Modelling voice as Appraisal and Involvement resources: The portrayal of textual identities and interpersonal relationships in the written stylistic analyses of non-native speaker, international undergraduates.

Volume 1

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Abstract

This thesis aims to address the need for a fine-grained, linguistically-principled model for describing voice and its development in specialised academic writing contexts. The study develops and evaluates a model for analysing the voices and identities students need to perform in the domain of pedagogical stylistics. The new theory is predominantly informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and models voice as genre and the interpersonal systems of Appraisal and Involvement. Appraisal, the principal analytical tool, maps the resources associated with the construction of an effective voice, namely those that express the writer's views on the subject matter (Attitude), adjust their commitment to those views (Graduation), and more authoritatively and/or persuasively align the imagined reader to the argument being made (Engagement). Involvement features, such as technical terms and grammatical metaphor, enable the writer to bond with the imagined reader by projecting their reciprocal identities and shared affiliations and interests.

The new model offers two particular advances in relation to existing linguistic and theoretical approaches to voice in academic writing. Firstly, a more balanced theorisation of voice enables the analyst to show how the writer's interpersonal choices enact and/or create an impression of her/his individuality, as well as of her/his social identities. From an intersubjective perspective, the combined lenses of Appraisal and Involvement provide additional insights into the overt and covert ways in which the assumed reader is aligned to the writer's argument and the actual reader is invited to comply with this reading position. Thirdly, extensions of the Attitude and Engagement systems within Appraisal have been developed to account for discipline- and topic-specific characteristics of the data, and these are incorporated into the model.

The primary data were the literary stylistic analysis arguments of ten international non-native speaker (NNS) undergraduates enrolled in a subject that adopted a stylistics-based approach to English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction. The study employed a discourse analytic, case study methodology. In-depth, stage-by-stage analysis of a high-graded argument made it possible to relate variations in linguistic choices to modulations of the

writer's voice and rhetorical positioning of the assumed reader, and corresponding shifts in their projected identities and bonds. Comparative analyses of nine lower-graded arguments and a small corpus of the case study participant's writing across two genres respectively provided a description of an effective voice in the domain of pedagogical stylistics, and evidence of the writer's unique voice traits. Lastly, evaluation of the model was informed by interrogation of the analytical process and its outcomes, and specifically of the extended Appraisal framework.

Although exploratory, the study makes an original contribution to research on voice in academic discourse by its innovative theorisation of voice and detailed deconstruction of voices privileged in a specific text, genre and discipline. The study has theoretical implications for linguists interested in modelling voice, particularly through Appraisal theory, in stylistics and related domains. Finally, it offers EAP teachers insights and tools for helping students to fashion voices that conform to disciplinary conventions but also express their individuality.

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