

# **Stance in the Academic Writing of Zimbabwean Students Using English as a Second Language**

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## **Abstract**

Undergraduate learners writing in English as a Second language have to deal with a two-pronged challenge-expressing themselves in a second language and adjusting to the writing conventions characteristic of university. One challenge students face when writing at university level relates to the need to show where they stand in relation to some of the facts they present in their academic papers, a practice known as stance-taking. The present research explored the writing of undergraduate learners from a variety of academic disciplines at a single university (Solusi University) to establish how they deployed stance while operating in a second language. Data was gathered through collection and subsequent analysis of essays from students in five faculties at Solusi University. Purposive stratified sampling was used to select the essays that were used for analysis. The sampling ensured that all the faculties were represented in the data used as the corpus of the study. In addition, the researcher ensured that the different study levels were equally represented in the final sample. The deployment of stance in academic papers demonstrates an appreciation and engagement with material which is not superficial but such is only possible where learners would have understood the language in use. The present research argues that learners do not take stance because they have not really comprehended material presented in a second language and they may not be positioned to write in a manner that is acceptable in the genre. This paper thus suggests that English as a Second language users ought to be taught to write in a manner that is acceptable in the 'academic writing' genre.

**Keywords:** Stance, stance-taking, academic writing, English as a second language