

# Textual Engagement of Native English Speakers in Doctoral Dissertation Discussion Sections<sup>1</sup>

Zahra Loghmani<sup>2</sup>, Behzad Ghonsooly<sup>3</sup>, & Mohammad Ghazanfari<sup>4</sup>

Received: 07/01/2017

Accepted: 14/09/2018

## Abstract

Academic writing is no longer considered an objective and impersonal form of discourse. It is now seen as an attempt involving interaction between writers and readers; hence, academics are not only required to produce texts representing external realities but also to use language to recognize, build, and exchange social relations. The present study aimed to analyze how native English speakers, Ph.D. candidates in TEFL, position their texts intertextually when writing their doctoral dissertation Discussion sections. To this end, 5 Discussion sections were selected and analyzed in detail based on the Engagement subsystem of the appraisal model. Hence, the type and frequency of every Engagement resource were identified and its functionalities were explicated. Results indicated that the examined writers could easily engage themselves in dialogue with their potential interlocutors. Also, they preferred to limit the possibility of being rejected or challenged by using dialogically contractive Engagement resources almost twice as many as dialogically expansive ones. Moreover, it was found that, although these authors developed their Discussion sections in a dialogistically contractive way, they provided enough space for the consideration of alternative viewpoints.

**Keywords:** Appraisal Model; Engagement; Doctoral Dissertation; Native English Speakers; University of Texas at Austin

---

<sup>1</sup>Please cite this paper as follows:

Loghmani, Z., Ghonsooly, B., & Ghazanfari, M. (2019). Textual engagement of native English speakers in doctoral dissertation Discussion sections. *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics*, 10(1), 78-107.

<sup>2</sup>Corresponding author, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran; leilaloghmani@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup>Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran; ghonsooly@um.ac.ir

<sup>4</sup>Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran; m.ghazanfari23@gmail.com

## 1. Introduction

Successful academic writers are those who competently project their assessments of research entities and claims (Lv, 2015). These writers take a stance toward what they discuss and adopt a point of view with respect to various issues discussed in their texts and to others who hold point of views on those issues (Hyland, 2012, 2015). Thus, academic texts—like any other types of texts—are dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981) and although academic writers are required to produce texts representing external realities, they should simultaneously use language to recognize, build, and exchange social relations (Hyland, 2007).

As an example of academic texts, doctoral dissertations—written by native speakers of English and monitored by highly experienced professors—can be considered authentic texts for analyzing how highly educated scholars in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) fulfill the requirements for academic writing and the Ph.D. degree. These scholars, at the highest educational level, are required to undergo the demanding tasks of writing doctoral dissertations and creating original extended texts that contribute to their field of study. In doing so, they are also required to skillfully negotiate their position in relation to previous related knowledge and their potential audiences (Chatterjee, 2008). Using the appraisal framework (Martin & White, 2005), the present study aimed to analyze the intersubjective positioning in the context of doctoral dissertation Discussion writing in English and to reveal the ways in which native English speaker Ph.D. candidates create academic knowledge through discourse and in dialogue with other knowledge and other knowers in TEFL. The results of this in-depth textual analysis can help novice academic writers, especially those nonnative speakers of English who want to publish their texts for a global audience, approximate their texts to the conventions of academic writing in TEFL.

## 2. Literature Review

Several text analysts have examined academic texts based on the appraisal framework's Engagement system as an analytical tool for the analysis of stance-taking techniques and ways of establishing interpersonal relationships with readers. In the following paragraphs, some of these studies are reviewed.

Within the appraisal framework, Liping (2005) explored the delicate evaluation strategies of the English academic review genre by conducting an Engagement analysis. Doing so, he analyzed the intravocalize resources in the Evaluation stage of 10 linguistic reviews and found different frequencies. Correspondingly, the most frequent intravocalize resources were Evidence, Concurrence, and Counter-expectation. Then, Denial and Likelihood were the most used resources, whereas Hearsay and Pronouncement were the least. He also found

that Proclaim and Endorsement were mostly used to give praise, Disclaim giving criticism, and Entertain and Hearsay did not tend towards either praise or criticism.

Another study investigated how nonnative speakers of English position their texts intertextually when writing their grant proposals (Pascual, 2010). Pascual conducted an Engagement analysis on two successful proposals and found that they were highly heteroglossic and that numerous Engagement resources, particularly expansive ones, were applied to address a potentially varied audience. She concluded that such results could help writers become aware of how to position themselves intertextually and align their audience when writing proposals.

In her doctoral dissertation, Cominos (2011) conducted a qualitative analysis of dialogic positioning in a native speaker student's essay. She found a higher frequency of heteroglossic formulations in the Discussion section, compared to the Introduction and Conclusion sections with higher frequencies of monoglossic or factual statement.

Engagement resources were also investigated in a relatively small corpus of doctoral dissertation Discussion sections written by Chinese-speaking and native English-speaking writers (Geng & Sue, 2016). They found that native speaker writers preferred Disclaim over Proclaim and Entertain over Attribution resources.

In a more recent study, Ngongo (2017) qualitatively analyzed 10 undergraduate theses written by students who had received grade A in TEFL, based on the appraisal framework. He found that the examined students tended to use the expansive Engagement resources of Entertain and Attribution more than the contractive ones. He finally concluded that students need to take into account appropriate use of evaluative language.

### **3. Methodology**

In this research, an Engagement analysis of a rather small number of representative texts for a more delicate analysis across a wider range of realizations (Martin, 2003) was conducted. Doing so, five doctoral dissertation Discussion sections, written by American Ph.D. candidates whose nationalities were specified in the Biography section at the end of their dissertations (2004-2009), were randomly selected out of the published Ph.D. dissertations in TEFL uploaded to the Texas University website. The doctoral dissertation Discussion section was selected for the present analysis, as it relies heavily on evaluative language and the writers have to critically discuss their findings with their readers and fit their results into the existing knowledge (Geng & Sue, 2016). The initial phase of the study started by coding the instances of Engagement in the examined texts. To have a more reliable and valid dataset, each text was coded manually 3 times in six-month intervals to remove every

possible inconsistency. The quantitative data related to the frequency of each Engagement resource in each text were provided and, then, those formulations which were in some way interesting or less emphasized elsewhere were explained to avoid repetition and add something relatively new to the framework. Accordingly, the first phase of this study was the quantitative phase in which the Engagement resources were identified and presented in the form of tables. Such tables are important, as each is an illustration of a writer's textual persona and preference for the use of Engagement resources. The following phase of the study was qualitative; hence, the data analysis was conducted through explanation and clarification. In the present study's analysis, instances of Engagement can be distinguished from other uses of the terms by presenting them in capital letters. For each text, a brief explanation consisting of the name of the author, the number of words/sentences, and the ratio of each Engagement resource will be presented. Because the lengths of the examined Discussion sections were not identical, a frequency per 1,000 words was counted for each category of Engagement. The sentences borrowed from the examined dissertations are presented in *italic*, evaluative words or phrases are underlined, and instances of Engagement being explained are presented in *italic/bold*.

### ***3.1. Analytical Framework***

In the 1980s, the researchers in the Write It Right project tried to find out the reading/writing requirements of the discourses of science, technology, the media, history, English literature studies, geography, and the visual arts (e.g., Iedema, Feez, & White, 1994). The outcomes of this project led to the formation of the appraisal model, now considered as an extension of the interpersonal metafunctions in systemic functional linguistics (SFL; Wang & Guan, 2013).

The appraisal model provides a systematic account of linguistic resources used to express emotions and attitudes (Attitude), evaluate the play of voices within and across texts (Engagement), and analyze the intensification of both Attitude and the degree of Engagement (Graduation; Ngo & Unsworth, 2015). Although these three subsystems of the appraisal framework work simultaneously in the construction of a text, the present study focused only on the Engagement system and analyzed how native English speaker Ph.D. candidates position their dissertation Discussion sections intertextually and dialogistically.

#### ***3.1.1. Engagement and engagement linguistic resources***

Within the Engagement framework, outlined by Martin and White (2005), various attitudinal or stanced linguistic resources are available to position the authorial voice with respect to other voices and alternative positions. Thus, the Engagement system is applied to identify the diverse range of linguistic resources by which writers/speakers adjust and negotiate the arguability of their utterances. This

system of language analysis is highly influenced by Bakhtin's/Voloshinov's notions of dialogism and heteroglossia (multivoicedness), indicating that all verbal communication is dialogic. Bakhtin (1981) believes that every discourse—including rhetorical and scholarly—"cannot fail to be oriented towards the *already uttered*, the *already known*, the *common opinion* and so forth" (p. 279). From the SFL viewpoint, a writer plays an important role to establish and maintain an interpersonal relationship (or dialogue) with the readers (Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks, & Yallop, 2000; Lemke, 1992; Martin, 1995) and every instance of writing is "an interactive event, a social exchange of meanings" (Halliday & Hasan, 1989, p. 79). Through the process of intersubjective meaning creation, the writers/speakers try to apply different linguistic resources to either align or disalign themselves with their envisaged, imagined, or ideal addressees. The resources included within the Engagement system are all dialogistic in the sense that they are all means by which the writers/speakers represent themselves as being more or less engaged in a dialogue with prior voices and alternative viewpoints. However, a distinction must be made between heteroglossic and monoglossic locutions. Accordingly, following Bakhtin (1981), all locutions represented as but one view among a range of possible views are labeled as heteroglossic, whereas locutions labeled as monoglossic do not obviously reference other voices or do not recognize alternative positions. Monoglossic locutions or bare assertions have regularly been characterized as intersubjectively neutral, objective, or even factual (Martin & White, 2005:99).

The overtly dialogistic locutions, which are the concern of the present study, can be divided into two broad categories of "dialogically expansive" and "dialogically contractive" regarding their intersubjective functionality (Martin & White, 2005, p. 102). Accordingly, when an Engagement resource actively allows dialogically alternative positions and voices, it is considered as dialogically expansive or alternatively; when it fends off or restricts the scope of dialogue, it is labeled as dialogically contractive. An overview of the contractive and expansive Engagement resources is presented in Figure 1:

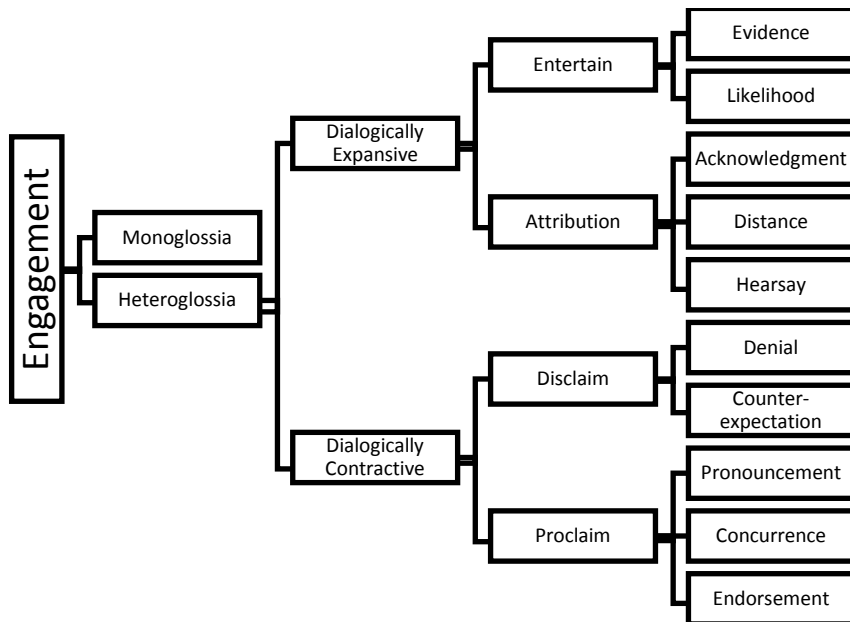


Figure 1. Dialogistic Resources: Contractive and Expansive

As shown in Figure 1, Engagement resources for dialogic contraction are Disclaim and Proclaim, whereas those of dialogic expansion are Entertain and Attribution (for more explanation, refer to Martin & White, 2005, pp. 102-132).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Textual Analysis of Text 1

Brian Guenter Rubrecht<sup>1</sup>, born in Pennsylvania, wrote T1 in 2004. He defended his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Texas at Austin. The total number of words and sentences in T1 were, respectively, 1,041 and 29. The analysis indicated 25 cases of Engagement in T1 (24.0 per 1,000 words). In Table 1, the frequency, percentage, and frequency per 1,000 words are presented for each Engagement category in T1:

<sup>1</sup>Rubrecht, B. G. (2004). *Perceived obligation and language learning motivation: A preliminary inquiry into the individual versus group obligation orientations of Japanese high school students and their motivation to learn English*. Retrieved from UT Electronic Theses and Dissertations data base. <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/2183>

Table 1. *Frequency, Percentage, and Frequency per 1,000 Words of Each Engagement Category in T1*

Types of Engagement Resources			Frequency	%	Frequency per 1,000 Words
Dialogistically Contractive	Disclaim	Denial	5	20	4.8
		Counter-Expectation	9	36	8.6
	Proclaim	Concurrence	2	8	1.9
		Pronouncement	2	8	1.9
		Endorsement	0	0	0.0
Total			18	72	17.2
Dialogistically Expansive	Entertain	Evidence	2	8	1.9
		Likelihood	4	16	3.8
	Attribution	Acknowledgment	1	4	0.9
		Distance	0	0	0
		Hearsay	0	0	0
Total			7	28	6.7

As indicated in Table 1, the category of Counter-expectation ( $n = 9$ , 36%) has the highest frequency in T1. These cases are mostly realized through conjunctions *however*, *but*, *nevertheless*, and *although* that are explained extensively in the literature of appraisal text analysis. Nonetheless, there are four cases of Counter-expectation (S11, S12, S22, and S24) that are worthy of further explanation. For example, in sentence 11, the Counter-expectation is conveyed via the phrase *in spite of these findings*:

- S11: *In spite of these findings, the questionnaire also revealed that many students possessed an individualistic and competitive stance toward their studies and toward others . . .*

The mentioned findings in S11 are that *the students overall to be cooperative with regard to their classmates and their studies* and that most of them *regarded themselves as being cooperative and not competitive*. Being cooperative is at odds with the students' individualistic and competitive stance toward others, revealed as a result of further questionnaire analysis. Therefore, the adverbial adjunct *in spite of these finding* is used to indicate that although the students explicitly acknowledged that maintaining friendships is more important than the results of the exams, they implicitly tried to overtake their classmates.

Similarly, in S12, the Counter-expectation is conveyed via the adverb *despite*. The countering relationship here exists between students' claim that *their almost solitary goal for their English classes in the last year of high school [is] the passing of the university entrance examinations* and *the fact that they professed to*

have numerous other mostly distal goals for learning English. The author uses *despite* to indicate his surprise about the fact that the students professed that they also have other probably equally important goals for learning English which contradicts what they initially stated that their most solitary goal was the passing of entrance exams:

- S12: *The qualitative findings from the interviews with six students and two English teachers revealed that the students have as their almost solitary goal for their English classes in the last year of high school the passing of the university entrance examinations, **despite** the fact that they professed to have numerous other mostly distal goals for learning English that were either unrelated to university entrance or were related in an indirect manner.*

The other exciting case of Counter-expectation can be observed in S22:

- S22: ***Instead of looking into themselves, they look to others as a means to generate said motivation.***

People are expected to look into themselves and their abilities first and, then, enter into a competition. However, the author uses the adverbial phrase *instead of looking into themselves* to convey a Counter-expectation. Accordingly, the Japanese students were different in that they looked to others' abilities and potentials as a source of motivation.

- S24: *This identification of rivals, in turn, spurs the students to become motivated to study, **although** friendships are not sacrificed and are actually maintained in the process.*

Counter-expectation and Denial cooccur in S24. By using such dialogically contractive resources, the T1 author strongly confines the possibility of rejection by his putative audience. In fact, friendships often disappear by competition and former friends do not maintain their friendly relationships when they become rivals, but in the case of Japanese students, this did not happen. As a result, the examined Japanese students remained friends, even after the Kumi was not supported by the Japanese education system. The adverb *actually* is normally categorized under the Engagement resource of Pronouncement by which speakers/writers insist upon the value of a proposition. Nonetheless, the author of this dissertation uses the adverb *actually* to further emphasize that the previous proposition (i.e., *friendships are not sacrificed*) is surprising. Thus, it can also be categorized as an instance of implicit Affect, conveying the author's emotion toward the phenomenon.

There are five instances of Denial in T1 (20%). These instances are conveyed by simply negating various propositions and, thereby, presenting the authorial voice as rejecting some opposing positions.



Regarding the Engagement category of Likelihood, it can be said that the T1 author uses modal auxiliaries of *may* and *can* to indicate that his proposition is only one proposition among all other possible propositions.

There are only two instances of Pronouncement in T1 (8%). One of these instances is conveyed via the typical framer of Pronouncement (i.e., *the fact that*), but the second one requires further explanation:

- S17: *These first two conclusions show the interrelated nature of the students' language learning motivation and their obligation orientations and **directly provide an answer to** the research question of this study.*

In the above sentence, the authorial voice tries to explicitly intervene in the text and show his support for the value of the conclusions he draws from his study. This explicit support is conveyed by the proposition *directly provide an answer to*, showing the importance and warrantability of the conclusions and, therefore, increasing the interpersonal cost of contrary value positions.

Instances of Concurrence in T1 are conveyed by using the adjective *expected* in S10 and the framer *it is well known that* in S27 ( $n = 2$ , 8%). By using these linguistic resources, the T1 author considers his addresses as having similar expectations and knowledge as he has and excludes other dialogic alternatives.

The Engagement category of Evidence includes propositions construed as the authorial voice's subjective understanding of a phenomenon. However, this understanding is not obtained only by chance, but by a process of deduction justifying that understanding. Therefore, the propositions considered as Evidence in the appraisal framework have epistemic value as the authorial voice can be considered, to some extent, certain about the truth value of those propositions. There are only two instances of Evidence in T1 (8%) conveyed via a typical framer of Evidence resources, that is, *X appeared to* (S3 & S23).

The only instance of Acknowledgment can be found in S27:

- S27: *It is well known that such instruction, **which includes juku, yobikô, and private instructors** (Blumenthal, 1998), provides students with extra information on examination subjects and examination-taking techniques.*

The bold part in S27 is considered an instance of assimilated Acknowledgment or free indirect speech. Although the name placed in parentheses (i.e., *Blumenthal*) shows that the words are borrowed from an external source, there is no indication of heteroglossia in the main clause. By using such a strategy, though the authors lessen the distance between their textual voice and the external ones, they avoid taking any responsibility for the truth value of those propositions. The coding of such free indirect propositions, as either Endorsement or Acknowledgment, can

only be done by considering the cotext and other implicit or explicit indications of the authorial support or lack of support. It must be noted that the T1 author remains neutral only with regard to the extra information he provides within two commas, but his commitment to the rest of the sentence is obvious as he uses the Concurrence framer *it is well known that*.

According to the results, the highest to the lowest frequencies of Engagement resources in T1 were, respectively, related to the Disclaim ( $n = 14$ , 56%), Entertain ( $n = 6$ , 24%), Proclaim ( $n = 4$ , 16%), and Attribution ( $n = 1$ , 4%) subcategories. These figures along with the ratio of contractive to expansive dialogic resources (18:7, 72%:28%) indicated that T1 was dialogically contractive. Therefore, the authorial voice preferred to challenge or restrict the scope of dialogically alternative positions by either positioning itself at odds or presenting the propositions as highly warrantable or generally-agreed. Compared to the resources of Disclaim, the author of T1 did not use many Entertain or Attribution locutions, indicating that he preferred not to invoke contrary positions by locating the propositions in his or others' subjectivity. Thus, the authorial voice was trying to invite the putative readers to share with him the value positions being advanced in the text by overtly indicating his investment in them and lowering the degrees of subjectivity or uncertainty.

#### 4.2. Textual Analysis of Text 2

Jennifer Christa Holling<sup>1</sup>, born in San Angelo/Texas, wrote T2 in 2004. She defended her Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Texas at Austin. The total numbers of words and sentences in T2 were, respectively, 1,029 and 40. The analysis indicated 51 cases of Engagement in T2 (49.5 per 1,000 words). In Table 2, the frequency, percentage, and frequency per 1,000 words are presented for each Engagement category in T2:

Table 2. *Frequency, Percentage, and Frequency per 1,000 Words of Each Engagement Category in T2*

Types of Engagement Resources		Frequency	%	Frequency per 1,000 Words	
Dialogistically Contractive	Disclaim	Denial	7	14	0.6
		Counter-Expectation	10	19.5	9.7
	Concurrence	0	0	0.0	
Proclaim	Pronouncement	7	14	0.6	
	Endorsement	5	9.5	4.8	

<sup>1</sup>Holing, J. C. (2004). *Evaluating the impact of errors made by English language learners on a high-stakes, holistically scored writing assessment*. Retrieved from UT Electronic Theses and Dissertations data base. <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/1328>

Total			29	57	28.1
Dialogistically Expansive	Entertain	Evidence	2	4	1.9
		Likelihood	19	37	18.4
	Attribution	Acknowledgment	1	2	0.9
		Distance	0	0	0
		Hearsay	0	0	0
Total			22	43	21.3

T2 can be characterized as a text consisting of various possibilities, or Likelihood resources ( $n = 19$ , 37%). The author is engaged with other voices by using a set of Likelihood resources, namely modal auxiliaries *may*, *might*, and *would*; modal adjunct *perhaps*; modal attributes *possible* and *likely*; and evidence-based formulations [*it*] *appear to be* and *it seems that*. As previously mentioned, these linguistic resources are formulations by which speakers/writers indicate that their proposition is but one of a number of possible explanations and, thereby, make space for those possibilities. Therefore, these linguistic resources are dialogically expansive.

There are also instances of Disclaim and Proclaim in this text, closing down the space for alternative positions. Some of these resources are among those requiring further explanations. For example, in S6, the author uses the framer *in fact* to indicate his commitment to and support for the following proposition which is an assimilated proposition attributed to another author *Perkins*.

- S6: ***In fact***, *measures that take into account the presence or absence of errors are particularly relevant in distinguishing poor from good quality writing (Perkins, 1980).*

This type of referencing is explained in the Engagement analysis of T1. However, there is an important difference between this instance of free indirect speech and the one discussed in T1. The difference is that the T2 author explicitly shows her support for the proposition she attributes to Perkins by presenting it as *a fact* and, therefore, incontrovertible and *particularly relevant*. Accordingly, the consideration of cotext directs us to code this strategic referencing as an instance of assimilated Endorsement.

In S12, the author presents herself as just surprised as it is assumed her readers will be by framing her proposition in *one surprise finding of this study is that* and, accordingly, aligns herself with her potential readers. She further emphasizes her surprise by using the adverb *actually*:

- S12: ***One surprise finding of this study is that*** *non-ELL essays actually contained significantly more run-on errors per t-unit than the ELL essays.*

Instances of Pronouncement, or the authors' overt intervention into the propositions, are conveyed in T2 via the framers *in fact* and *the fact that*. For example, in S40, the author insists on the truth-value of a proposition by saying that:

- S40: *In other words, it is most likely due to **the fact that** ELL essays that received a low score were particularly short compared to all other groups that these interactions were found.*

The author uses the superlative *most* to intensify the degree of possibility of the modal attribute *likely* so that, she indicates a high level of possibility concerning the applicability of the proposition she frames in *due to the fact that*. Accordingly, the first part of the proposition minimally invites other voices to contribute in the discussion (due to the use of high possibility indicator *most likely*), but not about the second part of the proposition which is presented as highly warrantable and true in the subjectivity of T2 author. The author, in fact, takes responsibility for *the fact that ELL essays that received a low score were particularly short* and, thus, contracts the possibility of objection by the potential interlocutors; yet, she opens up some space to negotiate other possible causes of the relationship between receiving low scores and shortness of the essays.

In T2, the highest to the lowest frequencies of Engagement resources were, respectively, related to the Entertain ( $n = 21$ , 41%), Disclaim ( $n = 17$ , 33.5%), Proclaim ( $n = 12$ , 23.5%) and Attribution ( $n = 1$ , 2%) subcategories. These figures along with the ratio of contractive to expansive dialogic resources (29:22, 57%:43%) indicated that T2 was relatively a dialogically contractive text. The T2 author preferred to construe a heteroglossic backdrop for many propositions by overtly grounding them in her own subjectivity [but not others]; therefore, she opened up space for other possible dialogistic positions. Moreover, because the author provided her putative readers with new conclusions, she was somehow cautious to invest more on their validity and, thus, introduced them as contingent and one possibility among other potential positions. However, she used a high frequency of contractive resources to either reject or challenge the alternative value positions and, therefore, limit the possibility of being challenged by her putative readers. The interesting point in the analysis of T2 was the availability of only one instance of Entertain, indicating that the T2 author preferred to mostly locate the text's dialogic propositions in her own subjectivity, rather than the subjectivity of external voices.

### 4.3. Textual Analysis of Text 3

Scott Victor Anderson<sup>1</sup>, born in Murray/Utah, wrote T3 in 2009. He defended his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Texas at Austin. The total numbers of words and sentences in T3 were 2,025 and 79, respectively. The analysis indicated 128 cases of Engagement in T3 (63.2 per 1,000 words). In Table 3, the frequency, percentage, and frequency per 1,000 words are presented for each Engagement category in T3:

Table 3. *Frequency, Percentage, and Frequency per 1,000 Words of Each Engagement Category in T3*

Types of Engagement Resources			Frequency	%	Frequency per 1,000 Words
Dialogistically Contractive	Disclaim	Denial	24	19	11.8
		Counter-Expectation	22	17	10.8
	Proclaim	Concurrence	2	1.5	0.9
		Pronouncement	6	4.5	2.9
		Endorsement	8	6.5	3.9
Total			62	48.5	30.6
Dialogistically Expansive	Entertain	Evidence	10	7.5	4.9
		Likelihood	43	33.5	21.2
	Attribution	Acknowledgment	9	7	4.4
		Distance	1	1	0.4
		Hearsay	3	2.5	1.4
Total			66	51.5	32.5

As it is indicated in Table 3, the category of Likelihood has the highest frequency in T3 ( $n = 43, 33.5\%$ ). Thus, similar to T2, T3 can be considered a text of several possibilities. In this text, the instances of Likelihood are mostly conveyed through the use of typical linguistic resources in this category of Engagement, including the modal verbs of possibility *may can might* and *could*, modal attributes of *possible* and *likely*, and modal adjuncts *perhaps* and *possibly*. Nonetheless, there are a few cases of Likelihood in T3, which require further explanations. For example, the auxiliary verb *can* is used as an indicator of general ability in some cases (e.g., S5 & S8), but as an indicator of possibility in other cases (e.g., S37 & S23):

<sup>1</sup>Anderson, S. V. (2009). *Mental muscularity: Shaping implicit theories of intelligence via metaphor*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UT Electronic Theses and Dissertations data base. <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/7557>

- S5: [. . .] *students **can achieve** mastery of any subject -statistics included- if they conceive their intelligence as malleable.*
- S37: ***Perhaps** further applications of the “mind as muscle” metaphor **can** continue to improve upon these disparities.*

In S5, *can* is considered as an instance of Likelihood, as S37 starts with another Likelihood resource, namely *perhaps*. In other words, the whole sentence is an assumption in the subjectivity of the author.

In S49, instances of Denial, Pronouncement, Evidence, Counter-expectation, and Likelihood cooccur. This sentence is an important one in that various dialogically contractive and expansive positions are simultaneously taken by its author. The ratio of dialogistically expansive to contractive linguistic resources in this sentence is 2 to 4 (i.e., 33%:67%); therefore, the whole proposition has been advanced by the author to close, rather than open up, space for opposing propositions. One realization of Concurrence (i.e., *definitely*) can be seen in the proposition *given that the “don’t know” or “pass” options are definitely not correct* to indicate that the proposition is accepted by almost every participant and, therefore, to source it to the subjectivity of a group of people sharing an idea. This initial part of the proposition also functions as a piece of evidence for the rest of the proposition, framed in an evidence-based postulation phrase (i.e., *it seems plausible that . . .*). Accordingly, the author explicitly indicates his subjective, but evidence-based, response to why participants did not choose the *don’t know* or *pass* options by using expansive Engagement resources of Entertain, but he simultaneously closes space for alternative viewpoints by applying contractive Engagement resources of Denial, Pronouncement, and Counter-expectation to further emphasize the validity of his statement:

- S49: *Given that the “don’t know” or “pass” options are **definitely not correct**, it seems plausible that participants **would not provide** those responses, **but** would rather choose from the other **potentially correct** options.*

Similarly, various Engagement resources are used in S52:

- S52: *It was **proposed** that learners **might feel** a sense of reactance (Brehm, 1966) in response to feedback that explicitly told them to “think more carefully” or “try harder.”*

If considered alone, the frame *it was proposed that . . .* can be labeled as an instance of Hearsay as no source is specified for that; however, the cotext shows that the whole proposition is an indirect quotation referenced to another writer *Brehm*. The author assimilates another person’s proposition into his text and, thereby, reduces

the distance between his and the external source's words, but as we proceed to S54, we find that the author has a neutral stance towards the attributed statement, which is why this dialogic formulation is coded as an instance of assimilated Acknowledgment. The other Engagement resource used in S52 (i.e., Likelihood) is an estimation of the likelihood of the proposition *learners might feel a sense of reactance (Brehm, 1966) in response to feedback that explicitly told them to "think more carefully" or "try harder"* made by the external voice. The primary dialogistic functionality of such an attributed postulation is to place the proposition in the subjectivity of another knower and, therefore, to make space for other voices and value positions.

Instances of Entertain, Disclaim, and Proclaim are consecutively used in S69 and S70, so that a possibility is acknowledged (S69) and, then, rejected by the authorial voice (S70):

- S69: *At first glance, the resonance finding **may seem** to be a failed hypothesis.*
- S70: ***However**, the findings that resonance was not supported **may actually** lend more credibility to using the "mind as muscle" metaphor, as compared to other metaphors that represent growth (e.g., the mind as a seed).*

The authorial voice, first, entertains those views that consider *the resonance findings* a *failed hypothesis*, then replaces them by introducing a countering proposition (starting with the adverb *however*) and, finally, pronounces the validity of the countering proposition (via the modal adjunct *actually* and the modifier *more*). The modal auxiliary used before the modal adjunct *actually* can be explained epistemically as indicating some degrees of authorial voice's uncertainty about the following proposition. Therefore, the author has framed his proposition in a way to both demonstrate his commitment to the value position being advanced and acknowledge other possible explanations supporting *the "mind as muscle" metaphor, as compared to other metaphors that represent growth (e.g., the mind as a seed)*.

Among all other instances of Denial, there is one interesting case that requires more explanation.

- S22: *All in all, it seems that **not only do** feedback mechanisms in computer programs matter, but the content, quality, and embedded messages of that feedback also matter.*

In S22, the author uses *not only* not to deny a proposition, but to reject the position that considers *feedback mechanisms in computer programs* as the only important factor in learning outcomes. Nonetheless, he shows his commitment to the value position that considers *feedback mechanisms* as one of the important factors in

learning outcomes by stressing on the auxiliary *do*. Thus, whereas he admits the importance of *feedback mechanism*, he still introduces other equally important factors which might be ignored or unexpected by some of his putative readers. However, by using an *it seems* framer, this author does not reject that position forcefully by placing it in his subjectivity which is open to further negotiations. According to this explanation, all other similar instances of *not only but also* cases in the present study data are coded as instances of Denial followed by Counter-expectation.

Instances of Acknowledgment ( $n = 9$ , 7%) are conveyed via various conjugations of reporting verbs (e.g., *contemplate*, *think*, *report*, and *believe*), an instance of *according to*, and the noun *notion*.

Instances of Endorsement are mostly conveyed via various conjugations of the factive verbs *demonstrate*, *show*, *establish*, *find*, and *indicate*. There is also an instance of assimilated Endorsement in S25:

- S25: *While females tend to outperform males in mathematics through elementary and junior high school, the trends reverse in high school, college, and beyond (see Hyde, Fennema, & Lamon, 1990 for a meta-analysis).*

As mentioned before, the dialogic functionality of this type of reference can only be interpreted by taking into account the cotext (i.e., the authorial indications regarding his or her support or lack of support for the proposition attributed to external sources). In S25, the T3 author implicitly shows his support for what has been found by other scholars by assimilating it into his own text, with no overt indication of intertextuality, except for the names written in parenthesis.

Instances of Pronouncement are conveyed via the use of auxiliary verbs *do* and *did* and the adverb *definitely*.

- S15: *[...] exposure **did** result in higher overall performance scores than the scores of those in the control condition.*
- S22: *All in all, it seems that not only **do** feedback mechanisms in computer programs **matter**, but the content, quality, and embedded messages of that feedback also matter.*

In the above sentences, the author prefers to use the bold auxiliary verbs to put more emphasis on their corresponding verbs (i.e., *result* & *matter*). In fact, the T3 author could say *exposure resulted in* or *not only feedback mechanisms matter*, but he preferred to use another linguistic form to express his presence in the text.



Ph.D. dissertation Discussion sections are categorized as a scientific-academic type of written texts; therefore, Hearsay is not typically expected in such texts. In T3, however, there are three instances of Hearsay:

- S9: *However, the multifaceted benefits of the growth mindset are succinctly and compellingly conveyed by the “**mind is a muscle**” metaphor.*
- S17: *Second, and perhaps most central to this study, it was found that using the “**mind as muscle**” metaphor as feedback was more effective than literal growth-oriented feedback or neutral feedback . . .*

The T3 author places the *mind is a muscle* and the *mind as muscle* within double quotation marks that are normally used to quote directly from an external source or to introduce a word or phrase the first time it is used in a text. The second usage of double quotation marks is rejected as the author uses the double-quoted *mind as muscle* seven times throughout his dissertation discussion section. This, of course, may indicate this author’s ignorance of the writing style rules; nevertheless, in the present study, these instances are considered quotations of an unspecified external source and coded as instances of Hearsay. Not considering a writing style rule still developed the hypothesis that the *mind as muscle* metaphor must have been originated from somewhere or coined by someone. Therefore, as there is no indication of the source of this metaphor, it seems logical to code it an instance of Hearsay.

- S34: *Some of our brightest minds in these areas may be missing representation in the field because of socially-constructed limitations of their intellectual potential, such as the fixed mindset belief that “**women can’t do math.**”*

Similarly, the source of the double-quoted belief that *women can’t do math* is not specified in S34 and, therefore, it is coded as another instance of Hearsay in T3.

In T3, the highest to the lowest frequencies of Engagement resources were, respectively, related to the Entertain ( $n = 53, 41\%$ ), Disclaim ( $n = 46, 36\%$ ), Proclaim ( $n = 16, 12.5\%$ ) and Attribution ( $n = 13, 10.5\%$ ) subcategories. These figures along with the ratio of contractive to expansive dialogic resources (62:66, 48.5%:51.5%) indicated that contractive and expansive linguistic resources were distributed in T3 in a rather similar way. Thus, the T3 author preferred to construe a heteroglossic backdrop for many propositions by overtly grounding them in his, and to a lesser degree, others’ subjectivity; therefore, he opened up space for other possible dialogic positions. This author also used a comparable frequency of contractive resources to either reject or challenge the alternative value positions and, therefore, limit the possibility of being confronted by his putative readers.

#### 4.4. Textual Analysis of Text 4

Sharla Jeannette Jones<sup>1</sup>, born in Sacramento/California, wrote T4 in 2006. She defended his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Texas at Austin. The total number of words and sentences in T4 were, respectively, 3,740 and 170. The analysis indicated 92 cases of Engagement in T4 (24.5 per 1,000 words). In Table 4, the frequency, percentage, and frequency per 1,000 words are presented for each Engagement category in T4:

Table 4. *Frequency, Percentage, and Frequency per 1,000 Words of Each Engagement Category in T4*

Types of Engagement resources			Frequency	%	Frequency per 1,000 Words
Dialogistically Contractive	Disclaim	Denial	27	29.5	7.2
		Counter-Expectation	23	25	6.1
	Proclaim	Concurrence	3	3.5	0.8
		Pronouncement	12	13	3.2
		Endorsement	15	16	4.0
Total			80	87	21.3
Dialogistically Expansive	Entertain	Evidence	2	2	0.5
		Likelihood	3	3.5	0.8
		Acknowledgment	3	3.5	0.8
	Attribution	Distance	4	4	1.0
		Hearsay	0	0	0.0
Total			12	13	3.2

As can be seen in Table 4, the Engagement category of Denial has the highest frequency in T4 ( $n = 27, 29.5\%$ ). The instances of Denial are simply conveyed by the process of negation and one instance of *not only . . . but also* (S24; see the explanation in the analysis of T3). However, there are some instances of denying propositions that need further explanation.

- S85: *Although she [Manette] claimed she had improved her ability to write feedback by reading the examples of others, as her teacher, I could not see that she had become better at providing critical comments to her classmates.*

<sup>1</sup>Jones, S. J. (2006). *Blogging and ESL writing: A case study of how students responded to the use of weblogs as a pedagogical tool for the writing process approach in a community college ESL class.* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UT Electronic Theses and Dissertations data base. <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/2736>

In the introductory part of S85, T4 author includes a claim made by Manette regarding her advanced ability in writing feedback. By using the verb *claim*, the author distances her from Manette's proposition and, therefore, rejects any responsibility for it. This rejection and lack of responsibility are reinforced by the use of *I could not see* framer in the second part of the sentence. Dialogically, the use of Counter-expectation in conjunction with Denial indicates that the denying proposition is in direct contradiction with what is expected (Martin & White, 2005, p. 120). What is interesting in this case of Denial is that the author explicitly intervenes (as in Pronouncement) to indicate the falseness of the preceding claim, and at the same time, she acknowledges the heteroglossic diversity among her putative readers by using the personal pronoun *I*. Accordingly, while she admits that there may be people believing that Manette's feedback writing skill had been developed (including Manette!), she rejects it, but declares that this rejection is done in her contingent subjectivity. Thus, instead of entirely closing down the space for alternative value positions (as in Denial), she provides limited space for negotiating possible rejections from her readers.

- S99: *The feedback gave them different perspectives that they otherwise would not have thought about.*

In S99, the author implicitly appreciates feedback as something very productive and valuable. She, therefore, negates the positive proposition *the participants would have thought about different perspectives without the feedback they received*. In fact, there is a possibility that the students could acquire those perspectives from elsewhere and in different conditions. However, the author rejects such warrantable possibility and limits the space for negotiating it. Of course, this authorial position indicates an exaggerated appreciation of the feedback.

The Engagement category of Counter-expectation has the second highest frequency in T4 ( $n = 23$ , 25%). Instances of Counter-expectation are mostly conveyed via the conjunction *however* ( $n = 13$ ). The countering propositions in T4 are also realized via other conjunctions, such as *despite*, *although*, *even though*, and *but* and the adjunct *even*. Such formulations are used by the T4 author to replace or supplant propositions which would have been expected in their places. As an example, the author indicates her surprise over the simplicity associated with the use of many blog sites in the following sentence:

- S20: *Many blog sites have even less complicated methods of use.*

Accordingly, by using the adjunct *even*, the authorial voice indicates that there are many blog sites which are shockingly easy to use, even easier than the blog site she used! This ease-of-use is considered unexpected by the T4 author because she provides explanations implying that the blog site she used was very easy to work

with (even for those who lack word-processing skills) and more user-friendliness of other blog sites is oversimplification. The countering situation can also be that the T4 author replaces what is normally expected by people who lack blogging and word-processing skills concerning the high level of difficulty associated with those skills.

So far, all instances of Endorsement and Acknowledgment analyzed in the present study have been integrated or assimilated into the texts. In other words, they have been paraphrased versions of the exact propositions made by external sources. Such paraphrased statements are intertextually used to reduce the distance between external and internal voices in a text, whereas inserted, or directly quoted, propositions are used to dissociate the external proposition from the authorial voice. These explanations are quite necessary as there is one case of inserted Endorsement in T4:

- S91: *Gousseva (1998) pointed out in her study that “the act of writing is critical as one learns to write by reading” (p. 1).*

From another point of view, such directly quoted propositions can be used by authors to not only distance themselves from the propositions which are sourced to external voices but also emphasize the actual words of the quoted source and differentiate it from the text’s authorial voice. For example, in the above sentence, the author indicates her support for the quoted proposition by using the verb *point out*. Then, she includes the exact wording of the external source to emphasize the validity of that statement further and reduce the possibility of readers’ misinterpretation. There is still another simple explanation for the inclusion of specific propositions of external voices in a text. We, as writers, occasionally encounter statements which are hard to paraphrase or whose paraphrased versions are not so different from the original wording; therefore, we may choose to directly quote them without considering the dialogic consequences of those direct quotations. The one presented in S91 might be one of those cases.

Other instances of Endorsement formulations are also used by the T4 author to indicate the validity of propositions sourced to external voices. These instances are mostly conveyed via the verbs *show*, and *substantiate*, and less frequently via the verbs *establish* and *recognize*.

The T4 author explicitly interpolate into her text by using formulations such as *the fact that*, *[the findings] proved to be*, *I found that*, and *in fact*. She also stresses on the auxiliary *did* in some sentences (i.e., S31, S34, S38, and S83). These formulations are used by the T4 author to increase the interpersonal cost of being challenged or rejected by her putative readers. Therefore, it can be said that she simultaneously acknowledges the dialogistic diversity of meaning-making among her audience.

The Engagement resources of Distance ( $n = 4$ , 4%), Acknowledgment ( $n = 3$ , 3.5%), Concurrence ( $n = 3$ , 3.5%), Likelihood ( $n = 3$ , 3.5%), and Evidence ( $n = 2$ , 2%) are not frequently used by the T4 author.

In T4, the highest to the lowest frequencies of Engagement resources were, respectively, related to the categories of Disclaim ( $n = 50$ , 54.5%), Proclaim ( $n = 30$ , 32.5%), Attribution ( $n = 7$ , 7.5%) and Entertain ( $n = 5$ , 5.5%). These figures along with the ratio of contractive to expansive dialogic resources (80:12, 87%:13%) indicated that T4 was a highly dialogically contractive text. The T4 author tried to convince and, therefore, align her putative readers by providing a large number of explanatory propositions. This author also preferred to exclude certain value positions by rejecting them or presenting them at odds with what were expected in their places. She also tried to limit the scope of dialogic alternatives by using various Proclaim resources. The relatively high frequency of Endorsement to Acknowledgment resources indicated that the T4 author tended to involve external voices when she agreed with them. The low frequencies of Attribution and Entertain resources in T4 indicated that this author did not prefer to construe a heteroglossic backdrop for her text by overtly grounding propositions in her own subjectivity or others; therefore, she generally tried to limit the space for alternative or opposing dialogistic positions.

#### 4.5. Textual Analysis of Text 5

Satasha L. Green<sup>1</sup>, born in Kingsville, wrote T5 in 2005. She defended his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Texas at Austin. The total number of words and sentences in T5 were 3,090 and 137, respectively. The analysis indicated 80 cases of Engagement in T5 (25.8 per 1,000 words). In Table 1, the frequency, percentage, and frequency per 1,000 words are presented for each Engagement category in T5:

Table 5. *Frequency, Percentage, and Frequency per 1,000 Words of Each Engagement Category in T5*

Types of Engagement resources			Frequency	%	Frequency per 1,000 Words
Dialogistically Contractive	Disclaim	Denial	23	28.7	7.4
		Counter-Expectation	24	30	7.7
	Proclaim	Concurrence	7	8.75	2.2
		Pronouncement	8	10	2.5

<sup>1</sup>Green, S. L. (2005). *The effects of culturally-based computer software on the motivation and academic engagement of African American English speakers*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UT Electronic Theses and Dissertations data base. <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/1557>

		Endorsement	0	0	0
Total			62	77.5	20.0
Dialogistically Expansive	Entertain	Evidence	5	6.25	1.6
		Likelihood	10	12.5	3.2
		Acknowledgment	3	3.75	0.9
	Attribution	Distance	0	0	0.0
		Hearsay	0	0	0.0
Total			18	22.5	5.8

As indicated in Table 5, the highest frequencies of Engagement resources in T5 are related to the Disclaim categories of Counter-expectation ( $n = 24$ , 30%) and Denial ( $n = 23$ , 28.75%). Instances of Counter-expectation are realized in T5 via the use of conjunctions and connectives of *but* ( $n = 6$ , 25%), *however* ( $n = 12$ , 50%) and *even though* ( $n = 5$ , 21%) and the use of Adjunct *even* ( $n = 1$ , 4%) by the author. Instances of Denial in T5 are mostly realized via the use of the adverb *not* attaching to different auxiliary verbs (e.g., *was not*, *were not*, *cannot*, etc.;  $n = 16$ , 12.5%). Moreover, almost half of the Denial locutions in T5 are used in company with instances of Counter-expectation ( $n = 11$ , 9%; e.g., *but/however/even though . . . not*); nevertheless, there are other instances of Denial in T5 that require further explanations. For example, in S38, the author negates her proposition by framing it in a correlative conjunction *neither . . . nor* form:

- S38: *However*, when asked *specific* questions from the CARR: RMS on those *particular* topics she answered “No” that she *neither* liked reading books that had characters that talked liked her *nor did Adina want to* read stories about events or things in her community.

Obviously, this sentence can be rephrased as *she did not like reading either books that had characters that talked liked her, or stories about events or things in her community*. Therefore, the underlying meaning behind the *neither . . . nor* framing is Denial. There is also an instance of *not only . . . but also* in S124 (see other instances in T3 & T4).

There are also two instances of the use of the adjective *unclear* that can be considered synonymous with the negated form ‘not clear’ and, therefore, instances of Denial.

Nine out of 10 instances of Likelihood are conveyed via typical linguistic resources of Likelihood, namely modal verbs of *may* and *might* and the modal attribute *possible*; nonetheless, there is also an interesting instance of Likelihood in T5 that has been less emphasized elsewhere. In S23, the author introduces a possibility via the use of the adjective *prone*:

- S23: *She was **prone to** answer “No” to questions that were specific to addressing reading aloud or to someone else.*

In S23, the author explains one possible reason why Adina (the antecedent of *she*) is prone to answer “NO” when asked to read aloud as *Adina is in special education for a speech and language impairment, she is very self-conscious about the way she talks and Adina is more comfortable reading silently*. The author uses the adjective *prone* to introduce one possibility among many other possibilities and, thereby, opens up space for alternative explanations. Accordingly, this adjective is considered an instance of Likelihood as it represents a sense of possibility residing in the author’s subjectivity.

The two subcategories of Proclaim (i.e., Concurrence and Pronouncement) are used somewhat equally in T5. The instances of Pronouncement ( $n = 8$ , 10%) in T5 are mostly realized via the use of *in fact* at the beginning of the propositions. Such framing device indicates explicit emphasis or intervention of the authorial voice in the text. Nevertheless, there is one shaky case in S38 which is not considered in the process of data calculation.

- S38: *She [Adina] neither liked reading books that had characters that talked liked her nor did Adina want to read stories about events or things in her community.*

The reason behind not considering this instance of *stress on auxiliary* an instance of Pronouncement is that the author, despite being a native English speaker, does not observe the rule of parallelism in the use of correlative conjunctions (e.g., *neither . . . nor*). The way the T5 author uses a *neither . . . nor* framer may be applicable in everyday speech though not in academic writing. Accordingly, the stylistically correct version of the above sentence is *she neither liked . . . , nor wanted . . .* with no stress on the auxiliary *did*. On the other hand, if the authorial voice was determined to put stress on the auxiliary *did*, she must have written S38 as *she neither did like . . . nor did want . . .*. Hence, this instance of the authorial stress on the auxiliary is considered a stylistic error not an instance of Pronouncement.

Six out of the seven instances of Concurrence ( $n = 7$ , 8.75%) are conveyed by the author via the use of the framing device *it is clear that*. By using such framer, the author overtly announces her agreement with her potential readers and, thereby, restricts the chance of objection by presenting share values or beliefs as universally held in the current communicative context. The author also uses another framer functioning in the same way in S3:

- S3: ***There is an expectation that** students read on grade level . . .*

The expectation here is presented as a commonly held belief regarding the students' ability to read based on their grade level; thus, it is coded as an instance of Concurrence.

There are five cases of Evidence (6.25%) in T5. These instances are mostly realized via the use of evidential formulations (*X appears to . . .* ( $n = 3$ ; 60%) and *the research suggests that . . .* [ $n = 2$ , 40%]), indicating that the propositions are derived "via a process of deduction or surmise" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 110) on the part of the author. Therefore, the author opens up space for alternative views by presenting them as contingent. There is also an instance of deontic modal (i.e., *should be*) in S1:

- S1: *Because the design of the study is pre-experimental, the results **should be** viewed as preliminary and descriptive.*

Although the author has justified the mentioned obligation, it is still contingent, individually-based and open to being challenged by other communicative partners.

Three cases of Acknowledgment can be found in the analysis of T5 (3.75%). Two of these instances are assimilated Acknowledgment. This type of Acknowledgment strategy is used when the authors do not prefer to create a distance between the authorial voice and the words of external sources, but remain neutral to those words with not indicating any type of support for them. Thus, the authorial voice neutrally reports a proposition and only indicates its source within two parentheses.

There is also a tricky case in T5 that is necessary to be discussed here. In S5, the authorial voice introduces a proposition to indicate that participating in state standardized tests is compulsory for third-grade students, if they want to proceed to the next grade:

- S5: *With this initiative, students **are required to** participate in state standardized testing such as the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).*

This requirement from the third-grade students is not in the subjectivity of the authorial voice, but in the subjectivity of people who provided the NCLB's Reading First Initiatives. In other words, the requirement is the authorities of that initiative's assessment of the obligation that third-grade students have to pass such tests. This instance of *someone is required to do something* (= someone has to do something) is, in fact, an obligation which is introduced by a group of external voices, namely the authorities of the NCLS's Reading First Initiatives and the T5 author only reports on that obligation. Thus, as in Acknowledgment, she opens up space for dialogic alternatives by attributing the assessment of an obligation to external voices,



while the framer better fits the category of Evidence in the appraisal framework. In fact, this instance looks better to be coded as an instance of Acknowledgment.

In T5, the highest to the lowest frequencies of Engagement resources were respectively related to the categories of Disclaim ( $n = 47, 58.75\%$ ), Proclaim ( $n = 15, 18.75\%$ ), Entertain ( $n = 15, 18.75\%$ ) and Attribution ( $n = 3, 3.75\%$ ). These figures along with the ratio of contractive to expansive dialogic resources (62:18, 77.5%:22.5%) indicated that T5 was a highly dialogically contractive text. Thus, the authorial voice preferred to challenge or restrict the scope of dialogically alternative positions mostly by rejecting or supplanting the alternative positions. Compared to the resources of Disclaim, the author of T5 did not use many Attribution locutions, indicating that she preferred not to invoke contrary positions by locating the propositions in others' subjectivity. Thus, the authorial voice was trying to invite the putative readers to share with her the value positions being advanced in the text by overtly indicating her investment in them and lowering the degrees of subjectivity or uncertainty.

## 5. Discussion

The present study was conducted to analyze how native English speaker Ph.D. candidates in TEFL dialogistically position their texts in relation to other voices. The examined texts consisted of 10925 words and 376 Engagement resources (i.e., 34.4 per 1,000 words).

Considering the whole data, the highest to the lowest frequencies of Engagement resources used by American Ph.D. candidates were as follows: Disclaim ( $n = 174, 46.5\%$ ), Entertain ( $n = 100, 26.5\%$ ), Proclaim ( $n = 77, 20.5\%$ ), and Attribution ( $n = 25, 6.5\%$ ). These results indicated that the examined Ph.D. dissertation writers tended to use dialogistically contractive Engagement resources ( $n = 251, 67\%$ ) almost twice as many as dialogistically expansive ones ( $n = 125, 33\%$ ). This result is consistent with results of Geng and Sue (2016) study, in which the frequency of contractive resources was reported as 1.5 times more than that of expansive ones. To put these results simply, it can be said that the participants in both studies (i.e., doctoral dissertation Discussion writers) comfortably rejected ideas or presented them as unexpected; they easily expressed their subjectivities and did not hesitate to share them with their readers and they were not so engaged in attributing their texts to external voices; also, they preferred to include others' proposals when in line with their views and conclusions. These results are also in line with those of Geng and Sue's (2016), indicating that native English speaker academic writers prefer Disclaim over Proclaim and Entertain over Attribution. Furthermore, the frequency of Engagement resources (in the overall corpus) per 1,000 words (i.e., 34.4) indicated that the examined authors easily engaged themselves to have

dialogues with other voices and, thereby, considered their readers active participants in the academic community to which they were related. On the other hand, if considering each text individually, we found that T1, T4, and T5 were chiefly contractive, T2 was rather contractive, and T3 was equally contractive and expansive. These results indicate that it is not that easy to generalize such findings concerning the ratio of contractive to expansive Engagement resources to even a specific academic domain, let alone the academic writing, in general. Indeed, each academic text has its own dialogic features which are determined based on the consideration of its topic, methodology, and potential audience. The important issue when writing an academic text, in general, and a Ph.D. discussion, in particular, is to use linguistic resources available in the Engagement system appropriately, adequately, and persuasively. Knowing such resources is important not only when writing (Pascual, 2010), but also when reading (Liu, 2010), and for not only nonnative English speaker academic writers, but also for native speaker academics.

Considering the highest to the lowest frequencies of Engagement resources in the current study, the results are not consistent with what Liping (2005) reported on the frequencies of Engagement resources in English academic review genre. He reported that Evidence/Concurrence/Counter-expectation were the most frequent and Denial/Hearsay/Pronouncement were the least frequent locutions. However, in the present study, Denial/Counter-expectation/Likelihood were the most frequent, and Concurrence/Distance/Hearsay were the least frequent Engagement resources. These contradictory results indicated the different representation of the subject and the audience in texts written in/for different discourse communities (Bazerman, 1988). Accordingly, even slightly different texts written in the same genre (e.g., Ph.D. dissertation Discussion and Abstract sections in the academic genre) may dialogically differ as they function differently. Such different results also indicate the subjective nature of appraisal analysis, so that different appraisal analysts may code the same text differently and find different frequencies for different subcategories of the appraisal system.

Although the bases of the appraisal model have not changed dramatically, it is so vigorous and comprehensive that scholars prefer it over other available analytical frameworks. In fact, the importance of appraisal theory-based textual analyses mostly relies on the identification and categorization of interpersonal/dialogic linguistic resources used by writers in various genres of texts. This identification and categorization of dialogic resources can be helpful in the development of writing and reading materials, so that texts written by highly proficient authors can be analyzed and used as guides in the development of authentic writing and reading materials, especially for novice writers. On the other hand, texts written by novice writers can be analyzed and used to identify the deficiencies of the

current writing courses. Such instruction is, in fact, necessary for every graduate student, but it can be even more helpful for scholars whose native language is not English. To be more inclusive, scholars in every field of study need to be familiar with dialogic resources in the English language if they want to be successful and active participants in their academic communities. This need is also stated by Karimnia (2013), as he explained that senior academic writers try to be engaged in an interaction with their readers, whereas junior writers are more cautious about the choice of vocabularies and grammatical issues. Therefore, it is essential to include issues of audience, dialogic nature of academic texts, stance-taking, and presentation of voice in the EAP/ESP courses, as they are universal features of academic writing (Crismore, Markkanen, & Steffensen, 1993). This inclusion is actually done in most universities in the United States (Galvan, 2009) in the form of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs that have been developed to enhance students' communication, community, interpersonal, and personal skills along with four other core skills required for successful academic writing (Miles & Wilson, 2004). However, most universities in the Middle East have not updated their writing courses to meet the new demands of academic writing (Al-Zubaidi, 2012).

One of the limitations of this study might be the use of somehow outdated sources, both in terms of references and the analyzed texts. This limitation can be justified by considering that it is by no means easy to access Ph.D. dissertations in TEFL, especially those written by native speakers of English. Fortunately, the University of Texas at Austin provides scholars with free copies of the dissertations defended in that university. Accordingly, the texts analyzed in this study were randomly selected from the Ph.D. dissertations uploaded to the Texas university website disregarding the dates of their publication. This lack of attention to the date of publication stemmed from the insight the researcher acquired from an article written by Hyland and Jiang (2016). They examined changes in authorial projection over the past 50 years and found that stance-taking has progressively increased in academic texts. Therefore, scholars in the field of linguistics and other adjacent disciplines now exclude agency more than 50 years ago and use fewer hedges and boosters (36% fall per 10, 000 words). They also explained that such differences might emanate from the growing number of L2 writers who have been trained to eliminate explicit agency from academic writing (Hyland, 2012, as cited in Hyland & Jiang, 2016). Accordingly, because the authors of the texts analyzed in the present study were native speakers, such differences could be neglected. Moreover, the changes in academic stance-taking examined by the aforementioned authors occurred in 50 years; therefore, changes in the writing style of academic writers over a period of 14 years (2004 [the most dated text]-2018 [now]) were again ignored in the present study.

Regarding the abovementioned limitation of the present study, it is also worth mentioning that the most important references on the appraisal model and its application in text analysis were written by its founders over the period 2000-2005. Therefore, such references are always offered in every appraisal theory-based study as the basics. The other limitations of the present textual analysis included the small corpus size, the availability of only one textual analyst (i.e., the researcher), and the analysis of academic texts in a single academic discipline. These limitations, however, can be justified by considering that (1) small sample sizes are appropriate for the “qualitative, contextually informed analyses” (Flowerdew, 2004, p. 18), which was the concern of the present study; (2) the present study was part of a bigger project, namely a doctoral dissertation in TEFL; thus, the researcher was alone in the process of codification, and (3) written texts in TEFL were selected for the analysis as the researcher had fair background knowledge about the field that facilitated the interpretation and coding of the examined texts. Whatever the case may be, researchers interested in discourse analysis can conduct similar appraisal-based studies cooperatively on academic texts in other fields of study and even on more significant corpora. Nevertheless, despite the mentioned limitations, the results of this study, especially the explanations provided on the usage of common dialogic resources used by native English speaker Ph.D. candidates, have instructional value and can also be used as an educational tool by scholars who are interested in discourse analysis, in general, and the appraisal framework, in particular.

Authors’ familiarity with evaluative linguistic resources and intersubjective positioning is an important factor in academic writing. This familiarity can be successfully achieved through instruction. Therefore, the instructional value of such studies can improve our understanding of how professional academic writers use various linguistic resources when writing for a global audience.

### References

- Al-Zubaidi, K. O. (2012). The academic writing of Arab postgraduate students: Discussing the main language issues. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 66, 46-52.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: four essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bazerman, C. (1988). *Shaping written knowledge*. Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press.
- Bitchener, J., & Basturkmen, H. (2006). Perceptions of the difficulties of postgraduate L1 thesis students writing the Discussion section. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5, 4-18.

- Butt, D., Fahey, R., Feez, S., Spinks, S., & Yallop, C. (2000). *Using functional grammar: An explorer's guide*. Sydney: National Center for English Language Teaching and Research Macquarie University.
- Chatterjee, M. (2008). Textual engagement of a different kind? Bridging discourses. *ASFLA 2007 Online Proceedings*. Australia: Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics Association.
- Cominos, N. (2011). *Managing the subjective: exploring dialogic positioning in undergraduate essays*. (Doctoral dissertation). <https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/handle/2440/78605>
- Crismore, A., Markkanen, R., & Steffensen, M. S. (1993). Metadiscourse in persuasive writing: A study of texts written by American and Finnish university students. *Written Communication, 10*(1), 39-71.
- Flowerdew, L. (2004). The argument for using English specialized corpora to understand academic and professional language. In U. Connor & T. Upton (Eds.), *Discourse in the professions: Perspectives from corpus linguistics* (pp. 11-36). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Galvan, J. (2009). *Writing literature review: A guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences*. New York & London: Rutledge.
- Geng, Y., & Wharton, S. (2016). Evaluative language in Discussion sections of doctoral theses: Similarities and differences between L1 Chinese and L1 English writers. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 22*, 80-91.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1989). *Language, context, and text: Aspects of language in a social semiotic perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hyland, K. (2007). Stance and Engagement: A model of interaction in academic discourse. *Discourse Studies, 7*(2), 173-192.
- Hyland, K. (2012). *Disciplinary identities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hyland, K., & Jiang, F. (2016). Change of attitude? A diachronic study of stance. *Written Communication, 33*(3), 1-24.
- Iedema, R. S., Feez, S., & White, P. R. R. (1994). *Media literacy: Write it write literacy in industry research project stage 3*. Sydney Metropolitan East Disadvantaged Schools Programs: NSW Department of School.
- Karimnia, A. (2013). Writing research articles in English: Insights from Iranian university teachers of TEFL. *Social and Behavioral Sciences, 70*, 901-914.

- Lemke, J. L. (1992). Interpersonal meaning in discourse: Value orientations. In M. Davies & L. Ravelli (Eds.), *Advances in systemic linguistics: Recent theory and practice* (pp. 82-93). London: Printer Publishers.
- Liu, X. (2010). An application of appraisal theory to teaching college English reading in china. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 1(2), 133-135.
- Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan Publications.
- Miles, C., & Wilson, C. (2004). Learning outcomes for the twenty-first century: Cultivating student success for college and the knowledge economy. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 126, 87-100.
- Ngongo, M. (2017). Systemic analysis of text appraisal on students' theses writing in English. *Journal of Scientific Research and Studies*, 4(4), 67-72.
- Ngo, T., & Unsworth, L. (2015). Reworking the appraisal framework in ESL research: Refining attitude resources. *Functional Linguistics*, 2(1), 1-24.
- Pascual, M. (2010). Appraisal in the research genres: An analysis of grant proposals by Argentinian researchers. *Revista Signos*, 43(73), 261-280.
- Tang, L. (2005). Evaluation strategies of English academic review: An engagement analysis for the dialogic perspective. *Foreign Language Research*, 4, 1-7.
- Wang, D., & Guan, X. (2013). An analysis of appraisal in CEO corporate social responsibility statements. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3(3), 459-456.