

Stance in spoken and written university registers

Doug Biber

Northern Arizona University

The main goal:

- To document the grammatical expression of 'stance' in university 'registers'
 - Considering both academic and student management registers,
 - Considering both spoken and written registers

What are 'registers'?

- Varieties associated with a situation of **use**
(e.g., conversation, editorial, novel)
- Registers differ in their situational characteristics, such as:
 - Communicative purpose
 - Audience
 - Interactiveness
 - Setting
 - Degree of planning

Registers for the present study

	<u>Physical mode:</u> Speech	Writing
<u>Communicative purpose:</u>		
Instruction	Classroom teaching	Textbooks
Management	Classroom management	Course management (e.g., syllabi)

Situational characteristics – Spoken university registers

- Classroom teaching:
 - moderately interactive, some pre-planning, produced in real-time, purpose: convey information, student directives, reveal own attitudes
- Student ‘management’ talk:
 - highly interactive, no pre-planning, produced in real-time, purpose: student directives, reveal own attitudes

Situational characteristics – Written university registers

- Textbooks:
 - No interaction, carefully pre-planned, revised, and edited; purpose: convey information
- Course syllabi:
 - No interaction, carefully pre-planned, revised, and edited; purpose: student directives (+ convey information, reveal own attitudes)

'Stance': epistemic or attitudinal
comments on propositional
information

Background to the study

- Many studies of stance in written academic language (e.g., Crompton 1997; Grabe & Kaplan, 1997; Hunston 1994; Hyland, 1994, 1996a,b; Meyer 1997; Charles 2003; Varttala 2003)
 - Different labels: 'evaluation', 'affect', 'evidentiality', 'hedging'
- But little research on spoken university language
- And almost no research on stance in non-academic university registers (e.g., advising sessions, course syllabi)

A cline of explicitness for the expression of stance

- grammatical devices
 - Obviously you don't have to come to class on May eighth.
- value-laden word choice
 - I love pizza.
- paralinguistic devices
 - I **love** pizza.
- Non-linguistic communication
 - Gestures, facial expressions, etc.

Classroom teaching (Political Science): What stance devices can you notice?

Instructor: Uh, one of the U.S. Court District Judges, I think it was W. C., in the City U.S. District Court, made a statement one time that maybe about one half of the lawyers who were, uh presenting cases before him were incompetent. And he wasn't saying mentally incompetent, he was just saying they weren't practicing law with a skill that was professional. Now, obviously I'm not trying to scare you, you know - what am I trying to do? I'm trying to let you know that you, you should pay attention to who your lawyer is, and get someone who has respect. Uh, or it could affect the outcome of your case. You know, and uh again, that's not what the system was designed to do and I don't think it should be part of the system - I'm just saying, in fact, it is.

Classroom teaching (Political Science)

Instructor: Uh, one of the U.S. Court District Judges, I think it was W. C., in the City U.S. District Court, made a statement one time that maybe about one half of the lawyers who were, uh presenting cases before him were incompetent. And he wasn't saying mentally incompetent, he was just saying they weren't practicing law with a skill that was professional. Now, obviously I'm not trying to scare you, you know - what am I trying to do? I'm trying to let you know that you, you should pay attention to who your lawyer is, and get someone who has respect. Uh, or it could affect the outcome of your case. You know, and uh again, that's not what the system was designed to do and I don't think it should be part of the system - I'm just saying, in fact, it is.

Textbook (Geology)

The Jura are hills that separate France from Switzerland. Partly wooded, partly farmland, long inhabited, the Jura derive their name from *juria*, the Latin word for "forest."

The rocks of the Jura are fossiliferous limestones. They are famous for fossils of extinct sea creatures called ammonites that lived in coiled shells resembling the modern coiled nautilus. In the early nineteenth century, when European geologists started to arrange fossils in the sequence in which they had lived, fossils in the Jura were selected as the types characterizing certain ammonites and rocks containing ammonites were selected as the examples of Jurassic sedimentary rocks, named after the Jura hills.

Written course syllabus (Business)

Each chapter lists Learning Objectives that indicate what *you should be able to* accomplish after completing the chapter.

Although assigned problems are not collected, *it is essential that you* complete all problems before I present and discuss them in class. ... *It is preferable for you* to work problems yourself incorrectly and learn from your mistake than it is to merely copy problem solutions from the board. *You should* study the material and attend my office hours [...]

The final exam *will* consist of tasks to be performed using the computer. *You must* perform the tasks and store the results on your floppy disk to receive any credit.

Three apparent patterns from the preceding texts

1. Stance seems to be pervasive in many kinds of university language
2. There are a surprising number of different grammatical devices used to express stance
3. Different university registers seem to rely on different grammatical stance devices

The present study uses a corpus-based approach to investigate the generalizability of these patterns

Grammatical stance devices analyzed in the study

- Modal verbs (e.g., *can, should*)
- Stance adverbials (e.g., *obviously, possibly*)
- Complement clauses:
 - *That*-clauses, *to*-clauses, *WH*-clauses
 - Controlled by:
 - Verbs (e.g., *I doubt that they've published this*)
 - Adjectives (*We can be certain that they're independent*)
 - Nouns (*We began with the claim that human beings are an alien presence on the earth*)

A cline of explicitness among grammatical stance expressions

- Explicitly attributed to the speaker/writer
 - NP-Subject + Verb + Complement clause
 - *I know a lot of people avoid Sacramento because of the deathly smog here.*
- No explicit attribution
 - Modal verb:
 - *Both of those things might be true.*
 - Stance adverbial:
 - *Maybe someone mentioned this in speaking about it.*
 - Stance adjective controlling extraposed clause:
 - *It seems fairly obvious that Watson tremendously oversimplified the learning process.*

Semantic distinctions among the stance features analyzed in the present study

1. Modal and semi-modal verbs

- possibility / permission / ability: *can, could, may, might*
- necessity / obligation: *must, should, (had) better, have to, got to, ought to*
- prediction / volition: *will, would, shall, be going to*

Stance features analyzed in the present study (cont.)

2. Stance adverbs

- **Epistemic**
 - **Certainty:** *e.g., actually, certainly, in fact,*
 - **Likelihood:** *e.g., apparently, perhaps, possibly*
- **Attitude:** *e.g., amazingly, importantly, surprisingly*
- **Style/Perspective:** *e.g., according to, generally, typically*

Stance features analyzed in the present study (cont.)

3. That complement clauses

- **controlled by a verb (e.g., we predict that the water is here)**
 - certainty verb (e.g., demonstrate, realize, show)*
 - likelihood verb (e.g., appear, hypothesize, predict)*
 - attitudinal verb (e.g., anticipate, expect, prefer)*
 - communication verb (e.g., imply, report, suggest)*
- **controlled by an adjective (e.g., it is strange that he went there)**
 - likelihood adjectives (e.g., possible, likely, unlikely)*
 - attitudinal adjectives (e.g., good, advisable, paradoxical)*
- **controlled by a noun (e.g., the proposal that he put forward)**
 - certainty noun (e.g., assertion, observation, statement)*
 - likelihood noun (e.g., assumption, implication, opinion)*
 - attitudinal noun (e.g., hope, reason, view)*
 - communication noun (e.g., comment, proposal, remark)*

Stance features analyzed in the present study (cont.)

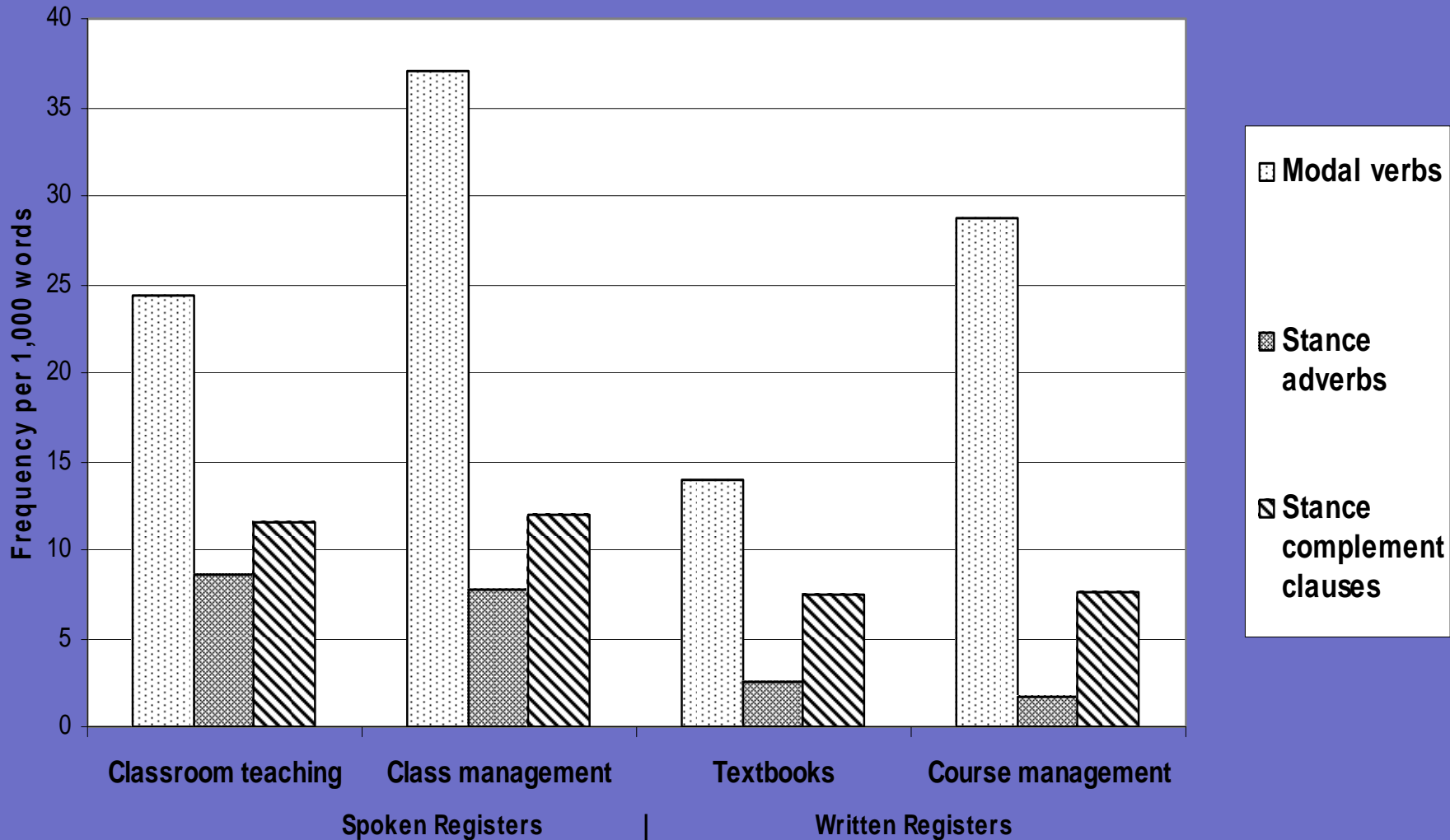
4. To complement clauses

- *controlled by a verb (e.g., He hoped to go)*
 - likelihood/simple fact verb (e.g., appear, happen, seem)*
 - cognition verb (e.g., believe, learn, pretend)*
 - desire/intent/decision verb (e.g., aim, hope, prefer)*
 - modality/cause/effort verb (e.g., allow, leave, order)*
 - communication/speech act verb (e.g., urge, report, convince)*
- *controlled by an adjective*
 - likelihood adjectives (e.g., prone, apt, likely)*
 - ability/willingness adjectives (e.g., competent, hesitant)*
 - personal affect adjectives (e.g., annoyed, nervous)*
 - ease/difficulty adjectives (e.g., easy, impossible)*
 - evaluative adjectives (e.g., convenient, smart)*
- *controlled by a noun (e.g., agreement, intention, plan)*

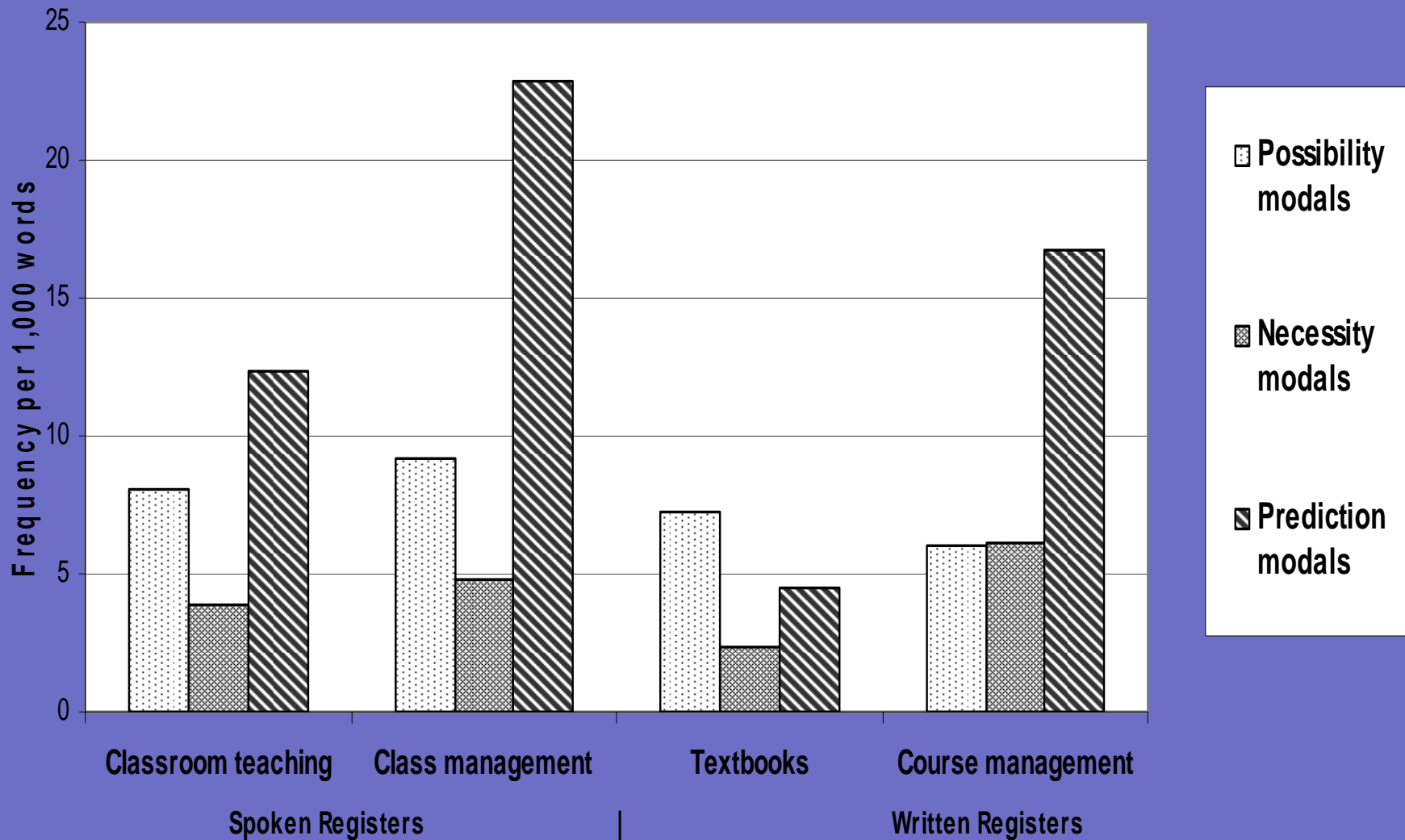
The corpus for the study: the T2K-SWAL Corpus (Constructed for the Educational Testing Service)

Register	# of texts	# of words
Spoken:		
Classroom teaching	176	1,248,811
Classroom management	40	39,255
Office hours	11	50,400
Study groups	25	141,100
Service encounters	22	97,700
Written:		
Textbooks	87	760,619
Course management	21	52,410
Institutional writing	37	151,500

Major stance features across registers



Modal verb classes across registers



Prediction modals in classroom management

***Will* - course expectations**

- When we get into chapter seventeen we will start talking about something called the pecking order theory of raising money.
- So, what I've decided to do is have the peer review on - Monday and then assignment six will be due Tuesday.

***Would* - student requirements; indirect directives**

- I d like for you to do problem 1-A.
- I would encourage you to add this to your stack of materials.
- I would suggest reading it.

Possibility modals in classroom teaching

Can – ability (possibility)

- You can build a firewall out of hacker filtering
- It's an excellent learning tool if you can kind of, you know if you can get past, uh, some things you don't like about yourself.

Can – permission (less common)

- Um can I ask a question?
- If you don't want to do it you don't have to do it. You can take the regular part on Monday during the test.

Modals in written course management

Written syllabi:

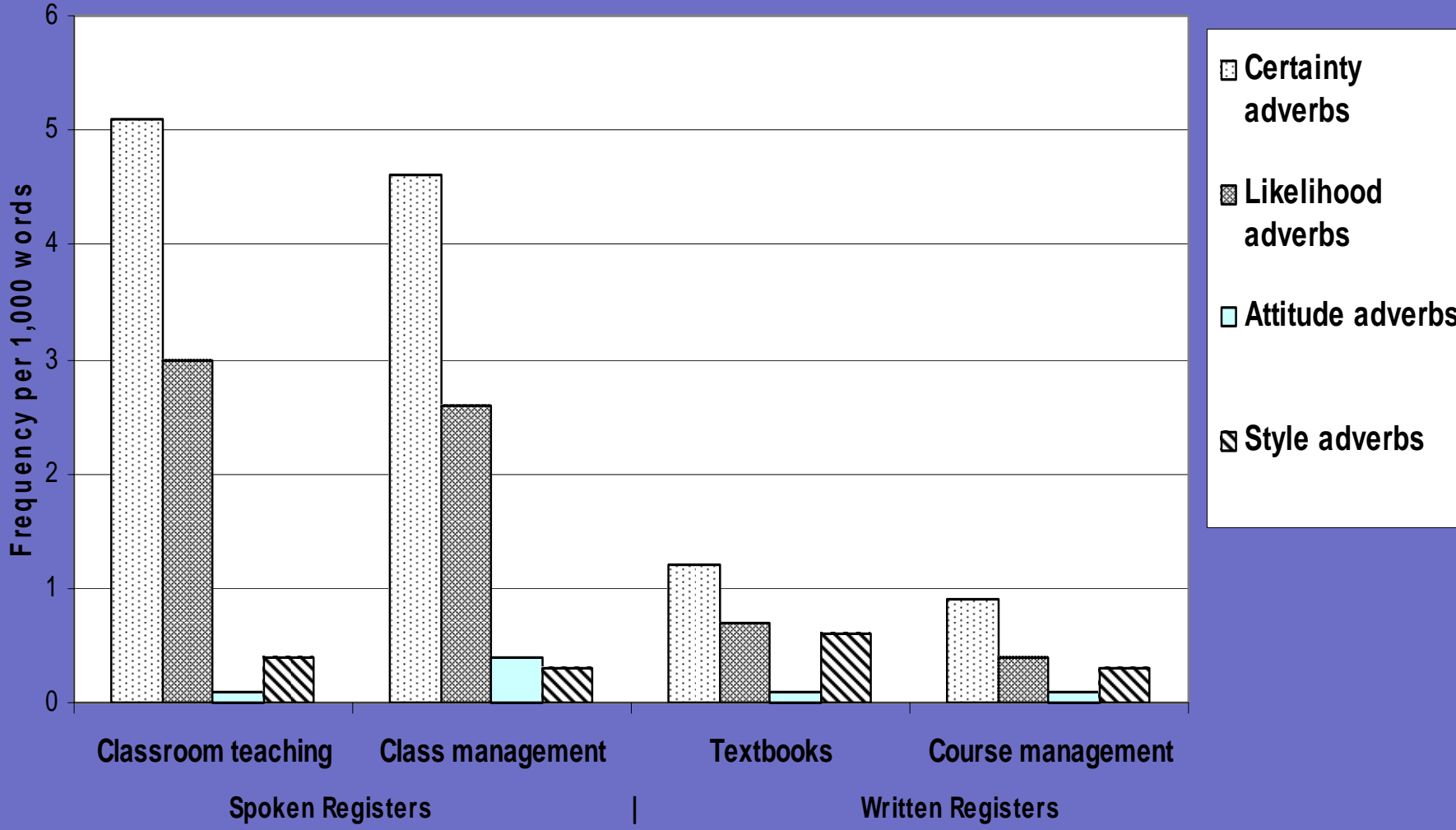
Will

- Note that there will be no class on January 18.
- There will be five graded problem sets during the semester.

Must, should

- Students must turn in the exam to me before leaving class or they will receive a zero for the exam.
- This means that you should strive to present your work clearly, neatly, and with no blatant errors.

Semantic classes of stance adverbs across registers



Stance adverbs in classroom teaching

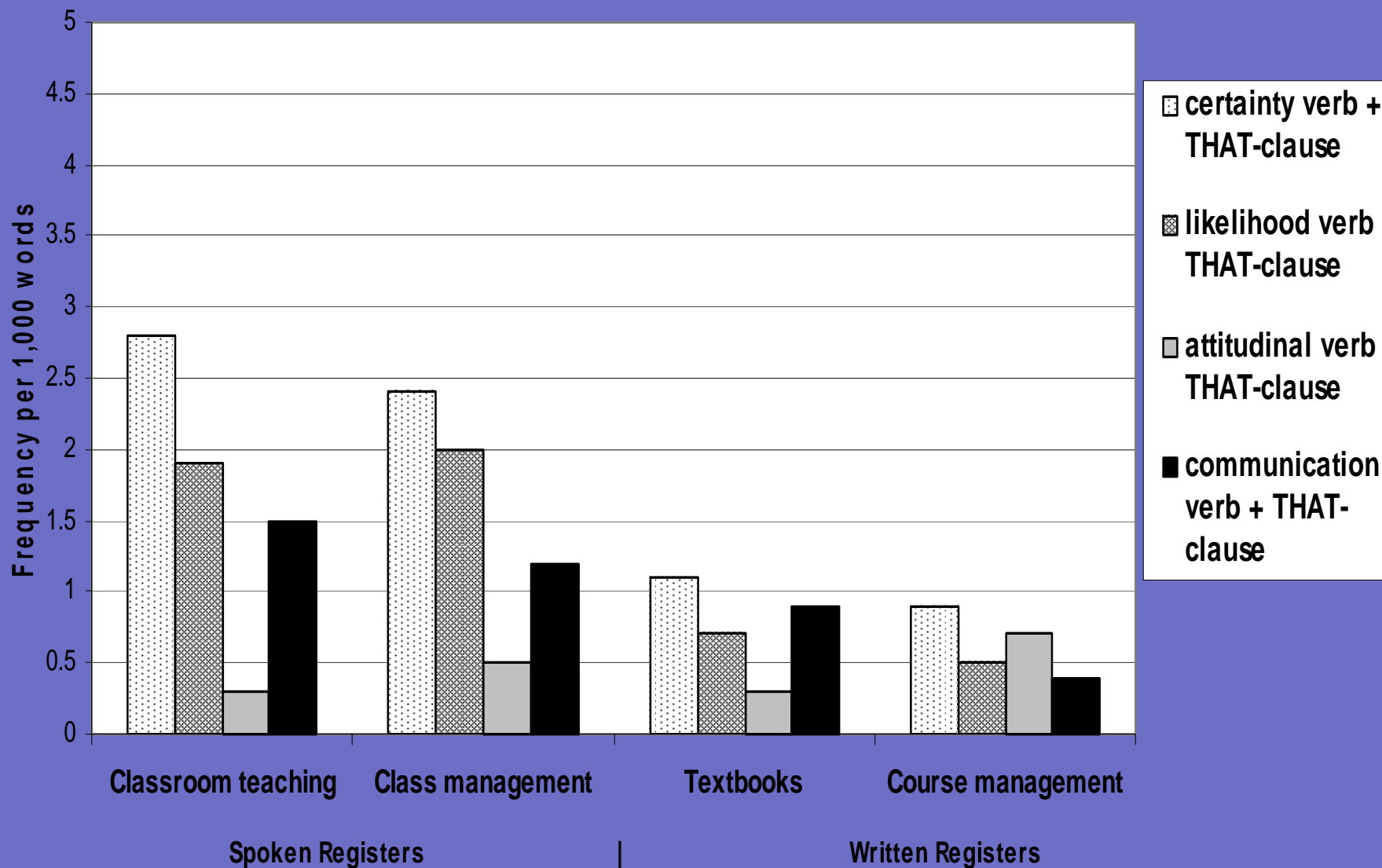
Certainty:

- the service industry is certainly part of the tourist industry.
- it's obviously very difficult to control for size because it's hard to find anybody who's little.
- But then the Mississippi of course flows from New Orleans

Likelihood

- in this instance, employees are probably convinced that the change will make things worse.
- Or possibly, sometimes people yell things at those games just to start something.
- I would suspect that she, you know, maybe personally she knew deep down that was maybe causing some of her ills

Semantic classes of controlling verb with THAT-clauses



Verb + *that*-clause in university spoken registers

Classroom teaching:

Certainty:

Instructor: How do I know it's Y plus two over nine?

Students: [unclear words]

Instructor: Because I got to have fifty-four. Remember I know they're independent, I know that F of X Y is equal to this.

Study groups:

Likelihood:

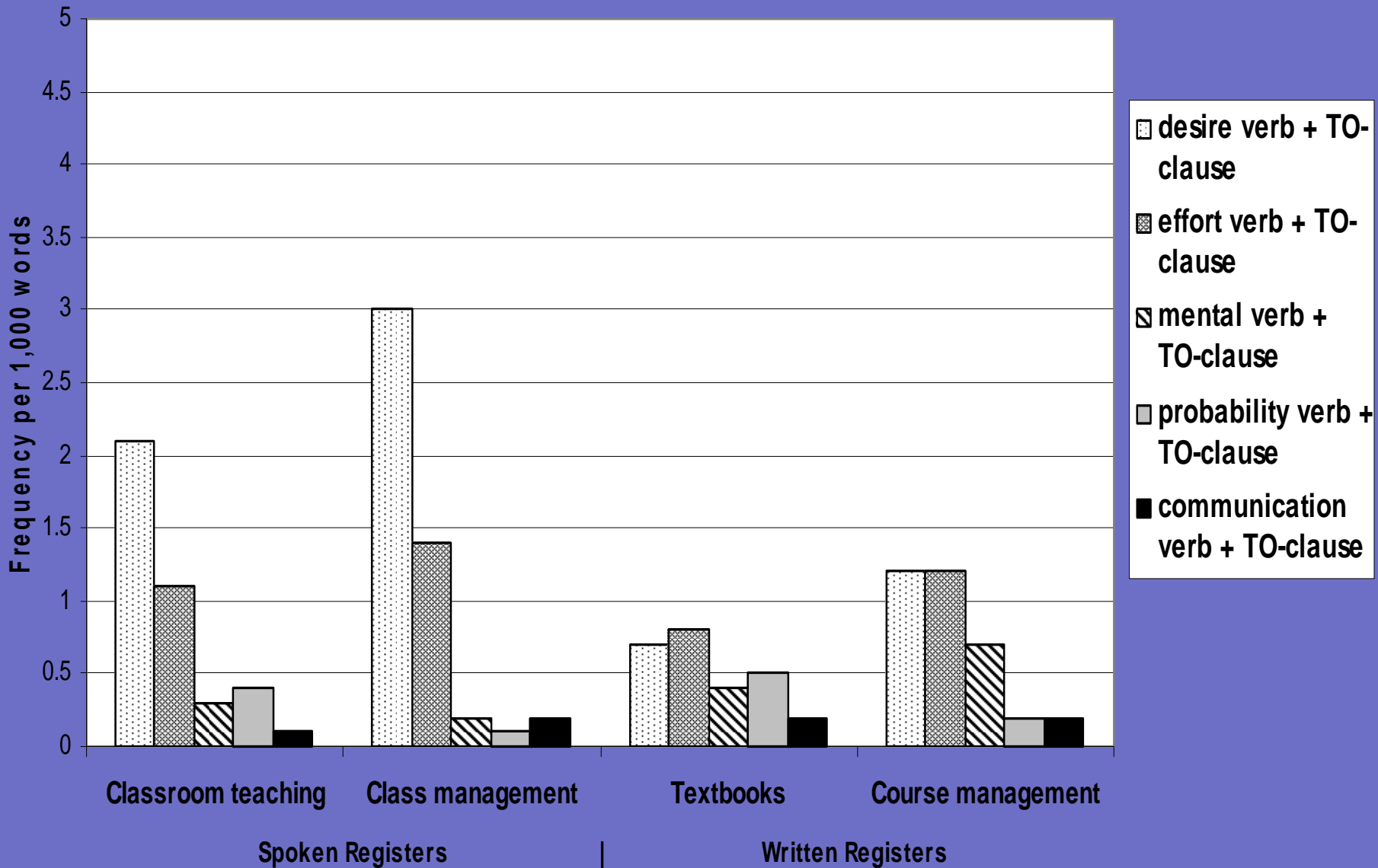
A: I guess he did interaction process analysis and then socio-emotional and instrumental leaders now I don't know if it's on here. No it's not. but instrumental leadership is on here. but I think for socio-emotional, I don't think that he terms it socio-emotional. he terms it something else

B: whoa whoa wait -

A: I think it's expressive

B: I think that he did something on S.E.S.?

Semantic classes of controlling verb with TO-clauses



Desire verb + *to*-clause in classroom teaching and management

To focus on instructional goals:

- What I'd like to do is say just a couple of things about language development
- There are maybe a few things I want, I want to emphasize as important

As indirect directives:

- I'd like you to read it first to see if you can read at a very interpretive level.
- um, for this Thursday I want you to write just a brief handwritten paragraph to me proposing, what you think your subject and topic will be.

Verb + *to*-clause in written syllabi

Desire verb - directives

- To complete this assignment, you need to request a distribution list.
- You will want to interpret what your process/artifact says about your culture.

Effort verb - - directives or suggested methods

- Also try to avoid saving large images because you will have memory problems later.
- You will be assigned a series of problems to help you write a Chapter Summary.
- About 3 pages should allow you to explain and discuss the differences and similarities

Overview of the distribution of stance devices across university registers

	Classroom Teaching	Class Management	Textbooks	Course Management
Modals				
possibility	++	++	+	+
necessity	(+)	+		+
prediction	++	++++	+	+++
Stance adverbs				
certainty	+++	+++	+	(+)
likelihood	++	++		
Stance verb + <i>that</i>-clause				
certainty	+++	+++	+	(+)
likelihood	++	++		
communication	++	+	+	
Stance verb + <i>to</i>-clause				
desire	++	+++		+
effort	+	+		+
probability			(+)	
Stance adjective + <i>to</i>-clause				
			+	+
Stance noun + <i>that</i>-clause				
	(+)		(+)	

General Conclusions

- Stance is pervasive in university language
- But there are large differences in the preferred grammatical devices, the preferred meanings, and the overall extent to which stance is expressed.

Conclusions (2)

Implications for listening:

- Both 'academic' listening and non-academic listening are important
 - Different grammatical devices are preferred in the two
 - Different specific stance functions are prevalent

Implications for reading/writing:

- Stance is relatively rare, and often subtle, in academic writing.
- In contrast, stance is extremely common, and often overt, in non-academic writing
 - But directives are often extremely indirect in form

Conclusions (3)

Overall:

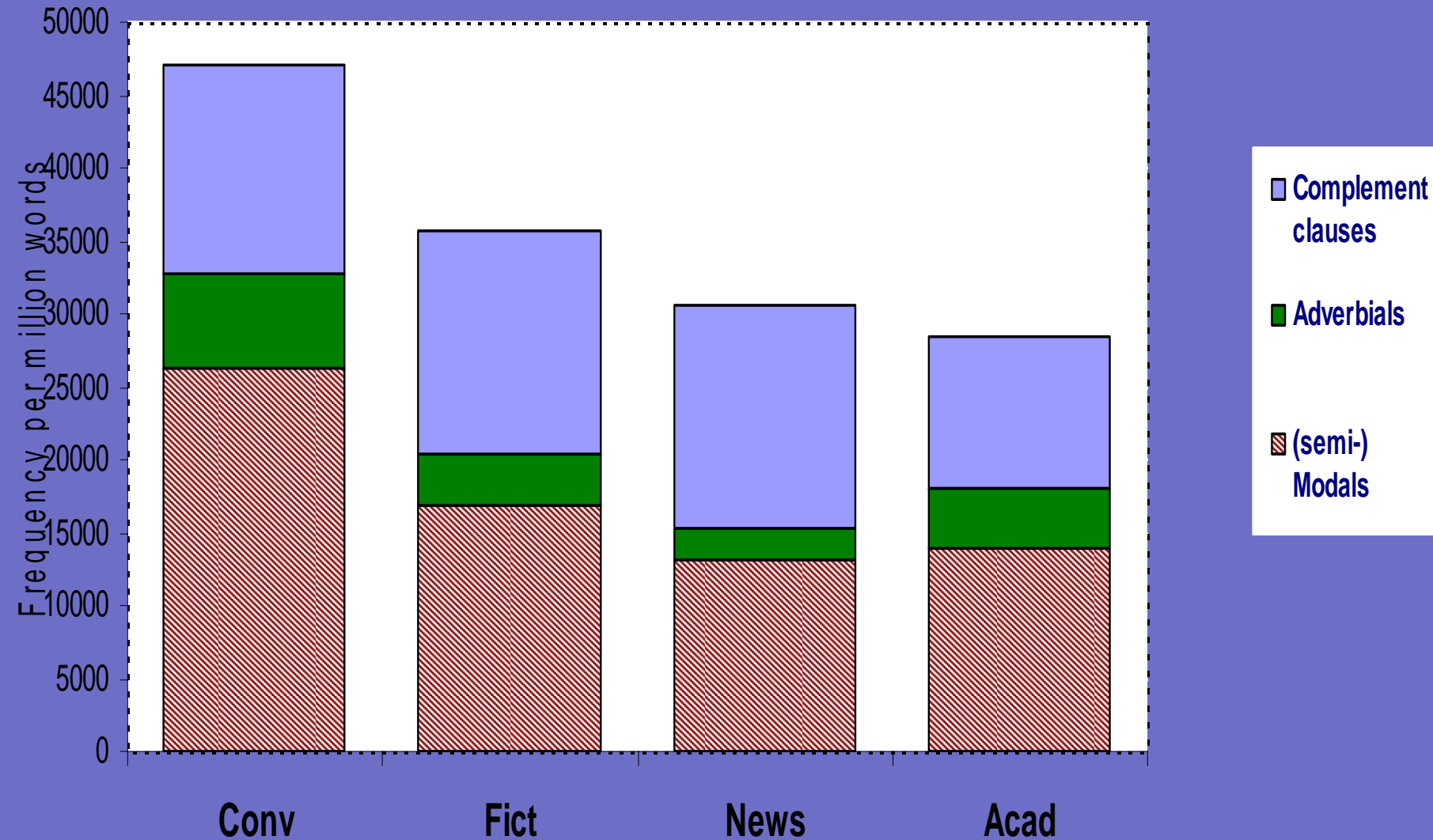
A complex pattern – but one with important implications for the teaching of listening versus reading and writing for university contexts.

Extra slides

Background: General register differences for the expression of stance

- Findings taken from the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English; LGSWE*

Distribution of stance markers by
major grammatical category (based on LGSWE Fig 12.1)



Frequency of modals and semi-modals
in four registers (based on LGSWE, Fig 6.9, p. 486)

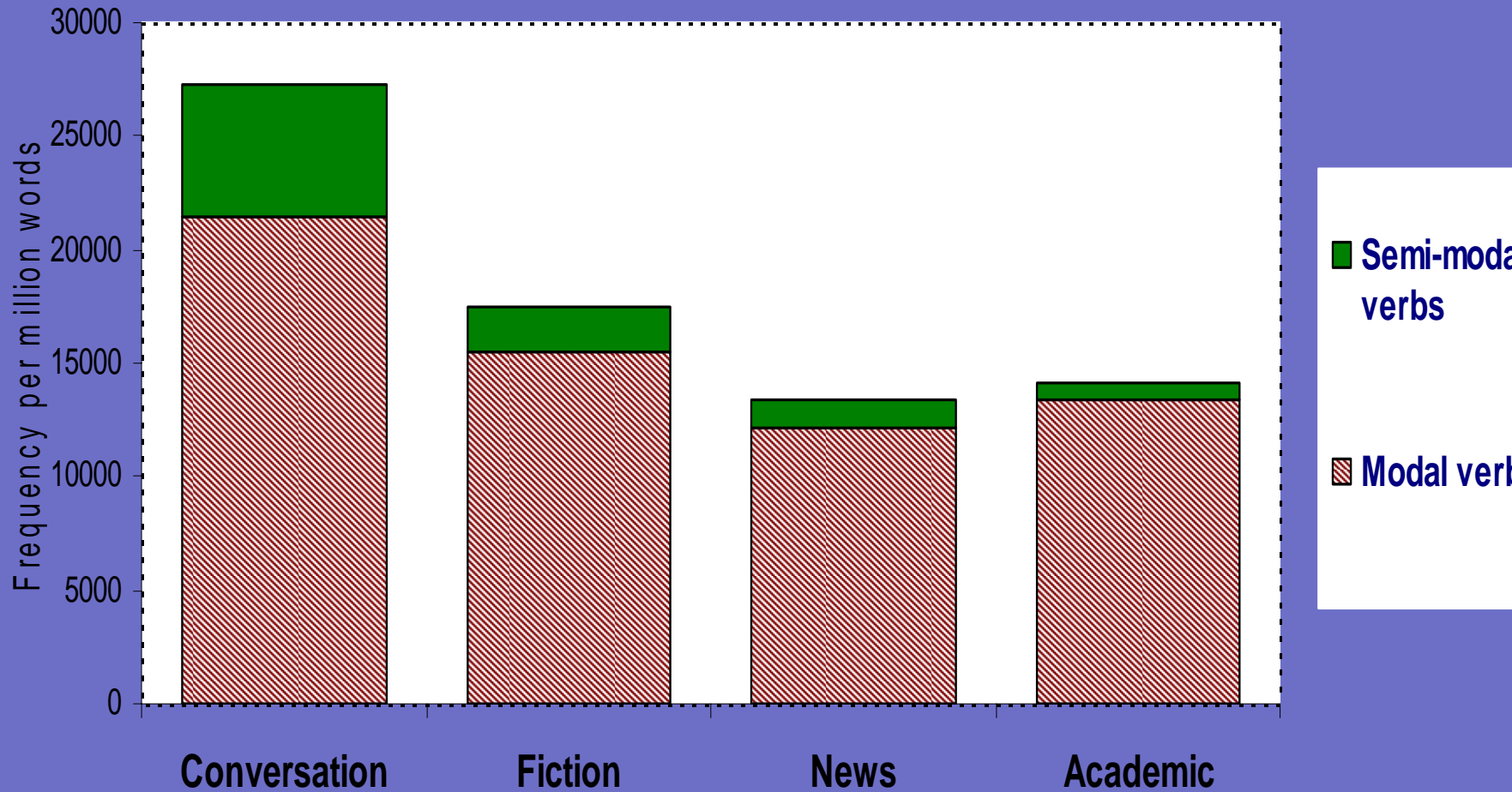
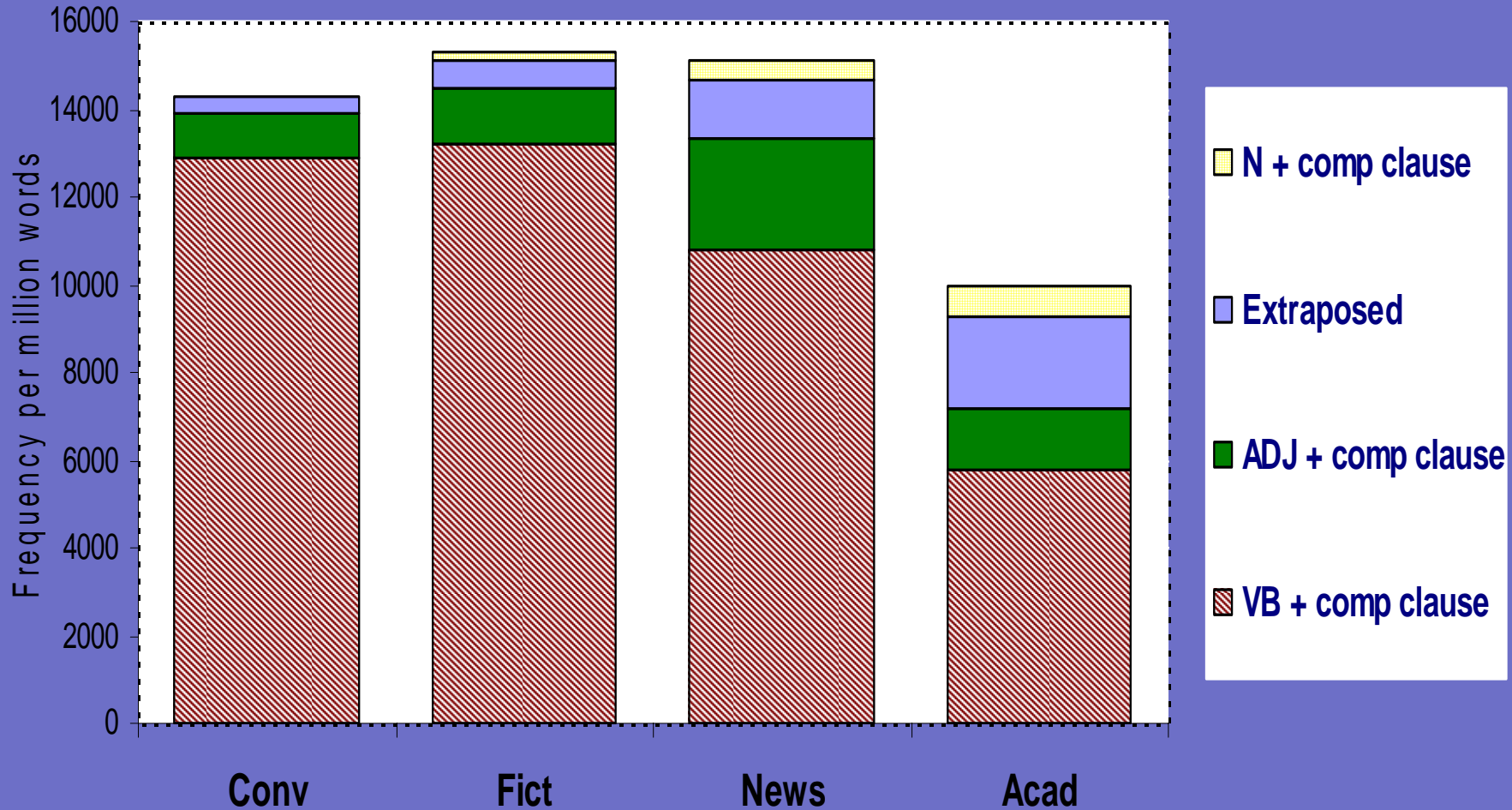


Figure 2: Breakdown of stance markers within the complement clause category (based on LGSWE Fig 12.3)



Class management talk (Education)

Instructor: OK. I want to remind you again that Tuesday we **will** not be meeting because I'll be in Killup. Um, You can turn in your thematic unit to my office and then, um, on the first and third, lost my chalk, I'd like you to bring some food, some snacks. I'll bring, um, I'll bring something healthy, like carrots or fruit. First and third, so if you, you're not presenting, I'd like you to bring some snacks for the rest of the group. And you'll get your final exam on December first, and its due December ninth or earlier if you want to turn it in. [...] what we're probably going to have to do because all of you obviously are giving me different times and, your schedules are all different, is that, when I finish evaluating your, um, I'll have a box outside my office door, where they can be picked up at your convenience.