Original Research   **Open Access**

Authorial Stance-Taking and Engagement by Iranian PhD Candidates of TEFL in Writing Their Dissertations

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Abstract

Writing has a special role in academic society as most of the information is transferred though publications. It has various aspects and among them stance taking and engagement have received less attention. The current study aimed at investigating how Iranian PhD candidates take stance and engagement in their dissertations. The participants of the study included Iranian PhD candidates and corpus for text analysis contained PhD dissertations written by them. Discourse analysis was carried out on the corpus to identify stance taking and engagement based on the framework proposed by Hyland (2008). Overall, it was found that Iranian PhD candidates use all the elements of stance taking although some elements were more present than others. For instance, the use of stance makers of boosters like actually, believe(s), believed, certain, clear, definite, demonstrate(s), demonstrated, and establish were present in the dissertations about 12.38% while the use of self-mention like I, me, my, our, us, we, the researcher, and the researchers were present about 39.04% out of all instances of stance markers used by the PhD candidates. With regard to the engagement, it was found that all the engagement markers were present in the dissertation except engagement markers such as Questions and Directive (imperative). As in stance taking the elements of engagement were present with various degrees. For instance, the use of interjections like the use of word Key was 12.42% while that of modals such as have to, must, need, ought, and should was 59.62%. The results were discussed and their implications were presented.
Keywords: Authorial stance; Stance; Engagement; Text analysis; Writing; Academic writing.

1. Introduction

The word "stance" represents the lexical, grammatical, and textual resources that speakers/writers apply in making an authorial event in their text (Hyland, 2005). In academic writing, like other written discourses, stance taking comprises moves in order to spot one's level of commitment to declarations, explain the importance of evidence, build cohesion with fictional readers (for example, by making concessions and shaping public information), explain predictable misinterpretations, and other interactive values (Hyland, 2005). According to a study conducted by Hyland (2005), these interpersonal changes constitute the most formal and objective of corrective discourses, and they are directed by writers' consciousness of the social dynamics that are at play in the discourse setting. As Biber (2006), noted gaining consciousness of these social dynamics brings about complexities for students who are expected to produce academic writing.

The degree to which the writer can logically establish or covey self-assertiveness in academic discourse has given rise to many controversies. Accordingly, multiple textbooks or style manuals have clearly stated that objectivity is a writing convention which is globally recognized in academic writing, especially in scientific writing (Engelbretson, 2007). Therefore, a lot of academic writers seek to suppress their roles as authors. This is accomplished by writers' tendency to hide themselves behind arguments through refusing to make use of self-mentions (Hyland, 2005). However, as the persuasive, analytical and informative aspects of academic writing entail the active and more or less subjective contributions of the writer, so as to decide which reference to review, which data set would stand for arguments writers intend to make, or how to interpret results, recommending that academic writers continue to be objective and at the same time meet the above-mentioned rhetorical purposes of academic writing is contradictory (Biber, 2006).

The challenges and difficulties of academic writing are related to making of knowledge claims and authorial stance-taking to create a reliable writing, mostly interpersonal meaning making (Engelbretson, 2007). These include the problems that adult L2 writers deal with in managing their authorial stance and voice in academic writing. The evidence shows the urgency in facing L2 writers' longstanding problem with employing an effective stance (Engelbretson, 2007). A lot of attention has been paid to stance in recent years from writing researchers and linguists

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of different theoretical backgrounds (Biber, 2006; Engelbretson, 2007; Hyland, 1998; Martin and White, 2005; Soliday, 2011).

Moreover, a large number of studies conducted on different dimensions of academic discourse, especially linguistic features that have to do with writers' self-representation, have indicated that academic writers do not always suppress their roles thoroughly from texts; instead, they seek to project themselves carefully and appropriately by assessing the relevant contextual factors as well as making choices accordingly (Hyland, 2000;2001). One of the main challenges for second language (L2) writers at the postgraduate levels is authorial stance-taking in research writing. This enables a writer to connect with readers, evaluate and analyze the work of others, admit alternative assessments, and argue for a situation (Hyland, 2004). Failure to present a real authorial position often causes poor assessment of a writer's research perspective (Barton, 1993; Schleppegrell, 2004; Wu, 2007).

According to Hyland (2008), engagement markers are a text characteristic which reflects the writers' recognition of their potential readers. As Hyland maintains, when writing, writers need to assume the presence of their readers and, pull them along with their arguments, focus their attention and consider them as discourse participants to finally lead them to the right interpretations. Engagement markers as proposed by Hyland (2008), which will be considered in the current study fall into five categories including reader pronoun, imperative, questions, directives, and shared knowledge.

According to Engagement framework proposed by Martin and White (2005), interpersonal meanings are comprehended in the interaction of two broad voices, which are monogloss and heterogloss. In projecting an authoritative stance, writers need to show a satisfactory balance of assertion (e.g., when offering the main argument and the rationale for the study) and openness (e.g., making room for accepting other viewpoints and exchanging them with readers). The suitable positioning of interpersonal assessment can help present one's corrective identifications through projecting a professionally suitable personality and attitude (Martin and White, 2005). By engagement, they mean the arrangement of voice in the form of monogloss or heterogloss in order to connect with readers. In monoglossic statements, substitutions are not recognized, as they do not obviously place other voices or distinguish alternative situations. Moreover, statements presented in the form of the monoglossic are often a crucial point for debate or argumentation, or contain propositions that are taken-for-granted and assume that reader shares the writer's position (Martin and White, 2005). The focus in Martin and White (2005), however, is on the explanation of heterogloss, and the Engagement framework proposes that heterogloss statements can be considered as either expanding or contracting. According to Martin and White (2005), the difference is in the allowances for dialogically alternative locations and voices (dialogic expansion), or otherwise, challenge or limit the possibility of such (dialogic contraction).

The studies focusing on writer' voice have viewed stance from different angles focusing on notions like hedging devices to express possibility (Hyland, 1998b), self-mention (Hyland, 2001) and reported speech (Hyland, 2000). All these features, although very revealing about stance taking, touch on a particular aspect of stance. Therefore, the current study made use of the model by Hyland (2008), which was more elaborate and more theatrically supported (Hyland, 2008). As stated by Zhao (2014), voice is a construct that does not have a well-established theoretical and operational definition. As they maintain, not many studies have so far attempted to formally explore whether and how the strength of an author's voice in written texts can be reliably investigated. In a study, Zhao (2013), employed a mixed-method approach, to develop and validate an analytic rubric measuring voice strength in second language argumentative writing. The findings of their study indicated that authorial voice in written discourse is realized primarily through the following dimensions: "(1) the presence and clarity of ideas in the content; (2) the manner of the presentation of ideas; and (3) the writer and reader presence." (p. 201). The model proposed by Zhao (2013), was based on the one by Hyland (2008), and only measures authoritative stance in argumentative writings which was not suitable for other writing genres. Therefore, it was concluded that it was still safer to use the model proposed by the Hyland (2008), which had wider scope and is more general.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate to what extent do Iranian Ph.D. Candidates of TEFL take stance and engagement in writing their dissertations. As a review of the previous studies indicates, no study, to date, to the researchers' best knowledge has explored to what extent do Iranian Ph.D. Candidates of TEFL take stance and engagement in writing their dissertations.

2. Literature Review

A look at the studies conducted on authorial presence in academic discourse reveals that authorial stance has been widely investigated with different analytical frameworks (Biber, 2006; Chang and Schleppegrell, 2011; Hyland, 1998;2000;2005;2008; Koutsantoni, 2006; Thompson and Hunston, 2000). Hyland (2005), proposed a model for interaction in academic discourse that contained stance taking elements. His model contained two dimensions namely, stance and engagement. The attitudinal dimension of the model includes "features which refer to the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgments, opinions, and commitments" (Hyland, 2005). This model was later empirically used by Hyland (2008), which gave the model a practical credibility. The current study takes advantage of this model to examine the status of stance taking by Iranian EFL students. Table 1 shows the complete model of interaction in academic discourse by Hyland (2008).

Table-1. Hyland (2008) Model of Discourse Interaction

Interaction	Stance	Hedges
		Boosters
		Attitude Markers
		Self-mention
	Engagement	Reader pronouns
		Directives
		Questions
		Shared knowledge
		Personal asides

Based on text analysis of research papers in eight different fields of the study, Hyland (2005), proposed a model for interaction in academic discourse. Various terminologies like stance, evaluation, hedging etc. (Hyland, 2008) have been used to capture the writer's voice. Hyland (2008), contained two dimensions namely, stance and engagement. However, in the present study, the focus was on the stance dimension which was the attitudinal dimension of Hyland's model. The attitudinal dimension of the model included features for expressing writers' personal position, judgment and opinions Hyland (2008).

As seen in Table 1, the stance dimension was composed of 4 elements of Hedges, Boosters, Attitude markers, and Self-mention. Hedge devices such as "possible", "might", and "perhaps" allow writers to avoid being too absolute. On the other hand, boosters are words such as "like", "obviously", and "demonstrate" clearly express writers' opinion and provide an indication of writer's solidarity with readers based on shared information. According to Hyland (2005), "attitude markers indicate the writer's affective, rather than epistemic, attitude to propositions, conveying surprise, agreement, importance, frustration, and so on, rather than commitment". Attitude markers can be signaled by "attitude verbs (e.g. agree, prefer), sentence adverbs (unfortunately, hopefully), and adjectives (appropriate, logical, remarkable)". Finally, self-mention is the use of personal pronounce and possessive adjectives. This is to signal the "propositional, affective and interpersonal information" (Hyland, 2001;2005). For the complete list of stance markers, readers are suggested to study the list of stance marker in Appendix.

According to Hyland (2005), engagement markers refer to a text characteristic which is considered as writers' recognition of their potential readers. As Hyland maintains, when writing, writers should really feel the presence of their readers, pull them along with their arguments, focus their attention and consider them as discourse participants to finally lead them to the right interpretations. Engagement markers generally fall into five categories by Hyland (2005), reader pronoun, imperative, questions, directives, and shared knowledge.

3. Research Question

In an attempt to address the purpose of the present study, the following research question was formulated:

RQ: To what extent do Iranian Ph.D. Candidates of TEFL take stance and engagement in writing their dissertations?

4. Method
4.1. Students' Corpora

The data of the present study included participants' dissertation written in partial fulfillments for their respective degrees i.e. PhD. To this end, these theses was searched, found and analyzed.

4.2. Procedure

To collect the corpus of the present study, the researcher initially briefed 15 PhD candidates on the purposes of data collection. Any questions from the participants were answered and ambiguities were removed through adequate explanations in terms of why and how the data were used. The participants were also assured that the collected data were used just for research purposes. Following that, the analysis of the theses chapters (1 to 5) were conducted through identifying the participants' use of attitudinal devices as indicated in Hyland (2008), model. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, two analysts analyzed the corpus and through determining the extent of agreement between the two analysts' scoring, reliability of the procedure was estimated. In other words, agreements and disagreements between the two analysts' scores were calculated using Holist's (1969) coefficient of reliability (C. R.) which indicates the number of agreements per total number of coding decisions. Afterwards, description and comparison on the use of stance markers (attitudinal dimension) were carried out and reported.

5. Results and Discussion
5.1. Addressing the Research Question

The research question of the present study sought to probe the way Iranian Ph.D. Candidates of TEFL take stance and engagement in writing their dissertations. In order to answer this question, elements of stance based on the Hyland's model of discourse interaction were identified and their frequencies were computed. Table 2 shows the elements of stance found in dissertations and their frequency counts.

Table-2. Elements of Stance Found in dissertations and their frequency counts

	Hedges	Boosters	Attitude Markers	Self-mention	Total
PHD dissertations	225 (23.80%)	113 (12.38%)	226 (24.76%)	441 (39.04%)	1105 (100%)

Based on the frequency count, it was found that hedges consisted 23.80 %, boosters 12.38%, attitude markers 24.76%, and self-mention 39.04% of the stance taking. Accordingly, self-mention was the most frequently used stance element followed by attitude markers, hedges, and boosters in a descending order.

Based on the analysis hedges included such words like about, almost, apparently, approximately, around, estimate, frequently, generally, in general, mainly, mostly, often, on the whole, quite, rather, relatively, roughly. Following examples have been taken from the dissertations illustrating the use of hedges (**boldfaced**) by PhD participants.

5.2. Apparent
It is **apparent**, to the teachers that were interviewed, that emotions are a fundamental way in which they respond to their students and their institutional contexts.

The need for second language writing became increasingly **apparent** as a result of the international expansion of English ….

5.3. Around
……professional identity, and spiritual identity which mainly revolve **around** the values embedded in English language teaching.

------engagement of the students in subjects expressed **around** ideas that matter as authenticity in teaching.

5.4. Estimated
However, the model of role of cognitive and motivational individual difference variables in writing, **estimated** by using …..

A full SEM model allows researchers to **estimate** both the links….

5.5. Frequently
….. Interpretive research methodology **frequently** used by social science researchers …..

edited their texts more **frequently** and resorted less frequently to their mother tongue while writing in…..

5.6. Generally
….and the questions asked are **generally** open-ended and designed to elicit detailed….

In the same regard, it is **generally** believed that the provision of appropriate feedback

5.7. Ingeneral
…**ingeneral**, account for much of the variance in their writing competence and the automatization of necessary procedures for writing.

Her perfunctory manner in writing or her inadequate grammatical knowledge, in particular, and limited L2 proficiency, **ingeneral**

5.8. Mainly
…which **mainly** perceived the identity as non-unitary, changing, and transformative (Varghese *et al.*, 2005).

…..language teacher identity was **mainly** theorized…..

5.9. Mostly & Often
The construct of motivation is **mostly** captured by considering learners 'goals.

To revise it completely and she has **mostly** edited the phrases and sentences.

….and how they are **often** represented is crucial to the success of ELT teacher training courses…

5.10. Onthewhole
Onthewhole, self-efficacy beliefs are essential in energizing the learners to…..

Onthewhole, both psychological and applied linguistic research confirms that in order to achieve learning outcomes…..

5.11. Quite & Rather
……Cronbach's Alpha which is **quite** satisfactory for the present study.

Rather it seems to be any Iranian educated citizen.

….and how our selves are historically shaped, prevents **rather** than promotes real freedom….

5.12. Relatively & Roughly
…will create **relatively** stable features of identity, even as some aspects of a person's identity….

…..he logs are **relatively** non-intrusive (Dörnyei, 2007).

…..he residuals are **roughly** rectangularly distributed.

It should be noted that all the instances of hedges specified in the list (See Appendix) was not found in the dissertations and only the ones found are listed above. Similar procedure was used to identify instances of booster in the dissertations. Based on the analysis the booster markers included actually, believe(s), believed, certain, clear, definite, demonstrate(s), demonstrated, establish. Some of the examples of these boosters are listed below:

5.13. Actually

Actually I judge my teaching from my students' points of view.

This body of research has shown that self-efficacy is a reliable predictor of students' writing performance and mediates between what they believe they can write and what they **actually** write.

5.14. Believes

This school **believes** that interpretations are all we have and description itself is an interpretive process.

He **believed** that the recognition of the horizons of significance —gives a new importance to being true to myself.

5.15. Certain

Identity is a matter of becoming and related to how an individual is positioned within **certain** circumstances and responds to social conditions.

He also argued that —no one would deny that part of what makes a good teacher is what they know about how to teach **certain** subjects to certain students in certain contexts.

5.16. Clear

Interpreting Taylor's horizons of significance, it becomes **clear** that communitarian perspectives on authenticity takes into account both personal desires and social and external values.

This became **clear** as the teachers described, in response to questions asking about their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, all kinds of emotions from joy and happiness to disappointment and anger.

5.17. Definite

As argued by Erickson (2007) divergent questions make responders explore different answers understanding this point that there is no **definite** answer.

One important feature of this type of question is that it may not have a **definite** answer.

5.18. Demonstrate

…professional competence that teachers must **demonstrate** to meet institutional expectations as well as structural factors.

…..though not always clearly **demonstrated** in her discussion of data, is a welcome departure from those who leave out the body altogether.

5.19. Establish

An insider gave her several advantages. It helped to facilitate trust and confidence in the researcher-participant relationship and allowed her to **establish** rapport.

In fact, many of the problems found in the students 'drafts were related to the students 'prerequisite knowledge in grammar and vocabulary which should have already been **established**.

With regard to the use of attitude markers, all the instances of attitude markers were identified and their percentage was computed. The attitude markers included agree, disagree, disagreed, expect, prefer, appropriately, and expectedly and some of the examples of attitude markers in the dissertations are as follows:

5.20. Agree

…..10 teachers ignored the emails, and 5 teachers didn't **agree** to participate in the study as they were busy and the study was time-consuming.

…..who **agreed** to participate in this project and those who answered the emails in spite of their disagreement to participate in the study.

5.21. Disagree

Disagreeing with appropriateness discussed in many books and papers which the participants read during the period of being EFL learners …

You know, we can say that we agree with this or we **disagree** with that.

5.22. Expect

We are **expected** to develop our own opinions, outlook, stances to things, to a considerable degree…..

In the same regard, different individuals who benefit from various levels of cognitive abilities are **expected** to perform differently……

5.23. Prefer

Fatemeh because of favoring experiential and discovery-oriented approaches to learning **prefers** indirect feedback with error codes and maintains that…..

….she**prefers** metalinguistic feedback with comments and explanations because she believes by

such feedback she can understand what her weaknesses are and will know how to solve her problems in writing.

5.24. Appropriately

She has used a variety of sentence structures and vocabularies accurately and **appropriately**.

In fact, since he is not competent enough in **appropriately** connecting the ideas with each other, there are many cases of run-on sentences in his texts.

5.25. Unexpectedly

…..unexpectedly indicated that low self-efficacious individuals had higher mean scores in the two dependent variables compared to high self-efficacious ones.

Self-mention was the last category for actualizing the stance taking in texts. Based on the framework of analysis the self-mentions appeared in dissertation in the form of words like I, me, my, our, us, we, the researcher, and the researcher's. Some of the examples of self-mention in the dissertations are as follows:

5.26. I

So, **I** was motivated to speak and show myself and my world.

I try to be different at least by introducing new books and new materials in my

Class.

5.27. Me

It was a great possibility for **me** to work with such a great and intelligent teacher….

…..structural and situational disadvantages made **me** commit myself to a more egalitarian perspective in teaching.

5.28. My

……I could freely talk about **my** ideals, constructing and deconstructing them and navigating…..

……gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of **my** life, I miss what being human is for me.

5.29. Our

Furthermore, the study of emotions can deepen **our** understanding of the complexity of socially just teaching …….

…….emotion that resists unjust systems and practices as well as emotion that helps create a more fair and just world in **our** classroom and **our** everyday lives.

5.30. Us

…..and as argued by Ahmed (2004), emotions are ―what connects **us** to this or that.

……but also in that what we feel might be dependent on past interpretations that are not necessarily made by **us**, but that come before **us**.

5.31. We

Whether that self is one **we** would want to see expressed in the classroom depends greatly on who the teacher is.

……emotions are what move us, and how **we** are moved involves interpretations of sensations and feelings not only in the sense that we interpret what we feel…..

5.32. The Researcher

The researcher chose authenticity in teaching as the topic of the present study because of her contestation to the significant growth in enrollment in higher……

……**the researcher** sought to develop a theory of authenticity based on the participants 'experience and conceptions of authenticity in teaching.

Based on the analysis, it was found that Iranian PhD candidates employ stance taking in their dissertations. As it was evident in the above examples most of the elements of stance taking was present in the dissertations which points to the fact Iranian PhD candidates know how to take stance in their academic writing.

Similar procedure was adopted to identify how PhD candidates use engagement markers in their dissertations. Based on the text analysis it was found that use of engagement markers was much lower than the use of stance markers in the dissertations of Iranian PhD candidates. The engagement wad carried out mainly through the use of directive in the form of **Must**. Table 3 shows the frequency count of the use of engagement markers by Iranian PhD candidates.

Table-3. Frequency count of the use of engagement markers by Iranian PhD candidates

Engagement markers	Reader pronoun	Interjections	Questions	Directive (imperative)	Directive (obligation modals)	Total
Percentage	315 (27.95 %)	140 (12.42%)	0	0	672 (59.62%)	161 (100%)

Text analysis was done by identifying the stance markers specified in the framework of analysis. In the framework engagement markers were specified as Reader pronouns like let us, let's, one's, our, (the) reader, us, we, you, your, Interjections like by the way, incidentally, key, Question thought the use of questions mark (?), Directives(Imperatives) such as add, allow, analyze, apply, arrange, assess, assume, calculate, choose, classify, compare, connect, consider, consult, contrast, define, demonstrate, do not, don't, and Directives(Obligation modals) like have to, must, need to, ought, should.

In the analysis of dissertations reader pronoun was realized thought the employment of words such as one's, and reader by the Iranian PhD candidates. Some of the examples of the use of reader pronouns are as follows:

5.32. One's

This study probed the conceptualization of authenticity as being true to **one**'s own self in choosing among the existing possibilities in teaching and investigated its link to Iranian EFL teachers' and learners' emotional life through critical emotional praxis.

Kellner (1973) asserted that the aim of inauthenticity is to maintain **one**'s own standing in society and explained that……

5.33. Reader

It creates verisimilitude, a space for the **reader** to imagine his or her way into the life experiences of another.

A major goal of the interpretive writer is to create a text that permits a willing **reader** to share vicariously in the experiences that have been captured.

Another category of engagement was interjection that was realized thought the use of work Key by the PhD candidates. Some examples are as follows:

5.34. Key

The observation that students and teachers do not conceptualize authenticity in teaching principally in relation to the existential, critical and communitarian perspectives was one of the **key** findings that emerged from the analysis of repertory grid data.

Another **key** element related to the motivation construct is the learners' self-efficacy beliefs which along with their self-concept is subsumed under the learners '……..

The engagement categories of question and directive or imperative were not realized by the PhD candidates at all. Although there were questions in the dissertations but these questions were either the research questions or the questions in the appendix of the dissertations which did not aimed at engaging the readers?

With regard to the use of obligation modal as directives for engaging the readers PhD candidates used the words and phrases like have to, must, need, ought, and should. Some of the examples for the use of modals as directive are as follows:

5.35. Have to

However Sasaki (2009), proposed that due to the fact that —foreign language students do not always **have to** set goals to survive in their L2 learning situations.

If Dasein itself were a being, one would then have to question the process by which a clearing were made for it to appear, and if that in turn were a being, one would **have to** question the process by which it appeared, and so on to infinity.

5.36. Must

But this doesn't mean that on another level the content **must** be self-referential: that my goals must express or fulfill my desires or aspirations, as against something that stands.

Consequently, an attempt **must** be made to identify specific conditions and particular language tasks that are maximally dependent on each set of factors and try to maximize their facilitating potentials and minimize their inhibiting roles.

5.37. Need

…..teachers **need** to shift their identities to survive change. Exclusion from the workplace community of practice can be seen as an alternative form of participation in the reform practices

….learners who **need** to develop their writing ability may benefit from understanding about the contributing variables of L2 writing and their relative importance. Students 'being and becoming from different perspectives including teacher educators 'and administrators 'horizons.

5.38. Ought

……a struggle between what teachers are feeling and what they believe they **ought** to be feeling while they are teaching.

….professional competence that teachers **ought** to demonstrate to meet institutional expectations as well as structural factors.

5.39. Should

She also suggested that the teachers' attempts for socially just teaching **should** be manifested in what they teach and how they teach and explained that beyond these……

…..they **should** consider a content problem of what to write, and a rhetorical problem of how to express their ideas in a way that suits both the topic and the audience.

6. Discussion

The present study aimed at investigating the use of stance taking and engagement in Iranian PhD candidates' dissertations. The corpus of the study included dissertations written by PhD candidates in the field of applied linguistics. The framework of analysis includes identification of elements of stance taking and engagement as proposed by Hyland (2005), After identifying the elements of stance and engagement they were tallied and their frequency count and percentages was computed. Overall it was found that Iranian PhD candidate use all the elements of stance taking although some elements were more present than others. For instance, the use of stance makers of boosters like actually, believe(s), believed, certain, clear, definite, demonstrate(s), demonstrated, and establish were present in the dissertations about 12.38% while the use of self-mention like I, me, my, our, us, we, the researcher, and the researchers were present about 39.04% out of all instances of stance markers used by the PhD candidates. With regard to the engagement, it was found that all the engagement markers were present in the dissertation except engagement markers such as Questions and Directive (imperative). As in stance taking the elements of engagement were present with various degrees. For instance, the use of interjections like the use of word Key was 12.42% while that of modals such as have to, must, need, ought, and should was 59.62%.

Based on the above results, it was concluded that in general Iranian PhD students had ample awareness regarding the use of stance markers and engagement and could employ them in their dissertations. This finding was not surprising at all because firstly, they were majoring in applied linguistics and were already familiar with linguistic concepts such academic writing, argumentations, genre etc. Secondly, PhD candidate read lots of scientific papers which might have contributed to their use of stance elements in their writings. In this regard, many researchers have reported that there is positive relationship between writing and reading (Almansour and Al-Shorman, 2014; Hany, 2007; Salehi *et al.*, 2015; Zainal and Husin, 2011). which justifies the claim that PhD candidate read academic articles that might have affected their academic writing.

Furthermore, PhD candidates particularly in the field of applied linguistics pass certain courses containing theoretical discussion of English for Specific Purpose which familiarize them with expectations of discourse community from academic writing including stance taking. Other studies have also reported that PhD candidates pass courses related to English for Academic Purposes courses with a focus on rhetorical consciousness-raising (Belcher, 2004; Casanave, 2003; Swales and Feak, 2000).

The general conclusion drawn from the findings of the study was that Iranian PhD candidates have adequate awareness of the essential role of stance taking in academic writing and they do their best to have their voice and position in their writing. Furthermore, they take stance in their dissertations and reflect their perspective in their words although they admit in their accounts that they are not fully satisfied with their skill in taking stance in their writings.

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Appendix

List of engagement and stance markers (Hyland, 2005)

Engagement Markers
Reader pronouns: let us, let's, one's, our, (the) reader, us, we, you, your
Interjections: by the way, incidentally, key
Questions:?
Directives(Imperatives): add, allow, analyze, apply, arrange, assess, assume, calculate, choose, classify, compare, connect, consider, consult, contrast, define, demonstrate, do not, don't
Directives(Obligation modals):have to, must, need to, ought, should

Stance Markers
Attitudinal Markers: agree(s), agreed, disagree(s), disagreed, expect(s), expected, prefer, admittedly, amazingly, appropriately, astonishingly, correctly, curiously, desirably, expectedly
Boosters: actually, believe(s), believed, beyond doubt, certain, clear, definite, demonstrate(s), demonstrated, doubtless, establish(es), established
Self-mention: I, me, my, mine, our, us, we, the author, the author's, the researcher, the researcher's, the writer, the writer's
Hedges: about, almost, apparent, apparently, approximately, around, broadly, certain amount, certain extent, certain level, essentially, estimate, estimated, frequently, generally, guess, in general, in most cases, in most instances, largely, mainly, mostly, often, on the whole, quite, rather X, relatively, roughly, slightly