

DEVELOPMENT OF EVALUATIVE STANCE AND VOICE IN  
POSTGRADUATE ACADEMIC WRITING

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Development of Evaluative Stance and Voice  
in Postgraduate Academic Writing

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## CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as part of the collaborative doctoral degree and/or fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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This thesis is the result of a research candidature conducted jointly with another University as part of a collaborative Doctoral degree.

## Abstract

This thesis is located within the two broad domains of linguistics and academic literacy. The aim of the thesis is to examine the emergence and development from a linguistic perspective of stance and voice in the academic written discourse at the postgraduate level (Master of Arts [MA]). This is a context in which students develop rhetorical insights into the knowledge and knowers of the disciplinary field. They learn to evaluate other research, as well as negotiate space for new knowledge from their own research. The linguistic and discursive features identified from this thesis can serve as resources potentially useful for academic writing instruction.

The data for the study includes the introductions to MA research proposals and dissertations, written in English by English as a second language writers. The texts are investigated through a detailed study of stance and voice across multiple linguistic orientations, including genre, register and discourse semantics. The analysis of this study draws upon the APPRAISAL system within Systemic Functional Linguistics (Martin & White, 2005) as the primary theoretical point of departure. Choices of evaluative language in the data are interpreted through the application of APPRAISAL analysis. At the same time, the evaluative choices in the data are examined with the co-articulation of other meanings. The patterning of ATTITUDE is investigated in relation to IDEATION, PERIODICITY and ENGAGEMENT as an enactment of stance and voice. The data consists of proposals written by the postgraduate students at the start of the academic year, and dissertations written by the same students at the end of the year. The analysis of the construal of stance and voice in the proposals becomes a point of reference for identifying the evaluative strategies deployed in the dissertations. The logogenetic approach to the analysis of the two interrelated text types aims to trace the ontogenetic development of stance and voice over the period of postgraduate study. The objective, however, is not to stipulate one single trajectory for enacting stance and voice. Instead, this study aims to enhance the linguistic understanding of stance and voice and deconstruct its complexity for explaining the differences in evaluative choices across written tasks and time.

The thesis contributes through an original comprehensive functional linguistic explanation of stance and voice in academic writing. The study addresses how novice academic writers expand their discursive repertoire to express their stance and voice, as well as the changes that are evident in the management of stance and voice over time. The thesis also contributes a multi-perspectival and theoretically-driven framework that facilitates an analysis of the construal of stance and voice across academic text types. The framework highlights the intrinsic evaluative and persuasive nature of academic genres. It explicates the enactment of stance and voice as an integration of interpersonal meaning with ideational meaning establishing evaluation towards different kinds of knowledge in the field. The distribution of evaluation in the text is in turn organised through textual meaning which organises and propagates evaluation dynamically. From a pedagogic perspective, the framework also offers insights and resources for fostering academic literacy instructions in terms of modelling stance and voice in introductions to proposals and dissertations. The evaluative strategies can provide a metalinguistic framework that could be shared with students.

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