

**Week 9**  
**PBI207**

**Linguistics features of academic registers – interpersonal choices**

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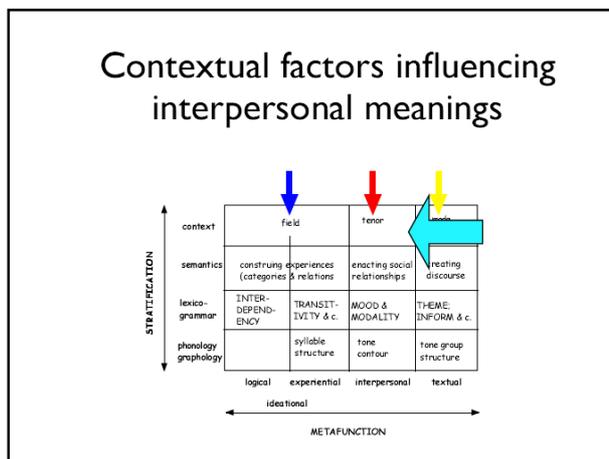
### SOME CONTEXTUAL PARAMETERS

- **Field** ("what's going on?"):
  - Socio-semiotic process (nature activity)
  - Semiotic domain ("subject matter")
- **Tenor** ("who's taking part?") — including:
  - Power (status, "vertical relations")
  - Familiarity (contact, "horizontal relations")
- **Mode** ("what role's language playing?") — including:
  - Medium (written / spoken)
  - Turn (dialogic / monologic)

TABLE 3.1  
Grammar and the Context of Situation

Contextual Variable	Linguistic Realization
Field (Presenting ideas)	Ideational Choices Noun phrases/nominal groups (participants) Verbs (process types) Prepositional phrases, adverbial adjuncts, and other resources for information about time, place, manner, etc. (circumstances) Resources for marking logical relationships
Tenor (Taking a stance)	Interpersonal Choices Mood (statements, questions, demands) Modality (modal verbs and adverbs) Intonation Other resources for evaluative and attitudinal meaning (e.g., resources for appraisal)
Mode (Structuring a text)	Textual Choices Cohesive devices, including conjunctions and connectors Clause-combining strategies Thematic organization

Note. Based on Halliday (1989, 1994).



**Detention letter**  
[Source: *From Nothing to Zero* ???]

I am 9 years old. We have been in detention (for) two and a half years.  
I like to watch TV. My favourite show is (the) Simpsons. My favourite food (is) pizza.  
I came from Iraq. I speak Arabic language. I go to school in the detention. We have (a) small school, one class and one teacher for all different ages.  
I am very sad because (I have been a ) very long time in a jail.  
I wish to go outside of detention.

<b>TEXT</b>	"Detention Letter"
<b>Field</b>	The socio-semiotic function of this text is <b>sharing</b> . The domain is concrete, concerned with sharing the experience and attributes of an individual.
<b>Tenor</b>	The institutional roles are mildly expert to novice. However, it is clear the speaker / expert is in powerless situation. The writer constructs a relatively close interpersonal distance with the reader by sharing personal experience. The evaluation of the experiential domain ranges between neutral and negative.
<b>Mode</b>	The text is constitutive of its context of situation; it is written, monologic and mono-modal.

### Lexical density

- Lexical density is a measure of the density of information in any passage of text, according to how tightly the content words are packed into the grammatical structure.

## Calculating lexical density

- **Lexical density** refers to the ratio between the number of clauses in a text and the number of content words in a clause
- Lexical items or content words:
  - form open systems
  - include nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs
- Grammatical items or function words
  - belong to closed systems
  - include articles, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, some classes of adverbs (eg *usually, often*), finite verbs *is, has, was* etc

## Calculating lexical density

- To calculate lexical density, divide the number of content words by the number of clauses

## Increasing lexical density:

### Examples

- But we never did very much **science** at **school**.
- My **father** used to **tell** me about a **singer** in his **village**.
- A **parallelogram** is a **four-sided figure** with its **opposite sides parallel**.
- The **atomic nucleus absorbs** and **emits energy** in **quanta**, or **discrete units**.
- Griffith's energy balance approach to strength and fracture also **suggested** the **importance of surface chemistry** in the **mechanical behaviour of brittle materials**.

## Nominalisation

Nominalisation is the process by which events, qualities and relationships come to be represented not as verbs, adverbs or conjunctions, but as things, nouns

Veel (1997)

## Nominalisation: Example

- Competency based training (CBT) focuses on working out what abilities someone needs to do their job and developing and delivering training based on those abilities and recognising this training with a certificate.
- Competency based training (CBT) focuses on the identification of abilities needed to complete a task and the development and delivery of appropriate certified training.

## Why use nominalisation?

- Allows more information to be packed into a short space: ie allows concise expression
- Allows for increased flexibility: eg
  - the rate at which inflation grows
  - the rate of inflation growth
  - the inflation growth rate
 'The inflation growth rate' can be used as subject, object or indirect object in another sentence

### Why use nominalisation?

- Theme and New: Contributes to the organisation of a text, as it allows concepts to be introduced in Thematic position and facilitates the flow of information from New position to Given position (See worksheet)
- Contributes to 'objectivity' as it presents processes, concepts etc as taken-for-granted, this-is-how-things-are
- Allows process to be placed in Thematic position

### The results of increased nominalisation:

- Reduced sentence complexity  
 Meaning is coded in the nominal group, not the verbal group  
 The use of the copula (is/was) is greatly increased.

Oscillations are frequency-dependent. (= Oscillations depend on frequency.)  
 The tyre is non-skid. (= The tyre does not skid.)  
 Danger is practically non-existent. (= Danger does not practically exist.)

### The results of increased nominalisation

- Reduced sentence complexity and use of non-finite in place of finite or independent clauses

The starter motor is switched off, the engine accelerating under its own power. (= The starter motor is switched off, and the engine accelerates under its own power.)

The rivet contracts as it cools, thereby drawing the plates together. (= The rivet contracts as it cools, and draws the plates together.)

### The results of increased nominalisation

- Increased sentence length, as a result of long nominal groups: eg

The eukaryotic nucleoplasm contains many small nuclear ribonucleoproteins (snRNPs), stable complexes of small nuclear RNA (snRNA) bound to several specific proteins.

### Metadiscourse

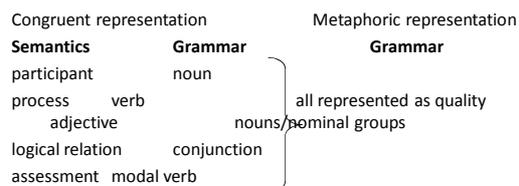
#### What is metadiscourse?

"... the self-reflective linguistic material referring to the evolving text and to the writer and imagined reader of that text. It is based on a view of writing as social engagement and in academic contexts reveals the ways that writers project themselves into their discourse to signal their attitude towards both the propositional content and the audience of the text."

Hyland and Tse (2004)

### Grammatical metaphor

- Nominalisation involves the transfer of a congruent form of expression to a metaphoric one: 'grammatical metaphor'



## Abstraction

- Academic and professional language involves a greater degree of abstraction than everyday casual communication:  
ie more and more emphasis is placed on entities that are not concrete - concepts, notions, properties, facts, ideas
- Unlike nominalisations, abstractions can't be unpacked and expressed in congruent forms

## Recognising metadiscourse

- Hyland distinguishes two aspects of metadiscourse:
  - Textual resources
  - Interpersonal resources
- Textual resources refer to features which organise the discourse, (ie SFG textual metafunction)
- Interpersonal resources are distinct from propositional aspects of discourse. They involve aspects of the text that embody writer-reader interactions

## Metadiscourse and authority

- Metadiscourse in textbooks:
  - Relationship between reader and writer one of authority, and the information presented tends to be widely accepted so information often presented as categorical fact
  - Humanities and social sciences tend to rely on argument and interpretation of data, and therefore need to involve reader in argument, resulting in greater use of interpersonal metadiscourse
  - Natural sciences explanations derive from models, measurements etc, therefore less need of personal standing and reader involvement

## Metadiscourse and authority

- Metadiscourse in research papers  
Research papers seek to persuade the reader of the correctness of their claims, therefore interactional metadiscourse is a major feature

## Interpersonal metadiscourse

Category	Function	Examples
Hedges	Withhold writer's full commitment to statements	might/ perhaps/possible/ about
Boosters	Emphasise force or writer's certainty in message	in fact/ definitely / It is clear
Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude to propositional content	Unfortunately / I agree / X claims
Relational markers	Explicitly refer to or build relationship with reader	frankly / note that / you can see
Person markers	Explicit reference to author(s)	I / we / my / mine/ our

Hyland, K. (2006). *Disciplinary Discourses*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. p.114

## Hedges

- Hedges are used to express an absence of certainty :
    - a lack of commitment to the truth value of a proposition
    - a desire not to express a categorical commitment
- They aim to gain reader acceptance of the claims being made

## Functions of hedging

- Allows writers to express propositions with greater precision.
- Allow scientific claims to be made with an appropriate degree of caution

eg: A reduced speed limit      will result      in fewer accidents  
      »                                    may result  
      »                                    might/could result  
      »                                    is likely to result

## Functions of hedging

- Allows author to anticipate possible negative consequences of being proved wrong
- in research articles, this involves professional deference (cf authority in textbooks)

Examples:

- It was assumed that phosphorylation of EF-2 may play a ...
- The model implies that the function of grana is to ...
- On the limited data available ...
- In the view of some researchers ...

## Attitude markers

- Attitude markers present the author's personal evaluation of material
- They guide the readers response to the material
- They increase the authority of the writer

Examples:

- Care must be taken to note that ...
- It must be remembered that ...
- It is important that you ...
- Smith claims/states/ suggests/assumes ....

## Relational markers

- Contribute to the development of the writer-reader relationship

Examples:

- If you keep adding sugar to a cup of tea, you will reach a point ...
- What is the source of energy for ecosystems?
- We are surrounded by molecules ...
- Thus, we propose that ....

## Person markers

The author or authors refer to themselves

Examples:

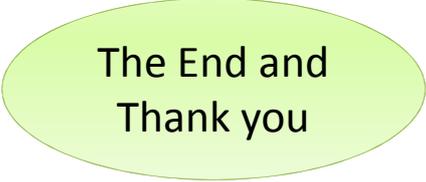
- We propose that...
- I believe that

## Science & Humanities: Conjunctive relationships

- Explicit and implicit conjunction
  - Explicit conjunction is realised lexically
  - Implicit conjunction is realised in the relationship between clauses
- Internal and external conjunction
  - Internal conjunction refers to relationships internal to the text: they organise the meanings in the text (eg: first, second, third)
  - External conjunction organises events constituting the field

### Science & Humanities: Conjunctive relationships

- Texts in the sciences tend to use external and explicit conjunction  
ie conjunctions describe logical relations in the real world
- Texts in the humanities tend to use implicit and internal conjunction  
ie conjunctions describe logical relations within the text:  
they organise the argument and relationship between  
events in the real world are often implicit.



The End and  
Thank you