

Chapter 2 Positioning the study in a pedagogic and linguistic landscape

Introduction

In this chapter, I position the current study in relation to contributions from two broad and intersecting fields, those of education and linguistics. Given the enormity of the literature pertaining to both, I necessarily restrict my discussion in a number of ways. In the first instance my orientation is to social rather than cognitive understandings of language and learning, so I consider both domains primarily from this perspective. From an educational point of view, I begin in 2.1 with a broad orientation to the context of academic literacy and a general reflection on the tasks confronting undergraduate students. I focus on the relationship of academic writing tasks and texts at undergraduate level to those undertaken within the schools sector, as well as those that characterise the writing of 'experts'. I then narrow the focus to consider some of the specific issues facing non-native speakers of English in this pedagogic context. While many of the issues facing non-native speakers of English are also relevant to students who are native speakers, and while many issues facing undergraduate students are also relevant to postgraduate writers, or even professional academic writers, the site of undergraduate studies in English as a second language is nonetheless an especially complex one. It represents a double challenge in the sense of new kinds of discourse in a non-native language. It therefore represents an important site for research in the field of academic literacy. In this contextualising discussion of academic discourse I also address current debates around calls for reform of academic literacy practices, especially as these calls relate to what are sometimes characterised as 'elite' uses of language, in contrast to what are seen as more accessible or indigenous forms of language. I position the current study as an attempt to articulate more clearly how particular academic discourses function, with the aim both to shape more effective support for novice academic writers, and also to enable the academic community to be clearer about what is at stake in advocating the reform or rejection of certain modes of construing knowledge.

In 2.1, the discussion of social perspectives on the academic discourse community merges inevitably with a discussion of linguistic theories. However, in 2.2, I then move deliberately out of a specific educational frame to look at issues in academic discourse through a linguistic lens. I focus the discussion around interpersonal aspects of meaning-making and

specifically around the notion of evaluation. I consider contributions to understanding evaluative discourse, from a number of linguistic orientations including genre, grammar, lexis, and discourse. Relevant sociological theories are also referred to at this point. The discussion becomes a framework for positioning the theoretical model of evaluation that underpins this study, namely the system of Appraisal within Systemic Functional Linguistic theory. Where relevant this linguistic lens is focused on academic language and in particular the language of evaluation in academic texts. I argue on the basis of this review that there is a need for research into how evaluative stance is construed in the meaning-making space between genre and lexicogrammar, that is in the discourse semantics of academic texts, and for interpretation of meaning grounded in a functional, rather than a cognitive theory of language.

As Lemke (2002: 22) suggests “as bodies of scholarship grow to unprecedented new scales, I believe we must abandon all pretence in individual works to exhaustive citation of the relevant literature.” Certainly the fields of academic literacy and EAP are characterised by a recent and rapid expansion of published research studies. For this reason the review of the literature is broad in scope but necessarily selective in terms of specific contributions.

2.1 Academic education

2.1.1 The academic discourse community

Descriptions of the academic environment as a discourse community, or a community of socio-rhetorical practices, are pervasive in the literature (e.g. Swales 1990, 1998, Lave and Wenger 1991, Bizzell 1992, Bazerman 1988, Bereiter and Scardemalia 1987, Gee 2002, Hyland 1998, Schleppegrell and Colombi 2002, Ramanathan 2002). Common to most interpretations is recognition of the academic discourse community as representing characteristic kinds of relationships and practices that are enacted in or through discourse. These practices relate to common social functions in terms of the construction and dissemination of knowledge. However, within a broad alignment, there are necessarily variations in the ways in which the terms *discourse* and *socio-rhetorical practice* are understood (Swales 1998). One key difference lies in the extent to which language is seen as essentially central, that is the extent to which discourse as language is seen as bringing into being the relationships and practices, or whether discourse as language is seen as merely enacting a social world that exists other than in and through language (Fairclough 1992, Gee 2002).

The differences here are played out to some extent in terms of the ways in which research into academic discourse is approached. Geisler (1994:252) for example, refers to concerns for the ‘actual experiences of readers and writers’ not just the ‘virtual experience of the text’. The orientation is therefore more of a sociological one, exploring interactions and social networks and relationships. Adam and Artemeva (2002: 183) argue along these lines for the need for investigations of academic writing “in situ” – going into classrooms, studying how writing plays a role in learning’. They emphasise learning as interactive practice rather than individual cognition, and texts are seen as ‘constituents of social motives and responses’. Learning to manage particular types of texts is therefore understood to co-occur with processes of socialisation into relevant discourse communities. While the emphasis in such studies is on particular social actions and roles, an orientation to what individuals ‘do’ may also include a cognitive dimension alongside the social (Geisler 1994, Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995, Bereiter and Scardemalia 1987, Paltridge 1997) or focus predominantly on the cognitive with an acknowledgement of the social (Connor and Kramer 1995, Ackerman, 1990, Flower 1990). Connor and Kramer (1995: 156) describe North America composition research in the following terms:

although writing is still considered a cognitive activity (...) it is also considered a situationally determined activity, a social activity.

Belcher and Braine (1995:xii) also open their influential volume with a statement of assumed shared understanding that ‘academic writing is inherently a cognitive as well as a social process’. The social in this sense may be overlaid onto a fundamentally a-social perspective on language as represented in much SLA research. Connor and Kramer (1995: 156), for example, argue that

[c]urrent theories consider ESL learning not only the acquisition of language but also the socialization in language in a specific community, context, or genre.

Differently positioned again is the work of Ivanic and Simpson (1992), Ivanic (1998), and Clark and Ivanic (1997), who focus their studies on the literate lives of individuals, rather than a study of texts, but whose theoretical bases are situated within social rather than cognitive theories of language. Ivanic (1998), for example, reports on case studies of eight mature students returning to study at tertiary level in which she explores the relationships between the writing tasks undertaken by the students and issues of identity. Identity is seen as socially constructed through kinds of interaction.

Others focus primarily on a study of discourse as text, although the scope of approaches here too, is diverse in terms of the degree of incorporation of the social. Perhaps the most distanced from the sociological position described above would be that captured in Fairclough’s negative assessment of discourse analysts who present texts as ‘simply “there”

and available for description' (1992:15), rather than as shaped by social relations and ideologies. Hyland, in discussing the academic world of science, captures the ways in which the differing positions are perceived and critiqued by the other.

The sociological accounts have emphasised (...) that linguistic conventions help to generate a social world of science without describing the systematic means by which this is accomplished, while the linguistic work has largely neglected the significance of the wider context in which linguistic features occur (Hyland 1998:14).

Others within the domain of applied linguistics, who focus primarily on discourse as the site for study of social practices, do so from a perspective on discourse as both shaped by, and thus interpreted with respect to, the socio-cultural context, and at the same time constitutive of that context. From this perspective the social is enacted and interpreted through the semiotics of language. In other words, in reading social practices we are reading texts. An understanding of language as social semiotic (Halliday 1978) is seen as central to, and embedded in, a study of social practices (Fairclough 1992, Martin and Rose 2003, Christie and Martin 1997, Unsworth 2000, Christie 1999, Hasan and Williams 1996). It is this perspective that is taken as the theoretical foundation for this study.

2.1.1.1 Metaphors of apprenticeship

Interpretations of the academy as a discourse community, however that is interpreted, have important implications for how learning within this community is perceived. Metaphors that are frequently used within academic contexts include, for example, references to learners as novitiates or novices, and references to learning as apprenticeship, induction or enculturation (Candlin 1998, Casanave 1995). All these metaphors convey to some extent a process of guided entry into a 'community'. While Candlin (1998) acknowledges the appeal of these metaphors, he questions their meaningfulness to the participants themselves within the community, in this case faculty and students. Studies reported in Candlin and Plum (1998) found for example, 'little evidence from student feedback in focus groups that they perceive themselves as being apprenticed' (Candlin 1998:21). Although it may be as Fairclough (1992: 12) suggests that the way discourse is both shaped by and constitutive of social identities and relations and systems of knowledge 'is (not) normally apparent to discourse participants'.

The notion of apprenticeship into a discourse community has also been problematised on other grounds. Casanave (1995) critiques the notion of an academic or disciplinary discourse community as adequate only at a very general level of abstraction, and becoming more and more meaningless as it is applied to specific settings, groups or individuals, where individual students can be seen to go about the process in very different ways (c.f. Lundell and Beach 2003). While Casanave attributes the growth in case study research to a recognised

inadequacy of descriptions of the broader community, it should be noted that such case studies are frequently oriented to an individual cognitive perspective, in other words it is individual difference that is the underlying focus (e.g. Berkenkotter, Huckin and Ackerman 1988, Herrington 1988). Certainly, at least at a general level, there are commonalities of social purpose that do privilege certain kinds of meaning making in academic contexts, in particular resources for construing abstract and technical meanings (Wignell 1998, Martin 2002b). Clearly certain kinds of genres are more prominent in, or restricted to, particular disciplinary areas (Hyland 2000a, Ravelli in press), and the realisation of common genres may vary from one cultural context to another (Swales 2002). Yet commonalities in the ways members of the academic discourse community engage with the construction of knowledge compared with practices characteristic of secondary education (Schleppegrell 2001), may still warrant use, albeit in an abstract sense, of the term academic discourse community.

2.1.1.2 Undergraduate academic literacy

The distinction between academic discourse and that of schooling is also taken up in Geisler (1994). She challenges the notion, perhaps implied in metaphors of enculturation or apprenticeship, that acquiring control of academic discourse is a seamless progression from school literacy. She described school literacy practices as fundamentally different from those expected of tertiary level students, especially as students move beyond undergraduate studies in transition to becoming expert professionals. The disjunction in literacy practices relates to the notion of texts as autonomous representations of knowledge in the reading and consequently the writing that is characteristic of secondary schooling. Geisler argues that

the right to do something with knowledge, particularly the knowledge encountered in books, is not a right routinely extended to students in school (Geisler 1994:50).

By contrast, literacy practices in the tertiary context are characterised by the creation and transformation of knowledge, and by engagement with texts as rhetorical constructions.

This representation of the divide between secondary and tertiary literacy is a highly generalised one, and from particular socio-cultural positions, students may have greater or lesser access to discourses (and languages) of academic knowledge (see Bernstein 1990 on code theory; Bourdieu 1991 on cultural capital, Hyland and Milton 1997, Mauranen 1996, Bloch and Chi 1995, Riley 1996, Scollon and Scollon 1995, on variations across cultural groups, and Pennycook 1994 on global English and competing languages). Not surprisingly, the shift in literacy practices and expectations from secondary to tertiary learning presents major difficulties for many undergraduate students, difficulties that may remain unattended to in their formal learning experiences (Belcher 1995, Johns 1997, Gollin 1998), and which are compounded where academic writing is in English as a second language (Belcher and

Braine 1995, Ventola and Mauranen 1996, Flowerdew and Peacock 2001, Schleppegrell and Colombi 2002, Kroll 2003, Ravelli and Ellis in press).

2.1.1.3 ESL undergraduate literacy

In the case of undergraduate students writing in English as a second language (ESL) there are a number of specific challenges that students may encounter. One issue that has generated considerable debate in the literature is the potential impact on culture and identity from the increasing dominance internationally of English as the language of tertiary education. English is growing in significance as a language of academic publishing, and increasingly the medium of instruction for a growing number of non-native speakers/writers of English (Masters 1998). At a social political level one concern associated with the global dominance of English is the potential for linguistic and cultural hegemony, and the undermining of other languages and cultures (Phillipson 1992, Scollon and Scollon 1995, Riley 1996, Benesch 1993, Pennycook 1994). Pennycook (1994: 308), for example, cites Ngugi (1993) who argues the need to 'avoid the destruction that English has wrought on other languages and other cultures in its march to the position in now occupies in the world'. While one response is to advocate a reduction in the teaching of English (Rogers 1982), Pennycook argues that

[w]hile we can seek to oppose the spread of English in various ways, the issue is perhaps more one of how we can find ways of dealing with English by establishing critical pedagogies in English (1994: 308).

This view expresses concerns at a more personal political level, for the disadvantageous impact on ESL students from confronting the conflicting cultural values and identities embedded in new language, new registers, and also much EAP pedagogic practice where student assumptions and beliefs are not heard, and which frequently do not 'acknowledge the complexities of the meanings students are trying to produce' (Pennycook 1994:305). Pennycook advocates pedagogies that aim at 'helping people to both find and create voices in a new language' (1994: 311). Such a critical pedagogy would also acknowledge power relations and build them into pedagogy, rather than take a 'neutral' stance in relation to teaching roles and teaching content (Benesch 1996, 1999, c.f. Ivanic 1998, Clark and Ivanic 1997 for similar arguments on behalf of marginalised native speaking students in tertiary study).

Belcher and Braine (1995: xv), however, suggest that it is a misrepresentation to claim that most second language students find culturally different learning styles and discourse roles a major hindrance to their learning, or that taking on new roles and relationships in academic study implies an abandonment of other identities. They suggest that ESL students do, however, 'welcome guidance through the mystifying labyrinth of academic discourse'. They

also critique both what they refer to as the 'sociotherapeutic' response to the challenges faced by ESL learners, which they characterise as 'open resistance to academic oppression', and the 'psychotherapeutic' approach, which seeks to enable students to find some 'true' identity. They argue instead for 'an approach informed by a belief in the power of explicit cognitive awareness of the texts, subtexts, and contexts of academic discourse to enable individuals to join the collective endeavours that academic communities are'. Participation in these endeavours does not, they argue, require 'cultural conversion', and on the contrary, can contribute to the 'enlargement of identity' (1995: xix). It would seem especially important in a context of tertiary education, where it is anticipated that discourse practices will differ from those experienced by students in their first language and/or home culture, to be able to explicate the ways in which academic texts are constructed in English, and to make more transparent the discursive constructedness of academic argument. As Bazerman (1992) and others suggest, making the implicit in discourse explicit is a means by which we can enable critical awareness and critical participation.

A second major body of literature related specifically to ESL student writers concerns the language resources they require in academic study, and the identification of aspects of academic writing that appear to be particularly problematic. Some studies attend to areas of difference that characterise the writing of native and non-native English speakers. There are a number of important contributions from such a comparative perspective, facilitated by advances in corpus-based analyses that enable broad generalisations to be made about specific areas of difference in language use. Some of these studies specifically address the writing in English of Chinese students. Hyland and Milton (1997), for example, compare expressions of doubt and certainty in the academic writing of Chinese secondary school students in Hong Kong and their native speaking counter-parts in the UK. They show that Chinese students were 'exhibiting greater problems in conveying a precise degree of certainty' (1997: 183). Field and Yip (1992) also compared upper secondary school essays from native speakers of English and from Cantonese speakers writing in English, and found that the Chinese students used significantly more organisational cohesive devices. A comparative study by Green, Christopher and Mei (2000) also found that Chinese students showed a greater tendency than native English speaking students to put logical connectors in Theme position in their writing, and similar results were reported in Milton and Tsang (1993). The limitations in the text coding resources currently available mean that these studies tend to focus on a small number of textual features. Nonetheless they make a contribution to understanding some of the specific grammatical and text organizational issues that may become relevant sites for intervention in EAP programs.

Other studies pay more attention to the pedagogic context and to factors impacting on the kinds of texts that ESL students produce. Schleppegrell (2002: 138), for example, points out that the limited grammatical resources of ESL students become 'strikingly apparent when they attempt to do a complex task for which their language is not yet well-developed enough'. She demonstrates that those students who attempt responses in line with model texts are likely to display more grammatical errors. Her argument, however, is that

[d]evelopment means more errors, and when fewer errors occur, the writer may be using too cautious an approach. Attempting more complex explanations results in more surface errors, as attention needed to monitor the errors is used to focus on making scientific meanings (Schleppegrell 2002: 138).

Schleppegrell also argues that the feedback on writing assignments given to ESL students tends to relate less to meaning and content, as the attention of instructors is drawn to grammatical errors. She found that ESL student papers are often returned covered with markings indicating grammatical errors, yet '[w]here meaning breaks down, typically instructors respond with "unclear" or "awkward" in marginal comments' (2002: 139). Her research is an important reminder of the complex linguistic challenges faced by undergraduate students studying in English as a second language, and the need to be able to respond to students in ways that go beyond a focus on syntactic errors, to attend to the kinds of meanings that students are aiming to construct, and to the language for realising such meanings.

While there is a significant body of work attending to the writing of undergraduate ESL students from a cognitive or process-oriented, and/or individual case-study perspective (e.g. Casanave 1995, Prior 1995) it remains a relatively under-researched site from the point of view of discourse analytic studies. The majority of studies that take a discourse level focus on academic writing focus on professional academic and published texts (e.g. Salager-Meyer 1994, Hyland 1998, Hunston 1993, Thetala 1997, Thompson 1996), or graduate level writing (Bunton 1999, Samraj 2000). Recent exceptions include Green, Christopher and Mei. (2000) where the focus is on Chinese undergraduate students writing in English, and Schleppegrell (2002) who compares undergraduate ESL research reports with a native speaker model. Barton (1993) also provides an important contribution in her comparative analysis of the ways in which student writers and expert writers use of a range of resources of *evidentiality*. She discusses implications for the kinds of arguments they construct and resultant variations in stance. The current study extends this kind of analysis by drawing on a more comprehensive model of evaluation, and by approaching the analysis from a qualitative perspective, to enable a consideration of the patterning and interaction of resources in individual texts

In summary, the discussion above points to the significance of undergraduate learning as a site of transition in academic literacy practices. This transition is from one where texts are seen as decontextualised depositories of formal and uncontested knowledge, knowledge that is expected to be incorporated but not transformed in the texts students write, to one where the texts that are read, and progressively written, are complex rhetorical resources through which abstract knowledge is constructed. The transition is from one kind of knowledge and one way of knowing to another. As such, this site represents an important yet under-researched one for the study of discourses of academic practice, and for explorations of the ways in which novice writers, particularly but not exclusively ESL writers, take on the discourse practices associated with disciplinary expertise.

2.1.2 Academic discourse

One interesting feature of descriptions of academic discourse in much of the literature referenced to this point, is that they represent a dichotomised or at least bifurcated perspective along lines that relate in some way to notions of product (or content) and process (or form). Geisler (1994), for example, following Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), distinguishes between '*domain content*' and '*rhetorical process*' in her description of the discourse of professional expertise, and this duality of function is reflected in a great deal of the academic literacy literature (e.g. Bourdieu 1991), and discussions of approaches to discourse analysis (Fairclough 1992). Candlin (1998) makes the distinction between what he refers to as different orientations of *stance*, one oriented to 'current knowledge, other researchers and other practitioners', corresponding in some sense to what you know, and the other to 'audience', corresponding to how you present this knowledge. While both aspects are seen here as discursively constructed, in distinguishing between what is known and how it is presented, the latter is sometimes referred to as meta-discourse. This is a difficult construct to pin down in the literature (see, for example, Bourdieu 1991, Fairclough 1992, Crismore 1989, Barton 1993, Hyland 2000a). In part the problem relates to defining what is meant by meta-discourse in relation to other terms. Geisler (1994) for example refers to both 'metadiscourse' and to 'rhetorical process', which is contrasted to 'domain content'. She explains rhetorical processes as 'shaped by the writer's relationship with the intended audience' (1994: 82), and meta-discourse is similarly defined as,

discourse about discourse. It is the discourse that calls attention either to the relationship between the author and the claims in the text or to the relationship between the author or the text's readers (1994: 11)

Crismore (1989) identifies instances of meta-discourse fulfilling interpersonal functions that are to do with assessing certainty, expressing attitude towards a proposition, or directly addressing the audience. In this sense then meta-discourse includes the notion of rhetorical

process and is perhaps something more. Fairclough (1992) considered meta-discourse to be a kind of manifest intertextuality where the writer in a sense interacts with her own text. This included the use of 'hedging', with various kinds of markers of vagueness, as well as some means by which other voices are projected into a text. It should be noted, however, that Fairclough does not use the term 'meta-discourse' in more recent work on discourse analysis (2003). The common thread seems to be meanings other than ideational ones, meanings that are predominantly interpersonal but may also be textual. In respect to textual meanings that are taken as instances of meta-discourse, this seems restricted to some readily identifiable resources for calling attention to the text as message such as in the following examples from Bourdieu (1991: 71) 'if you'll pardon the expression...', 'off the record...'. However, other resources identified in a functional theory of language as construing a text as message, such as higher-level thematic choices (Martin and Rose 2003), are not so identified in the meta-discourse literature.

The confusion or at least lack of clarity in the identification of resources of 'meta-discourse' rests in a pragmatic understanding of discourse as fundamentally about the transmission of information (content). From such a perspective there is a need to account for the other functions of the text as doing positioning, politeness, arguing or alignment work, and to account for the writer's construction of the text as a message as somehow outside of discourse proper. This interpretation of meta-discourse is born out in Hyland's (2000a) recent reference to 'interpersonal meta-discourse' and 'textual meta-discourse'. The notion of meta-discourse appears to be a pragmatic response to recognition of the interpersonal meaning at the level of texts, in the same way that 'hedging' is used as a pragmatic label for a set of interpersonally functioning grammatical resources. In other words 'meta-discourse' is to text as 'hedging' is to grammar.

Within a Systemic Functional theory of language, the notion of metafunctions acknowledges the role of language as simultaneously construing ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings (Halliday 1985, 1994, Martin 1992b, Halliday and Matthiessen 1999). The ideational refers to the representation of experience (what is meant by 'content' in other models), the interpersonal refers to the enactment of social relations of power and solidarity (that is, 'rhetorical strategy' and/or 'meta-discourse'), and the textual refers to organization of representations and relationships as meaningful text (sometimes included in notions of metadiscourse). The interpersonal and the textual are therefore intrinsic to the notion of language as a meaning-making resource. They are not 'meta' to discourse. The meaning of the text lies in the integration of all three dimensions, each of which needs to be understood in relation to the others. So for example, the content meanings able to be made, and the level of abstraction in the representation of concepts within a field of study, will vary with

respect to the relationship with the audience, as will the kinds of direct appeal made to the audience. Likewise the kinds of direct appeals made to the audience may vary with respect to the experiential meanings encoded and the level of abstraction by means of which the field of study is construed. When a Systemic Functional model is applied to the examples cited as instances of meta-discourse, they can be systematically addressed as meaning options within systems of discourse semantics. A more theoretically motivated explanation of interpersonal meaning-making in academic discourse is a significant aspect of the project undertaken in this research study, and Appraisal theory, as the theoretical foundation of the study, is explained further in this chapter and at other relevant stages in the thesis.

The issue of the duality of the content knowledge and interpersonal relations identified above as a feature of much research on academic literacy is addressed from an alternative sociological perspective in Bernstein (1999). He considers the question of identity and discourse drawing on code theory (1990, 1996) and the notions of classification and framing. Classification is briefly defined as the transformation of power relations into specialized discourses, and framing is the transformation of principles of control into the regulation of interactional discursive practices (1996: 3). Bernstein sees the construction of identity as the outcome of what he calls “‘voice message’ relations’ (1999: 260). Voice, he argues, ‘sets the limit on what can be legitimately put together (communicated)’ and is established through classificatory relations, for example disciplinary boundaries in the academy, and for that matter between school and the university (in other words ‘content’ classifications). The acquisition of ‘voice’, and the manifestation or realisation of voice in ‘message’, are regulated by framing relations. In this sense we might interpret instances of discourse as realisations of the relationship of classification and framing, as manifestations of what is realised within constraints of possibility.

Bernstein’s sociological model of coding in terms of classification and framing allows us to consider variations across the academic environment, both progressively in terms of the transition from school to university, and synchronically in terms of variations across disciplines and institutions (see, e.g., Hyland 2000a, 2002, Candlin and Plum 1998 on disciplinary differences; Geisler 1994, Hyland and Milton 1997 on institutional differences). The strength of classification, for example, in one sense becomes stronger with subject specialisation upon entry into undergraduate studies and especially into graduate studies. However the strength of the classification, and the resultant distinctions in identity, may be eroded or may become problematic with greater encouragement to interdisciplinary studies. Geisler (1994) draws attention at a personal level to the pitfalls that can accompany the attempt to construct an identity that bridges disciplinary areas. The danger is that the cross-disciplinary ‘message’ may not be legitimised by the governing ‘voices’ in either disciplinary

home base. Framing relations can also map differences between contexts of learning, over sectors of education and across disciplinary environments, and cultural contexts. In an academic context, these differences will be played out in the ways in which faculty and students interact (Belcher 1995, Hyland and Milton 1997), and in terms of the roles that are facilitated and enabled for participants. Students in transition to expert professional knowledge enter a world of changed framing relations, which enable different messages to be legitimately realised.

2.1.2.1 Reforming academic discourse practices

To conclude this introductory discussion of the nature of the academic context as a discourse community, I review positions related to the argument of the elitism and/or disfunctionality of academic discourse. Different interpretations of discourse that have been the focus of this discussion of academic literacy also have implications for the ways in which the academic community is perceived as problematic and in terms of the kinds of reforms that are proposed. Typically debates are concerned with issues around the devaluing of local, indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing in the formal culture of the academy, and the consequential further marginalisation of minority or disadvantaged groups (Giroux 1992, Geisler 1994, Lee 1997). The proposed reforms potentially involve the invention of 'new discourses of knowledge making' or the celebration of multiplicity (Geisler 1994: 246). New forms of discourse accompanying more participatory and democratic kinds of pedagogic practice are argued for on the grounds that they provide opportunities for marginalised groups who are silenced in existing practices (Giroux 1992), although Geisler cautions that the reform of the academy is 'much more complicated than simply going back to a preprofessionalised utopia' (1994: 251). Bernstein (2000) addresses this debate in his highly detailed sociological analysis of the discourses of pedagogy. He refers to forms of knowledge that are characterised as everyday, 'common sense', or local as *Horizontal discourse*, and contrast this with the *Vertical discourse* associated with specialised contexts and modes, and the recontextualising of knowledge (2000: 157). Bernstein argues that while

Horizontal discourse may be seen as a crucial resource for pedagogic populism in the name of empowerment or unsilencing voices to combat the elitism and alleged authoritarianism of *Vertical discourse* (2000:157),

and while

segments of *Horizontal discourse* are being inserted in *Vertical discourse* (...) these insertions are subject to distributive rules, which allocates these insertions to marginal knowledges and/or social groups (...) raising an interesting question of the implications for equality by the recognition and institutionalisation of diversity (2000: 169/70).

Bernstein goes on to argue,

I should make it quite clear that it is crucial for students to know and to feel that they, the experiences which have shaped them, and their modes of showing are

recognised, respected and valued. But this does not mean that this exhausts the pedagogic encounter. For to see the pedagogic encounter only in terms of a range of potential voices and their relation to each other is to avoid the issue of pedagogy itself (2000: 174).

Maton (2000) similarly argues that, in order to challenge existing practices and make demands for reform, it is necessary to consider more critically the ways discourse is functioning in pedagogic contexts. This study aims to make a contribution to this project, and by so doing, hopefully to provide ways to make aspects of the nature of the *Vertical discourse* of academic knowledge more visible and accessible to those for whom it represents uncommon sense.

2.2 Evaluation from a linguistic perspective

The discussion of academic discourse practices in this chapter has inevitably begun to construct the linguistic territory that informs this study. At this point, I want to focus more directly on the nature of academic discourse from a linguistic perspective. I take the notion of evaluation as a starting point and review contributions to a linguistic understanding of evaluation from a range of theoretical positions and linguistic orientations. Some, but not all, of this work relates to the specific context of academic writing.

In the introduction to their influential volume, "Evaluation in text: Authorial stance and the construction of discourse", Thompson and Hunston (2000:5) define evaluation as

the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about.

This brief definition points to a complexity of underlying functions, which in turn suggests the implication of a variety of linguistic resources. Broadly speaking, we could consider evaluation to incorporate all aspects of interpersonal meaning encoded in texts, and functioning to construe stance or point of view. Needless to say the mapping of this territory of interpersonal meaning has been approached in many different ways, with the diversity being a product of divergent theories of language, divergent research interests, and diachronic developments in research and theory. It is an impossible task therefore to fully reconcile the multiple models of evaluation, their categorisations and labelling. Nevertheless some comparison of the ways in which the territory of evaluation is mapped is a useful means to capture the breadth and complexity of evaluative meaning making, and in addition to provide a background to, and rationale for, the model drawn upon in this study. In this

section I consider studies of language as evaluation from the perspectives of genre, grammar, lexis, and discourse.

2.2.1 Evaluation as genre

I begin with a review of work on genre, as relevant to a discussion of the language of evaluation in that the academic texts analysed in this study represent examples of expository genre. In particular they are texts that aim to align readers to a point of view. Martin and Rose (2003: 18,19) refer to such texts as ‘macro-propositions’. They are intrinsically evaluative in their social purpose.

Hyon (1996) reviews three main perspectives on genre that characterise research and theory building: the New Rhetoric position, the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) view, and what she refers to as the ‘Sydney school’, where genre is positioned within the broader theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Martin 1985, 1993, 1994, Christie and Martin 1997). The New Rhetoric position is associated primarily with North American scholars (e.g. Millar 1994, Freedman and Medway 1994, Coe 1994, Coe, Lingard and Teslenko 2002) whose interests are predominantly in social activity, which is seen as impacting on, but fundamentally outside, language as system. A notion of genre as essentially a ‘mode of action’ implies for new rhetoric scholars, that ‘[i]dentifying patterns of text format, syntactical and lexical choice, and discursive ordering, (...) is no longer considered sufficient for pinning down the genre’, rather its identification ‘should arise from a particular socially recognisable motivation’ (Medway 2002:123/4).

This suggests a difference in perspective from the textual orientation to the study of genre of those working in a Systemic Functional model (e.g. Christie and Martin 1997). Underlying the varying positions on genre, from a New Rhetoric perspective and from an SFL perspective, is a basic difference in the theorisation of language and its relationship to activity. Within SFL, language is seen as a social semiotic, alongside other social semiotic systems, including for example, visual imaging (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996), action as movement (Martinec 1998, 2000) and music and sound (van Leeuwen 1999). Language is seen as the most complex of these systems in that, to a large extent, language can be used to interpret these other semiotic systems. From an SFL perspective, ‘activity’ is therefore understood as a ‘kind of meaning’ as is language (Martin 2002a: 267). The argument against the privileging of activity over language is strongly stated by Hasan.

It is certainly true that language is only one among many semiotic systems and that in many important ways the various sign systems are alike (...). This, however, does not mean that they are identical in all respects. For example, they differ considerably in their potentiality. The potentiality of a sign system can be estimated by reference

to how far the system impinges on the significant life-situations of a community; the more it does so, the higher its potentiality.(...)

It seems reasonable to argue that control over a sign system with a higher potentiality is relatively more important, and there is no virtue in treating all sign systems on an equal footing. (...) The term *privileged* is often used in educational discourse almost as an emotion-laden war cry. But to say that some semiotic system, for example, language, is being privileged at the cost of others simply because it receives greater attention, reveals a lack of analytic acuity; there is no attempt in such declarations to engage with the variability in the efficacy of the various sign systems in the life of the community. One can hardly deny that, compared to most sign systems, language has an exceedingly high potential (1996:382/3).

Rather than privileging activity over language in a study of genre, as is the case in explanations of genre within the New Rhetoric position (Coe 1994, Samraj 2002), a social semiotic approach would consider the meaning making systems of both language and other kinds of activity. So while studies of genre within an SFL approach, focus in detail on the language as text, they do so with an understanding of text as on a plane of instantiation in enacting culture (Halliday 1991).

The second school of genre studies identified by Hyon (1996) is that of the ESP position, notably represented, for example, in Swales (1990) and Dudley-Evans (1994) in studies of academic discourse, as well as Bhatia (1993), in research on professional discourses.

Swales defines genre as

a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognised by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style (1990: 58).

The ESP tradition of genre studies has resulted in a significant volume of work in academic discourse, with more or less attention to grammar. Studies of genre within ESP include analyses of sections of academic journal articles such as introductions (Swales 1990, Crookes 1986), abstracts (Salager-Meyer 1990, Hyland 2000a), literature reviews (Swales and Lindemann 2002) results sections (Hopkins and Dudley-Evans 1988), discussion section (Dudley-Evans 1994) and the transition from results to conclusions in research articles (Yang and Allison 2003), as well as submission letters to academic journals (Swales 1996) and grant proposals (Connor and Mauranen 1999), and oral language genres such as conference presentations (Thompson 1997). ESP genre studies offer a text-oriented perspective, one that could be said to bridge between the New Rhetoric position and that of Systemic Functional linguists. Particularly in earlier studies of genre in this tradition (including Swales 1990) a social theory of language does not extend beyond genre itself. That is, discussions of grammatical realisations of generic stages are predominantly in formal structural terms, and structural categories are then attributed with pragmatic

explanations of meaning. Grammatical choices themselves are not seen as systematically meaning making, and the text is seen as arising from a discourse community, but not necessarily as constructing of that community. This can be exemplified in relation to Swales' (1990) analysis of the structure of the introduction to research articles. Swales (1990) uses the term 'moves' to describe the ways in which genres function progressively to achieve the social purpose of a text. The moves, and sub-moves or 'steps' that characterise the introductions to research articles, for example, are identified as,

- Move 1 Establishing a territory
 - Claiming centrality, and/or
 - Making topic generalizations, and/or
 - Reviewing items of previous research
- Move 2 Establishing a niche
 - Counter-claiming, or
 - Indicating a gap, or
 - Question raising, or
 - Continuing a tradition
- Move 3 Occupying the niche
 - Outlining purposes, or
 - Announcing present research
 - Announcing principal findings
 - Indicating RA structure

(from Swales 1990: 141).

However, it is unclear on what basis the identification of a move boundary is made, other than based on an intuitive reading of the text. As Bloor (1998:60) acknowledges,

anyone who has tried to identify moves in texts will realize that it can be a difficult and contentious activity. Experienced readers often fail to agree on the interpretation of moves.

Hyland (2002:116) also suggests that 'analysts have not always been convincingly able to identify the way these shifts are explicitly signalled by lexico-grammatical patterning' (c.f. Paltridge 1997). In more recent work, Swales and Feak (2000) recognise a problem in this approach to describing text structuring from a different point of view. In discussing the structuring of literature reviews in research papers, they suggest that

“[p]erhaps the most important *rhetorical* characteristic of LRs is that they are different from most other academic genres in one crucial respect. They do not easily fall into those stages or 'moves' (...) that have proved helpful in structuring abstracts, conference posters, introductions, discussions, and so forth. In effect, as we shall see, the range of options for structuring a LR is much greater.” (Swales and Feak 2000: 122)

Such diversity in the ways texts are constructed may suggest the need for a closer investigation of variations in the social purposes of the texts. However, the difficulties cited in providing an adequate description of text organization in terms of move structures (e.g. Bloor 1998) may arise where the notion of generic stage or move connects to language only in terms of a post-hoc description of a range of formal grammatical constructions. That is, the

problem may arise where there is no theorised connection between the semantics of move-labelling, and linguistic resources that are identified as characteristic of the text in that move. Illustrative of this is Swales' discussion of the linguistic signalling of a shift into Move 2 (in the set above), where he points to the fact that negative quantifiers typically occur in sentence initial position or following an adversative conjunction (1990:155). An explanation from a semantic perspective might address the thematic placement of both negative meaning and counter-expectancy.

More recently, the ESP position on genre has merged in two directions, in some cases aligning more closely with the New Rhetoric position (Samraj 2002) and in other instances merging with an SFL perspective (see, for example, Swales 1997, Paltridge 1997). Within SFL, genre is 'interpreted as a system of social processes' (Martin 1992b: 494), that are conventionalised or institutionalised representations of meanings. They are both representations of, and constructive of culture. However, this attempt to bridge the 'genre as action' and SFL perspectives of genre is not without its difficulties, as evidenced in Paltridge's (1997) analyses of lexicogrammatical realisations of the 'background information' stage of research papers. He was led to conclude that 'it is not possible to make any clear cut either/or statements about lexico-grammatical patterning and nominal and verbal group structures in texts' (1997:79), and that 'the conditions for the assignment of a communicative event as an instance of a particular genre (...) are essentially non-linguistic rather than linguistic' (1997: 87). He may well have concluded differently, however, had his analyses not been focused on clause-level grammatical realisations of ideational meaning (nominal group structures and transitivity choices). While the labelling as 'Background Information' makes salient the ideational content, the important persuasive function of this stage also needs to be addressed in grammatical analyses. But perhaps more important is the issue of the restricted focus on clause-level grammar. In relation to the semantic attribute of 'quantity', for example, Paltridge identifies its frequency of occurrence and provides valuable exemplification of the multitude of ways in which this semantic category is realised, including as participant, process and circumstance. However, he concludes from this diversity of grammatical realisations that it constitutes evidence of a lack of association between grammar and generic staging. A discourse semantic perspective on linguistic realisations of generic stages would accommodate the diverse realisations of, for example, quantification, as instances of grammatical metaphor. And a metafunctional perspective would encourage a consideration of their interpersonal meaning-making role (as is taken up in this study).

Key tenets of SFL theory are that language is *stratified*, that is, it functions on different planes of content (discourse semantics and lexicogrammar) and expression (phonology), and that language is *metafunctional*, in other words it simultaneously construes ideational,

interpersonal, and textual meaning. These tenets have important implications in terms of how genres and their sub-stages are identified and how language choices ('content and style') within genres are analysed and described (Hyland 2002). In terms of stratification, Hyland (2002) notes an expansion of work in genre studies with a focus on realisations of meanings at the level of discourse semantics, including for example, analyses of reference systems as realised in personal pronouns (Kuo 1999), and Theme choices (McKenna 1997). Important work in this regard also includes, Drury (1991) on thematic choices in student summary writing, Mauranen (1996) on thematic development in native and non-native texts, Ravelli (in press) on cross-disciplinary variation in higher level thematic structuring in undergraduate essays, and Coffin and Hewings (in press) on Appraisal resources as interpersonal Theme in IELTS essays.

Hyland (2002) also points to a growing interest in the interpersonal meaning in academic writing, and refers to recent work that

has sought to reveal how persuasion in various genres is not only accomplished through the representation of ideas, but also by the construction of an appropriate authorial self, and the negotiation of accepted participant relationships' (Hyland 2002: 116,117).

The study undertaken here intends to contribute further to this project.

The focus in both ESP genre studies and those from the 'Sydney school' (Hyon 1996) is on the identification of generic stages in texts, and on their realisation in choices of lexicogrammar (albeit from differing orientations to the nature of grammar). The concept of move structure or generic staging of texts has been shown to provide a useful pedagogic tool for introducing the notion of discourse structuring in academic texts, and for enhancing metalinguistic awareness on the part of students. However, it necessarily has its limitations in this regard. Swales presents the problem as simplification versus complication, thus:

One seemingly predisposing feature for the acceptance of structural models is a certain simplicity. (...) In contrast, elaborate models, for all their sophistication and for all the time and effort put into their evolution, somehow typically fail to attract the attention of the relevant applied linguistic communities in a sustained way, however, much they may appeal to coteries of like-minded scholars. It looks as though being simple engenders being memorable, and this in turn engenders being usable, quotable, and perhaps teachable' (Swales 2002: 67).

In addressing 'complications' to the notion of genre, Swales focuses on the degree of variation that abounds in the realisations of a genre across cultural locations (e.g. Mauranen 1993, Ahmad 1997, Duszak 1997) and in relation to different kinds of research spaces. Swales acknowledges, for example, that his CARS (Create a Research Space) model 'primarily reflects research in a big world, in big fields, in big languages, with big journals and big libraries' (2002:71), and that alternative models might include OARO (Open a Research

Option) or PART (Present a Research Topic) even TOTE (Take on the Establishment). He also acknowledges that 'the options available for established researchers can be very different to those available for beginning ones' (2002: 73). From a Systemic Functional perspective on genre, the issue of variation is accommodated within a notion of genres as 'resources for meaning' rather than 'systems of rules' (Halliday and Martin 1993). Martin (2002a: 264) makes the point that 'we need to distinguish genre (system) from text (instantiation) – to distinguish recurrent configurations of meaning immanent in our culture from the textual instances that draw on one or more of them or reinforce these configurations or nudge the culture along'. Instances of textual realisation vary within culturally configured systems of social functioning.

There is one further issue in the analysis of genres that remains pertinent to this study, and that relates to the division and labelling of stages. In any labelling of generic stages in a text, the orientation is to particularise meanings, that is, to represent them as part-whole structures. This kind of structuring favours/reflects an ideational orientation to meaning (Halliday 1994, Martin 1992b), an orientation that is frequently encoded in the wording of labels for moves or stages. Swales' (1990) CARS model for introductions to research articles (outlined above) provides an example. While the labelling of Moves 1, 2 and 3 links them to the achievement of the social purpose of argument (e.g. 'Establishing a niche'), the particulate structuring favours the description of shifts in ideational meanings, or field focus. The shift from Move 1 to Move 2 can be seen essentially as a differentiation of ideational focus from the topic of the research, to research undertaken within that topic. In line with this perspective, the shift to Move 3 represents a change in ideational focus from the research of others, to the writer's own research. However, it would seem useful also to consider discourse structuring from other metafunctional perspectives. In the context of an argument genre, for example, the reader might anticipate shifts in the kinds of interpersonal meanings (e.g. evaluation) that are characteristic of one stage or another in the text. An important issue for consideration is therefore how to understand the organization of texts in ways that enable an effective modelling of interpersonal meanings and textual meanings.

The SFL perspective on genre has moved away from 'simple constituency representations of genre staging' (Martin 1997:16). Initially this was to account for the structuring of longer texts as 'macro-genres' with internal logico-semantic links of elaboration, extension, and enhancement, and then as a recognition of the different types of structuring principles associated with different metafunctions, the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual (Halliday 1979, Matthiessen 1988, Martin 1992b).

The basic division is between particulate, prosodic and periodic structures. Particulate structure organizes text segmentally (...). Prosodic structure is super-segmental; it spreads itself across a text (...). Periodic structure is wavelike; it

organizes a text into a rhythm of peaks and troughs, as the demands of information flow prescribe. It follows from this factoring of kinds of structure that genre structure is best interpreted simultaneously from the perspective of particulate, prosodic and periodic representations (Martin 1997:17).

This multifunctional perspective on the organization of texts is taken up in this study of research paper introductions (see chapter 5) where patterns of interpersonal meaning are investigated in terms of their particulate distribution, their periodic positioning, and their prosodic co-articulation (c.f. Martin 2001, Martin and Rose 2003).

In summary, genre studies have contributed to an understanding of the underlying argument structure of much academic writing, and in particular the writing of research articles. Different orientations to the study of genre give greater or lesser attention to the activities and relationships characterising the context of production of the texts, or to the texts themselves. Where the focus is predominantly on texts, they may be seen as fundamentally reflective of practices in the discourse community, or as simultaneously reflective of and constructive of those practices. The current study draws on SFL as the underlying theory of language, and is therefore aligned with the latter interpretation. In other words, in this study, texts are seen as meaning making in terms of both content knowledge and in terms of the construal of relationships. An analysis of texts is therefore seen as an essential aspect of understanding the nature of the discourse communities within which they are constructed.

2.2.2 Evaluation as grammar

It is generally agreed in most recent linguistically oriented studies of evaluation that, functionally, evaluation has to do with valuing and taking a position in relation both to entities and to propositions. This basic distinction between valuing entities and valuing propositions, is made by Hunston and Thompson 2000, by Bybee and Fleischman (1995), and by Fairclough (2003), although both Bybee and Fleischman, and Fairclough use the label *evaluation* for the 'evaluation' of entities, and *modality* for propositions. *Modality* for Fairclough refers to an author's commitment to 'what is true and what is necessary' and *evaluation* refers to an author's commitment to 'what is desirable or undesirable, good or bad' (Fairclough 2003:164). In earlier work Fairclough (1992) also uses the term *stance* to refer to the 'point of intersection in discourse between signification of reality and the enactment of social reality' (1992: 160). At the time he likened this, in Systemic Functional terms, to the intersection of the ideational and the interpersonal (160), but perhaps stance could be reinterpreted, in Fairclough's more recent terms, to refer to the intersection of evaluation and modality. This seems in line with his more recent reference to the realisations of meanings of evaluation and modality as a 'texturing of identities' (2003:164). Conrad and

Biber (2000) and Biber and Finegan (1989) make similar categorical distinctions to those above, but refer to kinds of *stance* as *epistemic stance* incorporating modality, and also attribution to other sources, and *attitudinal stance* referring to feelings and value judgements. They also include a third category, that of *style stance*, where the writer provides a comment on the way the proposition is presented. Sinclair (1981) too, distinguishes between evaluation oriented to the proposition as a whole and that oriented to the world being written about, and refers to these as two *planes of discourse*, the *interactive* and the *autonomous* planes (see also Hunston 2000).

The functional complexity of evaluation inevitably draws into play an extensive range of linguistic and non-linguistic resources, which may be made more or less explicit depending on the focus and linguistic orientation of the research. Hunston and Thompson (2000) make the point that each kind of evaluation (that is, of entities and of propositions) draws differently on resources of grammar. They suggest that entities are typically evaluated through adjectives, and propositions are evaluated through more grammatical categories such as modal verbs. Labov (1972, cited in Hunston and Thompson 2000:13) very broadly considers evaluation to be 'anything that is compared to or contrasts with the norm'. His notion of evaluative devices and the grammatical and non-grammatical means of expression include: *intensifiers* - e.g. expressive phonology, repetition, gesture; *comparators* – e.g. imperatives, questions, negatives, modals; *correlatives* – e.g. progressive verbal tense, and *explicatives* – e.g. qualifications such as 'because', 'so'. Stubbs (1996) also includes as potentially evaluating, choices in mood, modality, tense, logical connection, vague language and sourcing propositions. Given the diversity of grammatical resources implicated in evaluative stance, it is not surprising to find that much research focuses on the evaluative functioning of just one or a small number of linguistic resources, for example, Nwogu (1997) and Thompson and Zhou (2000) on conjunctive relations, Conrad and Biber (2000) on adverbials, Hoey (2000) on the positioning of evaluation in Given or New, Groom (2000), Hawes and Thomas (1997), Hyland 1999 on citation structures, Thompson and Ye (1991), Hyland (1999) on reporting verbs, Oster (1981), Malcolm (1987), Swales (1990) on tense. Such studies are frequently corpus based.

A general consensus throughout the research literature on evaluation, is that, while evaluation may be concentrated at particular points or phases in the text, it is nonetheless encoded throughout texts though the deployment of a wide range of linguistic resources. Much research has focused on the evaluation of propositions in texts, and the grammatical resources that function in that role.

2.2.3 Evaluation as lexis

Fewer studies approach the study of evaluative language from the point of view of lexis, with some notable exceptions. One body of work focuses in particular on the use of imprecise or vague language. In her study of vague language, Channell (1994) included the use of vague words and additives such as 'loads of', 'heaps of', 'something like that'. Her explanations are oriented to the representation of truth-values and commitment to propositions (epistemic), but, as she explains, the reasons for this vagueness may include a range of social goals. Myers (1996) also studied expressions of what he calls 'strategic vagueness' in academic texts, and again considers the functioning not only in epistemic terms, but also in terms of 'the negotiation of complex boundaries' and 'the mediation of apparently conflicting interests' (1996: 3). Both Channell and Myers make an important contribution in pointing to the role of the vague evaluation of entities in construing social relations. Myers claims that

vagueness can be used strategically to allow a written text to take on a range of meanings for different audiences with different interests (1996:4).

He argues that

this kind of vagueness is particularly important in academic writing, in which the success or failure of claims may turn on the negotiation of their specificity and breadth (1996:4).

Both Myers and Channell move from general statements of the functions of vagueness to articulating the grammatical resources that are seen to constitute vagueness in the terms they establish for their studies.

In a different research take on similar linguistic resources, Biber and Conrad (2001) report on a register variation study of 'downtoners' such as 'pretty', 'somewhat' and 'slightly'. They found that such terms were distributed differently across registers and in particular that academic prose uses a wider range of common downtoners than is used in conversational language. They also found that in conversational language, downtoners are most frequently used to modify evaluative terms, whereas they are used with a much wider range of descriptive adjectives in academic prose.

Many of the downtoner+adjective collocations in academic prose have to do with marking the extent of comparison between two items (e.g. *slightly smaller*, *somewhat lower*) (Biber and Conrad 2001: 178).

In other words in academic prose the downtoners are used to grade non-evaluative lexis, an issue that is explored in depth in this study (see chapters 4 and 5).

While the studies cited in the discussion above contribute to an understanding of the rhetorical functioning of lexical resources that encode vagueness or that modify meanings,

they do not attempt to systematise the semantic options of vagueness or modification. However, the notions of 'vague language' and of 'downtoners' are incorporated into the system of Appraisal within SFL, as Graduation. The model as articulated in Martin (2000), and in Martin and Rose (2003) (see chapter 1), systemises the semantic options of Graduation, as including choices for grading as Force or as Focus and then identifies further semantic options within Force to include grading as Intensity, as Measure or as Enrichment. Approaching an analysis of discourse from a semantic perspective of Graduation, allows for the integration of various kinds of graded meanings, including those discussed above as 'vagueness' and as 'downtoners', and most importantly accounts for the realisation of these meanings across a range of grammatical systems. Graduation provides, therefore, a framework for exploring the multiple ways in which academic writers grade meanings strategically in their writing. The system of Graduation is applied in this study of the construction of evaluative stance, and is extended through that application as is detailed in chapter 4.

Channel (2000) focuses on 'evaluative lexis from yet another perspective. Her focus is on the covert evaluative functioning of lexical terms (see also Sinclair 1991 and Stubbs 1996). She studied concordances for a range of words or expressions, including 'self-important', 'regime', and 'fat', to determine whether they are associated with positive or negative values in large corpora of texts. Her study points to the need to consider the typical association of words in understanding their evaluative potential. A word may convey a negative meaning by association if that word typically associates with negative meanings, even though the word itself is not overtly evaluatively coded. Channell (2000: 39) claims the necessity of corpus-based studies to determine such associations. She argues that corpus-based studies 'go beyond what intuition can achieve'.

More closely associated with the study undertaken in this thesis is Thetala's (1997) research into the evaluation of entities in research articles, where she distinguishes importantly between topic-oriented evaluation (TOE), and research-oriented evaluation (ROE). Thetala's corpus of texts includes research articles from four discipline areas, and in an analysis of the 'ascribed value' for entities in ROE, she concluded that there was

overwhelming evidence of no significant differences among the four disciplines in terms of the kinds of evaluated entities and ascribed values, as well as the lexical realizations of such values. This indicates that values of research are the same in different disciplines and therefore predictable (Thetala 1997: 115).

She did, however, find differences in the frequency and distribution of values, and 'differences among disciplines in terms of the balance of TOE and ROE in a text' (1997: 116). Thetala's distinction between evaluated entities that are topic-oriented and those that are research-oriented is an important consideration in the analysis of Attitude in this study,

where similar field distinctions are drawn on. In this thesis [drawing on the work of Christie (1991a, 1999) in distinguishing between registers in pedagogic discourse], the distinctions between different fields being evaluated are theoretically motivated on the basis of an analysis of projection (see chapter 4).

In summary, studies of attitudinal lexis and the evaluation of entities have received comparatively less attention in research than have studies of the grammar of evaluative language, and there have been few attempts to model the semantics of attitude, especially in the context of academic discourse. An analysis of lexical choices in the evaluation of entities is a significant aspect of this study.

2.2.4 Evaluation as discourse

Some studies of the linguistics of evaluation arguably sit at the intersection of grammar and discourse. Within this category I include studies in pragmatics that are concerned with the functioning of discourse, but which focus predominantly on identifying language choices at the level of grammar. In such studies of text, rhetorical strategies are intuited on the basis of aggregations of grammatical forms. I include a review of such studies under a section on discourse (rather than grammar) in that the motivation is the identification of rhetorical strategies, but also on the grounds that they are likely to be so positioned by the researchers themselves.

A number of studies of the linguistics of evaluation focus predominantly on the evaluative resources of modality, with varying degrees of alignment to Halliday's category of *modalization* (Halliday 1985, 1994). Stubbs' (1996) concept of modality, for example, addresses grammatical resources of modalization, but also includes other resources of vague language and some diminutive forms of address. Chafe's (1986) concern is also with the evaluation of propositions (i.e. modalization) but he uses the term *evidentiality* to refer to language that expresses attitude towards knowledge. Barton (1993) relates evidentiality to *metadiscourse* (discussed earlier) or at least identifies two types of metadiscourse (drawing on Vande Kopple 1985) that constitute evidentiality. These are *validity markers*, identified as hedges, emphatics and attributors, and *attitude markers*, vaguely exemplified as what would be comment adjuncts in SFL theory, for example, 'surprisingly'. Validity markers and attitude markers construct *epistemological stance* for Barton (1993:746). In her study of comparisons in the use of evidentials in expert and student texts, she focuses on four specific rhetorical strategies used in academic argument: problematization, persona, citation, and argument. She assigns a particular kind of evidential to each and articulates the most frequent constructions for realising that strategy. The strategy of 'problematization', for example, is

realised in evidentials of contrast the most frequent being sentence-initial conjunction. The strategy of 'persona' is constructed through evidentials of belief including first-person reference with mental processes of cognition, such as 'I believe'.

Arguably the most influential work on the evaluative functioning of modality within the EAP literature is that under the term *hedging* (e.g. Hyland 1994, 1998, 2000, Myers 1989, Salager-Meyer 1994). For Hyland,

"hedging" refers to any linguistic means used to indicate either a) a lack of complete commitment to the truth value of an accompanying proposition, or b) a desire not to express that commitment categorically (1998:1).

Emphasis is given once again to the dual functions of valuing epistemologically and interpersonally, the former having to do with encoding the writer's perceptions of the natural world in terms of accuracy and certainty about knowledge claims, and the latter to do with respecting the institutional constraints and expectations imposed by the scientific community. Hyland maintains this distinction in hedges between those that orient to the proposition and those that orient to the reader, although he acknowledges

in actual use the epistemic and the affective functions of hedges are often conveyed simultaneously and that this indeterminacy prevents the formation of discrete descriptive categories (Hyland 1998: ix).

Hyland also distinguishes between hedging and boosting, although grammatically this distinction is difficult to justify in that resources of modality constitute a cline, a 'continuum carrying potentially infinite gradation' (Halliday 1961:249), which does not support a dichotomous distinction between positive and negative. Halliday argues that

even a high value modal ('certainly', 'always') is less determinate than a polar form: *that's certainly John* is less certain than *that's John* ... In other words, you only say you are certain when you are not (1994:89).

In that sense, high certainty is hedging, in contrast to representing something as fact. The boosting/hedging distinction does, however, make sense in the context of discourse analysis where different levels of modality (high/median/low) could be deployed to open up space to a proposition in one context, and to close down space for that proposition in another context (see White 2003).

From a non-linguistic perspective the dual orientations of evaluation to assigning value and to positioning with consideration to the audience, can also be discerned in Dascal's (2000) distinction between the two pragmatic motivations in academic discourse of *reputation* and *refutation*. Refutation is epistemologically oriented, to do with truth and value, and reputation links to pragmatic concepts of face and politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987). He explains the resultant negotiation of these potentially conflicting forces in texts as a process of

‘conflict management’, requiring an application of a ‘communicative epistemological Principle of Charity’. Dascal suggests that

The more an author is reputed, the more careful must be the critique and the eventual rejection of his position, and the more careful the alleged refutation of his position (2000:14).

One problem with the distinction made in analyses of hedging in texts between writer commitment to the truth-value of propositions (epistemic modality), and writer acknowledgement of audience, is that these are neither discrete decisions nor discrete encodings. The encoding of a degree of certainty about a knowledge claim needs to be seen as the writer choosing to attach a degree of certainty to the knowledge claim, in a given socio-semantic context. As Dascal (2000) argues, it is impossible to achieve absolute separation of epistemological and interpersonal motivations. ‘[S]ince truth and value are things of this world (...) they do not escape social constraints’ (Dascal 2000: 9). Within the model of Appraisal that informs this study, the second-guessing of writer motivation is avoided altogether. The construct of *Engagement* theorises instead the degree of heteroglossic space that is opened up to or closed down to a proposition, proposed by either the writer or other sources (White 2003a, 2003c; Martin and White, forthcoming). Unlike pragmatic explanations of hedging, the system of Engagement (see chapter 6) does not posit readings of modality as identifying an individual writer’s level of certainty or commitment to a proposition. Rather they are seen as functioning ‘to reflect the process of interaction and negotiations within a text between different socio-semiotic positions’ (White 2003c). In studies of the evaluative functioning of modality, then, the most significant area of difference relates to whether or not a distinction can be made, in analysing texts, between epistemic modality (i.e. as commitment to truth-value) and interpersonal modality (encoding social positioning).

In most discourse oriented studies of evaluation to date, evaluation is identified at a functional level, and realised in choices of grammar and/or lexis. The functions of evaluation are summarised by Hunston and Thompson (2000:6) as threefold, namely,

- (1) to express the speaker’s or writer’s opinion, and in doing so to reflect the value system of that person and their community;
- (2) to construct and maintain relations between the speaker or writer and hearer or reader;
- (3) to organize the discourse.

This categorisation corresponds closely to Hunston’s (1997) discussion of evaluation as indicating *value*, *stance*, and *significance*. Research with a focus on the first of these functions is oriented to analyses of lexical choices. The second function, that of establishing and maintaining of social relations is studied extensively under the pragmatic umbrella term of ‘hedging’, often with the distinction made between what Hyland (1998) refers to as the

epistemic function of hedges and the interpersonal function; the former having to do with coding the truth-value of propositions, and the latter with signalling interpersonal relationships of power and/or solidarity. A key grammatical resource is modality, but other grammatical systems are implicated and, as noted above, lexical choices that encode a lack of precision may also be relevant. Other research related to the second of Hunston and Thompson's categories of the functions of evaluation, focuses on the manipulative power of language. Hoey (2000) for example considers the structuring of information in a clause in Given or in New position (Halliday 1994) as significant in terms of the manipulative potential of the language. In relation to the third function, that of text organization, research focuses more specifically on discourse systems in language, as the concern is with the location of evaluative resources in texts. Studies indicate the positioning of evaluative lexis as functioning to indicate significance (Hunston 1997) or to signal the point of a section of text (Sinclair 1987).

2.2.4.1 Appraisal theory

Many discourse level studies such as those discussed above, especially the more comprehensive approaches that incorporate multiple functions and resources such as those by Hunston (1997, 2000), and Hyland (1998) offer valuable insights into the complexity of the construction of evaluative stance. However, what has been missing to date in the framing of evaluation in discourse has been a theoretically motivated linguistically-based model for discourse semantic options in interpersonal meaning, that is, a means for theorising the relationship of language choices to semantic functions. It is this that is offered in the system of Appraisal within SFL (Martin 1997, 2000, Martin and Rose 2003). The contribution of Appraisal theory (which is briefly summarised in chapter 1, and presented in more detail in later chapters) is that it allows evaluation to be studied comprehensively as options in networks of semantic categories for expressing *Attitude*, for manipulating the strength of those values (as *Graduation*) and for introducing and managing other voices and positions (as *Engagement*). These semantic categories can be realised across a range of grammatical systems, and the relationships established are theoretically motivated, rather than intuitively assigned. The model of Appraisal supports a comprehensive study of evaluation that represents the construct as more than the contribution of one or more specific grammatical resources, or even as the sum of a range of grammatical parts. The question asked in discourse studies based on Appraisal theory is not what function does a particular grammatical structure fulfil, or even what is the function of an accumulation of grammatical choices, but rather how are particular meanings realised/construed across *patterns* of lexicogrammatical choices. In relation to the semantics of attitude, for example, the theory identified categorical distinctions between attitude as *Affect* or the expression of feelings, the *Appreciation* of things, and *Judgements* of human behaviour. Linguistic resources across a

range of grammatical categories can be implicated in realising particular semantic choices. The semantic options in Graduation accommodate the kinds of lexical resources discussed earlier in 2.2.3, as well as many others, and the dimension of Engagement represents sets of semantic options for opening and closing space for other voices.

2.2.4.2 Notions of voice and identity in discourse

In relation to the dimension of Engagement, Appraisal theory draws especially on the work of Bakhtin ([1936] 1981). Bakhtin (1986) drew attention to the presence of ‘the other’ in language, and the intrinsic dialogic nature of texts.

Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances. (...) Each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known and somehow takes them into account. (...) each utterance is filled with various kind of responsive reactions to other utterances of the given sphere of speech communication. These reactions take various forms: others’ utterances can be introduced directly into the context of the utterance, or one may introduce only individual words or sentences, which then act as representatives of the whole utterance. Both whole utterances and individual words can retain their alien expression, but they can also be re-accentuated (ironically, indignantly, reverently, and so forth). Others’ utterances can be repeated with varying degrees of reinterpretation. They can be referred to as though the interlocutor were already well aware of them; they can be silently presupposed; or one’s responsive reaction to them can be reflected only in the expression of one’s own speech – in the selection of language means and intonations that are determined not by the topic of one’s own speech but by other’s utterances concerning the same topic (Bakhtin 1986:91).

Bakhtin refers to the dialogism of written texts as *heteroglossia*. The concept of heteroglossia as multi-voicing is interpreted by Kristeva (1986) as *intertextuality*, and in turn by Fairclough (1992:10) as *manifest intertextuality* or ‘the explicit presence of other texts in a text’. The term ‘voicing’ as it is used in relation to ‘manifest intertextuality’, refers to the existence of language other than the writer’s in any written text. While it is argued that all texts are intrinsically dialogic (Bakhtin, and Kristeva), it is also apparent that texts vary in the extent to which the representation of other voices is explicit in the discourse. Bakhtin (1981) distinguishes between *authoritative* and *internally persuasive* discourse. Authoritative discourse is associated with univocal texts where meanings are presented as fixed and unable to ‘enter into contact with other voices and social languages’. Internally persuasive discourse is dialogic, ‘half-ours and half-someone else’s’ (Wersch 2001:227). Martin and Rose (2003) and White (2003a, 2003c) use the Bakhtinian term ‘heteroglossia’ in referring to Engagement as system options in opening up and closing down heteroglossic space in texts.

In the context of understanding the heteroglossic nature of text, Bakhtin paid particular attention to the phenomenon of reported speech, that is, where one voice in the text reports the utterance of another (Wersch 2001:227). This is particularly relevant in the context of academic discourse. The ways in which other ‘voices’, meaning sources, are introduced and

referenced in academic discourse is a topic of considerable research (e.g. Swales 1990, Tadros 1993, Thompson 1996, Hawes and Thomas 1997, Groom 2000, Hyland 2000a), and in turn, receives considerable attention in academic literacy support resources (e.g. Weissberg and Buker 1990, Jordon 1997, Atkinson and Curtis 2000, Swales and Feak 2000, Bate and Sharpe 1990, Thurstun and Candlin 1997). Working within a theoretical framework of systemic functional linguistics, the heteroglossic nature of texts is explored through an analysis of projection (Halliday 1985, 1994, Halliday and Matthiessen 1999, Thompson 1996, Lemke 1998, Martin and Rose 2003). The concept of projection informs this study and is explained in detail in chapter 4 with examples of its realisation in the texts.

Founded on Bakhtin's notion of texts as intrinsically dialogic, is an emerging field of studies in the discursive construction of identity. Recent studies of the construction of voice in SFL have focused on the identification of 'voices' in texts as configurations of interpersonal meanings (Appraisal) that distinguish particular kinds of texts, or that characterise different phases (Gregory and Malcolm, 1995) in a single text. Of note in this regard is the work of Iedema, Feez and White (1994) who studied options available to journalists in encoding the authorial self into different kinds of media texts as different configurations in resources of appraisal. They distinguish the 'Reporter Voice' of hard news stories, from the 'Correspondent Voice' of news commentary, and the 'Commentator Voice' of the editorial. Other studies of voice options in different registers, include a study of voice in the writing of history. Coffin (2000) distinguishes the voices of the recorder, the interpreter, and the adjudicator. Voice is also considered in literary response texts (Macken-Horarik 2003). Within Appraisal theory, Martin (2003), while not using the term 'voice' to avoid confusion with its grammatical usage, models a cline of instantiation of 'recurrent syndromes of evaluation', as indicated in figure 2.1.

Fig. 2.1.: Cline of instantiation of 'syndromes of evaluation' (Martin 2003)

language	:	appraisal
register/genre	:	key
text type	:	stance <- -> signature
text	:	evaluation
reading	:	reaction

Appraisal represents the meaning potential at the level of system; *key* represents the sub-potential drawn upon in specific registers and genres; *stance* is the syndrome of resources of evaluation characteristic of a generalised set of texts, and *evaluation* is the encoding of interpersonal meanings in a given text. Martin (2003) takes this cline of instantiation through to the text that is read, and the evaluative reading/reaction to that text. The reader reaction to

texts is therefore positioned in relation to the encoding of evaluation in texts. Texts are seen as construing a 'naturalised' or 'ideal' reader position (Kress 1989, Macken-Horarik 2003, Martin 1995). Macken-Horarik (2003) cites Chatman's (1978) reminder that 'the real reader is a position not a role'. The ideal reader

is an idealized position *projected by the text itself* which sets the terms of the interaction with the reader and makes particular subject positions more or less likely or preferred (Macken-Horarik 2003:287).

The actual reading of the text may, of course, be against this ideal or naturalised position. As Martin and Rose (2003:270) explain, texts invariably afford a range of interpretations that may be tactical, or resistant, or compliant. None the less the writer employs a range of discourse strategies to encourage a particular reading, and the strategies by which readers are positioned are explored in chapter 6.

Notions of *voice* as seen from the perspective of the textual construal of projecting *persona* (Barton 1993) tend to merge with those of *identity*, where identity is seen as socially and discursively constructed. Fairclough (2003) for example refers to the 'texturing of identity' as 'thoroughly embedded in the texturing of social relations'. He argues that 'identities are relational: who one is, is a matter of how one relates to the world and to other people' (Fairclough (2003:166). From a sociological perspective, Bernstein interprets *voice* in terms of his code theory (1990). Voice, he argues, is 'somewhat like a cultural larynx which sets the limits on what can be legitimately put together (communicated). Framing relations regulate the acquisition of this voice and create the "message" (what is made manifest, what can be realized)' (1999:260). Bernstein's (1999) construct of 'voice-message relations' corresponds closely to Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, as languages of different social groups. An analysis of voice as a way of meaning interpersonally in academic argument is a major contribution of this thesis, and is explicated in chapter 6.

2.3 Conclusion

In the discussion in this chapter I have positioned the current study at the intersection of education and linguistics, as drawing on work from both fields and as aiming to make a contribution to both. In educational terms I have argued for the importance of a study of academic discourse that is specifically focused on the needs of undergraduate students, and on the task that confronts them in writing up their own research, especially when they are writing in English as a second language (see, for example, Barton 1993 and Schleppegrell 2002). I have also argued that the study of texts has an important contribution to make to both the ways in which we intervene in the teaching of EAP, as well as in discussions about

appropriate kinds of discourse for academic pedagogy (see for example, Geisler 1994, Pennycook 1994, Belcher and Braine 1995).

From a linguistic perspective on evaluation, I have mapped a range of approaches to the study of evaluation that have been important in raising the awareness of the EAP profession to the significance of interpersonal meanings in so-called 'objective' academic writing. These include studies of academic writing as argument genre (e.g. Swales 1990, Dudley-Evans 1994, 1997), studies that focus on the grammar of evaluation (such as Hoey 2000, Conrad and Biber 2000), studies of evaluative lexis (especially Channell 1994 and Myers 1996), and studies that attend to language as discourse. In the latter category I include the influential studies of hedging such as Hyland 1998, 2000b) that take a pragmatic orientation to discourse, as well as a growing body of work that explores discourse from a functional perspective. I note that while there are a growing number of functional studies of discourse semantics in academic discourse, these have tended to focus on information structuring or 'periodicity' (Martin and Rose 2003), or on aspects of cohesion. One of the key reasons then for the approach taken to the study of evaluation in this thesis is that it addresses a neglected area in the modelling of evaluation in texts, that of the structuring of evaluation in systems of discourse within a functional model of language. In taking this approach, I argue for the need to draw on a comprehensive and functional theoretical model of language to capture the complexity of evaluative stance, and to enable a theoretically informed means for interpreting language choices in discourse. I briefly summarise Appraisal theory within Systemic Functional Linguistics as representing such a model. Because SFL represents a stratified model of language, discourse semantics is systematically related both to context (as Field, Tenor, and Mode) and to lexicogrammar. Discourse semantic systems function at a more abstract level than lexicogrammar and can be seen as patterns of meanings in lexicogrammar (Martin 2002c, Lemke 1995). As a system of discourse semantics then, Appraisal importantly addresses the neglected 'middle ground' (Martin 2002c) between context, as register and genre, and language as lexicogrammar. As a metafunctional model, SFL construes meaning as simultaneously ideational, interpersonal, and textual. This modelling of meaning is significantly different from a traditional distinction between semantics and pragmatics that informs most studies of the linguistics of evaluation, where semantics is generally assumed to relate to ideational meanings *in* language, and where interpersonal meanings are relegated to the loosely defined area of pragmatics, as inferences *from* language (see, e.g., Channell 1994). Within a metafunctional model evaluative meanings in discourse are systematically encoded in patterns of choices in the grammar of interpersonal meaning, and interpersonal meanings can be mapped with ideational and textual meanings. This modelling of evaluative meaning at the level of discourse will be further explicated at relevant points in the body of the thesis.

In the following chapter I outline the research design, introducing the data and the pedagogic context, and the method of analyses employed.