

## CHAPTER 11

# MAKING STANCE EXPLICIT FOR SECOND LANGUAGE WRITERS IN THE DISCIPLINES: WHAT FACULTY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE LANGUAGE OF STANCE- TAKING

**Zak Lancaster**

Wake Forest University

*Expressing an authorial stance in contextually valued ways may be especially challenging for English as a Second Language (L2) writers (in addition, certainly, to many L1 writers), as the subtle ways that writers in the disciplines go about evaluating evidence and positioning the reader toward their views are largely tacit and therefore not often made explicit to students. In response to this problem, this chapter discusses ways that writing specialists can assist faculty in the disciplines to become explicitly aware of stance expressions in their students' writing. Drawing on analysis of student writing in two disciplinary contexts (political theory and economics) as well as interviews with the course instructors, I offer examples of stance features that appear to be valued in these two contexts even though they run below the instructors' fully conscious awareness. I then discuss ways that disciplinary faculty can be assisted to identify these features explicitly. The larger goal of this chapter is to argue for a way of reading students' disciplinary writing that is sensitive to the details of stance-taking and to the language-related problems that many students experience when writing in the disciplines.*

Students in upper-level writing in the disciplines contexts are expected, often implicitly, to construct stances in their writing in ways that are recognized by readers as appropriate and authoritative—i.e., assertive, knowledgeable,

critically distant, and aligned with a specific disciplinary culture. To meet these stance expectations, writers must use language in specialized ways, as revealed by linguistic analyses of specific disciplinary discourses (see, e.g., Charles, 2003; Hyland, 2004, 2005; Macken-Horarik & Morgan, 2011; Schleppegrell, 2004; Soliday, 2011). These specialized ways of using language, however, are not typically recognized as such by faculty in the disciplines, due largely to assumptions about the transparency of academic discourses (Turner, 1999). In particular, there is not often conscious awareness of the ways that disciplinary stances are accomplished through language, for example through wordings that subtly foreground valued epistemologies, construct a critical reader-in-the-text, or otherwise index the stance of a student who is engaged with the disciplinary discourse.

As brief illustration, consider the following two texts written by students in an advanced economics course.

(1a) Using an ex post analysis of share prices and product prices, I was able to show that the Supreme Court decision had negligible effects on the industry, and therefore a better outcome could have been achieved. (Eric)

(1b) Using my personal opinion to analyze the remedies used in this case, I determined the District Court was correct in allowing the merger to proceed. (Nancy)

These texts are from students' final essays in the course. One difference between them, as suggested by just these concluding sentences, is that Eric adopts a contrastive stance toward the reasoning of Supreme Court, while Nancy adopts a stance of agreement (*the District Court was correct*). Subtler differences can be found in the details of the language. Eric's text, for instance, thematizes (or linguistically foregrounds)<sup>1</sup> the analytic framework that he uses to reach his judgment (*Using ex post analysis of share prices and product prices*), while Nancy's text thematizes the subjective basis of her judgment (*Using my personal opinion to analyze the remedies used in this case*). Through these and other language resources, Eric's text conveys more critical distance and authority.

It is unlikely that many faculty think in such explicit terms about stance when evaluating student work. This lack of explicit attention may not cause problems for students who have learned "organically" how to construct valued stances in their writing, i.e., through trial and error and unconscious noticing of patterns in genre exemplars. It can present problems, however, for students who have difficulty meeting implicit stance expectations, due either to limited exposure

to academic registers and genres or to a variety of linguistic, socio-cultural, and individual factors. To provide meaningful support for these students, it would be useful for faculty to be aware of the various linguistic means through which valued stances are realized in their discourse contexts. With such awareness, they could learn to read student work in new ways and provide feedback that takes into account the complexities involved in taking on a disciplinary stance.

Recent research shows that stance-related challenges may be especially acute for English as a Second Language (L2) writers (Chang, 2010; Feak, 2008; Hyland & Milton, 1997; Lancaster, 2011; Schleppegrell, 2004; Tardy, 2009). When L2 writers' styles of stance-taking are not explicit enough, inconsistent in evaluative position, not measured enough, too measured, or otherwise subtly off the mark, the students can be judged as having vague "language" or "grammar" problems and thus directed to the campus writing center, where writing specialists who are likely untrained in the disciplinary context may or may not be able to help (Feak, 2008). Students can also be judged in a very different way as having problems comprehending the subject matter (Lancaster, 2011). Specifically, faculty may interpret what are actually problems in linguistic expression of stance as problems with thinking, understanding, or even effort. (See Zawacki & Habib [this volume] for similar faculty explanations of L2 student error, many of which could be attributed to inappropriate stance-taking.) For instance, in some disciplinary genres, inconsistent use of "hedges" (e.g., *perhaps*, *research suggests*, *it appears/seems that*) may contribute toward the impression that the writer has not engaged in sufficiently cautious reasoning. In other disciplinary genres, foregrounding of personal opinion, as in Nancy's text, may be perceived as insufficient "analytic rigor." Evidence that stance does matter can be found in research that reveals connections between the types of stances students project and their grades or scores (Barton, 1993; Coffin, 2002; Lancaster, 2012; Soliday, 2004; Wu, 2007).

That adopting an effective stance in disciplinary writing comes with linguistic challenges presents a conundrum for writing instruction, one well known to writing scholars. The conundrum is that, while faculty in the disciplines best understand the close text-context interrelations in the disciplinary genres that they themselves have mastered and are asking their students to engage with, they typically feel ill-equipped, under-prepared, or under-motivated to deal with "language" in their classroom instruction. While linguistic issues in writing may fall under the expertise of writing specialists, discipline-specific ways of using language are best understood (at least potentially) by experts in the respective disciplines.

In response to this knotty and long-standing problem, I suggest ways in this chapter that writing specialists can work with faculty in the disciplines to become

explicitly aware of stance expressions in student writing. My main suggestion is that, if faculty are to develop strategies for reading and commenting on their students' papers in ways that are sensitive to expression of stance, they need to be able to identify textual patterns in their students' writing that are more and less related to valued disciplinary stances. The capacity to identify patterns of stance in students' texts, furthermore, requires a meaningful metalanguage (or language about language), one that potentially can be used to assist students to recognize how valued stances are realized through language.

I begin by clarifying what I mean by "stance." I then offer examples of patterns in stance-taking that faculty could be assisted to identify. My examples are pulled from two distinct disciplinary contexts, an upper-level course on economic regulation and antitrust policy (henceforth Econ 432) and an upper-level course on twentieth century political theory (henceforth PolSci 409). In the larger research project from which my examples are taken, I used appraisal theory from systemic functional linguistics (Martin and White, 2005) to analyze argumentative essays written by consistently high- and low-performing students. I also interviewed the course instructors about their goals and values for student writing in order to interpret how patterns of stance were related to valued meanings in the contexts. I describe these methods more fully in Lancaster (2012). After discussing relevant patterns in example texts, I finally turn to specific strategies for assisting faculty to read student work in terms of stance-taking.

## **STANCE: WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT SO TRICKY?**

*Stance* is a slippery concept that faculty across the disciplines, including writing faculty, have difficulty discussing with their students in clear terms. As Soliday (2011) points out, students are frequently advised to "take your own position" and offer judgments, but to avoid sounding "biased" (p. 39-40). Similarly, they are expected to show commitment to their arguments and even "passion" for their topics, but also to remain "objective" or critically distant. Other potentially contradictory messages that students may hear include: Use your own words, your own "voice," but don't be colloquial in your use of language; use "I" in your writing, but not too frequently; write assertively and with authority, but don't forget you're a student and lack expertise; engage with others' views and voices, but don't just summarize what others have said; display understanding of the target material, but don't just reel off facts; try new things, experiment with new ways of thinking and arguing, but be sure to write clearly and concisely. The cumulative effect of these apparently contradictory

instructions can lead students to the (not unreasonable) conclusion that every instructor wants something different: Instructors have their own idiosyncratic tastes for what counts as an effective style of stance taking.

Stance has been hard for linguists to pin down, too, as suggested by the wide range of definitions that have been offered (see, e.g., Englebretson, 2007; Hyland, 2005; Jaffe, 2009; Martin & White, 2005). Furthermore, in some traditions of applied linguistics, stance has been treated as nearly or completely synonymous with the construct of *voice*. Hyland (2011), for instance, equates the two constructs when he explains that “stance refers to the writer’s textual ‘voice’ or community recognized personality” (p. 197).

In this chapter, I am using the term *stance* rather than *voice* because I examine how writers’ interpersonal moves (like use of counterargument strategies) relate to issues of reader positioning. Expressing stance is both a writer-oriented and reader-oriented concept, a point that is reflected in Johnstone’s (2009) definition of stance as “the methods, linguistic and other, by which interactants create and signal relationships with the propositions they utter and with the people they interact with” (p. 30-31). I am, in fact, equally comfortable referring to the linguistic construction of an “authoritative voice” as I am an “authoritative stance,” but other textual qualities that I discuss below, like contrastiveness, have to do with the signaling of relationships with others’ views and voices. Thus a “contrastive stance”—or adopting a stance of contrast towards others’ views—makes more intuitive sense than a “contrastive voice.” Likewise a dialogically expansive or contractive stance (as explained in White, 2003, and discussed below) makes more intuitive sense than a dialogically expansive or contractive voice.

Stance, then, refers to the ways that writers—as they go about analyzing and evaluating things, making assertions and recommendations, providing evidence and justifications and so forth—project an authorial presence in their texts, one that conveys attitudes and feelings and that interacts with the imagined readers by recognizing their views, identifying points of shared knowledge, conceding limitations, and otherwise positioning them as aligned with or resistant to the views being advanced in the text. According to this expansive definition, stance expressions are pervasive throughout disciplinary genres, including ones often thought of as objective and “faceless” like research articles and lab reports. (See the Appendix for examples of stance moves from various disciplinary contexts.)

As suggested by the discussion so far, expressing stance in academic writing requires more complex decision-making than whether or not to adopt a formal tone or use the active voice or the pronoun “I.” It requires making decisions (usually tacitly) about such matters as when to tune up or down one’s level of commitment to assertions; whether and how to comment on the significance

of evidence; when and how to engage with alternative perspectives; how to construct a text that engages with the imagined reader; and many other interpersonal considerations that can vary widely according to genre and disciplinary context (Hyland, 2004; 2005). These subtle interpersonal moves can be highly challenging for both L1 and L2 student writers. They can also be difficult for experienced writers to think about consciously and to identify in discourse explicitly, as they tend to be so deeply embedded within their social knowledge of genre.

In terms of my own difficulties as a writing specialist, I can only go so far in conjecturing whether or not certain stance features, such as the ones I identified in Eric's and Nancy's texts above, are valued or not in their contexts, as I am not trained in economics or political theory. Eric's stance is both more "critical" (or contrastive) and critically distant than Nancy's. Through my analysis (in Lancaster, 2012), I showed that these and other qualities do correlate with students' grades in the courses. That is, the high-performers more consistently adopt stances marked by contrastiveness and critical distance, among other qualities. The difficulty for me lies in pinpointing why a particular pattern or type of wording might be valued, either with regard to the pedagogical purposes of the assignment or the epistemological values of the disciplinary culture—or a combination of the two. Is the stance that Nancy projects not as effective as the one that Eric projects? If so, is this because it is in agreement with the District Court's reasoning and thus is not "critical"? Or is it because her text foregrounds the subjective basis of her reasoning? I can, of course, speculate that foregrounding personal opinion is not the most effective way to go about recommending a course of action in the context of an economically-driven public policy analysis. But the person who is in the best position to comment on these meanings, and perhaps connect them to other important meanings in the context that I have not identified, is the course professor. This is why it would be ideal for him and other faculty in the disciplines to gain experience in identifying patterns of stance that are more and less valued in their own students' writing.

## EXAMPLES OF LINGUISTIC PATTERNS THAT REQUIRE INSTRUCTIONAL ATTENTION

In this section I focus in more detail on types of language use that my research suggests warrant close attention, especially in disciplinary contexts that call for evidence-based arguments. I begin with the case of Econ 432. My analysis of high- and low-graded papers in this course revealed that the wordings in *bold*

*italics* in the sentences below are instances of a larger pattern of language use that can present particular difficulties for L2 writers.

(2a) Of the defendants involved in Utah Pie Company's case only one *seems* to have emerged as exceptionally successful. Continental, now known as Morton Frozen Foods Division, had a 13, 11, and 13th percentage share of the market in 1974, 1975 and 1976 respectively (see table 1).

(2b) It *appears* that maximum price fixing does the greatest harm when set below a competitive level.

(2c) The rise of Mrs. Smith's, fall of Utah Pie, and relative success of Continental in the resulting time frame *suggest* internal management, and not the Supreme Court, played the most significant role in market performance and conduct.

These highlighted wordings appear significantly more frequently in the high-performing students' writing in the course, and for this reason they may warrant instructional attention. Given that, how can they be discussed?

Often referred to in the applied linguistics literature as **hedges** (see Hyland, 2004; 2005), these devices are used to weaken authorial commitment to claims and signal openness to alternative views. In the specific sentences above, hedging is realized through appearance-based evidential verbs (*appears*, *seems*, and *suggest*), which highlight the evidence-based nature of the reasoning and represent the writers' judgments as "based on plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge" (Hyland, 2005, p. 179). Hedging can also be realized through low-probability modal expressions (e.g., *could*, *might*, *may*, *perhaps*, *possibly*, *I think*)—in addition to a variety of other lexical and grammatical means for expressing a claim as a possibility rather than fact or pronouncement.

In the case of genres that require evidence-based argumentation, it is useful to distinguish between two sub-types of hedging: **evidentializing** (e.g., *the research suggests*; *based on these facts it appears/seems*) and **conjecturing** (e.g., *perhaps*; *it is likely/possible that*; *in my view*), which are terms that I borrow from Tang (2009). Both are instances of hedging, with the difference being that evidentializing expresses sustained consideration of evidence—a process that shifts focus somewhat away from the immediate subjective experience of the writer—while conjecturing expresses an internalized process grounded in the subjectivity of the authorial voice. My analysis of Econ 432 papers revealed that high-graded papers used more instances of evidentializing, while

the lower-graded papers used more instances of personalized conjecturing (or “personalizing”), for example *it seems to me* and *in my view*. As I discuss below, this differential pattern does not hold for the case of PolSci 409 writing because this context calls for a different kind of evidence-based writing.

In Econ 432, the specific *pattern* of evidentializing that was revealed as especially valuable, because it works to construct an authoritative stance, involves three elements. These comprise an initial presentation of facts, which are either categorically asserted or strongly boosted, followed by a hedged judgment of the evidence, and finally a statement of recommendation. This sequencing strategy allows the writers to adopt a stance marked by cautious evaluation of evidence. Examples are provided below. (Key wordings are in ***bold italics***.)

### (3a) From Ken’s high-graded essay

<b>Presentation of Evidence (boosted)</b>	As <i>shown</i> in a recent survey of physician satisfaction by Harvard Medical School, physician autonomy and the ability to provide high-quality care, <b><i>not</i></b> income, are <b><i>strongly</i></b> associated with changes in job satisfaction.
<b>Judgment (hedged)</b>	Thus, it <b><i>seems reasonable to assume</i></b> that health care providers would take advantage of the greater bargaining power to improve the quality of care.
<b>Recommendation (hedged)</b>	Such measures <b><i>might</i></b> take the form of measures included in many state patient protection bills ...

### (3b) From Luis’s high-graded essay

<b>Presentation of Evidence (boosted)</b>	<b><i>Clearly</i></b> , Von’s did <b><i>not</i></b> accomplish what it set out to achieve: <b><i>countless</i></b> subsequent antitrust cases have <b><i>completely</i></b> ignored the reasoning set forth by the Court.
<b>Judgment (hedged)</b>	<b><i>It would seem</i></b> , then, the Von’s decision was a failure. This statement leads to a natural question: if the Court got it wrong in Von’s, what <b><i>might</i></b> the correct decision have been?
<b>Recommendation (hedged)</b>	For several reasons, the Supreme Court <b><i>should</i></b> have ...

In these excerpts, Ken and Luis are moving from analysis to recommendations. To accomplish this move in an authoritative manner, they ramp up persuasive effort through strategic use of hedging and boosting.

**Boosters** (see, e.g., Hyland, 2005; Perales-Escudero & Swales, 2011) are something of a counterpart to hedges in that they increase authorial commitment while closing down discursive space for other views. Analyzed as resources of



high-force **graduation** in Martin and White (2005), boosters express the writer's involvement with the topic. They also draw attention to the importance of the ideas, persuading the reader to accept the proposition being put forth. Instances of boosting are seen in 3a and 3b in the stance expressions *strongly*, *clearly*, *countless*, and *completely*. Cooperating with these boosters is the verb *shown* and the explicit denials (*not*). Like boosters, these latter devices—endorsements and denials—work to shut down space for alternative views (White, 2003). Ken could have chosen less committed wordings like *as suggested* or *indicated in*, but instead he chose *as shown in*, which expresses a stronger endorsement of the survey results. He further closes down room for negotiation in this phase of discourse by directly denying a possible alternative view (*not income*). The result of these maneuvers is a highly committed stance. However, when offering his most general judgment, Ken reduces authorial commitment and opens up the discursive space by hedging (*seems reasonable to assume*). The wording here expresses a very different kind of stance than if Ken were to have written *It is therefore obvious/certain/clear that*. The use of hedging enables him to express a carefully reasoned stance, which may be rhetorically useful before proceeding to offer recommendations.

In general, the movement from boosting to hedging in Ken's and Luis's texts creates the impression of highly involved but cautious analysts. Such a stance is likely to be valued in academic genres calling for evidence-based recommendations. It is also likely to be one that is difficult to construct and sustain for many L2 writers (as well as many L1 writers), especially those who have not had prior training in working with academic registers.

Hedges are used somewhat differently by the high-performing writers in the political theory course (PolSci 409). This is an important point to make because the differences in use suggest that faculty must go further than simply telling their students that hedges are valuable; they also need to understand whether, where, and how hedges are used to create valued meanings in their contexts. In the PolSci 409 essay, which requires interpretation, explanation, elaboration, and critical juxtaposition of theoretical arguments, hedges are used less to convey cautious consideration of evidence and more to mitigate the force of critical challenges to others' arguments.

Offering challenges to texts by the likes of Michel Foucault, John Rawls, Nancy Fraser, and others assigned in the class is a delicate procedure, especially for student writers. Abruptly executed problematization moves can project a stance marked by brashness or under-appreciation of the assigned readings. When using the rhetorical strategy of **problematization**, which involves "showing that a prevailing assumption, idea, view, or situation needs reexamination, reconceptualization, or reevaluation of some kind" (Barton, 1993, p.

748), hedges are often useful to suggest a stance of openness and willingness to negotiate critical positions. This dialogically open stance can be seen in 4a and 4b.

(4a) In this sense, the trial *somewhat* contradicts Foucault's theory of the modern exercise of power. In modernity (according to Foucault), power is diffused so much as to make it impossible to locate the source of power. In the trial, however, the source of power is clearly identifiable; therefore, the trial *seems* to be more in line with Foucault's pre-modern concept of justice and power. (Maria)

(4b) Fraser prefers the transformation strategy, which would reconfigure the social structure by eliminating the groups as such. While this method *may* be more decisive in eliminating the injustice, it *appears* to have the drawback of not being in the immediate interests of any group, as they would stand to lose their identities. Therefore, while Fraser's matrix *may* help soften their distributive-recognition dilemma, it doesn't offer any *obvious* solutions to the problem of recognition in modern society. (Ethan)

Problematization is a highly valued argumentative practice in academia (Barton, 1993; Wu, 2006), and it may be implicitly expected across academic discourse contexts. Even if students are aware of the need to be "critical" in this way, however, many struggle to do so in genre-appropriate ways, for example by maintaining a carefully-reasoned or critically distant stance. In an interview, the professor of PolSci 409 praised one of the top essays in the class for being, in his words, both "critical" and "sympathetic" toward the main text under analysis. Both Maria's and Ethan's texts are examples of how hedging can be used to bring these two potentially contradictory stances together.

In contrast to these two writers, two of the self-identified L2 writers in PolSci 409, Victor and Ryan, had trouble with this stance of critical sympathy, but for different reasons. Victor's writing suggests that he was not aware of the implicit expectation to adopt a critical or contrastive stance when carrying out the assignment. His essay, in fact, was one of the few that did not use problematization strategies at all. Consider, as illustration, the different ways that Ethan (the high-performing writer of 4b above) and Victor respond to the same essay prompt in their introductory paragraphs. The prompt is reproduced here, and key stance differences in the students' writing are in *bold italics*.

Prompt: Nancy Fraser argues that conventional “distributive” theories of justice cannot address contemporary problems related to the politics of “recognition.” Explain and elaborate on Fraser’s argument. Then consider how Rawls or Nussbaum would respond to Fraser’s view.

(5a) from Ethan’s introduction (high-graded) ...

... Fraser’s proposal posits that “the remedy for cultural injustice ... is some sort of cultural or symbolic change.” She calls this cultural change “recognition.” *Rawlsian theory, however, disputes Fraser’s sharp division between socio-economic and cultural injustice.* In fact, Rawls would respond to Fraser by saying that his theory fairly addresses cultural injustice, and her attempt to redress cultural injustice through recognition may actually lead to unjust outcomes.

(5b) from Victor’s introduction (low-graded) ...

... Both Fraser and Nussbaum put forward ideas on how to eliminate social and economic inequalities and provide justice to people, although Fraser is more concerned with the means of bringing justice to people who need it, whereas Nussbaum looks at the ends by which we can evaluate if justice is provide or not. *Therefore, in my opinion their views complement each other* by providing suggestions on two aspects of the same problem: how to provide social and economic justice and the grounds on which we can judge if this goal is accomplished.

Ethan’s text in 5a assumes a contrastive stance by positioning Rawls in a critical relationship with Fraser. Ethan maintains this stance throughout his essay by engaging in frequent problematization moves. Victor’s stance, in contrast, is focused on complementarity. Throughout the course, in fact, his writing displays a desire to locate points of agreement among different thinkers’ views (and possibly a reluctance to problematize). Partly for this reason, his writing elicits such feedback from the professor as “simple compare and contrast” and “you’ve done a good job summarizing, but you haven’t developed an argument.” Victor’s stance of assumed agreement seems to have caused his difficulty in critically juxtaposing texts in specific ways.<sup>2</sup>

Victor’s writing, then, suggests that he may not have been aware of the implicit expectation to place the texts under analysis in a critical relationship

with one another. In contrast, another L2 writer in the course, Ryan,<sup>3</sup> had difficulty *executing* problematization moves in genre appropriate ways. In example 6, Ryan attempts to problematize an aspect of Foucault's argument as a way to transition into a discussion of Walzer. But he realizes this move in a way that reflects lack of critical distance. (Wordings that I discuss below are in ***bold italics***.)

(6) One thing that Foucault doesn't address, ***not saying that he should have because it isn't one of his ideas***, is whether the old form of public executions and the new form of punishment is an act of dirty hands or not. ***According to Walzer's argument I think*** the act of public executions would ***definitely*** be an unjustified act of dirty hands, but what about the new forms of punishment such as jail time? Giving someone jail time for a crime that they've committed seems to be completely necessary, but is there a better way of taking care of the problem? (Ryan)

As indicated in this excerpt, Ryan seems to be aware of the expectation to assume a critical stance and to negotiate positions with the reader. But his prose does not demonstrate control over that critical stance. It is at times difficult to tease apart material he is attributing to others from his own assertions, as seen in the second sentence (*According to Walzer's argument I think*). In addition, the imagined reader that Ryan projects in his text appears to be the course professor rather than a peer discussant. This is seen in the quick personal aside that qualifies the problematization of Foucault (*not saying that he should have because it isn't one of his ideas*), his personalizing move (*I think*), and conversational register (e.g., *one thing, definitely, but what about*). These features reflect a tenor marked by closeness and familiarity. Ryan could learn to mitigate the force of his problematization moves in a more critically distant way through the use of register-congruent hedges, such as those used above in examples 4a and 4b.

To sum up, there appear to be at least two different reasons why L2 writers experience difficulty constructing an authoritative stance in their writing. Students like Victor, may not see the educational stakes in adopting a critical stance or may even resist doing so. Then there are students like Ryan who may be aware of the value in adopting a certain kind of stance but do not command the discursive resources needed to project an authoritative stance in their texts.

There is research evidence that this second difficulty may be more common. Hyland and Milton (1997), for instance, found that the English L2 writers in their study tended to respond to the implicit expectation to project an

authoritative stance in research report writing by repeatedly expressing their views in direct and highly committed forms (e.g., *it is certain that; this will definitely*)—which can result in a hasty or ill-considered stance—instead of by strategically modulating between doubt and certainty. Similar problems among L2 writers in controlling valued linguistic resources for expressing stance are reported in Schleppegrell (2004) and Wu (2007). In light of this research, simply advising students in abstract terms to adopt an authoritative (or critical, critically distant, measured, etc.) stance would be insufficient for assisting them to project these stances in their texts and to make choices about the types of stances they wish to convey. Many students need help in identifying the stance moves that are prototypical and valued in samples of the discourse they are being asked to write. They could be supported in this effort by faculty who are aware of the complexities involved in constructing interpersonal meanings in academic writing, ones that more often than not go unnamed and therefore unnoticed by students.

## ARGUMENTS FOR AN EXPLICIT STANCE-FOCUSED METALANGUAGE

When pointing out valued stances and rhetorical strategies to students, should specific stance-related terms like *hedging*, *evidentializing*, *conjecturing*, *boosting*, and *problematizing* be used? Behind this question are at least three more pointed pedagogical questions:

*Is it necessary or beneficial to draw students' attention to fine-grained levels of textual detail (or sentence-level strategies) when discussing stance in disciplinary writing?*

*Is a specific analytic terminology or metalanguage useful for faculty and students, or could it be burdensome or distracting?*

*How can faculty who are untrained in text analysis be assisted to read students' texts for fine-grained expressions of stance and to develop a vocabulary that connects micro-level textual choices to epistemological values in the discipline?*

In terms of the first question, the research and examples discussed above suggest that L2 writers (in addition, certainly, to many L1 writers) need to be shown instances in texts—possibly their own texts—in which abstract rhetorical effects like an authoritative stance are achieved. They also need ample opportunity to reflect on the discursive resources that are available to them for realizing important stances in their writing. Class activities that can help achieve these aims include instructor-led discussions with students about what sorts of “critical” stances are valued in certain disciplinary genres; tasks that require

students to rewrite excerpts from students' papers that they find problematic in terms of stance and reader-positioning; and tasks that require that students reflect explicitly on their own stance-taking strategies while writing, for example by inserting meta-reflective comments in the margins of their papers. See Lancaster (2011) for more detailed discussion of these activities.

In terms of whether or not to use a specific metalanguage with students, there is now good evidence that use of a meaning-based (rather than traditional grammar-based) metalanguage can assist students to gain conscious awareness of valued linguistic resources and patterns in the genres with which they are engaging. Such affordances have been documented by scholars working in the tradition of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), as well as in other traditions of applied linguistics. For example, the use of a meaning-based metalanguage has been shown to help learners to identify subtle patterns of evaluation in political opinion texts and thus improve their capacities for critical reading (Perales-Escudero, 2011). It has also been shown to help teachers of history identify language areas that create problems for their students in learning to read history discourse (Schleppegrell & de Oliveira, 2006). For both secondary- and tertiary-level student *writing*, direct instruction in use of metadiscourse strategies has been shown to assist students to improve their writing. For instance, Cheng & Steffensen (1996) found through interviews and analysis of pre- and post-test writing samples that first year composition students improved both in their rhetorical awareness and use of metadiscourse strategies in their writing, including reader engagement devices like *one may expect* and attitude markers like *surprisingly*. Focusing on the writing of twelfth grade Chilean students, Concha and Paratore (2011) likewise found through text analysis and think-aloud protocols that students who learned an explicit metalanguage for reflecting on issues of *local coherence* (LC)—which the authors define as “the relationship between adjacent propositions in text” (p. 37)—improved in their ability to think and talk about LC and to control language resources for constructing LC in their own writing.

Robust frameworks for talking about linguistic choices in rhetorical terms are offered by, among others, Graff and Birkenstein (2006), Hunston and Thompson (2000), Hyland (2005), Martin and Rose (2007), Martin and White (2005), Swales and Feak (2012), and Thompson (2001). Depending on the context, the linguistic concepts identified in these studies can be used in focused ways to raise instructors' conscious awareness of the ways language creates important meanings in their disciplinary discourses and their students' writing. For example, in the context of empirically-based research arguments, instructors can learn to identify how *evidentializing* (or hedging that is based in sustained consideration of evidence) can contribute to a more authoritative

stance than *conjecturing* (or hedging that is grounded in the subjectivity of the authorial voice). (See the Appendix for further examples of both types of hedging.) In general, a meaningful metalanguage about the sentence-level details of stance is needed if faculty in the disciplines are to come to notice how language is working more and less effectively in their students' writing to project valued interpersonal meanings.

The third question above—how can faculty be assisted to read students' writing in terms of stance?—is knottier. Given the inevitable time constraints in a busy academic year and the lack of linguistic/rhetorical training among most faculty in the disciplines, one natural objection to this chapter's argument is that use of a specific metalanguage, while ideal, is unrealistic. It is unduly burdensome. A second objection is that patterns of language use can be identified more informally, without employing a specific metalanguage. I respond to the first objection below in detail. To the second one, I would suggest that many linguistic features of texts cannot be recognized, at least consciously and explicitly, without some kind of underlying concept. The accompanying terminology like *hedges* and *boosters* may appear “jargony” because the concept is unfamiliar, or, perhaps more accurately, because the concept is regarded as such a transparent part of the discourse that explicit identification appears unnecessary.

Continuing with this point just a bit, it is true that authors like Graff and Birkenstein (2006), whose textbook *They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* has been used successfully with both L2 and L1 writers, use non-specialized terminology to identify “the moves that matter in academic writing.” To refer to attributions, for instance, they use the descriptive phrases “introducing what ‘they say’” (p. 163), “introducing ‘standard views’” (p. 163), and “capturing authorial action” (p. 165). Below each strategy, they list wordings or templates associated with each function. The sorts of strategies they identify could be very useful for student-writers who are struggling with basic discursual resources for reviewing others' arguments and taking a stance. However, by keeping the description of language at the very general level that they do, the authors do not discuss patterns of language that operate at more specific levels of discourse (often below writers' fully conscious awareness) and that create valued meanings in *particular discourse contexts*, such as the strategic uses of hedging in genres calling for evidence-based recommendations. The authors' use of what could be referred to as a “commonsense” metalanguage for describing academic moves, that is, may be more useful for first year writing courses and other general introductions to academic discourse and less useful for advanced disciplinary contexts, such as Econ 432 and PolSci 409, where a more specialized metalanguage may be needed to identify subtly valued disciplinary moves.



As an example of where a more specific metalanguage could be useful, consider the following examples from Graff and Birkenstein's textbook. The authors offer these examples when discussing the importance of "entertaining objections" (p. 78; 170) in academic writing.

(7a) Yet some readers may challenge the view that ...

(7b) Of course, many will probably disagree with the assertion that ...

(Graff & Birkenstein, 2006, p. 170-171)

In light of hedging patterns discussed above, these examples are interesting because of the second layer of "entertaining" brought into play through the hedges *may* and *probably*. Unacknowledged by the authors, these hedges subtly entertain objections to the claims that there are objections. That is, *some readers may challenge the view, but they may not*. In projecting this second layer of "entertaining," these texts convey a more measured stance than if they were worded in a more committed manner, as in *Undoubtedly, many readers will challenge the view that ...* or *Of course, many will most certainly disagree with the assertion that ...* The decision to hedge rather than boost the assertion is important in terms of the resulting authorial stance. Also unacknowledged are the counter (*Yet*) and concede move (*Of course*). The authors do not explain how these resources, which could trigger important interpersonal meanings depending on the context, relate to entertaining objections.

By pointing out these more micro-level features, I do not mean to suggest that every stance resource needs to be identified every time discourse is examined, and for Graff and Birkenstein's aims in *They Say / I Say*, such detail may be unnecessary. However, research cited above shows that in more advanced academic writing contexts rhetorical moves like hedging, boosting, subtle countering, and conceding points are important strategies and ones with which many students struggle. Acknowledging how these meanings are expressed in text at the level of the sentence may therefore require a non-commonsense way of talking about texts. Finally, Graff and Birkenstein themselves cannot entirely avoid employing technical terms. As two instances, they refer to "embedding voice markers" (p. 70-71; 170) and "metacommentary" (p. 123-132; 176). These (or similar) terms are necessary, as I believe the authors would acknowledge, if they are to make the points about language that they need to make. In general, the degree of specialization in metalanguage is influenced by the type of meanings and the level of linguistic detail that require attention. It is



also influenced, of course, by students' level of academic discourse knowledge. While Graff and Birkenstein's approach may be ideally suited for first-year university writers, working with upper-level students in specific disciplinary contexts may require more specialized terminology for making disciplinary stance moves explicit.

Returning to the first objection, how realistic is it to propose using any kind of specialized metalanguage in faculty development contexts focused on stance and reader positioning? Which linguistic concepts should be addressed and how? Above, I focused on hedging, boosting, and related concepts because these areas proved important after detailed discourse analysis of upper-level student writing. How can faculty in other contexts learn to identify meaningful patterns of language use in their own students' writing? A positive effect of this kind of analysis would be that faculty come to recognize the complexity of the writing they are asking their students to take on and to better understand the nature of the difficulties that weaker student writers experience. This kind of recognition could potentially lead to more nuanced grading and commenting practices, as well as to strategies for making stance expectations explicit when designing writing assignments.

To be sure, learning to track micro-level stance moves in disciplinary discourses is a tall order. Nevertheless, while faculty in the disciplines may not be trained in discourse analysis, they do have the clear advantage of being trained in the disciplinary discourse itself. Valued uses of language are thus an *implicit* part of their overall communicative repertoire for making meaning in disciplinary genres. The task for faculty in the disciplines, therefore, is to learn to identify these valued uses of language explicitly. I make some suggestions for assisting them to do this in the next section.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR WORKING WITH FACULTY IN THE DISCIPLINES**

My suggestions for working with faculty in this section are focused on two types of metalanguage about stance, one more general and the other specific. I explain how these could be useful to writing specialists who aim to assist faculty in the disciplines to track meaningful patterns of stance in their disciplinary discourses and in their students' writing.

The first, more general metalanguage comprises concepts such as stance, reader-positioning, dialogic expansion and contraction, dialogic control, authoritativeness, contrastiveness, critical distance, and discursal alignment. Concepts such as these (which are illustrated in the Appendix) are "general"

because they have to do with rhetorical effects that are abstracted away from word/phrase, sentence, and text-level patterns. They have to do with abstract qualities of stance that are constructed through recurring configurations of language use. When examining student writing, writing specialists and disciplinary faculty could use general concepts like these to guide their process of identifying and interpreting more specific patterns of language use in student work.

In terms of *how* they could use these concepts, I would suggest that the metaphorical orientation of academic writing-as-conversation, which Graff and Birkenstein, among many others in composition studies, endorse, could serve as a useful overarching framework for facilitating workshop activities. As I discuss below, this metaphorical orientation could be more useful than other metaphors about writing, such as argument-as-war (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), especially when the task at hand is to identify patterns of stance in students' texts. This is because it offers a lens through which to introduce related conceptual metaphors about stance. These may include *reader positioning* (or moves to bring the reader into alignment with the author's views), *dialogic control* (or use of language to establish a sense of control over various participants in the discourse) and *dialogic expansion* and *contraction* (or use of language to decrease and increase authorial commitment and thus involve and guide the reader through the argument). Through the use of these dialogically-oriented concepts, other more general stance concepts can be introduced in coherent ways.

For example, an *authoritative* stance can be discussed as a quality that is achieved not just through use of highly assertive language—through *boosters*, for example—but through rhetorical strategies that work to manage a dialogic exchange among various interactants in the discourse. Connected to this, reader-positioning can be introduced as a lens through which to examine how student writers use language to engage and interact with the reader when developing their arguments and thereby establish an authoritative stance. For example, workshop participants can practice identifying textual moves for offering concessions to the reader and then countering (e.g., *It is indeed the case that ...; but ...*), identifying points of shared knowledge (e.g., *Of course, it is widely understood among compositionists that ...*), correcting potential misunderstandings (e.g., *This is not to say that ...; but rather ...*), and other strategies that extend hands of solidarity to readers, especially readers who are not already aligned with the writer's views.

In general, the writing-as-conversation metaphor, while certainly not new to writing scholars, could be useful for anchoring discussions of stance with faculty from various disciplinary contexts. Importantly, it could also lead to the formation of new questions about student writing that motivate close

examination of language use in student-produced texts, i.e., to the features of language that operate to realize the abstract concepts explained above.

The second type of metalanguage is more directly tied to text-level details. While less intuitive for instructors who have not been trained in discourse analysis, this metalanguage—e.g., hedging, boosting, evidentializing, conjecturing, problematizing, and other canonical discourse analytic concepts discussed in Barton and Stygall (2002), Hyland (2004), Swales and Feak (2012), and elsewhere—might be drawn on selectively as faculty begin to notice salient patterns of language use in their own students' writing. As discussed above, identifying linguistic patterns is facilitated through a metalanguage that gives a name to specific linguistic concepts, and whichever linguistic features are discussed must be determined by the discourse context.

Before suggesting specific examples of this way of talking about stance with faculty in the disciplines, I would like to suggest that the writing-as-conversation metaphor could supplement or re-orient (rather than entirely replace) participants' existing metalanguage about writing. This is so they can practice examining student texts through lenses that are both familiar and new. Terms that might be more familiar to describe qualities of student writing, such as evaluative descriptors like *well-structured*, *clear*, *critical*, *engaging*, *formal/informal*, and *awkward*, could in fact serve as starting places for infusing faculty development workshop activities with metaphors that place emphasis on meanings related to stance. Barton (2002), for instance, explains how her motivation to figure out what types of language use contributed to the impression of "awkwardness" in student writing led to her to the linguistic concept of *evidentiality* (defined, after Chafe (1986), as attitudes toward knowledge). She then used this linguistic concept to systematically analyze stance in student writing (in Barton, 1993).

I now turn to specific examples of how faculty in the disciplines might be encouraged to track patterns of stance in their students' writing. Starting with the case of PolSci 409, the professor's term to describe effective student writing is "control." This is a concept he spoke about enthusiastically in our interview and one that he reported to be using with students when discussing writing. Understandably, however, he had some difficulty identifying specific places in students' essays where control is accomplished, as well as places in Victor's and other low-performers' essays where control wanes. Refining the concept of "control" to *dialogic control* might usefully direct his attention to meaningful patterns in his students' writing for navigating between different theoretical viewpoints. The question, that is, could subtly shift from *how a sense of control is accomplished in the text* to *how the student writer establishes control over the dialogue between theorists*. This latter question is well-suited to the particular

essay assignment because the assignment required students to juxtapose two or more theoretical arguments. It required that they orchestrate a critical discussion among theorists. This can be accomplished in ways that convey varying degrees of dialogic control.

With this subtle shift in emphasis from *control* to *dialogic control*, the workshop discussion could explore how high-performing students use language to control the dialogic exchange between different theoretical perspectives. Identifying patterns of language use related to dialogic control could lead, for instance, to an examination of problematization moves. This is because the high-performers in the course often used problematization as a structuring device. That is, in order to make the transition from one theorist to another, they would often identify gaps in reasoning that could only be resolved by turning to another theorist. For example, Ethan's problematizing of Fraser's argument in 4b (above) worked as rhetorical motivation for turning the discussion to Rawls. Moving the attention down to text-level features with a focus on problematization could then open up a discussion about ways to problematize in more and less measured ways, which might then lead to the observation that hedges are useful for constructing a stance that is both contrastive and measured or "aware" of other dialogic possibilities.

In Econ 432, the instructor's metalanguage about student writing, as revealed in our interview and his comments on students' essays, is guided largely by the conceptual metaphor of argument as war (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In our interview, he spoke about the need for students to build, in his words, "strong," "defensible," and "airtight" arguments. He identified counterargumentation as one strategy that students could use to better defend their positions. Making this argument-as-war metaphor explicit in faculty development workshop settings could be useful for opening up discussions with faculty in other disciplines about goals for student writing. Interestingly, this particular metaphor does correspond to the highly adversarial quality of the discourse on antitrust law and economics (McCloskey, 1985/1998), a quality which is realized in the high-graded Econ 432 essays partly through repeated counterargument moves. But the argument-as-war metaphor does not account for all of the instructor's explanations of valued features of student writing.

For example, the instructor praised Ken for insightfully "step[ping] outside of economics" to make his argument. This suggests a view of academic writing as participating in a disciplinary (or interdisciplinary) conversation. It suggests that writing is a matter of staying within or stepping outside of a particular disciplinary area and thus perhaps participating in a disciplinary culture. If, therefore, the conceptual metaphor for evaluating student writing were shifted from argument-as-war to argument-as-conversation, an interesting

question becomes, how might counterargumentation be seen and talked about differently? This is a question that could be put to this Econ 432 instructor. Discussions might lead toward viewing counterargumentation less in terms of defending positions or sealing up holes in arguments and more in terms of increasing argumentative complexity by engaging with alternative views and voices in the discourse.

In a faculty development workshop setting, the Econ 432 instructor could be encouraged to consider how counterargumentation correlates with taking a step back or outside of the discourse. Stemming from this discussion, different uses of countering could be introduced to workshop participants. For example, deny/counter pairs (*it is not the case that ... rather ...*) and concede/counter pairs (*yes, it is true that, but ...*)—both highly assertive maneuvers—could be discussed as reader-oriented strategies for steering the reader through the discussion and thus controlling the conversation. In contrast, hedge/counter pairs (*it could be/possibly/perhaps ... at the same time, though ...*) could then be discussed as moves for negotiating with others' views, for opening up the conversation and then pushing it forward. This type of explicit language-based discussion would preserve the instructor's focus on counterargumentation while also shifting the concept from one metaphorical system to another, from argument-as-war to argument-as-conversation. In other words, counterargumentation moves could be explained as a rhetorical strategy for guiding the readers through the argument.

In addition to using conceptual metaphors to facilitate interaction about patterns in student writing, it would also be possible to build activities that start with instructors' comments on students' essays (rather than with the essays themselves). Instructors could be encouraged to examine patterns in their own commenting practices, perhaps with a special focus on those pertaining to language use. What types of features in student writing elicited their comments? From there, discussions could focus on how students' use of language index particular kinds of stances.

For instance, the Econ 432 instructor's comments on students' papers suggest that he was sensitive to their level of commitment when putting forth critical evaluations. This was seen, for example, in his suggestion on one essay to "use a weaker word here than 'could'." His suggestion for alternate wording was "maybe 'might' or 'conceivably could'?" Pausing on a comment like this could open up space for reflecting on the question of where in students' writing they should try to adopt a committed stance and where they should strive for a more expansive or less committed one. The instructor's comment about using a "weaker word" could have left the student confused, and so this is an example of a good opportunity to comment on rhetorical strategies in the specific context. In particular, if the larger goal is for students to construct an assertive,

committed, strong argument, what exactly is the purpose of backing off from full commitment when offering a critical evaluation? Why not, as it were, use the “stronger” word? Such a question ties in directly with the metaphor of writing-as-conversation because it suggests that authoritativeness has just as much to do with manipulating dialogic space in strategic ways, with opening up space for others’ views and voices, as it does defending positions by sealing up holes in arguments.

Examples of useful workshops discussions/activities could go on. But in general, the suggestion I am making is that it is important to create opportunities for meaningful interaction among disciplinary faculty and writing researchers about language use in student writing, specifically language use related to stance. This interaction can be guided by a general metalanguage about stance and reader positioning, which could help to promote conscious noticing of patterns in language in student-generated texts. (Zawacki & Habib [this volume] suggest that having a language to talk about language would have been useful for the faculty they interviewed who expressed a willingness to help their L2 students improve their writing but also frustration with their inability to diagnose the causes of the problems or how to fix them.)

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The principal pedagogical implication that has emerged from my own and others’ linguistics work on stance in student writing is greater awareness among faculty in the disciplines of valued and less valued patterns of stance in student writing. Sharing results of text analyses is one way to foster such awareness. Another way that may have greater potential for sustainability is through faculty development workshops that are designed to assist faculty to identify subtle patterns of interpersonal meanings in their students’ writing and in their responses to students’ wordings. Since this second option is especially challenging considering that most faculty in the disciplines do not have prior training in text analysis, it is important that the pedagogical stakes of attending closely to micro-level meaning-making in student writing be made apparent. For instance, writing specialists can assist faculty to identify how styles of stance-taking in their students’ writing operate to position the instructor-reader in certain ways—for example, as aligned or not with a shared analytic framework or with a certain kind of epistemological and attitudinal orientation to disciplinary concepts.

With a keener eye to the ways specific linguistic patterns interrelate with learning goals and epistemological values, faculty in the disciplines can become

more reflexive about how and why they respond to student writing in the ways that they do. They can also learn to discuss with their students in explicit ways what rhetorical moves are valued in the course writing and why. Armed with a rich metalanguage for making connections between texts and contexts, faculty could enable high-performing students like Ken, Luis, Ethan, Eric, and Maria to draw on their discursive expertise in strategic ways to respond effectively to less familiar writing contexts. For students like Victor and Ryan, who appear to be putting forth effort in their writing but not employing the necessary rhetorical and linguistic strategies needed to create valued stances, it is doubly important that faculty be explicit about their genre expectations and work with these students to closely read genre exemplars, to identify how patterns of language are working, and to learn to monitor and evaluate their own discursive choices.

## NOTES

1. In systemic functional linguistics (SFL), the *theme* is the “point of departure” for the message of a text (Halliday, 1994, p. 94). The theme includes the grammatical subject of the sentence as well as any material that may precede the subject, for example circumstantial adjuncts (e.g., *From there Microsoft Excel and Matlab were used to analyze data.*), fronted dependent clauses (e.g., *If people were just as aware of the value in their endemic biodiversity, curbing the spread of exotic species would take an easier turn*), and other options.
2. There are, of course, other stance differences that can be identified in the two texts above. Ethan’s stance is, for instance, more critically distant than Victor’s. But for now I point out that Victor’s stance of assumed agreement is one reason his essay also does not use hedging strategies. That is, he does not need to mitigate the force of his critiques because he does not develop critiques.
3. Ryan’s native-language is Korean, and the professor’s sense was that Ryan’s writing is more representative of “1.5 Generation” writers than it is L2 writers because, while his control of syntax, local coherence and cohesion is advanced, the register he selects is often highly conversational. This conversational register can be seen in example 6. I grouped Ryan as an L2 writer in my study because he responded that English is not his native language in a pre-term course survey.

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## **APPENDIX: EXPLANATION OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS**

### **CONFUSING “TEACHER TALK” ABOUT STANCE:**

- Be critical: offer judgments and critical evaluations  
... *but don't be judgmental or biased*
- Display excitement and commitment to your argument  
... *but be objective*
- ... *and try not to use “I” or other self-mentions*
- Use your own words, your own voice

... *but don't be colloquial and address the wrong audience*

Write assertively and with authority

... *but be sure to allow for other viewpoints*

... *and don't forget you're not yet an expert*

Engage with others' views and voices

... *but don't just summarize what others have said*

Be interesting, experiment with new argument strategies

... *but be sure to write clearly and concisely*

**Stance:** refers to the ways that writers—as they go about analyzing and evaluating things, making assertions and recommendations, providing evidence and justifications and so forth—project an authorial presence in their texts, one that conveys attitudes and feelings and that interacts with imagined readers by recognizing their views, identifying points of shared knowledge, conceding limitations, and otherwise positioning them as aligned with or resistant to the views being advanced in the text.

**Reader-positioning:** the reader-oriented side of stance. Reader-positioning is the use of stance strategies for engaging and interacting with the imagined reader, including marking concessions and counters, identifying points of shared knowledge, correcting potential misunderstandings, acknowledging points of contention, and other strategies designed to bring the reader into alignment with the writer's views.

## EXAMPLES OF STANCE AND READER POSITIONING MOVES IN PUBLISHED ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

These example texts are discussed in Ken Hyland's (2005) article "Stance and Engagement: A Model of Interaction in Academic Discourse," *Discourse Studies*, 7(2), 173-192.

*I argue* that their treatment is superficial because, *despite appearances*, it relies solely on a sociological, as opposed to an ethical, orientation to develop a response. (Sociology)

Chesterton was *of course* wrong to suppose that Islam denied "even souls to women." (Philosophy)

This measurement is distinctly different from the *more familiar* NMR pulsed field gradient measurement of solvent

self-diffusion. (Physics)

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 ... (Biology)

... two quantities are *rather important* and, for this reason, the way they were measured is re-explained here. (Mechanical engineering)

### SOME KEY DISCURSIVE RESOURCES OF STANCE

**Hedging:** a stance-taking strategy used to reduce authorial commitment to the proposition being forwarded, for the purpose of expressing cautiousness and/or opening up discursive space for alternative views. Hedging is accomplished through low-probability modal expressions (*may, might, could*), appearance-based evidential verbs (*seems, appears, suggests*), low-certainty adverbs (*perhaps, possibly*) and other linguistic resources.

**Evidentializing:** a type of hedging that expresses sustained consideration of evidence. e.g.:

In national terms, Pabst became the third largest brewer in 1961, three years after the acquisition, with 5.83% of the national beer market. These numbers *suggest* that the anticompetitive damage done to the beer market, no matter how it is defined geographically, must have been minimal.

**Conjecturing:** a type of hedging that expresses an internalized process grounded in the subjectivity of the authorial voice. e.g., “Regulation of prices *may* be left best to companies with more stable cost structures.”

**Boosting:** a stance-taking strategy used to increase authorial commitment to the proposition being forwarded, for the purpose of drawing attention to the importance of the topic and tightening up discursive space. Boosting is accomplished through the expressions of certainty, as in *strongly, clearly, countless, and completely*.

**Dialogic expansion:** The use of various linguistic resources, including hedges, attributions, rhetorical questions, and others, for releasing the author from full commitment or responsibility for a proposition. e.g.

However, this case is *not without* concerns. There is the *possibility* for abuse *if* the producer sets different maximum prices for different retailers, allowing some to reap higher profits. There is also a *possibility* that for new retailers to enter the market they would have to charge higher prices initially, in which case a maximum price *could* deter competition. It *appears*, then, that maximum price fixing does the greatest harm when set below a competitive level. In Case 4 it *could potentially* do harm to small retailers trying to enter the market, but does so for the benefit of consumers and the producer. *Based purely on the models, it appears* that, *at the very least*, maximum prices deserve a Rule of Reason approach to evaluate their cost and benefits.

**Dialogic contraction:** The use of various linguistic resources, including boosters, denials, counters, and others, for increasing the author's commitment and closing down space for alternative views. e.g.

If what Foucault says is true ... should we abandon the idea of a human reasoning, able to reflect over choices? *My answer is no. I do not deny* that we all have notions of what is right and wrong behavior and many of these notions are without a doubt acquired through Socialization .... *However* we would *hardly* accept that every action is strictly a result of Socialization.

**Problematization:** A rhetorical strategy for “showing that a prevailing assumption, idea, view, or situation needs reexamination, reconceptualization, or reevaluation of some kind” (Barton, 1993, p. 748). Problematization is often used to prepare the ground for the author's research and argumentative contribution to an ongoing discourse.

### SOME ABSTRACT STANCE QUALITIES VALUED IN ACADEMIC DISCOURSES

**Critical distance:** a quality of stance marked by interpersonal detachment toward the entities that are being analyzed and evaluated. This quality can be accomplished by some hedging devices. It can also be accomplished through the use of various “embedded” wordings, for example when writers use wordings to objectify their own mental processes. e.g.

Young's concept of the “five faces of oppression” offers *a*

*perspective from which to view* the various relationships in the novel as ones that are typical of societies imbued with systemic oppression. Young's definition of oppression is also useful *in examining* the different ways in which, and to what degree, different groups suffer from oppression in the novel.

**Contrastiveness:** a quality of stance marked contrast against others' views and voices. Frequent use of contrastive connectors (e.g., *however, nevertheless, but*, etc.) and denials (e.g., *it is not, never, failed*, etc.) index a contrastive stance, as do frequent problematization moves.

**Dialogic control:** a quality of stance marked by control over a conversation with the reader and other discourse participants. It can be achieved through strategic deployment of dialogical expansion and contraction for regulating the dialogic space. Problematization moves can help to construct a sense of dialogic control, as can more sentence-level features like deny/counter strategies (e.g., *I am not suggesting that ... but rather that ...*) and hedge/counter strategies (e.g., *There is a possibility that ... However ...*). Further resources can include strategic transition devices (or "roadmapping"), as well as elaboration strategies (e.g., *in other words, that is, what I mean is that*) and exemplification strategies (*for instance/example*).

**Discoursal alignment:** a quality of stance marked by assimilation of the language of the discourse with the writer's "own language." It is often accomplished by use of language that frames evaluations in terms of disciplinary constructs while also positively evaluating those constructs, conveying assimilation of the disciplinary discourse. e.g.

The realities raised by Fraser offer *important complexities* to Young's political discourse. Young provides *a useful schematic* for understanding oppression both in Coetzee's *Disgrace* and contemporary society.

**Authoritativeness:** a very general quality of stance, one that is highly context-sensitive and construed through a configuration of various linguistic resources. In many academic discourses, a sense of authoritativeness may be related to such qualities as critical distance, contrastiveness, dialogic control, and discoursal alignment.