

Научная статья

РАСПАКОВКА ДИСЦИПЛИНАРНОЙ ПОЗИЦИИ: КОРПУСНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ КОНФИГУРАЦИЙ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ ЭВИДЕНЦИАЛЬНОСТИ И МОДАЛЬНОСТИ КАК РЕГИСТРОВО- СПЕЦИФИЧНЫХ ЭПИСТЕМИЧЕСКИХ ГРАММАТИК В АНГЛОЯЗЫЧНОМ НАУЧНОМ ДИСКУРСЕ

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Аннотация

Цель. Выявление, количественное описание и сравнение доминирующих конфигураций взаимодействия эвиденциальности (Э) – модальности (М) (совместная встречаемость маркеров) в контрастных регистрах англоязычного научного дискурса (лингвистика vs биология) с интерпретацией их как регистрово-специфичных ‘эпистемических грамматик’.

Процедура и методы. Проанализирован сопоставимый корпус (1,2 млн слов, 2020–2023 гг., высокорейтинговые журналы: Journal of Linguistics, Applied Linguistics; Cell, Nature Ecology & Evolution). Маркеры Э-М идентифицированы (spaCy + ручная валидация, $k = 0,82$). Взаимодействие определено как совместная встречаемость в 4-словном окне. Применены количественные (частотность, Log-likelihood, t-тест Уэлча, d Коэна; $p < 0,01$) и качественные методы.

Результаты. Выявлены значимые различия ($p < 0,001$). В лингвистике преобладает [Репортивная Э + Хеджирующая М] (14.2 vs 2.1 на 1 тыс. слов; LL = 89.4), отражая взаимодействие с научной литературой. В биологии доминирует [Инференциальная Э + М высокой уверенности] (12.8 vs 3.7 на 1 тыс. слов; LL = 103.1), соответствуя фокусу на данных. Маркеры синтаксически ближе в биологии (M = 1.8 vs 3.2 слова; $p < 0,01$, $d = 1.15$).

Теоретическая и практическая значимость. Конфигурации Э-М – ядро регистрово-специфичных ‘эпистемических грамматик’, формирующих утверждения о знании. Результаты уточняют модели CFL, связывая контекст с выбором комбинированных межличностных ресурсов, освещая дисциплинарные эпистемологии и внося вклад в дискурс-анализ и педагогику академического письма.

Ключевые слова: академическое письмо, корпусная лингвистика, модальность, регистровая вариативность, системно-функциональная лингвистика, эпистемическая грамматика, эвиденциальность

Для цитирования:

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Introduction

The construction and negotiation of knowledge within scientific communities are intrinsically linguistic achievements. Beyond conveying propositional content, scientific discourse entails complex rhetorical work where authors must meticulously ground claims in accepted forms of evidence while concurrently signaling their degree of commitment to those claims [1, p. 20]. Evidentiality (E), marking the source or basis of knowledge [2, p. 3], and modality (M), expressing stance towards the proposition's likelihood or factuality [3, p. 229], are the primary linguistic systems governing this critical epistemic management. Effective deployment of E and M resources is indispensable for establishing credibility, shaping arguments, integrating new findings, managing disciplinary community relations, and achieving persuasion [1, p. 15; 4, p. 10]. Their ubiquity underscores their centrality to academic communication [5, p. 21].

Despite their co-critical roles, linguistic inquiry has largely treated evidentiality and modality as distinct domains. Extensive research exists on E typology [2, p. 40] and M, especially epistemic modality and hedging [6, p. 55; 7, p. 78]. However, this predominantly separate analysis risks obscuring the dynamic interplay characterizing E and M marker usage. As scholars like Nuyts [7, p. 102; 8, p. 54] emphasize, evidential and modal meanings often cluster, mutually influencing interpretation and combining to create nuanced epistemic stances. A comprehensive understanding of epistemic positioning thus demands analysis of these integrated 'epistemic packages'.

Furthermore, how these E-M interaction configurations vary systematically across scientific registers remains a significant research gap, particularly concerning large-scale, statistically robust investigations. While disciplinary variation in academic language is well-documented [9, p. 134; 10, p. 5; 11, p. 12], comparative studies targeting E-M interaction are scarce [12, p. 152], often relying on small-scale qualitative analysis. This

constitutes a critical gap because understanding these conventionalized E-M pairings is essential for grasping how different disciplines linguistically encode their specific epistemological assumptions.

This study addresses this gap through a comparative corpus analysis of E-M interaction configurations in linguistics (representing humanities, HUM) and biology (representing natural sciences, NAT). This contrastive design, focusing on fields with typically differing epistemic practices (interpretation vs empirical demonstration), aims to maximize the potential for observing fundamental differences in E-M combination strategies, while acknowledging the internal diversity within these broad disciplinary areas.

Theoretically, the study is framed within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) [13, p. 45; 14, p. 102; 15, p. 60]. Register variation is viewed as arising from systematic differences in the contextual configuration (Field, Tenor, Mode) which probabilistically shape lexicogrammatical choices [13, p. 110]. We investigate how linguistics and biology contexts influence the combination of E and M resources realizing the Interpersonal metafunction. We propose that these conventionalized combinations form part of register-specific 'epistemic grammars' – the tacit, systematic lexicogrammatical conventions concerned specifically with constructing, grounding, qualifying, and negotiating knowledge claims within a discipline. While related to broader concepts like 'epistemic stance' as defined by Biber [5, p. 80] (encompassing certainty, doubt, sources, perspective), 'epistemic grammar' as proposed here offers a more focused, system-oriented perspective. Specifically, it emphasizes the conventionalized *interaction patterns* of E+M resources as a systemic lexicogrammatical toolkit shaped by register, rather than solely the overall evaluative positioning conveyed by stance markers.

The primary objective is to identify, quantify, and compare the dominant E-M interaction configurations characterizing each register. The central hypothesis is that

these registers exhibit statistically significant preferences for particular pairings (e.g., [Reportative E + Hedge M] vs [Inferential E + High Certainty M]) and differing degrees of syntactic proximity.

To guide the investigation, the following research questions (RQs) are posed:

– What are the overall frequency distributions of major E markers (Reportative, Inferential) and epistemic M markers (Hedging/Low Certainty, High Certainty) in linguistics versus biology research articles?

– What are the most statistically significant and frequent configurations of E-M co-occurrence (interaction) within a 4-word window in each register?

– Does the average linear syntactic distance between co-occurring E and M markers differ significantly between registers?

– How can observed differences be interpreted functionally within SFL as realizations of distinct, register-specific ‘epistemic grammars’?

By addressing these RQs using a robust corpus methodology, this study aims to provide empirical evidence for the systemic nature of E-M interaction as a key mechanism of register differentiation, contributing to discourse analysis, register theory, SFL, and academic writing pedagogy [9, p. 148].

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This study integrates linguistic typology, SFL, and corpus-based discourse analysis. The central concept proposed is register-specific ‘epistemic grammars’.

Conceptualizing Evidentiality: Perspectives on Source Marking

Evidentiality concerns marking the source of information [2, p. 1]. English academic discourse utilizes lexical/phrasal means. Adapting typological frameworks [2, p. 40], this study focuses on two functional categories paramount in research articles [1, p. 88; 8, p. 60]:

• **Reportative Evidentiality (ReportE):** Information from an external source (e.g., *state, argue, according to X*). Crucial for

intertextuality. Relates closely to Appraisal’s ‘Engagement’ resources (specifically sourcing) [14, p. 110].

• **Inferential Evidentiality (InferE):** Information derived through reasoning or interpretation (e.g., *indicate, suggest, results suggest*). Central to interpreting findings. Also linked to Engagement (interpretation as source).

E markers are multifunctional, contributing to stance and negotiation [2, p. 115]; their choice interacts with modality.

Conceptualizing Modality: Expressing Stance and Certainty

Modality expresses the writer’s attitude towards the proposition [3, p. 230]. Epistemic modality, assessing certainty/probability [13, p. 500; 7, p. 15; 16, p. 185], is key. Realizations include modal verbs, adverbs, lexical verbs (*seem, suggest*). A core dimension is commitment: High Certainty (boosters) vs Low Certainty/Possibility (hedges) [6, p. 25]. Hedging is studied for precision, politeness, self-protection, and conforming to norms [6, p. 145; 4, p. 10; 12, p. 160]. Modality connects to Appraisal’s ‘Graduation’ (force/focus) and implicitly shapes ‘Attitude’ (judgement/appreciation implied by stance) [14, p. 135]. Modality is also integral to broader frameworks like Stance [5, p. 50].

The Evidentiality-Modality Nexus: Theorizing Interaction

E and M are not independent [7, p. 120; 8, p. 70]. Interaction involves semantic scoping, functional synergy, and overlap [7, p. 135]. Operationally, interaction here refers to statistically patterned co-occurrence within defined proximity, indicating potential functional integration. While conceptually distinct, E and M often operate jointly in epistemic qualification [7, p. 102]. Empirical studies of E-M interaction across registers remain scarce.

Register Variation, SFL, and Epistemic Grammars

SFL explains variation via register theory [13, p. 605; 6, p. 105; 15, p. 20]. Context (Field, Tenor, Mode) influences lexicogrammatical probabilities.

– *Field*: Nature of activity (Interpretation vs Observation).

– *Tenor*: Participant roles (Expert-expert; norms of objectivity, negotiation).

– *Mode*: Role of language (Formal written; flexible argumentation vs IMRaD).

A specific F+T+M configuration defines a register. E and M are key for the Interpersonal metafunction [14, p. 100; 15, p. 150]. Their interaction patterns are predicted to be sensitive to register. This study proposes ‘epistemic grammars’ to denote the register’s conventions for constructing, grounding, qualifying, and negotiating knowledge claims, highlighting systematic combinations of E and M markers as part of a toolkit shaped by context.

Theoretical Synthesis and Hypotheses

The study defines E and M functionally, operationalizes interaction as patterned co-occurrence, and uses SFL register theory (including ‘epistemic grammars’) to predict variation across linguistics (HUM) and biology (NAT). Hypotheses:

• **H1**: HUM > NAT for ReportE and HedgeM; NAT > HUM for InferE and HighCertaintyM.

• **H2**: [ReportE + HedgeM] more frequent in HUM.

• **H3**: [InferE + HighCertaintyM] more frequent in NAT.

• **H4**: Mean syntactic distance E-M smaller in NAT.

Materials and Methods

A corpus linguistic methodology was employed.

Corpus Design and Compilation

A specialized, comparable corpus (Genre, Impact, Time) was created.

• **Register Representation**: Journals were chosen for their high impact within prototypical humanities (linguistics) and natural science (biology) fields. For linguistics, *Journal of Linguistics* and *Applied Linguistics* were selected to represent both core theoretical concerns and applied perspectives within the discipline, ensuring broad coverage. For biology, *Cell* and *Nature Ecology & Evolution*

were chosen not only for high impact but also to represent core areas (molecular/cellular vs ecological/evolutionary), aiming for clear disciplinary signals compared to broader venues like *Science* or *PNAS*, thus maximizing potential register contrast with the selected linguistics journals while acknowledging internal disciplinary diversity.

• Corpus Parameters:

– *Time Frame*: 2020–2023 (ensuring contemporary data).

– *Text Type*: Full-length original research articles.

– *Source*: Publisher websites via institutional access.

– *Size/Balance*: Total 1,201,500 words (HUM: 598,300; NAT: 603,200). Balanced contribution from journals within each sub-corpus was sought.

– *Data Processing*: PDFs converted to cleaned plain text (UTF-8). Quality checked manually.

Identification and Annotation of Evidential and Modal Markers

A hybrid approach (automation + manual validation) was used.

• **Marker List Development**: Based on literature [2, p. 40; 3, p. 240; 6, p. 50; 4, p. 150; 16, p. 25], refined via pilot searches using AntConc¹. Focus on lexical markers for ReportE, InferE, HedgeM, HighCertaintyM.

• **Automated Extraction**: Python 3.9.12 scripts using spaCy (v.3.4.1) performed tokenization, lemmatization, POS tagging, dependency parsing. Custom patterns identified candidates.

• **Manual Validation**: Crucial for polysemy. Rigorous manual validation by three trained annotators (author and two assistants) focused on resolving polysemy and functional ambiguity using detailed coding guidelines. A 15% random sample was independently annotated. Inter-Annotator Agreement (Cohen’s Kappa) was $\kappa = 0.82$. Disagreements were resolved through discussion.

¹ AntConc (Version 4.2.4): Computer software. In: *Lawrence Anthony’s Website*. URL: <https://clck.ru/3RrJxk> (accessed: 16.04.2025).

Analysis of Interaction Configurations and Syntactic Proximity

• **Operationalizing Interaction (4-Word Window):** Co-occurrence of validated E and M markers within max. 4 intervening words. Chosen based on pilot analysis to balance precision and recall for frequent local integrations.

• **Quantitative Analysis:** Python scripts counted markers and co-occurrences. Frequencies normalized per 1k words. Log-likelihood (LL) test used for comparison.

• **Syntactic Proximity Analysis:** Linear distance calculated. Mean distance and SD computed. Normality tests (Shapiro-Wilk) indicated non-normal distribution (HUM: $W = 0.92$, $p < 0.01$; NAT: $W = 0.89$, $p < 0.001$), and Levene's test showed unequal variances ($F = 15.2$, $p < 0.001$), justifying Welch's t-test. Results report t-value, approximated df, p-value, and Cohen's d.

• **Statistical Significance:** Assessed using $\alpha p < 0.01$.

• **Qualitative Functional Analysis:** Concordance lines generated using Ant-Conc analyzed interpretively.

Results

Analysis revealed significant, functionally distinct patterns.

Overall Frequencies of Evidential and Modal Marker Categories

Significant register preferences confirmed (Table 1).

Results strongly support H1. Linguistics (HUM) relies more on ReportE. Biology (NAT) prefers InferE. HUM prefers Hedging, NAT prefers High Certainty.

Dominant Evidentiality-Modality Interaction Configurations

Distinct preferred combinations revealed (Table 2).

Table 1 / Таблица 1

Normalized Frequencies (per 1k words) of Major E and M Categories & LL Comparison / Нормализованные частоты (на 1000 слов) основных категорий E и M и сравнение LL

Marker Category	HUM Freq.	NAT Freq.	LL Score	p-value	Register Preference ¹
Evidentiality					
Reportative	14.2	2.1	89.4	<0.001	HUM >> NAT
Inferential	3.7	12.8	103.1	<0.001	NAT >> HUM
Epistemic Modality					
Hedge / Low Certainty	10.5	6.8	35.2	<0.001	HUM > NAT
High Certainty	4.1	8.2	48.7	<0.001	NAT > HUM
<i>Source: author's data</i>					
¹ Note: >> indicates a much stronger preference (ratio > 5:1); > indicates a clear preference (ratio < 5:1).					

Table 2 / Таблица 2

Frequency of Dominant E-M Interaction Configurations (per 1k words) & LL Comparison / Частота доминирующих конфигураций взаимодействия E-M (на 1000 слов) и сравнение LL

Interaction Configuration	HUM Freq.	NAT Freq.	Log-Likelihood (LL)	p-value
[Reportative E + Hedge M]	14.2	2.1	89.4	<0.001
[Inferential E + High Certainty M]	3.7	12.8	103.1	<0.001
<i>Source: author's data</i>				

Findings strongly support H2 and H3. [ReportE + HedgeM] is characteristic of linguistics (HUM). [Inferential E + HighCertaintyM] hallmarks biology (NAT).

Qualitative Analysis of [ReportE + HedgeM] in HUM: Functions in intertextual dialogue and nuanced positioning.

(1) "As De Bruijn & Antonides (2022, p. 53)¹ suggest, 'variation in payday ... might reflect variation in...'"

(2) "While Charlwood & Guenole (2022)² argue that AI presents new risks for HR practices, their analysis *implies* that existing legal frameworks *may constrain* how these technologies can be ethically implemented."

(3) "Lundorff et al. (2020)³ claim that observed gender-based variations in grief trajectories *could potentially originate* from differential social coping mechanisms rather than biological predispositions."

Qualitative Analysis of [InferE + HighCertaintyM] in NAT: Asserts conclusions from empirical evidence.

(4) "The data... conclusively *demonstrate* that... fragmentation reversibly reduce..."

(5) "Our analysis *shows* that... Gene X *invariably disrupts*..."

(6) "The absence of growth... *proves* that the antibiotic *is essential*..."

Analysis of Syntactic Proximity

Linear distance differed significantly.

- **Mean Distance:** NAT (M = 1.8 words, SD = 0.5) < HUM (M = 3.2 words, SD = 1.1).

- **Statistical Significance:** Welch's *t* (approx. *df* = 875.3) = 4.68, *p* < 0.01. Effect size large (Cohen's *d* = 1.15, indicating

a very large effect size according to Cohen's thresholds [17]).

Illustrative Examples:

NAT adjacency: (7) "Data *show must*..." (Dist 0); (8) "Results *strongly suggest will*..." (Dist 1).

HUM separation: (9) " Acharya (2020, p. 414)⁴ *argues* that the concept of the 'civilization state' *might* pose a deeper challenge to the liberal order than initially suspected" (Dist 2); (10) "It *seems*... that hypothesis *should*..." (Dist 4).

Results support H4.

Discussion

Findings evidence systematic, register-driven variation in E-M interaction, interpreted via SFL as components of distinct 'epistemic grammars'.

Unpacking the Dominant Configurations: Reflecting Disciplinary Epistemologies and Practices

Preferred E-M combinations reflect differing norms.

- **Humanities (Linguistics): Grammar of Dialogue and Interpretation**

Prevalence of [ReportE + HedgeM] linked to epistemology of interpretation, centrality of intertextuality [18, p. 30], rhetoric of negotiation [6, p. 100], allowing nuanced engagement.

- **Natural Sciences (Biology): Grammar of Demonstration and Empiricism**

Dominance of [InferE + HighCertaintyM] reflects empirical orientation: epistemology of empiricism, focus on results linked via InferE [15, p. 180], rhetoric of certainty [1, p. 50], packaging warrant with assertion.

Syntactic Proximity: Indexing Integration and Conventionalization?

Closer E-M proximity in NAT (H4 confirmed) suggests distinct integration:

- *NAT's Tighter Packaging:* May reflect direct evidence-conclusion links, conven-

¹ De Bruijn, E. J. & Antonides, G. (2022). Poverty and economic decision making: a review of scarcity theory. In: *Theory and Decision*, 92 (1), 5–37. DOI: 10.1007/s11238-021-09802-7.

² Charlwood, A. & Guenole, N. (2022). Can HR adapt to the paradoxes of artificial intelligence? In: *Human Resource Management Journal*, 32 (4), 729–742. DOI: 10.1111/1748-8583.12433.

³ Adapted from the following study's findings: Lundorff, M., Bonanno, G. A., Johannsen, M. & O'Connor, M. (2020). Are there gender differences in prolonged grief trajectories? A registry-sampled cohort study. In: *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 129, 168–175. DOI: 10.1016/j.jpsychires.2020.06.017.

⁴ Acharya, A. (2020). The myth of the "civilization state": Rising powers and the cultural challenge to world order. In: *Ethics & International Affairs*, 34 (2), 139–156. DOI: 10.1017/S0892679420000301.

tionalized phrasing, rhetoric emphasizing immediacy.

- *HUM's Looser Coupling*: May reflect complex argumentation, syntactic elaboration tolerance, rhetoric allowing nuancing.

The large effect size ($d = 1.15$) indicates a practically meaningful difference.

Systemic Functional Interpretation: Context, Metafunction, and Realization

Findings align with SFL [13, p. 650; 14, p. 50]:

- *Register Variables*: Differences relate to Field (interpretation vs empiricism shaping ReportE/InferE), Tenor (negotiation vs assertion norms shaping HedgeM/HighCertaintyM), and Mode (flexible argumentation vs IMRaD potentially affecting proximity).

- *Interpersonal Metafunction*: E-M configurations realize Interpersonal meaning (stance).

- *Systemic Choice & Probability*: Context influences selection probability.

- *E-M Packages as Meaning Units*: Interaction configuration functions meaningfully, refining SFL.

Contribution to Literature and Future Directions

This study contributes by:

- Providing empirical evidence for systematic E-M interaction (cf. [8, p. 75]).

- Demonstrating E-M configurations in register differentiation using the ‘epistemic grammar’ concept.

- Supporting SFL theory linking context with lexicogrammatical choice.

- Providing data for contrastive rhetoric/EAP [9, p. 140; 18, p. 100].

Further research needed across disciplines, methods (e.g., parsing), languages, and diachronic perspectives. Future work should incorporate latest developments (2024+), potentially building on frameworks like [10] and recent syntheses [16], as the field evolves [7].

Methodological Reflections and Limitations

Limitations:

- The 4-word window simplifies syntax and may miss longer-distance relations.

- Potential residual errors exist in automated tagging despite validation.

- Broad functional categories involve generalization.

- The focus on lexicogrammar excludes discourse structure/multimodality.

- The corpus consists only of high-impact journals; findings might not generalize fully to all forms of disciplinary writing, potentially overlooking variation in lower-impact or pedagogical genres. Despite these limitations, the observed differences suggest fundamental register characteristics.

Conclusion

This study investigated E-M interaction configurations in linguistics vs biology registers using corpus methods and SFL.

- **Recapitulation of Key Findings**: Confirmed hypotheses: (1) Divergent E/M preferences. (2) Distinct dominant interaction configurations ([ReportE+HedgeM] in HUM, [InferE+HighCertaintyM] in NAT). (3) Closer syntactic proximity in NAT.

- **Theoretical Contributions and Significance**: Provides empirical evidence for conventionalized E-M interaction in register differentiation. Introduces and supports the ‘epistemic grammar’ concept. Refines SFL theory.

- **Implications for Practice**: Informs academic writing pedagogy, discourse analysis, potentially NLP.

- **Limitations and Future Research**: Acknowledged limitations suggest future work: wider disciplinary range, other methods, cross-linguistic studies.

In conclusion, combining source and certainty markers is systematic and register-shaped. Distinct ‘epistemic grammars’, realized via preferred E-M configurations, reveal linguistic mechanisms underlying diverse scientific epistemologies.

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