

# CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

## ***6.1 Overview***

In this chapter I set out the main findings of the thesis, focussing on the contributions the study makes to theories of computer mediated communication, genre analysis and the appraisal framework. The thesis presented a methodological approach to the study of CMC-mediated texts, in which it was demonstrated that rhetorical purpose, interpersonal orientation and the linguistic realisation of texture in whole texts are intrinsically related. This approach was able to reveal new insights into each of the three main fields of enquiry related to the study, and suggested further applications of such a framework. The purpose of this chapter is to summarise these insights and contributions to each of these three fields—CMC, genre, and appraisal—and to outline a number of related areas of investigation that were begun during the course of the research, and which were enabled by the framework itself. Limitations to the study on which the approach was based are discussed in the context of summarising the findings. The chapter begins with a discussion of the relevance of the findings to the study of CMC. This is followed by a focus on genre, after which findings related to the appraisal framework become the focus of discussion. The chapter then describes further applications of the framework to related areas of investigation.

### ***6.1.1 CMC***

The thesis offered a theoretical perspective which differs from many previous investigations of CMC discourse communities, by approaching the investigation of list interaction through analysing the posts to the list as the primary unit of analysis. In addition, rather than accepting that such interaction can be accounted for almost entirely by reference to the dimension of *medium* (i.e. the written ↔ spoken dimensions) of registerial *mode*, my approach expands the parameters of mode and suggests below (section 6.2.7) sets of sub-dimensions related to both

*medium* and *channel* (see e.g. Hasan 1985, in Halliday and Hasan 1985). This approach to *mode* entails a view of CMC written interaction as more or less *interactive* (at 1<sup>st</sup> order register,) or *involved* (at 2<sup>nd</sup> order register)<sup>1</sup>.

In taking the *post*, or contribution to the list discussion, as the primary unit of analysis a concurrent *genre* perspective is able to highlight key aspects of this form of interaction. Because a genre perspective on the texts entails a notion of *social purpose*, the model was specifically concerned not only with the textual meanings most commonly associated with *mode*, but more particularly with interpersonal relations (i.e. *tenor*) at the level of context of situation, and with ideological meanings at the level of context of culture. Each of these aspects of the context of interaction are implicated in analysing texts of this type, such that resources of mood, modality and evaluation are foregrounded in interpreting both single contributions as instances of this mode of communication, and in generalising common strategies of interpersonal positioning found in the corpus as a whole. Further, texts involved in discussions of this nature must be analysed with a view to participants' need to signal alignment and affiliation. This means that the use of evaluative resources also textures the contributions in ways that signal interpersonal positioning in relation to social values and beliefs.

Posts to the list as *discourse community* represent a type of *speech genre*, what Bakhtin (1986: 78) refers to as the "relatively stable typical *forms of the construction of the whole*" (italics in original). The study identified a number of 'relatively stable typical forms of construction of whole posts', and noted that listmembers use these forms as flexible templates or conventionalised social practices in which they manage their identities as textual personae. The methodological approach incorporated a notion of 3 Layers or 'tracks' of analysis which served as a descriptive device for outlining the way in which posters creatively reproduced such 'relatively stable typical forms of whole posts'.

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<sup>1</sup> Mod 2, part 1, section 2.1 discusses orders of register. Also see Martin (1992: 571-572), and Halliday (1978). See also Chapter 1: *Figure 1.1*

This creative reproduction of *group norms* resulted in posts which were the site of woven-together stages or units realised in turn by variations of culturally recognisable *core-genres*. For example, such *mixed-genre* texts regularly stage their texts in the service of generally argumentative and affiliative social purposes, as well as incorporate the previous posts of other listmembers in order to *recontextualise* their contributions. Attitudinal meanings functioned to both signal such staging and to signal affiliation with respect to other listmembers.

The relationship between the various stages or segments of texts, and the boundaries of the texts themselves, is conceived of as *layered by frames of coherence*. The notion of frames of coherence is similar to that of Hasan's (1996) *frame of relevance*, which she likens to a 'context of situation – for interaction', which she further specifies as something which is negotiated amongst interactants in a given environment. *Framing* is the overall term used to group together all the ways that texts signal their meanings—from overtly graphic signals such as lines of white space, asterisks, capitalisation, dashes, dots, etc, through to signalling changes in footing or tenor by means of evaluation, or addressivity and other ways of prospecting audience response.

The text-units of email-mediated communication and their staged organisation cannot theoretically be restricted to email, but the constraints of the technological mediation tend to promote certain textual realisations in interaction. It is therefore possible to provide a conventional set of repeated text-units common to almost all the texts in the study—as in *Figure 6.1* below—while at the same time maintaining that defining functional stages of the texts as a genre type is not warranted. That is to say, the set of texts cannot be said to represent a genre 'type', since their generic staging is not predictable in core-genre terms. Nevertheless, all the texts investigated could be defined as expository or argumentative in rhetorical purpose, and thus many of their features locate them close to exposition in a genre *topology*.

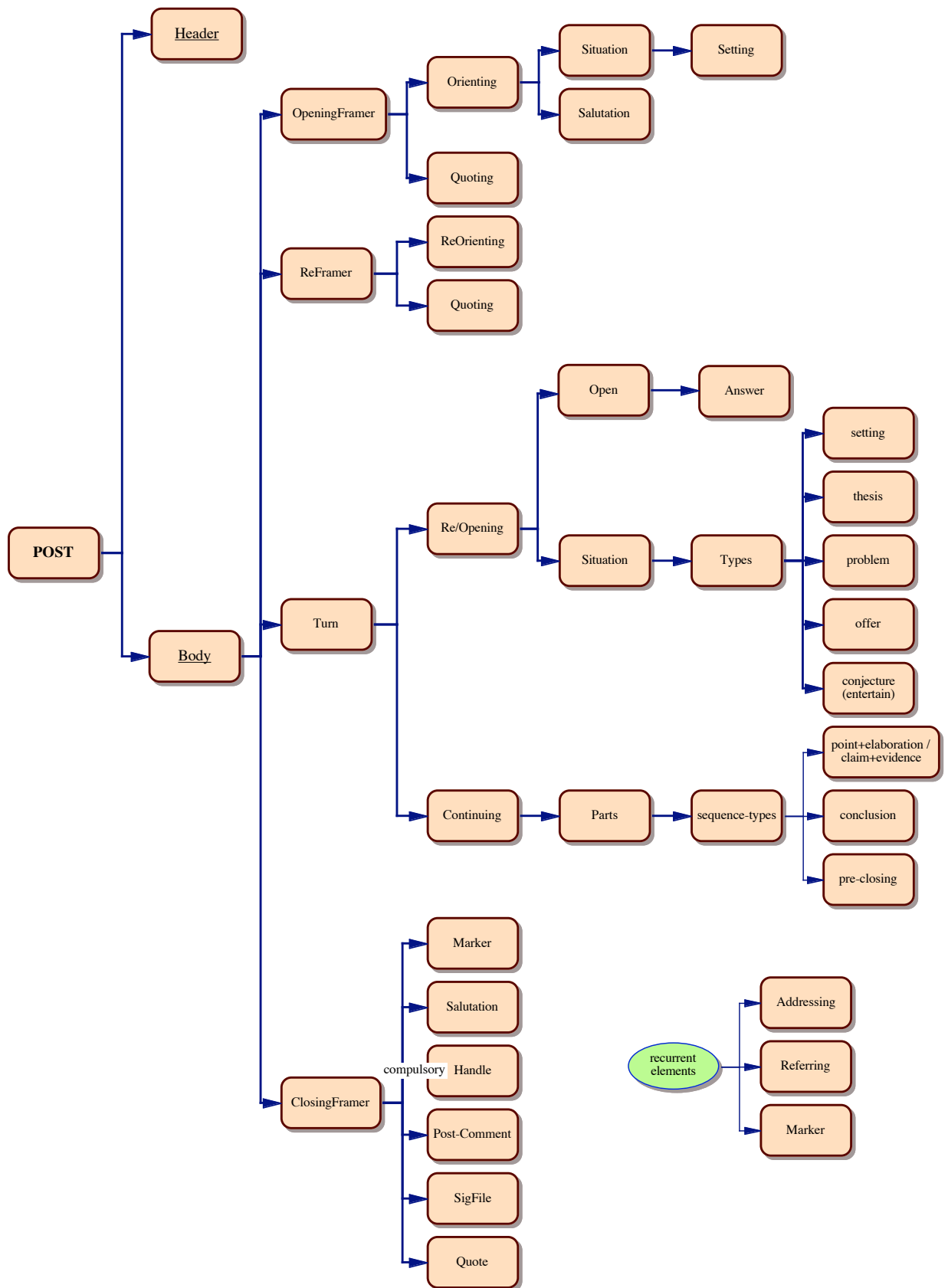


Figure 6.1: Conventional text-units of posts

Moreover, while email posts to a discussion list have often been classed as representative of *a genre*, I argue that such classification confuses issues of material context of situation with issues of textual context of situation. In order to clarify such issues of genre with respect to analysis of email posts, a distinction is proposed between the material form of a text's (re)production and distribution, and the content and staging of a text. This distinction is made between an email post (and any sub-types of email post)—classed as a matter of *text-type* (as defined by formatting and appearance due to the interface used)—and the content and staging conventions of the *Turns* of such posts (such as anecdote, explanation, argument, etc) which are classed as related to *genre*.

In making these distinctions, the framework developed focuses particularly on *re-contextualisation*. By *re-contextualisation* I refer to the ways in which contributors make clear the relevance of their post(s) to any previous contributions. The way in which a post responds to any quoted or referenced material classifies it as either *Response* or *Reply*. Overt, written and posted responses to the list may be directly responding to some previous contribution or responding to general ideas and topics, but in the case of *Replies*, the new material acts to add to, elaborate on, or enhance the previous material, as distinct from merely referencing it. This basic *orientation to response* on the part of contributors towards previous material forms the key underlying explanatory element in my framework. Orientation to response is a key factor in the development of the interactive context and the type of group dynamics engendered. In her comparative studies of email list interaction for example, Harrison (2003: 70) described a list as "successful" when the topics under discussion "normally received a response". I go further, and note that status and authority of any member of a group—an email list representing one type of group—rests almost entirely on the amount and type of contributors' responses to each poster's messages. To this end the framework incorporates a set of parameters of *responsivity* and *addressivity* which are detailed further below (6.2.5). Features relating to *orientation to response* together with profiles of *attitudinal disposition* together form the means

of characterising the positioning of textual personae in interaction, and of accounting for textual identity within discourse communities such as this one. Some proposed further work on textual identity is discussed in section 6.2.1 below.

In addition to distinguishing between Response types according to a post's orientation to previous material, a set of 5 categories of *text-type* style are identified. As discussed above, text-type style classifies the posts as technologically-mediated objects. These basic text-type styles are only relevant to email-mediated discussion lists and are identified through their orientation to response, taking into account both *responsivity* and *addressivity*. Features of *responsivity* and *addressivity* act to *re-contextualise* each new contribution to the discussion, and result in posts which signal their fundamental orientation to response using the following "text-type" styles:

- ◆ The overtly "interactive" style: simulated turn-taking, incorporating overt formatted interactivity.
- ◆ The "relevance - in" style: a short excerpt of a previous contribution is quoted and commented upon.
- ◆ The "post-appended" (post that motivated me) style: the whole of a previous post is appended to the end of a contribution.
- ◆ The "non-quoted" (I don't need to indicate relevance - you find it) style: there are no overt formatting features in the body of the post to recontextualise the contribution.
- ◆ The "announcement" style

Selection for text-type style also signals differences in communicative purpose. The longer *Turns* of the *relevance-in* style for example, use a relatively reflective, less spontaneous orientation than shorter more 'conversational' contributions such as found with the *simulated-interactive* style. These longer contributions therefore incorporate more recognisably 'written' generic conventions. The development of both text-type style preferences within a discourse community and the use of conventional sequences of text-units together with typical patterns of mapping functional stages onto such units also provides an avenue for invoking attitudinal stance, and for constructing textual identity. Thus, when marked behaviour in the use of group-conventional resources occurs, it tends to function as a signal of attitudinal stance. Once again, matters of text-type,

rhetorical purpose and linguistic realisation, are shown to be interrelated and act as sites of co-redundancy within such interactive contexts.

A similar observation on the findings may be made in terms of the common rhetorical organisation potential of these texts—in this case, the interrelationship of 'generic conventions', social purpose and linguistic realisation. A common occurrence is that invoked attitudes occur in the final or 'pre-final' sections of a *Turn*-unit. Invoked attitudes thus often functioned in summary evaluations, or appeared in the Reinforcement slot of staged argument genres, and acted to avoid overt negative appraisal of a target where such a target could be associated with addressees even indirectly. Such indirectly realised, *invoked* Attitudes (and targets of attitude) were observed to be a common feature of the representative texts, not only in the final stage of many posts and the final parts of "Turns", but also across the texts as a whole. Their dispersion provided one means of signalling changes or shifts in position or 'footing', but also acted to expand heteroglossic space by avoiding explicit negative evaluation and thus putting solidarity at risk. While these types of move were noted to occur regularly in closing sequences, the study did not compile statistics on the types and exact relative location of these ambiguously evaluative moves. However, since the corpus has been tagged for these moves, it is possible to complete this area of enquiry incorporating a new search programme in order to clarify the extent that invoked attitudes are typical of closing stages. A larger corpus of texts and comparative corpora derived from a different discourse community would enhance such a study, and determine whether this is a common feature of email-mediated interaction in general, or whether list-specific profiles are enabled through comparison.

The shifts in footing or stance common in pre-final sequences of these texts are realised by a combination of features. Such features commonly represent a shift in interpersonal orientation—'footing' or stance—since, relative to what has gone before, they act to orient 'outwards', to events outside the text, to the future,

and/or to the participants themselves, and are collectively labelled *interpersonal prospection*.

The framework developed both highlights the over-arching purpose of email interaction as sites for contestation of identity, and provides a fine-grained analytic tool for investigating how such contestation is carried out in instances and across sets of representative texts. Mode and technological mediation remains a contributing factor for the texture of these texts—allowing and constraining meanings by enhancing or reducing the level of contact or interactivity between participants. However, the ways in which participants weave together the intertextual meanings of the cultures with which they are familiar and which reference the ideological values and beliefs they bring to such interaction, are also matters of field and tenor, and so a view of the products of the interaction as examples of *mixed-genre* is adopted. A genre perspective enables a more abstract, 'higher' level conception of the texts in which features of each aspect of Register become a matter of *convergent coding* (Hasan 1996: 47) which in turn, indicate text organization towards a variety of purposes. It also allows conceptions such as *Layering* to be introduced as heuristic devices, which depend on combinations of metafunctional features. A genre perspective more fully reveals commonalities and typical forms in the texts, and provides avenues for insights into other aspects of the interactive context such as the prevalence of incidents of misunderstanding, heated reaction and the interpretation of offence. The prevalence of such *high involvement* contributions is in turn intrinsically related to social purpose of the interaction, in which the contestation and maintenance of identity results in texts whose overall rhetorical purpose is argumentative and hortatory. Indeed, many of the texts in the study made their meanings through reference to shared intertextual meanings which rely on high involvement for their full interpretation.

The contribution this study makes to the conception and investigation of genre is the focus of the next section.



### 6.1.2 Genre

As stated above, the texts instantiated by posts to a list are regarded as representative of a type of *mixed-genre*, comprised of stages common to culturally-recognised *core-genres*, but by no means consistent in their generic organisation. A number of conventions in formatting and functional staging were identified in the texts in the study, and their rhetorical mode was expository, commonly combining exemplum, argument, explanation and anecdote in making their claims. However, their description as a 'genre-type' is not warranted. Rather, they can be classed as more or less located close to the expository end of a spectrum of core-generic types, what Martin (2001 *inter alia*) describes as a *topology*. This highlights the need for genre analysis in general to distinguish between abstract concepts of core-genre types, in which functional stages are *realised* by common patterns of features of Register, and actual *instances* of texts in interaction, in which functional stages *instantiate* quite complex arrangements of embedded stages in which core-generic features may be recognised, and in which overall social purpose may be common.

Several extreme examples from the interaction were analysed in the thesis, yet each of the examples investigated could be shown to entail a common rhetorical purpose—to position self and others, and thereby imply an argument regarding the evaluation of a set of targets. Recall for example text [tvs228.56/stan33] in which the core-genre type limerick acted to position the writer with respect to both his audience and one member of the audience in particular. In order to do this, the writer made reference to the past contributions to the list as a means of arguing that it was better to be direct and state feelings than to obfuscate affect through use of verbose language. Although it was possible to identify claims, evidence, and targets of negative attitude in the text, this was not easily retrieved from the surface of the discourse. And yet, the main factor driving the appearance of this contribution was its rhetorical purpose related to the negotiation over identity. Functional staging in this case was carried by discrete stanzas, but did not necessarily map onto them.

Text [tvs75.14/frank] provides another example in which the rhetorical purpose of negatively evaluating the interaction of the list is evident, but in which there is no generic development of a recognisable argument. The rhetorical purpose means that the writer selects for a text-type and content more closely resembling a spontaneously created, spoken-like contribution than the recognisably staged genres of other written mediums. The 'claim + evidence' structure of argument is not available at the surface level of the discourse in this text, but is engendered at an abstract level in which the framing of interpersonal meanings and contexts of interaction in each unit leads to an interpretation of the text as hortatory in function.

The diagram below, adapted from Martin (2001: 317), shows the range of parameters he used in order to locate a number of genres common to the discipline of history. The diagram makes clear that the two example texts discussed above sometimes incorporate a number of the same parameters, and thus cannot be clearly defined as belonging to one or another common generic sub-type.

	Parameters	Text <i>[tvs228.56/stan33]</i>	Text <i>[tvs75.14/frank]</i>
1	prosodic appraisal	X	
	periodic appraisal	X	X
	thesis appraisal		
2	proposition	X	
	proposal		X
3.	tell		X
	record		

	explain/ reveal	X	
	probe		X
	argue	(X)	(X)
4	individual focus	X	X
	group + hero focus	X	
5	text time = field time		
	text-time ≠ field time	X	X
6	episodic unfolding in time	X	X
	causal unfolding	X	X
	internal unfolding	X	
7	anecdote		X
	exemplum		
	explanation	X	X
	argument [point + evidence]	(X)	(X)

*Figure 6.2: Multiple generic features of 2 example texts adapted from Martin (2001)*

Real texts, not only examples taken from this mode of interaction, cannot be simply assumed to follow common generic stages. While text-types and various text sub-types may follow conventional patterning as far as common units and framing conventions are concerned, the ways in which their *functional* staging is managed cannot be reduced to typical sequences despite common rhetorical purpose. For the texts in this study, because of a perceived common *rhetorical*

purpose, the model was concerned with features related to inter-personal relations and to ideological meanings (such as 'evaluative prosodies') as a means of interpreting each text as a staged *argument*. The sequence of such stages, however, cannot be posited *a priori*. The model of genre developed by this framework therefore leaves open the exact sequencing and inter-relationship of functional stages, and provides instead a means of locating liminal stages and framing devices which signal that changes or shifts in orientation (i.e. Register) are occurring.

Since social purpose is the overriding factor in the definition of any genre, the texts in the study were first determined as having a social purpose that was related to the maintenance of identity, and the construction of solidarity and alignment through strategies of positioning. In terms of the field of discussion, recurrent threads of discussion in fact concerned such topics as the relevance of attached signature files to the end of contributions as a means of identity, the real-world groups and activities that members engaged in, beliefs and values concerning religious worship, workplace relations, and gender identification, membership in other email lists, the nature of evil, and of course the group dynamics of the list itself. The dynamics of the group were variously likened to those of a family, a soap opera, a pool party, a bunch of bozos standing at a bus stop, a group of people in a diner, and the role functions of a fairy tale à la Vladimir Propp. Thus the topics themselves tended to promote explanation of self identity as a means of arguing for any position, and in response, other contributions would signal understanding and/or dis/alignment regarding the propositions previously put forward. The social purpose of list-members in exploring difference and constructing solidarity is realised through argument in which they position themselves and others in relation to ideological value systems. In turn, the texts which resulted are most closely related to the category of what Martin (1985) describes as *expository writing*, in which writers' social purpose is defined as *persuading to* and *persuading that* respectively (Martin 1985: 17). Although the corpora selected were based on argumentative

threads, this selection itself was based on the perception that list contributions were always the site of some hortatory purpose.

The framework is designed to provide a set of patterns common to a set of texts, particularly those that are used within a discourse community in which participants recognise other members. Its focus is on the legitimated options for action that any participant can undertake at any given juncture of the unfolding of the discourse. This also includes specific institutional practices and their activity-sequences which are *legitimated* within a 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger 1991, Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1998, Wenger 1998). This means that 'genre' needs to be characterised at a variety of levels of delicacy by reference to both linguistic (synoptic) and discursive (dynamic) orientations, which take into account the development or contestation of the norms of the group's discursive practices over time.

Instead of using such patterns as evidence for this or that genre, I introduce the term *rhetorical organisation potential* to describe what is common or typical to the set(s) of texts. This 'potential' may or may not be realised in further instances in the discourse community, since legitimation operates dynamically through social actors negotiating their own practices. As with any corpus, the wider the set of instances, the closer the set can become to representing the norm, but because the study operated on a relatively small corpus of texts, the results of this study cannot be said to be definitive. At the same time, each new instance provides for a new representation of what is commonly or typically the case. Commonality or typicality does not cover every legitimate instance of course, and thus each individual text represents either a variation on a theme or a marked case of meaning-making in context. Any legitimation is then bound up in responses to an instance.

The framework also uses the device of Layers or tracks interrelated to signal shifts rather than strictly demarcated boundaries—as between stages in a

text—and in this way overlaying or clustering of features on different Layers is conceived as a way of identifying transitional phases (Gregory 1985) or boundary conditions (Hunston 1989) between text units or stages. This notion is based on the concept of *meta-redundancy* as derived from Bateson's (e.g. 1972) systems theory perspective.

The generic organisation of the *Turn* was a focus of part of the study. *Turn*-parts are given functional labels suggested by their content and sequence, and functionally labelled stages serve as examples of the way that these texts organise their *Turns* as mixed-genres whose purpose is typically argumentative in the service of constructing solidarity and maintaining identity. Elements of core-genre argument<sup>1</sup> were found in each of the texts analysed. The main feature of such arguments was a claim, either asserted or implied, related to the topic of discussion. These claims sometimes involve a positioning move, which act to align the writer with the addressee(s), a group with which the addressee(s) affiliated, or another group, through understood reference and evaluation. This means that claims are not necessarily overtly asserted. A recurrent feature of the arguments in the set of texts was that evaluations and also targets of such evaluations are implied rather than directly made.

The study also focused on Opening and finalising phases. For example, the function of REINFORCEMENT of the argument's main point was regularly identified in the closing units of the *Turn*, realised in these cases by *summary-evaluations*. In addition, there were often units whose function was that of CODA—material extra to the arguments in the *Turn* and making reference to the here and now of list interaction or material world concerns. Such CODA often featured *interpersonal prospection* in which the writer combined several features directed outward to the audience or the future. Their interpersonal function was partly a matter of discrete linguistic features such as acts of *Addressing*, and partly an effect of the rhetorical and registerial shift from the abstract concerns of an

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<sup>1</sup> [OBSERVATION] + CLAIM + EVIDENCE [SUPPORT] + REINFORCEMENT OF CLAIM.

exposition, to a context of leave-taking in which wider heteroglossic space was felt more appropriate.

In order to provide a 'set of patterns', the ways in which *attitudinal meanings* appear at regular intervals and thus help to signal staging in texts (e.g. via 'attitudinal prosodies') are one of the main tools the framework advocates. Evaluative strategies are related to each text's communicative purpose as reflected in the texts' use of recognisable, if mixed, generic structures and their staging. For example, *targets* of attitude are maintained in each primary stage, or part of a Turn, and so boundaries between functional stages are also suggested by a change in the target of appraisal. Target maintenance can provide a prosody by which texts are staged, while invoked and ambiguous Attitude provides a type of 'downbeat' of periodicity—complementary to the notion of AMPLIFICATION of Attitude (Martin & White 2005: 31). In the next section I turn to the appraisal framework, and outline the main contributions which the thesis makes to the conceptualisation and the grammar of appraisal.

### ***6.1.3 The Appraisal framework***

The thesis both proposes enhancements to the appraisal framework in the study of *invoked* attitude, and also highlights areas in which appraisal figures in the analysis of texts as generic potential. This section first discusses how strategies for invoking attitude are grouped according to the type of grammatical resources they employ or how easily or commonly a span of text is capable of invoking attitude. Invoked attitudes and targets of attitude are then noted as providing a diagnostic tool for identifying potential unit boundaries in the *rhetorical organisation* of texts, and as one means of investigating the *textual identity* of individual posters.

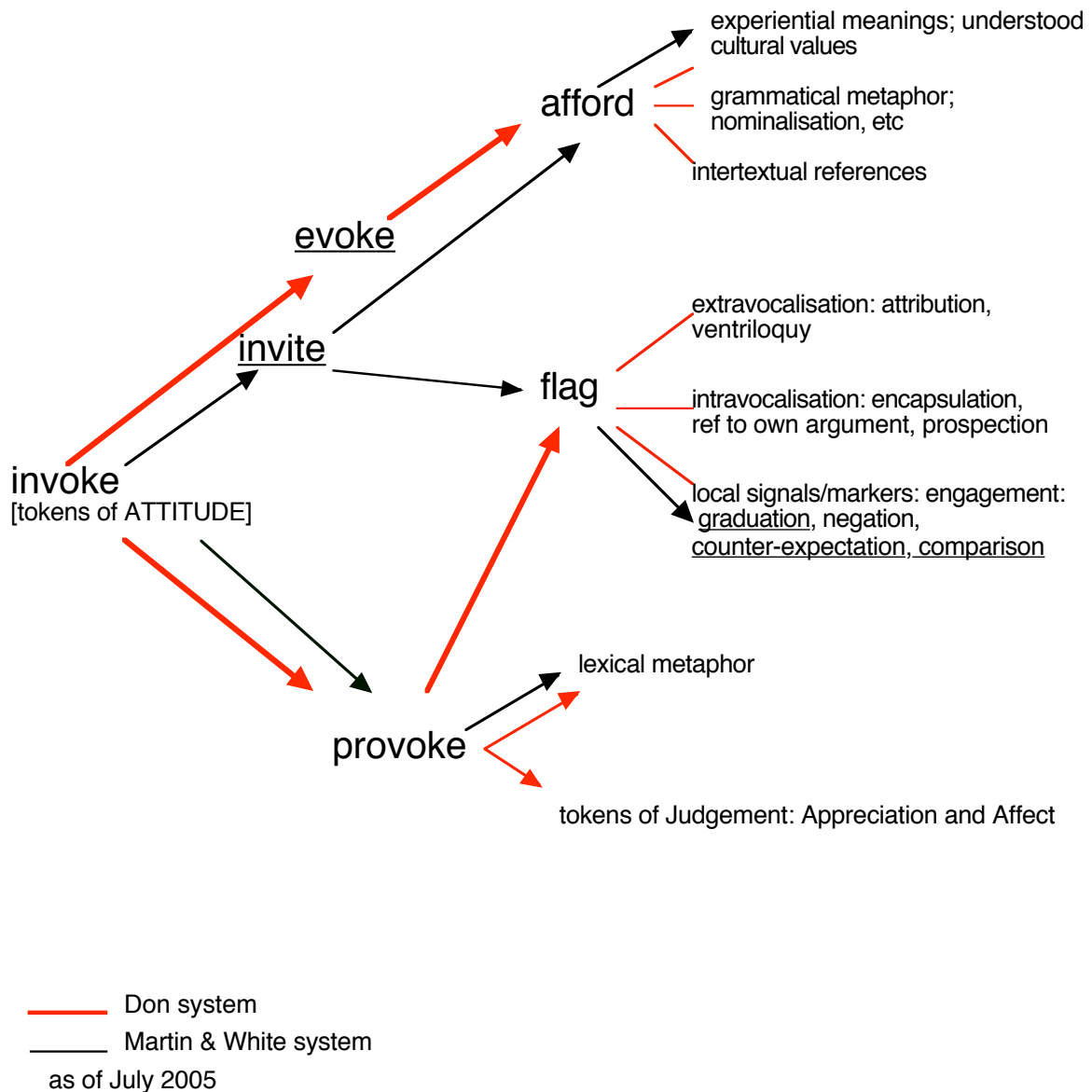
One of the key features of the texts in the study is that invoked or ambiguous appraisal is common across the corpus as a whole, as well as throughout each

text as a unit of meaning. This appears to be a function of the mode of interaction in which bald assertion and inscribed evaluation are likely to cause offence or dis-alignment for some of the projected audience members—who are either known only through their contributions to the list, or remain 'unseen'. On the other hand, invoked attitude needs to be *interpreted* by the reader, and thus appears to provide a more open heteroglossic space in which arguments need not be overtly face-threatening. At the same time, leaving evaluation more open occasionally invites a need for clarification and further argument. In the context of list discussion, silence on a list is often taken for lack of interest and hence low 'involvement' in the interaction. This means that invoking attitude rather than openly evaluating serves several interpersonal purposes in these contexts.

A number of means for invoking Attitude were noted while undertaking the analysis of the texts using the xml tagging system outlined in Chapter 3. These were summarised in *Figure 5.1: Invocations of Attitude* (reproduced for convenience below as *Figure 6.3*) where they were grouped according to membership of a number of categories along a cline relative to *inscribed* attitude. That is to say, the cline is arranged according to how easily each means of invoking attitude could be related to inscribed evaluation, or to whether the invocation could be located in specific node words and/or tokens of attitude.



## invocations of ATTITUDE



**Figure 6.3: Invocations of Attitude**

Figure 6.3 above shows that, in contrast to Martin & White's (2005) system, my summary of resources associated with the invocation of attitude retains a distinction between *evoking* and *provoking* attitudes, while Martin & White eliminate the category *evoke*. Additionally, while Martin & White subsume their categories of *flag* and *afford* under the category *invite*, and restrict the provoking of attitude to matters of lexical metaphor, my classification scheme also

associates the resources of *flagging* with *provoking* attitude along with the be-tokening of Judgement values through Affect and Appreciation.

Martin & White's system for example, labels experiential meanings and understood cultural values as *affording* attitude. My system retains this notion of *affording* and classifies these resources more elaborately by noting that grammatical metaphor is also commonly found to afford attitude, especially through the means of nominalisation, sometimes teamed with presuming reference. Moreover, in their taxonomy of modes of Attitude, Martin & White do not deal specifically with intertextual reference, in which assumed reference to local, or field-specific knowledge can be interpreted as invoking an attitude toward some target. Use of such resources to invoke attitude is linked to the positioning of readers as members of an in-group, and is therefore a means of calling on solidarity or familiarity / affiliation. It is because these resources are the most distant from inscription of attitude that they are grouped together under the retained label of *evoke*.

With respect to the set of resources Martin & White group under the label *flag* on the other hand, a qualitative difference is evident. In contrast to *evoked* attitude, within the span of text which *flags* an attitude, specific elements of the span, or strategies which engender the attitude may be isolated. Under the label *flag*, several types of resource may be differentiated, not just the resources of graduation which Martin & White concentrate on. For example, at the less explicit end of the cline for *flagging* attitude, rhetorical postures such as adopting an *animator* or *author* role—in addition to, or in contrast to the role of *principal* (Goffman 1981: 226)—are a subtle but detectable means of distancing the writer from any evaluative stance—and thus help to signal its presence at the same time. Other forms of *attribution* can also *provoke* attitude since attribution often acts to signal that an evaluative stance is being reported rather than asserted. Similarly, *intra-textual* strategies are found to *flag* attitude as well. These resources for flagging attitude include ways in which text to come is introduced in

'prejudicial' terms, and what Francis (1994) calls *labelling*, in which a stretch of previous text is given a label which has the capacity to invoke an attitude. Included under resources for flagging attitude are other markers which are generally grouped under the label Engagement. These include negation, counter-expectation, comparison, modals of obligation, and so on<sup>1</sup>. All of these resources act to *mark* or *frame* the co-textual span in obvious and identifiable ways, and thus I group them as capable of *provoking* attitude. Tokens of Affect and Appreciation are also grouped at the more explicit end of the cline, since they act to provoke Judgement in particular. Some of the most prevalent strategies which act as tokens of Judgement are instances of inscribed Appreciation of target objects which are products of specific groups or individuals. Another common strategy is represented by expressions of Affect on the part of specific groups or individuals in order to make a Judgement about them. Other tokens of Affect which work in this way are what I term *behave-surges*, such as *Ugh!*, *Wow!* *Sigh*, and the like, all of which can be pinpointed as the means by which attitude may be *provoked*.

In order to account for patterns of invoked Judgement such as these, analysis employing "double-coding" is adopted and the lexico-grammatical resources for invoking attitude are noted along with the tagged spans. Those resources found to be commonly used in the texts in this study have been summarised above by *Figure 6.2*, a framework which may be further elaborated by description of local contexts for invoking attitude through similar analysis of other corpora, and further compilation of statistics of invoking strategies and their occurrence.

Analysis of attitude is also a means of identifying the organization of texts, particularly the identification of boundaries of primary text units. In particular, the final sections of the *Turn* were sites where *invoked* appraisal is common, along with *summary-evaluations* and *interpersonal prospection*. The rhetorical purpose of the texts and their interpersonal orientation prompts such expansion of

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<sup>1</sup> Engagement resources were discussed in detail in Mod 2.II

heteroglossic space: the purpose in this case is to avoid putting solidarity at risk—at least overtly. Further investigation of the location and occurrence of strategies of invocation are inviting.

Tracking targets of attitude can also provide a *prosody* by which texts are staged. The notion of *evaluative prosody* can be used to help determine functional staging by attending to changes in evaluative positioning, with changes in attitudinal targets one means of tracking this feature. The location of invoked and inscribed attitudes in relation to text sequences in which targets are maintained can highlight cycles or rhetorical units in text organisation. While evaluative prosodies may not necessarily map onto discrete stages identified in text-types, they provide another diagnostic tool for identifying boundary conditions and hence generic stages and phases within them.

Appraisal analysis also provides one means of 'building up' a picture of *textual identities*. My findings show that the poster identities can be differentiated from other posters by means of comparing the frequencies and types of attitude used, and the type of targets preferred. In this way a profile of *evaluative disposition* may be obtained. For example, posters position themselves and others in relation to targets associated with in-groups and out-groups. The nature of the evaluation of certain social groupings can act to position addressees depending on whether they are known to identify with such groups, or are labelled as such. Appraisal analysis enables a more thorough investigation of textual identity and how roles, status, and solidarity are negotiated in the legitimation of positions in interaction. Further work in this area can provide a critical discourse analysis in which identity may only be performed as legitimated social practice.

## ***6.2 Further work***

### **6.2.1 Textual identity**

As stated in the previous section, further analysis of interactive texts using attitude analysis is inviting. This is because a focus on 'positioning' can highlight the means by which the negotiation of legitimate behaviour takes place. Fairclough (2003: 41) describes the 'norms' of interaction "as a moral order [which] are oriented to and interpreted differently by different social actors, and these differences are negotiated". The approach is defined in terms of ways of signalling affiliation, or positioning of self (the writer/addresser) in relation to others and their values—what I term 'negotiated identity'. In negotiating identity, reference is made to cultural values and assumed knowledge of roles and relationships, where difference and equivalence can be invoked by alignment regarding the topics under discussion. The investigation of identity negotiated over time also requires a micro-analysis of *responsivity* and *addressivity* in the texts, concentrating on sequences of interaction and the responses engendered by contributions on the part of selected identities. The thesis suggested and discussed a framework for investigating both stylistic identity—such as evaluative disposition—and negotiated identity as a function of response.

### **6.2.2 Solidarity/affiliation/alignment/stance**

One of the aims of the study was to develop a framework or approach which could help account for the means by which solidarity, or what I call *affiliation* may be invoked. The written interaction of an email list provided a convenient source of material through which such affiliative practices could be investigated. In the case of the list studied here, such an investigation appeared particularly relevant since the issue of 'sub-grouping' was a regular topic of discussion among participants interested in email list group dynamics during my membership.

The approach adopted focuses on the ways in which the practices and values of self and others are legitimated or censured—mainly through strategies claiming *alignment* or *affiliation*. Identifying such strategies involved use of the Appraisal

framework and tagging the texts for Attitude, along with noting how these attitudinal values had been realised. As stated earlier, many attitudinal values in the texts were invoked. It is the invocation of attitude through development of argument, intertextual reference and the use of what Appraisal calls Engagement which enabled such strategies of dis/alignment and dis/affiliation to be effected.

One means of investigating these strategies involved looking at high frequency lexical items in selected corpora. In this manner, tracking of thematic formations and discourse community-specific intertextual identity chains can be identified using concordancing software. It was possible to determine how certain semantic domains and specific lexical items might be associated with certain groups or individuals over a period of discussion time, and in this way allow such groups or individuals to be targeted for evaluation without explicitly naming them. This has relevance for the critical analysis of discourse in the wider public sphere in which groups and individuals can be evaluated through strategies of invoked attitude, some of which have been identified in this study.

Further analysis of other text-types and their genres using the same approach to the identification of affiliative strategies is inviting. In any such study, the use of a much larger corpus covering a wider range of text-types is necessary and enlightening. For the study reported here, the Bank of English at the University of Birmingham was used in order to compare relative frequencies of keywords in selected corpora. This demonstrated that the keywords identified were relatively highly concentrated in the focus corpus, but the benefits of a larger corpus for the appraisal analyst are much wider and more pressing. Analysts using the appraisal framework usually rely on intuitive knowledge as ratified members of their discourse communities and communities of practice in order to claim semantic integrity for their interpretation of instances of evaluation in context. These claims need to be set against the background of a wider social spectrum of language in use, which only large corpora can provide. This is not to say that frequency of use of a lexical term or strategy of evaluation will prescribe or

determine its interpretation, but that common socially prevalent ways of using language need to be referenced as a means of supporting interpretation. This is especially pressing where appraisal is used in critical discourse analytic studies which focus on affiliative practices and strategies of affiliation and alignment. These strategies are implicated in the means by which identity is legitimated and through which access to social resources is at stake.

Strategies of affiliation are not always so transparent. That is to say, it is not always language directed at targets which imply affiliation, but the dynamics of interaction itself which can imply alignments and presumed social values. Therefore, during the course of the study, the texts in the corpora were also tagged for a set of *responsivity* and *addressivity* features (c.f. Chapter 3, *Fig 3.2*). In this manner, profiles of posting behaviour as stylistic identity were prepared for the sets of texts. Details of this approach and the results of such studies were not reported in the thesis due to lack of space, but a brief overview of the findings made possible is presented below in section 6.2.5, and in the next section (6.2.3) which summarises a study used to investigate the interaction between *identified-as* male or female posters in two email lists.

### **6.2.3 Gender expectations**

Participants in most social groups use overt material markers such race, gender, and social class in order to ‘call a person into existence’ through interacting with them—by recognising them as a particular identity. These material markers of identity are not available for email-mediated discourse communities. In these contexts of interaction, habitual ways of identifying other social actors so that communication can proceed smoothly, raises expectations for example that one's interlocutors are either male or female. My observation is that participants in email lists feel a need to identify another participant as either male or female in order that they can continue interacting with them. Participants are thus usually

*identified as* either male or female—by default through their handles, or through overt enquiry if ambiguity exists.

The distinction ‘identified-as’ is important in this context: because gender roles are not necessarily a product of the biological sex of any participant, it is possible that anyone can take up or ‘perform’ any gender role, especially when the overt material markers of gender are not present. It is possible that this expectation of dual gender role-slots could override any knowledge gaps on the part of a gender-performer and that once a poster has been identified-as either male or female, such expectations colour any interpretation of their contributions. These types of gender role expectation are the focus of my studies of list interaction using the perspective of orientation to response—specifically, whether such expectations lead to differences in ratified identity onlist.

The hypothesis to be tested is that overt responses to male versus female posters are both quantitatively and qualitatively different, which would, over time, result in a negotiated role and status identity in which the propositions made by male posters would be viewed more ‘seriously’ than those contributed by female posters. The effect of such status accruing to male posters, for example, should be reflected in not only how many responses their contributions generated, which in itself would be a reflection of the propositions (or ‘topic’) being ‘supported’ by other subscribers, but also by the nature of the support for the propositions they presented. This would result in the topics presented by male posters being discussed for longer periods of time, and crucially, by their being referenced in other conversations (threads) as well. Thus, identity of high status (regarding authority to control attitude and topic) versus low status members of a list can be partially determined by the number of times their names or ideas are referred to in sections of text (‘strips’ in Goffman’s terms) taken from the stream of list activity—as well as in what ways their contributions were evaluated or acknowledged. One means of approaching this study lies in determining differences in *addressivity* and *responsivity* across gender lines—that is to say,



whether male and female posters were more or less supportive of either gender's contributions, thus according them higher status in terms of prominence and authority.

At present a study using this approach is being conducted using two strips of list activity excerpted from another list ("Cybermind"), where preliminary findings indicate that males were given slightly higher prominence and/or status within these strips of list activity despite the almost equal participation rates of the female posterIDs. It also suggests however, that much longer strips of list activity are required to make valid conclusions regarding the nature of list identity status. This is because the dynamics of responsivity require evidence over a longer period of time than the 3 days used in the study, and because it became evident that a small proportion of participants contributed a relatively higher number of posts. This means that their prominence in terms of number and type of responses garnered might be a function of their prolificacy.

#### ***6.2.4 The grammar of invoked appraisal***

As discussed above, in the texts I investigated, meanings are made, in part, via intertextual reference or assumed knowledge within the group. This 'relationship knowledge', what Fairclough (1992: 72) refers to as "members' resources", acts to co-position participants without explicit evaluation. While analysing the texts for attitude, a variety of ways in which Attitude was found to be invoked in the texts was noted and summarised (Chapter 5, *Figure 5.1: Invocations of Attitude*, reproduced above as *Figure 6.3*). It became obvious that many evaluative positions and signals of dis/affiliation were not made explicitly in texts, but are rather *invoked* via the use of a variety of discourse semantic strategies—including inter-textual reference whose more precise *evoked* meanings would only be available to those with the necessary *members' resources*. The Appraisal framework provided a basis for grouping a variety of strategies working to invoke attitude in the texts, and assumed intertextual knowledge became one

"category". However, the summary of these resources outlined in *Figure 6.3* has not yet been specified in sufficient detail.

It remains for these findings to be further analysed by compiling frequency and proportions for specific strategies as well as correlating the use of such strategies with specific posterIDs. The appraisal analysis of the texts tagged mainly for attitude and targets of attitude, while the resources and strategies for the invocation of this attitude were noted "on the fly". Once more, a larger corpus of texts needs to be analysed with the same goal in mind, and comparative studies using different text-types and genera would provide further insights into how discourse communities typically act to evaluate their targets. This type of analysis and correlation of strategies of invocation would make it possible to suggest avenues for comparison of evaluative dispositions—either of individuals or communities—and provide for a growing set of discourse semantic categories for determining evaluative positioning strategies. Such collections in turn would be a useful resource for second or foreign language learners for whom the necessary "members' resources" inherent in language use in context—especially for the interpretation and construal of evaluative stance—are lacking.

One sub-study undertaken in the course of the analysis but not reported in the thesis provides an example. It involved investigating the function of the negative in construing Attitude (and tenor) by implying and rejecting a view on the part of the interlocutor. One signal of positioning, collected under the label [disclaim: deny] in the engagement system of the appraisal framework, subsumes a large number of 'negative operators' in the lexicogrammar, such as *no* ~, *never*, *~not*, and variants. I noted that the common function of these negative operators was to position interactants, and that the presence of a negative operator in the text signalled an attitude toward some perhaps unspecified target. Pagano's (1994) identification of 4 categories of "implicit denials" (derived from Tottie, 1982, 1987) in the texts she investigated, provided the basis for an initial investigation of negatives in the corpus. All of the categories identified by Pagano were useful

in accounting for both interpersonal meanings and textual meanings. In other words, negative operators in the texts acted both to construe reader positioning and the presence of presupposition, and also the cohesive relations and organisation of the evaluative positioning or argumentation in the local context—such as functioning in matching relations of contrast.

One example was investigated in detail. The following clause complex was considered to construe negative attitude toward the general target category *this group*, i.e. the list members:

**Example 6.1**

An open system is **not** defined **by** public archives and open subscription, it is defined **by** how a family responds to its new babies and external influences. [*sht4/sally4*]

For the sample clause complex above, the writer was interpreted as disaffiliating with the list as a group. In order to account for this interpretation, I considered it as a potential candidate for a local grammar à la Hunston and Sinclair (2000: 81) in the following way:

thing evaluated	hinge	evaluative category	aposition	thing evaluated	hinge	evaluative category
nominal group	neg v-link	nominal group		nominal group	v-link	nominal group
A	is not defined by	X		A	is defined by	Y

**Figure 6.4**

If this pattern were common in a larger corpus, it would be possible to investigate its typical functions, or even 'meanings' at a higher level of abstraction: the discourse semantic. Therefore, the following query was entered into the Bank of English: [not+1,2by], and then sorted 1 word to the right. There were 41 instances in the whole corpus<sup>1</sup>, out of which 12 showed either a similar, or related

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. at the time of investigation in 2003

'denial' of definition together with replacement by another definition. Out of these, 7 used apposition, or the denial plus affirmation pattern, but none showed the pattern given above in all respects. That is to say, in 6 instances, the pattern was abbreviated by ellipsis of the repeated nominal and verbal groups of the example clause complex, and in a 7<sup>th</sup>, the pattern was slightly different due partly to its orientation to futurity. These 7 examples are listed in *Ex 6.2* below:

**Example 6.2**

- 1) It is that ultimately our human significance is **not** defined **by** the wrong we do, **but by** God's love for us. <brmags/UK>
- 2) Great players are **not** defined **by** their best performances **but by** how easily they repeat excellence.<usspok/US>
- 3) Alpine permafrost is **not** defined **by** the percentage of permanently frozen ground **but by** its presence in a mountainous setting.<strathy/CA>
- 4) This view, increasingly being promoted by cognitive scientists and artificial intelligence experts, suggests that human beings are **not** defined **by** the atoms of our bodies, **but by** an ethereal matrix of electrically stored data.<guard/UK>
- 5) The desire for a quality of life that is **not** defined **by** the accumulation of things **but rather by** a pairing down to the essentials<brmags/UK>
- 6) Here, the basic process is **not** defined **by** industrial engineers, **but by** the team members themselves, who construct a detailed working plan which is followed by each member. <wbe/UK>
- 7) The terms "investment adviser representative" and "place of business" are **not** defined **by** the Coordination Act, **but** are proposed to be defined **by** Commission rules. <p> <wbe/UK>

These examples suggested that the verbal group of this particular pattern cannot be comprised of the elements hypothesised in *Figure 6.4* above: the preposition 'by' has not been deleted along with the verbal element in the second clause, and therefore needs to be analysed as part of a prepositional phrase realising a Circumstance of Manner. In sentences 6) and 7) the pattern is semantically complicated in that the nominal groups realise an agent function in the clause, rather than simply an instrumental function (Halliday 1994: 154). However, given

that the structure of a prepositional phrase is [preposition + nominal group], the pattern could be rewritten in the following way:

thing evaluated	hinge	evaluative category	apposition	thing evaluated	hinge	evaluative category
nominal group	neg v-link	-by- prep phrase		nominal group	v-link	-by- prep phrase
A	is not defined	by X	[but]	[ellipted]	[ellipted]	by Y

**Figure 6.5**

In all of the above examples from the corpus, it appears that a certain definition, or 'view of reality' has either been assumed as entertained by addressees, or it has been developed as a shared assumption on the part of the addressees during the unfolding of the discourse. In most of these cases, the positioning does not necessarily act to dis-affiliate addressees as originally proposed, but it does construct them as sharing an invalid assumption, about which the addresser has more expertise or knowledge. In this way, the writer is able to define the nature of reality anew for the readers (hearers) with whom s/he claims affiliation in terms of *field*, but positions themselves as having an unequal power relation in terms of authority (expertise) and control (genre manipulation) within this field

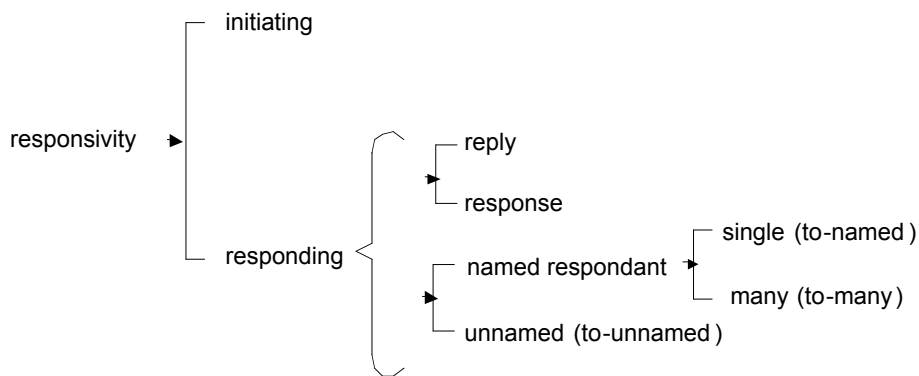
### **6.2.5 Orientation to response**

Responses indicate their relevance to what has gone before and what is expected to follow. All responses either align with the original material or reject it in some way, and this acts to position constructed audience members according to the assumptions brought into play by the text's arguments and social evaluations.

Selection for text-type style represents an initial orientation to response on the part of the writer, but the texts in the corpora were also tagged for a set of *responsivity* and *addressivity* features so that profiles of posting behaviour could be compiled. Chapter 3, *Figure 3.2* showed a representation of the simple system network, or 'scheme' developed in order to assess the frequency of the 5 main

response styles or text-types using the Systemic Coder. The Coder is able to create statistical data, comparing elements of the system and their relative occurrence. Although space prevents the detailed discussion of these other findings, a brief look at the comparative statistics made possible by coding each text for such parameters is presented below.

A system network for the possibilities as to responsivity is provided below.



**Figure: 6.6: Responsivity options as a system network**

This makes for the following possible repertoire of classifications for post according to Responsivity

Initiation (non responding)

Response-to-named (single named respondent)

Response-to-many (multiple named respondents)

Response-to-unnamed

Reply-to-named

Reply-to-many

Reply-to-unnamed

The following table illustrates comparative statistics using frequency of responsivity features of two corpora. The two corpora are those of the thread

threads (*threads* set) and the unedited strips of list activity (*Febs* set) taken from February 1996 and February 2002 (c.f. Chapters 4.2.5 and 4.2.2):

Feature	Febs(N=240)		Threads(N=11)		Tst	Lv
	Me	Std	Me	Std		
in-reply2named	0.46	0.5	0.53	0.501	1.17	
in-response2name	0.20	0.4	0.27	0.447	1.50	
in-response2many	0.02	0.2	0.00	0.243	0.6	
in-reply2many	0.01	0.1	0.02	0.212	1.70	+
initiation	0.14	0.3	0.00	0.125	4.0	++
in-response2unna	0.08	0.2	0.00	0.243	0.8	
in-reply2unnamec	0.03	0.1	0.00	0.081	1.51	

**Table 6.1: Differences in Febs versus Threads: Responsivity**

The table above shows that the **Threads** set exhibits significantly **higher** use of the feature *in-reply2many* (4.70 vs. 1.70), while the **Febs** set exhibits significantly **higher** use of the feature *initiation* (14.60 vs. 1.60). Since the criterion for inclusion in a set of texts known as a thread is topic maintenance, it is not surprising that the main difference found between the two sets is a lack of initiations in the unedited set.

The posts were also cross classified by reference to a taxonomy which I label ‘addressivity’. Thus, posts are classified by reference to both Responsivity and Addressivity, since differences in orientation between these parameters can highlight differences in both corpus-general orientation to response and in the posting behaviour of individual poster identities. Many posts may indicate that they are made *in response to* a specific earlier contribution, yet they may not *address* the poster of that contribution, or they may address a different set of projected readers. Similarly, initiations, while not responding to a specific previous contribution are quite likely to address themselves to the group as a whole. Thus, addressivity is a system for observing points in the text where there are directly invoked or referenced addressees who are not necessarily the writers of the responded-to prior post.

The taxonomy operates in the following manner:

- *unaddressed*

A post is labelled as ‘unaddressed’ when it contains no instances of formulations which directly address some respondent – that is to say, there are no indications that anyone is being directly addressed, hailed or interpellated by the post. This is typically the case for the announcement-style text type, as well as for many initiations. Forwarded material without comment, reports, and 'artworks' such as poems or narratives are examples of this ‘unaddressed’ type, but many ‘true’ responses also lack any overt linguistic indicators that the post is addressed to any one individual or group.

- *addressed to unidentified:*

A post is labelled as ‘addressed to unidentified’ when the writer uses some indicators of *addressivity* such as rhetorical questions, directives, or 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns, but no specific identifiable individual or group is hailed or interpellated. Thus, there is no naming of audience or listmembers, or reference to a particular group.

- *addressed to-group:*

A post is labelled as ‘to-group’ when, rather than addressing a named individual or named individuals, the poster hails the list as a whole or indicates that s/he is making comments to a wider audience – for example by formulations such as *folks, hi all, you guys, anyone here*, questions to the group as collective, 1<sup>st</sup> person plural forms (*we, us, our*), or other indicators that Addressees are not limited to one other poster.

- *addressed to-named & to-many-named:*

A post is labelled as ‘to-named’ when a particular named respondent is hailed or otherwise addressed, and as ‘to-many-named’ when multiple named listmembers



are addressed. Here the analysis attends to such features as direct address using a name, a direct 2<sup>nd</sup> person address, or rhetorical questions or directives regarding the content together with a named, or rather, 'identifiable' respondent.

The table below again illustrates the type of statistics made available through tagging the texts for addressivity features. In this case, the two corpora compared are those of the *Sally* set, and the unedited strips (*Febs*):

Feature	Febs(N=24)		Sally(N=22)		Tsta	Lvl
	Me	Std	Me	Std		
address2name	0.48	0.50	0.73	0.44	2.16	++
to-many-name	0.00	0.21	0.18	0.36	2.49	+++
addressed2grc	0.33	0.45	0.00	0.20	2.57	+++
unaddressed	0.13	0.33	0.00	0.20	1.14	
address2unide	0.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	0.86	

**Table 6.2: Addressivity system feature comparison: Sally versus unedited strips (“Febs”)**

Table 6.2 above for example shows that the Set *Sally* exhibits significantly **higher** use of both the feature *address2named* (72.70% vs. 48.70%), and of the feature *to-many-named* (18.20% vs. 5.00%), while the *Febs* set exhibits significantly **higher** use of the feature: *addressed2group* (30.00% vs. 4.50%). Such findings allow the analyst to hypothesise that the posterID *Sally* can be differentiated from the norm of the group by her use of addressivity features: while other group members are more likely to address the group as a whole in making their posts, *Sally* is more likely to name group members specifically.

### **6.2.6 The interpersonal function of mode-related markers**

'Marker' refers to any element acting to signal conjunction or comment on the unfolding of the discourse in any way. Some of the Markers found to be prevalent in the texts or which have performed an interpersonal as well as textual function,

were tabulated in the thesis, but further compilation of the location and occurrence of types of Markers is warranted. This is because *Markers* are considered as one of the common resources which help signal both evaluative orientation, and text unit boundaries.

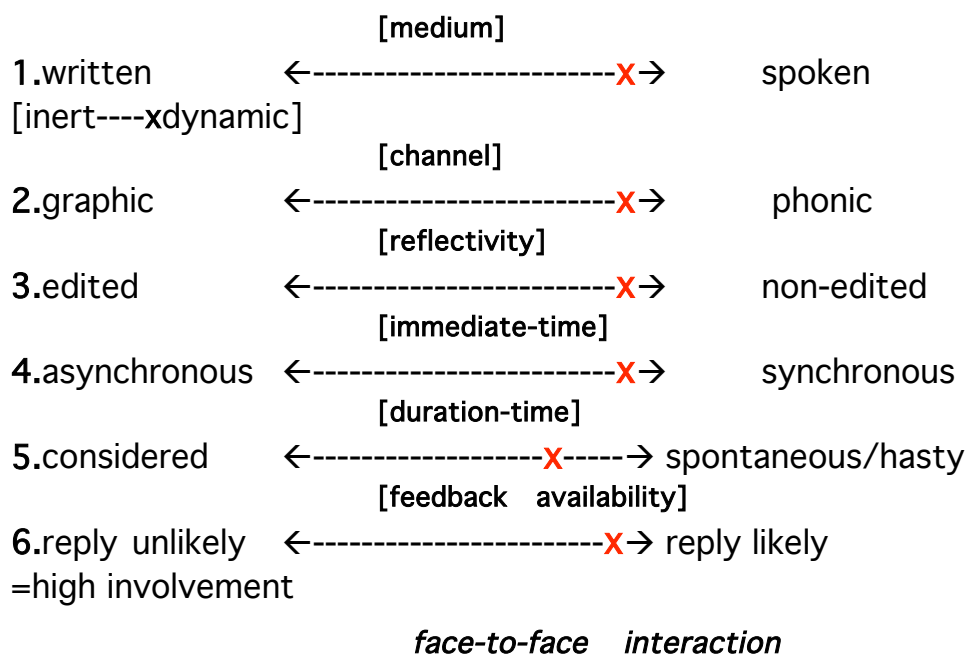
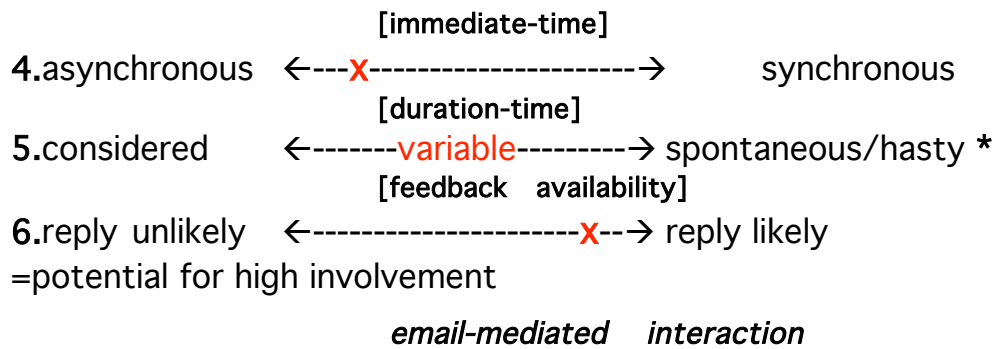
On the *interactive plane*, the actual 'argument' is cued by *Markers*, while on the *autonomous plane* also, some references also help to signal evaluation of the target(s) of the argument, and these were classed as Markers for that reason.

### 6.2.7 Parameters of mode

I propose that *mode* can be more delicately characterised along a variety of dimensions or 'parameters' dependent on the actual materiality of the context, and that these are intimately connected to what I contend is the primary dimension of *mode* which relates to the degree of interactivity/possibility of feedback. My texts, while "constitutive" of their context (as opposed to "ancillary"), are also dialogic, related to their texturing as responses to previous contributions, and their actual technologically-mediated response capability.

In the two tables below (Figure 6.7), I summarise six parameters of mode which can be used to distinguish email-mediated "conversation" from face-to-face conversation. These parameters can also be used to label other contexts of interaction and provide comparative topologies. The availability of feedback is associated with the variable that is closest to highly interactive (i.e. f2f) contexts, and therefore this too is associated with the degree of *involvement* or *simulated high contact*, as intimated by parameter 6 below.

	[medium]	
1.written	←X-----→	spoken
[inert---?--dynamic]		
	[channel]	
2.graphic	←X-----→	phonic
	[reflectivity]	
3.edited	←-----variable-----→	non-edited *



*Figure 6.7: Mode-related parameters locating for text-type*

### 6.2.8 Summary

The investigation of the conventions of the units of meaning in a particular discourse community has shown that rhetorical purpose, interpersonal orientation and linguistic realisation are intrinsically related. This thesis is the result of a need to provide a sturdy framework with which to make further studies focussed on the rhetorical strategies interactants use in order to construct an authoritative and legitimated 'reality' for their actions in such a community. Each of the perspectives applied to the texts made it apparent that such rhetorical purpose informed every aspect of the discourse produced.

The thesis set out a framework using a genre perspective which was designed to account for the varied generic conventions observed in the texts. It suggested that this type of rhetorical organisation potential could be described by reference to several recurrent primary text-units. These in turn provided the scaffolding on which functional moves or phases of the overall argument of these posts could be identified through the overlaying of a number of tracks of analysis and analytical perspectives. Analytical perspectives included the tracking of attitude, the use of discourse markers of various function, and strategies of interpersonal prospection. The overlaying or clustering of features derived from such analyses were termed *framing* signals and were taken to signal potential boundaries between phases and other functional units in the texts. Since the negotiation of identity was deemed to underlie all participation in the group discussion, an extension of the framework was also proposed. This extension outlined an approach to both the investigation of textual or stylistic identity, and the investigation of how positioning of self and others contributes to the negotiation of identity over a period of time.

The framework provides ways of approaching these texts, as well as texts taken from other contexts of situation. It allows a fine-grained analysis of texts' internal organisational features, and a means of interrelating several external factors (participants, culture, group dynamics, textual identity) in order to interpret their local meanings. The study contributes useful insights to, and suggests extensions for the study of CMC, genre and argument structure, and the appraisal framework.