METADISCOURSE

KEN HYLAND

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Metadiscourse

Exploring Interaction in Writing

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Preface

Students are often told that successful writing in English is 'reader-friendly'. It must fit together logically, be signposted to guide readers, and take their likely responses and processing difficulties into account. But it also needs to work for the writer too, as we communicate for a reason. We use language to persuade, inform, entertain or perhaps just engage an audience, and this means conveying an attitude to what we say and to our readers. These functions are collectively known as *metadiscourse*: the linguistic expressions which refer to the evolving text and to the writer and imagined readers of that text.

The concept of metadiscourse is based on a view of writing as social engagement. It represents the writer's awareness of the unfolding text as *discourse*: how we situate ourselves and our readers in a text to create convincing, coherent prose in particular social contexts. By setting out ideas in ways our interlocutors are likely to accept, conveying an appropriate writer personality, and engaging with them in appropriate ways, we create the social interactions which make our texts effective. These interactional functions have attracted increasing attention in recent years as researchers have widened their focus beyond the ideas texts contain to the ways they function interpersonally. It is now recognized that written texts not only concern people, places and activities in the world, but also acknowledge, construct and negotiate social relations. The ability of writers to use metadiscourse effectively, to control the level of personality in their texts by offering a credible representation of themselves and their ideas, is coming to be seen as a defining feature of successful writing.

For many people, metadiscourse is an intuitively attractive concept as it seems to offer a principled way of collecting under one heading the diverse range of linguistic devices writers use to explicitly organize their texts, engage readers and signal their attitudes to their material and their audience. This promise, however, has never been fully realized. Metadiscourse remains under-theorized and empirically vague. The failure to pin the concept down precisely has meant that it has not achieved its explanatory potential or allowed analysts to confidently operationalize it in real texts. This lack of theoretical rigour and empirical explicitness has made analysis an elusive and frustrating experience. It also, however, forms the rationale for this

book and provides a starting point for an attempt to take stock of metadiscourse research and perhaps move the concept on a little.

My goal in this book is to review, discuss and critique existing conceptions of metadiscourse, to discover their strengths and weaknesses, and to explore what they have to tell us about communication in general and academic writing in particular. I also set out to both synthesize and build on these conceptions to offer a more robust, explicit and useful model of metadiscourse. I will argue that the concept provides us with a coherent and context-sensitive way of analysing interactions in discourse and affording insights about the values, beliefs and assumptions of text users and their communities. I focus primarily on writing and on academic and professional texts as these tend to be regarded as either 'informational' or as records of experience rather than social interactions. Interactive features are perhaps more obvious in genres such as casual conversation, but all language use, whether written or spoken, is involved in the process of sharing meaning between participants, and by concentrating on the less obvious I hope to make clear one way in which this is achieved.

The book is organized as three sections. The first presents the basic distinctions, assumptions and classifications of metadiscourse, introducing its goals and rationale, problematizing some of the conceptions of the term and proposing a modified categorization scheme. The second part discusses the main applications of the term and addresses what metadiscourse has contributed to our understanding of rhetoric, genre, culture and community. This section thus describes its research value and illustrates the key functions, forms and uses of the concept. The final section explores the importance of metadiscourse for teachers and students, outlining some of its practical advantages and applications in the writing class, then pointing forward to further research in the area.

SECTION 1
WHAT IS METADISCOURSE?

Metadiscourse is a widely used term in current discourse analysis and language education, referring to an interesting, and relatively new, approach to conceptualizing interactions between text producers and their texts and between text producers and users. Despite the growing importance of the term, however, it is often understood in different ways and used to refer to different aspects of language use. In this section I set out to clarify what metadiscourse means by providing a critical overview of its main distinctions, assumptions and classifications. The following three chapters therefore discuss the key elements of metadiscourse, clarify and problematize some of the assumptions and conceptions of the term, and propose a new categorization scheme. This provides a basis for understanding the concept and studies which follow in later chapters.

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1 First impressions

In this chapter I set out to give a brief picture of metadiscourse and to describe why it has attracted the interest and attention of so many practitioners working in discourse analysis and ESL (English as a Second Language) writing instruction. I begin by providing a general sense of the term, what it focuses on and the kinds of things it can tell us about discourse and communication. Then I go on to look at some of the main reasons for its emergence in discourse studies and its relationship to the key notions of interaction and audience.

1.1 A brief overview of metadiscourse

The term *metadiscourse* was coined by Zellig Harris in 1959 to offer a way of understanding language in use, representing a writer's or speaker's attempts to guide a receiver's perception of a text. The concept has been further developed by writers such as Williams (1981), Vande Kopple (1985) and Crismore (1989), and collects together a range of discoursal features such as hedges, connectives and various forms of text commentary to show how writers and speakers intrude into their unfolding text to influence their interlocutor's reception of it.

Essentially metadiscourse embodies the idea that communication is more than just the exchange of information, goods or services, but also involves the personalities, attitudes and assumptions of those who are communicating. Language is always a consequence of interaction, of the differences between people which are expressed verbally, and metadiscourse options are the ways we articulate and construct these interactions. This, then, is a dynamic view of language as metadiscourse stresses the fact that, as we speak or write, we negotiate with others, making decisions about the kind of effects we are having on our listeners or readers.

In this extract from a hiking guide, for instance, it is clear that the writer is not simply presenting information about the suggested route by just listing changes of direction, but taking the trouble to see the walk from the reader's perspective:

> There is a fine prospect of Penshurst Place as you cross the field and the walk takes you directly to the stone wall surrounding it. Go along this wall and in 200 metres cross the style into the churchyard of St John the Baptist church. Walk through the churchyard – the church is well worth visiting if you have time – and continue out to the road where you turn left, your direction 110 degrees.
>
> (*Time Out Book of Country Walks*, 2001: 153)

The use of imperatives, second-person pronouns and evaluative commentary in this text helps the writer to involve himself in the text both to convey information more clearly and to engage the reader as a fellow enthusiast. Removing these metadiscourse features would make the passage much less personal, less interesting and less easy to follow. By offering a way of looking at these features systematically, metadiscourse provides us with access to the ways that writers and speakers take up positions and align themselves with their readers in a particular context.

Metadiscourse thus offers a framework for understanding communication as social engagement. It illuminates some aspects of how we project ourselves into our discourses by signalling our attitude towards both the content and the audience of the text. With the judicious addition of metadiscourse, a writer is able not only to transform what might otherwise be a dry or difficult text into coherent, reader-friendly prose, but also to relate it to a given context and convey his or her personality, credibility, audience-sensitivity and relationship to the message (Hyland, 2000).

We have to remember that writing and speaking, acts of meaning-making, are never neutral but always *engaged* in that they realize the interests, the positions, the perspectives and the values of those who enact them. Those that *articulate* meaning must therefore consider its social impact, the effect it has on those who *interpret* the meaning, the readers or hearers who at that moment constitute an *audience* for the communication. Metadiscourse is one of the main means by which this is accomplished, involving writers/speakers and their audiences in mutual acts of comprehension and involvement.

The idea of audience is something of a contested notion in discourse studies, but it is generally accepted that a clear sense of who we are writing for or speaking to makes the communicative task easier and increases the chance that the resulting text will successfully meet our goals. This is because an idea of who the audience is gives us a greater understanding of what we can assume our reader/hearer knows and what we need to explain and support. It means we are able to offer a credible and effective representation of ourselves, use anticipated

forms of engagement and persuasion, and establish our positions and attitudes more convincingly. An ability to relate to an audience in ways that they will expect and understand means creating texts which see things as they do, so that the text is easier to comprehend, more interesting, and more likely to create the desired response.

Metadiscourse has come to refer to the various ways that these understandings of context and audience are realized in texts, the forms we use to transform what may otherwise be a lifeless text into discourse that meets the needs of participants. As a result, it is a universal aspect of our everyday language, and a major feature of the way we communicate in a range of genres and settings. Crismore (1989) has shown how metadiscourse has been present in writing from antiquity through the Middle Ages to the present, and has detailed its presence in discourses as distinct as poetry, science and biography.

The term is therefore an increasingly important concept in research in composition, reading, rhetoric and text structure. Studies have suggested the importance of metadiscourse in casual conversation (Schiffrin, 1980), school textbooks (Crismore, 1989), oral narratives (Norrick, 2001), science popularizations (Crismore and Farnsworth, 1990), undergraduate textbooks (Hyland, 2000), postgraduate dissertations (Bunton, 1999; Hyland, 2004a; Swales, 1990), Darwin's *Origin of Species* (Crismore and Farnsworth, 1989), advertising slogans (Fuertes-Olivera *et al.*, 2001) and company annual reports (Hyland, 1998b). It appears to be a characteristic of a range of languages and genres and has been used to investigate rhetorical differences in the texts written by different cultural groups (Mauranen, 1993b; Crismore *et al.*, 1993; Valero-Garces, 1996). It has also been shown to be present in medieval medical writing (Taavitsainen, 1999) and in scientific discourse from the late seventeenth century (Atkinson, 1999). It is said to contribute to effective comprehension (Camiciottoli, 2003), be a feature of good ESL and native-speaker student writing (Intaraprawat and Steffensen, 1995; Cheng and Steffensen, 1996) and comprise an essential element of persuasive and argumentative discourse (Crismore and Farnsworth, 1990; Hyland, 1998a).

This research points to metadiscourse as an important means of facilitating communication, supporting a position, increasing readability and building a relationship with an audience. The previous paragraph shows that most of this research has focused on metadiscourse as a feature of written discourse. Presumably this is because of the overarching significance of writing in all our lives, its roles in social, professional and academic contexts, and the importance it has in determining our life chances. Writing is central to our personal experience and social identities, and it is in our writing that an

understanding of the workings of metadiscourse is likely to have the greatest payoff. Metadiscourse has therefore been important in writing instruction for academic purposes, as a way of helping both native and non-native speakers of English to convey their ideas and engage with their readers effectively. Academic writing will also be the main emphasis of this book and to avoid the clumsy 'writer/speaker' phrasing I have used thus far, from here I will talk of writers to refer to the producers and readers to refer to the receivers of both written and spoken texts.

Yet despite this research and teaching interest in metadiscourse, it has never developed into a major analytical approach to written discourse, nor has it produced the insights into language registers that were originally hoped for. Even in the well-trodden terrain of academic writing, metadiscourse studies have been suggestive rather than definitive, and analysts have turned to other concepts such as *evaluation* (Hunston and Thompson, 2000) and *engagement* (Hyland, 2001a) as potentially more productive ways of exploring interpersonal features of discourse. This is largely because the origins of metadiscourse in pedagogic style guides (Williams, 1981) and intuitive reflection (Vande Kopple, 1985) provide an insufficiently solid theoretical foundation on which to analyse real texts or to understand how writers communicate effectively.

For these reasons, both positive and negative, metadiscourse is ready for re-examination and that is what I set out to do in this book. The strengths and limitations of the concept provide the starting point, establishing a theoretical and pedagogical imperative to look more closely at what metadiscourse is, what it tells us, and how it can be made more theoretically robust, empirically usable and pedagogically useful.

1.2 A context of emergence: information and interaction

The analysis of discourse is the analysis of language in use, the ways linguistic forms are employed for social purposes – what language is used *for*. But when linguists first started to look beyond grammatical structures to see how people actually used language in their everyday lives, they tended to adopt a limited approach to what these purposes might be, drawing a broad distinction between *transactional* and *interactional* uses of language: the function which language serves to express 'content' and the function used to express personal relations and attitudes (e.g. Brown and Yule, 1983; Jacobson, 1960). In other

words, a distinction was made between the communication of information and the communication of affect.

While acknowledging that any real-life utterance would probably involve both functions, that we simultaneously express and evaluate ideas, theorists nevertheless tended to assume that the most important one was the communication of information. They therefore devoted their attention to propositional meanings and the ways that speakers and writers expressed their ideas. This is essentially the view propounded by the philosopher Locke in the seventeenth century, favouring the propositional and expository mode of representation and seeing the job of communication as matching words to ideas. Since then, as Coates (1987: 113) points out, 'there has been a dangerous tendency among many linguists, philosophers and semanticists to concentrate on the referential function of language at the expense of all the others'.

The use of language to talk about our experiences and ideas is obviously a key purpose of communication and one that we encounter every day, from exchanging holiday experiences with friends over coffee to discussing politics in the corridor. Equally, the value of language to transmit information is ingrained in our cultural mythology as the source of human development and diversity, and the basis of philosophy, religion, literature and science. Academics themselves often believe that what they mainly do is 'communicate knowledge' and the media characterize modern society as a new 'information age'. Consequently linguists have given particular attention to this aspect of language and focused on written language as the best place to find it.

A more sophisticated alternative to this approach was Sinclair's (1981) distinction between interactive and autonomous *planes of discourse*. Basically, Sinclair takes the representational role of language, its ability to signify matters in the world, as given and instead focuses on how it assists participants to 'share their experiences and not just their information' (Sinclair, 1981: xx). This is accomplished through the *autonomous* and *interactive* planes of discourse. The *autonomous plane* refers to the gradual unfolding of a record of experience through the organization and maintenance of text structure. This is concerned with language only, rather than the ways it is related to the world outside, and allows participants to share relevant experience by recalling previous words and reworking them into new contexts as the discourse progresses. The *interactive plane*, on the other hand, concerns the ways we use language to negotiate with others and present our texts interactively, so creating a relationship with the reader.

In other words, language is not simply used to convey information about the world. It also acts to present this information through the organization of the text itself (on the autonomous plane) and engage readers as to how they should understand it (on the interactive plane). Statements thus, simultaneously, have an orientation to the world outside the text and an orientation to the reader's understanding of that world through the text itself. This is a very different model to the transactional–interactional distinction and, as we shall see in Chapter 3, the fact that writers can refer to, evaluate and otherwise comment on both discourse entities and real-world entities is a defining feature of metadiscourse.

But in the early 1980s, Sinclair was almost alone in emphasizing the importance of interactional aspects of language. At that time, and until recently, research into the ways language is used to negotiate relationships and scaffold interaction was largely left to sociologists and sociolinguists. In fact, work by the sociologists Bateson (1972) and Goffman (1974) on 'frames' was an important early development leading to linguistic conceptions of metadiscourse. The notion of frames refers to our cognitive or conceptual views of particular situations, including the ways we name or characterize what is being said. Of particular interest is what MacLachlan and Reid (1994) call 'intratextual framing', which occurs when we pay attention to the way in which the flow of words within the text is affected by internal organizational devices which guide interpretation. Such framing devices are seen as an effort to limit the reader's interpretive licence and control understandings of a text in competition with alternative framing brought to the text by the reader. Frames are therefore aspects of discourse which allow us to orient to messages and understand the world in particular ways.

Ragan and Hopper's (1981) discussion of 'alignment' similarly helped to bring interactional aspects of discourse into focus, showing how language allows users to promote a positive impression of themselves and to negotiate participant roles with the hearer. But it was another sociolinguist working on casual conversation, Debbie Schiffrin (1980), who perhaps struck the biggest blow for metadiscourse in these early days. She helped move the notion of metadiscourse forward by showing how 'meta-talk' such as *'I'm telling you that'* and *'let me give you an example'* allows speakers to change their role in the discourse by projecting themselves as an *animator*. Thus conversationalists commonly move from presenting information to becoming a conscious and explicit producer of the discourse itself by referring to organizational or evaluative aspects of the talk. The research and insights of such writers therefore provided an important

impetus to establishing the importance of talk which did not directly concern topic information and to developing ways of exploring this.

There is no doubt that in many contexts it is crucial that recipients get the information that the sender is trying to convey, and that clarity is a major consideration in achieving this aim. But there is obviously more to communication than this. What the 'informational' view of language almost completely ignores is that *all* discourse, no matter how explicitly 'informational', is created between participants who bring to the encounter certain affiliations, experiences, expectations and background understandings. These interpersonal dimensions influence how they will interpret and respond to the message and how they will engage in the interaction. The introduction of *metadiscourse* into the applied linguistics vocabulary in the 1980s, building on sociolinguistic conceptions of planes of discourse, frames, alignment and meta-talk, was largely a reaction to this overemphasis on the propositional aspects of language and an attempt to establish the important principle that language use always draws on, and creates for itself, a social and communicative dimension.

1.3 Metadiscourse and audience awareness

The idea that 'informative' and 'interactional' aspects of language are used in tandem is not new, of course. Even as far back as 1923 Malinowski argued that people use language simultaneously to convey propositional information and 'to create and sustain expressive meanings', while more recently writers in fields such as pragmatics (Fraser, 1990), English Language teaching (Skelton, 1988), academic writing (Chafe, 1986) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992) have made similar observations. What this means in practice can be seen from this short extract from the beginning of a university lecture:

Okay can everybody hear me okay? Okay, alright this is the schedule for today, I'm gonna lecture on women's work. The notes are being passed out now, and, uh I'll, finish up at around ten after eleven, then I will hand out the midterm, and um I will discuss the midterm, for a while a little bit, to make sure that all of you understand, what's expected of you in the midterm okay? I wanna remind you that we do not have class meeting on Thursday. This is to give you a chance to work on the midterm, um if you're writing the midterm in class you'd be writing the midterm in class so, spend some time on thinking about the midterm. It also will give you a chance to,

get in touch with me or, um, your G-S-I before the end of the week, so that if you have questions about the midterm, uh you can ask them. Now I won't be holding office hours Thursday morning but I will be, uh able to meet with anybody who feels desperate in need to meet with me in the late afternoon on Thursday so if you do, email me okay? And we can, set up some time to meet okay? Now uh are there any qu- procedural questions? The midterm is due in class, on, Tuesday, right? Does that make sense?

The large scale formal lecture is perhaps *the* prototypical genre of information transfer. Emphasizing transmission over negotiation and monologue rather than dialogue, it is seen by universities as the best way to impart content information to large classes relatively cheaply. While this extract is from the opening minutes of the lecture, and so perhaps rather more dialogic than what follows it, we can see that there are both informational and interactional elements in the segment. There is a series of 'housekeeping' announcements about the fact that the next lecture is cancelled to allow the students to work on their assignment (lines 7–11), about when students can ask questions about this (lines 11–14) and meet the lecturer (lines 14–19), and about when the paper is due (lines 19–20). Intertwined with this information about the course and its requirements, which are essentially statements about the world, there are statements which call attention to the discourse itself and its possible reception. These metadiscoursal statements concern information about how the discourse will be organized and about the relationship the speaker wants to establish with his audience.

Thus, the speaker opens with a check to see if the channel is working effectively (line 1) then goes on to preview the session and anticipate the pattern of events which will follow. He provides a frame for what the students can expect from the class by giving the topic for the lecture and announcing that the assignment will be distributed and discussed (lines 1–7). This previewing talks about the talk and actions which will follow, rather than performing these acts themselves, acting as a commentary on the discourse.

The lecturer then underlines his authority and ensures that students recognize the importance of the assignment by stating why he intends to discuss the material ('to make sure that all of you understand what's expected in the midterm okay?'). This authority is also clear in the speaker's lexical choices: 'reminding' students about the next class and directing them to think about the midterm. Asking if there are any questions and focusing the students on the due date by

presenting this as an interrogative helps to soften this authority and establish greater rapport, with the final checking question acting to close the segment with an attempt to reduce the threat of the assessment task. Also sprinkled throughout are pragmatic devices such as *okay* and *alright* which help to frame boundaries in the discourse as the speaker moves from one issue to another, and to oil the interaction from an interpersonal perspective.

In sum, not everything that occurs in such 'informational genres' works to convey information. Speakers and writers seek to ensure that the information they present is not only distinct and intelligible, but also understood, accepted and, in many cases, acted upon. Addressees have to be drawn in, engaged, motivated to follow along, participate, and perhaps be influenced or persuaded by a discourse. To do this, senders endeavour to shape their texts to the anticipated expectations and requirements of receivers.

1.4 Metadiscourse, interaction and audience

To view writing as interactive therefore means examining discourse features in terms of the writer's projection of the perceptions, interests and needs of a potential audience. Managing social relationships is crucial in writing because a text communicates effectively only when the writer has correctly assessed both the readers' resources for interpreting it and their likely response to it. This is, in part, achieved through the use of metadiscourse.

Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 207–11) point to five main parameters of audience that influence writing:

1. The number of readers – whether a text is written for oneself, a single person, a small group or a large heterogeneous group will have an impact on linguistic and rhetorical choices.
2. Whether readers are known or unknown – the degree of closeness to the reader is likely to influence the extent of interactional and involvement features in the text (e.g. Biber, 1988).
3. The relative status of participants – metadiscourse choices will also vary depending on whether the writer has an equal or lower status than the reader. In spoken contexts it seems that equal status creates more interactional negotiation (Wolfson, 1989).
4. The extent of shared background knowledge – writers are likely to be more explicit in their use of metadiscourse where

they assume the reader's lack of cultural, institutional or social familiarity with issues.

5. The extent to which specific topical knowledge is shared – how far writers can rely on readers knowing about the topic will influence not only the amount of detail that can be included, but also the elaboration of ideas and assumptions through code glosses, the amount of evidential support required, the frequency of explicit transitions, and so on.

The notion of audience, however, is notoriously elusive. For some analysts, audience is real people outside a text whom the writer must consider and accommodate, while for others it is a fiction embodied in the writer's rhetorical choices (Kirsch and Roen, 1990; Park, 1986). Audience is, in fact, outside the context of personal letters, face-to-face conversation and similar genres, rarely a known and stable reality. In many settings we do not have exact knowledge about who we are addressing. A great deal of professional and academic writing, for example, may have multiple audiences and this is particularly true of much of the significant writing we do in our lives, which is evaluated by examiners, employers, clients and other gatekeepers. Essentially then, audience represents the writer's awareness of the circumstances which define a rhetorical context and the ways that the current text is related to or aligned with other texts. Writers construct an audience by drawing on their knowledge of texts they have encountered in similar settings in the past, either as readers or writers, and by relying on readers' abilities to similarly recognize intertextuality, or resemblances, between texts.

The extent of knowledge overlap is crucial to the ways we construct meanings. At one end of a continuum of shared understandings, writing for oneself allows a lot to be left unsaid, so, for example, we usually have little trouble reconstructing fuller meanings from a set of notes or a shopping list. Metadiscourse here is likely to be minimal and the text will approach the extremes of a fully ideational discourse. At the other end of the continuum there is the situation where we are writing for a largely unknown audience, as in a newsletter or a sales flier, or on a subject that is either new to readers or something they are likely to disagree with. Here writing needs to be far more explicit and writers need to draw on a host of rhetorical techniques to help readers understand the material and guide their responses to it.

In most cases we have little trouble in decoding the texts we encounter, often because we are among the writer's intended recipients. Even when the audience is a heterogeneous one, such as

with a mass mailshot sales letter or an email addressed to all employees of a large corporation, we are able to identify the writer's purposes and the context it was designed to create. We can usually say who wrote it, for whom, why, and its likely chances of success. Generally, what enables us to recover something of the characteristics of that context and audience are the metadiscourse features the writer has chosen to use. This is because creating a convincing reader-environment involves deploying metadiscoursal resources so that the final text is *co-produced* by the author *and* by members of the audience to which it is directed. The degree of formality chosen by the writer, the power, social status and familiarity encoded in the text, the shared understandings implied, and the cultural or community knowledge drawn on, can all be marked with metadiscourse. These signals can appeal to readers in different ways and provide important clues about the writer–reader relationship and the writer's goals in the encounter.

While interaction is influenced by the writer's purpose and genre in any particular context, Grabe and Kaplan's parameters remind us that it also involves the writer's sense of his or her personal relationship with readers. In deciding whether to establish an equal or hierarchical affiliation, adopt an involved or remote stance, or chose a convivial or indifferent interpersonal tenor, we are at least partly constrained by the dominant ideologies of our institutions. But these choices also depend to some extent on the number of intended readers and how far they are personally known to us. Following Brown and Levinson (1987), writers make evaluations of their readers in terms of the social distance between them, the power difference between them, and the scale of the imposition being made on the reader. By weighing up these variables, writers decide how far they can be direct, involved, informal, friendly or forceful. A letter to a friend, for instance, will obviously be very different to one written to a stranger in terms of informality, interactional involvement and the amount of topic elaboration needed to establish common ground.

Metadiscourse is therefore an important link between a text and its context as it points to the expectations readers have for certain forms of interactions and engagement. It highlights the dialogic role of discourse by revealing a writer's understanding of an audience through the ways that he or she addresses readers and their needs. These expectations are social, affective and cognitive, based on participants' beliefs and values, their individual goals and their experiences with similar texts in the past. In other words, a text has to talk to readers or hearers in ways that they find familiar and acceptable, which means that the processes of comprehension and participation are not just a matter of informational clarity, but of the individual writer's or

speaker's projection of a shared context. That is, in pursuing their personal and professional goals, senders seek to embed their discourse in a particular social world which they reflect and conjure up through particular recognized and accepted discourses.

1.5 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to elaborate the view that all speech and writing, whether professional, academic or personal, includes expressions which refer to the text producer, the imagined receiver and the evolving text itself. I have also argued that these expressions provide information about the participants, the kind of discourse that is being constructed, and the context. These expressions are, collectively, referred to as *metadiscourse*: aspects of a text which explicitly organize a discourse or the writer's stance towards either its content or the reader. In relating the idea of metadiscourse to specific social, cultural and institutional contexts, I follow Faigley's (1986: 535) claim that discourse 'can be understood only from the perspective of a society rather than a single individual' and Geertz's (1983) view that knowledge and writing depend on the actions of members of local communities. Looking at communication in this way therefore evokes a social milieu which influences the writer and activates specific responses to recurring tasks. So rather than focusing on the ways information is presented and regarding all that accompanies this as regularities of style, metadiscourse encourages us to examine these features for traces of social interactions with others.

The concept of metadiscourse is based on a view of writing (and speaking) as a social and communicative engagement, offering a means of understanding the ways we project ourselves into our texts to manage our communicative intentions. The term has emerged to help re-establish the importance of interpersonal aspects of language following a period when linguists were almost exclusively concerned with the ways language is used to convey information. With the growth of discourse analysis as a key tool in understanding language use, the importance of interaction in writing as much as in speech has become ever more obvious, and metadiscourse has emerged as a way of bringing these interactional features to prominence. In short, we now recognize that without metadiscourse readers would be unable to contextualize a text and writers unable to communicate effectively.

Yet while the concept has generated considerable interest, its descriptive and explanatory potential has remained undeveloped and embryonic. Its origins in style guides and armchair contemplation mean that it has lacked both solid theoretical underpinning and

empirical validation. A central problem here is a tendency towards vagueness in defining metadiscourse and a lack of rigour in classifying the features it is supposed to encompass. These are the issues I turn to in the next two chapters.

2 Definitions, issues and classifications

Having painted a broad outline, I now want to fill in some of the detail and look a little more closely at how analysts define metadiscourse, the kinds of distinctions they make in identifying it, and the classification schemes they have proposed. Essentially, 'metadiscourse' is an umbrella term, used to include an apparently heterogeneous array of cohesive and interpersonal features which help relate a text to its context. Because the resources which can be employed to organize a discourse or the writer's stance towards it are diverse and potentially huge, classifications and descriptions of metadiscourse have themselves been diverse and wide-ranging. In this chapter I will therefore focus on the way metadiscourse has been understood by looking at current definitions of the term and exploring the key notions of *proposition, levels of meaning* and *function* which underlie it.

2.1 Definitions of metadiscourse

Metadiscourse has always been something of a fuzzy term, often characterized as simply 'discourse about discourse' or 'talk about talk', definitions which highlight its role of looking inward to refer to aspects of the text itself. But this is a very partial and unsatisfactory view of a concept which has enormous potential to include features of language which describe not only how we organize our ideas, but also how we relate to our readers or listeners. This fuzziness is remarked on by Swales (1990: 188) and by Nash (1992), who observes that while the concept is easy to accept in principle, it is more difficult to establish its boundaries:

> The word 'metadiscourse' may have a reassuringly objective, 'scientific' ring, but its usage suggests boundaries of definition no more firmly drawn than those of, say, 'rhetoric' or 'style'. One reader may perceive a clear stylistic intention in something which another reader dismisses as a commonplace, 'automatized' use of language.
>
> (Nash, 1992: 100)

I would want to argue, however, that the writer's commentary on his or her unfolding text represents a coherent set of interpersonal options. And while the phrasing and expressions we use may sometimes seem 'automatic' or unconscious, all language use consists of making choices from a system of finite options. Michael Halliday, the leading modern linguist, for example, argues that language is a 'system of meanings'. The decisions we make when interacting with others, whether to use an active or passive verb, a categorical or hedged assertion, a contrastive or additive conjunction, and so on, are therefore choices motivated by intentions to express certain meanings in specific situations. Indeed, it is those choices which both construct and are constructed by those situations (Halliday, 1994). Assisting us to see the relationships between the often unconscious language choices we make and the social contexts in which we make them is the key contribution of metadiscourse to the study of language use.

But fuzziness remains. Not all analysts understand the term in the same way, for instance. Some writers have restricted the term to features of rhetorical organization by including only those text elements which refer to the text itself, such as *'we now turn to another topic'* or *'this will be discussed in the next chapter'*, describing this as *metatext* or *text reflexivity* (e.g. Bunton, 1999; Mauranen, 1993a, 1993b; Valero-Garces, 1996). Others have narrowed the term to explicit illocutionary predicates, such as *'I believe that'* and *'we demonstrate that'* (Beauvais, 1989). Both approaches attempt to address theoretical difficulties with the term and resolve analytical problems by simplifying what is studied.

The notion of *text reflexivity* is particularly interesting as it sees metadiscourse as the explication of the writer's awareness of the text itself, rather than of the reader. Mauranen (1993a) calls this a 'non-integrative' approach to metadiscourse and argues that the decision to exclude evaluation and interpersonal features helps to clarify and sharpen the concept of metadiscourse. This is an interesting and useful insight which seeks to avoid the difficulties encountered in distinguishing metadiscoursal from non-metadiscoursal material by including only text-referential matter. It does, however, seem a rather arbitrary separation to make. Metadiscourse reveals the writer's awareness of the reader and his or her need for elaboration, clarification, guidance and interaction. In expressing an awareness of the text, the writer also makes the reader aware of it, and this only happens when he or she has a clear, reader-oriented reason for doing so. In other words, drawing attention to the text represents a writer's goals relative to an assessment of the readers' need for guidance or elaboration. This is, as I will argue later, a clear, reader-oriented and interpersonal strategy.

Generally, however, rhetoricians, applied linguists and composition theorists agree on using metadiscourse in a wider sense, to refer to the various linguistic tokens employed to guide or direct a reader through a text so both the text and the writer's stance is understood. It is the author's manifestation in a text to 'bracket the discourse organisation and the expressive implications of what is being said' (Schiffrin, 1980: 231).

So far so good. But the fuzziness associated with the concept isn't solved by broad definitions of this kind. Metadiscourse is a difficult construct to pin down and this is evident in the literature with imprecision characterizing much of the discussion. This lack of systematicity is partly a result of the heterogeneity of the features of spoken and written discourse which can signal the dimensions of context that metadiscourse refers to: the sender, the receiver or the organization of the message. But an equally serious problem relates to defining what is meant by metadiscourse in relation to other terms. Fairclough (1992), for instance, sees metadiscourse as a kind of 'manifest intertextuality' where the writer interacts with his or her own text. Geisler (1994), on the other hand, refers to both metadiscourse and 'rhetorical processes', contrasting these with what she calls 'domain content'. The proliferation of terms is unhelpful as it prevents us seeing important connections and makes it difficult for studies to build on and critique each other. Such problems largely result from trying to carve out a domain of focus for metadiscourse distinct from the propositional component of discourse.

2.2 Propositional and metadiscourse meanings

The common thread in definitions of metadiscourse is that it concerns meanings other than propositional ones. This distinction occurs in the earliest discussions of the subject (e.g. Lautamatti, 1978; Meyer, 1975). Lautamatti, for instance, discusses metadiscourse as 'non-topical linguistic material' which is irrelevant to discourse topic development but key to understanding discourse as a whole. The distinction is also central to Williams' (1981: 226) definition, which states that metadiscourse is 'whatever does not refer to the subject matter being addressed'.

Similarly Vande Kopple (1985) defines metadiscourse as 'the linguistic material which does not add propositional information but which signals the presence of an author', and Crismore (1983: 2) refers to it as 'the author's intrusion into the discourse, either explicitly or non-explicitly, to direct rather than inform, showing readers how to understand what is said and meant in the primary discourse and how

to "take" the author'. This definition re-appears in Crismore *et al.*'s (1993) influential paper which states that metadiscourse is:

> Linguistic material in texts, written or spoken, which does not add anything to the propositional content but that is intended to help the listener or reader organize, interpret and evaluate the information given.
>
> (Crismore *et al.*, 1993: 40)

What is understood by 'proposition' is often left vague, but it is generally used to refer to information about external reality: all that which concerns thoughts, actors or states of affairs in the world outside the text. Halliday (1994: 70), for example, states that propositional material is something that can be argued about, affirmed, denied, doubted, insisted upon, qualified, tempered, regretted and so on. The distinction made by analysts to clearly identify metadiscourse therefore looks back to the transactional–interactional division discussed in Chapter 1. But additionally, and more disturbingly, it also follows earlier theorists in regarding propositional matter as the 'primary' discourse with metadiscourse performing a supportive or 'secondary' role. The transactional function is once more elevated above the interactional one. Thus not only is communication divided into 'types' of discourse, but an unnecessary hierarchy is also established which values one 'type' over another. This not only preserves the Lockean positivist theory, which privileges the propositional and informational, but by doing so also relegates metadiscourse to an inferior status.

A closer look, however, reveals that the idea of propositional content does not always rule out much of what is typically considered as metadiscourse. Sometimes a statement can have a dual function; for example, the Socratic paradox 'I am lying' simultaneously expresses a proposition and a commentary on it. The question of what is actually 'propositional' has long preoccupied philosophers working in formal semantics, who have traditionally applied the test of falsifiability to identify propositions, determining whether a statement describes a state of affairs truly or falsely. But this test turns out to be of little use as both propositions and metadiscourse can be seen as either true or false. Mao (1993: 267), for example, points out that the words 'I hypothesize' seem to be a metadiscourse marker adding no propositional information to the rest of the utterance which follows. It simply calls the reader's attention to the speech act and the status of the assertion. But if what is hypothesized is a well acknowledged fact, then this too can be untrue. So if metadiscourse can be judged as true or false, then this test does not allow us to characterize it as being 'non-propositional'.

One interesting attempt to preserve the proposition/metadiscourse distinction is made by Beauvais (1989) who characterizes metadiscourse as explicit markers which help readers to identify how a writer's arguments are to be understood. Drawing on Austin's (1962) theory of speech acts, Beauvais points out that there is a difference between how a proposition is to be taken and the proposition itself. The speech act philosopher John Searle puts it like this:

> Stating and asserting are acts, but propositions are not acts. A proposition is what is asserted in the act of asserting, what is stated in the act of stating. The same point in a different way: an assertion is a (very special kind of) commitment to the truth of a proposition.
> (Searle, 1969: 30)

The role of metadiscourse is therefore to signal the writer's communicative intent in presenting propositional matter and Beauvais lists a number of ways this is done, limiting metadiscourse to illocutionary predicates such as 'I argue/believe/have noted' and 'he/she/Smith asserts/believes/has noted' and their reduced forms. Thus in the example *'I believe that tax reform is necessary'*, *'I believe that'* is the metadiscourse marker of illocutionary force, and *'tax reform is necessary'* is the propositional content. Unfortunately, however, such overt, explicit performatives do not cover most utterances expressing writer viewpoints, and in many cases, such as passive sentences, the reader is unable to recover who the actor is at all, making metadiscourse identification problematic. In addition, such predicates often do more than indicate the force that the writer intends the proposition to have: they also establish the writer's stance to the material and attitude to the reader. Such acts which *state* or *assert* information can therefore carry significant weight in delivering a message and actually represent the 'content' of the message itself – what the utterance is actually 'about'. Metadiscourse can therefore both be of equal importance to what is asserted and overlap with it.

The picture is further clouded by inconsistencies in metadiscourse categorization schemes. Crismore (Crismore, 1989; Crismore and Farnsworth, 1990), for instance, includes 'referential, informational metadiscourse' in her classification, apparently referring to Halliday's ideational function of language or the ways writers express their ideas and experiences. This looks very much like 'propositional content' smuggled back under a different guise. So while Crismore and Farnsworth argue for a clear separation between 'primary' and 'secondary' discourse, they seem not to notice that they undermine this distinction by simultaneously admitting the propositional function as part of metadiscourse.

2.3 'Levels of meaning'

Some writers have sought to draw the distinction between propositional discourse and metadiscourse even more clearly. Williams (1981) and Dillon (1981), for instance, talk of different *planes* or *levels of meaning*, with one level supplying the reader with information about a topic, and the other calling attention to the act of writing. This is also Vande Kopple's view (1985 and 2002), expressed most recently like this:

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

It is difficult to see, however, how metadiscourse can constitute a different level of meaning. It is certainly possible, even commonplace, to distinguish the propositional content of a text from the particular way it is expressed, for even the most idiosyncratic reading positions we might adopt are constrained by the text and the conventions of a community of readers. But this does not imply that metadiscourse can be omitted from a text without changing its meaning (Hyland and Tse, 2004).

Content can, of course, be rewritten, summarized, paraphrased and reformulated in different ways and, indeed, academic texts often undergo transformations of this kind, from their original appearance in research articles to new forms in popularizations, textbooks, dictionaries, grant proposals, abstracts and undergraduate essays. Myers, for example, shows how a paper in the journal *Science* was rewritten by the editors of the *Scientific American* for a wider, non-specialist audience. This involved transforming sentences such as (1) below into (2):

> (1) When branches of the host plant having similar oviposition sites were placed in the area, no investigations were made by the *H. hewitsoni* females.
>
> (2) I collected lengths of *P. pittieri* vines with newly developed shoots and placed them in the patch of vines that was being regularly revisited. The females did not, however, investigate the potential egg-laying sites I had supplied.
>
> (Myers, 1990: 180)

The second version gives more emphasis to the intervention of the scientist, rather than his conceptual framework, and presents the

material as a narrative instead of a report, but we can see that the extracts are 'about' the same thing. The 'content', or subject matter, remains the same but the meanings have changed considerably. This is because the *meaning* of a text is not just the propositional material or what the text could be said to be *about*. It is the complete package, the result of an interactive process between the producer and receiver of a text in which the writer chooses forms and expressions which will best convey his or her material, stance and attitudes.

This interactional dimension is principally achieved through metadiscourse and is perhaps clearer in the two extracts below. Each sample is around 170 words and deals with the same 'content': Grice's Cooperative Principle. The first (3) is Grice's original formulation written for an academic audience. The second (4) is a reformulation from one of the web's more bizarre sites, *Zen in the Art of Dressage*, and written for equestrians rather than philosophers. The metadiscourse markers are underlined.

(3) Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognises in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction. The purpose or direction may be fixed from the start (e.g., by an initial proposal of a question for discussion), or it may evolve during the exchange; it may be fairly definite, or it may be so indefinite as to leave very considerable latitude to the participants (as in a casual conversation). But at each stage, some possible conversational moves would be excluded as conversationally unsuitable. We might then formulate a rough general principle which participants will be expected, other things being equal, to observe, namely: make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. One might label this the Cooperative Principle.
(Grice, 1975)

(4) The basic assumption is that any discourse, whether written or spoken, is a joint effort. Both the speaker and the addressee have to follow certain pragmatic, syntactic, and semantic rules in order to communicate effectively. They have to co-operate. Grice's Co-operative Principle consists of several maxims that appear very simple, straightforward, and common-sensical at first sight. What took me by surprise is that you can actually observe these principles at work on a highly technical level in

> language when you analyse spoken or written texts. You can find them in any text of any genre in any language. When you read on, you will think *that Grice's maxims are terribly idealistic*, that few speakers really follow them. When misunderstandings (and real life human linguistic and non-linguistic communication is full of misunderstandings) occur, you can demonstrate that they are generally due to a violation of one or more of the maxims. In the equestrian world, they are a criterion for the rider's competence in the saddle (as well as on the ground).
>
> (Ritter, T., http://www.classicaldressage.com/zen/articles/a_2.html)

Aside from the fact that Ritter seems to have misunderstood Grice, it is important to note that the type and distribution of metadiscourse in the two texts reveals their very different contexts of reception. In the first we find the careful qualifications and exceptions characteristic of philosophical precision, with much of the metadiscourse functioning to hedge propositions (*to some degree, to some extent, other things being equal*, etc.) and explicate or gloss ideas (e.g., *namely*). Grice also endeavours to engage his readers by using general personal pronouns (*our, one, we*) to stress the relevance of his discussion and its connection to the common experience of both readers and writer. The second extract, in contrast, is altogether more personal in tenor, with numerous metadiscoursal markers referring directly to the writer and the reader with *me* and *you* instead of Grice's more generalized participants. Ritter also makes assumptions about what readers '*will think*' and proffers explicit statements of attitude (*What took me by surprise*) as well as turning to readers to offer a commentary on his statements, asides in parentheses which seek to engage the readers as active participants in the discourse.

The point to be made here is that Vande Kopple and others are simply wrong to state that metadiscourse is a separate 'level of meaning'. Texts are communicative acts, not lists of propositions. The meaning of a text depends on the integration of its component elements, both propositional and metadiscoursal, and these do not work independently of each other. Metadiscourse is an essential part of any text and contributes to the ways it is understood and acted upon; it is not a separate and separable set of stylistic devices that can either be included or not without affecting how a text is presented and read. These two texts indicate that while a re-textualization may have recognizably similar content, the fact it is written for a different genre, purpose and audience means it will have different meanings, not least because of the metadiscourse it contains. So while a

proposition–metadiscourse distinction is required as a starting point for exploring metadiscourse in academic writing, we still need a means of distinguishing actual instances of the two concepts.

In sum, meaning is not synonymous with 'content' but dependent on all the components of a text. Both propositional and metadiscoursal elements occur together, generally in the same sentences, and we should not be surprised that a stretch of discourse may have both functions. Such integration is common, with each element expressing it own 'content': one concerned with the world and the other with the text and its reception.

2.4 Functional analyses

Another key issue in the metadiscourse literature, and often a source of confusion in empirical studies, concerns whether metadiscourse is a syntactic or functional category, with some analysts even adopting both approaches simultaneously (e.g. Crismore *et al.*, 1993). Most writers, however, have adopted a functional approach and sought to classify the linguistic tokens, or metadiscourse markers, according to the functions they perform in a text (e.g. Lautamatti, 1978; Meyer, 1975; Williams, 1981).

The term *functional* has a number of meanings in applied linguistics, but in metadiscourse studies it refers to how language works to achieve certain *communicative purposes* for users. It therefore concerns whether a stretch of language is asserting a claim, directing readers to an action or response, elaborating a meaning, posing a question and so on. Functional analyses recognize that a comprehensive and pragmatically grounded description of any text must involve attending to the use of language in relation to its surrounding co-text and the purpose of the writer in creating a text as a whole. The emphasis is therefore on meanings in context, how language is *used*, not what a dictionary says about it. So, when considering any item as a candidate for inclusion as metadiscourse, the question is not 'what is the function of this item?' but 'what is this item doing here at this point in the text?'.

Metadiscourse is a relative concept in that text items only function as metadiscourse in relation to another part of the text. So what might be metadiscourse in one rhetorical context may be expressing propositional material in another, and analysts must always examine each item individually to determine its function. The potential multifunctionality of items is illustrated in the examples below and will be taken up in more detail in Chapter 3. Here the

italicized word in (a) below functions as metadiscourse, while in (b) it does not:

(5) (a) I want to agree about the date, *then* we can talk about the venue.
(b) I was waiting an hour *then* he told me the train had already left.
(6) (a) It's *possible* that he just forgot to collect it.
(b) It's *possible* to see the peaks of Snowdonia on a clear day.
(7) (a) I think she is crazy. *First* she screamed at me. *Second* she tore up the mail.
(b) When I told her the news, *first* she screamed at me. *Second* she tore up the mail.

In (5a) the speaker is talking about how he will organize his discussion, using *then* to sequence the progress of the discourse while in (5b) *then* tells us how events followed in time. In (6a) *possible* is used to suggest the speaker's estimation, proposing a likely explanation and marking this as a guess rather than a true state of affairs, and in (6b) it expresses a feasible occurrence given the right conditions, an occurrence beyond the speaker's control and not dependant on his or her assessments of likelihood. In (7a), the sequence markers are being used to list the speaker's arguments, working interpersonally to convince the hearer that someone's behaviour should be seen as mad. In (7b), on the other hand, they are being used to recount how events unfolded in the world rather than present an argument. In sum, there can be no simple linguistic criteria for unambiguously identifying metadiscourse as many items can be either propositional or metafunctional depending on their role in context.

More importantly, this multifunctionality means that metadiscourse cannot be regarded as a strictly linguistic phenomenon at all, but must be seen as a rhetorical and pragmatic one. This is because we cannot simply read off particular linguistic features as metadiscourse, but have to identify the strategies that speakers and writers are using in producing those features at particular points in their discourse. In looking at metadiscourse as functional we can see that metadiscourse is something that we *do*, a social act through which people carry on a discourse about their own discourse for particular rhetorical purposes. These are important issues for understanding and identifying metadiscourse and I will take them up again in the next chapter.

2.5 'Textual' and 'interpersonal' functions

Because metadiscourse analysis involves taking a functional approach to texts, writers in this area have tended to look to the Systemic Functional theory of language for insights and theoretical support. Within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), language is seen as being organized around, and simultaneously realizing, three broad purposes or 'metafunctions' (e.g. Halliday, 1994; Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999). These are:

- *The Ideational function*: the use of language to represent experience and ideas. This roughly corresponds to the notion of 'propositional content' discussed earlier and concerns perceptions of the world and our own consciousness.
- *The Interpersonal function*: the use of language to encode interaction, allowing us to engage with others, to take on roles and to express and understand evaluations and feelings.
- *The Textual function*: the use of language to organize the text itself, coherently relating what is said to the world and to readers.

For Halliday these metafunctions do not operate independently and discretely but are expressed simultaneously in every utterance. The meaning of a text lies in the integration of all three functions, each of which is understood in relation to the others.

Many metadiscourse analysts have drawn on Halliday's metafunctions to code their data (e.g. Crismore and Farnsworth, 1990; Crismore *et al.*, 1993; Hyland, 1998b, 2000; Vande Kopple, 1985). To do this they have distinguished metadiscourse items from propositional matter, and then categorized the former as either performing a textual function by organizing a coherent discourse, or performing an interpersonal function by conveying the writer's attitudes to the text.

Thus, Vande Kopple (1985: 87) believes that *textual metadiscourse* 'shows how we link and relate individual propositions so that they form a cohesive and coherent text and how individual elements of those propositions make sense in conjunction with other elements of the text'. Lyons (1977: 5) refers to this as *text reflexivity*, or 'the capacity of natural language to refer to or describe itself', calling attention to the idea that parts of a text can function to organize the discourse and help make the message comprehensible rather than refer to the world. *Interpersonal metadiscourse*, on the other hand, 'can help us express our personalities and our reactions to the propositional content of our texts and characterize the interaction we would like to have with our readers about that content'.

But while Halliday's terminology lends a certain theoretical respectability to the idea of metadiscourse, the concept plays no part in his thinking. The linguistic categories in SFL which most closely correspond to metadiscourse are *conjunctive relations*, which link text elements together, and *modality*, which deals with degrees of certainty. For Halliday, and those working in a systemic linguistics tradition, the textual function is principally realized by cohesive devices such as pronouns, referring terms, etc. and by the choices a writer makes in giving prominence to information as 'given' or 'new' by locating it at either the beginning or the end of the clause. Such choices of *theme* are a good example of how textual devices simultaneously express other functions as they not only provide for the development of a text, but also for what the writer sees as key elements. The theme helps to signpost what writers have in mind as a starting point, what 'frame' they have chosen to present their message. It therefore also represents what they see as the best way of highlighting particular ideational or interpersonal information to reflect their intentions and their assessments of reader needs in comprehending the message.

In other words, while metadiscourse theorists tend to see textual, interpersonal and propositional (ideational) elements of the texts as discrete and separable, Halliday reminds us that texts have to be seen more holistically. Discourse is a process in which writers are simultaneously creating propositional content, interpersonal engagement and the flow of text as they write. But in this process the creation of text is a means of creating both interpersonal and ideational meanings, and textual features cannot be seen as ends in themselves. If metadiscourse is the way writers engage their readers and create convincing and coherent text, then we have to acknowledge that it is about *interaction* in text. It expresses the interpersonal dimension and how both interactive and textual resources are used to create and maintain relations with readers. I will elaborate this view in more detail in the next chapter.

2.6 Metadiscourse signals

There is also a lack of clarity in the literature concerning what counts as metadiscourse. We have already noted that there are no simple linguistic criteria for identifying metadiscourse. In fact, metadiscourse can be seen as an open category to which writers are able to add new items according to the needs of the context. Even adopting a functional approach, there are numerous ways that we are able to both reveal ourselves and our purposes in our texts, and there is a potentially huge

range of linguistic items which might realize these functions. The Appendix, for instance, lists 300 potential expressions.

Metadiscourse studies focus on *explicit* textual devices, that is, items which can be clearly identified in the text. While metadiscourse concerns the presence of an author, only those relationships between parts of the text and between the author and the text which are observable can be included. Explicitness is an important criterion of metadiscourse not only for the practical purposes of identification, but also because it is this explicit presence which is textually and rhetorically interesting. It represents the writer's or speaker's overt attempt to create a particular pragmatic or discoursal effect, and while explicitness may be a matter of degree, it does not alter the principle of excluding implicit authorial presence from analyses.

For some writers these heterogeneous realizations can include non-verbal signals, e.g. the paralinguistic cues which accompany spoken messages, such as tone of voice and stress, as well as gesture, facial expression and proximity (e.g. Argyle, 1972). In written texts various forms of punctuation and typographical marks such as underlining, capitalization, scare quotes and exclamation marks can highlight aspects of a text or the writer's attitudes to it (e.g. Crismore *et al.*, 1993: 48). Figure 2.1 represents these non-verbal aspects of metadiscourse.

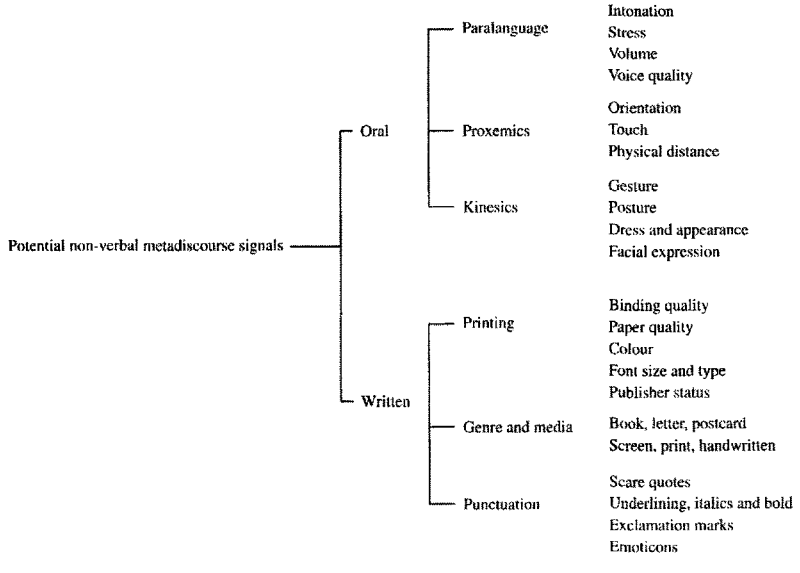

Figure 2.1 *Potential non-verbal expressions of metadiscourse*

The examples in (8) below illustrate how writers can use punctuation to distance themselves from some connotations of a word (a); indicate their surprise or outrage (b); show that the accompanying statement is meant ironically or as a joke (c); offer a gloss or clarification of a possibly unfamiliar word or phrase (d); and turn to the reader to offer an aside or personal comment (e):

(8) (a) I admit that the term 'error' may be an undesirable label to some teachers. (PhD dissertation)

(b) To call a patient at the Royal Free costs 39p off-peak and 49p peak-time per minute!! (letter to the editor)

(c) As you know, I always meet the assignment deadlines ☺. (personal email)

(d) The newly devised menu 'Essence D'Asiatique' (of Asian influence) features tantalizing cuisine expertly prepared on the premises. (restaurant review)

(e) Read could be sighted on the square minutes before the start of the test receiving deliveries from James Anderson (remember him?). (sports journalism)

More usually, however, analyses focus on explicit textual devices (9). These range from individual words which act to signal the writer's stance or how he or she wants the reader to understand links between textual matter (a); whole clauses which can direct the reader to some action or preview the upcoming text (b); and sequences of several sentences (c):

(9) (a) There is an outward show of greater choice because of the wide variety of channels, but this *might* be an illusion because the channels will come to resemble each other in many respects. (GCE Social Studies paper)

The appellants did not request a copy of the general conditions, *although* on 1st July a copy of the 1969 version was sent to them. (court judgment)

(b) *You should note* that the relations of Eq. 1–3 imply that stress is linearly related to load. (Physics textbook)

In this section you will find essential safety information regarding your notebook. (computer manual)

(c) The organization of this paper will be as follows. Chapter 2 is a review of Hong Kong air cargo industry. Chapter 3 is a literature review. Chapter 4 is a model measuring the

> multiplier effects brought by the air cargo industry to the Hong Kong labour market. Chapter 5 concerns the drivers and constraints for future growth of this industry and the last Chapter offers conclusions and recommendations.
> (PhD dissertation)

An important issue in metadiscourse identification, however, is that there is invariably a certain amount of insider opacity in metadiscourse use. From the surfer's 'tubular' to the diplomat's 'full and frank discussions', the analyst is confronted with users' shared understandings which signal insider status and defy purely textual analysis. Group members are often able to recover easily the connotative meanings of arcane terminology and the coded references of routinely used community expressions which may be impenetrable to the analyst. This is because text participants are linked by webs of intertextual knowledge as a result of their experience of similar texts and their expectations of how information and attitudes are likely to be expressed. In other words, writing and reading involve deploying a considerable amount of procedural and content knowledge to texts, and interlocutors have to suppose, even if only for the sake of economic processing, that what is salient, and so therefore what is meaningful, is adequately encoded and recoverable. As Nystrand observes:

> The process of writing is a matter of elaborating text in accord with what the writer can reasonably assume that the reader knows and expects, and the process of reading is a matter of predicting text in accord with what the reader assumes about the writer's purpose. More fundamentally, each presupposes the sense-making capabilities of the other. As a result, written communication is predicated on what the writer/reader each assumes the other will do/has done.
> (Nystrand, 1989: 75)

Less esoteric, yet often similarly opaque, are features of language which signal metadiscoursal meanings which are not usually regarded as metadiscourse. Thus metaphors can help focus attention (*rainforests are the lungs of the earth*) and allusion is often used to forge a common bond with readers (*the chocolates he sent were actually a Trojan horse*). Perhaps more problematic for the analyst are cases where the writer chooses to encode metadiscoursal meanings grammatically. We can, for example, opt to signal the importance of ideas explicitly as in (10a), or by using a main clause with a subordinate clause (10b):

(10) (a) *It is important to note that* our discussion is not intended to reflect how strongly these feelings are held. (research article)

(b) Our discussion is not intended to reflect how strongly these feelings are held, because this will be measured in a later quantitative study. (invented)

When writers use only main clauses without subordination they are covertly informing their readers that all the ideas presented have equal importance, while subordination establishes a hierarchy and implicitly signals the writer's evaluation of significance.

A final consideration of what we should count as metadiscourse relates to the writer's expression of affect, or lexical evaluation. We communicate positive or negative viewpoints in a whole range of ways, and it can be said that almost any linguistic choice conveys an attitude of some kind, expressing our likes and dislikes, our approval and disapproval. When we report our emotional states or reactions in this way we invite our readers to share those reactions, or at least to see them as valid, and so reach out to them interpersonally. At the most delicate level a writer's viewpoint can be conveyed through lexical choice alone, as the selection of an adjective can convey subtle shades of affect (the use of *frugal* vs *stingy, forthright* vs *blunt*, or *single* vs *spinster*, for example). But to include such items as metadiscourse undermines the concept by widening it beyond any useful descriptive role. Metadiscourse studies therefore tend to distinguish between evaluative lexis, used to qualify individual items, and stance markers, which provide an attitudinal or evaluative frame for an entire proposition. Features which modify individual lexical words are therefore excluded as metadiscourse because they do not function in relation to an entire proposition (e.g. Crismore *et al.*, 1993).

Together, these issues mean that it may not be possible to capture every interpersonal feature or writer intention in a coding scheme and that any list of metadiscourse markers can only ever be partial. Metadiscourse therefore helps to reveal meanings in the text and relationships between text users, but can never achieve a comprehensive description. It does, however, encourage us to look harder at texts to discover the ways that writers make their points and engage with their readers. It also suggests that we should go beyond texts to discover how they work, using methods which take texts as a starting point but which draw on multiple sources of evidence including the analysis of a corpus of representative texts, interviews with insider informants, and focused expert self-reports concentrating on particular text features. This kind of triangulation helps get us closer to understanding how insiders view their literacy practices and how they write and respond to these features (Hyland, 2000).

2.7 Categorizations of metadiscourse

Given the breadth of meanings realized by metadiscourse markers, there are a number of different ways which these features have been categorized. Most taxonomies are closely based on that proposed by Vande Kopple (1985), whose categorization consists of seven kinds of metadiscourse marker divided into textual and interpersonal types. These are summarized in Table 2.1.

This classification has been used by numerous writers (e.g. Crismore and Farnsworth, 1989, 1990; Intaraprawat and Steffensen, 1995; Cheng and Steffensen, 1996) and is itself a development of Lautamatti's (1978) taxonomy and Williams' (1981) brief style guide treatment. The vagueness of the categories and the functional overlaps, however, mean they have proved difficult to apply in practice. One obvious problem is the difficulty of distinguishing *narrators* and *attributors*, particularly in academic writing where citation is used to perform a variety of rhetorical functions. Not only can citations

Table 2.1 *Vande Kopple's classification system for metadiscourse*

Textual metadiscourse
Text connectives – used to help show how parts of a text are connected to one another. Includes sequencers (*first, next, in the second place*), reminders (*as I mentioned in Chapter 2*), and topicalizers, which focus attention on the topic of a text segment (*with regard to, in connection with*).
Code glosses – used to help readers to grasp the writer's intended meaning. Based on the writer's assessment of the reader's knowledge, these devices reword, explain, define or clarify the sense of a usage, sometimes putting the reformulation in parentheses or marking it as an example, etc.
Validity markers – used to express the writer's commitment to the probability or truth of a statement. These include hedges (*perhaps, might, may*), emphatics (*clearly, undoubtedly*), and attributors which enhance a position by claiming the support of a credible other (*according to Einstein*).
Narrators – used to inform readers of the source of the information presented – who said or wrote something (*according to Smith, the Prime Minister announced that*).
Interpersonal metadiscourse
Illocution markers – used to make explicit the discourse act the writer is performing at certain points (*to conclude, I hypothesize, to sum up, we predict*).
Attitude markers – used to express the writer's attitudes to the propositional material he or she presents (*unfortunately, interestingly, I wish that, how awful that*).
Commentaries – used to address readers directly, drawing them into an implicit dialogue by commenting on the reader's probable mood or possible reaction to the text (*you will certainly agree that, you might want to read the third chapter first*).

provide propositional warrants (validity markers in Vande Kopple's terms) and meet conventions of precedence (narrators), but they might also be used to offer a narrative context for the research (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995) or establish an intertextual framework to suggest a cumulative and linear progression of knowledge (Hyland, 2000).

It is worth noting that these functions are not performed in isolation, and the writer may be trying to achieve several purposes at once in selecting a citation. As a result, it is not entirely clear how far either the analyst or the reader can determine which function may be intended. Similar problems occur when we try to disentangle examples of illocution and validity markers where cases such as 'we suggest that' and 'I demonstrate that' seem to indicate both the degree of commitment that the writer wishes to invest in a statement and simultaneously the act that the discourse is performing at that point. Nor is it obvious what the category of *commentary* might include or how this is likely to differ from that which might be labelled as *attitude markers*. These are not problems that can be disambiguated by close analysis of context, but are inherent shortcomings of the categorization scheme itself. Consequently, Vande Kopple's taxonomy has been refined and amended by various writers (e.g. Nash, 1992; Xu, 2001) and, recently, by Vande Kopple (2002) himself who has re-labelled *validity markers* as *epistemology markers* and included *narrators* in that category, highlighting their function of providing evidential support to statements.

The most substantial revisions have been those of Crismore *et al.* (1993) and Hyland (1998b, 1998c, 1999b) who have collapsed, separated and reorganized Vande Kopple's categories. A summary of Crismore *et al.*'s taxonomy is shown in Table 2.2 As can be seen, Crismore drops *narrators*, shifts some sub-functions to a new category of *textual markers*, and moves *code glosses* and *illocution markers* into another new category of *interpretive markers*. These two new categories are supposed to account for the textual role of metadiscourse, with textual markers referring to features which help organize the discourse and interpretive markers which function to 'help readers interpret and better understand the writer's meaning and writing strategies' (Crismore *et al.*, 1993: 47).

While Crismore *et al.*'s attempts to impose order on the various functions of metadiscourse are an improvement on Vande Kopple's approach, problems remain. It is not clear, for instance, why textual metadiscourse has been divided into textual and interpretive markers. Organizational features obviously contribute to the coherence of the text and thereby assist the reader in interpreting it. There is also confusion within these categories; for example, the decision to include

Table 2.2 *Crismore et al.'s categorization of metadiscourse (1993: 47–54)*

Category	Function	Examples
Textual metadiscourse		
1. Textual markers		
Logical connectives	Show connections between ideas	therefore; so; in addition; and
Sequencers	Indicate sequence/ordering of material	first; next; finally; 1, 2, 3
Reminders	Refer to earlier text material	as we saw in Chapter one
Topicalizers	Indicate a shift in topic	well; now I will discuss ...
2. Interpretive markers		
Code glosses	Explain text material	for example; that is
Illocution markers	Name the act performed	to conclude; in sum; I predict
Announcements	Announce upcoming material	in the next section ...
Interpersonal metadiscourse		
Hedges	Show uncertainty to truth of assertion	might; possible; likely
Certainty markers	Express full commitment to assertion	certainly; know; shows
Attributors	Give source/support of information	Smith claims that ...
Attitude markers	Display writer's affective values	I hope/agree; surprisingly ...
Commentary	Build relationship with reader	you may not agree that ...

reminders, which refer to matter earlier in the text, as textual markers while *announcements*, which look forward, are seen as interpretive.

Nor is the class of logical connectives entirely transparent. While Crismore *et al.* accept Vande Kopple's view that these items show how different parts of the text are connected, they nevertheless identify them syntactically rather than functionally, including only those 'joining two main clauses'. Thus they count coordinating conjunctions (such as *and* and *but*) and conjunctive adverbs (*therefore, in addition*) as metadiscourse, but not subordinating conjunctions (like *because* and *which*). Their reason for this is that subordinators are essential to grammaticality, whereas 'writers can omit an *and* or *therefore* and still have a well-formed independent clause' (*ibid.*: 49). Crismore seems to be suggesting that items can only perform metafunctional roles if they are the product of choice rather than syntactic necessity. Features can therefore perform *either* a metadiscoursal *or* a syntactic function in this scheme. But there is always more than one way of expressing an utterance, and every realization can be seen as the expression of a conscious writer choice. As writer intervention is a cornerstone of metadiscourse, it is unclear quite why this constraint is applied. The same grammatical choices can clearly work metadiscoursally and create well-formed sentences.

Finally, although Crismore *et al.* define metadiscourse as material which does not add anything to the propositional content of the text, they nevertheless see items which often connect ideas, such as logical connectives, as metadiscourse. It seems clear, however, that

conjunctions operating to link elements of proposition might justifiably be seen as part of those propositions. In the following example from a Sociology textbook, for example, it is the two elements in combination, both the emergence of trade unions *and* their relative power, which is the key fact for this writer:

> The new interventionist state drew its authority and legitimacy from a societal consensus which had been forged around the growth of a countervailing power bloc (the trade union and labour movement) and its strength relative to that of the owners of industrial capital.

The inclusion of *and* here is crucial to the proposition and it is difficult to see the sense in which it is functioning as metadiscourse, although this is how Crismore *et al.*'s definition would have us code it.

So although it is reasonable to try and establish boundaries for metadiscourse as lying outside of propositional matter, using syntactic criteria to do this simply muddies the waters. What is important is not whether a sentence becomes ungrammatical if an item is removed, but the function that item is performing in the sentence. I will argue later that we need to keep in mind that connective items, as well as other features, can function to either connect steps in an exposition, and so help to organize the *discourse* as an argument, or connect activities in the world outside the text, and so represent *experiences* as a series of events (Martin, 1992). It is this distinction, rather than some spurious notion of writer choice, which contributes to the theoretical and analytical coherence of the concept of metadiscourse.

2.8 Summary and conclusions

While there is broad agreement that metadiscourse refers to material which goes beyond the subject matter to signal the presence of the author, there is a certain amount of confusion surrounding the term and imprecision in defining it. Analysts seem to be over-reliant on an uncertain distinction between propositional and metadiscourse matter and some have been led into making spurious assertions about 'primary' and 'secondary' discourses or even different 'levels of meaning' in texts. I have also briefly reviewed the categorization schemes that have been proposed in the literature and the assumptions that analysts have made in making their selections.

The discussion has suggested that while most analysts adopt a functional approach to metadiscourse, categorizations sometimes confuse functional with syntactic criteria and misrepresent Halliday's tripartite view of language. This tends to obscure the fact that language

features have potentially multifunctional roles and that items only function as metadiscourse in relation to other parts of the text. It is also apparent that there is also a degree of opacity in metadiscourse because of the fact that discourse involves interactions between language users communicating as members of social groups. Items which can function metadiscoursally often draw on the shared understandings and conventions of these groups and so are not always accessible to the analyst.

These are not insurmountable problems, however. By adopting a clear functional approach and being consistent in our categorizations, metadiscourse offers a powerful analytical tool for describing discourse and mapping the ways that language is related to the social contexts in which it is used. Clearly, metadiscourse studies must begin with functional classifications and analyses of texts. It is, moreover, important to see metadiscourse as central to the overall purpose of language use, rather than merely an adjunct to it, realizing functions which both parallel and support the transmission of ideas or experiences. It is these issues I turn to in the next chapter.

3 A metadiscourse model

The previous chapter has suggested that the conflicting definitions and ambiguity surrounding the term 'metadiscourse' has led to uncertainty about what features to include in analyses and how to categorize these. More significantly, this lack of clarity has seriously undermined confidence in the concept itself and frustrated attempts to operationalize it consistently as a means of describing discourse. In this chapter I propose a more theoretically robust and analytically reliable model of metadiscourse, based on a number of core principles and offering clear criteria for identifying and coding features. The key assumption here is that rhetorical features can be understood and seen as meaningful only in the contexts where they occur, and as a result metadiscourse must be analysed as part of a community's practices, values and ideals. This kind of analysis can then reveal, and help explain, why discourses are structured in a particular way among a particular group of users.

This chapter spells out what it means to take this view of metadiscourse seriously. I begin by briefly discussing three basic principles of metadiscourse, and then go on to suggest a functional framework which characterizes metadiscourse as a means of conceptualizing interpersonal relations.

3.1 Key principles of metadiscourse

The first place to start is with a clear definition:

> Metadiscourse is the cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community.

While this definition relates to some of the earlier work on metadiscourse, it is also clear that it differs from it in important ways, overlapping with other views of language use which emphasize the interpersonal, such as *evaluation, stance* and *engagement.* Essentially it sees metadiscourse as a system of meanings realized by an open-ended set of language items. These items can also perform non-metadiscoursal roles and so are recognized only in actual instances of realization. Underpinning this conception of metadiscourse is a

functionally oriented perspective, which sees writers as conducting interaction with their readers, and three key principles of metadiscourse (Hyland and Tse, 2004). These are:

1. that metadiscourse is distinct from propositional aspects of discourse;
2. that metadiscourse refers to aspects of the text that embody writer–reader interactions;
3. that metadiscourse refers only to relations which are internal to the discourse.

i. Metadiscourse is distinct from propositional aspects of discourse

I noted in 2.2 that definitions of metadiscourse draw a line between propositional material, or the 'communicative content' of discourse, on the one hand and material which organizes this content and conveys the writer's beliefs and attitudes to it on the other. To oversimplify this distinction slightly, we might suggest that writers have something to say and the ways they choose to say it are influenced by their expectations of how it will be received by a particular audience. That is, the main purpose of a text is to be read, and the writer's anticipation of this reading has a backwash effect on the composition of the text, influencing how it is set out and the position the writer takes towards it. We can see these two dimensions as two simultaneously enacted aspects of language in use, referring to two main types of entity: things in the world and things in the discourse, propositions and metadiscourse.

This division is an essential starting point for both theory building and analysis, but because the idea of 'proposition' is undertheorized and rarely elaborated, it has not provided researchers with an infallible means of identifying what is propositional and what is not. The two statements in example (1) below, for instance, could be seen as discussing something going on in the world (propositional matter) or reports on such matters in the discourse (non-propositional material):

(1) A taxonomic scheme such as the one I present below is not just a neutral description of diversity but a theory in itself.
(science textbook)

'Political correctness' is a tired old expression, not used much nowadays by anybody but the *Daily Mail*, which employs it as a weapon with which to castigate the left.
(newspaper column)

The 'taxonomic scheme' in the first utterance might be *a specific example*, something referred to and discussed in the text itself, or a reference to *all* such schemes existing in the world beyond the text. Similarly, the newspaper columnist might be evaluating *the expression* 'political correctness' as part of the discourse, or its actual manifestation in real-world behaviours. The fact that the first writer refers to the scheme as 'presented below' and that 'political correctness' is enclosed in quotes and anaphorically referred to as 'a tired old expression' and 'it', suggests a discourse-internal reading for both examples. The point of such examples is that a propositional/content distinction is required for exploring metadiscourse, but we need clear principles for identifying actual instances in practice.

It is true that many professional and academic texts are concerned with issues other than themselves. They seek to inform or persuade readers of activities, objects or people in the world. Equally though, a large proportion of every text is not concerned with the world, but with its internal argument and its readers. It is also important to note that one is not 'primary' and one 'secondary' to the meaning of a text. Metadiscourse does not simply support propositional content: it is the means by which propositional content is made coherent, intelligible and persuasive to a particular audience. As Malinowski (1923) argued when discussing 'phatic communion' 80 years ago, language does not exist only to reflect thought, but also to satisfy other communicative needs. In particular we employ it to express social relations and establish bonds with others. Following Malinowski, then, we can say that metadiscourse is not *secondary* but *specialized*. It is how we organize out texts and construct a stance to what we say. It is what engages receivers and encourages them to accept our positions.

Essentially, this position is implied in Sinclair's (1981) discussion of 'planes of discourse' mentioned in Chapter 1. Sinclair's account offers a dynamic view of how language works by suggesting how we create text by setting out our material and negotiating relationships so others will understand it. In addition to the propositional, transactional, informative or ideational dimension of language, Sinclair argues that language performs important work in structuring and shaping the writer's understandings of the world for readers. This is a model of recipient design.

He offers a model of text which rests on two basic components. One is the expressive, attitudinal, interactional or interpersonal plane which reflects 'the need of language users to negotiate their affairs with one another'; and the other is the textual, organizational and text-maintenance plane where speakers or writers transform the world

outside to the world of language. Sinclair explains the distinction like this:

> As we put language to use, we make text by negotiating our affairs with each other. At any one point, the decisions about what effect utterances should aim at, what acts they should perform, or what features of the world they should incorporate, are decisions on the interactive plane. Each segment of activity thus has an existential quality. But at the same time it is building up from text which has gone before, readjusting, working in the new material with the old, and maintaining records, moment by moment. Decisions in this intra-textual area are made on the autonomous plane.

So on the autonomous plane language works to organize and share relevant experiences and is 'concerned with language only and not with the means by which language is related to the world outside the text'. On the interactive plane it seeks to negotiate and engage readers with those experiences. Sinclair represents these planes diagrammatically as in Figure 3.1. The curved lines suggest a portion of a circle where everything inside has to do with language and outside is the real world. The interactive plane is the interface between the two.

Hunston (2000: 183) sees the distinction in terms of the roles of writer and reader. At any point the writer is an informer and the reader is informed by the structure and nature of the text; this is the autonomous plane. At the same time, on the interactive plane, the writer is acting as a text constructor and the reader is informed through moment-by-moment negotiation. In terms of the present discussion, the model presents a view of discourse which distinguishes metadiscourse from propositional content with no separate 'textual' function.

We also need to remember, however, that both propositional and metadiscoursal elements occur together in texts, often in the same sentences, and that both elements are crucial to coherence and meaning. Such integration is common, with each element expressing

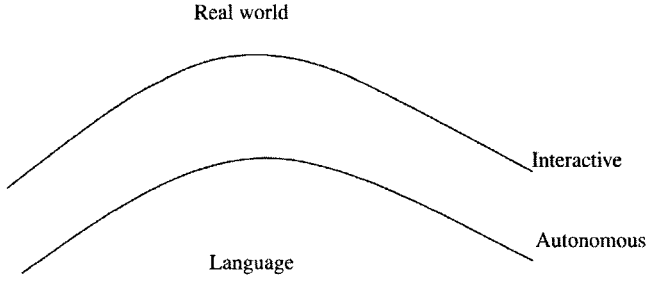

Figure 3.1 *Sinclair's planes of discourse model*

its own content: one concerned with the world and the other with the text and its reception. Like propositional discourse, metadiscourse conveys the writer's intended meaning – it is part of the message, not an entirely different one. In other words, we have to see metadiscourse as integral to the process of communication and not mere commentary on propositions. It is not simply the 'glue' that holds the more important parts of the text together, but is itself a crucial element of its meaning – that which helps relate a text to its context, taking readers' needs, understandings, existing knowledge, intertextual experiences and relative status into account. Metadiscourse is therefore an important concept for analysing the ways writers engage with their subject matter and readers, allowing us to compare the strategies used by members of different social groups.

ii. Metadiscourse expresses writer–reader interactions

A second principle of metadiscourse is that it must be seen as embodying the interactions necessary for successful communication. As such, definitions and coding schemes have to reject the duality of textual and interpersonal functions found in much of the metadiscourse literature. Instead, I suggest that **all** metadiscourse is interpersonal in that it takes account of the reader's knowledge, textual experiences and processing needs and that it provides writers with an armoury of rhetorical appeals to achieve this (Hyland and Tse, 2004).

As we saw in the previous chapter, there are difficulties in distinguishing a purely textual function for metadiscourse. Most 'textual metadiscourse' is realized by conjuncts (*so, because, and*) and adverbials (*subsequently, first, therefore*), together with their respective metaphorical or paraphrasing expressions (*as a result, on the other hand, needless to say*). For many metadiscourse analysts, these conjunctive relations (called 'text connectives' by Vande Kopple, 1985 and 'logical connectives' by Crismore *et al.*, 1993) are treated as 'straightforward and unproblematic' textual markers (Crismore *et al.*, 1993: 48). But like other features of 'textual metadiscourse', the transitions and links that conjunctions mark between clauses can be oriented towards **either** the experiential **or** the interpersonal, to either propositional or interactional meanings. Our tendency to see conjunctions as expressing connections between ideas is perhaps a result of our primarily *ideational* orientation to the world, but we can also see conjunctions as interactionally motivated, contributing to the creation and maintenance of shifting *interpersonal* orientations.

In some cases, then, so-called 'textual devices' deal with the logic of discourse: they work to cement the text together. In other cases they

concern the logic of life: they function to extend, elaborate or enhance propositional meanings. These distinct functions can be seen in the following examples. In (2a) the conjunctions *but*, *then* and *first* function *ideationally*, connecting propositions and signalling the writer's understanding of the relations between ideas by creating links with statements about the *world*. In (2b), on the other hand, they function *interactionally* to engage the reader as a participant in the discourse, recognizing his or her need for explicit signalling of links in the *argument*:

(2) (a) Harmison returns to the attack, but he overpitches and Jacobs punches him straight down the ground for four lovely runs. (cricket over-by-over commentary)

I met one guy who was forced to play piano accompaniment, for these kinda plays, for several years and then was forced to do very hard labor and he said he enjoyed the hard labor. (university seminar)

A marketing research project is undertaken to help resolve a specific marketing problem but first the problem must be clearly defined. (Marketing textbook)

(b) The city is a great place to visit, but would you want to bank there? (advertisement)

If it is said that the individual constituent should dominate over the social one, then the desirable political arrangements will be those that foster individual autonomy at the expense of social authority. (Philosophy article)

First, preheat the oven to 190 degrees C. Lightly grease 10 muffin cups, or line with muffin papers.
(banana muffin recipe)

The *interpersonal* use of conjunctions is perhaps most apparent in the use of concessive forms as these both mark what the writer anticipates will be unexpected and monitor the reader's response to the discourse (e.g. Martin and Rose, 2003). In academic writing in particular, tracking readers' expectations is a vital interpersonal strategy. Concessives rhetorically acknowledge voices other than the writer's by demonstrating a sensitivity to audience understandings and explicitly attempting to engage with these. In the examples opposite, for instance, the writers are doing more than creating a textually cohesive text; they are manoeuvring themselves into line with

community expectations and shaping the reader's role to gain a more sympathetic hearing for their views (3). This is especially important when writers seek to head off potentially detracting information or competing interpretations (4):

(3) *Verbal Hygiene* is worth reading, even if it is sometimes irritating in its extreme views and expressions.
(book review)

Admittedly, the data collection of the present study may be classified as 'opportunistic', rendering the representativeness of the research findings very limited. (PhD dissertation)

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

As suggested by Ortmeyer, Quelch, and Salmon (1991), the EDLP store basket price attracts time constrained consumers, and the PROMO store's deals attract the potential cherry pickers. However, positioning involves more than pricing.
(research paper)

In other words, unlike propositional and interpersonal meanings, both of which orient to non-linguistic phenomena, the textual function is intrinsic to language. It exists to construe **both** propositional and interpersonal aspects of texts into a coherent whole. We should, then, see textuality as a general property of the realization of discourse itself, perhaps analogous to syntax. This interpretation corresponds to that of other writers. Halliday (1994), for instance, refers to textual elements as having an *enabling* role, facilitating the creation of discourse by allowing writers to generate texts which make sense within their context.

In sum, so-called 'textual' devices organize texts as propositions by relating statements about the world and as metadiscourse by relating statements to readers; they do not function independently of these two functions. Figure 3.2 illustrates this relationship.

An important characterization of interactions relevant to this discussion is provided by Thompson (2001) and Thompson and Thetela (1995) who, like Sinclair in his model of *planes of discourse*, not only separate the ideational and interactive aspects of texts but also distinguish two main types of interaction. These they call the *interactive* and the *interactional*. *Interactive* resources concern the ways writers signal the arrangement of their texts based on their

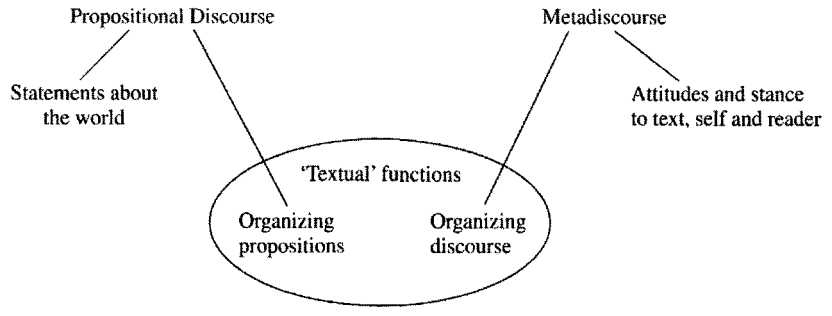

Figure 3.2 *The role of 'textual' devices in texts*

appreciation of the reader's likely knowledge and understandings. This influences the 'reader-friendliness' of a text and primarily involves the management of information flow, addressing how writers guide readers by anticipating their likely reactions and needs. *Interactional* resources, on the other hand, are more personal and involve the reader collaboratively in the development of the text. These concern the writer's explicit interventions to comment on and evaluate material, and so relate more directly to Halliday's interpersonal metafunction which

> is concerned with the social, expressive and conative functions of language, with expressing the speaker's angle: his attitudes and judgments, his encoding of the role relationships in the situation, and his motive in saying anything at all.
>
> (Halliday and Hasan, 1989: 26)

Thompson (2001: 61) points out that these two aspects of interaction, the interactive and the interactional, 'are essentially the two sides of the same coin'. This is because an overt intervention to elicit a response, such as a question or directive which might be seen as primarily having an interactional purpose, can also signal where the text is going next, and so function interactively as well. Similarly, interactive resources such as conjunctions not only create structural links which assist comprehension, but also serve important interactional functions by anticipating, and perhaps deflecting, possible reader objections or counterclaims (cf. Barton, 1995).

The *interactional* thus represents the writer's overt performance in the text while the *interactive* more discreetly embodies it. As Thompson (2001: 61) puts it:

> Rather than simply moulding the text interactively to fit the readers, writers may choose at any point to bring their management

> of the unfolding of the text to the surface and to engage themselves and their readers explicitly in the process. ... The reasons why this option might be selected are very varied but typically reflect an attempt to involve the reader in some way.

Such involvement displays solidarity with readers, showing concern for their processing of the text, and the stance of the writer. It also, as we shall see, works to position readers by manipulating their understanding of propositional matter and encouraging them to accept it.

In sum, we should see the explicit signalling of connections and relationships between elements in an argument as related to the writer's awareness of self and of the reader when writing. By making reference to the text, the audience or the message, the writer indicates his or her sensitivity to the context of the discourse, by making predictions about what the audience is likely to know and how it is likely to respond. So-called *textual metadiscourse* is therefore actually another aspect of the *interpersonal* features of a text. It concerns decisions by the writer to highlight certain relationships and aspects of organization to accommodate readers' understandings, guide their reading, and make them aware of the writer's preferred interpretations. We can, then, say that **all** metadiscourse refers to interactions between the writer and reader.

iii. Metadiscourse distinguishes external and internal relations

If we accept that many so-called 'textual' items can realize either interpersonal or propositional purposes depending on their context, then we need a means of distinguishing their primary function in the discourse. This brings us to the third key feature of metadiscourse, and one I have alluded to several times already, the distinction between 'internal' and 'external' reference.

Once again, connective items offer a clear example of this division as they can function to either connect steps in an exposition (internal), organizing the *discourse* as an argument, or they can connect activities in the world outside the text (external), representing *experiences* as a series of events (Martin, 1992). An internal relation thus connects events in the account and is solely communicative, while an external relation refers to those situations themselves. Halliday (1994: 325) provides an unambiguous statement of this difference when discussing temporal connectors:

> Many temporal conjunctives have an 'internal' as well as an 'external' interpretation; that is, the time they refer to is the temporal unfolding of the discourse itself, not the temporal

sequence of the processes referred to. In terms of the functional components of semantics, it is interpersonal not experiential time.

For example, the connecting devices in (5) below express a relation between activities and processes and so are experientially oriented. In these utterances *therefore* signals a consequence concerning how something will happen in the world, *in contrast* compares the characteristics of two cultures, and *then* tells us that events follow in time:

(5) We understand that the idea of moving your account to us may be daunting, therefore we will do most of it for you.
(bank advertisement)

In contrast to Western culture, Asian societies put emphasis on an interdependent view of self and collectivism.
(textbook)

So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. (The Bible)

In contrast, the examples in (6) below set up relations between aspects of the discourse and express metadiscoursal functions. They construct logical relations which are internal to the steps in their arguments. Here *therefore* signals that the writer is drawing a conclusion from the preceding argument, *in contrast* flags a disjunctive relation, alerting the reader to a move away from the expectancies set up by the prior text, and *then* realizes a logical condition in an argument:

(6) The poll was taken just after this month's messy reshuffle and puts the Tories on 33 points, Labour on 32 and the Liberal Democrats on 25. Therefore, on today's results the Tories would gain an extra 41 seats and the Lib Dems 20 in the next election, leaving Blair with an uncomfortably narrow majority.
(newspaper article)

In contrast, these findings were not found among the low collectivists. (PhD dissertation)

If you link the swipe card to your mobile number then you can use it at any one of over 60,000 TopUp points where you see the green TopUp sign. (mobile phone SIM brochure)

The function of discourse features to refer to either relationships internal to the discourse or to events in the world can also be seen in the use of sequencing devices. These resources can be employed to

arrange the argument and inform readers of how the interaction itself is being organized (7), or to the how events unfold as steps in a particular process, relating one real-world event to another (8):

(7) Firstly, the importance of complete images in compression is described in section one. Secondly, predictors used for lossless image coding are introduced. Thirdly, the results and analysis are used to show the performance of the proposed compression. (PhD dissertation)

First, select the picture and double click on it. Second, click on the arrow buttons to go forward or backward. Finally, click 'OK' on the operation panel to return to the previous display. (camera manual)

(8) Firstly, the number of observations in the first segment (N1) and the second segment (N2) were combined and a 'pooled' regression conducted. Secondly, individual regressions of the two periods were carried out. Then, finally, the F test was applied ... (PhD dissertation)

In assigning either propositional or metadiscoursal values to items, in academic discourse the distinction between internal and external reference differentiates two writer roles, reflecting Bunton's (1999: S47) view of *research acts* and *writer acts*. The former concerns events which occur in the research process itself and which form part of the subject matter of the text, such as the steps used to describe the experiment in example (8) above. Here the researcher is acting as a researcher, not as a writer, reporting processes that would be carried out irrespective of how the research is eventually written up. Describing an experiment in the hard sciences or a theoretical model in the humanities involves the writer in reporting events in the world. In contrast, by constructing an argument, the writer is making choices about presentation and how best to fashion material for a particular readership and this is where metadiscourse is used.

The internal/external distinction is analogous to that made in modal logic between *de re* and *de dicto* modality, concerning the roles of linguistic items in referring to either the reality denoted by propositions or the propositions themselves. Palmer (1990: 185) recognizes this distinction as epistemic and dynamic modality, the latter 'concerned with the ability or volition of the subject of the sentence, rather than the opinions of the writer' (1990: 36). That is, items such as *might* and *possible* can be regarded as interpersonal features where they express writers' inferences about the likelihood of something, and as propositional where they are referring to real-world

enabling conditions which can affect outcomes (Coates, 1983: 113; Hyland, 1998a: 110).

The determining factor is therefore the objectivity of the event, whether the outcome is related to the speaker's assessments of possibility about something happening or to external circumstances which might make it possible. The clearest cases are those where such objective enabling conditions are made explicit. Thus (9) comments on the writer's estimation of possibilities, and is thus an example of metadiscourse, while (10) is propositional as it represents an outcome as depending on certain circumstances.

(9) The poor market performance could be due to customers switching to alternative on-line sources for their groceries. (business report)

It is possible that Strauss will also pull out of the tour to Zimbabwe this winter. (newspaper)

(10) Of our small British birds, perhaps this is the most common and well-known, as it frequents the dwellings of man and even lives in the heart of great cities. (bird guide)

A Travelcard makes it possible to visit all these sites in one day. (London guide)

In some cases both epistemic and dynamic readings are possible, but coding is rarely problematic.

There are, then, good reasons for distinguishing metadiscourse from the propositional content of a text and for seeing it more broadly as encompassing the interactional aspects of discourse, using the criteria of external and internal relations. If the term is to have any coherence as a means of conceptualizing and understanding the ways writers create meanings and negotiate their ideas with others, then the distinction between matters in the world and those in the discourse are central.

3.2 A classification of metadiscourse

The classification scheme summarized in Table 3.1 embodies these principles. It is based on a functional approach which regards metadiscourse as the ways writers refer to the text, the writer or the reader. It acknowledges the contextual specificity of metadiscourse and, at a finer degree of delicacy, employs Thompson and Thetela's (1995) distinction between *interactive* and *interactional* resources to acknowledge the organizational and evaluative features of interaction

Table 3.1 *An Interpersonal model of metadiscourse*

Category	Function	Examples
Interactive	**Help to guide the reader through the text**	**Resources**
Transitions	express relations between main clauses	in addition; but; thus; and
Frame markers	refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages	finally; to conclude; my purpose is
Endophoric markers	refer to information in other parts of the text	noted above; see Fig; in section 2
Evidentials	refer to information from other texts	according to X; Z states
Code glosses	elaborate propositional meanings	namely; e.g.; such as; in other words
Interactional	**Involve the reader in the text**	**Resources**
Hedges	withhold commitment and open dialogue	might; perhaps; possible; about
Boosters	emphasize certainty or close dialogue	in fact; definitely; it is clear that
Attitude markers	express writer's attitude to proposition	unfortunately; I agree; surprisingly
Self mentions	explicit reference to author(s)	I; we; my; me; our
Engagement markers	explicitly build relationship with reader	consider; note; you can see that

(Hyland, 2001a; Hyland and Tse, 2004). But while the model owes a great deal to Thompson and Thetela's conception, it takes a wider focus by including both stance and engagement features (Hyland, 2001a) and by building on earlier models of metadiscourse (Hyland, 1998a and 2000).

The model recognizes that metadiscourse is comprised of the two dimensions of interaction:

1. ***The interactive dimension***. This concerns the writer's awareness of a participating audience and the ways he or she seeks to accommodate its probable knowledge, interests, rhetorical expectations and processing abilities. The writer's purpose here is to shape and constrain a text to meet the needs of particular readers, setting out arguments so that they will recover the writer's preferred interpretations and goals. The use of resources in this category therefore addresses ways of organizing discourse, rather than experience, and reveals the extent to which the text is constructed with the readers' needs in mind.
2. ***The interactional dimension***. This concerns the ways writers conduct interaction by intruding and commenting on their message. The writer's goal here is to make his or her views explicit and to involve readers by allowing them to respond to the unfolding text. This is the writer's expression of a textual 'voice', or community-recognized personality, and includes the ways he or she conveys judgements and overtly aligns him- or herself with readers. Metadiscourse here is essentially evaluative and engaging, expressing solidarity,

anticipating objections and responding to an imagined dialogue with others. It reveals the extent to which the writer works to jointly construct the text with readers.

3.3 Metadiscourse resources

These two dimensions are defining characteristics of any communication, whether spoken or written, and are expressed through a range of rhetorical features which themselves perform more specific functions. I will briefly discuss these below.

i. Interactive resources

As discussed above, these features are used to organize propositional information in ways that a projected target audience is likely to find coherent and convincing. They are clearly not simply text-organizing as their deployment depends on what the writer knows of his or her readers. They are a consequence of the writer's assessment of the reader's assumed comprehension capacities, understandings of related texts, and need for interpretive guidance, as well as the relationship between the writer and reader. There are five broad sub-categories:

- ***Transition markers*** are mainly conjunctions and adverbial phrases which help readers interpret pragmatic connections between steps in an argument. They signal additive, causative and contrastive relations in the writer's thinking, expressing relationships between stretches of discourse. It is unimportant whether items here contribute to syntactic coordination or subordination, but to count as metadiscourse they must perform a role internal to the discourse rather than the outside world, helping the reader interpret links between ideas. Table 3.2 shows how Martin and Rose (2003: 127) summarize the different discourse roles played by internal and external transitions. ***Addition*** adds elements to an argument and potentially consists of items such as *and, furthermore, moreover, by the way*, etc. ***Comparison*** marks arguments as either similar (*similarly, likewise, equally, in the same way, correspondingly*, etc.) or different (*in contrast, however, but, on the contrary, on the other hand* etc.). ***Consequence*** relations either tell readers that a conclusion is being drawn or justified (*thus, therefore, consequently, in conclusion*, etc.) or that an argument is being countered (*admittedly, nevertheless, anyway, in any case, of course*).

Table 3.2 *Different roles for internal and external transitions*

Relation	External	Internal
Addition	adding activities	adding arguments
Comparison	comparing and contrasting events, things and qualities	comparing and contrasting arguments and evidence
Consequence	explaining why and how things happen	drawing conclusions or countering arguments

- ***Frame markers*** signal text boundaries or elements of schematic text structure. Once again, care needs to be taken to identify features which order arguments in the text rather than events in time. Items included here function to sequence, label, predict and shift arguments, making the discourse clear to readers or listeners. Frame markers can therefore be used to sequence parts of the text or to internally order an argument, often acting as more explicit additive relations (*first, then, 1/2, a/b, at the same time, next*). They can explicitly label text stages (*to summarize, in sum, by way of introduction*). They announce discourse goals (*I argue here, my purpose is, the paper proposes, I hope to persuade, there are several reasons why*). And they can indicate topic shifts (*well, right, OK, now, let us return to*). Items in this category therefore provide framing information about elements of the discourse.
- ***Endophoric markers*** are expressions which refer to other parts of the text (*see Figure 2, refer to the next section, as noted above*). These make additional ideational material salient and therefore available to the reader in aiding the recovery of the writer's meanings, often facilitating comprehension and supporting arguments by referring to earlier material or anticipating something yet to come. By guiding readers through the discussion they help steer them to a preferred interpretation or reading of the discourse.
- ***Evidentials*** are 'metalinguistic representations of an idea from another source' (Thomas and Hawes, 1994: 129) which guide the reader's interpretation and establish an authorial command of the subject. In some genres this may involve hearsay or attribution to a reliable source; in academic writing it refers to a community-based literature and provides important support for arguments. Evidentials distinguish *who* is responsible for a position and while this may contribute to a persuasive goal, it

needs to be distinguished from the writer's *stance* towards the view, which is coded as an interpersonal feature.

- ***Code glosses*** supply additional information, by rephrasing, explaining or elaborating what has been said, to ensure the reader is able to recover the writer's intended meaning. They reflect the writer's predictions about the reader's knowledge-base and are introduced by phrases such as *this is called, in other words, that is, this can be defined as, for example*, etc. Alternatively, they are marked off by parentheses.

ii. Interactional resources

These features involve readers and open opportunities for them to contribute to the discourse by alerting them to the author's perspective towards both propositional information and readers themselves. They help control the level of personality in a text as writers acknowledge and connect to others, pulling them along with their argument, focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties and guiding them to interpretations. But these resources are not only the means by which writers express their views, but are also how they engage with the socially determined positions of others. They therefore act to anticipate, acknowledge, challenge or suppress alternative, potentially divergent positions and so work to expand or restrict opportunities for such views (White, 2003). Once again, there are five sub-categories.

- ***Hedges*** are devices such as *possible, might* and *perhaps*, which indicate the writer's decision to recognize alternative voices and viewpoints and so withhold complete commitment to a proposition. Hedges emphasize the subjectivity of a position by allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than a fact and therefore open that position to negotiation. Writers must calculate what weight to give to an assertion, considering the degree of precision or reliability that they want it to carry and perhaps claiming protection in the event of its eventual overthrow (Hyland, 1998a). Hedges therefore imply that a statement is based on the writer's plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge, indicating the degree of confidence it is prudent to attribute to it.
- ***Boosters***, on the other hand, are words such as *clearly, obviously* and *demonstrate*, which allow writers to close down alternatives, head off conflicting views and express their certainty in what they say. Boosters suggest that the writer

recognizes potentially diverse positions but has chosen to narrow this diversity rather than enlarge it, confronting alternatives with a single, confident voice. By closing down possible alternatives, boosters emphasize certainty and construct rapport by marking involvement with the topic and solidarity with an audience, taking a joint position against other voices (Hyland, 1999a). Their use strengthens an argument by emphasizing the mutual experiences needed to draw the same conclusions as the writer. The balance of hedges and boosters in a text thus indicates to what extent the writer is willing to entertain alternatives and so plays an important role in conveying commitment to text content and respect for readers.

- ***Attitude markers*** indicate the writer's affective, rather than epistemic, attitude to propositions. Instead of commenting on the status of information, its probable relevance, reliability or truth, attitude markers convey surprise, agreement, importance, obligation, frustration, and so on. While attitude is expressed by the use of subordination, comparatives, progressive particles, punctuation, text location, and so on, it is most explicitly signalled metadiscoursally by attitude verbs (e.g. *agree, prefer*), sentence adverbs (*unfortunately, hopefully*) and adjectives (*appropriate, logical, remarkable*).
- ***Self mention*** refers to the degree of explicit author presence in the text measured by the frequency of first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives (*I, me, mine*, exclusive *we, our, ours*). All writing carries information about the writer, but the convention of personal projection through first-person pronouns is perhaps the most powerful means of self-representation (Ivanic, 1998). Writers cannot avoid projecting an impression of themselves and how they stand in relation to their arguments, their community and their readers. The presence or absence of explicit author reference is generally a conscious choice by writers to adopt a particular stance and a contextually situated authorial identity (Hyland, 2001b).
- ***Engagement markers*** are devices that explicitly address readers, either to focus their attention or include them as discourse participants. So in addition to creating an impression of authority, integrity and credibility through choices of *hedges, boosters, self mention* and *attitude*, writers are able to either highlight or downplay the presence of their readers in the text. Because affective devices can also have relational

implications, attitude and engagement markers are often difficult to distinguish in practice. The latter, however, focus on reader participation with two main purposes:

1. The first acknowledges the need to adequately meet readers' expectations of inclusion and disciplinary solidarity, addressing them as participants in an argument with reader pronouns (*you, your*, inclusive *we*) and interjections (*by the way, you may notice*).
2. The second purpose involves rhetorically positioning the audience, pulling readers into the discourse at critical points, predicting possible objections and guiding them to particular interpretations. These functions are mainly performed by questions, directives (mainly imperatives such as *see, note* and *consider* and obligation modals such as *should, must, have to*, etc.) and references to shared knowledge.

In any communicative situation an orientation to the reader is crucial in securing social and rhetorical objectives. Readers always have the option of re-interpreting propositional information and rejecting the writer's viewpoint, which means that writers have to anticipate and respond to potential objections to their views. Metadiscourse is the way they do this, drawing on the rhetorical resources it provides to galvanize support, express collegiality, resolve difficulties and avoid disputes. Choices of *interactive* devices address readers' expectations that an argument will conform to conventional text patterns and predictable directions, enabling them to process the text by encoding relationships and ordering material in ways that they will find appropriate and convincing. *Interactional* choices focus more directly on the participants of the interaction, with the writer adopting an acceptable persona and a tenor consistent with the norms of the community. In academic writing this mainly involves establishing a judicious, discipline-defined balance of tentativeness and assertion, and a suitable relationship to one's data, arguments and audience.

3.4 An illustration: metadiscourse in postgraduate writing

To illustrate the model and show how these resources are used to facilitate effective, community-specific interactions in academic writing, I will briefly describe a study of metadiscourse use in graduate research writing (Hyland, 2004a; Hyland and Tse, 2004). Metadiscourse is particularly important at this advanced level of writing as it

Table 3.3 *Metadiscourse in postgraduate dissertations (per 10,000 words)*

Category	Master	Doctoral	All	Category	Master	Doctoral	All
Transitions	75.8	95.6	89.0	Hedges	86.1	95.6	92.4
Evidentials	40.0	76.2	64.1	Engagement markers	39.7	51.9	47.8
Code glosses	27.4	40.6	36.2	Boosters	31.7	35.3	34.1
Frame markers	20.7	30.3	27.1	Attitude markers	20.4	18.5	19.2
Endophorics	22.3	24.0	23.4	Self mentions	14.2	40.2	31.5
Interactive	**186.2**	**266.7**	**239.8**	**Interactional**	**192.1**	**241.5**	**225.0**

represents novice writers' attempts to negotiate propositional information in ways that are meaningful and appropriate to a particular disciplinary community. On the one hand, metadiscourse reveals writers' assumptions about the processing abilities, contextual resources and intertextual experiences of their readers, and, on the other, writers' abilities to adopt an appropriate disciplinary persona by revealing a suitable relationship to their data, arguments and audience.

The importance of metadiscourse in advanced postgraduate writing is shown by the fact that there were over 184,000 cases in a four million word corpus of 240 Masters and doctoral dissertations written by EFL students in Hong Kong. This is a frequency of one every 21 words. It is important to note that because metadiscourse often has clause or sentence length realization these standardized figures are not meant to convey the overall *amount* of metadiscourse in the corpus, but simply to allow comparison of different patterns of *occurrence* of metadiscourse in different genre and disciplinary sub-corpora. A concordance program searched the texts for some 300 potential expressions of metadiscourse and a large sample was analysed manually to ensure each was functioning as metadiscourse. Table 3.3 shows that writers used slightly more interactive than interactional forms, and that hedges and transitions were the most frequent devices followed by engagement markers and evidentials.

The significance of these frequencies are perhaps more clearly understood when compared to other common features of published academic writing. A large corpus-based study for the Longman Grammar, for instance, gave figures of 18.5 cases per thousand words for passive voice constructions and 20 per thousand words for past tense verbs (Biber *et al.*, 1999). These metadiscourse signals are therefore an important component of academic prose.

The high use of transitions, representing internal connections in the discourse, is clearly an important feature of academic argument. Transitions represent over a fifth of all metadiscourse in the corpus,

demonstrating writers' concerns that readers are able to recover their reasoning unambiguously. The most frequent sub-category, however, is hedges, which constitute 41 per cent of all interactional uses. This frequency reflects the critical importance of distinguishing fact from opinion in academic writing and the need for writers to evaluate their assertions in ways which recognize potential alternative voices. In fact, *may, could* and *would* were among the highest frequency items in the corpus, presenting claims with both caution and deference to the views of readers/examiners. In general, then, the use these students made of metadiscourse demonstrates a principal concern with expressing arguments explicitly and with due circumspection.

We can also see that the use of metadiscourse varied considerably across the two corpora of dissertations. There was an overall balance between interactive and interactional forms in the Masters theses, with slightly more interactional uses, while the doctoral texts contained 10 per cent more interactive forms. The PhD dissertations, however, contained far more metadiscourse, with 73 per cent of all cases. This may have something to do with the fact that PhD theses are often twice as long as the Masters dissertations, so students have to make greater use of interactive devices to structure more discursively complex arguments. However, the higher frequencies in the PhDs also seem to represent more determined and sophisticated attempts by writers to engage with readers and to present themselves as competent and credible academics immersed in the ideologies and practices of their disciplines.

In the ***interactive categories***, for instance, doctoral writers made far more use of *evidentials*, with over four times the number of intertextual references. Citation is central to the social context of persuasion, as it helps provide justification for arguments and demonstrates the novelty of the writer's position, but it also allows students to display an allegiance to a particular community and establish a credible writer identity, showing a familiarity with the literature and with an *ethos* that values a disciplinary research tradition. The writers of Masters theses, on the other hand, are unlikely to be so concerned about establishing their academic credentials. Not only are their texts much shorter, but they are also completed fairly quickly and in addition to substantial coursework, while many of their writers are often studying part-time and are looking forward to returning to their professional workplaces rather than a career in academia. Consequently their reading of the literature, and their desire to demonstrate their familiarity with it, may be less pressing.

Similarly, doctoral students employed far more ***interactional metadiscourse*** markers per 10,000 words, with much higher use of

engagement markers and *self mentions*. Self mention is a key way in which writers are able to promote a competent scholarly identity and gain approval for their research claims. While many students are taught to shun the use of first person, it plays a crucial interactional role in mediating the relationship between writers' arguments and their discourse communities, allowing them to create an identity as both disciplinary servant and creative originator (Hyland, 2001b). The points at which writers choose to metadiscoursally announce their presence in the discourse tend to be those where they are best able to promote themselves and their individual contributions. Engagement features are also far more common in the doctoral texts, particularly imperatives and obligation modals which direct the reader to some thought or action. These are important means of bringing readers into the text as participants in an unfolding dialogue.

There were also substantial variations in the use of metadiscourse across ***disciplinary communities***. The corpus contained equal numbers of dissertations from six disciplines in the natural and social sciences, and Table 3.4 shows that the more discursive 'soft' fields employed more metadiscourse overall and almost two-thirds of the interactional features. Hedges were well over twice as common in the soft fields and self mentions almost four times more frequent (before norming for text length).

The figures reflect the greater role that explicit personal interpretation plays in the humanities and social sciences where interpretations are typically more explicit and the conditions for

Table 3.4 *Metadiscourse in dissertations by discipline per 10,000 words*

Category	Applied Linguistics	Public Administration	Business Studies	Computer Science	Electronic Engineering	Biology
Transitions	95.1	97.8	89.1	74.3	76.9	86.6
Frame markers	25.5	29.5	25.3	35.4	24.7	22.5
Endophorics	22.0	15.5	19.6	25.9	43.1	23.0
Evidentials	82.2	55.6	60.7	31.1	20.1	99.5
Code glosses	41.1	36.6	30.0	32.3	30.7	36.0
Interactive	**265.9**	**235.0**	**224.7**	**199.0**	**195.5**	**267.6**
Hedges	111.4	109.7	93.3	55.8	61.5	82.1
Boosters	37.9	39.5	29.8	29.4	28.0	30.5
Attitude markers	20.3	26.1	20.7	16.2	10.6	15.5
Engagement markers	66.1	42.0	35.8	59.2	32.7	15.4
Self mentions	50.0	22.4	31.6	29.3	18.1	5.7
Interactional	**285.7**	**239.7**	**211.2**	**189.9**	**150.9**	**149.2**
Totals	**551.6**	**474.7**	**435.9**	**388.9**	**346.4**	**416.8**

establishing proof less reliable than in the hard fields (e.g. Hyland, 2000). Dealing with human subjects and data is altogether more uncertain and writers are unable to draw to the same extent on empirical demonstration or trusted quantitative methods. Consequently persuasion lies far more in the efficacy of argument and the role of language to build a relationship with readers, positioning them, persuading them, and including them in the argument.

Overall, these results suggest the extent to which metadiscourse is related to the socio-rhetorical contexts in which it is used. Because it enables text producers to frame and organize propositions, to position and engage readers, and to express a stance and enter relationships with their interlocutors, metadiscourse provides a link between texts and cultures. It thus helps to characterize the rhetorical context by revealing some of the expectations and understandings of the audience for whom a text was written. Because metadiscourse is the way writers construe their readers, its study enables us to explore writers' perceptions of the communities for which they are writing. This, in turn, helps to reveal not only readers' preferred discourse patterns, but also something of their social practices, values and ways of thinking.

3.5 The limits of description

It should be borne in mind that no taxonomy or description will ever be able to do more than partially represent a fuzzy reality. This is partly because metadiscourse studies deal only with *explicit* devices which can be clearly identified in the text (see 2.6 above). The decision to focus on overt surface features is due, to some extent, to the practical purposes of identification, but equally importantly, this explicitness represents the writer's conscious choice to indicate a presence in the discourse. Explicitness is therefore related to the author's awareness of both self and audience: it signals a point where the writer has reflected on the process of text creation, and this induces a similar awareness in the reader.

Clearly, however, dichotomizing authorial presence into high and low explicitness does not do full justice to the writer's intervention in a text, as any textual choice is a non-explicit signal of such a presence. But metadiscourse analysis is indicative rather than comprehensive. It helps us to understand the extent of authorial self-awareness, how far writers are able to see their texts as an outcome of writing (rather than as a study or theory in the world), and to compare the ways writers employ this awareness in crafting texts in different genres, cultures and communities.

A further limitation of the description, however, is the fact that the imposition of discrete categories on the fluidity of actual language use inevitably conceals its multifunctionality, blurring simultaneous meanings in an 'all-or-nothing' interpretation of how particular devices are used. Writing effectively means anticipating the needs of readers, both to follow an exposition and to participate in a dialogue, and occasionally devices are used to perform both functions at once so there will inevitably be some overlap between categories. Not only are metadiscourse functions often confused with propositiononal ones, as we have seen, but contrastive connectives such as *but* and *however*, which principally play interactive roles by organizing the discourse, can also act interactionally by shifting from a positive to a negative judgement (Hood and Forey, 1999) or by mitigating the introduction of a counter-claim (Barton, 1995). Similarly, code glosses not only reveal the writer's assessments of shared subject matter, but also imply an authoritative position vis-à-vis the reader.

A classification scheme can therefore only approximate the complexity of natural language use. But while it may give no firm evidence about author intentions, it is a useful means of revealing the meanings available in the text and perhaps some of the assumptions writers hold about the issues they address and the ways they see their audiences. Interacting effectively means anticipating the needs of readers, both to follow an exposition and to participate in a dialogue; it should be no surprise that many devices are used to perform both functions at once.

3.6 Summary and conclusions

This chapter has presented a model of metadiscourse based on its primary function of negotiating interactions in texts. Essentially my argument has been that metadiscourse offers a way of understanding the interpersonal resources writers use to organize texts coherently and to convey their personality, credibility, reader sensitivity and relationship to the message. There is often a tendency in the metadiscourse literature to focus on surface forms and the effects created by writers, especially in pedagogic materials, but metadiscourse should not be seen as an independent stylistic device which authors can vary at will. I hope the model described here overcomes many of these limitations and offers a comprehensive and pragmatically grounded means of investigating the interpersonal resources in texts.

The importance of metadiscourse lies in its underlying rhetorical dynamics which relate it to the contexts in which it occurs. In most of our communications that matter, such as the writing we do for

academic or professional purposes, interaction involves 'positioning', or adopting a point of view in relation both to the issues discussed in the text and to others who hold views on those issues. In claiming a right to be heard, and to have our views taken seriously, we must display a competence as community insiders. This competence is, at least in part, achieved through establishing an appropriate writer–reader dialogue which situates both our arguments and ourselves, establishing relationships between people, and between people and ideas. Successful writing thus depends on the individual writer's projection of a shared community context. Metadiscourse emphasizes that in pursuing their goals, writers seek to create a recognizable social world through rhetorical choices which allow them to conduct interpersonal negotiations and balance claims for the significance, originality and plausibility of their work against the convictions and expectations of their readers.

To the analyst, metadiscourse is a useful concept because it reveals the presence of the author in the text and his or her awareness of a reader. It is a specialized form of discourse which allows writers to engage with and influence their interlocutors and assist them to interpret and evaluate the text in a way they will see as credible and convincing. As a result, metadiscourse is intimately linked to the norms and expectations of particular communities through the writer's need to supply as many cues as necessary to secure the reader's understanding and acceptance of the propositional content. Central to this conception of metadiscourse, then, is the view that it must be located in the settings which influence its use and give it meaning. These functions and connections will be elaborated in the following chapters.

SECTION 2
METADISCOURSE IN PRACTICE

Having considered the basic features of metadiscourse and proposed an interactional view of the concept, I will now elaborate some of the main applications of the term and illustrate what it has to offer the study of discourse. The four chapters in this section look at a range of studies concerned with the key areas of rhetoric, genre, culture and community to illuminate how metadiscourse research has been undertaken and what it contributes to the study of language in use.

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4 Metadiscourse and rhetoric

Metadiscourse is, as I noted earlier, closely associated with the purposes of speakers and writers. It allows them to project their interests, opinions and evaluations into a text and to process and refine ideas out of concern for readers' possible reactions. Because it helps writers to engage their audience, signal relationships, apprise readers of varying certainty and guide their understanding of a text, metadiscourse pursues persuasive objectives. In fact, metadiscourse contributes to the rational, credible and affective appeals which have characterized persuasive discourse since the time of ancient Greece:

- it promotes rational appeals when it explicitly links ideas and arguments;
- it relates to credibility appeals where it concerns the writer's authority and competence;
- it addresses affective appeals when it signals respect for the readers' viewpoint or that the message has direct relevance to the audience.

In this chapter I look at the relationship between metadiscourse and rhetoric, understood here not in its contemporary sense as discourse level organizational patterns, but as strategies of persuasion, focusing mainly on the categorizations of classical rhetoric in two very different kinds of text: Darwin's *Origin of Species* and company annual reports.

4.1 The concept of rhetoric

The term *rhetoric* has had different meanings in its long history and at one time referred to one of the most important of all academic subjects (Ong, 1983). Essentially, rhetoric is the art of persuasion; it concerns arguments on matters about which there can be no formal proof. In the recent past the notion of rhetoric tended to carry negative connotations, suggesting unscrupulous manipulation and coercion, but today it is a central concept to those working in text analysis and written communication. As Mauranen (1993b: 20) observes:

> The study of rhetoric has been rediscovered not only as a means of improving efficiency in verbal presentation, but as an analytical tool that can be used by different disciplines for uncovering certain aspects of discourse.

The concepts of classical rhetoric are particularly important in much contemporary research into oral communication and in current theories of composition, both of which carry traces of the basic insights and principles of persuasion established by Aristotle (Erickson, 1974; Furley and Nehamas, 1994).

Aristotle's *Rhetoric*[1] is one of the most respected and enduring works of antiquity, an attempt to systematically understand persuasion and ground it in the practices of the oratory of the day. At the outset of this work, Aristotle distinguishes rhetoric from the more speculative form of argument of dialectic, defining it as the art of finding available ways of establishing persuasive proof. Since people are not persuaded until they are convinced that something is true, the rhetoric involves demonstrating *how* something is true or how it can be shown to be true. He argued that persuasion has to be adjusted for differences in the three major components of communication: the speaker, the hearer and the content of the argument. Further, he suggested that to make an argument speakers had to attend to three points: the means of persuasion, language and the organization of the argument.

These three elements have been central to almost all writing instruction and composition textbooks in modern times, with emphasis placed on strategies for making claims, careful choice of language forms and themes, and attention to the genre structure of the discourse. Of greatest interest to metadiscourse research, however, are the three means of persuasion:

- *Ethos* – the personal appeal of one's character;
- *Pathos* – the appeal to emotions;
- *Logos* – the appeal to reason.

Although they can be analysed separately, these three appeals tend to work in combination towards persuasive ends.

- *Ethos* concerns the character of the speaker and his or her credibility. Authors can have credibility prior to their text being heard or read, so it is partly related to reputation, expertise, celebrity and so on, but they must always re-establish it during the course of the discourse itself. Modern interpretations suggest that we do not see *ethos* as a static quality or as an attribute of a person, but as the dynamic and interpretive result

of the interaction between the writer and reader through the text itself (e.g. Hauser, 1986).

- *Pathos* concerns affective appeals and focuses on the characteristics of the audience rather than the speaker, considering its education level, ethnicity, gender, age, interests, background knowledge, group membership and so on.
- *Logos* concerns the speech itself, its arrangement, length, complexity, types of evidence and arguments and so on.

All three of these characteristics are equally important, although some may become more important in different situations.

Relating these means of persuasion to metadiscourse, we can see metadiscourse projecting the rational appeals of *Logos* when it explicitly links elements of the argument; it conveys an *Ethos* where it refers to the writer's authority and competence; and it relates to *Pathos* when it signals respect for the readers' viewpoint or that the message has direct relevance to the audience. In this chapter I will explore how metadiscourse realizes these rhetorical elements in scientific and business texts.

4.2 Academic discourse and rhetoric

There is a widespread belief that rhetoric is irrelevant to academic discourse. Academic prose is often perceived as a unique form of argument because it depends upon the demonstration of absolute truth, empirical evidence or flawless logic. Its persuasive potency is seen as grounded in rationality and based on exacting methodologies, dispassionate observation and informed reflection. Academic writing, in other words, represents the discourses of 'Truth' (Lemke, 1995: 178). It offers an objective description of what the natural and human worlds are actually like and this, in turn, serves to distinguish it from the socially contingent. We tend, therefore, to see this form of persuasion as a guarantee of reliable knowledge, and we invest it with cultural authority, free of the cynicism with which we view the partisan rhetoric of politics and commerce.

However, over the last decade or so academic writing has gradually lost its traditional tag as an objective, faceless and impersonal form of discourse and come to be seen as a persuasive endeavour involving interaction between writer and readers. Even 25 years ago, rhetoricians such as Carolyn Miller were arguing that scientific writing was not 'the revelation of absolute reality but a persuasive version of experience', a case she argues cogently here:

> Science ... is not concerned directly with material things, but with these human constructions, with symbols and arguments. Scientific verification relies on tacit conceptual theories, which may be said to 'argue for' a way of seeing the world. Scientific verification requires the persuasion of an audience that what has been 'observed' is replicable and relevant. Science is, through and through, a rhetorical endeavour.
>
> (Miller, 1979: 616)

The problem for science is that both inductivism and falsification, the key planks of scientific proof, are themselves based on less reliable forms of knowing (Hyland, 2002a). Interpretation, in fact, always depends on the theoretical assumptions which the scientist brings to a problem (Kuhn, 1970). This means that observations are as fallible as the theories they presuppose, and so cannot provide a solid foundation for the acceptance of scientific claims. As the physicist Stephen Hawking (1993: 44) notes, a theory may describe a range of observations, but 'beyond that it makes no sense to ask if it corresponds to reality, because we do not know what reality is independent of a theory'. All reporting occurs within a context and in relation to a theory which fits observation and data in meaningful patterns, so there is no secure observational base upon which any theories can be tested (Chalmers, 1978).

Texts cannot therefore be seen as accurate representations of 'what the world is really like' because this representation is always filtered through acts of selection and foregrounding. Scientific proof depends on extra-factual, extra-logical arguments concerned with probabilities rather than facts. To discuss results and theories is not to reveal absolute proof, it is to engage in particular forms of persuasion (Hyland, 2005a). In other words, academics do not simply produce texts that plausibly represent an external reality, but use language to acknowledge, construct and negotiate social relations. This involves metadiscourse and the rhetorical construction of a convincing writer with something interesting and plausible to say. Writers seek to offer a credible representation of themselves and their work by claiming solidarity with readers, evaluating their material and acknowledging alternative views, so that controlling the level of personality in a text becomes central to building a convincing argument. Put succinctly, every successful academic text relies on metadiscourse to display the writer's awareness of both its readers and its consequences.

Academic writing is therefore an engagement in a social process, where the production of texts reflects the methodologies, arguments and rhetorical strategies constructed to engage colleagues and

persuade them of the claims that are made. Academic discourse must therefore be seen as the use of various devices to enhance persuasiveness in order to appropriately frame disciplinary submissions. Creating a convincing reader-environment thus involves deploying disciplinary and genre-specific conventions such that 'the published paper is a multilayered hybrid *co-produced* by the authors *and* by members of the audience to which it is directed' (Knorr-Cetina, 1981: 106). Among the most important of these are metadiscourse markers.

4.3 Metadiscourse, *ethos* and *The Origin of Species*

One element of establishing a successful academic argument is *ethos*, the perceived credibility that readers grant to writers. Crismore and Farnsworth (1989) argue that metadiscourse provides a perspective on author–reader interactions that broadens our view of *ethos*. They explore how it was used in a highly prestigious and influential scientific text, *The Origin of Species*.[2] Concentrating on interactional features (what they call 'interpersonal metadiscourse'), the authors trace Darwin's use of *modality markers* (*hedges* and *boosters*), *attitude markers* and *commentary* in this text, drawing on Vande Kopple's (1985) schema described in Chapter 2. Crismore and Farnsworth argue that these items reveal Darwin's assessments of likely truth, his affective responses to material, and his attempts to engage readers in a dialogue. They found 890 instances of such metadiscourse in Chapter One of *The Origin of Species*, which sets out a framework for the book, and Chapter Four, which presents the theory of natural selection.

i. Modality markers: Hedges

Together, hedges and boosters accounted for 83 per cent of all metadiscourse in the study, with hedges being four times more frequent. For Crismore and Farnsworth these patterns reveal the creation of an *ethos* based on a plea for the just claims of limited knowledge:

> We believe that Darwin's ethos is constructed from aspects taken from the following: the tentative, cautious, naturalist; the modest, gentleman naturalist; the non-assertive, tactful presenter of ideas; the trustworthy expert, the childlike human being given to wonder – in short, the nonthreatening, endearing Mr Darwin.
>
> (Crismore and Farnsworth, 1989: 101)

Darwin's voice is therefore that of the cautious scientist, using hedges to indicate the relative uncertainty of his claims and the temperament

of a reasonable academic. Clusters of hedges show the scientist carefully marshalling his facts and asking readers to consider the evidence for his arguments, a rhetorical strategy discussed by Toulmin (1958) and widely used in modern academic discourse (Hyland, 1998a). Hedges imply that a statement is based on the writer's interpretation rather than certain knowledge, and this is clear where Darwin enters realms of probability. In this example he projects current evidence concerning stock breeding back into the past, an argument that clearly involves considerable speculation:

> (1) The whole subject must, I think, remain vague; nevertheless, I may, without here entering on any details, state that, from geographical and other considerations, I think it highly probable that our domestic dogs have descended from several wild species. In regard to sheep and goats I can form no opinion. I should think, from facts communicated to me by Mr Blyth, on the habits, voice, and constitution, &c., of the humped Indian cattle, that these had descended from a different aboriginal stock from our European cattle; and several competent judges believe that these latter have had more than one wild parent. With respect to horses, from reasons which I cannot give here, I am doubtfully inclined to believe, in opposition to several authors, that all the races have descended from one wild stock.

In addition, hedges also seek to persuade readers by opening a discursive space where interpretations can be disputed. Claim-making is risky because it can contradict existing literature or challenge the views of one's readers, and Darwin was right to anticipate fierce opposition to his work. The theory of natural selection was bitterly criticized, not least by those influenced by the religious convictions of creationism. Arguments must accommodate readers' expectations that they will be allowed to participate in a dialogue and that their own views will be acknowledged in the discourse. Darwin therefore gained some credibility from his peers by expressing caution about matters which he could not prove, and by opening the opportunity for debate where he challenged accepted views. By marking statements as provisional with hedges, therefore, he sought to convey deference and respect for readers' views and involve them in the ratification of his claims (Hyland, 1998a).

ii. Modality markers: Boosters

But Darwin is not always so accommodating and conciliatory, and it is doubtful whether his arguments would have been so successful if he

had been. He often, for example, combined hedges with boosters, as Crismore and Farnsworth also observe. This is the iron fist in the velvet glove as Darwin heads off possible objections while leaving the reader in no doubt of his views. This can be seen in these examples from the opening of Chapter One:

(2) I think we are driven to conclude that this greater variability is simply due to our domestic productions having been raised under conditions of life not so uniform as ...

It seems pretty clear that organic beings must be exposed during several generations to the new conditions of life to cause any appreciable amount of variation.

Most of Darwin's boosters begin sentences or clauses, allowing him to thematize his personal view and make his perspective prominent:

(3) Even in the case of the domestic dogs of the whole world, which I fully admit have probably descended from several wild species, I cannot doubt that there has been an immense amount of inherited variation.

But I am strongly inclined to suspect that the most frequent cause of variability may be attributed to the male and female reproductive elements having been affected prior to the act of conception.

We must believe that these tints are of service to these birds and insects in preserving them from danger.

At other points, particularly when he is summarizing or assembling the product of his discussion, Darwin adopts an authoritative persona, presenting an *ethos* which is confident and assured. The closing paragraphs of Chapters One and Four illustrate this unhedged certainty very well:

(4) To sum up on the origin of our Domestic Races of animals and plants. I believe that the conditions of life, from their action on the reproductive system, are so far of the highest importance as causing variability. I do not believe that variability is an inherent and necessary contingency, under all circumstances, with all organic beings, as some authors have thought.
(Chapter 1)

Natural selection will modify the structure of the young in relation to the parent, and of the parent in relation to the young. In social animals it will adapt the structure of each

> individual for the benefit of the community; if each in consequence profits by the selected change. What natural selection cannot do, is to modify the structure of one species, without giving it any advantage, for the good of another species; and though statements to this effect may be found in works of natural history, I cannot find one case which will bear investigation. (Chapter 4)

iii. Attitude markers and commentary

Darwin's *ethos* is also expressed in his use of *attitude markers*. Crismore and Farnsworth point out that by the frequent use of evaluative terms such as *strange*, *curiously* and *wonderful*, 'Darwin reveals his humanity and his attitude toward the subject matter through his awe before the miracle of nature' (Crismore and Farnsworth, 1989: 107). These signals of affect have no important propositional value, but display Darwin's excitement about his subject matter and affiliation to his audience. Attitude markers therefore play a key role in strengthening the persuasiveness of his argument by claiming solidarity with fellow scientists while at the same time suggesting how they might themselves respond to the material.

Finally, Darwin is fond of interjecting comments into the text to build a relationship with readers and draw them into his argument. His use of these features helps to convey respect and appreciation for his readers' attempts to come to terms with what may be an unfamiliar discourse, while simultaneously presenting an *ethos* of the 'reasonable' Mr Darwin. Often, Darwin uses commentary to metadiscoursally refer to what he intends to do in the next part of his argument, introducing this with a comment which, almost apologetically, shows he is impelled to act in this way. Here, then, is the tactful and polite presenter:

> (5) In order to make it clear how, as I believe, natural selection acts, I must beg permission to give one or two imaginary illustrations.
>
> I must now say a few words on the circumstances, favourable, or the reverse, to man's power of selection.
>
> I must here introduce a short digression.

Such commentary on the discourse puts the writer squarely into the text, but draws the reader in as well, showing that his or her needs for clarity and engagement are recognized and attended to. This is more

obvious, however, when he promotes a close author–reader relationship by using *we* and *us*:

(6) Let us now briefly consider the steps by which domestic races have been produced, either from one or from several allied species.

We can clearly see this in the case of animals with simple habits.

We shall best understand the probable course of natural selection by taking the case of a country undergoing some physical change, for instance, of climate.

By carefully bringing the reader into the discourse, and by binding the writer and reader together through inclusive pronouns in this way, Darwin was able to claim an equality with his audience and create a sense of a joint pursuit of the same scientific goals. Darwin thus enhances his credibility and conjures a joint enterprise as he leads his readers to his viewpoint.

I have spent some time in discussing the use of metadiscourse in *The Origin of Species* to both illustrate its role in academic persuasion and, following Crismore and Farnsworth, to show how it can realize the author's *ethos*. A close reading of Darwin's *Origin* offers fascinating insights into the use of metadiscourse, and interested readers might wish to explore this further, but it is not only celebrated and prestigious texts which employ metadiscourse in this way. Every research article, book review, student essay, grant proposal, language class and conference presentation can only succeed if speakers and writers deploy metadiscourse appropriately to convey a credible persona and relate to an audience in ways that seem familiar and engaging. This is not to say that academic persuasion is just smoke and mirrors. Ultimately we are convinced by an argument that seems to describe the world in a way that make sense to us. But metadiscourse plays a critical role in bringing us to this point. As Simons (1980: 127) has eloquently expressed it, 'although the scientific donkey may have been pinned with an unbecoming rhetorical tail, it is still capable of carrying a heavy load'.

4.4 Business discourse and metadiscourse

Good arguments are seen to be good only from a certain point of view, and, like academic discourse, business writing works to create that point of view. Aristotle argued that persuasion first means identifying

and engaging an audience, and in terms of today's business communication, this involves modifying the behaviour of employees, clients, customers, shareholders, regulators and others who are in a position to influence company operations and profitability. Texts do this by drawing the same rhetorical appeals discussed above, employing metadiscourse to construct the world we live in by helping to create a positive corporate, personal or product image.

This is clear in *direct mail sales promotion letters*, for instance, which encourage readers to buy or support the product these letters sponsor. Bhatia (1993) and Cheung (1993) see frame markers, imperatives and hedges as key elements of this persuasive purpose, working to engage readers and lead them to the desired behaviour. Nus (1999: 196) also found interactive markers such as connectors (*therefore, but, however*) to be crucial in drawing 'attention to the offer or to information which the sender hopes will motivate the reader to consider the offer'. The importance of metadiscourse is also apparent in *company emails*. Mulholland (1999), for instance, discovered that the absence of expected interactional features in the internal emails of a major multinational company resulted in confusion and created serious resentment among staff. By treating emails as purely an information channel and omitting important affective and interpersonal elements, writers both undermined the message and jeopardized harmony and cooperation.

Perhaps one of the clearest examples of the rhetorical role of metadiscourse is found in advertisements. Fuertes-Olivera *et al.* (2001), for instance, show that metadiscourse is extensively used in advertising slogans and headlines 'to convey a persuasive message under an informative mask' (p. 1305). In the genre of magazine advertising, metadiscourse assists copywriters in creating solidarity with readers to secure rhetorical, and ultimately commercial, objectives.

The extensive use of self mention is important in this respect as projecting the author into the text gives individual consumers the impression that they are being addressed personally. Fuertes-Olivera *et al.* (2001: 1298–9) point out that this personalization is achieved in three ways. First, self mention can engender solidarity with potential consumers by identifying the product or service with the company (all examples from Fuertes-Olivera *et al.*):

(7) You have sensitive skin, *we* have sensitive wipes.
(Simple wipes)

Second, self mention encourages potential customers to associate the product with cultural icons, by either reinforcing stereotypes, as in (8a)

which relates to the idea that Italian food is delicious, or undermining them, as in (8b), which breaks the myth of the eternal lover:

(8) (a) Most pasta sauces sound Italian. Mine taste Italian. (Sacia pasta)

(b) He promised to love me from the top of my head to the tips of my toes. So what went wrong? (Scholl foot antiperspirant)

Third, they can be used to associate the product with a celebrity:

(9) Omega – my choice. Cindy Crawford. (Omega watches)

This one metadiscourse device thus provide copywriters with a tool to develop the potential customer's trust in a product through its connection with cultural icons and a sense of reliability, creating an *ethos* of dependability.

These brief examples from the genres of magazine advertising and sales letters show that creating solidarity with potential consumers and constructing a credible *ethos* are essential to meeting corporate goals. But these are also important strategies in other forms of business communication. The following section takes a more detailed look at classical rhetorical appeals to explore how metadiscourse is used by company CEOs to create a persuasive *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos* in company annual reports.

4.5 Metadiscourse and rhetoric in company annual reports

The annual report is a crucial corporate document and the CEO's letter to shareholders is its most prominent and widely read part. Although frequently criticized as 'five pages of financial information and 40 pages of fluff' (Wild, 1997), the production of annual reports is a major corporate endeavour, representing an industry worth over $7 billion in the US alone. Within the report, the CEO's letter is widely seen as a promotional genre, designed to construct and convey a corporate image to stockholders, brokers, regulatory agencies, financial media and the investing public (Anderson and Imperia, 1992: 114). Generally written as a signed personal letter, the document has enormous rhetorical importance in building credibility and imparting confidence, convincing investors that the company is pursuing sound and effective strategies. So, while investment decisions are mainly based on financial data (e.g. Epstein and Pava, 1993), the CEO's letter is widely read (Coutis, 1982) and its contents are an important means of validating quantitative measures (Poe, 1994). It therefore has a major impact on a firm's competitive position (Kohut and Segars, 1992).

The CEO's letter is thus a highly rhetorical creation, written to galvanize support through the expression of credibility, the resolution of uncertainty, and the avoidance of dispute. Indeed, it is often collaboratively ghost-written by a team of professional writers who may take three months to produce it (Cross, 1990). In fact, 33 per cent of CEOs have nothing at all to do with the letter that appears above their signature (Cato, 1985). This genre is then a carefully crafted persuasive product designed to gain the reader's acceptance for a positive construction of the company's image and performance over the year. So while ostensibly an informative genre, which lays out an objective assessment of the company's activities, performance and future plans, the letter clearly moves beyond passive disclosure to what amounts to the marketing of a corporate ideology and a corporate figurehead. It is not surprising, therefore, to find metadiscourse extensively used in support of these goals in 137 CEOs' letters in the published reports of companies listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange (Hyland, 1998c). With 3,500 metadiscourse items in a corpus of half a million words, this amounts to about one device every 50 words.

These figures contrast markedly with the metadiscourse to be found in another section of the company annual report: the directors' report. This is a catalogue of compulsory details required by the Companies Ordinance and the stock exchange. Unlike the more overtly persuasive CEO's letter, this provides a descriptive review of the year, detailing the activities of the company, summarizing acquisitions, describing changes in assets, and so on. As can be seen in Table 4.1, such an objective digest of statutory information reveals the contextual specificity of metadiscourse and highlights its importance in promoting rhetorical goals in the CEOs' letters.

The directors' reports contained about half the metadiscourse of the CEOs' letters, but most striking is the difference in the interactional devices employed, with the CEOs' letters containing *seven times* as many devices per 1,000 words. This illustrates the far greater efforts of

Table 4.1 *Functions of metadiscourse in sections of company reports*

	CEOs' Letters			**Directors' Reports**		
	Number of terms	Per 1000 words	% of total	Number of terms	Per 1000 words	% of total
Interactive	2241	12.9	62.3	1040	7.8	85.5
Interactional	1358	7.9	37.7	177	1.3	14.5
Totals	3599	20.8	100	1217	9.1	100

the writers to align with readers and engage them in the promotion of the corporate ideology. The main metadiscourse devices in the CEOs' letters were transitions and hedges, which together comprised two-thirds of all items. These powerful people had little use for evidentials, choosing instead to build their credibility through personal authority and only referring to other sources when positive results could be underscored by accounting houses or regulatory bodies. While a battery of accountants and marketing specialists work behind the scenes to assemble and spin the information presented in the letter, it is the CEO who stands before the readers to present them. As in Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, writers' deployment of metadiscourse is a key element of how they do this successfully, and I will briefly illustrate the ways it is used in these texts to create the rational, credible and affective appeals first discussed by Aristotle.

i. Logos: *creating rational appeals*

Rational appeals correspond to the Greek concept of *logos*, the use of reason in persuasion, and this is mainly accomplished through the propositional content of the text. How writers choose to define problems, support claims, validate premises and state conclusions are crucial to whether an audience is likely to accept an argument. But no less important is the way that writers set out their arguments and the connections they make between its elements. The logical connections used to elaborate an argument by adding, comparing, sequencing or explaining its elements are critical to a text's overall persuasive force. Analysis of interactive metadiscourse can help distinguish the structure of the persuasive appeals employed in a text.

Interactive metadiscourse helps readers understand a text by explaining, orienting and guiding them through the information. It functions rhetorically to point readers in the direction the writer intends by his or her argument. It is no surprise therefore to find that the CEOs' letters contained over 60 per cent more interactive metadiscourse per 100 words than directors' reports. In particular, the CEOs took considerably more trouble to explicitly label parts of the discourse macrostructure, either to ensure the reader understood the sequence of steps in the argument (10), the discourse act being performed at a particular point (11), or the writer's purpose (12):

(10) I think there are three main reasons for this. Firstly we have seen an upturn in overseas demand in the past twelve months. (Jusco, 1994)

Before discussing this however, I would like to highlight some of the positives. (Nestlé, 1993)

(11) In conclusion, the group is very optimistic about the prospects of the plastics industry. (Wing On, 1994)

To illustrate how attractive this market is, in 1992 the New York tri-state area accounted for more than ...
(Chase Manhattan, 1993)

(12) I wish to record my appreciation of their contribution.
(HK Bank, 1994)

I will now discuss each of these core businesses.
(Pacific Concord, 1993)

In addition to these *frame markers*, there were also almost four times more *code glosses* in the Chairpersons' letters. These help readers grasp the significance of particular information in the way the writer intends, particularly by expanding an item to ensure either its details or significance were understood:

(13) The group is continuing to develop its three major housing estates, namely Laguna City, South Horizons, and Kingswood Villas, according to plan.
(Cheung Hong Holdings, 1994)

Group earnings for the year, representing HK$2.14 per share (1992 HK$ 1.91), have increased by 11.9%.
(China Light and Power, 1994)

The point is – it didn't matter. (General Electric, 1993)

The most frequent way that the argument structure of a text is made explicit, however, is through *transitions*. These denote how the writer intends the connections between elements of the discussion to be understood. They are realized through conjunctions (*and* or *but*), sentential adverbs (*nevertheless* or *consequently*) and by prepositional phrases (*due to* or *in spite of*). Again, these occur much more frequently in the CEOs' letters as here there is a greater need to ensure clarity of exposition and assist readers to recover the writers' reasoning:

(14) This view must be tempered by the continuing delay in bringing about a successful conclusion to the Uruguay round of GATT talks which is so crucial to the world's free trade talks and therefore the wellbeing of our core business.
(Orient Overseas, 1992)

> Profitability was outstanding and the company continued to broaden its customer base by developing new dealer relationships. Likewise, as in prior years, portfolio credit quality was maintained at high levels.
>
> (Dao Heng Bank, 1993)

> Hong Kong's export and entrepot trade performance is expected to improve, buoyed by economic improvement in most western industrial countries. On the other hand, in view of the high inflation and overheated economy in China, macro-economic restraint policies are likely to continue in 1995. (Wing Lung Bank, 1994)

It is interesting that the rhetorical purposes of the CEOs' letters is reflected in the types of relations expressed. Table 4.2 shows a far heavier use of additive devices in directors' reports while CEOs employ more connectors of comparison and consequence, indicating the relatively greater complexity of the argument in these texts.

Directors' reports are often simple inventories of the company's principal activities, details of directors and a summary of trading results. In the CEO's letter readers are far more likely to encounter explanations for financial performance, justifications for particular courses of action and discussions of plans for the future. These kinds of topics demand a high use of transitions to facilitate a discourse which is able to convey exceptions to general situations, deviations from original proposals and changing strategies in the light of new circumstances.

The only category of interactive metadiscourse which occurred more in the directors' reports was *endophoric markers*, devices which refer the reader elsewhere in the text for further information. This is perhaps explained by the tendency to concentrate a wide range of items into the directors' report so that it is often 'little more than a clearing house for reference to other parts of the annual report' (Martin, 1989: 78). The CEOs' letter, on the other hand, is a relatively self-contained document, with no graphical or pictorial material to make

Table 4.2 *Types of transitions*

Category	Examples	% in CEOs' Letters	% in Directors' Reports
addition	*and; as well as; in addition; further*	57.8	82.3
comparison	*but; on the other hand; similarly*	27.4	10.1
consequence	*because; so; as a result; therefore*	14.8	7.6
Totals		100	100

reference to and an average length of around 1200 words, offering little opportunity for the kind of development that might require more referring expressions.

ii. Ethos: *creating credibility appeals*

As we saw with Darwin's use of interactional metadiscourse, successful persuasion depends very much on the writer's ability to create an effective *ethos*. The perceived integrity and authority of the writer is particularly important in CEOs' letters (Epstein and Pava, 1993; Jacobson, 1988: 52) where 'honesty' (Cato, 1994: 29) and 'candour' (Poe, 1994) are regarded as crucial elements of effective communication. While some CEOs may have a high profile image prior to their pronouncements in the annual report, they still have to re-establish their *ethos* in their texts. Metadiscourse is therefore a means by which CEOs can project themselves into their writing to present a competent, trustworthy, authoritative and honest persona. The aspects of metadiscourse which contribute most to the CEOs' credibility appeals are *hedges, boosters, engagement markers* and *evidentials*, all of which help to suggest a forthright writer committed to particular views and confident in achieving the best for the company.

Credibility is obviously most easily gained on the strength of company successes, and, in such circumstances, CEOs may be able to draw on external sources to underline the authority of their assertions. Although not widely found in this genre, *evidentials* occur where they lend support for either the CEO's views or his or her role in a thriving company. Here attributions to sources with positive evaluations can be combined with highly charged expressions to reinforce an emphatic endorsement of the company's performances.

(15) We're the top-rated underwriter of emerging markets debt, according to *Euromoney*, and *International Financing Review* named Chase 'Emerging markets debt house of the year'. (Chase Manhattan, 1994)

Other research indicates that the overall satisfaction of merchants with American Express improved dramatically in 1993. (American Express, 1993)

More typically, the CEO has to build an *ethos* through an appropriate presentation of self by 'accentuating the positive' and stamping a personal authority on the text. One way he or she can do this is through the use of *boosters* to underline certainty and establish an individual presence in the discourse. Boosters are widely used by chairpersons to demonstrate a confident, decisive and commanding

image. They help the writer to instil confidence and trust in shareholders and potential investors through an impression of certainty, assurance and conviction in the views presented:

(16) As our HK$31,400 million worth of aircraft and equipment orders clearly show, we remain very confident about the future of Hong Kong. (Cathay Pacific, 1994)

Commercial activities in China will definitely create unprecedented opportunities ... (Ryoden Developments, 1993)

We firmly believe we are well positioned to become a multimedia technology leader. (Vtech Holdings, 1994)

An interesting feature of this attempt to build a personal *ethos* is the extensive use of *self mention*, with 489 first-person pronouns in the letters and none at all in the directors' reports. When combined with *boosters*, they provide expressions of personal belief which strengthen the writer's presence in the text and directly align the CEO with the views expressed. In this form of discourse, self mention with epistemic verbs of judgement underlie an overt acceptance of personal responsibility, and an explicit attempt to build a personal *ethos* of competence and authority:

(17) I know from my year as chairman of the Administration Board that budgeting has been a very delicate operation over the last two years. (Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, 1994)

I am sure that our company will continue to grow in 1993. (Crocodile, 1993)

I believe strongly that our people should share in the success of Cable and Wireless and be well rewarded for exceptional personal performance. (C&W, 1994)

The use of first person combines effectively with boosters as a strategy to clearly promote the image of a determined, confident and positive hand at the helm of the company.

Unfortunately, the CEO's *ethos* as a commanding authority figure may not always be an appropriate one, particularly in years when the company has performed poorly. At such times the CEO has to be more circumspect, and reconsider his or her contribution to a genre which tends towards an 'overly positive emphasis' (Cross, 1990: 198) and an 'inevitably optimistic tone' (Miller *et al.*, 1983: 149). The goal of building credibility through frank admissions and rhetorical honesty is thus tempered by the need to retain investor confidence during times

of indifferent performance. This delicate equilibrium between confidence and candour is partly reflected in the balance between boosters and hedges which works to suggest an image of authority and sincerity. By enabling them to encode a point of view towards what they say, epistemic markers thus contribute to the CEOs' *ethos*.

At times, then, a CEO may seek to present a reassuring image of a modest, trustworthy and cautious steward of the company, a person who can be relied on to make honest assessments of future possibilities and who takes few risks with investors' capital. This self-projection is mainly accomplished through the use of *hedges*, which comprise nearly a quarter of all metadiscourse items in the corpus. A reluctance to assert that his or her views represent the unequivocal truth can help strengthen the CEO's reputation as a person whose word is tempered by regard for restraint, integrity and an honest admission of market vagaries and company setbacks, as in these examples:

(18) At this juncture however it would appear that local infrastructure projects ... should take up most of any slack caused by slower growth rates in the PRC.
(Dao Heng Bank, 1993)

... it is possible to envisage a future when many banking services will be delivered direct to the home or business place via television screens. (Barclays, 1993)

Each of the above projects has resulted in significant increase of rent and there is good reason to believe that future endeavors will produce similar results.
(Amoy Properties, 1994)

Developing such an image can therefore promote the credibility and modesty of the CEO, restoring some humanity to a faceless corporation and making it easier for stockholders to identify with the ideals and objectives of the company. On the other hand, of course, the CEO's letter publicly links the Chief Executive with his or her opinions, and so represents careful decisions concerning the degree of commitment he or she wishes to invest in them. Withholding commitment, often by use of hedges without an explicit agent, can therefore also be a prudent insurance against overstating an assertion which later proves to have been in error.

Hedges, then, are an important means of mitigating the directness by which disappointing results or failed projects are presented, and as a result are also found in other business genres where political delicacy is required (Hagge and Kostelnick, 1989). Cautious expressions anticipate reader responses to bad news while simultaneously seeking to retain an

ethos of frankness and honest disclosure. But by allowing the writer to assume some distance from a statement, hedges help avoid direct responsibility for it. This minimizes damage to personal credibility and conveys a professional *ethos* of honesty and openness.

(19) Generally our Service businesses made good progress. (Inchcape Pacific, 1993)

Some improvement may be possible in 1994 as a result of the expansion of the customer base at Global Container Base at New Jersey, USA. (Orient Overseas, 1993)

At this stage, the 1994 results are unlikely to show significant growth over 1993. (Cathay Pacific, 1993)

The predominance of hedges over boosters in the corpus is partially a consequence of this need to soften the announcement of poor results and account for setbacks. They occur, however, in an environment in which writers strive to project an overall impression of confidence, assurance and optimism. The rhetorical use of metadiscourse in the construction of a CEO's *ethos* is therefore double-edged. Boosters allow writers to project a credible image of authority, decisiveness and conviction while hedges demonstrate personal honesty and integrity through a willingness to address hard realities, albeit behind a shield of mitigation.

iii. Pathos: *creating affective appeals*

In addition to the need to present a rational argument and a credible persona, writers also have to attend to the desired effects of their text on readers, drawing on the metadiscoursal resources of *pathos*. In particular, they need to consider readers' attitudes to the argument and to their perception that the discourse is significant and germane to them personally. Clearly the CEO's letter will seem relevant to those who look to it as a guide to investment, but writers also have to actively create a dialogue to involve their audience in the message of the text. This affective element involves the writer in looking at the text from the reader's perspective, addressing their situation, empathizing with their values and goals, and directly inviting them to respond. The use of interactional metadiscourse demonstrates that the writer has taken the prospective reader into consideration. It is therefore more reader-centred than the strategies used to promote an *ethos*. The categories of engagement markers, attitude markers and hedges, together with the manipulation of pronoun reference, contribute to the development of a

relationship with the reader which helps realize such affective appeals.

One aspect of affective appeals is where the writers provide a personal evaluation of what they are discussing, expressing surprise, agreement, pleasure, emphasis and so on:

(20) Fortunately, in the past few years we have taken full advantage of the rising markets. (Amoy Properties, 1994)

Hopefully these new ventures in a market with tremendous potential will bring more profits to the group. (Ming Pao Daily, 1993)

The reason for this level of performance and, more importantly, the 120 ... (Swire, 1993)

These expressions carry (or rhetorically appeal to) an implicit assumption that the reader will experience the discourse in the same way, and so they create and emphasize a set of shared, taken-for-granted purposes and understandings. This is particularly clear when we look at the ways CEOs use *engagement markers*, and particularly directives such as *must, have to, need* and *should*, to align the goals and desires of the writer with those of the reader. These obligation modals express the belief that something should be done, while rhetorically presupposing that the reader will concur:

(21) Customers must be offered a speedy response, flexibility, innovation, value for money, and, above all, improved quality of service. (Barclays, 1993)

At the same time, it is essential that we should make a great effort to appreciate what is going on in China and respond accordingly. (Ming Pao Newspapers, 1994)

Other engagement markers function more directly to build writer–reader relationships. Questions, for example, explicitly seek to draw the reader into the discourse as a participant in a dialogue (22a), while asides, which interrupt the argumentative flow to offer a comment on propositional information, address the audience directly about the discourse itself (22b).

(22) (a) Have we made progress? Yes. Can we do more? Definitely. And we intend to. (Chase Manhattan, 1993)

(b) ... but successful Asian economies – and there are a growing number of them – display certain shared characteristics. (Hong Kong Bank, 1993)

The affective appeal of these devices is achieved by demonstrating common ground with the reader, prompting agreement on the claims discussed by presenting oneself as a person with similar views, interests and objectives as the reader.

A more explicit means of appealing to an audience is to both personalize the discourse and more closely involve readers by directly addressing them using second-person pronouns:

(23) Of all the headlines of the past year our favorites, and perhaps yours, were the ones reporting that Union Carbide was the year's best performing stock ...
(Union Carbide, 1992)

The board has good reasons to be optimistic about the future of the group; and so should you, too.
(Elec and Eltek International Holdings, 1994)

As we enter the third era, your company can be counted upon to play an important part in the smooth transfer ....
(China Light and Power, 1993)

Self mention can also explicitly contribute to the development of a relationship with the reader when it collocates with *attitude markers.* While first-person pronouns also help to build credibility, through the writer's alignment with boosters, they can play a significant *affective* role by emphasizing the CEO's personal disposition or sensibilities. These examples demonstrate the impact of this strategy, which can be seen by comparing (24) with (20) above:

(24) We cannot, of course, achieve our international aims without strengthening our home base, and I am glad to say that financially we are in good shape. (HKIE, 1994)

It is my hope that it will further enhance the good image of the Group both in the eyes of our international investors and the public at large. (Amoy Properties, 1994)

Similarly, although less frequently used, the inclusive third-person form also contributes to the persuasiveness of a text by making the shared interests of writer and reader transparent (25):

(25) Let us hope that Government sees no reason to increase betting duty further for many years to come.
(Hong Kong Jockey Club, 1994)

The directors are confident that our company can maintain a solid growth momentum in 1994. (Li and Fung, 1993)

The effect of strategic pronoun use can be clearly seen where different forms are used together (26):

(26) On your behalf also, I would like to thank all our workforce who have contributed to the results achieved by our company. (Nestlé, 1993)

For clarity I have presented different metadiscourse items as having distinct rhetorical effects, but it should be clear from the examples that devices can perform more than one function simultaneously. The overlap is particularly marked in the use of interactional markers to convey both affect and credibility. The dual pragmatic role of surface features, and the desire of writers to perform functions simultaneously, means that any clear differentiation between these two functions may be misleading. Hedges, for example, have a high frequency in this genre because they build both *ethos* and *pathos*: they help realize an *ethos* of cautious restraint by mitigating commitment to the truth of statements, and also signal courtesy and reader regard by demonstrating a reluctance to express views categorically. Thus a CEO might weaken the expression of a proposition not only to express doubt about its truth, but also to convey an attitude of tact and deference to the reader (Myres, 1989; Hyland, 1998a). Hedges thus acknowledge that a categorical assertion is rarely an appropriate persuasive resource.

Identifying the predominant pragmatic function of a hedge in any particular instance is often perilous as both courtesy and caution meanings are frequently intended. The clearest examples of 'politeness' uses would seem to be where the hedge suggests a reluctance to assert a proposition where reasons for such reluctance are not apparent in the text. Thus the writer seems to have little need for caution in these examples:

(27) Indeed, two events that occurred during the year might be regarded as milestones of the group's history. (Hopewell Holdings, 1994)

... members are probably aware that a third international ... (HK Jockey Club, 1994)

While most references to probabilities or writer commitments to the truth of statements appear to also carry affective meanings, the writers in these examples are simply acting in a non-assertive, deliberate manner. They are attempting to show that the readers' rights to alternative views are respected.

4.6 Summary and conclusions

In this chapter I have sought to demonstrate something of the descriptive and explanatory power of metadiscourse by highlighting its key role in realizing the appeals of classical rhetoric in modern forms of persuasive discourse. We have seen how Darwin deployed metadiscourse as a key feature in his highly influential *The Origin of Species*, enabling him to create a credible and trustworthy persona. I have also shown the extent to which metadiscourse is a ubiquitous feature of the way CEOs portray themselves and their companies. These examples suggest that those interested in the relationships of language to academic and business persuasion are likely to find much of interest in the study of metadiscourse.

Essentially, rhetoric refers to reason-giving activity on issues about which there can be no formal, absolute proof. Despite the wealth of data and examples that Darwin brings to his discourse, the theory of natural selection remains a hypothesis, a best guess that continues to be challenged to this day. Similarly, the figures and plans marshalled by the CEO are often seen by readers as institutional ideology and corporate spin designed to achieve maximum shareholder 'buy-in'. The devices and analyses reported here help to show how powerful figures create discourses which have considerable impact in their domains of activity, and so may be of interest in revealing the distinguishing features which operate in other contexts. It is certain, however, that further research will reveal that the ways writers control the expression of interactional relationships within a text are as vital to the rhetorical success of a text as its propositional content.

I have elaborated these analyses to clarify how researchers undertake metadiscourse research. Such studies, however, may also help students of academic and business communication to develop a more effective rhetorical and verbal repertoire to better operate in the professional domains in which they will find themselves. The rhetorical analysis of influential texts, moreover, can help readers gain a better understanding of the strategies behind the scientific and corporate messages that are so prevalent in modern society. These discourses represent part of the growing global hegemony of English and the increasingly insistent undercurrent of a promotional culture in informative texts. Such analyses as those presented here can therefore help readers develop a rhetorical awareness of written persuasion.

Notes

1. An on-line and fully searchable hypertext version of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* compiled by Lee Honeycutt is available at http://www.public.iastate.edu/%7ehoneyl/Rhetoric/index.html.
2. There are numerous copies of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* available on the web. One can be found at: http://www.literature.org/authors/darwin-charles/the-origin-of-species/.

5 Metadiscourse and genre

A central aspect of metadiscourse is its context-dependency, the close relationship it has to the norms and expectations of those who use it in particular settings (Hyland, 2000). This contextual specificity is particularly apparent in the ways in which metadiscourse is distributed across different genres, assisting writers and speakers to respond to and construct the contexts in which language is used. Because metadiscourse represents the social purposes of writers it is a *social act* rather than simply a string of *language* items, and this means that its use will vary enormously depending on the audience, the purpose and other aspects of the social context. In turn, studying this variation reveals the diversity in patterns of use and helps us to understand the ways individuals use language to orient to and interpret routine communicative situations. In this chapter I will focus on some of the results and insights such studies have produced. I begin with a brief introduction to genre then go on to explore how the metadiscourse found in key academic genres reveals responses to particular writer purposes, audiences and social settings.

5.1 The concept of genre

Genre is a term for grouping texts together, representing how writers typically use language to respond to recurring situations. The concept is based on the idea that members of a community usually have little difficulty in recognizing similarities in the texts they use frequently and are able to draw on their repeated experiences with such texts to read, understand and perhaps write them relatively easily. This is, in part, because writing is a practice based on expectations: the reader's chances of interpreting the writer's purpose are increased if the writer takes the trouble to anticipate what the reader might be anticipating. Such predictions of reader needs are based on previous texts they have read of the same kind. We regard certain choices as representing effective ways of getting things done in familiar contexts and it is through our recurrent use of these conventionalized forms that we are able to develop relationships, establish communities and express our ideas and emotions. As a result, language is seen to be both embedded in social realities and helping to create those realities.

Genre theorists therefore locate the relationships of participants at the centre of language use and assume that every successful text will display the writer's awareness of its context and the readers who form part of that context. Genres, then, are 'the effects of the action of individual social agents acting *both* within the bounds of their history and the constraints of particular contexts, *and* with a knowledge of existing generic types' (Kress, 1989: 10). While analysts differ in the emphasis they give to either texts or the social contexts which they reflect and construct (Johns, 2002; Hyland, 2004b), they all assume that writing is *dialogic* (Bakhtin, 1986). This is both because it presupposes and responds to an active audience, and because it makes links to other texts. Writing involves drawing on the texts we typically encounter and are familiar with, and as a result the concept of intertextuality (Bakhtin, 1986), the ways that snatches of text or text conventions occur in other texts, has been extremely influential in genre theory.

One influence has been that analysts are not simply concerned with describing text similarities, but with exploring the constraints which different contexts exercise on language patterns. Variation is just as important as similarity because texts spread along a continuum from core genre examples to those which are marginal, with users exercising options in particular cases (Swales, 1990). Genres are not, therefore, overbearing structures which impose uniformity on users. The fact that we routinely and unreflectively recognize similarities and differences between texts with sufficient agreement to successfully negotiate and interpret meanings demonstrates this. So while a shared sense of genre is needed to accomplish understanding, it is not necessary to assume that genres are fixed, monolithic and unchanging. One of the ways that genres vary, both internally and in relation to other genres, is in their use of metadiscourse.

5.2 Metadiscourse and genre

Genre theories rest on the idea that texts are similar or different and can be classified as one genre or another. In order to systematize these classifications, research has set out to characterize various key linguistic and rhetorical features of particular genres. Sometimes this has involved focusing on their typical rhetorical structures, describing them in terms of regular sequences of moves or stages (Bhatia, 1999; Butt *et al.*, 2000). Increasingly, however, writers have sought to explore how genres are distinguished by clusters of specific rhetorical features.

One such feature is metadiscourse. This is a key dimension of genre analysis as it can help show how language choices reflect the different purposes of writers, the different assumptions they make

about their audiences, and the different kinds of interactions they create with their readers. Interest in metadiscoursal aspects of genre has been encouraged by a growing curiosity about the interpersonal dimensions of academic and professional writing. In particular, this addresses the ways that persuasion 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. Academic writing is one domain where an orientation to the reader is crucial in securing rhetorical objectives. While often considered predominantly propositional and impersonal, the act of convincing an academic audience of the reliability of one's arguments means making linguistic choices which that audience will conventionally recognize as persuasive. The means of 'doing persuasion', however, differ across genres.

This can be seen by comparing academic texts and editorials, for example. While both genres aim to persuade through argument, they each use metadiscourse in their own way. In a comparative study Le (2004) found that the main function of *evidentials* in *Le Monde*'s editorials was to emphasize the newspaper's seriousness, elitism and independence of mind, while in academic texts they enabled writers to show how their own work relates to earlier work in the field. Similarly, *self mention* in academic texts was often used to construct the text and present decisions, while the first person (plural) in *Le Monde*'s editorials was used to reinforce the newspaper's own position on an issue. Le suggests that such differences are related to the different kinds of knowledge being constructed. Academic knowledge is presented as relatively impersonal, despite its necessary reliance on the audience's participation in its construction, while in editorials knowledge is subjective, representing the newspaper's position. Such fundamental differences both distinguish the genres and help to explain the variations in metadiscourse use.

In the remaining sections of this chapter I will focus on academic texts of various kinds and elaborate the role that metadiscourse plays in a number of key genres in this domain.

5.3 Metadiscourse in academic research articles

The importance of the research article to the creation of academic knowledge cannot be overestimated. Despite the emergence of electronic journals and e-lists and the growth of 'letters journals' in the fast-moving sciences (Hyland, 2000), research papers are still the main means by which the majority of academics disseminate their work and establish their reputations. It is in research articles that

writers exhibit both the relevance and the novelty of their work to colleagues. Here they assemble arguments that will undergo the arduous and exhaustive process of ratification and peer review to provide the social justification which transforms beliefs into knowledge. The research article remains the primary genre of the academy: the site where names are made, knowledge authenticated, rewards allocated and disciplinary authority exercised.

Research articles are thus broadly concerned with knowledge-making and this is achieved by negotiating agreement with colleagues about interpretations and claims. Writers try to consider their readers, imagine what they know and need to know, and engage with them effectively. They are not just concerned with cognitive factors, but also with social and affective elements, and this moves analysis beyond an interest in just the ideational dimension of texts to the ways they function interpersonally. Essentially, the writer of an academic article wants his or her argument to be both understood and accepted. But achieving these goals is complicated by the fact that there is no independent, objective means of distinguishing observation from conjecture. There is always more than one plausible reading for data, and readers always retain the option of rejecting the writer's interpretation.

i. Metadiscourse and negotiating claims

This need for ratification reveals the vulnerability of arguments in research papers, and the active role readers have in their construction. Metadiscourse is one indication of a writer's response to the potential negatability of his/her claims, an intervention to engage the reader and anticipate possible objections or difficulties of interpretation. Its role in academic discourse is therefore to galvanize support, express collegiality, resolve difficulties and avoid disputation. This reader opposition to statements comes from two principal sources.

First, readers may reject a statement if it fails to meet *adequacy conditions* (Hyland, 1998a), that is, if it does not correspond to what the world is thought to be like. Writers have to ensure that their claims display a plausible relationship with reality using the epistemic conventions and argument forms of their disciplines. Here metadiscourse helps signal relationships between ideas and order material in ways that the potential audience is likely to find appropriate and convincing. It therefore represents the writer's assessment of readers and his or her assumptions about their processing needs, rhetorical expectations and background understandings. This is the function of interactive metadiscourse, an intercession to cue interpretations which

are consistent with the writer's intentions, explicitly relating propositions to each other and to other texts to lead the reader through a text.

This example gives some flavour of the role of such interactive features in a research paper (interactive metadiscourse is underlined):

(1) Our model offers several advances over previous representations of disappointment and regret. First, the measure of disappointment we propose generalizes Bell's (1985) measure that is only applicable to two outcome lotteries. Second, we formally integrate the concepts of disappointment and regret into a single model based on a multi-attribute preference structure. Third, the independence conditions allow us to simplify the general form of our model and to treat the three components independently. In this way, we obtain a simple separable model based on explicit and rigorous preference assumptions. This also makes our study different from some previous studies that use additive models without deriving the implications. Fourth, our model can be used for both pre-choice decision evaluation and post-outcome valuation. In this paper we focus on the latter, but we do address the former as well in 4.2 and the Appendix. In sum, our model captures the effects of both disappointment and regret on post-choice valuation in a clear, intuitive, and rigorous fashion. We now briefly discuss alternative choices for the functions U1, U2, and U3. (Marketing)

Second, to be persuasive statements also have to address *acceptability conditions*, incorporating an awareness of interactional factors. Metadiscourse here attends to the needs of the participants of the interaction, with the writer adopting a professionally acceptable persona and a relationship with readers which seeks a balance between the researcher's authority as expert-knower and his/her humility as disciplinary servant. This is principally accomplished through weighting tentativeness and assertion, and the expression of a suitable relationship to one's data, arguments and audience. Mastery of the situationally appropriate rhetorical conventions of one's discipline thus enables the writer to address an audience with skill and exhibit a professional interpersonal competence which influences the effectiveness of the argument. Again, a brief example suggests the persuasive influence of these features:

(2) Although further research is needed, we suspect that the type of new product used in this study (i.e., one designed to enable people to take medicine more easily) may have contributed to this result. Note, however, that the companies' CSR associations did not influence respondents' perceptions of product

> social responsibility. Second, and perhaps more important, is the negative relationship we uncovered between the corporate evaluation and the product evaluation, a seemingly nonintuitive finding. Because of its importance, we address this result in greater detail in the following discussion. (Marketing)

ii. A study of research papers

The importance of anticipating reader reactions and making appropriate metadiscourse choices is suggested in the findings of a study of 28 research articles from seven leading journals in each of Microbiology, Marketing, Astrophysics and Applied Linguistics, totalling 160,000 words (Hyland, 1998b). There were over 10,000 metadiscourse devices in this corpus, an average of 370 occurrences per paper or one every 15 words. Table 5.1 shows that, as in the dissertations discussed in Chapter 3, writers used more interactive than interactional forms, and that hedges and transitions were the most frequent devices followed by code glosses and evidentials. In a follow-up study of interactional metadiscourse in a larger corpus of articles in eight disciplines (Hyland, 1999a), I found similar results, although with higher proportions per thousand words.

The predominance of interactive devices emphasizes the importance of guiding the reading process by indicating discourse organization and clarifying propositional connections and meanings. In particular, all writers made considerable use of transitions, even

Table 5.1 *Metadiscourse categories in research article genre*

Category	Total items	Items per 1000 words	% of total metadiscourse
Interactional	**4666**	**29.1**	**44.9**
Hedges	2417	15.1	23.3
Attitude markers	634	4.0	6.1
Self mention	629	3.9	6.0
Boosters	627	3.9	6.0
Engagement markers	359	2.2	3.5
Interactive	**5721**	**35.8**	**55.1**
Transitions	2045	12.8	19.7
Code glosses	1134	7.1	10.9
Evidentials	1109	6.9	10.7
Frame markers	796	5.0	7.6
Endophoric markers	637	4.0	6.1
Totals	**10,387**	**64.9**	**100**

though much of the reasoning was coded grammatically rather than explicitly:

(3) Intuitively, we would say that its temperature is higher than infinity. But this is mathematical nonsense, ... (Physics)

It can be noticed that this is a rigorous way to characterize the association of the two devices because the couplings between the electromagnetic modes are taken into account. So, this calculation is valid for any spacings between the two resonators, even if they are coupled to each other.
(Electronic Engineering)

The most frequent sub-category, however, was hedges, which constituted over half of all interactional uses and were the only items outside the interactive category among the top ranked items:

(4) Within-industry mobility should be a positive function of job creation within the origin industry, but possibly also of job elimination within the origin industry. (Sociology)

(5) At the moment we tend to conjecture that processes of the kind described in Fig. 15 are bounced twice before returning and re-emerging outside the eye. Such processes might be produced by the rods and cones constituting the retina.
(Physics)

This reflects the critical importance of not only conveying appropriate precision in academic writing, but also in grounding propositions in an explicitly acknowledged degree of subjectivity. Casting potentially controversial or disputable claims and assertions as contingent and individual allows the writer to make space for alternative positions. By evaluating assertions to express appropriate caution, hedges function to open a dialogue with peers who may hold other views. In general, then, the use of metadiscourse in research articles demonstrates a principal concern with expressing arguments precisely, explicitly and with due circumspection. I will return to this genre in more detail in Chapter 7.

5.4 Metadiscourse in popular science articles

The number of journals carrying reports of the most newsworthy findings of science for a lay audience has dramatically increased in recent years. What interests analysts about this is that academic papers written for specialists and popularized accounts of this research differ in their purposes and audiences, and so in their use of language.

Research articles, as discussed above, are central to scientific knowledge constructed through the negotiation of claims with reviewers, editors and readers, while pieces written for the general public seek to link issues in the specialist domain to those of everyday life. The metadiscourse selected by writers to engage with their readers is a key way these differences are realized.

For some, popularizations are a distortion, a dumbing down of science to suggest easy comprehension and an upbeat ideology of progress, while others regard the jargon and technicalities of science papers as exclusive and elitist. These two views are evident in responses to an experiment conducted by the editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1971 (reported in Myers, 1990: 141). Frustrated with incomprehensible papers in immunology, he published both an original immunology article and a version rewritten by a *Science* journalist who gave greater attention to organization, explication and clarity. The editor subsequently received letters both from general physicians applauding the fact that even difficult topics could be made accessible, and from immunologists complaining that the revised version was harder to read because information was not where they expected to find it. Both groups therefore had different views about the best way to write immunology based on their own needs, background knowledge, discourse expectations and reading purposes.

i. Popularizations and research papers

Myers (1990) argues that a key difference between these two genres is that they provide contrasting views of science, with popularizations tending to focus on the *objects* of study and articles on the disciplinary *procedures* by which they are studied. The professional papers construct what he calls a *'narrative of science'* by following the argument of the scientist, arranging time into a parallel series of events, and emphasizing the conceptual structure of the discipline in their syntax and vocabulary. The discourse thus embodies assumptions of impersonality, cumulative knowledge construction and empiricism. The popular articles, on the other hand, present a *'narrative of nature'*, focusing on the material, plant or animal itself rather than the scientific activity of studying them. Presentation in popularizations is therefore chronological, and the syntax and vocabulary paint a picture of nature which is external to scientific practices. Here the scientist acts alone and simply observes nature. These different language choices not only convey different meanings of both research and science, but also mean that writers or readers of one narrative cannot easily understand the other.

A clear example of such differences can be found in the titles writers give to their papers and the ways that they introduce them. Myers gives these examples from a professional and a popular paper by Geoffrey Parker. The first, in the journal *Evolution*, has an extremely precise title and an opening paragraph which emphasizes a link between research methods and the promise of a quantitative model for biologists. The second reports the same research in the *New Scientist*, the title highlighting what is most interesting to lay readers and then hooking them by anthropomorphizing animal behaviour.

(6) **The reproductive behaviour and the nature of sexual selection in *Scatophaga stercoraria* L. (Diptera: Scatophagidae). IX. Spatial distribution of fertilization rates and evolution of male search strategy within the reproductive area.**

The present series of papers is aimed towards constructing a comprehensive model of sexual selection and its influence on reproductive strategy in the dungfly, *Scatophaga stercoraria*. The technique used links ecological and behavioural data obtained in the field with laboratory data on sperm competition, for which a model has already been developed.

(7) **Sex and the cow pats**

Why do peacocks sport outrageously resplendent plumage compared with their more conservative mates? Why do majestic red deer stags engage in ferocious combat with each other for possession of harems, risking severe injury from their spear-point antlers?

ii. Interactive metadiscourse in popularizations

Interactive choices are obviously central to these translations of meanings across genres. Writers of popularizations must find ways to present information about natural phenomena to an audience curious about scientific findings rather than procedures and which, while interested in science, may lack necessary domain knowledge. In the rhetorical context of the popularization, then, metadiscourse becomes a crucial means of framing scientific work for a non-science audience. In (7) above, the use of questions (engagement markers) and affective adverbs and adjectives (attitude markers) are good examples of this.

In a comparison of a professional and a popular paper on the same topic written by Stephen Jay Gould, Crismore and Farnsworth (1990) found that metadiscourse occurred more frequently in the professional

genre. They investigated only a few features, mainly interactional choices, and did not attempt to explain these differences, but there are clear reasons why there may be genre variations in the frequencies and functions of metadiscourse. For one thing, popularizations tend to be shorter than professional papers and so writers have less need of frame markers to guide readers through a lengthy or complex text. Transitions are also less common because these texts report the work of *other* papers and therefore rarely refer to the internal unfolding or sequencing of the discourse itself. The conjunctions we find in these papers are focused on the behaviour of external phenomena, and function to make real-world relationships clear to non-specialist readers. That is, they are used to make *propositional* rather than *discoursal* connections and so do not function metadiscoursally.

Other metadiscoursal features occur in popularizations but are used differently from those in research papers. Evidentials, for instance, perform similar functions but in a slightly different way and with a different form. Evidentials indicate the external origin of material in the current text and give credence to that material by drawing attention to the credibility of its source. In research articles these attributions partly function to recognize and reward particular researchers, with credibility conferred by the fact of *publication* in a refereed journal. References thereby perform the key role of embedding new work in a community-generated literature to demonstrate its relevance and importance (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995; Hyland, 2000).

Popularizations, on the other hand, tend to refer to researchers more generally when sketching background and only identify a particular scientist who is relevant to the current development, bestowing credibility through his or her *position* in an institution. These examples illustrate something of these uses:

> (8) Greedy computer hackers using open-source Linux machines could steal more than their fair share of bandwidth from WI-FI hotspots, Swiss computer scientists have warned.
>
> (*New Scientist*, June 2004)

> 'We can finally see a link between areas of starburst activity and these long-linear filaments,' said Farhad Yusef-Zadeh, a Northwestern University astronomer who presented the results last week at a meeting of the American Astronomical Society in Denver. Scientists had theorized that the filaments were related to the magnetic field, because the first filaments spotted were aligned with it. 'The problem with this hypothesis is that more recent images have revealed a population of weaker filaments oriented randomly,' Yusef-Zadeh said. (*Scientific American*, June 2004)

> An asteroid, an unseen companion star, or the heat and light from CoKu Tau 4 itself could have caused the gap, the researchers acknowledge. But 'the planetary explanation is the most likely explanation,' said Alan B. Boss, an astronomer at the Carnegie Institution in Washington. Boss was not a member of the discovery team but spoke at the briefing.
>
> (*Science News*, Vol. 165: 23 June 2004)

Popularizations also differ from articles in the ways in which this reporting is 'manifestly marked'. In research papers imported material is overwhelmingly presented as a summary from a single source or as a generalization combining several different studies. Direct quotations are almost never used in science articles and non-integral structures, which relegate the cited author to parentheses or a footnote, are the norm (Hyland, 2000). In contrast, popularizations adopt a style of reporting more like popular journalism, employing direct, usually interview, quotes and making extensive use of the reporting verb *say*, a choice uncommon in the article genre. This extract illustrates these practices:

(9) In the hunt for toxins, spy insects go where humans can't. That, at least, is the vision of Jeff Brinker, a materials scientist at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque. Brinker and his team have devised a way to transform the loathed insects into stealthy environmental sentinels to detect chemical or biological agents. Roaches were a natural next step. 'It's a very durable beast,' Brinker says. 'Plus they tend to explore nooks and crannies.' But how to put their wiliness to work? The key, Brinker says, is genetically altered yeast cells glued to the bug's body that will glow when they encounter something harmful. Living cells have several potential advantages over mechanical sensors, says Susan Brozik, a Sandia biochemist working with Brinker. They're small, cheap and exquisitely sensitive to their surroundings. But sensors made of living cells are difficult to keep alive out in the field, says Brinker. (*Popular Science*, March 2004)

Another common feature of this genre is code glosses. These are metadiscourse signals that work to clarify what the writer assumes may be an unfamiliar term or usage.

(10) Last year, the big news in cancer therapy was Avastin, a colorectal cancer drug that extends life by an average of five months. This year, scientists are looking hard at the 'children' of Avastin, drugs that are based on the same principle but have additional bells and whistles. Avastin

> works by cutting off blood supply to tumors, a process known as anti-angiogenesis. (*Popular Science*, 8 June 2004)
>
> The filaments range from 10 to 100 light-years in length and 1 to 3 light-years across. They occur only in a very narrow area, within about 900 light-years of the galactic center, a region crowded with old and new stars. A light-year is the distance light travels in a year, about 6 trillion miles (10 trillion kilometers). (*Scientific American*, 7 June 2004)
>
> A plague of locusts is defined as a large, gregarious population present in at least two major regions. (*New Scientist*, 8 June 2004)

In these examples terms or concepts which may be unfamiliar or understood only loosely are made clear by the helpful addition of metadiscourse.

iii. Interactional metadiscourse in popularizations

Popular science articles are most obviously distinctive in their use of interactional metadiscourse, and particularly in the ways that writers make their attitudes to material explicit. Crismore and Farnsworth (1990) found fewer hedges and boosters in the Gould popularization compared with the professional paper and more attitude markers and what they call 'commentary', a function which overlaps with my category of 'engagement markers' (see Chapter 3).

Epistemic devices, which allow the writer to comment on the status of propositions, are key features of research genres as they are crucial to negotiating knowledge claims with a potentially sceptical audience. Hedges and boosters carry the writer's degree of confidence in the truth of a proposition, displaying an appropriate balance between scientific caution and assurance, but they also present an attitude to the audience. Knowledge claims have to be carefully handled, so writers must invest a convincing degree of assurance in their propositions while avoiding overstating their case and risking inviting the rejection of their arguments. Popularizations, in contrast, contain a higher proportion of unmodified assertions because of a different attitude to facts. For the science journalist, hedges and boosters simply reduce the importance and news value of a statement by drawing attention to its uncertain truth value.

Fahnestock (1986) has described this transformation of research into popular accounts as an upgrading of the significance of claims to emphasize their uniqueness, rarity or originality. She illustrates this by showing how the qualified conclusions from an article in *Science*,

reporting a longitudinal study of mathematical aptitude, were transformed by two popular magazines. The original research article looked like this (with hedges underlined):

(11) We favour the hypothesis that sex differences in achievement in and attitude toward mathematics result from superior male mathematical ability, which may in turn be related to greater male mathematical ability in spatial tasks. This male superiority is probably an expression of a combination of both endogenous and exogenous variables. We recognise, however, that our data are consistent with numerous alternative hypotheses. Nonetheless, the hypothesis of differential course-taking was not supported. It also seems likely that putting one's faith in boy-versus-girl socialisation processes as the only permissible explanation of the sex difference in mathematics is premature.
(Benbow and Stanley, 1980)

Reports of this research in *Newsweek* (12) and *Time* (13), however, display none of this tentativeness. Instead they amplify the certainty of the claims and thereby increase the impact of the story:

(12) The authors' conclusions: 'Sex differences in achievement and in attitude toward mathematics result from superior male mathematical ability'.

(13) According to its authors, Doctoral Candidate Camilla Persson Benbow and Psychologist Julian C. Stanley of Johns Hopkins University, males inherently have more mathematical ability than females.

In other words, the elimination of hedges and boosters in popularizations adds to the significance and newsworthiness of the subject, glamorizing material for a wider audience.

Interactional meanings are largely conveyed through attitude and engagement markers in popularizations, indicating the writer's affective responses to material, pointing out what is important, and encouraging readers to engage with the topic. Unlike their role in research papers, where they signal the writer's attitudes and values shared with other members of a disciplinary community, attitude markers in this genre help to impart an informal tone and underline the accessibility of the material. The attitudes expressed are those which the interested lay reader might be expected to hold, rather than the writer:

(14) After digging their way out and molting into adults, billions of the big, clumsy, red-eyed insects will sing their ear-splitting love songs. (*Scientific American*, July 2004)

> The good news is that the Gulf's dead zone disappears each winter, observes Fred Wulff of the University of Stockholm. In the eastern Baltic Sea, where he works, a permanent dead zone covers up to 100,000 square km. Nasty blooms of blue-green algae in the Baltic also lead to regular beach closures and fish kills. (*Science Today*, June 2004)

Engagement markers explicitly address readers to selectively focus their attention or to include them in the text. While science research articles make extensive use of imperatives for this purpose, they almost never include other forms, such as second-person pronouns, questions and asides (Hyland, 2001a). These forms are quite common in popularizations, however, as can be seen from the following examples:

(15) For most people, the notion of harnessing nanotechnology for electronic circuitry suggests something wildly futuristic. In fact, if you have used a personal computer made in the past few years, your work was most likely processed by semiconductors built with nanometer-scale features.
(*Popular Science*, July 2004)

> But what about subtler problems like the card sorting deficiencies? After all, it might just be that smart college students tend to smoke lightly while others smoke heavily. In which case the card sorting results may have little to do with marijuana. (*New Scientist*, February 1998)

> Little by little, new targeted therapies are helping cancer patients live longer, even if they do not offer miraculous cures, researchers said on Sunday. They are learning how to combine the best new targeted therapies with older drugs to eke out a few extra months or even years for cancer patients – which can mean a lot to a patient hoping to live long enough to see a child graduate or marry.
> (*Popular Science*, July 2004)

There are, then, distinctive differences in the ways that writers set out the same material for different purposes and these account for the range of metadiscourse options used in popularizations. In this genre, information is presented as newsworthy, which means writers' metadiscourse choices are used to invest it with factual status, relate it to real-life concerns, and present it as relevant to readers with perhaps little interest in the ways that findings were arrived at or in the controversies surrounding them.

5.5 Metadiscourse in introductory textbooks

The same context-sensitive deployment of metadiscourse we have seen in research articles and popularizations is also found in the major pedagogic genre of the academy, the undergraduate textbook. Textbooks represent one of the primary means by which the concepts and analytical methods of a discipline are acquired, playing a central role in learners' experiences and understandings of a subject. They extend competence into new areas of knowledge for students while simultaneously providing a coherently ordered view of the boundaries, values and practices of their discipline. They are, then, seen as the conservative exemplars of current paradigms and acknowledged fact, conveying an ideological representation of stability and authority.

Unlike research articles, where knowledge is forged and confirmed, or popularizations, where it is transformed into news for a lay readership, textbooks are widely regarded as repositories of codified facts and disciplinary orthodoxy, the place where we find the tamed and accepted theories of a discipline (Hewings, 1990; Myers, 1992). Bakhtin (1981: 427) refers to this as 'undialogized' discourse: privileged in its absolute definition of reality. Thus while the research article is at the cutting edge of new knowledge, the textbook attempts to reduce the cacophony of past texts to a single voice of authority. This view of textbooks as merely a compilation of uncontested facts for impressionable undergraduates means that they are often undervalued as scholarship, with academics gaining little institutional credit for producing them. In reality, however, textbooks are both a pedagogic and a professional genre, representing accepted views while providing a medium for writers to disseminate a vision of their discipline to both experts and novices (Swales, 1995: 6; Hyland, 2000).

These contextual imperatives mean that what can be said, and what needs to be said, differs considerably from research papers, and the writer's choice of metadiscourse features needs to be sensitive to such changed purposes and audiences. The primary purpose of textbook writers is to set out the established views and theories of the discipline and to claim sufficient authority to initiate learners into a new world of cultural competence. At the same time, however, they must not appear too uncompromisingly didactic or superior, as the reasonableness of the author's 'voice' is as important as the accessibility of the text in achieving these purposes. With respect to audience, writers must address students with limited experience of academic discourse and disciplinary content while not ignoring professional peers who are familiar with the specialized conceptual frameworks of the field.

i. Metadiscourse in university textbooks and research papers: an overview

The interactions involved in setting out an accredited canon are clearly not those of presenting claims and disputing interpretations in research articles, and so once again metadiscourse uses are different. A study comparing a chapter from each of 21 core introductory undergraduate coursebooks with research articles from the same three disciplines found similar overall frequencies of metadiscourse, but considerable variations in its use (Hyland, 1998b). Table 5.2 shows the articles had a rough balance between interactive and interactional forms, while the textbooks overwhelmingly favoured interactive.

Looking at the sub-categories, devices used to assist comprehension such as transitions, code glosses and endophoric markers were more frequent in the textbooks, while those typically used to assist persuasion, such as hedges, boosters, evidentials and self mention, were more frequent in the articles. The disparate knowledge bases of the two audiences compels writers to employ different patterns of metadiscourse. Transitions were overwhelmingly the most common device in the textbooks, guiding the reading process by clarifying relationships and connections between propositions, while hedges were the most frequent metadiscourse feature in the articles,

Table 5.2 *Ranked metadiscourse categories (Hyland, 1998b)*

	Textbooks		**Research articles**	
	Items per 1000 words	**% of total**	**Items per 1000 words**	**% of total**
Interactive	**49.1**	**71.7**	**34.8**	**52.6**
Interactional	**19.4**	**28.3**	**31.4**	**47.4**
Sub-category				
Transitions	28.1	40.9	12.3	18.5
Code glosses	9.6	14.0	7.6	11.5
Hedges	6.4	9.4	16.7	25.3
Endophoric markers	4.4	6.5	3.2	4.9
Attitude markers	4.3	6.3	4.5	6.8
Frame markers	3.8	5.5	5.6	8.5
Engagement markers	3.7	5.4	2.5	3.8
Boosters	3.5	5.1	4.2	6.3
Evidentials	3.3	4.8	6.1	9.3
Self mention	1.4	2.1	3.5	5.2
Grand Totals	**68.5**	**100**	**66.2**	**100**

Table 5.3 *Metadiscourse in 56 coursebooks in 8 disciplines (Hyland, 2000)*

Categories	No. per 1000 words	%	Categories	No. per 1000 words	%
Transitions	24.9	37.0	Hedges	8.1	12.2
Code glosses	5.5	8.0	Engagement markers	7.0	11.3
Endophoric	4.8	6.7	Boosters	5.3	7.9
Frame markers	3.4	4.9	Attitude markers	4.4	6.6
Evidentials	1.7	2.7	Self mention	1.6	2.5
Interactive	**40.3**	**59.3**	**Interactional**	**26.4**	**40.5**

demonstrating the importance of distinguishing fact from opinion and of evaluating assertions carefully.

In a more detailed study, I looked at metadiscourse in seven chapters from recommended undergraduate textbooks in eight disciplines, a corpus of 500,000 words (Hyland, 2000). The overall frequency of metadiscourse was similar to the earlier study, but the larger corpus produced a different pattern of sub-categories, with more interactional features. Table 5.3 shows that there were far more hedges and engagement markers in this collection of texts, and that after transitions, these were the most frequent devices overall.

ii. Interactive metadiscourse in textbooks

The dominance of interactive metadiscourse in the textbooks underlines writers' regard for keeping readers informed about where they are and where they are going. As such they represent careful decisions about what the audience can be expected to know and what needs to be spelt out. This is particularly clear in the use of frame markers to structure the discourse (16) and endophoric markers (17) to refer readers to sections, illustrations, arguments and so on.

(16) In this chapter we introduce the fundamental theorems and operations of Boolean algebra ... (Electronic Engineering TB)

The Ascolichens will be briefly considered under three large groups corresponding to the structure of their asci and ascocarps. (Biology TB)

This chapter focuses on organizational matters rather than on personal factors that affect strategic decisions ... (Marketing TB)

(17) This is very much like the example we gave above at the beginning of chapter 1. (Applied Linguistics TB)

As we saw in Chapter 9, the discovery of the New World gave a powerful impetus to the first requirement: the great flow of gold and silver led to the emergence of a money economy in Western Europe. (Sociology TB)

In the foregoing section we demonstrated how the relatively routine procedure of integration could be used to obtain shear-force and bending-moment diagrams for beams with distributed loads. (Physics TB)

These functions are also a key feature of other genres, but there are differences in preferred forms of realization. In another pedagogic, but oral, genre, the laboratory demonstration, for instance, Garcia and Marco (1998) found that frame markers are often used either to shift the topic (18) or to indicate steps in an experiment as the demonstrator moves through a process (19). These examples from their data illustrate these roles:

(18) This is a steel ball that is attached to this pressure gauge. Now, because it's rigid, the amount of gas inside and the volume of the gas will remain the same. The only things we'll vary are the pressure and temperature. Let's try it and see what happens.

(19) This time we're going to vary the volume and the pressure, again leaving temperature constant. Now what I'm gonna do is release the piston and see if it can come up to this mark here which refers to double of the volume. All right, so we release the piston.

Clearly, while the 'knowledge imparting' function of this genre is similar to the purpose of textbooks, the immediacy of the oral mode encourages greater involvement and the choice of more engaged features to deliver material.

This high frequency of metadiscourse elements to mark an interactive and verbal style is also apparent in the use of devices such as questions and imperatives. While functioning as engagement markers, they also act as endophorics by referring to other parts of the discourse and to other discourses, reminding hearers of matter salient to the current discussion (these examples from Garcia and Marco, 1998: 282–4):

(20) I'm going to make use of this liquid nitrogen again. Remember, it's very cold, minus 196 degrees C.

Now, what do you think that means in terms of the amount of gas added? I bet you said it doubled the amount of gas, huh? That's the intuitive guess. And you're right. If we double the amount of gas we double the pressure. So as we increase the temperature of the gas inside the ball, what happens to the pressure?

We also find interactive forms of metadiscourse being used differently in research articles. Endophoric markers, for instance, were almost exclusively used to refer to tables and graphs in the articles, while pointing to explanatory material or relating claims to a wider context in the textbooks. Frame markers occurred in textbooks at regular intervals to structure the discourse for the reader. In the articles they tended to cluster in introductions, where they acted to specify the overall purpose of the research, and in discussion sections, where they served to organize lists of points.

In other words, metadiscourse was principally employed in these textbooks to reduce the weight of new propositional material for novices and present unfamiliar content more comprehensively. This is also apparent in the use of code glosses which were both more extensive in the textbooks and tended to instruct rather than simply clarify. These devices help convey meanings thought to be problematic for readers, but while mainly labelled as examples in both genres, the textbooks contained more cases which aided interpretation by either providing a definition (21) or elaborating on a statement (22).

(21) Saxicolous (growing on rocks) lichens are probably instrumental in initiating soil ... (Biology TB)

... limnologists (biologists specializing in freshwater systems) began to examine ... (Biology TB)

(22) Cross-cultural variation is a primary barrier – that is, understanding cognitively and affectively what levels of formality are appropriate or inappropriate.
(Applied Linguistics TB)

Internal corporate analysis requires the organization to identify its resources (financial, human labour and know-how, and physical assets), ... (Marketing TB)

Differences in audience and purpose between these genres are also apparent in the contrasting use of evidential markers. For readers of

research papers, claims are inseparable from their originators and a great deal of explicit intertextuality is required from authors to show who first made the claim and how it relates to the current argument. More than this, however, citations are also crucial to gaining approval of new claims by providing persuasive support for arguments and demonstrating the novelty of assertions. This means that evidentials are common in articles:

(23) There is no consensus opinion on the kinetics of partitioning: some authors have suggested that sister chromosomes 'jump' to their separated positions in preparation for division (Begg and Donachie, 1991; Hiraga *et al.*, 1990; Sargent, 1974), whereas more recent measurements suggest that movement of the chromosomes is continuous (van Helvoort and Woldringh, 1994). (Biology article)

...within the research that has been done on academic listening, hardly any has been conducted in contexts where English is a second language (Arden-Close, 1993; Flowerdew and Miller, 1992; Jackson and Bilton, 1994).
(Applied Linguistics article)

The textbook writer, however, is less concerned with convincing a sceptical professional audience of a new claim than with laying out the principles of the discipline. The emphasis is therefore on the established facts rather than who originally stated them or one's stance towards them. As a result, metadiscourse is omitted and unspecified sources replace citations:

(24) Surface structures of the pathogenic *Neisseria* have been the subjects of intense microbiologic investigations for some time. Gonococcal outer membrane proteins demonstrate ... (Biology TB)

Many experts believe superstores will continue to spread. If so, existing supermarkets may suffer. (Marketing TB)

Clearly rules for polite behaviour differ from one speech community to another. (Applied Linguistics TB)

For a textbook audience then, the writer transforms the facts themselves from the potentially disputable status of the articles to the relatively uncontroversial statements which require no citational backing.

Finally, writers' metadiscoursal assessments of the ability of a potential audience to recover their communicative intentions also help

to explain the different frequencies of transitions. In the research articles there were far fewer transitions as writers tended to code their reasoning lexically, relying on readers to construct an underlying semantic structure from their knowledge of craft skills and relations between the entities discussed (e.g. Myers, 1991). Domain knowledge specific to microbiology, for example, allows the informed reader to unpack the connections between these sentences from a research article:

(25) Transformation-dependent erythromycin resistance indicates that an adenosine methylase gene originating from *Enterococcus faecalis*, a mesophile, is expressed in *C. thermosaccharolyticum*. The plasmid pCTC1 appears to be replicated independently of the chromosome, as indicated by visualization of recovered plasmid on gels, and retransformation using recovered plasmid pCTC1 is maintained in *C. thermosaccharolyticum* at both 45 and 60C. Restriction analysis showed little or no rearrangement occurred upon passage through the thermophile.

On the other hand, textbook passages discussing biological processes typically signal the intended connections more explicitly to ensure that readers who lack domain knowledge are able to recover the intended connections:

(26) Despite these potential differences in the rates of DNA synthesis within a particular region of DNA, the overall rate of DNA replication is higher in eukaryotes than in prokaryotes. This is because the DNA of eukaryotes has multiple replicons (segments of a DNA macromolecule having their own origin and termini) compared to the single replicon of the bacterial chromosome. Consequently, even though there is much more DNA in a eukaryotic chromosome than in a bacterial chromosome, the eukaryotic genome can be replicated much faster ...

Because novices lack experience of the forms which give coherence and life to those understandings, authors attempt to construct this experience by making the shared meanings of the discipline explicit and indicating clear lines of thought through surface logicality.

iii. Interactional metadiscourse choices in textbooks

While differences in interactive metadiscourse point largely to variations of audience between the two genres, interactional metadiscourse indicates something of their contrasting purposes. Argumentative writing lends itself to the use of interactional forms and the

articles in my comparative study contained 60 per cent more of these devices overall, with hedges and self mentions particularly prominent.

Several studies have shown how levels of certainty are affected by the transformation of statements from new claims in research articles to accredited facts in textbooks. Latour and Woolgar (1979) and Myers (1992), for instance, observe that textbooks contain a higher proportion of unmodified assertions because they largely deal with 'arranging currently accepted knowledge into a coherent whole' rather than seeking agreement for new claims (Myers, 1992: 9). When hedges are omitted the result is both greater certainty and less professional deference, reflecting a different attitude to information and readers. The textbook author does not have to persuade an expert audience of a new interpretation or anticipate the consequences of being proved wrong because most claims are presented as recognized facts. The following examples suggest how statements are differently treated in the two genres, with heavier qualification in the articles (28), demonstrating the writers' awareness of both the limitations of knowledge and the possibility of expert refutation:

(27) Transferring the information contained in DNA to form a functional enzyme occurs through protein synthesis, a process accomplished in two stages – transcription and translation. (Biology TB)

Thus, peer writing conferences foster more exploratory talk, promote cognitive conflict, encourage students to take a more active role in their own learning processes and enable students to recognise the impact of their own writing on others. (Applied Linguistics TB)

(28) It therefore seems likely that these genes may contribute to a general chromosome-partitioning mechanism of wide importance. (Biology article)

Thus, it appears that *The Times* reinforces support for the Establishment (while seeming impartial) by according it a relatively high profile, whereas the *Sun* depoliticizes its largely working-class readership (posing as outspoken all the while) by concentrating on individuals and pronoun participants. (Applied Linguistics article)

While textbook authors use fewer hedges than research writers, they do not ignore them altogether, and their presence suggests that the genre is not simply a celebration of academic truths. Writers pick their

way through the information they present, sorting the taken-for-granted from the still uncertain. This is particularly the case where authors speculate about the future or the distant past (29), or when generalizations may attract challenges if presented baldly (30):

(29) ... earliest cells could also have obtained energy by chemoorganotrophic mechanisms, most likely simple fermentations. Photosynthesis is also a possibility but seems less likely than ... (Biology)

And it is probably impossible in the near future to describe the whole of human discourse. (Applied Linguistics)

(30) As unemployment increases, and new technological developments seem to herald a possibly permanent end to the need for full employment, then cuts in welfare expenditure might be seen as inevitable and necessary concomitants to changes in the industrial system. (Sociology)

Women appear to use language that expresses more uncertainty (...) than men, suggesting less confidence in what they say. (Applied Linguistics)

In science textbooks, hedges are also used to give readers a clear picture of scientific progress by distinguishing the false assumptions of the past from the certainties of the present. The contrast of qualification and definiteness in the extract below is typical of the ways that writers seek to establish a cognitive schema of development and the increasing ability of their disciplines to describe the natural world. This view lies at the heart of the epistemologies and modes of inquiry of the sciences:

(31) It was argued that the simple sporangiospores of the zygomycetes could be developed after only a short period, while the more elaborate fruit bodies of the ascomycetes would require a longer build-up, and the even larger basidiomata of the Coprini would need the longest preparation of all. (...) We now know that the various components of the substrate are far from exhausted after the initial flushes of growth and sporulation. What has really happened is that Coprinus has seized control by suppressing most of the other fungi. Hyphae of Coprinus are actually ... (Biology)

Overall, however, there is a general reluctance by textbook writers to upgrade claims that might be considered tenuous by the expert readership which evaluates, recommends and uses coursebooks in its classrooms (Swales, 1995). It is also probable that authors are

conscious of the role textbooks play in socializing neophytes into the *rhetorical* practices of their discipline. A cautious attitude to facts is central to academic writing and to acquiring an appropriate cognitive schema. Hedges thus represent the contextual opportunities and constraints of this dual audience, displaying a clear orientation to both students and a wider professional readership.

Not only do textbooks and articles contrast in terms of writers' expressed approach towards facts, but the use of attitude, engagement and self mention also reveals a markedly different interactional stance. The relative absence of self mention in the textbooks, for example, suggests a different writer–reader relationship to that cultivated in research texts, and this is supported by the greater use of engagement markers. The pragmatic value of these devices is to directly address the reader as a text participant, and in research papers this generally takes the form of inclusive *we* and the use of imperatives to guide readers through the text, treating readers as equals with the writer by drawing them into the discussion. In textbooks this professional involvement is largely replaced by a relationship of unequal knowledge, so when a writer explicitly addresses the reader it is often in the role of primary knower:

(32) Now, let's look at the size of stores and how they are owned ... (Marketing TB)

> By this point you have probably realised that doing good research is not easy. As a result, it shouldn't surprise you that many research projects are done poorly. You should also be aware that some research is intentionally misleading. (Marketing TB)

> As you read this excerpt, pay particular attention to the roles that each student assumes and the structure of the student–student interaction. Try to describe the type of language that is generated and the type of language functions that are carried out. Also, assess the extent to which this type of student–student interaction creates opportunities for students to use language for classroom learning and second language acquisition. (Applied Linguistics TB)

This unequal relationship also seems to allow textbook authors greater freedom in expressing their opinions towards propositional content. While the frequency of attitude markers was similar in the two genres, and mainly consisted of evaluations of importance, the textbook authors intruded far more into their texts with explicitly evaluative comments:

(33) The author cannot support either extreme position since he believes neither approach is always correct. (Marketing TB)

My own view is that Krashen's hypotheses do not, on closer inspection, conform to the three linguistic questions. (Applied Linguistics TB)

Thus I believe for my part that the ontological need cannot be silenced by an arbitrary dictatorial act which mutilates the life of the spirit at its roots. (Philosophy TB)

There is a clear implication here that the writer is an expert in full command of the topic and informing an audience which is both less knowledgable and requiring less deference.

In sum, metadiscourse uses in the two genres indicate clear differences of purpose and audience. The textbooks are characterized by an elaborate discursive style that clearly orders material and elucidates connections, and an interactional stance that emphasizes an expert role towards both information and readers. Underlying this use, of course, is a clear pedagogic model. The expert is distinguished from the novice and the process of learning seen as a one-way transfer of knowledge. Research writers, on the other hand, typically address their readers as experts and use metadiscourse to draw on shared understandings and emphasize solidarity. So while the patterns of metadiscourse in the textbooks seek to clarify and inform, those of articles serve to exclude outsiders and negotiate agreement.

5.6 Summary and conclusions

Metadiscourse is a framework for analysing interactions in spoken and written texts, providing a means to explore the ways that writers construct both texts and readers and how they respond to their imagined audiences. Analysis of popularizations, undergraduate textbooks and research articles helps to reveal how metadiscourse construes and reflects different rhetorical contexts and facilitates the dialogic relationships which are at the heart of all communication. We have seen that in academic research papers, popular science articles and undergraduate textbooks, writers make metadiscourse choices which are sensitive to a number of interactional elements of the context. Not least among these are evaluations of readers' likely subject knowledge, their topic interests, their needs and purposes for reading, their understandings and prior experiences of the conventions of the genre, and their expectations for interactional engagement and authorial intervention.

For the research writer, metadiscourse contributes to a writer's voice which balances confidence and circumspection, facilitates collegial respect, and seeks to locate propositions in the concerns and interests of the discipline. In popularizations, it helps writers present findings as relevant, newsworthy facts for a lay audience with potentially little detailed subject knowledge or interest in disciplinary practices. Here authors rarely use metadiscourse to refer to themselves or to the literature, preferring to situate material in an imagined 'real world' inhabited by their readers. For the textbook writer, metadiscourse provides a means of presenting an authoritative authorial stance and of engaging with readers while setting out information as facts as explicitly as possible. These different patterns not only help writers achieve their rhetorical goals, but help define the genres and contexts in which they write.

6 Metadiscourse and culture

In the last chapter I sought to show how discourse is always situated, purposive behaviour, highly adapted for the rhetorical contexts in which it is created and understood. This relationship to context, what linguists call *indexicality*, indicates that language always takes its meaning from its contextual surroundings as much as from its literal sense. But while Chapter 5 focused on variations in social activity, looking at the different purposes of writers and at writer–reader relations, genre is only one way in which contexts vary. Globalization has increased intercultural and interlingual contacts and raised questions concerning whether writers socialized into a non-English writing culture learn rhetorical habits which affect their writing in English. Researchers have therefore started to explore metadiscourse in various languages and how speakers of those languages use it in English. The fact that many of these studies have focused on academic texts is unsurprising given the internationalization of this field for both students and professional scholars. In this chapter then, I turn to focus on culture, looking at the use of metadiscourse in other languages and by speakers of those languages writing in English.

6.1 Culture and language

Two decades ago Raymond Williams (1983: 87) described *culture* as one of the most complex words in the English language, and there is still no single broadly agreed definition of it today. But not only is the term difficult to pin down, it is also controversial, with some writers criticizing it as altogether too reductionist, deterministic and simplistic, and others (e.g. Abu-Lughod 1991; Fox and King 2002) calling for its abandonment altogether.

In a recent paper, Atkinson (2004) distinguishes three main perspectives on culture which he defines as follows:

- *Received views of culture* – the popular, common-sense idea which sees the world as divided into a diversity of separate societies, each with its own culture (e.g. Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 1). Such views conflate large political groupings such as nation states and ethnic communities and privilege the

sharedness of perspective and activities, ignoring the fragmenting influences of immigration, social class and cultural diffusion.

- *Postmodern views of culture* – emphasize change, disruption, discontinuity, inequality, movement, hybridity and difference (e.g. Appadurai 1996; Lyotard 1984). In other words, they directly address the unforeseen interesting and chaotic mixing, combining and cultural synergies that international movements of people and ideas have brought about in the last half century.
- *Cultural studies views of culture* – approaches contemporary culture from an ideological perspective, claiming that cultural beliefs and practices are developed predominantly under the influence of exposure to mass, popular culture in all its forms and all its power.

Although no view of culture receives universal assent, a version which perhaps commands the most influence in language studies regards it as a historically transmitted and systematic network of meanings which allow us to understand, develop and communicate our knowledge and beliefs about the world (Lantolf, 1999). That is, cultural factors help shape our background understandings, or schema knowledge, and are likely to have a considerable impact on what we write and how we organize what we write, and our responses to different communicative contexts.

While there are disagreements about the scale of such cultures, whether we see them in classrooms or in nation states (e.g. Holliday, 1999), and their location, whether they exist in the mind or the world (e.g. Geertz, 1973; Strauss and Quinn 1997), culture is seen as inextricably bound up with language (Kramsch, 1993). Cultural factors have the potential to influence perception, language, learning and communication, particularly the use of metadiscourse. This is partly because our cultural values are reflected in and carried through language, and partly because cultures make available to us certain taken-for-granted ways of organizing our perceptions and expectations and engaging others in writing. Communities construct and share cultural models, which are formed and transformed through the endless negotiations of everyday life. These models interact with the personal models we individually develop as a result of our unique experiences and act to constrain what we attend to and perceive as salient (Shore, 1996).

Such a definition obviously comes close to inscribing a more or less 'received' view of culture, and studies of language research have tended, until very recently, to adopt such a view. This does, perhaps,

overemphasize a shared and static picture at the expense of what is fluid and dynamic about culture. In fact, I should stress that although linguistic and cultural factors may distinguish first and second language writers, we should not ignore the cross-cutting influences of individual and group experience. Individuals from the same country cannot be lumped together as an undifferentiated group nor cultural norms be regarded as decisive. Writers have individual identities beyond the language and culture they were born into and the tendency to stereotype individuals according to crude cultural dichotomies should be avoided. I do not intend to address the ways culture and the individual interact in this brief overview, but I simply point out that culture is not deterministic: people may resist or ignore cultural patterns.

Perhaps the most-examined influence of culture in language is the differing expectations that people have about the logical organization of written texts and the effects these may have on L2 literacy development. What is seen as logical, engaging, relevant or well-organized in writing, and what counts as evidence, conciseness and coherence, are all said to differ across cultures. This is the field of *Contrastive Rhetoric* (CR), which actively uses the notion of culture to explain differences in written texts and writing practices. CR seeks to build a research base to identify the fact that there are 'differences between languages in rhetorical preferences' (Kaplan, 2000: 84), and metadiscourse is one of the most researched aspects of this enterprise.

Although it is far from conclusive, research suggests that the schemata of L2 and L1 writers differ in their preferred ways of organizing ideas, and that these cultural preconceptions can influence communication (e.g. Connor, 2002; Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Hinkel, 2002). These conclusions have been supported by a range of studies over the past decade comparing the features of research articles in various countries (e.g. Cmejrková, 1996; Duszak, 1997; Moreno, 1997). Other genres that have been studied across cultures include business request letters (Kong, 1998), sales letters (Zhu, 1997), grant proposals (Connor and Mauranen, 1999), application letters (Upton and Connor, 2001), student essays (El-Sayed, 1992; Kubota, 1998), court documents (Fredericson, 1996) and conference abstracts (Yakhontova, 2002).

In accounting for such discoursal and textual forms and practices, however, CR has largely assumed a received view of culture (Connor, 2002), until recently unproblematically identifying cultures with national entities and reducing individuals to cultural types. The result of this has often been to emphasize predictable consensuality *within* cultures and differences *across* them (e.g. Atkinson, 2004; Zamel, 1997). In response, Connor (2004) has recently suggested the term

intercultural rhetoric instead of contrastive rhetoric to refer to the current dynamic models of cross-cultural research which focuses on contexts as well as texts, and which seeks to acknowledge the ways in which 'small' cultures (e.g. classroom cultures, youth cultures, company cultures, disciplinary cultures, etc.) interact with the national cultures in any intercultural situation.

Essentially, the critics argue that we cannot simply read off cultural preferences from the surface of texts: all rhetorical patterns are available to all writers and do not allow us to predict how students from different language backgrounds will write. Spack (1997), for instance, argues that focusing on culture to explain writing differences prompts a normative, essentializing stance which leads to lumping students together on the basis of their first language background. This is a useful caution, but it is equally important that we should not ignore research which might help us understand the ways individuals write in a second language.

Basically the L2 writer is writing from his or her own familiar culture and the L1 reader is reading from another context, and so a possible explanation for any difficulties of comprehension may be related to the amount of effort the writer expects the reader to invest in the text. Hinds (1987: 143) suggests that in languages such as English the 'person primarily responsible for effective communication is the writer', but in Japanese, and perhaps classical Chinese and Korean too (Eggington, 1987), it is the reader. Writers compliment their readers by not spelling everything out, while readers are said to savour hints and nuances. Similarly, Clyne (1987) argues that while English language cultures urge writers to produce clear, well-organized statements, German texts put the onus on the reader to dig out meaning. Coherence, in other words, is in the eye of the beholder.

Metadiscourse is a good example of how skilled writers craft their texts with this kind of orientation to the reader in English. It is, for example, the writer's task to provide transition statements when moving from one idea to the next, to indicate how ideas are to be linked and understood, and to regularly bring the reader into the text. The frequency and use of these metadiscourse functions across languages have begun to attract the attention of researchers.

6.2 Metadiscourse across languages

A growing body of research has sought to identify the rhetorical features of particular languages, often comparing these features to those in English texts. A small sample includes nominalization in Japanese (Maynard, 1996), indirectness in Chinese (Zhang, 1990), implicitness

in Finnish (Tirkkonan-Condit, 1996), theme in Finnish (Mauranen, 1993a), and reflection in Thai (Bickner and Peyasantiwong, 1988). Studies which have directly addressed the ways different writing cultures use metadiscourse offer the view that, compared with other languages, Anglo-American academic English tends to:

- be more explicit about its structure and purposes;
- employ more, and more recent, citations;
- use fewer rhetorical questions;
- be generally less tolerant of asides or digressions;
- be more tentative and cautious in making claims;
- have stricter conventions for sub-sections and their titles;
- use more sentence connectors (such as *therefore* and *however*);
- place the responsibility for clarity and understanding on the writer rather than the reader.

i. Evidentials in Chinese and English articles

Comparative studies of this kind have tended to focus on one or two specific metadiscourse features, and a good example is Bloch and Chi's (1995) study of the ways Chinese and Western scholars refer to prior texts in their academic writing. Examining 120 articles in English and Chinese, the authors focused on the metadiscourse category of *evidentials* and the ways writers use citations. For Western writers evidentials are central to the social context of persuasion as they both provide justification for arguments and demonstrate the novelty of the writer's position (Hyland, 1999c). In other words, citations help an academic text to demonstrate 'sameness', or connections to prior research, and 'difference' by emphasizing originality and divergence to what has gone before (Mulkay, 1991). Chinese academic writing, on the other hand, is sometimes said to reflect an uncritical and over-reliant dependence on source texts based on the Confucian values of harmony and 'knowledge telling'. This practice is said to be typical of classical Chinese rhetoric which values transmission rather than creativity.

Bloch and Chi, however, found that while the Anglo-American writers used overwhelmingly more evidentials, there was little difference in the ways they used them rhetorically. The authors describe a fairly consistent distribution of citations used to sketch background, support claims, and criticize other studies across the physical and social science fields in English and the physical sciences in Chinese. Only in the Chinese social science texts were there a greater number of support citations and a lower number of background

ones. The fact that the social science writers in both Chinese and English used more citations to build support for their arguments suggests a more rhetorical approach to intertextuality than simply laying out background. The average number of critical citations was relatively low across all the texts, although these were greater in the social sciences in the English texts and the physical sciences in the Chinese texts.

Bloch and Chi's results show it is difficult to make strong generalizations about cultural differences in rhetoric. Importantly, they refute the view that Chinese rhetoric lacks a critical edge, showing that there is diversity in rhetoric which has evolved in response to social change. They did, however, find that English language writers used significantly more recent citations than their Chinese counterparts, with almost inverse proportions of newer and older citations between the two text corpora. The authors note that while this may support the view that Chinese writers are more tied to precedent and the classical writings of the past, it may also simply reflect their lack of access to recent texts. This work therefore cautions us against using stereotypes to draw conclusions about the influence of cultural values on writing practices in this area of metadiscourse.

ii. Spanish and English editorials

Outside of academic genres, Milne (2003) explored the role of metadiscourse in the editorials of the Spanish *El País* and the British *The Times* to compare how professional writers guided and engaged with their readers in persuasive texts.

She found that while the Spanish and British writers used similar amounts of metadiscourse overall, the Spanish texts contained significantly greater frequencies of textual (interactive) metadiscourse, particularly sequencing devices and code glosses, while writers in *The Times* used more interpersonal (interactional) metadiscourse. Perhaps the most interesting differences were in the use of transition markers where the Spanish overwhelmingly preferred additive markers to link ideas (e.g. *y, además, aún más/and, moreover, furthermore*) while the British writers made far greater use of adversative markers (*but, however, in contrast*). These differences might be explained by the Spanish tendency to produce much longer sentences which need to be coordinated by additive markers. Milne (2003: 42) also offers a rhetorical explanation, speculating that Spanish writers may build arguments by 'adding warrants to the original idea but always moving in the same direction', while the English writers 'tend to build arguments contrasting the pros and cons of an idea which necessarily implies the use of adversative markers'.

Her results suggest that both culture and genre influence metadiscourse use in editorials. Spanish cultural preferences perhaps shape the use of textual metadiscourse, with the differences in transitions pointing to different ways of constructing arguments and the use of code glosses reflecting greater freedom to introduce complementary information. On the other hand, Milne argues that genre-driven conventions are responsible for the relative uniformity of interpersonal metadiscourse. Similarities in the use of hedges and attitude markers, for instance, reflect the combination of mitigation and opinion needed to persuade newspaper readers. Clearly these generalizations need further investigation, but they suggest important differences in cultural rhetorical practices.

iii. Spanish and English articles

Another good example of cross-cultural metadiscourse research is Moreno's work on textual features in business and economics research articles, comparing 36 papers in English with 36 in Spanish. Her work has examined cause–effect metadiscourse signals such as *the result is, as a consequence*, and *this leads to the following result* (Moreno, 1997), and retrospective indicators of premise–conclusion relationships such as *thus, therefore* and phrases such as *these results would appear to indicate* (Moreno, 2004). All these interactive markers are optional in both languages and so represent interesting differences, allowing us to compare Spanish and English writers' assessments of the need to spell out inter-sentential relations.

In the cause–effect research, Moreno found more similarities than differences as both groups made these relations explicit with similar frequencies and with similar strategies of expression. An interesting similarity was that both groups chose to highlight the causal relation to a similar extent by signalling the function as independent sentences (1) as opposed to embedding the metadiscourse devices in the sentence (2) (examples with translation):

(1)	This difference produces two effects. The results are presented in table 1.	Así surgen dos grandes grupos. Las consecuencias no se han hecho esperar.
(2)	*As a consequence, ...* The *result* is ...	*Como consecuencia, ...* El *resultado* es ...

In the more recent study, Moreno (2004) explored the Spanish and English writers' preferences for retrospective cohesive mechanisms to signal premise–conclusion relations between sentences. She found that while the two groups used these links in similar

proportions, there were differences in the degree to which they were expressed explicitly. She identified three levels of explicitness in presenting these transition markers:

1. ***Explicit labels***: these expressions refer to no single nominal group but by naming what has come before in previously stated arguments, indicate exactly how that stretch of discourse is to be interpreted. They therefore provide a frame of reference for the subsequent development of the argument, as in these examples from my biology research article corpus:

   (3) *These results* suggest that the expression of lectin stops upon withering of the leaves.

   In these circumstances, reduced colonization often reduces mycorrhizal cost and might increase plant growth rate and yield response.

2. ***Fuzzy labels***: where the deictic element is made explicit by using a pro-form such as *this* and *all this* in English, or *esto* ('this'), *eso* ('that'), *ello* ('it'), *aquí* ('there') and *lo cual* ('which') in Spanish. The reference, however, is not always very clear. But while the reader does not know exactly which stretch of discourse the item refers to, the label signals a shift in direction important for the development of the discourse. Moreno gives these examples from both languages:

   (4) English: *This* means that ..., *all this* suggests that ..., *this* is one indication of ...
   Spanish: *Esto* significa que ... ('this means that'), de *ello* parece deducirse ... ('from *it*, it seems to be inferred ...'), dicho *esto*, ... ('having said *this*'), según *esto*, ... ('on *this* basis ...'), por *todo ello* ... ('for *all this*')

3. ***Implicit labels***: in which the referential item is left implicit, as in most conjuncts in English and in Spanish, and in some linking phrases. These leave the reader to decide from which stretch of the previous discourse the conclusion is to be drawn:

   (5) *as a consequence/como consecuencia* ('as a consequence'), *therefore/por tanto* ('thus/therefore')
   We can only conclude that ...; The main implication is that ...
   Se observa claramente que ... ('it can be clearly seen that ...'), *si alguna conclusión puede aparecer como evidente es que* ... ('if one conclusion seems clear, it is that ...')

Table 6.1 *Explicit vs fuzzy vs implicit premise–conclusion labels (Moreno, 2004)*

(p = 0.000)	English		Spanish	
Category	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**
Explicit	209	33.4	85	29.3
Implicit	374	59.8	148	51.0
Fuzzy	42	6.7	57	19.7
Total	625	100.0	290	100.0

As can be seen from Table 6.1, both English (59.8 per cent) and Spanish (51.0 per cent) writers show a greater preference for implicit labels in such premise–conclusion metadiscourse. This suggests that writers believe that their readers have sufficient specialist competence to recover the relevant arguments from the preceding text to accept their conclusions. There is, however, a statistically significant difference in the Spanish preference for the use of fuzzy labels (19.66 per cent) as compared to English (6.72 per cent) in this genre. This might imply that the Spanish writers are making more space for alternative interpretations or offering readers a chance to dispute the conclusions.

Moreno also notes differences between the two language groups in their use of nominal groups to refer to stretches of discourse as linguistic acts, labelling them as, say, *an argument, a point* or *a section* rather than as, say, *problems* and *issues*, which exist in the world outside the discourse. These are called *frame markers* in my system and *illocution markers* in Crismore's scheme. Moreno observes that these *ad hoc* characterizations of language behaviour or text stages allow the writer to offer assessments of propositions. While both languages showed a greater tendency to use research-related nouns (6) for this purpose, this preference was greater in English (60.2 per cent) than in Spanish (43.4 per cent) with the use of visual unit nouns (7) being greater in Spanish (26.5 per cent) than in English (19.4 per cent).

(6) Research-related nouns:
English: *The t-test statistics* clearly indicate ..., the conclusion of *the model* is that ..., from *this research literature* we can see...
Spanish: *Los resultados empíricos del análisis* sugieren que ... ('*the empirical results from the analysis* suggest that ...'), quizá la conclusión más destacable de *la encuesta realizada* es ... ('perhaps the most important conclusion from *the survey carried out* is ...'), dados *estos resultados* ... ('from *these results* ...')

(7) Visual unit nouns:
English: *Table 1* shows that ..., as shown in *Figure 4*
Spanish: En *el cuadro 7* se observa que ... ('*Table 7* shows that ...'), como puede apreciarse en *la figura 6* ... ('as can be seen *in Figure 6* ...')

Moreno observes that understanding these findings as the result of cultural differences is difficult as both types of labelling can be seen as strategies for authors to distance themselves from their interpretation of the data. Such 'abstract rhetors' imply that no researcher interpretation is involved in the conclusion.

iv. Finnish and English essays

Perhaps the most influential comparative study of metadiscourse is Crismore, Markkanen and Steffensen's (1993) analysis of US and Finnish students' use of metadiscourse in 40 persuasive essays. Using the descriptive framework outlined in Table 2.2, the study compared the native languages of two groups. This research broke new ground in both Contrastive Rhetoric and metadiscourse studies by addressing the possible universality of metadiscourse and the potential validity of its categories across languages. Their results are shown in Table 6.2.

Crismore *et al.* found that while both groups used all categories of metadiscourse and employed far more interactional than interactive metadiscourse, the Finnish students had a higher density of metadiscourse per line than the Americans. There were also cultural differences in the use of metadiscourse in the sub-categories, with the Finnish writers using substantially more *attitude markers* and

Table 6.2 *Comparison of US and Finnish students' use of metadiscourse by line density and % (Crismore et al., 1993: 59)*

		US Students		Finnish Students	
Feature	**Functional gloss**	**Density**	**%**	**Density**	**%**
Text markers	connectives, sequencers, topicalizers	0.295	27.3	0.313	22.9
Interpretives	code glosses, illocution markers	0.133	11.2	0.164	12.0
Total textual metadiscourse		**0.428**	**38.5**	**0.477**	**34.9**
Hedges	epistemic uncertainty signals	0.194	18.0	0.334	24.9
Attitude markers	affective signals	0.180	17.7	0.278	20.5
Commentary	draw reader into dialogue with writer	0.142	12.3	0.170	12.4
Boosters	certainty markers	0.076	7.0	0.062	5.6
Attributors	source of text material	0.060	5.5	0.037	2.7
Total interpersonal metadiscourse		**0.652**	**60.5**	**0.881**	**66.1**

hedges. Unfortunately, because Crismore *et al.* lump all *connectives, sequencers* and *endophorics* together as 'text markers', it is not possible to compare the students' use of these features. The figures were roughly the same for each language group, however, although these formed a substantially higher percentage of the Americans' use of metadiscourse. The Finns employed slightly more of the other categories of interactive markers, which Crismore calls 'interpretives', which are essentially *code glosses* and *frame markers* referring to discourse acts (*to summarize, I state again that* ...).

These general similarities in the writers' deployment of metadiscourse might be explained by the fact that the students were writing in the same genre with the same persuasive purpose, influenced perhaps by the homogenizing effect of Western educational systems and instructional materials. The differences are harder to explain. Given the cultural stereotype of Finns as reserved and distant, it is puzzling that the Finnish students intruded into their texts far more than the Americans, using over 70 per cent more hedges and 50 per cent more attitude markers. Crismore *et al.* account for this by suggesting that Finnish students have more experience of writing expressive essays at school and may have interpreted the prompts as requiring a personal perspective while the Americans saw the need to provide evidence and support for a position, and so made more use of *attributors*. It is also true, however, that Finnish students receive very little instruction in writing academic English beyond high school and have to write relatively little in any language while at university. This may mean they are more likely to fall back on more conversational patterns of communication when asked to write persuasively (Ventola, 1992).

It is also surprising that the Finnish students employed more interactive signals, taking slightly more care to spell out the discourse organization and their rhetorical acts for readers. Again, Finns are often seen as enigmatic in their communication, leaving their message implicit so that others have to pick out their intentions from the little they say. While these figures contradict this view, they might just be a function of the small sample, as 40 timed essays is not a large number on which to base comparative statements of cultural preferences. Alternatively, it may result from the method of identifying metadiscourse, as Mauranen (1993a and 1993b) found that Finns used about half the interactive metadiscourse forms of native English speakers when writing in English. As I noted in Chapter 2, Crismore *et al.*'s approach to identifying features confounds pragmatic and syntactic criteria and fails to distinguish between text-internal and text-external referents of devices, that is, between devices that refer to links between

items in the discourse and links between items in the world. In other words, Crismore *et al.* may have been counting features in a different way to Mauranen.

Yet despite these weaknesses, this is one of the few studies which explores a comprehensive range of metadiscourse markers across languages in a single genre. The conclusion to be drawn from this research shows that the need to explicitly signal text organization and evaluate what is said is not only a feature of English texts.

v. Summary

The information emerging from the kinds of research described in this section has helped to build a descriptive understanding of variations in the written discourses of different languages and language-using groups. So while many academics and teachers question the wisdom and feasibility of requiring students to follow Anglo-American rhetorical practices (e.g. Kachru, 1999), clarifying what these conventions might be has been extremely productive. This research demonstrates that metadiscourse use is not uniform across languages, reveals how little is actually universal, encourages us to question a monolithic view of academic writing, and develops our sensitivity to different metadiscourse practices in second language writing classrooms. In addition, as Ventola (1992: 191) has observed, such research provides vital information for non-native writers of English and 'offers convenient tools for analysing, understanding and correcting intercultural linguistic problems in writing'.

6.3 Metadiscourse and writing in English

While there are few studies which have sought to identify metadiscourse variation across languages, far more work has been done on texts written in English by writers from different cultural backgrounds. These studies build on the assumption that metadiscourse use varies according to cultural practices, even in the same genre, and that traces of these practices can be found in writers' use of English. The following two sections summarize some of this work.

6.4 Interactive metadiscourse in English

Studies of metadiscourse have tended to examine a relatively limited range of features, with the majority examining interactive devices, perhaps because 'the analysis of textual metadiscourse, both its identification and classification, is less problematic than that of the

interpersonal type' (Markkanen *et al.*, 1993: 144). Many of these studies have expressed results in terms of the overuse or underuse of particular devices relative to native speaker practices for similar stages of cognitive development and genre.

i. Transitions and frame markers

Transitions, which indicate relationships between arguments, and frame markers, which help structure the local and global organization in the text, have been widely studied in this way. Scollon and Scollon (1995), for instance, report that items such as *and* and *but* used by speakers of Japanese, Korean and Chinese often result in incoherent stretches of discourse. Similarly, in her large-scale study of 68 features in the English essays of 1,457 university students, Hinkel (2002) found that Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and Arabic students significantly overused phrase-level transitions such as *and, but, yet,* etc. compared with an English native speaker group, often to produce extremely long, complex sentences. Sentence level conjunctions (*however, therefore, as a result*) and frame markers used to sequence material (*first, second, lastly*) were also substantially overused by all six of her Asian non-native English speaking groups. Marandi (2002) similarly found that Anglo-American applied linguists used significantly more frame markers than their Iranian counterparts.

Milton and Tsang (1993) also found considerable overuse of transitions in a large corpus of essays by Hong Kong university students compared with native English speaker writing in the (generically rather varied) London-Oslo-Bergen, Brown, and HKUST corpora. Among European students, Altenberg (1995) found that Swedish writers underused some logical connectors when writing in English and Ventola (1992) discovered that Finns both used connectors less frequently than native English writers and relied excessively on a limited set of devices so that 'the use of connectors by Finnish writers seems to be infrequent, fairly locally motivated, and somewhat haphazard and monotonous' (p. 209). Granger and Tyson (1996), on the other hand, found an overuse of connectors by Francophone students. Granger and Tyson attribute their findings to interference from French, although Milton and Tsang ascribe students' enthusiasm for transitions to over-teaching in Hong Kong schools.

In a very different kind of study, Milton (1999) used a large learner corpus to explore his impression that his Hong Kong university students were overusing certain fixed interactive expressions in their essays, leading them to a repetitive style of writing. He compared a student essay corpus of 500,000 words with a similar sized corpus of

L1 essays and with Hong Kong school textbooks and published research articles. As Table 6.3 shows, the analysis confirmed that the L2 students used the same metadiscoursal phrases far more often than L1 writers, while underusing alternative phrases from the L1 samples. Clearly not all the devices here represent 'interactive' options, but they include transitions (*on the other hand*), frame markers (*first of all, all in all*) and code glosses (*an example of this is* ...). The extensive use of phrases of engagement and attitude (*as we all know, in my opinion*) are also significantly higher than those of the L1 texts.

Milton attributes the differences to an overemphasis on these features in teaching materials and in examination 'cram schools'. By including alternatives in his classes, he was able to help his students vary their writing in academic essays.

While these studies provide some insights into the comparative use of transitions and other text rhetorical features, researchers have generally been interested in their syntactic role in establishing semantic cohesion rather than their function as metadiscourse. This approach, however, fails to distinguish between the *internal* and *external* roles of transitions and framing devices discussed in Chapter 3. Mauranen's (1993a and 1993b) work on Finnish academics is one of the few approaches which does not blur these two roles, taking care to distinguish between *propositions* and *sentences* as two ways of representing reality.

Mauranen provides an analysis of metadiscourse elements which serve text-organizational purposes, such as connectors (*and, so, as a result*), reviews (*so far we have assumed that* ...), previews (*we show*

Table 6.3 *Lexical phrases in a Hong Kong learner corpus compared with other samples (Milton, 1999: 226)*

		Frequency of phrases per 50,000 words			
	Lexical phrases with greatest difference	L2 student texts	L1 student texts	School textbooks	Published articles
Not used in L2 student texts	It can be seen that	0	8	0	4
	An example of this is	0	8	0	3
	This is not to say that	0	7	0	2
Overused in L2 student texts	First of all	170	1	13	5
	On the other hand	239	31	25	30
	(As) we/you know	118	2	22	3
	In my opinion	110	12	8	0
	All in all	59	2	1	0

below that ...) and illocutionary action markers (*the explanation is* ...). She argues that these elements do not add any propositional information to a discourse but serve to make explicit relations that are already there in the text by virtue of the meanings of the propositions that they link. They are therefore 'text-clarifying linguistic phenomena' which facilitate reader processing but which are not necessary for cohesion. Mauranen sees this optionality as crucial: it means that interactive metadiscourse devices are available but not essential. Writers can choose to overtly signal interconnections between utterances when they feel it is necessary to restrict readers' interpretations explicitly. They therefore reflect the writer's assumptions about the reader's processing needs in following the text, reducing any potential uncertainties about the writer's intended meaning.

This rhetorical purpose of metadiscourse helps explain Mauranen's findings that Anglo-American writers used more metatext than Finnish authors. Table 6.4. focuses on just two papers to more clearly illustrate this difference. As can be seen, there were far fewer sentences containing metadiscourse in the Finnish writer's text (22.6 per cent) than in the native English writer's text (54.2 per cent). The American writer also had a higher proportion of metatextual elements in each category and a higher proportion of metatextual sentences in a sequence (17.0 per cent as opposed to 3.2 per cent). In general, her study showed that the native English speakers displayed more interest in guiding and orienting readers and in making their presence felt in the text than the Finnish authors when writing in English. These results once again indicate a more reader-oriented attitude, a more positive notion of politeness and a generally more explicit textual rhetoric. This reinforces Crismore *et al.*'s (1993) results discussed in Table 6.2 and is consistent with the impression that Finnish writing,

Table 6.4 *Metatext in texts by an English and a Finnish writer (Mauranen, 1993b: 11)*

	English writer		**Finnish writer**	
	No.	**%**	**No.**	**%**
Sentences in text	330		155	
Sequences of 2 sentences or more with metatext	18	5.5	2	1.3
Sentences of metatext in sequences	56	17.0	5	3.2
Individual metatextual sentences	46	13.9	12	7.7
Connectors	94	28.5	18	11.6
Total of sentences with metatextual elements	179	54.2	35	22.6

both in English and Finnish, follows an implicit and reader-responsible style (e.g. Ventola and Mauranen, 1991).

Mauranen speculates that her results arise from different cultural preferences in norms of politeness and rhetorical explicitness between Finns and Americans. The Americans give an impression of having a greater sense of audience than the Finns and seek to condition readers' interpretations by explicitly guiding them. In contrast:

> The poetic, implicit Finnish rhetoric could be construed as being polite by its treatment of readers as intelligent beings, to whom nothing much needs to be explained. Saying too obvious things is, as we know, patronising. On the other hand, being implicit and obscure can also be interpreted as being arrogant and unconcerned: the inexplicit writer can be seen as presenting himself as superior to the reader, displaying his or her own wisdom, and leaving the reader to struggle with following the thoughts, if indeed he/she is capable of such a task. If the reader cannot follow the argument, it is his/her problem.
>
> (Mauranen, 1993b: 17)

So while Finnish rhetorical strategies can be perceived as polite and persuasive in Finnish, when transferred into English they may result not only in unintentionally inefficient rhetoric, but negative evaluations of the writer.

In a parallel study of the same features in four Spanish and English Economics texts, Valero-Garces (1996) found similar results to Mauranen. The Anglo-American economists in her study used more metatext than the Spanish writers, with considerably more connectors and illocution markers. The Spanish-speaking writers employed relatively little metatext to orientate the reader, to link propositional material, or to preview and review content. Also like Mauranen's study of Finnish writers, Valero-Garces found that her Spanish texts contained far less authorial presence than the native English speaker texts, with the role of the author played down and facts presented impersonally. The Spanish writers, like the Finns, make the reader's role more demanding and both authors invoke Hinds (1987) and Clyne (1987) to suggest that these cultures approximate to 'reader-responsible' languages which place emphasis on the reader to manage successful communication.

6.5 Interactional metadiscourse in English

Although most research has focused on the interactive features of metadiscourse, comparative studies have not ignored interactional

resources altogether. In the last decade there has been a growing interest in the evaluative and interactive features of language (e.g. Hunston and Thompson, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Martin and White, 2004) and this interest is also reflected in contrastive studies. The ability of writers to offer a credible representation of themselves and their work, by claiming solidarity with readers, evaluating their material and acknowledging alternative views, is a defining feature of successful academic writing and has been studied in both first and second language writing in English.

Abdollahzadeh (2003), for instance, found that native Anglo-American writers tend to use significantly higher instances of *boosters* and *attitude markers* in the discussion sections of published Applied Linguistics research papers than their Iranian counterparts. In contrast, Vassileva's (2001) study found Bulgarian academics used far fewer *hedges* and more *boosters* when writing papers in English, indicating both greater detachment and more commitment. In another study, this time of conference abstracts, Yakhontova (2002) discovered that Ukrainian/Russian speakers were far more likely to use *self referential pronouns* and *evaluative expressions* than their English counterparts when writing both in English and in Ukrainian. The English writers, on the other hand, only used inclusive *we* and avoided evaluations of their research and negative attitudinal devices when discussing the literature. Yakhontova points to both a Germanic 'writer-orientation' tradition and the continuing influence of a collaborative Soviet ideology in seeking to explain the broad structural differences in this corpus, although this does not account for the greater writer presence in these texts.

In one of the most extensive and detailed comparative studies of this kind, Hinkel (2002) investigated the frequencies and uses of 68 linguistic and rhetorical features in timed essays written in English by 1,457 undergraduates from six language groups and compared them with those by native English speakers. The results of some of the key interactional metadiscourse features in her study are summarized in Table 6.5.

While we would need to analyse every instance of each device in its context to determine if it was performing a metadiscoursal role, these rhetorical features are often used to realize particular interactional metadiscourse functions. To elaborate slightly, they represent possible uses of the following functions:

- Self mention first-person pronouns (direct involvement of writer) *I, me, my, mine*

Table 6.5 *Median frequency rates for selective interactional metadiscourse features (based on Hinkel, 2002)* (**bold** = statistically significant difference to L1 use)

	L1	Chinese	Japanese	Korean	Vietnamese	Indonesian	Arabic
First-person pronouns	1.95	**2.63**	**3.97**	**3.33**	**3.33**	**2.78**	1.92
Boosters	1.22	**2.83**	**2.26**	**1.97**	**2.68**	**1.92**	**2.77**
Amplifying adverbs	1.73	**3.17**	**2.94**	**2.81**	**2.14**	**2.67**	**3.03**
Downtoners	0.48	0.42	**0.43**	**0.33**	0.42	0.60	0.55
Frequency adverbs	0.00	0.24	0.00	0.00	**0.25**	0.22	0.18
Hedges	1.39	**1.17**	**1.10**	**1.41**	**0.88**	**0.86**	**0.33**
Second-person pronouns	0.00	**1.07**	**0.52**	**0.94**	**0.60**	0.00	**0.40**
Rhetorical questions	0.00	**0.24**	**0.19**	**0.00**	**0.00**	0.00	**0.21**
Necessity modals	0.60	**1.36**	**1.34**	**1.37**	**0.99**	**0.83**	**0.84**
Presupposition markers	0.00	0.00	**0.00**	**0.00**	0.00	0.00	**0.00**

- Boosters — emphatics (reinforce truth value) *certainly, demonstrate, really*
  amplifying adverbs (strengthen verbs and adverbs) *totally, always*
- Hedges — downtoners (reduce force of statements) *fairly, almost, partly*
  frequency adverbs (make statements indefinite) *usually, sometimes*
  hedges (decrease responsibility for truth) *probably, perhaps, may*
- Engagement markers — second-person pronouns (address reader directly) *you, your, yourself*
  rhetorical questions (speak directly to reader)
  necessity modals (direct reader to action or thought) *must, should* presupposition markers (assume sharedness) *of course, obviously*

The table shows clear differences in the use of a number of metadiscourse features by different language groups writing on the same topics in English. Self mention, boosters and engagement markers were generally far more frequent in the non-native English speakers' essays, while hedges were less frequent. The following paragraphs elaborate these comments.

Self mention: Asian students are often believed to favour collectivist ways of expressing identity or opinion, avoiding self mention to disguise the direct involvement and views of the writer (Ohta, 1991; Scollon, 1994). The fact that almost all of the non-native writers in this study used significantly *more* first-person pronouns may

have been a function of the prompts that students were asked to respond to. Hinkel notes that the essays written by all the non-native English speakers, except speakers of Arabic, included large proportions of personal narratives in which writers naturally sought to recount their own experiences. Such essays produced sentences such as this, from a Chinese student:

(8) When *I* was in my music class, *I* could forget about all *my* troubles. *I* liked playing the violin so much that *I* couldn't wait to go to the university to study. But *my* father said that *I* had to be a doctor, and *I* wanted to run away from *my* house.

But while such comparative overuse of self mention may reflect cultural preferences or inexperience with Anglo-American academic conventions, it is just as likely to result from the current confusion in teaching materials and style guides, which seem uncertain whether to encourage or prohibit their use (Hyland, 2002b).

Boosters: Hinkel observes that in many rhetorical traditions other than Anglo-American, exaggeration and overstatements are seen as appropriate and effective means of persuasion, conveying the writer's commitment to his or her statements. This may help to explain the high frequencies of amplifiers in the non-native speakers' essays. These function to intensify the meanings of gradable adverbs and verbs, producing utterances such as this from an Indonesian writer (from Hinkel, 2002: 126):

(9) Parents *always* encourage their children to study the major that will be needed by *a lot* more companies in the future, so that they could get jobs and earn *a lot* more money after they graduate from the university. There are *a lot of* people who *totally* hate their jobs, and they are *very* miserable.

Similarly, boosters were significantly more frequent in the second language writers' texts, where writers often drew on informal forms to strengthen their claims and emphasize the truth of a statement:

(10) *No way* can they apply what they learn to the real world.
(Vietnamese)

Their *strong* dependence *really* makes them lack competitiveness and confidence, and finally defeated easily.
(Chinese)

In contrast, academic writing materials and teachers generally discourage overstatement in English and this seems to have influenced the native speaker writers in this corpus.

Hedges: Hedges are common in many academic writing traditions as a means of conveying indirectness, opening a rhetorical space for alternative views and avoiding responsibility for the certainty of a proposition. Downtoners scale down the intensity of verbs and adjectives, reducing the affective impact of statements (11), while frequency adverbs also often function as hedges by imparting vagueness and generality to propositions (12). These examples are from my Hong Kong undergraduate corpus:

(11) Overall, passengers of NWFB are *a little bit* more satisfied than those of Citybus in all three attributes.

Empirical data of our study show clearly that both men and women had a *fairly* high mean score on extrinsic motivation factor, ...

(12) The students are *sometimes* puzzled by the abundance of codes, abbreviations and symbols.

Girls also *usually* score higher than boys in verbal ability and reading tests, especially from age eleven onward.

Only hedges were widely employed by writers in the corpus, and all language groups except Koreans used significantly fewer than the Anglo-American writers. Hinkel believes that essays written by speakers of Japanese, Korean and Chinese often appear over-hedged and uncertain, possibly because of their writing traditions. Her own data, however, suggests otherwise, and I will take this issue up again below.

Engagement: A heterogeneous group of devices are used to directly address the reader, and we can see in Hinkel's data that the second language writers were far more likely to employ these in their essays. Second-person pronouns were used significantly more by the non-native English writers in this corpus, largely to urge the reader to learn from the personal experience of the writer, as in this example from a Chinese writer in Hinkel's data:

(13) If *you* are an undergraduate student, *you* may have difficulty choosing a major field. *You* have to try to find jobs that have both *your* interests and can satisfy *your* living. *You* need to hear *your* parents' words, like I did, but *you* cannot let *your* parents control *you*. Remember this is *your* life, and *you* need to do what *you* need to do.

In some cultures, these pronouns function to elicit reader involvement and promote group solidarity, but writers are generally urged to avoid

them in academic writing in English as being inappropriately informal and conversational.

Rhetorical questions are similarly seen as an artificial and contrived way of building a relationship with readers while presupposition markers, which pre-empt opposition and assume common knowledge with readers, are also rare in these texts. Necessity modals, on the other hand, were employed far more frequently by the L2 groups. These direct readers to some action or thought and their frequency could have resulted from essay topics which encouraged writers to remind readers of their social and family obligations (Hinkel, 2002: 110).

i. More on hedges and boosters

Hedges and boosters generally emerge as the most frequently employed interactional metadiscourse markers in studies of expert writer texts in English (see Chapters 5 and 7). These are a principal means by which writers can use English flexibly to adopt a stance to both their propositions and their audience and can have a considerable effect on a reader's assessment of both referential and affective aspects of texts. They are, however, generally acknowledged to be difficult for learners to acquire. This is not only because hedging and boosting can be expressed in a variety of different ways, but also because they can convey a range of different meanings, signalling the writer's confidence in the truth of information and contributing to a relationship with the reader (Hyland, 1998a).

Several years ago Lyons (1981: 238) observed that different languages use different linguistic means for expressing particular kinds of modality. Equally importantly, there are also variations in the certainty and confidence with which arguments are expressed in different languages. Scollon and Scollon (1995), for instance, suggest there is an Asian preference for rhetorical strategies of indirectness arising from different cultural structurings of situations and participant roles in interaction which are related to questions of interactional politeness. A number of studies have identified such variations in academic writing across languages. German and Czech, for example, appear to be more direct than English in academic contexts (Bloor and Bloor, 1991: 9; Clyne, 1987), while Finns (Mauranen, 1993b; Ventola, 1992), Japanese (Hinds, 1987; Harder, 1984), Malays (Ahmad, 1995), Koreans (Choi, 1988; Eggington, 1987) and Chinese (Bloch and Chi, 1995; Hinkel, 1997) seem to favour a more cautious and indirect style when expressing opinions.

Such differences may influence how students write in English and Thomas (1983) refers to these problems of sociolinguistic miscommunication as 'cross-cultural pragmatic failure'. While this is an under-theorized and difficult concept to apply in practice, it cautions us that L2 students may have a different understanding of appropriate formality, directness, politeness and so on as a result of the different practices which operate in their own cultures and which may hinder them when writing in English. Skelton (1988) and Bloor and Bloor (1991), for example, observe that direct and unqualified writing is more typical of EFL students than native speakers, and this view receives support in studies of Arab, Dutch, French, Finnish and other language groups (e.g. Scarcella and Brunak, 1981; Crismore *et al.*, 1993). Interestingly, it also seems to apply to Chinese students, despite the cultural stereotype of indirectness. Hu *et al.* (1982) and Allison (1995), for example, found Chinese L2 writers to be more direct and authoritative in tone and to make more use of strong modals than native English-speaking students.

In an analysis of hedges and boosters in a one million word corpus of GCE exam scripts written by Hong Kong and British school leavers, Hyland and Milton (1997) found that while both student groups depended heavily on a narrow range of modal verbs and adverbs, the manipulation of certainty and affect was particularly problematic for the L2 students. The Hong Kong learners employed simpler constructions, relied on a more limited range of devices and offered stronger commitments to statements.

In this study, we discovered that although both groups employed about the same number of devices overall, averaging one every 55 words, the native English speakers used about twice as many hedges as the Hong Kong writers. Over half the epistemic devices in the L2 essays functioned as boosters:

(14) The trend from overseas *always* affecting Hong Kong people.

Actually, there has been tremendous concern on this issue.

It is *certain* that Hong Kong will continue to develop prosperously.

This will *definitely* improve your English.

Buying expensive brand-name products is, *in fact*, a sumptuous activity.

In contrast, most items in the L1 sample were hedges, marking the writer's qualification by either indicating that the proposition was probably true (15) or conveying possibility (16):

(15) It brings the issue of racism to the forefront of the social agenda in a move which cannot be *essentially* condemned.

In such cases, the press *appear* to have forced unnecessary actions.

This is *likely* to cause resentment in the poorer communities.

(16) It *may* be argued however that these people have chosen to be in their positions and are seen to be an example to others.

More broadcasting equals worse broadcasting is *perhaps* too simplistic.

It is *possible* to argue, therefore, for a comprehensive Bill of Rights ...

This preference for more certain forms in the L2 essays can also be seen in the specific choice of modifiers by the two groups. The forms *will, may, would* and *always* were among the top six most frequently used devices of both groups, although *will* occurred twice as often in the L2 sample and *would* twice as frequently in the L1 data. As both forms can be used to refer to future probabilities, it appears that the Hong Kong writers tended to favour confident prediction and native speakers more tentative expression. *May*, on the other hand, occurred about twice as often in the L2 essays, being the preferred marker of possibility for them and demonstrating a stronger tendency to offer more nuanced claims of certainty. The use of *think* as an epistemic verb was almost exclusively employed to express the writer's certainty in both the L1 and L2 data and occurred nearly three times as often in the latter.

In relation to hedging and boosting by Asian writers, Hinkel (1997: 382) has argued that:

> The rhetorical traditions based on Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist philosophical precepts operate within frameworks and paradigms recognizably different from those accepted in the Anglo-American writing tradition which is structured around Aristotelian notions of directness, justification and proof.

However, while contrastive studies might suggest that students from different cultures may have preconceptions about features of writing which may differ from those which operate in English academic

settings, they do not necessarily predict the ways students will write in English. Clearly any number of factors can influence writing and cultural preference is just one of these.

In fact, language proficiency seems to have played a large part in the results of the Hong Kong study as further analysis of the L2 texts showed an uneven distribution of items between the ability bands of A to E in the exam results. Interestingly, students achieving higher grades approximated more closely in their use of hedges and boosters to native speaker patterns. Weaker students employed a significantly higher proportion of certainty markers while 45 per cent of the hedges in the L2 texts occurred in the work of grade A and B learners. This suggests the influence of proficiency rather than culture, and that a lack of familiarity with the metadiscourse conventions central to many expository genres in English may be detrimental to learners' academic performance. This is partly because such errors can often influence readers' judgements of coherence and comprehensibility. These errors can also effect the impact of the argument, and how the academic competence of the writer is evaluated.

6.6 Summary and conclusions

The role of culture in writing remains controversial. Critics argue that conceptions of the term are often crude and function to oversimplify the nature of written English. They point instead to the complexity of the term *culture* in a fast-changing world where globalization questions the merits of specific cultural influences and stress that there are wide variations in what passes for acceptable written English. Canagarajah (2002: 68), in fact, points out that:

> Though difference is always going to be there in writing, and though much of it may derive from culture, the ways in which this influence takes place can be positive or negative, enabling as well as limiting, and teachers have to be aware of all these possibilities when they teach student writing. More importantly, teachers must keep in mind that no one needs to be held hostage by language and culture; students can be taught to negotiate conflicting rhetorical structures to their advantage.

Contrastive studies may therefore help teachers and writers avoid getting trapped in an Anglophone cultural ethnocentrism where non-English writing practices appear as deviant anomalies.

The studies reviewed in this chapter suggest the importance that the first language and culture may have in writing in a second language and imply that, despite the relative uniformity of academic genres,

there may be variation in the ways metadiscourse is used in different writing cultures. The idea that rhetorical patterns may be related to culture remains intuitively attractive for many people. Teachers of academic writing, for instance, see such variations as offering explanations for their L2 students' writing practices in English. They draw on them to account for why their students may seem to be less 'reader-oriented' in guiding readers through a text or why they make stronger claims than the conventions of the genre normally allow. But while contrastive rhetoric is helpful in providing a social, rather than individual deficit, explanation for student writing, we cannot simply read off culture from texts.

It is simply not the case that there is one single writing practice in any particular language and it is important to take into account more 'dynamic' and 'decentred' notions of culture, acknowledging for instance how various 'small' cultures such as the classroom, the professions, the disciplines, institutions, age, etc. can interact with national cultures (e.g. Atkinson, 2004). Indeed, in recent years researchers have become sensitive to a community-based orientation to literacy, so that differences in the use of metadiscourse should be understood not only in relation to the national culture of the writer, but also in relation to the genre and the immediate discourse community to which the text is addressed. It is to one such type of community, that of academic disciplines, that I turn in the next chapter.

7 Metadiscourse and community

In recent years the concept of community has become a key idea in discourse analysis as researchers have become more sensitive to the ways genres are written, used and responded to by individuals acting as members of social groups. This community-based orientation to literacy therefore focuses on the importance of writing, and learning to write, as an *insider* of the community one wishes to engage with. Such ideas as *communicative competence* in Applied Linguistics, *situated learning* in Education, and *social constructionism* in the social sciences have contributed to a view which places community at the heart of writing. Community, in fact, helps us to *explain* writing differences, and in this chapter I examine how it helps us to better interpret and understand metadiscourse use.

7.1 The concept of community

The notion of community is central to our appreciation of metadiscourse as it draws attention to the fact that communication is always situated in social contexts. *Community* helps to specify *culture*, reducing huge national or ethnic conglomerates to a human scale, but it also complements *genre*. In fact, genre and community determine each other's domain: each helping to form and being formed by the other. Together they provide a descriptive and explanatory framework of how meanings are socially constructed, considering the forces outside the individual which help guide purposes, establish relationships and ultimately shape writing.

Genre has been an enormously valuable tool over the last 20 years in exploring situated language use, allowing us to see texts as stabilized sites of social action which help coordinate the work of groups and organizations. Its influence, however, has perhaps led us to overemphasize the resemblances and correspondences between texts rather than the differences within them. This is largely because genre helps us to harness the power of generalization, grouping together texts that have important similarities in terms of rhetorical purpose, form

and audience, and then exploring how they differ from other text types. As a result, there has been a relative neglect of the ways texts vary across communities. In fact, the differences that can be found in the kinds of cross-cultural comparisons discussed in Chapter 6 must also be interpreted and understood in relation to both genre and the social communities where the texts are produced.

With the idea of *discourse community* we arrive at a more rounded and socially informed theory of texts and contexts. The concept draws attention to the idea that we do not generally use language to communicate with the world at large, but with individuals and with other members of our social groups. Swales (1990) has defined these communities as having collective goals or purposes, while other writers have suggested a weaker relationship, positing common interests, rather than goals, as essential (Johns, 1997; Porter, 1986). Barton (1994: 57), for instance, proposes a definition of a potentially loose-knit group engaged in either text reception or production, or both:

> A discourse community is a group of people who have texts and practices in common, whether it is a group of academics, or the readers of teenage magazines. In fact, discourse community can refer to the people the text is aimed at; it can be the people who read a text; or it can refer to the people who participate in a set of discourse practices both by reading and writing.

The important point here, however, is that it is individuals acting as *community members* who use language to engage in these practices or achieve these goals. It is, then, a powerful metaphor joining writers, texts and readers in a particular discursive space.

Essentially, the idea of community draws together a number of key aspects of context that are crucial to the production and interpretation of spoken and written discourse. These are the *situational context* in terms of what people 'know about what they can see around them'; the *background knowledge context*, including cultural knowledge and interpersonal knowledge of what people know about the world, what they know about aspects of life, and what they know about each other; and the *co-textual context* in terms of what people 'know about what they have been saying' (Cutting, 2002: 3). Bizzell (1982: 217) similarly emphasizes 'sharedness', discussing communities in terms of 'traditional, shared ways of understanding experience', including shared patterns of interaction, and Doheny-Farina (1992: 296) refers to the 'rhetorical conventions and stylistic practices that are tacit and routine for the members'.

Community thus provides a principled way of understanding how meaning is produced *in interaction* and has proved useful in identifying how writers' rhetorical strategies depend on purposes, setting and audience (e.g. Bruffee, 1986). The concept therefore offers us a means of analysing communication as a joint accomplishment, uniting social, psychological and cognitive factors relevant to a particular purpose and site. The fact that most of the important interactions of our lives take place within particular discourse communities unifies these elements by making them relevant to a particular context (Swales, 1990).

But the concept also has its critics. Canagarajah (2002), Chin (1994) and Prior (1998), for example, all view the term as too structuralist, static and deterministic, overemphasizing a stable core of shared values and removing writing from the real situations where individuals make meanings. Clearly if we see communities as stable groups conforming to rules and upholding a consensus, then we obscure their potentially tremendous diversity. Discourse communities are, in fact, not monolithic and unitary but often hybrid, characterized by varied values and discourses and by individuals with diverse experiences, interests and influence. Members often hold memberships of several communities simultaneously and so their allegiance to the goals and their participation in the practices of any one of them can very tremendously. The experiences of many multilingual students, for example, point to the stress which can be created in shuttling between their home and academic communities (Canagarajah, 1999).

We do, of course, have to understand communities as human institutions where actions and perceptions are influenced by the personal and interpersonal, as well as the institutional and socio-cultural. Jolliffe and Brier (1988), for instance, see communities as comprising a series of concentric circles of members of varying interest, expertise and commitments. This diversity is inherent in all groups, however, and need not create antagonisms and tensions. We all belong to many communities at the same time and, as Berkenkotter *et al.* (1988) observe, members can maintain multiple affiliations without rejecting the values and practices of any of the communities they belong to.

Such critiques of community have thus sharpened the construct. Killingsworth (1992), Porter (1992) and Swales (1998) have all sought to redefine the concept in terms of an individual's engagement in its practices, rather than orientations to rules and goals. There is now a tendency to see discourse communities as rhetorical constructs which 'persist by instantiation and engagement, rather than existing through

membership and collectivity' (Swales, 1993: 696), with traces of this engagement in their discourses. This view is taken up in the metaphor '*communities of practice*', which shifts the focus from language or social structure to the situated practices of groups shaped by a history of pursuing particular goals using particular forms of social interaction (Lave and Wenger, 1991). So while it remains controversial, the notion of community foregrounds an important influence on social interaction, drawing attention to the fact that discourse is socially situated and illuminating something of what writers and readers bring to a text. This is crucial to understanding the ways that metadiscourse works.

7.2 Community, academic writing and metadiscourse

Community is a particularly important concept in studies of academic writing, providing insights into how disciplinary-situated argument practices work to construct knowledge. In the sociology of science, for example, theorists have argued that academic discourse is embedded in the wider processes of argument, affiliation and consensus-making of discourse communities (Bruffee, 1986; Rorty, 1979). Rather than simply reporting studies of the natural or human worlds, writing actually helps to create a view of these worlds, influenced by the problems, social practices and ways of thinking of particular groups. In other words, texts cannot be seen as accurate representations of what the world is like because this representation is always filtered through acts of selection, foregrounding and symbolization; reality is constructed through processes that are essentially social, involving authority, credibility and disciplinary appeals.

Disciplinary communities have been described as tribes (Becher, 1989), each with its own norms, categorizations, bodies of knowledge, sets of conventions and modes of inquiry which comprise a separate culture (Bartholomae, 1986; Swales, 1990). Within each culture individuals acquire a competence in specialized discourses: an ability to organize data and observations into meaningful patterns for readers. Creating a convincing reader-environment involves deploying disciplinary and genre-specific conventions such that 'the published paper is a multilayered hybrid *co-produced* by the authors *and* by members of the audience to which it is directed' (Knorr-Cetina, 1981: 106). In other words, writing as a member of a discipline involves textualizing work in a way that colleagues can see as 'doing biology' or 'doing sociology'. Such community constraints on discourse both restrict how something can be said and authorize the writer as someone competent to say it.

To put this another way, we have to see genres not simply as forms of language, but as forms of social action designed to accomplish socially recognized purposes, and the writer's success in this depends on the projection of a shared context. We are therefore more likely to persuade readers of our ideas if we frame our messages in ways which appeal to appropriate community-recognized relationships (Hyland, 2000 and 2002a). Book reviews in Economics, for example, are more evaluative than those in Linguistics or Chemistry (Motta-Roth, 1998); lectures in Highway Engineering are more likely to follow a problem-solution pattern than those in Plant Biology (Dudley-Evans, 1994); research articles in Psychology more often foreground research methods and warrants than those in English Literature (MacDonald, 1994); and textbooks in Linguistics refer more to previous research than those in Law (Bhatia, 1993). As I shall show, such disciplinary-specific practices are most clearly seen in the ways that writers use metadiscourse to present their arguments, control their rhetorical personality and engage their readers.

But while community interacts with genre in important ways, we should not neglect the influence of language *culture* in understanding how academic writers leave traces of themselves in disciplinary writing. In a recent study of *endophorics* and *frame markers* in 180 research articles in Economics, Linguistics and Medicine written in English, French and Norwegian, for example, Dahl (2004) found that language and discipline interacted in complex ways. Language was the most important variable in Economics and Linguistics, where Dahl attributes the far greater use of metatext in English and Norwegian to the idea that these are both writer-responsible cultures while French is reader-responsible. In all three languages, Medicine evidenced far less interactive metadiscourse. This is because no text-referring features are needed by expert readers familiar with the ways that medical reporting presents content in a fixed sequence of IMRD (Introduction – Methods – Results – Discussion) categories. Economics and Linguistics, on the other hand, have a less formalized text structure and rely more on creating their findings through argumentation, which makes it more likely that 'national' culture will be more important than it is in Medicine.

In short, writing is a community-situated activity and the effective use of metadiscourse depends on the writer's observation of appropriate interpersonal and intertextual relationships. For writers to publish and have an influence on their fields, they must exploit their understanding of these relationships. The notion of discourse community therefore provides a means of accounting for shared presuppositions, and the metadiscourse strategies which can evoke

these. To understand the pragmatics of metadiscourse, then, it must be located in the genres and communities which give it meaning. In this chapter I will extend the discussion of research articles and undergraduate textbooks discussed in Chapter 5, building on the ways genres affect the deployment of metadiscourse to explore the role that disciplines play in writer–reader interactions.

7.3 Metadiscourse variation in articles across disciplines

The research article is a genre where an orientation to readers is crucial in securing rhetorical objectives. While it is often considered a predominantly propositional and impersonal genre, the act of accrediting knowledge is a social process and involves making linguistic choices which an audience will recognize as persuasive. So if, with Rorty (1979: 170), we view knowledge as 'the social justification of belief', then it is clear that writers must consider the reactions of their expected audience, anticipating its background knowledge, processing problems, interests and interpersonal expectations. Simultaneously, readers are trying to predict lines of thought and interrogate authors from the perspective of their personal research goals (Bazerman, 1988). Thus academic writers seek to produce texts that evoke specific responses in an active audience, both informing and persuading readers of the truth of their statements by seeking to 'weave discourse into fabrics that others perceive as true' (Harris, 1991: 289).

Metadiscourse facilitates the social interactions which contribute to knowledge production within disciplines and, because disciplines are different, its use and meaning varies between disciplines. We can see something of this variation in Table 7.1, which shows the distribution of metadiscourse in the four disciplines discussed in Chapter 5.

The table shows that the overall frequency of metadiscourse was fairly similar across the disciplines, with about 20 per cent more items in Marketing because of more engagement markers and hedges. Astrophysicists used substantially more transitions and endophorics; biologists more evidentials and code glosses; and applied linguists more boosters. The most striking aspect of these frequencies, however, is the far heavier use of interactional metadiscourse in Applied Linguistics and Marketing than in the sciences. Some two-thirds of all interactional forms occurred in the soft fields. In other words, we see that writers in different disciplines represent themselves, their work and their readers in different ways, and this observation is confirmed in studies of a much larger corpus discussed in 7.4.

Table 7.1 *Metadiscourse in academic disciplines per 1,000 words (% of total)*

Category	Biology		Astrophysics		Applied Linguistics		Marketing	
Transitions	11.3	(18.8)	14.2	(23.7)	11.1	(18.1)	13.8	(18.7)
Frame markers	5.2	(8.6)	3.0	(5.0)	4.7	(7.6)	6.6	(9.0)
Endophoric markers	4.6	(7.7)	6.2	(10.4)	2.5	(4.1)	3.2	(4.4)
Evidentials	9.8	(16.2)	9.4	(15.5)	4.5	(7.3)	5.9	(8.0)
Code glosses	9.3	(15.4)	5.3	(8.8)	7.4	(12.1)	7.1	(9.6)
Interactive	**40.2**	**(66.7)**	**38.1**	**(63.4)**	**30.2**	**(49.2)**	**36.6**	**(49.7)**
Hedges	12.2	(20.0)	9.9	(16.5)	15.7	(25.6)	19.9	(27.0)
Boosters	3.5	(5.8)	3.0	(5.0)	4.6	(7.4)	4.2	(5.7)
Attitude markers	1.3	(2.2)	2.3	(3.9)	5.3	(8.8)	5.2	(7.0)
Engagement markers	0.7	(1.2)	1.4	(2.4)	2.5	(4.1)	3.3	(4.5)
Self mention	2.4	(4.0)	5.3	(8.9)	2.9	(4.8)	4.4	(6.0)
Interactional	**20.1**	**(33.2)**	**21.9**	**(36.7)**	**31.0**	**(50.7)**	**37.0**	**(50.2)**
Totals	**60.3**	**(100)**	**60.0**	**(100)**	**61.2**	**(100)**	**73.6**	**(100)**

7.4 Interactional metadiscourse in articles across disciplines

A series of follow-up studies of metadiscourse in 240 research articles from eight disciplines reveals that writers in the humanities and social sciences take far more explicitly involved and personal positions than those in the 'hard' sciences. The more discursive 'soft' fields of Philosophy, Sociology, Applied Linguistics and Marketing contained 75 per cent more interactional metadiscourse items than the engineering and science papers (Table 7.2). These patterns coincide with our intuitions that the sciences tend to produce more impersonal, or at least less reader-inclusive, texts. More precisely, however, they indicate how the resources of language mediate the contexts in which they are used. That is, metadiscourse patterns reflect the knowledge domains and argument forms of the disciplines that create them, as I will seek to explain below.

i. Hedges and boosters

These are communicative strategies for recognizing contingency and indicating the room the writer is willing to offer for negotiation. As we saw in Chapters 5 and 6, in academic discourse they contribute to a rhetorical and interactive tenor by carrying the writer's degree of confidence in the truth of a proposition and an attitude to the audience. Writers weigh up their commitment by deciding how certain their interpretations of data are and the effect this commitment might have on readers' responses.

Table 7.2 *Interactional metadiscourse features in 1.4 million word corpus (per1,000 words)*

Feature	Philosophy	Sociology	Applied Linguistics	Marketing	Physics	Biology	Mechanical Engineering	Electronic Engineering	Total
Hedges	18.5	14.7	18.0	20.0	9.6	13.6	8.2	9.6	14.0
Boosters	9.7	5.1	6.2	7.1	6.0	3.9	5.0	3.2	5.8
Attitude markers	8.9	7.0	8.6	6.9	3.9	2.9	5.6	5.5	6.2
Self mention	5.7	4.3	4.4	5.5	5.5	3.4	1.0	3.3	4.2
Engagement markers	13.7	1.6	2.2	1.5	3.7	0.7	2.4	3.8	3.7
Total Interactional	**56.5**	**32.7**	**39.4**	**41.0**	**28.7**	**24.5**	**22.2**	**25.4**	**33.8**

On the one hand, boosters seek to suppress alternatives, presenting the proposition with conviction while marking involvement, solidarity and engagement with readers (Hyland, 1998d). Here the writer anticipates possible responses from readers but chooses to shut them out:

(1) This brings us into conflict with Currie's account, for static images surely cannot trigger our capacity to recognize movement. If that were so, we would see the image as itself moving. With a few interesting exceptions we obviously do not see a static image as moving. Suppose, then, that we say that static images only depict instants. This too creates problems, for it suggests that we have a recognitional capacity for instants, and this seems highly dubious. (Philosophy)

On the other hand, hedges cast a proposition as contingent by highlighting its subjectivity. This expresses the writer's willingness to negotiate a claim thereby reducing commitment and conveying respect for alternative views (Myers, 1989; Hyland, 1998a):

(2) Our results suggest that rapid freeze and thaw rates during artificial experiments in the laboratory may cause artifactual formation of embolism. Such experiments may not quantitatively represent the amount of embolism that is formed during winter freezing in nature. In the chaparral at least, low temperature episodes usually result in gradual freeze–thaw events. (Biology)

Both hedges and boosters tended to be more common in the humanities and social science papers with about 2.5 times as many devices overall and hedges particularly strongly represented (see Table 7.2). This is mainly because the soft-knowledge fields are typically more interpretive and less abstract than the hard sciences and their forms of argument rely more on a dialogic engagement and more explicit recognition of alternative voices. Research is influenced far

more by contextual factors, there is less control of variables, more diversity of research outcomes, and generally fewer unequivocal bases for accepting claims. Writers in the soft fields cannot therefore report their research with the same confidence of shared assumptions. They must rely far more on focusing readers on the claim-making negotiations of the discourse community, the arguments themselves, rather than relatively unmediated real-world phenomena.

In one way, this means that arguments have to be expressed more cautiously in the soft disciplines, remaining open to heteroglossic diversity in the community by using more hedges:

(3) Wilson leaves us disappointed, it seems to me, in the sense that his theory is far from being general. (Sociology)

We tentatively suggest that the *Sun*'s minimalist style creates an impression of working-class language, or restricted code, while the very wordy *Times*' themes, especially their long qualifiers and apposition elements, remind one of academic, formal discourse. (Applied Linguistics)

The fact that methodologies and results are more open to question also means that writers in the soft fields need to work harder to establish the significance of their work against alternative interpretations. This means they also have to restrict, or fend off, possible alternative voices, closing them down using boosters to emphasize the strength of the writer's commitment, and thereby convince the reader through the force of the argument. Two comments from informants typify this view:

You have to be seen to believe what you say. That they are your arguments. It's what gives you credibility. It's the whole point. (Philosophy interview)

I'm very much aware that I'm building a façade of authority when I write, I really like to get behind my work and get it out there. Strong. Committed. That's the voice I'm trying to promote, even when I'm uncertain I want to be behind what I say. (Sociology interview)

This kind of commitment is evident in these extracts:

(4) It is certainly true that many arguments involve multiple premises. (Philosophy)

This particular result is undoubtedly attributable to the impending incorporation of Hong Kong into the People's Republic of China. (Marketing)

Argument is very different in the hard sciences. An important aspect of a positivist-empirical epistemology is that the authority of the individual is secondary to the authority of the text and facts should be allowed to 'speak for themselves'. Writers generally seek to disguise both their interpretive responsibilities and their rhetorical identities behind a screen of linguistic objectivity. The less frequent use of hedges and boosters is one way of minimizing the researcher's role in interpreting data, evaluating claims and appealing to readers. Boosters are also more often expressed impersonally with more assertive claims largely restricted to specific experimental results, either suggesting the strength of the relationship between data and claims with verbs such as *establish* and *show*, or expressing the certainty of expected outcomes, often with *predict* and *will*. These forms carry less subjective connotations than cognition verbs such as *think, believe* and *suspect*, and are also more easily combined with inanimate subjects.

(5) X-ray diffraction analysis shows that the composite consists of xSiNa and siN from the matrix and SiC from the Hi-Nicalon fibres. (Physics)

Figure 7 demonstrates the degree to which heat transfer varies during combustor warm-up. (Mechanical Engineering)

The main disciplinary distinctions thus involved a preference for impersonal strategies in the hard sciences. This was assisted by the greater use of modal verbs acting as hedges and boosters in the science and engineering papers, a strategy which downplays the person making the evaluation:

(6) The theory given above simply provided some insight into the various mechanisms and configurations that might or might not yield a polarimetric effect. (Physics)

There was a good correlation between the four values. For V. trifidum, ANOVA showed a significant increase from L to L' and FI, which could be interpreted as reflecting the dynamics of fungal colonization. (Biology)

To summarize, not only do writers in the soft fields generally use more hedges and boosters, but they also rely more on a personal projection. There are good reasons for understanding these disciplinary preferences not merely as obedience to arbitrary conventions, but as rational attempts to make the best use of linguistic resources to effectively interact with colleagues and secure agreement for one's arguments.

ii. Self mention

As noted above, metadiscourse choices which realize explicit writer presence are closely associated with authorial identity and authority (Ivanic, 1998). In research writing the strategic use of self mention allows writers to claim such authority by expressing their convictions, emphasizing their contribution to the field, and seeking recognition for their work (Kuo, 1999). Self mention thus sends a clear indication to the reader of the perspective from which their statements should be interpreted, distinguishing their own work from that of others. In the disciplines represented here some 69 per cent of all cases of self mention were in the humanities and social science papers, with an average of 38 per article, compared with only 17 per paper in science and engineering. This distinction reflects the very different ways writers in these domains represent their research and persuade readers to accept their claims.

Hard science writers are generally seeking to establish empirical uniformities through precise measurement and scrutiny of a limited number of controlled variables. Research usually consists of conducting experiments to propose solutions to specific disciplinary problems and typically involves familiar procedures, broadly predictable outcomes and relatively clear criteria of acceptability (e.g. Becher, 1989; Whitley, 1984). Scientists can therefore downplay their personal role in the research to highlight the phenomena under study, the replicability of research activities and the generality of the findings. By electing to adopt a less intrusive or personal style, they suggest that research outcomes are unaffected by individuals, strengthening the objectivity of their interpretations and subordinating their own voice to that of nature. One of my respondents expressed this view clearly:

> *I feel a paper is stronger if we are allowed to see what was done without 'we did this' and 'we think that'. Of course we know there are researchers there, making interpretations and so on, but this is just assumed. It's part of the background. I'm looking for something interesting in the study and it shouldn't really matter who did what in any case ... In theory anyone should be able to follow the same procedures and get the same results. Of course reputation is important and I often look at the writer before I look at a paper, but the important thing is whether the results seem right.*
>
> (Biology interview)

In contrast, the high proportion of self mention in the soft-knowledge papers suggests a quite different rhetorical stance. Establishing an appropriately authorial persona and maintaining an effective degree of

personal engagement with one's audience are valuable strategies for probing relationships and connections between entities that are generally more particular, less precisely measurable and less clear-cut than in the hard sciences. Variables are often more heterogeneous and causal connections more tenuous. Successful communication depends far more on the author's ability to invoke a real writer in the text. Self mention can help construct an intelligent, credible and engaging colleague by presenting an authorial self following the norms of the discipline and reflecting an appropriate degree of confidence and authority:

> *Using 'I' emphasizes what you have done. What is yours in any piece of research. I notice it in papers and use it a lot myself.*
> (Sociology interview)

> *The personal pronoun 'I' is very important in philosophy. It not only tells people that it is your own unique point of view, but that you believe what you are saying. It shows your colleagues where you stand in relation to the issues and in relation to where they stand on them. It marks out the differences.*
> (Philosophy interview)

The first person therefore assists authors to make a personal standing in their texts and to demarcate their own work from that of others. Distinguishing who they are and what they have to say in this way is principally a function of the humanities and social science papers.

iii. Attitude markers

These devices indicate the writer's affective, rather than epistemic, attitudes, encoding an explicit positive or negative value that is gradable (e.g. important/very important) to propositions. As Hood (2004) notes, in academic writing *attitude* is frequently expressed through the grading of ideational content, particularly the force by which writers convey their judgements and attitudes towards results, entities or behaviours. While attitude is expressed throughout a text by the use of subordination, comparatives, progressive particles, punctuation, text location and so on, it is most explicitly signalled by attitude verbs (e.g. *agree, prefer*), sentence adverbs (*unfortunately, hopefully*) and adjectives (*appropriate, logical, remarkable*).

Once again, such explicit judgements foreground the writer and so are found more frequently in the humanities and social sciences papers where they contribute to a writer's persona and establish a link with the disciplinary community. By signalling an assumption of

shared attitudes, values and reactions to material, writers both express a position and suck readers into a conspiracy of agreement so that it can often be difficult to dispute such judgements.

(7) The most surprising fact to emerge was that the searches reported to be successful did not stem from the use of coded information in the extra column, which contains explicit syntactic codes. (Applied Linguistics)

The first clue of this emerged when we noticed a quite extraordinary result. (Philosophy)

This period has also seen many other important changes such as: falling birth-rates, an increasing number of working women, and changing retail formats, all of which have had significant impacts on consumer behaviour. (Marketing)

Equally, as with hedges and boosters, each instance of attitude can contribute to developing an overall attitude in a text as the multiple instances accumulate one with the other. In the examples below, for instance, the build-up of attitude markers amplifies the negative tone of the introduction to create a rhetorical effect which constructs a problematic issue worthy of research.

(8) Homicide followed by suicide has been a neglected area in criminological theory and research. The work that exists is marked by a series of methodological limitations, such as small samples and lack of systematic multivariate analysis. (Sociology)

Recently, William Blattner has explained the apparent ambivalence by appealing to Kant's transcendental/empirical distinction. Although an ingenious reading of *Being and Time*, there are a number of difficulties involved in cashing out its central claims. I argue that it fails, moreover, to capture Heidegger's avowed animus toward both realism and idealism. (Philosophy)

Once again, clusters of attitude markers used to create a research space in this way are more common in the soft-knowledge papers. In the hard sciences research topics tend to be presented as linear developments of existing research, where papers contribute to recognized gaps in existing knowledge.

More generally in disciplinary argument, the sciences emphasize demonstrable generalizations rather than interpreting individuals, so greater burden is placed on research practices and the methods,

procedures and equipment used. Writers in the soft fields, however, are less able to rely on proven quantitative methods to establish their claims and this increases the need for more explicit evaluation. Attitudinal metadiscourse is more prominent here as it helps create a convincing discourse and establish personal credibility, critical insight and disciplinary competence.

iv. Engagement markers

These devices refer to the various ways writers bring readers into the discourse to relate to them and anticipate their possible objections. Based on their experiences with texts in the discourse community, writers make predictions about how readers are likely to react to their arguments. They know what they are likely to find persuasive, where they will need help in interpreting the argument, what objections they are likely to raise and so on. This process of audience evaluation therefore assists writers in constructing an effective line of reasoning and, like other metadiscourse options, also points to the ways language is related to specific cultural and institutional contexts (Hyland, 2001a). The remainder of this section will elaborate the key engagement features.

a. Reader pronouns are the most explicit way that readers are brought into a discourse and were the most frequent engagement feature in the corpus, with over 80 per cent occurring in the soft-discipline papers. *You* and *your* are the clearest way a writer can acknowledge the reader's presence, but these are rare outside of Philosophy, perhaps because they imply a distance between participants. Instead there is enormous emphasis on binding writer and reader together through inclusive *we*. Inclusive reference appeals to scholarly solidarity and sends a clear signal of membership by constructing both the writer and the reader as participants with mutual, discipline-identifying understandings and goals. This was apparent to my informants:

> *It helps to locate you in a network. It shows that you are just doing and thinking what they might do and think. Or what you would like them to, anyway.*
>
> (Sociology interview)

> *I often use 'we' to include readers. I suppose it brings out something of the collective endeavour, what we all know and want to accomplish. I've never thought of it as a strategy, but I suppose I am trying to lead readers along with me.*
>
> (Mechanical Engineering interview)

Reader pronouns also claim authority as well as communality, addressing the reader from a position of confidence at the same time as they set up a dialogue. By weaving the potential point of view of readers into the discourse, writers are able to claim collegiality and authority as they anticipate reader objections, stepping in to voice their concerns and views. Thus *we* helps guide readers through an argument and towards a preferred interpretation, as can be seen here:

(9) Now that we have a plausible theory of depiction, we should be able to answer the question of what static images depict. But this turns out to be not at all a straightforward matter. We seem, in fact, to be faced with a dilemma. Suppose we say that static images can depict movement. This brings us into conflict with Currie's account, ... (Philosophy)

Although we lack knowledge about a definitive biological function for the transcripts from the 93D locus, their sequences provide us with an ideal system to identify a specific transcriptionally active site in embryonic nuclei. (Biology)

My informants also noted this shading of solidarity into explicit positioning of the reader:

I suppose 'we' helps to finesse a positive response – we are all in this together kind of thing. I use it to signal that I am on the same wavelength, drawing on the same assumptions and asking the same questions.
(Marketing interview)

I am trying to encourage them to share my interpretations and using 'we' helps foreground a common response. Yes, definitely.
(Sociology interview)

b. Personal asides briefly interrupt the argument to offer a comment on what has been said. While this expresses a writer perspective on the text, by turning to the reader in mid-flow the writer acknowledges and responds to an active audience, often to initiate a brief interpersonal dialogue. While it is used relatively infrequently, this is a key reader-oriented strategy as such comments often add more to the relationship than to the propositional development of the discourse:

(10) And – as I believe many TESOL professionals will readily acknowledge – critical thinking has now begun to make its mark, particularly in the area of L2 composition. (Applied Linguistics)

> He above all provoked the mistrust of academics, both because of his trenchant opinions (often, it is true, insufficiently thought out) and his political opinions. (Sociology)

> What sort of rigidity a designator is endowed with seems to be determined by convention (this, by the way, is exactly the target of Wittgensteinian critiques of Kripke's essentialism). (Philosophy)

Asides build a relationship between participants which does not depend on an assessment of what content needs to be made explicit: they are interventions simply to connect. They function to show that both writer and readers are engaged in the same game and are in a position to draw on shared understandings. While all writing needs to solicit reader collusion, this kind of engagement is far more common in the soft fields as readers must be drawn in and involved as participants in a dialogue to a greater extent than in the sciences.

c. Questions are a key strategy of dialogic involvement, inviting engagement and bringing the interlocutor into an arena where they can be led to the writer's viewpoint (Hyland, 2002b). Questions arouse interest and encourage the reader to explore an issue with the writer as an equal, sharing his or her curiosity and following where the argument leads. But almost all questions in the corpus were rhetorical, presenting an opinion as an interrogative so the reader appears to be the judge, but actually expecting no response. This kind of positioning is most obvious when the writer poses a question only to reply immediately:

(11) Is it, in fact, necessary to choose between nurture and nature? My contention is that it is not. (Sociology)

> What do these two have in common, one might ask? The answer is that they share the same politics. (Applied Linguistics)

Questions were largely confined to the soft fields. The fact that they reach out to readers was seen as a distraction by my science informants:

> *Questions are quite rare in my field I think. You might find them in textbooks I suppose, but generally we don't use them. They seem rather intrusive, don't they? Too personal. We generally prefer not to be too intrusive.* (Mechanical Engineering interview)

> *I am looking for the results in a paper, and to see if the method was sound. I am looking for relevance and that kind of dressing is*

irrelevant. People don't ask questions as it would be seen as irrelevant. And condescending probably.
(Electronic Engineering interview)

In contrast the soft-knowledge writers saw them as an important way of relating to readers:

In my field that's all there are, questions. Putting the main issues in the form of questions is a way of presenting my argument clearly and showing them I am on the same wavelength as them.
(Philosophy interview)

Often I structure the argument by putting the problems that they might ask. (Marketing interview)

d. Directives instruct the reader to perform an action or to see things in a way determined by the writer. As mentioned in Chapter 3, they are signalled mainly by imperatives (like *consider, note,* and *imagine*), modals of obligation addressed to the reader (e.g. *must, should, ought*) and predicative adjectives expressing judgements of necessity/importance (*it is important to understand ...*) (Hyland, 2002a). In the sciences these often instruct readers how to carry out research processes or to perform actions in the real world:

(12) Before attempting to measure the density of the interface states, one should freeze the motion of charges in the insulator. (Electronic Engineering)

Mount the specimen on the lower grip of the machine first, ... (Biology)

Set the sliding amplitude at 30mm traveling distance.
(Mechanical Engineering)

More frequently, however, and potentially far more threatening, directives are used to guide readers' reasoning. They can position readers by leading them through an argument to the writer's claims (13), or by getting them to understand a point in a certain way, emphasizing what they should attend to in the argument (14):

(13) Then, let us consider a reference field which has rigid rotation $W,^{*}(p)$ and a rigid displacement w(p) at source point. (Electronic Engineering)

Think about it. What if we eventually learn how to communicate with aliens. (Sociology)

(14) It is important to note that these results do indeed warrant the view that ... (Applied Linguistics)

What has to be recognised is that these issues ... (Mechanical Engineering)

Directives are the only engagement feature which occur more frequently in papers in the sciences and engineering. Although explicit engagement is mainly a feature of the soft disciplines, where writers rely less on accepted procedures to demonstrate their claims, directives are risky and interviewees in the soft fields noted that they treated them with caution:

> *I am very conscious of using words like 'must' and 'consider' and so on and use them for a purpose. I want to say 'Right, stop here. This is important and I want you to take notice of it'. So I suppose I am trying to take control of the reader and getting them to see things my way.* (Sociology interview)

> *I am aware of the effect that an imperative can have so I tend to use the more gentle ones. I don't want to bang them over the head with an argument, I want them to reflect on what I'm saying. I use 'consider' and 'let's look at this' rather than something stronger.* (Applied Linguistics interview)

In contrast, the more linear and tightly structured approach to knowledge construction in the hard-knowledge fields means that readers are often more familiar with the literature, allowing arguments to be presented more succinctly. This view was expressed by a number of my science informants and is summarized in this comment:

> *I rarely give a lot of attention to the dressing, I look for the meat – the findings – and if the argument is sound. If someone wants to save me time in getting there then that is fine. No, I'm not worried about imperatives leading me through it.* (Electronic Engineering interview)

In addition, while the rapid growth of knowledge and high submission rates in many sciences also places a premium on concision, in such contexts directives provide an economy of expression highly valued by space-conscious editors and information-saturated scientists, as another informant noted:

> *I'm very conscious of how I write and I am happy to use an imperative if it puts my idea over clearly. Often we are trying to work to word limits anyway, squeezing fairly complex arguments into a tight space.* (Mechanical Engineering interview)

In sum, these different features are important ways of situating academic arguments in the interactions of disciplinary communities. They represent relatively conventional ways of making meaning and so elucidate a context for interpretation, showing how writers and readers make connections, through texts, to their disciplinary cultures.

7.5 Interactive metadiscourse in articles across disciplines

It is clear that writers in different disciplines represent themselves, their work and their readers in different ways, with those in the humanities and social sciences taking far more explicitly involved and personal positions than those in the science and engineering fields. These differences also extend into interactive forms of metadiscourse, and this is most obvious when we consider endophorics and evidentials.

i. Endophorics

These are metadiscoursal devices that refer the reader to explanatory or related material elsewhere in the text. They represent the writer's assessment of both the material and the audience, relating the propositions to the reader's assumed ability to process, and accept, the ongoing argument. In the soft fields this largely means reinforcing an argument by ensuring the reader has immediate access to relevant data or arguments located elsewhere in the text:

(15) We will see in the next section that failing to capture true higher order and/or interaction effects can lead to problems associated with interpreting regression coefficients, particularly as importance weights. (Marketing)

What is clear from our experiment is that it is not the placing of the grammatical codes that is causing problems, since as we saw in the previous section, informants were willing to use the extra column to obtain synonyms. (Applied Linguistics)

The mere fact of structural change does not, however, predetermine the pattern of worker response, because, as we noted in the previous section, there are multiple mechanisms by which labor force adjustment can occur. (Sociology)

Endophorics, however, are overwhelmingly a feature of writing in the hard disciplines, where the referent is usually a nearby table or graph. Linguistic resources are configured in the sciences by combining images and text, and these metadiscourse markers function to highlight such connections for readers. Writing is a constant switching between written and diagrammatic representation because scientific concepts are typically semiotic hybrids which combine verbal, mathematical and visual elements. Lemke (1998: 105) and Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) stress that visuals in scientific discourse do not simply present verbal information in another way, but add important and necessary data to complement this information. Visuals actively construe meanings and interact with the text and the reader, which makes endophorics central to scientific argument, indicating how the writer sees connections between text elements and the argument and readers. Often these connections are explicitly rhetorical:

(16) It is evident from Fig. 1 that the largest amplitude of the oscillations in the coupling parameter occurs in the case with reflecting BCs and the smallest for open BCs. (Physics)

From Table 2, it is known that for the cases with the same roll radii, the friction factor m increases with increasing reduction. (Mechanical Engineering)

We see from Figs 3B and 4B that the protein is distributed throughout the entire nucleus except for the nucleoli in vivo. (Biology)

To discourse in the hard fields is therefore to be comfortable with these combinations of modes and with the ways that verbal texts interact with quantitative graphs, abstract diagrams and information tables. The metadiscoursal linking of textual material to diagrammatic forms is therefore an important way that scientists communicate.

ii. Evidentials

There are also clear disciplinary differences both in the extent to which writers rely on the work of others in their arguments and in how they represent such work. Table 7.3 shows the distribution of citations in a sample of 80 articles from the corpus, suggesting that the soft disciplines employ more citations, with Engineering and Physics well below the average, although Biology differs considerably from this general picture.

An average of almost 70 citations per paper indicates the importance of locating academic claims within a wider disciplinary

Table 7.3 *Rank order of endophorics by discipline (80 research articles)*

Rank	Discipline	Av. per paper	per 1000 words	Total citations
1	Sociology	104.0	12.5	1040
2	Marketing	94.9	10.1	949
3	Philosophy	85.2	10.8	852
4	Biology	82.7	15.5	827
5	Applied Linguistics	75.3	10.8	753
6	Electronic Engineering	42.8	8.4	428
7	Mechanical Engineering	27.5	7.3	275
8	Physics	24.8	7.4	248
	Totals	67.1	10.4	5,372

framework. Explicit reference to prior literature is a substantial indication of a text's dependence on context and thus a vital piece in the collaborative construction of new knowledge between writers and readers. The embedding of arguments in networks of references not only suggests an appropriate disciplinary orientation, but also reminds us that statements are invariably a response to previous statements and are themselves available for further statements by others. New work has to be embedded in the literature of the community to demonstrate its relevance, importance and the credentials of the writer. But this clearly plays a more visible role in the humanities, with two-thirds of all the citations in the soft-knowledge papers.

One reason for this was noted above. The fact that hard knowledge tends to be more cumulative in the hard fields means that research is driven by the imperatives of current interests, so that new findings emerge from an existing state of knowledge (Kuhn, 1970). Scientists participate in relatively discrete areas of study and their research proceeds along well defined paths, so they can presuppose a certain amount of theoretical, background, procedural expertise and technical lexis (Hyland, 2000). Such shared assumptions allow them to present research using a highly standardized code (cf. Bazerman, 1988) and so references, particularly in Physics, tend to be tightly bound to the particular research topic. Citation is a means of integrating new claims into current knowledge while drawing on previous work as supporting testimony, situating new work in a scaffold of accredited facts.

This kind of predictability is relatively rare in the humanities and social sciences where new knowledge follows more reiterative and recursive routes which are less dependent on a single line of development (Becher, 1989). Old ground is re-crossed and

Table 7.4 *Surface forms of citations (%)*

Discipline	Non-integral	Integral	Subject	Non-subject	Noun phrase
Biology	90.2	9.8	46.7	43.3	10.0
Electronic Engineering	84.3	15.7	34.2	57.6	8.2
Physics	83.1	16.9	28.6	57.1	14.3
Mechanical Engineering	71.3	28.7	24.9	56.3	18.8
Marketing	70.3	29.7	66.9	23.1	10.0
Applied Linguistics	65.6	34.4	58.9	27.1	14.0
Sociology	64.6	35.4	62.9	21.5	15.6
Philosophy	35.4	64.6	31.8	36.8	31.4
Overall averages	70.6	29.4	44.4	40.4	15.3

reinterpreted rather than assumed. More importantly, the literature is open to greater interpretation, findings are often borrowed from other disciplines, and criteria for establishing claims are less clear-cut. Because readers cannot be assumed to possess the same interpretive knowledge, writers have to elaborate a context through citation. The more frequent citations in the soft texts therefore suggest greater care in firmly situating research within disciplinary understandings, providing a discursive framework for arguments and demonstrating a plausible basis for claims.

Writers in the soft fields in my studies were also more likely to highlight the importance they afforded cited authors. Table 7.4 shows that writers in the humanities and social sciences were far more likely to include cited authors in the sentence rather than in parentheses or footnotes (a practice called *integral citation*), and to place them in subject position. In the hard sciences only Biology conformed to this pattern.

The conventions of impersonality in science help to account for the relatively low incidence of citation in the Physics and Engineering corpus and for the predominance of non-integral structures. By reducing their emphasis on individual actors, writers reinforce the ideology that the legitimacy of hard-science knowledge is built on socially invariant criteria. The author is merely 'a messenger relaying the truth from nature' (Gilbert, 1976: 285). This also explains the overwhelming use of the footnote format in the sciences, replacing cited authors with numbers as in these examples:

(17) Furthermore, it has been shown [103] that the fundamental dynamic ... (Electronic Engineering)

As already observed by others [17], T1 was found to be ... (Physics)

> ... suffice to say that it has been thoroughly analysed and summarized by various authors (2, 8, 16), and is still being re-analysed from different points of view by other researchers (17). (Mechanical Engineering)

Removing the agent helps remove the implication of human intervention and the possible subjectivity and distortions this might introduce, maintaining instead the authority of scientific knowledge as built on non-contingent pillars of replication, falsification and induction.

Within integral sentences, greater emphasis can be given to cited authors by situating them in subject position. Here the hard and soft disciplines diverge once more, with the former favouring passive or adjunct agent structures (e.g. *according to* ...). Only Philosophy, which typically consists of narratives that engage the arguments of other writers, consistently included the cited author in the reporting sentence. Philosophy is a discipline with high author visibility as knowledge is constructed through a dialogue with peers in which perennial problems are recycled through personal engagement:

> *Citing allows you to debate with others, the questions have been around a long time, but you hope you are bringing something new to it. You are keeping the conversation going, adding something they haven't considered ... You know most of them anyway, you read them and they read you.* (Philosophy interview)

Philosophers also used far more noun phrases and possessive forms, which open up more opportunities for evaluation:

(18) If I guess correctly that the Goldblach conjecture is true, ... (Philosophy)

> We can usefully start with Stalnker's pioneering sketch of a two stage theory. (Philosophy)

> ... according to Davidson's anomalous monism, our mental vocabulary ... (Philosophy)

In the sciences these forms largely acted as shorthand references to procedures rather than a means of introducing an author's work:

(19) The Drucker stability postulate in the large regains ... (Mechanical Engineering)

> Using the Raleigh-Ritz procedure, i.e. making it stationary with respect to ... (Physics)

> Matthei's equations [17, 19] were first used as a starting point in the scale model ... (Electronic Engineering)

iii. Summary

In sum, we tend to find more citations and an overall disposition towards integral and subject citation forms in the social science and humanities papers (Hyland, 1999c). Such citation practices are not merely extending the thread of knowledge from a previously established base, but helping to construct an authorial self by positioning the writer in relation to other views. Writing in the humanities stresses the individual creative thinker, but always within the context of a canon of disciplinary knowledge. This was mentioned explicitly as a reason for citing by a sociologist I interviewed:

> *I've aligned myself with a particular camp and tend to cite people from there. Partly because I've been influenced by those ideas and partly because I want them to read my work. It's a kind of code, showing where I am on the spectrum. Where I stand.*

Overall, the relatively greater cumulative growth of knowledge in the sciences allows for succinct communication, contributes to apparently 'strong' claims, and facilitates a highly formalized reporting system which allows writers to minimize their presence in their texts. The degree to which the background to a problem and the appropriate methods for its investigation can be taken for granted means the ways claims are established or refuted are relatively clear and this is reflected in writers' deployment of metadiscourse markers. In the soft disciplines, where what counts as adequate explanation is less assured, interpretive variation increases and writers must rely to a greater extent on a personal projection into the text, through markers which invoke an intelligent reader and a credible, collegial writer.

7.6 Metadiscourse variation in textbooks across disciplines

To expand this discussion of disciplinary variation in metadiscourse, I would briefly like to mention textbooks. Like research articles, this is also a community-constructed genre, embodying disciplinary conventions, values and practices as authors draw on the theoretical, research and rhetorical vocabularies which represent their field. Even a glance at course texts reveals their considerable heterogeneity, with wide disciplinary differences in their form and presentation. The coloured diagrams and glossy photographs which characterize Business Studies texts, for example, seem to convey marketing norms, while the experimental procedures, taxonomies and electron micrographs

Table 7.5 *Metadiscourse in academic textbooks per 1,000 words*

Category	Philosophy	Sociology	Applied Linguistics	Marketing	Physics	Biology	Mechanical Engineering	Electronic Engineering	%
Transitions	33.1	26.1	21.9	29.6	22.6	25.9	21.1	19.0	37.0
Frame markers	3.3	2.6	4.6	3.5	3.5	3.1	3.2	3.5	4.9
Endophoric	0.3	0.8	3.7	1.6	7.9	6.5	8.5	9.2	6.7
Evidentials	0.8	4.9	4.3	0.7	0.8	1.9	0.1	0.1	2.7
Code glosses	4.0	5.3	7.6	5.1	5.8	5.3	5.4	5.6	8.0
Interactive	*41.5*	*39.7*	*42.1*	*40.5*	*40.6*	*42.7*	*38.3*	*37.4*	*59.3*
Hedges	12.3	10.6	8.5	10.3	5.5	8.7	4.4	4.8	12.2
Boosters	8.3	4.6	5.3	5.1	3.8	5.4	4.9	5.1	7.9
Attitude markers	5.9	5.1	4.2	6.4	2.7	3.8	4.2	3.3	6.6
Self mention	5.7	0.7	1.8	1.1	1.2	0.7	0.7	0.8	2.5
Engagement markers	19.7	5.5	8.4	3.4	6.0	2.4	6.2	4.7	11.3
Interactional	*51.9*	*26.5*	*28.2*	*26.3*	*19.2*	*21.0*	*20.4*	*18.7*	*40.5*
Totals	**93.4**	**66.2**	**70.3**	**66.8**	**59.8**	**63.7**	**58.7**	**56.1**	**100**

common in Biology textbooks represent a knowable, objective world to novice scientists.

More centrally, textbooks play different roles in different disciplines. In hard-knowledge fields they embody the truths and current platforms of professional activity. So, in the sciences (e.g. Love, 1993; Myers, 1992) and Economics (Hewings, 1990; Tadros, 1994), certitude, abstract nominalizations and style reinforce existing paradigms. In Philosophy and composition, on the other hand, textbooks are often regarded as important vehicles for advancing scholarship and presenting original research (e.g. Gebhardt, 1993).

The significance of metadiscourse in this genre is shown by an average of one instance every 15 words in a corpus of 56 textbook chapters totalling half a million words (Hyland, 2000). Table 7.5 shows that writers used far more interactive than interactional forms in textbooks and that transitions, hedges and engagement markers were the most frequent devices overall.

There are, once again, similarities in the frequency of interactive metadiscourse items across the disciplines while interactional forms were more common in the soft-knowledge disciplines. Philosophers were again heavy users of interactional metadiscourse, employing twice as many devices as any other discipline. Broadly, then, disciplinary differences reflect the patterns we have seen in research articles, with the science and engineering texts displaying less concern with establishing an explicit interactional context.

7.7 Interactional metadiscourse in textbooks across disciplines

Because interactional metadiscourse tends to be a feature of overtly argumentative and persuasive genres it is surprising to find that it makes up 40 per cent of the metadiscourse in textbooks. This is a genre whose apparently uncontentious purpose is simply to arrange currently accepted knowledge into a coherent form for naïve readers, but there is clearly more going on here. The fact that interactional metadiscourse patterns mirrored their distributions in research articles points to the differences in rhetorical practices among the disciplines noted above. Again, the soft-knowledge fields displayed more explicit interactional positions and the hard disciplines employed arguments based more on theoretical models and experimental results.

i. Hedges and boosters

These epistemological issues are clear in the manipulation of certainty across disciplines. While the shift from new claims in research articles to ascribed truths in textbooks results in fewer hedges in this genre, disciplinary distributions are broadly similar to those of research papers, with the soft fields containing more hedges, and boosters evenly spread among the disciplines. So although textbook writers generally seek to present what is taken for granted as fact, they are careful to distinguish the categorical from the uncertain. This is particularly evident in the humanities and social science books, which most closely approach the articles in their reluctance to upgrade claims:

(20) This probably explains some of the outbreaks of 'red mould disease' in sliced and wrapped bread. (Marketing)

Krashen's work has been the subject of impassioned attacks, perhaps because of the frustrations involved in tracking down the empirical basis for its claims.
(Applied Linguistics)

... these problems might appear to discredit, to a greater or lesser extent, the industrial state approach as an underarching explanation of state activity in modern Britain.
(Sociology)

Compared to hedges, however, writers in the science fields are more often prepared to move beyond the tenuous and uncertain to what may be safely assured. All the science textbooks but Physics made far greater use of boosters than the articles. This demonstrates to students

the strong claims of the sciences and the confident rhetoric of a discipline moving knowledge forward based on faith in its methods and a secure awareness of what the world is like:

(21) It clearly indicates that initial evolution from the universal ancestor was at first in two directions, the Bacteria versus the Archaea/Eukarya line. (Mechanical Engineering)

There is now no ambiguity; we will get definite answers for this idealization. (Physics)

That is, we'll prove that a 1-bit or 2-bit change in a code word yields a noncode word. (Electronic Engineering)

ii. Self mention and attitude markers

Assertiveness is also expressed and strengthened through the use of self mention and attitude markers, and, once again, there were substantial community differences. Again, these were greater in the soft fields, with writers in Philosophy and Applied Linguistics most often taking overt personal responsibility for their claims:

(22) We believe that this concept of the 'self' is not entirely appropriate as the basis for Asian communication. (Applied Linguistics)

I am convinced, for my part, that no ontology – that is to say, no apprehension of ontological mystery in whatever degree – is possible ... (Philosophy)

Those interests, I contend, authorize the subjection of individual spontaneity to external control. (Philosophy)

Here we see a confident expert in full control of the material, making judgements and passing comment on issues of concern to the discipline.

Attitudinal metadiscourse was also more frequent in the social science and humanities textbooks, which contained both a larger number and a wider range of devices:

(23) The basis of the enormous productivity and affluence of modern industrial societies is their fantastic store of technological information. (Sociology)

This is an incredibly large figure for such a small economy. (Marketing)

> ... intellectuals especially have been prone to change their world views radically and with amazing frequency.
>
> (Philosophy)

iii. Engagement markers

These showed both the most significant differences with articles, with twice as many devices in the textbooks, and some of the largest disciplinary variations. Most interesting were the preferences for particular kinds of engagement markers, with an overwhelming concentration of directives in the sciences. As we have seen, necessity modals and imperatives frequently direct readers to particular lines of thought or action, and in the science textbooks this kind of authority often borders on the autocratic:

(24) T7 and T8 show a few rules that should seem obvious.
(Electronic Engineering)

> You should encourage your local engineering chapters (...) to invite outside lecturers to discuss these topics with you. It is important that you learn how to ...
>
> (Mechanical Engineering)

> You should be careful when using fictitious forces to describe physical phenomena. Remember that fictitious forces are used only in noninertial frames of reference.
>
> (Physics)

> You should note in methods a and b that we must be consistent in working with ac or dc parameters. If, as in method a, you wish to work with dc sensitivity, you must work with dc voltage. Similarly, if you work with ac sensitivity, you must work with ac voltage.
>
> (Electronic Engineering)

In the soft fields such explicit authority is rather less common and instead there is an attempt to engage student readers by drawing them into a shared world of disciplinary understandings through the use of inclusive *we*. This is a particularly common strategy in Philosophy, where it operates to reduce the distance between participants and to stress shared discovery and participation. The authority of the writer, however, always remains clear:

(25) I suspect that if we looked carefully enough, we'd discover there's more agreement among societies about basic moral principles than we're often led to believe by Conventionalists.
(Philosophy)

> We should be able to determine whether there's a 'sense of self' simply by talking to them to find out whether they mean the same thing as we do when they say 'I'. (Philosophy)
>
> Where does that leave us? We have yet to develop a fully plausible theory about morality. (Philosophy)

Interestingly, many cases of *we* in textbooks do not simply link writers and readers, but work to construct student readers as junior members of the disciplinary discourse community:

> (26) We call these models mathematical models. In creating them it is our hope that we can find one which will simulate the real physical system very well. (Physics)
>
> In any complement number system, we normally deal with a fixed number of digits, say n. (Electronic Engineering)
>
> Both of these features as we currently understand them require the development of a cell structure. (Biology)

Through their embedded assumptions that the student readers' goals, understandings and values are compatible with those of the community, the reader is recognized as a peripheral participant in the practices and rhetoric of the discipline.

7.8 Interactive metadiscourse in textbooks across disciplines

Sixty per cent of all metadiscourse in the textbooks was interactive. There is a clear priority here for writers to ensure that student readers are able to follow the exposition and recover their intended meanings. Interactive metadiscourse helps writers to make links between arguments, between different parts of the text, between current and other texts, and between what the writer believes the reader knows and what needs to be made clear. These forms therefore help guide the reading processes of novices by indicating discourse organization and spelling out propositional connections and conclusions.

i. Transitions

These comprised two-thirds of all interactive forms, functioning to connect processes by adding, comparing and explaining them. As I have pointed out, we have to distinguish transitions which connect *activities* and those which connect *arguments*, with metadiscourse

referring only to this second, discourse-organizing role. It is unsurprising therefore that these forms should occur most frequently in the soft disciplines, where exposition relies more on verbal argumentation than the demonstration of proofs, the unpacking of tables and figures, or the interpretation of quantitative data. This function of linking argument-internal elements can be seen in these examples:

(27) Furthermore, once you know the difference between pleasure and pain, don't you try to get more of the former and none the latter? You control what you do. Notice, however, that so far we have generated only necessary characteristics, not a set of sufficient ones. Because, again, we can find counterexamples like dogs and cats which also have the traits we are describing. And this means that our list needs a good deal more precision. (Philosophy)

It's hard to discuss 'intelligence' because so-called 'intelligence tests' measure only certain abilities. Furthermore, the test items as well as the language they're couched in can be culture bound. (Marketing)

Here the writers are organizing their discourses to offer warrants for their claims and what follows from these, clearly marking the conclusions that students should draw from them.

ii. Endophorics

In contrast, endophorics are largely a feature of the science and engineering texts, which contained 85 per cent of these devices. As in the research papers, these are overwhelmingly used to signal the to-and-fro between visual and verbal information, acting to make content clearer and inducting learners into the ways that science typically employs a variety of semiotic systems to make meanings.

(28) (See Example 15–3 for a detailed examination of how source-impedance unbalance leads to degradation of the CMRR in differential amplifiers.) (Electronic Engineering)

Figure 3.8.4 shows the unidirectional repeatability, while Figure 3.8.5 shows a possible definition of bidirectional repeatability. (Mechanical Engineering)

Table 10.6 is an approximate summary of what probably occurs during the firing of a whiteware body. (Physics)

In textbooks they are also used to help learners navigate the discourse, a particularly important function in long pedagogic texts. As we see

here, endophorics are crucial to linking distant information and ensuring that salient information is available to help learners understand current material:

(29) Although direct sequencing of ribosomal RNA is still used, newer methods are beginning to supplant this approach. Specifically, the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technique (see Section 8.9) is being used to amplify RRNA genes (the DNA itself) using synthetically produced primers complementary to conserved sequences in RRNA as PCR templates (see section on signature sequences). (Biology)

Note in the above procedure that the stress-concentration factor is applied to both the mean and the alternating components of stress. In Chapter 9 we used it with the latter only, with the argument that yielding in a cycle or two of loading would relieve the stress. (Mechanical Engineering)

Frequently endophorics are used to contextualize the current topic, combining with frame markers, to either preview content or mark a topic shift:

(30) In Chapter 2 we discussed the measurement of direct current and voltage, as well as resistance measurements, using the d'Arsonval meter movement which is a dc-responding device. In this chapter we will discover that we can use the same d'Arsonval meter movement to measure alternating current and voltage. (Electronic Engineering)

In the previous section it was assumed that the load acting on the slender member and the support forces were concentrated or 'point' forces. Another idealization which is commonly employed is the concept of a continuously distributed loading. (Mechanical Engineering)

Writers in the soft disciplines generally prefer a relatively more self-contained discursive style that does not seek to affiliate content by signposting links in this way, with only applied linguists using this strategy with any regularity.

iii. Evidential markers

The greater use of evidential markers in applied linguistics and sociology presents learners with a very different rhetoric, one that supports arguments and claims of novelty by reaching outside the current text. As discussed in Chapter 5, evidentials are far less common in textbooks than articles, but they are not omitted altogether.

While the presentation of human claims as established facts takes priority in several disciplines, evidentials play an important role in the social sciences by emphasizing explicit intertextuality and providing students with an awareness that claims are inseparable from their originators. Reference to prior literature thus helps to demonstrate the writer's expertise and contributes to an understanding of what counts as evidence in the soft fields:

(31) Krashen (1982) points out that students' length of residence in the foreign country correlates with cloze test scores. (Applied Linguistics)

According to the observations of Harry Gracey, kindergarten can be as demanding as a boot camp in teaching the lessons of regimentation and obedience to authority. (Sociology)

Parsons argues that families 'are "factories" which produce human personalities'. (Sociology)

In the hard fields experimental evidence and accepted disciplinary truths provide support for claims rather than attribution, once again showing how textbooks reflect the conventions of community-specific argument. In fact, the use of metadiscourse in this genre is a key dimension of literacy acquisition, giving learners a sense of participating in a particular community and leading them towards eventually becoming independent producers of such discourses. A number of informants made this explicit:

When I set a textbook for a course I'm not only telling students what knowledge I want them to have of the discipline, I'm providing a model of good writing. How to set out arguments, refer to other studies, link ideas, and so on.
(Applied Linguistics interview)

The content is important of course, the science has to be right, but also how scientists do research and how we talk about it.
(Biology interview)

Philosophy is mainly about argument, not facts. I'm not interested in teaching facts, but in reasoning, interpreting, arguing clearly. The readings have to give good examples of that.
(Philosophy interview)

iv. Summary

In sum, metadiscourse in textbooks contributes to the ways disciplines frame knowledge for novices, in terms of both a pedagogic sequencing of content and the interactional choices which reveal a perspective of the discipline. These metadiscourse options thus display an orientation to both professional and student audiences, and to particular views of disciplinary socialization and learning. By asking (mainly rhetorical) questions, varying their degree of certainty, confidently evaluating the assertions of others, issuing directives, providing definitions and leading readers to particular interpretations of material, writers construct an authoritative and coherent picture of their field for learners.

7.9 Summary and conclusions

In this chapter I have tried to show how metadiscourse practices are closely related to the social activities, cognitive styles and epistemological beliefs of academic communities.

In research articles we have seen that metadiscourse is sensitive to differences in the ways disciplines understand the world and conduct their academic practices. Natural scientists tend to see their goal as producing public knowledge able to withstand the rigours of falsifiability. Because research often occupies considerable investments in money, training, equipment and expertise, it is frequently conducted at specific sites. Similarly scientists tend to be committed to specific research areas for many years, establishing a clear and familiar context for those working in the area. The novelty and significance of contributions can therefore be easily recognized and metadiscourse is largely devoted to linking verbal and visual information and establishing a clear line of argument. The soft-knowledge domains, in contrast, tend to be more interpretive and produce discourses which often recast knowledge as sympathetic understanding, promoting acceptance in readers through an ethical rather than a cognitive progression. Metadiscourse thus exhibits a more explicitly interpersonal colouring, building a relationship with readers, drawing them into the discourse, and establishing a clear stance and attitude to arguments.

Pedagogic texts reveal similar disciplinary differences in writers' use of metadiscourse, attitudes to knowledge and approaches to instruction. Here interactive features play a prominent role as writers seek to facilitate the transfer of disciplinary knowledge as clearly as possible while assuming the authority of a disciplinary expert. In addition, we find that textbook patterns represent the discourse of their

parent communities, so students will gain an understanding of the ways that meanings are encoded in their disciplines. In laying out what he or she regards as the principles of the discipline, the writer is also acting as a guide to its argument forms and patterns of reader engagement. In this process metadiscourse helps to assist novice readers towards a range of values, ideologies and practices that will enable them to interpret and employ academic knowledge in institutionally approved ways.

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SECTION 3
ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

In the preceding chapters I have defined, elaborated and discussed the concept of metadiscourse and presented a series of studies which I hope have demonstrated something of its value to discourse analysis and the understanding of communication. In the process I have, implicitly, sketched a methodology for using metadiscourse as a research tool, identifying the kinds of distinctions which form the basis of analyses and elaborating the functions, forms and uses of the concept. Less obviously, perhaps, I have also sought to show how a knowledge and understanding of metadiscourse might be of considerable value to teachers and students, providing important insights into language use that can have pedagogical payoffs. In this closing section I want to discuss this aspect in a little more detail by outlining some of the practical benefits and applications of metadiscourse for teaching. A concluding chapter raises some unresolved issues and points forward to further research in the area.

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8 Metadiscourse in the classroom

In this chapter I want to focus briefly on some of the pedagogical implications of earlier chapters to consider what the study of metadiscourse offers language teachers and how they might go about putting it to use. By exploring metadiscourse in this book, testing aspects of the theory and applying it to real data, I have been arguing for a re-evaluation of the concept and suggesting that we might incorporate it more centrally in our models of learning, reading and writing. Effective teaching and learning crucially depend on understanding how language works and using this understanding to help students communicate appropriately and successfully in their communities. Here I will elaborate on how metadiscourse can contribute to this enterprise.

8.1 Students, writing and audience awareness

Metadiscourse is a central feature of communication since only when we have correctly assessed both the readers' resources for interpreting a text and their likely responses to it can we construct our arguments effectively. The significance of metadiscourse is gradually becoming recognized in language teaching, but until recently was largely neglected as teachers focused instead on content: how speakers and writers conveyed their ideas. Academic writing, in particular, was seen as a limited textual practice, taught either through imitating the writing processes of experts or by concentrating on grammatical patterns which, if executed correctly, produced successful texts.

Even today, in many classrooms around the world, these views still prevail and a lot of energy is invested in learning and applying rules while ignoring the role of rhetorical functions and interpersonal strategies. Mauranen's (1993b: 1–2) comments of a decade ago are still largely relevant:

> The writers seem not to be aware of these textual features, or the underlying rhetorical practices. This lack of awareness is, in part, due to the fact that textlinguistic features have not been the

> concern of traditional language teaching in schools. Sometimes text strategies are taught for the mother tongue, but rarely if ever for foreign languages separately. Such phenomena have therefore not been brought to the attention of (writers) struggling with writing.

But while an explicit knowledge of rules can help, this is only part of learning to write. What is often missing is an understanding of the rhetorical options that make texts work within and for specific contexts and audiences. In particular, it is important for novice writers to have a reliable idea of how far their relevant knowledge and understandings are likely to overlap with those of their reader so that all participants will make sense of the text in the same way.

Accommodating one's interlocutor in this way is not only central to communication, but is also crucial to learning to speak a first language. By repeatedly participating in conversational interactions with parents and other adults, small children learn how to recount experiences as a shared endeavour, jointly reconstructing their experiences with a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978). Through the adult's questioning and responses, the child learns how explicit a story needs to be, the kinds of details that it should have, and even that it should have a point, and so eventually learns to incorporate the reader's needs into the story (Painter, 1986). Thus the child has the time and the attention of an adult to move from joint to solitary development of a 'text', something which is missing when he or she experiences teacher feedback and conferencing when later coming to write at school. Through interaction then, we learn to produce language appropriate to a particular audience and genre, developing the metadiscourse resources we need in response to others.

Unfortunately second language students often have considerable trouble in fleshing out a mental image of their readers (Silva, 1993; Hillocks, 1986). As the research discussed in Chapter 6 suggests, ESL writers tend to use metadiscourse devices very differently to their native English-speaking counterparts. This means that they often fail to represent themselves or their ideas in the ways that they intend and their writing can seem uncontextualized, incoherent and inappropriately reader-focused. Students generally recognize that they need to interact with their readers, but without a clear understanding of available resources, they often simply transfer conversational features to their writing. Conversations, however, obviously operate in real time and speaker turns help regulate and order the unfolding interaction. In written texts only one of the interacting parties plays a visible role and metadiscourse functions very differently, working to anticipate the reactions of the other, imagined interactant.

This example from a Hong Kong student's high school exam essay shows how transferring metadiscourse which is common in conversational settings to academic writing can seem awkward and unsuitable:

(1) If we walk around the news stands, we can easily see different kinds of comics with attractive covers everywhere. You can look around yourself in the streets and you will see many young people are reading comic books. There is no doubt that comic books are probably the most popular form of reading material for youngsters in Hong Kong. Many of my friends read them and I myself buy several every week such as 'Dragon Ball' and 'Tiger Fish'. Is this trend unhealthy for students? Does it lead to bad influences on them? We cannot prove the increase of crime rate and suicide can be linked to increasing reading of violent and pornography comics.

The heavy use of self mention, boosters (*no doubt, many, easily see, will see, everywhere*), and engagement markers (particularly rhetorical questions, inclusive *we*, and reader pronouns) all suggest the personal, direct and involved communication of face-to-face conversation. This is often seen as inappropriately informal and colloquial for academic argument (e.g. Hinkel, 2002), and can mean that students are marked down. The writer of the extract above, for instance, received a *D grade* for this essay in the Hong Kong school-leaving examination.

This kind of pseudo-conversational interaction is by no means restricted to L2 students. The extract below shows how a textbook writer, searching for an engaging and informal style, misguidedly overuses the same metadiscourse features as in (1), and so potentially creates problems of adjustment for the student reader, and maybe irritation for the rest of us:

(2) One of the most basic questions we can ponder is, 'Who or what am I? What is it that is unique or different about me?' How do we answer that? For openers, unlike rocks in the field and the tar in the road, we're alive. But so are lots of other things: plants and trees, viruses and algae. So simply being alive is not enough of an answer. How about the fact that we move under our own power and do whatever we choose to do? That differentiates us from stones and shrubs, but what about dogs and cats? Can't they move and make choices? What if we say that we're intelligent and have more control over our actions? That's more specific, and it excludes all the so-called 'lower animals'. Isn't there something else we can point to that we think is unique about our humanity?

In sum, many writers experience difficulty in adapting their prose for readers (Redd-Boyd and Slater, 1989). This is generally because of the different conventions writers are familiar with from their home communities and cultures. Because of this we cannot expect either L1 or L2 students to just 'pick up' suitable metadiscourse usage from their assigned readings or other course materials, for these often provide inappropriate models. Textbook authors' efforts to both construct a disciplinary image and mediate unfamiliar material for novices involve rhetorical practices very different to other academic genres (Myers, 1992; Swales, 1993). EFL and EAP (English for Academic Purposes) writing textbooks are often equally unhelpful, either treating metadiscourse features in a rather piecemeal and cursory way or ignoring them altogether. The importance of hedges and boosters, for example, is rarely reflected in textbooks (Holmes, 1988; Hyland, 1994), and even transitions can be misrepresented (Milton, 1999). In addition, this neglect of metadiscourse in EFL textbooks may be duplicated by teachers who rely on such texts as sources for their own in-house materials.

As a result, it is rare for metadiscourse to be either explicitly taught or adequately covered in writing materials in a way which either shows the systematic effect of particular options or reveals the important interactive nature of discourse. It seems vital, then, that students should receive appropriate instruction in metadiscourse using models of argument which allow them to practise writing within the socio-rhetorical framework of their target communities.

8.2 Advantages of teaching metadiscourse features

Essentially, an awareness of metadiscourse offers three main advantages to students, whether ESL or first language writers. First, it helps them to better understand the cognitive demands that texts make on readers and the ways writers can assist them to process information. Second, it provides them with the resources to express a stance towards their statements. Third, it allows them to negotiate this stance and engage in a community-appropriate dialogue with readers. Spelling this out a little more, the potential advantages of highlighting metadiscourse in the classroom can be summarized in point form. The possible contributions that metadiscourse can make to a text are that:

1. It provides a context in which to place propositional information.
2. It injects a human presence into a written text and so makes students more attentive and engaged with a text.

3. It increases the persuasiveness of a text.
4. It aids comprehension and recall of text content.
5. It assists coherence and relates issues clearly to each other.
6. It helps mediate the real world and the school world through a real writer.
7. It highlights writer uncertainties and makes readers aware of the subjective interpretation of truth.
8. It helps show the author's position on the propositional information in a text.
9. It indicates the writer's attitude to the reader of the text, including intimacy, relative power, status, etc.
10. It relieves the reader's processing load by highlighting important points, indicating direction, anticipating structure, linking sections and ideas, etc.
11. It shows readers that the writer recognizes their needs and is seeking to engage them in a dialogue.
12. It reveals the writer's awareness of the interactional conventions of a community.

Evidence for these assertions is less easy to come by, but some studies have suggested that both reading and writing are enhanced through appropriate use of metadiscourse. Crismore and Vande Kopple (1988), for instance, found that students learnt more from texts which included hedges than from texts in which they were omitted, while Barton (1993) observed that more experienced and successful writers made greater use of contrast conjunct transitions. Intaraprawat and Steffensen (1995) discovered a strong correlation between the use of metadiscourse and the quality of student writing. In timed essays written by twelve ESL students they found that the higher graded essays contained proportionally more metadiscourse and a greater variety of features than the poor essays. Essays marked as 'good', for example, contained almost twice the proportion of hedges, attitude markers and evidentials (using my terms) than the weaker essays, and more than double the proportion of code glosses and boosters. The authors argue that these differences reveal the good writers' greater awareness of audience, and the cognitive demands the texts made on readers, as well as their greater ability to see their texts objectively and comment on them in various ways.

Metadiscourse research often has a pedagogical orientation, with writers at pains to point out that their findings may be useful to non-native speakers of English. Few studies, however, have sought to discover whether writing actually improves as a result of explicit instruction in metadiscourse. One exception is Cheng and Steffensen's

Table 8.1 *Changes in metadiscourse use after 2 months' instruction (Shaw and Liu, 1998)*

Function	First essay	Second essay
Transitions and sequencers	400	503
Reminders	17	13
Illocutionary markers	70	68
Announcements	31	28
Hedges	66	60
Boosters	11	22
Attitude markers	216	223
Engagement markers	75	116
Others	9	7
Totals	895	1040

(1996) study which discovered that an experimental group received significantly higher grades in their in-class essays after being taught the function and use of metadiscourse for 16 weeks. This experimental group used more metadiscourse and used the markers more skilfully than a control group which had received only conventional process writing instruction, suggesting that teaching students to use metadiscourse was an important factor in improving writing skills.

Shaw and Liu (1998) also found substantial improvements in students' essay writing after two months of EAP instruction which included key metadiscourse features. Studying 164 foreign language students from 17 different first language backgrounds, Shaw and Liu observed that the texts they analysed evidenced an increasing awareness of genre expectations and audience, characterizing the changes as a move from a spoken to a written style. In terms of the acquisition of metadiscourse items, this meant an increased use of transitions and engagement markers (*as you can see, we can note that*), small increases in attitude markers and boosters, and a reduction in self mention. Table 8.1 summarizes some of these changes. According to the researchers, the increase in metadiscourse 'was moderate and not undiscriminating', and seemed to respond 'to the academic demand for explicitness'.

Xu (2001) found similar changes in a study of metadiscourse use by 200 students across four years of an undergraduate course in English at a Chinese university. Broadly, he found that students in the final two years employed more formally complex and precise interactive metadiscourse (*consequently, therefore, as a result*) than those in the first two years, who preferred forms such as *but, then* and *and*. In addition, they used fewer attitude markers, less self mention

and fewer 'validity markers' (hedges and boosters). The reasons for these changes are complex, but Xu attributes them to the weakening intrusion of Chinese criteria of good writing as the students gained greater awareness of English academic norms.

8.3 Some teaching principles

Teaching students to use metadiscourse effectively essentially means helping them to develop a sense of audience and equipping them with the means to engage with that audience appropriately. Readers expect that texts will be organized in certain ways, that sufficient signals of the writer's intentions will be available in the writing, and that their own views will be acknowledged. The fact that many students find it hard to see writing as 'interactive' and so take their models from the more obvious to-and-fro of face-to-face encounters means there is considerable value in explicitly introducing the concept of metadiscourse to students and discussing the functions it performs for writers. Cheng and Steffensen's (1996) research, for instance, involved students reading and working with articles about metadiscourse and this may have contributed to improvements in their writing.

Instruction which is explicitly directed to student awareness in this way is generally referred to as *rhetorical consciousness raising* (e.g. Swales, 1990: 213). This involves tasks which sensitize students to the rhetorical effects and features that tend to recur in particular genres and communities. This approach is more concerned with producing better writers than with producing better texts, so it emphasizes skills and strategies that will generalize beyond a current course. One activity that increases students' linguistic meta-cognition in this way is asking students to engage in their own discourse analysis. This encourages them to develop a curiosity about the rhetorical practices of their communities and an exploratory attitude towards texts. In the case of metadiscourse instruction, the discussion in previous chapters suggests that teachers need to consider the following key elements:

1. the writer's target needs;
2. the writer's prior writing and learning experiences;
3. the role of language in expressing functions;
4. the importance of social interactions;
5. the use of authentic texts;
6. the role of audience and community practices.

i. Consider the writer's target needs

If writing is a cultural activity, reflecting the writer's socially recognized goals while interacting with other members of a community, then we have to start with the questions 'Why are these students learning to write?', 'Who will they be interacting with?', 'For what purposes?' Needs are not always easy to determine, however, and teacher training manuals often give a misleading objectivity to the process. It is easy to overlook the potential conflicts between the needs of different stakeholders (school administrators, government departments, parents, employers, teachers, learners) and to neglect the personal and political compromises that may be necessary to gain access to prestigious academic or professional communities (Benesch, 2001). However, the fact that metadiscourse use varies across cultures, communities and genres means that we should, as far as possible, identify the kinds of writing that learners will need to do in their target situations and bring these into our courses. This involves careful study of the goals, relationships and rhetorical interactions of target groups and means providing students with opportunities to explore the ways writers typically use metadiscourse in relevant genres.

ii. Consider the writer's prior writing and learning experiences

To see writing as a cultural activity not only means that we should recognize the different contexts in which writing occurs, but also that we should be aware of the different culturally grounded writing and learning experiences that students bring to the classroom. It is not enough to establish what will be expected of students in the university or workplace and then give them models of what we want them to produce. Students from different backgrounds will have their own ideas of what appropriate interactions and engagement are in writing based on their prior educational, cultural or social experiences. Teachers have to take care to recognize these in the tasks they assign so students can avoid making choices which reflect rhetorical conventions not shared by their readers. This means that we must acknowledge the possibility of alternative practices and consider ways of engaging writers by providing clear models, relevant topics, appropriate writing strategies and relevant feedback to make writing tasks manageable. It also suggests that we might assist students, through an understanding of the ways metadiscourse varies in different contexts, to draw on their own experiences of genres and communities to interpret and produce texts.

iii. View learning to write as learning to use language

Some approaches to writing instruction emphasize individual self-expression and downplay the importance of language, but focusing on metadiscourse encourages students to see that the target language is a resource they can use to make meanings when they write. Teachers should encourage students to see that effective interaction with readers involves making appropriate grammar and vocabulary choices for particular purposes and audiences. Focusing on the functions of metadiscourse features means that developing an awareness of grammar has to be integrated into the exploration of texts and contexts rather than taught as a discrete component of writing. This allows writers to draw on relevant knowledge about text structure and context to predict the language they are likely to need in a way that learning isolated forms can never do. Moreover, in learning how to use language in their writing, students not only begin to understand how to create meanings and interpret reality, they also develop an understanding of how language itself works, acquiring a vocabulary they can use to talk about language and its role in texts.

iv. Highlight social interactions

Metadiscourse is the way we negotiate material through interactions with others. Teaching students to use metadiscourse effectively therefore stresses the importance of such interactions, and how devices can be used to construct a dialogue in a monologic format. This not only means that teachers should focus on functions rather than forms, but also that they should emphasize key issues which are often neglected in writing courses, such as self-presentation, politeness, assertiveness, mitigation, reference to shared knowledge, coercion, stance, status and the 'positioning' of readers. The constraints of both the writer's purpose and the genre in a particular context will be important here, but so will the writer's sense of his or her personal relationship with readers in terms of social distance, power differences and the scale of the imposition being made on the reader. By engaging in a variety of relevant writing experiences which draw on different purposes and readers, students can see how texts relate to particular contexts and ways of using language.

v. Create tasks based on authentic texts

Taking students' communicative needs seriously means that the selection of metadiscourse devices to be taught should be based on the target language repertoire. Using authentic samples of language

means that students are exposed to the most useful, productive and frequent items so that their functions become apparent. Equally, however, it means that features are contextualized so that grammar is subordinated to the rhetorical features of key genres. The texts they work with should therefore be both *relevant* to the students, representing the genres they will have to write in their target contexts, and *authentic*, created to be used in real-world contexts rather than in classrooms. Rewriting texts for students often involves a loss of cohesion and coherence, distorting some elements by emphasizing others, but it can also mean that the texts lose much of what students need to learn from them. Metadiscourse devices typically work together to convey information about those who write them, their relationship to their audience and the culture of the community in which they are written, and much of this can be lost with simulated texts.

vi. Investigate community practices

Because metadiscourse places a consideration of the reader at the centre of writing, it is important that students should be involved in the analysis of communicative events as much as they are in the investigation of textual features. By observing activities that occur in the target context and by discussing these with participants, it is possible for students to see more clearly what happens in those contexts, who is involved, the roles they play, and the meanings interactions have for them. Essentially, students benefit from learning to view the various metadiscourse features as purposeful rather than arbitrary, as situated rather than autonomous, and as interactive rather than as stylistic flourishes.

This kind of target situation research involves methods of observation, interview and participant reflection to understand how texts are produced and used in a particular situation, who uses them and how they are linked with other texts and purposes. This encourages students to see how writing is embedded in real-world situations and the role of metadiscourse in getting things done with language. Encouraging learners to locate texts in their full cultural context in this way also:

- assists students to understand metadiscourse by showing how writing has consequences for users;
- helps students to see the role metadiscourse plays in the ways people interact with each other and in constructing contexts and identities;

- develops an appreciation of the ways texts are related to other texts in contexts of use;
- encourages critical engagement with the situations students may later participate in and helps them to see how texts are underpinned by ideologies and values;
- provides learners with a means for investigating and questioning communicative events.

8.4 Some teaching strategies

Rhetorical consciousness-raising involves developing a generative capacity rather than an adherence to rules, an exploitation of forms not a compliance to them. This requires finding ways of incorporating contextual factors into teaching to emphasize a conscious awareness of recurrent and useful patterns in target genres and the need to reflect on the motives behind their use. There are three main steps that teachers can use to highlight metadiscourse and help students interact more effectively with their readers. First expert writers' interactive strategies need to be made salient to students, then opportunities given for students to practice their use, and finally writing tasks provided which ask students to weave appropriate forms into their own work.

i. Analysing texts

Familiarizing students with metadiscourse can begin with tasks which require no production but which draw attention to how language is used in relevant contexts for interactional purposes.

One way of highlighting particular features is to search for relevant examples in real texts using a concordancing program. Concordanced output provides authentic data for materials that concentrate attention on metadiscourse forms widely used in target genres. These materials, for example, can encourage students to complete gapped concordance printouts using contextual clues. This approach is especially useful if students can also analyse the use of metadiscourse in their course books, since they are less likely to be distracted by unfamiliar content. Alternatively, text corpora allow a deductive approach, encouraging students to use a concordancer themselves to search texts for metadiscourse features and draw conclusions about their use. It might be interesting, for example, for students to compare their results with some of the studies described in this book. Such 'data-driven learning' (Johns and King, 1991) is an important means of stimulating inquiry and encouraging independent engagement with the language.

Another way to encourage an appreciation of how metadiscourse functions is through the examination of text fragments. Here students can explore the interactional and interactive effects of particular metadiscourse items through tasks such as the following:

- scanning a text to identify its interpersonal tenor and the kinds of relationships that are being expressed, then searching for the items through which these relationships are realized;
- comparing two texts on a similar topic written for different audiences (e.g. a textbook and a research paper) and discussing how each audience is accommodated by textual choices;
- examining a news item from a tabloid and a broadsheet newspaper to determine what features are being used in each case to make the item 'reader-oriented' or 'reader-friendly';
- identifying all examples of interactive metadiscourse in a text, circling the forms used, and assigning a meaning to them;
- distinguishing statements in a text which report facts and those which are unproven;
- locating all transitions in a text, classifying them as either addition (*and, furthermore*), comparison (*similarly, on the other hand*) or consequence (*therefore, nevertheless*) and seeing which categories and forms are most common. Comparing these with another text to draw conclusions about the type of argument or audience expectations;
- distinguishing statements in a text where the author asserts a statement as a personal view and those attributed to another source;
- identifying all hedges, boosters or attitude markers in a text, stating what they are referring to in each case and deciding if there is a consistent position being taken;
- selecting a feature and comparing its use in a small corpus (or single text) in two languages;
- examining reformulations of a text which vary the components of interaction noted above, i.e. status, social distance and weight of imposition.

Finally, students can analyse a whole text by asking a number of questions about it. This both encourages students to notice metadiscourse items and helps them to uncover features outside the text which may have influenced the ways it was written. The questions in Figure 8.1, suggested by Paltridge (2001), provide a useful starting point for this kind of activity.

What is the text about?
What is the purpose of the text?
What is the setting of the text? (e.g. in a textbook, newspaper, etc.)
What is the tone of the text? (formal, informal, etc.)
Who is the author of the text?
What is his/her age?
  Sex?
  Ethnic background?
  Social status?
Who is the intended audience of the text?
What is the relationship between the author and intended audience?
Can you see any rules or expectations that are being followed by the writer?
What shared cultural knowledge is assumed by the writer?
What shared understandings are implied?
What other texts does this text assume the reader has knowledge of?

Figure 8.1 *Some initial contextual questions when examining a text (Paltridge, 2001: 51)*

While it may be difficult to get clear answers to some of these questions without more detailed information, this is a good orientation to studying some of the interpersonal opportunities and constraints that a genre makes possible.

ii. Manipulating texts

When students are able to identify examples of metadiscourse and the roles they are performing, then they can work on these features, changing and altering texts to achieve different meanings. Good examples of target texts can provide a foundation for controlled composition tasks, developing learners' confidence and fluency by providing a text frame from which learners can complete a parallel text, edit a draft text, or otherwise rework a model to include appropriate metadiscourse features. These kinds of focused tasks provide plenty of scaffolded opportunities for students to see the rhetorical effects of metadiscourse items and to manipulate these for different purposes (Hyland, 2003).

Such tasks can include the following:

- completing a gapped text from which metadiscourse items have been removed and considering the effect of including them;

- locating and removing all cases of a particular feature and discussing the effect this has on the comprehensibility, impact and reader-orientation of the text;
- identifying all hedges in a text, substituting a statement of certainty and discussing the effect this has on the negotiability of statements;
- rewriting a text for a different audience by varying their likely reception of the argument (agreement vs hostility), their relative knowledge of the subject (experts or novices) or their relative power or status (equal or superior to the writer);
- rewriting a text as a letter to a newspaper, a poster for display, or for children;
- summarizing and rewriting a science text for a popular science journal and considering what metadiscourse changes are needed;
- transforming a spoken text, such as a lecture, into an essay, attending particularly to engagement markers and self mention;
- adding or removing all frame markers from a text and commenting on the effect this has on its cohesion and readability;
- translating a text in the student's L1 into English for a similar audience and purpose and comparing how metadiscourse differs in the two languages;
- using a concordancer to locate and identify all frame markers expressing purpose or discourse goals (*I argue here, my purpose is, I propose*) in a corpus of research abstracts or introductions. Considering the rhetorical effect of changing self mention subjects to inanimate ones (*this paper analyses, the method will show*) or vice versa.

iii. Understanding audiences

Because metadiscourse is concerned with interaction, to use it effectively depends on the writer's understanding of who is likely to read the text, what they know and don't know, their expectations of engagement and negotiation, their relationship to the writer and so on. Teachers therefore need to incorporate a range of real and simulated audience sources into their writing classes. Classroom audiences are important as teachers play a central role in responding to learners' writing while student peers can be trained to provide effective feedback. But in addition, both teachers and students need to be sensitive to genre-specific and community-specific issues of audience.

In particular, teachers can help students to anticipate the needs and expectations of particular groups of readers by specifying a clear communicative context for writing, either through specifying writer roles for students, or by investigating contexts.

The literature suggests various ways to teach audience awareness and three potentially useful approaches immediately suggest themselves. First, expert readers can be asked to 'think aloud' while they read a student text, giving their impressions, reactions and understandings as they read (Schriver, 1992). Students can then discuss these detailed recorded responses and identify what metadiscourse features may have been successful or caused difficulties, and where additional metadiscourse might have been helpful. Second, students can be given tasks which address different goals and audiences (Herrington, 1985). These tasks might elaborate a detailed writing situation which specifies a clear rhetorical problem and audience, such as characterizing the audience as potentially friendly or hostile to an argument, so that students have to modify the metadiscourse in their texts accordingly. Third, an increasingly common technique in language learning classrooms is that students are asked to research real audiences. This means talking to those who use a genre regularly in the contexts in which it is typically found, helping learners to understand the social forces that affect writing and how writers negotiate these.

Johns (1997: 105) argues that the exploration of audiences is a key way that students learn about writing:

> Much student research on texts and processes can be completed in literacy classrooms, but students also need to go outside: to observe, to question and to develop hypotheses ... about texts, roles, and contexts, and about writers' and readers' purposes.

By seeing how texts are embedded in institutional life, communities and cultures, students can better understand interactional choices as motivated by social purposes and human relationships rather than as simply arbitrary and conventional. In other words, investigating readers can both reveal what writers *do* and help explain *why* they do what they do.

In particular, the following kinds of socio-cultural knowledge are likely to be important to an understanding of metadiscourse:

- the role the target genre plays in the institutional setting (its importance, purposes, outcomes, etc.);
- the roles that the genre implies or makes available to writers and readers;

- the institutional and social relationships of writer and readers who use the genre;
- the degree of formality, authority, intimacy and other interpersonal aspects associated with the genre;
- how the genre is related to other genres in that context and the extent to which elements are borrowed from other texts;
- what the audience already knows and what it needs to know.

Johns (1997) recommends that teachers encourage groups of students to decide on an issue they want to research, to develop and pilot a set of questions which address this topic, and then to interview faculty members about their teaching or writing practices. This model could easily be extended to focus on the writing practices, understandings and interactions of experienced writers in other target domains. The important point is, however, that by involving students in the analysis of communicative events in this way it is easier for them to construct an interpersonal schema when they sit down to write. This kind of research involves watching and listening and uses whatever methods are feasible, but they can all help students to see how the genres they are learning in their writing classes are embedded in real-world situations.

iv. Creating texts

Finally, while analysing texts and contexts can help, students only learn to write effectively by actually writing. Extended writing tasks not only provide practice for students in working through the entire writing process of planning, drafting, formatting, editing and polishing a text, but also opportunities to construct a text for an audience. They require students to create a textually cohesive, stylistically appropriate and ideationally coherent piece of discourse with the intention that it will be read and responded to. Extended writing offers students the chance to develop and express ideas in response to a real-world, or at least realistic, situation, and to develop their skills in crafting an interactively successful text.

Many novice writers often find it difficult to see a text through another's eyes, and are therefore unable to predict their readers' comprehension needs or to anticipate the potential response the text is likely to receive (e.g. Flower and Hayes, 1981). Some teachers argue that weaker writers should not be burdened with worrying about their readers until they are able to handle the added planning complexity that this information brings to the writing context. I have argued, however, that such considerations cannot be separated from how

Table 8.2 *An audience awareness heuristic (White and Arndt, 1991: 32)*

A What do I know about the topic?	B What does my reader already know about it?	C What does my reader not know?	D What is my reader's attitude likely to be?
Customer bought some biscuits. There was something hard in one of them.	As for A.	What the company will do about it, e.g. apologize, refund the price.	Customer is probably very annoyed. She will expect compensation.

writers express their messages. The interactive and autonomous planes of discourse are simultaneous and interwoven. Researchers such as Bonk (1990) and Collins and Williamson (1984) argue that even the weakest writers can cope with reader issues if other aspects of the task are made manageable.

Essentially the development of writing skills requires careful scaffolding so that novices get the support they need while developing their competence. One kind of scaffolding device has been suggested by White and Arndt (1991) who propose the use of audience awareness heuristics which sensitize students to the importance of attending to the knowledge and attitudes that writer and readers share. They suggest a simple checklist with four key questions, illustrated here with an example response to a letter of complaint (Table 8.2).

Alternatively, students can look to their student peers or the teacher for feedback on particular aspects of a text. One way of doing this which helps raise awareness of interactional issues is to encourage students to draft three or four questions they would like their readers to answer when reading the text. They can, for example, ask for comments on comprehensibility (what did you find clear?, what seemed unclear?), voice (did the text seem too personal?, was it too assertive?), engagement (did the text address you appropriately?, did it involve you?), argument (were points set out explicitly enough?, were there enough signposts?) and so on. Teachers can also give feedback on student writing through face-to-face conferencing (Hyland, 2003). Conferencing has important advantages as it can supplement the limitations of one-way written feedback with opportunities for 'the teacher and the student to negotiate the meaning of a text through dialogue' (McCarthey, 1992: 1). The interactive nature of the conference gives teachers a chance to respond to the student's choice of metadiscourse features, discuss alternative options and clarify the meanings these convey while saving the time spent in detailed marking of papers.

There are various ways of encouraging students to consider their audience when writing, most of which lead on from the tasks and principles sketched above:

- Students can be encouraged to think of their reader through private interactions with the teacher in dialogue journals (Peyton and Staton, 1993). These provide a fruitful means of building confidence, fluency and audience awareness among writers, particularly in early stages of writing proficiency.
- Teachers should provide students with a variety of writing experiences and genres, varying the audience, purpose and interpersonal features of the relationship between the writer and reader in each.
- Teachers can design assignments that provide 'intended' readers other than the teacher in order that students can 'adjust the transaction' between themselves and the reader (Elbow, 1998).
- Students can be assessed on the basis of a mixed-genre portfolio which contains texts written in a range of genres for a number of different audiences.
- Students can be assigned writing tasks which involve interviewing writers and readers to gain a better understanding of the interaction between their purposes, the interests and values of real audiences, and the genres that are appropriate for specific contexts.
- Students can be asked to write persuasive texts of varying kinds on sensitive topics, anticipating and accommodating the potentially critical views of their readers.

In all tasks it is important that the context should be clearly stated to specify a relevant genre and a specific audience, so that students understand the purpose of the assignment and the role of metadiscourse in the task. In these ways students can come to understand the conventions of their communities and more readily view these conventions not as constraints but as possibilities for taking a stance and engaging their readers.

8.5 Summary and conclusions

Taking the metadiscourse research findings seriously means acknowledging the importance of interaction in discourse and finding ways to translate that importance into classroom tasks. The social perspective that metadiscourse entails has important implications for instruction

as it encourages not only a functional approach, emphasizing what language can be used to achieve, but also the importance of understanding audience and using texts to engage with other members of a social group. Instruction in academic and professional writing then becomes a process of raising students' awareness of the functions of different metadiscourse forms, the choices that are available to them in given genres, and the consequences of making those choices in particular contexts. This not only provides learners with the skills they need to create their own meanings using community-recognized routines, but also helps move language teaching away from an unhelpful preoccupation with process writing and transactional aspects of academic communication towards an understanding of students' target communities and the ways they get things done using language.

To understand and use metadiscourse effectively it is important that students get sustained and systematic exposure to differentiated, functional language. In addition to studying texts, however, researching audiences and the practices of text users can help students develop an appreciation of the kinds of interactions that are possible and common in writing. It can help them to appropriately express a stance, to open up or close down a dialogue, to convey information coherently, and to engage with readers in ways they expect and understand. This means they do not just blindly adopt the cosmetic mannerisms of formal writing, but understand the contexts where it is used and employ it with discrimination and impact to negotiate the identities and meanings they intend.

9 Issues and directions

My main aim in writing this book has been to take stock of the emerging field of metadiscourse, to define the concept more precisely, and to evaluate its contribution to our understanding of communication in general and the study of academic and professional writing in particular. By bringing together the growing body of research in this area I hope to have illuminated, and perhaps clarified, our present partial and fragmented state of knowledge of written interaction, indicated something of its pedagogic possibilities and suggested an agenda for further research. By arranging the book in three parts I have sought to explore the distinctions, principles and categorizations which characterize the term, review the contribution it has made to the study of rhetoric, genre, culture and discourse communities, and to suggest its relevance to the teaching of writing.

In this concluding chapter I want to revisit the main issues raised in this discussion to highlight some key features, in particular to stress the significance of metadiscourse as a systematic means of studying interactions, and to look forward to future directions.

9.1 Metadiscourse and the socially situated writer

Metadiscourse concerns the relationship between writer and reader, with the writer making clear his or her awareness of the communication situation itself. But it should be noted that 'the writer' implied by a theory of metadiscourse is not an isolated individual struggling to express personal meanings. He or she is seen as a social being immersed in the activities of a community and attempting to shape textual meanings to interact effectively with that community. The research emphasizes that metadiscourse is a *pragmatic* feature. This means that when adopting a metadiscourse perspective we are not merely analysing or teaching surface structures. Instead we are addressing the rhetorical conditions created in a given context and the interactional functions discourse performs in that context. We are interested, then, in the behaviours of social beings. The importance of metadiscourse, in other words, lies not in the semantic meanings of particular forms but meanings which only become operative within a

particular context, both invoking and reinforcing that context with regard to audience, purpose and community.

Central to a conception of metadiscourse is the view that its use reflects differences in the various forms of communication recognized and employed by distinct communities. Writers are concerned to supply as many cues as are needed to secure their readers' understanding and acceptance of propositional content, and these cues tell us a great deal about how writers see their readers. So by signalling what writers feel they need to 'fill in' to facilitate comprehension, metadiscourse provides a link between texts and disciplinary, social or professional cultures. This link thus defines important aspects of the rhetorical context by revealing the expectations, norms and perceptions of the audience for whom a text was written. Differences in metadiscourse patterns may therefore prove to be an important means of distinguishing discourse communities and accounting for the ways writers specify the inferences they would like their readers to make. Put simply, the significance of metadiscourse lies in its role in explicating a context for interpretation and indicating one way which acts of communication define and maintain social groups.

Metadiscourse is therefore a key element of discourse analysis, providing insights into patterns of interaction and engagement and revealing how writers, through their texts, see the values, interests and assumptions of their communities.

9.2 Metadiscourse and interpersonal engagement

A great deal of research has now established that written texts embody interactions between writers and readers. A range of linguistic features have been identified as contributing both to the writer's projection of a stance to the material referenced by the text, and, to a lesser extent, to the strategies employed to presuppose the active role of addressees. This concern with the interpersonal has always been central to both systemic functional and social constructionist frameworks of analysis, which share the view that all language use is related to specific social, cultural and educational contexts. These approaches have sought to elaborate the ways by which interpersonal meanings are expressed, describing such linguistic resources as *evaluation* (Hunston and Thompson, 2000), *appraisal* (Martin, 2000; White, 2003), *stance* (Biber and Finegan, 1989; Hyland, 1999a) and *engagement* (Hyland, 2001a, 2005b).

In particular, and in contrast to earlier claims, recent research has shown that professional writers must establish an appropriate balance between 'topic-based' discourse and 'human-face' discourse (Thetela,

1997: 101). This involves maintaining interaction with their readers by indicating the perspective from which their texts should be interpreted, and this must be done, of course, without compromising the factual information central to much academic and workplace writing. As yet, however, there is no overall typology of the resources writers employ to express their positions and connect with readers. Metadiscourse provides one possible response to this gap, offering a framework for analysing the linguistic resources of inter-subjective positioning. Attending to stance, commitment, engagement, solidarity, attitude, evaluation and readability, the model provides a comprehensive and integrated way of examining how interaction is achieved and how the discoursal preferences of different communities construct both writers and readers.

9.3 Metadiscourse and discourse variation

Metadiscourse studies typically take a contrastive angle, generally focusing on the variables of first language, discipline or genre in order to compare national or academic cultures or to characterize the features of different text types. This kind of research is important in a number of ways.

First of all it helps establish the view of multiple literacies. This emphasizes that writing is not a unitary or stable object but is influenced by professional, institutional and disciplinary cultures. Scholarly discourse, for example, is not uniform and monolithic but an outcome of a multitude of different practices and strategies, where argument and engagement are crafted within specific communities that have different ideas about what is worth communicating, how it can be communicated, what readers are likely to know, how they might be persuaded and so on. We are more likely to achieve our disciplinary purposes if we frame our messages in ways which appeal to appropriate culturally and institutionally legitimated relationships.

Second, metadiscourse offers insights into the characteristics of particular genres and the ways these differ. Texts are similar or different because of the socio-cultural purposes they are intended to serve, and genre theorists attempt to reveal the salient features and conventions which are shaped by these communicative purposes. Genre differentiation, however, has been hampered by subjectivity in identification and the fact that competing classification schemes often reflect the intuitions of different analysts. But while no reliable validation procedures for distinguishing genres yet exist, interaction is a feature of language that can be analysed across genres. By focusing on the ways different genres express different relationships and patterns

of interaction, metadiscourse offers the possibility of unambiguous genre identification.

Third, metadiscourse research shows that different cultures have different expectations for writing and that these are expressed as preferred patterns of discourse. While we need to consider the complexly interacting 'small cultures' in any institutional or other intercultural situation, it appears that there is considerable variation in the role played by metadiscourse in similar genres written in different languages. Assisted by a new rigour introduced by the need to collect and examine data through corpus methods, comparable rhetorical features in equivalent corpora are being identified and compared, revealing culture-driven preferences in the use of metadiscourse features.

9.4 Metadiscourse and classroom practice

Metadiscourse is not a teaching methodology but we have seen that it has important implications for classroom practice. As a method of inquiry and source of insights into the ways language is used in different genres and communities, it provides a knowledge base for EFL students and their teachers and feeds into ESP (English for Special Purposes) teaching and into first language instruction in academic literacies. Metadiscourse research suggests that teachers need to become aware of different rhetorical conventions in target communities and genres, to understand that L2 writers may be familiar with different interactional conventions, and to accept different conventions in the work of their learners. This tolerance, however, needs to be tempered with an understanding of the degree of variation that readers are likely to accept in the students' educational or workplace situations.

Metadiscourse variation also underlines the fact that academic writing is often misrepresented as a naturalized, self-evident and non-contestable way of participating in academic communities. This in turn encourages the idea that there is one general 'academic English' (or 'business English', etc.) and one set of strategies for expressing a stance, engaging audiences and constructing arguments that can be applied across disciplines. Many subject specialists also subscribe to this view, but by divorcing language from context, such an autonomous perspective of literacy misleads learners into believing that they simply have to master a set of rules which can be transferred across contexts.

Essentially metadiscourse research tells us that good writers are people who are better able to imagine how their readers will respond to

their texts because they are familiar with the conventions and expectations which operate in particular settings. As a result, it encourages teachers to understand the interactive and interactional patterns of the genres their students will need to write and provides them with appropriate schemata to help students think about the needs, experiences and expectations of their readers.

9.5 Methodological issues

Research into metadiscourse has adopted various methods to show how an array of linguistic and pragmatic features function to form a rhetorical link between writers and readers. The studies discussed in this book indicate that these methods are predominantly qualitative and descriptive, focusing on broad tendencies and community preferences rather than validating analyses in exact quantitative terms. So while many studies make use of text corpora, the frequency counts are used to support qualitative observations and comparisons, not to serve as the goals of research.

Framing metadiscourse as cultural constraints on rhetorical conventions of interaction suggests two possible lines of inquiry (Hyland, 2005b). One is to examine interaction as a real, situated encounter in an individual text, such as Crismore and Farnsworth's discussion of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* discussed in Chapter 4. The other approach involves removing texts from their actual circumstances of composing to examine how linguistic forms relate to rhetorical effects within particular communities.

The first method suggests the richness of composing as writers negotiate their immediate writing circumstances, but it fails to capture the culture which the discourse invokes. Texts do not function communicatively at the time they are composed but when they are read, as they anticipate particular readers and the responses of those readers to what is written. A social context intrudes upon the writer, activating specific responses to recurring tasks. By looking for patterns of metadiscourse use in representative collections of texts, usually with concordance programs, we can discover the interactional resources which context makes available and learn how writing both evokes and draws on this context. Studying metadiscourse in this way therefore provides a way of examining interactions and of exploring the ways writers construct and engage in their communities.

Frequency and collocational data provide descriptions of existing practice but they are not ends in themselves. While corpus analyses are excellent for raising awareness of metadiscourse uses and for telling us what writers do, to stop here runs the danger of reifying interactional

conventions rather than explaining them. What we cannot do with corpora we must do in other ways. The study of metadiscourse benefits from multiple methods, and interviewing and think aloud techniques, where writers talk through their actions while writing, are perhaps the most productive of these. Text analyses must be balanced with an understanding of the production and reception of those texts. So by supporting and exploring text data with interviews, we learn more about what writers seek to achieve in their discourse and gain deeper understandings of why they make the interpersonal choices they do.

9.6 Some implications and remaining issues

Finally, I would like to close this book by making a few brief remarks on some continuing issues and point to some implications for future research.

Several scholars have pointed to the lack of a solid theoretical basis for metadiscourse (Beauvais, 1989; Mao, 1993) and the different definitions and classification systems have not helped to establish metadiscourse as either an explanatory or practical tool. One difficulty here has been a reluctance to see metadiscourse as a *rhetorical* feature of communication. Crismore *et al.* (1993), for instance, confuse pragmatic and syntactic criteria in their identification scheme, while Mauranen (1993a), Bunton (1999), Beauvais (1989) and others seek to confine its scope to textual features or speech act predicates, so restricting its coherence and descriptive power. These problems are compounded by the fact that there have been few systematic attempts to characterize the relationship between metadiscoursal and propositional elements of texts. Crismore and Farnsworth (1989), for instance, confuse the two elements by talking of 'informational metadiscourse', while Williams (1981) and Vande Kopple (2002) invoke the idea of two 'levels of meaning', a move which misrepresents meaning as synonymous with 'content' and implies that metadiscourse simply functions to glue together lists of propositions.

Together these issues have meant there has been a failure to clearly distinguish metadiscourse as a coherent aspect of language. In addition, the only theoretical underpinning of the approach has been a misreading of Halliday's model of metafunctions, and this has subsequently made it difficult to analyse texts consistently. In fact, with metadiscourse often referred to as a 'secondary' discourse supporting the more important propositional work of language, it is actually surprising that metadiscourse has made the impact it has on discourse analysis and language teaching.

In this book I have sought to clarify some of these issues and present a theoretically more robust model of metadiscourse. By adopting Sinclair's (1981) idea of *planes of discourse* to distinguish the autonomous and interactional dimensions of discourse I have attempted to incorporate the fact that there are two types of text 'content': one concerned with the world and the other with the text and its reception. By drawing on Halliday's (1994) characterization of the enabling role of textual elements I have highlighted the need to distinguish internal and external functions: that in some cases textual features address the logic of discourse, cementing the text together, and in others the logic of life, elaborating propositions. And finally, by borrowing Thompson and Thetela's (1995) distinction between *interactive* and *interactional* aspects of interaction, I have brought the two facets of interaction expressed by metadiscourse to the fore: the ways writers signal the arrangement of their texts to anticipate readers' likely reactions and needs and how they more explicitly involve them collaboratively in the development of the text.

These modifications, I believe, strengthen the concept of metadiscourse by tying it more closely to understandings of context and social interaction. But while this offers a more coherent rationale for the theory and holds the promise of greater explanatory potential, it also complicates analyses by requiring a more careful and context-sensitive study of texts. It is important that analysts examine every potential metadiscourse item to determine whether it is functioning interpersonally in the discourse. This is very different to simply counting off instances of semantic forms as we cannot categorize individual words detached from their functional use and combinations. This means resolving whether features are referring to discourse-internal or real-world matters in order to assign either metadiscoursal or propositional values to them. This is not always observed in the work on metadiscourse but is crucial to differentiating the metadiscoursal from the propositional. In some cases the co-text allows for both readings, but this should not deter us from studying texts in this way.

9.7 Further research

In using this model of analysis, there is a significant need, and considerable opportunity, for further research.

First, while hedges, boosters and evidentials have received considerable attention in the literature, especially in so far as they are used in key academic genres, there is still substantial scope to explore other metadiscourse functions and the use of individual forms.

In particular, it would be interesting and useful to explore interactive features and their meanings, frequencies and cluster patterns in particular communities and genres. The extent to which transitions and sequencing items have text-internal or text-external referents, for example, points to the relative significance of organizing experience and organizing discourse as tools of persuasion, while looking at the items which realize endophorics and evidentials can indicate the ways arguments are constructed and intertextual links established in different contexts. It is, perhaps, also worth noting here that metadiscourse research is greatly assisted by the growing availability of computerized discourse corpora which open up more reliable and systematic means of identifying the principles and regularities of rhetorical behaviour.

Second, more descriptive studies should be done with different genres written for different populations on different topics. This would help to determine the interactional features which characterize particular genres and how such interactional patterns relate text users together interpersonally. Metadiscourse studies have largely focused on a limited number of academic genres such as research articles, textbooks and dissertations, but it is important to see how interactions work in other kinds of texts. Business genres are obviously a key area here and analyses could profitably extend the work on advertising, newspaper editorials and company annual reports to explore the ways that readers are guided and persuasion is accomplished in other kinds of texts. In particular we know little about interactions in the emerging business and professional genres of email and online synchronous conferencing. These kinds of studies would not only help us to delineate genres more precisely, but also provide important insights about the role of interaction in different forms of argument.

Third, metadiscourse research can contribute to the important work conducted by Hinkel (2002), Mauranen (1993a) and others into intercultural discourse variation, exploring the expectations for particular metadiscourse forms and interpersonal practices of different first language groups in target contexts. Metadiscourse studies use English as a common point of reference, reflecting the importance of English as a *lingua franca* in the global education and research community. But research can spread beyond this to the ways interactions function in other languages and cultural groups. This is, in fact, a growing field and not only serves the purpose of gathering evidence for potential cultural variation, but also illuminates similarities and differences between writers which can feed into teacher training and second language teaching. As we have seen, control of interactional features is often particularly difficult for L2 writers and

contributes to the 'cross-cultural pragmatic failure' which can seriously affect the credibility of such writers and may even result in them being regarded as boorish, impolite or pushy. Such research into cross-cultural differences in metadiscourse use could have a significant impact on this area of teaching and learning.

Fourth, research into the ways metadiscourse is typically used by different discourse communities can help us see more clearly how texts are the outcome of interactions and discourse practices which involve engagement in a web of professional and social associations. Communities are composed of relationships between people and so participation in them involves careful negotiations with, and considerations of, colleagues. By revealing the interactional and interactive preferences of writers in different communities we are able to learn more not only about those approved rhetorical practices but also about the values, norms, understandings and institutional structures which they reflect and conjure up. Such research is also valuable to both L1 and L2 students as it can help them to cope with the new ways of thinking about writing (and speaking) that often confront them as novice members of their target disciplines or professions. By revealing the ways interpersonal practices depend on discourse domain and context, metadiscourse research can help learners attend to features that are used differently in their 'home' discourses. In this way they are better equipped to produce effective and appropriate texts in new target contexts.

Finally, there are very few diachronic studies of metadiscourse practices and research is urgently needed to document changing thought styles, patterns of argument, and ideological practices over time. Some work has been done. Taavitsainen's (1999) study of metadiscourse use in scientific writing, for instance, shows a movement from a relatively detached to a more interactive and reader-centred rhetoric from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, with an increase in active voice and metadiscursive commentary, while Atkinson (1999) shows an opposite trend since that time. Fairclough (1995) has suggested another form of change, observing that many public and business genres now exhibit a feature he calls 'synthetic personalization' which simulates the involvement of friendly conversation in order to mystify domination or commercial objectives. These changes and tendencies are still unclear, however, and careful analysis of patterns of change would be enormously beneficial to diachronic studies of academic and professional communities and to critical discourse analysis.

These research suggestions are relatively broad and represent just a few of the more obvious directions that metadiscourse research could

take. Importantly, however, they represent key areas which will benefit both our understanding and our teaching of language while sharpening the multidimensional theories and methodologies that the emerging field of metadiscourse has taken up and adopted.

The breadth of these proposals also points to our currently rather sketchy understandings of the interactional character of language use. These proposals emphasize that we have only just begun to tap into this reservoir of linguistic resources, to understand how writers and readers – speakers and hearers – negotiate their ideas, engage with each other and construct their communities. Metadiscourse research is making it increasingly clear, however, that the decisions we make at different points of composing, to open dialogical space or restrict it, to foreground or disguise our involvement, to appeal to community knowledge or spell out assumptions, to clarify or obfuscate our arguments, to stand behind our views or attribute them to others, are all strategic choices. They are part of a repertoire of practices which create the relationships that constitute membership of social communities.

I hope the model and analyses I have presented in this book have shed a little more light on these resources of interaction and the ways they are employed by different social groups. I also hope to have illustrated something of how metadiscourse studies are beginning to help us understand more about published texts, community practices and human relationships. But most of all, I hope to have encouraged others to explore these practices and refine the models we currently have. Metadiscourse is a relatively new field of investigation and is still growing. It is, however, a field which holds considerable potential for both description and explanation, promising to reveal the interactions which underlie all communication and help us see how discourses are community-specific, historically situated cultural products.

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Appendix: Metadiscourse items investigated

These are the search items used in this book as potentially realizing metadiscourse functions. It must be remembered, of course, that all items can realize either propositional or metadiscoursal meanings and that many can express either interactive or interpersonal meanings. Every instance should therefore be studied in its sentential co-text.

Interactive Metadiscourse

Code Glosses
–
( )
as a matter of fact
called
defined as
e.g.
for example
for instance
I mean
i.e.
in fact
in other words
indeed
known as
namely
or X
put another way
say
specifically
such as
that is
that is to say
that means
this means
viz
which means

Endophoric Markers
(In) Chapter X
(In) Part X
(In) Section X
(In) the X chapter
(In) the X part
(In) the X section
(In) This chapter
(In) This part
(In) This section

Example X
Fig. X
Figure X
P. X

Page X
Table X

X above
X before
X below
X earlier
X later

Evidentials
(date)/(name)
(to) cite X
(to) quote X
[ref. no.]/[name]
according to X
cited
quoted

Frame Markers

a) Sequencing
(in) chapter X
(in) part X
(in) section X
(in) the X chapter
(in) the X part
(in) the X section
(in) this chapter
(in) this part
(in) this section
finally
first
first of all
firstly
last
lastly
listing (a, b, c, etc.)
next
numbering (1, 2, 3, etc.)
second
secondly
subsequently
then
third
thirdly
to begin
to start with

b) label stages
all in all
at this point
at this stage
by far
for the moment
in brief
in conclusion
in short
in sum
in summary
now
on the whole
overall
so far
thus far
to conclude
to repeat
to sum up
to summarize

c) announce goals
(in) this chapter
(in) this part
(in) this section
aim
desire to
focus
goal
intend to
intention
objective
purpose
seek to
want to
wish to
would like to

d) shift topic
back to
digress
in regard to
move on
now
resume
return to
revisit
shift to
so
to look more closely
turn to
well
with regard to

Transition Markers
accordingly
additionally
again
also
alternatively
although
and
as a consequence
as a result
at the same time
because
besides
but
by contrast
by the same token
consequently
conversely
equally
even though
further
furthermore
hence
however
in addition
in contrast
in the same way
leads to
likewise
moreover
nevertheless
nonetheless
on the contrary
on the other hand
rather
result in
similarly
since
so
so as to
still
the result is
thereby
therefore
though
thus
whereas
while
yet

Interactional Metadiscourse

Attitude Markers
!
admittedly
agree
agrees
agreed
amazed
amazing
amazingly
appropriate
appropriately
astonished
astonishing
astonishingly
correctly
curious
curiously
desirable

desirably
disappointed
disappointing
disappointingly
disagree
disagreed
disagrees
dramatic
dramatically
essential
essentially
even x
expected
expectedly
fortunate
fortunately
hopeful
hopefully
important
importantly
inappropriate
inappropriately
interesting
interestingly
prefer
preferable
preferably
preferred
remarkable
remarkably
shocked
shocking
shockingly
striking
strikingly
surprised
surprising
surprisingly
unbelievable
unbelievably
understandable
understandably
unexpected
unexpectedly
unfortunate
unfortunately
unusual
unusually
usual

Boosters
actually
always
believe
believed
believes
beyond doubt
certain
certainly
clear
clearly
conclusively
decidedly
definite
definitely
demonstrate
demonstrated
demonstrates
doubtless
establish
established
evident
evidently
find
finds
found
in fact
incontestable
incontestably
incontrovertible
incontrovertibly
indeed
indisputable
indisputably
know
known

must (*possibility*)
never
no doubt
obvious
obviously
of course
prove
proved
proves
realize
realized
realizes
really
show
showed
shown
shows
sure
surely
think
thinks
thought
truly
true
undeniable
undeniably
undisputedly
undoubtedly
without doubt

Self Mention
I
we
me
my
our
mine
us
the author
the author's
the writer
the writer's

Engagement Markers
(
?
(the) reader's
add
allow
analyse
apply
arrange
assess
assume
by the way
calculate
choose
classify
compare
connect
consider
consult
contrast
define
demonstrate
determine
do not
develop
employ
ensure
estimate
evaluate
find
follow
go
have to
imagine
incidentally
increase
input
insert
integrate
key
let x = y
let us
let's

look at
mark
measure
mount
must
need to
note
notice
observe
one's
order
ought
our (*inclusive*)
pay
picture
prepare
recall
recover
refer
regard
remember
remove
review
see
select
set
should
show
suppose
state
take (a look/as example)
think about
think of
turn
us (*inclusive*)
use
we (*inclusive*)
you
your

Hedges
about
almost
apparent
apparently
appear
appeared
appears
approximately
argue
argued
argues
around
assume
assumed
broadly
certain amount
certain extent
certain level
claim
claimed
claims
could
couldn't
doubt
doubtful
essentially
estimate
estimated
fairly
feel
feels
felt
frequently
from my perspective
from our perspective
from this perspective
generally
guess
indicate
indicated
indicates
in general
in most cases
in most instances
in my opinon

in my view
in this view
in our opinion
in our view
largely
likely
mainly
may
maybe
might
mostly
often
on the whole
ought
perhaps
plausible
plausibly
possible
possibly
postulate
postulated
postulates
presumable
presumably
probable
probably
quite
rather x
relatively
roughly
seems
should
sometimes
somewhat
suggest
suggested
suggests
suppose
supposed
supposes
suspect
suspects
tend to
tended to
tends to
to my knowledge
typical
typically
uncertain
uncertainly
unclear
unclearly
unlikely
usually
would
wouldn't

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