THE USE OF PRAGMATIC UNITS IN ACADEMIC TEXTS

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Annotation: This article examines the use and functional features of pragmatic units in an academic article. Pragmatic units play an important role in academic communication because they allow authors to express their attitudes, indicate the degree of certainty, organize ideas, and establish interaction with readers. The study focuses on the linguistic and pragmatic functions of such units as hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mention markers, engagement markers, and discourse markers in academic writing. The analysis is based on selected academic texts and employs a qualitative approach to identify the ways in which pragmatic units contribute to the construction of academic discourse. Particular attention is paid to how these units help authors present claims cautiously, emphasize important statements, express evaluation, and guide readers through the text. The findings demonstrate that pragmatic units are not merely additional linguistic elements but important resources for expressing stance and managing writer–reader interaction. Their appropriate use contributes to the clarity, persuasiveness, and communicative effectiveness of academic texts. The study highlights the significance of pragmatic competence in academic writing and provides a linguistic perspective on the ways academic authors construct meaning and interaction through language.

Keywords: academic discourse, academic writing, pragmatic units, hedges, boosters, stance, metadiscourse, writer–reader interaction.

Аннотация: В данной статье рассматриваются использование и функциональные особенности прагматических единиц в научной статье. Прагматические единицы играют важную роль в академической коммуникации, поскольку они позволяют авторам выразить свое отношение, указать степень определенности, систематизировать идеи и наладить взаимодействие с читателями. Исследование сосредоточено на лингвистических и прагматических функциях таких единиц, как преграды, стимулы, маркеры отношения, маркеры упоминания о себе, маркеры вовлеченности и дискурсивные маркеры в академическом письме. Анализ основан на отборных научных текстах и использует качественный подход для выявления того, каким образом прагматические единицы способствуют построению академического дискурса. Особое внимание уделяется тому, как эти единицы помогают авторам осторожно излагать утверждения, подчеркивать важные утверждения, выражать оценку и направлять читателей по тексту. Полученные результаты демонстрируют, что прагматические единицы являются не просто дополнительными лингвистическими элементами, но и важными ресурсами для выражения позиции и управления взаимодействием автора и читателя. Их правильное использование способствует ясности, убедительности и коммуникативной эффективности научных текстов. Исследование подчеркивает важность прагматической компетенции в академическом письме и дает лингвистический взгляд на то, как академические авторы конструируют смысл и взаимодействие посредством языка.

Ключевые слова: академический дискурс, академическое письмо, прагматические единицы, преграды, стимулы, позиция, метадискурс, взаимодействие писателя и читателя.

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Introduction

Academic writing is one of the main forms of scholarly communication. It is used not only to present research findings but also to explain ideas, formulate arguments, evaluate previous studies, and communicate the author's position to readers. For this reason, academic texts require careful organization of information and appropriate use of linguistic resources. An academic text is not simply a collection of facts and statements; it is also a form of interaction between the writer and the reader. Through different linguistic choices, authors can indicate how strongly they support a claim, express their attitude towards information, and guide readers in interpreting the presented ideas.

In this context, pragmatic aspects of academic writing have attracted increasing attention in linguistic research. Pragmatics is concerned with how meaning is shaped by context, communicative purposes, and the relationship between participants in communication. In academic discourse, pragmatic meaning can be expressed through a variety of linguistic units that perform particular communicative functions. These units can help writers show certainty or uncertainty, express evaluation, emphasize important information, refer to themselves, and directly or indirectly address readers.

One important group of such linguistic resources is represented by pragmatic units. They include hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mention expressions, engagement markers, and various discourse markers. For example, expressions such as may, might, and appear to can reduce the strength of a claim, while words such as clearly and demonstrate can make a statement more emphatic. Similarly, expressions such as it is important to note can draw the reader's attention to particular information. Therefore, pragmatic units contribute not only to the organization of an academic text but also to the expression of the author's stance and the construction of writer–reader interaction.

The study of pragmatic units is particularly important because academic writing requires a balance between presenting information objectively and expressing the author's position. Academic authors often need to make claims without presenting them as unquestionable facts. At the same time, they need to demonstrate confidence in their research findings and establish their academic authority. Pragmatic units provide linguistic resources for achieving this balance. Their use can therefore reveal important features of academic communication and the ways in which writers construct their relationship with readers. Although pragmatic features of academic discourse have been widely discussed in linguistic studies, the use of individual pragmatic units and their communicative functions continue to require attention in different types of academic texts and linguistic contexts. The frequency, distribution, and functions of these units may vary according to the purpose of a text, its genre, disciplinary context, and the writer's communicative intentions. This makes the analysis of pragmatic units relevant for understanding how academic discourse is constructed at both linguistic and communicative levels.

The present study aims to examine the use and functional characteristics of pragmatic units in academic texts. It focuses on the ways in which these units express stance, modify the strength of claims, convey evaluation, organize interaction, and guide readers through academic discourse. The study also seeks to identify the major types of pragmatic units used in the selected texts and to explain their contribution to effective academic communication.

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What types of pragmatic units are commonly used in academic texts?
2. What communicative and pragmatic functions do these units perform?
3. How do pragmatic units contribute to the expression of stance and writer–reader interaction in academic discourse?

Literature Review

The linguistic study of academic texts has developed through several interconnected areas, including discourse analysis, pragmatics, academic writing, and metadiscourse studies. Previous research has shown that academic writing is not simply a means of presenting information. It is also a form of communication in which writers organize arguments, express their positions, evaluate information, and establish relationships with readers. From this perspective, pragmatic units represent

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an important linguistic resource for understanding how academic texts function as communicative acts.

One of the influential approaches to discourse is presented by van Dijk (2008), who emphasizes the relationship between discourse, context, cognition, and society. From this perspective, linguistic choices in a text are connected with the communicative situation and the knowledge and expectations of discourse participants. This approach is particularly relevant to academic discourse because academic texts are produced for particular audiences and within specific disciplinary contexts. Therefore, the interpretation of pragmatic units should take into consideration not only their linguistic form but also the context and communicative purpose in which they are used.

The social and interactive nature of academic writing is also emphasized by Hyland (2009). He approaches academic discourse as a form of social interaction in which writers communicate knowledge while simultaneously positioning themselves in relation to their arguments, disciplinary communities, and readers. This perspective challenges the traditional view that academic writing should be completely impersonal. Instead, academic writers make deliberate linguistic choices to express degrees of certainty, evaluation, authorial presence, and relationships with readers.

A particularly important contribution to the study of academic interaction is Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse. The model distinguishes between interactive and interactional resources. Interactive resources help readers follow the organization and development of a text, while interactional resources involve readers in the discourse and allow writers to express their positions. The interactional category includes hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers. These categories are especially relevant to the present study because they demonstrate how linguistic forms can perform pragmatic and interpersonal functions in academic writing.

Hedges are used to reduce the strength of a proposition and indicate that the writer does not present a claim as completely certain. Expressions such as may, might, perhaps, and possible allow writers to acknowledge alternative interpretations and maintain an appropriate level of caution. Boosters perform an opposite function by expressing greater confidence and emphasizing the certainty of a claim. Examples include clearly, definitely, and it is clear that. The combination of hedges and boosters enables academic writers to manage the degree of commitment they express toward their propositions. Hyland (2005) therefore considers these resources important for negotiating academic interaction and positioning the writer in relation to readers.

Attitude markers represent another important category of interactional resources. They allow writers to express evaluation and indicate their feelings or judgments towards the information being discussed. Words such as important, significant, appropriate, and surprisingly can signal the writer's evaluation of a proposition. Self-mentions, including I, we, and our, make the author's presence explicit and contribute to the construction of authorial identity. Engagement markers, in turn, explicitly involve readers by directing their attention or inviting them to consider particular information. These resources demonstrate that academic writing contains an important interpersonal dimension in addition to its informational function.

The concept of metadiscourse has also been developed by other scholars. Ädel (2006), for example, examines metadiscourse as a way of understanding how writers refer to the discourse itself and manage interaction within written communication. Her work contributes to a broader understanding of metadiscourse and demonstrates the importance of examining linguistic forms in relation to their discourse functions. This perspective supports the view that pragmatic analysis should focus not only on individual words and expressions but also on the functions they perform within a larger textual context.

Discourse markers constitute another group of linguistic resources relevant to pragmatic analysis. Schiffrin (1987) examined discourse markers as linguistic expressions that contribute to the organization and interpretation of discourse. They can help establish relationships between different parts of a text and guide the interpretation of ongoing communication. In academic writing, expressions such as however, therefore, moreover, and in contrast can indicate contrast, consequence, addition, or other logical relationships between ideas.

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Fraser (1999) further developed the pragmatic analysis of discourse markers and described them as expressions that signal a relationship between the interpretation of one discourse segment and another. Importantly, their specific interpretation is influenced by context. This suggests that expressions such as however or therefore should not be considered merely grammatical connectors. Their use can also contribute to the pragmatic organization of academic argumentation by helping readers understand how the writer intends different propositions to be related.

The relationship between textual organization and academic writing has also been examined from a broader linguistic perspective. Halliday and Hasan (1976) emphasized the role of cohesive relations in creating connected texts. Although cohesion and pragmatics represent different areas of analysis, cohesive resources can support pragmatic communication by helping readers identify relationships between propositions. Thus, the interpretation of pragmatic units can be strengthened when their role in the wider organization of the text is also considered.

Brown and Levinson (1987) theory of politeness provides another perspective for understanding interpersonal aspects of communication. Their work demonstrates that speakers and writers make linguistic choices partly in response to social relationships and communicative goals. Although their model was not developed specifically for academic writing, its attention to interpersonal relations is relevant to academic discourse, where writers need to formulate claims, criticism, and evaluation in socially appropriate ways. Hedges, for instance, can sometimes contribute not only to epistemic caution but also to the mitigation of potentially strong statements.

The linguistic characteristics of academic writing have also been investigated through corpus-based research. Biber and Gray (2016) demonstrate that academic writing has distinctive linguistic patterns and that academic prose cannot be adequately described through simple assumptions about grammatical complexity or formality. Their research highlights the importance of examining academic language in its actual textual and disciplinary contexts. This supports the need for a contextual analysis of pragmatic units rather than treating their occurrence as independent linguistic items.

Taken together, previous studies demonstrate that pragmatic resources have several interconnected functions in academic discourse. They help writers organize information, express degrees of certainty, communicate evaluation, establish authorial identity, guide readers, and manage writer–reader interaction. However, these functions cannot always be determined from linguistic form alone because the pragmatic meaning of a unit depends on its context and communicative purpose. Therefore, the present study approaches pragmatic units as functional linguistic resources rather than as isolated words or grammatical structures. Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of van Dijk, Hyland, Schiffrin, Fraser, Ädel, Halliday and Hasan, Brown and Levinson, and Biber and Gray, the study focuses on how pragmatic units operate in academic texts and how they contribute to the construction of meaning and interaction. Particular attention is given to hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, engagement markers, and discourse markers as important resources for academic communication.

Methodology

The present study employs a qualitative approach to examine the use and pragmatic functions of pragmatic units in academic texts. The research material consists of the introduction section of the academic research article „Can AI-Generated Text be Reliably Detected'' written by Sadasivan et al. (2025). The introduction section was selected because it typically establishes the research topic, present the background of the study, refer to previous research, identify a research gap, and introduce the purpose of the study. These communicative functions provide a suitable context for examining the use of pragmatic units. The analysis focuses on pragmatic units that contribute to the expression of the writer's stance and the management of interaction with readers. Based mainly on Hyland's (2005) interpersonal metadiscourse framework, the study examines five major categories: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers. In addition, discourse markers are considered as a separate category because they contribute to the organization and interpretation of academic arguments.

Hedges include linguistic expressions that reduce the strength or certainty of a claim, such as

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may, might, perhaps, possibly, and appear to. Boosters indicate a higher degree of confidence and include expressions such as clearly, certainly, definitely, and demonstrate. Attitude markers express the writer's evaluation of information through words and expressions such as important, significant, interesting, and surprisingly. Self-mentions refer to explicit references to the writer through forms such as I, we, and our. Engagement markers involve readers more directly through expressions such as note that, consider, and it is important to note. Discourse markers, including however, therefore, moreover, and in contrast, are analyzed according to their role in establishing relationships between ideas and guiding the reader through the argument.

The analysis was conducted in two stages. First, the two article introductions were carefully examined to identify instances of the selected pragmatic units. Second, the identified units were analyzed in their immediate textual context in order to determine their communicative and pragmatic functions. This contextual approach is important because the function of a particular linguistic expression may depend on the context in which it occurs. The study is primarily qualitative, as its main purpose is to interpret the functions of pragmatic units rather than to provide statistical generalizations. However, the occurrence of different categories is also considered in order to identify general patterns within the selected texts. Given the small size of the corpus, the quantitative observations are used only as supporting evidence for the qualitative analysis and are not intended to represent academic writing as a whole.

The analysis is guided by the theoretical approaches discussed in the literature review, particularly Hyland's (2005, 2009) work on metadiscourse and academic discourse, as well as Schiffrin's (1987) and Fraser's (1999) approaches to discourse markers and pragmatic meaning. These frameworks provide the basis for identifying the selected pragmatic units and interpreting their functions within the academic texts.

Through this methodological approach, the study seeks to show how pragmatic units operate in the introduction sections of academic research articles and how they contribute to the expression of stance, organization of ideas, and writer–reader interaction.

Results

The qualitative analysis of the Introduction section of the selected academic article by Sadasivan et al. (2025) revealed that pragmatic units play an important role in organizing information, expressing logical relationships, and presenting the authors' position. Several types of pragmatic units were identified, including contrastive, causal, exemplifying, transitional, and stance-related expressions. Contrastive markers such as "However" and "In contrast" are frequently used to present differences between the advantages of large language models and the problems associated with their use. For example, the authors first describe the ability of LLMs to generate high-quality and human-like texts and then use "However" to introduce concerns about authenticity, regulation, and possible misuse. This creates a clear argumentative progression. Causal and consequential units, including "Hence," "Thus," and "As a result," establish logical connections between the presented facts and the authors' conclusions. These expressions help the reader understand why the development of AI-generated text creates a need for reliable detection methods and why weaknesses in existing detectors may lead to practical problems.

The Introduction also contains exemplifying expressions such as "For example" and "In particular." These units introduce specific cases or evidence that support broader claims. Their use makes the argument more concrete and allows the authors to move from a general statement to a particular example. Another important group consists of authorial stance markers. Expressions such as "we show," "we observe," "we find," "we analyze," and "we provide" explicitly present the researchers' actions and findings. They make the authors' presence visible in the text and indicate how the presented claims are connected with the research process.

Modal and evaluative expressions, including "can," "may," "potential," "significant," "critical," and "reliable," also contribute to the pragmatic organization of the Introduction. Modal verbs help the authors express possibility and avoid presenting every claim as absolute, while evaluative words

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indicate the importance of the research problem and its possible consequences.

Overall, the analysis shows that pragmatic units in the selected Introduction perform both organizational and communicative functions. They connect ideas, guide the reader through the argument, express authorial stance, and emphasize the significance of the research problem.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that pragmatic units are an important part of academic communication. In the analyzed Introduction, they are not used only to connect individual sentences; they also help the authors construct a coherent argument and communicate their position to the reader. The frequent use of contrastive markers, particularly “However” and “In contrast,” allows the authors to present the topic from different perspectives. The positive development of LLMs is first described, while their potential risks and limitations are subsequently introduced. In this way, contrastive pragmatic units help create a balanced academic argument rather than presenting the research problem without contextual background.

Causal and consequential expressions perform a different but complementary function. Units such as “Hence” and “Thus” connect evidence with interpretation and show how one statement leads to another. This is especially important in academic writing because the reader needs to understand the logical relationship between the development of AI technologies, their possible misuse, and the need for reliable detection.

The analysis also indicates that authorial stance is clearly expressed through first-person plural constructions such as “we show,” “we find,” and “we analyze.” These expressions identify the researchers as active participants in the production of knowledge. At the same time, modal expressions such as “can” and “may” allow the authors to distinguish between established findings and possible consequences. This contributes to a cautious and academically appropriate style. Evaluative expressions such as “significant,” “critical,” and “potential” further demonstrate the persuasive function of pragmatic language. Through these expressions, the authors emphasize the importance of reliable AI-text detection and draw attention to the possible consequences of inaccurate detection.

Therefore, the analyzed Introduction shows that pragmatic units contribute to several interconnected aspects of academic discourse: argument organization, logical coherence, authorial positioning, evaluation, and reader guidance. Although the present analysis is limited to one academic article, it demonstrates how pragmatic choices can support the effective presentation of a research problem and establish the communicative purpose of an academic text. Further research involving a larger corpus of academic articles would allow these observations to be examined across different disciplines and types of academic writing.

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