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COMMUNITY-MEDIATED DEVELOPMENT OF GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE IN BILINGUAL DIGITAL INTERACTION

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ABSTRACT

Research on bilingual digital interaction has enriched our understanding of identity construction, translanguaging, and intercultural negotiation. However, attention to how micro-level grammatical features, particularly epistemic stance marking, are restructured through digital community participation remains limited. Furthermore, classical models of communicative competence tend to position grammatical competence as a relatively stable structural system before its use in interaction. This study addresses this gap by investigating how stance adverbs are used and recalibrated in bilingual digital interaction across different online communities. Using a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design with embedded quantitative support, the study draws on four months of longitudinal data from five bilingual participants engaged in peer-informal, mentor-guided, and transnational digital communities. The dataset comprised 63 interactional episodes, totaling 417 turns, in which 138 stance-related adverbial tokens were identified and analyzed using integrated sequential discourse analysis, corpus-informed distributional analysis, and chi-square testing. The findings show that stance adverbs varied systematically across community types and changed over time. Peer-informal interaction more frequently favored emphatic and categorical stance marking, whereas mentor-guided and transnational interactions showed greater use of mitigated, evidential, and interactionally responsive forms. Longitudinally, participants displayed increased lexical diversification, greater functional precision, and a tendency toward more context-sensitive epistemic calibration in their stance choices. These findings suggest that micro-level grammatical choices in digital bilingual interaction are shaped by sustained participation across communities and may provide insight into how grammatical competence is reconfigured through socially mediated online interaction.

***Keywords**; Bilingual Communication; Community-mediated development; Digital Interaction; Grammatical Competence; Higher Education.*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian tentang interaksi digital bilingual telah memperkaya pemahaman kita mengenai konstruksi identitas, translanguaging, dan negosiasi interkultural. Namun, perhatian terhadap bagaimana fitur gramatikal pada level mikro, khususnya penandaan stance epistemik, direstrukturisasi melalui partisipasi dalam komunitas digital masih terbatas. Selain itu, model-model klasik kompetensi komunikatif cenderung menempatkan kompetensi gramatikal sebagai sistem struktural yang relatif stabil sebelum digunakan dalam interaksi. Studi ini mengisi kesenjangan tersebut dengan menyelidiki bagaimana adverbia stance digunakan dan dikalibrasi ulang dalam interaksi digital bilingual di berbagai komunitas daring. Dengan menggunakan desain mixed-methods yang didominasi oleh pendekatan kualitatif dengan dukungan kuantitatif tertanam, penelitian ini memanfaatkan data longitudinal selama empat bulan dari lima partisipan bilingual yang terlibat dalam komunitas digital peer-informal, mentor-guided, dan transnational. Dataset penelitian terdiri atas 63-episode interaksional yang mencakup 417 giliran

tutur, dengan 138 token adverbial terkait stance yang diidentifikasi dan dianalisis melalui analisis wacana sekuensial terintegrasi, analisis distribusional berbasis korpus, dan uji chi-square. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa adverbia stance bervariasi secara sistematis antartipe komunitas dan berubah seiring waktu. Interaksi peer-informal lebih sering menunjukkan penandaan stance yang bersifat tegas dan kategoris, sedangkan interaksi mentor-guided dan transnational menunjukkan penggunaan bentuk yang lebih mitigatif, evidensial, dan responsif secara interaksional. Secara longitudinal, partisipan memperlihatkan peningkatan diversifikasi leksikal, ketepatan fungsional yang lebih tinggi, serta kecenderungan menuju kalibrasi epistemik yang lebih peka terhadap konteks dalam pilihan stance mereka. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pilihan gramatikal pada level mikro dalam interaksi digital bilingual dibentuk oleh partisipasi berkelanjutan lintas komunitas dan dapat memberikan wawasan tentang bagaimana kompetensi gramatikal dikonfigurasi ulang melalui interaksi daring yang dimediasi secara sosial.

kata kunci: Interaksi Digital; Kompetensi Tata Bahasa; Komunikasi Bilingual; Pendidikan Tinggi; Pengembangan mediasi komunitas

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly digitalized global communication landscape, bilingual speakers no longer develop L2 competence primarily through formal classrooms, but rather through active participation in digitally mediated interactions. Platforms such as WhatsApp groups, video calls, online academic forums, gaming communities, and transnational discussion networks have become social ecosystems where language is continuously used, negotiated, and reconfigured. In this context, a second language is not simply a communication tool but a medium for constructing epistemic positioning (Conti, 2025; Song et al., 2025), forming relational alignment (H. Xu et al., 2025), and managing the negotiation of meaning in heterogeneous and cross-cultural interaction (Bao, 2025). Epistemic positioning refers to the ways speakers linguistically display, qualify, and negotiate their knowledge status, degree of certainty, and rights to make particular claims in interaction. In this study, participants' recurrent use of stance-related lexico-grammatical resources, especially stance adverbs, is observed, which mark certainty, mitigation, evidential orientation, and alignment in response to different interlocutors and interactional contexts.

In the classical tradition of the communicative competence model by Canale & Swain, grammatical competence is positioned as a relatively stable structural foundation before being used in social contexts (Pituxcoosuvarn et al., 2025; Zimmermann et al., 2026). This assumption implies that grammatical structures are ready-made before being put into practice in interaction. However, in the contemporary digital ecosystem, this assumption becomes increasingly problematic. Digital interactions are rapid (Hou & Hearn, 2026), cross-community (Hirschmann et al., 2025; G. Xu et al., 2026), and often bring together participants with asymmetrical knowledge distribution (Chen et al., 2025; Xing et al., 2026). In such circumstances, micro-level lexico-grammatical resources, particularly stance adverbs, warrant specific analytical attention because they occupy a critical interface between grammatical structure and social practice: formally, they shape the epistemic

and evaluative framing of propositions, while socially, they enable speakers to calibrate certainty, manage epistemic risk, soften or reinforce claims, and negotiate the legitimacy of knowledge in relation to their interlocutors.

Over the past two decades, research on bilingual digital interaction has flourished, particularly in the study of identity construction (Gonzales, 2025), code-switching (Wulandari et al., 2025; Yousif, 2025), translanguaging, and intercultural communication strategies (Eren, 2025). Although existing scholarship has significantly advanced our understanding of the macro-level discursive and pragmatic dimensions of digital communication, important gaps remain in explaining how these processes are realized at the micro-grammatical level. Empirically, there is still a lack of longitudinal research tracing how bilingual speakers' linguistic choices develop across multiple digital communities over time. Analytically, little attention has been given to stance adverbs as a key lexico-grammatical mechanism through which speakers calibrate epistemic commitment, manage certainty, and negotiate knowledge claims in interaction. Theoretically, the relationship between sociocultural mediation and the restructuring of micro-level grammatical resources remains underexplored. As a result, while we now understand much more about how bilingual speakers negotiate identity and social position in digital environments, we still know relatively little about how their grammatical repertoires are recalibrated through sustained participation in diverse interactional communities. Grammatical repertoires include the range of lexico-grammatical resources that speakers draw on to express meanings, manage interpersonal relations, and position themselves epistemically in interaction. In this study, they are observed through recurring patterns in participants' use of stance-related forms, especially stance adverbs, across different digital communities and over time to identify shifts in functional distribution, pragmatic precision, and interactional adaptability.

Features such as actually, apparently, clearly, obviously, and presumably play a central role in epistemic stance marking. In certain contexts, "obviously" can function as an unproblematic assertion; in others, it can trigger epistemic challenges (Li et al., 2025; Spieler et al., 2025). Similarly, "apparently" or "evidently" can serve as mitigation strategies when participants encounter knowledge asymmetries (Isbaner et al., 2025). In transnational interactions, where participants do not always share background knowledge, stance marking becomes crucial for maintaining smooth interaction (Ekşi & Can Daşkın, 2025). This is where grammatical competence becomes more than just a matter of syntactic structure; it is a matter of epistemic calibration that is sensitive to social relations (Jegede, 2025). In this study, epistemic calibration involves the process by which speakers adjust the strength, certainty, and evidential grounding of their claims in relation to interlocutors, interactional goals, and perceived knowledge asymmetries. It is examined through patterned shifts in participants' use of stance-related lexico-grammatical resources, particularly stance adverbs, across different digital communities and interactional episodes to trace how certainty is softened, strengthened, or strategically qualified in context.

The sociocultural theory perspective emphasizes that language development is mediated (Alkouri & Aldhafeeri, 2026) and relational (Tian & Zhang, 2025). Competence does not develop

in isolation within individuals (Enferad et al., 2025; Jin, 2025), but rather through participation in the discursive practices of communities (Atkinson et al., 2025). However, even within the framework of sociocultural mediation, attention to how micro-grammatical features are restructured through participation in digital communities remains limited (Liu et al., 2025; L. Zhang & Luo, 2025). Most development research focuses on classroom interaction, whereas the non-pedagogical digital bilingual ecology is relatively underrecognized as a site for the development of grammatical competence.

This is where the conceptual gap that serves as the starting point for this research lies. If grammatical competence is part of communicative competence, and if communicative competence develops through interaction, then how exactly does community-mediated digital interaction reshape grammatical choices at the micro-level? Does variation in the use of stance adverbs merely reflect situational differences, or does it indicate systematic shifts in grammatical repertoire? Furthermore, how does interactional uptake, in the form of alignment, challenge, clarification, and repair, function as a mediating mechanism in this process.?

Specifically, this study examines how the use of stance adverbs in bilingual digital interactions reflects the dynamics of community-mediated grammatical development. Using a longitudinal, multi-community interaction study design, this study analyzes changes over time and across contexts in the use of stance marking. Development in this study is not defined merely as an increase in frequency, but rather as a shift toward more context-sensitive, layered, and epistemically calibrated usage.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design, in which qualitative discourse analysis served as the primary analytic framework and quantitative distributional analysis functioned as an embedded form of methodological support. The qualitative component examined stance adverbs as interactional resources within sequentially unfolding digital exchanges, with particular attention to how participants calibrated certainty, mitigated claims, and negotiated epistemic positioning in relation to different interlocutors and community norms. The quantitative component, informed by corpus-based procedures, was not intended as a separate explanatory strand but as a complementary analytic layer used to map patterns of frequency, functional distribution, and longitudinal shifts across communities and time. In this design, chi-square testing was used to assess whether observed differences in the distribution of stance-related forms across interactional contexts were statistically significant. Thus, rather than treating qualitative and quantitative procedures as parallel or disconnected methods, the study integrated them within a single analytic logic: sequential discourse analysis provided contextual interpretation of how stance adverbs functioned in interaction. In contrast, quantitative evidence strengthened the analysis by identifying broader recurrent tendencies that could then be interpreted in relation to the qualitative findings.

Participants

The study involved five bilingual participants selected through purposive sampling for intensive longitudinal observation. Although the number of participants was limited, this was consistent with the study's case-oriented design, which prioritized depth of interactional evidence over breadth of population coverage. Rather than aiming for statistical representativeness, the study sought to capture fine-grained developmental processes as they unfolded over time, across communities, and within recurring interactional situations. This orientation aligns with micro-genetic and interactional sociolinguistic approaches, in which smaller samples are methodologically appropriate because the analytic goal is to trace situated linguistic change, pragmatic adjustment, and meaning-making in detail within naturally occurring discourse. In this sense, the five participants were sufficient not because they represented a larger population numerically, but because they generated a dense body of longitudinal interactional data through which shifts in stance-related grammatical practices could be examined closely and systematically.

Materials and Data Procedures

Data were collected through participant-assisted digital archiving combined with periodic researcher monitoring over four months. Each participant was asked to systematically archive interactional episodes from their routine engagements in selected digital communities by saving screenshots, chat excerpts, or message threads that contained sustained exchanges in which epistemic positioning, stance marking, or negotiation of meaning was visibly relevant. To increase procedural consistency, participants submitted archived materials at regular intervals, and the researcher conducted weekly monitoring to review incoming data, verify contextual information, and ensure that the archived interactions remained aligned with the study's analytic focus. Not all interactions produced by participants during the observation period were recorded in full; instead, the dataset was built through principled screening of interactional episodes that met predefined selection criteria, including relevance to bilingual digital interaction, the presence of identifiable stance-related lexico-grammatical forms, interactional sequenceness sufficient for discourse analysis, and recurrence across participants, communities, or time points. Within this procedure, the researcher did not participate in or intervene in the interactions themselves, but took an active curatorial role in organizing submissions, checking completeness, anonymizing records, and selecting information-rich episodes for subsequent qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded through a staged selection and coding process designed to ensure that only analytically relevant and sufficiently contextualized interactions were included. In the initial phase, the corpus consisted of all archived materials submitted during the four-month observation period, yielding an initial pool of digital interaction records. These records were first screened for completeness and relevance, and interactions were excluded when they (a) consisted only of isolated words, emojis, or formulaic responses without sequential development; (b) lacked sufficient contextual information to identify interlocutor relations or interactional purpose; (c) did not contain any identifiable stance-related lexico-grammatical forms; or (d) represented

duplicated, truncated, or technically incomplete captures. After this first screening, the remaining dataset was reviewed more closely to identify interactional episodes that were sufficiently rich for sequential discourse analysis and suitable for cross-case comparison. This procedure produced the final analytic corpus of 63 episodes drawn from 417 turns, within which 138 explicit occurrences of stance-related adverbial forms were identified for detailed qualitative and quantitative analysis. In simplified form, the selection flow moved from all archived records, to screened interactional submissions, to eligible episodes meeting the analytic criteria, and finally to the coded set of stance-related tokens used for interpretive and distributional analysis.

Development in this study is operationalized not merely as an increase in frequency, but rather as a shift toward more context-sensitive and interactionally adaptive use. Four indicators are used to track longitudinal changes: lexical diversification, functional precision, syntactic embedding complexity, and interactional responsiveness. Distributions across time and across communities are mapped descriptively. In contrast, differences in the distribution of syntactic functions and positions across communities are tested using a chi-square test of independence at the $p < .05$ significance level. Sequential qualitative analysis examines how stance marking is processed through alignment, challenge, clarification, and repair in real interactions. The entire analysis process is documented through analytic memoing and an audit trail to maintain transparency and methodological rigor. By combining distributional and interactional analyses, this study aims to comprehensively capture the dynamics of community-mediated grammatical development, grounded in replicable empirical data.

FINDING

Emergent Patterns of Epistemic Stance Marking in Digital Interaction

A comprehensive analysis of a corpus of digitally mediated interactions shows that stance adverbs function as a central tool in managing epistemic claims, not simply as additional rhetorical elements. Of the 417 interactional turns containing stance marking, 138 explicit occurrences of stance adverbs were identified, which became the focus of microanalysis. The overall lexical distribution indicates a dominance of high-frequency forms such as “actually” and “really”, but variations in function and distribution across contexts reveal a more complex pattern than form preference.

Table 1. Lexical Distribution of Stance Adverbs

Stance Adverb	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
actually	47	34%
really	30	22%
clearly	19	14%
obviously	15	11%
apparently	12	9%
evidently	8	6%

others (literally, definitely, honestly)	7	4%

As seen in Table 1, the two most dominant forms, actually (34%) and really (22%), account for more than half of the total occurrences. However, the significance of this distribution becomes clearer when analyzed longitudinally and across communities. In the initial observation phase (Month 1), the use of stance adverbs tended to be emphasis-oriented, especially in the context of peer-informal interactions with a high level of epistemic symmetry.

"Yeah, that was actually the correct answer."
"I really think it's fine."

Communication partners' responses in this context generally involve minimal alignment, such as "yeah," "true," or "exactly". Sequentially, interactions rarely progress to repair or clarification sequences. This pattern suggests that in the initial stages, stance marking functions primarily as a reinforcement device for claims assumed to share a common knowledge base.

However, when analyzed by community type, the distribution of functions differs significantly. Table 2 shows the variation in the distribution of functions across community contexts.

Table 2. Functional Distribution of Stance Adverbs Across Community Contexts

Functional Category	*Peer-Informal (%)*	*Mentor-Guided (%)*	*Transnational Exchange (%)*
Emphasis-oriented use	68%	21%	18%
Mitigation	17%	42%	24%
Evidential/Inferential marking	15%	29%	61%
Negotiation trigger	8%	19%	31%

In Table 2, the peer-informal context was characterized by emphasis-oriented use (68%), whereas mentor-guided interactions showed a significant increase in mitigation (42%). The most striking pattern was seen in transnational exchanges, where 61% of usage functioned as evidential or inferential marking. This difference was statistically significant ($p < .05$), indicating that the function of stance adverbs correlates with the configuration of social relations and the distribution of knowledge within the community.

In the context of transnational interactions, the use of forms such as apparently, evidently, and clearly is not always accepted unconditionally but often triggers epistemic negotiations.

A: *"Clearly, that's a cultural difference."*
B: *"What do you mean by that?"*
A: *"I mean, in my country we don't usually do that."*

This example demonstrates that stance marking can function as a negotiation trigger, particularly when the assumption of shared knowledge is not fully met. Thus, epistemic stance becomes a locus of interaction sensitive to potential epistemic asymmetry.

In addition to functional distribution, longitudinal changes are also evident in the syntactic dimension. Table 3 shows a shift in the distribution of syntactic positions of stance adverbs over time.

Table 3. Longitudinal Distribution of Syntactic Position

Syntactic Configuration	*Month 1 (%)*	*Month 4 (%)*
Simple clause (non-embedded)	88%	61%
Embedded/subordinated structure	12%	39%

In Month 1, the majority of adverbs appear in simple linear structures.

"It is actually correct."
"That's really interesting."

However, in Months 3-4, usage of embedded structures and layered stance configurations increased.

"I guess it's probably actually a misunderstanding."
"It was, actually, more complicated than I thought."

The increase in subordinate structures (12% → 39%) suggests a trend toward syntactic embedding complexity, reflecting a more precise ability to map levels of certainty and epistemic commitment.

Furthermore, there was a decrease in the absolute use of unmitigated stances and an increase in the use of mitigated/evidential stances throughout the observation period, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Absolute vs Mitigated/Evidential Usage Over Time

Usage Type	*Month 1 (%)*	*Month 4 (%)*
Absolut stance	47%	14%
Mitigated/Evidential stance	53%	63%

The decline in the use of absolute markers like "obviously" without additional framing, and the increase in the use of mitigating markers like "I think," "probably," or "apparently", indicate a relatively stable trend in epistemic recalibration. This change cannot be explained solely by situational variation but rather by systematic recalibration tendencies that emerge through cross-community participation.

These findings indicate that epistemic stance marking in bilingual digital interaction exhibits a structured distribution pattern, is sensitive to community type, and undergoes significant longitudinal shifts. Participants' lexico-grammatical repertoires do not change radically, but show consistent expansion and adjustment toward more context-sensitive and epistemically calibrated usage. This pattern provides an empirical basis for interpreting grammatical development as a process mediated by communities and negotiated through interaction, rather than as an accumulation of forms independent of social context.

Functional Reconfiguration of Stance Adverbs

The cross-community differences observed in the initial distributions not only indicate frequency variations but also demonstrate consistent functional reconfiguration at the interactional level. The same forms: "actually," "clearly," or "obviously" do not maintain identical pragmatic functions across contexts, but rather adapt according to the configuration of social relations and the distribution of epistemic authority. In other words, what changes is not just the form used, but how that form operates within the sequential structure of interactions.

In peer-informal communities, where relations are relatively symmetrical and intimacy is high, stance adverbs most often function as affective reinforcement or emphasis-oriented markers. Claims framed with "actually" or "really" are almost always followed by immediate alignment without sequential expansion.

"It's actually not a big deal."
"Yeah."
"That's obviously true."
"Exactly."

In this context, stance marking does not expand adjacency pairs or trigger repair. Distributionally, 68% of usage in peer communities is emphasis-oriented, with a challenge rate of only 8%. This structure suggests that under conditions of high shared epistemic ground, the need for epistemic calibration is relatively low, so absolute usage, such as "obvious," is rarely questioned.

However, this pattern changes when interactions take place in mentor-guided contexts, where epistemic asymmetry is more pronounced. In these contexts, participants show an increased tendency to mitigate claims before making them, resulting in a layered stance-marking configuration.

"I think that's actually the correct answer."
"It's probably, actually, more complex than that."
"Technically, it should work that way."

In contrast to peer contexts, communication partners' responses often take the form of probes or clarifications.

"Why do you think so?"
"Can you explain what you mean?"

In the mentor community, the use of a mitigation-oriented stance reached 42%, significantly higher than in the peer context (17%). This difference indicates that the change in function is not a distributional coincidence, but rather a response to the structure of social relations. In this context, the actual no longer functions solely as a claim reinforcer but becomes part of a mitigation configuration that maintains epistemic legitimacy for authority figures.

The most complex pattern emerges in transnational exchanges, where knowledge distributions are not always overlapping and cultural backgrounds are diverse. In this context, evidential and inferential markers become dominant.

"Apparently, that's how it works in your country."
"Evidently, we misunderstood each other."
"Presumably, it depends on the system."

In 61% of cases in transnational contexts, stance adverbs functioned as evidential/inferential marking, compared to only 15% in peer contexts. Furthermore, the challenge rate increased to 31%, indicating that epistemic claims were more frequently processed through explicit negotiation.

A: *Clearly, that's the best approach."*
B: *"Why clearly?"*
A: *"I mean, from my experience…"*

This example demonstrates how an absolute marker, such as "clearly," triggers repair initiation, which results in a downgrading of the claim to an experience-based framing. This means that the adverb's function is restructured from an absolute assertion to an epistemic negotiation device.

Table 5. Functional Reconfiguration of Stance Adverbs

Functional Category	*Peer-Informal (%)*	*Mentor-Guided (%)*	*Transnational Exchange (%)*
Emphasis-oriented reinforcement	68%	21%	18%
Mitigation / epistemic softening	17%	42%	24%
Evidential/inferential marking	15%	29%	61%
Explicit negotiation trigger	8%	19%	31%

This table shows that the function of stance adverbs is strongly correlated with the structure of social relations and the level of epistemic risk. In low-risk peer communities, adverbs tend to reinforce claims without negotiation. In mentoring contexts, the function shifts toward mitigation and calibration; in transnational contexts with high epistemic uncertainty, the evidential function and the potential for negotiation increase significantly.

In addition to functional differences, there are indications of cross-context transfer. Experiences of epistemic challenge in transnational contexts appear to influence stance use even in peer contexts during the later stages of observation.

Early phase (peer context):

"Obviously, that's wrong."

Later phase (peer context):

"It might be obvious to me, but maybe not to everyone."

These changes demonstrate that functional recalibration is not limited to a single community but can be internalized and applied across contexts. In other words, negotiation experiences in one relational configuration can shape usage tendencies in other communities.

There is also evidence of an increase in layered stance configurations in contexts with higher epistemic risk.

"I guess, it's probably actually a misunderstanding."
"So you're fully certain?"
"I'm not completely certain, but it seems likely."

In this example, the use of multi-layered stances opens up a discussion about the level of certainty. Stance is no longer simply a claim enhancer, but an explicit tool for managing levels of epistemic commitment.

The observed functional reconfiguration does not indicate a complete transformation of the grammatical system, but rather a steady trend toward more context-sensitive and interactionally adaptive usage. The community acts as a structuring condition that increases the probability of certain functions emerging, rather than as a single deterministic factor. Thus, the observed changes are more accurately understood as probabilistic recalibration tendencies mediated by social configurations and epistemic negotiation dynamics.

This finding strengthens the argument that grammatical choice in bilingual digital interaction is relational and mediated. Lexico-grammatical repertoires are not merely used in social contexts; they are actively reshaped through participation in communities with varying knowledge distributions and relational structures. Thus, functional reconfiguration is not merely a stylistic variation but rather an indication that grammatical competence undergoes adaptive restructuring through cross-community interactions.

From Conventionality to Markedness: Development Shifts in Grammatical Realization

Longitudinal analysis shows that the observed shifts are not limited to functional variation across communities but rather exhibit a relatively consistent pattern of intra-individual change throughout the observation period. This shift can be understood as a transition from more conventional and formulaic usage to more marked, layered, and context-sensitive usage. Development, in this context, is not defined as the acquisition of structurally new forms, but rather

as increased flexibility in mapping lexico-grammatical choices to the epistemic demands of interaction.

In the initial observation phase (Month 1), the repertoire of stance adverbs was relatively limited and dominated by high-frequency forms such as "actually" and "really." Usage tended to be repetitive and functioned as emphasis-oriented reinforcement without additional argumentative elaboration.

"I actually agree."
"It's really good."
"That's actually correct."

Distributionally, three out of five participants used a maximum of three different adverb types in the first two weeks.

Table 6. Longitudinal Lexical Diversification of Stance Adverbs

Indicator	*Month 1*	*Month 4*
Mean number of stance types per participant	3.2	6.8
Dominant forms	actually, really	actually, apparently, technically, evidently
Proportion of high-frequency forms (actually/really)	72%	41%

As seen in Table 6, there was an increase in the number of adverb types used per participant, as well as a decrease in the proportion of high-frequency forms. In Months 3-4, forms such as apparently, presumably, technically, and evidently began to appear in more complex contexts.

"Apparently, that's not how it works."
"Technically, that's correct but…."
"Evidently, we misunderstood earlier."

This repertory expansion not only increases the variety of forms but also broadens the functional options for managing epistemic claims.

In addition to lexical diversification, significant changes are observed in functional precision. In Month 1, several cases demonstrated pragmatic mismatch, particularly when absolute markers were used without considering the distribution of knowledge.

"Obviously, you know that already."
Response: *"Actually, I don't."*

The use of "obviously" in this example assumes a shared epistemic ground that does not exist, thereby prompting explicit correction. In Month 4, the use of absolute markers becomes less frequent and is more frequently calibrated through additional framing.

"It might seem obvious from my perspective, but maybe not for you."
"Apparently, that's how it works in your system."

The number of pragmatic-mismatch incidents decreased from 17 in Month 1 to 4 in Month 4. This decrease was consistent across the four main participants and indicates a trend toward more precise epistemic calibration.

A more structural shift was seen in the syntactic embedding complexity dimension. In the initial phase, adverbs almost always appeared in simple linear structures.

"It is actually correct."
"That's really interesting."

Entering Month 3-4, there is an increase in the use of subordinate structures and layered stance configurations.

Table 7. Longitudinal Shifts in Syntactic Embedding of Stance Adverbs

Syntactic Configuration	*Month 1 (%)*	*Month 4 (%)*
Simple clause (non-embedded)	88%	61%
Embedded in a subordinate clause	9%	28%
Layered stance configuration	3%	11%

The increased use of subordinate structures and layered configurations indicates that participants are increasingly able to manage levels of epistemic commitment hierarchically. Layered stance marking, such as "I guess + probably + actually," allows for finer-grained differentiation of certainty levels, rather than simply a single, absolute claim.

In addition to changes in form and function, a shift from reactive to strategic use is also evident. In the initial phase, stances often emerge as direct responses to questions.

A: *"Is that correct?"*
B: *"Yes, actually."*

In the advanced phase, stances are used proactively to anticipate potential misunderstandings.

"Actually, before we continue, I think we need to clarify something."
"Apparently, this might be confusing because of the time difference."

This proactive use indicates increased interactional responsiveness, in which participants not only respond to claims but also more consciously manage the interaction's trajectory.

Longitudinal changes are also evident in the absolute proportion of unmitigated stance use compared to mitigated/evident stance use.

Table 8. Shifts from Absolute to Mitigated/Evidential Stance

Usage Type	*Month 1 (%)*	*Month 4 (%)*
Absolut stance	47%	14%
Mitigated/Evidential stance	53%	63%

The drastic decrease in the use of absolute markers without additional framing and the increase in the use of mitigating and evidential markers indicate a trend toward stabilization of context-sensitive tendencies. This change did not occur uniformly across all participants, but four out of five showed a relatively consistent pattern.

Rather than calling this shift a radical transformation of the grammatical system, the findings are better understood as an interactionally mediated recalibration. The grammatical repertoire did not change completely, but showed increased flexibility, diversification, and precision in epistemic functions. The shift from conventional to more marked and layered usage reflects adaptation to experiences of cross-community negotiation.

Thus, the developmental shifts observed here are not simply increases in structural complexity, but rather increased sensitivity to the distribution of knowledge and the potential interactional consequences of epistemic claims. Grammatical realization in bilingual digital contexts appears to move from formulaic to calibrated, from reactive to strategic, and from absolute to layered. This pattern strengthens the argument that grammatical competence in the digital ecosystem is adaptive and continuously restructured through interactional participation.

Community Mediation as a Structuring Force in Grammatical Choice

The longitudinal and interactional findings presented previously point to a consistent pattern: the choice of stance adverbs does not emerge as an autonomous individual preference, but rather is shaped by the social configuration of the community in which the interaction takes place. In other words, the community functions as a structuring force that shapes the probability that certain forms and functions emerge. The observed variations are not merely stylistic; they reflect adaptations to different distributions of knowledge, levels of epistemic risk, and social relational structures.

In peer-informal communities, relationships are relatively symmetrical, and shared background knowledge tends to be high. Under these conditions, the use of stance adverbs is more often emphasis-oriented and rarely triggers explicit negotiation. Forms such as “actually,” “really,” and even “obviously” are used without significant interactional consequences.

“It’s actually fine.”
“Yeah.”
“That’s obviously true.”
“Exactly.”

In this context, epistemic claims are rarely questioned. The distribution shows that 68% of uses in peer communities serve as reinforcement, with only 8% being explicitly challenged. This structure suggests that when epistemic symmetry is high, the need for epistemic calibration is minimal.

However, a different pattern emerges in mentor-guided interactions, where epistemic asymmetry is more pronounced. Participants tend to mitigate claims and adopt a layered stance to manage epistemic legitimacy toward authority figures.

"I think it's actually correct."
"Technically, it should work that way."

The responses often took the form of probing or clarification, rather than simply alignment. The distribution shows that mitigation use in the mentor context reached 42%, compared to 17% in the peer context. This suggests that the structure of social relations influences how claims are framed and positioned.

The most complex pattern is seen in transnational exchanges, where knowledge distribution is not entirely overlapping and cultural backgrounds are diverse. In this context, the use of evidential and inferential markers increases significantly.

"Apparently, that's how it works in your country."
"Evidently, we misunderstood each other."

In 61% of cases in transnational contexts, stance adverbs functioned as evidential/inferential marking, significantly higher than in peer contexts (15%). Furthermore, the challenge rate increased to 31%, indicating that epistemic claims are more often processed through explicit negotiation.

A: *"Clearly, that's the best approach."*
B: *"Why clearly?"*
A: *"I mean, from my experience…."*

In this example, the use of "clearly" is interpreted as an overly absolute claim in a context of high epistemic uncertainty, thereby triggering reformulation. Thus, the community not only becomes the setting for language use but also shapes the architecture of grammatical choices.

Table 9. Community-Specific Distribution of Grammatical Choice and Update

Community Type	Dominant Stance Function	Explicit Challenge (%)	Mitigated/Evidential Usage (%)
Peer-Informal	Emphasis-oriented (68%)	8%	24%
Mentor-Guided	Mitigation (42%)	19%	58%

Transnational Exchange	Evidential (61%)	31%	72%

Table 9 shows that the dominant function and negotiation level correlate with community type. The higher the epistemic asymmetry and cultural distance, the greater the probability of using evidential framing and the higher the level of explicit challenge. This pattern supports the argument that community acts as a structuring condition, not an absolute determinant, but it increases the likelihood that certain stance types emerge.

Another important finding is the indication of cross-community transfer. Experiences of epistemic tension in a transnational context appear to influence usage tendencies, even in peer contexts, in the final phase of observation.

Early phase (peer context):

"Obviously, that's wrong."

Later phase (peer context):

"It might be obvious, but maybe not to everyone."

These changes suggest that exposure to negotiations within a single community can produce recalibration tendencies that are internalized and applied across contexts. This means that communities not only influence local choices in a single interaction but also contribute to the broader restructuring of grammatical repertoires.

It is important to note, however, that communities do not act deterministically. Not all transnational interactions produce evidential framing, and not all peer interactions are free from mitigation. What is observed is a probabilistic pattern: communities increase or decrease the likelihood that certain forms emerge, depending on the relational configuration and the distribution of knowledge.

Overall, these findings suggest that grammatical choice in bilingual digital interactions is both relational and mediated. Communities provide structural conditions that influence how epistemic claims are framed, negotiated, and reformulated. Thus, community mediation is not simply a context for language use, but a force that shapes the distributional tendencies and functional configuration of lexico-grammatical choices. These findings strengthen the argument that grammatical competence in digital ecosystems is adaptive and continuously restructured through participation in heterogeneous communities.

Interactional Uptake and Negotiation of Epistemic Positioning

Analysis of interactional uptake shows that the development of stance adverb usage cannot be understood solely from changes in form or function, but must be interpreted through the dynamics of production, response, and adjustment that occur repeatedly in interactions. Stance marking does not stand alone as an individual lexico-grammatical choice, but is processed, negotiated, and sometimes reformulated through the responses of communication partners. Thus,

negotiation of epistemic positioning becomes a key mechanism in the restructuring of grammatical repertoire.

In peer-informal contexts, most stance adverb use is followed by immediate alignment rather than sequential expansion. The interaction structure typically stops at the basic adjacency pair, without triggering repair or clarification.

A: *"It's actually not difficult."*
B: *"Yeah, true."*
A: *"That's really obvious."*
B: *"Exactly."*

In this context, 72% of stance occurrences were followed by a direct alignment response. Challenges occurred in only 8%, and clarifications in 6%. This pattern suggests that under conditions of high epistemic symmetry, epistemic claims are rarely treated as requiring explicit negotiation.

However, in mentor-guided interactions, the uptake pattern becomes more complex. Although alignment still occurs, responses often take the form of probes or clarifications, thereby creating space for additional elaboration.

A: *"It's technically correct."*
B: *"Technically?"*
A: *"Yes, I mean according to the definition…"*

In this example, the mentor's technical repetition functions as an epistemic probe rather than merely as reinforcement. The participant then elaborates to clarify the basis for the claim. This structure suggests that the stance serves as an entry point for epistemic evaluation.

The most dynamic pattern is observed in transnational exchanges, where knowledge distributions do not always overlap, and cultural backgrounds differ. In this context, the use of absolute markers more often triggers the initiation of challenge or repair.

A: *"Clearly, that's the best way."*
B: *"Why clearly?"*
A: *"I mean, from my experience…"*

In this example, the use of "clear" is processed as an overly absolute claim, triggering explicit negotiation. The subsequent reformulation downgrades the claim from universal to personal experience. Thus, uptake is not only responsive but also serves as a corrective mechanism for epistemic framing.

Table 10. Distribution of Interactional Uptake Across Community Contexts

Uptake Type	Peer-Informal (%)	Mentor-Guided (%)	Transnational Exchange (%)
Immediate alignment	72%	41%	33%

Clarification prompt	6%	22%	21%
Explicit challenge	8%	19%	31%
Repair/reformulation	4%	11%	15%

As shown in Table 10, the rate of challenge and repair increases significantly in contexts characterized by epistemic asymmetry or cultural distance. In transnational exchanges, 31% of claims triggered explicit challenges, compared to only 8% in peer contexts. This difference was significant according to a chi-square test ($p < .05$), indicating that community configuration influences the processing of epistemic claims. Not all negotiations emerge as direct challenges. In some cases, clarification prompts serve as a more subtle form of negotiation.

A: *"Apparently, that's how it works."*
B: *"Apparently?"*
A: *"Yeah, that's what I heard from someone."*

In this structure, a single repetition ("Apparently?") serves as an epistemic probe, requesting elaboration on the source of evidence. The subsequent response clarifies the basis of the claim. This pattern suggests that interactional uptake can involve implicit negotiations regarding the level of certainty and the source of knowledge.

Longitudinal analysis shows that uptake experiences, particularly challenges and clarifications, correlate with changes in stance use in subsequent interactions. In Month 1, absolute claims without mitigation appeared relatively frequently.

"Obviously, that's wrong".

But by Month 4, even in the previously relatively negotiation-free peer context, a more calibrated framing emerged.

"It might be obvious to me, but I'm not sure about you."

These changes indicate uptake-induced adjustment, whereby negotiation experiences in one community influence usage patterns in another. In other words, the interactional feedback loop functions as a longitudinal mediating mechanism.

Table 11. Longitudinal Shift in Uptake-Related Stance Adjustment

Usage Category	Month 1 (%)	Month 4 (%)
Absolut stance without reformulation	47%	14%
Reformulated/mitigated after uptake	18%	39%
Pre-emptive mitigation (anticipatory stance)	11%	36%

The data in Table 11 shows that the use of preemptive mitigation increased significantly in the final phase of observation. This means that participants anticipated potential challenges before their communication partners processed the claims. This change indicates that development occurs not only at the level of formal production, but also at the level of sensitivity to the interactional consequences of epistemic claims.

Furthermore, the increased use of layered stance configurations was often accompanied by responses that focused on the level of certainty, rather than solely on the content of the claim.

A: *"I guess it's probably clearly misunderstood."*
B: *"So you're not fully certain?"*
A: *"I am not completely certain, but it seems likely."*

In this structure, uptake isolates the level of certainty as an explicit topic, and the subsequent response demonstrates a recalibration of epistemic commitments. Thus, stance serves as an explicit tool for managing the level of certainty, rather than simply conveying a proposition.

These findings suggest that interactional uptake is an integral component in the restructuring of lexico-grammatical choices. Alignment, challenge, clarification, and repair form a recurring cycle of production-response-adjustment. Development in this context cannot be understood as the accumulation of new forms, but rather as an increased ability to manage the interactional consequences of epistemic claims. Thus, the negotiation of epistemic positioning is not simply a pragmatic dynamic, but a mediating mechanism that shapes the reconfiguration of grammatical realization in bilingual digital interaction.

Integrated Model of Community-Mediated Grammatical Development

The model proposed here is not intended as a universal formulation of grammatical development, but rather as an interpretive framework that builds on the empirical patterns of this study. This model illustrates adaptive tendencies in micro-grammatical use rather than absolute determinations. In this context, grammatical competence is understood as a system of choices that is continuously negotiated through participation in heterogeneous digital communities. The process of community-mediated grammatical development consists of four interrelated components.

First, exposure to community-specific epistemic norms. Each community, whether peer-informal, mentor-guided, or transnational exchange, forms a different relational configuration and distribution of knowledge. This configuration generates implicit norms regarding how epistemic claims should be framed. Exposure to these norms exerts adaptive pressure on lexico-grammatical choices, so that participants gradually map specific forms to specific contexts with greater precision.

Second, epistemic tension arises when claims are not immediately accepted through challenge or clarification. These moments encourage functional recalibration, in which absolute claims are reformulated as evidential framings or mitigated stances.

Third, this process is reinforced by an interactional feedback loop, a cycle of production, response, reformulation, and subsequent adjustment. Feedback does not always produce instantaneous change, but longitudinal patterns suggest that repeated negotiation experiences contribute to the restructuring of usage tendencies, even across communities.

Fourth, in the later phase, a tendency toward stabilization of the context-sensitive repertoire is observed. This stabilization does not mean the elimination of specific forms, but rather increased selectivity and sensitivity to the distribution of knowledge.

Development in this model is not the acquisition of structurally new forms, but rather increased flexibility in managing the interactional consequences of grammatical choices. Thus, this model emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between micro-level grammatical choice and macro-level community structure. Communities mediate the choice of forms, and that choice, in turn, shapes the trajectory of interactions, resulting in a recursive cycle that continues throughout participation in the digital communication ecosystem.

Table 12. Integrated Model of Community-Mediated Grammatical Development

Component	Description	Mechanism
Exposure to Community-Specific Epistemic Norms	Exposure to implicit norms regarding claim framing in different communities	Observation and participation in different social relations (peer, mentor, transnational)
Epistemic Tension & Functional Recalibration	Epistemic tension due to challenge or clarification	Reformulation from an absolute stance to an evidential/mitigated framing
Interactional Feedback Loop	Production-response-reformulation-adjustment cycle	Alignment, challenge, repair, clarification
Stabilization of Context-Sensitive Repertoire	Consistency in using a more calibrated stance	Selectivity and flexibility across contexts

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate a consistent tendency for stance-related forms to become more finely calibrated to epistemic and interactional contexts over time and across community participation. This pattern invites a theoretical reconsideration of grammatical competence, particularly as conceptualized in the Canale and Swain model, where grammar is often treated as a relatively stable system available for subsequent communicative use. In contrast, the present study suggests that, in digitally mediated bilingual settings, grammatical competence is not simply deployed in

interaction but is also shaped by it. Participation across communities with different epistemic configurations appears to contribute to the ongoing recalibration of grammatical choices, thus supporting a more dynamic view of competence that is socially mediated (Alkouri & Aldhafeeri, 2026; Zheng & Zhang, 2025), interactionally responsive (Shadrova, 2025; Tian & Zhang, 2025), and sensitive to digital conditions of communication (Nguyen & Doan, 2025; Qi & Chen, 2025).

Furthermore, these findings contribute to the literature on interactional competence by demonstrating that micro-level grammatical choices, particularly epistemic stance marking, have direct consequences for interactional trajectories. Analysis of interactional uptake demonstrates that alignment (Huang et al., 2025), clarification (Rheindorf & Vollmer, 2026), challenge (C. Zhang & Wang, 2025), and repair are not merely pragmatic responses but mediating mechanisms that reshape the configuration of epistemic claims (Jiang & Su, 2025; Pretorius & Thewissen, 2026). The increased use of preemptive mitigation and the decrease in absolute stances, without additional framing, indicate that participants anticipate the possibility of negotiation before claims are processed (Burhan-Horasanlı, 2026; Zhao et al., 2025). Thus, the interactional feedback loop functions as a key mechanism in the restructuring of grammatical repertoire.

These findings also bridge the gap between studies of digital discourse, which tend to focus on macro dimensions such as identity construction and intercultural negotiation, and micro-grammatical analyses that examine the realization of forms in real interactions. While much prior research has highlighted how bilingual speakers negotiate identity and social position (Guercini & Lechner, 2025; Tiermas & Alisaari, 2025), this study demonstrates that community mediation processes also occur at the level of lexico-grammatical form. The variation in the distribution of stance adverb functions across peer-informal (Osypenko & Athanasopoulos, 2026; Sato et al., 2025), mentor-guided (Bukari et al., 2025), and transnational exchanges suggests that community acts as a structuring condition (Suzuki et al., 2025), influencing the probability of certain stance types emerging (Delgado-Garza & García Mayo, 2025; Molbæk, 2026).

However, it is important to exercise caution in interpreting these findings. This study focuses on stance adverbs as an analytical window into epistemic positioning. Although the emerging patterns demonstrate longitudinal consistency, generalizations to other grammatical domains, for example, modality or discourse markers, require additional empirical verification. Furthermore, the relatively small number of participants and the intensive longitudinal, case-oriented design limit claims of generalizability to the population. However, the depth of analysis allows for a rich reading of intra-individual dynamics.

The model of community-mediated grammatical development proposed in this study suggests that grammatical competence in the digital age is not a fixed body of forms, but a relational system of choices continuously reshaped through interaction across communities. Each component of the model was grounded in the findings: its relational dimension emerged from cross-community differences in stance-adverb use, its developmental dimension from the longitudinal movement toward more mitigated and evidentially qualified forms, and its mediational dimension from sequential patterns of uptake, alignment, challenge, and negotiation

that appeared to shape subsequent grammatical choices. This interpretation resonates with sociocultural accounts of mediated development, interactional views of competence as participation-based, and usage-based perspectives on grammar as emergent from repeated situated use. The model, therefore, extends, rather than replaces, existing competence theories by highlighting how digital mediation and cross-community participation contribute to micro-grammatical restructuring. At the same time, the study has important limitations. The dataset was restricted to platform-bounded, digitally archived interactions and may therefore reflect only a partial segment of participants' communicative practices. Participant-assisted archiving and periodic monitoring may also have introduced observer effects and selection bias, since not all interactions were captured, and some episodes may have been preserved precisely because they were perceived as noteworthy. Moreover, because the data were situated within a specific sociocultural context, the findings should not be generalized uncritically to other cultural or digital environments. Accordingly, the proposed model should be understood as a context-sensitive analytic account that requires further testing across broader platforms, interaction types, and sociolinguistic settings.

CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that grammatical competence in digitally mediated bilingual interaction is not simply a fixed structural resource, but may be understood as a repertoire of choices that is recalibrated in relation to interlocutors, participation frameworks, and community-specific norms. More specifically, the study indicates a tendency for stance-related grammatical choices to shift across time and across digital communities, particularly in relation to epistemic calibration, mitigation, and the negotiation of knowledge claims. On this basis, the study makes three main contributions. First, it contributes to theories of grammatical competence by showing that micro-level grammatical choices can be examined not only in terms of formal accuracy, but also in terms of their interactional and socially mediated development. Second, it contributes to digital discourse research by demonstrating that cross-community participation provides an important context for understanding how bilingual speakers reshape stance-related resources in online interaction. Third, it offers a methodological contribution by combining longitudinal interactional data with an integrated sequential and distributional analysis, thereby providing a way to connect local discourse processes with broader patterns of grammatical variation.

Because the analysis was based on five participants over a four-month period and on a bounded set of digitally archived interactions, the findings should not be taken as universally representative of all bilingual speakers, digital platforms, or sociocultural contexts. Rather, they should be understood as evidence of context-specific developmental tendencies observed in this dataset. Even so, the study extends existing work by suggesting that grammatical development in digital environments can be productively examined through the intersection of social participation, epistemic positioning, and micro-grammatical choice. In practical terms, this suggests that language learning may benefit from greater attention to stance awareness, epistemic calibration, and context-sensitive meaning negotiation in digitally mediated communication. For future

research, broader datasets, more varied platform ecologies, and cross-cultural comparisons would help test the transferability of these patterns and refine the proposed account of community-mediated grammatical development.

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