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Stance and engagement in postgraduate writing: a comparative study of English NS and Arab EFL student writers in Linguistics and Literature

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*This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my beloved mum, **Safeya Faden** whose prayers, words of encouragement, and push for tenacity still ring in my ears!*

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<u>Abstract</u>

This study investigated the ways English native and Arab EFL student writers in a UK university from two disciplines (i.e. Linguistics and Literature) use language in their master's dissertations to interact with readers. How they present themselves and convey judgements and opinions, and how they connect with readers and establish rapport were examined by the employment of Hyland's (2005b) model of stance and engagement, which encompasses nine categories: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, reader references, directives, asides, questions, and references to shared knowledge. The primary data used consisted of a corpus of 39 master's dissertations and discourse-based semi-structured interviews with 15 of the writers. While a corpus analysis helped to reveal which features were overused and which ones were underused, interviews were conducted to discover more about how and why the writer participants used such features in their academic writing.

The findings suggest that while it is true that both disciplinary community and cultural background are very likely to have an impact on the way writers position themselves and their readers, there are other factors related to the students' conceptions of academic writing in general and their audience in particular which appear to have a more vital role in the writers' use of stance and engagement markers. These include personality differences, stylistic preferences, previous education, and supervisors' comments and advice. The thesis closes by exploring the implications of this study for both EAP writing pedagogy and dissertation supervision and proposing some new directions for future research.

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List of Abbreviations

AL	Applied Linguistics
Bio	Biology
BS	Business Studies
CS	Computer Science
EAP	English for academic purposes
Econ	Economics
EE	Electrical Engineering
EFL	English as a foreign language
ESL	English as a second language
FTAs	Face-threatening acts
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IS	Information Systems
L1	First language
L2	Second language
Ling	Linguistics
MA	Master's of Art
MD	Metadiscourse
ME	Mechanical Engineering
MM	Mixed Methods
MSc	Master's of Science
NNS	Non-native speaker
NS	Native speaker
PA	Public Administration
PhD	Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Phil	Philosophy
PR	Project report
RA	Research article
SS	Social Sciences
TESOL	Teaching English to speakers of other languages
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

Chapter 1   Introduction

Writing researchers and learners have long asked why is it that "while the written production of advanced learners is mainly free from grave grammatical errors, their writing often sounds unidiomatic and shows subtle differences to texts produced by native speakers" (Callies, 2013, p.357). This non-nativeness in the learners' writing used to be explained by vague cover terms such as 'unidiomaticity' or 'style'. With the emergence of learner corpus research, however, we now have much more precise descriptions of advanced student writing, and the evidence has revealed that texts by EFL writers differ from those of their NS counterparts in terms of frequencies of certain words, phrases, and syntactic structures (see, e.g., Hinkel, 2005b for a review of research on EFL writers' texts). Some of this research has suggested that learners' over-/under-use of metadiscourse, which "refers to the linguistic devices writers employ to shape their arguments to the needs and expectations of their target readers" (Hyland, 2004, p.134), is one possible reason why EFL writing gives an impression of non-nativeness (see, e.g., Ädel, 2008). Studies have also indicated that while mastering such interpersonal features is not an easy task for native speakers (NSs) (see, e.g., Cheng & Steffensen, 1996), it is notoriously difficult for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) (see, e.g., Holmes, 1982; Intaraprawat & Steffensen, 1995). But when it comes to the issues of what causes these difficulties and how exactly the EFL learners' deployment of interpersonal language differs from that of their NS counterparts, diverging and inconclusive results have been reported. These apparently unresolved questions have motivated the present study in which I aim to provide a better understanding of novice academic writing that could hopefully assist in creating better academic writing teaching materials.

Academic writing is no longer seen as an objective, faceless and impersonal form of discourse. By discovering the important role of social context in the writing process, writing research has

established that academic writing involves interaction between writers and readers which is accomplished via the surface of the text. As a result, there has been an increasing interest in exploring the different ways writers use language to position themselves and engage readers in the discourse. Investigation in this area has been conducted under various labels including *evaluation* (Hunston & Thompson, 2001), *appraisal* (Martin, 2001; White, 2003), *metadiscourse* (Crismore et al, 1993; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Vande Kopple, 1985, 2002), and *stance and engagement* (Hyland, 2005b). In fact, *stance and engagement* which is proposed by Hyland (2005b) as a model of interaction in academic discourse is very much related to *metadiscourse*.

Metadiscourse is often defined as "discourse about discourse or communication about communication" (Vande Kopple, 1985, p.83). While some analysts have limited the scope of metadiscourse to features of textual organisation (Bunton, 1999; Burneikaitė, 2009; Dahl, 2004; Mauranen, 1993; Khedri et al, 2013; Valero-Garcés, 1996) or illocutionary markers (Beauvais, 1989), metadiscourse is very frequently used as an umbrella term to embrace an array of features "which help relate a text to its context by assisting readers to connect, organise, and interpret material in a way preferred by the writer and with regard to the understandings and values of a particular discourse community" (Hyland, 2004, p.134). Different definitions and classifications have been proposed for metadiscourse but discussions have been essentially based on Halliday's (1976) concept of the three macro-functions of language: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Ideational is concerned with the content of the text; the textual has "an enabling function, that of creating a text"; and the interpersonal is concerned with "language as the mediator of role, including all that may be understood by the expression of our own personalities and personal feelings on the one hand, and forms of interaction and social interplay with other participants in the communication situation on the other hand" (Halliday, 1973, p.66). The 'interpersonal' function in particular has been the key principle of metadiscourse and of much research that has been concerned with the ways interaction is achieved in academic discourse.

Hyland and Tse (2004) who see metadiscourse "as a means of conceptualizing interpersonal relations in academic writing" (p.159) classified metadiscourse into: (i) interactive resources which help writers organize their texts (including transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and code glosses), and (ii) interactional resources which involve readers in the argument (including hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self mentions and engagement markers). Drawing more specifically on the interactional metadiscourse category and based on his analysis of 240 published research articles from eight disciplines, Hyland (2005b) offered *stance and engagement* as a more refined and detailed model of interaction in academic discourse. This framework which includes nine subcategories—hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, reader references, directives, questions, asides, and references to shared knowledge—provides a comprehensive way of exploring the means by which interaction is accomplished in academic wiring. Thus, it was chosen as the analytical framework for the current study for its applicability and great potential for tracing patterns of interaction across texts (for example, see works by Lee, 2009, 2011; McGrath & Kuteeva, 2012; and Yang, 2014). But since *metadiscourse* is the main concept upon which the *stance and engagement* model was constructed and since the features of *stance and engagement* are also identified as interactional metadiscourse, research which has studied (features of) interactional metadiscourse will also be discussed.

Features of *stance and engagement*, which have also been studied under the term *metadiscourse*, have contributed to a range of studies including those of casual conversation (Schiffrin, 1980), academic spoken discourse (Yang, 2014), science popularisations (Crismore & Farnsworth, 1990), textbooks (Crismore, 1989; Hyland, 1999), PhD theses (Bunton, 1999), company annual reports (Hyland, 1998d), job postings (Fu, 2012), and traveller forums (Suau-Jiménez, 2014). Findings of such studies have suggested the importance of interpersonal language and that it contributes to the characterization of different genres. Interpersonal features have also been seen

as a crucial aspect of persuasive and argumentative discourse (Crismore & Farnsworth, 1990; Hyland, 1998a) and a characteristic of good ESL/EFL and native speaker student writing (Cheng & Steffensen, 1996; Intraprawat & Steffensen, 1995).

Research has also suggested the importance of studying the interactional features across disciplines. Due to the fact that different academic disciplines have developed different discourse conventions (Swales, 1990), Hyland (2005b) argues that analysis of stance and engagement features is a valuable means by which we can explore and compare the academic writing conventions and the rhetorical preferences of different disciplinary communities. For instance, Hyland (1998a, 1998c, 2005b) in a series of studies explored the use of metadiscourse/stance and engagement markers in research articles (RAs) from a number of different disciplines broadly divided into 'soft' knowledge domains (humanities and social sciences) and 'hard' knowledge domains (sciences and engineering). He concluded, "writers in different disciplines represent themselves, their work and their readers in different ways" (Hyland, 2005b, p.187) to reflect the conventions and the epistemologies of their disciplines. Similarly, Abdi (2002), who compared the ways writers used interactional metadiscourse (i.e. hedges, boosters, and attitude markers) in a corpus of 55 RAs from the Social Sciences and Natural Sciences, reported that the Social Sciences writers employed interpersonal metadiscourse more often than the Natural Sciences writers. Skelton (1988b) based on his analysis of commentative language (i.e. boosters and hedges) in 40 RAs in humanities and hard sciences found that language constructions such as *"It can not be denied"* and *"it seems likely"* were more common in Philosophy articles than in Organic Chemistry papers. Afros and Schryer (2009) examined the strategies associated with promotional (meta)discourse including personal pronouns in RAs from Language and Literary Studies with each covering a wide spectrum of subfields ranging from Theoretical Linguistics to Dialectology, and from Textual Analysis to Genre Theory. They showed that the key difference was the use of self-citations in which personal pronouns were employed more often by linguists

to strengthen ethos appeals. Chang and Swales (1999) also investigated the use of personal pronouns in addition to imperatives and direct questions in RAs from three disciplines: Linguistics, Philosophy, and Statistics. Philosophy employed self-mentions and direct questions more frequently than both Statistics and Linguistics while imperatives were most common in Statistics. Also, based on a corpus of 50 RAs in ten disciplines, Swales et al (1998) examined the use of imperatives and suggested that this engagement feature was field-specific.

While all these studies provided us with useful insights into how the experts (since the focus was on research articles) write in different fields, little is known about the ways student writers express a 'voice'[1] as a result of their interactions with their communities (Petrić, 2010). Only a few studies of inter-disciplinary differences have examined the use of stance and engagement features in the student-produced genre (e.g., Hyland, 2002a, 2009; Thonney, 2013) and there have been even fewer studies in master's dissertations (although see Hyland, 2004; Samraj, 2008). There is no doubt that research articles are an important genre, which, as Hyland (2014) argues, "represents an excellent site for the investigation of the ways that dialogue works in academic writing" (p. 6). But studying the interactional features in student writing, in particular, in master's dissertations and the ways these advanced student writers present propositions and negotiate meaning in their particular disciplinary community is, I argue, also of significance because it helps to reveal the extent to which these novice researchers have understood the norms of their disciplines and how well they have engaged with their communities. Such information is needed to devise relevant teaching materials for these students as it has been a typical practice for many material designers to base their guidance and instruction for postgraduate student writers on research article norms rather than norms for student writing. This seems to have caused confusion for student writers (see, e.g., Hüttner, 2007) since, of course, the written texts

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[1] While there is a broad range of meanings that can be ascribed to the notion of voice, "most would agree that voice encompasses *both* individual and social dimensions" (Tardy, 2012, p. 35), and so that it is a superordinate of stance and engagement features.

they produce are for different communicative purposes and audiences to those of research articles. Ventola and Mauranen (1996) have noted, "innumerable guidebooks and manuals on writing up research have been published; however, very few of these are based on serious linguistic analysis of the kinds of texts that a novice academic might have to master" (p.vii).

In fact, one of the major challenges for novice writers lies in recognizing and managing the effective deployment of linguistic devices in relation to positioning the self and others in writing as has been suggested by many studies which compared writers' use of interactional features in research articles and student texts (e.g., Hood, 2004; Hyland, 2008a, 2009). This line of research, unsurprisingly, has indicated a considerable variation between the student and expert writers in the way they communicate with their audience. One source of this variation, as Cheng & Steffensen (1996) maintain based on their study of English NS university students, is that "many novice writers focus on the product, the written text, and do not pay enough attention to the ultimate goal of writing, communicating with an audience (p.149). Moreover, it is widely agreed now that academic writing is "an act of identity" (Hyland, 2002a, p.1092), requiring writers to strike a balance between reporting objective data and signalling subjective evaluation in order to construct a persuasive argument. "Academic writers need to make a clear distinction between propositions already shared by the discourse community, which have the status of facts, and propositions to be evaluated by the discourse community, which only have the status of claims" (Crompton, 1997, p.274). However, managing such an evaluative stance while maintaining the "appearance of objectivity" (Johns, 1997, p.32) is frequently cited as a challenge to novice writers, particularly non-native speakers writing in English as a foreign language. This has been observed in many studies which have examined the use of stance and engagement features/interactional metadiscourse in texts written in different languages (for example, Dahl, 2004; Hu & Cao, 2011; Kim & Lim, 2013; Lee & Casal, 2014; Molino, 2010; Mur-Dueñas, 2011) and by NSs and EFL writers (e.g., Abdollahzadeh, 2011; Lafuente-Millán, 2014;

Mauranen, 1993; Valero-Garcés, 1996; Vassileva, 1998, 2001). While all these studies have investigated the rhetorical features in research articles, some cross-cultural studies have focused on student writing (for example, Crismore et al, 1993; Lee & Casal, 2014). And in an EFL context, there has been an increasing interest in studying the ways EFL student writers—with different cultural backgrounds—project themselves and readers in comparison with their English NS counterparts. For instance, in the context of China, Chen (2010, 2012), Hyland & Milton, (1997), and Hu & Li (2015) compared the use of boosters and hedges in texts written by Chinese EFL student writers and NSs; Lorenz (1998) explored intensifications in the writing of advanced German EFL writers and their NS counterparts; Neff-van & Dafouz-Milne (2008) and Neff et al (2004) studied Spanish EFL writers' uses of personal pronouns and interactional metadiscourse (respectively) and compared them to those of the NSs; Breeze (2007) and Ringbom (1998) examined personal pronouns in Spanish EFL texts; and Hatzitheodorou & Mattheoudakis (2007) investigated advanced Greek EFL learners' use of stance features in their academic essays. But what appears to be missing from the literature is a comprehensive study that examines the ways advanced Arab EFL student writers position themselves and readers in their academic writing. A partial exception is Hinkel (2005a), which is reviewed in detail later.

Researchers have proposed a number of reasons for the variations in NSs and NNS uses of interpersonal resources and the learners' apparent difficulties in representing an appropriate evaluative position. But the one factor that has been widely agreed upon is the influence of native language (L1) (see, e.g., Kaplan, 1966; Connor, 1996). However, since there is evidence that advanced learners of diverse L1 backgrounds face similar problems and difficulties in representing an evaluative stance which conforms to the norms and conventions of their communities, some researchers have attributed these observed difficulties to the learners' lack of overall knowledge of rhetorical conventions of academic writing, or lack of practice rather than L1 transfer (e.g., McCrostie, 2008). It has been suggested that the problems international

students encounter in their L2 writing lie in the "potential mismatch between literacy expectations and rhetorical background on one hand and L2 classroom practices on the other hand" (Ismail, 2010, p. 47; Cadman, 1997; Carson, 2001). Carson (2001) pointed out,

> ESL students come to second language writing classrooms with expectations of how writing is taught and learned. To the extent that their expectations do not match pedagogical practices, they are likely to be confused about the purpose and effectiveness of these methods. Their previous experiences in learning to read and write may not yield effective strategies in ESL writing classrooms where the task of learning to write differs not only in the complexity of its demands, but also in its social context and, ultimately, in its social functions. (p.154)

Moreover, because it has also been observed that learners very often make use of features that are more typical of speech than writing, such behaviour has been interpreted as unawareness of register differences (e.g., Ädel, 2006, 2008; Gilquin & Paquot, 2008) or lack of communicative competence. Intaraprawat and Steffensen (1995) argue, "differences in linguistic features reveal important differences in the writers' awareness of audience, particularly the cognitive demands on the reader" (p.256) but it has been noted that students seldom have a clear sense of audience or their needs and expectations (Cheng & Steffensen, 1996, p.152).

While these studies have begun to provide insights, we are still not certain how and why even advanced EFL/ESL students differ in comparison with their NS counterparts in their strategic deployment of resources of interpersonal meaning. This is so not only because studies have provided diverse interpretations and results but also because most these studies were based solely on corpus analysis where interpretations of writers' actions and beliefs were largely intuitive, based on the analysts' best guess rather than asking student writers themselves about their own practices and behaviours.

Thus, this current comparative study sets out to address these issues and gaps in the literature by employing both corpus- and interview-based approaches, focusing on the interactional linguistic

features in master's dissertations written in English by two different writer groups (English NS and Arab EFL writers) from two different disciplines (Linguistics and Literature), adopting Hyland's (2005b) model of interaction in a academic discourse. Specifically, I will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How do master's student writers from two disciplines (Linguistics and Literature) present themselves and engage readers in their writing?

   • How frequently do they make use of these elements of stance and engagement? Are there any similarities or differences in the frequencies or the way they use them? How can we account for any similarities or differences?

2. Within each discipline, how do NS and NNS master's student writers present themselves and engage readers in their writing?

   • How frequently do they make use of these elements of stance and engagement? Are there any similarities or differences in the frequencies or the way they use them? How can we account for any similarities or differences?

The master's dissertation is an integral part of most master's programs in the UK and it is often perceived as a formidable task by students, particularly L2 students. Not only are L2 students writing in a language that is not their own but it is very likely their first experience in reporting original research at length and requires them to meet the expectations and conventions of their particular community. Studies of postgraduate writing (namely the master's dissertation, which "fills a place somewhere in between student-produced course papers, on the one hand, and published research articles, on the other, in a taxonomy of academic writing" (Samraj, 2008, p.56)) reveal that L2 students duly often experience difficulties in the writing of this genre. These difficulties students often face can be seen at two levels (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006).

At one level, students can have difficulties in understanding and meeting the requirements of the dissertation genre (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006). For instance, students may experience difficulties in structuring and organizing an argument over an extended stretch of writing with balance and consistency (Cooley & Lewkowicz, 1995; 1997; Dong, 1998; Jenkins et al, 1993; Thompson, 1999). At the other level, L2 students may have more problems than their NS counterparts at the paragraph and sentence level especially with selecting appropriate and/or formal lexical choices. For example, while all the L2 students in Dong's (1998) study reportedly believed that vocabulary choice was very important for expressing opinions and claims, about a third of them believed that they experienced difficulties with vocabulary choice in comparison with only 10% of NS students. Thus, motivated by the need to design relevant EAP teaching material for master's students, research has attended to these issues related to the difficulties learners encountered when writing. For example, some studies of master's dissertations have examined the organization of certain sections of this genre such as introductions and discussion sections (Dudley-Evans, 1986) and conclusions (Hewings, 1993), focusing on texts from single disciplines; while others like Paltridge (2002) have investigated the overall organization of both master's and doctoral theses from a number of disciplines. While these studies have suggested disciplinary variation in writing produced by graduate students, more research is needed to help understand the writing of advanced students and therefore design more focused teaching materials.

Thus, the present study will explore the ways writers perceive and engage with their disciplines through their deployment of interactional features of texts, focusing on master's dissertations in two domains: Linguistics and Literature. My selection of these two disciplines in particular for comparison was motivated by several considerations. Firstly, Linguistics and Literature, which are often classified as social sciences and humanities, respectively, are commonly studied under the umbrella 'soft' knowledge domain where the focus is on similarities rather than differences.

While it is very useful to see how these 'soft fields' differ from the 'hard/pure fields' in the ways they position themselves and their readers in writing, it would be interesting to also see whether and how different disciplines (such as Linguistics and Literature) within the soft fields differ in their use of stance and engagement markers. It is likely that there will be similarities in language features between these disciplines, given their positioning as soft rather than hard field, but there could also be some differences since we already know from previous studies that each discipline has developed its own conventions and practices in writing to distinguish itself from other disciplines (Swales, 1990). Secondly, to the best of my knowledge, no studies of master's dissertations written in English have compared and contrasted the use of language in these two disciplines. Thirdly, these two disciplines are of great pedagogical interest to me since I am an academic staff member in a department of English Language which delivers modules in both fields. Moreover, since my bachelor's degree in English Language involved courses from both disciplines, I felt my basic knowledge of both disciplines would be of great help to me as an analyst when it came to reading the students' texts in both subjects.

Thus, this study aims at exploring the use of interactional features in master's dissertations which were written not only for two different disciplines (namely, Linguistics and Literature) but also by two different writer groups: Arab EFL student writers vs. their English NS counterparts. The motivation behind choosing in particular student-writers whose L1 is Arabic rather than non-native writers with a different L1 to be compared and contrasted with English native student-writers was because I teach L1 speakers of Arabic, and so working with these writers rather than other L2 writers is pedagogically relevant to me. Besides, there has been little work in this vein which has focused specifically on L1 Arabic writers. Furthermore, earlier in my academic career I was taught that the writer's L1 would always interfere in his/her L2 writing, hence the written texts produced by EFL writers often differ from those of English NSs. But unfortunately we were not provided with enough evidence or specific information to help us understand how our

writing differs and how we could improve our L2 writing. So, since "students bring a whole range of cultural and social experiences to their acts of meaning making in academic writing" (Lillis, 2001, p.6), one would expect that non-native student writers with different L1s and cultural backgrounds might write differently. Thus, a corpus analysis of writing by Arab EFL students (a group to which I belong) in comparison to L1 writers will hopefully provide us with a better understanding of the writing of the two groups and whether they differ in managing an evaluative stance and engaging readers in the discourse. For a deeper understanding, how and why questions will also be investigated via discourse-based interviews with the student writers themselves. Such information will be helpful to consider when teaching academic writing to the target population.

This thesis is organised as follows: in Chapter 2, I will review the literature most relevant to the focus of my study, shedding light on Hyland's model of interaction in academic writing which was adopted for this research. Chapter 3 will discuss my methodology and procedures and present a detailed account of corpus and discourse-based semi-structured interviews which were used in my research. I will then present quantitative results in Chapter 4 and in Chapter 5 will be devoted to qualitative findings. Chapter 6 will discuss the main findings of the research. Finally, Chapter 7 will conclude my thesis by providing an overview of the study, explaining the implications of the findings, acknowledging the limitations, and suggesting projects and directions for further research.

Chapter 2   Literature Review

2.1   Introduction

This chapter will review and discuss the literature related to the current study. It is organised into five main sections. Section 2.2 introduces and briefly explains the notion of writing as a social and interactional act. Section 2.3 focuses more specifically on the importance of interaction in academic writing and how it is accomplished, presenting and reviewing the concept of *metadiscourse*. Section 2.4 provides a detailed description of *stance and engagement*—Hyland's (2005b) model of interaction in academic writing. Section 2.5 reviews some relevant studies focusing on stance and engagement features across disciplines and cultures. Finally, section 2.6 provides a summary of the literature, shedding more light on the research gap; and presents the research questions that the study seeks to investigate.

2.2   Writing as a social and interactional act

In the 1980s, "writing researchers [showed] increasing interest in the social aspects of written communication", shifting perspectives from "things cognitive to things social" (Nystrand, 1989, pp.66-67). But what heightened researchers' awareness of social aspects of writing could be attributed to a number of "forces," one of which was "the problem of genre" (see Nystrand, 1989, p.66, for a full account). Researchers as well as educators noted the many genres that constitute the diverse range of writing demands in colleges and universities, and the demands placed on writers to accommodate to the modes of discourse characteristic of the new field they were entering.

A social perspective on composition theory perceives writing as an interactive process between writers and readers where "text is not just the result of composing [but] also the medium of communication" (Nystrand, 1989, p.75). Nystrand (1989) asserts that since interaction in spoken language between conversants is accomplished as "an exchange of meaning or transformation of

shared knowledge" takes place, then "writers and readers interact every time the readers understand a written text" (p.74). He further explains, "written communication is predicated on *what the writer/reader each assumes the other will do/has done*" (Nystrand, 1989, p.75, emphasis in original). According to the social-interactive view,

> The limits of text meaning are determined not only by objective properties of text and not only by the reader's cognition, but also by reciprocity between writers and their readers that binds the writer's intention, the reader's cognition, and properties of text all together in the enterprise of text meaning. (Nystrand, 1989, p.78)

That is, interaction between both writer and reader subsumes active willingness to negotiate knowledge/meaning in which their participation "is allowed by the surface text itself" (Sa'Adeddin, 1989, p.37). Research has indicated that interaction in written discourse can be performed in a number of ways which are fundamentally the same as in spoken discourse "but which have different effect because of the medium" (Thompson & Thetela, 1995, p.103). For example, Frank (1989), in her analysis of direct sales letters, has showed how this kind of planned impersonal marketing communication employed questions as a conversational feature that research has linked to interactivity and involvement (see, for example, Tannen, 1984) and to oral genres, in general. Similarly, Thompson and Thetela (1995) also revealed that interaction was evident in written advertisements by the use of questions, commands and pronouns such as WE and YOU to influence readers' behaviour, arguing that other written genres including academic writing can be viewed as utilizing similar linguistic choices of interactional features. Indeed, research has now established that academic writing, which was traditionally depicted as an objective, faceless, and impersonal form of discourse, is highly social and interactional. What follows is a discussion about interaction in academic writing, its importance and how it is managed.

2.3   Interaction in academic writing

Research has now shown that academic writing involves interaction between writer and reader and is seen as a "persuasive endeavour" through which academics "acknowledge, construct, and negotiate social relations" (Hyland, 2005b, p.173). Thompson (2001) asserts,

> The importance of the interactional perspective is that it highlights the possibility of seeing the text not just as constructed with the readers' need in mind, but as jointly constructed, with communicative space being left for the readers to contribute to the achievement of the text's goals. The readers' views are politely and collaboratively taken into account. (p.62)

Thus, readers' collaboration and involvement are crucial to achieve interaction in academic writing including research papers, dissertations, and assignments. And because readers can always reject claims, writers need to shape their texts according to the readers' expectations and present their arguments, results, and interpretations in ways that readers could find credible and convincing. Hence, it is important for writers to control the level of personality in their texts, as it is well recognized now that "claiming solidarity with readers, evaluating material, and acknowledging alternative views" (Hyland, 2004, p.133) is a key feature of successful academic writing. Put succinctly, successful academic writing involves, amongst other things, an awareness of the readers (their needs and views) and the ability to reflect this awareness in the way the text is written. How to reflect and exploit the awareness of audience in writing is looked at in the following section.

2.3.1   Performing overt dialogic interaction with readers

As it has now been accepted that academic texts involve interaction between writer and reader, the ways writers project themselves and their readers and express their opinions, feelings, and assessments have been the focus of many studies which have been conducted under a number of different terms including *evaluation* (Hunston & Thompson, 2001), *attitude* (Halliday, 1994), *epistemic modality* (Hyland & Milton, 1997), *appraisal* (Martin, 2001; White, 2003), *stance*

(Biber & Finegan, 1988, 1989; Conard & Biber, 2001), *hedging* (Hyland, 1996, 1998a), *metadiscourse* (Crismore et al, 1993; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Vande Kopple, 1985, 2002), and *stance and engagement* (Hyland, 2005b). Investigation of interactional features in academic prose has also been carried out on particular linguistic resources such as *personal pronouns* (e.g., Breeze, 2007; Harwood, 2003, 2005c, 2006, 2007; Hyland, 2001b, 2002a; Thonney, 2013; Vassileva, 1998); *hedges and boosters* (e.g., Hinkel, 2005a; Holmes, 1988; Hu & Cao, 2011); *imperatives* (Swales et al, 1998); and *questions* (Hyland, 2002c; Webber, 1994). Such a "range of devices writers use to explicitly organize their texts, engage readers, and signal their attitudes to both their material and their audience" (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p.156) has been embodied under the concept of metadiscourse to which we now turn.

2.3.1.1   Metadiscourse

"Based on a view of writing as a social and communicative engagement between writer and reader, metadiscourse focuses our attention on the ways writers project themselves into their work to signal their communicative intentions" (Hyland, 1998b, p.437). Metadiscourse is becoming an increasingly important concept to research in composition, reading, and text structure. It is considered one of the factors that make a text 'reader friendly'. The fact that it encompasses a range of devices writers use to project self, organize texts, and engage readers has attracted writing researchers and corpus analysts as a useful concept offering the possibility of tracing patterns of interaction and cohesion across texts (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p.156). As will be seen in the following sections, the definition and classification of metadiscourse have generally been refined since the concept was introduced into rhetoric and composition. However, its theoretical foundation (as mentioned earlier in the introduction chapter) is Halliday's (1976) distinction between the ideational/propositional meaning and the textual and interpersonal meanings of language. What follows is a detailed account of the concept of metadiscourse.

2.3.1.1.1   *Vande Kopple (1985)*

Vande Kopple (1985) defined metadiscourse as "discourse about discourse or communication about communication" (p.83), identifying seven kinds of metadiscourse (text connectives, code glosses, illocution markers, narrators, validity markers, attitude markers, and commentary). He suggested that these kinds of metadiscourse could convey what Halliday (1973) calls interpersonal and textual meanings as opposed to ideational meaning which is "concerned with the content of language" (Halliday, 1973, p.66). By classifying metadiscourse into interpersonal and textual (see Figure 2-1 below), Vande Kopple claimed that metadiscourse could be seen to be functioning on a different level from that of the ideational meaning. That is, rather than adding propositional material, metadiscourse has the potential to appreciably affect readers' interactions with the text. More specifically, Vande Kopple sees interpersonal metadiscourse, which encompasses validity markers, attitude markers, and commentary, as a means of expressing "our actual personalities, our true evaluations of the propositional material, our role in the situation in which the text functions, and our hopes for the kind of responses readers might make" (Vande Kopple, 1985, p.87). Textual metadiscourse, on the other hand, "can help us show how we link and relate individual propositions so that they form a cohesive and coherent text and how individual elements of those propositions make sense in conjunction with the other elements of the text in a particular situation" (p.87).

Figure 2-1: Vande Kopple's (1985) classification of metadiscourse as cited in Crismore et al (1993, p.46)

- TEXTUAL METADISCOURSE
    1. Text connectives, which help readers recognize how texts are organized and how different parts of the text are connected to each other functionally or semantically (e.g., *first, next, however, but*)
    2. Code glosses, which help readers grasp and interpret the meanings of words and phrases (e.g., *X means Y*)
    3. Illocution markers, which make explicit what speech act is being performed at certain points in texts (e.g., *to sum up, to give an example*)

4. Narrators, which let readers know who said or wrote something (e.g., *according to X*)

- INTERPERSONAL METADISCOURSE

1. Validity markers, which assess the truth-value of the propositional content and show the author's degree of commitment to the assessment, i.e., hedges (e.g., *might, perhaps*), emphatics (e.g., *clearly, obviously*), attributors (e.g., *according to X*), which are used to guide readers to judge or respect the truth-value of the propositional content as the author wishes;
2. Attitude markers, which are used to reveal the author's attitudes toward the propositional content (e.g., *surprisingly, it is fortunate that*)
3. Commentary, which draw readers into an implicit dialogue with the author (e.g., *you may not agree that, dear reader, you might wish to read the last section first*)

However, while Vande Kopple's classification of metadiscourse provides insights into the kinds of language that can affect readers' interactions with the text, and therefore have a significant role in the success or failure of texts, the "boundaries and characteristics" (p.83) of metadiscourse, as he himself acknowledged, need to be examined more closely.

2.3.1.1.2   Crismore et al (1993)

Like Vande Kopple, (1985), Crismore et al (1993) used the term metadiscourse

> to refer to the linguistic material in texts, whether spoken or written, that does not add anything to the propositional content but that is intended to help the listener or reader organize, interpret, and evaluate the information given. (p.40)

However, they modified Vande Kopple's classification of metadiscourse to some extent by collapsing, separating, and reorganizing his subcategories while the two main categories, textual and interpersonal metadiscourse, were preserved as can be seen in Figure 2-2. It is worth mentioning, however, Crismore et al have noted that "many items are multifunctional (either metadiscourse (MD) or propositional content, depending on the context) and in some cases are simultaneously MD and propositional content" (p.47). Consequently, in their functional analysis of metadiscourse, they focused on "what appeared to be the primary function of the item in particular context" (p.48).

Figure 2-2: Crismore et al's (1993, p.47) classification system for metadiscourse categories

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I.   TEXTUAL METADISCOURSE (used for logical and ethical appeals)

   1. Textual Markers

   -   Logical Connectives
   -   Sequencers
   -   Reminders
   -   Topicalizers

   2. Interpretive Markers

   -   Code Glosses
   -   Illocution Markers
   -   Announcements

II.   INTERPERSONAL METADISCOURSE (used for emotional and ethical appeals)

   3. Hedges (epistemic certainty markers)

   4. Certainty Markers (epistemic emphatics)

   5. Attributors

   6. Attitude Markers

   7. Commentary

2.3.1.1.3   *Hyland and Tse (2004)*

Hyland and Tse (2004) identified metadiscourse as

> the writer's reference to the text, the writer, or the reader and enables the analyst to see how the writer chooses to handle interpretive processes as opposed to statements relating to the world. (p.167)

The metadiscourse model they have proposed builds on three fundamental principles:

1. metadiscourse is distinct from propositional aspects of discourse;
2. the term 'metadiscourse' refers to those aspects of the text that embody writer-reader interactions;
3. metadiscourse distinguishes relations which are external to the text from those that are internal.

<div align="right">(Hyland & Tse, 2004, p.159)</div>

With regard to the first principle, Hyland and Tse consider the distinction between propositional content and metadiscourse to be a helpful starting point for investigating metadiscourse in academic writing but they believe "it is unwise to push this distinction too far" (p.160), rejecting, for example, Vande Kopple's (1985) suggestion that there are two different levels of meaning:

> On one level we expand ideational material. On the levels of metadiscourse, we do not expand ideational material but help our readers connect, organize, interpret, evaluate, and develop attitudes toward that material. (Vande Kopple, 2002, p.93)

Vande Kopple (1985) considered the ideational/propositional meaning to be the "primary discourse" (p. 86) while metadiscourse was seen as functioning in a "secondary" level because it does not expand the propositional meaning of the text. However, Hyland and Tse (2004) argue,

> Metadiscourse is not simply the 'glue' that holds the more important parts of the text together, but is itself a crucial element of its meaning—that which helps relate a text to its context, taking readers' needs, understandings, existing knowledge, prior experiences with texts, and relative status into account. (p.161)

Thus, rather than relegating metadiscourse to a secondary level, Hyland and Tse see metadiscourse as "an integral process of communicating meaning" that is "able to convey the writer's intended meaning in a given situation", just like propositional discourse (p.161).

The second principle of Hyland and Tse's model perceives metadiscourse "as embodying the interactions necessary for successful communication" (p. 161) and rejects splitting metadiscourse functions into textual and interpersonal as shown in the classification system for metadiscourse of Crismore et al (1993), Vande Kopple (1985), and many other studies (for example, Crismore & Farnsworth, 1990; Hyland, 1998b, 2000). Instead, Hyland and Tse have proposed that all metadiscourse is interpersonal because "it takes account of the reader's knowledge, textual experiences, and processing needs and […] it provides writers with an armoury of rhetorical appeals to achieve this" (p.161). To them, distinguishing between textual and interpersonal metadiscourse is "unhelpful and misleading" since "it overlooks the ways that meanings can

overlap and contribute to academic arguments in different ways" (p.164). To clarify their point, Hyland and Tse provided extracts from their corpus of master's and doctoral theses to show how conjunctive relations (called *'text connectives'* by Vande Kopple (1985) and *'logical connectives'* by Crismore et al (1993)) which were treated as purely textual metadiscourse, can be seen "as interactionally motivated, contributing to the creation and maintenance of shifting interpersonal orientations" (p.163). Hyland and Tse argue that the writers' uses of concessives like those in Example 2-1 below can do more than constructing a textually cohesive text; such concessives help the writers manoeuvre "themselves into line with community expectations and shaping the reader's role to gain a more sympathetic hearing for their own views" (p.163).

Example 2-1: An extract including concessives functioning as interpersonal metadiscourse (as cited in Hyland & Tse, 2004, p.164)

<div style="border:1px solid black;padding:8px">

Of course, these survey findings provided a more objective and independent perspective on police performance, **but** the findings are relevant to the service as a whole and cannot be reduced to individual and team performance. (PA MA)

</div>

The explicit signalling of connections and relationships between elements in academic writing reveals the writer's awareness of self and of the reader and his/her endeavours to accommodate readers' points of view, and guide them to the writer's preferred interpretations. Thus, Hyland and Tse emphasize that what is often referred to as textual metadiscourse does contribute to the interpersonal features of a text.

The third key feature of metadiscourse, according to Hyland and Tse, is concerned with distinguishing 'internal' from 'external' reference. An internal relation "connects the situations described by the propositions and is solely communicative, while an external relation refers to those situations themselves" (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p.165). For the purpose of illustration, Hyland and Tse offered some extracts taken from their corpus of advanced student writing which include connective items, sequencing devices or modal verbs functioning as metadiscoursal in some contexts (Example 2-2) while propositional in some other cases (Example 2-3).

Example 2-2: Extracts including connective items, sequencing devices or modal verbs functioning as ***metadiscoursal*** *(as cited in Hyland & Tse, 2004, p.165)*

- **In contrast,** these findings were not found among the low collectivists. (PA PhD)
- Crops accounted for a significant proportion of heavy metals dietary intake. The reasons are two folds. **Firstly**, crops are being the bottom positions of many food chains and food webs. **Secondly**, vegetables are one of the major dietary components of Hong Kong people. (Biology MSc)
- The diverse insect fauna reported from the reedbeds in Mai Po suggests that the reedbeds **could potentially** be an important habitat for a wide variety of animal taxa. (Biology PhD)

Example 2-3: Extracts including connective items, sequencing devices, or modal verbs functioning as ***propositional*** *(as cited in Hyland & Tse, 2004, p.165)*

- However, in contrast to Western culture, Asian societies put emphasis on interdependent view of self and collectivism. (PA PhD)
- For the boric acid indicator, firstly, 5g of boric acid crystals was dissolved in 200ml of warm distilled water, then, 40ml of methyl red indicator […] and 15ml of bromocresol green indicator […] were added to the boric acid solution. (Biology PhD)
- This statement obviously exploits the Maxim of Quantity at the expense of the Maxim of Quality because the salesperson could have simply said: 'This company is also very famous in Taiwan.' (AL PhD)

Hyland and Tse stress that distinguishing internal (or interpersonal) from external (or ideational) reference is vitally important

> if metadiscourse is to have any coherence as a means of conceptualizing and understanding the ways writers create meanings and negotiate their claims in academic texts. (p.167)

Based on these three principles discussed above, Hyland and Tse (2004) developed a model of metadiscourse in academic writing (Figure 2-3), drawing upon Thompson's (2001) two dimensions of interaction in academic writing: (i) interactive resources, and (ii) interactional resources. According to Thompson (2001), the term interactive "primarily involve[s] the management of the flow of information and thus serve[s] to guide readers through the content of the text" while interactional resources "allow writers to conduct more or less overt interaction with their audience by appearing in the text to comment on and evaluate the content through the use of modality and evaluation" (p. 59). While owing a great deal to Thompson's conceptions of

these two dimensions, Hyland and Tse's model took a slightly broader focus than Thompson's by incorporating both stance and engagement features of interaction (Hyland, 2001a) and by building on earlier models of metadiscourse (Hyland, 2000).

Figure 2-3: Hyland and Tse's (2004, p.169) model of metadiscourse in academic texts

Category	Function	Examples
Interactive resources	*Help to guide reader through the text*	
• Transitions	express semantic relation between main clauses	but/thus
• Frame markers	refer to discourse acts, sequences, or text stages	finally/to conclude
• Endophoric markers	refer to information in other parts of the text	see Fig/in section 2
• Evidentials	refer to source of information from other texts	according to X
• Code glosses	help readers grasp functions of ideational material	namely/e.g.
Interactional resources	*Involve the reader in the argument*	
• Hedges	withhold writer's full commitment to proposition	might/about
• Boosters	emphasize force or writer's certainty in proposition	in fact/definitely
• Attitude markers	express writer's attitude to proposition	unfortunately/I agree
• Engagement markers	explicitly refer to or build relationship with reader	consider/you can see that
• Self-mentions	explicit reference to author	I/we/my/our

For Hyland and Tse, interactive choices, which include transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and code glosses,

> address readers' expectations that an argument will conform to conventional text patterns and predictable directions, enabling them to process the text by encoding relationships and ordering material in ways that they will find appropriate and convincing (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p.170),

whereas interactional devices, which encompass boosters, hedges, attitude markers, engagement

markers, and self-mentions,

> focus more directly on the participants of the interaction, with the writer adopting a professionally acceptable persona and a tenor consistent with the norms of the disciplinary community. (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p.170)

Because "an orientation to the reader is crucial in securing rhetorical objectives in research writing", metadiscourse which provides choices of interactive and interactional devices is the means by which writers can "galvanize support, express collegiality, resolve difficulties, and avoid disputes" (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p.170). But while interactive devices have already received much attention from rhetoricians and writing researchers/teachers, there has been an increasing interest in investigating the interactional choices which have only been used more recently and seemed to cause more problems to novice writers as was evident in many studies. Hyland is, perhaps, the most prominent researcher who has devoted much of his work to this area of research. By consolidating his previous work and by analysing a corpus of 240 research articles, amounting to 1.4 million words, Hyland (2005b) extended the interactional resources of metadiscourse by classifying and fine-tuning categorizations for analytical purposes, proposing a model of interaction in academic prose and calling it *stance and engagement*, to which we now turn.

2.4   Stance and engagement: Hyland's model of interaction in academic discourse (2005b)

According to Hyland (2005b), writers manage interactions in their academic texts in two main ways: stance and engagement (Figure 2-4). They are the two sides of the same coin since they both contribute to the interpersonal dimension of discourse as will be seen from the description in the following sections. (The pros and cons of the model will be discussed later)

Figure 2-4: Hyland's (2005b, p.177) stance and engagement features

Interaction

Stance   Engagement

Hedges   Boosters   Attitude   Self-   Reader   Directives   Questions   Knowledge   Asides
                    markers   mention   references   references
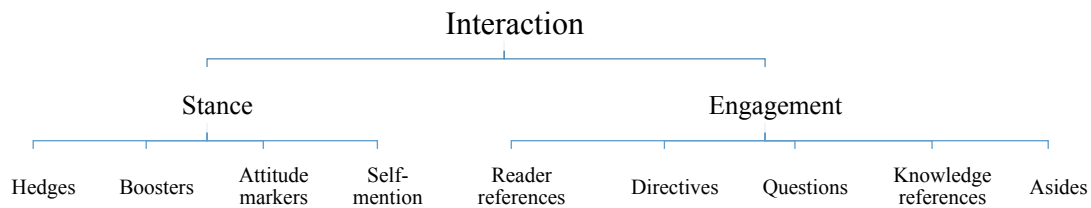
2.4.1   Stance

Stance refers to the way that writers invoke authority in their arguments by presenting themselves and conveying judgements, opinions, and commitments to what they say. It can also be seen as an attitudinal dimension where writers seek to offer a credible academic identity. It is about writer-oriented features of interaction and has three key principles:

- *Evidentiality* or the writer's expressed commitment to the reliability of propositions and their potential impact on the readers;
- *Affect* or personal and professional attitudes towards what is said, including emotions, perspectives and beliefs;
- *Presence* or how far writers choose to project themselves into a text.

(Hyland, 2014, p.5)

Stance embodies four main components: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions each of which will be examined in more detail below.

2.4.1.1   Hedges

Hedging is the expression of "possibility rather than certainty and collegiality rather than presumption" (Hyland, 1998a, p.VIII). It helps us "register necessary doubts" (Vande Kopple, 1985, p.84) and shows our "lack of commitment to the truth-value" of a proposition (Crismore et al, 1993, p.50). Thus, hedging is a significant communicative resource in academic writing. Indeed, it is central to academic discourse since it performs "both epistemic and interpersonal functions, enabling writers to anticipate possible opposition to claims by expressing statements

with precision, caution and humility" (Hyland, 1998b, p.451), and allowing readers to negotiate and participate in a dialogue. Moreover, as Myers (1989) argues, hedging is one of the signs by which claims might be distinguished from facts: "a sentence that looks like a claim but has no hedging is probably not a statement of new knowledge" (p.13).

Due to its commonness and importance to any academic reading or writing course, hedging has been extensively studied in an attempt to identify its functions and propose taxonomies so that it can be included in EAP syllabi. Hedging has been associated with the concept of "shields" and "approximators" (Prince et al, 1982), treated as a form of metadiscourse (Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore et al, 1993), as a strategy of politeness (Myers, 1989), as a pragmatic device modifying the illocutionary force of utterances for interpersonal reasons (Holmes, 1984), as a subset of commentative language (Skelton, 1988a), and most commonly as epistemic modality (Crismore, 1984; Holmes, 1984, 1988; Hyland, 1994, 1998c, 1999).

Prince et al (1982), for instance, building on the work of Lakoff (1972) who introduced the term hedge and defined it as "words which make things fuzzy or less fuzzy" (as cited in Crompton, 1997, p.281), examined the words and phrases which made things "fuzzier" in their corpus of spoken medical discourse. Based on their analysis, they identified two main categories: *approximators*, which introduce "fuzziness *within the propositional content*" (e.g. sort of, about), and *shields*, which introduce "fuzziness *in the relationship between the propositional content and the speaker*" (p.85) and which were further classified into *plausibility shields* "which involve something related to doubt" (e.g. "I don't see that you have anything to lose by..."); and *attribution shields* which "attribute the belief in question to someone other than the speaker" (e.g. "according to her estimates") (p. 89).

However, this classification has been regarded as deficient due to the functional overlap between *approximators* and *shields*; that is, both "can in certain context, modulate the writer's

commitment to the truth" (Millan, 2008, p.69). Several researchers (e.g., Millan, 2008; Skelton, 1988a) have also claimed that such a distinction is difficult to uphold and warned about the impossibility of applying it to real textual analysis.

Myers (1989), on the other hand, used Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness for the purpose of understanding the interactions between writers and readers in academic writing. His investigation of how we interpret some constructions found in academic writing suggested that hedging is a politeness device which helps to maintain relations between writer and reader:

> Hedging is a politeness strategy when it marks a claim, or any other statement, as being provisional, pending acceptance in the literature, acceptance by the community—in other words, acceptance by the readers. (Myers, 1989, p.12)

Myers argues, "hedging reflects not the probability of the claim, and not the personal doubt [of the writer], but the appropriate attitude for offering a claim to the community" (pp.12-13). To him, hedging could be realized with "a modal verb making a conditional statement *(would* or *could)* or with a modifier *(probably)* or with any device suggesting alternatives" or "anything but a statement with a form of *to be* that such and such is the case" (p.13). In making claims, the *be-verbs* are commonly avoided in academic writing to be replaced by a verb like *suggest*. However, Crompton (1997) argues that while it is true that hedges can be a strategy of politeness, it cannot be said that all politeness strategies are hedges.

Another taxonomy was proposed by Salager-Meyer (1994) who classified hedges into four main categories:

1. Shields: all modal verbs expressing possibility; semi-auxiliaries (*to appear*); probability adverbs (*probably*) and their derivative adjectives; epistemic verbs (*to suggest*).
2. Approximators: (e.g., *often*).
3. Expressions such as "I believe", "*to our knowledge*" which express the authors' personal doubt and direct involvement.
4. Emotionally-charged intensifiers: (e.g., *particularly encouraging*). (p.154)

However, Hyland's (2005b) broader view of hedges sees them as not only seeking to involve readers as participants in a dialogue, conveying deference, modesty, or respect for colleagues' views (Hyland, 1998a) but also to "imply that a statement is based on plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge, indicating the degree of confidence it is prudent to attribute to it" (Hyland, 2005b, p.179). Hyland (1996) emphasizes "the multi-functional character of hedges in gaining acceptance for claims" (p.434) which were neglected in previous taxonomies especially those treating hedges as a politeness or modesty strategy. Hedging is often used in academic discourse to assist writers not only in avoiding overstating an assertion but also in telling the truth about how much confidence they have in what is being said (Example 2-4).

Example 2-4: An extract including hedges as cited in Hyland (2005b, p.179)

Our results **suggest** that rapid freeze and thaw rates during artificial experiments in the laboratory **may** cause artifactual formation of embolism. (Biology RA)

2.4.1.2   Boosters

Boosters have often been defined as one of the two alternative categories of epistemic modality, together with hedges (Crismore 1984; Holmes 1984; Hyland 1998a, 2004). Linguistic devices such as *definitely*, *of course* and *it is clear that* are frequently used to express "full commitment" to the truth of a proposition (Crismore et al, 1993, p.52; Millan, 2008), to "underscore what we really believe—or would like our reader to think we believe" (Vande Kopple 1985, p.84), to increase the illocutionary force of speech acts (Holmes, 1984), to emphasise the strength of and the confidence in the proposition (Abdi et al, 2010; Hyland, 1998b), or to close off alternative voices (Gillaerts & Van de Velde, 2010; Hyland, 1998b). By closing down possible alternatives, Hyland (2005a) argues, "boosters emphasize certainty and construct rapport by marking involvement with the topic and solidarity with an audience, taking a joint position against other voices" (p.53). Boosters "function to stress shared information, group membership, and

engagement with readers" (Hyland, 2005b, p.179), underscoring the writer's conviction in his/her argument (Example 2-5).

Example.2-5: An extract including boosters as cited in Hyland (2005b, p.179)

> This too creates problems, for it suggests that we have a recognitional capacity for instants, and this seems **highly** dubious. (Philosophy RA)

Thus, boosters, like hedges, can be powerful tools in academic writing in order to gain acceptance for claims as they reveal the writer's attitude to propositions and to readers. However, to be convincing, "writers must weigh up the commitment they want to invest in their arguments based on its epistemic status and the effect this commitment might have on readers' responses" (Hyland, 2005b, p.180). Such a view was articulated by professional writers in interviews with Hyland (2005b):

> I like tough minded verbs like 'think'. It's important to show where you stand. The people who are best known have staked out the extreme positions. The people who sit in the middle and use words like 'suggest', no one knows their work. (Sociology interview)

> (As cited in Hyland, 2005b, p.180)

2.4.1.3   Attitude markers

Unlike hedges and boosters, attitude markers "express writers' affective values—their attitudes toward the propositional content and/or readers rather than commitment to the truth-value" (Crismore et al, 1993, p.53). They are pragmatic connectives to convey surprise, agreement, importance, obligation, frustration, and so on. While attitude can be expressed by, for instance, "the use of subordination, comparatives, progressive particles, punctuation, and text location", it is most overtly marked by attitude verbs (e.g., *agree, hope*), sentence adverbials (e.g., *unfortunately, hopefully*) and adjectives (e.g., *appropriate, remarkable*). Such attitudinal markers

help writers "both express a position and pull readers into a conspiracy of agreement so that it can often be difficult to dispute" the writers' judgements (Hyland, 2005b, p.180) (Example 2-6).

Example 2-6: An extract including attitude markers as cited in Hyland (2005b, p.180)

> Student A2 presented another **fascinating** case study in that he had serious difficulties expressing himself in written English. (AL RA)

2.4.1.4   Self-mentions

Self-mention mainly refers to the use of first person pronouns and possessive adjectives to convey not only ideational content but also affective and interpersonal information (Hyland, 2001b, 2002a). It is one of the important linguistic features by which writer-reader interactions are realized in academic writing. Kuo (1999) argues that the communicative purpose of academics can be revealed by the analysis of, for instance, personal pronouns and their discourse functions which have been closely linked with authorial presence (Harwood 2003; Hyland 2002a; Ivanič, 1998; Tang & John 1999). While there is a range of rhetorical and interactive features through which writers can project an authorial identity, first person pronouns and possessive determiners are arguably the most visible feature. They are said to help writers "create a sense of newsworthiness and novelty about their work" (Harwood, 2005b, p.343), gain credibility and display confidence (Hyland, 2002a), and promote themselves (Harwood, 2005a). Use of the first person can also allow writers to assert their claims and express authority; and therefore "influence the impression they make on their readers" (Hyland, 2001b, p.207) and affect the way their messages are received. Note for instance the effects 'I' help to create in Example 2-7.

Example 2-7: Extracts including self-mentions as cited in Hyland (2002a, p.1093)

> - **I agree** with that, although **I differ** in the details as to the analysis of. . . (AL RA)
> - **I will show** that a convincing reply is available to the minimalist. (Philosophy RA)

Such choices of language allow the writers to make clear where they stand and how they would like their readers to interpret the statements. There is no doubt then that first person can be a powerful rhetorical strategy by which "writers express an identity by asserting their claim to speak as an authority, and this is a key element of successful academic writing" (Hyland, 2002a, p.1094). Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the use or non-use of first person, as Kuo (1999) argues, "can often reveal how writers view themselves, their relationship with readers, and their relationship with the discourse community they belong to" (p.123). That is, the presence or absence of explicit author reference depends on how the writer chooses to position himself/herself into the text in relation to his/her argument, discipline, and readers.

There have been a number of studies which explored the rhetorical functions first person pronouns perform in academic writing (e.g., Chang & Swales, 1999; Harwood, 2005a,b, 2006, 2007; Kuo, 1999; Tang & John, 1999). However while the functional taxonomies constructed by these studies were based on the analysis of both exclusive and inclusive first person pronouns, other typologies like those by, for instance, Harwood (2005c), Hyland (2001b, 2002a) and Vassileva (1998) featured only the functions of 'I', where the researchers in their analyses distinguished between inclusive and exclusive pronouns.

Hyland (2002a), for instance, based on his study of the use of 'I' in two corpora of academic writing (student final project reports (PR) and research articles (RA)) from eight disciplines, identified five textual effects that exclusive first person pronouns help to construct: (1) Expressing self-benefits; (2) Stating a goal/purpose; (3) Explaining a procedure; (4) Elaborating an argument; and (5) Stating results/claims. Each of these effects, which are ordered according to the degree of authorial power each category holds, is briefly introduced below with illustrative examples from Hyland's (2002a) work.

1. Expressing self-benefits

This is arguably the least threatening function of authorial 'I' where writers simply comment on what they learned from the undertaken task (Example 2-8). It is "a familiar student identity" (Hyland, 2002a, p.1100) that does not occur in the professional research texts.

Example 2-8: 'I' to express self-benefits as cited in Hyland (2002a, p.1100)

After finishing the project, **I** found that Information System (IS) techniques can be applied to the real world. This helps **me** to be an IS professional in the future career. (IS PR)

2. Stating a goal/purpose

Authorial pronouns can also be used to help "clarify both the direction of the research and the schematic structure of the argument" (Hyland, 2002a, p.1100) (Example 2-9).

Example 2-9: 'I' to state a goal/purpose as cited in Hyland (2002a, p.1101)

In this section, **I** am going to describe the findings from **my** interviews with the students based on their experience of the lesson in which **I** used task-based grammar teaching approach. (TESOL PR)

Since the writer's interventions here are largely metadiscoursal, "simply signposting readers through the text" (Hyland, 2002a, p.1100), such functions supposedly carry little threat of criticism or rejection. However, Gragson and Selzer (1990), who noted in their analysis of an evolutionary biology article the substantial use of 'I' simply to guide the reader through the text ("*I have taken as my starting point…I first outline…I then discuss…I summarize and comment on…*"), argue that such a use of 'I' helps to "establish the author as the authority and the implied reader as the novice in need of direction" (p.34).

3. Explaining a procedure

This is to describe the research procedures used, detailing how skills were applied, difficulties

were surmounted, and processes were set up (Example 2-10).

Example 2-10: 'I' to explain a procedure as cited in Hyland (2002a, p.1101)

> **I** have interviewed 10 teachers; there were 10 teachers from different primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong. (TESOL PR)

While such an authorial reference seems to reflect a relatively low degree of personal exposure, it might exhibit disciplinary competence and highlight the writer's distinctive role in making adequate qualitative judgements.

4. Elaborating an argument

This is "a high-risk function" (Hyland, 2002a, p.1103) which requires writers to set out a line of reasoning, to take responsibility for the arguments and opinions they express, and to personally engage with their beliefs and their readers. This is typically accomplished by associating personal pronouns with explicit cognitive verbs such as *think, believe* and *assume* (Example 2-11).

Example 2-11: 'I' to elaborate an argument as cited in Hyland (2002a, p.1103)

> **I** think it works something like this: suppose we start with a new, just-assembled ship S. . .
> (Philosophy RA)

5. Stating results/claims

"This is the most self-assertive, and consequently potentially the most face-threatening use of self-reference" (Hyland, 2002a, p.1103). It requires writers to firmly align themselves with their claims through use of 'I' in order to represent their unique contributions and possible interpretations for a phenomenon (Example 2-12). To construct such a personal authority, writers need to have confidence and command of their arguments which most novice writers (presumably) lack.

Example 2-12: 'I' to state results/claims as cited in Hyland (2002a, p.1104)

> Likewise, **I** have offered evidence that some critical thinking practices may marginalize subcultural groups, such as women, within U.S. society itself. (AL RA)

6. Defining terms

This additional category was added to Hyland's taxonomy by Harwood (2003) who, based on a corpus analysis, found that writers frequently used first person pronouns to help them define their terms (e.g., *In this article **I** use the term 'x' to mean 'y'*).

Research has shown that self-mentions, in particular first-person singular pronouns, are relatively common in academic writing in English (Myers, 1989) thus a knowledge of the strategic use of these pronouns is of great value to writers (Kuo, 1999) because "in many cases it is a key way in which professional academics are able to promote competent scholarly identity and gain credit for their research claims" (Hyland, 2004, p.142). However, students are often discouraged to use first person pronouns.

2.4.2   Engagement

In comparison to stance, engagement concerns the ways writers pull readers into their discourse, anticipating the readers' plausible reaction to their arguments so that they can construct an effective line of reasoning (Hyland, 2005b). Its function is similar to that of "commentary," the term that is used by Vande Kopple (1985) and Crismore et al (1993) to refer to the devices by which writers "address readers directly, often appearing to draw them into an implicit dialogue" (Vande Kopple, 1985, p.85). Generally, there are two main purposes, as identified by Hyland (2005b), for using engagement strategies:

1. Acknowledgement of the need to adequately meet readers' expectations of inclusion and disciplinary solidarity. Here we find readers addressed as participants in an argument with reader pronouns and interjections.
2. To rhetorically position the audience. Here the writer pulls readers into the discourse at

critical points, predicting possible objections and guiding them to particular interpretations with questions, directives, and references to shared knowledge.

(Hyland, 2005b, p.182)

While it is acknowledged that we cannot always make a division between the two functions, as writers are able to use language to simultaneously achieve both functions, such a distinction "help[s] us to see some of the ways writers project readers into texts and how this is done in different disciplines" (Hyland, 2005b, p.182). Hyland (2005b) has included five main elements under the engagement category: (1) reader references; (2) personal asides; (3) directives; (4) questions; and (5) shared knowledge references, each of which will be described in the following sections.

2.4.2.1   Reader references

Readers can be brought into the text as discourse participants perhaps most explicitly by the use of inclusive and second person pronouns. While YOU is apparently the clearest way to acknowledge the reader's presence in the text, it rarely occurs in academic writing, according to many corpus analyses such as those by Hyland (2001a, 2005b) and Kuo (1999). The avoidance of YOU could be because it often suggests a lack of involvement between participants. From the perspective of the reader-writer relationship in academic writing, YOU "could sound offensive or detached since it separates readers, as a different group, from the writer" (Kuo, 1999, p.126) whereas it is well recognized that writers need to link closely to their readers and meet their expectations of being involved in the process of argumentation in order to solicit their agreement.

But YOU could also refer to people in general, rather than the reader. For the purpose of illustration, Hyland (2001a) provided an extract from his corpus of research articles (see Example 2-13) where YOU is used to "carry an interactive and encompassing meaning",

showing the writer's ability "to identify with readers, anticipating their objections, voicing their concerns, and expressing their views" (p.577) so that the writer's statement would be generally held as true.

Example 2-13: An extract including YOU, as cited in Hyland (2001a, p.577)

> If **you** concede that mental properties have causal powers, while accepting at the same time the causal closure of the physical domain, then **you** must consider the causal role of mental properties to be somehow dependent on the causal role of physical properties. (Philosophy RA)

Inclusive WE, on the other hand and in contrast to exclusive WE which refers to the writer only, is used to send "a clear signal of membership by textually constructing both the writer and the reader as participants with similar understanding and goals" (Hyland, 2005b, p.182). Hyland (2005b) shows how inclusive WE can emphasize solidarity of writer and reader in an extract like that in Example 2-14. Inclusive WE here allows the writer to "adopt the position of an imaginary reader to suggest what any reasonable, thinking member of the community might conclude or do" (Hyland, 2001a, p.558), constructing "intimacy and involvement with the audience" (Harwood, 2006, p.427).

Example 2-14: An extract including inclusive WE, as cited in Hyland (2005b, p.183)

> Now that **we** have a plausible theory of depiction, **we** should be able to answer the question of what static images depict. (Philosophy RA)

Inclusive WE, which assumes shared knowledge, goals, and beliefs between participants, is said to help writers "shorten the distance from readers" (Kuo, 1999, p.136), "cast their readers as equals, as colleagues" (Gragson & Selzer, 1990, p.197), enhance the persuasiveness and "the reader-friendliness" of the text (Harwood, 2007, p.34), construct positive politeness by mitigating "both claims and denials of claims" to minimize face-threatening acts (FTAs) (Myers, 1989, p.7) and "guide readers through an argument and towards a preferred interpretation of a phenomenon" (Hyland, 2001a, p.560).

It is no wonder then that inclusive WE which in general can perform as both a discourse guide and a rhetorical device is the most common engagement feature in academic writing, as shown by many empirical studies (e.g., Hyland, 2001a, 2004, 2005b). However, using inclusive WE is not without risk because it "addresses the reader from a position of confidence as it allows the writer to take responsibility for leading the reader's thinking" (Hyland, 2009, p.117). But it is said that the indefinite pronoun ONE "can make the opinion less personal and suggest that the opinion is widely held, or the action would be taken by any researcher in a given situation" (Kuo, 1999, p.129). Example 2-15 shows that the indefinite pronoun "*one* is semantically similar to inclusive *we* but the action statement that follows *one* is impersonal" (p.129).

Example 2-15: An extract including the indefinite pronoun ONE, as cited in Kuo (1999, p.129)

To apply this algorithm **one** needs to fill in the data,... (Geiger & Girosi, 1991, p.407)

2.4.2.2   Personal asides

Personal asides allow writers to offer a metacomment on what has been said directly addressed to the readers. By briefly interrupting the flow of argument and turning to the reader (Example 2-16), "the writer acknowledges and responds to an active audience, often to initiate a brief dialogue that is largely interpersonal" (Hyland, 2001a, p.561). This kind of engagement "add[s] more to the writer-reader relationship than to the propositional development of the discourse" (p.561) and shows that both writer and reader are in the same position to draw on shared understandings.

Example 2-16: An extract including a personal aside, as cited in Hyland (2001a, p.561)

And—**as I believe many TESOL professionals will readily acknowledge**—critical thinking has now begun to make its mark, particularly in the area of L2 composition. (AL RA)

2.4.2.3   Shared knowledge references

Appeals to shared knowledge allow writers "to position readers within the apparently naturalized and unproblematic boundaries of disciplinary understandings" (Hyland, 2001a, p.567). While this engagement feature aims at constructing readers by presuming that they hold similar knowledge and beliefs to bring them to agree with the writer (Example 2-17), it is a less imposing involvement strategy in comparison with reader pronouns (discussed in 2.4.2.1).

Example 2-17: An extract including shared knowledge references, as cited in Hyland (2001a, p.567)

> This tendency ***obviously*** reflects the preponderance of brand-image advertising in fashion merchandising. (Marketing RA)

While *obviously* and *of course* are generally seen as an indicator of epistemic stance, showing the writer's certainty of a proposition (e.g., Biber et al, 1999, p.540; Hyland, 1998b), Hyland (2001a) argues, "*of course* actually moves the focus of the discourse away from the writer to shape the role of the reader" (p.567) (Example 2-18).

Example 2-18: An extract including shared knowledge references, as cited in Hyland (2001a, p.568)

> Clahsen's well-known conclusion is, ***of course***, that Universal Grammar is not available to the adult L2 learner. (AL RA)

2.4.2.4   Directives

Directives are now recognized as one of the strategic ways by which writers can produce effective academic writing which requires them to keep a balance between minimizing the imposition of their claims on readers and projecting an appropriate authority and displaying a command of their work. Hyland (2002b) defined directives as "utterances which instruct the reader to perform an action or to see things in a way determined by the writer" (pp.215-216). However, since directives apparently signal that the writer is in a position of power over the reader, they have been regarded as "bald-on-record" face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson,

1987, p.228). Even though directives might be viewed as a potentially risky strategy, studies have shown that directives are reasonably frequent in academic writing (see, e.g., Hyland, 2002b, 2009; Swales et al, 1998).

Directives, according to Hyland (2002b, p.216), can be realized in three main ways: (i) by an imperative (*consider*); (ii) by a model of obligation addressed to the reader (*must*); or (iii) by a predicative adjective expressing the writer's judgment of necessity/importance (*It is important to understand*). It is also worth mentioning that while all these forms of directives, as acknowledged by Hyland (2002b), carry the authority of the writer in assigning the role the reader should perform in or outside the text, they may express differing degrees of intensity, for instance, the imperative form (e.g., *Note*) may sound more direct than the other two forms of directives (e.g., *it should be noted, it is important to note*). Moreover, the functions of directives in academic writing also appear to vary according to the form of activity readers are guided to engage in (Hyland, 2002b).

Figure 2-5: Hyland's (2002b, p.218) categories of directives
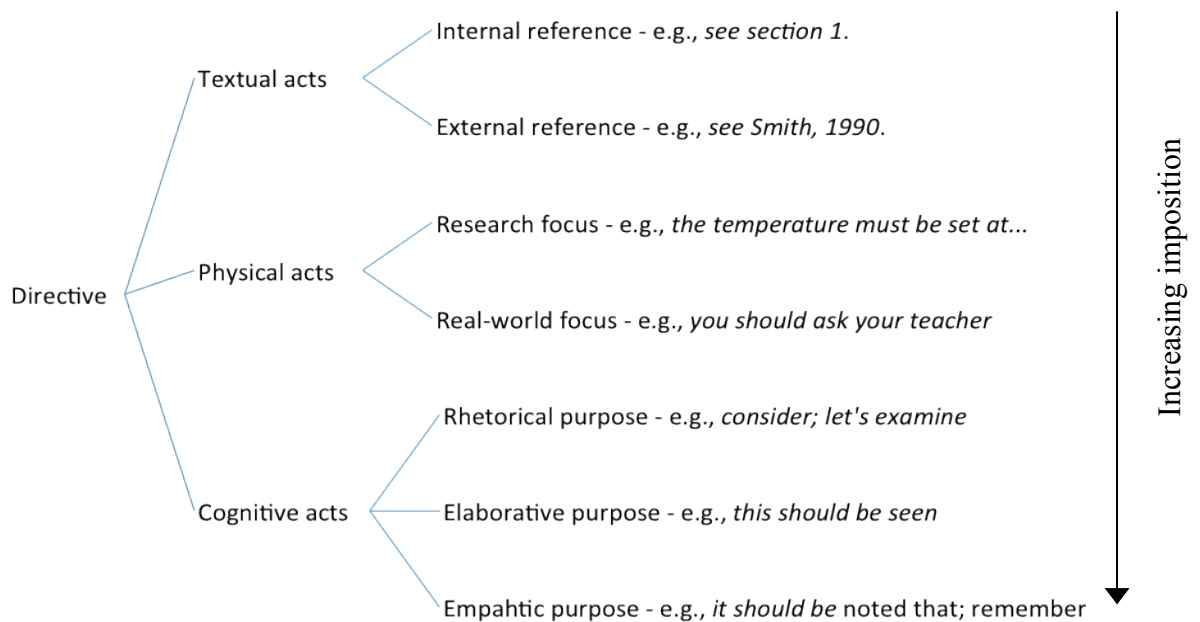
Hyland (2002b) classifies directives rhetorically into three main categories (see Figure 2-5 above). Firstly, directives for *textual acts* which help writers steer readers to another part of the text or to another text (e.g., *see below, see Smith (1990) for a review*). Secondly, directives for *physical acts* which are used to instruct readers to perform an action in the real world or carry out a research process (e.g., *What we need to examine is…, You should ask your teacher*). Thirdly, directives as *cognitive acts* which can get readers to understand a point in a certain way; and this is considered to be the most threatening type of directives (e.g., *Let us consider* this, *It is necessary to understand*).

2.4.2.5   Questions

Questions are one of the ways that writers explicitly bring readers into their texts to make an impact on argument and interaction (see, for example, Hyland 2002c; Webber, 1994). While it is true that questions are "the strategy of dialogic involvement *par excellence*, often functioning to express an imbalance of knowledge between participants" (Hyland 2002c, p.530) and that they are considerably more common in spoken language than academic writing (as revealed by Biber et al's (1999) comprehensive analysis of 40 million word Longman corpus), questions, as Hyland (2002c) argues, are also used by academic writers for the purpose of engaging readers into a discourse, creating rapport and intimacy, and then leading readers to the writers' viewpoints. In fact, questions are said to help the writer convey authority suggesting that he/she is in full control of both material and audience. Webber (1994) points out,

> Questions create anticipation, arouse interest, challenge the reader into thinking about the topic of the text, and have a direct appeal in bringing the second person into a kind of dialogue with the writer, which other rhetorical devices do not have to the same extent. (p.266)

2.4.3   Metadiscourse as rhetorically multifunctional

While metadiscourse in general and Hyland's taxonomy in particular appear to offer a comprehensive description of the different interactional features of language, they, like any other classification schema, partly signify a "fuzzy reality" (Hyland 1998b, p.444). Hyland (1998b) acknowledged, "the imposition of discrete categories on the fluidity of actual language use inevitably conceals its polypragmatic character" (p.444). Analysts have noted how one language feature could simultaneously create two or more textual effects, therefore making it difficult sometimes to determine the function intended by the author (Gragson & Selzer, 1990). In fact, Harwood (2007), based on his interviews with five political scientists about their use of 'I' and WE, reported that informants themselves claimed that in some cases two effects were intended to be achieved simultaneously by their use of pronouns. They for example used pronouns to both highlight their research contribution and enhance the reader-friendliness of the text.

2.5   Stance and engagement: Studies of interdisciplinary and cross-cultural differences

While a great deal of studies have focused on professional writers' use of interactional metadiscourse in the genre of research articles, fewer studies have looked at student writing in general and much less attention has been given to master's dissertations in particular—and to the L2 writing of Arab EFL students. To my knowledge, no research has investigated Arab EFL writers' use of interactional metadiscourse in master's dissertations. Thus due to the scarcity of research on these areas, I review relevant studies of Arab and non-Arab writers below which focus on metadiscourse, interdisciplinary and cross-cultural differences in student argumentative writing and/or research articles. A few of the studies reviewed below focus on both stance and engagement features (e.g., Hyland, 2004), however and wherever possible, I have separated the

review of studies which look at stance and studies which look at engagement into two different sections for ease of reference for readers.

2.5.1   Stance and disciplinary differences

In this section, I will review studies focusing on how academic writers use language mainly to position themselves in their texts.

2.5.1.1   Hyland (2004)

Hyland (2004) aimed at exploring the ways second language postgraduate student writers perceived and engaged with their disciplines through their deployment of interpersonal metadiscourse features, comparing the uses of these features in two corpora (i.e. master's dissertations and doctoral theses) and across six disciplinary communities. The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches, comprising frequency counts and text analyses of 240 dissertations (20 master's and 20 doctoral dissertations from each of six academic disciplines: Electronic Engineering (EE), Computer Science (CS), Business Studies (BS), Biology (Bio), Applied Linguistics (AL), and Public Administration (PA)) by L2 postgraduate students from Hong Kong with Cantonese as their first language. In addition, 24 interviews with postgraduate student writers (two master and two doctoral students from each discipline) were conducted to uncover some of their own preferences and thoughts on disciplinary practices. In order to explore how student writers displayed their persona and a tenor consistent with the norms of the disciplinary community, Hyland examined the students' use of interactional resources which included hedges (MIGHT), boosters (DEFINITELY), attitude markers (SURPRISINGLY), self-mentions (I, WE), and engagement markers (CONSIDER, MUST).

Hyland's study revealed that hedges were by far the most frequent devices in his corpus, constituting 41% of all interactional uses, which indicates the vital importance of distinguishing

fact from opinion in academic writing and the need for writers to qualify their assertions in ways that are likely to be convincing. Hyland also reported that there were considerable differences across the six disciplinary communities, with the social science disciplines of AL, PA, and BS employing more interactional metadiscourse, in particular hedges, attitude markers, and self-mentions, as can be seen in Table 2-1 below. Hyland argues that while hedging claims is a feature of all academic writing, it is particularly important in the more discursive soft fields (i.e. humanities and social sciences) because such soft fields primarily "deal with human subjects and rely on qualitative analyses and/or statistical probabilities to construct and represent knowledge" (Hyland, 2004, p.145). Hence the need for tentativeness in expressing claims. In sciences, on the other hand, writers are more willing to trust results of quantitative methods and present them as proofs, with less toleration of uncertainties, as explained by Hyland's science informants:

> In fact in our field it is very practical, statistics is everything, there is no such case as uncertain about the findings. If you ask me, we can't say we are 100% sure about anything, so sometimes I'd be careful, but again in our field we only value sure ideas, you cannot say you are uncertain all the times or your research would not be valuable no matter how many references you use to support yourself. (EE MSc interview)

Table 2-1: Interactional metadiscourse in postgraduate dissertations by discipline per 10,000 words (Hyland, 2004, p.144)

Interactional features	Applied Linguistics	Public Administration	Business Studies	Computer Science	Electronic Engineering	Biology
Hedges	111.4	109.7	93.3	55.8	61.5	82.1
Boosters	37.9	39.5	29.8	29.4	28.0	30.5
Attitude markers	20.3	26.1	20.7	16.2	10.6	15.5
Self-mentions	50.0	22.4	31.6	29.3	18.1	5.7
Engagement markers	66.1	42.0	35.8	59.2	32.7	15.4
Total	285.7	239.7	211.2	189.9	150.9	149.2

Self-mentions were also more common in the soft fields. This is because, Hyland explained, in the humanities and social sciences students are often encouraged by departmental style guides and supervisors to present their own 'voice' and exhibit a disciplinary stance towards the issues

they discuss in order to make their individual contributions visible to the field. In pure sciences, however, it is more typical for writers to downplay their personal role to highlight the phenomena under investigation hence the infrequent use of self-mentions in Biology in particular, as a student writer explained in their interviews:

> We are taught to use passive voice in writing thesis and avoid "I" as it shows subjectivity, because the focus of the thesis should be on the experiments instead of the student who did them. I expect my supervisor would not agree to the use of "I" too. (Bio PhD interview)

Table 2-2: Interactional metadiscourse in postgraduate dissertations per 10,000 words (Hyland, 2004, p.140)

Interactional features	Masters	Doctoral
Hedges	86.1	95.6
Boosters	31.7	35.3
Attitude markers	20.4	18.5
Self-mentions	14.2	40.2
Engagement markers	39.7	51.9
Total	192.1	241.5

Moreover, Hyland's results also showed that there were, unsurprisingly, variations across the corpora (i.e. master's dissertations vs. PhD theses). While there were considerable differences across disciplines, Hyland reported that doctoral students employed far more interactional resources, with greater use of engagement markers and self-mentions (Table 2-2). Given that self-mention plays a significant role in "mediating the relationship between writers' arguments and the expectations of their readers" (Hyland, 2004, p.143), and influencing the way readers receive the message, Hyland ascribed the higher appearance of self-mentions in the doctoral corpus to the possibility that these more advanced doctoral students were more concerned about promoting themselves and their individual contributions and so they were slightly more comfortable employing self-mentions. Conversely, many master's students, as Hyland's study indicated, avoided the use of personal pronouns because to them personal pronouns are

"powerful" and are "only for established scholars" to use; while others reported that self-mentions could violate the requirement of objectivity and formality in academic writing.

With regard to engagement features, which encompassed imperatives and obligation modals (e.g., SHOULD), and which required students to have confidence in their arguments in order to direct readers to particular interpretations, they were less represented in the master's than in the PhD corpus, with the PhD students supposedly having greater mastery of their subject and greater confidence in their writing.

Hyland concluded that exploring language use across degrees and disciplines helps to reveal the crucial role of context in the writers' rhetorical decisions and choices of how to present their arguments and interact with their readers, demonstrating how different disciplinary communities as well as different writer groups (i.e. master's vs. doctoral students) vary in their use of interactional metadiscourse. However, Hyland's study can be criticized in its design since we are not told precisely what quality of texts were chosen for inclusion in the corpora: information about the strengths or weaknesses of the texts included, and their grades, in the case of the master's corpus, is lacking. So it could be argued that differences may, to some extent, arise due to likely differences in the students' language proficiency, with the doctoral students (or even the better master's students) producing different patterns of interactional metadiscourse at least partly due to their superior linguistic skills rather than because of socio-rhetorical factors.

Hyland's qualitative analysis consists of a discourse analytical approach, with Hyland identifying the various functions effected by metadiscoursal usage from context. However, given that rhetorical decisions may sometimes reflect either conscious choices or unreflective practices, we need to allow student writers themselves to talk about their practices and choices of particular items in their own texts. While it is true that Hyland conducted interviews with the postgraduate writers, his interviews focused only on the writers' general perceptions of research

writing; but what would be more interesting here is 'discourse based interviews' with student writers to reveal their views about their own use of particular items. This kind of procedure would provide more in-depth information about how and why, for example, such interactional features were used in the student writing.

2.5.1.2   Samraj (2008)

Samraj (2008) investigated the use and the discourse functions of self-mention in the introduction sections of 24 master's dissertations from three different disciplines, namely Biology, Linguistics, and Philosophy, at a university in the US. Eight dissertations were selected from each of these disciplines as examples of the sciences (Biology), social sciences (Linguistics), and humanities (Philosophy).

The use of first person pronouns varied considerably in the three sets of master's dissertations. Self-mentions occurred most frequently in humanities (the Philosophy dissertations) with 64 instances, and occurred the least in sciences (Biology) with only nine instances while social sciences (Linguistics) occupied a central position with 19 occurrences. Interestingly, while the personal pronouns were not widely used in the student texts, these distributional frequency patterns appear to parallel those in Chang and Swales' (1999) study which, based on an analysis of research articles from three similar domains, sciences (Statistics), social sciences (Linguistics), and humanities (Philosophy), reported that the use of first-person singular pronouns is discipline-specific; while it seems to be appropriate in Philosophy and acceptable in Linguistics, it appears to be discouraged in Statistics.

This alignment of results in the use of self-mention between master's students and professional writers, with the student writers reflecting to some degree "the variations in discursive practices exhibited by more established members of disciplinary communities" (Samraj, 2008, p.63), may indicate that these postgraduate student writers have acquainted themselves with the

epistemological practices of their respective disciplines at least in terms of establishing authorial identity in academic writing. This claim could also be supported by turning to the different rhetorical functions these student writers aimed to achieve by their use of self-mentions in Samraj's study. Her analysis revealed that master's students employed first person pronouns to assert the goals of their research and preview the organization of their dissertations, as in Example 2-19.

Example 2-19: An extract including 'I' as cited in Samraj (2008, p.63)

> In Chapter III **I will describe** the published language materials utilized for this study…. **I will then introduce** these informants,... (Ling)

Moreover, not only did the first person pronoun help to exhibit the writers' presence as performers of research but also to portray themselves as agents making decisions. This clearly appears in Example 2-10.

Example 2-20: An extract including 'I' as cited in Samraj (2008, p.64)

> **I predicted** that EPP could occur in least Bell's vireo based on the asynchronous nature of breeding, […]. To determine whether last Bell's vireos engage in EPC, **I performed** DNA fingerprinting on selected parents... (Bio)

The first person pronoun was also found to help student writers present their arguments more explicitly in order to establish a strong authorial identity as illustrated in Example 2-21.

Example 2-21: An extract including 'I' as cited in Samraj (2008, p.64)

> **I will argue** that the Nietzschean educational project is concerned with the education of a self-creative individual. (Phil)

What is interesting about Samraj's (2008) study is that it not only suggested that master's student writers appear to reflect, to some extent, the practices of their disciplinary communities (particularly in their use of 'I') but also indicated that discursive practices of social science disciplines (Linguistics) differ from those of humanities (Philosophy). In contrast, Hyland's

(e.g., 2005a; 2005b) work often makes only a broader distinction between 'soft' and 'hard' fields where both social sciences and humanities fall into the same category (as soft fields) and so attention is dedicated to similarities rather than differences.

As insightful as it is, Samraj's study is limited in scope because it only examined the use of one interactional feature (self-mentions), only focused on one chapter of the master's dissertation (the introduction chapter), and it is an open question whether self-mentions in the other chapters would display the same tendencies. Also, student writers were not consulted about their own uses of self-mentions so again we can not be sure whether they were aware of their language use and whether they have actually been socialized into the epistemological practices of their disciplines. In fact, many studies have indicated that the use of personal pronouns which connote authority can cause a huge problem for student writers. The difficulty seems to increase as the focus shifts to less experienced writers. For instance, Hyland's (2004) study (discussed above) revealed that master's students, in contrast to doctoral students, were more reluctant to use personal pronouns in their academic writing. Moreover, based on his analyses of personal pronoun use in two corpora of L2 undergraduate final project reports and research articles, Hyland (2002a) found that there was a considerable underuse of self-mentions in the student texts compared with those of experts. A more detailed review of this study will be presented in the following section.

2.5.1.3   Hyland (2002a)

Hyland (2002a) investigated the notion of identity in L2 writing by examining the use of self-mentions in a corpus of 64 Hong Kong undergraduate theses (amounting to 630,000 words) collected from eight disciplines: Biology (Bio), Mechanical Engineering (ME), Information Systems (IS), Business Studies (Bus), TESOL, Economics (Econ), Public Administration (PA), and Social Sciences (SS). Another larger corpus of 240 published research articles (totalling 1.3

million words) was also selected from disciplines related very closely to those of the student corpus so that the use of personal pronouns in the student corpus could be examined with reference to expert writers. The patterns of use in the professional writing can contribute to our "understandings of appropriacy and conventions of good disciplinary writing" and "provide the background by which we can understand learner practices" (p.1096). Textual analyses were supplemented by interviews with one supervisor from each field (all English L1) and small focus groups of student writers (all Cantonese L1). The aim of this method was to elicit participants' perceptions of the meanings and effectiveness of the use of first person, and to uncover their own disciplinary practices.

In his analysis of self-mention, Hyland excluded all generic and inclusive uses of personal pronouns to include only those of exclusive meaning. Results revealed considerable underuse of authorial reference by students whereas the experts were four times more likely to explicitly intervene with the first person, with figures higher for the soft disciplines. Therefore, Hyland suggested that while students might have acquired some implicit understanding of disciplinary conventions through their reading, this appeared to have had little impact on the student writing.

With regard to the rhetorical distribution of self-mentions, nearly half the occurrences of self-mentions in the research articles were used to present arguments or claims, compared with only a quarter in the project reports, while the least common category in the expert corpus, which was to state a purpose, was the most frequently used in the student texts. This, together with the interview data, indicated that students consciously avoided the most authoritative functions and downplayed their role in the research. On the basis of his interviewees' accounts, Hyland attributed students' preferences for avoiding self-mentions in their reports to reasons such as:

> recommendations from style manuals, uncertainties about disciplinary conventions, culturally shaped epistemologies, culture-specific views of authority, conflicting teacher advice, or personal preferences. (p.1107)

Similar results were also reported by Vergaro (2011), who examined the rhetorical functions of personal pronouns in L2 student essays following Hyland's (2002a) functional taxonomy. Results revealed that self-mentions were employed but not widely, and that they were mainly used for stating a goal/purpose or explaining a procedure; in other words, for 'low risk' functions.

2.5.2   Engagement and disciplinary differences

In this section, I will review studies focusing on how academic writers use language to represent their audience rather than themselves.

2.5.2.1   Hyland (2009)

Contending that argumentation differs across disciplines and that a writer's choice to bring readers into the discourse is related to the ways disciplines undertake research and negotiate the construction of knowledge, Hyland (2009) examined the use of engagement features (i.e. questions, reader references, directives, asides and references to shared knowledge) in a corpus of 64 project reports (PR) written by final year Hong Kong undergraduates in eight disciplines. The final year project is a high stake genre for students; typically it is a piece of writing between 8,000 and 13,000 words, presented after a year of supervised research work, and assessed by two examiners. He selected reports from eight fields: Biology (Bio), Mechanical Engineering (ME), Information System (IS), Business Studies (BS), TESOL, Economics (Econ), Public Administration (PA), and Social Science (SS), producing a corpus of 630,000 words. His text data were supplemented with focus group interview data from student writers and interviews with supervisors to help in interpreting the results of the textual analyses and understanding something of the disciplinary and learner practices.

It was found that the engagement features appeared about 24 times in each report, approximately one occurrence every two pages, with directives and reader pronouns being the most frequent features overall.

Table 2-3: Frequency of engagement features in student reports per 10,000 words (Hyland, 2009, p.114)

Discipline	Questions	Reader pronouns	Directives	Shared knowledge	Asides	Totals
Info Systems	2.2	5.7	24.5	3.5	0.0	35.9
Mechanical Eng	3.0	3.6	23.7	4.7	0.0	35.0
Biology	1.0	5.3	11.9	1.7	0.3	20.1
Social Sciences	8.8	6.3	7.7	0.3	0.2	23.5
Public Admin	6.0	10.9	3.3	2.0	0.7	23.0
TESL	6.7	3.3	9.2	2.8	0.0	22.0
Economics	1.5	3.1	8.9	3.8	1.0	18.3
Marketing	1.1	6.0	3.7	2.2	0.2	13.3
Overall	4.3	6.1	10.6	2.5	0.3	23.9

Hyland's analyses also showed some cross-disciplinary differences (Table 2-3). While directives were employed the most by students in the science and engineering fields, questions and reader pronouns were most common in the more discursive soft fields (i.e. social sciences and humanities). Shared knowledge references and asides, reportedly very rare in academic writing in general (Hyland, 2001a), were almost absent in the student reports. Because the overall distributional frequency patterns of these engaging features in the student corpus resembled those in the academic research articles (see Hyland, 2001a, although they were only half as frequent as in RAs), Hyland argued that these student writers are aware that academic writing is not wholly impersonal and are conscious of the conventions and rhetorical behaviour of their disciplinary communities.

Hyland argues that engagement is generally a feature of 'soft' disciplines, and highlights that directives are the only engagement feature that occurred more frequently in the sciences and engineering texts. Directives appear to help writers in the hard knowledge domains to formulate

arguments in a highly standardized code and provide an economy of expression which is greatly valued by journal editors and busy scientists.

Apparently, then, science and engineering student writers who made the highest use of directives (Table 2-3 above) seemed to be aware of the practices of their disciplinary communities. However, in comparison with the published work, Hyland reported that the student texts featured only about half the number of directives in the research articles (per 10,000 words) even though directives were the most frequent engagement features in the student reports, comprising 45% of all features. This could be because directives are not merely a command but a complex feature that may entail a threat to the reader's face. Thus, the more imposing the directives are, the less frequently they occurred in L2 student texts. Hyland reported that the students in their reports mostly used directives to engage readers in physical acts or to guide them to figures, appendices and other sections of the report to support their discussion. But the most imposing directives which direct readers to some cognitive action by demanding they *consider* or *note* something in the argument and which were employed most frequently by expert writers appeared to be largely avoided by student writers. From the interview data, one of Hyland's student informants expressed his/her reluctance to claim an authority by the use of directives:

> I never use 'must' or tell my supervisor to 'notice' or 'consider'. These words are too strong. It is like a demand and I can't demand my supervisor to agree with me. (IS interview) (As cited in Hyland, 2005c, p.371)

On the other hand, writers in the social sciences and humanities tend to produce texts that are "more interpretative and less abstract" because there is "less control of variables and greater possibilities for diverse outcomes, so writers must spell out their evaluations and work harder to establish an understanding with readers" (Hyland, 2005b, p.187). This can be seen in the higher occurrences of reader pronouns, particularly, inclusive WE, and questions in the student texts of the soft domains.

With regard to inclusive WE, Hyland (2005b) reported that about 80% of reader pronouns, which were the most frequent engagement feature in the expert corpus, occurred in the soft fields, where they functioned to claim authority and "appeal to scholarly solidarity" (p.188). The soft domains in the student corpus also featured a higher use of reader pronouns, albeit they were underused. In fact, inclusive WE was five times more frequent in the professional texts. While the analysis did show that some L2 student texts featured expert-like use of reader pronouns (although only rarely; see, for instance, Example 2-22), many of them avoided addressing readers from that position of confidence and instead employed less risky WE functions (see, for instance, Example 2-23) which draw on everyday knowledge, rather than marking a shared disciplinary membership with the reader.

Example 2-22: A student's expert-like use of WE as cited in Hyland (2009, p.116)

If we agree that reproductive rights can promote happiness to the human well being, then **we should** determine the standard of reproductive rights... (PA)

Example 2-23: A student's typical use of WE/OUR as cited in Hyland (2009, p.117)

Such advancement is gradually changing **our** lifestyles, …and ultimately the whole world. (Econ)

Apparently, Hong Kong undergraduates rejected taking an authorial role to direct their readers simply because of their awareness of their readers' greater status and disciplinary knowledge:

> I can't use 'we' or 'you' as my supervisor might not agree what I think is true. I might be wrong. (SS student interview) (As cited in Hyland, 2009, p.116)

Likewise, questions predominantly occurred in the humanities and social sciences fields in both expert and student corpora. Hyland's analyses revealed that while both student and expert corpora were in general similar in overall frequencies of questions (4.3 and 5.5 per 10,000 words, respectively), there were substantial differences in the ways questions were used. In published writing, the experts employed questions "to arouse interest, to establish a research

niche, to convey a claim forcefully, to express evaluation, and to suggest further research" (Hyland, 2005c, p.374), whereas students tended to avoid these potential authoritative functions and confined their uses of this feature to organize their discourse. This was frequently done by recycling research questions into section headings, a 'low risk' strategy.

In sum, Hyland suggested that while student writers appeared to be aware of their disciplinary conventions at least when it comes to the use of engagement features, their underuse of these dialogic devices could be attributed to their culture and institutional context. Given that the L2 writers are from a culture with a different writing tradition which tends to place emphasis on respect for authority and that students are aware of the authority and the greater status of their readers/examiners, it is understandable that these students would feel uncomfortable employing more engaging language. Hyland (2009) remarked that "[C]ulture intrudes into our communicative practices in significant ways" (p.114). So although displaying an appropriate degree of rhetorical sophistication while recognizing the reader's greater knowledge of the field and power to assess their texts might be an issue for L1 student writers, this may be more problematic for L2 student writers from cultures which emphasize respect for authority and face.

2.5.2.2   Swales et al (1998)

Swales et al (1998) explored the syntactic and rhetorical functions of imperatives (a form of directive) in research articles across ten academic disciplines. Their corpus consisted of 50 articles: five articles from a single issue of a journal in each of the ten selected fields. Each of these articles was searched for occurrences of imperatives, which were defined on the basis of surface syntactic form; that is, an imperative sentence should have no surface subject and should have either a main verb or emphatic 'do' in the base form without any modals. Interviews with the authors of some of the articles were also conducted in order to obtain further insight into their use of imperatives and gain more information about the practices of particular disciplines.

Table 2-4: Ranking by ratio of imperatives to total number of words in each discipline (Swales et al, 1998, p.102)

Rank	Discipline	Frequency	Ratio
1	Statistics	141	1 298
2	Experimental Geology	51	1 457
3	Linguistics	103	1 844
4	Philosophy	40	1 1567
5	History	12	1 3120
6	Art History	5	1 3676
7	Chemical Engineering	10	1 3800
8	Literary Criticism	3	1 4700
9	Political Science	0	0
10	Communication Studies	0	0

The results as can be seen in Table 2-4 revealed great variation in the frequencies of imperatives from one discipline to another. The data showed that while Political Sciences and Communication Studies employed no imperatives in the main text, low figures were recorded for Literary Criticism (3 occurrences) and high figures for Statistics and Linguistics (141 and 103 occurrences, respectively). In fact, the authors expressed their surprise at the discrepancies among disciplines, as there was "no strong or obvious correlation with traditional divisions into sciences, social sciences, and humanities" (p.102). However, they noted that the three top disciplines (i.e. Statistics, Experimental Geology, and Linguistics) tend to generate texts that include "mathematical, experimental, or illustrative elements" which may, as a result, necessitate the use of more specific forms of "reader-text management" (p.103).

Further, Swales et al examined the most frequent imperatives, SEE, CONSIDER, NOTE, and LET US, in terms of syntactic patterns and rhetorical functions. For instance, SEE was found to function either as metadiscourse, directing readers to tables, figures, or other parts of the text or as citational devices, citing relevant literature. The authors identified three slightly different degrees of imposition: the more imposing SEE (i.e. as a citational device) accounted for as many as 64% of the cases in Statistics and appeared as a full non-bracketed sentence, seemingly a

discourse convention in this field. A lower degree of imposition appeared to be more frequent in Experimental Geology and Linguistics, and a lower one still in Philosophy, History, and Art History.

In sum, it was suggested that although imperatives in academic texts could be recognized as a kind of face-threating practice as they indicate the power and control of the writer over the reader, the acceptance of their usage in general could come from various sources, such as tradition, the need for word economy, and stylistic variation.

2.5.3   Stance and cross-cultural differences

Typically, university students in their academic writing are expected to "present their views objectively, approach a topic from a balanced perspective, and support their views with appropriate information to lend these views credibility" (Hinkel, 1999, p.90). Research, however, has shown that the writing of NNSs, in comparison with that of NSs, can be less objective and more prone to generalization, giving a one-sided presentation rather than a balanced argument. Many studies have suggested that such tendencies can be an outcome of knowledge transfer of L1 discourse traditions, conventions, and rhetorical paradigms. Hinkel (1997, 1999, 2003, 2005a), for instance, based on her comparative studies of NS and NNS essay writing, considered this theory of knowledge transference from L1 to L2 writing to be one of the reasons why NNS texts often appear generalization-prone and subjective and therefore less persuasive than those by NSs. In fact, newer comparative studies continue to produce evidence which supports the view that NSs and NNS writers differ in their interactional patterns in academic writing.

2.5.3.1   Hinkel (2003)

Hinkel (2003) investigated the use of the most common semantic classes of adverbials (such as adverbs of time, place, and manner, as well as amplifiers, emphatics, and downtoners) in

academic essay texts, written by first-year NS of American English (who received no prior writing instruction at the university level) and academically-advanced NNS students who were speakers of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Indonesian. All NNSs were of a relatively high L2 proficiency (with TOEFL scores ranging from 550 to 620) and had substantial exposure to and experience with US academic writing. The essay corpus consisted of placement and diagnostic tests routinely administered to all students (NSs and NNSs) at the very beginning of their first required writing classes. Thus, all essay prompts were identical and designed to elicit writing in the rhetorical mode of argument with the purpose of convincing an unspecified general audience.

Comparing the NSs' and NNSs' uses of deictic, modifying, and intensifying adverbials, Hinkel found that the most pronounced differences between the two writer groups were in the frequency rates of amplifiers (such as ALWAYS) and emphatic adverbs (such as DEFINITELY) (which both can be classified as boosters), with the NNS writers in all language groups employing boosters significantly more often than NSs. Hinkel attributed such results to the transfer of L1 syntactic and semantic properties to L2. While she pointed out that in formal English academic writing amplifiers are generally considered inappropriate (Hinkel, 1999) and appear to be discouraged by many instructional textbooks (see, e.g., Smoke, 1999), she claimed,

> in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Indonesian, amplification and intensification can be acceptable means of persuasion. These languages have highly developed systems of adverbs or particles that convey a high degree of intensity, emphasis, desirability, and/or truthfulness. (Hinkel, 2003, p.1058)

The analysis also showed that intensifiers such as ALWAYS, NEVER, and REALLY which are associated with exaggeration and conversational language and which are employed very rarely in published academic genres (Biber et al, 1999) were noticeably more common in the NNSs' writing, resulting in a colloquial style and overstated tone in their academic argumentation prose. Even though all NNS writers in Hinkel's study were described as "academically advanced and proficient L2 learners", the high occurrences (and the limited number) of intensifiers in their

texts, as Hinkel suggested, could also be "an outcome of the writers' lack of other more appropriate lexical means of developing academic argumentation" (p.1058) such as detailed supporting information and specific factual descriptions (Smoke, 1999).

2.5.3.2   Hinkel (2005a)

Like intensifiers, hedges which are normally associated with conversational discourse were also more commonly used in NNSs' writing as Hinkel (2005a) concluded from her investigation of the frequencies of hedges and intensifiers employed in NS and NNS essays included in a corpus of 745 essays (220,747 words). Similar to her earlier study reviewed above (Hinkel, 2003), Hinkel (2005a) compiled a corpus from academic essays written by NSs of American English and advanced NNSs. The NNS groups included speakers of Arabic in addition to those of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, and Vietnamese, who all had also attained a relatively high level of English language proficiency with TOEFL scores ranging from 533 to 620.

In her analysis Hinkel focused on the NSs' and NNSs' uses of six different types of hedging devices: epistemic hedges (*normally, relatively*), lexical hedges (*about, in a way*), possibility hedges (*in case, perhaps*), down toners (*nearly, simply*), assertive pronouns (*anyone, somebody*), and adverbs of frequency (*frequently, usually*). In addition, her analysis also included intensifiers, such as universal and negative pronouns (*everyone, no one*), amplifiers (*a lot, very*), and emphatics (*extremely, certainly*). Comparing the NSs' and NNSs' uses of each of these subcategories, Hinkel found that the NNS academic texts in general contained fewer hedging devices. Since the Arab EFL writers here are of particular relevance to my study, I focus below on reviewing the results of the Arab EFL student writers in relation to the English NSs.

The results of Hinkel's analysis of hedging devices and intensifiers in the academic writing of NSs and Arab EFL writers are reproduced in Table 2-5. Generally, as can be seen in the table below, the Arab EFL student writers, in comparison with the NSs, underused hedging devices,

especially epistemic and lexical hedges while overusing all three types of intensifiers. Hinkel

claimed that the underuse of hedges and the overuse of emphatics in the Arab EFL essays could

be attributed to L1 transfer. She claimed that the Arabic writing tradition, in contrast to formal

English prose, "does not place a high value on hedges and understatements, and amplification

and exaggeration are considered to be an appropriate means of persuasion" (Hinkel, 2005, p.34;

however, see, e.g., Sa'Adeddin, 1989 and Ismail, 2010 for somewhat different views).

Table 2-5: Median frequency rates for hedging devices and intensifiers in English NSs and Arab EFL academic essays (Adopted from Hinkel, 2005a, pp.41, 45)

Hedges	English NS	Arab EFL
Epistemic hedges	0.47	0.30*
Range	3.40	2.13
Lexical hedges	0.60	0.30**
Range	4.63	2.13
Possibility hedges	0.00	0.00
Range	1.36	1.20
Downtoners	0.47	0.48
Range	3.80	3.19
Assertive pronouns	0.38	0.77**
Range	2.22	6.38
Frequency adverbs	0.00	0.28*
Range	1.87	4.02
Intensifiers	English NS	Arab EFL
Universal pronouns	0.44	0.78**
Range	3.04	5.77
Amplifiers	1.70	3.23
Range	5.46	14.29
Emphatics	1.04	4.12**
Range	4.26	13.01
*one-tailed p ≤ 0.05. **two-tailed p ≤ 0.05.		

Hinkel's analysis also showed that the Arab EFL student writers, in contrast to their English NSs

counterparts, not only relied on a limited range of linguistic items to express their uncertainty and conviction but they also employed those words/expressions that are highly conversational. This is evidenced in their greater use of ALWAYS, USUALLY, and A LOT which can generally be acceptable in conversation but inappropriate in formal prose (Leech, 1983, p.183). Moreover, lexical and epistemic hedging devices which are found to be very common in published texts (Hyland, 1998c) were significantly fewer in the Arab than the NSs texts. Apparently then, these student writers seemed to lack knowledge of academic writing conventions and how academics write. They appear to simply and inappropriately transfer the conversational language they acquired during their residence in the US (1.5-3.1 years) into writing (Hinkel, 2005a). Even though they were relatively highly proficient in English and had some training in academic writing, it seems that these novice writers who were at the undergraduate level were still not well acquainted with presenting claims that are neither overstated nor understated in relation to evidence or reasonable assumption. In fact, conveying statements with an appropriate degree of doubt and certainty appears to cause a major problem for L2 writers of academic essays of English as also noted by Hyland and Milton (1997) in their corpus-based study of L2 texts to which we now turn.

2.5.3.3   Hyland and Milton (1997)

Hyland and Milton (1997) studied NSs' and NNSs' uses of epistemic modality which is "concerned with the speaker's assumptions, or assessment of possibilities, and, in most cases, it indicates the speaker's confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition expressed" (Coates, 1995, p.55). The corpus included examination texts of 900 Cantonese-speaking school leavers writing in English and those of 770 British learners of similar age and educational level. Both student writer groups were required to argue their own points of view on topics concerned with current social issues. The NS subcorpus was selected on the basis of best performance (i.e. only papers awarded 'A' and 'B' from GCE A level General Studies scripts) in

order to compile a model corpus of ideal performance of NS students; while the NNS subcorpus included samples from six grade ranges in the Hong Kong Use of English Examination ('A' to 'F') so that the NNS essays at each proficiency level could be compared with the NS target. Both NS and NNS student corpora were searched for occurrences of the 75 most frequently epistemic items identified in reference grammars and some of the research literature on features of academic writing (those items included modal verbs (*may, will*), adjectives (*possible, certain*), nouns (*doubt, evidence*), and adverbs (*likely, clearly*)). Hyland and Milton's results, surprisingly, showed that the two writer groups did not markedly differ in their overall use of epistemic items, employing one device every 55 words. Furthermore, both groups seemed to prefer *will, may, would* and *always* as they appeared among the top six most frequently used items. However, there were considerable differences in their frequencies, with NNS student writers employing about 60% more certainty markers than their NS counterparts and fewer hedging devices. For instance, epistemic *will* (which marked certainty) occurred twice as frequently in the NNS corpus, while *would* (which was used to express doubt) was represented twice as often in the NS corpus. Such distributional frequencies of certainty and doubt devices, according to Hyland and Milton, indicate NNS writers "favouring confident prediction and native speakers more tentative expression" (p.188). Then, rather than attributing differences to L1 transfer (cf. Hinkel, 2005a), Hyland and Milton suggested that the NNS students' inability to moderate their claims sufficiently could be due to either their inadequate linguistic knowledge, which might have been caused by different interpretations of equivalent semantic forms of English or to their imperfect awareness of appropriate language use in academic prose since the degree of directness and assertiveness in their writing conflicts with convention.

Among NNS students, when the various levels of NNS writing were compared, a more complex picture emerged. It was found that weaker students employed fewer epistemic devices overall and their writing was characterized by stronger assertions. The students in the top three ability

bands made a higher usage of hedges, averaging 2.01 items per 100 words compared with 1.25 in the lowest band. The 'A' grade essays showed the greatest similarity to the NSs' usage, indicating that Chinese learners of English approximated native-like usage of tentative expressions as their language proficiency improved. Generally, however, it was found that the NNS student writers of all levels of writing relied on a more restricted range of epistemic devices in comparison with the NSs.

Based on their results, then, we should expect master's students (who are the focus of my study) to perform much more like their English NS counterparts, given that they are arguably more advanced.

Thus far, results seem to support the view that the academic writing of many L2 learners (in particular, Arabs and Chinese) is characterized by unwarranted assertions and a more authoritative tone in comparison with NS student writers. In fact, even L2 professional papers seem to feature more boosters when compared with their NS counterparts (e.g., Hu & Cao, 2011; Vassileva, 2001). For instance, based on her analysis of three different corpora of research articles written in Bulgarian as L1, English as L1, and English as L2 by Bulgarians (Bulgarian-English) in the field of Linguistics, Vassileva (2001) found that while the degree of detachment (i.e. the use of hedges) was highest in the English NSs' articles, the degree of commitment (i.e. the use of boosters) was the greatest in the Bulgarian-English writing. She attributed the Bulgarian-English writers' overuse of boosters and underuse of hedges to several factors similar to those suggested by other researchers who were concerned with student writing (see above). Vassileva suggested that the Bulgarians might not have enough knowledge of the means of expressing "detachement" in English, or that Bulgarians were unaware of the necessity of hedging claims, so "pragmatic failure" rather than linguistic deficit may be to blame (although these Bulgarians specialised in English Linguistics and were selected for the study mainly

because of the researcher's belief that they would, presumably, "have the highest possible level of command of English" (p.85)). Moreover, Vassileva suggested that culture might also have an influence on the forceful tone in the Bulgarian-English articles, in that "Bulgarians try to preserve their cultural identity" (p.88) and write as they would in their L1.

But interestingly, McEnery and Kifle's (2002) study (discussed below) reported some contradictory results; they found that the NNSs' texts featured more hedges and fewer boosters compared with those of their NS counterparts.

2.5.3.4   McEnery and Kifle (2002)

McEnery and Kifle (2002) also examined the use of epistemic modality in two corpora: one of English NS and the other one of Eritrean EFL student writers. The NS corpus was compiled from argumentative essays written by British school children of around 16 years of age. The NNS corpus included 92 short argumentative texts written by Eritrean second-year university students who were around the age of 20 and who attended the English Foundation Course which prepared them to take the IELTS test. McEnery and Kifle showed that the two writer groups differed in their overall use of epistemic items, with the NS writers using about two thirds more epistemic items than the Eritrean learners (686 and 439 occurrences, respectively). However, it was found that the Eritrean learners employed fewer certainty devices than NS writers and made a greater use of possibility devices, contradicting the results of many other studies which view EFL writing as more assertive and authoritative when compared with NS discourse. While being unable to confirm or rule out culture as a possible reason for the differences found between the two writer groups, McEnery and Kifle presented evidence to suggest that the coursebook from which the Eritrean students learned English could be responsible, to some extent, for their greater use of possibility devices, particularly those in the form of modal verbs and adverbs. By examining those classroom materials, McEnery and Kifle found that there was a great emphasis

on the use of tentative epistemic devices.

McEnery and Kifle also discovered that the coursebook presented the students with only a limited range of epistemic devices in a list of modal verbs, adverbs, and quantifiers without any explanation or indication which of these devices are more common in academic writing and whether there are other parts-of-speech which may also help form epistemic modality. They believed that this evidence is persuasive enough to explain the overuse of tentative devices, which were in the forms of modal verbs and adverbs, in the Eritrean students' texts, given that access to other English language resources in the Eritrean context was "severely restricted".

McEnery and Kifle's results are interesting because they show "how crucial the role of the textbook may be in forming the language use of NNS writers" (McEnery and Kifle, 2002, p.191). However, evidence from other contexts presents contradictory results: Lorenz (1998) found that German learners made a greater use of not only boosters but also hedges when compared with their NS counterparts.

2.5.3.5   Lorenz (1998)

Lorenz (1998) examined the use of adjective intensification in a corpus of argumentative essays written by four writer groups: two groups of non-native speakers, German teenagers and German university students; and two groups of British English native speakers of similar age and educational level to the German groups. Lorenz found that the German learners overused not only amplifiers (such as COMPLETELY, VERY) but also downtoners (such as NEARLY, A LITTLE). Such results appear to oppose the widespread cultural stereotypes which assume that German learners are culturally more prone to overstating claims while British English NSs understate claims (Lorenz, 1998). Thus, since the "cultural difference hypothesis" could not account for why advanced German learners felt compelled to overuse downtoners as well as amplifiers, Lorenz suggested that the German learners' "over-zealousness" to impress readers

might be the cause of their overuse of such markers. It could be that the non-native student writers feel insecure about the effectiveness of their own writing, since they are aware of the limitations of their linguistic repertoire, so "they might feel a greater need than the native speakers to stress the importance […] of what they have to say" (p.59). Moreover, Lorenz found that the learners not only overused intensification, but also employed it "in places where it is semantically incompatible, communicatively unnecessary, or syntactically undesirable" (p.64) (see Example 2-24). Even worse, Lorenz reported that some of these "infelicities" increased in the writing of the more advanced learners. So it was apparently neither the influence of culture nor a lack of understanding the function of intensification as a whole that made the German learners overuse amplifiers and downtoners but it was, according to Lorenz, the learners' eagerness to create an impression.

Example 2-24: Extracts showing the learners' inefficient use of intensifications as cited in Lorenz (1998, pp.60, 62)

- For people living in the city centre on a warm summer day it's **<u>really impossible</u>** to open the window because no whiff of fresh air will come in.
- I thought that my **<u>absolutely authentic</u>** Rock music should hit the charts in seconds.

If Lorenz's undergraduates were reportedly eager to impress their readers by using 'intensifications', the same cannot be said of the NNS master's students in Burneikaitė's (2008) study.

2.5.3.6   Burneikaitė (2008)

Burneikaitė (2008) compared NSs' and NNSs' uses of evaluative metadiscourse (which included mitigation markers, emphatics, and attitude markers) in a corpus of 40 master's dissertations in Linguistics (20 texts by English NSs from two British universities and 20 texts by Lithuanian EFL student writers from two Lithuanian universities). Burneikaitė reported that Lithuanian learners underused all evaluative markers in general and emphatics in particular. She suggested that the learners' reluctance to express their opinions and feelings in writing might be caused by

their general lack of confidence and/or their unfamiliarity with critical evaluation in academic writing which she claimed is almost nonexistent in the Lithuanian writing tradition. Nonetheless, we should approach such speculation cautiously: evidence for these claims needs to be provided, for instance by interviewing the student writers to uncover the real reasons behind their underuse of boosters, hedges, and attitude markers. And since we were not told about the grades of the texts analysed, it could be that these differences were down to the fact that the NNSs' texts were not as good as their NS counterparts; that the NS texts were authored by more accomplished writers.

It is also worth noting that Burneikaitė's results contradicted those reported by Hinkel (2003, 2005a) and Hyland and Milton (1997) in that the EFL writers in Burneikaitė's study underused boosters in comparison with their English NS counterparts while it has been observed in many studies that EFL writing is (inappropriately) more assertive than its NS equivalent. This contradiction could be not only because the writers in Burneikaitė's study were (supposedly) more advanced but it might also be because of the different genres. Hinkel (2003; 2005a) and Hyland and Milton (1997) analysed student argumentative essays which were constrained by time (i.e. written in about one hour in response to examination prompts). But Burneikaitė (2008) examined master's dissertations which typically go through different stages of drafting and redrafting and very likely with supervisors (on some occasions) commenting and possibly suggesting changes on the students' writing before a final draft is submitted. So all these factors could contribute to the way learners use language to express opinions and convey arguments.

2.5.3.7   Abdollahzadeh (2011)

Although this study was concerned with examining the use of stance markers (i.e. hedges, emphatics, and attitude markers) in research article conclusion sections (rather than student texts) written in English by Anglo-American and Iranian academic writers, Abdollahzadeh (2011) also

reported that there was a significant difference in the overall use of stance markers by the two writer groups, with the English NSs using more markers (366 instances) than their Iranian counterparts (286 instances). But while the Iranian writers underused both boosters and attitude markers in their papers, the two writer groups did not significantly differ in their uses of hedges. Unlike Burneikaitė (2008), who reported that the L2 learners underused all stance markers including hedging, Abdollahzadeh found a heavy use of hedging devices in the two corpora of research articles. This could very likely be because these professional writers, unlike L2 learners, were more aware of the importance of leaving space for readers to disagree in order to gain their acceptance; however, this contradicted Vassileva's (2001) results (see section 2.5.3.3).

With regard to the use of boosters, Iranian writers expressed certainty to a lesser extent than the NS writers, with 102 instances of certainty found in the corpus of the NSs while only 68 instances were used in the Iranian corpus. The NS writers also employed certainty for different purposes. Abdollahzadeh attributed these differences to Iranian culture which "does not favour assertiveness and overt display of confidence" but which considers "taking a back seat on one's asserted position [as] a sign of modesty and respect." (p.295) However, many Anglo-American writers, as Crismore et al (1993) claimed, "view certainty as a sign of strength and hedging as a sign of weakness, perhaps because certainty is related to assertiveness and self-confidence" (p.65). Thus, they might be more willing to express their ideas with certainty more often than Iranian writers. So cultural differences seem to play a role in the rhetorical behaviour of these writers with respect to at least their use of assertive language.

Likewise, attitude markers were also employed less often and for a much narrower range of rhetorical functions in the Iranian papers in comparison with those of NSs. Abdollahzadeh suggested that the Iranians' limited use of attitude markers in terms of frequency and range of rhetorical functions could be because of their belief that "impersonality and less reliance on

personal projection in the form of opinions, attitudes, or feelings add possibly more to the objectivity and acceptability of their claims" (p.295). He claimed that the common practice in Iranian culture is "to abide by the rules and traditions without questioning or expressing doubt or opinion about them" (p.295).

Apparently, then, cultural upbringing and unawareness of the different pragmatic functions of certainty and attitudinal language across writing cultures may have an impact on the way NNS writers position themselves and express their epistemic and affective attitudes in their own texts, resulting in the underuse of boosters and attitude markers.

2.5.4   Pronouns and cross-cultural differences
2.5.4.1   Hinkel (2002)

Hinkel (2002) compared the use of first person singular pronouns (i.e. self-mention) and second person pronouns (i.e. engagement markers) in a corpus of argumentative essays written by American student writers and NNSs from six different language/cultural backgrounds. The NNS groups included speakers of Arabic in addition to Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, and Vietnamese who all attained a relatively high level of English language proficiency (their TOEFL scores ranged from 520 to 620) and had received extensive training and instruction in L2 reading and writing for periods of four to fifteen years. The corpus consisted of 434,768 words and 1,457 argumentative essays written for placement and diagnostic tests with prompts being identical for both NS and NNS essays.

Table 2-6: Median frequency rates for personal pronouns (Median %) (Adopted from Hinkel, 2002, p.86)

Personal Pronouns	NS	L1					
		Chinese	Japanese	Korean	Vietnamese	Indonesian	Arabic
First person	1.95	2.63*	3.97**	3.33*	3.33**	2.78*	1.92
Second person	0.00	1.07**	0.52**	0.94**	0.60**	0.000	0.40*
Noes: All comparisons are relative to NSs. *one-tailed p ≤ 0.05. **two-tailed p ≤ 0.05.							

As can be seen in Table 2-6, while the number of occurrences of first person singular pronouns in all learner language groups (except for Arabic) significantly exceeded that of the NS group, the Arab EFL writers employed slightly fewer person pronouns compared with their NS counterparts. Hinkel suggested that the considerable use of first person pronouns in the non-Arab L2 essays could be explained by the fact that sizable portions of personal pronouns were employed for the purposes of narrating and recounting experiences (Example 2-25). With regard to the Arab writers, Hinkel attributed the lower occurrences of self-mentions in their essays to Arabic writing traditions, which discourage the use of 'I' but accept the use of WE which helps establish a relationship of solidarity between writer and reader (Ostler, 1987; Sa'Adeddin, 1989).

Example 2-25: An extract including 'I' from an essay by a NNS student writer as cited in Hinkel (2002, p.88)

> When **I** was in **my** music class, **I** could forget about all **my** troubles. **I** liked playing the violin so much that **I** couldn't wait to go to the university to study. (Chinese)

Second person pronouns (Table 2-6 above) were used significantly more frequently in the essays of the Arab group and almost all other NNS groups compared with the NSs. But although YOU and YOUR signal direct appeals with the reader, they are generally considered inappropriate and so rarely employed in English academic writing. Hinkel again attributed their frequent use to the NNSs' culture. In the Arab culture, for instance, because the value of past experience for learning is well-appreciated by the speakers of Arabic (Johnstone, 1989), "directly addressing the reader to establish solidarity and communication may appear to be a reasonable approach to constructing text" (Hinkel, 2002, p.87).

While Hinkel's results are thought provoking, it is difficult to determine the extent to which Arabic traditions explain the findings and the Arab writers' uses of personal pronouns since, for instance, we are in no position to judge whether these learners tried or wanted to avoid the use of 'I' and employed WE instead. Possibly, interviews with the student writers would elicit information that could help in verifying such assumptions. Besides, Scarcella and Brunak's

(1981) study which investigated the use of exclusive WE in the speech of adult native speakers of English and Arabic suggested that the L1 transfer hypothesis did not seem to play a role in the learners' use/avoidance of 'I'/WE. Scarcella and Brunak reported that while the English NSs employed exclusive WE (as a strategy of showing indirectness when communicating with superiors) and avoided the use of 'I' and YOU in their speech, there was an absence of exclusive WE in the speech of the Arab EFL students and a heavy reliance on the use of 'I' and YOU. The authors attributed these learners' behaviours to their limited linguistic repertoire; that is, because 'I' and YOU were acquired earlier than exclusive WE, L2 students felt more at ease with the use of those already-learned pronouns. Even though Scarcella and Brunak's study was based on the analysis of transcripts of spoken language, it seems noteworthy here because, in contrast to Hinkel's, it casts doubts on the validity of L1 transfer theory and its influence on the Arab EFL learners' use of language in general and pronouns in particular.

Because no other studies, to my knowledge, explored the use of pronouns in the Arab EFL writers' texts, in the following sections I review some cross-cultural studies which are concerned with the L2 writing of learners of other cultural backgrounds but which interestingly can be divided into two lines of research: one line of research suggests that the differences between NS and NNS writers' texts are attributable to L1 transfer while the other questions the extensiveness of cultural influence on learners' use of pronouns.

2.5.4.2   Petch-Tyson (1998)

Petch-Tyson (1998) explored the degree of writer/reader visibility (i.e. interactional metadiscourse) in four corpora of argumentative essays written in English by university students from four different language and cultural backgrounds (French, Dutch, Swedish, and Finnish). The EFL output was compared with English NSs in order to determine whether there were differences between the NSs and the four EFL groups in the way they represented themselves

and their readers in writing. Petch-Tyson reported that all four EFL writer groups made a considerably greater use of personal pronouns when compared with their NS counterparts (Table 2-7).

Table 2-7: Analysis of personal pronouns (Adopted from Petch-Tyson, 1998, p.112)

Personal pronouns	Dutch 55,314	Finnish 56,910	French 58,068	Swedish 50,872	US 53,990
1st person singular pronouns	391	599	346	448	167
1st person plural pronouns	484	763	775	1,358	242
2nd person pronouns	447	381	257	227	76

By examining the concordances of 'I' across the corpora, looking at the kind of environment in which 'I' occurred, Petch-Tyson found that NSs and NNSs differed in their uses of 'I' not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. That is, while the NS writers employed 'I' mainly to recount personal experiences, expressing feelings and attitudes in real life to support their arguments, the predominant function of 'I' in the EFL corpora was to guide readers through the text. Petch-Tyson also noted a much greater occurrence of clustering or chains of features (e.g., "*I mean that according to my opinion there…*") in the learner data than in the native speaker concordances. Furthermore, it was found that the learner corpora featured frequent repetitions of phrases, and recurrent uses of expressions such as '*I think*' and '*I guess*' at the end of sentences, which creates a more chatty style. Hence, Petch-Tyson concluded that the learner writing conformed less to the conventions of academic writing and this could be attributed to the influence of culture or teaching factors.

While all these interpretations sound reasonable, it would be more insightful to interview the student writers and allow them to talk about their rhetorical writing choices and preferences. Interviews combined with other kinds of analysis (such as textual analysis) would help us

understand how different writer groups make use of interactional features and where variations often occur and what motivated such variations. Once we gain knowledge of how and why such features are used in NNS and NS texts, we will be better equipped to assist learners to use these interactional features effectively.

2.5.4.3   McCrostie (2008)

McCrostie (2008) duplicated Petch-Tyson's (1998) study, but with L2 texts written by Japanese EFL students. She examined the use of writer/reader visibility features in two corpora of argumentative essays written in English by groups of first and second year Japanese university students, both majoring in English language studies. McCrostie found that both groups of Japanese learners, like the European learners in Petch-Tyson's (1998) study, employed far more personal pronouns than the NS student writers which made the writing of the NNSs sound like "speech written down" (p.98). McCrostie suggested that this could be explained by the Japanese learners' lack of knowledge of English academic writing. Unlike Petch-Tyson (1998), McCrostie questions whether L1 transfer of academic writing tradition is central in learners' overuse of first person singular pronouns in their writing because, she explained,

> Japanese academics in most natural and social sciences consider the use of first person pronouns as lacking proper academic rigour. Instead, Japanese writers may use the term *hissya* (the author). (p.111)

Yet, the Japanese learners never employed the expression THE AUTHOR or THE WRITER to refer to themselves in their essays. It seems that these Japanese novice writers lacked experience and training in academic writing conventions not only in their L2 but also in their L1. Thus, the overuse of personal pronouns in the academic writing of NNS students could have resulted from them reproducing a more familiar conversational style.

Across the two Japanese learner groups, the second years used far fewer pronouns (1,155 vs. 2,045 per 50,000 words). McCrostie ascribed this drop to the explicit instruction they received during the second semester of the first and the second year of their studies where learners were often advised to reduce the use of first person pronouns in their academic writing.

Hence, L1 transfer does not seem to be an explanatory factor to account for McCrostie's results. Instead, she suggested that differences in the NS and NNS student writers' use of personal pronouns might be attributed to the learners' limited knowledge of academic writing conventions and explicit instruction. Callies (2013) reached similar conclusions from his investigation of novice writers' strategies in the (non-)representation of authorship in academic writing.

2.5.4.4   Callies (2013)

Callies (2013) explored learners' use of self-mentions (I, ME, and MY) and reader pronouns (WE, US, OUR, YOU, and ONE) in two comparable corpora: (i) the NNS corpus, which comprised eighteen research papers (amounting to 62,300 words), was written in English by German EFL university students from the field of Linguistics; and (ii) the NS corpus, which also consisted of eighteen Linguistics reports and research papers, was written by novice English NSs.

It was found that the German learners significantly overused all pronouns (I, WE, and ONE) except for YOU, which was slightly more frequent in the NS corpus. The most pronounced difference between the two writer groups was in the use of WE, indicating the German learners' attempt to avoid 'I' because WE was frequently used exclusively rather than inclusively. Callies suggested that this overrepresentation of first person pronouns in the learners' writing was very likely caused by the learners' insecurity which might have resulted from contradictory advice/teaching, inexperience with disciplinary conventions, and learners' limited linguistic

repertoire which did not seem to allow them to represent their results without mentioning the author-agent.

Again, however, without interviewing the student writers about their practices and preferences we cannot be certain whether these were the actual reasons behind their overuse and/or underuse of such features in their academic writing.

2.5.5   Engagement and cross-cultural differences
2.5.5.1   Hinkel (1999)

Hinkel examined the use of rhetorical questions and imperatives (among other rhetorical devices and syntactic markers) in a corpus of 30 university argumentative essays written by American NSs and 120 essays by non-native speakers (30 from each of the following four language groups: Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Indonesian). Essays by NNSs were selected on the basis of both the students' relatively high linguistic proficiency level (their TOEFL scores ranged from 567 to 623) and their length of residence in the United States, 1.5-3.1 years. All NNSs had received extensive instruction in L2 reading and writing in an L2 academic environment. All essays by NSs and NNSs were written during 1-hour placement tests, and the prompts were identical for both groups.

Table 2-8: Rhetorical questions and imperatives in NS and NNS essays (Median %) (Adopted from Hinkel, 1999, p.97)

Markers	NSs	Chinese	Korean	Japanese	Indonesian
Imperatives	[.00	.39]*	.74]*	.00]*	.43]*
Range	1.11	1.92	1.91	3.68	2.79
Rhetorical questions	[.00	.38]*	.42]*	.41]*	.44]*
Range	.63	1.94	2.72	1.94	3.43
*2-tailed p ≤ .05. Note: All comparisons are relative to English speakers					

Hinkel found that the two writer groups differed in their uses of imperatives and rhetorical questions, the NNSs employing a significantly greater number of imperatives and rhetorical

questions than their NS counterparts (Table 2-8). Since these two features are explicitly discouraged in L2 writing instructional textbooks (e.g., see Swales & Feak, 1994), and since they occur very rarely in published English academic writing (Biber, 1988), Hinkel suggested that these differences could be attributed to the influence of the learners' culture:

> advanced and trained L2 learners from cultures influenced by Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist precepts employed the rhetorical objectivity devices and markers common to the Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist traditions rather than those expected in Anglo-American academic compositions. (Hinkel, 1999, pp.106-107)

That is, the frequent use of imperatives and questions in the NNSs' writing could be the result of an influence of the Confucian and Taoist writing traditions, where direct personal appeals to readers could achieve "mutual understanding and solidarity" and at the same time display "the writer's authoritative stance" (p.98), and where questions can hedge claims (Ohta, 1991). Hinkel concluded that despite the relatively high linguistic proficiency of the NNS participants and despite the extensive training they had received in L2 writing, "rhetorical devices associated with Anglo-American notions of objectivity writing remain inaccessible to them" (p.107).

Interestingly, like Hinkel, Virtanen (1998) reported that the NNS student writers in her study employed a significantly higher number of questions when compared with their NS counterparts. More discussion about her study follows.

2.5.5.2   Virtanen (1998)

Virtanen (1998) aimed at investigating the overall frequencies and distribution of direct questions in argumentative EFL and NS student writing. Her study was based on an analysis of a NS corpus of 103 essays (totalling 87,497 words) by American and British university students and a NNS corpus of 248 essays (totalling 175,251 words) by Finnish speaking and Swedish speaking Finns.

Table 2-9: Distribution of direct questions in NS and NNS argumentative student writing: absolute frequencies, and relative frequencies per 1000 words (Adopted from Virtanen, 1998, p.97)

Subcorpus	Number of questions	?/1000 words
NS British and American	160	1.83
NNS L1 Finnish and Finland-Swedish	567	3.23

The results (as can be seen in Table 2-9) showed that the NNS writers used considerably more questions than their NS counterparts. Virtanen's analysis also indicated that while questions were generally employed to encourage reader involvement, they could be classified more specifically into two main functions: (i) topical and (ii) rhetorical. Topical questions, which have a text-organizing function, used to introduce or shift topics (Example 2-26) while rhetorical questions, which have an interactional function, used to convince the reader of a proposition and without providing an explicit answer (Example 2-27). Although both topical and rhetorical questions occurred in the NS and NNS corpora, it was found that the distribution of these questions in the essays under analysis varied to some extent. Virtanen noted that, despite the interpersonal functions of direct questions in academic writing, the overuse of this feature in the NNS student writing could diminish the argumentative power of the writing, and enhance its informality. She argued that such a variation in the use of questions between the two corpora could be attributed to cultural differences in rhetoric, supporting earlier studies such as Kaplan (1966).

Example 2-26: An extract including topical questions as cited in Virtanen (1998, p.100)

Does a terminally ill person with only a few months to live have the right to choose between a seemingly peaceful death at the hand of their doctor, or nurse they continue living in pain? Also, if this situation is accepted, does this mean that other cases, not as severe, might also be considered for this option? The issue of assisted suicide and euthanasia is now being addressed by society in response to the medical practices of Dr Kevorkian… (NS)

Example 2-27: An extract including rhetorical questions as cited in Virtanen (1998, p.100)

In closing, only one question need be asked. Is it worth losing lives to violent protests just to allow a few others to lose their lives to euthanasia? (NS)

2.6   Conclusion

In sum, most (if not all) cross-cultural studies have shown that EFL writers, regardless of their L1 and of the written genre (e.g., examination texts, argumentative essays, undergraduate project reports, master's dissertations, RAs) differ from their English NS counterparts in their uses of interactional language. Specifically:

- Many NNS writers, whether experts or novices, tend to use more assertive devices and less tentative language compared with English NS counterparts (see, e.g., Chen, 2012; Hinkel, 2005a; Hyland & Milton, 1997).

- While fewer studies have investigated the use of attitude markers in NSs' and NNSs' academic writing, NNS writers employ attitude markers less often than their English NS counterparts (e.g., Abdollahzadeh, 2011; Burneikaitė, 2008; Neff-van & Dafouz-Milne, 2008).

- Personal pronouns are generally overused by EFL learners even at advanced levels and are mainly used to perform low risk functions (whereas expert writers normally employ personal pronouns to claim authority). However, the Arab EFL learners in Hinkel's (2002) study employed 'I' slightly less often than their English NS counterparts but overused YOU, causing their writing to sound more informal.

- EFL writers were found to overuse questions and imperatives, causing their writing to depart from the conventions of academic writing (Virtanen, 1998).

Various reasons have been postulated in an attempt to explain these discrepancies in the ways NS and NNS writers present themselves or their readers, such as L1 transfer. But a few researchers attribute such variances between the two writer groups to learners' lack of knowledge of the conventions of academic writing or lack of training and practice rather than the influence of cultural backgrounds (see, e.g., McCrostie, 2008). Lorenz (1998) also casts doubt on

the validity of L1 transfer theory but suggests that learners' overuse of boosters and hedges in comparison with their NS counterparts is likely to be influenced by an eagerness to impress readers.

While all these explanations appear to be reasonable, they appear to be based on intuition. None of the studies reviewed in this chapter consulted the student writers or allowed them to talk about their language choices in their own texts by using for example discourse-based interviews. Although Hyland (2004, 2009) interviewed his student participants, the interviews were mainly to uncover their preferences and perceptions about academic writing in general rather than getting them to explain the reasons behind the linguistic choices they made in their own writing in particular.

It is also important to note that the literature discussed above is mainly concerned with argumentative essays rather than master's dissertations. Research investigating the use of interactional features in master's dissertations is very rare; Burneikaitė (2008) is an exception, reporting that NNS student writers underused all interactional markers (i.e. hedges, boosters, and attitude markers) compared with their NS counterparts. Burneikaitė also suggested that such variations might be caused by the learners' cultural background. Again this is merely speculation based on the researcher's best guess rather than based on writers' own accounts.

It is also noticeable that research in L2 writing has covered a range of writer groups of different cultural backgrounds but there is a clear absence of research of L2 writing by native speakers of Arabic.

This comparative study addresses these issues and helps to provide a better understanding of advanced student writing in general and Arab EFL writers in particular. Thus, both corpus-based and interview-based approaches were employed to answer the following questions:

1.   How do master's student writers from two disciplines (Linguistics and Literature) present themselves and engage readers in their writing?

- How frequently do they make use of these elements of stance and engagement? Are there any similarities or differences in the frequencies or the way they use them? How can we account for any similarities or differences?

2.   Within each discipline, how do NS and NNS master's student writers present themselves and engage readers in their writing?

- How frequently do they make use of these elements of stance and engagement? Are there any similarities or differences in the frequencies or the way they use them? How can we account for any similarities or differences?

Chapter 3   Methodology

3.1   Introduction

This chapter will provide detailed accounts of the research methods used in the study, the corpus, the informants, the research site, and the procedures taken to collect the data. But first in section 3.2, I will begin by briefly presenting and justifying the selection of mixed methods research. In section 3.3, I will more specifically focus on discussing the pros and cons of corpus-based content analysis and the interview-based approach.

3.2   Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research

Mixed methods (MM) research has been called the "third methodological movement" following the developments of first quantitative and then qualitative research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003, p.5). It has been argued that quantitative and qualitative approaches should not be regarded as "rigid, distinct categories, polar opposites, or dichotomies" but they represent different ends on a continuum (Creswell, 2014, p.3) in that they are not mutually exclusive and can be combined, although a study will tend to be more qualitative than quantitative or vice versa. Many different terms have been used for this approach, such as integrating, quantitative and qualitative methods, multimethod, and mixed methodology; but recently methodologists appear to have settled on the term mixed methods (e.g. Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Several definitions for mixed methods have been proposed over the years. The core of these definitions involves combining, integrating, or mixing elements of qualitative and quantitative methods or approaches (see Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). And so to arrive at a satisfactory definition of MM, we should first view definitions of qualitative and quantitative research and then proceed towards a definition of MM. The three definitions presented below are cited from Creswell's (2014) recent book:

- *Qualitative research* is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. […] Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation.

- *Quantitative research* is an approach for testing objective **theories** by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures. […] Those who engage in this form of inquiry have assumptions about testing theories deductively, building in protections against bias, controlling for alternative explanations, and being able to generalize and replicate the findings.

- *Mixed methods research* is an approach to inquiry involving collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. The core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the combination of the qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone.

(Creswell, 2014, p.4)

Thus, the value of combining qualitative and quantitative data "reside[s] in the idea that all methods [have] bias and weaknesses, and that the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data neutralize[s] the weaknesses of each form of data" (Creswell, 2014, pp.14-15). However, this must not be taken as minimizing the importance of selecting either a qualitative or quantitative approach when it is called for by the situation. Not all situations justify the choice of mixed methods. There are times when a qualitative approach seems the best choice because the researcher's aims are to explore a problem and deliver multiple perspectives of participants. At other times, a quantitative approach could be best, because the researcher's goal is to reach an understanding of the relationship among variables or to determine whether one group performs better in some way than another group. So it is suggested that we think about fitting methods to different types of research problems (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Examples of research problems that fit mixed methods are those in which one data source might be inadequate, results

need to be further explained, exploratory results need to be generalized, a second method is required to boost a primary method, and an overall research objective could be best tackled with multiple phases, or projects (see Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

3.2.1   Mixed methods research designs

MM research designs combine elements of both quantitative and qualitative approaches and require creativity and flexibility in their construction. But methodologists cannot create a complete taxonomy of MM designs because the diversity in mixed methods studies is far greater than any typology can effectively encompass (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). However, according to Creswell the three main models found in the social sciences today are:

- **Convergent parallel mixed method**
  In this design, the investigator typically collects both forms of data [quantitative and qualitative data] at roughly the same time and then integrates the information in the interpretation of the overall results. Contradictions or incongruent findings are explained or further probed in this design.

- **Explanatory sequential mixed methods**
  [T]he researcher first conducts quantitative research, analyzes the results and then builds on the results to explain them in more detail with qualitative research. It is considered explanatory because the initial quantitative data results are explained further with the qualitative data. It is considered sequential because the initial quantitative phase is followed by the qualitative phase. This type of design is popular in fields with a strong quantitative orientation (hence the project begins with quantitative research).

- **Exploratory sequential mixed methods**
  This is the reverse sequence from the explanatory sequential design. In the exploratory sequential approach the researcher first begins with a qualitative research phase and explores the views of participants. The data are then analyzed, and the information used to build into a second, quantitative phase.

(Creswell, 2014, pp.15-16)

Mixed methods research can therefore open up fruitful new avenues for research in the social sciences. It can help (i) achieve a comprehensive understanding of a target phenomenon, (ii) validate one's conclusion by presenting converging results found through different methods, and (iii) reach audiences that would not give approval and support to one of the approaches if applied

alone. MM research can generate an overall level of trustworthiness for the researcher if executed well (Dörnyei, 2007).

Although mixing qualitative and quantitative methods has been seen by many as a potentially enriching approach, scholars have warned us about the challenges that this form of research can pose. These challenges include the need for extensive data collection, the time required for analysing both quantitative and qualitative data, and the requirement for the researcher to be adequately trained in both quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

In light of my research questions, mixed methods research appears to be the most appropriate method to use. In the following I describe how the MM design was applied to my research.

3.3   The design of my study: Corpus-based and interview-based approaches

For the purpose of my study, I adopted Harwood's (2006) heuristic, combining the corpus-based and interview-based approaches to investigate the use of stance and engagement markers in students' writing from two disciplines: Linguistics and Literature. So while the corpus-based approach helps to highlight disciplinary similarities and differences in the way student writers used language to express stance and engage readers, the interview-based approach provides accounts of the reasons that motivated writers to choose and use such language in their master's dissertations. In Creswell's (2014) taxonomy, it is the explanatory sequential MM design which best fits my study given that the study begins with quantitative analysis where the results are then further explained by qualitative data. However, my study is not focused primarily on quantitative data as the number of dissertations in my corpus is not big enough to enable me make a generalization from the findings. Instead, in this study I am more concerned to find out why student writers choose to interact with their material and readers in the way they do.

Thus, my study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches, comprising frequency counts and text analyses of a corpus of a total of 39 master's dissertations from two different disciplines (Linguistics and Literature), followed by interviews with 15 of the writer-participants: four native speakers of English (English NS) and eleven EFL writers whose L1 is Arabic (Arab EFL). These two approaches (corpus-based and interview-based approaches) will be presented and discussed in detail below.

3.3.1   Corpus-based content analysis approach

Content analysis is a research technique used in corpus-based analysis. It is sometimes seen "as virtually synonymous with discourse analysis" (Huckin, 2004, p.13); however, while discourse analysis is fundamentally qualitative, content analysis can be used qualitatively or quantitatively (Miller & Whicker, 1999) or even in tandem. Huckin (2004) defined it as

> the identifying, quantifying, and analyzing of specific words, phrases, concepts, or other observable semantic data in a text or body of texts with the aim of uncovering some underlining thematic or rhetorical pattern running through these texts. (p.14)

The basic principle of this approach is its focus on the surface aspects of the text. Traditionally, content analysis comprises mostly of counts of "only those words, phrases, or other linguistic tokens that belong to a predetermined list" (Huckin, 2004, p.15). Because it often restricts its scope to formal text features, quantitative content analysis has been criticized as it then apparently overlooks "rhetorical, social, interpersonal, and other contextual aspects of written communication" (Huckin, 2004, p.26). However, Huckin argues that while it would be risky to rely on quantitative content analysis as the chief tool for investigation, it can be valuable as an aide to more qualitative analysis. In fact, modern content analysis, since the 1970s, has tended to combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to focus on "both explicit and implicit concepts, and empower the researcher to use his or her judgment in determining, on a case by case basis, whether a particular linguistic token references a particular concept in the

given context" (Huckin, 2004, p.15). It is therefore seen to offer a degree of thoroughness that is usually lacking from other research methods. Nonetheless, MacNealy (1999) warned that such practices, which involve doing detailed text analysis, required a great deal of time and energy. While there is no doubt that content analysis is "labor intensive" (Huckin, 2004, p.28), it has many virtues. Thomas (1994), for instance, noted that content analysis delivers data in the form of frequency and distribution measurements that is unobtainable when using other methods. Moreover, because content analysis bases its explorations on observable data, it provides a higher level of objectivity than other research techniques. In comparison with instruments such as interviews, Weber (1990) remarked,

> content analysis usually yields unobtrusive measures in which neither the sender nor the receiver of the message is aware that it is being analyzed. Hence, there is little danger that the act of measurement itself will act as a force for change that confounds the data. (p.10)

Moreover, corpus-based content analysis studies effectively highlight disciplinary similarities and differences (e.g. Abdi, 2002; Hyland, 1998b,c, 2001a, 2005b); however, as Harwood (2006) argues, "they can give the reader the impression that (a) there is a consensus within each discipline concerning [the use of certain linguistic features in academic writing] and (b) such practices in each discipline are stable, when neither of these is necessarily the case" (p.425). Furthermore, the corpus-based approach is limited as it fails to access the writer's perspective. But it is said that content analysis can definitely function as empirical grounding for other more effective methods (Huckin, 2004, p.14).

The present study, which employs both the corpus- and the interview-based approaches, is predominantly qualitative as it seeks to answer how and why different writer groups of different cultural backgrounds/from different disciplinary communities use stance and engagement markers in their writing. But the frequency counts obtained from the corpus-based content analysis are of importance as they can reveal which stance and/or engagement features are being

over- and under-used by the different sub-corpora. Interviews with the student writers themselves can then reveal the motivations behind their choices of these interactional devices.

3.3.2   Interview-based approach

 "Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (Patton, 2002, p.341). We interview people to find out about their feelings, thoughts and intentions. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into someone else's mind and obtain their perspectives. This can be done in different interview formats which will be considered in the following section.

3.3.2.1   Main types of interviews

One-to-one interviews can be divided into three different types: (i) structured interview, (ii) unstructured interview, and (iii) semi-structured interview. These types differ according to the degree of structure in the process (Dörnyei, 2007). However, they "share the commitment to ask genuinely open-ended questions that offer the persons being interviewed the opportunity to respond in their own words and to express their own personal perspectives." (Patton 2002, p.348)

3.3.2.1.1   Structured interviews

In this type of interview, the researcher follows a pre-prepared 'interview guide' which consists of a set of questions fully and carefully worded and structured before the interview so that each informant will be asked the same questions in the same sequence with essentially the same words. The informants answer the same questions; thus the comparability of their responses increases but the flexibility for probing is limited. It is suitable for cases when the researcher is aware of what he/she does not know and can phrase questions that will generate the needed answers (Dörnyei, 2007).

3.3.2.1.2   *Unstructured interviews*

The 'unstructured interview' is the most open-ended approach to interviewing. Because there is no predetermined set of questions, as opposed to the 'structured interview', this interview type relies completely on the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of an interview. However, in advance of the interview, "the researcher usually thinks of a few (1-6) opening questions to elicit the interviewee's story" (Dörnyei, 2007, p.136). The unstructured interview is also called "the informal conversational interview" (Patton, 2002, p.342; and it is sometimes referred to as "ethnographic interview". This type of interview is most appropriate when a study focuses on the deep meaning of particular phenomena.

3.3.2.1.3   *Semi-structured interviews*

The 'semi-structured interview', which offers a compromise between the structured and unstructured approaches, is the most favoured interview type by applied linguists. It involves a preparation of a list of questions or issues that are to be explored with each informant before the interview begins. So while the interview guide offers the same basic topics to be pursued with each interviewee, the interviewer is still free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will clarify that particular topic. The advantages of preparing an interview guide are (a) to help the interviewer make the best use of the limited time available in an interview situation; and (b) to help make interviewing a number of different people more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the topics to be investigated.

Given all these advantages, the semi-structured interview seemed an appropriate choice for my study. That is, while I had some knowledge about what topics should be discussed (e.g., the interviewees' use of stance and engagement markers), obviously I would need to probe and ask further questions about any interesting phenomenon arising from the interview in order to explore its deep meaning. However, this is not to say that interviews are free of disadvantages. In the following section, I will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of interviews in general.

3.3.2.2   Strengths and weaknesses of interviews

By employing interviews with the writer-participants, we are able to learn about the writers'
motivations for the choices they made when composing their texts, allowing things to be
interpreted by the writers themselves rather than relying solely on the researcher/analyst. In other
words, interviews allow us to conduct emic, as opposed to etic research; while etic research
involves interpreting things only through the eyes of the researcher, emic enquiry allows us to
interpret things through the eyes of the writer-participant (Harwood, 2006).

As valuable as interviews can be in providing some insight into the factors motivating the
writers' choices and decisions, they are not without drawbacks. For example, one of the central
problems of retrospective accounts is the delay between process and report and consequent
forgetting. When writers are asked to report and remember the processes involved in
constructing a text at an earlier time, it appears clear that they remember relatively little and that
"the farther the separation between the event and the recall, the more likely that the account will
contain…**conventionalization** and **simplification**…. Details drop out and new ones are added"
(Prior, 2004, pp.184-5, emphasis in original).

Greene and Higgins (1994) also discuss this concern explaining that

> remembering is an act of reconstruction…that entails simplification, compression, and
> generalization in order to give some coherence to experience. When [writers] are asked to
> report on their own processes, … [they] may use a single experience and generalize from
> this instance to typify their approach to writing. When they do not clearly remember
> certain aspects of their experience, writers may fill in with more general information
> based on their knowledge of what writers usually do or should do, or they may gloss over
> or omit idiosyncratic aspects of their performance that do not fit this prototype. (p.120)

Walford (2007) adds that

> the interviewee may have incomplete knowledge and faulty memory. They will always
> have subjective perceptions that will be related to their own past experiences and current
> conditions. At best, interviewees will only give what they are prepared to reveal about

their subjective perceptions of events and opinions. These perceptions and opinions will change over time, and according to circumstance. They may be at some considerable distance from 'reality' as others might see it. (p.147)

Another problem is that the writer-participants may easily fall prey to inferential errors when interviewers probe using general questions such as "How do you plan before you write?" or "How do you revise?" rather than linking questions to a very recent, specific writing event (Tomlinson, 1984, p.436).

In response to these concerns related to interviews and retrospection, a number of suggestions have been provided to help overcome such problems. For example, since writers have the tendency to generalize information, Greene and Higgins (1994) suggest the use of concrete examples taken from the writer's own text because talking from a specific text could help writers recreate the thinking that motivated the choices/decisions they made when writing. Thus, "[t]heir responses might be far more focused, accurate and detailed" (p.124). In support of this, Harwood (2006), in his study of the personal pronoun use in political science, found that "getting writers to talk about their pronoun use with reference to their own writing" (p.430) would partially solve the problems of recall error and lack of self-awareness.

What scholars are implying here is a "discourse-based interview" (Odell et al, 1983) (which can also be employed in a semi-structured format) in order to combat some of the interviews weaknesses discussed above. What it is and how it can be applied are the topics of the following section.

3.3.2.3   Discourse-based interview

The discourse-based interview is one type of retrospective method. It was designed and developed to study workplace writing by Odell et al (1983) who believe that

we develop our skill as writers not by studying rules, but by continually writing. Further, it is likely that we do not consciously formulate much of this knowledge as a set of

premises or maxims, but instead internalize it as inexplicit functional knowledge that we shall use and expand upon each time we write. (p.221)

In other words, each time we write we can use such "tacit knowledge" without having to formulate it consciously. So in order to "enable writers to make explicit the knowledge or strategies that previously may have been only implicit" (p.223), Odell et al argue that interviewers need to discuss texts with writers to elicit information about such "tacit knowledge". As a way of encouraging writer-participants to articulate the reasons for selecting specific linguistic features and thus allow the researcher to gain access to this "tacit knowledge", Odell et al suggest two basic questions:

> *"Here you do X. In other pieces of writing, you do Y or Z. In this passage, would you be willing to do Y or Z rather than X? What basis do you have for preferring one alternative to the other?"* (p.223)

Similar to the discourse-based interview is 'talk around texts', a method that has been developed by Roz Ivanič (for an account for this, see Lillis (2009)). Ivanič draws on the discourse-based interview by Odell et al (1983) in three specific ways: (a) she adopts the idea of having a text as a base for discussion; (b) she uses the practice of presenting alternative linguistic–rhetorical features as a way for generating discussion with writer-participants; and (c) she focuses on a range of linguistic features such as modality, choice of lexis, etc. (Lillis, 2009).

However, there are some differences between these two methodological tools. Perhaps the most obvious is that because the '*discourse-based interview'* could help the researcher gain access to the "tacit knowledge" writer-participants bring to their writing, the researcher needs to determine specific linguistic features that the writer-participants used in their writing and then encourage them to articulate the reasons for such use. Conversely, the researcher in the method of *'talk around text'* encourages the writer-participants to identify aspects of the text that they believe are worthy of analysis. This should enable the analysts to recognize important features that they may not have noticed themselves (Lillis, 2009).

Obviously, both methods seek to build on emic (writer) understandings. Thus, they usefully help the researcher/analyst reach beyond the text. But for my research, I opted for the discourse-based interview since my approach was closer to Odell et al (1983); for example, the linguistic features, which are of interest to my study, are already identified as stance and engagement markers. So I adapted the interview procedures of the discourse-based interview (e.g. on a couple of occasions I presented a range of alternatives to the writers and asked why they might prefer to choose one of the markers) to reveal the writers' preferences and perceptions about their use of stance and engagement markers in their dissertations, and to uncover the reasons behind selecting these particular markers in their writing.

So like Odell et al, I used the interviews "to identify the kinds of world knowledge and expectations that informants bring to writing tasks and to discover the perceptions informants have about the conceptual demands that functional, interactive writing tasks make on them" (Odell et al, 1983, p.228). Although this kind of interview proved to be useful for eliciting this sort of information, one should be aware of the danger of "oversimplifying claims framed in relation to such data" (Lillis, 2008, p.361). While the discourse-based format will combat some of the limitations of interviews, it cannot solve everything. For example, Tomlinson (1984) pointed out that the best way to elicit better accounts is to interview writers immediately upon the conclusion of the writing activity. This however can be difficult to accomplish with the discourse-based interview format where the researcher needs time to analyse texts and then decide on and prepare questions about the feature of language to be discussed. But while it has been accepted that data based upon retrospection are incomplete since writer-participants are required to reconstruct experience from memory and so that their ability to describe exactly how any task is performed is limited,

> [r]etrospective accounts can at least offer a plausible explanation, providing more detail
> than we might obtain by simple speculation or by other methods alone. (Greene &
> Higgins, 1994, p.120)

Another issue that has also been called into question is the validity of the interview data and how interviewees might possibly thwart researchers' purposes in generating 'truthful' or 'credible' data. Tomlinson (1984) points out that the writers may be giving a performance rather than reporting what they have done. It may be because they want to please or impress the researcher and this of course can influence the type and accuracy of the data we collect.

However, acknowledging the weaknesses and limitations of interviews does not mean that we should reject interviews altogether. In fact, many scholars have provided well-reasoned arguments for how the use of interviews might be theorized and modified, rather than discarded completely (see, for example, Hammersley, 2003; Holstein & Gubrium, 2004; Mishler, 1986).

As with any research method, the retrospective interview can only reveal part of the process of writing. "In order to reveal the richness and complexity of what is involved in composing" (p.127), Greene and Higgins (1994) suggest combining methods. In fact, many scholars are in favour of combining methods that could complement each other. For example, Harwood (2006) argues that an integrated approach that combines the strengths of both corpus analysis and interviews is needed. That is, while corpus-based analyses provide us with insights into broad disciplinary tendencies concerning the frequencies and functions of a linguistic feature under investigation, the interview-based approach offers us an emic perspective on writers' intentions and motivations that a corpus-based account cannot provide.

As mentioned before, I adopted Harwood's (2006) combined approach. After the corpus-analyses, I interviewed 15 of the writer-participants, employing the format of semi-structured merged with discourse-based interviews. How data were collected will be presented after describing the research site in the following section.

3.4   Research Site

My research took place in a single UK university, namely the University of Essex, involving three distinct departments: (i) the Department of Language and Linguistics (L&L), (ii) International Academy (IA), and (iii) Literature, Film, and Theatre Studies (LiFTS). However, the master's programmes offered by both L&L and IA were, for the purpose of my study, subsumed under one main discipline: *'Linguistics'* which encompasses a range of subdisciplines (e.g., Applied Linguistics, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Syntax, etc.). From the LiFTS department, only two master's programmes (MA in Literature and MA in Film & Literature) were selected and classified as subdisciplines of *'Literature'*.

In the following section, I will shed some light on the similarities and differences between these programmes/departments with regard to the dissertation writing and marking procedure and discuss why these details are of importance here.

3.4.1   Key similarities and differences between the master's programmes/departments

All three departments stress that in order for a master's dissertation to be successful, students should show understanding of relevant ideas (theoretical or applied) and techniques. They also need to be critical in their evaluation, interpretation, argumentation, analysis, and use of evidence. Moreover, their expressions and writing style have to be to a good standard of clarity, fluency, and appropriacy, showing awareness of their audience. However, they have differing regulations with regard to word lengths: L&L requires 16,000 words, IA accepts dissertations of 12,000 words. Some LiFTS programmes give students the option of producing a literary work (whether a piece of creative writing or a play) and then an accompanying dissertation which is related to it in some way. But when it requires a stand-alone dissertation, the dissertation should be 20,000 words, and this applies to the two LiFTS master's programmes included in my study under the Literature category (i.e. all dissertations in my corpus were stand-alone ones).

Another issue observed is related to the degree of emphasis on language correctness. While all departments highlight that dissertations should be well presented, LiFTS is the only department that implements explicit penalties for spelling mistakes, grammatical and syntactical errors, or lack of proof-reading; according to LiFTS marking criteria, poor presentation will be penalized by up to 10 points. Differences can also be noted in the marking procedures in the three departments. It is typical in all three departments that two internal examiners will assign a mark to a master's dissertation. However, while in L&L and IA, the first marker is usually the supervisor, in LiFTS the supervisor has no marker role at all. Hence it may be that the supervisor's (non-)involvement in marking the dissertation may affect how students use language: there is a sense with L&L and IA students that they are 'writing for the supervisor' who is their first marker. These students may feel the need to use the stance and engagement features they know (or believe) their supervisors approve of. But in LiFTS things are clearly very different. Since they do not personally know their main readers (in this case their markers), they might keep a distance between themselves and the reader. It could be argued that at master's level students should be able to present their work to the larger community rather than to a particular reader. But given that this is an assessed genre, it is very likely that students are concerned about the mark and the marker.

3.5   Data collection
3.5.1   The corpus: size and design

Decisions about the size and design of a corpus depend very much on the purposes for which the corpus is to be used. For the purposes of my study which aims at comparing and contrasting the use of stance and engagement markers in master's dissertations in two distinct disciplines (Linguistics and Literature), the corpus was assembled of 39 dissertations (20 from Linguistics and 19 from Literature), 19 written by native speakers of English and 20 by Arab EFL writers. All dissertations selected for the corpus were written relatively recently (2009-2012, except for one written in 2007 but the writer was not interviewed). Collecting dissertations that were

written relatively recently was imperative because I intended to interview the writers of these dissertations under analysis. So it was an attempt to lessen the effect of the gap in time between the actual writing and the interview, to therefore lessen the problem of writers' recall—their difficulty to remember, for example, why they used particular items in their writing rather than alternatives. To stimulate the writers' memory, a discourse-based interview was employed (see sections 3.3.2.2 and 3.3.2.3 for more details about the strengths and weaknesses of the interview methods and the discourse-based interview format, respectively).

Another feature of the corpus design was that all dissertations should be of the same quality (i.e. all were awarded relatively high grades: 65^2 or more). Because my study looks at the similarities and differences (i) across two disciplines (Linguistics and Literature) and then (ii) within each discipline between the two writer groups (English NSs and Arab EFL writers), comparable texts were sought. One of the considerations was the grade awarded to the dissertation and the criterion of quality; for example, it seems reasonable to assume that low-graded dissertations (in comparison with high-graded ones) may lack convincing or clear ideas (as made clear from the marking criteria set by the target departments; see Appendix A). This in turn may mean that high and low quality texts feature different patterns of stance and engagement markers in terms of both quantity and quality. Moreover, since one of my concerns is pedagogical, I want to see what good writers do, because when providing learners with pedagogical models, it is always beneficial to provide them with examples from successful student writing. Therefore, I felt it is essential to distinguish and then select only high-graded dissertations.

Although all these factors were taken into consideration in order to control variables and to maintain comparable groups, the dissertations in my corpus cannot be said to be representative of all the dissertations submitted to each of these two disciplines because of the relatively small

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[2] A score of 65 was chosen in particular because in these departments, prospective PhD candidates are required to score GPAs of 65 or more to be accepted onto the doctoral programme. And a score of 65 or more is seen to constitute 'evidence of research potential' by the departments and by prospective PhD supervisors.

number of texts and the diversity of sub-disciplines within each domain.

3.5.1.1 Compiling the corpus

Dissertations were collected either from the writers themselves or from the target departments. At first, emails were sent to potential participants (some of them are my friends or were suggested by them). I also asked the postgraduate administrators of the target departments to forward my email to their postgraduate students. In the email, I explained the purpose of my research and what I required of them. I asked for: (i) electronic copies of their dissertation (if it was written relatively recently (i.e. 2009-2012), and scored 65 or more); (ii) a copy of their supervisor's feedback and comments on their first drafts of their dissertations (to see to what extent the supervisors influenced the writing in general and the use of stance and engagement markers in particular); and (iii) a copy of the markers' feedback (to see if the markers offered any comments on the students' use of language and to pursue at interview how such comments were received by the students). Also I asked them to fill in a short form (Appendix B) to elicit some background information (for example their previous education), and in the case of EFL students a question was added about whether they had taken any English courses prior to their master's degree (for a full account of this form, see 3.5.2.4). Learning about their educational background could help us understand some of their writing practices and to what extent this might have influenced their stance in writing. Finally, in the email, it was mentioned that I would like to interview them about their use of certain words/expressions.

Sadly, I received very few positive replies. It seems that one of the reasons why these tactics were unsuccessful was that (as I was told) some potential participants were unable (or unwilling) to provide me with all the documents requested, such as documents showing comments from their supervisors and feedback from the markers. This was presumably for one of two reasons: (i) these documents were now lost (particularly if the potential participants had not finished their dissertations recently); or (ii) students may have felt sharing markers' and supervisors'

comments (which would have undoubtedly contained at least some criticisms) was face threatening.

Therefore, since the dissertations were the main documents I needed for my study, I modified the emails (see Appendix C)[3] by deleting the request for supervisors' and markers' feedback and sent them out again to the same potential participants including those who explained that they were unable to participate because of these unavailable documents. By doing so, I received some more positive responses.

Also, from searching the library catalogue of the dissertations submitted recently to the departments in question, I made a list of those students who were apparently native speakers of English or Arabic judging by their names. Then I asked the departments to confirm the nationalities of the writers in my list and to provide me with electronic/hard copies of their dissertations if they had received a mark of 65 or above. For ethical reasons, they were able to confirm whether or not these dissertations had been awarded 65 or above without specifying the exact mark. They provided me with the electronic/hard copies of the texts only if the authors had given permission for the university to put their dissertations in the library, meaning they had given their consent to making the dissertations publically available. Thus, only the ones that met all criteria were included into my corpus.

So, in total, 39 dissertations were collected for my corpus, from three departments but classified into two disciplines: Linguistics and Literature. See Table 3-1 which displays the distribution and the number of words of all dissertations in my corpus.

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[3] The same emails were sent to a number of universities in the UK, in particular to departments of linguistics (including any department that offers master's programmes in linguistics, applied linguistics, or education) and to departments of literature (including any department that offers master's programmes in literature). But because I did not receive many replies, my corpus was limited to dissertations from one UK University.

Table 3-1: Overview of dissertations in my corpus

Disciplines	Master's Programme	English NS vs. Arab EFL writers	Number of dissertations	Number of words	Total
Linguistics (Ling)	• Applied Linguistics (AL) • English Language Teaching (ELT) • Linguistics • Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)	English NS	10	156,555	323,171
		Arab EFL	10	166,616	
Literature (Lit)	• Literature (Lit) • Film and Literature (F&L)	English NS	9	189,783	364,798
		Arab EFL	10	175,015	
Total number of words in the corpus					687,969

As can be seen in Table 3-1, each discipline (Linguistics and Literature) encompasses a range of subdisciplines. While it was difficult to collect 20 dissertations written for one particular subdiscipline, fulfilling all criteria I set for my corpus (e.g., awarded a high mark and written recently by English NSs or Arab EFL writers), an effort was made to at least compile balanced subcorpora. For example, the topics of dissertations selected for the Linguistics corpus were distributed evenly between the two writer groups (English NSs and Arab EFL writers). That is, in the English NS subcorpus, there are four dissertations in ELT/TESOL, one in linguistics, and five in AL. Similar distributional patterns of topics are also found in the Arab EFL subcorpus within Linguistics. Unfortunately, within the Literature corpus there was an imbalance in the dissertation topics between the two writer groups as it was not easy to compile two balanced subcorpora. In fact, two problems were encountered when selecting dissertations for the Lit corpus: (i) there were few dissertations written for the MA programme in Literature by English NSs but there were some written in Film & Literature following the criteria of the MA in Literature (i.e. they were critical/analytical dissertations of 20,000 words, satisfying the same requirements of dissertations in MA Literature and were marked according to the marking

criteria of MA in Literature). Thus, a decision was made to include dissertations from both programmes in the corpus as subdisciplines of Literature to approach the number of dissertations I was aiming at (i.e. ten dissertations by each writer group within each discipline); (ii) no dissertations in Film & Literature written by Arab EFL writers satisfied my criteria (that is, these dissertation were only 10,000 words and were submitted in conjunction with complementary creative work, such as a film). So, since there was no other choice and since dissertations in Literature are the main focus of my research, the Arab EFL subcorpus was compiled from dissertations written only for the Literature programme in contrast to the English NS subcorpus which included dissertations from both subdisciplines: Literature and Film & Literature.

It is worth reiterating that I am not by any means claiming that the dissertations in my corpus are representative of all dissertations submitted in the disciplines and therefore it is not one of my aims to generalise from the findings. Instead, my study is largely qualitative and I am more interested to find out about the student writers' own perspectives about the use of stance and engagement features and what motivated their use of such language features in their dissertations.

3.5.1.2   Naming, formatting, and preparing files

The corpus was divided into two sub-corpora: (i) Linguistics (Ling) and (ii) Literature (Lit). And these were divided further into four sub-corpora according to the two different writer groups:

(i)   Linguistics Dissertations by English NSs,

(ii)   Linguistics Dissertations by Arab EFL writers,

(iii)   Literature Dissertations by English NSs, and

(iv)   Literature Dissertations by Arab EFL writers.

Accordingly, dissertations were given identification numbers as they were added to the corpus. For example, Ling03-NS: 'Ling' signifying Linguistics, '03' identifying this as the third

dissertation in this category, and 'NS' referring to the English native speaker writer. The four tables (Table 3-2, 3-3, 3-4, and 3-5) below provide information about each dissertation and writer from each of the four groups in my corpus.

Table 3-2: Linguistics- English NS student writers

	Dissertation Code	Writer's Gender	Writer's Nationality	Year of Dissertation Submission	Number of Words in Dissertation	Dissertation Grade
1.	Ling01-NS	F	British	2010	12723	70 Distinction
2.	Ling02-NS	M	British	2011	10823	78 Distinction
3.	Ling03-NS	F	British	2009	16938	78 Distinction
4.	Ling04-NS	F	British	2011	14465	67 Merit
5.	Ling05-NS	M	British	2012	18355	67 Merit
6.	Ling06-NS	F	British	2009	17867	80 Distinction
7.	Ling07-NS	M	British	2012	15941	70 Distinction
8.	Ling08-NS	F	American	2011	17528	78 Distinction
9.	Ling09-NS	F	British	2012	13963	67 Merit
10.	Ling10-NS	F	British	2007	17952	72 Distinction

Table 3-3: Linguistics- Arab EFL student writers

	Dissertation Code	Writer's Gender	Writer's Nationality	Year of Dissertation Submission	Number of Words in Dissertation	Dissertation Grade
1.	Ling01-EFL	F	Saudi	2010	17186	68 Merit
2.	Ling02-EFL	F	Saudi	2010	13378	71 Distinction
3.	Ling03-EFL	M	Saudi	2010	17404	76 Distinction
4.	Ling04-EFL	F	Syrian	2010	18829	70 Distinction
5.	Ling05-EFL	F	Saudi	2011	17682	65 Merit
6.	Ling06-EFL	F	Saudi	2011	17457	66 Merit
7.	Ling07-EFL	M	Saudi	2009	11055	71 Distinction
8.	Ling08-EFL	F	Saudi	2010	18952	70 Distinction
9.	Ling09-EFL	F	Saudi	2011	17946	70 Distinction
10.	Ling10-EFL	M	Syrian	2009	16727	65 Merit

Table 3-4: Literature- English NS student writers

	Dissertation Code	Writer's Gender	Writer's Nationality	Year of Dissertation Submission	Number of Words in Dissertation	Dissertation Grade
1.	Lit01-NS	M	British	2010	23819	82 Distinction
2.	Lit02-NS	F	British	2011	21376	Distinction
3.	Lit03-NS	M	British	2009	21347	Distinction
4.	Lit04-NS	F	British	2011	20792	Distinction
5.	Lit05-NS	M	British	2009	19910	Distinction
6.	Lit06-NS	F	British	2011	19486	Distinction
7.	Lit07-NS F&L	F	British	2010	22534	Distinction
8.	Lit08-NS F&L	M	British	2010	20460	Distinction
9.	Lit09-NS F&L	F	British	2009	20059	Distinction

Table 3-5: Literature- Arab EFL student writers

	Dissertation Code	Writer's Gender	Writer's Nationality	Year of Dissertation Submission	Number of Words in Dissertation	Dissertation Grade
1.	Lit01-EFL	F	Syrian	2011	19710	66 Merit
2.	Lit02-EFL	F	Syrian	2011	18944	65 Merit
3.	Lit03-EFL	F	Saudi	2010	19195	65 Merit
4.	Lit04-EFL	F	Syrian	2010	18730	65 Merit
5.	Lit05-EFL	M	Syrian	2010	17429	67 Merit
6.	Lit06-EFL	F	Syrian	2009	17597	68 Merit
7.	Lit07-EFL	F	Syrian	2010	15068	66 Merit
8.	Lit08-EFL	M	Syrian	2010	16484	65 Merit
9.	Lit09-EFL	F	Syrian	2012	15963	66 Merit
10.	Lit10-EFL	F	Syrian	2012	15895	65 Merit

Information about each of the dissertations and writers was collected either from the participants themselves (who agreed to take part in my study and therefore filled in the short form I sent them) or from the administrative staff who provided me with some of the dissertations in my corpus but not the precise marks (see 3.5.1.1 above). Such information was essential to help build comparable corpora. However, when constructing the two writer subcorpora in Literature, while all L1 writers in the Literature subcorpus obtained distinctions for their dissertations, none of the Arab EFL writers received a distinction mark. In an ideal world I would have liked to have got a more equivalent sample of texts, in that I would have liked all the L2 texts to have

been distinctions just like the L1 texts. But that was not possible because it proved difficult or indeed impossible to find Literature L2 writers who matched these criteria. I might very tentatively say that this could be attributed to the marking criteria where students were penalised up to "10 points" for faulty spelling and/or grammatical grammar/structure. And it was noted that while it was recommended that students had their work proofread, only one of my participants did so while the others claimed that they could not send their dissertations for proofreading due to time constraints.

All dissertations which were received in an electronic format were saved in Word format (.docx). The other dissertations which were received in hard copy format (these being mostly provided by the department rather than the participants) were scanned and converted into Word files using an OCR program[4] (OCR WEB SERVICE SOAP and REST Cloud API). Then, I checked all dissertations manually, retaining the main chapters while excluding the cover page, acknowledgements, abstracts, table of contents, references, appendices, tables, figures, pictures, and tree diagrams. Footnotes were not deleted because they featured the citational references in the dissertations from the domain of Literature. So deleting them would prevent me from distinguishing the writer's stance from that of the citee's (see Example 3-1). Thus, they were kept in all dissertations from both disciplines, but were not included in the word counts or analysis.

Example 3-1: An extract from the Literature subcorpus showing its referencing system

The linguistic similarity between "Rayment" and "remnant" hints at the suggestion that Paul's name may be open to a number of interpretations*. [Lit]
*See: Peter Hulme, *Remnants of Conquest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

3.5.1.3   Textual analysis

Unlike some previous studies (e.g., Samraj, 2008) which compared and contrasted the use of some linguistics features found in particular chapters of dissertations (e.g. the Introduction

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[4] http://www.ocrwebservice.com

chapter), in my study the comparisons of the use of stance and engagement markers were on the basis of the analysis of all main chapters. One of the reasons was that the structure and the organization of the dissertations from the two disciplines vary enormously. For example, in Linguistics, a dissertation is typically divided into: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Discussion, and Conclusion while in Literature a dissertation could be divided into chapters, for example, according to the main novels or characters analysed. The textual analysis of my corpus was done manually (I read all dissertations, highlighting each stance and engagement marker) but before taking that decision a different procedure was considered and, in fact, was trialled: doing the analysis semi-automatically using AntConc, as discussed below.

3.5.1.4   Trial analysis using AntConc

AntConc (Anthony, 2011) is a freeware corpus analysis toolkit which works only with Plain Texts (*.txt)* to search for words. Therefore, a sample of 10 dissertations, five from each discipline, was selected and then transformed into Plain Text format so that the sample could be analysed with AntConc. Then, concordance searches were used to search for words in predetermined lists of stance and engagement markers provided by Hyland (2005a). (See Appendix D which shows Hyland's lists of stance and engagement markers). In order to make sure that all various word forms were included in my search, the asterisk (Wildcard search) feature was used, for example, 'possib*' was used to search for all various forms of the word 'possible' such as 'possible, possibly, possibility, etc.'. And by using the Concordance Plot feature in AntConc, all occurrences were examined in context so that only those which clearly showed the writer's own stance were counted, and those which do not indicate the writer's stance were excluded. Figure 3-1 below shows a list of the types of examples excluded.

Figure 3-1: Potential stance and engagement markers which were disregarded from the text analysis

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Potential stance and/or engagement markers which were disregarded:

- *When it is in direct quotes, because the words are associated with the writer's sources rather than the writer himself/herself:*

     As McDonough & McDonough (1997:183) argue, "the anonymity of the questionnaire <u>may</u> mean that more honest responses are given". [Ling]

- *When the source's views are reported or summarized:*

     According to Bell and Egan (2002), this anecdotal evidence <u>suggests</u> that students are therefore not able to engage fully in their studies when reaching higher education. [Ling]

- *In cases featuring non-integral citations where it is not certain that it is the writer's voice rather than his/her source's voice which is prominent:*

     For example, a student studying Economics <u>may</u> need subject specific lexis such as 'demand for −goods/products/services' which would not be needed for a student studying Linguistics (Jordan, 1997:257).   [Ling]

- *When the writer uses evidence from the literature rather than evidence of his/her own*:

     As mentioned in Chapter 2, research <u>suggests</u> that there is an increase in the usage of PEDs by students. [Ling]

Although AntConc can produce lists and frequencies of the search words quickly and easily, unfortunately, the results it produced here were unsatisfactory for my purposes for several reasons. The major reason was that many of the words in Hyland's lists unsurprisingly did not appear in my sample (for example, (i) Attitude markers such as: *amazed, curiously, fortunate*, (ii) Boosters such as: *incontestable, incontrovertible, undisputedly*, (iii) Hedges such as: *estimate, in most instances, postulate*, and (iv) Engagement markers such as: *by the way, incidentally*, or (v) Imperatives such as: *calculate, arrange, mount, remove*). But upon a closer examination of the texts under analysis, I noticed other words which did not appear in Hyland's lists which were employed as stance or engagement markers (for examples, see Table 3-6 below).

Table 3-6: Examples of stance markers found in my corpus but not in Hyland's (2005a) lists

	Stance markers	Extracts from my corpus
Attitude Markers	Bewildering	This makes the situation **bewildering.** [Ling]
	Noteworthy	The present study makes several **noteworthy** contributions to the field of ESL. [Ling]
	Bold	This **bold** thesis initiated a paradigm shift in thinking about state security and geopolitics. [Lit]
	Outspoken Insightful	…, the most **outspoken** and **insightful** critic of which was Edward Said, to whom we now turn. [Lit]
Boosters	Entrenched	For this radical interpretation of history, Amis draws on an **entrenched** stereotype of the East,... [Lit]
	Again	**Again** this provides evidence for the case that the OWEN variant is not a NZ innovation... [Ling]
	Unequivocally	This significance is **unequivocally** reflected in the relationship between their scores on the third MAT section. [Ling]
Hedges	In some ways	**In some ways**, Saturday is a conventional realist novel. [Lit]
	More often than not	...so writers attempt to paint that picture for their readers by choosing bright, lively, memorable images, **more often than not** in the form of metaphor. [Lit]
	In the main	**In the main** it is clear that the operation of SVLR occurs in the lexicon... [Ling]

One of the possible reasons for the non-appearance of some of the items in my corpus from Hyland's lists concerns the genres in question. Hyland's lists were mainly based on his analysis of published writing, as opposed to student writing, a different genre which is written by writers who presumably are experts in the field and who may use a somewhat different range of items to project themselves to their readers compared to the items student writers use. The range used by experts may also be wider (Hyland, 2009; Neff-van & Dafouz-Milne, 2008). Moreover, given that Hyland's lists are compiled from words used in a broad range of different disciplines (e.g., eight hard and soft disciplines) rather than only two disciplines, and given that different disciplines may use different words and items to position themselves and address their readers, one might expect that not all words in Hyland's lists will necessarily be used by student writers in the field of Linguistics and/or in the field of Literature. In fact, this latter field 'Literature' was not covered in Hyland's corpora which may mean writers in this field (whether experts writing journal articles OR students) may use different items.

Therefore, it seemed preferable to analyse the dissertations in the corpus of my study manually, that is, without the help of ready-made lists of potential items for inclusion at all. In fact, I found that doing the textual analysis manually was more helpful in the sense that it helped me understand the context more clearly and so do the coding more confidently although it was time-consuming (since it entailed reading the texts of the 39 dissertations in their entirety instead of reading the extracts generated by AntConc). As for counting and classifying frequencies of the occurrence of each marker of stance and engagement, this was manageable with the aid of NVivo 10, software that helps organize and analyse information, and also shows the frequencies of each item coded.

3.5.1.5   Manual textual analysis

The basic principle that underlies the analysis of my corpus was that only those items which clearly showed the writer's own stance were coded and counted, and those which do not indicate the writer's stance were excluded (see Figure 3-1 above). Given that Hyland's framework of stance and engagement markers employed for the analysis includes nine sub-categories, it was important to decide on a way of coding to keep things organized and consistent. Thus, colour-coding (as shown in Table 3-7 below) was found appropriate for the job.

Table 3-7: Colour-Coding for Stance and Engagement Markers in my corpus

Stance	*Engagement*
Hedges (*may, possibly*)	**Reader pronoun** (*YOU*, inclusive *WE*)
Boosters (*indeed, undoubtedly*)	**Directive** (*see, it is important to…*)
Attitude markers (*hope, interestingly*)	**Shared Knowledge** (*of course, obviously*)
Self-mentions (*I, the researcher*)	**Questions** (?)
	Personal asides

For the stance markers, different colours were used; each colour refers to a subcategory, for example, light orange means a hedge while green means a booster. As for the engagement markers, because they were used very infrequently, and because it was so clear and easy to differentiate one subcategory from the other, one colour (red) was used to refer to all

engagement markers. Here is an extract (Example 3-2) that shows how coding for textual analyses was done.

Example 3-2: A sample of coding of my corpus

> **Perhaps** the **most** **striking** comparison to be made between the genders of this generation **can** be found in /bju/ tokens such as *beautiful*. Whereas the younger females show consistent yod retention, the males **undoubtedly** prefer a yod less pronunciation (85%). [Ling]

3.5.1.6   Inter-rater reliability

Inter-rater reliability tests were carried out "to ensure that the coding scheme can be used consistently, or reliably across multiple coders wherever possible" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p.242). Therefore, 10% of the corpus (i.e. 4 dissertations: 2 from Linguistics, one by a native speaker of English and one by an Arab EFL writer, and 2 from Literature, one from each writer group) was analysed by two other raters; each independently analysed 2 dissertations from the corpus. Because the dissertations were quite long (each was around 15,000-21,000 words), I had to ask two raters to do the analysis: Jill (pseudonym) was a LiFTS PhD student, and Jack (pseudonym) who holds a master's degree in Linguistics used to proofread students' writing, also to teach and give private lessons in English. Both are native speakers of English.

In the first meeting with the two raters, I explained the goals of my study and how to use the framework of stance and engagement markers. I asked them to acquaint themselves with Hyland's framework by reading his article which I provided. I also provided them with a sample-coded chapter. Then, I asked them (for training purposes and before coding the actual dissertations) to code sample data (an Introduction Chapter from a dissertation), using different highlight colours according to the example sheet (see Appendix E) I gave them. I checked their codes against mine and then we met to discuss codes, focusing on the discrepancies.

After ensuring that they understood the framework and how to code, each was asked to read two dissertations and do the coding. Once they finished and emailed me their analyses, I compared

their codes with mine and then calculated inter-rater reliability through "a simple percentage" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p.243) which is the ratio of all coding agreements over the total number of coding decisions made by the coders, as shown in the formula below:

$$\frac{\text{Number of coding agreements}}{\text{Total number of coding decisions}} \times 100 = \% \text{ of agreements}$$

Following this formula, the total percentage of agreements between Jack and I was 85% for two dissertations, and 83% for the other two dissertations between Jill and I. These percentages are relatively high; Mackey and Gass state that "[f]or simple percentages, anything above 75% may be considered "good"" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p.244).

So after that, I met with each of the second-raters to discuss their codes and mine, focusing on the disagreements that took one of the three following forms:

(i) The second rater and I coded the same item but categorised it differently. For example:

Particularly, Miriam and Clara represent the conflicting "spirit" and "body" urges in Paul's character. [Lit]

In this extract, the second rater coded PARTICULARLY as an attitude marker while I coded it as a booster.

(ii) The second rater coded an item as a stance or engagement marker but I did not. For example:

There is evidence that suggests otherwise and Maclagan and Gordon (1998:10) reproduce a manuscript that contains a disyllabic OWEN form at around the time of Shakespeare. [Ling]

In this extract, THERE IS EVIDENCE was coded as a booster by the second rater but I did not code it since I take it as purely stating and describing a fact.

(iii) I coded an item as a stance/engagement marker but the second rater did not. For instance in the following extract I coded AGAIN as a booster but the second rater did not code it at all:

> As does the fact that the Colchester data has favourable comparisons to the sonority scaling discussed in section 5, **<u>again</u>**, leading to the conclusion that the Breaking feature here is one of post-lexical vowel lengthening. [Ling]

Prior to the meeting, to save time, I made notes of the numbers of all pages that contained instances of disagreement. So, while each had a copy of the dissertation she/he coded, we went over the target pages and discussed all disagreements (one by one). In some cases, we easily reached a consensus, as in the example (i) above, where we both agreed that PARTICULARLY is a booster more than an attitude marker, and that AGAIN in example (iii) is a booster. In some other cases, like in the second example (ii) above, we were unsure whether to classify it or disregard it. So my supervisor who checked all these instances (as he also checked my first analyses for some dissertations) helped to make a final judgment for such cases: for example, THERE IS EVIDENCE in extract (ii) was ultimately not coded.

As was clear from the pilot and has been acknowledged by analysts (e.g., Crismore et al, 1993; Hyland, 1998b), many items are multifunctional/polypragmatic; that is, in some cases items may perform more than one function simultaneously in the same context. Thus a decision was made to single code for the primary function of the item in a particular context. This decision was important in order to ensure a more systematic and consistent analysis.

As mentioned above, analysing the texts in my corpus required that every instance was carefully scrutinized in context to ensure that it was being used as an interactional marker and that it could be classified under one of the nine features of stance and engagement (i.e. booster, hedge, attitude, self mention, reader references, directives, questions, asides, or shared knowledge references). In practice, I admit this analysis was far from an easy, straightforward job. Although there were some items easily classified (e.g. FORTUNATELY is an attitude marker, CERTAINLY is a booster), some other items were multifunctional and it was difficult to tell what exactly they express in certain contexts. For example, modal verbs are multifunctional (see, e.g., Biber et al, 1999; Palmer, 1990 for more details). CAN, COULD, MAY, and MIGHT can

mark permission/ability and possibility. I found that the meanings of COULD, MAY and MIGHT were to some extent clear and easy to be interpreted as marking either permission/ability (Example 3-3) or possibility (Example 3-4). And I therefore counted only those which were marking possibility as hedges.

Example 3-3: An example of a modal verb that was NOT counted as a hedge

It must be noted that the design of the dictionary task in Phase 2 of this study <u>could</u> not compare exactly the same words for PED and PD. [Ling]

Example 3-4: An example of a modal verb that was counted as a hedge

One reason for this **could** be due to the student's language levels. [Ling]

CAN, on the other hand, is particularly ambiguous, since it can be interpreted in most cases as marking either ability or possibility (Example 3-5). However, a decision was made to count such cases as hedges since they still can be interpreted as marking possibility.

Example 3-5: An example of CAN that was counted as a hedge

However, people usually do not use the four together; they have their preferred learning orientations which **can** be, sometimes, extended in certain learning situations. [Ling]

Another complicated case which emerged while piloting was OBVIOUSLY (Example 3-6).

Example 3-6: An extract including OBVIOUSLY that was counted as a booster

Obviously, the poem employs explicit traditional concepts of Christianity;… [Lit]

In this example OBVIOUSLY can be seen as both a booster and as a shared knowledge reference. While it indicates the writer's certainty of a proposition, it can also realize engagement meaning by getting the reader to agree to the writer's claims. But since boosters, as Hyland (2005b) himself acknowledges, can also have this interpersonal effect, and since it clearly adds force and conviction, OBVIOUSLY was classed as a booster.

There were other items which were found to create more than one textual effect depending on the context of occurrences. For instance, QUITE can either hedge or boost the force of a word (Example 3-7).

Example 3-7: Extracts including QUITE functioning as a hedge OR a booster depending on contexts

A hedge	A booster
And this is **quite** challenging inasmuch as interesting in the same time. [Ling]	**Quite** the reverse is true. [Lit]

Also, the word GREAT in some cases were found to express the writer's attitude/evaluation while in other contexts it was a booster (Example 3-8).

Example 3-8: Extracts including GREAT functioning as an attiitude marker OR a booster depending on contexts

An attitude marker	A booster
Indeed, **great** poems were written in this regard. [Lit]	Of **great** importance to the researcher was that the questionnaire looked straightforward and easy to complete. [Ling]

There were some other issues which arose from piloting and which were considered when I started coding the whole corpus. These are as follows:

- Epistemic verbs such as KNOW, BELIEVE and THINK were counted as a booster/hedge only if they followed a personal subject.

- Reporting verbs which represent a comment (for example, *"**I suggest** that Walter is a tactile working man whose feelings are never deep"* [Lit]) were classified as hedges while those only reporting others (for example, *"Summers (1998: 111) suggests that dictionaries should not be seen as best source of vocabulary knowledge"* [Ling]) were not counted.

- Exclusive WE as in: *"we will review", "As we have mentioned before", "we pointed out", "our study", and "our Arabic participants"* was found problematic as it can refer to either the writer him/herself (i.e. self-mention, though arguably it could be considered grammatically inaccurate) or to both the writer and the reader (i.e. reader pronoun). Thus, such examples were not counted, either as a stance nor an engagement marker, but they were brought up in the interviews to elicit the writers' views about and motivations behind the use of exclusive WE. It is worth mentioning however that examples such as *"our discussion"* and *"we have discussed"* were found to be used inclusively since the

word 'discuss' for example normally suggests two people, the writer and the reader. Hence they were counted as a reader pronoun.

All these issues were taken into account as I started analysing the texts using Hyland's (2005b) stance and engagement model (see Appendix F for a list of stance and engagement markers appeared in my corpus and therefore investigated). In fact, piloting and going through all these processes of analyses and reanalyses was informative, and I came to realize the importance of looking closely at the context surrounding the word/phrase in question. But I agree with Crismore et al (1993) that this kind of analysis is "messy" with "a certain degree of impreciseness and subjectivity" (p.54), and I admit that categorization was uncertain in some cases (for example those with the word QUITE but which were then checked by my supervisor). Moreover, accurate quantification is hazardous. So all these concerns should be borne in mind when considering the results.

3.5.1.7   Preparing data for analysis

Two important steps were taken before statistical analyses were performed. Firstly, because the sample dissertations in my study were of unequal sizes, the raw figures for each dissertation writer were adjusted (per 10,000 words) to allow for a fairer comparison. Secondly, to address the quantitative parts of my two main research questions (i.e. How often are stance and engagement used? Are there any similarities or differences between disciplines or writer groups in my corpus?), two-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) and independent-samples t-tests were seen to be the most appropriate significance tests for my data. Since ANOVA presupposes normality of the distribution of scores, this was checked with the Shapiro-Wilk test (p>.05). By examining separately the frequencies for each feature measured separately in each of the four sub-groups in my corpus, the majority (57%) passed the normality tests. Moreover, the decision to use parametric statistics for my study was also supported by Pallant (2013) who states that

> For parametric techniques, it is assumed that the populations from which the samples are taken are normally distributed. In a lot of research, scores on the dependent variable are not normally distributed. Fortunately, most of the techniques are reasonably 'robust' or tolerant of violations of this assumption. With large enough sample sizes (e.g. 30+), the violation of this assumption should not cause any major problems. (p.214)

In addition, ANOVA and other parametric techniques are well known, and similar studies to mine often use such techniques for analysis (for example, Hu & Cao, 2011).

3.5.2   Interviews
3.5.2.1   The interview guide

After considering the topics and the questions that were to be included in the interview, an interview guide was designed and divided originally into seven parts. The first part was to follow up on some of the interesting issues that were raised by the writer-participants' responses to the short questionnaire which focused on the interviewees' educational backgrounds, and which was sent to them in advance (see 3.5.2.4 below for details). For example, one of the writer-participants mentioned that he obtained a National Certificate in Journalism. So I started my interview referring to this topic, asking in particular about the kind of writing they were trained to do, and how it differs from academic writing. I found this to be a good technique which created a relaxed environment for the interviewees where they could talk about an interesting topic relating to them and at the same time provide relevant and useful information for my study.

The second part dealt with stance markers (hedges, attitude markers, and boosters). In an attempt to elicit information about why interviewees chose to use certain stance markers in their writing, I used prompt cards with extracts that contained some of the most frequent (and sometimes infrequent but interesting) items found in their own dissertation. The main question in each card was as in Example 3-9.

Example 3-9: A prompt card for Question 2 used during interviews

Q2.1. Could you please tell me what impressions you wanted to convey or create with the

> *underlined words in each sentence?*
>
> 1. The variation of the gender differences between the present study and Reid's study (1987) **might** be due to several reasons. [...] The second reason **might** be the different methods used for the analyses.
>
> 2. Finally, though this construct offers a wealth of information about the language learners and language learning, it is a relatively difficult model to use as it **may** yield an enormous number of different profiles.

There were usually follow up questions such as those in Example 3-10.

Example 3-10: Examples of follow up questions used during interviews

> (Referring to the underlined words in the extracts above):
>
> • Is there a difference between 'might' and 'may'? In their usages or meanings?
> • If yes, how do they differ?
> • If not, which one do you prefer/use more frequently in your writing? Why?

The third part also dealt with stance markers but in this part the discussion was focused on the use of some of the most frequent items found in the dissertations of other participants but not in the interviewee's text. But as we will see later, after piloting, this part was deleted.

The fourth part was exclusively about self-mentions. With a prompt card that displayed some extracts from the corpus containing all the different words writers used to refer to themselves, interviewees were asked to comment on the use of each of these words, being asked questions like those in Example 3-11.

Example 3-11: A prompt card for Question 4 used during interviews

> *Q4.1:*
> • *Please comment on the use of the underlined words the writers used to refer to themselves in their dissertations.*
> • *To what extent do you feel these words are appropriate in academic writing? Why?*
>
> 1. The subject of this case study is **my** husband, who came to live in the UK about 4 months before the first time **I** recorded him.
>
> 2. As mentioned previously this study focussed on the speech of older speakers from the Colchester area. They were selected in the main, through contacts from **the author's** mother.

The fifth part subsumed the engagement markers (reader references, directives, and questions). Again, interviewees were shown prompt cards that displayed different extracts containing different markers of the engagement sub-categories from the corpus and were invited to discuss the extent to which they think the use of such language is appropriate in academic writing. Although the main goal of all questions was to discover how interviewees perceive the use of engagement markers and whether they prefer to use such language in their writing, it was important to vary the question formats so that the question format avoided becoming monotonous, causing interviewees to become bored. A different question format to those discussed above is therefore provided in Example 3-12.

Example 3-12: A prompt card for Question 5 used during interviews

> *Q5.1.1:*
> - *On a scale from 0-3, to what extent do you feel that using the underlined word in addressing readers is appropriate in academic writing?*
> - *Can you explain why you gave this score?*
>
> 1. Thus, once the **reader** has looked at the first table thoroughly, it will surely be easy and straightforward to understand the results in the other two tables.
>
> | *0=not appropriate* | *1=not very appropriate* | *2= appropriate* | *3= completely appropriate* |
> |---|---|---|---|
>
> 2. Having discussed the aspects of the theory that are relevant to our analysis, **we** are in a position to discuss how coordination in LFG is treated.
>
> | *0=not appropriate* | *1= not very appropriate* | *2= appropriate* | *3=completely appropriate* |
> |---|---|---|---|

Interviewees were also shown a list of the words (self-mentions/engagement markers) found in their own dissertations with the number of times each of these words appear in their texts, and invited to comment. If none of these items were found in the interviewees' dissertations, they were asked whether they would use such language in their writing and were invited to give reasons.

Part six encompassed a variety of questions which mainly focused on the context of writing the dissertations. Interviewees were asked about the views they held when writing their dissertations

(whether or not they should use the language of stance and engagement), the kind of help and support they got, and whether they received any feedback from their supervisors regarding their use/choices of certain language. As with the previous parts of the interview, prompt card cues were used to trigger their thoughts and to help them recall experiences of their own writing choices (Example 3-13).

Example 3-13: A prompt card for Question 6 used during interviews

Q6.1. Here are different views by two people about whether student academic writers should express their opinions about what they are writing or not.

> *Q6.1.1*
> - *To what extent do you agree with both opinions? Please explain.*
> - *Did you hold this same belief when you wrote your dissertation?*
>
> *Ted says*: "Students shouldn't express their opinions and be critical in their master's dissertations because I think that they are not very knowledgeable about what they are writing when compared with their readers".
>
> *Dave says*: "Students should express their opinions and be critical when writing their master's dissertations in order to be heard and to gain membership of this academic community".

In the last part of the interview guide, the interviewees were invited to add or comment on anything that had been discussed.

3.5.2.2 Piloting the interview guide

The main purpose of piloting the interview guide was to find out whether all the questions worked well, whether they needed rewording or omitting and most importantly whether the interviewees understood them. In other words, piloting would help improve the interview guide and allow me the opportunity to practice and refine features of my interview techniques so that I would be able to approach the main interviews with more confidence.

The first issue that needs to be mentioned here is the language in which the interview is conducted since the L1 of the interviewees in my study differs. The interviewees in my study are divided into two groups: (a) native speakers of English, and (b) learners of English whose L1 is

Arabic (the group to which I also belong). It is preferable to conduct the interviews in the L1 of each group because enabling interviewees to use their native language in interviews allows them to speak more comfortably and to construct more detailed and nuanced accounts (see for example Miller, 2011), and that would, in turn, alleviate "concerns about the proficiency of the participant impacting the quality of the data provided" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p.174). However, given that all the Arab participants in my study were advanced learners of English (all were doing their PhD studies in a UK university at the time they were interviewed), it seemed reasonable to give them the chance to choose the language to be used in the interview. Otherwise, some of them might feel offended if I used Arabic without consulting them (as they might get the wrong impression that I judged their English to be inadequate). Besides, the interviews were mainly about the use of certain words/phrases they used in their dissertations which were, of course, in English. So one would imagine that interviewing them in English would be more convenient. However, Arab writer-participants were given the chance to choose the language for the interview and they were also reminded that whatever language they used in the interview was acceptable.

So for piloting my interview guide, two Arab-writer-participants were interviewed. However, while ideally my pilot interviews would have included an English NS student writer as well, unfortunately there was a very small number (four) of English NSs who had agreed to be interviewed and I did not want to risk losing some of the potential English NS data. On the other hand, many Arab EFL student writers were willing to be interviewed. Besides, the two Arab EFL writers chosen for piloting were from the two different disciplines which are the focus of my study. Moreover, both did their master's degree in the same UK university as the target departments, in 2010. Sara (pseudonym) from the department of L&L received a mark of 71 (distinction) for her dissertation, while Hana (pseudonym) from LiFTS received a mark of 65 (merit). Both interviews were conducted at a room in campus provided by my department.

Before getting started with the interviews, I obtained the interviewees' permission to record the interview and reassured them about confidentiality and anonymity. Because "understanding the purpose of the questions will increase the motivation of the interviewee to respond openly and in detail" (Dörnyei, 2007, p.140), I stated the reasons for conducting the interviews and explained that we were about to discuss mainly the use of certain words/phrases found in their dissertations and in others' work. It is important to note that both interviewees preferred the interviews to be in English.

The interviews were transcribed and analysed to see generally how well the questions worked and what kinds of modifications were needed. Below is a discussion of the main problems found and how they were dealt with.

Firstly, one of the concerns regarding my interview guide was that there were many interesting topics needing to be covered and many questions to be answered. But the idea of dividing the interview guide into two across two separate days was not welcomed by either interviewee; they preferred to conduct the interview in a single longer interview of two hours (or even more) with a break in between; and that is what we did. This preference on the part of the interviewees resulted in me looking to delete some parts and questions from the interview guide as I found out after the interviews were over that the duration were longer than two hours, and I felt this was too long, and that interviewees became fatigued and stopped answering questions in a considered, reflective manner. Thus, I used the piloting to help me decide which parts to exclude. Consequently it was a straightforward decision to cut part three, which focused on the words/phrases that the interviewees never used in their dissertations but which were used very frequently in the dissertations of others, because they did not reveal much information (maybe because questioned interviewees about the writing of others rather than their own writing). Another example of a question that was disregarded was in part six where interviewees were

asked about the things that worried them while writing their dissertations. This question did not generate relevant information for my research.

Also from piloting the interviews, some items were modified. For example, in part six, question 6 a prompt card was used showing a list of possible readers interviewees might have considered while writing their dissertations. The interviewee from the department of Literature mentioned that the markers of their dissertations could be considered as possible readers; hence this was added to the list.

Accordingly, and after making the modifications needed as a result of the pilot (see Appendix G), I proceeded with my main interviews. An account of the interview procedures in the main study will be given after providing detailed information about the interviewees.

3.5.2.3   Interviewees' profiles

Fifteen of the student-writers of the dissertations in my corpus agreed to be interviewed about their writing. Although my aim was to interview 20 writers, five from each of the four subgroups in my study, unfortunately only 15 were willing to be interviewed and were divided as in Table 3-8).

Table 3-8: The distribution of interviewees in my study

The writer group	Linguistics	Literature
English NS	3	1
Arab EFL	5	6

Eleven of the interviewees submitted their dissertations in 2010, three in 2011, and one in 2012. They all received relatively high grades for their dissertations; the highest mark was 82 (Distinction) and the lowest was 65 (Merit) (See Tables 3-9 and 3-10 for more details).

Table 3-9: Profiles of the interviewees from Linguistics

	Interviewee Code	Gender	Nationality	Other Language(s) spoken	Language Test/Score	Year of Dissertation Submission	Dissertation Grade	Dissertation Proofread	English Courses before coming to UK	English Courses in UK before starting MA
1.	Ling01-NS	Female	British	French+Spanish	NA	2011	70 Distinction	No	NA	NA
2.	Ling07-NS	Male	British	French (badly)	NA	2012	70 Distinction	No	NA	NA
3.	Ling08-NS	Female	American	Basic Japanese	NA	2011	78 Distinction	No	NA	NA
4.	Ling02-EFL	Female	Saudi	English	TOFEL/100	2010	71 Distinction	Yes	10 weeks*	10 weeks**
5.	Ling03-EFL	Male	Saudi	English	IELTS/6.5	2010	76 Distinction	No	None	3 months**
6.	Ling04-EFL	Female	Syrian	English	IELTS/7	2010	70 Distinction	No	None	None
7.	Ling09-EFL	Female	Saudi	English	IELTS/6.5	2011	70 Distinction	Yes	None	6 months**
8.	Ling10-EFL	Male	Syrian	English+Basic French	IELTS/7	2010	65 Merit	No	None	None

*Scholarship Preparation Course (Obligatory)
**Pre-sessional course (Optional)

Table 3-10: Profiles of the interviewees from Literature

	Interviewee Code	Gender	Nationality	Other Language(s) spoken	Language Test/Score	Year of Dissertation Submission	Dissertation Grade	Dissertation Proofread	English Courses before coming to UK	English Courses in UK before starting MA
1.	Lit01-NS	Male	British	None	NA	2010	82 Distinction	No	NA	NA
2.	Lit01-EFL	Female	Syrian	English	IELTS/ 7	2010	66 Merit	Yes	None	None
3.	Lit02-EFL	Female	Syrian	English	IELTS/ 7	2010	65 Merit	No	None	None
4.	Lit03-EFL	Female	Saudi	English	IELTS/ 7.5	2010	65 Merit	No	3 Weeks*	None
5.	Lit04-EFL	Female	Syrian	English+French (competent)	IELTS/ 7	2010	65 Merit	No	None	None
6.	Lit05-EFL	Male	Syrian	English	IELTS/ 6.5	2010	67 Merit	No	None	None
7.	Lit08-EFL	Male	Syrian	English+French+Latin	IELTS/ 7	2010	65 Merit	No	None	None

* Preparation course for IELTS test (Optional)

The NS interviewees comprised three British and one American informant. As for the Arab interviewees, eleven student writers participated: five from Linguistics (three Saudis and two Syrians), and six interviewees (one Saudi and five Syrians) from Literature. And as can be seen from Tables 3-9 and 3-10 above, all three Saudi informants from Linguistics chose to attend a pre-sessional course for almost three months before they started their master's programme. Although they all had unconditional offers from the university to do their master's degree, these interviewees preferred to take a pre-sessional course in the same university because they reportedly wanted to familiarize themselves with the educational system at the university in particular and to settle in and get used to the living in the UK in general. With regards to the

Arab interviewees from Literature, none of them took any English course in the UK before they started their master's degree.

3.5.2.4   Interview procedures

As mentioned above, 15 interviewees (four English NSs and eleven learners of English whose L1 is Arabic) from the two disciplines (Linguistics and Literature) were interviewed individually in a one-off session (as they preferred) lasting about 90-120 minutes. Interviewees were offered breaks after the first hour and when needed. Interviewing the participants took place early in 2013 once the analyses of all dissertations in my corpus were completed and in one case (Ling07-NS who submitted his dissertation on October 2012) the grade was obtained, as it was one of the research criteria that participants in my study should receive a relatively high grade (i.e. 65 and above) for their dissertations (see 3.5.1 for more details).

All 15 interviewees were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix H-1) which explained the purpose of my study, assured them of their anonymity when writing up my results, and made it clear that participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving reasons for doing so. Also, they were given an information sheet about my study to keep (see Appendix H-2).

Prior to the interview and once interviewees agreed to take part in my study, I asked them to fill in a short form which elicited some background information such as nationality, languages spoken, qualifications and other degrees held (see Appendix B). Also, I asked, in particular, about the master's programme they enrolled in, about whether the dissertation was proofread or not, and about the grade/mark they received for their dissertation. There were also some additional questions for the non-native writer-participants: for example, they were asked about their English language test scores obtained in order to be accepted on their master's programme, and about the English courses they had taken before and/or after they came to the UK to do their

master's degree. Learning about the informants' educational background could help us understand and/or explain the learners' writing behaviour in general, for example, had they been taught to use/avoid a particular feature of language such as first person pronouns? I also asked them to fill in this form prior to the interview meetings to help me find a relevant, interesting topic from which I could start my interview with each of my writer-participants (and to help to build up a rapport with the participants).

3.5.2.5   Transcribing

Once interview data were collected, it was essential to "organize them into a manageable, easily understandable, and analysable base of information" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p.221). The first step in the qualitative data analysis in most cases was to transform the interview recordings into text (Dörnyei, 2007). Hence, all 15 interviews were transcribed and prepared for coding and analysis in order to make sense of them (see Appendix I for a sample of an interview transcript). What follows is a detailed account of how coding was done.

3.5.2.6   Pre-coding and coding

"Coding in qualitative research is the analytical process of organizing raw data into themes that assist in interpreting the data" (Baralt, 2012, p.222). In Dörnyei's (2007) words, coding is a technique "aimed at reducing or simplifying the data while highlighting special features of certain data segments in order to link them to broader topics or concepts" (p.250). However, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue,

> Coding need not be viewed simply as reducing data to some general, common denominators. Rather, it can be used to expand, transform, and reconceptualize data, opening up more diverse analytical possibilities. (p.19)

According to Miles et al (2014), "coding is analysis", "deep reflection about and, thus, deep analysis and interpretation of the data's meanings" (p.72) while codes are

primarily, but not exclusively, used to retrieve and categorized similar data chunks so that researcher can quickly find, pull out, and cluster the segments relating to a particular research question, hypothesis, construct, or theme. Clustering and the display of condense chunks then set the stage for further analysis and drawing conclusions. (p.72)

They describe codes as

labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are usually attached to data "chunks" of varying size and can take the form of a straight forward, descriptive label or a more evocative and complex one (e.g., a metaphor). (pp.71-72)

Coding is thus "a mixture of data reduction and data compilation", "used to expand and tease out the data in order to formulate new questions and levels of interpretation" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p.28).

Before I started with coding, it was crucial to read and reread the transcripts several times, reflecting on them, and jotting down my thoughts in order to obtain a general sense of the data. This is often referred to as a "pre-coding move" (Dörnyei, 2007, p.250). Dörnyei (correctly) argues, "[t]hese pre-coding reflections shape our thinking about the data and influence the way we will go about coding it" and "give way to a more formal and structured coding process" (p.250).

Thus, after carrying out multiple cycles of reading the interview data while at the same time considering the main topic of my research which is concerned with the writers' use of stance and engagement features in their academic writing, I began coding with three broad themes that emerged. The first theme concerned the interviewees' beliefs about the "Functions" of each of the seven language features discussed in the interviews: 'Functions of hedges', 'Functions of boosters', 'Functions of attitude markers', 'Functions of self-mentions', 'Functions of reader references', 'Functions of directives', and 'Functions of questions'. Under these themes a number of sub-themes were created, most of the time using some key words/phrases from the

actual text to make the initial codes more authentic (Dörnyei, 2007, p.251). Take for instance the

case of the 'Functions of hedges' (see Table 3-11).

Table 3-11: A sample of my initial coding of the interview data with the broad theme "Functions of hedges"

	Master code: Functions of hedges	
	Sub-Codes	Extracts from my interview data
1.	To modify the strength of claims	I suppose the word 'almost' is included – if the sentence were just to claim certainty, I am not sure that there would have been enough evidence produced to prove that. So 'almost' is just there **to modify the strength of that claim**. [Lit01-NS]
2.	To leave open other possibilities	The reason 'might' is there is because**… I don't want to say that I can establish this with certainty at this point. I want to leave open other possibilities**. [Lit01-NS]
3.	To soften language	"It would appear…": this phrase is a way to link from my results to showing how that can play out in the classroom. I'm using it as a link there and it's necessary to establish the link and **to also soften. I'm not going to tell teachers what to do from this single Masters dissertation.** There's not going to be one answer. This is what my research shows. [Ling08-NS]
4.	Being tentative to avoid reader attack	I'm trying to be tentative in other words, so I'm not trying to say 'this is the reason' because I'm not sure, so I'm trying to soften my language, saying 'may' so **in case somebody's reading my dissertation they wouldn't say, 'How do you know?'** They'd say, 'OK, he's saying "may", so that's a possible reason.' [Ling10-EFL]

The second broad theme is concerned with the interviewees' "Other reasons for using/avoiding a

stance/engagement marker". In fact, this theme subsumed many sub-categories some of which

can be seen in Table 3-12 below.

Table 3-12: A sample of my initial coding of the interview data with the broad theme "Other reasons for using/avoiding a stance/engagement markers"

	Master code: Other reasons for using/avoiding a stance/engagement marker	
	Sub-Codes	Extracts from my interview data
1.	Disciplinary differences	It seems these hedges come up a lot when I'm making the transfer from what the data shows to what it means. Because I very much don't want to conclude, […] and I think **that's how we do it in our field. Even if**

		your data is absolutely saying this you're not going to say, "Here's the answer." We don't do that. I don't know, maybe if you're dealing in absolute scientific principles you can do that, but certainly in applied linguistics, no. [Ling08-NS]
2.	Supervisor's advice	Actually I remember **my supervisor advised me to use the word "appear"** because she said that I can't state my idea and say "he does something" as a fact. [Lit03-EFL]
3.	Beliefs about appropriate academic writing: to avoid repetition	Yes again 'appears' and 'seems', I think I use them interchangeably, they mean the same thing but **I'm trying not to repeat the same words because it's just a matter of style** because… it's no good saying the same word three or four times in one paragraph, so I'm trying to change my words… [Ling10-EFL]
4.	Stylistic preferences	By and large… I wonder why I picked this specifically? **It might have been something about simply just the rhythm of it – it's a nice phrase;** "By and large, the empirical studies…" It gets a bit boring sometimes if you just say, "Overall, the main point is…" So you need to have something of the rhythm of the sentence. [Ling08-NS]
5.	Writer's lack of self-confidence	SUGGEST, it's a hedge. That's why I'm using it. **I don't feel at that stage and the stage I'm in now that I should be using strong verbs. I'm still learning, I'm still a student; I'm still not that knowledgeable in the area to write with more authority**. I have to be hedging most of the time. [Ling02-EFL]

The third theme describes the interviewees' reaction to their own use of a stance/engagement marker. This theme encompasses four sub-themes: "surprised", "unsurprised", "happy", and "unhappy".

When examining the data not only those pertinent to my topic and research questions were coded, interesting data that were not directly related to the research questions or my review of the literature were also coded in the spirit of exploratory qualitative enquiry—but also because they helped shed light on informants' feelings about academic writing and stance and engagement. For instance, other codes such as 'unconsciousness' and "Writer development" were also generated as they emerged from the data itself (see, for instance, Table 3-13 for extract samples).

Table 3-13: Examples of codes emerged from the data

Code	Extracts from my interview data
Unconsciousness	…the use of rhetorical questions; perhaps two questions, one after another. I have noticed a number of academics had used that, and it has struck me as a very effective way of communicating. **I think have reproduced that technique. Almost without being aware of it,** I think; it just strikes me as an effective way of communicating, and it has kind of crept into my writing. [Lit01-NS]
Writer development	…by saying 'there is every reason' I was trying to say, "here look at my language", something like that. **I'm different now**, but this was when I came here to the UK, because you know we're so obsessed about language when we first came here and we're trying to show them that, 'Look at us, we're educated. We know English!' But **now I know when writing my language should be just reader-friendly and should be read by everyone**. So I would say you can't see in my whole PhD something like that. [Ling10-EFL]

It was essential that I carry out additional cycles of reading in order to generate more codes and refine further subthemes. It was also important to compare the data that had been coded under the same theme and/or across the individual accounts, considering how they were similar/different. This coding process resulted in clustering or merging together similar or closely related categories under one broader label. For instance, the codes "beliefs about formality", and "beliefs about frequency" of a stance/engagement marker in academic writing were grouped under the code "beliefs about appropriate academic writing". Once I had developed a list of codes with accompanying descriptions, it was necessary to have the list checked against a portion of the data. Appreciatively, my supervisor checked my list of codes and descriptions and also blind coded the largest portions of two transcripts. His comments and feedback helped tremendously in my coding process and in modifying and developing the final version of the codebook (see Appendix J) which was then applied to each of the transcripts. But unfortunately due to time constraints it was not possible to again ask a second coder to code another portion of the data using the final version of codes.

3.6   Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to detail the research methods and provide an account of the analytical procedures I have adopted in order to answer my research questions which are concerned with the student writers' use of stance and engagement markers in their master's dissertations written in English in two different disciplines (Linguistics vs. Literature) and by two writer groups with different cultural backgrounds (Arabs vs. English NSs). The findings will be presented in the next two chapters: 4 and 5.

Chapter 4   Quantitative Results

4.1   Introduction

To address my two research questions, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted. I first present the results of my statistical analyses. Section 4.2 primarily answers the quantitative part of my first research question which is concerned with the use of stance and engagement markers between the two disciplines (Linguistics and Literature) regardless of the writer group (i.e. English NS and Arab EFL writers). Section 4.3 addresses the quantitative part of my second research question which focuses on the two writer groups within each-discipline.

4.2   Stance and engagement in two disciplines (Linguistics and Literature)

The focus in this part of the research is of the effect of discipline (regardless of the two writer groups) on the use of stance and engagement markers (sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2). Results about the effect of writer group (regardless of the two disciplines) will also be presented and briefly discussed in sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 because statistical results were interesting; and they provide preliminary results from which we pursue analysis in section 4.3 to further explore similarities and differences between the two writer groups within each discipline.

4.2.1   Stance by discipline comparison (regardless of writer group)

In Table 4-1 we see that on average there are 27.3 more uses of stance markers in Linguistics than in Literature per 10,000 words. While variation between individuals within Linguistics is moderate (SD= 37.6% of the mean), it is relatively high within Literature (SD= 52.8% of the mean), indicating that writers within Literature vary in their uses of stance more than those in Linguistics.

Table 4-1: Descriptive statistics for stance per 10,000 words in Linguistics and Literature

Discipline	Writer Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Linguistics	Both English and Arab EFL writers	159.1	59.85	20
Literature	Both English and Arab EFL writers	131.85	69.62	19

The ANOVA results however show that the main effect of discipline on stance was not significant (F (1,35)= 1.68, p= .20). Nor was the interaction effect between discipline and writer group (F (1,35)= .15, p= .71). These results indicate that there was no significant difference between Linguistics and Literature in the use of stance as one whole category, regardless of whether the writer is an English NS or Arab EFL writer. However, when further ANOVA tests were separately performed on each of the four features of stance (i.e. attitude markers, boosters, hedges, and self-mentions), hedges came out as significant (Table 4-2).

Table 4-2: Inferential statistics for the main features of stance per 10,000 words in Linguistics and Literature

Stance features	Effect	F	P
Attitude markers	Discipline	.50	.49
	Discipline by writer group	.37	.55
Boosters	Discipline	2.19	.15
	Discipline by writer group	.17	.68
Hedges	Discipline	5.10	**.03***
	Discipline by writer group	.01	.94
Self-mentions	Discipline	1.96	.17
	Discipline by writer group	2.50	.12

The ANOVA results (Table 4-2) show that discipline as a main effect was significant only in the case of hedges (F (1,35)= 5.10, p= .03), indicating that Linguistics (M= 82.05, SD= 34.77) used significantly more hedges than Literature (M= 57.45, SD= 36.39). Again the interaction between discipline and writer group was not significant, suggesting that the influence of discipline on the use of hedges does not depend on whether the writer is an English NS or Arab EFL writer.

Figure 4-1: Stance features per 10,000 words in Linguistics and Literature
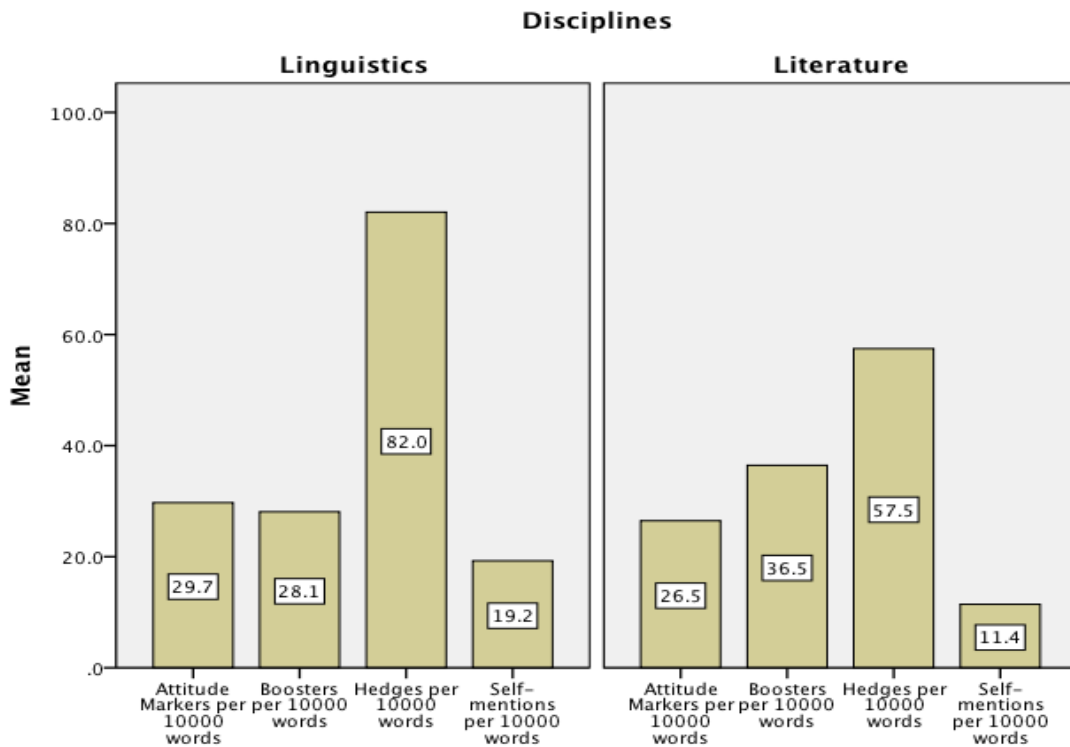
What is also worth mentioning here is that, on average, hedges in both disciplines (Linguistics and Literature), as seen in Figure 4-1, are the most common of all stance features. Similar results were observed in many other studies of both expert writing (e.g. Abdi, 2002; Hyland, 2005b) and student writing (e.g. Hyland, 2004). Hyland's (2004) corpus analyses of master's and doctoral theses from six different disciplines found that hedges were the most common stance feature in each of these disciplines. Similar results were also revealed when Hyland (2005b) examined the use of these stance features in research articles from eight disciplines. Likewise, Abdi's (2002) study of interpersonal metadiscourse in social science and natural science research articles found that academics from both fields used hedges more often than boosters and attitude markers. However, hedging claims do not seem to be preferred in other fields such as Pure Mathematics: McGrath and Kuteeva's (2012) corpus analysis of research articles in this field found that hedges were used less often than boosters and attitude markers. McGrath and Kuteeva attributed these frequency patterns, based on their interview data, to "the community expectation of strong commitment to a proposition, and the need to highlight the applicability and importance of a

result" (p.167). Such results support Hyland's (2005b) argument that writers need to present their claims "with regard to colleagues' views" (p.186). Thus, while pure sciences appear to require 100% conviction in propositions for publication, humanities and social sciences expect claims to be presented with appropriate caution. And this could explain the commonness of hedges in both the Linguistics and Literature subcorpora in my study.

4.2.2   Engagement by discipline comparison (regardless of writer group)

The use of engagement in dissertations in Linguistics and Literature was investigated in the same way as stance was examined. Thus, ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of discipline on the use of engagement as one whole category. Then, to further illuminate the result of engagement use in Linguistics and Literature, I examined separately each of the five engagement features (i.e. asides, directives, questions, reader references, and shared knowledge references).

Table 4-3: Descriptive statistics for engagement per 10,000 words in Linguistics and Literature

Discipline	Writer Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Linguistics	Both English and Arab EFL writers	16.65	10.66	20
Literature	Both English and Arab EFL writers	14.14	10.52	19

Table 4-3, which presents descriptive statistics for engagement by discipline, shows that on average the difference between Linguistics and Literature is not very noticeable (mean difference 2.51 per 10,000 words). However, variation between individuals within groups is high in both disciplines (SD= 64% and 74.40% of the mean, for both Linguistics and Literature, respectively), indicating that writers from both disciplines widely deviated from the norm.

The ANOVA results, as might be expected, show that the main effect of discipline in the use of engagement was not statistically significant ($F_{(1,35)}= .50$, $p= .48$), nor was the interaction effect between discipline and writer group ($F_{(1,35)}= 3.3$, $p= .08$), indicating that writers from both

disciplines (whether they were English NSs or Arab EFL writers) did not significantly differ in their uses of engagement markers as a whole category.

However, further examinations of the effect of discipline on the use of each of the five main features of engagement (Table 4-4) showed that there was significantly higher use of directives in Linguistics than in Literature (F (1, 35)= 24.2, p= .001) while reader references were significantly more common in Literature than in Linguistics (F (1, 35)= 4.5, p= .04). The interaction effect between discipline and writer group however was not significant in any of these cases.

Table 4-4: Inferential statistics for the main features of engagement per 10,000 words in Linguistics and Literature

Engagement features	Effect	F	P
Asides	Discipline	1.9	.17
	Discipline by Writer group	.005	.94
Directives	Discipline	24.2	**.001***
	Discipline by Writer group	.86	.36
Questions	Discipline	1.1	.29
	Discipline by Writer group	.69	.41
Reader references	Discipline	4.5	**.04***
	Discipline by Writer group	2.97	.09
Shared knowledge references	Discipline	.56	.46
	Discipline by Writer group	.14	.71

But strikingly, a closer analysis of the results revealed a considerable divergence in the use of each of these features (i.e. reader references and directives) among writers within each discipline. For instance, as can be seen in Table 4-5, one student writer in Linguistics (Ling04-NS) completely avoided explicit reference to readers in her writing; however the number of occurrences of reader devices in Ling04-EFL's dissertation was as high as 42. Likewise, student writers within Literature also vary in their uses of reader references. While some writers kept reader references to the minimum (for instance, Lit02-NS and Lit03-NS each used them only twice), others seemed to be more confident bringing readers into their discourse (for instance,

Lit07-NS and Lit09-NS employed reader references 55 and 65 times, respectively). Interviewing

student writers seems to be needed here in order to seek out the reasons behind such variation in

language use. This proposal was pursued and will be reported in the following chapter.

Table 4-5: Number of occurrences of reader references in each dissertation from both the Linguistics and Literature subcorpora

Linguistics	Reader references		Literature	Reader references	
	Raw No. of occurrences	Per 10,000 words		Raw No. of occurrences	Per 10,000 words
Ling01-EFL	4	2.3	Lit01-EFL	9	4.2
Ling02-EFL	5	3.7	Lit02-EFL	40	21.1
Ling03-EFL	30	17.2	Lit03-EFL	9	4.5
Ling04-EFL	42	22.3	Lit04-EFL	10	5.3
Ling05-EFL	3	1.7	Lit05-EFL	17	9.8
Ling06-EFL	8	4.6	Lit06-EFL	41	23.3
Ling07-EFL	10	9.1	Lit07-EFL	8	5.3
Ling08-EFL	2	1.1	Lit08-EFL	11	6.7
Ling09-EFL	1	0.6	Lit09-EFL	5	3.3
Ling10-EFL	28	16.7	Lit10-EFL	7	5.0
Ling01-NS	1	0.8	Lit01-NS	37	15.5
Ling02-NS	3	2.8	Lit02-NS	2	0.9
Ling03-NS	3	1.8	Lit03-NS	2	0.9
Ling04-NS	0	0	Lit04-NS	15	7.2
Ling05-NS	10	5.5	Lit05-NS	5	2.5
Ling06-NS	8	4.5	Lit06-NS	12	6.2
Ling07-NS	2	1.3	Lit07-NS	55	24.4
Ling08-NS	1	0.6	Lit08-NS	35	17.1
Ling09-NS	7	5.0	Lit09-NS	65	32.4
Ling10-NS	3	1.7			
Total	171	5.3	Total	385	10.6

With regard to the other engagement features (Figure 4-2), questions were very rare while asides

and shared knowledge references were almost absent from both disciplines.

Figure 4-2: Engagement features per 10,000 words in Linguistics and Literature, regardless of writer group

Disciplines
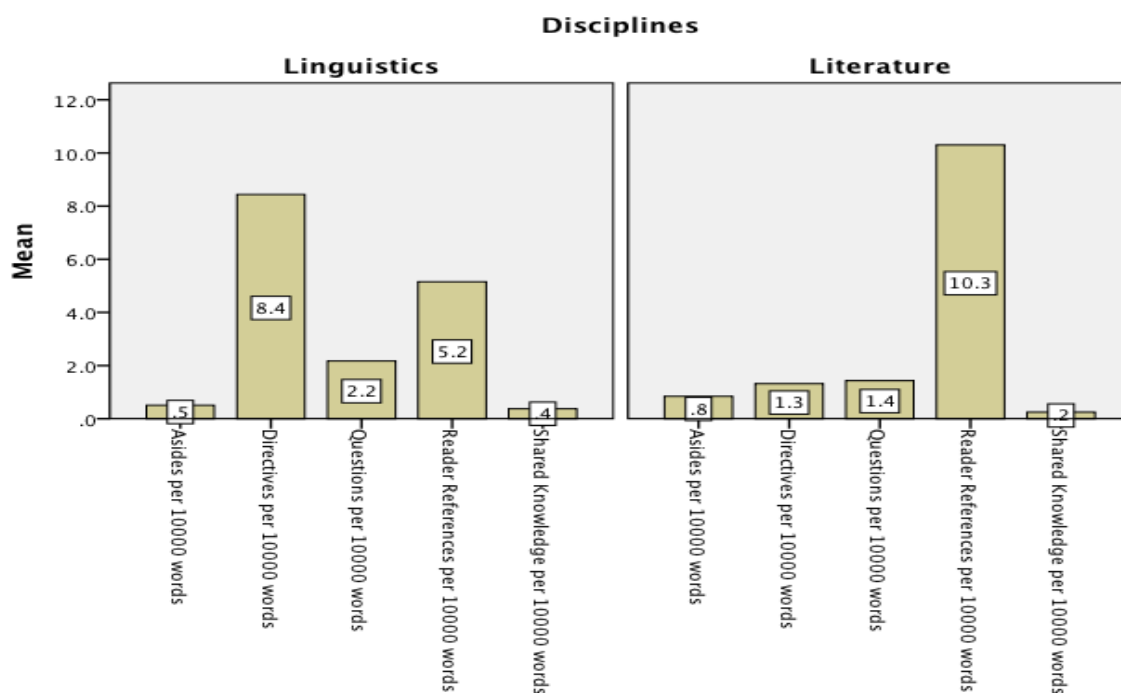
Table 4-6: Occurrences of both stance and engagement markers in the whole corpus of my study

	Raw No. of occurrences	Per 10,000 words	% of the whole corpus
Stance	10,053	146.1	90.3%
Engagement	1,078	15.7	9.7%

In fact, engagement markers were particularly, perhaps unsurprisingly, infrequent in dissertations from both disciplines, especially when compared with stance markers (Table 4-6). Stance markers were almost ten times more frequent than engagement markers. Such distributional frequency patterns of stance and engagement markers was also observed in Hyland's (2005b) study of research articles from eight disciplines (soft and hard), where stance features were about five times more common than engagement markers. While stance markers refer to the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgements, opinions, and commitments, engagement markers refer to the ways writers explicitly bring their readers into the discourse, guiding them to the writers' preferred interpretations. But achieving these goals of engagement, which requires the use of devices such as directives, reader references, questions,

asides, and shared knowledge references, is not without risk. For instance, the uses of both the reader pronoun WE and imperative verbs (e.g. NOTE, CONSIDER), which "guide readers through a line of reasoning, or get them to understand a point in a certain way" (Hyland, 2005b, p.185), can be face-threatening to readers. Besides, Hyland's (2001a, 2005b) corpus analyses of research articles showed that while reader references were the most common engagement feature, both asides and shared knowledge references were relatively uncommon. The distributional patterns of these engagement features in Hyland's (2005b) corpus of research articles in the soft disciplines, where reader references and directives were the most common features, almost accord with those in my study of master's dissertations (Table 4-7). However, as we can see in Table 4-7, there are considerable differences in terms of frequency in the use of each of the engagement features between my corpus of master's dissertations and Hyland's (2005b) of research articles. Student writers appear to be reluctant to engage readers in their writing, underusing engagement markers in general and asides and shared knowledge devices in particular.

Table 4-7: Frequency of engagement features in my corpus of dissertations compared to that of Hyland's (2005b) analysis of RAs (per 10,000 words)

Genre	Questions	Reader references	Directives	Shared knowledge	Asides	Total
Master's dissertation	1.9	8.1	4.7	0.3	0.7	15.7
Research article	7.3	40.7	18.5	3.4	1.7	74.1

4.2.3   Stance by writer group comparison (regardless of discipline)

Moving now to the impact of writer group on the use of stance markers as a whole, regardless of discipline, we see in Table 4-8 that use of stance by NSs is greater than that by Arab EFL writers (mean difference 44.71 per 10,000 words), and it is indeed significantly different ($F_{(1,35)}$= 4.91, p= .03). This is perhaps not a surprising result because although both writer groups in my

study (who are novice writers) received relatively high grades (ranging from 65 to 82) for their dissertations, most Arab EFL writers lack familiarity and training in academic writing. Their educational system in their home countries are primarily based on exams that do not normally require writing in an academic style like in the UK, and so learners were not very familiar with the concept of 'academic writing' or how to present their opinion in a manner that was practiced and accepted in an English academic environment. Even though they must have learned something from the assignments they were required to write in order to pass their modules during the first two terms of their master's degree, they still cannot be considered as well-trained in academic writing as the English native writers who at least had some training on academic writing during their undergraduate studies.

Table 4-8: Descriptive statistics for stance per 10,000 words by the two writer groups

Discipline	Writer Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Both Linguistics & Literature	English NS	168.75	68.92	19
	Arab EFL	124.04	55.04	20

Moreover, this result of NS student writers using more stance markers than their NNSs counterparts aligns with that of McEnery and Kifle's (2002) study (see review in section 2.5.3.4). McEnery and Kifle compared the use of epistemic modality (i.e. hedges and boosters) in argumentative essays produced by Eritrean second year-university students and British school children of around 16 years of age. Their analyses showed a considerable difference between the two writer groups in their total use of epistemic modality markers, the native speakers using three devices per hundred words, as against the non-native speakers' two devices. Although McEnery and Kifle's study was concerned only with the use of certainty and hedging devices (but not attitude markers and self-mentions), these two features are the most common stance features in my corpus in which they constitute about 70% of all stance markers. Besides, hedges

and boosters (see Figure 4-3) are also more common in dissertations by NSs than those by Arab

EFL writers.

Figure 4-3: Stance features per 10,000 words by the two writer groups
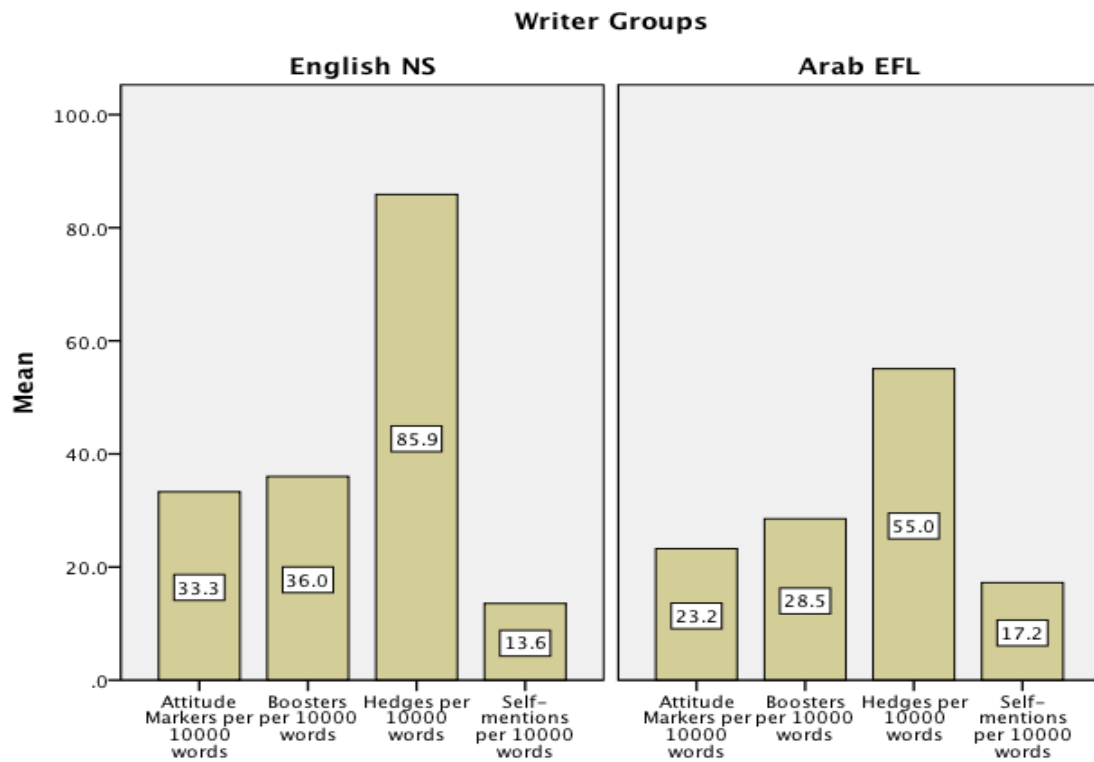
To further explore this result of NSs using significantly more stance markers (as one category)

than their Arab EFL counterparts (regardless of their disciplines), I next examined separately the

main effect of writer group on the use of each of the four main features of stance (i.e. attitude

markers, boosters, hedges, and self-mentions).

As can be seen in Figure 4-3, self-mentions were the only feature of stance that appeared more

often in the Arab EFL dissertations (mean difference 3.6 per 10,000 words) while the other three

stance features were more common in the dissertations by NSs. The ANOVA results (Table 4-9),

however, show that the main effect of writer group was significant in only two cases: (i) for the

use of attitude markers ($F_{(1,35)} = 5.22$, $p = .03$); and (ii) for hedges ($F_{(1,35)} = 8.18$, $p = .01$).

These results indicate that English native writers used significantly more attitude markers (M=

33.29, SD= 14.17) and more hedges (M= 85.88, SD= 38.43) than the Arab EFL writers (M= 23.24, SD= 12.42 for attitude markers, and M= 55.04, SD= 29.77 for hedges). This result aligns with Burneikaitė (2008) whose English NS student writers employed significantly more evaluative metadiscourse (i.e. hedges, boosters, and attitude markers) than Lithuanian EFL student writers. However, Hinkel (2005a) and Hyland & Milton (1997) reported somewhat contradictory results. While both studies identified a higher proportion of tentativeness in NS writing, unlike my study they reported more assertive NNS writing. More discussion will be found in section 4.3.1, when making a comparison of the use of stance markers between the two writer groups within Linguistics.

Table 4-9: Inferential statistics for the main features of stance per 10,000 words by the two writer groups

Stance features	Effect	F	P
Attitude markers	Writer group	5.22	.03*
	Discipline by writer group	.37	.55
Boosters	Writer group	1.77	.19
	Discipline by writer group	.17	.68
Hedges	Writer group	8.18	.01*
	Discipline by writer group	.01	.94
Self-mentions	Writer group	.44	.51
	Discipline by writer group	2.50	.12

4.2.4   Engagement by writer group comparison (regardless of discipline)

As can be seen in Table 4-10, on average, there is very little difference between the NSs and the Arab EFL writers in their uses of engagement markers as a category. ANOVA shows that the main effect of writer group in the use of engagement markers was not statistically significant ($F_{(1,35)}$= .02, p= .89) when both disciplines are considered together.

Table 4-10: Descriptive statistics for engagement per 10,000 words by the two writer groups

Discipline	Writer Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Both Linguistics & Literature	English NS	15.13	9.28	19
	Arab EFL	15.71	11.83	20

With regard to the use of each of the five engagement features, Figure 4-4 shows that reader references are the most common feature in both writer groups: English NSs (M= 6.9 per 10,000 words) and Arab EFL writers (M= 8.4 per 10,000 words); followed by directives (M= 4.3 per 10,000 words for NSs; and M= 5.6 per 10,000 words for Arab EFL writers). Both asides and shared knowledge references are the least common; however, the ANOVA results (Table 4-11) show that the main effect of writer group was significant only for these two features: asides (F $(1, 35)$= 12.6, p= .001), and shared knowledge references (F $(1, 35)$= 8.99, p= .005). That is, there are significantly more uses of asides and shared knowledge references in the English NSs' dissertations, regardless of their disciplines. One possible interpretation for this could be that Arab EFL writers might not be familiar with such features since they did not encounter them frequently enough in their reading, given that these two features in particular are found to be very rare in research articles (see section 4.2.2).

Figure 4-4: Engagement features per 10,000 words by the two writer groups
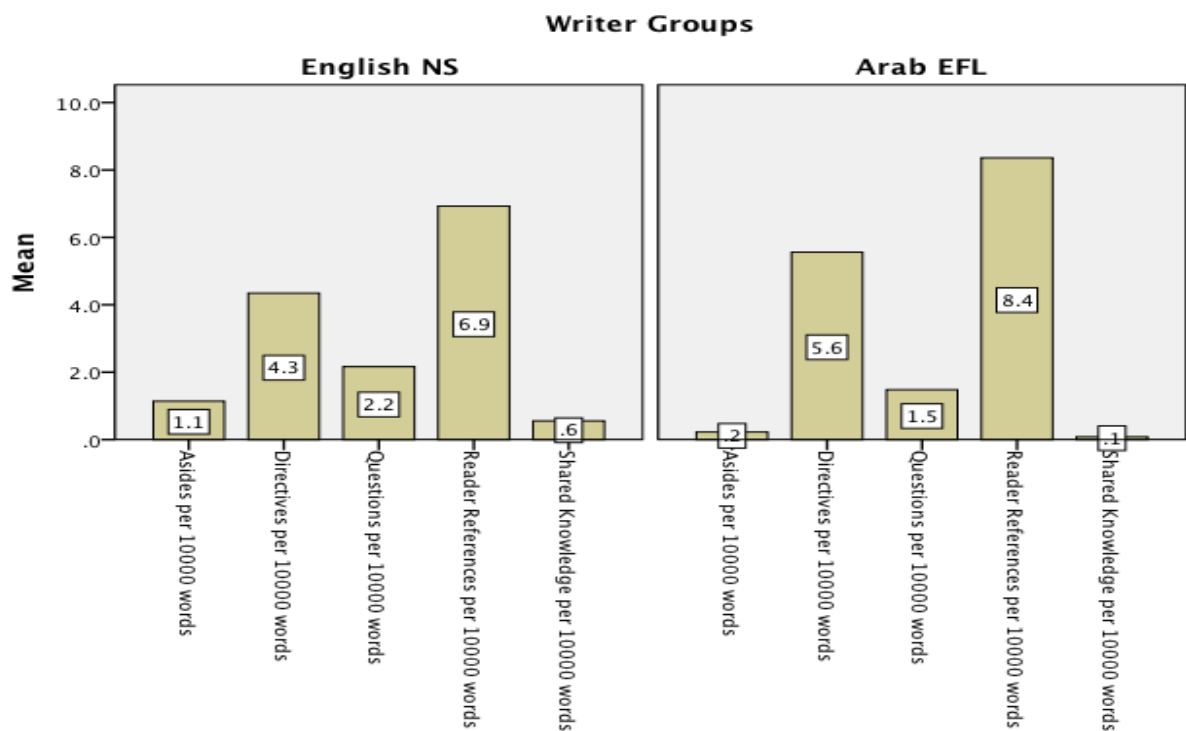
Table 4-11: Inferential statistics for the main features of engagement per 10,000 words by the English NSs and Arab EFL writers

Engagement features	Effect	F	P
Asides	Writer group	12.6	**.001***
	Discipline by Writer group	.01	.94
Directives	Writer group	.98	.33
	Discipline by Writer group	.86	.36
Questions	Writer group	1.04	.31
	Discipline by Writer group	.67	.41
Reader References	Writer group	.23	.63
	Discipline by Writer group	2.97	.09
Shared Knowledge References	Writer group	8.99	**.005***
	Discipline by Writer group	.14	.71

4.3   Stance and engagement by the two writer groups within a discipline

The second research question of this study is also concerned with the use of stance and engagement markers, but the focus here is on the two writer groups (i.e. English NS vs. Arab EFL writers) within each discipline (i.e. Linguistics and Literature). To address this question, independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare the use of stance and engagement markers between English NSs and their Arab EFL counterparts within each discipline. Statistical results are presented in the following sections, starting by comparing the stance and engagement scores for writer groups within Linguistics (sections 4.3.1 & 4.3.2) and then within Literature (sections 4.3.3 & 4.3.4)

4.3.1   Stance by the two writer groups within Linguistics

On average (see Table 4-12) the overall use of stance in Linguistics dissertations by NSs is greater than that by Arab EFL writers (mean difference 36.61 per 10,000) (as was seen with stance results between the two writer groups when both disciplines are considered together; see 4.2.3). Variation between writers within the Arab EFL writer group (SD= 68.54) is higher than

that within the NSs group (SD= 46.03), indicating that NS writers are more consistent with each other than the Arab EFL writers in the number of stance markers they used. The result from the independent-samples t-test however, as we see in Table 4-13, shows that the difference in the overall use of stance in Linguistics was not significant (t (18)= 1.40, p= .18, two-tailed), indicating that the two writer groups did not significantly differ in their uses of stance as one whole category.

Table 4-12: Descriptive statistics for stance and its main features per 10,000 words within Linguistics

Discipline		Writer Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Linguistics	**Stance**	English NS	10	177.40	46.03
		Arab EFL	10	140.79	68.54
	Attitude Markers	English NS	10	35.99	12.57
		Arab EFL	10	23.45	13.76
	Boosters	English NS	10	30.75	12.26
		Arab EFL	10	25.41	18.41
	Hedges	English NS	10	97.56	26.02
		Arab EFL	10	66.54	36.62
	Self-mentions	English NS	10	13.10	11.48
		Arab EFL	10	25.39	21.73

Table 4-13: Inferential statistics for stance and its main features per 10,000 words within Linguistics

Discipline		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Linguistics	**Stance**	1.40	18	.178	36.61
	Attitude Markers	2.13	18	**.047***	12.54
	Boosters	.76	18	.455	5.34
	Hedges	2.18	18	**.042***	31.03
	Self-mentions	-1.58	13.66	.137	-12.29

Figure 4-5: Stance features per 10,000 words by the two writer groups within Linguistics
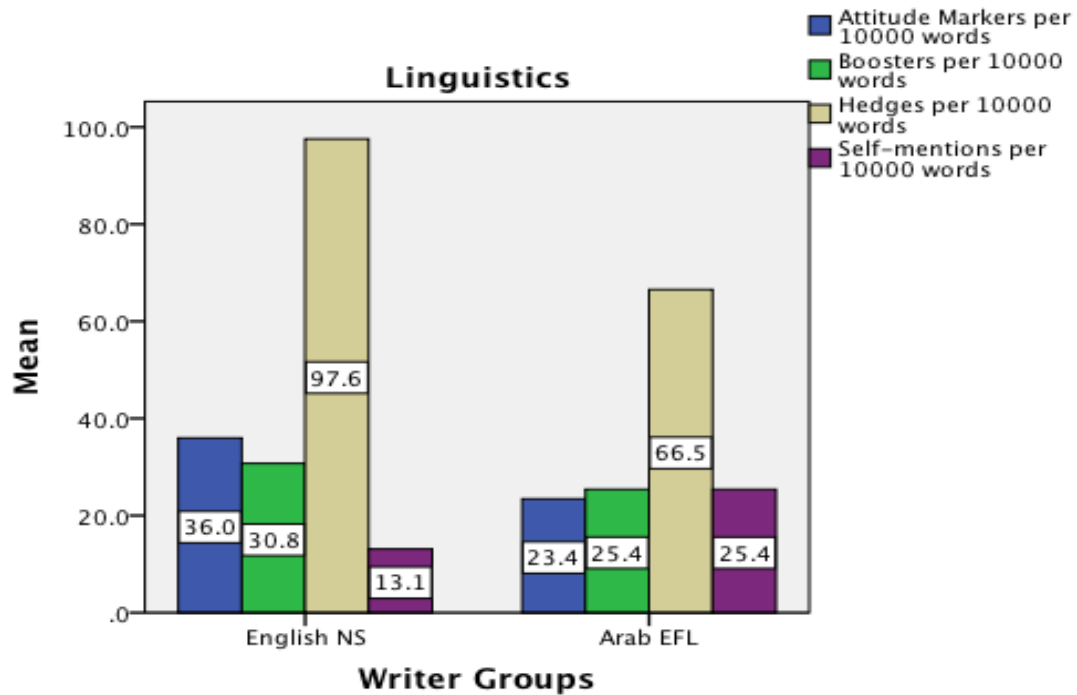
As for the four features of stance, we see in Figure 4-5 that hedges are the most common feature in both writer groups while self-mentions are overall used the least. Frequency means of hedges, attitude markers, and boosters are higher in NSs' dissertations, with hedges showing the highest mean difference (31.02 per 10,000 words). Indeed, hedges and attitude markers are the only two stance features that were found to be significantly different, at p= .042 regarding the use of hedges, and at p= .047 regarding the use of attitude markers, indicating that English NSs employed significantly more attitude markers and more hedges than their Arab EFL counterparts (again as was seen with stance results between the two writer groups when both disciplines are considered together; see 4.2.3). These results accord with those of Burneikaitė's (2008) study, which was based on the analysis of 40 master's dissertations in Linguistics written in English by British and Lithuanian EFL student writers. Burneikaitė hypothesized that the learners' underuse of evaluative metadiscourse (i.e. hedges, boosters, and attitude markers) might be due to the learners' general lack of confidence and/or their unfamiliarity with critical evaluation in

academic writing which she claimed is almost nonexistent in the Lithuanian writing tradition. But she failed to provide evidence to support her speculations. In contrast, in the current study I pursued at interview the student writers' motivations behind their language use and writing behaviour, which will be presented in the following chapter.

Despite the similarity between my results and Burneikaitė's, many other studies have reported contradictory results. For instance, Hinkel (2005a) concluded that NNS students (including Arabs) tend to underuse hedges but overuse boosters as a result of their cultural backgrounds. For their part, McEnery & Kifle (2002) reported that the Eritrean learners in their study employed more hedging devices (albeit more limited in range) than their NSs counterparts. One possible interpretation for this was the classroom materials: McEnery & Kifle found that the Eritrean learners were trained not to use strong devices and to sound more tentative in making claims. And because of the few devices the coursebook provided, learners tended to overuse them in their writing. These and further explanatory factors underlying both writer groups' uses of stance and engagement features were explored at interview, and will be reported in the following chapter, section 5.3.

With regard to self-mentions, on the other hand, they are found to be the only stance feature that appears more often in dissertations by Arab EFL writers than those by NSs (mean difference 12.3 per 10,000 words). If we look back at Table 4-12, we see that while variation between individuals within both writer groups is moderate in attitude markers, boosters, and hedges, it is high in self-mentions (SD= 11.48 for NSs, and for Arab EFL writers, SD= 21.73, very close to their means). This high variation between individuals using self-mentions (see also this variation captured by histograms in Figure 4-6) comes about because while there were many writers (nine NSs and six Arab EFL writers) who made no or rare use of self-mentions, there were a smaller number of writers (one native speaker and four Arab EFL writers) who made considerable use of

these devices to present themselves explicitly in their writing. This suggests that this result is more about individual writing style than about being an English NS or Arab EFL writer. Also, since the use of self-mentions is slightly greater in the Arab EFLs' texts, we might wonder whether their L1 had an influence on their decision as to what extent they should be visible in their writing. These issues and more were further investigated in interviews and will be presented in section 5.3.

Figure 4-6: Histogram of self-mentions per 10,000 words in Linguistics
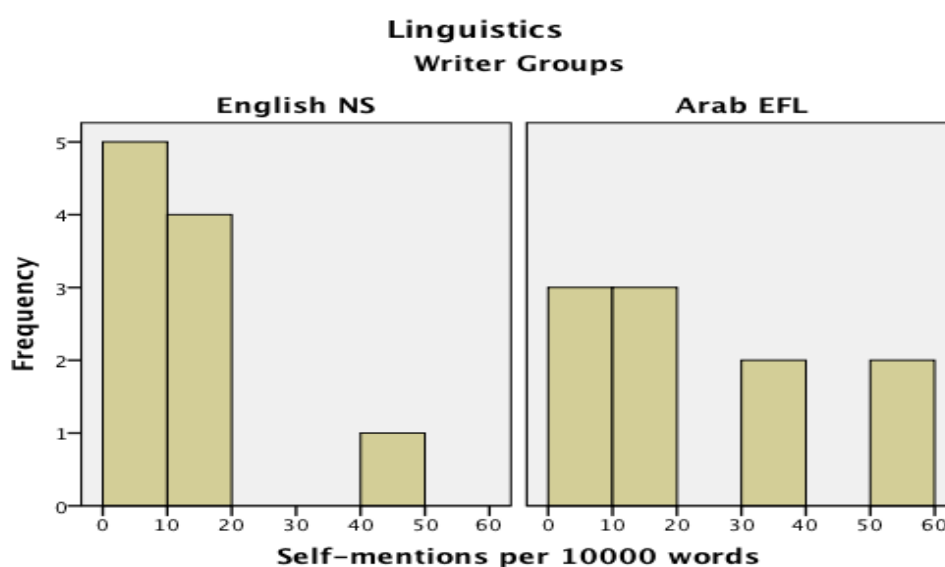
4.3.2   Engagement by the two writer groups within Linguistics

Table 4-14 shows that the overall use of engagement by Arab EFL writers is slightly (but nonsignificantly: see Table 4-15) higher than that by the English NSs (mean difference 6.53 per 10,000 words); however, while variation between individuals within Arab EFL writers is high (SD= 14.29, well over half the mean), the English native writers are more consistent with each other (SD= 3.45).

Table 4-14: Descriptive statistics for engagement and its main features per 10,000 words within Linguistics

Discipline		Writer Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Linguistics	**Engagement**	English NS	10	13.38	3.45
		Arab EFL	10	19.91	14.29
	Asides	English NS	10	.96	.90
		Arab EFL	10	.05	.17
	Directives	English NS	10	7.11	3.29
		Arab EFL	10	9.76	7.59
	Questions	English NS	10	2.24	2.17
		Arab EFL	10	2.11	1.70
	Reader References	English NS	10	2.44	1.93
		Arab EFL	10	7.87	7.90
	Shared Knowledge References	English NS	10	.64	.81
		Arab EFL	10	.11	.23

Directives and reader references are the most common engagement features employed by the two writer groups in Linguistics (Figure 4-7). The Arab EFL writers made slightly but nonsignificantly (Table 4-15) greater use of both directives and reader references than their English NS counterparts. Both asides and shared knowledge references are very rare in the English NSs' dissertations and almost absent from those by the Arab EFL writers. However, there was a significant difference (p= .01) in the use of asides between the two writer groups, with the NSs using significantly more asides (M= .96, SD= .90) than their Arab EFL counterparts (M= .05, SD= .17). Again, as mentioned earlier (section 4.2.4), the near absence of asides in the dissertations of the Arab EFL writers could be attributed to their unfamiliarity with this linguistic feature and/or its rhetorical function in academic writing.

Figure 4-7: Engagement features per 10,000 words by the two writer groups within Linguistics
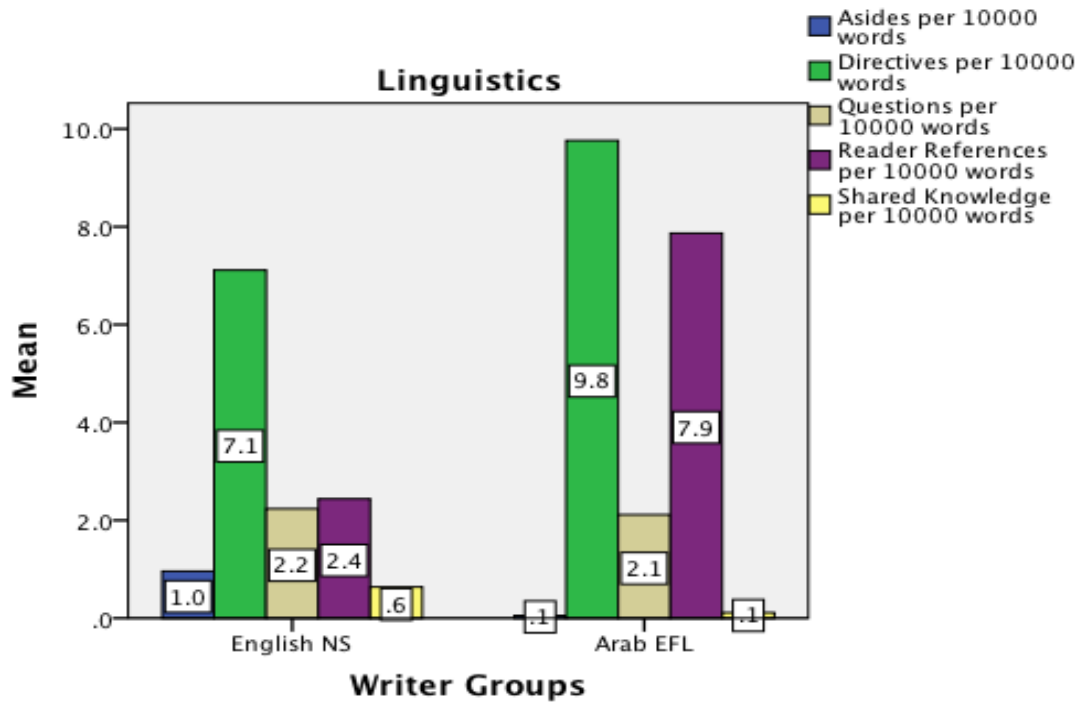
Table 4-15: Inferential statistics for engagement and its main features per 10,000 words in Linguistics

Discipline		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Linguistics	**Engagement**	-1.40	10.0	.19	-6.53
	Asides	3.12	9.6	**.01***	.91
	Directives	-1.01	18	.32	-2.65
	Questions	.14	18	.88	.12
	Readers References	-2.1	10.1	.06	-5.43
	Shared Knowledge References	1.99	10.5	.07	.53

4.3.3   Stance by the two writer groups within Literature

Broadly similar to the results of the overall use of stance in Linguistics, on average the overall use of stance in Literature is also greater in English NSs' dissertations than that by Arab EFL writers (mean difference 51.86 per 10,000 words; see Table 4-16). Variation between individuals within the NS group is moderately high (SD= 56.6% of the mean) while the Arab EFL writers appear to be more consistent with each other (SD= 30.5% of the mean). The

independent-samples t-test results however (Table 4-17) show no significant difference in the overall use of stance or in the use of any of the four stance features between the two writer groups within Literature. Even though the mean difference between the two writer groups was quite high, the nonsignificant results could be because of the great variation among individuals, particularly within the English NS group (see Table 4-16 for SD scores).

Table 4-16: Descriptive statistics for stance and its main features per 10,000 words within Literature

Discipline		Writer Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Literature	**Stance**	English NS	9	159.14	90.03
		Arab EFL	10	107.28	32.77
	Attitude Markers	English NS	9	30.30	15.97
		Arab EFL	10	23.04	11.67
	Boosters	English NS	9	41.85	23.33
		Arab EFL	10	31.63	17.93
	Hedges	English NS	9	72.90	46.93
		Arab EFL	10	43.55	15.40
	Self-mentions	English NS	9	14.09	21.45
		Arab EFL	10	9.06	11.07

Table 4-17: Inferential statistics for stance and its main features per 10,000 words within Literature

Discipline		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Literature	**Stance**	1.63	9.9	.13	51.85
	Attitude Markers	1.14	17	.27	7.26
	Boosters	1.08	17	.29	10.22
	Hedges	1.79	9.54	.11	29.34
	Self-mentions	.65	17	.52	5.03

Looking at the frequency of stance markers in each dissertation within both writer groups (Table 4-18), we can see that frequencies varied to a great extent among individuals within the NS group. There were as few as 72.14 and 56.45 per 10,000 words of stance markers in the dissertations of both Lit03-NS and Lit06-NS respectively while in Lit07-NS's and Lit08-NS's dissertations there were as many as 304.87 and 305.47 respectively. This variation among the

English NS subcorpus could be attributed to the different subdisciplines it included. While all dissertations in the Arab EFL subcorpus were written for topics in Literature, the English NS subcorpus included dissertations from both Literature and Film & Literature subdisciplines. The ones that featured the highest use of stance markers (Lit07-NS, Lit08-NS and Lit09-NS) were written for topics in Film & Literature. (It may now seem that including these dissertations written for Film & Literature was not a good thing to do especially because such dissertations were absent from the Arab EFL subcorpus; but I included them because both subdisciplines required student writers to follow the same criteria for writing their dissertations; see section 3.5.1.1 for more details. However, this suggests that variation within a discipline can be a very salient consideration, albeit one that is outside the scope of my study).

Table 4-18: Stance by each individual writer from the two writer groups within Literature (per 10,000 words)

English NS	Stance	Arab EFL	Stance
Lit01-NS	130.15	Lit01-EFL	113.31
Lit02-NS	138.94	Lit02-EFL	113.49
Lit03-NS	72.14	Lit03-EFL	60.41
Lit04-NS	159.2	Lit04-EFL	104.64
Lit05-NS	105.98	Lit05-EFL	51.06
Lit06-NS	56.45	Lit06-EFL	97.18
Lit07-NS (F&L)	304.87	Lit07-EFL	138.7
Lit08-NS (F&L)	305.47	Lit08-EFL	158.94
Lit09-NS (F&L)	159.03	Lit09-EFL	106.26
		Lit10-EFL	128.82

With regard to the use of the four stance features, again none was significantly different between the two writer groups. But as can be seen in Figure 4-8, the English NSs made greater use of all stance features. The highest mean difference between the two writer groups is in the use of hedges (mean difference 29.35 per 10,000 words). Hedges are also more common than the other three stance features in both writer groups while self-mentions are the least common (again these results are very similar to those found in Linguistics). However, Literature writers

in both groups seem to vary, to some extent, in their uses of stance features (as seen from SD

scores of each stance feature in Table 4-16), indicating that a qualitative investigation which

aims to seek out the causes for all of this variation is worth pursuing.

Figure 4-8: Stance features per 10,000 by the two writer groups within Literature
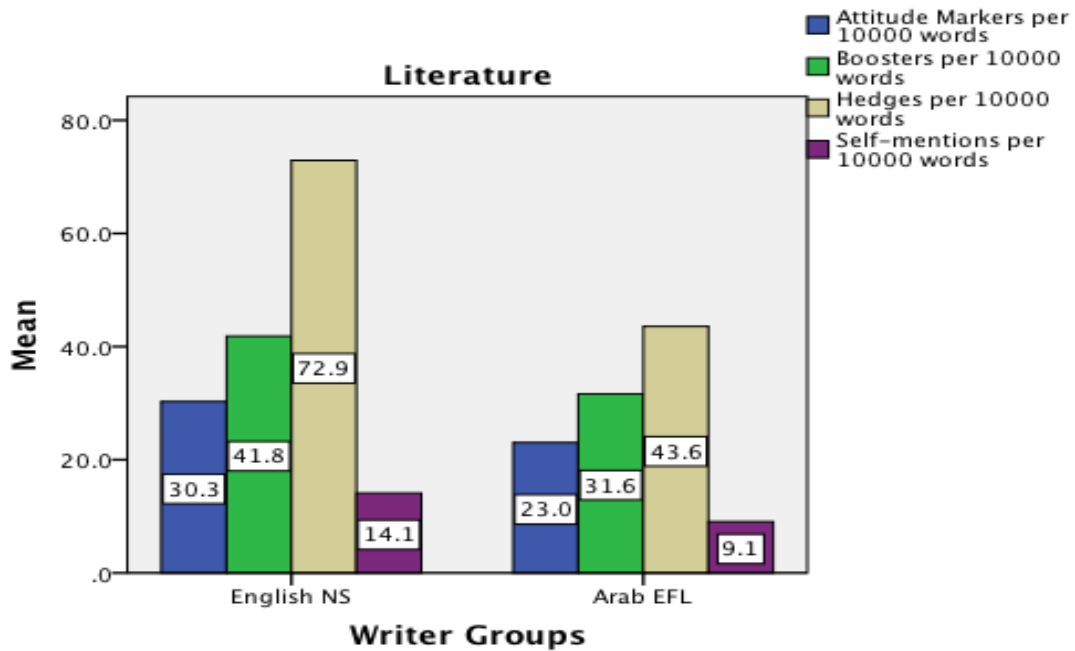
4.3.4   Engagement by the two writer groups within Literature

As we saw with the overall results for engagement in Linguistics dissertations, engagement

markers in Literature dissertations are also very infrequent; however, the overall use of

engagement markers by NSs is slightly (but nonsignificantly; see Table 4-19) higher than that by

their Arab EFL counterparts (mean difference 6.1 per 10,000 words) (Table 4-20).

Table 4-19: Inferential statistics for engagement and its main features per 10,000 words within Literature

Discipline		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Literature	**Engagement**	1.1	12.1	.28	5.57
	Asides	2.1	10.7	.06	.94
	Directives	-.14	17	.98	-.09
	Questions	1.2	10.2	.27	1.2
	Readers References	.7	17	.48	3.06
	Shared Knowledge References	2.6	17	**.02***	.41

Table 4-20: Descriptive statistics for engagement and its main features per 10,000 words within Literature

Discipline		Writer Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Literature	**Engagement**	English NS	9	17.6	13.13
		Arab EFL	10	11.5	7.19
	Asides	English NS	9	1.34	1.27
		Arab EFL	10	.40	.55
	Directives	English NS	9	1.27	1.52
		Arab EFL	10	1.36	1.38
	Questions	English NS	9	2.08	2.99
		Arab EFL	10	.84	1.17
	Reader References	English NS	9	11.91	11.18
		Arab EFL	10	8.85	7.27
	Shared Knowledge References	English NS	9	.46	.47
		Arab EFL	10	.05	.17

With regard to the use of each of the five engagement features (Figure 4-9), we see that, overall, reader references are the most common feature employed by both writer groups while the other four engagement components are very rare. The independent-samples t-test results (Table 4-19 above) show no significant differences between the two writer groups in the use of any of the engagement features except for shared knowledge references (t (2.6)= 17, p= 02). However, again there seems to be a considerable variation between individuals within each writer group in

Literature, indicating that engagement features are not only infrequent in the student writing but they also appear to be employed by only a few writers.

Figure 4-9: Engagement features per 10,000 words by the two writer groups within Literature
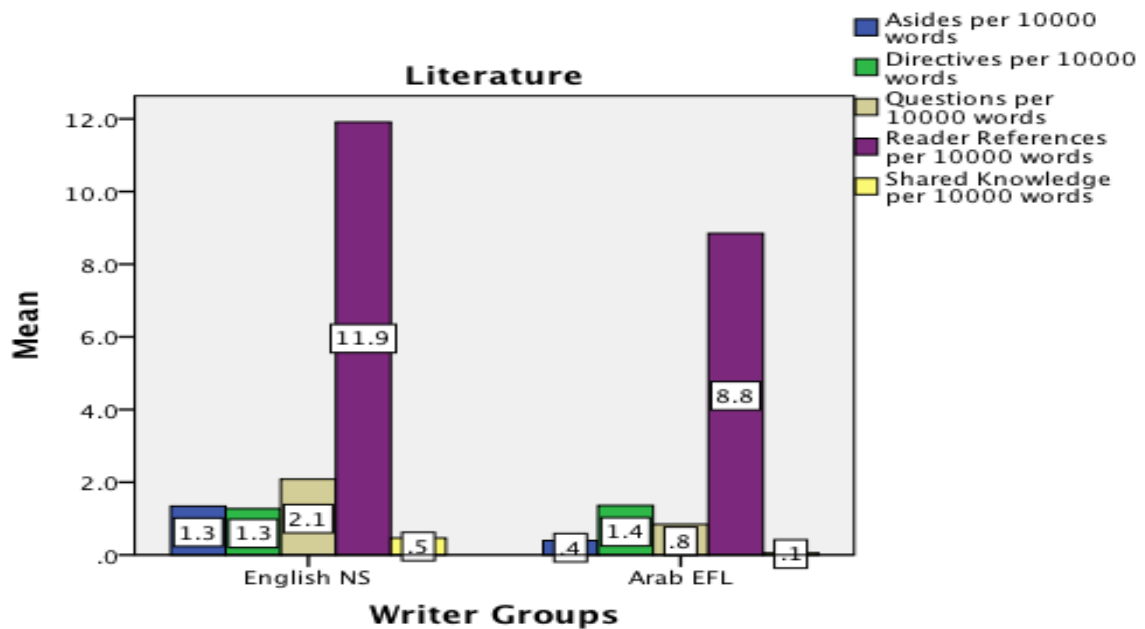
4.4   Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the results of the statistical analysis, showing the extent to which different disciplines (Linguistics vs. Literature) and different writer groups (Arab EFL writers vs. English NSs) within each discipline diverge/converge in their uses of stance and engagement markers. I now report in the following chapter the findings of my interview data analysis.

Chapter 5   Qualitative Results

5.1   Introduction

As seen from the quantitative results (sections 4.2 and 4.3), the overall frequency of stance and engagement markers is rather similar in the two disciplines and the two writer groups within each discipline. However, further analysis shows that there are some significant differences in the use of specific features of stance and engagement: (i) between the two disciplines (regardless of writer group), with Linguistics employing significantly more hedges and more directives than Literature while Literature used significantly more reader references than Linguistics; (ii) between the two writer groups within Linguistics, with the NS writers using significantly more attitude markers, more hedges and more asides than the Arab EFL writers; and (iii) between the two writer groups within Literature, with the NS writers using significantly more shared knowledge references than their Arab EFL counterparts. Furthermore, closer analysis indicates that there is great variation in the use of stance and engagement markers (for example, in the use of self-mentions) in the case of some individual writers within each of the four sub-corpora. Thus, discourse-based semi-structured interviews were conducted to investigate the causes of this variation while at the same time interviews provide accounts of the reasons that motivated writers to choose and use stance and engagement markers in their dissertations.

Interview data revealed that the student writers' reasons for employing stance and engagement markers were generally "to express their positions, represent themselves, and engage their audiences" (Hyland, 2005b, p.176), in part, similar to those reasons articulated by expert writers as found in the literature. However, there appear to be other factors which have influenced their decision whether to use or avoid a stance or engagement marker in their writing. The two excerpts below (Examples 5-1 and 5-2), which are taken from two different interviews (the first informant is an English NS from Linguistics [Ling01-NS], and the second one is an Arab EFL

writer from Literature [Lit04-EFL]), illustrate why student writers used a particular stance/engagement marker in their dissertations. Both informants were shown extracts taken from their own dissertations and were asked to talk about the impression they wanted to convey with the use of MAY and MIGHT [Ling01-NS], and IPSO FACTO [Lit04-EFL].

Example 5-1: An excerpt from my interview with Ling01-NS

The extract (1) below is taken from the interviewee's dissertation and she was asked about the impression she wanted to convey by her uses of MAY and MIGHT:

> (1) There also appears to be no studies that compare native and non-native speakers of English. As it **may** be the case that native and non-native speakers of English **might** have similar needs, it is of interest to investigate the impact of an EAP course and student needs of both groups in the same study. [Ling01-NS]

Ling01-NS: I think I used 'may' and 'might' here just, kind of cautious language, because the thing is with my dissertation, I can never be quite certain with my research, because I'm only doing it within a short time frame and so I don't have a lot of time to investigate all areas, but it was just, I suppose I was using this language to say that that's what I'd found, but this might not be completely the full story, because I've got limitations. […]

AM: Interesting! Okay. Here is a table showing some extracts including the word 'may' or 'might', and the frequency of each word. 'May' has been used 33 times and 'might' has been used only once. Any comments?

Ling01-NS: I think I prefer 'may', because I think 'may' sounds a little bit more formal, whereas 'might' is probably a little bit more spoken English. I think the reason why I used it here was so that I didn't have the two of the same words in the sentence.

AM: You mean otherwise you wouldn't use 'might' at all?

Ling01-NS: Probably not actually, I would definitely favour 'may', because 'might' looks a bit odd, now that I've read this over, 'might' looks a bit strange.

AM: Does it have to do with the meaning?

Ling01-NS: I think it's to do with the formality really.

As can be seen from Example 5-1, Ling01-NS used both MAY and MIGHT to express uncertainty. However, when she was presented with the frequencies of the two words (MAY= 33 times, MIGHT= 1), she further explained that MAY, for her, sounds more formal while MIGHT

is a less formal word and the reason for using MIGHT in that sentence was to avoid repetition. Likewise, Lit04-EFL (Example 5-2) revealed that her use of IPSO FACTO was to lay emphasis on what was being said and at the same time she wanted to impress readers with her language. Lit04-EFL also indicated that her writing and her beliefs about writing have changed since she wrote her dissertation we are discussing, so she would not use IPSO FACTO anymore.

Example 5-2: An excerpt from my interview with Lit04-EFL

> *The extract (2) below is taken from the interviewee's dissertation and she was asked about the impression she wanted to convey by her use of IPSO FACTO:*
>
> (2) This, **ipso facto**, **proves** that the fear of death, presented in the novel, is not meant to tackle individual cases of characters—the characters are used to convey a postmodern symptom, their function beyond this purpose is limited. [Lit04-EFL]

> Lit04-EFL: I added it [IPSO FACTO] just as a sort of emphasis, which is something I wouldn't do now.
>
> AM: Because?
>
> Lit04-EFL: I'm not after impressing someone with my language anymore! I'm not.
>
> AM: Okay. So you won't use it again?
>
> Lit04-EFL: I might, but in a different context, because it's a lovely one, I can't see there's something wrong with that. See now there's a lot of fear when I'm writing.
>
> AM: Why's that?
>
> Lit04-EFL: Because I don't want somebody to circle my words and tell me 'expression problem, expression problem' because even sometimes I check it and I think it's right, but [my supervisor] would comment, so it leaves me all the time bewildered, what to do here. […] so I try to keep it very simple because I'm scared.

Clearly, both excerpts illustrate that there were a mixture of factors that might have influenced writers' linguistic choices. While one of those factors was the student writers' beliefs about the function of stance/engagement markers (which echoed to some extent expert writers' beliefs as found in the literature), there appear to be some other different factors that motivated student writers to use (or avoid) such language in their writing.

Thus, because it was common in the data for writers to ascribe their usage or non-usage of stance/engagement markers to several causes, qualitative results will be presented in three main sections in an attempt to avoid repetition. In section 5.2 I will introduce the student writers' beliefs about the main function of each feature of stance (i.e. attitude markers, boosters, hedges, and self-mentions) and engagement (i.e. directives, reader references, and questions; asides and shared knowledge references were not discussed in the interviews due to time constraints and their infrequent use in academic writing in general and in my corpus in particular). In section 5.3, a detailed account of the writers' other reasons for using (or avoiding) stance/engagement markers will be provided. Section 5.4 will deal with how student writers have changed and/or developed their writing and their beliefs about appropriate academic writing.

5.2   Beliefs about the function of stance and engagement markers

In their interviews, student writers expressed their beliefs about the function of stance and engagement markers which appeared in their own dissertations and/or in other students' dissertations. What follows is a report of what they said about the main function of each of the stance and engagement features.

5.2.1   Function of hedges

Generally, writers employ hedges to imply that what is being said is based on plausible reasoning rather than on certain knowledge (Hyland, 2005b). That is precisely the belief held by all my informants about the function of hedges, as my interview data reveals, and basically one of the reasons behind employing hedges the most, when compared with their uses of other stance and engagement features. Also, interview data shows that the student writers are aware of the importance of hedging their claims in order to gain readers' acceptance. On the basis of the informants' accounts, hedges were employed mainly to: (1) express uncertainty about what is being said; and (2) involve readers in a dialogue in order to avoid their attacks or objections to

the writer's claims. What the informants say about each of these functions of hedges is presented below.

5.2.1.1   To express uncertainty

Informants explained that hedges such as ALMOST, APPEAR, SEEM, MAY, and IN MY OPINION allow them to express their uncertainty in what they say since they could not provide (hard/enough) evidence to support their claims. For instance, Lit01-NS explains that ALMOST (Example 5-3) was included because

> I am not sure that there would have been enough evidence produced to prove that. So 'almost' is just there to modify the strength of that claim. I think actually it's a way of making it more plausible, perhaps, because I am not sure that an ambitious claim of that kind can be established with such confidence. [Lit01-NS]

Example 5-3: Lit01-NS's use of ALMOST

…there are **almost** certainly finer gradations between the Moral, National, and Global varieties of Islamism.

Ling07-NS also explained that he had to use APPEAR (Example 5-4) because the claim he was making was based on his opinion rather than on hard evidence:

> …in the first three sections, I thought the writer probably hadn't thought about it. Whereas in the next sections, it seemed to me that it was of such a choice that it appeared to be deliberate. But without actually asking the writer, there's no way that I could say that they used that term deliberately, or not deliberately. [Ling07-NS]

Example 5-4: Ling07-NS's use of APPEARS

It was decided instead to opt for the sequence as outlined in the Introduction, in which the first three sections discuss metaphors of a more subconscious nature, followed by those where the choice **appears** to be more deliberate.

In the same vein, Ling08-NS had to hedge her statement (Example 5-5) by using SEEM not only because she did not believe that it was "absolutely the fact" but also because "there was no way to prove it". She further explains that

the reason I'm not saying, "It means X," is simply because the data is not so straightforward, and I can't say, "This is why people choose to do this," because there're many other reasons. [Ling08-NS]

Example 5-5: Ling08-NS's use of SEEM

Language ability may certainly play a part, but it would **<u>seem</u>** that culture is the key player,…

So hedges also serve the purpose of leaving open other possibilities. That is, while informants see hedging as a way of saying '*from my point of view*', they are at the same time acknowledging that there could be other views and other interpretations. For instance, Ling01-NS says, referring to her use of IN MY OPINION (Example 5-6),

> I was probably being a bit more cautious, because I was saying that it was my opinion and not saying to the reader, 'This is what we can see' because […] it was just a reason that I had thought up, it wasn't anything that could be seen clearly, so I think by saying this, I just wanted to say, 'One reason could be…' And I think also, maybe, that there wasn't a lot of evidence to show this, it was just an inference. [Ling01-NS]

Example 5-6: Ling01-NS's use of IN MY OPINION

<u>In my opinion</u>, I believe that one of the reasons that native speakers had negative feeling towards the course is that they felt that they were being compared to students with lower language levels.

In summary, then, by both expressing uncertainty about what was being said and by acknowledging that there could have been other interpretations besides the one they advanced, student writers were able to tone down their claims. Ling08-NS, for instance, had to hedge her claim and employ APPEAR (Example 5-7) because without it her claim would sound "too strong":

> I'm not going to tell teachers what to do from this single Master's dissertation. There's not going to be one answer. But this is what my research shows. [Ling08-NS]

Example 5-7: Ling08-NS's use of APPEAR

<u>It would appear</u> the most pedagogically valid approach is to teach students both polite and casual move...

5.2.1.2   To avoid readers' potential attack

Interview data shows that student writers were aware of their reader's potential disagreement with what was being said, so they employed hedges to acknowledge their readers' views and accommodate their expectations. The function of hedges here appear to allow readers to get involved in an argument as participants, to seek their agreement and avoid their attack. Ling08-NS, for instance, expected that her readers would disagree with the approach she was taking so she employed MIGHT (Example 5-8) to "show a gentle opening of possibility" and to say to readers,

> "Look, I'm aware that you could say this negative thing about what I'm doing, but that doesn't actually apply here" because 'it might'. […] Obviously I'm doing the gentle academic tone of, "Here's a potential gap," and I think I probably go on to show I will fill it. [Ling08-NS]

Example 5-8: Ling08-NS's use of MIGHT

While acknowledging Prior's suggestion […], an exploratory genre analysis of academic request email's composite parts **might** both de-mask and demystify this necessary part of student communicative practice.

Likewise, Lit04-EFL was aware that at a particular point (Example 5-9) she could not use strong words like DEMONSTRATE because her readers would say "this is pre-deterministic" and it would sound as if "I've given a verdict". But with the word SEEM,

> …it's more like controversial, I'm leaving space for argument, a sort of give and take, and eventually I might prove that. [Lit04-EFL]

Example 5-9: Lit04-EFL's use of SEEMS

DeLillo's fiction **seems** to take the postmodern condition into account...

Ling07-NS also used MAY (Example 5-10) to soften his claim and to thereby avoid readers' (the marker's) attacks:

> It's slightly softening it and making sure that I don't say anything too precise that the

person marking it could come back at me. [Ling07-NS]

Example 5-10: Ling07-NS's use of MAY

While they **may** each have a different structure and outcome, many sports have common features.

Similarly, Ling10-EFL says that employing AT BEST (Example 5-11) is like "building a wall and trying to avoid any holes in it". So by including both possibilities, he wanted to "avoid a counter-argument":

> I stop the reader from saying, 'How about if they were something else'. Yes, it's like you're building a wall and trying to avoid any holes in it, you see? […] So I'm trying to say, 'In both possibilities, this argument is valid.' [Ling10-EFL]

Example 5-11: Ling10-EFL's use of AT BEST

… if learning styles are permanent psychological traits or, **at best**, "moderately strong habits" (Reid, 1987: 100), there will be no point of investigating an area that cannot be embodied in practical uses.

Apparently, student writers were aware of (and concerned about) their readers' potential objections and disagreement to the approaches they were taking and/or to the claims they were making. However, with hedges, Ling03-EFL says, "there should be no problem" because even if the reader disagrees with what is being said, hedges are employed to soften claims and make them more acceptable. In sum, student writers in my study appear to generally understand the 'multi-functional' character of hedges as emphasized by Hyland (1996) (see 2.4.1.1).

5.2.2   **Function of boosters**

Unlike hedges, boosters (such as AGAIN, CLEARLY, SHOW, IN FACT, and VERY) were used to express certainty in what is being said. Example 5-12 shows some extracts including boosters from my corpus.

Example 5-12: Extracts including boosters from my corpus

---

(1) Bergeson's remarks apply to Qutb's works specifically, but his point here […] is even truer of the generation of Islamists which followed Qutb, and **indeed** truer **again** of the generation which came next. [Lit01-NS]

(2) **In fact**, this very problematic pertinently correlates with the issue of nationalism in the Indian context. [Lit02-EFL]

(3) This idea is **very** clear in both novels. [Lit01-EFL]

(4) This is **clearly** not a subconscious choice of lexis, but a carefully thought-out one. [Ling07-NS]

(5) The data **shows** that most students need some kind of further guidance. [Ling01-NS]

Informants explained that their uses of such strong words like those in Example 5-12 were for "pure emphasis". For instance, Lit01-NS says that he used both INDEED and AGAIN (Example 5-12(1)) "just to enhance the point being made". Similarly, Lit02-EFL found IN FACT, in this context (Example 5-12(2)), "the most appropriate word to connect ideas and emphasize my point". Also, Lit01-EFL employed VERY (Example 5-12(3)) because she was "100% sure of this idea" so she wanted to lay some stress on it. Ling07-NS, likewise, felt confident and able to use CLEARLY (Example 5-12-(4)) in his claim that the writer (in his study) was conscious about his/her "choice of lexis" because

> It appeared to be carefully worked out. […]. For me, there appeared to be some thought given to it. It wasn't subconscious. It would have been very difficult for somebody to come out with that, without thinking about it first. It was almost contrived. [Ling07-NS]

With regard to the last example (Example 5-12(5)), Ling01-NS says that she was "quite definite" about the results of her study and that was why she employed SHOW because

> if I wasn't quite certain if the students needed some kind of further guidance, then I would have said, 'It appears from the data that they need…' rather than, 'The data shows', and I'm probably quite confident in my results here. [Ling01-NS]

Obviously then, boosters allow student writers to present their work with assurance and therefore "mark involvement with the topic and solidarity with their audience" (Hyland, 2005b, p.179).

5.2.3   Function of attitude markers

Textual analysis indicates that the student writers employed attitude markers mainly to display their 'affective' attitudes towards propositions, conveying importance, surprise, agreement/disagreement, and frustration (Example 5-13).

Example 5-13: Extracts including attitude markers from my corpus

> - However, one **significant** issue raised from the data was that most students needed some further guidance. [Ling01-NS]
> - This is an **astonishing** sentence. [Lit01-NS]
> - In positing this I **disagree** with Susan Stanford Friedman... [Lit04-NS]
> - **Unfortunately** and predictably, as the interviews were not conducted until after mid-summer to allow for coding, many students had returned to their home countries... [Ling08-NS]

Moreover, informants explained that their uses of words such as INTERESTINGLY, STARTLING and BEAUTIFULLY STRIKING (Example 5-14) not only allowed them to express their affective attitudes to what was being said but also helped them to underline their points as worthy of attention so that readers would take more notice of these.

Example 5-14: Extracts including attitude markers from my corpus

> - **Interestingly**, the results of the study showed a significant difference between male and female learners... [Ling02-EFL]
> - Perhaps the most **startling** similarity in the two very different novels looked at here is the dominance of men over women. [Lit01-EFL]
> - Similarly, Ghosh delineates quite a **beautifully striking** image of Nick's alienation... [Lit08-EFL]

Thus, student writers employed attitude markers (as opposed to hedges and boosters) to signal their reactions to material and to convey feelings rather than 'commitment'. By doing so, "writers both express a position and pull readers into a conspiracy of agreement so that it can often be difficult to dispute these judgements" (Hyland, 2005b, p.180). And as Ling02-EFL notes, it is "nice" to share feelings and thoughts with readers because that would make writing sound "honest" and so it would be "more convincing".

5.2.4   Function of self-mentions

Textual analysis showed that most student writers (i.e. 36 out of 39) explicitly referred to themselves in their dissertations. While most of them employed first person singular pronouns (I, MY, and ME), some student writers referred to themselves by using third person nouns (THE AUTHOR, THE RESEACHER and THE WRITER). The following examples (Example 5-15) are from my corpus.

Example 5-15: Extracts including self-mentions from my corpus

- **I** felt that addressing learning styles would help **me** to help **my** students… [Ling02-EFL]
- As mentioned previously this study focussed on the speech of older speakers from the Colchester area. They were selected in the main, through contacts from **the author's** mother. [Ling04-NS]

On the basis of my informants' accounts and my textual analysis which referenced previous functional taxonomies (such as Harwood (2003, 2005c), Hyland (2002a), and Tang & John (1999)), self-mentions appear to help student writers: (1) define a term; (2) express self-benefits and present future plans; (3) state a purpose; (4) explain a procedure; (5) elaborate an argument; and (6) state results/claims. Below each of these points will be discussed and illustrated by examples from my corpus.

5.2.4.1   To define a term

A number of student writers employed 'I' to define terms used in their dissertations (Example 5-16).

Example 5-16: Self-mentions to DEFINE A TERM

- **I** use the term how pseudo-question (HPQ) to refer to a class of utterances... [Ling06-NS]
- By passive belonging, **I** mean, making no changes to the self in order to fit into the host society. [Lit02-EFL]

5.2.4.2   To express self-benefits and present future plans

Some student writers included a personal statement on what they have gained from the research and/or (consequently) what plans they have had for future projects (Example 5-17).

Example 5-17: Self-mentions to EXPRESS SELF-BENEFITS

> - During the process of writing this dissertation, **I** have come to realise the importance of an objective and flexible approach in aiding the construction of knowledge. [Ling05-NS]
> - As the purpose of this research was to create a teachable move structure, the findings in Table 11 will be used in conjunction with genre-based teaching theory **by the researcher** in future classrooms of academic and pre-academic students. [Ling08-NS]

5.2.4.3   To state a purpose

It appears that most student writers felt comfortable employing 'I' "to state their discoursal purposes in order to signal their intentions and provide an overt structure for their texts" (Hyland, 2002a, p.1100). Both Ling03-EFL and Lit02-EFL, for instance, say that they used 'I' mainly to show how their dissertations were organized and to inform readers about the main topics and issues that would be discussed (Example 5-18).

Example 5-18: Self-mentions to STATE A PURPOSE

> - In this dissertation, **I** will attempt to present an account for the properties of Gapping... [Ling03-EFL]
> - **My** dissertation will be made of four chapters in which **I** discuss four novels. [Lit02-EFL]

Also included in this category is the writer's use of self-mentions to state his/her purposes for doing the research or to explain the reasons why the research is needed or considered (Example 5-19).

Example 5-19: Self-mentions to EXPLAIN WHY THE RESEARCH IS NEEDED/CONSIDERED

> • This research paper was inspired by **the writer** noticing a growing trend in students using PEDs in the second language classroom. [Ling02-NS]
> • **My** interest in investigating the resonance of the road in American literature was stimulated by the publication of Cormac McCarthy's The Road1 in 2006. [Lit05-NS]

5.2.4.4   To explain a procedure

Analysis shows that student writers employed what Harwood (2005c) calls "method pronouns" which help to not only recount the successful research process but also give accounts of "procedures that *could* have been followed, but which were not followed for whatever reason, as well as procedures which were *attempted*, but which were unsuccessful" (Harwood, 2005c, p.252, emphasis in original). The following examples (Example 5-20) are from my corpus:

Example 5-20: Self-mentions to EXPLAIN A PROCEDURE

> • **I** asked Walters how he chose this metaphor... [Ling07-NS]
> • …it could have been better if **I** had used a probability sample. [Ling02-EFL]
> • **My** emphasis on PBI coming before a request and JUS usually after was at fault… [Ling08-NS]

Moreover, method pronouns also appear to help student writers to display their disciplinary competence or lack of it (Example 5-21).

Example 5-21: Self-mentions to DISPLAY DISCIPLINARY COMPETENCE/LACK OF IT

> • In choosing Spielberg to introduce this project, **I have consciously selected** a director who is infamous for his successful Hollywood blockbusters, yet who appears to have been overlooked in terms of scholarly focus on the sound in his films. [Lit09-NS]
> • **I do not have the phonological expertise** to provide a more in-depth analysis,… [Ling06-NS]

Unsurprisingly, closer analysis reveals that almost all instances of method pronouns appeared in the Linguistics subcorpus (only a few cases of 'I' and 'MY' appeared in the Literature subcorpus). Obviously, this is attributed to the different research types and styles demanded by

each discipline. In Linguistics, for instance, student writers, as interview data reveals, are required to clearly present their methodological approach. Ling07-NS says it is legitimate to use 'I' when describing how you set up your experiments because "you are explaining your mode of operation". Recounting the research methods and procedures seem to be the "personal" part of the research where student writers feel more comfortable to insert 'I', MY and ME in their writing. Thus, some student writers used method pronouns to help them describe the different stages of procedures they went through, for example, when coding their qualitative data (Example 5-22).

Example 5-22: Self-mentions to describe the different stages of coding

> For **my** first coding, **I** made some initial codes and placed them besides the quotes throughout **my** first reading. […] **I** wrote it like this beside the stretch of the text. […] For **my** second coding, **I** tried to compare between different answers to group them according to similarity of themes using different coloured markers. […] Having **my** research questions in mind, **I** then made **my** last coding. [Ling01-EFL]

For others, method pronouns helped to relate how they recruited participants for their study (Example 5-23).

Example 5-23: Self-mentions to explain how participants were recruited

> Many useful contacts were made throughout the older generation within the Mersea community while **I** was invited to help as a volunteer […]. **I** was introduced to the club members […] and **I** spent some time talking to them and giving them **my** contact details. [Ling10-NS]

For Ling08-NS, method pronouns allow her to be "direct" and attribute things that she is "comfortable owning" to herself even though she is, in general, not in favour of using first person pronouns:

> I'm not saying, "My study, my research," or any of that, but when it comes to me, things that I'm comfortable owning, 'my inexperience with coding', 'my mistake', and 'my time constraints'. […] I want to admit that those are all mine. [Ling08-NS]

By being honest and telling the truth about the difficulties encountered during the research process, Ling08-NS hoped that the "case" was clearer so the reader would be more convinced that this is "a good study," because she then showed how those problems were fixed. She believes that "it's a way to argue the case more strongly" by not hiding these.

In Literature, however, the nature and the kind of research vary from those in Linguistics. Literature research primarily adopts a critical, discursive approach and does not normally require experiments to be conducted and then be reported as in Linguistics, and so this could explain the relative absence of method pronouns in the Literature subcorpus. Only a few cases were found; and they were mainly used to explain the difficulties student writers encountered in their research in general (Example 5-24).

Example 5-24: Methods pronouns found in the Literature subcorpus

- In **my** comparison of The House of Mirth and Sons and Lovers, the most difficult hindrance that faced **my** research was the difference between American and British class formation. [Lit01-EFL]
- **I** faced some difficulties which made it hard for **me** to address the South Asian communities in the UK in **my** dissertation. [Lit02-EFL]

5.2.4.5   To elaborate an argument

Although this is "a high-risk function" where the writers choose "to stake their commitments to their arguments with the use of first person" (Hyland, 2002a, p.1103), student writers in my study do not seem to be afraid of taking responsibility when giving opinions and elaborating arguments (Example 5-25).

Example 5-25: Self-mentions to ELABORATE AN ARGUMENT

- In positing this **I disagree** with Susan Stanford Friedman.... [Lit04-NS]
- **I concur** with the feminist insight…[Lit06-NS]
- **I think** that overall, the insight gained from analysing mean scores was very useful.

[Ling03-NS]

This may indicate the student writers' awareness of the genre which requires that they present themselves as a thinker who should express agreement or disagreement with what is being said in order to make a more convincing case. Ling08-NS, for instance, used 'I SUGGEST' to help her make "a theoretical argument" and to show that what is being said is her own interpretation so no one else should be blamed for it:

> "I suggest," I'm making a theoretical argument there, so I very much want to attribute it to me. I couldn't say, "It could be seen that." I'm saying that this is my interpretation of a theoretical construct of critical EAP. So I need to acknowledge it's mine. Indeed, I want to show this is me, I've thought of it, don't blame other people. [Ling08-NS]

5.2.4.6   To state results/claims

In this category, writers "firmly align themselves with their claims through use of a singular pronoun" (Hyland, 2002a, p.1104). Clearly, this is the most face-threatening function of self-mentions (Hyland, 2002a). In his analysis of first person uses in the published corpus, Hyland found that

> in all disciplines writers used the first person to represent their unique role in constructing a plausible interpretation for a phenomenon, thereby establishing a personal authority based on confidence and command of their arguments. (p.1104)

But this explicit use of *'persuasive 'I''*, predictably and understandably, was not very common in my corpus of student writing; and that could be because it is "a risky strategy" that is "most vulnerable to criticism" (Hyland, 2002a, p.1104) a student writer might wish to avoid. However, Example 5-26 shows how some student writers in my study used 'I' to confidently represent their claims.

Example 5-26: Self-mentions to STATE RESULTS/CLAIMS

> - **I ultimately achieved** the purpose of these interviews. [Ling06-EFL]
> - Even the simple description of a batsman hitting the ball can have qualitative overtones, as **I showed** earlier... [Ling07-NS]
> - **As I have argued**, this is true of much of Morris's work to a lesser or greater extent. [Lit08-NS]

Overall, student writers appear to be aware of the various rhetorical functions of self-mentions as viewed in the literature (see 2.4.1.4).

5.2.5   Function of reader references

Explicit reference to audience is one of the strategies that writers employ to build up rapport with their readers and claim solidarity. My corpus textual analysis revealed that there were four different devices student writers used to explicitly bring readers into their discourse: (i) inclusive WE; (ii) inanimate pronoun ONE; (iii) YOU; and (iv) THE READER (Example 5-27).

Example 5-27: Extracts including reader references from my corpus

> - This choice of form will prove important later in **our** discussion. [Lit01-NS]
> - …**one** might wonder whether what happens with L2-learners is similar to what goes on with very young L1-acquirers. [Ling04-EFL]
> - As **you** can see from the chart above, the question has four different responses. [Lit07-NS]
> - Hopefully, the review of the literature has given **the reader** an understanding of the current state of the research... [Ling05-NS]

As can be seen from Table 5-1 below, the frequencies of these devices vary to a great extent. While WE was by far the most frequent device in my corpus (418 occurrences; 75% of all reader references), YOU and THE READER were used the least (10 and 11 occurrences, respectively) even though they are the clearest ways to acknowledge readers' presence (Hyland, 2005b). One reason for the infrequent use of YOU could be because it is perceived as informal language as my interview data reveals. All my 15 informants share the same view that YOU is an 'informal'

word which is associated with speaking rather than writing; thus, none of them used (or would use) YOU in their academic writing.

Table 5-1: Occurrences of reader references in my corpus of master's dissertations

Reader references	Number of occurrences	%
One	117	21
The reader	11	2
We (inclusive)	418	75.2
You	10	1.8
Total	**556**	**100**

With regard to the READER, however, different views were expressed. While some student writers were in favour of mentioning THE READER, many others perceived it as academically not very appropriate because to Lit01-NS and Ling07-NS a reference to the reader in that form sounds "odd" and "redundant" so they suggest avoiding it in academic writing. Commenting on other students' use of THE READER (Example 5-28), Lit01-NS says,

> I think an improved version of that sentence would just not refer to the reader, and it would just describe what the table shows. […]. I don't think a reference to the reader adds anything to it. It just seems like an empty gesture. It could be shorter and punchier perhaps. So I suppose I'd say it's not very appropriate…. [Lit01-NS]

Lings07-NS adds,

> Here, they're using 'the reader', meaning 'you'. Instead of moving the first person into the third person, they're moving the second person into the third person. They're using the third person slightly oddly. [Ling07-NS]

Example 5-28 Extracts including THE READER from Ling04-EFL's dissertation

- Thus, once **the reader** has looked at the first table thoroughly, it will surely be easy and straightforward to understand the results in the other two tables.
- …for the sake of making the study's outcome clearer to **the reader**, the results for each linguistic aspect studied are presented separately in the form of three tables.
- This chapter presents a discussion of the results of the case study reported in chapter 4; thus **the reader** will have to refer to the results tables there.

Likewise, both Ling03-EFL and Ling10-EFL tended to avoid using THE READER in their writing because of its uncommonness in published work since they both believe that scholars in their fields of Linguistics almost never address the reader in this form.

Lit08-EFL also avoided using THE READER in his dissertation because, to him, the writer would then be distancing himself/herself from the audience. This lack of involvement between participants, he thinks, is not a good strategy in writing if you want to convince readers of what you are saying and if you want to gain acceptance in your disciplinary community:

> Maybe here the writer should have engaged himself or herself with the readership, […] so you could have used 'we', because the 'we' here is understandable in this context. You are engaging yourself with your audience. So it's not only 'the reader'. [Lit08-EFL]

On the other hand, some other informants (like Ling04-EFL) find a reference to THE READER appropriate in academic writing because, unlike the pronoun ONE, "it is clear that the writer here is addressing the reader but not anyone else". Ling04-EFL employed it three times (Example 5-29 above) mainly to guide readers through the discussion:

> I think it's completely appropriate. I do sometimes tell the reader to look at tables so it will be easy for them to understand what I'm talking about. [Ling04-EFL]

In fact, mentioning THE READER in academic writing, according to Hyland (2008b), is rare and "slightly quaint and dated" (p.151).

With regard to the other two devices, inclusive WE and inanimate pronoun ONE, both devices seem more preferable to many student writers because they help them: (1) to engage readers as participants in the discourse and claim solidarity; and (2) to guide readers through the discourse and towards the writer's preferred interpretation. What follows will report what my informants say about each of these two functions.

5.2.5.1   To engage readers and claim solidarity

The writer's use of inclusive WE is generally meant to send "a clear signal of membership by textually constructing both the writer and the reader as participants with similar understanding and goals" (Hyland, 2005b, p.182). Some informants made it clear that their uses of WE were to include readers in the discussion, positioning them as being possessed of a comparable level of knowledge with their readers. Ling03-EFL, for instance, explains that his uses of WE were;

> to include the reader as an active participant in my study. It tells the reader in an indirect way that they participate in this study by following the arguments presented […] in a way it's to pull them in the discussion with me. [Ling03-EFL]

Also, Ling09-EFL says, commenting on her use of 'lead us' (Example 5-29):

> 'Lead us', it meant to include the readers. I'm suggesting the reader and me have reached the same level of understanding so I thought it's OK to use US here. [Ling09-EFL]

Example 5-29: Ling09-EFL's use of US

> This code-switching between the two variants may also lead **us** to understand how women interact with each other…

5.2.5.2   To guide readers through the discourse and towards the writer's preferred interpretation

Textual analysis also showed that student writers used inclusive WE as a discourse guide to organize their dissertations (Example 5-30).

Example 5-30: WE as a discourse guide (1)

> - In the following, **we** will look into these two accounts in more details. [Ling07-EFL]
> - Indeed, as **we** shall see, these two dimensions of the text are ultimately inextricable. [Lit01-NS]

In interviews, both Ling04-EFL and Ling10-EFL agree that inclusive WE helps them to guide readers through the text in a smooth and polite way:

> Saying 'we' […] is like an invitation to the reader that we are moving from here to somewhere else. [Ling10-EFL]

> …when we finish a chapter, we could say "in this chapter we looked at so and so" just to say "you have read the chapter with me so we can now move on". [Ling04-EFL]

As well as guiding readers to forward points (e.g., "as we shall see"), inclusive WE is used to refer back to an argument already covered (e.g., "as we have seen"; see Example 5-31) in order to summarize it and

> also to make sure that the reader has an idea about what has been said and what [is] to follow. [Ling04-EFL]

Lit01-NS adds,

> I suppose it's a way of getting reader and writer on the same page. It's almost, I suppose, a way of recouping the arguments that have been given so far, and saying, "If you accept all of that, then this makes sense," something like that. [Lit01-NS]

Example 5-31: WE as a discourse guide (2)

> * **As we have seen**, Amis routinely treats Islam and Islamism as synonymous. [Lit01-NS]
> * **As we have seen,** the main issue Haznedar addressed was "whether the lack of functional elements entails the lack of functional categories"…[Ling04-EFL]

Thus, inclusive WE does not only organise text but it also, in a way, directs readers towards the writers' preferred interpretation (Example 5-32). Sharing the views of many academic writers (see 2.4.2.1), Lit01-NS explains his use of WE:

> I think it's a way of saying, "I have provided the claims and the evidence that would allow me to make the following claim." I suppose 'we', because it includes the reader, is like saying, "We together have gone through the reasoning that led up to this." [Lit01-NS]

Example 5-32: WE to direct readers towards a preferred interpretation

> * **We** can observe also that the match between Perowne and his wife is only "a stroke of luck". [Lit01-NS]
> * Even if **we** accept that Bonaparte represented one type of consciousness, there is always

the subaltern,… [Lit06-EFL]

Hence, in order to gain readers' support and agreement, WE seems to be the key by which the writer can involve his/her readers in the argument, "anticipating their objections, voicing their concerns, and expressing their views" (Hyland, 2005b, p.183).

5.2.6   Function of directives

Based on Hyland's (2005b) classification of directives (section 2.4.2.4), my textual analysis revealed that student writers used directives to engage readers only in two kinds of activities: (i) textual acts; and (ii) cognitive acts, discussed below. No examples of 'physical acts' were found in my corpus and that could be because of disciplinary differences. That is, instruction to perform 'physical acts' (such as: "Mount the specimen on the lower grip of the machine first,..." (Hyland, 2005b, p.185)) would very likely appear in hard disciplines such as Microbiology but perhaps not in humanities or social sciences research like the ones under investigation.

5.2.6.1   Textual acts

Textual acts were found to be signalled mainly by the imperative SEE in parentheses. There was a total of 144 occurrences of imperative SEE and only two instances of imperative VISIT. These imperatives were used to direct readers to tables, links, or other sections in the same dissertation or to other references (Example 5-33).

Example 5-33: Extracts including directives to textual acts from my corpus

- The negation in Arabic seems to be complex (**see** Benmamoun, 2000; Alsharif and Sadler, 2009; and Aoun et al., 2010). [Ling]
- For full information about the course books and programs given in this department **visit**: http://uqu.edu.sa/computer-sciences-information/ar/1316. [Ling]
- In the very same sense, the concept of one medium's adaptation to another did not originate from the novel to film debate as Voltaire's remarks printed in Lessings preface to *Laocoon* suggest (**see** above). [Lit]

5.2.6.2   Cognitive acts

Analyses revealed that student writers engaged their readers in cognitive acts by the use of three different forms (Example 5-34): (1) an imperative verb; (2) a model of obligation addressed to the readers; and (3) a predicative adjective expressing the writer's judgement of importance. Based on my informants' accounts, such forms were employed to achieve two main goals: (i) To support a very general claim that would lead readers through the discussion towards the writer's preferred interpretation, and (ii) To emphasise what readers should attend to in the discussion and direct them to think in a certain way. What informants say about each of these goals is presented in the following sections.

Example 5-34: Extracts including directives to cognitive acts from my corpus

- **Let us** consider Lily Briscoe again in order to explore the issue further. [Lit04-NS]
- **Compare** *my ear* [maɪ ʲɪə] to *my year* [maɪ jɪə] and *two-eyed* [tu: ʷaɪd] and *too wide* [tu: waɪd]. [Ling04-NS]
- **It is important to** be cautious about drawing any conclusions on the basis of the punctuation of HPQs alone. [Ling06-NS]
- **…it must be noted** that she is mortal and not in control of Paul's actions. [Lit02-NS]

5.2.6.2.1   To support a very general claim

Ling03-EFL, who alone employed the imperative CONSIDER 27 times in his dissertation (all were used in similar contexts to Example 5-35), says that the use of CONSIDER helped him "explain" and then "prove" a point previously discussed.

Example 5-35: Ling03-EFL's use of CONSIDER

Our main purpose here is that we investigate how their approach is working and then in the following section, we will see whether their approach succeeds to account for Gapping and RNR in HA or not. **Consider** the following example:

    a.   John gambled in Sydney on Monday and in Monaco on Thursday.

Lit01-NS also would use CONSIDER in a similar way, to give support to a claim he is making. In an illustration, he says,

> …if I were making a very general claim about a particular book, for instance, and I wanted to support that claim, I might say, "Consider this passage," and I might cite an extract. The word 'consider' would be saying that this is just one of many examples that could be given. [Lit01-NS]

However, not all informants looked favourably upon this use of imperative verbs to direct readers to think in a certain way. More discussion about this will follow when presenting the personal stylistic preferences as one of the factors that affected the writers' use or avoidance of imperatives in section 5.3.8.3.

5.2.6.2.2   *To emphasise what readers should attend to in the discussion*

Informants were asked to comment on the use of other students' use of the predicative adjectives *'It is important to note'* and the modal of obligation *'This must not be confused'* (Example 5-36).

Example 5-36: Extracts including predicative adjectives and modal of obligation from my corpus

- **It is also important to note** that the above list of general skills is not extensive. [Ling]
- **This must not be confused** though, with the view that all respondents believed that the whole narrative should be copied from the pages of the novels into the screenplay,... [Lit]

All informants agree that these two forms are "purely for emphasis", to instruct readers to "pay attention to" and "be aware of" what is being said. But unlike imperative verbs (e.g., CONSIDER, NOTE), informants believe that these forms of predicative adjectives and modals of obligation are more acceptable in academic writing because they are "more formal" and "more objective". Commenting on the use of *'This must not be confused'*, Ling01-NS says,

> I think this is fine, they're being assertive, […] giving quite a strong opinion, kind of telling the reader what to think, but in a bit more of a removed way, by just talking about a view, rather than telling the reader, 'you shouldn't confuse this'. [Ling01-NS]

Ling07-NS agrees that this is a "good" form that could be used to avoid YOU. So instead of saying, 'YOU must not confuse this' which of course would sound too direct, he says, the writer successfully made the point by guiding the readers in an indirect way.

Generally then, cognitive acts manifest as imperative verbs, predicative adjectives, or modals of obligation are seen as useful engagement markers by which readers could be directed to the writers' claims:

> Yes, I totally agree to use these words, because they direct the reader to where he or she should go […]. Like when you are driving a car, imagine if you don't have the directions or the traffic lights! So they are like traffic lights directing readers to certain directions. [Lit01-EFL]

However, closer analysis of the data shows a great variation in the distributions of cognitive acts among dissertations. While most student writers employed predicative adjectives and/or modals of obligation to instruct readers to engage in cognitive acts, only eight (out of 39) students employed imperative verbs which, also, mostly appear in one dissertation (33 out of 53 occurrences of imperative verbs appeared in Ling03-EFL's dissertation where he employed the imperative CONSIDER as in *'consider the fowling example'* 27 times).

It seems from the interview data that informants were aware of the potentially face-threatening effect of directives in general and of imperative verbs in particular. And so this could also be one of the reasons why cognitive acts were realised mostly by predicative adjectives and modals of obligation. To lessen the threat to face of imperatives, some student writers employed the first person plural imperative LET US and one writer even used the word PLEASE before RECALL (possibly) in an attempt to make it more polite. However, when my informants were asked to comment on the use of PLEASE in such a context (Example 5-37), their views varied to some extent. While some informants find it very polite and preferable because it mitigates the

command, one interviewee perceives it as offensive, and overly imposing. Some others find it too personal, and inappropriate. Take Lit01-NS:

> I would probably not use the word 'please' there. I think it's safe just to ask the reader to recall something. The 'please' – there would be contexts outside academic writing where that would be a way of being polite, but I don't think that kind of politeness is essential to impersonal, scholarly pieces of work. I almost want to say it's too personal; it's too personalised, perhaps, in some way. But it's not like I think there's some kind of absolute rule here. It is flexible, I suppose. [Lit01-NS]

Example 5-37: An extract including PLEASE+imperative from my corpus

Please recall from previous chapters that the present study therefore set out to investigate the usefulness of and attitudes towards the information found in PDs and PEDs. [Ling02-NS]

5.2.7   Function of questions

Informants were asked to comment on the use of three questions (Example 5-38) which exemplify three main different kinds of questions found in my corpus. All informants see questions as a kind of an "engaging style". Based on their accounts and how they perceived these questions, there appear to be five different functions of questions:

1. To stress the point in question and make it easier to grasp

2. To direct readers through the discourse and arouse their interest

3. To interact with and respond to readers' potential enquiries

4. To trick readers into agreement

5. To appeal for further research

Example 5-38: Extracts featuring three different kinds of QUESTIONs found in my corpus

(1) **Why choose ethnographic studies?** We have taken a brief look into the establishment of cultural studies and how the idea of audience studies came into being, we have yet to look into the particular impetus behind the adoption of extra-textual methods of research;… [Lit]
(2) An obvious question raised by the existence of this widespread pattern - it encompasses many American writers as well - is this: **Are there any precedents**

> for this literary treatment of terrorism? Specifically, **does *Saturday* draw on any established tradition of fictional writing about terrorism?** It can be argued that it does. [Lit]
>
> (3) In other words, **does the visibility of the prime in the mask priming paradigm affect the participants responses?** In addition, […], **is it the increased visibility of the prime or the pause that would allow them to have more time to process the prime word?** These are some of the open questions that were not answered by the outcomes of this study. [Ling]

5.2.7.1 To stress the point in question and make it easier to grasp

All informants agree that questions in general are used to 'highlight' the point under discussion and make it 'more focused':

> The question shows that the point we want to make is prominent. I could just state the point I want but the question emphasizes its importance. [Ling04-EFL]
>
> …it's quite a bold thing to do, because you can always see a question in a piece of writing, it stands out. [Ling01-NS]

Commenting on the use of question (2) in Example 5-38 above, Ling07-NS believes that the question there was employed to "flag up" the point that will be looked at; and because the question was followed by a short answer, it makes the point even stronger. Ling02-EFL agrees with Ling07-NS that question (2) gives emphasis to the point under discussion. Lit05-EFL adds that turning the point into a question in general could "help make the point clearer and easier for readers to grasp because it is more focused".

5.2.7.2 To direct readers through the discourse and arouse their interest

My informants believe that questions could help to both direct readers to what is coming up and interest them. Most informants admit that, as readers, questions usually get them to think of an answer and make them feel more involved in the argument:

I guess they're involving me in the question, for me to think about it. I wonder if there's a bit of interaction there with the reader and the writer, rather than you just always saying what you've looked at and what you've found. [Ling01-NS]

Usually these questions come to engage readers. You say, "Look I know you have these questions in mind like I do. So, we're going to find the answers together". [Lit04-EFL]

I think they just wanted us to think about that, so they make it more eye-catching. [Lit02-EFL]

Even Ling10-EFL who is generally not in favour of asking questions in academic writing believes that posing questions (like the ones in Example 5-38 above) can often be an effective tool to "provoke the reader to think" and "encourage them to continue reading". All other informants express similar views:

I sometimes like to use questions at the beginning of a chapter just to make the readers feel more excited about reading my texts, and to stimulate their minds, it's like saying "do you know anything about this?" so that will make the reader thinks about it even before they continue reading. [Ling04-EFL]

I think they are good because they make me think about it and at the same time encourage me to continue reading. So yeah it's a kind of engagement. [Ling02-EFL]

In addition to capturing readers' attention, questions could also help in making a more enjoyable, "smoother reading experience". Ling07-NS, whose personal preference is to avoid posing questions because, to him, it sounds informal, believes that writers sometimes need to write "in a fluid, engaging style" because "you don't want to get too pompous". So by posing a question, you are drawing the reader in:

Rather than being very dry and just laying it out as fact, it's making it more readable, basically. I think if you can make these things readable, then people are going to take more notice of them. They're going to enjoy them more, and that's the point of it. [Ling07-NS]

And also we can use questions for a change, using questions, different words. So the readers won't feel bored. [Ling04-EFL]

Likewise, Lit01-NS, commenting on his use of questions in general (and on question (2) in Example 5-38 above, in particular), says that posing questions is not only a way of introducing a new line of argument without it being "too abrupt" but it is also to make reading more "digestible":

> …if a 20,000 word document were nothing but evidence and arguments, without any of these kind of stylistic – I think it would be much less readable, without posing questions. I mean, strictly speaking, you could just remove all these questions perhaps and rewrite them in another way but I think it would be less easy to read and less digestible. I think questions like this posed at certain points make it a smoother reading experience. [Lit01-NS]

So it appears that posing questions is a good way to "break the barrier" between the writer and the readers to get them feel that they are participating in the discussion and so they would not feel "bored" and would continue reading.

5.2.7.3   To interact with and respond to readers' potential enquiries

Questions could also be employed "to interact with what the writer thought that the reader was thinking". Commenting on the use of question (1) in Example 5-38 above ("Why choose ethnographic studies?"), Lit01-NS says

> I suppose it's whenever the writer has become aware that at this point the reader could reasonably ask, "Why have you gone in that direction and not that direction?" then that kind of question is appropriate. [Lit01-NS]

So by asking a question, the writer is, in a way, showing an awareness of the reader's potential questions and consequently responding to them.

5.2.7.4   To trick readers into agreement

While all informants believe that questions could help to engage readers in the discourse in order to solicit their support and agreement, Lit05-EFL further explains that posing questions (like Example 5-38(2)) is kind of "a trap" through which you can "cleverly" and indirectly "get

readers to agree with you, with what you are saying". To him, it is "a sophisticated style" of academic writing.

5.2.7.5   To appeal for further research

Open/genuine questions (like Example 5-38(3)) tend to occur in concluding sections where the writer intends to show awareness of gaps in the present knowledge and appeal for further research. Ling10-EFL perceives these genuine questions as "an invitation to the reader, if they are interested, to make a further study and pursue these questions". But such genuine questions cannot be seen as "entirely innocent of rhetorical intent", as suggested by Hyland (2002c):

> Identifying issues for further study and pointing to new areas of research does not leave the state of knowledge unchanged. The writer has identified him or herself as the identifier of the problem and the author of new questions. (p.553)

5.3   What affected the writers' use of stance and engagement markers?

On the basis of my informants' accounts, many factors seem to have played a role in the way writers position themselves and readers in their dissertations. They can be summarized as ten main factors:

1. Supervisors' (and/or other lecturers') influence

2. Learning from the pre-sessional course in UK

3. Learning through reading in the subject of research

4. Previous education

5. Cultural influence

6. Beliefs about appropriate academic writing in general

7. Beliefs about disciplinary differences

8. Writers' personal stylistic preferences

9. Writers' self-confidence

10. Writers' performance

Each of these factors will be discussed in turn in the following sections.

5.3.1 Supervisors'/other lecturers' influence: *"it affected me the thing my supervisor said"*

Interview data reveals how supervisors (and/or other lecturers) have, to some extent, influenced their students' use of stance/engagement markers. Apparently, almost all informants benefitted from their supervisors' comments and feedback on the first drafts of their dissertations. Supervisors' influence appears clearly in the students' use of (1) hedges; (2) boosters; (3) attitude markers; (4) first person singular pronoun 'I'; and (5) inclusive WE, as evidenced in feedback and comments students received and discussed below.

5.3.1.1 Supervisors' influence on the students' use of hedges

Supervisors particularly influenced the writers' use of hedges. Interview data indicates that the kind of feedback informants usually received from their supervisors was to withdraw, to some extent, from the position they had staked out. For instance, Lit01-NS explains:

> I had perhaps at least implied that I had established something. If [the supervisor] felt that there hadn't been the necessary argumentation for it…, that claim wasn't justified. So she might highlight a phrase and say, "Can you really demonstrate this degree of confidence?" There would be a number of phrases that she would highlight in each of the chapters and say, "Has this really been established at this point, and will the reader be persuaded by it?" [Lit01-NS]

Similarly, Lit04-EFL says she would often receive comments like "This is perhaps too strong"; and Lit05-EFL's supervisor would say, "Are you sure you want to say this?" implying the need to back-pedal slightly from an assertive stance. Ling04-EFL also admits that she used to use

strong expressions and words like PROVE but her supervisor's feedback was to avoid such words. So when she was asked to comment on her use of MAY and MIGHT, she says,

> In my drafts I sent to my supervisor I used to use the word "prove", for example, "this study proves …blah, blah" and I used to use expressions to show that I'm sure about what I'm saying. And he used to tell me not to do that. There's nothing sure about studies or research, even if they prove something. It might change and be wrong. So I started like relaxing and using words just to say that "it could be this way or it could be another way". That's the general idea of using such words. [Ling04-EFL]

But when she was presented with the frequency of each word [MIGHT=9, MAY=7] in her dissertation, she was slightly surprised:

> I never thought about them. I didn't even think that I used them that much. But I know that it affected me the thing my supervisor said, "Don't look like you are sure about everything". So I started throwing them, words like may and might everywhere in my dissertation. I guess that was the reason. [Ling04-EFL]

Supervisors' influence could also be more direct and specific as Lit01-EFL explained how her supervisor would sometimes suggest adding, changing or even deleting a word or a phrase she employed in the first drafts of her dissertation. For instance, her supervisor suggested (i) the addition of mitigating words such as APPARENTLY (Example 5-39(1)); (ii) the replacement of strong words such as PROVE and NOTHING with less strong words such as SHOW and LITTLE (respectively) (Example 5-39(2) and 5-39(3)); and (iii) the deletion of the phrase WITHOUT A DOUBT (Example 5-39(4)) "because in literary criticism, someone will always doubt, even where you wouldn't imagine it", repeating her supervisor's comment. Similarly, Lit03-EFL mentioned that it was her supervisor who added the word APPEAR to her writing because, her supervisor explained, "in Literature you cannot state your opinion as a fact".

Example 5-39: Extracts from Lit01-EFL's dissertation showing her supervisor's influence on toning down strong claims by adding, replacing, or deleting particular items

Examples of a supervisor's influence on Lit01-EFL's writing (the strikethrough was her supervisors'):

- *Adding a hedging device APPARENTLY:*

(1) So, even the **apparently** typical greediness and vulgarity of Jews is nothing when compared to the avarice and money-love of established, upper-class New Yorkers.

- *Replacing strong words with less strong ones:*

(2) Looking closely at the characters studied in this chapter ~~proves~~ **shows** that the "outsiders" of certain societies are not totally bad; …

(3) So, Rosedale is one of Wharton's inventions who has ~~nothing~~ **little** to do with his actually being a Jew.

- *Deleting a phrase that sounds too strong:*

(4) ~~Without a doubt~~, Wharton explores the desire of the new women at the turn of the century …

However, it seems that the impressions students may have had about what their supervisors expect or like are not always correct. One misguided case was revealed as Lit04-EFL explained that she avoided the use of APPEAR because she believed that her supervisor "wouldn't like it". Besides, she thought that the replacement of SEEM with APPEAR (Example 5-40) would be inappropriate because she is associating the word APPEAR with "appearance" only but, she said, "it's my main argument. […] I'm talking about convictions". It seems that Lit04-EFL was unaware of the rhetorical function of APPEAR.

Example 5-40: Lit04-EFL's use of SEEM as a hedge influenced by her supervisor

DeLillo's fiction **seems** to take the postmodern condition into account…

Apart from this erroneous case, student writers must have benefitted from their supervisors' comments and feedback particularly about reconsidering the position they wanted to take with regard to the proposition. A large proportion of hedges found in the student writing could be attributed to the influence of the supervisors' feedback on the students' first drafts.

5.3.1.2   Supervisors' influence on the students' use of boosters

Even though all informants claim their supervisors would usually suggest that they weaken to some extent the assertive stands they take, there appears to be one interesting case where the

supervisor suggested the use of a booster (CLEARLY) in Lit02-EFL's dissertation (Example 5-41).

Example 5-41: Lit02-EFL's use of CLEARLY as a booster influenced by her supervisor

> **Clearly**, second generation migrants have to keep negotiating their place, ...

Lit02-EFL says, commenting on the appearance of the word CLEARLY in her dissertation, "that's my supervisor, because I never say CLEARLY". She explains that she would not have used such a strong word in her writing because "it might not be clear to everyone else", admitting "At the time, I wasn't confident about my opinions". [Lack of self-confidence is another factor that appears to have affected the student writing so it will be discussed later in section 5.3.9.1].

5.3.1.3   Supervisors' influence on the students' use of attitude markers

When Lit01-EFL and Lit03-EFL were asked about the impression they wanted to convey by using CALCULATINGLY (appears once in Lit01-EFL's dissertation (Example 5-42(1)) and PARADOXICALLY (appears twice in Lit03-EFL's dissertation (Example 5-42(2)) which were counted as attitude markers, both informants admitted that it was their supervisors who added these words to their dissertations. They claimed that their supervisors usually suggested using such "big", "difficult" words to make their writing sounds more academic.

Example 5-42: Lit01-EFL's and Lit03-EFL's use of attitude markers influenced by their supervisors

> (1) Moreover, the final scene of the novel which portrays Seldon searching between Lily's papers and private things is **calculatingly** materialistic. [Lit01-EFL]
> (2) On the one hand, they lead Joanna to reject her natural role as a bearer of life (and thus also to repress her desires for sexual intercourse and marriage) and, on the other hand, they lead her, **paradoxically**, into becoming a patron of black people. [Lit03-EFL]

5.3.1.4 Supervisors'/other lecturers' influence on the students' use or avoidance of 'I'

Supervisors/other lecturers also seem to have an influence on their students' use of 'I'. Although almost none of the 15 informants were in favour of employing 'I' in their academic writing EARLY IN THE PROGRAMME, it appears in all but two of their dissertations. One reason for its appearance, as Ling02-EFL and Ling10-EFL said, was because of a lecturer (in a dissertation writing class) who says that first person pronouns are acceptable in academic writing. Thus, both Ling02-EFL and Ling10-EFL felt more comfortable and started employing 'I' in their dissertations (Example 5-43) even though they admitted that in their home countries (Saudi Arabia and Syria) they were taught to avoid personal pronouns. Ling10-EFL further explained that first person pronouns were regarded "as something prohibited" but

> when we came here, we felt like no, those are the British people and they know better. So we started to use some of these pronouns, and you saw some of these examples in my dissertation. [Ling10-EFL]

Example 5-43: Ling02-EFL's and Ling10-EFL's use of 'I' influenced by their lecturer

(1) **I** would first attempt to apply the same classification to **my** study so that **I** can see…[Ling02-EFL]
(2) In this study, **I** have attempted to investigate the relationship between learning style and metalinguistic knowledge…[Ling10-EFL]

Similarly, Lit03-EFL, who employed 'I' 14 times, also tended to avoid using it in her writing. She said she used to employ the word ONE instead (as in 'one would argue') but her supervisor reportedly said: "No, you should say 'I' if you want to argue something. Make it clear it's your argument."

Ling08-NS also employed 'I' 13 times but mostly in the methodology chapter because 'I' helped her to make her methodology "really explicit"; a goal she wanted to achieve to meet her supervisor's expectations.

> Then this little description here, "On reviewing the sample… I had done the same… my coding… I had originally… my emphasis." I put quite a lot about the coding in, because I wanted my methodology to be really explicit. [My supervisor] would require this sort of thing, […] because if the coding is no good, like with any study, if the methodology is not sound, then the results are useless. So I wanted to really show how much work had gone into the coding. […] it was quite a process to get it to be a strong coding thing. [Ling08-NS]

All informants said that if they have not been encouraged, in one way or another, by their supervisors (or lecturers) to use 'I', they have not been warned against using it except for Lit04-EFL who never employed 'I' and who was actually advised by a lecturer to avoid using it. She says,

> …there are some professors in my department who say, "don't say 'the chapter argues' because the chapter cannot argue. Say, 'I argue'." But others particularly tell me, 'It's not professional to bring in the "I"' and I feel this is right. Don't mention yourself […] if you want to be more objective and more persuasive. Just deal with this stuff the way they are. [Lit04-EFL]

Clearly, while she received contradictory advices from her lecturers regarding the use of 'I', Lit04-EFL chose to avoid it because of her beliefs about appropriate academic style (also see section 5.3.6.1).

5.3.1.5   Supervisors' influence on the students' use of inclusive WE

It also seems that the supervisor has an effect on students' use of inclusive WE. For instance, Lit01-EFL does not like using WE and she tends to avoid it in her writing but when she was told that WE appeared in her dissertation seven times, it seems that her supervisor was the one who suggested the use of WE a couple of times. Lit01-EFL expressed her surprise and discomfort with her use of WE in general and with its frequency in particular: "I'm really not happy with

that. I never thought that I was using it. Seven times!" But then referring to one extract in which 'reminds us' was used (Example 5-44), Lit01-EFL said this was her supervisor's suggestion.

Example 5-44: Lit01-EFL's use of US influenced by her supervisor

> This idea of the outsider in both novels **reminds us** of a similar notion in postcolonial criticism, which is Edward Said's concept of "the Other".

Lit01-EFL explained that in her first draft she wrote 'reminds me' but then her supervisor suggested the use of 'reminds us' instead. Lit01-EFL was trying to avoid using US because

> I didn't want to engage [the readers]. Because if you say "Reminds us of a similar notion," you are saying that most of the readers who are reading your work will remember this when they read about the outcast. So you are making that assumption. I can't go to that extent to say this. But according to my supervisor because she's more knowledgeable than me in this field, she says, "Any scholar who's reading your work, he or she should know about this." I thought it's not necessary that everyone should know about it. But actually everyone knows about it. [Lit01-EFL]

So it appears that her reluctance to use inclusive WE was because of her fear of soliciting readers' agreement. This fear of assuming what the reader should know obviously led the writer to exclude her readers from her discussion (by avoiding US in her first drafts), making her writing less interactive. However, her supervisor's comment helped her then to better understand the function of 'reminds US' when compared with 'reminds ME':

> I think that this one "Reminds us" is better, because it will engage the reader in your dissertation. It will make them part of your dissertation or part of your talk, part of your argument. So this 'reminds us' means remind me, the writer and you, the reader. So it breaks the barrier between the writer and the reader. [Lit01-EFL]

5.3.2   Learning from the pre-sessional course: *"our tutor talked about hedging and that was the first time to hear this word"*

Only three (out of 15) of my informants (Ling02-EFL, Ling03-EFL, and Ling09-EFL) reported that they attended the UK pre-sessional courses before they started doing their master's degree.

But I included it here as one of the main factors because it apparently has had a great influence on my informants' academic writing, especially in their uses of hedges.

5.3.2.1   Learning about hedging

Both Ling02-EFL and Ling09-EFL stressed the fact that they were first taught about hedging in their pre-sessional course before they started their master's degree. Ling09-EFL said that during the pre-sessional course she learned that words like MAY, MIGHT, CAN and COULD are important in English academic writing in order to be "on the safe side" and to avoid readers' attacks. So when she wrote her dissertation, she said, she always tried to hedge her claims and avoid "assertiveness" (Example 5-45). However, she seemed to have overused hedges (126 occurrences) and underused boosters (15 occurrences) (see section 6.3.1 for discussion).

Example 5-45: Ling09-EFL's use of hedges

> **Probably**, this **may** lead speakers to use the general more dominant variants than localized or socially stereotyping variants.

Ling02-EFL also employed hedges more than boosters (hedges=78 occurrences; boosters=55) in her dissertation but in a more balanced way. She attributed her frequent uses of hedges to her awareness of the importance of hedging that she learned about during one of the pre-sessional classes:

> I remember our tutor talked about hedging, and that was the first time to hear this word. […] I remember that she asked us to underline certain words in the articles and she said this is the way we should write. […] we can't be 100% sure about what we write because everything is changing. So you have to be moderate in your writing. [Ling02-EFL]

Ling02-EFL admitted she was "not really aware" of the rhetorical functions and the effectiveness of words like MAY, SUGGEST, and SOMETIMES before attending the pre-sessional course even though such words are "common in publications and we use them all the time".

On the other hand, Ling03-EFL, who also attended the pre-sessional course, did not seem (at first) to remember learning anything in particular from the course; his initial comment was that "the course was okay in general but nothing new". So I specifically asked him whether he was taught anything about hedges. He confirmed learning about hedging and added that we sometimes need to hedge our claims if they are likely to be rejected by our readers.

5.3.3   Learning through reading in the subject: *"I've noticed a number of academics had used that"*

Unsurprisingly, most informants talked about how during reading in their discipline they learned about how academics write. For instance, posing questions is one of the language features that "struck" Lit01-NS as an effective strategy in academic writing so he decided to employ it in his dissertation. Other informants speak of how reading is one of the strategies they use to learn new academic vocabulary and then reproduce in their own writing. Each of these two points will be discussed in turn below.

5.3.3.1   Learning to pose questions

Lit01-NS's dissertation featured 18 questions, and he explains how reading raised his awareness of a technique where he asks a few questions and then in what follows he goes about answering them. Not only have rhetorical questions "crept" into his writing but also titles of chapters which include question marks such as: *'A clash of civilisations?'* which appears as a title of one of the chapters in his dissertation. He explains that these titles are "widely used" in other books and that he has "borrowed" it from there.

5.3.3.2   Acquiring new academic attitude markers and then using them in their dissertations

Some informants explain that some of the attitude markers (such as BEWILDERING, IT IS SOBERING TO, and STARTLING) found in their dissertations were acquired from reading in

their subjects. Ling02-EFL, for example, has noticed that BEWILDERING is used frequently in articles on her subject so she "picked it up" and used it herself in her writing (Example 5-46).

Example 5-46: Ling02-EFL's use of BEWILDERING influenced by reading in the subject

> This makes the situation **bewildering**. In one hand, this can be good. On the other hand, it can be dangerous.

Likewise, Ling10-EFL says '*it is SOBERING to*' (Example 5-47) was one of the expressions he has learned from reading. He confesses that his dissertation was like "a field" where he practiced his newly acquired academic vocabulary. He says that one of his strategies of learning English language was to notice from reading "certain expressions," especially infrequent ones (such as '*there is EVERY reason*' and '*it is INCUMBENT to*') and then reproduce them in his dissertation whenever he had the chance. Although he has "quit" this habit now it is obvious that it affected his writing to the extent that the second marker made some disparaging remarks about too many "flowery expressions" used in his dissertation.

Example 5-47: Ling10-EFL's use of SOBERING influenced by reading in the subject

> It is **sobering**, though, to draw attention to the fact that the visual display of the scatterplots in these dimensions reveals that a density of high scores on the MAT is associated with neutrality of style.

5.3.4   Previous education: *"that's what I've been taught really"*

Writers' previous education has also to some extent affected their decisions to use or avoid 'I' and other self-mentions, as discussed below.

5.3.4.1   Influence of previous education on the students' use or avoidance of 'I'

Even though all 15 informants received education from different countries (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Syria, the UK and the USA), they all have been taught that the general rule in academic writing

is to keep writing formal and objective by avoiding using 'I' because 'I' sounds informal and implies subjectivity. However, only two informants (Lit01-NS and Lit04-EFL) seem to stick to this general rule and never employed first person pronouns in their writing. Lit01-NS emphasises that

> I would never refer to myself in the first person in academic writing, if only because I have just been taught that that kind of writing should be impersonal, and that perhaps it has more authority if it's not referring to the writer. I suppose it's purely convention, but that's how I write. [Lit01-NS]

Also Lit04-EFL explains that at university in her home country (Syria) she was taught to avoid first person pronouns because in academic writing issues should be dealt with objectively in order to make them more formal and more convincing.

But the other informants explained that while they have been taught that the general rule in academic writing is to avoid 'I', they have been told that 'I' could be acceptable in some cases depending on the writer's purposes. Ling01-NS, for instance, says to justify the appearance of 'I' six times in her dissertation:

> I was taught that in the introduction you can use it to show the overview of what you're going to say, and possibly a little bit in the conclusion to summarise what you've discussed. [Ling01-NS]

By checking those six cases where 'I' appears in her dissertation, Ling01-NS seems to be practicing what she has been taught to a great extent. She employed authorial pronouns four times in the introductory paragraphs of different sections/chapters *('I shall discuss', 'I will be taking', 'I shall outline',* and *'I shall revisit'*) to signal her intention and provide an overt structure for her dissertation. The other two cases of 'I' (*'I have discussed'* and *'I believe'*) were used in her discussion where she made a knowledge claim or elaborated an argument.

5.3.5   Cultural influence: *"we do this in Arabic"*

Almost all Arab informants argued that their L1 must have had an influence on the way they wrote their dissertations. Lit02-EFL, for instance, says Arabic "has always affected my English language and it still does" because

> some expressions are there in your head and you don't assume that English speakers won't understand them, because they make perfect sense to you. [Lit02-EFL]

For example, she says, commenting on her use of '*I want to argue*':

> Yes. That's Arabic (Laughter). I would say something like, "I will argue." I think we have it [I want to argue] in our language. [...] It feels so strange looking at it now. [Lit02-EFL]

Perhaps a clearer example of the influence of Arabic on the Arab EFL writing appears in the use of exclusive WE instead of 'I' (saying for example in the case of a single author, '*We have proposed*' instead of '*I have proposed*'). This issue will be discussed in section 5.3.5.1. Then, in section 5.3.5.2, I will present a single (but interesting) case where the writer's American English can be attributed to the frequent use of the word SEEM (which appeared 28 times in Ling08-NS's dissertation) while the word APPEAR was strikingly infrequent (being employed only twice).

5.3.5.1   Influence of the Arab culture on the students' use of exclusive WE instead of 'I'

Interestingly, when I asked about the extent to which they find the use of WE (Example 5-48) appropriate in academic writing, most Arab informants after reading the sentences immediately (and correctly) guessed that the writer of these sentences was an Arabic-speaker because, according to them, in the Arab culture WE is often used instead of 'I' as a way of expressing politeness and modesty.

Example 5-48: An extract showing an Arab writer's use of WE instead if 'I'

> In this section, <u>**we**</u> have discussed how Maxwell and Manning's approach treats Gapping and RNR. <u>**We**</u> pointed out that their approach fails to account for Gapping and RNR in HA. In the following section, <u>**we**</u> propose a *function-spreading approach* that will be shown to be able to account for Gapping and RNR in HA straightforwardly and successfully. [Ling03-EFL]

Ling02-EFL, for instance, confesses to using WE instead of 'I' most of the time "subconsciously" (as in Example 5-49) because

> …it's a cultural thing. […] 'I' is usually connected with selfishness sometimes, or presenting oneself as arrogant […] but we should be humble and not showing off. [Ling02-EFL]

Example 5-49: Ling02-EFL's uses of exclusive WE

> - …the classification of the results into unimodality and multimodality is insightful particularly in such context as a Medical College in <u>**our study**</u>.
> - To sum up, the above results answer <u>**our research questions**</u>…

So, while being aware that in English using WE instead of 'I' might not sound right, some Arab informants admit using it subconsciously, sometimes for politeness. But most Arab informants find the use of exclusive WE, as in '*we pointed out*' and '*we proposed*' (Example 5-49 above), "inappropriate" and even "incorrect". Ling10-EFL says, commenting on the use of '*we proposed*':

> …they're trying to be humble by saying 'we', although for an English speaker it sounds like 'we' as 'we' of her majesty, 'We, the queen'. [Ling10-EFL]

Similarly, the English NS informants find the use of '*we pointed out*' and '*we proposed*' "silly", "ugly" and grammatically inaccurate because the writer used WE in a place where 'I' should be used. Ling08-NS says,

> …this is the only one that gives me some pause. I don't mind it, but I do think it's silly to use we unless there was more than one author. […] I don't like it simply that it's not grammatically accurate; it's not the truth. You're not the queen! [Ling08-NS]

Ling07-NS believes that while it is acceptable to use WE in the first sentence ('*we have discussed*') given that the verb *discussed* means two people, WE in the other two sentences ('*we pointed out*' and '*we proposed*') read "oddly" because

> …'we' didn't do it at all, 'I' did it. The writer did it. So, 'we have discussed' I think is fine. 'We pointed out' and 'we propose' reads very ugly to me. It seems to me that this person is just using the 'we' where they could have used 'I'. Or indeed, they could have avoided it altogether. 'It was pointed out' would work very well with that. 'It was proposed'. Using passive, in both cases, gets away from using the first person, and I think would have been much better. [Ling07-NS]

However, when I asked the writer (Ling03-EFL) of the extract in Example 5-49 above to comment on his uses of WE ('*we have discussed*', '*we pointed out*,' and '*we proposed*'), he said in all these cases he wanted to "include the readers". In fact, his dissertation features 38 instances of WE, nine of which appear to be used exclusively rather than inclusively (e.g., '*In this section, we will propose our analysis*' and '*as we mentioned in (2.3)*'). But again when I asked him about these extracts, he emphasized that he used all of these WEs to include readers, "to pull them in the discussion with me" and "to tell the readers, in an indirect way, that they participate in this study".

Interestingly, Ling04-EFL is the only informant who agrees with Ling03-EFL and understands his uses of WE (in Example 5-48 above) to both include readers and to be consistent, therefore, she believes they are appropriate. She explains,

> "we have discussed", 'we' here could refer to the writer and the reader. We do this sometimes, we say, "we discuss this" to include the reader in the process although of course the writer is the one who discussed this. […]. Then in the following sentence, "we proposed", "we pointed out," normally the writer is the one who proposed but this is again to include the reader more in the process, that's for one thing, and the other thing, the writer here in the first sentence of the paragraph used "we discussed" so it won't be good to change into 'I'. It's better to go on with using 'we'. [Ling04-EFL]

Ling04-EFL also admits that she usually employs WE because "I always find it polite to include the readers with me in everything". But then when commenting on her use of US (Example 5-50), she referred to the influence of Arabic on her being more inclined to include readers for politeness:

> …here when I say "what concerns us" it's only me but I found it more polite to include the readers with me. It's better than saying "concerns me". […] And we do this in Arabic. We always include the readers with us. It's always for politeness. [Ling04-EFL]

Example 5-50: Ling04-EFL's use of US partially influenced by the Arab culture

> But let us not forget that what is of concern to **us** here is the fact that when he supplied them, Hamza always produced correctly inflected forms of *be*,...

Even when I asked her about her use of '*our Arabic participant*' (Example 5-51), she explained it was to include the reader, in particular her supervisor, but now she feels it is "not right". She says,

> now I wouldn't say it this way. I would say it differently but the assumption at that time was to include the readers even here but now I see it's not right. I was assuming all along that the study is our study so the reader is involved with me all the time […] And my supervisor is my first reader of course so I was consciously thinking of him at that time, we designed things together and he was always there. I couldn't say "I". It was not polite to say I did this while my supervisor had helped a lot with my study. [Ling04-EFL]

Example 5-51: Ling04-EFL's use of OUR partially influenced by the Arab culture

> This will mainly be achieved through comparing the performance of **our Arabic participant** and Lardiere's Patty, ...

In sum, the Arab EFL writers appear to be influenced by their Arab culture especially in the use of exclusive WE (instead of 'I') for the purpose of expressing politeness.

5.3.5.2   Influence of American English on a student's use of SEEM instead of APPEAR

The difference between American and British English is said to have some influence on Ling08-NS's uses of SEEM and APPEAR. While she employed SEEM 28 times, there were only two

occurrences of APPEAR in her dissertation. When she was presented with these frequencies, her surprise and discomfort were obvious:

> Oh, my goodness. I use 'seem' far too much. The 'appears' should be less. It's funny, when you said, "There were 36 mays," I said, "Oh, fine." But when I see all these seems, I feel there's a problem. Like I told you, my sister once said, "Either it is or it isn't." Whereas I'm comfortable with 'may'. But 'seem' is not really saying anything, so it's my own issue with it. [Ling08-NS]

Ling08-NS admits that she does not like to use SEEM but believes it is more common in American English while APPEAR sounds "too posh" for her:

> There may also be a thing of British versus American English here, which would explain my uncomfortability with appear; that maybe it's more common in academic writing here or just in more normal speech and writing here, to say, "It appears that." Whereas the equivalent in the States is, "It seems that." It may be, and that's why I go, "Oh, appeared sounds too posh for me." [Ling08-NS]

This brings to mind Neff-Van & Dafouz-Milne's (2008) study where they found that American university writers overused SEEM (126 occurrences) in comparison with expert writers (65 occurrences) while Spanish EFL writers underused it (28 occurrences). Thus, it could be that American English has had an impact on the overuse of SEEM in Ling08-NS's dissertation.

5.3.6   Beliefs about appropriate academic writing in general: *"it's to do with the formality really"*

All informants generally believe that appropriate academic writing is meant to be formal and objective. That is, writers should employ formal language and avoid the informal spoken register; and they should deal with research issues objectively, leaving a distance between themselves and their work. Ling01-NS further explains that academic writing has to be "serious" because

> …academic writing is based upon research…, it's not meant to be entertaining in any way really, unless you just find it interesting…, and it also has to be very clear, so I think that's why it's quite formal. And I think when you write formally, formal language is

always serious and also very clear and neutral and doesn't really show much views or opinion-based, we wouldn't use things like adjectives, you know, 'happy', 'sad', because we can't measure those and it might show a different viewpoint. [Ling01-NS]

This belief that academic writing should be formal and objective appears to have influenced some of my informants' uses of stance and engagement markers, for instance, some informants avoided 'I' because they believe it does not sound formal, while others avoided the word SEEM because they found it informal. Some other informants also believe that in academic writing it is not appropriate to employ rhetorical questions. In the following, we will further explore how and to what extent these beliefs about academic style have affected informants' choices of words/expressions.

5.3.6.1   Beliefs about avoiding 'I'

All informants believe that 'I' in general sounds informal or at least less formal than the passive form and inanimate subjects such as THIS STUDY. Because 'I' suggests subjectivity, some informants believe that 'I' should be avoided, if possible, to keep their writing objective and therefore more academically appropriate. For instance, Lit01-NS says, "I would never refer to myself in the first person in academic writing" (and he never did in his dissertation) because, in part, he believes that

> …on the one hand, it is just a convention that academic writing is impersonal. I suppose that's just been drilled into me, and that's how I write. On the other hand, I can see why that would be the case. I do think that reference to the first person might undercut the authority of the writing, because it suggests perhaps that there's something subjective or something more personal about what is being said. I suppose to make claims that seem more persuasive it's better if they are justified objectively. [Lit01-NS]

So not only does he believe that without 'I' his writing would be more formal, but he also believes that his claims would be "more persuasive". Lit04-EFL agrees. She says, "I feel this is right. Don't mention yourself […] if you want to be just more objective". Again this is partly the reason why she avoided and never employed 'I' in her dissertation.

All other informants also believe that it is more formal and "more credible" if claims are justified without 'I' even though they employed it in their dissertations in a number of cases for different purposes (reasons and justification for their uses of 'I' are discussed in three different sections: section 5.3.1.4 discusses supervisors'/lecturers' influence, section 5.3.4.1 discusses the influence of previous education, and section 5.3.8.1 discusses writers' personal stylistic preferences). Here are two of their comments:

> Some people, in their introduction, will say, 'In this essay, I will do X, Y and Z'. Other people will say, 'This essay will do X, Y and Z'. I think the latter sounds more formal. [Ling07-NS]

> Well, if I say, 'I think the study is so and so' is not as good as when I say, 'This study shows or indicates'. It's more credible, more believable to show the readers that this is not just my opinion but it's something factual, it's the results of the study. And when I write I tend not to use 'I' or 'we'. [Ling04-EFL]

Both Ling07-NS and Ling04-EFL are suggesting the use of inanimate subjects (such as THIS ESSAY and THIS STUDY) instead of 'I'; and elsewhere in my interviews with them they also refer to the passive as a more formal form that could be used to substitute 'I' because, Ling07-NS says,

> in the research, it's not you that counts. It's the research that counts. It's what you found in the literature, and therefore you don't want an 'I' getting involved. [Ling07-NS]

Ling01-NS agrees. Commenting on other students' use of '*it is hoped that*' (Example 5-52) instead of '*I hope that*', she says the passive sounds more formal and more appropriate because

> …it's further removed from the writer. So I suppose […] writers need to be more further removed from personal opinions, they have to be more neutral, and so by doing this, we can distance the person […] because you want your research to be strong and look like it's based on research and evidence and not just personal opinion. But I think once you start using pronouns, it just sounds a little bit more like you're basing it on personal opinion. [Ling01-NS]

Example 5-52: An extract including a passive form instead of using 'I'

> **It is hoped that** this study will help to bring clarity to the construct of teaching styles and what determines them within the context of this study. [Ling]

Similarly, some informants believe that third person subjects such as THE RESEARCHER and THE AUTHOR sound more formal and "more neutral" than 'I'. However, not all informants agree with the use of third person subjects because they believe that these are still "self-referential" and also sound "archaic". Lit01-NS says:

> People don't tend to refer to themselves as 'the author', or versions of that now, there's something archaic about that now. I think writers 60 years ago or more might have referred to themselves as the author, but I don't think people do that so much anymore. I don't think that is how academics write. I don't think they refer to themselves as the author very often. [Lit01-NS]

Likewise, Ling03-EFL, Ling04-EFL, Ling01-NS, Ling07-NS and Ling08-NS are also against the use of THE AUTHOR/THE RESEARCHER because they find them "too formal" and "too much". Ling01-NS says it is just "too far removed and it just sounds a little bit silly talking about yourself in the third person".

In summary, it appears that all informants share the belief that 'I' in general sounds less formal than the passive form and inanimate subjects such as THIS STUDY. However, this belief seems to have affected the student writers' use of 'I' to differing extents. That is, while some student writers tried to keep 'I' to the minimum, using it in certain contexts where they found it more acceptable or when they felt comfortable using it (see sections 5.3.1.4 and 5.3.8.1), others (like Lit01-NS and Lit04-EFL) completely avoided it in their dissertations.

5.3.6.2   Beliefs about avoiding SEEM and MIGHT

Some informants avoided (or tried to avoid) using words like SEEM and/or MIGHT in their dissertations because they believe that these words are informal (or at least less formal than

APPEAR and MAY respectively) and so they felt it would be inappropriate to employ them in academic writing.

5.3.6.2.1   *SEEM vs. APPEAR*

Ling07-NS never employed the word SEEM in his dissertation but he used APPEAR 13 times. The reason for his complete avoidance of SEEM is because he believes that SEEM is "too informal" and so it would look "wrong" in academic writing while APPEAR, to him, sounds more formal. He further explains that SEEM is a kind of word that he would use in conversation rather than in writing because it is "more personal" and so

> [w]hen I say, "It seems to me…" means that I'm thinking that it is. Whereas 'appears' means that there's actually evidence. […] So I'm making that judgment on the basis of what is written, rather than an internal thought of mine that it might be the case. [Ling07-NS]

Likewise, Ling01-NS also believes that SEEM is less formal than APPEAR. Although SEEM appeared in her dissertation once (Example 5-54(1)), she employed APPEAR 13 times (Example 5-53(2)). Explaining her uses of these two words, she says,

> when I write 'appear', I've already had a good look at everything, but whereas 'seem' sounds just a little bit, even more uncertain, because I'm kind of, guessing? [Ling01-NS]

Example 5-53: Ling01-NS's uses of SEEM and APPEAR

> (1) However, many courses and materials **<u>seem</u>** to be directed towards a generic set of skills.
> (2) There also **<u>appears</u>** to be no studies that compare native and non-native speakers of English.

So to Ling01-NS, SEEM sounds "more uncertain". Lit01-NS agrees and also believes that there is "a convention where SEEM is usually seen to be a less formal word". He thinks that SEEM would be used less often than APPEAR in academic journals. He says, "if someone's drawing conclusions about results, I can imagine APPEAR turning up much more often". Justifying the single appearance of SEEM in his dissertation (Example 5-54), Lit01-NS says SEEM would be

appropriate in this example because it is not "a really core argument" to his dissertation besides it is followed up by further claims. But, he explains,

> [i]t would seem to be most informal if – say it were a really core argument to my dissertation, and I established it on the word 'seems', I would be uneasy on that. I think it would sound too uncertain…. So I think 'seems' is generally a less formal word, and that is partly why I have used it less often. [Lit01-NS]

Example 5-54: Lit01-NS's use of SEEM

Yet there is, however, an unintended irony in his remarks here, and elsewhere in Hitch-22, which **seems** to evade his notice.

In brief, some student writers avoided using SEEM and others employed it less often than APPEAR because of their belief that SEEM is "less formal", "more uncertain" and "more personal" than APPEAR. To them, the use of SEEM suggests that judgement is based on "internal thought" rather than hard evidence; it is kind of "guessing" which is not preferable in academic writing.

5.3.6.2.2   *MIGHT vs. MAY*

MIGHT never appeared in Ling07-NS's dissertation while MAY was employed 11 times. When I asked him whether he would use MIGHT in his writing as an alternative to MAY, he said he would never use MIGHT because it "just doesn't sound right" in academic writing but MAY is "quite common" and "more formal". He believes that MAY sounds "the right thing to say", even though he admits that the difference between MAY and MIGHT is "one of these difficult areas that most people have difficulty with, including me".

Ling01-NS also believes that MIGHT is less formal than MAY and it is "a little bit more spoken English". She explains that the single appearance of the word MIGHT in her dissertation (while there were 33 occurrences of MAY) was to avoid a repetition of MAY in one sentence (Example 5-55).

Example 5-55: Ling01-NS's uses of MAY and MIGHT

> As it **<u>may</u>** be the case that native and non-native speakers of English **<u>might</u>** have similar needs,...

Otherwise she would not use MIGHT because it "looks a bit odd, now that I've read this over" and "I think it's to do with the formality really".

Likewise, Ling08-NS who employed MIGHT only twice but MAY 36 times believes that MAY is more academic while MIGHT is "more hesitant" so there is "less need for it in the academic writing":

> MAY seems to be a more fitting academic modal, whereas MIGHT, I probably use it a lot more in speaking: "I might go to the film." It would sound very formal to me to say "I may go to the film." I may, suddenly I'd have to put on a very posh accent and pretend to be the queen maybe. So it seems, for my use anyway – MAY more of a writing one, and MIGHT probably more common in speaking. I don't know if this is true, but I feel it's more hesitant. So there's less need for it in the academic writing, because you don't want to always be, "It might be, maybe, perhaps…" You need to actually say something. [Ling08-NS]

Example 5-56: Ling08-NS's uses of MAY and MIGHT

> (1) Overall it seems that student perceptions of move use **<u>may</u>** go beyond the functional purpose of a move to include facework, …
> (2) …, an exploratory genre analysis of academic request email's composite parts **<u>might</u>** both de-mask and demystify this necessary part of student communicative practice.

But she explains that the reason for employing MIGHT in Example 5-56(2) was because it conveyed her meaning better than MAY. Comparing the different intended purposes of using MAY and MIGHT in Example 5-56, she says,

> I'm trying to open this gap. So the more hesitant MIGHT fits here; "It MIGHT be the case that…" Whereas the MAY is coming after I've presented the data… [Ling08-NS]

What is interesting here is that while MIGHT is believed (by most informants) to be less formal and "more spoken English", it was nonetheless employed by some writers for different reasons. Ling01-NS, for instance, used MIGHT once for stylistic variation (i.e. to avoid repetition)

whereas both Lit01-NS and Ling08-NS employed it to best reflect their meaning. In contrast, Ling07-NS stuck to his belief and never employed the 'informal' word MIGHT in his dissertation.

But it seems that some students have a faulty understanding about the use of MAY and MIGHT. Interview data shows that some Arab EFL informants believe that MIGHT in academic writing is more formal and more common than MAY. However, according to Biber et al's (2002) analysis, MAY is more commonly used than MIGHT in the academic register but in conversation the reverse is true; that is, in conversation MAY occurs very rarely while MIGHT appears more frequently (p.179). Contrast Ling02-EFL's beliefs about MAY and MIGHT. She employed MIGHT nine times while MAY appeared only once (Example 5-57), and accounted for this usage thus:

> I don't know if it's just a feeling or maybe something that I have come across before, so it became one of my beliefs that "might" is more formal than "may". [Ling02-EFL]

Example 5-57: Ling02-EFL's uses of MAY and MIGHT

- …it is a relatively difficult model to use as it **may** yield an enormous number of different profiles.
- The contradiction in the results **might** be due to the fact that the two studies used different instruments.

Similarly, both Lit04-EFL and Lit05-EFL believe that MIGHT is more formal, even though their dissertations featured more use of MAY than MIGHT.

However, while MAY was used by almost all student writers (except Lit02-EFL), six of them never employed MIGHT in their dissertations. Further analysis showed that only two (Lit02-EFL and Lit09-EFL) out of the nineteen students in the Lit subcorpus used MIGHT more often than MAY.

5.3.6.3 Beliefs about avoiding rhetorical questions

Some of my informants believe that the use of questions in academic writing is informal and "not very appropriate". These informants avoided asking questions in their own dissertations. When they were asked to comment on other students' use of questions (Example 5-58), they said it would be "fine" if it was a "one-off" but they still believe that writing would be more formal without posing a question. To Ling01-NS, for instance, asking a question is "more spoken language" but "in academic writing we are meant to be formal".

Example 5-58: An extract including a QUESTION

> **<u>Why choose ethnographic studies?</u>** We have taken a brief look into the establishment of cultural studies and how the idea of audience studies came into being, … [Lit]

Likewise, Ling07-NS says, commenting on the use of question in Example 5-58,

> It's a style of writing. I don't think it's entirely appropriate. […] But I think that reads okay. I wouldn't object to that. It's quite a neat way of doing it. It's fairly elegantly done, I think. You always have to draw a line between formal academic writing and writing in a fluid, engaging style. You don't want to get too pompous. I think doing something like that is okay. [Ling07-NS]

Even though he finds the use of questions to introduce a new topic "elegant" and "engaging", he still feels that it would be more formal if the writer made the introduction in a statement form, instead.

Ling10-EFL is also not in favour of using rhetorical questions because he believes that posing questions is a style of "literary" writing. He, therefore, expected this style to be used more in qualitative rather than in quantitative studies.

5.3.7   Beliefs about the disciplinary norms of appropriate argument: *"that's how we do it in our field"*

In addition to the influence of the informants' general beliefs about appropriate academic writing on their uses of language (as discussed in section 5.3.6), interview data indicates that beliefs about disciplinary norms of appropriate argument have also, to some extent, an impact on their writing in general and on their uses of hedges and the first person singular pronouns in particular. Both issues will be discussed in turn below.

5.3.7.1   Disciplinary beliefs about employing hedges

All 15 informants from both disciplines express their belief that hedging is a feature of their disciplines. When they were asked about their use of words such as APPEAR, MAY, SEEM and QUITE, my informants explain that these words are to soften claims because in their disciplines they cannot present their findings and opinions as facts.

The following comments from Linguistics interviewees illustrate their beliefs about the importance of hedging in their discipline:

> I think that's how we do it in our field. Even if your data is absolutely saying this you're not going to say, "Here's the answer." We don't do that. I don't know, maybe if you're dealing in absolute scientific principles you can do that, but certainly in applied linguistics, no. [Ling08-NS]

> Especially in Theoretical Linguistics, one can't be 100% sure that a theory is right or wrong. Because you may see it as wrong but others may disagree with you. [Ling03-EFL]

Likewise, informants from the field of Literature (regardless of disciplinary differences and the type of research they are doing) also note that in their field they do not believe in absolute truth; hence their claims have to be softened by using hedges:

> Again 'quite' here modifies 'possible', so since after all you are dealing with literature, the domain of possibility, so to modify the extent to which this possibility extends, you use 'quite' [because] some might argue that it's not the case. [Lit08-EFL]

> In literature there are many reasons and different opinions and there's nothing wrong, it's subjective. I found this reason but […] you can't say this is the reason because others might not agree with you. There are always other possibilities. [Lit03-EFL]

It appears that student writers' belief about the importance of softening claims in their discipline could be one reason behind their frequent use of hedges. By acknowledging the norms of their discipline, student writers seek acceptance and membership in their disciplinary community (Hyland, 2005b).

5.3.7.2   Disciplinary beliefs about avoiding 'I'

Two informants from Literature (Lit01-NS and Lit04-EFL) never refer to themselves by using first person pronouns because, in addition to their general belief that academic writing should be "impersonal" and "objective", Lit01-NS stresses that

> …scholars in the field never refer to themselves in the first person. That's basically universally true. I don't think there would be any exceptions to that, unless there were some very special circumstances. Perhaps there might be some scholars who, in a footnote, may refer to themselves because they have had a disagreement with another scholar. They might say, perhaps, "In my paper, I said this and disagreed with so-and-so." Perhaps then they might refer to themselves but I think it's very, very rare now. [Lit01-NS]

This belief that scholars in Literature never refer to themselves by using first person pronouns seems dubious, and by checking some journal articles in Literature (such as those published in *Modern Language Studies*, *Cultural Critique* and *English Literary Renaissance*), it appears that first person singular pronouns are actually used by scholars in the field of Literature (Example 5-59). Also, almost all student writers (except for three) in my Literature subcorpus employed 'I' in their writing. Moreover, in interviews with the other six informants from Literature (including Lit04-EFL who also never employed 'I'), they all stated that first person pronouns are used by

scholars in Literature even if very rarely; for instance, Lit01-EFL says that you could see 'I' "once in every three or four pages". Besides, it appears that some supervisors advised their students to use 'I' in their writing. (This is discussed in section 5.3.1.4, which focuses on supervisors'/other lecturers' influence on the students' use of 'I').

Example 5-59: Extracts from Literature journal articles showing that scholars refer to themselves by using 'I'

- **I** will review the complex early modern property status of the corpse,… (Gottlieb, 2015, p.256)
- **I** maintain **my** claim that Bradstreet writes within the bounds of mainstream Puritan belief. (Hutchins, 2010, p.51)
- **I** should make a couple of things clear at the outset, however. First of all, **I** shall be using the word "Orientalism" less to refer to **my** book than to the problems to which **my** book is related;…(Said, 1985, p.89)

So what Lit01-NS says about scholars in his field never referring to themselves by using 'I' seems to be unfounded, but it apparently has in part influenced his decision to avoid using 'I'.

5.3.8   Personal stylistic preferences: *"this is…a personal thing; I imagine…other people would disagree"*

Informants say that they would avoid using a particular stance/engagement marker not because it is "wrong" but simply because it is not what they prefer. It seems that personal stylistic preferences have affected some students' decision whether to use or avoid 'I', reader references (such as ONE and WE), and imperative verbs (such as CONSIDER and LET US).

5.3.8.1   Influence of personal preferences on using 'I'

Most informants say that their preference would always be to keep their writing largely objective and to avoid using first person singular pronouns where possible, simply because self-reference suggests subjectivity, even though their dissertations actually feature the presence of 'I'. To justify their uses of 'I', they explain that there are some exceptional cases where the use of 'I' is more acceptable. For instance, Lit07-NS who employed 'I' 11 times (Example 5-60) says that

you could use 'I' when explaining how you organize your writing or when describing how you set up experiments; otherwise, 'I' would sound "odd" and redundant:

> If it's going to be an academic piece, it looks better if it's based on facts, that it's objective […]. [But] you could say for this thesis, 'I interviewed a number of people'. That sounds okay […], but within the essay itself, using the first person, unless you are describing how you set about things, sounds a bit odd. [Ling07-NS]

Example 5-60: Some examples of Ling07-NS's uses of 'I'

(1) **I** take up this point in section 4.7 below.
(2) **I** asked Walters how he chose this metaphor and if it was premeditated.
(3) In **my** earlier study of metaphors in football writing, **I** found metaphors involving rugby, …

From a close study of his uses of 'I', it appears that Ling07-NS did indeed try to keep 'I' to the minimum, using it mainly to signpost readers through his text (Example 5-60(1)); but there was one case where he described his procedures Example 5-60(2)), and another case where he referred to a research he previously conducted (Example 5-60(3)).

Likewise, Ling04-EFL, who employed first person singular pronouns ten times (Example 5-61), also prefers to keep her writing 'I'-less. She says,

> That's my preferred way of writing. I'm convinced of not using 'I' throughout my work but I wouldn't mind using them in the part when I'm describing what I did in the methodology for example. [Ling04-EFL]

So, she is not in favour of using 'I' but she believes that 'I' could be acceptable in certain occasions, such as, when describing methodology and when "talking about my results". She says, commenting on her use of MY HUSBAND as the subject of her case study (Example 5-62(1)):

> Well it's my husband. I wouldn't say for example "the author's husband". I think in my dissertation this is the only time when I talked about my relation to the subject of the study. In the other parts I didn't use "I" or "my" maybe very rarely but here because I was talking about my case study and how I did the study. […] And I found it awkward

when they say "the author's mother". But that's what we were taught back home at university, my teacher used to say never ever say "I" or "my" or "we," never. But for me I think it's nice sometimes. If I'm talking about my results I would say "my results so and so" but if I'm talking about other's results I wouldn't say, "I think that their results were not accurate" for example. [Ling04-EFL]

Example 5-61: Some examples of Ling04-EFL's uses of 'I'

(1) The subject of this case study is <u>**my**</u> husband, who came to live in the UK about 4 months before the first time **I** recorded him.
(2) **I** would like to mention that a number of issues noticed throughout conducting the study … are highlighted in Appendix A.
(3) However, when looking at whether he did the same thing with auxiliary and copula *be*, **I** found that when he supplied them, Hamza never made mistakes ...

Again, by examining the cases of 'I' found in Ling04-EFL's dissertation, it appears that although there were two cases of 'I' functioning as 'a discourse guide' (Example 5-61(2)), 'I' was predominantly employed to describe methods and results of her study.

Ling08-NS also disprefers the use of first person pronouns. However she employed 'I' 13 times in a number of cases mainly in her methodology to make it "really explicit" but she avoided it in other cases because, to her, 'I' would sound "a bit more juvenile". To illustrate this, when she was asked about the reason for her use of the passive (*'This method was felt to best fit'*) instead of the active form (*'I thought this method was the best fit'*), she says,

> 'I felt' would be a bit weaker in terms of methodological soundness. Here the point of the sentence is the study's focus. So classic use of passive voice; I don't want to say I because I'm not the important thing here. I'm saying, "Look, look, the study." So if I go into active voice and say, "I thought this method would best fit," it just seems a bit more juvenile, the writing quality. I would want to avoid that; "I did this, I did this, I did this." I don't feel a very mature or appropriately academic methodological description. [Ling08-NS]

And for Lit08-EFL, who employed 'I' four times, using a lot of 'I' is not "appealing":

> You know … we have to express ourselves of course, but by using a lot of 'I', this subjective form, … for me it wouldn't be appealing. You can express yourself, you can

> impress and affirm that this is you who's writing, differently and more subtly without the 'I'. [Lit08-NNS]

In the same vein, Ling10-EFL emphasises that using 'I' is not his "style" but he "would never, ever say this is bad or this is incorrect". He adds,

> Because I'm more grown up in terms of writing, I would say you can use 'I' and you can use objective expressions. I'm the kind of person who likes to use objective expressions… [Ling10-EFL]

Ling02-EFL also prefers to avoid using 'I' and be "more neutral" in her writing. However, when these two informants (Ling02-EFL and Ling10-EFL) were presented with the number of times 'I' appeared in their dissertations, both show their surprise and discontent with their uses of 'I'. Ling02-EFL, who employed first person singular pronouns 66 times, explains that sometimes when writing she just cannot think of another way to express her point without 'I', admitting her limited knowledge of stylistic structures of academic language:

> …personally I don't prefer the use of I or My in my dissertation. I prefer to be more neutral […]. But in certain parts when you are writing, it is unavoidable. You don't find an alternative to be used, so I used it. [Ling02-EFL]

Also Ling10-EFL was unhappy with his frequent use of 'I' (I=21 times):

> I'm surprised that I used these expressions [which include first person pronouns], to be honest. I wonder why! [Ling10-EFL]

In contrast, there are two informants, Lit01-EFL and Lit02-EFL, who do not mind (or who actually prefer) using 'I,' especially when compared with third person subjects such as THE RESEARCHER or the passive form. Lit02-EFL explains that in general she prefers using 'I' even though she thinks that a statement without 'I' would be more credible; but she believes that with 'I' the claim would sound more confident. So if she has to choose between writing '*I hope that*' or '*it is hoped that*', she says, she would go for 'I':

> The passive 'it is hoped that', I think the writer wanted to sound more academic. […] But I'm with using the 'I'. I don't know if it's more academic, but I love the 'I'. [Lit02-EFL]

Likewise, when 'I' is compared with the third person THE RESEARCHER, she still favours 'I':

> I prefer to use 'I'. I'm so selfish. (Laughter) No, I prefer the 'I'. I am a researcher and I'm writing my research, so if I say, 'the researcher', it will still sound like 'I'. Even though I think 'the researcher' is more formal. [Lit02-EFL]

For Lit01-EFL, 'I' is most preferable when she wants to argue against something. But she would not over-use it:

> Actually, when I was studying in the undergrad, they didn't allow us to use the personal pronouns. But now up here you can use them, but to an extent, not to overuse them […]. So, for example, after a section of three pages or four pages you can use 'I' as in "I argue that," because you have already settled an argument and then you will, for example, counter that argument in this way. […] I use this structure. I'm not sure if it's good or not, but this is my style. [Lit01-EFL]

Yet, when they were presented with the frequency of their uses of 'I', both Lit01-EFL (I=50) and Lit02-EFL (I=61) fear that they have overused it:

> I thought it was a little bit less, but it seems I have overused it. But I think I have used it, as I told you, between each three or four paragraphs or after section, I didn't over use it. I think so! [Lit01-EFL]

> WOW! […] Anyway, 61 out of 20,000 words is not a lot. I think. [Lit02-EFL]

In sum, it appears that some student writers' preferences would always be to avoid the first person singular pronoun because it implies subjectivity and because they feel such self-reference would have a negative effect on the quality of their writing. For them excessive use of 'I' would sound redundant, 'juvenile' and unattractive. Even though 'I' was employed in the dissertations of all informants except for Lit01-NS and Lit04-EFL, it appears that most informants (apart from Ling02-EFL (I= 66), Ling10-EFL (I= 21), Lit01-EFL (I= 50), and Lit02-EFL (I= 61)) kept 'I' use to what they saw as tolerable limits.

5.3.8.2   Influence of personal preferences on using reader references

5.3.8.2.1   ONE

The influence of personal stylistic preferences also appears in the students' use or avoidance of the indefinite pronoun ONE. In fact, most informants are in favour of using ONE in their writing because it implies impersonality and neutrality, unlike first and second person pronouns. Ling04-EFL's comment below summarises this view shared by many informants:

> "One could argue" I think it's completely appropriate, and it refers to the author her/himself. It could also refer to anyone in the field […] I would use "one" in my writing to say that this is my question, my argument so it's another way to avoid "I" but it also includes anyone in the field who could see things the way I do. [Ling04-EFL]

On the other hand, although other informants agree that ONE is completely "impersonal" and it could refer to an "unbiased" reader, they personally would not use it in their writing because while it is appropriate, it is not "necessarily effective". Lit01-NS explains,

> including something like 'one could argue' is a rhetorical gesture, in a way, and I am not sure it is necessarily effective. […] I don't think it's wrong to include that in an academic piece of writing, but I don't think I would use it so often. It always strikes me as, well, there's something just unpersuasive, I think, about asking the reader – often, not always – to project a hypothetical observer who could then follow out this argument. I would rather just establish some claims and try to persuade the reader of them. [Lit01-NS]

While Lit01-NS found the pronoun ONE to be "unpersuasive", both Ling01-NS and Ling07-NS share the view that ONE sounds "archaic" and "extremely formal," even in academic writing:

> 'one' is extremely formal and based on The Queen's English - <Laughter> And people see that as quite old language. [Ling01-NS]

Also Lit01-EFL expresses her dispreference for ONE. Even though she thinks it is used in academic writing, she would rather avoid it because for her it is "too general" and "not clear" who the ONE is.

5.3.8.2.2   *WE*

When informants were asked to comment on other students' use of WE (Example 5-62), their responses reveal that their perceptions and personal preferences with regard to the use of WE vary to a great extent. Also, it appears that their personal stylistic preferences have, in part, influenced their decision whether to use WE or avoid it in their dissertations.

Example 5-62: An extract including WE

> …**we** can see that a poorly designed questionnaire can only yield poor responses irrespective of the cohort. [Ling]

Some informants like Ling07-NS and Ling01-NS immediately expressed their dislike of the use of inclusive WE. Ling07-NS perceives WE as "patronising":

> I don't like 'we' at all. I just think 'we' looks very awkward. It's almost patronising isn't it? It's like talking to schoolchildren, "Now, today we're going to do such and such." If you're talking to a child, and they've got something wrong, "Well, we've done this before, haven't we?" It's how you would talk to a child. Meaning 'you', not 'we'. "We've seen this, we've done this. We did this yesterday". Meaning, "You did it with me", but it's actually trying to speak to them. That's how this comes across. That comes across to me as patronising. [Ling07-NS]

Ling01-NS shares this view about inclusive WE. Although Ling01-NS used to employ WE in her writing, she has changed her behaviour to avoidance. Her comments below explain her reasoning:

> I used to do this when I was an undergraduate, when I was first learning about academic writing and I used to copy what I had read in books…. As the years have gone on, I've decided that personally I don't really like this 'we', because I feel like you're telling the reader what to think, whereas I feel as a student, you should be just saying what you're doing, because I think this shows a lot of authority, it shows moral authority and you're showing a lot of confidence. So you're telling the reader what they're thinking, and I guess as I've developed my writing, I've steered away from this kind of thing. [Ling01-NS]

The other informants who prefer to avoid using WE have similar views to Ling01-NS. For them,

inclusive WE shows too much confidence for student writers:

> I think I've seen it [we] before. But it's not what I prefer. […] It assumes that the readers agree with my results. But they might not agree. [Lit02-EFL]

> …with 'we' the authors are flamboyantly exposing themselves and I'm not quite comfortable with that. I just don't like it. [Lit05-EFL]

> Here, 'we can see' as if you are dragging your reader, […] you are forcing the reader to agree with you, which is not right. […] a scholar, a well-published scholar and a very authentic figure in the field has the right, has the merit to say 'we' but not someone who's doing either a PhD research thesis or a Master's; saying 'we', […] as if you are very, very, pretty much like 100% sure that this is decisive, conclusive outcome, which might not be the case. [Lit08-EFL]

In contrast to the above tendency to avoid the use of inclusive WE, both Lit01-NS and Ling04-

EFL find the use of inclusive WE appropriate and would "happily" employ it in their writing. In

fact, inclusive WE appeared 36 and 33 times in Lit01-NS's and Ling04-EFL's dissertations,

respectively. Lit01-NS justifies his uses by saying that WE is

> generic and it's not referring to the writer or the reader. It's anyone who would be in a position to survey those results. So that seems appropriate to me.

Not only that but he also believes that WE is the best alternative to 'I' because it

> does sort of retain that certain kind of formality. I suppose if there is a sentence where you would otherwise have had to refer to yourself, the 'we' is just about the only word that you can use without going back into the first person. [Lit01-NS]

Ling04-EFL also explains that her preference for WE is because it allows her to engage readers

and so to solicit their agreement, referring to her own use (Example 5-63(1)):

> "*we can argue*", here I'm arguing but I like to include the reader with me because you as a reader I suppose you are following my ideas, my argument, my results, so I assumed that you agree with me, and would argue for the same ideas. That's what I feel when writing these sentences. [Ling04-EFL]

Example 5-63: Ling04-EFL's uses of WE and US

> (1) Thus, **we can argue** that optionality in adding morphological inflections is not affected by the learner's L1.
> (2) **What concerns us** in this chapter is the difference between English and Arabic verb inflection for a number of morphological categories…

She adds that her use of *What concerns us* (Example 5-63(2)) was because it sounds more polite

than saying *concerns me*:

> "what concerns us", it's only me but I found it more polite to include the readers with me. It's better than saying "concerns me". […] we do this in Arabic. We always include the readers with us. It's always for politeness. And I always find it polite to include the readers with me in everything. […] And also to say that this is what people generally do so it's a kind of making a generalization. [Ling04-EFL]

So both Lit01-NS and Ling04-EFL prefer using WE not only because of their belief it is

appropriate in academic writing but also because of its persuasive nature. A further reason for

preferring WE, according to Ling04-EFL, is its transmission of "politeness" in Arab culture.

More discussion about how Arab culture has influenced the English writing of some students,

leading them use WE instead of 'I,' is found in section 5.3.5.1.

5.3.8.3   Influence of personal preferences on using imperative verbs: CONSIDER vs. LET US

Lit01-NS generally does not object to the use of directives in academic writing. For instance,

when he was asked to comment on other students' use of CONSIDER (as in *Consider the*

following example), he found it "entirely appropriate for academic writing" because it is "just a

formal instruction". However, when he was asked about other students' use of LET US

(Example 5-64), although he still finds it appropriate, he says he would avoid it because, to him,

it sounds "slightly archaic":

> I think that's appropriate. But I don't think I would use it so much. The only reason I wouldn't use it, I think, would be saying, "let us" to me sounds rather old-fashioned. I think it's a way of writing that you see less and less often. It might have been more

appropriate decades ago, perhaps, but I don't think you see it so much. There's a slightly archaic quality to it. It's kind of inappropriate, but this is perhaps more a personal thing. I imagine there are other people who would disagree. [Lit01-NS]

Example 5-64: An extract including LET US

> But **let us** not forget that what is of concern to us here is the fact that when he supplied them, Hamza always produced correctly inflected forms of *be*,… [Ling]

Other informants like Ling01-NS, Ling07-NS and Lit02-EFL agree. They find CONSIDER "acceptable" because it is academically used in such context. However, they generally are not in favour of using imperative verbs because such verbs are perceived as "too strong" and "very confident":

> CONSIDER, I think this is a little bit more telling the reader what to think, it's not as far removed. […] it's maybe a little bit more confident, but I think because they're just giving an example and they're asking them to think about it, then that's OK, but if they were telling them to think in a certain way, then that wouldn't be acceptable. [Ling01-NS]

> Grammatically, it's a direct demand isn't it? CONSIDER, which is quite strong, but it's used quite a lot in this kind of writing. If you wanted somebody to look at an example, you might well say, 'Consider this…', it's not as strong as it perhaps appears. [Ling07-NS]

> It's too strong, but it still sounds academic in a way. [Lit02-EFL]

Ling07-NS expressed his dislike of LET US although he believes that it "technically" engages the readers. But to him, LET US is "chatterly academic"/"fairly colloquial". He says he would not use such an expression and would much prefer to turn it into the passive form; '*It should not be forgotten'* instead of '*LET US not forget'* would work better. Many informants agree with Ling07-NS and they would not use LET US in their academic writing because it sounds informal and confident. Ling02-EFL adds that LET US sounds more like an expression that could be used in a textbook where the author has the ability and the power to guide students "to reach a certain conclusion" but in a dissertation this might not be appropriate:

> I feel it's more a textbook word. When they want to explain something to you. It's usually like "let's consider this", "let's take this example," yes it engages the student or the reader in what's going on but I would rather be more formal in writing my thesis and dissertation. They are not the same. In the textbook you are trying to guide students to reach to a certain conclusion, in dissertation you are not talking to your students. It's different. [Ling02-EFL]

However, there are some other informants who express an opposing view. While they disagree with the use of CONSIDER, they express their preferences for using LET US. These informants find LET US "more polite" and more acceptable than the bare imperative verbs such as CONSIDER or RECALL because in their view, LET US does not sound like "an order". Ling04-EFL who employed it four times in her dissertation says,

> I'm including myself just for politeness but it meant that the reader should pay attention here. […] Yeah I use LET US quite a lot, four times but I think it's fine. It's more polite than saying "Examine this type of problem", for example. [Ling04-EFL]

In brief, my informants appear to have two opposing stylistic preferences with regard to imperatives. On the one hand, Lit01-NS, for instance, prefers the use of the bare imperative CONSIDER because it is just a "formal instruction" but he would rather avoid using LET US (and he never employed it) because to him it sounds "slightly archaic". Ling04-EFL, on the other hand, prefers and uses LET US because it sounds "more polite" than the bare imperative CONSIDER which she reportedly would avoid. But the single appearance of the bare imperative REMEMBER (Example 5-65) in her dissertation seems to be one of these words that slipped through. If she were to rewrite it now, she says, she would write LET US REMEMBER, instead:

> I used the bare imperative REMEMBER once but I think LET US is better and more polite, that's why I prefer it. [Ling04-EFL]

Example 5-65: Ling04-EFL's use of an IMPERATIVE verb

> **Remember** that whether the verb agrees in number with the subject in Arabic is essentially determined by whether the subject comes after or before the verb,…

5.3.9   Writers' self-confidence: *"it may be that more confident people feel that they can express their opinions more boldly"*

Another factor that may have had an influence on the students' use of a stance/engagement marker is their self-confidence. While a lack of confidence seems to have led to a reluctance to express their opinions, too much confidence could lead to inappropriate claims. What follows will consider both cases in turn.

5.3.9.1   Lack of self-confidence

It appears that less confident writers tend to present their claims very tentatively. For instance, Ling01-NS, who believes that student writers should express their opinions and be critical in their writing, admitted that she was very cautious when she wrote her dissertation because she was afraid to sound "too confident":

> I do agree [student writers] should definitely be critical, they should express their opinions, but it just depends in what way that they do express their opinions. You can express your opinion without saying, 'in my opinion', you can just make statements based on the research that you have found and that will be your own opinion. […] I think I tried to be as critical as I could. I think maybe for myself, maybe to do with my personality - I don't know - I was probably a little bit cautious, so when I did write my own opinion, I was very, very cautious about it and didn't want to sound too confident, … So I suppose it depends on your research and it may be that more confident people feel that they can express their opinions <laughs> more boldly! [Ling01- NS]

Also Ling02-EFL and Ling10-EFL confessed that when they wrote their dissertations they did not feel qualified to express their opinions strongly. This could be one of the reasons why hedges outnumbered boosters in their dissertations (78 vs. 55 and 258 vs. 112 cases, respectively). The following comments illustrate how they felt as they were writing their dissertations:

> SUGGEST- It's a hedge. That's why I'm using it. I don't feel at that stage and the stage I'm in now that I should be using strong verbs. I'm still learning, I'm still a student; I'm still not that knowledgeable in the area to write with more authority. I have to be hedging most of the time. [Ling02-EFL]

… now I'm more confident in having an evaluation of the literature and then venture my opinion somewhere, but maybe in my dissertation I wasn't very qualified. [Ling10-EFL]

Similarly, when Lit02-EFL was asked about the word CLEARLY that appeared in her dissertation, she immediately admitted that it was not her choice, but her supervisor's (see section 5.3.1.2). In fact, she was trying to avoid such strong language when she was writing her dissertation because she was not confident enough to express her opinions. She further explained that her fear of venturing her ideas (and indeed her confusion about what constitutes good academic writing) was because of the Literature Department which, as she claimed, used to instruct students not "to assume too much". More discussion about this and what causes students' fear and confusion can be found in section 6.3.3.

5.3.9.2   Too much self-confidence

It seems that overconfidence might also have an impact on how writers state their opinions; that is, too much confidence about one's results may lead the writer to make inappropriate claims. For instance, Ling04-EFL said the reason for using SHOW and CERTAINLY in one sentence (Example 5-66) was because she was "very confident" about her results.

Example 5-66: Ling04-EFL's use of boosters

> This study **shows** that optionality is **certainly** the outcome of a variety of linguistic features...

But now she said she would not use both like this, explaining that while SHOW seems fine, CERTAINLY sounds "over the top":

> Ling04-EFL: This one is related to my study where I probably got angry at some of the linguists who, because it's a certain phenomenon in English where L2 learners, they omit the morphological inflections, so lots of L2 learners say "I play football yesterday" instead of "played" for example. And some people say it's related to syntax only and some say it's related to phonology only from the L1, for example. And they stick to their opinion they say the only reason is syntax and the only reason is phonology but from my study I found that we can't say it's only this one or that one because the results are mixed. Sometimes they refer to syntax sometimes they refer to phonology. So I was

saying that it's related to a variety of linguistic features. Maybe I was sure about it so I say "it shows", it's certainly not only this or that […]

AM: So it's for emphasis?

Ling04-EFL: Yes, but if I had to write it again I wouldn't say it like this but at that time I was very sure about my result. I shouldn't use "certainly". So "it shows" is fine I think because I was confident about my results but "certainly" is over the top.

Likewise, Lit08-EFL also thought that his three uses of inclusive WE/US (Example 5-67) were

driven by his "too much self-confidence".

Example 5-67: Lit08-EFL's uses of WE

- In this respect, post colonial studies come to affirm that raising such a question leads **us** to think…
- Therefore, what **we** can conclude from analyzing Ghosh's both works is that…
- …what should this signify to **us** is that there exists a constant process of dislocation, perplexity, and anxiety…

His criticism of his own uses of WE and US is because these inclusive pronouns are including

him in an expert audience, and this shows a "sort of arrogance with too much self-confidence" as

he is still a student writer; to him, inclusive WE sounds a little bit "over emphatic" and shows a

"hyper-estimation" of the self:

I was at these times maybe so much driven by confidence that I have reached a point where I considered myself well acquainted with my topic, to deserve a little capacity for including myself. [Lit08-EFL]

5.3.10   Writers' performance: *"I was trying to convey that I know so many words"*

It seems that sometimes writers employ a stance/engagement marker as a way of showing that

their English language is good and as a way of impressing readers (cf. Goffman's (1959) concept

of 'performance'). For instance, when Ling10-EFL was asked about his use of '*there is EVERY*

reason', he admitted that this was only one example of the many words/expressions he used in

his dissertation to give the impression that "I know English and my English is good and I know how to write proper English like the ones written in journals". Although, of course, he was aware of the main function of the expressions he employed, his main purpose was to "show off":

> To be honest, it doesn't mean that I used the word here just because I found a place where I can express myself, 'Look at me, I know the language.' No. I think […] 'every reason' is stronger than saying 'there is a reason'. So there are two reasons for using this expression. One of them is using the proper language and one is using language that you can show yourself with. And maybe I would say I used it here because I wanted to show myself rather than because it was the right expression to use. [Ling10-EFL]

Thus, in order to achieve his goals of showing off and impressing readers, not only was he aspiring to literary language (or "flowery expressions" as one of his markers disparagingly called it), but he also deliberately chose those expressions that seemed infrequent in writing such as '*it is SOBERING to*'. He explained,

> 'Sober' yes, it means it's really important to something…again I would say my dissertation was like a field for me to practice my language, so that was one of the words […]. I was trying to convey that I know so many words. [Ling10-EFL]

In a similar vein, when Lit08-EFL was asked about the impression he wanted to convey by using IPSO FACTO, he explained that by integrating Latin words in his writing, he intended to stand out among other writers since not many writers would do so. In addition, to him, Latin words help to make writing sound both "more academic" and "more stylish":

> Lit08-EFL: Well I love Latin very much […]. So whenever I had the chance to use a Latin term, it was inserted. […]
>
> AM: So what impression you wanted to convey with this 'ipso facto' in this sentence?
>
> Lit08-EFL: To express myself more firmly let's say, it's *I* who is saying this, you wouldn't find many writers, using so much Latin words, so it is *I* who is having that style and that way of writing…

Lit04-EFL also wished to impress readers by employing IPSO FACTO in her dissertation although, she said, she would not use it anymore. Rather she would keep her writing "very simple" because of her fear of receiving criticism from her supervisor.

Like Lit04-EFL, Ling10-EFL has also decided to quit his habit of using 'literary', 'infrequent' language as a means of "showing off" (see above). However, while Lit04-EFL has now decided to keep her writing "very simple" and to avoid words/phrases such as IPSO FACTO because she is "scared" of receiving criticism from her supervisor/advisor, Ling10-EFL admitted that he used to have a faulty idea about what constructs good academic writing. These issues related to the writers' personalities and attitudes towards writing will be discussed in more detail in section 6.3.3.

What is also of interest here is that Ling10-EFL spoke about how his belief about (and attitude towards) academic writing has changed since he wrote his dissertation. He believes that he is more confident now "to write a better work". Indeed, this is not an isolated case as many of my informants (since most of them were doctoral students by the time of interview) repeatedly refer to how over time their writing abilities have developed, and how their beliefs about appropriate academic writing as well as their stylistic preferences have changed. Because this issue of development emerged as an interesting theme, the following section 5.4 will be devoted to report what my informants say about this matter.

5.4   Writers' changed beliefs about appropriate academic writing: *"I think my writing style has changed a lot"*

Interviewees attribute changes in their beliefs about academic writing to their exposure to it and an accompanying awareness of how academics write. Thus, when I asked them whether they had any comments on their uses of some particular stance/engagement markers which appeared in their dissertations, some of them expressed their discontent and surprise and some even criticized

their own choices of language which they now felt were inappropriate. Lit01-NS, for instance, like many other informants, emphasizes that if he were to revise his dissertation, he would write it differently; he would drop those words/expressions which sound "very assertive", "informal" or are generally perceived as inappropriate in academic writing. He, for example, would avoid the mentioning of THE READER in his writing because, to him, it is just "an empty gesture" that does not add anything to what is being said. Commenting on his single use of THE READER (Example 5-68), he says,

> I think my writing style has changed a lot (Laughter). I wouldn't use the word 'reader' like that now. It doesn't seem to me necessary in that sentence, or perhaps appropriate. It's just a word I would drop now. [Lit01-NS]

*Example 5-68: Lit01-NS's use of **THE READER***

> Finally, it will be noticed by **the reader** that this study is concerned with responses...

Furthermore, he adds, a reference to THE READER is not prototypical in this genre:

> I don't think referring to the reader like that is something you would see in a piece of work like this. If I were to revise it, I would get rid of that word. [Lit01-NS]

Another use of language that seemed inappropriate according to Lit01-NS was a rhetorical question in his dissertation. Lit01-NS was "unhappy" with his use of this question (Example 5-69) because he finds it "too leading", "very assertive in some way", and "less open":

> …this is now me criticising my own work. But I now think that sounds slightly sarcastic, perhaps, and I think perhaps that was slightly intentional. I think that was a misjudgement on my part. If I was to rewrite it, I don't think I would give it that particular inflection. I think I'd make it sound slightly different. I have some reservations about the way that's phrased, and I think it could be put better (Laughter). [Lit01-NS]

Example 5-69: Lit01-NS's use of a rhetorical question

> Critics like Eagleton often make the point that ideology operates most effectively when the subjects it holds in thrall are unaware of it. **Could Amis really have believed that prior to 9/11 Islam was a neutral category for the West, of no more significance than another species of plant or a new kind of cloud formation?**

Not only does he express his concern about being "too leading" by asking this particular question, but he also fears that he generally overused questions in his dissertation "without realizing". Because there were 18 occurrences of rhetorical questions in his dissertation, he worries that could distract readers. But he explains,

> I tend to think that it [a question] is a very effective tool when you're writing a long piece of work, but it's possible there are just too many here, and it might be distracting or whatever. But certainly at the time I felt that the questions were good ways of directing the reader to what was coming up. [Lit01-NS]

Lit05-EFL is also one of my informants who criticized their earlier uses of forceful language in their dissertations. He, for instance, employed the word PROVES (Example 5-70) once in his dissertation but now does not approve of using it because, he explains, in his field of Literature there is no such "proof"; "everything is subjective". Besides, PROVE to him "sounds more like a scientific word". Instead, he would employ the word SHOW or IMPLY to make his claim sound less strong and more appropriate.

*Example 5-70: Lit05-EFL's use of **PROVE***

> More than that, the range of young women who are portrayed as victims of their societies **proves** that Faulkner did not view them with preconceived ideas about women in his mind; he portrays a range of women who were shaped by their surroundings.

Another example of language that Lit05-EFL would rewrite is *'I BELIEVE'* (Example 5-71). His surprise and discontent with his use of BELIEVE was obvious: "that's horrendous". He says, "I wouldn't use BELIEVE anymore" because "it's too assertive":

> …there is no absolute truth in literature. It's just that what I see you could see it in a different way. […] Everything is more subjective. This goes back to, probably my reading in the subject. I've read a lot about phenomenology and that's the kind of philosophy that I am working on right now. That is mainly responsible for it as well, yes. [Lit05-EFL]

*Example 5-71: Lit05-EFL's use of **I BELIEVE***

> - However, <u>**I believe**</u> that this is only one side of Faulkner's representation of women.
> - Thus, another misunderstanding made by some critics, <u>**I believe**</u>, is their inability to distinguish Faulkner's personality from that of some of his characters regarding their views of women.

5.5   Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the results of my interview data analysis which was largely centred on the student writers' motivations behind their use/non-use of stance and engagement features. The analysis revealed a wide range of examples and emergent themes which will be discussed and linked to my earlier review of the literature in the following chapter.

Chapter 6   Discussion

6.1   Introduction

As seen in the literature chapter, there has been an emphasis on the influence of discipline and culture on writers' use of stance and engagement features. Surprisingly, however, it turned out that, in my study, the two disciplines (Linguistics and Literature) and the two writer groups within each discipline (Arab EFL writers and their English NS counterparts) did not significantly differ in their general use of stance and engagement markers even though a few significant discrepancies were detected in the student writers' uses of some of the stance and engagement subcategories such as directives and reader references between the two disciplines (regardless of their L1) and hedges between the two writer groups within Linguistics. But, even more interestingly, these discrepancies do not appear to be solely caused by discipline or cultural background. In fact, according to my interview data, other factors such as instruction on L2 pragmatic knowledge, supervisors' feedback, and personality differences and stylistic preferences of the student writers (all of which will be discussed in sections 6.3.1, 6.3.2, and 6.3.3 respectively) appear to play a more important role in the writers' use of stance and engagement markers. Such factors, I argue, have an impact on the way students position themselves and engage readers in their writing because they are still in the process of learning and developing their writing skills. This development theme which emerged from my interviews will be discussed in section 6.4. But before all that, I will first address in sections 6.2 and 6.3 the extent to which disciplinary differences and cultural background, respectively, have influenced the writers' use of some language features.

6.2   Disciplinary differences?

Corpus and statistical analyses show that the disciplines in focus (Linguistics and Literature) did not significantly differ in their overall use of stance ($F_{(1,35)}= 1.68$, $p= .20$) or engagement

markers (F (1,35)= .50, p= .48) (see sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2). However, there were significant differences in their uses of some of the subcategories of the stance and engagement markers.

With regard to the stance subcategories, there were significantly more occurrences of hedges in the Linguistics subcorpus than in Literature (F (1,35)= 5.10, p= .03) while the latter used, on average (though nonsignificantly) more boosters than the former (mean difference 8.4 per 10,000 words). Similar distributional patterns were also observed in Hyland's (2005b) corpus analysis of research articles from eight disciplines with Philosophy (a humanities subject) and Applied Linguistics (a social science subject) being among these disciplines. It was found that while these two disciplines did not (noticeably) differ in their uses of hedges, they differed in their uses of boosters, with Philosophy employing more boosters (9.7 per 1000 words) than Applied Linguistics (6.2 per 1000 words). The higher occurrences of boosters within humanities subjects, in comparison with social science subjects, may indicate the writers' need to present their arguments and opinions with more confidence, possibly to show how much belief they have in what they say since they lack 'hard evidence' to base their opinions on. Moreover, Simpson (1990), based on his analysis of epistemic modality, notes that "patterns of epistemic certainty" were "clear" in the texts of some writers in Literature (p. 92). Simpson also made an anecdotal note that a student of English Literature, reportedly, had been criticised (by her Literature tutor) for being "namby-pamby" because she "had deliberately written [an essay] in a tentative style" (p. 93). Similarly, my informants reported that in their Literature department they are usually encouraged to express more conviction when articulating their ideas, because, as Lit03-EFL explains, repeating her supervisor's words, weak claims that show the writer's uncertainty about what is being discussed are considered "inappropriate" in Literature. Whereas in the Linguistics department it is commonly recommended that student writers be cautious with claims and avoid expressing 100% conviction in a proposition simply because of the nature of their research topics which normally deal with human beings who can change according to contexts and situations

they are placed in. This may explain the higher occurrences of hedges in Linguistics compared with Literature, which could be attributed to the epistemology of the disciplinary discourse community that affected the writers' uses of hedges as well as boosters.

Concerning the use of engagement subcategories, my corpus analysis shows that Linguistics used significantly more directives than Literature (F (1, 35)= 24.2, p= .001) while the latter employed significantly more reader references than Linguistics (F (1, 35)= 4.5, p= .04). Again, such results may reflect the different practices of each discipline, as Hyland (2009) suggests. However, typical patterns of stance or engagement, Hyland (2001a) admits, "only provide broad perimeters of choice, and individual factors, such as experience, confidence, or professional rank, can always intervene" (p.572). Also, Harwood (2006), in his analysis of five political scientists' interview-based accounts of the use of personal pronouns in academic writing, maintains that the discipline embodies a number of subdisciplines which helps explain informants' differing pronoun preferences in his study. In light of these arguments along with the qualitative results presented in the previous chapter, I will discuss in the following sections the extent to which the two disciplines in focus here (Linguistics and Literature) have affected the student writers' use of directives (section 6.2.1) and reader references (section 6.2.2), although it must be borne in mind that the corpus under investigation in this study is relatively small and that therefore any generalizations we may wish to make on the basis of these results regarding disciplinary patterns can only be tentative, at best.

6.2.1   Directives by discipline comparison

Frequency counts showed that the use of directives is more associated with Linguistics (85.5% of all directives in the corpus) than Literature (14.5%). The highest percentage of directives represents textual acts in Linguistics (44.1%) while in Literature textual acts account for only 0.9% of directives. Only three instances of textual acts appeared in the Literature subcorpus; all

were accomplished by the imperative SEE ('***see** questions to follow'; '**see** page 13 above'*) and were employed by two student writers to exclusively direct readers to other parts of the dissertation.

This difference in the use of directives in general and of textual acts in particular could be attributed to the different disciplinary conventions of each discipline. In Linguistics, for instance, it is very common that textual acts appear in the main body to guide readers to other parts of the same text (e.g. (***see** above*)) or to other sources (e.g. (***see** Penke (2006) for a review*)). It is often viewed as a writing convention/tradition of Linguistics, as was acknowledged by all my Linguistics informants; and it was one of the reasons why they appear 13 times in Ling02-EFL's dissertation. Ling02-EFL admits that she used them "very frequently and confidently" because "we see them a lot in books and articles". Likewise, Ling07-NS employed them seven times because although the imperative SEE, he believes,

> is a command and it's quite strong, […] it's academically used. It's a convention. Perfectly acceptable. [Ling07-NS]

Ling10-EFL also commented that the use of SEE (which appears 32 times in his dissertation) is very acceptable and common in his field. To him, imperatives usually allow writers to be direct and precise and therefore to avoid lengthy sentences. So, it can be used for reasons of "economy". On the other hand, in Literature, according to all my seven informants, imperative SEE is very often placed in footnotes[5] rather than in the main text, usually to direct readers to other references.

Directives, then, appear to be a more common feature in Linguistics than in Literature because of the different argumentative styles of these two disciplines as revealed by my informants and as

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[5]By checking the footnotes of all dissertations in my Literature subcorpus, it was found that some student writers did indeed employ the imperative SEE to direct readers to other references, for instance, "See Jefferson and Robey 107-112" [Lit04-EFL]. Also, the imperative SEE was used, but to a lesser extent, to guide readers to other parts of the dissertation: for instance, "This "inbetween" position can be directly linked to Bhabha's theory of the "third space". **See** below for a more detailed analysis of his key theories." [Footnote, Lit09-NS].

suggested by a number of studies such as those by Swales et al (1998), Chang and Swales (1999), and Hyland (2001a; 2005b). Swales et al (1998) examined the use of imperatives (a form of directives) in research articles from ten disciplines (among these disciplines were Linguistics and Art History[6]), and found great disciplinary variation. In fact, similar to the results of my study, their analyses identified low figures in Art History (a humanities subject) and high figures in Linguistics. Based on interviews with the authors of the articles examined, Swales et al concluded that the acceptance of the usage of imperatives could be attributed to tradition and the need for word economy. Almost the same reasons were articulated by my Linguistics informants (see above) in justifying their frequent uses of directives (particularly, those functioning as textual acts).

It seems that student writers are aware of their discipline's practices, at least with respect to the use of directives, since the distributional frequencies of directives in both subcopora match those found in published work. For instance, Chang and Swales' (1999) study showed that directives were by far more common in both Statistics (285 occurrences) and Linguistics (264 times) than in Philosophy (90 occurrences), indicating that directives are more acceptable in sciences and social sciences than in the humanities. Further support was provided by Hyland (2005b) who also found in his analysis of research articles from eight disciplines that directives in general occurred more often, for instance, in Physics and Applied Linguistics papers than in the humanities. However, most directives in the soft fields, Hyland (2001a) explains, were "textual, directing readers to a reference rather than informing them how they should interpret an argument" (p.565) because engaging readers in cognitive acts in the soft disciplines could be a potentially risky strategy for writers who principally seek to establish an interpersonal relationship with readers since "there are less objective or clear-cut criteria for accepting

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[6]I take both disciplines, Art History and Literature, to be humanities subjects which use methods that are primarily critical as opposed to empirical approaches.

arguments" (p.564). Moreover, given that directives are the mark of "self-assured" writers who are capable of asserting their confidence in their arguments, novice writers might feel reluctant to employ such a feature in their writing. Hyland (2004), for instance, found that master's students were more hesitant than doctoral students in employing directives in their dissertations/theses. Indeed, many of my informants noted this potentially risky tactic of using imperatives to lead readers to a particular interpretation (rather than to other parts of the texts or to other references; see section 5.3.8.3 for more details). They admitted that they accordingly refrained from engaging readers in cognitive acts (especially by the use of imperatives) but felt more comfortable employing textual acts in their writing. This could explain the slightly higher occurrences of textual acts than cognitive acts in the Linguistics subcorpus. But the reason for the scarcity of textual acts (0.9% of total directives) in the Literature subcorpus is due, as mentioned earlier, to the Literature student writers' belief that referring readers to other sources is very often done via footnotes rather than in the main body of the text in their discipline.

Supporting, to some extent, Hyland's (2009) argument that corpus analyses and frequency counts could help in revealing the extent to which writing practices of different disciplines may vary, my statistical results, particularly of directives, indicate that even though both disciplines, Linguistics and Literature, are related in the sense that both can be categorized as soft fields, they still differ in some aspects. It is apparent that each disciplinary community has its own practices and conventions to distinguish itself from the other. Moreover, my interviews with writers from both disciplines confirm these results; but this is not meant to limit the important role of interviewing. In fact, interviews helped not only to uncover the writers' disciplinary beliefs and intentions of employing a stance/engagement marker but also to account for the high or low frequency counts of a particular linguistic feature in a discipline. It was obvious, as will be seen in the following section and as Harwood (2006) argues, that a combination of both corpus and interview studies is needed to reveal which language has been used, how often, and why—if

writers were aware of these motivations, since my interview data also showed that some writers were unaware of their uses of some particular words/expressions or indeed "surprised" to find out that they were using a language feature they claim they do not care for. Evidently, then, interviews could also help to reveal the extent to which the writers' practices coincide with what they say they prefer or disprefer.

6.2.2   Reader references by discipline

Frequency counts show that the number of occurrences of reader references in Literature (10.6 per 10,000 words) was twice the number in Linguistics (5.3 per 10,000 words). Such results appear to be somewhat in line with Hyland's (2005b) finding where Philosophy (a humanities subject) employed reader references (11.0 per 1000 words), approximately five times more often than Applied Linguistics (1.9 per 1000 words). Hyland reported that reader references (WE in particular) were the most common engagement devices that occurred in the humanities and social sciences papers, "where they function to appeal to scholarly solidarity, presupposing a set of mutual, discipline-identifying understandings linking writer and reader" (p.188). Hyland also acknowledged that the more interpretive and less abstract the field is, the more the writers need to secure readers' agreement through the deployment of engagement devices. Thus, while the two fields (Linguistics and Literature) are somewhat related, they differ in some respects. For instance, given that humanities subjects use methods that are primarily critical as opposed to various empirical approaches, they could be more discursive than social science subjects and so need to work harder to get the readers 'onside' to lead them towards a preferred interpretation. Hence, it seems reasonable to expect more occurrences of reader references in Literature than in Linguistics.

However, these frequency counts appear to only provide a superficial view of the results because closer analyses of each of the dissertations in the two subcorpora (Linguistics and Literature; see

4.2.2) along with my interview data reveal some divergence among the student writers' uses and perceptions of reader references within each discipline. Such discrepancies among writers in the same discipline may indicate that writers' personality, their personal stylistic preferences, or even their subdisciplines might have played a role in their usage of reader references in Literature and Linguistics rather than the results simply being due to an influence exerted by the discipline.

Within Linguistics, for instance, even though most of my informants acknowledged the fact that WE is used very frequently in published work, they expressed their reluctance to use it themselves in their writing because, to them, inclusive WE shows "a lot of authority" which they do not possess. But Ling07-NS refrained from using WE because to him it sounds "patronising" and so he instead employed the indefinite pronoun ONE twice in his master's dissertation. Ling01-NS, however, completely avoided using ONE explaining that ONE is an "archaic" word which is no longer used in academic writing. So in general the low occurrences of reader references in Linguistics could be attributed to the writers' lack of confidence and/or their personal stylistic preferences rather than the influence of discipline.

In Literature, on the other hand, where the number of reader references exceeded that in Linguistics, interviews revealed that many Literature informants (e.g., Lit08-EFL) "regretted" and negatively criticised their uses of some reader references in their dissertations (see 5.3.9.2) while others (like Lit01-EFL) were surprised to see that their dissertations featured some of these reader devices they claimed to disprefer (see 5.3.1.5).

In fact, the one concern that most of my informants (regardless of their disciplines and L1) expressed in their interviews is that they are novice researchers writing for a more knowledgeable audience. It is this fact that made some of the student writers cautious about the language they used in their writing and even made them wish to avoid such a risky strategy of

including themselves with their more expert readers and suggesting equality in knowledge and understanding. But this does not apply to Lit01-NS who employed WE 36 times and who was "happy" with his uses of inclusive WE which allowed him, he said, to engage readers and seek their agreement (Example 6-1; also see section 5.3.8.2.2 for more details). Even though Lit01-NS, like almost all other informants, had no experience of publishing and started his master's degree immediately after he finished his bachelor's degree, he in comparison to others appeared to have a very confident personality and an awareness of what was expected of him as a researcher:

> I had a copy of the mark scheme, and I knew approximately what was expected. I would keep in mind that certain patterns were expected to be followed, and that there should be a certain kind of structure. I knew roughly what they [the markers] expected, so I had them in mind throughout. [Lit01-NS]

Example 6-1: Lit01-NS's uses of WE

- …to what extent liberal principles must be sacrificed in the name of liberal politics, **we can see** that Hitchens, like Berman, has supplied one possible answer.
- This point does not seem so surprising when **we** learn that Qutb received an education in Western literature, philosophy, and political theory…

His (reported) awareness of the examiners' expectations appeared to make him feel more relaxed and confident and it did not seem to put him off trying to engage his readers by the use of inclusive WE to claim solidarity and guide readers towards his preferred interpretation. It is evident that the way he perceived his relationship with his readers as participants who have similar interests and knowledge gave him a level of assurance towards writing unlike most other Literature informants (see above for examples) who appeared to be uncertain about what is right and what is wrong in academic writing. They seemed to lack confidence, feeling that it is inappropriate for them as students to send a signal of membership by textually constructing both themselves and their examiners as participants with similar understanding because, as Lit05-EFL says, "They are better than me". But the fact that their dissertations featured a number of reader references, contradicting what they said they did, and that they felt surprised and dissatisfied

with their uses may suggest that at the time of writing their dissertations they perhaps were not fully aware of the rhetorical effect of WE. It could be that they unconsciously acquired it from their academic reading and reproduced it in their own writing without actually realizing. Or it could be that they, again unconsciously, transferred the personal pronoun WE from their cultural background where WE, as was claimed by my Arab informants, is very common in the Arabic culture as a way of expressing politeness (more discussion about the extent to which culture may have influenced the student's writing will follow later in this chapter, section 6.3). Whatever reasons were behind the higher occurrences of WE in the literature subcorpus, it was clear that conducting a discourse-based interview after a textual analysis was very useful to reveal to what extent the writers practice what they preach. Without the textual analysis, interview results could be misleading given that what the writer says may not coincide with what he/she does; and the reverse is true; that is, without interviewing the writers about their own writing, the best guess of the analyst (in this case, about the reason behind the writers' use of a particular feature of language) would still risk the possibility of being erroneous and so the writer's own perspective is needed here to confirm/disconfirm the analyst's presuppositions.

In sum, writers' confessions about their unawareness of employing some of the reader references that appeared in their dissertations and the fact that some of them now disapprove of and "regret" the use of some of these devices may suggest that the high frequency of reader references in the Literature subcorpus does not accurately reflect the actual writing behaviour of the discipline, at least with respect to the use of reader references. Apparently, there were a number of factors that could be the cause of the frequent occurrences of reader references in the student writers' texts other than the influence of the disciplinary community practices.

6.3   Cross-cultural differences?

We saw in Chapter 4 (sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4) that while the two writer groups (regardless of

their disciplines) did not significantly differ in their overall uses of engagement markers (F $(1,35)$= .02, p= .89), they differed in their overall use of stance makers (F $(1,35)$= 4.91, p= .03), with the English NSs using significantly more stance features than their Arab EFL counterparts. Moreover, closer examination showed that while self-mentions appeared (nonsignificantly) more often in the Arab EFL writers' dissertations, there were more hedges, attitude markers and boosters in those by the English NSs; although only hedges (F $(1,35)$= 8.18, p= .01) and attitude markers (F $(1,35)$= 5.22, p= .03) were significant. Approximately similar results were also observed when the two writer groups within each discipline were compared, especially within Linguistics (see section 4.3.1).

Interestingly and quite surprisingly, when comparing the English NSs with their Arab EFL counterparts within each discipline, it was found that the former group made greater use not only of hedges but also of boosters. The lower occurrences of hedges in the Arab EFL writers' texts is consistent with the results of many other studies concerned with L1 and L2 writing (such as Burneikaitė, 2008; Hinkel, 2002; 2005a; Hyland & Milton, 1997; and Vassileva, 2001); however their underuse of boosters appears to contradict the results of these studies (except Burneikaitė (2008)—see 2.5.3.6 and 4.3.1), which revealed NNSs' (including Arab EFL) texts tended to be more emphatic and assertive. This phenomenon, according to many researchers, was ascribed to either the NNS writers' limited knowledge of academic English language, or to their unawareness of the pragmatic force of epistemic modality. It was also suggested that the assertiveness in EFL writers' texts could be attributed to the influence of their cultural background, echoing Kaplan's (1966) contention that the differences between English L1 and L2 are caused by negative transfer from the EFL writer's first language.

Hinkel (2002; 2005a), for instance, who compared the uses of various hedge and emphatic devices by NS and NNS university students, the NNS group including Arab writers, found that

while the NSs used significantly more hedges than the Arab EFL writers, the latter group employed significantly more boosters. Hinkel claimed that the underuse of hedges and the overuse of emphatics in the Arab EFL essays could be attributed to L1 transfer. She claimed that the Arabic writing tradition, in contrast to formal English prose, "does not place a high value on hedges and understatements, and amplification and exaggeration are considered to be an appropriate means of persuasion" (Hinkel, 2005a, p.34). Hinkel based her claim on citing Connor (1996), who however cited a number of studies which appear to disagree about what causes divergence between the written English of the native Arabic speakers and that of the English NSs, and whose claims are open to debate, as explained in what follows. On the one hand, Kaplan (1966) and Ostler (1987) reported that Arab EFL writing, in contrast to that of English NSs, is characterized by a complex series of parallel constructions (a feature that is associated with oral communication), claiming that this style was influenced by the writers' Arabic language. On the other hand, Bar-Lev (1986), and Sa'Adeddin (1989) ascribed the differences in writing between the two writer groups to situational and sociocultural factors rather than to the linguistic system of Arabic.

By scrutinizing both views, it seems that Kaplan and Ostler based their overly strong claim on intuition. Besides, many flaws can be identified in their research design. For instance, Ostler (1987), following Kaplan's (1966) research design and hypothesis, compared 21 English expository essays written for a placement test by Saudi Arabian students entering a US university with ten English paragraphs randomly selected from published books by Anglo-American professional writers. She found that the essays written by the Arab students had a significantly higher number of coordinated sentences than the English passages. Ostler, echoing Kaplan's (1966) contention, claimed that the style of the Arabic-speaking students was influenced by the rhetorical style of Arabic. However, instead, attentive readers may prefer to ascribe such differences between the two writer groups to the (apparently lower) English

proficiency level of the NNS students when compared with that of the professionals, and to the fact that the two corpora under analysis were of different genres, written for different purposes to address different audiences. Not to mention the fact that the timed examination must have also played a role here, preventing the Arab EFL students from the multiple drafting, editing, and peer reviewing the published texts will have benefitted from. Unfortunately, Ostler in her study ignored all these situational and contextual factors (such as time constraints, writer test anxiety, the resulting first draft text, etc.) which might have affected the learners' writing product and therefore skewed the comparison results. Such flaws in her research undermined the validity of her results and so her intuitive arguments should not be generalized.

On the other hand, arguing against Kaplan's hypothesis, Sa'Adeddin (1989), who differentiates between the "aural" and the "visual" modes of text development, explains that the negative transfer of L1 occurred because while English academic writing permits only the visual mode as a means of developing texts, in Arabic both modes are used to serve different goals. That is, the native Arabic writer could choose to develop his/her text aurally by preserving the artefacts of speech (such as repetition in the channel; recurrent and plain lexis; overemphasis, exaggeration, etc.) in their written texts in order to "establish a relationship of informality and solidarity with the receivers of the text" (p.39). But if the writer aims to lead his/her audience to believe in his/her views and ideas by progressive reasoning, he/she would develop his/her text visually, where "all markers of orality will be pruned, unless otherwise dictated by the context of utilization" (p.38).

The evidence Sa'Adeddin provided was derived from his analysis of the semantic English translations of three Arabic texts. The first text, supposedly developed aurally, was from a newspaper. The writer of this text chose the aural mode because he was addressing a broad public audience and so he needed to utilize "a high degree of power and solidarity" (p.47). The

writers of the other two texts (which were presented at conferences) opted for the visual mode, developing their texts by "logical progression", "linearization, coherence and economy of expression" (p.45), because they intended to convince their peers of their views. In sum, Sa'Adeddin argues that

> choice of mode is conditioned, under normal circumstances of communicative feasibility by: (1) the interactive function the producer assigns to his text in the social encounter; (2) the degree of power and solidarity between the participants, and (3) the communally shared preferences for modes in the context of specific social encounters. (p.46)

Thus, Sa'Adeddin concludes that the Arabic NSs' use of a mode different from that preferred by the English NSs in writing may imply the Arab EFL writers' "confusion in application of the conventions of different mediums" (p.39), and ignorance of the sociolinguistic expectations of the receivers rather than an influence of Arabic rhetoric.

In a similar vein, Ismail (2010) also questioned the validity of Kaplan's (1966) contrastive rhetoric hypothesis. Avoiding fundamental weaknesses identified in previous contrastive rhetoric research such as those found in Ostler's (1987) study (see above), Ismail analysed and compared the EFL and Arabic L1 writing of 30 native Arabic speakers and the English L1 writing of 30 native English speakers on the same persuasive writing task, using measures of select rhetorical dimensions of persuasive writing developed by Connor (1990) and Connor and Lauer (1985; 1988)[7]. After confirming that the two participant groups were adequate for *"tertium comparationis"* (that is, as equivalent as possible for the purposes of principled comparison as was practicable: see Connor & Moreno, 2005) and that the analytic measures used were valid, Ismail reported that the statistical analysis, based on the participants' rhetorical performance, could not predict their language/cultural background and that there were no significant differences in the rhetorical performance of the two advanced writer groups regardless of the

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[7] The rhetorical dimensions Ismail (2010) investigated in his study were "argument superstructure, Toulmin's informal reasoning, rational, credibility and affective appeals, and persuasive adaptiveness" (Ismail, 2010, p.v).

language of composition. Instead, the results of his study revealed that there was much greater variance in the rhetorical performance of the participants within-group rather than between-group. Ismail concluded, "other individual, contextual, and/or situational variables play a more significant role in the writers' rhetorical performance than native language background does" (Ismail, 2010, p.v), casting doubts on the validity of the contrastive rhetoric hypothesis of Kaplan (1966), whose research design has also been critiqued by many scholars; see for example Bar-Lev (1986) and Severino (1993).

In fact, in a later publication ("Cultural Thought Patterns Revisited"), Kaplan (1987) himself admitted that his original claim that the differences in rhetoric between the written English of native Arabic speakers and English NSs were attributable to contrasts between the two cultures was "too strong". Modifying his claim, he suggested that one reason for the differences between NS and NNS writing is that any native speaker can signify the same meaning in hundreds of different ways. And because these possible alternatives can comprise a wide range of "sociolinguistic constraints", it is very unlikely for a non-native speaker to be aware of all of these possibilities. He explains,

> The non-native speaker does not possess as complete an inventory of possible alternatives, and does not recognize the sociolinguistic constraints of these alternatives, and does not recognize what sorts of constraints a choice imposes on the text which follows. (Kaplan, 1987, p.11)

This later argument of Kaplan's seems to make more sense especially because, as previous studies showed, most non-native writers, regardless of their language and cultural background, appear to have the same difficulty in L2 writing; however and unfortunately, his first contention has been widely disseminated and injudiciously treated as a fact by many researchers to base their claims on.

Of course this is not to deny the existence of differences between languages and cultures.

"Anyone who has had intercultural experience can easily realize that languages (or at least cultures) differ crucially in how they approach ideas, how they put ideas together in conversation, and so forth" (Bar-Lev, 1986, p.237). In fact, two of my informants, Lit02-EFL and Lit04-EFL, state the fact that in general "writing in English is different from writing in Arabic"; therefore they were concerned that Arabic would "always" interfere in the way they write and present their arguments and claims. However, it must be emphasized that there appears to be no decisive evidence, to my knowledge, to suggest that the Arabic writing tradition is characterized by assertiveness[8], nor that problems in the written English of native Arabic speakers resulted from cultural interference. Thus, Hinkel's (2005a) claim that L1 transfer was responsible for the higher use of boosters and the lower occurrences of hedges in Arab EFL's texts compared with those by their English NS counterparts seems to be unfounded.

Moreover, the results of my study, which shows that the Arab EFL writers underused not only hedges but also boosters, suggest that the "cultural overstatement hypothesis" is too crude to be of any explanatory value here, especially because my interview data reveals that other factors such as instruction on L2 pragmatic knowledge, the influence exerted by supervisors, a limitation of the EFL writers' linguistic repertoire, and personality differences and stylistic preferences played a more obvious and a more important role in the divergence between the English NSs and the Arab EFL writers in their uses of stance and engagement markers in general and boosters and hedges in particular. (More discussion about each of these factors will follow

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[8] One of the studies which was cited a number of times by other researchers was Al-Jubouri (1984), which mainly investigated the use of repetition in Arabic texts. Based on his analysis of the literal translation of three Arabic texts extracted from newspapers and written by three different authors, Al-Jubouri suggested that the use of repetition at several levels (i.e., the morphological level, the word level, and the 'chunk' level) in the Arabic texts is not only for ornamental purposes but also for rhetorical effect, to achieve a forceful assertion. That is, by repetition and "as the argument is developed, the assertion is made firmer and more solid, and the emotional impact that it leaves on the recipient helps to achieve persuasion" (p. 111). In summary, Al-Jubouri, based on the analysis of his very small corpus, tentatively concluded that repetition in Arabic is a rhetorical feature which has an intensification effect. But he clearly did not suggest that the Arabic writing tradition is characterized by assertiveness and exaggeration. Besides, the texts he analysed were taken from newspapers, addressing the public rather than academic peers.

later in the chapter). However, it should be noted that some of my Arab interviewees explained that their use of WE/OUR instead of I/MY in some contexts must have been influenced by their cultural background, where WE is more preferable because it was thought to signify politeness and humbleness while 'I', which they believe to typically indicate selfishness and egotism, is less favoured (see section 5.3.5.1 for more details). Even though my Arab informants showed awareness of these differences between their own culture and 'English' culture with regard to the use of exclusive WE, Ling02-EFL, for instance, admitted that she feels more comfortable using exclusive WE/OUR than I/MY and so she was not surprised to see that exclusive WE/OUR appeared in her dissertations a number of times (e.g., OUR STUDY). She acknowledged that MY STUDY would be in a sense more accurate but felt exclusive OUR would be more appropriate according to her culture.

It is worth noting here that culture is a broad concept which is "*composed* of socially shared elements, socially shared norms, codes of behavior, values, and assumptions about the world that clearly distinguish one sociocultural group from another" (Trueba, 1993, as cited in Kim, 2003, p.2). When it comes to its relation to language, it is generally accepted that culture is a broader umbrella concept, and that language is a part of culture and plays a significant role in it (Jiang, 2000). Brown (1994) further explains that both culture and language are "intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture" (p.165). The two symbolic systems of language and culture in which an individual is raised "play an instrumental role in socializing an individual, and in shaping his perceptions and his persona (Kim, 2003, p.1). Spindler and Spindler (1994) state that the "basic cultural assumptions and perceptions held by people of different cultures seriously influence behavior, perceptions and communication (p.29). And this clearly appears in the Arab EFL writers' (e.g. Ling02-EFL and Ling04-EFL) use of exclusive WE/OUR (e.g. OUR ARABIC PARTICIPANTS), influenced by their Arabic cultural/linguistic norms, where an Anglo-American writer may prefer I/MY usage.

In fact, this is the only case where two of my Arab interviewees (Ling02-EFL and Ling04-EFL) explicitly referred to the influence of their beliefs about culture (as well as their stylistic preferences) in their uses of exclusive WE instead of 'I'. However, this seems to contradict the findings of Scarcella and Brunak's (1981) study (see section 2.5.4.1 for more detail) which reported the absence of exclusive WE in the speech of L2 speakers whose L1 is Arabic while the English NSs used it very often in order to avoid 'I' and YOU and place greater social distance between themselves and superiors. It is important to note that Scarcella and Brunak's study was based on the analysis of transcripts of spoken language; but it seems relevant here because it also suggests the invalidity of the L1 transfer theory. According to Scarcella and Brunak, the L1 transfer hypothesis does not seem to play a role in the Arab EFL learners' use/avoidance of 'I'/WE. The authors instead suggested that the learners' limited linguistic repertoire was largely responsible for the differences in the use of language between the Arab EFL students and the English NSs. In fact, this claim is in line with Kaplan's (1987) later contention and some other studies such as Hyland and Milton (1997) and Vassileva (2001) as well as the explanations provided by my Arab informants who stress the fact that as non-native speakers of English, even though they possess a relatively high level of proficiency in English, they still lack knowledge of stylistic, syntactic, and linguistic features of academic writing, especially when compared with their English NS counterparts. Accordingly, Lit01-EFL, for instance, believes that her writing sounds different from that of a native speaker—perhaps less academic and less persuasive. More interestingly, while all my Arab EFL writers admitted that they lack knowledge of the wide range of syntactic and stylistic features of academic English a native speaker counterpart would normally possess, they as a result behaved differently according to their personality and stylistic preferences. In fact, my interview data (see section 5.3) reveals that, rather than cultural influence, factors such as instructional input, supervisors' feedback, and personality differences and stylistic preferences appear to have a more significant role in the way learners present their

claims and arguments, which in turn resulted in a lower number of hedges and boosters in their dissertations. Each of these factors will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

6.3.1   Instruction on L2 pragmatic knowledge

It is widely accepted that explicit instruction helps to enhance awareness of language features (e.g., Fordyce, 2014). Two of my informants (Ling02-EFL and Ling09-EFL) also explained that as a result of attending a pre-sessional course, they became aware of the importance of hedging claims in academic writing. For instance, Ling09-EFL's dissertation, as my textual analysis showed, featured 126 hedges (70.2 per 10,000 words) and only 15 boosters (8.4 per 10,000 words). When she was presented with these frequencies for comment, she said, "Yes, that what I was trying to do all the time, to hedge my claims" because that was what she had reportedly been taught in the pre-sessional course she attended before she started her master's degree. However, she added that she was now worried and not quite sure if the very low frequency of boosters was "good," especially when compared with the very high frequency of hedges. This writer seems to have stuck rigidly to a rule learned earlier in her development, running the risk of making her research sound perhaps imbalanced and too uncertain. Her awareness of the importance of hedges and the need to avoid (unnecessary) assertiveness seemed to have encouraged her to use clusters of hedges which can seem rather excessive at times (Example 6-2). Such an example indicates that not only did she use excessive hedging devices, but also seemed to have command of only a restricted range of hedges, which consequently got overused.

Example 6-2: Ling09-EFL's use of hedges

> And this behaviour **may** be attributed to the assumption that the [-ts] variant (localized) **may** be a mark to show regional belongings and solidarity in 'in-group' communication, as in the case of the [g] variant. However, it **may** be worth mentioning that the choice of using this variant **may** depend on the speakers' perspectives toward these variants ...

In fact, as revealed from my interview data and also from my own experience as a NNS student who attended a pre-sessional course at the same university, there was often an emphasis on using

tentative words/expressions while discouraging the use of emphatic, confident language. Students seemed to be taught how to soften claims by using hedges but they did not seem to be told when and how they could make strong claims; on the contrary they were taught to avoid assertiveness. This unbalanced attention given to hedge and booster devices also appears in some writing textbooks; for instance, in the third edition of their well-known textbook "Academic Writing for Graduate Students: Essential Tasks and Skills", Swales and Feak (2012) stress the importance of making tentative claims rather than strong ones. They therefore focus on examining specific ways of moderating or qualifying a claim. On the other hand, booster is only referred to as a strategy that could help writers reveal their stance: there are no more explanations about how this is achieved appropriately in academic writing, even though boosters are also recognized as an important feature of academic writing which allows writers not only to express their certainty in what they say but also "to mark involvement with the topic and solidarity with their audience" (Hyland, 2005b, p.179). While it is understandable that hedging often receives more attention from teachers/educators and textbook writers given that it is more common in academic writing, such an emphasis can potentially send a message that student writers should avoid using boosters, which may result in an imbalance, as shown earlier in the case of Ling09-EFL. It is perhaps evident that this unbalanced instruction has affected the student writers' perceptions about appropriate academic writing, since both hedging *and* boosting have a role to play. Thus, instead of teaching student writers to avoid assertiveness since they might express their certainty incorrectly, it would be better to teach them the appropriate way to do so, and when the use of boosters are acceptable. In other words, there should be balanced attention to both language features to allow writers to develop their own stance.

6.3.2   Supervisors' feedback

Another possible reason for the lower occurrences of boosters in the Arab EFL subcorpus could

be the influence exerted by supervisors as Ling04-EFL and Lit01-EFL indicated in their interviews. In fact, in their dissertations, unlike in Ling09-EFL's case mentioned above, the use of hedges and boosters appear to be more balanced. In Ling04-EFL's dissertation there are 68.5 and 35.1 per 10,000 words of hedges and boosters, respectively, and for Lit01-EFL, the figures are 43.8 and 27.2. However, in their interviews both writers admitted that in their first drafts their tone was more forceful—but their supervisors' feedback helped them to improve their writing by deleting many boosting devices when they redrafted their dissertations (see section 5.3.1.1). Apparently, then, while supervisors' interventions played a vital role in improving the students' writing by making it more balanced, it obviously helped to reduce in general the number of occurrences of boosters in the Arab EFL subcorpus.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that my Arab informants were not the only writer group who admitted that their overly strong claims were moderated as a result of their supervisors' comments; some of my English NS informants (for instance, Lit01-NS; see section 5.3.1.1 for details) also confessed receiving comments from their supervisors (although to a lesser extent) that they needed to qualify their claims for the same reason. It is perhaps unsurprising that student writers (regardless of their L1) in their first drafts would make claims which may sound too ambitious and too direct. This is because, as Lit01-NS explains, certain ideas are fresh in the mind and they go down on paper sometimes without the necessary support and back up. But on reflection and with supervisors' comments, student writers should be able to improve their writing and make it sound more academically appropriate.

6.3.3   Personality differences and stylistic preferences

From my interview data, it was obvious that my Arab informants were aware of the importance of hedging claims (even though their perceptions of the functions of hedging may have been modest at times). At the same time, however, they admitted that their knowledge of the wide

range of syntactic and stylistic features of academic writing was limited and so they felt disadvantaged when compared with their English NS counterparts. Apparently, they did not feel confident enough about their linguistic knowledge and ability to write in a sophisticated academic style like the English NSs would (presumably) do—as it is the goal of many learners to produce a native-like piece of writing. This lack of confidence and perhaps their faulty perceptions about what makes an appropriate academic text (as will be seen later in this section) seem to have influenced the learners' general writing attitudes, which appear to have diverged according to their personality differences and stylistic preferences.

On the one hand, some of my Arab informants like Ling02-EFL, Lit02-EFL, and Lit04-EFL reportedly refrained from venturing to make explicit their ideas in writing and expressed their fear of using strong language or showing authority, either because they did not feel qualified enough (like Ling02-EFL: "I'm still a student; I'm still not that knowledgeable in the area to write with more authority") or because they were just "scared" of receiving negative criticism from their supervisors (like Lit04-EFL: "there's a lot of fear when I write"). Lit04-EFL explained that she was very cautious with her claims to the extent that her supervisor and lecturers commented, "you're shy in your argument, you're shy in stating it" because she tends to avoid using strong words/expressions and usually opts for more tentative words. For instance, she prefers using MIGHT to MAY because she feels MIGHT sounds more uncertain. Likewise, Lit02-EFL confessed that she "usually" avoids using strong words such as CLEARLY (see section 5.3.9.1 for more details) because "At the time, I wasn't confident about my opinions". She also added that the Literature Department

> make you afraid of saying things sometimes because you're assuming too much and they don't want you to assume too much. But then they ask you to assume things to reach results… I've been in that stage where I don't want to confirm anything. [Lit02-EFL]

It is perhaps evident that these student writers lacked confidence; and this could be the main

reason why they felt uncomfortable voicing their views with authority in writing. Take, for instance, the case of Ling02-EFL (who obtained a distinction mark of 71 for her dissertation): she seems to be aware of the importance of expressing opinions in argumentative writing (since she not only attended a pre-sessional course and so had at least some training on how to conduct research and report it, but also claimed in her interview that while writing her dissertation she consulted a number of books on academic writing to guide her throughout). Nonetheless, she still did not feel that she was in a position to write with authority because of her perception of the unequal relationship between herself (a student) and her readers (supervisor and examiners). Her awareness of her lack of knowledge of the subject matter and her limited linguistic repertoire made her believe that she was not qualified enough to venture her ideas and criticize the work of others. Thus, she reportedly prefers to be cautious with her writing and be "on the safe side", and not to risk making assertive claims. Even though the number of booster and hedging devices in her dissertation are relatively high (41.11 and 58.3 per 10,000 words, respectively) when compared with those in the Arab EFL subcorpus, a close analysis of the devices employed in her dissertation revealed that almost half of the boosters were IN FACT and PARTICULARLY. While there were 21 occurrences of IN FACT, the adverb PARTICULARLY was employed five times (see Example 6-3). All other boosters were used less than four times (such as A GREAT DEAL OF, CANNOT, CLEAR, CLEARLY, EXACTLY, INDEED, INVITABLE, MOST, OF COURSE, SHOW, SPECIFICALLY, and VERY). Perhaps this suggests not only her limited linguistic inventory but also her reluctance to use devices she was not fully acquainted with. She reportedly was aware of sophisticated language that could be used, but did not dare to employ it in her own writing. It could be because she was afraid of misusing it and/or because it just did not match her own voice. Her writing attitude seems to contradict that of some other student writers like Ling10-EFL and Lit08-EFL whose views and attitudes towards writing will be discussed later in this section.

Example 6-3: Typical examples of sentences including boosters taken from Ling02-EFL's dissertation

> • **In fact**, this is exactly the case for the current study.
> • The limitation of the sample strategy is **particularly** important because it has some subsequent effects.

Unlike Ling02-EFL, Lit02-EFL and Lit04-EFL, who also expressed their fear and did not feel confident about their opinions, appear to have an unclear picture of what constitutes an appropriate academic writing style. This could be because neither of them attended any classes in academic writing before they started their master's degree, in their home country or in the UK. Both stressed the fact that the only writing classes they took were when they were doing their bachelor's degree and that the focus was mainly on grammar and language correctness rather than evaluating and criticizing the work of others. They immediately started their master's study once they reached the UK, and were not required to attend the pre-sessional course since they both achieved an overall mark of 7.0 in IELTS which enabled them to gain an unconditional offer for their programme). Thus, not only did they feel unprepared to write in a way they had never practiced before, but they also claimed that their lecturers and supervisors added to their confusion by providing contradictory advice. For instance, they say they were told to hedge their claims and not to overstate them but then they were asked to make their opinions more forceful. However, given that these writers seemed to have been relatively unfamiliar with such features in academic writing, it is very likely that their confusion here arose from the possibility that their lecturers'/supervisors' comments and advice were not explicit or clear enough. Nevertheless, it was observed that in general, different lecturers/supervisors have different stylistic preferences in writing and therefore they may provide different advice (for instance, Lit04-EFL explained that while some lecturers advised her to use first person pronouns in her writing, others told her that it is "not professional").

While it is perhaps clear that these writers had inadequate knowledge of English academic writing and apparently were confused about how to present their arguments and claims in an

academic way, they also seemed to lack confidence which in turn appeared to have, in part, affected their attitudes towards writing, leading them to avoid making strong claims. Consider the relatively low frequency number of boosters in their dissertations (21.6 and 24.5 per 10,000 words in both Lit02-EFL's and Lit04-EFL's dissertations, respectively), in comparison with those in the Arab EFL subcorpus for instance Ling10-EFL and Lit08-EFL who made the greatest use of boosters (66.96 and 71.58 per 10,000 words, respectively).

On the other hand, some other informants, who also admitted their limited linguistic inventory, felt the need to compensate for this by using an abundance of new words/expressions to impress their readers and to show that they are educated (see section 5.3.10). For instance, Lit08-EFL admitted that one of his intentions behind using Latin words/expressions (such as IPSO FACTO) in his writing was to impress readers. Being aware of his limited linguistic repertoire, he says,

> As non-native writers, we try to compete with others, we feel like we have to try our best to impress our readers maybe sometimes by using too many new words/expressions, to show them that we are knowledgeable. [Lit08-EFL]

Ling10-EFL also confessed that he put a great deal of effort into using various words/expressions (such as THERE IS EVERY REASON) as a means of showing off and giving the impression that "I know English and my English is good". He tended to do that because at the time of writing his dissertation he used to wrongly entertain the idea that

> there is a credit for language itself, that if you write with the proper language, without grammatical mistakes, with a variety of vocabulary, then you might get higher marks. So I came here with the impression that better language means you're better, but now I realise that better language doesn't mean you're better. Better ideas means you're better! I think I always write very safely now. [Ling10-EFL]

The learners' desire to make an impression reminds us of Lorenz's (1998) study, in which the German learners, in comparison with their English NS counterparts, overused not only amplifiers (such as VERY, ABSOLUTELY) but also downtoners (such as NEARLY, SLIGHTLY). His results are in conflict with mine (where the Arab learners underused both features) but his study

is of interest here because Lorenz also casts doubt on the validity of the widespread cultural

stereotype that NNS writers tend to overstate their claims when compared with English NSs (see

section 2.5.3.5 for a full account). He found that the "cultural overstatement hypothesis" was

unable to account for the NNSs' overuse of downtoners and that they used many more varied

adjective intensifications—more than those used by their English NS counterparts. Furthermore,

because the learners made use of affixation (such as "greyish, ultra-strong, or super-cool") which

was absent from the English NS corpus, Lorenz reasoned "these are not the symptoms of lexical

helplessness" (p.59). He also suggested that the NNSs' overuse of all these markers (amplifiers

and downtoners) could be attributed to "non-native style, perceived as overly eager to impress"

(p.59). He argued that many NNS writers are

> [a]nxious to make an impression and conscious of the limitations of their linguistic
> repertoire, [so] they might feel a greater need than native speakers to stress the
> importance – and the relevance – of what they have to say. (p.59)

According to Lorenz, the problem seems to lie in the attitude of the EFL student writers who

appear to be "more geared towards creating an impression than towards arguing a case"; and this

may result in "wordiness and overstatement" (Lorenz, 1998, p.64). In fact, Lorenz's assumption

seems to be supported by what some of my Arab informants (e.g., Lit08-EFL and Ling10-EFL)

say—that they intentionally employed a variety of words/expressions in order to impress their

readers. By examining the use of boosters and hedges in their dissertations (see Table 6-1), it is

apparent that Lit08-EFL and Ling10-EFL made a greater use of both language features,

particularly boosters, compared with those employed by other writers such as Ling09-EFL,

Lit02-EFL, Lit03-EFL, and Lit04-EFL, who admitted being too cautious about the way they

expressed their claims and opinions. In fact, the number of occurrences of boosters in the

dissertations of Lit08-EFL and Ling10-EFL exceeded not only those of fellow Arab EFL writers

but also those in almost all the English NSs' texts.

Table 6-1: Frequency counts (per 10,000 words) for boosters and hedges in each dissertation from both the Arab EFL and English NS subcorpora

Arab EFL subcorpus	Boosters	Hedges	English NS subcorpus	Boosters	Hedges
Ling01-EFL	26.77	77.39	Ling01-NS	20.44	84.89
Ling02-EFL	41.11	58.30	Ling02-NS	36.96	90.55
Ling03-EFL	8.62	10.92	Ling03-NS	20.07	119.26
Ling04-EFL	35.05	68.51	Ling04-NS	38.02	111.99
Ling05-EFL	15.84	70.13	Ling05-NS	16.34	80.63
Ling06-EFL	12.03	67.02	Ling06-NS	50.93	148.88
Ling07-EFL	13.57	37.99	Ling07-NS	20.70	89.08
Ling08-EFL	25.85	50.65	Ling08-NS	45.64	111.25
Ling09-EFL	8.36	70.21	Ling09-NS	22.20	54.43
Ling10-EFL	66.96	154.24	Ling10-NS	36.21	84.67
Lit01-EFL	27.18	43.76	Lit01-NS	27.71	56.26
Lit02-EFL	21.64	49.62	Lit02-NS	44.44	60.82
Lit03-EFL	18.82	21.29	Lit03-NS	26.23	33.26
Lit04-EFL	24.56	62.47	Lit04-NS	50.98	50.02
Lit05-EFL	15.49	24.67	Lit05-NS	26.62	56.76
Lit06-EFL	17.05	51.71	Lit06-NS	15.91	24.12
Lit07-EFL	26.55	69.68	Lit07-NS	93.64	149.11
Lit08-EFL	71.58	40.04	Lit08-NS	55.72	154.45
Lit09-EFL	48.79	33.42	Lit09-NS	35.4	71.29
Lit10-EFL	44.62	38.86			

Clearly, Lit08-EFL and Ling10-EFL's attitude differs from that of many other writers in my study. It appears that these differing attitudes towards writing were largely triggered by the writers' distinctive personality and stylistic preferences, as my interview data reveals. That is, while Lit08-EFL and Ling10-EFL felt the need to use an abundance of language as a way of showing off, others seemed to be very cautious and chose to be "on the safe side", seldom making claims or expressing their ideas with authority or strong language. For example, note the typical language use of Lit08-EFL and Ling10-EFL in Example 6-4 where an excessive use of boosters were employed mainly to "show off", as they admitted in their interviews, unlike Lit02-EFL and Lit04-EFL who rarely offered their opinions in writing but when they did, they did so very cautiously (Example 6-5).

Example 6-4: Lit08-EFL's and Ling10-EFL's typical uses of boosters

> - Similarly, such a discrepancy in perspectives has an ***ipso facto*** impact upon framing a divergent framework of identity, in the sense that cultural and religious factors are **inextricably** bound up with the **very** intrinsic construction of one's personality. **Indeed,** a clear example of this manifests itself in the nice vignette that combines Ustaz Mustafa and the narrator discussing historical incidents. [Lit08-EFL]
> - **In fact**, this **doubly-proved** strong association **clearly** disputes **any** calls to rule metalinguistic knowledge out of court, and **provides a solid basis** for further investigation ... [Ling10-EFL]

Example 6-5: Lit02-EFL's and Lit04-EFL's typical uses of hedges

> - This **could** be **relatively** true because, by comparing the two roles of Mowgli and Changez, the first one is about a stereotype which is already established while the second one **could** be understood as a new stereotype ... [Lit02-EFL]
> - DeLillo's novels have been assessed and continue to be assessed **largely** as postmodern. Although DeLillo's novels' subject matter engages the whole landscape of postmodernism, his novels **may** be better subsumed as modern, **perhaps** the last gasp of modernity—... [Lit04-EFL]

It is quite evident, then, that Lorenz's assumption cannot be generalized to all EFL student writers but it can be considered alongside other factors, such as learners' personality and the degree of confidence they have in their L2 linguistic and academic knowledge.

Moreover, if we look back again at Table 6-1 above, we can see that writers within each of the two writer groups also considerably differ in their uses of boosters and hedges. For instance, within the Arab EFL writer group, Ling03-EFL and Ling09-EFL employed boosters the least (8.36 and 8.62 per 10,000 words, respectively) while Ling10-EFL and Lit08-EFL made the greatest use of boosters (66.96 and 71.58 per 10,000 words, respectively). Similarly, within the English NS group, the uses of boosters diverge to some extent, ranging from 15.91 per 10,000 words (Lit06-NS) to 93.64 per 10,000 words (Lit07-NS). Factors such as subdisciplinary differences and/or the various types of research conducted might have played a role here; however, it is very likely, as discussed above, that personality differences and stylistic preferences might have had a greater impact on the learners' use of language in general and boosters in particular which in turn led them to adopt a differing stance. That is, as Ling01-NS puts it, "more confident people [may] feel that they can express their opinions more boldly!",

regardless of their cultural background.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that most of my informants explained that their beliefs and attitudes towards writing have changed since they wrote their dissertations, as they, reportedly, have become more acquainted with academic writing (since most of them were doing their doctoral studies when I interviewed them) and so they now feel more confident about their linguistic and writing abilities. In fact, my informants' claim that their writing has now changed and developed emerged as an interesting theme, discussed in more detail below.

6.4   Writers' development

Unsurprisingly, many novice writers regardless of their L1 background claim to find writing in an academic style challenging given that it requires skills that can be acquired chiefly by experience which they presumably lack. Also, it is perhaps understandable and expected to see that some NNS student writers lack confidence in their linguistic and writing abilities despite relatively good IELTS scores (ranging from 6.5 to 7.5). However, as they are increasingly exposed to academic writing (given that most informants were doing their doctoral studies when I interviewed them), they claim that generally their beliefs and writing have changed considerably and that they have become more confident about their opinions. For instance, as Lit02-EFL puts it,

> I can actually express my opinion better now. I can say what I'm thinking about without being afraid. [Lit02-EFL]

Likewise, Ling10-EFL explains,

> … now I'm more confident in having an evaluation of the literature and then venture my opinion somewhere, but maybe in my dissertation I wasn't very qualified, […] but maybe I'm more confident now, yes, to write a better work. [Ling10-EFL]

Similar confessions about changing beliefs and writing practices were also reported by some of my English NS informants. Lit01-NS, for instance, says, "I think my writing style has changed a

lot" and so "there will be uses of language that appear in [his dissertation], with which I would be less happy now" (see section 5.4 for more details).

There is little doubt that writers in general (even experts) change their writing practices over time, especially because writing itself is an evolving skill that is never static or immutable; for instance, it has been observed that there has been a "shift away from standard formal and impersonal styles of academic writing to ones that allow more personal comment, narration and stylistic variation" (Chang & Swales, 1999, p.145). Besides, related studies have also shown that "the features of disciplinary voice evolve in correlation with a writer's professional experience" (Dressen-Hammouda, 2014, p.22). In a similar vein, my informants' changing beliefs about academic writing was reportedly caused by greater exposed to writing and a concomitant development of their linguistic inventory and knowledge, enabling them to express their opinions more confidently. Moreover, the confidence and experience they gained must have made them feel that they have now become members of their disciplinary community, such that they now need to convince their peers rather than markers/examiners, and can be more authoritative and confident in their interactions.

To summarize, there appears to be a number of factors which have had an impact on the student writers' attitudes towards writing, affecting their "authorial stance-taking" which "concerns the making of knowledge claims to establish credible authorship" (Chang & Tsai, 2014, p.525). These factors include the writers' personalities, the kind of instruction they received from their lecturers/supervisors, and writing courses. These factors help explain why boosters occur less often in the Arab EFL subcorpus compared with that of their English NS counterparts, contradicting the results of many other studies, and the "cultural overstatement hypothesis".

Chapter 7   Conclusion

7.1   Introduction

In this chapter I first provide an overview of the study in section 7.2. In section 7.3 some pedagogical implications will be proposed based on the findings of the study, followed by a discussion of limitations (section 7.4) and suggestions for new directions for future research (section 7.5).

7.2   Overview of the study

The aim of the present study was to uncover the extent to which different disciplines (i.e. Linguistics and Literature) and different writer groups with distinctive cultural backgrounds (i.e. Arab EFL writers vs. English NS) diverge/converge in the way they position themselves and readers in their master's dissertations. Hyland's model of stance and engagement markers, which was seen as an appropriate and applicable framework, was adopted to help examine the student writers' use of the linguistic resources through which they construct stance and/or engage readers. These textual analyses were complemented with semi-structured discourse-based interviews with 15 of the writers to reveal their intentions and motivations behind their employment of particular words/expressions.

While it is true that both disciplinary community and cultural background are very likely to have an impact on the way writers position themselves and readers in their academic writing, interestingly, my study reveals that there are other factors which appear to have a more vital role in the writers' use of stance and engagement markers such as personality differences, stylistic preferences, previous education, autonomous learning, and supervisors' comments and advice. These factors, which are related to the students' conceptions of academic writing in general and their readers in particular, appear to have a great impact on the writers' attitudes.

The analyses suggest that, regardless of disciplines and the writers' L1, the way student writers perceive academic writing and what it entails, albeit these understandings are narrow and faulty at times, affects their decisions about where to stand with regard to their arguments and whether they should be visible or invisible in their writing. Likewise, how student writers perceive their relationship with their readers may prevent them from deploying a more effective and sophisticated stance and from engaging their readers dialogically. The issue is that most student writers perceive readers as supervisors/markers (whose knowledge is greater and whose opinions are more authoritative than their own) rather than a broader readership of academics. Thus, even though they grasp the rhetorical function of, for instance, inclusive WE in academic writing, most student writers prefer to avoid using it in their own writing since they do not feel comfortable associating themselves with their supervisors/markers who have institutional power to assess their writing and award grades, and since, for them, there is "a fine line between sounding appropriately authoritative and overstepping the limits of authority" (Clark and Ivanič 1997, p.156). These student writers appear to lack a sense of personal power and authoritativeness as authors. According to Clark and Ivanič (1997), it is important when analysing academic writing to focus on the writers and their presence in the written product, for example, how authoritative they feel and how they want to represent themselves, arguing that "writing cannot be separated from the writer's identity" (p. 134) and that by having an identity as a writer, you have power over readers in terms of influencing their ideas and views. However, student writers do not seem to be aware of this power attached to writing—or are reluctant to assume it.

Having discussed the main points of my study in general, we move now to look more specifically at how the data spoke to my research questions.

7.2.1   Research question 1

How do master's student writers from two disciplines (Linguistics and Literature) present themselves and engage readers in writing?

- How frequently do they make use of these elements of stance and engagement? Are there any similarities or differences in the frequencies or the way they use them? How can we account for any similarities or differences?

The ANOVA results showed that the two disciplines in focus did not significantly differ in their uses of stance (F $(1,35)$= 1.68, p= .20) or engagement (F $(1,35)$= .50, p= .48) as a whole category. However, Linguistics made considerably higher use of hedges (F $(1,35)$= 5.10, p= .03) and directives (F $(1, 35)$= 24.2, p= .001) while Literature employed significantly more reader references (F $(1, 35)$= 4.5, p= .04). I hypothesized that these differences could be attributed to a number of factors in addition to the impact of the epistemology of the disciplinary community on the student writing. Undoubtedly, the two disciplines favour to some extent different argumentative styles, especially in the use of directives. In fact, my interviewees showed awareness of their disciplinary community practices and admitted being advised by their supervisors/lecturers to adopt the conventions of their discourse community. For example, writers from Linguistics employed significantly more hedges because they reportedly were encouraged to do so since, for social scientists, evidence is almost never conclusive and there is always the possibility that new, contradictory evidence will emerge; whereas Literature students were asked to show more confidence when communicating their ideas because weak claims do not seem to be acceptable in their field. Likewise, the use of directives, in particular the use of textual acts, appears to be conventional and "perfectly acceptable" in Linguistics whereas in Literature textual acts are more commonly employed in footnotes.

However, with regard to reader references, which were also employed significantly differently by the two disciplines, textual and interview data revealed discrepancies among the writers' uses

of and views about reader references within each discipline. Such discrepancies suggested that there are factors, other than the influence of discipline, which appear to have affected writers' use or non-use of reader references. The explanatory power of these factors emerging from the interviews indicated that the frequency counts of a corpus alone do not necessarily reflect the actual writing practices of a discipline. It could be that, as revealed from my data, only a few writers in a disciplinary discourse group made considerable use of a stance/engagement feature simply because of personal stylistic preferences while the same feature was avoided by many others of the same discourse community. Thus, in order to obtain more accurate results, it is more advantageous and infinitely preferable to perform an analysis of individual texts alongside a corpus analysis and "insider" interviews, which should help uncover the writers' motivations as well as the acceptable disciplinary conventions and practices.

7.2.2   Research question 2

Within each discipline, how do NS and NNS master's student writers present themselves and engage readers in writing?

- How frequently do they make use of these elements of stance and engagement? Are there any similarities or differences in the frequencies or the way they use them? How can we account for any similarities or differences?

With regard to the use of stance, statistical analyses revealed that the Arab EFL writers within both disciplines underused not only hedges but also boosters, contradicting the results of many other studies such as Hinkel (2002, 2005a), Hyland and Milton (1997), and Vassileva (2001), which reported that while hedges were more common in the writing of the English NS writers, that of the NNSs tended to be more emphatic and assertive. These studies, among many others, attributed this phenomenon to the negative transfer from the EFL writers' first language. Interestingly however this widespread cultural stereotype did not seem to be supported by the results of my study. My interview data revealed that the Arab EFL writers' underuse of hedges

as well as boosters resulted from a number of factors, other than L1 transference, such as instruction on L2 pragmatic knowledge, supervisors' advice and feedback, and the learners' narrow or even faulty conceptions of audience and what constitutes appropriate academic writing, which in turn shake their confidence and affect their attitudes towards writing. These factors, I argue, have a major and more discernible impact on the learners' uses of stance and engagement markers in general and boosters and hedges in particular, as discussed in the previous chapter, sections 6.3.1, 6.3.2, and 6.3.3. While it may also be expected (indeed it was revealed from my data) that the NS student writers would encounter similar challenges in their academic writing (although to a lesser extent), it is evident that these challenges are particularly affecting the NNS student writers' academic stance-taking. In effect, then, the results of my study indicate the inadvisability of relying on theories of L1 transfer to explain differences between NS and NNS discourse and suggest that more attention should be given to such issues in order to help learners construct academically appropriate stance.

Regarding the use of engagement markers, the two writer groups within each of the two disciplines did not significantly differ in their uses of engagement either as a whole or when specific engagement types were examined, except for asides, which was employed significantly more by the Linguistics NSs, and shared knowledge references which appeared significantly more often in the Literature NSs dissertations. However, these two engagement subcategories in particular were very rare in the writing of NSs and were used by only a few writers from both disciplines, while they were almost absent from the writing of the Arab EFL student writers from both disciplines. One possible reason for the general scarcity of engagement markers (15.7 per 10,000 words compared with 146.1 per 10,000 words of stance features) in the student writing could be because these features are recognized (by many) as a face threatening, risky practice; readers may object to being guided to the writers' preferred interpretations.

7.3   Pedagogical implications

The findings of my study have a number of implications for both EAP writing pedagogy and dissertation supervision. Firstly, while it is widely accepted that research students are to present an authorial stance in their writing, analysing, interpreting and critiquing others' work, my findings imply that many of these novice writers, especially NNSs, do not seem to know how to accomplish this in an appropriate academic way or indeed do not feel qualified enough to take a "critical" stance with regard to others' arguments, or to make highly attitudinal, forceful, and assertive claims. This is largely due to the way student writers perceive their unequal relationship with their readers and/or their imprecise and narrow set of conceptions of authoritative stance. Thus, there appears to be a need to expand students' understanding of authoritative stance and how to enact it. Student writers should be made aware of the rhetorical functions of all stance and engagement features as well as the consequences of adopting such features in relation to the dominant conventions of their disciplines. For example, questions like: how and why should they make tentative/assertive claims? Could they address their readers explicitly in writing, "pulling" them into the discourse as participants? Perhaps, more importantly, with which readers should they be addressing and communicating their ideas: their supervisors/lecturers or a broader readership of academics? I believe a balanced instruction of these interactional features should help not only raise students' awareness of the pragmatic effects of each language feature but also provide novice writers with alternatives and opportunities to adopt the stance and the voice type with which they feel in harmony culturally and personally. Hence, students will be able to accomplish a convincing argument while maintaining a balance between being an authoritative persona and a humble servant of the research community (Hyland, 2004). However, since not all master's students have the opportunity to attend EAP writing classes, it would be helpful if academic departments offer such classes for their master's students to heighten their awareness not only of stance and

engagement markers but also of the norms and conventions of the master's dissertation genre and its markers' expectations, which should help them better conform to disciplinary conventions. Furthermore, it would also be helpful if students are encouraged to be analysts, recognizing the use of stance and engagement features common in their field, since "the socially relevant […] features of disciplinary voice can only emerge after a careful examination of the actual practices […] of a disciplinary community" (Dressen-Hammouda, 2014, p.16).

Secondly, the results of the present study have also revealed the crucial role of supervisors'/markers' advice and feedback on student writing in general and on the way students project their authorial personae. It is suggested that supervisors spend more time discussing their writing expectations and acceptable disciplinary practices with students. It would also be helpful if supervisors provide students with explicit and precise advice and comments on the academic voice they adopt since it is the first time for most students to conduct research and tackle extended pieces of academic writing.

Moreover, it is necessary for language teachers and educators to design and develop appropriate materials to train students in the proper use of stance and engagement markers. Sufficient attention should be given to all features, their definitions, expressions and rhetorical functions, so that students are aware of all features and have the opportunities to construct stance and audience that are academically and personally acceptable.

Also, the findings highlight the value of combining both corpus- and interview-based studies of master's dissertations.

7.4   Limitations

Interesting themes emerged from the present study, adding some new perspectives to the existing literature and to our understandings of how and why different disciplines/different writer groups

with distinctive cultural background diverge/converge in the way they position themselves and their readers in academic writing. Yet the findings should be taken with caution because the study has a number of limitations. Firstly, the limited samples of dissertations (and the small number of interviewees) collected from one UK university prevent generalizations from being drawn given that institutional factors may influence master's dissertation writing. Research has shown that different institutions often provide their students with different guidelines with regard to academic writing (Samraj, 2002).

Secondly, categorizing the dissertations/interviewees into two broad disciplines might not be nuanced enough and may be too crude as the dissertations/interviewees supposedly under the same disciplinary umbrella still represent different subdisciplines which could adopt different research types (i.e. empirical vs. non-empirical research) and which are very likely to possess different assumptions about effective research writing in general and effective academic stance-taking in particular. In future research more samples may be collected and further divided into subdisciplines.

Finally, the fact that the interviews took place considerably after the interviewees wrote their dissertation suggests that their recall may not always be valid. However, it is difficult for research of this nature to conduct interviews very close to the time when the text was being constructed and when writers' motivations may be fresher in their minds.

7.5   Further research

Interestingly, but perhaps unsurprisingly, as seen in the previous chapters, all my interviewees claimed that their beliefs about academic writing and writing styles have changed and developed since they wrote their dissertations. Thus, in further research, it would be worthwhile examining their uses of stance and engagement markers in their doctoral theses and compare these with those in their master's dissertations in order to understand the extent to which their authorial

stance has truly developed and matured and how their writing styles have changed. Textual analysis could also be complemented with discourse-based interviews with the writers to uncover whether there are other reasons behind the change and to what extent they are content with the change. Given that they already had the chance to comment on and critique some of the language features in their own writing and that of others, it is expected that they would be more conscious of such features when writing their doctoral thesis, as they claimed in the interviews.

Furthermore, in future research, supervisors and markers could also be interviewed about their views with regard to students' use of interactional features. Although a combination of a corpus analysis of student writing along with discourse-based interviews with the student writers themselves in the present study proved to be invaluable, suggesting a fuller, true picture of what, how and why a stance/engagement feature was being used in academic texts by different disciplines and different writer groups, discourse-based interviews with supervisors and markers would expand our understanding of the value of the student academic stance-taking. Thus, in future research supervisors (and markers) could be asked about their general opinions regarding their students' use of these interactional features in their writing, and the extent to which the use or non-use of these features might influence their judgment and evaluation of their student writing. In other words are their judgments related to linguistic expressions of stance and engagement in students' texts? They could also be asked about the kind of feedback they normally provide their students with: Do they comment on the stance students adopt with regard to their arguments/claims? Do they encourage/discourage their students to use engagement features? Do they do that explicitly or implicitly? Being aware of the possible diversity of the supervisors'/markers' stylistic preferences and views, I argue this approach of interviewing supervisors/markers has generally the potential to highlight patterns of stance and engagement markers in student writing that are valued (or not valued). Besides, supervisors'/markers'

commentaries and explanations could also help reveal the extent to which disciplinarity has an impact on writing in their fields.

My research has investigated a number of issues which were rather neglected in the literature and has revealed interesting results but I would like to further extend the scope in the future. I also hope my research will add to the existing debate about the use of stance and engagement in academic writing and assist in designing materials which raise awareness of their features.

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Appendices

Appendix [A]: Marking criteria set by the three target departments

Table A-7-1: The Marking Scale for MA dissertations according to L&L

	Distinction (70 and above)	Merit (60-69)	Pass (50-59)	Fail (below 50)
External sources used: Usually bibliographic, but also could be data from a corpus or informants where empirical work is involved	An excellent range of suitable sources is accesses, with intelligent/ enterprising choice of those beyond the basic/ those provided	A good range of suitable sources is used, some beyond the basic ones/ those provided	A minimally adequate range of sources/ informants is accessed	Seemingly little or no use of information or those used are not relevant
Student's own knowledge: Understanding of relevant ideas (theoretical or applied) and techniques (such as research methods, transcription or statistics)	Shows first rate understanding of the relevant concepts and techniques	There is good understanding of most of the relevant concepts and techniques	Sufficient understanding of some relevant concepts and techniques, but some misunderstandings	Exceptionall y poor grasp of relevant concepts and/ or deep misunderstanding s of how to transcribe, use statistics etc.
Student's thinking: e.g. critical evaluation, synthesis, formulation of questions/ hypotheses, interpretation, argumentation, analysis, use of evidence, structure and coherence	Information and ideas have been thoroughly processed to produce a really well-argued and exemplified, logical account, maybe with touches of originality	There is generally good thinking, analysis, argumentation etc., with some lapses	Thinking, organization, analysis and argumentation are minimally adequate	Information is presented with little or no proper work done on it in the form of critique or analysis; it is disorganized or incoherent
Coverage and balance: e.g. lack of digression or omission of relevant topics; appropriacy of content for the purpose of the task, relevance of conclusion to title	The material included is all relevant and no pertinent matters have been left out. Individual topics are given their due weight	There are some minor digressions and/ or omissions, but overall the coverage and balance is good	There is some digression and/ or topics omitted, but overall the coverage and balance is adequate	Much information is given that is irrelevant and/ or important topics are omitted
Expression: e.g. clarity and fluency of written English, appropriacy of style and use or terminology, audience awareness	The style is highly appropriate and the whole text is expressed beautifully clearly and fluently	Good clarity and style, fully comprehensible despite some minor weaknesses of expression	There are lapses of language or style and some dysfluency or poor intonation, but overall the expression is adequate	There are parts that are incomprehensibl e and/or the style is not appropriately academic
Presentation: e.g. titling, sectioning style, numbering, fonts, visual layout, table/ graph quality, referencing style, appendices	Presentation is highly professional in all aspects	Presentation is good with maybe a few weaknesses	There are some weaknesses of referencing, sectioning style, etc., but overall presentation is satisfactory	There are careless features such as: insufficient titles and sectioning
Source: L&L Guidelines (2009-2110, p. 40)				

Table A-7-2: Marking Scale for MA dissertations according to IA

80-100%	**High Distinction.** An exceptional and original answer to the question set. The introduction and conclusion sections are of outstanding quality. Length of text is appropriate. Bibliography, tables, diagrams, appendices conform to expected conventions. Immaculate presentation. Exceptional and original critical analysis of the interface between theory and practice An exceptional and original range of key primary and secondary source materials relevant to the assignment topic Exceptional organisation and structure which effortlessly guides the reader and enhances comprehension.
70-79%	**Distinction**. An excellent and highly appropriate answer to the question set. The introduction and conclusion sections are of very high quality. Length of text is appropriate. Bibliography, tables, diagram, appendices conform to expected conventions. Excellent presentation. Excellent critical analysis of the interface between theory and practice when examining relevant literature and reporting research findings. Very skilful use of theoretical frameworks as points of reference for evaluation of the ideas of other writers. A highly-developed ability to define own stance based on a careful analysis of different points of view An excellent range of key primary and secondary source materials relevant to the assignment topic. The balance between general and context-specific source materials is highly appropriate to the topic. All source referencing is expertly integrated into the text Lines of thought are always transparent and arguments are clearly expressed, leading towards compelling conclusions. Excellent, coherent organisation and structure which successfully guides the reader and enhances comprehension.
60-69%	**Merit**. A substantial and appropriate answer to the question set. The introduction and conclusion sections are of good quality. Length of text is appropriate. Bibliography, tables, diagram, appendices conform to expected conventions. Good presentation throughout Substantial critical analysis of the interface between theory and practice when examining relevant literature and reporting research findings. Consistent use of theoretical frameworks as points of reference for evaluation of the ideas of other writers. A clear ability to define own stance based on a careful analysis of different points of view A substantial selection of key primary and secondary source materials relevant to the assignment topic. The balance between general and context-specific source materials is appropriate to the topic. Source referencing is successfully integrated into the text. Arguments are confidently expressed through clear, logical lines of thought. Conclusions are firmly articulated, comprehensive, relevant and arise from the premised arguments. Good, coherent organisation and structure which for the most part carefully guides the reader and enhances comprehension.
50-59%	**Satisfactory Pass**. An appropriate answer to the question set. The introduction and conclusion sections are of acceptable quality. Length of text is appropriate. Bibliography, tables, diagram, appendices conform to expected conventions. Presentation is of acceptable quality. Sound critical analysis of the interface between theory and practice. Some use of theoretical frameworks to evaluate professional practice. Own stance is made clear and can be linked to that of other writers A sound selection of key primary and secondary source materials. The balance between general and context- specific source materials is adequate for the topic. Source referencing is, in general, integrated

	into the text
	Most arguments are expressed through clear, logical lines of thought. Conclusions are connected to the premised arguments, but in some cases may lack substance. Organization and structure are sound, though occasional problems of coherence may challenge the reader.
0-49%	**Fail**. An inadequate or inappropriate answer to the question set. The introduction and conclusion sections are of poor quality. Length of text may be inappropriate. Bibliography, tables, diagram, appendices may not conform to expected conventions. Poor presentation.
	Poor quality analysis of the interface between theory and practice. No real evidence of use of theoretical frameworks to evaluate professional practice. Own stance is consistently confused with that of other writers and remains unclear
	A poor selection of source materials for the topic chosen, showing little evidence of careful research. Source referencing is poorly integrated leading to confusion concerning the authorship of arguments presented
	Arguments are poorly expressed and appear to demonstrate confused thinking. Conclusions drawn but often not related to discussion. Poor organization and problems of coherence which provide a significant challenge to the reader.

Source: IA Guidelines (2012-2013, pp. 31- 33)

Table A-7-3: Marking Scale and Criteria for MA dissertations according to LiFTS

80%+	**Distinction**. Work which, over and above possessing all the qualities of the 70-79 mark range, indicates a fruitful new approach to the material studies, represents a real advance in scholarship, or is judged by the markers to be of publishable quality.
79-70%	**Distinction**. Outstanding piece of work, showing full conceptual command, good methodology, impressive overall organization, and pertinent and persuasive analysis. Excellent use is made of well-chosen critical, theoretical or other relevant material. The thought is clearly articulated and concisely expressed. The argument is well-conceived and executed rigorously. The work includes a full, accurate and properly laid out bibliography with complete references.
69-60%	**Merit**. The work is soundly structured and shows good conceptual command. It demonstrates detailed knowledge of the subject-matter, good use of critical writing and evidence of independent critical thinking and of analytical skills. The argument is well-conceived and conducted and analysis is clear. The work includes a full, accurate and properly laid out bibliography with complete references.
59-50%	**Pass**. Sensible and reasoned work which covers major points, clearly expressed, with some analysis and some use of critical reading. The range of knowledge is satisfactory and the argument coherent. Structure basically sound. The bibliography is properly presented and adequate references are given.
49-40%	The work shows basic understanding, and an adequate grasp of the material. There is little independent thought, ideas are not always well expressed, and the argument is deficient at some levels. The bibliography is incomplete or not properly presented, and references are not fully given.
39% or below	Patchy understanding of the material at best, poor expression, incoherent argument. Does not address the question or the title. Embryonic bibliography. Poor references.

Source: LiFTS Guide for MA Students (2009-2010, pp. 28-29).

Appendix [B]: Short questionnaire for participants to fill in

(About You)

1. Name:
2. Email:
3. Gender:
4. Nationality:
5. First Language:
6. Other languages spoken:
7. Did you take an English language test when you applied to do your master's degree? Yes/No If your answer was yes, which English language test did you take? (Please circle as appropriate) IELTS   TOEFL   Other (Please state which test): _____ If you took IELTS and/or TOEFL, please give details of your score/scores: TOEFL: _____ or IELTS: _____ Reading: _____/9, Listening: _____ /9, Writing: _____ /9, Speaking: _____/9.
8. Master's Programme:
9. Name/Names of your MA supervisor(s):
10. The university you did your MA in:
11. The name of the department:
12. The grade you received for your MA dissertation. (Please circle/ underline)   (a) Distinction   (b) Merit   (c) Pass 12.a. Please specify the mark =_____
13. Did you have your MA dissertation proofread? Yes/No

14. English Language courses you have taken:
14.a. Before you came to the UK to do your MA: (the first line is an example)

Name/focus of the course	Length of the course	Reason(s) for taking the course	Where?	When?
All four skills	*3 weeks*	*To prepare for the IELTS test.*	*Saudi Arabia*	*2009*

14.b. In the UK, before or while doing your MA: (the first line is an example)

Name/focus of the course	Length of the course	Reason(s) for taking the course	Name of the institution	When?
Pre-sessional	*One month*	*Compulsory*	*Essex University*	*2010*

15. Bachelor's degree:
16. Any other degrees held:
17. Any other qualifications:

Many Thanks!

Ahlam

Appendix [C]: Invitation email to participate

Dear All,

I am writing to ask whether you would be willing to take part in the PhD research I am conducting.

The research is about the ways **native** and **non-native** writers **whose L1 is Arabic** use language to interact with their readers.

Thus, I'm looking for
   (i)   **native speakers of English**; and
   (ii)   **Arabic learners of English**
who did their master's degree in any UK university, in the field of
   (a) **Linguistics** or;
   (b) **Literature**.

Participants will be asked to supply me with a **copy of their dissertations** if it was written recently (i.e. 2009, 2010, 2011), and received a mark of 65 or above.

I would also like to conduct an **interview** with you about your use of language, which would take about an hour. Needless to say, all data will remain anonymous when the findings of my research are written up.

I can offer a payment of **£20** as a token of my appreciation.

I understand that you must be busy with many other things, so I would like to reiterate how much your help would be appreciated. If you are able to participate, please email me at aamenk@essex.ac.uk. If you have any questions, or if you would like more information about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me. Alternatively, feel free to contact my PhD supervisor, Dr Nigel Harwood (nharwood@essex.ac.uk).

Many thanks once again for considering this.

Best Regards,

Ahlam Menkabu
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Essex
email aamenk@essex.ac.uk

Appendix [D]: Predetermined lists of stance and engagement markers

(Provided by Hyland (2005b & 1998c))

1. Stance Markers:

1.1 Hedges

1. About
2. Almost
3. Apparent (-ly)
4. Appear (-ed, -s)
5. Approximate (-ly)
6. Argue (-s, -ed)
7. Around
8. Assume (-d)
9. At least
10. Attempt
11. Believe?
12. Broad (-ly)
13. Certain +(amount, extent, level)
14. Claim (-s, -ed)
15. Could (not)
16. Deduce
17. Doubt (-ful)
18. Essentially
19. Estimate (-ed, -s, -tion)
20. Fairly
21. Feel (-s)/ Felt
22. Frequently
23. From (my, this) perspective
24. Generally
25. Guess*
26. Imply
27. In (my, this) view
28. In general
29. In most cases
30. In most instances
31. In my opinion
32. Indicate (-s, -d, -tion)
33. Infer
34. Largely
35. Likely
36. Mainly
37. May (not)
38. Maybe
39. Might (not)
40. Mostly
41. Nearly
42. Normally
43. Occasionally
44. Often
45. On the whole
46. Partially
47. Perhaps
48. Plausible (-ly)
49. Possible (-ly, -bility)
50. Postulate (-s, -ed)
51. Potentially
52. Predict
53. Presumable (-ly)
54. Probable (-ly)
55. Propose
56. Quite (+adj, adv)
57. Rarely
58. Rather x
59. Relatively
60. Roughly
61. Seek/sought
62. Seem (-s, -ed, -ingly)
63. Slightly
64. Some
65. Somehow
66. Sometimes
67. Somewhat
68. Speculate
69. Suggest (-s, -ed, -tion)
70. Suppose (-d, -s, -edly)
71. Suspect (-s, -ed)
72. Tend (-s, -ed) to
73. To my knowledge
74. Typical (-ly)
75. Uncertain (-ly)
76. Unclear (-ly)
77. Unlikely
78. Usually
79. Virtually

1.2 Boosters

1. Actually
2. Always
3. Believe (d, s)?
4. Certain (ly)
5. Clear (ly)
6. Conclusive (ly)
7. Decidedly
8. Definite (ly)
9. Demonstrate (d, s)
10. Doubt (Beyond doubt, no doubt, without doubt, doubtless)
11. Establish (ed)
12. Evident (ly)
13. Find/found
14. In fact
15. Incontestable (ly)
16. Incontrovertible (ly)
17. Indeed
18. Indisputable (ly)
19. Know/ knew/known
20. Must=possibility
21. Never
22. Obvious (ly)
23. Of course
24. Prove (ed, s)
25. Realize/realise (ed, s)
26. Really
27. Show (s, ed)/shown
28. Sure (ly)
29. Think/thought?
30. True/Truly
31. Undeniable (ly)
32. Undisputedly
33. Undoubtedly

1.3 Attitude Markers

1.   Admittedly
2.   Agree (s, d)
3.   Amazed
4.   Amazing (ly)
5.   Appropriate (ly)/ inappropriate (ly)
6.   Astonished
7.   Astonishing (ly)
8.   Correctly
9.   Curious (ly)
10. Desirable (ly)
11. Disagree (s, d)
12. Disappointed
13. Disappointing (ly)
14. Dramatic (ally)
15. Essential = important
16. Even x
17. Expected (ly)
18. Fortunate (ly)
19. Hopeful (ly)
20. Important (ly)
21. Interesting (ly)
22. Prefer /Preferable (ly)/ Preferred
23. Remarkable (ly)
24. Shocked
25. Shocking (ly)
26. Striking (ly)
27. Surprised
28. Surprising (ly)
29. Unbelievable (ly)
30. Understandable (ly)
31. Unexpected (ly)
32. Unfortunate (ly)
33. Unusual (ly)

1.4 Self-mentions

1.   I/ me/ my/ mine/ myself
2.   Interviewer
3.   Researcher, researcher's
4.   We/ us/ our/ ours
5.   Writer, writer's

2. Engagement Markers:

1.	(The) reader	46.	Must
2.	(The) reader's	47.	Need to
3.	Add	48.	Note
4.	Allow	49.	Notice
5.	Analyse	50.	Observe
6.	Apply	51.	One's
7.	Arrange	52.	Order
8.	Assess	53.	Ought
9.	Assume	54.	Our (inclusive)
10.	By the way	55.	Pay
11.	Calculate	56.	Picture
12.	Choose	57.	Prepare
13.	Classify	58.	Recall
14.	Compare	59.	Recover
15.	Connect	60.	Refer
16.	Consider	61.	Regard
17.	Consult	62.	Remember
18.	Contrast	63.	Remove
19.	Define	64.	Review
20.	Demonstrate	65.	See
21.	Determine	66.	Select
22.	Do not	67.	Set
23.	Develop	68.	Should
24.	Employ	69.	Show
25.	Ensure	70.	Suppose
26.	Estimate	71.	State
27.	Evaluate	72.	Take (a look/as example)
28.	Find	73.	Think about
29.	Follow	74.	Think of
30.	Go	75.	Turn
31.	Have to	76.	Us (inclusive)
32.	Imagine	77.	Use
33.	Incidentally	78.	We (inclusive)
34.	Increaser	79.	You
35.	Input	80.	Your
36.	Insert		
37.	Integrate		
38.	Key		
39.	Let x=y		
40.	Let us		
41.	Let's		
42.	Look at		
43.	Mark		
44.	Measure		
45.	Mount		

Appendix [E]: Sample of colour coding the dissertations

(For the second coder)

1. How to colour code the dissertations?

Use different colours of highlighters to represent each category as seen in the table below.

Table: Colour-Coding for Stance and Engagement Features

Stance	Engagement
Hedges (e.g. *may, possibly*)	Reader pronoun (e.g. *you, we* (inclusive))
Booster (e.g. *indeed, undoubtedly*)	Directive (e.g. *consider, it is important to…*)
Attitude markers (e.g. *hope, interestingly*)	Shared Knowledge (e.g. *of course, obviously*)
Self-mentions (e.g. *I, the researcher*)	Personal asides
	Questions (?)

Four different colours were assigned to each of the stance features. As for the engagement features, only use RED to represent all five sub-categories of engagement.

2. Definitions and more examples of stance and engagement markers (all based on Hyland's (2005b) study and his other work)

Interaction

Stance   Engagement

Hedges   Boosters   Attitude   Self-   Reader   Directives   Questions   Knowledge   Asides
                     markers   mention references   references
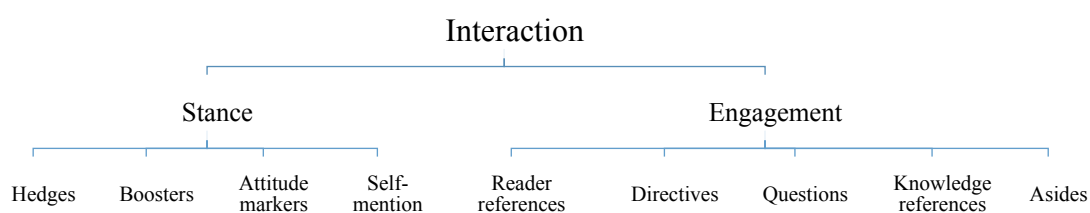
Figure: Hyland's (2005b, p. 177) stance and engagement features

2.1 Stance and features of writer positioning

Stance concerns writer-oriented features of interaction and refers to the ways academics annotate their texts to comment on the possible accuracy or credibility of a claim, the extent they want to commit themselves to it, or the attitude they want to convey to an entity, a proposition, or the reader. It is comprised of four main elements:

1. Hedges.   2. Boosters.   3. Attitude markers.   4. Self-mentions.

2.1.1 Hedges are devices like *possible, might* and *perhaps*, that indicate the writer's decision to withhold complete commitment to a proposition, allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than accredited fact.

Example1:

- Our results **suggest** that rapid freeze and thaw rates during artificial experiments in the

laboratory **may** cause artifactual formation of embolism. Such experiments **may not** quantitatively represent the amount of embolism that is formed during winter freezing in nature. In the chaparral **at least**, low temperature episodes usually result in gradual freeze-thaw events.

2.1.2 Boosters, on the other hand, are words like *clearly, obviously* and *demonstrate*, which allow writers to express their certainty in what they say and to mark involvement with the topic and solidarity with their audience.

Example 2:

- This brings us into conflict with Currie's account, for static images **surely** cannot trigger our capacity to recognize movement. If that were so, we would see the image as itself moving. With a few interesting exceptions we **obviously** do not see a static image as moving. Suppose, then, that we say that static images only depict instants. This too creates problems, for it suggests that we have a recognitional capacity for instants, and this seems **highly** dubious.

2.1.3 Attitude markers indicate the writer's affective, rather than epistemic, attitude to propositions, conveying *surprise, agreement, importance, frustration*, and so on, rather than commitment. While attitude is expressed throughout a text by the use of subordination, comparatives, progressive particles, punctuation, text location, and so on, it is most explicitly signalled by **attitude verbs** (e.g. agree, prefer), **sentence adverbs** (unfortunately, hopefully), and **adjectives** (appropriate, logical, remarkable).

Example 3:

- The first clue of this emerged when we noticed a quite **extraordinary** result.
- Student A2 presented another **fascinating** case study in that he had serious difficulties expressing himself in written English.

2.1.4 Self-mention mainly refers to the use of first person pronouns and possessive adjectives to present propositional, affective and interpersonal information (Hyland, 2001).

Example 4:

- **I** bring to bear on the problem **my** own experience. This experience contains ideas derived from reading **I** have done which might be relevant to **my** puzzlement as well as **my** personal contacts with teaching contexts.

2.2 Engagement and features of reader positioning

In comparison with stance, the ways writers bring readers into the discourse to anticipate their possible objections and engage them in appropriate ways have been relatively neglected in the literature. Based on their previous experiences with texts, writers make predictions about how readers are likely to react to their arguments. They know what they are likely to find persuasive, where they will need help in interpreting the argument, what objections they are likely to raise, and so on. There are five main elements to engagement:

1. Reader pronouns. 2. Personal asides. 3. Appeals to shared knowledge. 4. Directives. 5. Questions.

2.2.1 Reader pronouns are perhaps the most explicit way that readers are brought into a discourse. *You* and *your* are actually the clearest way a writer can acknowledge the reader's presence, but these forms are rare outside of philosophy, probably because they imply a lack of involvement between participants. Instead, there is enormous emphasis on binding writer and reader together through ***inclusive we***, which is the most frequent engagement device in academic writing.

Example 5:

- Although **we** lack knowledge about a definitive biological function for the transcripts from the 93D locus, their sequences provide **us** with an ideal system to identify a specific transcriptionally active site in embryonic nuclei.

2.2.2 Personal asides allow writers to address readers directly by briefly interrupting the argument to offer a comment on what has been said. By turning to the reader in mid-flow, the writer acknowledges and responds to an active audience, often to initiate a brief dialogue that is largely interpersonal. As we can see, such comments often add more to the writer–reader relationship than to the propositional development of the discourse.

Example 6:

- And –**as I believe many TESOL professionals will readily acknowledge**– critical thinking has now begun to make its mark, particularly in the area of L2 composition.

2.2.3 Appeals to shared knowledge: I am simply referring to the presence of explicit markers where readers are asked to recognize something as familiar or accepted. Obviously readers can only be brought to agree with the writer by building on some kind of implicit contract concerning what can be accepted, but often these constructions of solidarity involve explicit calls asking readers to identify with particular views. In doing so, writers are actually constructing readers by presupposing that they hold such beliefs, assigning to them a role in creating the argument, acknowledging their contribution while moving the focus of the discourse away from the writer to shape the role of the reader.

Example 7:

- This measurement is distinctly different from the more **familiar** NMR pulsed field gradient measurement of solvent self-diffusion.
- For the numerical integration, the semiellipse is parameterized in the **usual** way and **standard** Gaussian quadrature.

2.2.4 Directives instruct the reader to perform an action or to see things in a way determined by the writer. They are signalled mainly by the presence of an imperative (like *consider, note,* and *imagine*); by a modal of obligation addressed to the reader (such as *must*, *should*, and *ought*); and by a predicative adjective expressing the writer's judgement of necessity/importance (*It is important to understand*). Directives can be seen as directing readers to engage in three main kinds of activity (Hyland, 2002a):

1. Textual acts.
2. Physical acts.
3. Cognitive acts.

Textual acts are used to metadiscoursally guide readers through the discussion, steering them to another part of the text or to another text.

Example 8:

- **See** Lambert and Jones (1997) for a full discussion of this point.
- **Look at** Table 2 again for examples of behavioristic variables.
- **Consult** Cormier and Gunn 1992 for a recent survey.

Physical acts instruct readers how to carry out research processes or to perform some action in the real world.

Example 9:

- Before attempting to measure the density of the interface states, one **should freeze** the motion of charges in the insulator.
- **Set** the sliding amplitude at 30mm traveling distance.

Cognitive acts guide readers through a line of reasoning, or get them to understand a point in a certain way and are therefore potentially the most threatening type of directives. They accounted for almost half of all directives in the corpus, explicitly positioning readers by leading them through an argument to the writer's claims (Example 10) or emphasizing what they should attend to in the argument (Example 11):

(10)   **Consider** a sequence of batches in an optimal schedule.
       Think about it. What if we eventually learn how to communicate with aliens.
(11)   **It is important to note** that these results do indeed warrant the view that…
       What has to be recognised is that these issues...

2.2.5 Questions are the strategy of dialogic involvement par excellence, inviting engagement and bringing the interlocutor into an arena where they can be led to the writer's viewpoint (Hyland, 2002b). Over 80 percent of questions in the corpus, however, were **rhetorical**, presenting an opinion as an interrogative so the reader appears to be the judge, but actually expecting no response. This kind of rhetorical positioning of readers is perhaps most obvious when **the writer poses a question only to reply immediately**, simultaneously initiating and closing the dialogue.

Example 12:

- Is it, in fact, necessary to choose between nurture and nature**?** My contention is that it is not.
- What do these two have in common, one might ask**?** The answer is that they share the same politics.

3. *Potential stance and/or engagement items to be disregarded when doing the analysis*

    i.   *when it is in direct quotes, as in the example below:*

As McDonough & McDonough (1997:183) argue, 'the anonymity of the questionnaire ~~may~~ mean that more honest responses are given'.

    ii.   *when the source's views are reported or summarized, as in the example below:*

According to Bell and Egan (2002), this anecdotal evidence ~~**suggests**~~ that students are therefore not able to engage fully in their studies when reaching higher education.

   iii.   *in cases with non-integral citations where the writer's voice is not clear, as in the example below:*

For example, a student studying Economics ~~**may**~~ need subject specific lexis such as 'demand for–goods/products/services' which would not be needed for a student studying Linguistics (Jordan, 1997:257).

    iv.   *when the writer uses evidence from the literature rather than their own, as in this example:*

As mentioned in Chapter 2, research ~~**suggests**~~ that there is an increase in the usage of PEDs by students.

BUT in cases where the writer is talking about his/her own research, results, etc., for example, (*The results show that, This study indicates that*), these should be counted. In other words, **count only** those items which clearly indicate the writer's own voice, opinions, evaluations, attitudes towards what's being said.

Note:

You are very welcome to add (in the margins) any comments, questions or problems you faced with any of the items while doing the analysis.

Appendix [F]: List of stance and engagement markers investigated

Hedges:

a little	if any	normally	seem(s, ed)
about	if not all	not always	seemingly
all in all	if possible	not completely	seldom
almost	imply, implies	not entirely	slightly
apparently	in a broader sense	not necessarily	some
appear(s, ed)	in (a/one) sense	not particularly	some time
approximately	in a way	occasional(ly)	some way
arguable	in a way or another	often	somehow
arguably	in broader terms	on (several/some) occasions	sometimes
around	in essence	on the whole	somewhat
assume	in general	ostensibly	suggest (I suggest)
assumingly	in large part	overall	suppose
at least	in most cases	partially	supposedly
at times	in most probabilities	partly	tend(s, ed) to
attempt (n./v.)	in (my/the researcher's) opinion	perhaps	tentative(ly)
barely	in one way or another	plausible	theoretically
basically	in part	plausibly	think (I think)
broadly	in principle	possibility (that, of)	to (a/some/a certain) degree
by and large	in some cases	possible	to (an/some) extent
can	in some way(s)	possibly	to a lesser or greater extent
commonly	in the main	potential(ly)	to (my/the best of) the researcher's) knowledge
conceivably	in theory	predominantly	typically
could	indicate	presumably	unlikely
essentially	indicating that	primarily	usually
fairly	largely	principally	virtually
feasible	likely	probable	
feasibly	loomed large	probably	
feel (I feel)	loosely	propose (I propose)	
for me, for the author	mainly	questionable	
for the most part	may (not)	quite	
frequently	maybe	rarely	
from (my/this) perspective	might (not)	reasonably	
from my point of view	more often than not	regularly	
fundamentally	more or less	relatively	
generally	mostly	roughly	
hardly	near	routinely	
hypothetically	nearly	scarcely	

Boosters:

absolutely	greatly	pronounced
actually	highly	prove (s)
acutely	impossible	purely
again	in a very true sense	quite
altogether	in every sense	really
always	in fact	resolutely
assert	in no way	sharp (sharp contrast)
asserting	incontestably	sharply
assertion	incontrovertibly	show (s, ed)
		some (of some value), (with
assuredly	indeed	some conviction)
assures	indisputable	strongly
at all	inescapably	surely
at no time	inevitable	the fact remains, as does the fact
belief	inevitably	tightly
believe (I believe)	inextricable	to a lesser or greater extent
by no means	inextricably	total loss
certainly	infallibly	totally
clear (that)	infinitely	truly=in accordance with truth
clearly	ipso facto	unanimously
closely	it goes without saying	unarguably
complete(ly)	maintain (I maintain)	unavoidable
confidently	markedly	unavoidably
confirm	most, the most	undeniable
	much (much like something,	
considerably	much better)	undeniably
definitely	must	undoubtedly
diametrically	necessarily	unequivocally
emphasize(s)	never	unmistakably
emphatically	no doubt, little doubt	unquestionable
enormously	no one	unquestionably
entirely	no way	unreservedly
especially	not in any way	utmost
established that	not possible	utterly
ever	nowhere	vastly
every reason	obvious	very
evident(ly)	obviously	vitally
extremely	of course	well (as we well know)
far	once again	well-known
firmly	particular (of particular interest)	wholly
first and foremost	particularly	widely
for sure	patently	will
fully	perfectly	with (some) conviction
great (of great		
importance)	profoundly	without question

Attitude markers:

accurate(ly)
acute
adeptly
adequately
admittedly
adroitly
advantageous
agree
ample evidence
appealing
appropriate
apt(ly)
astonishing
astounding
astute
at any rate
attention-grabbing
attractive(ly)
awesome
beautiful(ly)
beauty
beneficial
best, the best
better
bewildering
bold
bravely
brilliant
brutal
central
challenging
clever(ly)
cogent
comforting
compelling
complex
complicated
comprehensive
concur with
confidently
confusing
convincing(ly)
correct(ly)
credibly enough
critical

crucial(ly)
curious(ly)
damaging
daringly
decisive(ly)
deep(ly)
deftly
delicate(ly)
delightfully
difficult
disagree
disappointing
discerningly
disingenuous
disturbing
easily
eloquently
embarrassingly
encouraging
enigmatic
enough
entertaining
enticing
essential
evocative
excellent
exciting
expected(ly)
expertly
extraordinarily
extraordinary
fail (s, ed)
fair
flawed
flexible
fluid
forceful
fortunately
fraught
fruitful
fundamental
good
great
greater
hard

harder
harsh
heartening
helpful
hope (s, d)
hopefully
horrible
humorously
ideal(ly)
imperative
importance
important(ly)
impressive
in a more buoyant vein
incisive(ly)
ingenious
innovative
insightful
integral
intelligent
interesting(ly)
intriguing(ly)
ironically
justifiably
key
logical(ly)
lucid
magnificent
main
major
misleading
mordantly
moving
naive
neatly
necessary
not unreasonable
notable
notably
noteworthy
odd
of (more, particular, great) interest
of note
on a more cynical note
optimistically

Attitude markers:

outspoken	striking(ly)
outstanding	strong
overriding	stronger
paradoxically	stunning
peculiar(ly)	subtle
perfect(ly)	subtly
powerful	successfully
predictably	succinctly
preeminent	surprise
primary	surprising(ly)
productive	tempting
prominently	tenably
properly	too little
prudent	too many
reasonable	too much
regrettably	understandably
remarkable	unexpected(ly)
remarkably	unfortunately
resounding	ungenerous
rewarding	unhelpful
rightly	unusual, not unusual
robust	unwise
sadly	useful(ly)
salient	valid
satisfactorily	valid(ly)
scrupulously	valuable
sensible	value
shockingly	vital
shrewdly	vivid(ly)
significance	weak
significant(ly)	weighty
simple	well
skilful, skillful	wish (I wish)
skillfully	worth +Ving
small	worthwhile
sobering	worthy
solid	would like (I would like to)
sophisticatedly	wrong
sophistry	
sparkling	
stark	
startling	
stimulating	
straightforward	
strange(ly)	

Self-mentions:
I, me, my, myself
the author('s)
the interviewer
the investigator
the researcher('s)
the writer

Asides:
(...)
aside
say

Directives:
Compare
Consider
has to (one has to)
it is crucial to
it is essential to
it is important to
it is necessary to
it is of importance (also) to
it is vital to
Let us
must
need to remain aware
Note
Please recall
Recall
Remember
see
should
should not
Take

Reader References:
One
The reader
We, us, our
You

Shared Knowledge References:
As can be seen
As we know
Usual

Appendix [G]: Interview schedule after piloting

Section 1: (Background)

I'd like to begin the interview by just asking a couple of things about your experience in teaching.

Q: I understand that you were teaching English here to international students and also to home students while you were doing your MA, right? So may I ask how long your teaching experience was when you did your MA?

Q: Do you think that teaching English here had affected the way you wrote your dissertation or maybe had drawn your attention to some aspects of language used in writing? If so, could you explain, please?

Section 2: (Stance markers)

Now I would like you to have a look at some extracts taken from your MA dissertation.

Q2.1 Could you please tell me what impressions you wanted to convey or create with the underlined words in each sentence? 1. There also appears to be no studies that compare native and non-native speakers of English. As it **may** be the case that native and non-native speakers of English **might** have similar needs, it is of interest to investigate the impact of an EAP course and student needs of both groups in the same study.

Q2.1 Could you please tell me what impressions you wanted to convey or create with the underlined words in this sentence? 2. It **appears** that the issue of placing native and non-native speakers under the same module may be a sensitive one.

Q.2.1: Here's a list of the extracts taken from your dissertation with the word 'APPEAR' and 'SEEM', and the frequency of each word. Any comments?

The words	Frequency	Extracts from your dissertation
Appears	12	It **appears** that the issue of placing native and non-native speakers under the same module may be a sensitive one.
Seem	1	As a branch of ESP, EAP should be needs based. However, many courses and materials **seem** to be directed towards a generic set of skills.

Q2.1 Could you please tell me what impressions you wanted to convey or create with the underlined words in this sentence?

3. **In my opinion**, I **believe** that one of the reasons that native speakers had negative feeling towards the course is that they felt that they were being compared to students with lower language levels.

Q2.2 Could you please tell me what impressions you wanted to convey or create with the underlined words in this sentence?

1. It was seen in the last chapter that the skill area mostly rated with 'low ability' by students before they started the course was referencing. As was discussed in chapter 2 of this study, referencing is a skill that will be new to **many** students.

Q2.2 Could you please tell me what impressions you wanted to convey or create with the underlined words in this sentence?

2. Participants were asked to rate how much further guidance they need on the individual skills now that the course has been completed. The data **shows** that most students need some kind of further guidance, either by selecting 'some further guidance needed' or 'a lot of further guidance needed' for each skill.

Q2.3 Could you please tell me what impressions you wanted to convey or create with the underlined words in this sentence?

1. The most **significant** finding in relation to the impact that the course had on students can be seen in the data for 'further guidance' needed.

2. Writing is an **important** skill area for students to develop proficiency.

Q2.3.1 Here's a list of all words and their frequencies as they were used in your dissertation. Any comments, please?

Words	Frequency	Extracts
Significant	4	However, one **significant** issue raised from the data was that most students needed some further guidance.
Important	3	Writing is an **important** skill area for students to develop proficiency.
Essential	3	Specific academic skills are **essential** in order for students to partake in their studies properly.
Key	3	Although the student may be already have listening and speaking skills in English, the **key** thing here is that an EAP course would teach the student how to conduct themselves appropriately in these academic situations.
Major	1	The **major** findings in this study raise a number of implications.

Section 3: (Self mention from different dissertations + the interviewee's dissertation)

Q3.1 Here are some extracts taken from different dissertations.

    a) *Please comment on the use of the underlined words the writers used to refer to themselves in their dissertations.*
    b) *To what extent do you feel these words are appropriate in academic writing? Why?*

1. The subject of this case study is **my** husband, who came to live in the UK about 4 months before the first time I recorded him.

2. As mentioned previously this study focussed on the speech of older speakers from the Colchester area. They were selected in the main, through contacts from **the author's** mother.

3. **I** was eager to fire **myself** up with ideas and look out into the world swarming with stories so **I** could cast **my** writing net. **I** had to liberate **my** mind from viewing the rewriting process as mere mess and look at it as the most pleasurable part of writing.

Q3.2:

    a) *Please comment on the use of the underlined words.*
    b) *To what extent do you feel these words are appropriate in academic writing? Why?*

4. In this section, **we** have discussed how Maxwell and Manning's approach treats Gapping and RNR. **We** pointed out that their approach fails to account for Gapping and RNR in HA. In the following section, **we** propose a *function-spreading approach* that will be shown to be able to account for Gapping and RNR in HA straightforwardly and successfully.

5. This is because much of the research **I** have discussed previously shows writing as being one of the skills most highly perceived in need of improvement.

6. **The researcher** observed that because the scoring system used fixed ranges with a set minimum and maximum value it did not allow for how individuals interact with the instrument.

7. There have been many attempts to define the attraction of the metaphor over two millennia and more. One of the most vivid is Kittay's (1987:1): 'To its champions, its lack of utility, its sheer capacity to delight, was the reason for its privileged place in language.' **This study** has attempted to bring out some of that delight.

8. Studies aimed at looking at how lower level second language learners use PEDs and PDs are less common and therefore, **this writer** believes that more research into this particular language level would be beneficial.

9. **It is hoped that** this study will help to bring clarity to the construct of teaching styles and what determines them within the context of this study, and compliment the awareness raising attributes of learning styles research by facilitating the implementation of such knowledge.

Q3.3: Here is a list of the words that you used in your dissertation to refer to yourself, and their

frequencies. *Please comment on the use and the frequency of each of these words.*

Self mention	Frequency	Examples from your dissertation
I	6	• In this section, **I** shall discuss the relation between academic literacy and EAP. • This is because much of the research **I** have discussed previously shows writing as being one of the skills most highly perceived in need of improvement.
Researcher	1	This has also enabled **the researcher** to easily compare data from different items and variables in the questionnaire.
The interviewer	1	Then data which has been taken indirectly will be outlined, or as a result of an unplanned question posed by **the interviewer**.

Section 4: (Engagement Markers)

4.1 (Reader Pronouns)

Q4.1.1: Here is a list of some extracts taken from different dissertations.

    a) *Who do you think is/ are addressed by the underlined word in each sentence?*
    b) *On a scale from 0-3, to what extent do you feel that using the underlined word in addressing readers is appropriate in academic writing? Can you explain why you gave this score?*

1. Whilst **one** could argue that the visual grammar of the film may reflect that of the novel this would only be on a relatively superficial level.

0= not appropriate	*1= not very appropriate*	*2= appropriate*	*3= completely appropriate*

2. The new family is made of her and both her daughters but **some** might argue that also her loyal friend Razia Iqbal could be considered as a member.

0= not appropriate	*1= not very appropriate*	*2= appropriate*	*3= completely appropriate*

3. Thus, once the **reader** has looked at the first table thoroughly, it will surely be easy and straightforward to understand the results in the other two tables.

0= not appropriate	*1= not very appropriate*	*2= appropriate*	*3= completely appropriate*

4. Working on the rather simple GIGO (Garbage In, Garbage Out) principle borrowed from computing, **we** can see that a poorly designed questionnaire can only yield poor responses irrespective of the cohort.

0= not appropriate	*1= not very appropriate*	*2= appropriate*	*3= completely appropriate*

5. As **you** can see from the chart above, the question has four different responses (outside of not having read the books, or watched the films), whilst still giving limited room for responses beyond those prescribed, gives the respondents a chance to make a more

nuanced response.

| 0= not appropriate | 1= not very appropriate | 2= appropriate | 3= completely appropriate |

Q4.1.2: Here is a list of the words that you used in your dissertation to address your readers. *Please comment on the use and frequency of this word?*

The Words	Frequency	Examples from your dissertation
We	1	As **we** have seen from the above information, native English speaking students are reported to have problematic writing skills.

Q4.1.3: Back to the extracts discussed in the previous question (Q4.1.1),

   a) *Regarding the words you didn't use in your MA dissertation, would __you__ use any of them to address your readers in __your__ academic writing in general? Why/ why not?*
   b) *Is there any word that you prefer more than the other?*

4.2: (Directives)

Q4.2.1: Here is a list of extracts taken from different dissertations.

   a) *What impression do you think the writers wanted to create by the use of the underlined clauses/ words?*
   b) *To what extent do you feel these underlined clauses are appropriate in academic writing?*

1. **It is also important to note** that the above list of general skills is not extensive. Flowerdew and Peacock (2001:192) suggest that with ever changing technology, the area of skills a student will need to cover is 'rapidly expanding'.
2. **This must not be confused** though, with the view that all respondents believed that the whole narrative should be copied from the pages of the novels into the screenplay, there are examples of those who are aware that not all of the content can be reproduced because of the restraints on the change in medium;...
3. Our main purpose here is that we investigate how their approach is working and then in the following section, we will see whether their approach succeeds to account for Gapping and RNR in HA or not. **Consider** the following example:
   a. John gambled in Sydney on Monday and in Monaco on Thursday.

4. But **Let us** not forget that what is of concern to us here is the fact that when he supplied them, Hamza always produced correctly inflected forms of be, and never used the infinitive instead of a finite form of the auxiliary.
5. **Please recall** from previous chapters that the present study therefore set out to investigate the usefulness of and attitudes towards the information found in PDs and PEDs.
6. The negation in Arabic seems to be complex (**see** Benmamoun,2000; Alsharif and Sadler, 2009; Aoun et al., 2010).
7. The biggest contention surrounding the design of the questionnaire was around the skip logic which was utilised on question 12 (**see** questions to follow).

Q.4.2.2: *Would **you** use such language in **your** academic writing? Why/ why not?*

4.3 (Questions)

Q4.3.1: Here are some extracts taken from different dissertations where the writers used questions in their texts.

   a) *As a reader, what do you think the underlined question is meant to convey in each extract?*
   b) *To what extent do you feel the use of question in each extract is appropriate in academic writing?*

1. **Why choose ethnographic studies?** We have taken a brief look into the establishment of cultural studies and how the idea of audience studies came into being, we have yet to look into the particular impetus behind the adoption of extra-textual methods of research; why exactly theorists decided to focus on the contextual rather than solely on the textual.
2. One link between Amis, Hitchens, and McEwan is their shared post-9/11 view of aircraft as "predatory or doomed." An obvious question raised by the existence of this widespread pattern - it encompasses many American writers as well - is this: **Are there any precedents for this literary treatment of terrorism?** Specifically, **does *Saturday* draw on any established tradition of fictional writing about terrorism?** It can be argued that it does.
3. Furthermore, it would still be wondered why the participants of the L2B groups did not show any advantage in the test condition even when 80% of the participants reported that they were able to see the prime word. In other words, **does the visibility of the prime in the mask priming paradigm affect the participants responses?** In addition, gave the advantage for the L2B group in showing greater amount of repetition priming compared to the L2A group, **is it the increased visibility of the prime or the pause that would allow them to have more time to process the prime word?** These are some of the open questions that were not answered by the outcomes of this study.

Q.4.3.2: *Would **you** use such language in **your** academic writing? Why/ why not?*

Section 5: (Writing in academic settings- General)

Now I'd like to ask you some general questions about academic writing.

Q5.1: Here are different views by two people about whether student academic writers should express their opinions about what they are writing or not.

   a) *To what extent do you agree with both opinions? Please explain.*
   b) *Did you hold this same belief when you wrote your dissertation?*

Ted says: **"Students shouldn't express their opinions and be critical in their master's dissertations because I think that they are not very knowledgeable about what they are writing when compared with their readers".**

> *Dave says*: **"Students should express their opinions and be critical when writing their master's dissertations in order to be heard and to gain membership of this academic community".**

Here is a list of some resources students might make use of when writing their dissertations.

Q5.2. When you wrote your dissertation,

    a) *Did you get help from any of these?*
    b) *Could you please talk about it (them)?*
    c) *To what extent do you think it was (they were) helpful? How?*

- Your supervisor(s)
- Friends/ colleagues
- Lecturers
- English Language tutors
- Other tutors or lecturers
- Ex-master's students
- Previous dissertations in your field
- Books (What kind of books: Grammar books, Vocabulary books, Writing books?)
- Journal articles
- Websites (which?)
- Departmental Guidelines/ handbook
- Others?

Q5.3.1: Have you been taught to avoid using certain language in your dissertation?

    a) If yes, can you give examples, please?
    b) Who taught you this?
    c) Why did they say that you should avoid using this language?

Here is a list of some (more) items.

Q5.3.2. Have you ever been taught to avoid using any of these items in your dissertation? If yes,

    a) *Who taught you this?*
    b) *Why did they say that you should avoid using this language?*

Items	Examples
First person pronoun 'I'?	**I** bring to bear on the problem **my** own experience. This experience contains ideas derived from reading **I** have done which might be relevant to **my** puzzlement as well as **my** personal contacts with teaching contexts.
Reader pronoun 'you'?	As **you** read this excerpt, pay particular attention to the structure of the …
Rhetorical questions?	**Is it, in fact, necessary to choose between nurture and nature?** My contention is that it is not.
Imperatives?	**Suppose** there are two students with identical ability in language

	learning but come from two different families.
Certain verbs?	This study **proves** that people judge each other on how they look.

Here is a list of possible readers of any dissertation.

Q5.4.1. Which party/ parties were you writing for? Why?

  a) To what extent did writing for these parties have an impact on the way you wrote?

  • Your supervisor (s)
  • The markers
  • Academics from the same field
  • Students from the same field
  • People from outside your field who are interested in your topic

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Q5.4.2. Looking back at these extracts we have just discussed earlier (Section 2), did you select any of these underlined words/ expressions while thinking of your readers (e.g., How would they feel about these words? Would they accept it or not?)?

Section 6:

Finally, is there anything else you would like to add or comment on about what we have discussed?

Appendix [H-1]: Participant's consent form

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX

FORM OF CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

CONFIDENTIAL

Title of project / investigation:

Stance and engagement in postgraduate writing: a comparative study of English NS and Arab EFL student writers in Linguistics and Literature

Brief outline of project, including an outline of the procedures to be used:

In this study I aim to examine the ways English native and non-native student writers use language to present themselves, and convey judgements and opinions. Also I aim to explore the ways writers connect with readers and establish rapport. I intend to do that by examining a variety of linguistic resources such as your use of questions, personal pronouns, imperatives, etc. in your writing.

Therefore, I will collect and analyse the language in your MA dissertation and in other dissertations written by native and non-native students in the field of linguistics and Literature from a number of UK universities. I will conduct an interview with you about your use of language. After your permission, I may also interview your MA dissertation supervisor.

Participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. When the results of this research are written up in my thesis and for publication, data will be anonymous and your identity will not be revealed.

I, ... *(**participant's** full name)

agree to take part in the above named project / investigation, the details of which have been fully

explained to me and described in writing.

Signed..   Date...

      (Participant)

I, ... *(**Investigator's** full name)

certify that the details of this project / investigation have been fully explained and described in writing to

the subject named above and have been understood by him / her.

Signed..   Date...

      (Investigator)

*Please type or print in block capitals

Appendix [H-2]: Participant Information Statement

(Research Project)

Title: Stance and engagement in postgraduate writing: a comparative study of English NS and Arab EFL student writers in Linguistics and Literature

1. *What is the study about?*

   This study aims to examine how English native and non-native student writers use language to present themselves and convey judgements and opinions, and how they connect with readers and establish rapport, using language such as questions personal pronouns, imperatives, etc.

2. *Who is carrying out the study?*

   Ahlam Menkabu, a PhD research student at the University of Essex, is conducting this study as she is interested in the ways English native and non-native postgraduate student writers use language in their academic writing, whether there are similarities or differences and how we can account for any similarities or differences.

3. *What does the study involve?*

   The study involves textual analysis of MA dissertations written by English native and non-native students and interviews with them to reveal their preferences and perceptions about their use of some linguistic resources. This study will also include interviews with some of the students' supervisors to discuss their students' uses of these resources. (Only with the students' permission, supervisors would be interviewed.)

4. *How much time will the study take?*

   The interview will take about one/two hour(s) of your time

5. *Can I withdraw from the study?*

   Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and- if you do participate- you can withdraw at any time without prejudice or penalty.

6. *Will anyone else know the results?*

   All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researcher will have access to information on participants. The results of the study will be reported in my PhD thesis, and may also be submitted for publication in academic journals, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report: their names will be changed and their identities disguised.

7. *Can I tell other people about the study?*

   Yes.

8. *What if I require further information?*

   If you like to know more about the study, please feel free to contact the researcher by email: aamenk@essex.ac.uk.

9. *What if I have a complaint or concerns?*

   Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study or questions about their rights as a participant can contact the ethics officer at The University of Essex (see www.essex.ac.uk for contact details). Alternatively, the researcher's supervisor can be contacted (Dr. Nigel Harwood, nharwood@essex.ac.uk).

Appendix [I]: Sample of interview transcript

Interviewer: First of all I'd like to thank you very much for taking part in my research and for meeting me today…

Respondent: That's okay.

Interviewer: And thanks for filling in the form for me. So your bachelor's degree was in Literature and you went straight into MA…

Respondent: Yes. I'm doing PhD now.

Interviewer: And you will submit by October 2014?

Respondent: yes.

Interviewer: Good! Wish you the best of luck!

Respondent: Thanks!

Interviewer: Ok, then. Let's start with the interview. Well, the interview will be mainly about the use of language. We will talk about some certain words used in your dissertation and in dissertations of other students. But let's start with your dissertation. Here are some extracts taken from your dissertation. Could you please have a look at each one and then tell me what impression you wanted to convey or create by the use of each of these underlined words. Let's start with the first word 'may'.

Respondent: What do you mean by the impression that I wanted to create? I am not quite sure.

Interviewer: Well, for example, you used the word 'may' here in this sentence. If we take this word out, would the meaning of this sentence be the same? I mean did you choose to use the word 'may' here for a particular purpose or function?

Respondent: Yes, I see. I would have chosen the word 'may' there because I didn't want to give an impression of certainty about what's being claimed. I imagine – I don't remember, but I imagine later on I would have expanded on that, and so I wanted to make it clear at that point that I couldn't establish that claim without further demonstration.
I imagine later in the same chapter I would have expanded on that. So the word 'may' would, I suppose, be used for the very first instance of this idea, which would subsequently be developed.

Interviewer: Can we replace this word 'may', for example, with the word 'might'?

Respondent: Hmm. No, I don't think I would use the word 'might', perhaps because – well, I think it would sound too uncertain. I think it would almost open up the possibility that what I was saying was perhaps just a speculation, and I wanted to make it sound more certain than near speculation. I wanted to make it sound like perhaps a first pass at interpreting this passage, and then I would add to it later. I think 'might' would sound too uncertain.

Interviewer:	So there is a difference between 'may' and 'might'?
Respondent:	I think there would be some different, yes. I don't think I would have chosen 'might'.
Interviewer:	Because it sounds too uncertain? Any other reason? Could we say that one word is formal and the other one is not?
Respondent:	I think that's also true. 'Might' would sound slightly informal. I wouldn't have chosen it for that reason.
Interviewer:	Okay, you know I did some counting here. I wanted to see how many times each word was used so here is a list of a number of extracts taken from your dissertation. All include the word 'May' or 'Might'.
Respondent:	Okay.
Interviewer:	If we look at the frequency column, 'Might' has been used twice and 'May' has been used 11 times.
Respondent:	That's interesting (Laughter).
Interviewer:	So any comments?
Respondent:	Okay, let me have a look, and I will see. Okay, with this first passage, the reason that I have chosen the word 'might' there – I have begun the sentence with 'in reply'. I think it's because I am mapping out one possible reply. 'May' wouldn't sound so appropriate there, and 'might' is a little more open-ended. I think because I am imagining one possible reply, I think 'might' seems okay. Yes, I think that's why I have used it there. In that second one, I think 'might' – are these the right kind of answers; are these the kind of things you want?
Interviewer:	Yes.
Respondent:	Ok. The reason 'might' is there is because there's this section in italics. The italics, again, are supposed to suggest that I am introducing a condition. So again, I don't want to say that I can establish this with certainty at this point. I want to leave open other possibilities. I think the 'might' is, as it were, justified by the italic section that emphasis. I think the two are linked, and I don't think I'm going to use the word 'might' otherwise.
Interviewer:	Okay, and how about 'May'?
Respondent:	I suppose, to leave the passage open for the subsequent chapters that come to follow which build on those claims.
Interviewer:	Okay. Anything else you would like add?
Respondent:	No, I don't think so.
Interviewer:	Okay, thank you. Can we do the other card, please? We have the word 'appear'.
Respondent:	Okay, so 'appear' in that sentence – "It would appear that it has proven the adequacy…" Well, again, I think because of the sentence in which it appears, I think 'appear' there is intended to suggest that the claim that is being made is

true. I think in another context, 'appear' might mean that it's just an appearance. But I think in context here it is intended to suggest that this is the case. It's intending to say, "Yes, this is right." It is supposed to establish the claim that's being made.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. So when you use the word 'appear', you are saying that the claim after it is true, …?

Respondent: In this particular sentence, I think that's what it's intended to convey, yes. But I can imagine another context where it wouldn't suggest that.

Interviewer: Okay, can we think of another word that can be used here instead of 'appear'?

Respondent: Well, I suppose the word 'seem' might be used there. But I wouldn't use the word 'seem' because I think it suggests a degree of doubt. I think 'seem' sounds more open to challenge, whereas I think the way 'appear' has been used here sounds more like I am reasonably confident about what I am saying.

Interviewer: Okay, so 'appear' shows some confidence. But with the word 'seem', it doesn't? It wouldn't give the same impression?

Respondent: I think in this sentence it would seem less confident, yes.

Interviewer: Okay, again here we have a list of some extracts taken from your dissertation. They all include the word 'appear' or 'seem'. 'Appear' has been used six times. 'Seem' has been used three times. Any comments?

Respondent: The uses of 'seem' in these sentences, when they're taken in context, when they're surrounded by all the other text that goes with them – my guess is that they are all leading up to further claims.
I don't think I would have made, as it were, any central claims and employed the word 'seems'. My guess is each of these would be followed up by something else that would build on them, whereas 'appears' – I know it appears six times – yes. I think it at least has an air of certainty about it which I think 'seems' lacks, perhaps.

Interviewer: Okay. And it has nothing to do with formality? Or preferences?

Respondent: Well, these sentences are ones in which 'seems' is appropriate, but I don't think it would be appropriate for some of these, for example, so yes. There are times when, I don't know, just the nature of the sentence dictates which of those words would seem appropriate, and there are times when it would be informal.
It would seem to be most informal if – say it were a really core argument to my dissertation, and I established it on the word 'seems', I would be uneasy on that. I think it would sound too uncertain. I think that's what I would say.
So I think 'seems' is generally a less formal word, and that is partly why I have used it less often. But there are specific contexts in which it is appropriate.

Interviewer: May I ask what these specific contexts are? Because these two words have almost the same meaning. So some students like non-natives tend to use them interchangeably. Maybe unaware of these slight differences?

Respondent: I see, yes; I imagine that's true. I imagine that – not that I have looked into it – that technically they are the same. Maybe there are minor differences. But I imagine technically they are the same. There does seem to be – I suppose I could just call it a convention. There seems to be a convention where 'seems' is usually

seen to be a less formal word. I don't think the word 'seems' – this is my guess – would appear as often in academic journals, for example, as the word 'appears'. If someone's drawing conclusions about results, I can imagine 'appears' turning up much more often. There are only occasional times, I think, where 'seems' is okay. I think in these examples that you have given, they would be okay for me, because they would be followed up by further claims.

Interviewer:	Interesting! Thank you. Another word?
Respondent:	Sure.
Interviewer:	Okay, we have here 'almost certainly'.
Respondent:	Do you want the same sort of answer as previously?
Interviewer:	Yes, please.

Respondent: Well, I suppose the word 'almost' is included – if the sentence were just to claim certainty, I am not sure that there would have been enough evidence produced to prove that. So 'almost' is just there to modify the strength of that claim. I think actually it's a way of making it more plausible, perhaps, because I am not sure that an ambitious claim of that kind can be established with such confidence. I would want to include that little modify, I suppose, just to make the reader aware that I am aware that you can't be so certain about such an ambitious claim.

Interviewer: Okay. Good. Another word?

Respondent: I think the word 'indeed' would be the one that I would focus on. I suppose 'indeed' is being used there to emphasise – there are two points. There's the point made in the first half of the sentence, and then after this dash, after the word 'teachings', I have introduced this second claim, about the second point. "Indeed truer again." I suppose 'indeed' is included to show that the first claim is bolstered by the inclusion of a second claim. The second half of a sentence is a reinforcement of the first. 'Indeed' is just serving the purpose of showing that it's being reinforced.

Interviewer: Okay, and how about the word 'again'?

Respondent: Yes. I suppose that's a repetition. Maybe that's a sort of rhetorical technique in a way. The fact that I have used both is purely for further emphasis. It's not serving any purpose beyond that. It's just to enhance the point being made.

Interviewer: Okay, here's a list of sentences from your dissertation, all include the word 'important' or similar words like 'crucial', 'key, 'significant', 'fundamental', and 'vital'. And how often you used each is in the second column. Any comments?

Respondent: Let's see. Of the words on this list, I think I'd say 'importance' appears the most because I think it's the weakest of those terms. The **decreasing** frequency goes hand in hand with increasing emphasis. The word 'central' I used only once, because I take it that there there's probably only going to be one major claim that is central to my dissertation.
'Vital', I take to be more emphatic than these other words (Fundamental, Crucial, Key and Important). 'Fundamental', I suppose, would be roughly on a par. I take 'significance' to be more central than 'importance'. 'Crucial' and 'key' would be roughly interchangeable for me. But 'importance', as I say, would be the least emphatic and that is why I have used it the most.

Interviewer: Interesting how you differentiate between these words. So you were saying you would rather be less emphatic in your writing? Why is that, may I ask?

Respondent: Well, I suppose if I am making a series of minor claims, then I don't want to be too emphatic about each of them. I would prefer that the reader would connect up those claims, and then when I reach the conclusion, perhaps to a chapter or the whole piece of work, then I'd be in a position to talk about 'vital' or 'central' conclusions and topics.
Up until that point, I think I'd just be establishing evidence. I wouldn't want to act as though the evidence, all by itself, was achieving some kind of certainty, or something like that.

Interviewer: Interesting. Thank you very much. Well, that was the end of this section where we're talking mainly about some words in your text. Would you like to have a break?

Respondent: No, that's cool, that's fine, yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Now in this section, we will look at some extracts taken from different dissertations, from both disciplines: literature and linguistics.
Here we will look at specific words that were used by different writers to refer to themselves in their dissertations. Words like 'my', 'the author`s' and 'myself'.
My question is to what extent do you feel that the use of these words in academic writing is appropriate?

Respondent: Okay, with the first one, 'my husband'. I suppose it would perhaps vary between disciplines. I imagine there would be some kinds of case study where it would be appropriate to speak in the first person, and I suppose that would be dependent on what kind of study it was.
I would never refer to myself in the first person in academic writing, if only because I have just been taught that that kind of writing should be impersonal, and that perhaps it has more authority if it's not referring to the writer.
I suppose it's purely convention, but that's how I write. The second one – I think one reason that people don't tend to refer to themselves as the author, or versions of that now, is that there's something archaic about that now. I think writers 60 years ago or more might have referred to themselves as the author, but I don't think people do that so much anymore.
Again, there might be studies in which that's appropriate; certain contexts in which that is appropriate. But generally I don't think that is how academics write. I don't think they refer to themselves as the author very often.
For the third one, I would make the same points. I wouldn't refer to myself as 'I' or 'my' unless that was okay for some reason.

Interviewer: Okay, so you wouldn't refer to yourself using 'I', or 'my'? Why is that? You said you have been taught not to?

Respondent: Well, on the one hand, it is just a convention that academic writing is impersonal. I suppose that's just been drilled into me, and that's how I write. On the other hand, I can see why that would be the case. I do think that reference to the first person might undercut the authority of the writing, because it suggests perhaps that there's something subjective or something more personal about what is being said.
I suppose to make claims that seem more persuasive, it's better if they are justified objectively. Something like that.

Interviewer: Okay, so how about in literature, in your reading in literature? Critics, scholars, in books and articles – they don't use these kinds of words to refer to themselves?

Respondent: I think I'd say that scholars in the field never refer to themselves in the first person. That's basically universally true. I don't think there would be any exceptions to that, unless there were some very special circumstances. Perhaps there might be some scholars who, in a footnote, may refer to themselves because they have had a disagreement with another scholar.
They might say, perhaps, "In my paper, I said this and disagreed with so-and-so." Perhaps then they might refer to themselves but I think it's very, very rare now.

Interviewer: Interesting! Okay, so more words from different dissertations.

Respondent: Okay, yes. With the first one, I would use the word 'we' in academic writing, because I think that does sort of retain that certain kind of formality. I suppose if there is a sentence where you would otherwise have had to refer to yourself, the 'we' is just about the only word that you can use without going back into the first person. I suppose it's often necessary to use 'we'. I do use that, and I think it's very widely used in academic writing.

Interviewer: Okay, so you use it to refer to yourself – 'we' to mean 'I'?

Respondent: Well, I think it's slightly different in that if I just said 'I', I feel that it would sound more like I am giving my opinion here. But if I give the word 'we', I think it includes the reader, and I think it's a way of saying, "I have provided the claims and the evidence that would allow me to make the following claim."
I suppose 'we', because it includes the reader, is like saying, "We together have gone through the reasoning that led up to this." So the 'we' is inclusive. It establishes that sort of link. I would use the word 'we' for that reason. I wouldn't use the word 'I' for the reasons that I gave in the last question.
My guess is that the word 'researcher' in some of the sciences. I imagine that is probably used. I don't know. I can imagine that.
'This study' – yes, I would use that, because again it's impersonal, and I would happily refer to my own work in that way.
I wouldn't refer to 'this writer'. Again, it's self-referential, and also I do think it sounds archaic as well. I think it is a convention that isn't used so much anymore.
I don't think I would use 'it is hoped' anymore. Once upon a time, I might have, but I don't think now, because I would say that it doesn't sound certain enough. I suppose it sounds a little too open-ended, perhaps. Now you're going to show me that you have used it lots of times, aren't you? But I don't think I have used that phrase, because it doesn't sound certain (Laughter).

Interviewer: Oh no don't worry. In your dissertation, none of these words have been used, except the word 'we' (Laughter).

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, so you would use 'we', and 'this study'. But you wouldn't use 'I', 'the researcher', 'this writer', or 'it is hoped that' because of the reasons you have just mentioned here. Let's look at 'we' and 'this study'. Which one do you prefer to use in your writing?

Respondent: Well, I think I'd probably use 'this study' more often, but I wouldn't repeat that too much. I think if you repeated the phrase 'this study' a lot, it might sound –

for one thing, it would be repetitious. That's purely a kind of stylistic point, I suppose. I don't think it would be nice to read many sentences with the phrase 'this study' in. I'd mix it up with 'we'. I would use both interchangeably I suppose.

Interviewer: Okay, is there anything else you'd like to add?

Respondent: No, I don't think so.

Interviewer: Thank you. Now I am going to show you more extracts with other words. 'One could argue' my first question who the 'one' would be in this sentence?

Respondent: Right. Okay, so the first one – Well, it's deliberately non-specific. I think it's just a hypothetical person; perhaps a hypothetical observer in a neutral position. Someone who carried out what is described in this sentence would come to the same conclusion as the writer. The 'one' is completely impersonal. It could be anyone who is unbiased, I supposed.

Interviewer: Okay, on this scale – we have a scale from zero to three: 'not appropriate' to 'completely appropriate', to what extent do you think that this word is appropriate in academic writing?

Respondent: Well, I think I would say two, because whilst it's appropriate, I perhaps wouldn't use it so much. In a way, I would prefer to structure that sentence in such a way, and the sentences around it, so that the word 'one' wouldn't be necessary. I think it would be better just to lay out some claims and see if the reader can be persuaded by them. I think including something like one could argue' is a rhetorical gesture, in a way, and I am not sure it is necessarily effective.
I would say two, because I don't think it's wrong to include that in an academic piece of writing, but I don't think I would use it so often.

Interviewer: Because you don't think it is effective?

Respondent: I don't think it is effective, no. It always strikes me as, well, there's something just unpersuasive, I think, about asking the reader – often, not always – about asking somebody to project a hypothetical observer who could then follow out this argument.
I would rather just establish some claims and try to persuade the reader of them.

Interviewer: Okay. So could 'one' here refer to the reader, the reader of the dissertation?

Respondent: I don't think so. It might be that the writer intended it that way, but that's not how it comes across, I don't think. I read, 'one could argue' as describing a possible person who would watch this film, and come to certain conclusions about it. I don't think it's targeted at the reader.

Interviewer: Okay. How about number two; we have 'some might argue'?

Respondent: Again I tend perhaps not to use that because I think it sounds too vague. I think it sounds too vague. It's difficult, in a way, to judge that, because it might be embedded in a paragraph where it does make sense. But taken on its own, I would need to know who 'some' refers to. It would be more helpful if there were a list of names there. If there is a list of scholars or critics or whoever, and we knew that they were referred to, the meaning might be clearer.

'Some' can sound unpersuasive, I think, potentially, because you could fill out the word 'some' with anyone, perhaps, and they would back up what is being said.

Interviewer: Yes, right. Okay, so if we look at the second question, to what extent do you think it's appropriate?

Respondent: I think I would score one, for not very appropriate. But I wouldn't say that it is impossible that there could be a context where that would work. Maybe there are some.

Interviewer: Okay, and then number three: we have 'the reader'.

Respondent: I think an improved version of that sentence would just not refer to the reader, and it would just describe what the table shows. I suppose I would say that there are redundant parts to that sentence. It would be better, I think, just to say what's in the table. I don't think a reference to the reader adds anything to it. It just seems like an empty gesture. It could be shorter and punchier perhaps.
So I suppose I'd say it's not very appropriate, just to cover places where perhaps someone might find a use for it.

Interviewer: Okay, and then number four 'we can see'?

Respondent: Yes, I think that is appropriate. I think I would use the word 'we' like that, because I suppose it's generic and it's not referring to the writer or the reader. It's anyone who would be in a position to survey those results. So that seems appropriate to me.

Interviewer: Because it's generic and refers to anyone?

Respondent: Well I think again this is, I suppose, just a convention now. But the word 'we' just has this impartial set of connotations to it, and I think that's why it's widely used. I would use it like that.

Interviewer: Okay. To what extent do you think it's appropriate?

Respondent: I think that's a three; that's completely appropriate, I think.

Interviewer: Okay, and then the word 'you' in number five?

Respondent: Yes, I'd say about that, exactly what I'd say about number three, with the reader looking at the table. I think all the same points apply. I don't think referring to 'you', the reader, adds anything to what is being said, and you could establish the rest of the information there on its own, without anything else.

Interviewer: Okay, that's good. So in your writing, you would only use 'we'.

Respondent: I think so, yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you very much. Well, in fact I looked for these words in your dissertation…

Respondent: Okay (Laughter).

Interviewer: Would you like to have a look?

Respondent: Sure (Laughter).

Interviewer: Okay. Here's a list of extracts that include words like 'we', 'the reader'. 'The reader', was used only once, and 'we' or 'us' 35 times. Any comments?

Respondent: 'Reader'. Yes, I think my writing style has changed a lot (Laughter). I wouldn't use the word 'reader' like that now. It doesn't seem to me necessary in that sentence, or perhaps appropriate. It's just a word I would drop now. I wouldn't have employed it, and that's just because my way of writing has changed since then.

Interviewer: Okay, great. So may I ask how and why your writing style changed?

Respondent: Well, I suppose it's because being exposed to more academic writing, and more academic journals and articles and things like this, has made me more aware of how academics write. I think there are certain stylistic features of my writing which I've dropped because they don't fit in with those conventions.
                       I don't think referring to the reader like that is something you would see in a piece of work like this. If I were to revise it, I would get rid of that word.

Interviewer: Okay, and what about 'we' or 'us'?

Respondent: Yes, I think the word 'we' is generally acceptable. 'We' there, yes, for all the reasons I gave before. 'Our' discussion. I'm taking 'our' just to be a version of 'we'. When I'm saying 'our', it's got the same reference as 'we'. I suppose that would encompass everything that has been written so far up to that point.
                       That's just intended to encompass anyone.

Interviewer: You mean anyone, as the readers?

Respondent: Yes, I mean anyone – I suppose it's a way of getting reader and writer on the same page. It's almost, I suppose, a way of recouping the arguments that have been given so far, and saying, "If you accept all of that, then this makes sense," something like that.
                       I perhaps wouldn't use the word 'us' so much anymore, perhaps because I actually think the phrase there, 'must not distract us', that actually sounds too informal to me. I am quite surprised that I used that, and I perhaps wouldn't use it anymore. I think there would be a way of restating that without talking about 'us'.
                       This is almost a – I am almost picking on how it sounds, in a way. I just think there's a more elegant, succinct way of expressing that. It's perhaps a stylistic thing as much as anything else.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Yes, the uses of 'we' there, I think the same. "As we have seen" I'd be happy to use that, still. "We can answer," and 'our' again I am just using as a version of 'we', really. "Our reading." I think I have explained this; I think that makes sense.

Interviewer: Okay, can I ask you about this expression "what we need to know is…"? What effect does it have? What's the purpose of such an expression here?

Respondent: With number six, "If this reading is correct, on that condition, what we need to know is…" I suppose I would describe that as a transition between what I take to be some evidence and a conclusion. That phrase is like a hinge between evidence

and conclusion. If I'm saying to the reader, "What we need to know," I suppose it's a way of directing them from what I have said to what I want to argue for. I suppose it's a way of flagging up what I think is the pertinent question. Perhaps once they have seen that, then they will think this is the question that should be answered, and they will expect an answer for it. I suppose that's its purpose.

Interviewer:	Interesting; and talking about number four, when you say, "Must not distract us from…"
Respondent:	Where's that, sorry?
Interviewer:	Number four.
Respondent:	Oh, yes.
Interviewer:	You said you wouldn't use it?
Respondent:	"Must not distract us." I mean, for one thing, I am not happy with that sentence (Laughter). I don't like that.
Interviewer:	Why are you not happy with it? May I ask?
Respondent:	Well, for one thing, I don't like the sound of it. But, 'Must not distract us' from the meaning of the whole I am uneasy about that. Again, I suppose technically, the role of "Must not distract us" in that sentence is approximately the role of "What we need to know" down here. It is very similar, but there is a difference just in that I think there is something inappropriate about the suggestion that we're in danger of being distracted from what is relevant, because again I think that registers some sort of uncertainty about what's being said. I think actually in itself there is something distracting about that, because I don't think the reader necessarily would have come to that – it's sort of like I am saying, "We mustn't do this," but I don't think the reader was in danger of doing that anyway. It's not a piece of language I would use now. It just – a phrase like that, in a way, sounds redundant, because it sounds like rather than making the case for something, it's a slightly old-fashioned phrase which is being used in place of an argument, and I would much rather have just made some claims and argued than used a phrase like that. It sounds rhetorical in a bad way; it sounds like a rhetorical piece of language that is out of place in some way.
Interviewer:	Okay. Interesting!
Respondent:	Yes. Sorry; it's quite hard to describe how you use language because it's so intuitive. I am going back and trying to calculate what I am doing in each case (Laughter).
Interviewer:	Yes. I know it's a little bit hard. I'm sorry. But honestly you're giving interesting information. It's helpful. I'm so grateful! Okay, now we will move to another feature in writing. Would you have a look at these words, please, and then tell me what impressions the writers wanted to create by the use of these expressions?
Respondent:	Okay. Right, so with the first one I think I would use the word 'important' like that. I suppose it is the equivalent of just putting something in italics or drawing attention to something. I think it's purely for emphasis, and I think it perhaps alerts the reader to the fact that what's going to follow is perhaps more important

than some of the surrounding text. Something like that, and yes, I would use it that way.

Yes, I think it's entirely appropriate.

Interviewer: And two 'this must not be confused'?

Respondent: Yes, well – I suppose that's a kind of instruction to the reader. I suppose it's a phrase you might fall back on if there is a danger of two things being confused; if there's a genuine danger of that, then that phrase, I think, is helpful. If that were the case, if there were two things that could be confused, I think it would be completely appropriate, that phrase.

Interviewer: Okay. How about number three, "Consider the following example"?

Respondent: That seems entirely appropriate for academic writing. It's just a formal instruction. That makes sense to me.

Interviewer: Do you use this kind of instruction in literature?

Respondent: I would very rarely use it, but I can imagine situations where – for example, if I were making a very general claim about a particular book, for instance, and I wanted to support that claim, I might say, "Consider this passage," and I might cite an extract. The word 'consider' would be saying that this is just one of many examples that could be given. So the 'consider' is just a way of saying there's a general field here, and that I'm just going to pick something to show you. Something like that. I think it is completely appropriate.

Interviewer: Okay, interesting, and then 'let us'?

Respondent: Yes, I think that's appropriate. I don't think I would use it so much. The only reason I wouldn't use it, I think, would be saying, "But let us" to me sounds rather old-fashioned. I think it's a way of writing that you see less and less often. It might have been more appropriate decades ago, perhaps, but I don't think you see it so much. There's a slightly archaic quality to it. It's kind of inappropriate, but this is perhaps more a personal thing. I imagine there are other people who would disagree.

Interviewer: Okay. Number five: 'please recall'.

Respondent: Yes. I think I would probably not use the word 'please' there. I think it's safe just to ask the reader to recall something. The 'please' – there would be contexts outside academic writing where that would be a way of being polite, but I don't think that kind of politeness is essential to impersonal, scholarly pieces of work. I almost want to say it's too personal; it's too personalised, perhaps, in some way. But it's not like I think there's some kind of absolute rule here. It is flexible, I suppose.

The uses of the word 'see' seem entirely appropriate, and I would use that. I use that in footnotes quite a lot just to refer to examples.

Interviewer: So you would use it only in footnotes? How about in the main text? Would you use it?

Respondent: Well, I wouldn't have any reason not to use it in the main text. Maybe there would be situations when I would be happy to use it, but I can't think of what they would be, and the only reason why that appears in the footnotes is because I only use that word if I want to say, "Someone has written about this. You might

want to refer to it." I only do that in footnotes. I can't imagine where it would appear in the body of the text, really.

Interviewer: Okay. Here of course the 'see' is used in different ways. Sometimes it's to refer to other references and sometimes to refer to other sections in the same…

Respondent: Yes, so there, with, "See questions to follow," I suppose there would be – I can imagine a scientific study might use that more often, perhaps, or maybe in my writing I might say, "See the previous chapter," perhaps in brackets I might say that. But I don't think I use that very often.

Interviewer: Okay, in brackets. Is there a difference, if it wasn't in brackets?

Respondent: Yes. I think I would include it in brackets. The way I use brackets is if I include a sentence like 'see previous chapter'; and if it's not in brackets, I think it sort of suggests that it's part of the current paragraph, and just when you cast an eye over it, it looks like it's part of the argument. I wouldn't want it to look like that, so I'd put it in brackets just to set it off to one side and show that it's not connected directly with everything else that's being said.

Interviewer: Okay, good. So in general, would you use such language in your writing?

Respondent: Yes, I would.

Interviewer: Okay, good. Thank you. Now we'll move to questions. The use of questions in dissertations. So, as a reader, what do you think the writers wanted to convey by the use of questions in each extract?

Respondent: In the first example, "Why choose ethnographic studies?" That sounds like it's the title of a section, perhaps, of a piece of work. Is this part of that paragraph?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: Well, I imagine the author's intention was just to ask why the approach that they're going to take is the right one, so I suppose they're anticipating a question that the reader might have, and they're answering it ahead of time, so they're giving the reasons that would answer that. I take it that what follows that question mark is the answer to it, and it's a way of suggesting to the reader why that approach has been taken.

Interviewer: Okay, and to what extent do you feel that this kind of question is appropriate in academic writing?

Respondent: Yes, I'd say that's appropriate. I would use a question roughly like that.

Interviewer: Okay, so the writer might ask that question to get the attention of the reader. Any other reasons why the writer chose to use a question in his or her text?

Respondent: I also think it would be because there might be certain junctures in the writing where the reader has a sense that you could go in a number of different directions. So perhaps you have some field you're investigating and there are several approaches you could take. I think the writer would ask a question like this to introduce the approach they're taking, and then when they answer that question, they can give the reasons for the approach.
I suppose it's whenever the writer has become aware that at this point the reader could reasonably ask, "Why have you gone in that direction and not that direction?" then that kind of question is appropriate.

Interviewer: What about question number two?

Respondent: Yes, so there I've used two of those kinds of questions, one after the other. The second question is actually just a way of making the first question more specific. The two questions are actually just aspects of the same question. I have said it can be argued that it does, and my guess is that this would be the introduction to a series of points.
I think that's a sort of convention that I have developed where I've asked a few questions, and then in what follows I'll go about answering them. I think it's also a way of introducing a new line of argument without it being too abrupt, because if the readers had some questions posed, it's a natural introduction to what's going to be said next.

Interviewer: Is there any other effect that you wanted to create?

Respondent: Other than the points I made about question one, I think I would just add that I think if a 20,000 word document were nothing but evidence and arguments, without any of these kind of stylistic – I think it would be much less readable, without posing questions.
I mean, strictly speaking, you could just remove all these questions perhaps and rewrite them in another way but I think it would be less easy to read and less digestible. I think questions like this posed at certain points make it a smoother reading experience.

Interviewer: Okay, good; number three?

Respondent: Yes, as far as I can see, the questions in that extract are entirely appropriate for the material. It sounds like this comes to the conclusion for something, because it ends with – and some open questions are not answered. So yes, that seems like an appropriate time to me to raise questions, including questions that haven't been answered.

Interviewer: Okay, so in general, to what extent do you think the use of questions in academic writing is appropriate?

Respondent: Yes. In specific contexts, I think it could be entirely appropriate, yes.

Interviewer: Okay, this is really interesting. Can we look back at example 2, please? Yes, when reading these questions I felt that these questions are arguments in themselves. I thought that I've kind of expected your answer. I think it's very sophisticated. It got my attention and made me want to continue reading to see if the answer you gave matches my expectations.

Respondent: That's a really good point. That's – it's quite hard to articulate. Perhaps that's the difference between the questions that I have used and the questions here. My guess is that the questions raised in extract three are going to be questions with which the audience is already familiar. They're probably the questions that were being asked all along, and they're just repeated here.
But as you say, the questions that I have used – because they are very specific and they're loaded with certain terms, they are sort of arguments in themselves. They're arguments in the sense that they narrow down the field of enquiry to something quite specific. So yes, that's another kind of function of these questions: to direct the enquiry, in a way.
That in itself is a kind of argument, I suppose. There's an argumentative dimension to them; I suppose I would say that. Yes, that's an interesting point.

Interviewer: It is. Okay, here I have a list of all the questions found in your dissertation. There were about 20 questions.

Respondent: Really? I see (Laughter).

Interviewer: First, can we talk about this first example, please? A question mark was used in the title of a chapter. Could you explain this to me, please? What is the purpose of the question mark in the title?

Respondent: Yes. Titles of chapters which include question marks; that's reasonably widely used, and I would have borrowed the form of that title from chapters that I have seen in other books. What I have noticed is that academics will – so in this case I am referring to a thesis of a particular writer. The reason I have included the question mark is because the chapter is asking whether that thesis is correct or not.
I have seen that – you'll have an academic title, and the book will have whatever its name will be, and there will be subheadings for the chapters. Often the chapters will have question marks in them. Usually when there is a question mark it is a way of raising the question of whether some particular thesis is right. So yes; here, this is – I mean, Samuel Huntington plays a big part in that chapter, and the title is just a way of alerting the reader to the fact that the chapter is about his thesis, and the fact it will be called into question.

Interviewer: Okay, nice! Any comments on the frequency of questions in your dissertation?

Respondent: Well, if I had to guess, I'd say I've probably used it more often than a lot of people would, 20 times. I might have used it too often, actually, without realising. I tend to think that it's a very effective tool when you're writing a long piece of work, but it's possible there are just too many here, and it might be distracting or whatever.
But certainly at the time I felt that the questions were good ways of directing the reader to what was coming up.

Interviewer: They were. Okay, so may I ask you about some of these questions and what you wanted to convey by using this question in this particular context in number two.

Respondent: Okay. I think I would just say that what I've said about my other uses of questions – I mean, perhaps the use of the question here is very slightly different to the others, in the sense that – let's see.
I suppose that is not really an open question. The question is constructed very carefully to connect up claims that have gone before and claims that follow. I think it would be apparent to the reader that it's not as if the question is being posed and I don't have some kind of answer in mind, because I then go on to lay out what I think the answer is, straight away.
In a way, it's almost inaccurate perhaps to call it a question. It has a question mark in it, but I think of it more like a way of articulating what is being said more clearly. I think it makes more clear to the reader what's being argued for. It's not intended to suggest that I don't know what the answer to that is, because I immediately go on and go about answering it.

Interviewer: Okay, how about the third one?

Respondent: Yes, I would say of that exactly what I said about the previous one, and for all the same reasons. I think it's playing the same role and it's more like a transition than an actual question, I suppose.

Interviewer: Is it okay to say to tell you what I understood from this as a reader- ?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Well, I believe that writers can use questions for different functions and purposes.
                       So, for example, let's have a look at the third one. Here, I thought there was a kind of irony, maybe? "Could Amis really have believed that…?" I guess that this question was meant to say that you don't really believe it? Is that right?

Respondent: Yes, I think you're absolutely right, actually. One thing I think I'd say is that – yes. If I were to rewrite this, my slight sort of concern about that is I think the question is, if anything, too leading, perhaps.
                       In a way, to say, "Could he really have believed…?" I almost think it sounds a little – this is now me criticising my own work. But I now think that sounds slightly sarcastic, perhaps, and I think perhaps that was slightly intentional. I think that was a misjudgement on my part. If I was to rewrite it, I don't think I would give it that particular inflection. I think I'd make it sound slightly different.
                        I have some reservations about the way that's phrased, and I think it could be put better (Laughter).

Interviewer: Sorry I didn't mean-

Respondent: It's all right.

Interviewer: Okay. So does this one differ from the previous one?

Respondent: Yes. There's a difference between the question here and this question, between two and three. The difference is something like this. This first question, in number two, is more argumentative, in the sense that it lays out certain claims and then I immediately go on to go about justifying them.
                       I feel like in the second case there's a certain kind of compression in that question. That question clearly suggests a lot of things, and I feel like they're perhaps not clear enough; they need expanding upon. It's as if there's a kind of – this is more assertive in some way, and less open. Number two is more of an open question, perhaps.
                       So with number three, there's a need to expand this; there's a need to expand it to bring the reader in more, because there I feel it needs unpacking; it needs expanding, or something like that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, right. Can we look at the others, please?

Respondent: Yes, number four. I think number four, both questions are playing the same role as in number two, because I open them by saying, "The deep question which this point raises is…" So again, they're playing the role of a transition; a transition which focuses in on what is I want to say.
                       Because I think this would have come – this must be later on in the piece of work, so I must have said lots of things by this point, and so there's a sense that you could say a lot of different things about what has been said, and I want to narrow the reader down so they know exactly what I am going to move onto: something like that. I would call them transitional questions, something like that.

Interviewer: Okay. Also what's interesting here, in this one, you answered this one –At the end, you say there is no obvious answer. I was not sure if you are referring to these two questions at the beginning.

Respondent;   Well, firstly, when I say there is no obvious answer, I am referring to a character that is of the view – he realises there is no obvious answer. But it is deliberately phrased in such a way that I am also saying, on my own behalf, that there's not an obvious answer to the two foregoing questions.
I actually think – just looking at it briefly, I do think the paragraph could be clarified a little to make it a bit more obviously that's the connection, but that is the intended connection. I have intended to say that both for me and on the part of the book that I am referring to, the questions are not obviously answered.

Interviewer: Yes. In fact, this was the feeling I got from it. Just wanted to make sure I got right.

Respondent: Okay. That's good.

Interviewer: Then in number five, you asked a question and then you said, "To put this another way." And then asked another question. Is it a kind of paraphrasing?

Respondent: Yes, that's another technique. Let me think. Well, it's interesting you picked that up. So I think the purpose of the phrase, 'to put this another way' – you could say that the second question is, strictly speaking, not a version of the first question. They are two different things. The use of the phrase 'to put this another way' is itself intended argumentatively.
So it's supposed to establish that the second question is of relevance to the first. My guess is that I will then have gone on to explain why it is that they are both versions of the same question. So yes, strictly speaking, they are two different things, and I want to argue for that they are one and the same. I think I go on to argue that.

Interviewer: What effect did you want to create here?

Respondent: The effect, I suppose, is that – I think I put it like this. I think it would be that it's not – perhaps it's not obvious that the second question is a version of the first. It's hard because it's out of context. It's hard for me to imagine how it hooks up with stuff.
All I can say about that, I think, is that the rest of the chapter that accompanied this is what establishes that those questions are asking the same thing. Taken on their own, it's quite hard for me to reconstruct whatever the connection is between them, exactly.
But I take it that, in context, there is a connection that is established.

Interviewer: Okay, and then, is number six like number two? No.

Respondent: No, I don't think so, because we spoke about how – because I said, "Could Amis really believe…?" this sort of thing, and whether that's the right kind of language and so on. I think number six is completely appropriate, because that is the question I go on to answer, and it's pretty carefully specified. That is exactly what I am interested in, and the reason I ask it is just to show the reader that that's what I am going to go on to talk about. I think again, it's really a way of focusing what I am doing. It's just a question of refocusing by posing a question; something like that.

Interviewer: Okay, and number seven I guess is the same.

Respondent: Yes, again, in number seven, the question, "How and why is…" That is, strictly speaking, something that you could just delete and replace with something. But it's there because that would be a slightly awkward reading experience. I think the question is a kind of nice way of connecting up two different aspects of the text, and I think it would just be a less smooth process without it.

Interviewer: Okay, good. Well, thank you very much for this. That's the last of this section. Would you like to have a break?

Interviewer: Okay, the last section of our interview is going to be about writing in academic settings in general. Here are two different views by two different people about whether students should express their opinions in their writing or not. Would you please have a look at these two different opinions, and then tell me to what extent you agree with each one.

Respondent: Well, I would disagree with the first opinion, because I think opinions and criticism are central to a dissertation, even at master's level. I suppose it's true, of course, that the student is going to be less knowledgeable than the person who is going to be reading it. That's true, but I don't take that as a reason for not giving opinions. I take it that as long as an opinion is backed up with valid reasoning and evidence then there's no reason for objecting to it out of hand, only on the grounds that the person doesn't have certain kinds of knowledge. If they have enough knowledge to give a critical view of some topic, and establish whatever it is they're claiming, then I don't see what the objection would be to them giving their opinion.

Interviewer: Okay, so were you holding this view when you were writing your dissertation, that you should be critical in your writing?

Respondent: Yes. I was definitely aware that there would be an argument, an underlying argument, which I'd want to make a case for, and if I held the first of these two views, then it would have been very hard to make that argument, because I wouldn't have felt justified in it.
                      Whereas, by talking with my supervisor and doing research, I was able to establish the argument and develop the grounds for it. Yes, I think that's what I'd say. Is this the kind of answer that you need to this?

Interviewer: Yes, thank you. My other question here is to do with the resources that students might make use of. I have here a list of some of these resources like supervisors, friends, lecturers, books, etc. So when you wrote your dissertation, did you get help from any of these?

Respondent: Yes. My supervisor read drafts of each chapter individually, and gave me fairly detailed feedback on each one, so that was a major source of help. I had conversations about the major topics in the dissertation with colleagues in the department as well – I mean other students, and so on.
                      People made useful suggestions and recommended books, as well; they recommended particular things to read. I also spoke to other lecturers; I spoke to a number of lecturers in the department who were also helpful in conversation. Obviously I haven't had an English Language tutor.
                      Other tutors and lecturers – well, that's the same. I didn't speak – well, I spoke to some PhD students, actually, who had done master's degrees, so I suppose they

would come under the ex-master's heading. I didn't read any other dissertations. I read a range of academic books; not grammar, vocabulary, or writing books. They were all content for the material.

Yes, I surveyed a number of journal articles, primarily from online databases. There are websites to which I referred; mainly news websites and some online journals that publish on the web, as well.

Others: I suppose television might be 'other'. Some television documentaries, which I have also mentioned in there, I referred to as well.

Interviewer:	Okay, right. So in general, all these helped. If we just start with your supervisor. Did he ever, for example, say that – he or she?
Respondent:	She is a she, yes.
Interviewer:	She. So in her comments did she ever comment, for example, in the use or your choice of certain words?
Respondent:	Most of the comments were about the content, but occasionally, very rarely, she would highlight a particular phrase or word, and usually, if there was a criticism of it, it would be that – and this happened a few times – I had perhaps at least implied that I had established something. If she felt that there hadn't been the necessary argumentation for it, or whatever, as it were, that claim wasn't justified. So she might highlight a phrase and say, "Can you really demonstrate this degree of confidence?" There would be a number of phrases that she would highlight in each of the chapters and say, "Has this really been established at this point, and will the reader be persuaded by it?" That happened a few times.
Interviewer:	Okay, what about books and journal articles? I think it happens sometimes that, when we read, we sometimes acquire some words, some phrases, expressions, you know. Then we re-use them in our writing subconsciously, maybe. But did it ever happen to you that you were conscious about the use of some certain words, expressions?
Respondent:	Yes. Would general writing techniques come under that heading? There are two in particular of which I am aware. One would be the use of rhetorical questions; perhaps two questions, one after another. I have noticed a number of academics had used that, and it has struck me as a very effective way of communicating. I think have reproduced that technique. Almost without being aware of it, I think; it just strikes me as an effective way of communicating, and it has kind of crept into my writing. There is another technique which I have noticed that some academics use. You'll have a sentence, and it will be interrupted by a dash, and then there will be some kind of sub-sentence, sub-clause, whatever, which further specifies what the sentence is about. Then there will be another dash and then the sentence continues. I have found that a very effective tool sometimes. I have used that, I think, a few times in the dissertation. That is very much a technique that I have picked up from academic writing. I wasn't aware of it until the last few years, perhaps. Actually, and one other that just occurs to me: there's another thing that I have seen in some academic writing which I think I have started to reproduce. It's the way that – I don't know how to describe it. You will have a sentence, and it would perhaps have come to a natural close. But rather than ending on a full stop, you will have a kind of long dash, and then a reiteration of what the sentence is about in a slightly different form. I have been

making use of that, as well, because it's almost a way of narrowing down, and making more specific, the meaning of the initial sentence.
I have noticed there are a number of academics that use it very efficiently. That would be a third technique that I have just picked up and started – it's a way of very much clarifying what you are saying. I find it helps to clarify; it is useful for that reason.

Interviewer: So may I ask again what effects does this technique or could this technique have?

Respondent: I think it's that – so if we imagine one of those sentences without that extra bit in the middle, the sentence by itself might be very slightly vague. It might be that it could be made a bit precise. I suppose including an extra phrase or sentence in-between dashes is a way of just adding some extra precision.
Of course, there are lots of other ways of making it more precise, but I think it's just a way of being extra precise about the meaning of something. The way it works, in my experience, is that the additional sentence between the dashes is a restatement of the rest of the sentence, but in a slightly different form.
Somehow, hearing the same statement in two slightly different forms is just by itself a clarification and can be useful.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Could it be also for emphasis?

Respondent: Yes, it can be. I think it's probably a bit of both. Emphasis is certainly one of the things it can achieve, yes.

Interviewer: Okay, I'm just wondering: could we also use this technique but not only for clarification but to talk about our own – to express our own opinion about what's being said? Could we do that, for example, to include our own opinion in this sentence between dashes?

Respondent: I don't think so, and the reason I would say that is – I have never done that. My guess is that if you were to include this kind of sub-clause with your own opinion, I think if anything it would make the meaning less clear. You would have this statement in the abstract, and then you would have an extra lump in the middle of the sentence, and then you'd go back into the main sentence. My guess is that there would be a tension between the two, because you'd have your opinion nested in the middle somewhere.
It's just speculating here. My guess is that it would be more difficult to read. I think it would be less clear overall.

Interviewer: Okay. Now let's move to another question. When we talked about language, and the use of 'I' to refer to ourselves, you said at the beginning that you'd been taught not to use them; it's a convention in the field. Is there anything else that you have been taught not to use? For example, you have been taught not to use certain verbs, certain expressions?

Respondent: Hmm. I can't think of specific ones. I think, in a way, we have a handbook for example that tells you there are certain technical conventions to follow to do with referencing, footnotes, and these kind of things. Beyond that, on the question of style, it really just says that academic writing has to be formal, and that you mustn't mention yourself in the first person. That kind of thing. But it doesn't give many specifics. I think it's because a sense of what formal writing is like is largely intuitive.
I suppose there probably are some textbooks out there that will explain exactly how to write formal English, but it seems to me something that you just pick up

by reading. It's not something I would ever have explicitly worked out. It's just something you drift into, and then as your essays are corrected, and things like this, over the years, you just learn, I suppose, that's the appropriate way to communicate in this setting.

Interviewer:

Okay. My other question here is about the readers of your dissertation. I have a list here of the possible people who might read your dissertation, for example, a supervisor, the markers, academics from the same field, a student from the same field, or people from outside who might be interested in your topic.
My question: when you wrote your dissertation, have you thought about any of these people as your audience?

Respondent:

Yes. Well, I was thinking about my supervisor's reactions immediately, because every time I completed a rough draft of something, I would email it to her. That would be the first reaction I would get, and that would be perhaps the prime reader I had in mind throughout the process, partly because I was responding to her criticisms, as well.
The markers, obviously, I was considering, in the sense that I had a copy of the mark scheme, and I knew approximately what was expected. I would keep in mind that certain patterns were expected to be followed, and that there should be a certain kind of structure. I knew roughly what they expected, so I had them in mind throughout.

Interviewer:

Okay. So were thinking about, for example, the way they – I mean, for example, I have heard that sometimes when the student writer knows the marker, he or she would read the markers' ex-students' dissertations for example, or the markers' own books and writing. They would ask about what are the things they prefer. In fact, I've been told that some supervisors advised their students to read and cite some of the marker's work. So have you ever thought about that?

Respondent:

I didn't know who the markers were at that time. But I knew it would be people from my department, and there's a reasonable continuity among the members of staff, and so I knew approximately what kind of work is expected by them, and I knew what the interests of the people are.
One of the reasons I chose the particular topics that I did is that I overlapped with the interests of a number of people in the department. Going back to what you were saying, I had my supervisor emailing from time to time, pointing out bits of language and saying, "Perhaps you are not in a position to establish this claim here with such confidence."
I don't think she would ever have said – I don't think she ever said, "You need to be more assertive here." Actually, when I submitted a draft, for example, of the last chapter, initially I think it concluded in a way that was too assertive. My supervisor had noticed that, and wanted me in a way to withdraw, to some extent, from the position that I had come to. She just didn't feel that I had reached it. She felt in a way that it wasn't fully supported by what had come before.
So her primary input was to say, "You need to back-pedal slightly from some of the more assertive…" But she only said that occasionally; it wasn't a major thing. She would just suggest that from time to time.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm. So can we say, then, that at the beginning, when you started writing your dissertation, you were a little bit assertive in your claims? Using or choosing words and expressions that sound strong and then your supervisor advised you sometimes to change words or…?

Respondent: Yes. Well, I think one other reason for that is that I was submitting first drafts to my supervisor. First of all, I am never happy with a first draft. I want to revise it many times. The first draft, I think, often – certain ideas are fresh in the mind and they go down on paper in a certain way which is perhaps – certain claims are perhaps made a bit too directly, and they need just to be surrounded with the necessarily backup and support and so on.
I feel like in a first draft, the material has kind of poured out, and I need a few weeks to reflect on it, and then I can come back and start revising it. My supervisor's comments were usually in line with that sort of criticism.

Interviewer: Okay, interesting. May I ask about the kind of expression or word that you used, and that your supervisor thought was too assertive?

Respondent: Yes. I can't remember the precise wording, but I know that when I submitted the last chapter in a first draft form, there were some concluding points that were – I suppose I would call them directly political. I think my supervisor felt that it was not entirely appropriate for the kind of piece of work that it was. She felt that, in a way, the reader needed to come to their own conclusions about what had been said, and that I was perhaps being too insistent in driving home a very particular reading of what I had said.
She would rather it be at least slightly more open in order for people to draw their own conclusions. I can't remember exactly the wording, but it was the fact that it was perhaps turning into more of a kind of piece of political argumentation, which my supervisor was not completely happy with.

Interviewer: Okay. We talked about the markers, and how about the academics from the same field? Have you thought about them?

Respondent: Yes, well I was aware that the markers would be academics from the same field, and I was aware that the dissertations are reviewed by external examiners, as well, when the department is reviewed. I knew that academics from other universities would be surveying it.
I know that the dissertation is available, and I know that academics can look at them, and they do sometimes. It's the same for students; post-graduate students pick up dissertations and PhD theses from the department and read those from time to time. I was aware that could happen as well.

Interviewer: Okay, so being aware of all these readers of your dissertation: while writing, have you ever thought about using certain language to make your writing easier or more sophisticated to make an impression, for example?

Respondent: Well, I think I go in the opposite direction in the sense that there are really, in my experience of reading academic articles and books as well – especially books, especially in literary studies in my area – there are two categories, I would say, very broadly speaking.
There are some scholars in literary studies who write in an extremely inaccessible way. It's extremely hard to unpack the argumentation; it's extremely hard to see exactly what claims they are making. They use a lot of very heavy theoretical language, and it's often a frustrating reading experience. I have spoken to other academics who feel the same way about certain kinds of publication.
My response to that is to try to write as clearly as possible. I am sort of constantly trying to clarify the way that I write, and I feel like since I wrote this, my writing has become a lot clearer even again. I feel that I am writing much more clearly now than ever before.

It's partly to do with separating out, as far as possible, everything that you want to establish, and breaking it down into smaller components. I suppose my target reader, in a way, if I keep in mind an ideal, is that I want to write in such a way that someone who is not familiar with the material could understand it and make sense of it. That is really what I am aiming for. That would encompass all these different readers.

I would prefer it if I could write something, and, say, someone from my family who knows nothing about the area could read it right through and make sense of it. I don't think there is any reason for me to write in a way that would be inaccessible to most people. That is what I try to avoid.

Interviewer: Great. That's why: I am not from the field but I just – I read it and understood it.

Respondent: Okay, that's good (Laughter). Excellent.

Interviewer: Okay, and that will lead us to my last question. Is there anything that you would like to add to what we have just discussed? Anything to say about it?

Respondent: Hmm. Let me think. Well, really just to reiterate that there are some things – I haven't read this in ages. I know there will be uses of language that appear in it that, with which I would be less happy now. Some of the ones you've pointed out, for instance; I think the rhetorical question which we mentioned – I think it was number three on one of the pages. It's just not a way that I would write anymore. I don't want to establish anything by suggestion. I want to have laid out exactly what my claims are, and clarified them as far as possible.

So yes, my overriding objective is clarity in this sort of writing, and I think I have gained in clarity since writing this dissertation.

Interviewer: Good! Anything else?

Respondent: I don't think so, no. I don't think so.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you very much; that was really helpful.

Respondent: Okay, good. I enjoyed taking part in your research. It's very interesting for me to reflect explicitly on how I implicitly go about using language. It really got me thinking about how I approach writing!

Interviewer: That's great, I'm glad to hear that! Thank you!

Appendix [J]: Codebook for the interview data

	Code	Definition
Codes related to writer's beliefs and knowledge (or lack of knowledge) about academic writing, discipline and disciplinary differences		
1.	Beliefs about appropriate academic writing	Writer's general beliefs about APPROPRIATE academic writing and appropriate academic writing in student/expert genres: what language should/shouldn't be used in academic writing. (For instance, a writer believes that in academic writing we should be 'objective', 'impersonal', and 'formal as opposed to informal' and that we should avoid repetition).
2.	Beliefs about different kinds of research	For instance, the writer says he/she used/didn't use a stance/engagement marker because of the different kind of research being conducted (e.g., quantitative vs. qualitative research). (For instance, the writer says quantitative researchers would usually avoid referring to themselves by first person pronouns and prefer using THE AUTHOR instead. Whereas qualitative researchers would feel more free to refer to themselves by first person pronouns.)
3.	Beliefs about discipline and disciplinary differences	For instance, the writer says he/she used/didn't use a stance or engagement marker because it is a convention or common/uncommon in his/her field. These beliefs may be accurate or misguided beliefs.
4.	Knowledge/lack of knowledge	This code concerns writers' KNOWLEDGE or LACK OF KNOWLEDGE about academic language.
Codes related to writer's personality, preferences, and development		
5.	Writer's development and change	For instance, the writer says his/her writing has developed or changed since he/she wrote their dissertation. The writer also explains how and why his/her writing has developed or changed.
6.	Writer's emotion	For instance, the writer says he/she used/didn't use a stance/engagement marker because he/she was 'scared' of receiving criticism from the supervisor.
7.	Writer's performance	For instance, the writer says he/she used a word or a phrase just to 'convey' that he/she is good at English, to 'show off' and 'to impress readers' (e.g. using Latin terms or infrequent academic words), or to show supervisors that

		he/she listens to their advice.
8.	Writer's personal preferences	It includes writer's preferred/dispreferred writing style, tone, authorial presence, rhetorical structure, argumentation structure, etc. (For instance, a writer says he prefers to keep writing largely objective and avoid personal pronouns).
9.	Writer's self-confidence	The writer says he/she used/didn't use a stance/engagement marker because he/she didn't feel confident enough (for example, to assert a statement or include readers), or felt too confident (about his/her results).
Codes related to other external factors		
10	Influence of culture	For instance, the writer says he/she used/didn't use/over-used a stance or engagement marker because of the influence of their L1 or their own culture. (For instance, Arabs tend to avoid the 'I' and instead they use 'we' to show modesty and politeness).
11	Influence of explicit instruction received in the UK	The writer says he/she learned about the use of a stance or engagement marker from a course or a module they took before or during their master's. (For instance, learning that personal pronouns could be used in academic writing).
12	Influence of previous education	For instance, the writer says he/she used/did not use a stance/engagement marker because of what she/he has been taught previously. (For instance, avoiding the use of 'I' because they were taught that 'I' is not formal.)
13	Influence of spoken language	For instance, the writer says he/she used a particular stance or engagement marker because he/she is more familiar with this marker as it is used more often in speech. (For instance, The writer says SEEM is more frequent in speaking so it's the first word that comes to mind when writing.)
14	Influence of the department	For instance, the writer says he/she used/didn't use a stance/engagement marker because of the influence of the department.
15	Influence of time constraints	The writer says time constraints might have pushed him/her to just write and use a stance/engagement marker without thinking much about it.
16	Sources and resources of help	For instance, the writer says he/she has acquired a stance or engagement marker through reading in the subject, from the departmental handbook, online thesaurus, vocabulary books, etc.
17	Supervisor's advice and influence	SUPERVISOR'S ADVICE: The writer says he/she used/avoided/changed a stance/engagement marker in his/her dissertation because his/her supervisor suggested (explicitly) adding/avoiding/changing it. (For instance, a writer says she used the word PARADOXICALLY because her supervisor suggested adding it to her writing because

		it's more formal)
		SUPERVISOR'S INFLUENCE: The writer says he/she used/didn't use a particular stance/engagement marker because he/she believed (or had the impression) that his/her supervisor would look upon this use or non-use of this marker favourably. (For instance, a writer says she didn't use the word APPEAR because she thought her supervisor/advisors wouldn't like it because the word APPEAR is associated with appearance and it's less certain than SEEM)
18	Examiners' feedback on final draft	FEEDBACK received from supervisors or markers: For instance, a writer says the marker of his dissertation criticised his excessive use of "flowery expressions". Another writer says the marker praised his use of language because it "engages the reader".
19	Impact of interview on interviewees	For instance, a writer says this interview 'really' got him to think about how he used language. Another writer says the interview made her realise how she used language.
20	Uncertainty	For instance, the writer says he/she is unsure why he/she used a word or a phrase. Or he/she cannot remember why they used a word or a phrase.
21	Unconsciousness	The writer says he/she used a stance/engagement marker without realising. Or she/he didn't realise how many times they used a stance/engagement marker.
22	Writer's self-evaluation	For instance, the writer is criticising his/her use (or frequency of use) of a stance or engagement marker; and/or expressing his/her feeling about his/her use (or frequency of use) of a stance or engagement marker (e.g., feeling happy/not happy, surprised/not surprised).