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CORPUS ANALYSIS OF SEMANTIC PROSODY OF REPORTING VERBS IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SCHOLARLY RESEARCH TEXTS

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Abstract. The article examines the semantic prosody of English reporting verbs in contemporary authentic linguodidactic scholarly research articles and explores the potential of its application in teaching academic reading and writing to Master's students. The aim of the article is to describe how frequent reporting verbs and their adverbial collocates express the author's position, the epistemic modality, and the degree of reliability of the scientific knowledge described, identifying pedagogically viable patterns for English for Academic Purposes instruction.
The research methods include quantitative and qualitative corpus analysis. At the first stage of the study, the author conducted a quantitative frequency ranking of reporting verbs via Voyant Tools in a 174,951-word corpus of 28 articles, followed by a qualitative collocation analysis in AntConc using Mutual Information (MI) and log-likelihood (LL) scores within a ±1 span. The sample consisted of most frequent reporting verbs with strong adverbial collocates (MI / LL) identified with the help of the abovementioned techniques. The findings substantiate the necessity to include semantic prosody training in Master's linguistics syllabi.
The analysis encompasses neutral verbs, argumentation verbs, and demonstration verbs. It has been found that the prosody of these verbs is explicated through stable expressions (e.g. *unquestioningly / automatically assume, widely recognized, reasonably claim, strongly suggest / indicate*), which serve as markers of the author's position. The results show that these collocations carry stable positive or negative prosody and function as the main method of expressing epistemic modality, demonstrating the author's agreement with the academic community, or keeping a critical distance. The conclusions stress the need to use corpus-driven tasks to develop the Master's students' skills to interpret the subtle nuances of the author's position while teaching academic reading and writing. The identification of semantic prosody in adverbial collocations with the verbs under analysis facilitates the intensification of teaching interpretation and expression of the author's position in foreign language instruction of Master's students.

Keywords: scholarly discourse; scholarly texts; English language; reporting verbs; semantic prosody; academic reading; scholarly article; author's position; English for Academic Purposes; master's degree courses; higher education institutions; education process; reading in a foreign language

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КОРПУСНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ СЕМАНТИЧЕСКОЙ ПРОСОДИИ ГЛАГОЛОВ ЦИТИРОВАНИЯ В АНГЛОЯЗЫЧНЫХ НАУЧНЫХ ТЕКСТАХ

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Аннотация. В статье исследуется семантическая просодия англоязычных глаголов цитирования в современных аутентичных научных текстах по лингводидактике. Анализируются способы ее применения в обучении магистрантов-лингвистов иноязычному академическому чтению и письменной речи. Цель статьи заключается в описании того, как частотные глаголы цитирования с адвербальными коллокатами выражают позицию автора статьи, эпистемическую модальность, степень достоверности излагаемого научного знания с целью их дальнейшего применения в обучении магистрантов-лингвистов английскому языку для академических целей.
Методология исследования сочетает количественный и качественный корпусный анализ. На первом этапе проведен количественный анализ частотности глаголов цитирования с помощью Voyant Tools на материале корпуса из 28 статей (174 951 слово). Далее выполнен качественный анализ коллокаций в AntConc с применением статистических метрик MI (взаимная информация) и LL (логарифмическая правдоподобность) в интервале ±1. Основной выборкой послужили высокочастотные глаголы цитирования с наиболее устойчивыми адвербиальными связями, выявленными с помощью указанных метрик. Полученные результаты обосновывают необходимость обучения магистрантов-лингвистов семантической просодии.

Анализ охватывает нейтральные глаголы, глаголы аргументации и демонстрации. Выявлено, что просодия названных глаголов эксплицируется через устойчивые сочетания (например, unquestioningly / automatically assume, widely recognized, reasonably claim, strongly suggest / indicate), которые служат маркерами выражения авторской позиции. Результаты показывают, что данные коллокации обладают устойчивой положительной или отрицательной просодией и являются основным способом выражения эпистемической модальности, демонстрации солидарности автора с научным сообществом или сохранения критической дистанции. Выводы подтверждают необходимость применения заданий на основе корпусных данных для развития умений магистрантов в интерпретации оттенков авторской позиции, при обучении иноязычному академическому чтению и письменной речи. Выявление семантической просодии в адвербиальных коллокациях с опорными глаголами цитирования способствует интенсификации обучения интерпретации и выражению авторской позиции в рамках иноязычной подготовки магистрантов.

Ключевые слова: научный дискурс; научные тексты; английский язык; глаголы цитирования; семантическая просодия; академическое чтение; научная статья; авторская позиция; английский для академических целей; магистратура; высшие учебные заведения; образовательный процесс; иноязычное чтение

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Contemporary developments in foreign language education define as a key requirement that future specialists must be ready and able to extract and interpret professional information from foreign research sources through reading, in order to participate in professional scholarly communication. This has been reflected in the goals of professionally oriented foreign language instruction within Master's programs delivered in a foreign language[1]. Researchers have convincingly demonstrated the inseparable connection between students' level of academic reading skills, their academic writing, and overall academic achievement.

It has been widely recognized that academic reading presupposes uncovering the content and structure of the text. It involves comparison, analysis, establishing links between different components of the text, formulating conclusions, decoding meaning, and understanding the scholar's stance as expressed in the article and realized through linguistic means, both in the lexis and syntax of the research text. It is important to stress that academic reading combines both critical evaluation of information and its analysis [Pestrikova, Lytaeva 2025; Anwar 2022].

A rethinking of the significance of technological tools in general, and of corpus linguistic tools in particular, has enabled researchers to reconsider the processes of teaching foreign-language reading overall, academic reading specifically, and the comprehension of foreign-language research sources. Scholars' turns to corpus toolkits is explained by the reduced degree of subjectivity in the selection of language material for subsequent interpretation of the data obtained [Plungyan 2008; Cherniavskaya, Khokhlova 2026]. Lower subjectivity contributes to more accurate decoding of the researcher's stance in the academic text.

In this context, the investigation, understanding, and conscious use of reporting verbs as markers of authorial stance becomes especially significant. It is worth mentioning that building on the work of R. C. Scarcella, the key distinguishing feature of written English academic discourse produced by native speakers is the striving for objectivity and balanced expression in argumentative statements, whereas non-native authors of English often resort to broad generalizations and subjective judgments. Therefore, in academic discourse, the deliberate choice of lexical items – above all verbs – that serve to express the author's stance in a research article is critically important. Equally significant is the fact that it is precisely verbal forms that most accurately convey the author's attitude toward the information presented in the article. It has been shown that certain verbs *(report, argue)* cannot be used interchangeably. Let us emphasize that particular attention should be paid specifically to verbs, because they express the author's attitude to the information in the text. In the context of English for Professional Purposes, working with these verbs is especially valuable [Scarcella 2003].

Analysis of research on teaching foreign-language academic reading, of post-reading discussions of foreign research texts, of English-language research written by first-year master's students majoring in the "Theory of Foreign Language Teaching and Intercultural Communication" programme, as well as the author's direct classroom observation, made it possible to draw a robust conclusion: one of the errors typical of this target audience is the interchangeable use of reporting verbs *(report, argue, claim)* in productive foreign-language activities. Instead of expressing a differentiated degree of certainty about others' conclusions, master's students present almost any statement as an indisputable fact.

Moreover, a quantitative analysis of 26 research articles written by first-year master's students (2024–2025) showed that for reporting author's arguments they most often use the universal but stylistically simplified verb *say* (54 occurrences) and think (65 occurrences). This dominance of neutral vocabulary indicates that the students struggle to select words that accurately express confidence or doubt expressed by the author of the article. In this regard, comparing such learner errors with the practices of British researchers – who rely on precise adverbial modifiers – appears highly important for improving the methodology of teaching academic writing.

This kind of epistemic homogeneity in fact eliminates the author's stance from the discourse, impeding

[1] Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Education – Master's Degree in the field of training 2020.45.04.02; Educational standard of Higher Education of St. Petersburg State University. 2018. URL: https://spbu.ru/sites/default/files/20180809_7828_1.pdf (mode of access: 28.06.2026).

the creation of an adequate scholarly commentary and critical evaluation of the material.

Epistemic homogeneity in the use of reporting verbs *(report, argue, claim)* reflects an insufficient understanding of their *semantic prosody* – the hidden evaluative coloring that emerges from typical collocations and conveys the author's attitude to the cited information [Sinclair 1991, 2004; Louw 1993].

Despite the in-depth study of prosody in the works of a number of researchers [Hunston 2007; Bloch 2010; Ilchenko, Kramar 2022], as well as large-scale statistical data [Al-Otaibi 2022], the specific interaction of these verbs with predicative adverbs in linguodidactic contexts has so far remained outside the focus of scholarly attention. Thus, while Al-Otaibi, using the DOAJ corpus, presented a valuable functional division of 24 verbs into "positive" and "neutral", the dynamics of their use in combination with adverbial markers in educational discourse remains an open question.

The present study fills this gap by offering a corpus-based analysis of the semantic prosody of reporting verbs.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations of Semantic Prosody: Genesis and Evolution of the Concept. The research field of semantic prosody covers the mechanisms by which evaluative meanings arise within the typical environment of a word. This approach, located at the intersection of pragmatic and semantic levels of analysis, makes it possible to investigate components of attitudinal meaning and hidden connotations.

The concept of semantic prosody has undergone considerable evolution since J. Sinclair's early observations on lexemes that function in particular "semantic environments". The foundation of this approach was laid precisely by Sinclair, who described the *semantic environment* that determines the hidden evaluative meaning of a word. Using the phase verb *set in* as an example, he showed that this verb systematically combines with nouns that denote negative states *(rot, despair)*, thus acquiring a negative evaluative profile [Sinclair 1991].

In 1993, B. Louw, adapting J. R. Firth's concept, introduced the term *semantic prosody* [Louw 1993]. He defined it as a stable "aura of meaning" created by the regular transfer to a node word of an evaluative component from its most frequent collocate. Thus, the predominance of negative contexts in the case of *set in* leads to the consolidation of a negative pragmatic meaning. Semantic prosody accumulates typical evaluative shades (positive, negative, or neutral) that arise in the course of a lexical unit's functioning.

Developing Louw's idea of an "aura of meaning", W. Bublitz postulates that lexemes possess specific evaluative profiles. In his interpretation, semantic prosody is a manifestation of a word's pragmatic valency – the ability of a lexeme to attract collocates with a particular evaluative charge. As a result, the expressive background of the surrounding items is transferred onto the node word, determining its final interpretation [Bublitz 1996].

The concept was further developed by M. Stubbs, who, analyzing verbs such as *cause, provide,* and *lurk*, argued that the regular functioning of a lexeme in particular contextual conditions determines its evaluative profile. The term *discourse prosody* proposed by Stubbs shifts the focus to the pragmatic aspect: stable collocations become a tool for transmitting the author's subjective stance, often extending beyond the denotative meaning of the unit [Stubbs 1996, 2001].

The final stage in shaping the theoretical framework was J. Sinclair's fundamental five-level model of co-selection. According to this concept, meaning is not the sum of isolated lexemes; it is realized within an "extended unit of meaning" that includes five levels: 1) semantic prosody as the highest pragmatic component expressing the author's intention; 2) semantic preference, which determines the node's compatibility with certain semantic groups; 3) colligation, i.e. the link of the lexeme with grammatical categories; 4) collocation, reflecting stable lexical co-occurrence; 5) semantic core as the invariant lexical component.

This multi-level structure highlights the role of the semantic prosody as an obligatory element that shapes textual cohesion and pragmatic orientation. A typical example of positive semantic prosody is the extended unit with *argue* plus the adverb *convincingly (convincingly argue that…)*. Here the semantic core *(argue)* conveys the basic meaning of argumentation, while at the collocational level it is linked with *convincingly* and typically followed by a *that*-clause. This unit displays a semantic preference for objects such as "well-supported theories", "relevant evidence", and "innovative approaches". The synthesis of these levels creates positive semantic prosody that signals the author's alignment with the cited researcher and emphasizes a high degree of reliability of the cited conclusions. In terms of cohesion, *convincingly argue* "programs" further textual development as elaboration or support of the idea rather than its refutation [Sinclair 2004].

These examples clearly confirm leading linguists' theoretical claims about the dynamic nature of the phenomenon. As A. Partington argues, semantic prosody is an evaluative meaning that is not fixed to a single word as a permanent feature but is "distributed" across the entire extended unit. He emphasizes its hidden character: prosody cannot be detected when the word is studied in isolation; it appears only at the macro level through analysis of large data sets. Consequently, prosody is treated not as a static property of a lexeme but as a mobile evaluative outcome arising within the whole phrase [Partington 2004].

In turn, K. Coffin, A. Hewings, and K. O'Halloran focus on the process by which this category forms. In their view, semantic prosody is not an inborn property of a word: initially neutral items gradually accumulate stable positive or negative associations precisely because they repeatedly occur in specific contexts [Coffin et al. 2004; Baker et al. 2006].

The controversial nature of semantic prosody becomes apparent in S. Hunston's work, who identifies fundamental differences between Sinclair's and Louw's approaches [Hunston 2007]. The key question is where the evaluative meaning is actually located.

While Sinclair treats prosody as a dynamic property of the entire phrase (the extended unit of meaning), Louw anchors it in a specific word as a constant attribute.

This difference leads to a methodological rift: Sinclair's approach is oriented toward analyzing actual usage (synchrony), whereas Louw's approach focuses on the diachronic accumulation of evaluative charge. The objects of study also differ: Sinclair sees prosody as a universal pragmatic component potentially inherent in almost any word, while Louw focuses primarily on originally neutral items. Thus, the rigid positive / negative dichotomy characteristic of Louw's model is replaced in Sinclair's approach by a more nuanced, context-dependent view.

In order to overcome this terminological ambiguity, D. Stewart proposed a functional distinction between approaches. He stresses the need to differentiate "discourse prosody" (in Sinclair's sense), which highlights the role of live pragmatic context, and "semantic prosody" (in Louw's sense), which sees evaluation as a stable lexicographic characteristic [Stewart 2010]. In the present study, we adhere strictly to the term "semantic prosody" to analyse how an initially neutral reporting verb systematically accumulates and projects a stable evaluative aura within a specific communicative domain.

Stewart's distinction provides a methodological foundation for interpreting authorial stance, allowing us to separate commonly accepted dictionary meanings from the senses generated by a specific communicative domain. Current debates (S. Hunston, D. Stewart) focus on the functional flexibility of prosody and its dependence on several factors.

First, there is the issue of the relationship between the descriptive (factual) and evaluative functions of a word. Stewart questions the absolute universality of evaluative components: Sinclair's classical example *naked eye* can, in certain contexts, be a neutral factual expression, devoid of subjective coloring [Stewart 2010].

Second, the realization of prosody is recognized as dependent on discourse type (register). S. Hunston notes that in scientific style the typically negative prosody of some words (for example, *cause*) may be neutralized, becoming an exception to the general language norm [Hunston 2007].

A key issue remains the status of prosody within meaning. While in traditional linguistics it is often considered a secondary addition (a connotation) [Stubbs 1996], Sinclair's model assigns prosody a central status. It is seen not as an optional feature but as the semantic core of the entire "unit of meaning", determining the overall orientation of the utterance.

Reporting Verbs as a Tool for Realizing Authorial Stance in Academic Texts. In the modern linguistic paradigm, *stance* is understood as the expression of the researcher's subjectivity: their attitude to the content of the message and degree of certainty (epistemic modality). As an integral part of metadiscourse, this modal-evaluative stance allows the scholar not only to present facts but also to position themselves within the professional community [Hyland 2005a].

The process of citation in a research article serves a dual function: on the one hand, it ensures continuity of knowledge; on the other hand, it is a tool for reinforcing the author's authority [Swales 1990; Hyland 2005b]. In the spirit of M. M. Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, any scholarly utterance constitutes a response to pre-existing knowledge. Argumentation is thus built as a sequential dialogue in which each new statement clarifies or challenges earlier positions.

Effective realization of this dialogicity is impossible without conscious authorial positioning, and reporting verbs serve as a key instrument in this process. The choice of a specific lexical marker endows the cited fragment with a particular semantic prosody – a hidden evaluative background that conveys the scholar's attitude to the reliability of the information. Through their system of references, authors construct their own reputation, turning the review of others' positions into the evidential basis of their original contribution.

To fully capture how the author's stance is encoded in the academic discourse, it is essential to employ Ken Hyland's taxonomy of reporting verbs [Hyland 1999, 2005a]. Within this framework, reporting verbs function as a primary vehicle for expressing the author's stance, allowing writers to evaluate the validity of cited claims and signal their commitment to the reported information. Crucially, the operational power of these verbs relies on their underlying evaluative status, which Hyland calibrates across three core dimensions: factive (presupposing the truth of the cited statement and validating the source), non-factive (modally neutral, creating an objective evaluation space), and counter-factive (signaling the author's disagreement or rejection).

Integrating these evaluative dimensions, Hyland categorised all reporting verbs into three macrofunctions based the act they perform: Research acts (Experimental procedures) feature the sub-category Procedures with the evaluative status of None and a Procedural intentional function (reporting verbs: *analyse, measure, design, calculate, compare*), which establishes objectivity and methodological rigor, as well as the sub-category Findings, which is divided into three types: Factive with the status Acceptance of Truth (e.g., *confirm, demonstrate, discover, establish*), which validates the cited information, signaling author's confidence in the reliability of the source; Non-factive with the status Neutral report (e.g., *find, identify*), which reports research outcomes neutrally, opening the objective evaluation space for further discussion; and Counter-factive with the status Error-signaling (e.g., *fail, ignore*), which signals an error, limitation, or gap in prior research to justify the current study; Cognition Acts (expressing research or cognitive activities), which carries no specified sub-category or evaluative status in the framework but performs a Cognitive evaluation function (e.g., *anticipate, assume,*) and depicts the cited researcher's cognitive states, beliefs without explicit textual commitments (meaning the writer avoids taking a personal text-based stance of agreements or disagreement); and Discourse acts (linguistic / textual actions), which includes the subcategory Information with a non-factive status and

a Neutral discursive report function (e.g., *answer, describe, discuss*), which conveys the content of external propositions neutrally, avoiding any explicit stance signaling by the writer.

The sub-category Argument with a non-factive (positive) status and a Strong discursive advocacy function (e.g., *affirm, argue, claim*), which highlights that the cited author strongly defends a position without the writer assuming absolute epistemic liability; and the sub-category Evaluation, which is split into three lines: non-factive (tentative) with a discursive hedging function (e.g., *indicate, suggest*), which expresses caution and modal tentativeness; Non-factive (Critical) with a discursive criticism function (attack, challenge, condemn, criticise, exaggerate), which explicitly targets and interrogates the linguistic weaknesses of predecessors; and counter-factive with a discourse rejection function (e.g., *contradict, deny, refute, rule out, warn*), which openly rejects opposing claims.

The above-mentioned classification serves as the precise structural framework through which the pragmatic parameters of evidentiality, affect, and self-mention are simultaneously projected and decoded within academic discourse [Hyland 2005b]. By employing specific reporting verbs categorized into research, cognition, or discourse acts, the writer subtly regulates their epistemic and evaluative distance from the cited claims.

Evidentiality is directly realised through the tension between factive and non-factive categories: while factive verbs *(prove)* validate the truth of a proposition, non-factive verbs establish an evaluation space where the writer employs discursive hedging *(suggest)* to calibrate epistemic certainty.

Central to this calibration within metadiscourse mode are the concepts of hedges and boosters [Hyland 1999, 2005a], which are dynamically realized through the interplay of reporting verbs and modal verbs. By introducing tentativeness, adverbial hedges (e.g., *possibly assume*) allow the writer to anticipate potential opposition and restrict absolute epistemic liability; while adverbial boosters (e.g., explicitly establish) reinforce commitment and project confidence in the reliability of the source.

Simultaneously, affect is explicitly encoded through specific evaluative functions; verbs of discursive criticism *(attack)* and error signaling *(fail)* convey negative alignment, whereas strong discursive advocacy *(argue, claim)* marks acknowledgement of a potent external argument. Finally, self-mention is implicitly manifested through the author's strategic choice among research, cognition, and discourse acts.

To conclude the theoretical overview, it should be noted that the pragmatics of these verbs is revealed through the interplay of collocational and discourse perspectives. In the collocational approach, prosody is conceptualized as a dynamic interaction between a "target" term (reporting verb) and a "source" term (the adverbial collocate) [Sinclair 1991]. An important addition is B. Williams's philosophical distinction between "thin" and "thick" concepts, which highlights that adverbs may either be purely evaluative or may combine description with evaluation [Williams 1985].

As a result, semantic prosody in academic style appears as the outcome of widely shared evaluations characteristic of the academic community. This underscores the methodological need for contextual analysis: the pragmatic meaning of verbs must be interpreted within entire utterances rather than from dictionaries alone. At the same time, despite the detailed study of predicates themselves, their interaction with modal adverbs (for example, *strongly argue, plainly state*) as additional stance markers remains underresearched. It is precisely the exploration of this interaction – between reporting verbs and adverbs – that constitutes the focus of the present study.

Corpus Characteristics and Initial Verb Extraction. To compile the lexical sample, we analyzed a corpus of texts totaling 174,951 words, which includes 28 recent publications (2020–2025) by British researchers in linguodidactics. The use of up-to-date scholarly sources made it possible to identify current norms in the use of reporting verbs in this particular discourse.

The first stage of selecting reporting verbs involved a rigorous quantitative analysis aimed at establishing a baseline frequency. The objective was to extract all potential reporting verbs from the selected articles using the *Terms and Context* tools within Voyant Tools. To ensure an accurate extraction process, the selection was guided by the following criteria:

1. Functional-Semantic Criterion: Only verbs that explicitly and directly introduce other researcher's ideas, opinions, or findings were selected. This criterion implies not only verbs of speaking (e.g., *report*) but also verbs that describe the cited authors' arguments (e.g., *argue, claim*) or their thoughts and hypotheses (e.g., *assume, believe*).

2. Contextual relevance: Every verb was cross-checked using the Contexts tool. This was necessary to filter out non-reporting uses (for instance, to separate the noun *"state"* or the general, non-citation meaning of *"show"* from their functions as citation signals.

3. Inflectional Lemmatization: All grammatical forms of the same verb (e.g., *argues, argued, arguing*) were grouped under a single base form (lemma), such as *argue*, to calculate their total corpus frequency accurately.

4. Frequency Threshold: To identify the most systematic patterns in the linguodidactic discourse, only verbs with a total frequency of 3 or more occurrences across the corpus were included in the final analysis. Following the corpus-linguistics methodology established by, this threshold allowed for the objective elimination of peripheral or accidental word choices.

Consequently, the methodology progressed from this initial frequency-driven extraction to a synthesis of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to corpus analysis. While the Terms tool enabled the application of the minimum frequency threshold to filter the reporting verbs quantitatively, the Contexts tool facilitated the qualitative evaluation. This dual functionality allowed for the essential contextual cross-checking of each lexical item, ensuring that only true reporting verbs were retained for further analysis. At this stage, the quantitative extraction was correlated with and classified according to the above-mentioned Hyland's framework of the reporting verbs, categorizing

the selected units into research, discourse, and cognition acts.

Collocational Analysis and Software Toolkit. The second stage of the methodology was explicitly aimed at identifying stable verb-adverb collocations. The theoretical basis for this analysis is the assumption that native speakers use specific lexical combinations to convey evaluative modality that is often not reflected in traditional dictionaries. Following established linguistic traditions, a collocation is defined as the tendency of a word to co-occur with particular items [Cherniavskaya, Khokhlova 2026]. Specifically, this study relies on the notion of statistical collocations as non-random co-occurrences of two or more lexical units [Kopotev 2014; Zakharov, Bogdanova 2020] that show a stable tendency to occur together [Cherniavskaya, Khokhlova 2026].

To identify and extract such patterns, the analysis employed the cross-platform corpus manager AntConc, (Version 4.3.1), specifically utilizing its *Collocate*, *KWIC* (Key Word in Context) [Cherniavskaya, Khokhlova 2026]. AntConc was chosen because of its advanced statistical capability to compute association measures – such as Mutual Information (MI) and log-likelihood (LL-score) – which are unavailable in Voyant Tools basic visualization modules.

In this quantitative analysis, we considered the full range of grammatical paradigms of the target verbs. The final dataset includes present simple, past simple, perfect forms, and present / past particles, including passive constructions, allowing for an accurate assessment of verb frequency regardless of syntactic role. To identify the semantic prosody in detail, all reporting verbs were analysed in combination with pre-verbal adverbs where the preceding word sets the evaluative tone of the entire utterance. Search parameters were limited to a context window of -1…+1 (one word to the left and right of the node), concentrating on adverbial modifiers immediately preceding or following the verb and specifying its meaning.

As a baseline threshold of statistical significance for stable combinations, we set a minimum absolute frequency of Freq ≥ 1. Collocations with a frequency of one were retained only if the node verb itself was highly frequent in the corpus, the adverb functioned strictly as a pre-modifier, and the combination displayed exceptionally high association score (MI / LL) alongside clear functional relevance in context. These peripheral cases are interpreted as local, pragmatically salient patterns rather than general, corpus-wide norms, ensuring the verifiability of the results while allowing for the objective elimination of random lexical choices.

To bridge the gap between statistical extraction and discourse theory, the identified adverb-reporting verb collocations were mapped onto Hyland's framework of interpersonal metadiscourse, specifically focusing on the categories of evidentiality, affect, and self-mention. The co-occurrence data from AntConc was triangulated with the theoretical framework based on the following explicit semantic and functional criteria:

1. Evidentiality: Adverbs were assigned to this category if they functioned as stance markers modifying the reporting verb to specify the source, empirical validity, or reliability of the cited knowledge (e.g., *clearly, empirically, explicitly*).

2. Affect: Adverbs were classified here if they expressed the author's emotional judgement, evaluative stance, or degree of alignment (agreement / disagreement) with the cited argument (e.g., *convincingly, surprisingly*).

3. Self-mention: In alignment with Hyden's emphasis on writer identity, this category included instances where the adverb-verb collocation was triggered by a first pronoun within the immediate syntactic context. Here, the adverb functioned not to evaluate another scholar, but to qualify the writer's own discursive actions (e.g., *I strictly focus*).

By applying these criteria through a micro-contextual analysis in the KWIC tool, the raw statistical collocations were systematically converted into meaningful elements of Hyland's contemporary discourse model, ensuring both the validity and reproducibility of the qualitative classification.

Lexicographic Baseline of Semantic Neutrality and Theoretical Mapping. Having filtered the initial extraction through collocational analysis in AntConc tool, a specific sub-sample of five target verbs – *assume, claim, indicate, recognize, suggest* was identified as actively co-occurring with modal adverbs. To establish a baseline for their pragmatic evaluation and to demonstrate how semantic prosody is subsequently constructed in the context, we analysed the initial semantic neutrality of these five target verbs using lexicographic data. A comprehensive review of standard dictionary entries demonstrates that the extracted verbs inherently lack pragmatic, register, or dialectal labels. Given the polysemy and wide range of meanings characteristic of English verbs, the present study addresses only those semantic variants directly related to the expression of authorial stance.

For instance, the Cambridge Dictionary[1] defines the verb assume /əˈsjuːm/ as "to think that something is likely to be true, although you have no proof." This definition relies purely on denotative components, free from any evaluative or emotional connotations.

Similarly, the verb *suggest* /səˈdʒest/[2], is glossed as "to say that someone or something is suitable for something"; *recognise* /ˈrekəgnaɪz/ (also US -ize) is described as "to accept that something is true or real"; and indicate /ˈɪndɪkeɪt/ is interpreted as "to show that something exists or is likely to be true." Finally, the verb *claim* /kleɪm/ is explained as "to state that something is true, although you have not proved it."

All these examples illustrate, all the verbs selected for the second stage of our analysis are originally characterized through basic, core concepts. Regarding the verb *recognise*, the dictionary entries indicate that the British standard uses the "s" spelling, the American standard utilises "z" – a purely orthographic variation. To further prove the inherent neutrality of these units, it is worth noting that across all the entries examined,

[1] Cambridge Dictionary). URL: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/ (mode of access: 28.06.2026).

[2] Ibid.

there is no absolute absence of information concerning sound reductions, social markers, colloquial usage, permissible stress fluctuations, vowel reduction, or colloquial coloring. Consequently, any evaluative, affective, or pragmatic prosody these five verbs acquire cannot be attributed to their dictionary meanings; instead, it must emerge dynamically from their textual context and, most importantly, from their collocational patterns with modal adverbs.

To fully operationalise K. Hyland's framework and link the statistical data from AntConc with the pragmatic categories of stance, the extracted adverb-verb collocations for these target units were mapped onto the concepts of evidentiality, affect, and self-mention based on the following functional and semantic criteria:

1. Evidentially Mapping: Combinations were assigned to this parameter if the modifying adverb calibrated the writer's commitment to the reliability or certainty of the knowledge source. Adverbs that restricted epistemic liability by introducing modal tentativeness (e.g., *possibly assume*) were characterised as hedges, whereas adverbs that emphasised certainty and empirical validity (e.g., clearly indicate, explicitly recognize) were classified as boosters.

2. Affect Mapping: Collocations were correlated with the parameter of affect when the adverb explicitly projected the writer's emotional, attitudinal, or evaluative alignment toward the cited claim. Adverbs intensifying positive advocacy (e.g., *strongly claim*) signaled positive alignment, while adverbs highlighting limitations or contextual reservations were mapped onto parameters of evaluation and critical framing.

3. Self-Mention Mapping: This parameter was identified through the contextual interplay between the verb paradigm, the adverb, and the presence of explicit or implicit authorial presence (e.g., *we tentatively suggest*). Collocations were analysed through KWIC tool in AntConc to determine whether the combined pragmatic force of the adverb and verb served to emphasise the current researcher's voice or, conversely, to background it in favor of an impersonal reporting style.

Results and Discussion

Quantitative Distribution and Functional Classification or Reporting Verbs. The first stage of the empirical analysis, conducted using the Terms and Contexts within Voyant Tools, enabled the comprehensive extraction and frequency mapping of the target reporting verbs across the compiled corpus of 174,951 words. The initial filtering yielded a total of 15 high-frequency reporting verbs (all with a corpus frequency of ≥ 3). These items were categorized based on their underlying evaluative status and intentional functions, mapping onto three corresponding functional profiles within contemporary corpus-driven discourse analysis:

1. Neutral verbs (factual reporting / Hyland's Non-factive Neutral Discursive Reports: *state* (135), *report* (91), *recognize* (43), *describe* (52), *note* (39), *mention* (24).

2. Argumentative verbs (expressing stance / Hyland's Non-factive Discursive Advocacy and Cognitive Evaluation): *argue* (93), *assume* (22), *claim* (28), *assert* (3).

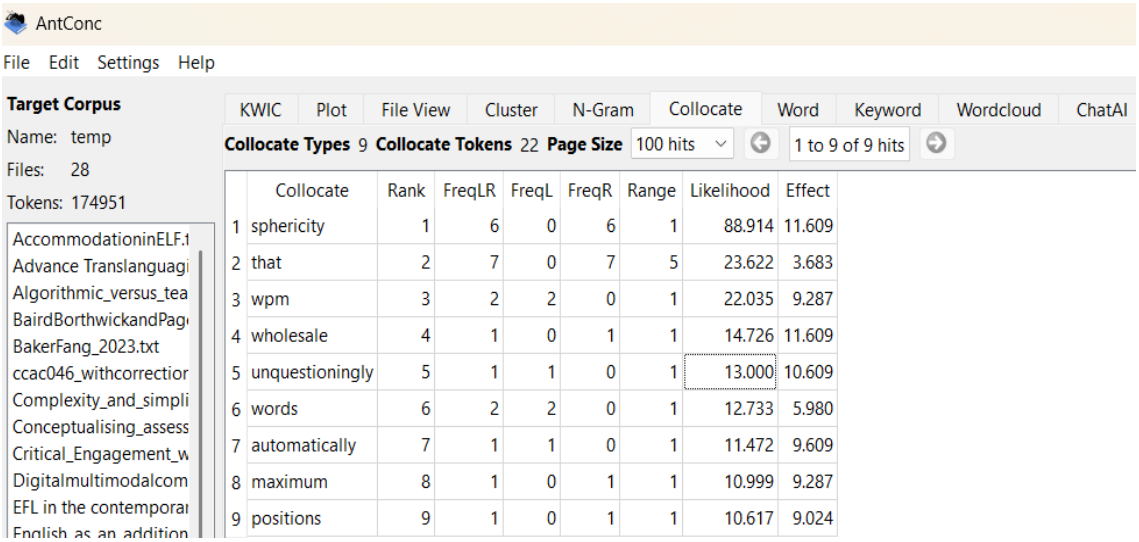
3. Demonstrative verbs (indicating evidence / Hyland's Factive Research Findings): *show* (79), *highlight* (72), *demonstrate* (48), *reveal* (30), *indicate* (20).

The quantitative predominance of non-factive neutral verbs and factive demonstrative verbs indicates the author's strong commitment to the objectification of exposition and a heavy reliance on empirical evidence.

Adverbial Collocations and the Realisation of Semantic Prosody. To uncover the hidden evaluative background of the selected units, the initial frequency-driven extraction was subsequently filtered and analysed through the Collocate and KWIC modules of AntConc (Version 4.3.1) [Cherniavskaya, Khokhlova 2026]. Although the total corpus frequently of the lemma *assume* reached 28 occurrences in Voyant Tools, a detailed contextual cross-checking narrowed the active reporting sample to 22 instances within 28 distinct text contexts.

The empirical analysis of *assume* demonstrated that, despite its inherent lexicographic neutrality and purely denotative, connotation-free baseline established in the preceding section (see Section 3.2), the verb carries a stable negative semantic prosody in contemporary British linguodidactic discourse. In line with the corpus-driven approach proposed by J. Sinclair and the concept of "discourse prosody" developed by M. Stubbs and D. Stewart, this evaluative meaning is not an inborn, static feature of the isolated verb [Sinclair 2004; Stewart 2010]. Instead, it operates as a dynamic pragmatic outcome distributed across an extended unit of meaning, where the pragmatic valency of the node word – to use W. Bublitz's terminology – attracts collocates with a highly specific evaluative charge [Bublitz 1996; Sinclair 2004].

This functional flexibility and attraction are statistically confirmed by high Log-Likelihood (LL) and Mutual Information (MI) scores for the immediate adverbial collocates of assume. Specifically, combinations with *unquestioningly* (LL: 13.000; MI: 10.609) serve to signal uncritical acceptance of information by the cited source [Hyland 1999]. Similarly, collocations with *automatically* (LL: 22.948; MI: 9.611) introduce a distinct shade of mechanistic thinking and neglect of linguistic-cultural specificity (see Fig. 1).

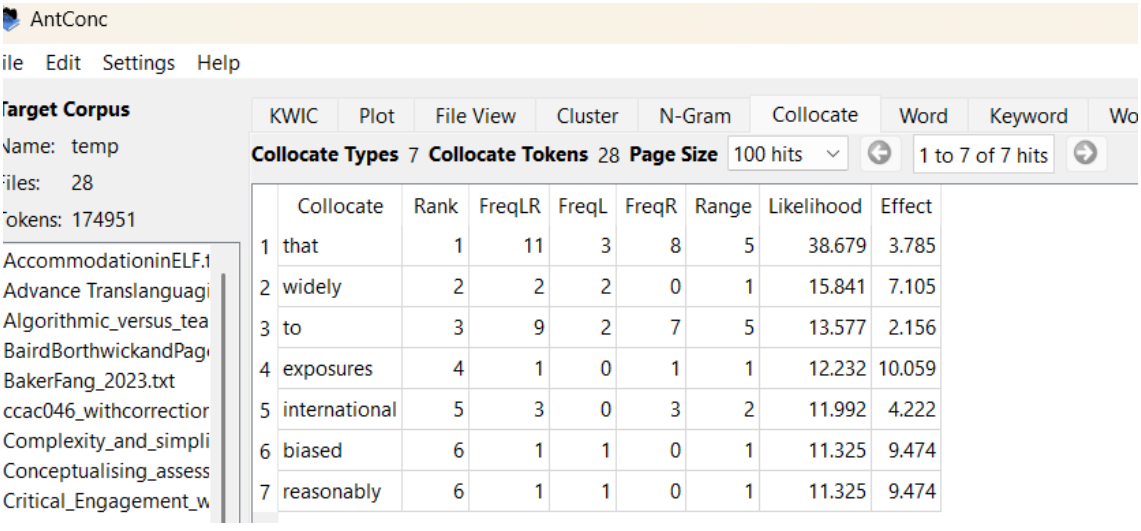


	Collocate	Rank	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Range	Likelihood	Effect
1	sphericity	1	6	0	6	1	88.914	11.609
2	that	2	7	0	7	5	23.622	3.683
3	wpm	3	2	2	0	1	22.035	9.287
4	wholesale	4	1	0	1	1	14.726	11.609
5	unquestioningly	5	1	1	0	1	13.000	10.609
6	words	6	2	2	0	1	12.733	5.980
7	automatically	7	1	1	0	1	11.472	9.609
8	maximum	8	1	0	1	1	10.999	9.287
9	positions	9	1	0	1	1	10.617	9.024

Fig. 1. AntConc data for the node verb 'assume'

A close qualitative screening of the corpus sentences using the KWIC (key Word in Context) module provided a deeper insight into the contextual realization of this semantic configuration. A vivid example of this critical orientation and negative prosody comes from an excerpt addressing educational policy: *"Governments and their education policies often appear to unquestioningly assume…"*. In this context, the micro-level analysis reveals how the modifying pre-verbal adverb *unquestioningly* acts as the primary vehicle for setting the evaluative tone of the entire utterances, transferring a negative tone onto the node verb. Through this strategic lexical co-selection, the author operationalises the mechanism of expressing subjective attitude – perfectly aligning with Hyland's parameters of affect and evaluation. While the dictionary entry for *assume* represents a connotation-free baseline, its actual use within the KWIC lines demonstrates that the verb converts an originally neutral verb into a tool for negative stance signaling, allowing writers to openly articulate a skeptical view of unfounded claims in contemporary linguodidacts.

This localized distribution is statistically confirmed by high association measures for its immediate adverbial modifiers, such as widely and reasonably (with *widely* yielding scores of LL: 15.841; MI: 7.105) and *reasonably* yielding LL: 11.325; MI: 9.474). In line with the collocational principles of J. Sinclair and B. Louw, these adverbial modifiers perform a crucial rhetorical role in generating a stable positive semantic prosody around the node verb. Specifically, the collocate *widely* appeals to a broad academic consensus, while *reasonably* explicitly emphasises logical soundness and methodological validity.



	Collocate	Rank	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Range	Likelihood	Effect
1	that	1	11	3	8	5	38.679	3.785
2	widely	2	2	2	0	1	15.841	7.105
3	to	3	9	2	7	5	13.577	2.156
4	exposures	4	1	0	1	1	12.232	10.059
5	international	5	3	0	3	2	11.992	4.222
6	biased	6	1	1	0	1	11.325	9.474
7	reasonably	6	1	1	0	1	11.325	9.474

Fig. 2. AntConc data for the node verb 'claim'

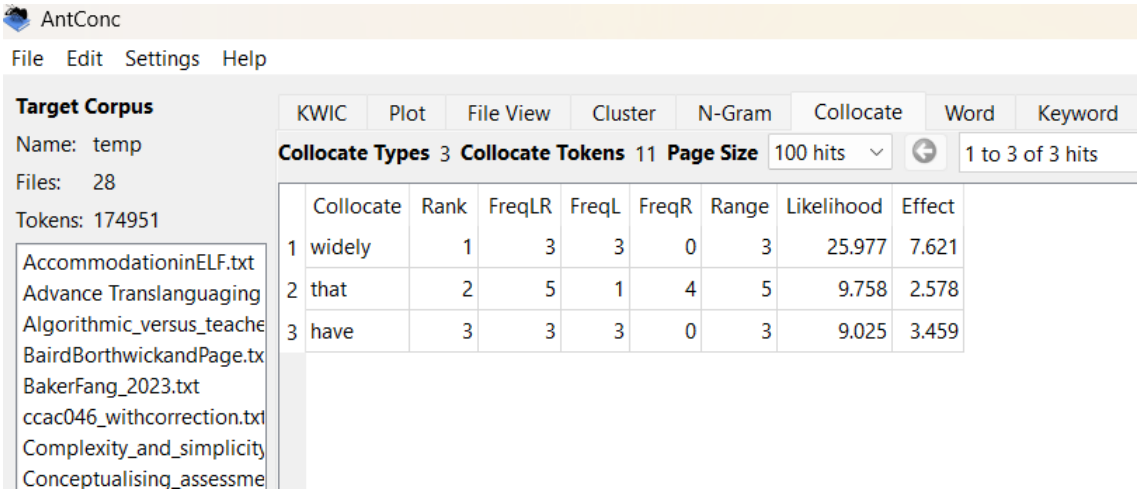
While in general language usage *claim* often functions as a marker of subjective doubt or unverified assertions, or a writer's tactical distancing from the cited source in these specific corpus environments of British linguodidactics it acts as a powerful tool for affirming professional competence and academic authority.

A closer contextual screening via the KWIC module showed that the verb's positive semantic prosody in these three collocate tokens is systematically formed in environments relating to professional expertise (e.g., *"expertise in teaching foreign languages"*), high language proficiency, academic reputation, and international

status. Furthermore, the verb frequently marks access to new research horizons (e.g., *"exposure to a new world"*). Through these stable lexical combinations, the extended units with *claim* convey an aura of confidence and recognition, implying justified and successful assertions of competence.

In terms of Hyland's framework, this interaction directly operationalises the parameters of evidentiality and self-mention. By modifying the non-factive predicate with adverbs of consensus and rationality, writers successfully calibrate epistemic certainty, turning a privately made claim into a widely accepted academic fact.

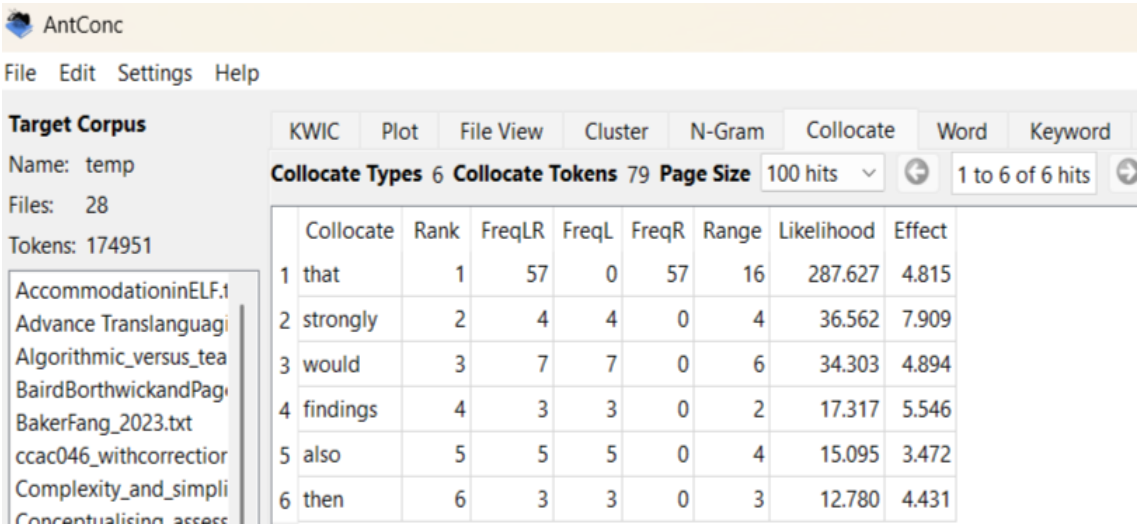
The adverbial collocates reveal a strongly positive semantic prosody for *recognize* (28 contexts, 11 tokens with *widely*: LL = 25.977, MI = 7.621). The phrase "widely recognized" carries a distinctly positive connotation, functioning as a seal of academic authority. This collocation credits sources not merely as "generally accepted" but as professional standards worthy of teacher training. The surrounding context ("effective teachers", "deep thinking") reinforces this evaluation, positioning *widely recognized* texts as reliable scholarly foundations



	Collocate	Rank	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Range	Likelihood	Effect
1	widely	1	3	3	0	3	25.977	7.621
2	that	2	5	1	4	5	9.758	2.578
3	have	3	3	3	0	3	9.025	3.459

Fig. 3. AntConc data for the node verb 'recognise'

Of particular importance for expressing epistemic confidence within the corpus is the behavior of the non-factive evaluation verb suggest (28 total instances in Voyant Tools). When filtered through the collocation analysis in AntConc, the lemma entered into stable combinations of 79 collocate tokens across various lexical environments. The high frequency of co-selection is statistically confirmed by exceptionally strong association scores (LL: 36.562; MI: 7.909), confirming its status as a systematic tool for intensifying authorial stance. Unlike the previously analysed critical and tentative combinations, the extended unit centered around *strongly suggest* embodies a positive semantic prosody of empirical robustness [Louw 1993; Sinclair 2004]. When no negative items appear within -1...+1 context window, the collocation conveys a confident tone of reliable support. In this configuration, the adverb *strongly* operates not merely as a mechanical intensifier, but as a deliberate pragmatic signal indicating that the writer's interpretation has reached the level of objective obviousness.



	Collocate	Rank	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Range	Likelihood	Effect
1	that	1	57	0	57	16	287.627	4.815
2	strongly	2	4	4	0	4	36.562	7.909
3	would	3	7	7	0	6	34.303	4.894
4	findings	4	3	3	0	2	17.317	5.546
5	also	5	5	5	0	4	15.095	3.472
6	then	6	3	3	0	3	12.780	4.431

Fig. 4. AntConc data for the node verb 'suggest'

A close qualitative screening of the KWIC lines provides a vivid Second Language Acquisition contextual example of how this booster function legitimises research gaps: *"...The mixed range of findings reported...*

and the gaps identified so far strongly suggest a need to empirically investigate…". Within this text segment, *strongly suggest* functions as a powerful rhetorical device that establishes the necessity for new empirical research as a logically inevitable and justified outcome of the prior literature review.

In terms of Hyland's framework, this interaction represents a fascinating pragmatic inversion [Hyland 1999]. While *suggest* inherently functions as a non-factive tentative verb used for discursive hedging, the addition of the high-certainty adverb *strongly* functionally converts the entire phrase into an explicit booster of truth. This mechanism directly operationalises the parameters of evidentiality and affect: it maximises epistemic certainty by projecting a high degree of confidence in the empirical validity of the argument, while simultaneously encoding the author's strong attitudinal alignment with the proposed research path.

The empirical analysis of the demonstrative verb *indicate* (28 total instances in the corpus) further highlights the mechanism of dynamic epistemic reinforcement. When filtered through AntConc, it was established that while the lemma co-occurred with various other parts of speech (non-adverbial elements) in 15 tokens, its active interaction with the adverbial environment was concentrated within the remaining contexts. Among these combinations the collocation *strongly indicate* (LL: 9.556; MI:2.87) exhibits the highest degree of rhetorical persuasiveness and a robustly positive evaluative background.

Within the examined discourse, the typical extended unit of meaning – frequently manifested as *"findings strongly indicate"* – signals maximum authorial confidence in the empirical conclusions. This specific combination successfully shifts the status of research results from tentative hypotheses to confirmed, undeniable facts. The lexical co-selection of *strongly* plus *indicate* emphasises an objective, reliable, and unmediated link between the study's data and its final outcome.

A close qualitative screening of the KWIC lines provides a vivid contextual example of how this booster configuration operationalises an expert conclusion: *"…the phrasing of the three descriptors below… strongly indicates that the framing is oriented to language knowledge and skills…"*. In this context, *strongly indicate* connects a detailed textual analysis directly to an authoritative expert conclusion, strategically presenting the researcher's interpretation as a direct logical consequence rather than just one of several possible viewpoints.

In terms of Hyland's framework, this interaction underscores the fine calibration of evidentiality and affect. By modifying a demonstrative verb with a high-certainty adverb, the author suppresses alternative interpretations, effectively converting the entire utterance into a powerful booster that objectifies the argumentation and projects an unshakeable academic stance.

Pedagogical Implications: Integrating Corpus Insights into EAP / ESP Contexts. To demonstrate how these findings are applicable in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), the extracted key collocations can be grouped into targeted pedagogical sets. This categorization operationalises Hyland's framework, enabling novice research to master parameters of evidentiality (calibrating certainty), affect (expressing attitudinal alignment), and self-mention (projecting authorial voice) by understanding how adverbial modifiers interact with the verb's underlying evaluative status (factive or non-factive).

1. High-certainty / strong support *(strongly suggest, strongly indicate)*: Students learn to master the parameter of evidentiality by employing these combinations as explicit boosters of truth. This set demonstrates a pragmatic contrast: in *strongly indicate*, the adverb intensifies an inherently factive demonstrative verb to signal maximum empirical robustness; conversely, in *strong suggest*, the adverb performs a pragmatic inversion, shifting an inherently non-factive tentative verb into a high-certainty booster. This allows learners to suppress alternative voices and confidently reinforce the evidential basis of their claims.

2. Broad acceptance *(widely recognized)*: Students learn to project disciplinary consensus and positive affect. This pattern teaches learners to employ adverbs of consensus to upgrade a non-factive neutral reporting verb, anchoring their literature review summaries.

3. Critical / reasonable endorsement *(reasonably claim)*: Students learn to balance self-mention and evidentiality through discursive hedging with non-factive argumentative reporting verbs. This set trains learners to use rationality modifiers with non-factive verbs to navigate epistemic liability, allowing them to present logically sound arguments and defend a position.

4. Critical evaluation *(unquestionably assume, automatically assume)*: Students learn to explicitly encode the parameter of affect and evaluate hidden bias. This set enables learners to project a sharp, skeptical, and evaluative stance towards institutional policies, uncritical assumptions, or methodological gaps in previous research, turning a neutral reporting verb into a tool for negative alignment and explicit discursive criticism.

For each set, language educators can bridge corpus insights with practical implementation by designing specific tasks, as presented in Table.

By integrating these categories into targeted learner tasks educators can operationalise corpus data for classroom use. This pedagogical bridge enhances students' precision and pragmatic competence in writing literature reviews, allowing novice researchers to successfully decode, calibrate, and project authorial stance with the academic domain.

Table. Academic Collocations for Semantic Prosody and Lerner Tasks

Typical adverb+verb	*Verb's evaluative status*	*Hyland's Metadisocurse parapeters*	*Semantic prosody*	*Suggested learner task*
Strongly suggest; strongly indicate	Non-factive (suggest) Factive (indicate)	Evidentiality (boosters); Affect (Confidence)	Positive	Rewrite neutral statements from students' draft into high-certainty arguments using boosters
Widely recognised	Non-factive (neutral report)	Evidentiality (Consensus); Affect (Approval)	Positive	Identify these collocations and integrate them into literature review to establish a secure theoretical baseline
Reasonably claim	Non-factive (argumentative)	Evidentiality (hedges); Self-mention (stance)	Neutral-positive	Paraphrase rigid assertions into cautiously endorsed claims to mitigate epistemic risk
Unquestioningly assume / automatically	Non-factive (cognition act mimicking Counter-factive function	Affect (Critical evaluation / Discursive criticism	Negative, critical	Locate in expert texts via KWIC lines; rewrite into formal critical comments for peer-reviews

Perspectives for further research

As a subsequent stage, the prosodically marked collocations identified in the current paper will be integrated as a targeted teaching materials for master's degree students majoring in English for specific purposes, including collocation lists with frequency rankings, concordance-based activities for contextual analysis, and writing frames to scaffold stance-appropriate reporting-verb use. Subsequent empirical studies will evaluate learning outcomes through pre- and post-testing. This assessment will systematically measure changes in learner's stance-making accuracy – specifically via reading-comprehension tasks and error analysis in argumentative essay.

Limitations

The corpus is geographically limited (primarily British) and thematically narrow (linguodidactics as a subfield). Prosodic patterns and stance strategies might differ in other disciplines (e.g., hard sciences, economics) or other Englishes (American, international journals). The article implicitly acknowledges this by focusing on one domain but does not fully explore cross-disciplinary generalizability.

Conclusion

The study shows that reporting verbs are central to the expression of author's stance in scholarly writing. Their semantic prosody is shaped by collocational patterns, especially adverbial modifiers. Corpus-based analysis of these patterns can therefore support more precise and effective teaching of academic reading and writing.

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