

The Use of Epistemic Modality in Argumentative Writing by English-Majored Students at a University in Vietnam

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This paper aims to explore the epistemic modality markers in argumentative writing. The data for the study is 50 essays written on education by English-majored students. Both the quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed to discover the participants' use of the linguistic devices to convey epistemic modality in terms of degrees of commitment and categories of devices. The findings reveal that epistemic modality is popular in this writing genre, with approximately one-third of the sentences in the data being epistemically modalized. It is obviously seen that the shade of probability and epistemic modal verbs are preferably utilized by the student writers to convey their personal attitudes and opinions to the topic question. The analysis of epistemic devices in the data also suggests speakers' interest in using epistemic lexical verbs and adjectives to realize certainty and epistemic modals to denote probability. Finally, pedagogical implications for making better use of epistemic modality in students' argumentative writing are put forward.

Online Profile

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