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**Chapter 11: Academic Discourse**

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**What is academic discourse?**

Academic discourse refers to the ways of thinking and using language which exist in the academy. Its significance, in large part, lies in the fact that complex social activities like educating students, demonstrating learning, disseminating ideas and constructing knowledge, rely on language to accomplish. Textbooks, essays, conference presentations, dissertations, lectures and research articles are central to the academic enterprise and are the very stuff of education and knowledge creation.

But academic discourse does more than enable universities to get on with the business of teaching and research. It simultaneously constructs the social roles and relationships which create academics and students and which sustain the universities, the disciplines, and the creation of knowledge itself. Individuals use language to write, frame problems and understand issues in ways specific to particular social groups and in doing these things they form social realities, personal identities and professional institutions. Discourse is at the heart of the academic enterprise; it is the way that individuals collaborate and compete with others, to create knowledge, to educate neophytes, to reveal learning and define academic allegiances. The academy cannot be separated from its discourses and could not exist without them. No new discovery, insight, invention or understanding has any significance until it is made available to others and no university or individual will receive credit for it until it has seen the light of day through publication.

At one level then, the study of academic discourse is interesting for what it can tell us about the accomplishment of academic life. But beyond the university, the languages of the academy have quietly begun to insert themselves into every cranny of our lives, colonizing the discourses of technocracy, bureaucracy, entertainment and advertising. Academic discourses have reshaped our entire world view, becoming the dominant mode for interpreting reality and our own existence. We find traces of it not just in popular science periodicals but in the Sunday broadsheets and the TV documentary, it is the language of the pharmaceutical bottle and the toothpaste advertisement, the psychotherapist and the recycling leaflet. It is the carrier of expertise and prestige - the badge of those who possess knowledge and of those who wish to. As Halliday and Martin (1993: 11) put it: ‘the language of science has become the language of literacy’.There are therefore good reasons for taking academic discourse seriously, and in this chapter I will seek to show why academic discourse is important, something of what is known about it, and how it is studied, finishing up with a sample study which illustrates these issues.

**Why is academic discourse important?**

The current interest in academic discourse, and particularly academic writing in English, is largely the result of three major developments over the past 20 years: changes in higher education which have resulted in greater interest given to the importance of writing; the growth of English as the international language of research and scholarship; and the emergence of theoretical perspectives which recognize the centrality of academic discourses in the construction of knowledge.

First, many countries in Europe, Asia and Australasia have witnessed a huge expansion of Higher Education as a result of greater social inclusion policies. This expansion has been accompanied by increases in full fee paying international students to compensate for cuts in government support, and by the rapid rise in refugee populations around the world with a consequent increase in international migration. Together these factors have a created a student body which is far more culturally, socially and linguistically heterogeneous than ever before. Added to this is the fact that students now take a broader and more eclectic mix of subjects. The ‘academicization’ of practice-based disciplines such as nursing, social work and marketing and the growth of modular and inter-disciplinary degrees means that students have to learn rapidly to negotiate a complex web of disciplinary specific text-types, assessment tasks and presentational modes (both face-to-face and online) in order to graduate.

So while writing continues to be the way in which students both consolidate and demonstrate their understanding of their subjects and are socialized into academic practices, students, including native English speakers, must take on new roles and engage with knowledge in new ways when they enter university. An important result of these changes is that learners bring different identities, understandings and habits of meaning-making to a more diverse range of subjects, so that tutors cannot assume their students will possess the understandings and learning experiences that will equip them with the literacy competencies traditionally required in university courses. As a result, greater emphasis is now placed on academic literacy and on EAP programmes to help students meet the demands of their courses. Academic discourses have been extensively studied to inform this pedagogic agenda.

A second reason for this growing interest in academic discourse has been the power it wields in the careers of individual academics. Publishing is the main means by which academics establish their claims for competence and climb the professional ladder. Moreover, as pressures on academics to publish increases, so does the demand that this should be done in English. Research shows that academics all over the world are increasingly less likely to publish in their own languages and to find their English language publications cited more often. There were over 1.1 million peer-reviewed research articles published globally in English in 2005 and this number has been increasing by 4% annually. With publishers encouraging libraries to subscribe to online versions of journals, the impact of English becomes self-perpetuating, since it is in these journals where authors will be most visible on the world stage and receive the most credit. This has meant that the numbers of non-native English speaking academics publishing in English language journals now exceeds papers authored by native English speakers (Swales, 2004), driving a demand for writing for publication courses. In this enterprise the study of academic discourse has become central to pedagogy.

A third major incentive for studying academic discourse comes from a very different direction: the questioning of a positivist, empirical view of scientific knowledge. In recent years the view of academic discourse as an objective, independent demonstration of absolute truth has been challenged by the sociology of scientific knowledge. Essentially, this perspective argues that scientific proof does not lay in the application of impartial methodologies but in academic arguments. Observations are as fallible as the theories they presuppose, and so texts cannot be seen as accurate representations of ‘what the world is really like’ because this representation is always filtered through acts of selection and foregrounding. In other words, there is always more than one possible interpretation of data and these competing explanations shifts attention from the laboratory or clipboard to the ways that academics argue their claims. We have to look for proof in the textual practices for producing agreement. At the heart of academic persuasion, then, is writers’ attempts to anticipate and head off possible negative reactions to their claims and to do this they use the discourses of their disciplines.

Interest in academic discourse has therefore emerged as part of attempts to reveal the specific rhetorical practices of academic persuasion. Analysts seek to discover how people use discourse to get their ideas accepted and at the same time how this works to construct knowledge and sustain and change disciplinary communities. This is a key issue of academic discourse analysis and of the study of human interaction more generally, as Stubbs (1996: 21) observes:

The major intellectual puzzle in the social sciences is the relation between the micro and the macro. How is it that routine everyday behavior, from moment to moment, can create and maintain social institutions over long periods of time?

In this enterprise discourse analysis, particularly text-based forms of genre analysis, has become established as the most widely used and productive methodology.

**How is academic discourse studied?**

Discourse analysis comprises a broad collection of methods for studying language in action, looking at texts in relation to the social contexts in which they are used. Because language is an irreducible part of social life, this broad definition has been interpreted in various ways across the social sciences. In academic contexts, however, it has tended to be a methodology which focuses on concrete texts rather than institutional social practices. In particular, it has largely taken the form of focusing on particular academic genres such as the research article, conference presentation, and student essay. Genre analysis can be seen as a more specific form of discourse analysis which focuses on any element of recurrent language use, including grammar and lexis, which is relevant to the analyst’s interests. As a result, genre analysis sees texts as representative of wider rhetorical practices and so has the potential to offer descriptions and explanations of both texts and the communities that use them.

Genres are the recurrent uses of more-or-less conventionalized forms through which individuals develop relationships, establish communities, and get things done using language. Genres can thus be seen as a kind of tacit contract between writers and readers, which influence the behaviour of text producers and the expectations of receivers. By focusing on mapping typicality, genre analysis thus seeks to show what is usual in collections of texts and so helps to reveal underlying ideologies and Discourses (Gee, 1999) and the preferences of disciplinary communities. These approaches are influenced by Halliday’s (1994) view of language as a system of choices which link texts to particular contexts through patterns of lexico-grammatical and rhetorical features and by Swales’ (1990) observation that these recurrent choices are closely related to the work of particular discourse communities whose members share broad social purposes.

One of the most productive applications of discourse analysis to academic texts has been to explore the lexico-grammatical regularities of particular genres to identify their structural identity. Analysing this kind of patterning has yielded useful information about the ways texts are constructed and how we recognise coherent patterning of text elements. Some of this research has followed the move analysis work pioneered by Swales’ (1990) which seeks to identify the stages of particular institutional genres and the constraints on typical move sequences. Moves are the rhetorical steps which writers or speakers routinely use to develop their social purposes, and recent work on academic genres has produced descriptions of dissertation acknowledgments (Hyland, 2004a), the methods sections in research articles (Bruce, 2008) and the peer seminar (Aguia, 2004).

While analysing schematic structures has proved a useful way of looking at texts, analysts are increasingly aware of the dangers of oversimplifying by assuming blocks of texts to be mono-functional and ignoring writers’ complex purposes and “private intentions” (Bhatia, 1999). There is also the problem of validating analyses to ensure they are not simply products of the analyst’s intuitions (Crooke, 1986). Transitions from one move to another are always motivated outside the text as writers respond to their social context, but analysts have not always been able to identify the ways these shifts are explicitly signalled by lexico-grammatical patterning (e.g. Paltridge, 1994). Consequently, attention has turned to particular features of specific genres, either grammatical, such as circumstance adverbials in student presentations (Zareva, 2009), functional, like hedging in research articles (Hyland, 1998), or rhetorical, such as evaluation in book reviews (Hyland & Diani, 2009). Corpora are increasingly used to identify frequent choices in different modes and genres, with recent studies exploring the common 4-word collocations, or lexical bundles, which are typical in undergraduate textbooks (Biber, 2006) and student dissertations (Hyland, 2008).

While text analysis is an essential part of discourse analysis, discourse analysis is not merely the linguistic analysis of texts. In academic contexts the interpretive and qualitative study of both texts and users has begun to grow in recent years to establish the ways that texts are firmly embedded in the cultures and activities in which their users participate. One example is Prior’s (1998) study of the contexts and processes of graduate student writing at a US university. Drawing on transcripts of seminar discussions, student texts, observations of institutional contexts, tutor feedback and interviews with students and tutors, Prior provides an in-depth account of the ways students in four fields negotiated their writing tasks and so became socialized into their disciplinary communities. In another study, Li (2006) shows how advice from supervisors, a journal editor and reviewers helped guide a Chinese doctoral student of physics through six drafts and several resubmissions before her paper was finally accepted for publication.

Ethnographic-oriented studies have also explored the literate cultures of academics themselves. Perhaps the best known of these is Swales’ (1998) ‘textography’ of his building at the University of Michigan. Swales makes greater use of analyses of texts and systems of texts in his approach than many ethnographies, combining discourse analyses with extensive observations and interviews. Together these methods provide a richly detailed picture of the professional lives, commitments and projects of individuals in three diverse academic cultures working in the building: the computer centre, the Herbarium and the university English Language Centre. The interplay of different types of data allows us to see how the multiple influences of academic practices, peers, mentors and personal experiences all contribute to their texts and experiences as academic writers (Paltridge, 2008).

Finally, studies conducted from a Critical perspective have focused on how social relations, identity, knowledge and power are constructed through written and spoken texts in disciplines, schools and classrooms. Distinguished by an overtly political agenda, CDA has attempted to show that the discourses of the academy are not transparent or impartial means for describing the world but work to construct, regulate and control knowledge, social relations and institutions. Particular literacy practices possess authority because they represent the currently dominant ideological ways of depicting relationships and realities and these authorised ways of seeing the world exercise control of academics and students alike. Lillis (2001), for instance, show how this can create tensions for students in coping with university literacy demands, while Flowerdew’s (1999) research suggests similar concerns among Non-Native English scholars.

 **What do we know about academic discourse ?**

Together these different approaches aim at capturing thicker descriptions of language use in the academy, producing a rich vein of research findings which continues to inform both teaching and our understanding of the practices of disciplinary knowledge-making. The scale of this research is difficult to summarise, but we can identify four main findings:

1. That academic genres are persuasive and systematically structured to secure readers’ agreement;
2. That these ways of producing agreement represent disciplinary specific rhetorical preferences;
3. That language groups have different ways of expressing ideas and structuring arguments;
4. That academic persuasion involves interpersonal negotiations as much as convincing ideas.
5. ***Academic texts are structured for persuasive effect***

All academic texts are designed to persuade readers of something: of the knowledge claim at the heart of a research article or dissertation; of an evaluation of others’ work in a book review, or of one’s understanding and intellectual autonomy in an undergraduate essay. To accomplish these various purposes, writers tend to draw on the same repertoire of linguistic resources for each genre again and again. This is, in part, because writing is a practice based on expectations. The process of writing involves creating a text that the writer assumes the reader will recognise and expect and the process of reading involves drawing on assumptions about what the writer is trying to do. Hoey (2001) says that this is like dancers following each other’s steps, each assembling sense from a text by anticipating what the other is likely to do by making connections to prior texts. While writing, like dancing, allows for creativity and the unexpected, established patterns form the basis of any variations.

This schema of prior knowledge, acquired through formal learning and repeated experiences with texts, allows writers and speakers to express themselves appropriately and effectively, drawing on conventions for organising messages so that their readers can recognise their purpose and follow their ideas. The research article, for instance, is a genre which restructures the processes of thought and the research it describes to establish a discourse for scientific fact-creation. Language becomes a form of technology in this highly refined genre as it attempts to present interpretations and position participants in particular ways as a means of establishing knowledge.

A range of spoken and written academic genres have been studied in recent years. These include student dissertations (Bunton, 2002), conference presentations (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2001), and grant proposals (Connor & Upton, 2004). This research demonstrates the distinctive differences in the genres of the academy where particular purposes and audiences lead writers to employ very different rhetorical choices. Table 1, for example, compares frequencies for different features in a corpus of 240 research articles and 56 textbooks.

*Table 1: Selected features in Research articles and textbooks*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| per 1,000 words | Hedges | Self-mention | Citation | Transitions |
| Research Articles | 15.1 | 3.9 | 6.9 | 12.8 |
| University Textbooks | 8.1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 24.9 |

We can see considerable variation in these features across the two genres. The greater use of *hedging* underlines the need for caution and opening up arguments in the research papers compared with the authorized certainties of the textbook, while the removal of *citation* in textbooks shows how statements are presented as facts rather than claims grounded in the literature. The greater use of *self-mention* in articles points to the personal stake that writers invest in their arguments and their desire to gain credit for claims. The higher frequency of transitions, which are conjunctions and other linking signals, in the textbooks is a result of the fact that writers need to make connections far more explicit for readers with less topic knowledge.

1. ***Academic texts represent discipline-specific modes of argument.***

A second finding of research is that successful academic writing depends on the individual writer’s control of the epistemic conventions of a discipline, what counts as appropriate evidence and argument, and that this differs across fields. Research on language variation across the disciplines is now one of the more fruitful lines of research and one of the dominant paradigms in EAP (e.g. Hyland, 2004b; Hyland & Bondi, 2006).

The idea of discipline is rather nebulous (Mauranen, 2006; Hyland, 2009), but captures how individuals use and respond to language as members of social communities. Challenged by post modernism, interdisciplinary research and the emergence of modular degrees, the notion of discipline is often questioned (e.g. Gergen & Thatchenkery, 1996). But while boundaries are never stable nor objects of study immutable, discipline is a notion with remarkable persistence. Their distinctiveness, however, can be informed by study of rhetorical practices. This is because successful academic writing depends on writers’ projections of a shared professional context as they seek to embed their writing in a particular social world which they reflect and conjure up through approved discourses.

Essentially, we can see disciplines as language using communities and this helps us join writers, texts and readers together. Communities provide the context within which we learn to communicate and to interpret each other’s talk, gradually acquiring the specialized discourse competencies to participate as members. So we can see disciplines as particular recognised and familiar ways of doing things – particularly of using language to engage with others. Speakers and writers thus make language choices to gain support, express collegiality and resolve difficulties in ways which fit the community’s assumptions, methods, and knowledge. Wells (1992) puts this succinctly:

*Each subject discipline constitutes a way of making sense of human experience that has evolved over generations and each is dependent on its own particular practices: its instrumental procedures, its criteria for judging relevance and validity, and its conventions of acceptable forms of argument. In a word each has developed its own modes of discourse.*

So disciplines structure research within wider frameworks of beliefs and provide the conventions and expectations that make texts meaningful.

In the sciences new knowledge is accepted through experimental proof. Science writing reinforces this by highlighting a gap in knowledge, presenting a hypothesis related to this gap, and then reporting experimental findings to support this. The humanities, on the other hand, rely on case studies and narratives while claims are accepted on strength of argument. The social sciences fall between these poles because in applying scientific methods to less predictable human data they have to give more attention to explicit interpretation. In other words, academic discourse helps to give identity to a discipline and analyses of texts help reveal the distinctive ways disciplines have of asking questions, addressing a literature, criticizing ideas, and presenting arguments. Research has discovered considerable rhetorical variation across a range of features in genres such as scientific letters (Hyland, 2004b), writing assignments (Gimenez, 2009) and PhD dissertations (Hyland, 2004c).

One of the most striking differences in how language differs across fields is the use of hedges such as possible, might, probably, etc.. These function to withhold complete commitment to a proposition, implying that a claim is based on plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge. They indicate the degree of confidence the writer thinks it might be wise to give a claim while opening a discursive space for readers to dispute interpretations (Hyland, 1998). Because they represent the writer’s direct involvement in a text, something that scientists generally try to avoid, they are twice as common in humanities and social science papers than in hard sciences. One reason for this is there is less control of variables, more diversity of research outcomes, and fewer clear bases for accepting claims than in the sciences. Writers can’t report research with the same confidence of shared assumptions so papers rely far more on recognizing alternative voices. Arguments have to be expressed more cautiously by using more hedges. In the hard sciences positivist epistemologies mean that the authority of the individual is subordinated to the authority of the text and facts are meant to ‘speak for themselves’. Writers therefore often disguise their interpretative activities behind linguistic objectivity. They downplay their personal role to suggest that results would be the same whoever conducted the research. The less frequent use of hedges is one way of accomplishing this.

1. ***Different cultures have different language schemata***

Academic discourse analysis has also pointed to cultural specificity in rhetorical preferences (e.g. Connor, 2002). Although a controversial term, one version of culture regards it as an historically transmitted and systematic network of meanings which allow us to understand, develop and communicate our knowledge and beliefs about the world. Culture is seen as inextricably bound up with language (Kramsch, 1993), so that cultural factors have the potential to influence perception, language, learning, and communication. Although it is far from conclusive, discourse analytic research suggests that the schemata of L2 and L1 writers differ in their preferred ways of organising ideas which can influence academic writing (e.g. Hinkel, 2002). These conclusions have been supported by a range of studies into different genres over the past decade (e.g. Duszak, 1997; Yakhontova, 2002).

Much of this work has focused on student genres and has identified a range of different features in first and second langauge writing in English, particularly, the ways writers incorporate material into their writing, how they orientate to readers through attention-getting devices and estimates of reader knowledge, and differences in the use of overt linguistic features (such as less subordination, more conjunction, less passivisation, fewer free modifiers, less noun-modification, less specific words, less lexical variety, predictable variation and a simpler style) (e.g. Grabe and Kaplan, 1996: 239). Critics point out, however, that because contrastive rhetoric starts from an assumption of difference, it has “tended to look at L2 writing … mainly as a problem of negative transfer of L1 rhetorical patterns to L2 writing” (Casanave, 2004: 41). This not only sees L2 writing as a deficit, but runs the risk of ignoring the rich and complex histories of such students’ literacies and what they bring to the L2 classroom (e.g. Horner and Trimbur, 2002).

Equally seriously, much of the contrastive rhetoric research into discourse assumes a ‘received view of culture’ which unproblematically identifies cultures with national entities and emphasises predictable consensuality *within* cultures and differences *across* them (e.g. Atkinson, 2004). However, it is fair to say that, compared with many languages, academic writing in English tends to:

* be more explicit about its structure and purposes with constant previewing and reviewing
* employ more, and more recent, citations
* be less tolerant of digressions
* be more cautious in making claims, with considerable use of mitigation and hedging
* use more sentence connectors to show explicitly how parts of the text link together.

While we can’t simply predict the ways people are likely to write on the basis of assumed cultural traits, discourse studies have shown that students’ first language and prior learning come to influence ways of organising ideas and structuring arguments when writing in English at university.

1. ***Academic argument involves interpersonal negotiations***

Much recent work has focused on how persuasion in various genres is not only accomplished through the ways ideas are presented, but also by the construction of an appropriate authorial self and the negotiation of participant relationships. While once considered a self-evidently objective and impersonal form of discourse, academic writing is now widely considered to be a persuasive endeavour. Academics do not simply produce texts that plausibly represent an external reality, but use language to acknowledge, construct and negotiate social relations. Discourse analysis has helped to show how writers offer a credible representation of themselves and their work by claiming solidarity with readers, evaluating their material and acknowledging alternative views. Interaction in academic writing essentially involves ‘positioning’, or adopting a point of view in relation to both the issues discussed in the text and to others who hold points of view on those issues. In persuading readers of their claims writers must display a competence as disciplinary insiders which is, at least in part, achieved through a writer-reader dialogue which situates both their research and themselves.

As this view gains greater currency, considerable attention has turned to the features which help realise this interpersonal and evaluative dimension of academic texts. Genres such as undergraduate lectures (Morrell, 2004), conference monologues (Webber, 2005), and book reviews (Hyland & Diani, 2009) have been explored from this perspective. Several frameworks have been proposed to analyse the linguistic resources employed in this way, with research conducted under labels such as 'evaluation' (Hunston & Thompson 2000), ‘appraisal’ (Martin & White, 2005), metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005a) and stance and engagement ' (Hyland, 2005b).

Stance and engagement refers to various rhetorical features which help construct both writers and readers. *Stance* is an attitudinal dimension which includes features which refer to the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgements, opinions, and commitments, either intruding to stamp their personal authority onto their arguments or stepping back to disguise their involvement. *Engagement*, in contrast, is an alignment dimension where writers acknowledge and connect to others, recognising the presence of their readers by focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties and including them as discourse participants. *Metadiscourse*, on the other hand, seeks to offer a more comprehensive way of examining interaction in academic argument, broadening the scope of interactional resources to also include features such as conjunctions, framing devices, and glosses on content. While these are often considered as simply helping to tie texts together, they have an important role in relating a text to a community.

**A sample study: citations**

The importance of interaction in academic writing and the variation of differences in disciplinary uses of language are evident in citation practices and illustrated in a study I conducted of 80 research articles in 8 disciplines comprising 700,000 words and interviews with specialist informants (Hyland, 2004).

The inclusion of references to the work of other authors is obviously central to academic persuasion. Not only does it help writers to establish a persuasive epistemological and social framework for their arguments by showing how a text depends on the understandings and previous work in a discipline, but it also displays the writer’s status as an insider. It helps align him or her with a particular community or orientation and establish a credible writer ethos, confirming that this is someone who is aware of, and is knowledgeable about, the topics, approaches, and issues which currently inform the field. This helps to explain why I found 70 citations per paper, but because discourse communities see the world in different ways they also write about it in different ways. Table 1 shows that two thirds of all the citations in the corpus were in the philosophy, sociology, marketing and applied linguistics papers, twice as many as in the science disciplines.

*Table 1: Rank order of citations by discipline*

**Discipline per 1000 Discipline per 1000**

 **words words**

Sociology 12.5 Biology 15.5

Philosophy 10.8 Electronic Engineering 8.4

Applied Linguistics 10.8 Mechanical Engineering 7.3

Marketing 10.1 Physics 7.4

These differences reflect the extent writers can assume a shared context with readers. In Kuhn’s ‘normal science’ model, natural scientists produce public knowledge through relatively steady cumulative growth. Results throw up more questions to be answered by further research so writers don’t need to report research with extensive referencing. Those who read the papers are often working on the same problems and are familiar with the earlier work and with the methodologies used. In the humanities and social sciences, on the other hand, the literature is more dispersed and the readership more heterogeneous, so writers can’t presuppose a shared context but have to build one far more through citation. Biology spoils the rather neat division between hard and soft knowledge practices by having the highest citation count per 1000 words. Interestingly, this is largely due to a high proportion of self-citation with 13% of all citations to the current author compared with about 6% in the other disciplines. This is a recognition of ownership of ideas which amounts to knowledge as private property in biology unknown in other sciences (Hyland, 2004b)

There are also major differences in the ways writers report others’ work as writers in different fields draw on very different sets of reporting verbs to refer to their literature (Hyland, 2004b). Among the higher frequency verbs, almost all instances of *say* and 80% of *think* occurred in philosophy and 70% of *use* in electronics. It turns out, in fact, that engineers *show*, philosophers *argue*, biologists *find* and linguists *suggest*. These preferences reflect broad disciplinary purposes. So, the soft fields largely use verbs which refer to writing activities, like *discuss, hypothesize*, *suggest*, *argue.* These involve the expression of arguments and allow writers to discursively explore issues while carrying a more evaluative element in reporting others’ work. Engineers and scientists, in contrast, prefer verbs which point to the research itself like *observe*, *discover*, *show, analyse*,and *calculate*,which represent real world actions. This helps scientists represent knowledge as proceeding from impersonal lab activities rather than from the interpretations of researchers.

These disciplinary differences suggest that citations are related to community-specific norms of effective argument which involve appropriate interpersonal interactions. Citation practices, like many other features, show that writers frame their studies for colleagues in ways that represent inquiry patterns and conventions of argument which reinforce ideologies of objectivity or engagement.

**Conclusion**

Discourse studies have provided analysts with insights into the ways academics and students actively engage in knowledge construction as members of professional groups, revealing something of how their discoursal decisions are socially grounded in the knowledge structures and rhetorical repertoires of their disciplines. As this research continues to grow, we can anticipate an ever increasing broadening of studies beyond texts to the talk and contexts which surrounds their production and use, beyond the verbal to the visual, and beyond tertiary to school and professional contexts.

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