is used to test pre-existing hypotheses.

Previous research on academic writing has found that authors express their attitudes using a limited number of types that occur relatively infrequently (e.g. Hu/Cao 2015; Khedri/Kristis 2017). In a similar vein, studies on diachronic change (Gillaerts/Vande Velde 2010; Hyland/Jiang 2016) have found that the frequencies of attitude markers in research articles have decreased over the past few decades. Despite these low frequencies in academic writing overall, studies have found that the use of attitude markers varies across disciplines (e.g. Khedri/Ebrahimi/Heng 2013; Hyland 2019). Furthermore, research that has analysed a range of non-academic genres has shown that writers express their attitude relatively frequently in certain contexts such as newspaper writing (Dafouz-Milne 2008; McCabe/Belmonte 2019) and popular scientific writing (Fu/Hyland 2014). These findings illustrate that writers face different compositional demands across contexts: in some cases, they have to assert their credibility among professional peers, while in others they have to emotionally engage a lay audience. Additionally, cross-linguistic studies of attitude (e.g. Dafouz-Milne 2008; Gholami/Ilghami 2016) have largely found that professional authors writing in different languages express attitude in similar ways.

Findings from research on academic writing at the tertiary level have been mixed. Some studies have found that university students avoid expressing attitude. For example, studies comparing attitude in high and low rated essays (Lee/Deakin 2016; Bax/Nakatsuhara/Weller 2019) have found that attitude markers were infrequent regardless of essay quality. Lee and Deakin (2016: 29) argued that students may

perceive attitude markers to express "subjectivity rather than objectivity, which may conflict with their notion of academic writing". Similarly, in an investigation of the effect of explicit compositional instruction, Cheng and Steffensen (1996: 162) found that, post-instruction, students used fewer attitude markers and persuaded their readers via "the force of the propositional content and logical argumentation" rather than by "soliciting agreement […] through personal relationships".

However, other studies of tertiary level writing that compare attitude in high and low rated essays have found that attitude markers were more prevalent in higher rated essays (Intraprawat/Steffensen 1995; Ho/Li 2018). Furthermore, in a study comparing texts written by native speakers of English and Turkish learners of English, Ozdemir and Longo (2014: 62) found that native speakers used higher frequencies of attitude markers. This led them to suggest that teachers of English as a foreign language should encourage students to use a broader range of interpersonal resources. Considering that findings from tertiary level studies have been mixed, there may be other factors that affect attitude marker use that may not have been considered, such as educational context, topic, or genre.

The small pool of studies that have investigated attitude in pre-tertiary writing have produced mixed findings. Qin and Uccelli (2019) reported that there were no differences in the use of attitude markers in academic and colloquial pupil texts, and Dobbs (2014) found that deontic markers did not predict essay quality. However, Uccelli, Dobbs and Scott (2019: 52) reported that, although attitude marker frequencies did not predict essay quality, they found differences in the pragmatic use of attitude markers in high-rated contra low-rated essays. For example, in low-rated essays, attitude markers were used in conjunction with presenting categorical assertions that did not recognise other perspectives (e.g. "this is not the *right* thing to do"). In high-rated essays, on the other hand, pupils offered evaluations in a way that did recognise other perspectives (e.g. "This assertion does not always have to be *negative*"). By investigating the attitude marker types and frequencies in a corpus of upper secondary essays, this study intends to offer a different perspective on understanding the expression of attitude in pre-tertiary writing.

3. Methods

In order to investigate which attitude marker types that pupils use and how frequencies vary across educational contexts and genres, a corpus of upper secondary essays was collected. To analyse the corpus, a taxonomy of attitude was devised based on previous studies and on the content of the present corpus. This section outlines the data collection procedures, the process of devising the taxonomy and the methods used for analysing the data.

3.1 Data collection

Over 90 upper secondary schools were contacted across Norway, Sweden and the UK during 2017 and 2018, but only 14 schools agreed to participate in the study. Thus, the data for this study were collected from six schools in Norway, three in Sweden and five in the UK. In total, I collected 282 essays written by pupils aged 17-19 (see Table 1). However, a number of essays were omitted from the corpus based on several criteria.

	Norway	*Sweden*	*UK*	*Word count (mean)*
POLITICAL ESSAY	40	20	.	50,085 (835)
LITERARY ESSAY	-	20	-	27,588 (1,379)
COMMENTARY	-	-	20	35,889 (1,794)
LINGUISTIC INVESTIGATION	-	-	15	29,530 (1,969)
OPINION PIECE	-	-	20	15,148 (757)
WORD COUNT (MEAN)	36,673 (917)	41,000 (1,025)	80,567 (1,465)	158,240 (1,166)

Table 1. Total number and word counts of essays collected from each educational context and belonging to each genre.

Firstly, while some pupils delivered two essays, only one essay per pupil was required. Secondly, essays that contained high frequencies of grammar and spelling errors were omitted. Finally, some essays were considered to fall outside the present genres. The resulting corpus consisted of 135 essays belonging to five genres (political essays, literary essays, commentaries, linguistic investigations, opinion pieces), as shown in Table 1.

The corpus consists of essays written for school evaluations, assigned either by exam boards or by teachers and therefore represents the conditions under which pupils usually write. Although writing for a pre-conceived task devised for a particular research question can be useful to achieve *tertium comparationis*, it was not practically feasible to prepare pupils at all 14 schools equally well for a single task. Thus, pupils wrote essays representing a range of genres and topics that reflect the curriculum aims in the respective educational contexts. In Norway and Sweden, pupils were required to write under timed conditions, whereas pupils in the UK wrote under process-oriented conditions (Badger/White 2000). In Norway, the political essays were written for a course called "Social Studies English" (Udir 2006). These essays were largely discussions of current affairs, such as the 2016 US election, but two of these essays were historical: one was about British colonialism and the other about the industrial revolution. In Sweden, the pupils wrote political essays and literary essays for a course called "English 7" (Skolverket 2020). The political essays were similar to those in Norway, but covered topics like genetic engineering and filter bubbles. The literary essays were discussions of canonical literature, such as *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and popular films and television series, such as *Game of Thrones*. The commentaries were written for a British course called "Creative Writing" (AQA 2013). For these assignments, pupils had to discuss their processes and inspirations in writing a series of other coursework pieces. The linguistic investigations and opinion pieces were written for a course called "English Language" (AQA 2019). The linguistic investigations were reports from research projects that the pupils had carried out themselves. Like the political essays, some opinion pieces were written about current affairs, but the goal of these pieces was persuasive rather than discursive. Furthermore,

opinion piece essays were usually written with a more clearly delineated genre in mind such as newspaper articles or reviews.

3.2 Analysis

In order to investigate the types of attitude markers that these upper secondary pupils used, a taxonomy of attitude was devised to capture the words that were present in this particular corpus. In devising the taxonomy, both corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches (Baker 2010) were incorporated, meaning that a list of search terms was compiled based both on previous studies (e.g. Mur Dueñas 2010; Hyland, 2019) and on a close reading of 50 of the essays. The search terms were then categorised based on their semantic field according to a simplified version of Martin and White's (2005) classification of evaluation. The four sub-categories of attitude that were prominent in this corpus related to complexity, emotion, morality and quality, as shown in Table 2.

Sub-category	*Number of search terms*	*Explanation and examples*
COMPLEXITY	18	Describes author's perception of difficulty: *basic*, *understandable*
EMOTION	43	Expresses author's emotional response: *desperate*, *tense*
MORALITY	41	Attributes a social value: *dangerous*, *misleading*
QUALITY	115	Offers author's general assessment: *funny*, *important*

Table 2. Sub-categories of attitude.

In total, a list of 216 marker types[2] was used to scan the corpus (see appendix). The quality sub-category could have been broken into further sub-categories, but it did not seem analytically useful to have sub-categories that encompassed a small number of search terms. The

[2] Roughly 270 types were initially used, but only those types that were found to express attitude in the present corpus are reported here.

search terms were used to scan the corpus using the KWIC (key word in context) concordancing function in #Lancsbox (Brezina/McEnery/ Wattam 2015). The concordance lines were copied into Excel, and each concordance line was read manually, so that non-attitudinal instances could be removed. A word or phrase was considered to express attitude when it served an evaluative role and when that evaluation could be attributed to the writer, as exemplified by the following:

(1) I also find it *hard* to create a whole narrative arc (complexity marker; commentary, UK) [3]

(2) It *should* be his right to state this opinion (morality marker; political essay, Norway)

If the marker was used in a direct quote, or if the attitude was attributed to an extra-textual source (such as the reader of the current text or another author), the instance was discounted, as in the following:

(3) You *understand* that if you are nice to a person, they will like you more (discounted complexity marker; literary essay, Sweden)

(4) Stanley claims that there is a marked *inequality* (discounted morality marker; linguistic investigation, UK)

In order to test the reliability of the taxonomy, the concordance lines from 10 texts were sent to a second rater alongside criteria for identifying each attitude marker sub-category. The level of agreement between the second rater's analysis and my own was 94%.

In order to investigate how attitude markers varied across educational contexts and genres, the frequencies per 100 words of each attitude marker sub-category were quantified for each essay and entered into SPSS (IBM Corp. 2017). In the full corpus, roughly 5,000 hits were retrieved using the search terms. After removing instances that did not function as attitude markers, 1,800 hits remained. The number of occurrences of each attitude marker type were calculated for each sub-category in order to identify which types were most frequent. The

[3] Any spelling or grammar mistakes in the reported extracts are left unchanged.

results did not meet assumptions of normality and homoscedasticity, so the Kruskal Wallis test was used to compare frequencies across educational contexts and genres. Accordingly, the medians and median absolute deviations (MAD) per 100 words for each sub-category are reported in Tables 5, 6 and 7.

4. Results

The results of this investigation are presented in the following two sections. The first section focuses on which types of attitude markers were used in this corpus. The second section focuses on how frequencies of each attitude sub-category varied across educational contexts and genres and provides extracts from the corpus to illustrate the trends that were observed.

4.1 Attitude marker types in upper secondary essays

Table 3 shows the number of different attitude marker types belonging to each sub-category in each educational context and in each genre.

	Complexity	*Emotion*	*Morality*	*Quality*	*Total*
POLITICAL ESSAY (No)	9	12	25	54	100
POLITICAL ESSAY (Sw)	5	10	19	37	71
LITERARY ESSAY (Sw)	10	6	20	41	77
COMMENTARY (UK)	13	33	13	86	145
LINGUISTIC INVESTIGATION (UK)	11	16	14	62	103
OPINION PIECE (UK)	8	14	22	57	101
TOTAL TYPES	18	43	41	114	216

Table 3. Total number of types of each category across educational contexts and genres and total types.

One trend was that there were fewer different types of complexity markers (e.g. *struggle*) than other sub-categories across the genres. One exception to this was the literary essays, which contained fewer types of emotion markers (e.g. *terrifying*). Another exception was the commentary genre, which contained the fewest types of morality markers (e.g. *appropriate*) across the genres. Overall, quality markers (e.g. *effective*, *well*) were represented by the greatest number of types in all genres. The commentaries contained the greatest number of quality marker types, perhaps reflecting the wide range of qualities that pupils ascribed to other pieces of coursework. When comparing the three educational contexts, the UK essays contained the highest number of types overall, which was attributed to the greater numbers of emotion and quality marker types in the commentary essays.

Table 4 presents the five most frequent types (six when the fifth most frequent was tied between two types), alongside the raw frequencies of each type, belonging to each attitude sub-category in the full corpus.

Complexity	*Emotion*	*Morality*	*Quality*
Easy (27)	Interesting (47)	Should (98)	Important (93)
Difficult (22)	Feel (17)	Need (34)	Good (58)
Hard (21)	Feeling (17)	Must (27)	Problem (54)
Complex (18)	Felt (12)	Better (25)	Effective (43)
Easily (13)	Like (12)	Bad (15)	Negative (35)
Understand (13)		Needs (15)	

Table 4. Most frequent types (and raw frequencies) of each attitude marker sub-category in the full corpus.

The most frequent complexity markers were often used in relation to the perceived ease or difficulty of a task. Regarding emotion, pupils most frequently assessed whether something was *interesting* and used conjugations of the verb *feel*. The three most frequent morality markers pertain to deontic modality, suggesting that pupils often discuss what action ought to be taken regarding the topic in question. The most frequent quality marker, *important*, was often used to justify why pupils had chosen to discuss the topic in question. Extracts from the corpus

that exemplify how these types were used are presented in the next section.

4.2. Attitude markers across educational contexts and genres

The medians and median absolute deviations per 100 words of attitude markers belonging to each of the sub-categories in the full corpus are shown in Table 5.

	Complexity	*Emotion*	*Morality*	*Quality*	*Total*
FULL CORPUS	0.06	0.08	0.2	0.59	1.11
(N = 135)	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.16)	(0.25)	(0.38)

Table 5. Median frequency (and MAD) per 100 words of attitude markers in full corpus

The median of the total number of attitude markers in the full corpus was 1.11. Reflecting the wider variety of types (see Table 3) belonging to the quality category, these markers were also more frequent overall (*Mdn* = 0.59). In contrast, the complexity category was least frequent (*Mdn* = 0.06).

The medians and median absolute deviations of each attitude sub-category, as well as comparisons across the three educational contexts, are presented in Table 6.

	Complexity	*Emotion*	*Morality*	*Quality*	*Total*
NORWAY	0.09	0.0	0.18	0.54	0.98
(N = 40)	(0.09)	(0.0)	(0.18)	(0.2)	(0.25)
SWEDEN	0.05	0.07	0.29	0.5	0.94
(N = 40)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.42)
UK	0.06	0.18	0.16	0.66	1.29
(N = 55)	(0.06)	(0.17)^{**NS}	(0.12)	(0.24)^{*N**S}	(0.48)^{*N}

Table 6. Median frequency (and MAD) per 100 words of attitude markers across educational contexts. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, ^{N} = Norway, ^{S} = Sweden, ^{U} = UK

The total number of attitude markers differed across the three contexts ($H(2) = 8.04$, $p = .018$). Pairwise comparisons showed that the pupils

at British schools (*Mdn* = 1.29) used significantly more attitude markers in total than pupils at Norwegian schools (*Mdn* = 0.98, $p = .046$, $r = .25$), but not significantly more than at Swedish schools (*Mdn* = 0.94, $p = 0.56$, $r = .24$). Regarding sub-categories, emotion markers were significantly different across contexts ($H(2) = 24.54$, $p < .001$). Emotion markers were more frequent in essays written at British schools (*Mdn* = 0.18) than those written at Norwegian (*Mdn* = 0, $p < .001$, $r = .49$) and Swedish schools (*Mdn* = 0.07, $p = .003$, $r = .34$). Quality markers were also significantly different across contexts ($H(2) = 12.75$, $p = .002$) and were more frequent in essays from British schools (*Mdn* = 0.66) than essays from Norwegian (*Mdn* = 0.54, $p = .028$, $r = .27$) and Swedish schools (*Mdn* = 0.5, $p = .003$, $r = .34$).

The medians and median absolute deviations of each attitude sub-category, as well as comparisons across the five genres, are presented in Table 7.

	Complexity	*Emotion*	*Morality*	*Quality*	*Total*
POLITICAL (N=60)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	0.27 (0.22)**^{I}	0.59 (0.24)	1.04 (0.31)**^{L}
LITERARY (N=20)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	0.2 (0.13)	0.36 (0.16)	0.73 (0.22)
COMMENTARY (N=20)	1.05 (0.95)	0.23 (0.13)**^{PL}	0.12 (0.08)	0.89 (0.23)**^{L}	1.35 (0.41)**^{L}
LING. INV. (N=15)	0.07 (0.07)	0.13 (0.13)	0.06 (0.06)	0.61 (0.16)*^{L}	0.82 (0.29)
OPINION (N=20)	0.0 (0.0)	0.15 (0.15)	0.5 (0.28)**^{CI}	0.62 (0.26)*^{L}	1.47 (0.4)**^{L}

Table 7. Median frequency (and MAD) per 100 words of attitude markers across genres. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, ^{P} = political essay, ^{L} = literary essay, ^{C} = commentary, ^{I} = linguistic investigation, ^{O} = opinion piece

In order to supplement these results, extracts from the corpus are provided to exemplify the trends observed. The total number of attitude markers differed across genres ($H(4) = 22.23$, $p < .001$), and pairwise comparisons showed that the literary essays (*Mdn* = 0.73) contained significantly fewer attitude markers than the political essays (*Mdn* = 1.04, $p = .004$, $r = .4$), commentaries (*Mdn* = 1.35, $p < .001$, $r = .69$) and opinion pieces (*Mdn* = 1.47, $p < .001$, $r = .7$). A number of potential

attitude markers were discounted from the literary essays because the pupils often cited the attitudes of literary characters (5), or reiterated narrative attitudes (6):

(5) 'He had dreamed of her as a *great* artist […]. Then she *disappointed* him' (literary essay, Sweden)

(6) Dorian Grey was a man who *easily* became influenced by people around him (literary essay, Sweden)

Additionally, a number of the pupils who wrote literary essays were required to base their analyses on Kohlberg's theory of morality (Blum 1988). Thus, morality markers were often discounted because they were used in connection with describing, not with evaluating, Kohlberg's theory:

(7) The first stage […] is all about being seen as good (literary essay, Sweden)

Of the sub-categories, complexity markers were the least frequently used type of attitude marker in all genres. Nevertheless, while there were no significant differences in the frequencies of complexity markers, different pragmatic trends across the genres were observed. Complexity markers in political essays, literary essays and opinion pieces were more often used to make general statements about how challenging the pupils perceived a task to be:

(8) If you are born poor it is going to be really *hard* to ever get out. (political essay, Norway)

(9) Kohlberg's theory is in fact *difficult* to prove in reality. (literary essay, Sweden)

(10) When we hear the terms 'poverty' or 'inequality', it is far too *easy* to picture a distant, faraway culture. (opinion piece, UK)

In the commentaries, complexity markers were often used in connection with personal experiences regarding compositional struggles (11), and in the linguistic investigations regarding the challenges of conducting research (12, 13):

(11) I have always found it quite *hard* to produce effective dialogue. (commentary, UK)

(12) It was a *challenge* for me to organise the data, methodically and coherently (linguistic investigation, UK)

(13) The transcript from Jimmy Carr's Laughing and Joking show was *easy* to find (linguistic investigation, UK)

Significant differences in the use of emotion markers were found ($H(4) = 28.41$, $p < .001$). The commentaries ($Mdn = 0.23$) contained significantly more than the political essays ($Mdn = 0$, $p < .001$, $r = .54$) and the literary essays ($Mdn = 0$, $p = .001$, $r = .62$). These pupils often described their personal emotions related to writing other pieces of coursework:

(14) I *felt* inspired to set the scene (commentary, UK)

(15) I was *satisfied* that the structure reflected the tone of the poem (commentary, UK)

(16) It was my aim to make the opening seem like a typical *mundane* day (commentary, UK)

Although such markers were less frequent in other genres, pupils still expressed emotions for a number of purposes, often using conjugations of the word *interest*. For example, some pupils gave an emotional reason for choosing a topic (17), expressed their personal reaction to the material in question (18, 19), or expressed a reaction to be shared with the reader (20, 21):

(17) Comedy is a genre which I have had great *interest* in (linguistic investigation, UK)

(18) This is how I *felt* about the election in 2016 (political essay, UK)

(19) Something which *surprised* me was the number of similarities both Hunter and Carr exhibited (linguistic investigation, UK)

(20) The 2016 election is the most *shocking* election of all time (political essay, Norway)

(21) In terms of euthanasia and rights to die, we cannot continue to *fear* the topic of death (opinion piece, UK)

Morality markers, which were significantly different across genres ($H(4) = 22.97$, $p < .001$), were more frequent in the political essays ($Mdn = 0.27$) than in the linguistic investigations ($Mdn = 0.06$, $p = .009$, $r = .37$), and more frequent in the opinion pieces ($Mdn = 0.5$) than the commentaries ($Mdn = 0.12$, $p = .009$, $r = .52$) and the linguistic investigations ($p = .001$, $r = .62$). In the political essays and opinion pieces, pupils often discussed current affairs, and were consequently more prone to evaluate whether or not something was morally acceptable (22, 23). Deontic markers constituted the most frequent types of morality markers, usually used to argue for actions that ought to be taken (24, 25, 26):

(22) People got angry at each other for voting on someone as *awful* as Hilary Clinton or *nasty* as Donald Trump (political essay, Norway)

(23) This implies that today's teenagers do not have any sense of *acceptable* boundaries (opinion piece, UK)

(24) Governing organs of the USA *need* to come to an agreement (political essay, UK)

(25) The schools *should* frequently talk about news around the world (political essay, Sweden)

(26) Prison guards in the UK *must* be empowered to take action on smuggling (opinion piece, UK)

Although quality markers were the most frequent sub-category in all genres, comparing across genres produced significant differences ($H(4) = 22.66$, $p < .001$). They were significantly less frequent in the literary essays ($Mdn = 0.36$), than in the commentaries ($Mdn = 0.89$, $p < .001$, $r = .72$), linguistic investigations ($Mdn = 0.61$, $p = .016$, $r = .53$) and opinion pieces ($Mdn = 0.62$, $p = .029$, $r = .47$). Among the broad range

of quality markers that were used, *important* occurred most frequently, often as a way of justifying the pupils' own choice of topics and arguments:

(27) This text has only scratched the surface of a very *important* matter. (political essay, Norway)

(28) His moral development was therefore *important* for the whole realm (literary essay, Sweden)

(29) I think it was *important* to introduce magical aspects into this piece (commentary, UK)

(30) It is *important* to understand the differences in audience of the two texts (linguistic investigation, UK)

The corpus also contained a large number of instances where pupils used quality markers to evaluate the material as either being in some way positive (31, 32, 33) or negative (34, 35, 36):

(31) In the first paragraph, he puts pathos into *good* use (political essay, Norway)

(32) There's a *good* reason as to why, children haven't had the time to develop. (literary essay, Sweden)

(33) With the use of this *positive* imagery the idea is to make the audience feel they can help (linguistic investigation, UK)

(34) Another *problem* with genetic engineering are the great risks of failure (political essay, Sweden)

(35) This is a true story about a *bad* car crash I witnessed. (commentary, UK)

(36) Why are women still labelled in such *negative* ways […]? (opinion piece, UK)

There were also a range of other qualities linked to, for example, visual aesthetics (37), prestige (38) and humour (39):

(37) Let's admire the exterior of this sleek and breathtakingly *beautiful* car (opinion piece, UK)

(38) Scotland could do better as an independent nation because of their *successful* industry (political essay, Norway)

(39) Often the punchline isn't that *funny* (commentary, UK)

The next section discusses the implications of the results, drawing on findings from previous studies that have investigated attitude in various written contexts.

5. Discussion

By drawing on taxonomies used in previous studies and by closely reading a sample of essays, this study offers a more comprehensive operationalisation of attitude than has been used in most previous studies. The findings suggest that pupils in all three educational contexts used a wider range of types and higher frequencies of attitude markers than would be expected in academic writing (e.g. Hyland/Jiang 2016) and in journalism (e.g. Dafouz-Milne 2008). Furthermore, pupils used certain attitude marker sub-categories at different frequencies and with different purposes in each genre. Each of these findings are discussed here in greater depth.

Significant differences were found across the three educational contexts, with pupils at UK schools using the highest frequencies of attitude markers overall. This may reflect that English is taught as a first language in the UK: by being exposed to English in most school subjects (whereas pupils in Norway and Sweden are exposed to English primarily in the English subject only), the UK pupils may be more proficient in using a greater range of attitude marker types. However, it seems that the differences across contexts could be attributed to topics and genres that the pupils worked with. For example, while emotion markers were more frequent in essays written at British schools overall, it was the commentary genre that contained the highest frequency and greatest range of types. This reflects the purpose of the commentaries, in which pupils were to reflect on their personal experiences in

composing a series of coursework pieces (AQA 2013: 15). Thus, an alternative reason for the differences across the three educational contexts may have been the differing national requirements. In the UK, pupils were required, on a national level, to complete pre-determined coursework assignments (AQA 2013, 2019). It may be that the process-oriented structure of these tasks, whereby pupils have more time to write and revise their work, is conducive to eliciting a wider range of attitude marker types. In Norway and Sweden, the curriculum consists of competence aims (Udir 2006; Skolverket 2020), but how these are to be achieved is determined by individual teachers, not by national educational boards. Consequently, it seems that the teachers at the participating schools in Norway and Sweden focused on preparing their pupils for final written exams by holding timed mock exams. These product-oriented approaches may not have granted pupils the opportunity to draw on an equally broad range of attitude types (Badger/White 2000). Thus, while studies have found that attitude markers vary among novice writers with different language backgrounds (e.g. Ozdemir/Longo 2014), but not among professional writers with different language backgrounds (e.g. Noorian/Biria 2010), it remains unclear whether upper secondary pupils in the Norwegian, Swedish and British contexts would express attitude differently had they been given the same task. Future studies might address this by comparing essays written for a single prompt across these educational contexts (Dörnyei 2007: 188), or by comparing how pupils express their attitudes when writing under timed contra process-oriented conditions.

With regards to academic writing, the linguistic investigations probably constituted the most academic-like of the genres represented in this corpus. The linguistic investigations contained 1.29 attitude markers per 100 words in total. This is higher than, for example, Mur Dueñas (2010), who reported 0.81 attitude markers per 100 words in business articles, or Hyland and Jiang (2016), who found 0.31 attitude markers per 100 words in recently published applied linguistics articles. Compared with professional standards, it seems that the pupils expressed their attitudes more frequently than would be expected, but this may be explained by a number of factors. For example, this study used a wider range of search terms to scan the corpus than the studies mentioned, which may have excluded a number of words that express

attitude. Another explanation may be that the pupils often evaluated their own experiences in conducting and writing academic-like studies in order to reflect on what they had learned. While such reflective passages may be seen as a useful pedagogical tool at this educational level (Walker 1985), they would be unnecessary in professional writing.

Regarding journalistic writing, opinion pieces probably constituted the most journalistic-like genre in this corpus. Pupils used 1.58 attitudes markers per 100 words, which is higher than in other studies of journalistic writing, such as Fu and Hyland (2014: 7), who found 0.18 per 100 words, and Dafouz-Milne (2008: 103), who found 0.41 per 100 words. Despite the different frequencies reported, these studies found that attitude markers were used for similar purposes to those found in this study. For example, Fu and Hyland (2014: 22) reported that attitude markers were used to evaluate whether something was either positive or negative. They also reported that authors used attitude markers to assume a shared reaction with their readers, which was particularly prominent in the present opinion pieces and political essays. Supporting Dafouz-Milne (2008: 103), deontic markers were the most frequent types of morality markers in this corpus overall, particularly in political essays and opinion pieces where they were used to promote certain actions to take in response to political issues.

Of the genres represented in this study, the literary essays contained the fewest attitude markers. While the pupils who wrote these essays expressed their attitudes to certain degree, evaluative words and phrases were often attributed to literary authors and characters, or to Kohlberg's theory of morality (Blum 1988). While studies have investigated various metadiscoursal features within texts belonging to the field of literature (e.g. Afros/Schryer 2009), none of those reviewed discuss the frequencies of attitude markers. It is therefore difficult to judge the degree to which these upper secondary essays adhered to professional practices.

Overall, although it remains unclear whether pupils in these English as a first and English as a foreign language contexts would express attitude differently given the same prompt, the findings suggest that pupils in these contexts were able to adapt their use of attitude according to the genre in which they were expected to write. For

example, the political analyses and opinion pieces contained higher frequencies of morality markers, while the commentaries contained higher frequencies of emotion and quality markers. Further differences between the genres were observed regarding the pragmatic uses of attitude markers. For example, while complexity markers were used in commentaries to evaluate compositional challenges, they were used in the linguistic investigations to evaluate methodological challenges. Another example is the use of emotion markers, used in the commentaries to react to compositional processes, but used in other genres to justify the choice of topic, or to imply a shared reaction with the reader. Like Uccelli, Dobbs and Scott (2019), these observations illustrate the value of considering the pragmatic choices that pupils make rather than focusing only on attitude marker frequencies.

While Thompson and Hunston (1999) argued that "the term *evaluation* is […] slippery", this study approaches attitudinal features in upper secondary essays using a more elaborate taxonomy of attitude than has been used in most previous studies. While some attitude markers may have been overlooked, the combination of corpus-based and corpus-driven methods used for this study helped to account for the range of attitudinal expressions present in this particular data set. The results thus provide further insight into features of upper secondary pupil writing, a demographic who frequently engage in essay writing tasks, but who have received little attention in previous research. In order to further investigate upper secondary writing, future research could account for whether pupils express their attitudes accurately and appropriately.

6. Conclusion

By investigating the types and frequencies of attitude markers in upper secondary pupil essays across educational contexts and genres, this study contributes to understanding how attitude is expressed at pre-tertiary levels. Furthermore, this study offers an operationalisation of

attitude that accounts for the content of the current corpus and incorporates a greater range of attitude marker types than used in previous studies. The results showed that pupils across the three educational contexts expressed their attitudes more frequently and using a greater range of types than would be expected in professional writing (e.g. Dafouz-Milne 2008; Mur Dueñas 2010). While the UK essays contained higher frequencies of attitude markers alongside a greater range of types, it seems that attitude varied more according to the genres in which pupils were required to write and pupils across the three contexts were able to adapt their use of attitude markers to the genre in question. This supports the notion that exposing pupils to a variety of genres at the upper secondary level may help to prepare them for the various genres that they may face upon leaving school (e.g. Tribble 2010). Furthermore, pupils may be able to draw on a broader palette of attitudinal features when writing under process-oriented conditions (Badger/White 2000). Thus, the findings from this study may, for example, be relevant for English teachers who aim to guide their pupils regarding the context-dependent nature of expressing attitude.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Ion Drew, Oliver Traxel, Maria Kuteeva, Milica Savic, Caroline Gentens and Liviana Galiano for their invaluable contributions to this paper. I would also like to extend my gratitude to all the pupils and teachers for their cooperation and to the anonymous reviewers for their detailed and constructive input.

Appendix: Attitude marker search terms

COMPLEXITY (18): advanced, basic, challenge, challenges, challenging, complex, complicated, difficult, easier, easily, easy, hard, perplexing, struggle, understand, understandable, understanding, understood

EMOTION (43): agree, appealing, calm, depressing, disappointed, embarrassing, enjoy, fear, feel, feeling, feelings, feels, felt, frightening, happy, hope, hoped, hopefully, hoping, interest, interested, interesting, interests, like, love, loved, mundane, pleasure, prefer, proud, sad, satisfied, scary, shock, shocking, surprise, surprised, surprising, surprisingly, tense, tension, terrifying, unfortunately

MORALITY (41): acceptable, appropriate, awful, bad, better, blame, correct, cruel, cruelty, dangerous, democratic, egocentric, evil, fault, forbidden, good, immoral, improve, innocent, misleading, moral, morally, must, nasty, need, needed, needing, needs, ok, okay, racist, right, should, taboo, terrible, unfair, value, well, worse, worst, wrong

ASCRIBING QUALITIES (114): accurate, attractive, average, bad, beautiful, beauty, beneficial, better, bright, capable, comedic, comfortable, confident, confused, conservative, cool, correct, crazy, critical, crucial, dramatic, effective, effectively, engaging, entertaining, essential, exaggerated, exciting, fault, friendly, fun, fundamental, funny, good, great, harsh, helpful, honest, humorous, ideal, importance, important, improve, improved, improvement, improves, influential, intellectual, intense, intimate, key, minor, mistake, mistakes, modern, mundane, natural, naturally, negative, negatively, nice, odd, okay, ordinary, perfect, perfectly, poor, popular, positive, powerful, prime, problem, problematic, prominent, proper, reasonable, relatable, relevant, responsible, right, safe, serious, significant, strange, strong, stronger, stupid, subtle, success, successful, successfully, superior, surprise, surprised, terrible, threatening, traditional, tragedy, tragic, trouble, unique, unusual, useful, vague, value, vital, vivid, vulnerable, weak, well, wild, wonderful, worse, wrong

References

Ädel, Annelie 2018. Remember that your Reader Cannot Read your Mind: Problem/Solution-Oriented Metadiscourse in Teacher Feedback on Student Writing. *English for Specific Purposes* 45, 54-68.

Afros, Elena / Schryer, Catherine F. 2009. Promotional (Meta)discourse in Research Articles in Language and Literary Studies. *English for Specific Purposes* 28, 58-68.

AQA Education (AQA) 2013. *A-Level Creative Writing.* Manchester: AQA.

AQA Education (AQA) 2019. *AS and A-Level English Language*. Manchester: AQA. <https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/specifications/AQA-7701-7702-SP-2015.PDF>.

Badger, Richard / White, Goodith 2000. A process genre approach to teaching writing. *ELT Journal Volume* 54, 153-160.

Bax, Stephen / Nakatsuhara, Fumiyo / Waller, Daniel 2019. Researching L2 Writers' Use of Metadiscourse Markers at Intermediate and Advanced Levels. *System* 83, 79-95.

Biber, Douglas 2006. Stance in Spoken and Written University Registers. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 5, 97-116.

Blum, Lawrence A. 1988. Gilligan and Kohlberg: Implications for Moral Theory. *Ethics* 98/3, 472-491.

Brezina, Vaclav / McEnery, Tony / Wattam, Stephen 2015. Collocations in Context: A New Perspective on Collocation Networks. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 20, 139-173.

Council of Europe 2018. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Dafouz-Milne, Emma 2008. The Pragmatic Role of Textual and Interpersonal Metadiscourse Markers in the Construction and Attainment of Persuasion: A Cross-Linguistic Study of Newspaper Discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics* 40, 95-113.

Dobbs, Christina L. 2014. Signaling Organization and Stance: Academic Language Use in Middle Grade Persuasive Writing. *Reading and Writing* 27, 1327-1352.

Dörnyei, Zoltàn 2007. *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Education First (EF) 2018. *English Proficiency Index.* <https://www.ef.no/epi/regions/europe/norway/>.

Fu, Xioali / Hyland, Ken 2014. Interaction in Two Journalistic Genres: A Study of Interactional Metadiscourse. *English Text Construction* 7, 122-144.

Gholami, Javad / Ilghami, Roghayeh 2016. Metadiscourse Markers in Biological Research Articles and Journal Impact Factor: Non-Native Writers vs. Native Writers. *Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Education* 44/4, 349–360.

Gillaerts, Paul / Van de Velde, Freek 2010. Interactional Metadiscourse in Research Article Abstracts. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 9/2, 128-139.

Gray, Bethany / Biber, Douglas 2012. Current Conceptions of Stance. In Hyland, Ken / Sancho-Guinda, Carmen (eds) *Stance and Voice in Written Academic Genres*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 15-33.

Ho, Victor / Li, Cissy 2018. The Use of Metadiscourse and Persuasion: An Analysis of First Year University Students' Timed Argumentative Essays. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 33, 53-68.

Hu, Guangwei / Cao, Feng 2015. Disciplinary and Paradigmatic Influences on Interactional Metadiscourse in Research Articles. *English for Specific Purposes* 39, 12-25.

IBM Corp. 2017. *IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 25.0*. New York: IBM Corp.

Hyland, Ken [2]2019. *Metadiscourse: Exploring Interaction in Writing.* London: Continuum.

Khedri, Mohsen / Kritsis, Konstantinos 2017. Metadiscourse in Applied Linguistics and Chemistry. *Discourse Studies* 15/3, 319-331.

Khedri, Mohsen / Ebrahimi, Seyed J. / Heng Chan S. 2013. Interactional Metadiscourse Markers in Academic Research Article Result and

Discussion Sections. *The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies* 19/1, 65-74.

Lee, Joseph J. / Deakin, Lydia 2016. Interactions in L1 and L2 Undergraduate Student Writing: Interactional Metadiscourse in Successful and Less-Successful Argumentative Essays. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 33, 21-34.

Martin, James R. / White, Peter 2005. *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

McCabe, Anne / Belmonte, Isabel A. 2019. Challenging the Concept of Pure Objectivity in British and Spanish Hard News Reports: The Case of the 2006 Lebanon War. In Sancho-Guinda, Carmen (ed) *Engagement in Professional Genres*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 67-86.

McEnery, Tony / Wilson, Andrew ²2003. *Corpus Linguistics: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Mur Dueñas, Pilar 2010. Attitude Markers in Business Management Research Articles: A Cross-Cultural Corpus-Driven Approach. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 20/1, 50-72.

Noorian, Mina / Biria, Reza 2011. Interpersonal Metadiscourse in Persuasive Journalism: A Study of Texts by American and Iranian EFL Columnists. *Journal of Modern Languages* 20/1, 64-79.

Ozdemir, Neslihan O. / Longo, Bernadette 2014. Metadiscourse Use in Thesis Abstracts: A Cross-Cultural Study. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 141, 59-63.

Prosser, Michael / Webb, Carolyn 1994. Relating the Process of Undergraduate Essay Writing to the Finished Product. *Studies in Higher Education* 19/2, 125-138.

Qin, Wenjuan / Ucceli, Paola 2019. Metadiscourse: Variation Across Communicative Contexts. *Journal of Pragmatics* 139, 22-39.

Skolverket. 2020. *English*. Stockholm: Skolverket. <https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.4fc05a3f164131a74181056/1535372297288/English-swedish-school.pdf>.

Thompson, Geoffrey / Hunston, Susan 1999. Evaluation: An Introduction. In Hunston, Susan / Thompson, Geoffrey (eds) *Evaluation in Text: Authorial Stance and the Construction of Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1-27.

Tribble, Christopher 2010. A Genre-Based Approach to Developing Materials for Writing. In Harwood, Nigel (ed) *English Language Teaching Materials*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 157-178.

Uccelli, Paola / Dobbs, Christina / Scott, Jessica 2013. Mastering Academic Language: Organization and Stance in the Persuasive Writing of High School Students. *Written Communication* 30, 36-62.

Utdanningsdirektoratet (Udir). (2006). English - Programme Subject in Programmes for Specialization in General Studies. Oslo: Utdanningdirektoratet. <https://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG4-01?lplang=http://data.udir.no/kl06/eng>.

Walker, David 1985. Writing and reflection. In Boud, David / Keogh, Rosemary / Walker, David (eds) *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning.* London: Routledge Falmer, 52-68.