

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

DIALOGIC POSITIONING IN LITERATURE REVIEWS OF MASTERS'  
THESES IN A GHANAIAN UNIVERSITY

BY

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Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the award of Master of Philosophy Degree in English.

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## DECLARATION

### **Candidate's Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere. Also, materials of the scholars that have been used have either been cited in text or in the reference list.

Candidate's Signature ..... Date .....

Name: Isaac Afful

### **Supervisors' Declaration**

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

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## ABSTRACT

Following insights from disciplinary variation studies on writer's positioning and stance, there has been an interest in analyzing how academics engage in an academic interaction with their putative readers, by either fending off alternative views from their readers or allowing for the inclusion of their views. Using the engagement system of the appraisal theory propounded by Martin and White (2005) in analyzing 45 purposively sampled M.Phil theses submitted to the departments of Linguistics, Geography and Resource Development and Nutrition and Food Science of the University of Ghana, the study examined the various engagement resources used by M.Phil. students to limit the dialogic space, on one hand, and to allow for the inclusion of the views of their readers, on the other hand, while reviewing the works of other scholars in the literature review section of their masters' theses. The study also probed further to examine the epistemological norms and conventions that inform the use of these resources in the theses submitted to the three selected departments. The analysis and discussion of the data revealed that M.Phil. students in the sciences are more dialogically contractive and dialogically expansive when constructing the literature review sections (henceforth, LR) of their theses. The analysis again revealed that unlike the humanities and social sciences, knowledge in the natural sciences is relatively more of an impersonal, inductive enterprise and this influences the engagement resources postgraduate students use while reviewing existing literature in their theses. The study contributes to postgraduate pedagogy, the appraisal theory and serves as a fertile ground for further research.

## KEY WORDS

Contractive and Expansive Resources

Dialogic Positioning

Disciplinary Variation

Engagement System of the Appraisal Theory

Literature Reviews

M.Phil. Theses

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DEDICATION

To my family

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FAN	Food and Nutrition
GEO	Geography
LIN	Linguistics
LR	Literature Review
M.Phil.	Master of Philosophy
RA	Research Article

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of the introductory chapter is to create a general context for the study. The chapter presents the background to the study, the statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study and organisation of the thesis.

### **Background to the Study**

Academic writing, as Bowker (2007) notes, is a special kind of writing that prescribes its own set of rules and practices. That is, academic writing adheres to traditional conventions of punctuation, grammar, and spelling and unlike many other personal writing contexts, academic writing deals with the “underlying theories and causes governing processes and practices in everyday life, as well as exploring alternative explanations for these events (Bowker, 2007:3).”

Academic writing has thus attracted considerable interest among scholars over the past two decades (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1993; Hyland, 2000). Researchers in Applied Linguistics, in general, and those in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), in particular, have conducted several studies that focus on expert writing across various academic genres. This zest, to a large extent, was driven by Swales’ seminal publication on the introductions of research articles (RAs). Following this study, there have been a plethora of studies on various rhetorical aspects of the research article (RA) such as the acknowledgement (Giannoni, 1998), abstract (Santos, 1996), results (Brett, 1994), discussion (Holmes, 2001),

conclusion (Yang & Allison, 2003) and titles (Afful & Mwinlaaru, 2010). This interest in the RA is not surprising, given that it is considered the most prestigious genre of academic discourse and a key means of scholarship (Swales, 1990).

The dominance of studies on the RA notwithstanding, one genre which continues to attract considerable scholarly attention in Applied Linguistics and other allied fields is the postgraduate thesis. A thesis can be explained as the written report of a research study undertaken in fulfilment or partial fulfilment of a graduate degree such as a doctorate and masters' degree (Cone & Foster, 2006). The thesis allows postgraduate student to think independently, contribute to existing scholarship and sharpen his research skills to produce a research report that meets international standards. The postgraduate thesis has necessitated a flurry of research on its rhetorical features such as acknowledgement (Hyland, 2004), introduction (Bunton, 2002), literature review (Kwan, 2006) and conclusion (Hewings, 1993; Bunton, 2005). Clearly, this perceptible and increasing interest in sub-rhetorical units of masters' theses continues to provide both exciting and useful insights regarding the extent to which novices (learners) are socialised into the academic community (Afful & Nartey, 2014).

Indisputably, one essential rhetorical aspect of the thesis is the literature review (henceforth, LR). As Bruce (1994) notes, the LR is nearly always a standard chapter of a thesis or dissertation and it provides the background to and justification for the research undertaken. Cooper (1998), as cited in Fitt (2011), asserts that two main elements typify LRs in postgraduate writings. First, a literature review uses as its database written reports of primary or original

scholarship and does not report new primary scholarship itself. The scholarship, he adds, may be empirical, theoretical, critical/analytical or methodological in nature. Second, a literature review seeks to describe, summarize, evaluate, clarify, and/or integrate the content of the primary reports. Modifying Cooper's definition of the literature review, Onwuegbuzie, Collins, Leech, Dellinger, and Jiao (2010) intimate that a literature review is an "interpretation of a selection of published and/or unpublished documents...that optimally involves summarization, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of the documents" (p. 173).

Stance taking and dialogic positioning are common practices academics partake in while constructing the LR section of their research works. These practices are informed by Bakhtin's (1981) now widely influential notions of *dialogism* and *heteroglossia*. Bakhtin indicates that all forms of communication, whether written or spoken, is 'dialogic' in the sense that one's attempt to speak or write is always geared towards revealing the influence of, referring to, or taking up in some way, what has been said/written before, and simultaneously, anticipating the responses of actual, potential or imagined readers/listeners (cited in Martin & White, 2005, p. 92). Bakhtin (1986, p. 94), in describing his notions of addressing a hearer through spoken language, states that, "from the very beginning, the utterance is constructed while taking into account possible responsive reactions." Bakhtin proposes that writing, like speaking, is also *dialogic* - a dialogue between the writer and the reader and that writing is constructed with the expectations and knowledge of the reader in mind. Corroborating Bakhtin's view, Hyland (2005) emphasizes that writing is dialogic



“because it [writing] presupposes and responds to an active audience, and because it makes links to other texts' (p. 88). This view suggests that in academic written genres created within specific disciplines, this awareness of a particular expert reader audience (involving the writer's and readers' shared knowledge of the activities and extant literature of the field) causes the writer to take into account a range of disciplinary contextual factors in order to create an acceptable realization of a genre. These contextual factors will involve the already mentioned areas of disciplinary content knowledge and epistemological viewpoint. Hyland (2005) ascribes an important role to a category of linguistic features that he terms *metadiscourse*. He defines metadiscourse as 'the means by which propositional content is made coherent, intelligible and persuasive to a particular audience' (p. 39). He also presents a model for interpersonal metadiscourse features involving *interactive* and *interactional* resources. Engagement markers fall under the interactional resources which encompasses those resources that involve the reader in the text. Against this background, it is necessary for other researchers to explore how such academic interactions are enacted through engagement resources in the literature review sections of postgraduate theses.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Several studies over the years have focused on various rhetorical sections of the postgraduate thesis such as the acknowledgement (Hyland, 2004), introduction (Bunton, 2002), literature review (Kwan, 2006) and conclusion (Hewings, 1993; Bunton, 2005). In the past two decades, whereas the literature review, as a dialogic genre, has attracted interest in non-African settings (e.g.

Holmes, 1997; Hyland, 2005, Kwan, 2006, Dayrell, 2009), it has not received much attention in Africa, in general, and Ghana, in particular. Generally, previous research on LRs of postgraduate theses has focused on the pattern of progression or organisational structure, linguistic and pragmatic or rhetorical variables in Asian and European contexts. In Africa, it seems the well-known empirical studies conducted on students' writing as far as constructing the literature review section in their research is concerned are that of Akindele (2010) and Afful (2008). To fill this research gap, there is the need for a study to be conducted on how MPhil students engage in academic conversations and how they take dialogic positions in constructing the LRs of their theses.

As Hyland (2009) observes, in presenting their work, writers adopt interactional and evaluative positions, anticipating readers' expectations and responses to participate in what amounts to a virtual dialogue with them. Interpersonal meanings are expressed, describing these linguistic resources as *evaluation* (Hunston & Thompson, 2000), *appraisal* (Martin & White, 2005), *stance* (Biber & Finnegan, 1989; Hyland, 1999) and metadiscourse (Adel, 2006; Hyland, 2005). As regards appraisal systems, Swain (2007) notes that applications of appraisal theory in educational contexts have tended to focus on systems of attitude (Coffin, 2002) and graduation (Hood, 2006), with less emphasis on the engagement system. Recent studies have proven that the engagement system is useful for understanding the ways in which both professional and student writers use language to construct an authorial stance within specific disciplinary contexts (Wu, 2007; Derewianka, 2009).

Also, given that the LR is not a merely source-driven sub-genre or a catalogue of related materials but an “academic conversation” in which a researcher intends to participate (Galvan, 2009), the present study aims to investigate how engagement resources are employed in this conversation. Thus, the present study focuses on three disciplines, Linguistics, Geography and Food Sciences, from a Ghanaian public university in order to investigate how students from these disciplines dialogically position and engage with their putative readers when reviewing works of other scholars in the LRs of their masters’ theses.

### **Research Questions**

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What engagement resources are used by M.Phil. students to fend off alternative views in the LRs of M.Phil. theses submitted to the disciplines of Linguistics, Geography and Food Science of the University of Ghana?
2. Which engagement resources are used by M.Phil. students to open up or allow for alternative views in the LRs of M.Phil. theses to the three disciplines?
3. How does disciplinary knowledge influence the use of engagement resources in masters’ theses submitted to the three selected disciplines?

### **Significance of the Study**

The study is important in three ways. First, the study will contribute to the scholarship on academic discourse, in general, and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), in particular. Thus, the study will add to the already existing studies or stock of knowledge on academic writing, generally, and thesis writing, especially. Thus, by emphasising a small but indispensable aspect of the thesis

(LR), this research will add to the increasing interest in research on student writing, in general, and thesis writing, in particular. Moreover, the study will help faculty in various disciplinary communities to become self-conscious about “the shape of their own knowledge and articulate that structure for those who wish to learn (Stockton, 1994: 95)”. The significance of this study, therefore, rather than being an end in itself, is in part meant to draw attention to the gap between disciplinary knowledge of the selected disciplines as much as it is designed to show how to forge a closer relationship between student/learners writing and expert writing (Afful, 2005).

Second, the findings of this study will be useful for both theory and practice. Given that the Engagement System of the Appraisal Theory has been least applied to academic discourse and/or writing as compared to the Attitude and Graduation Systems (Swain, 2010), this study sheds light on the usefulness of the theory to academic discourse and/or writing. In terms of practice, the study would be useful for supervisors, supervisees, assessors and curriculum developers to be abreast with the kinds of engagement resources postgraduate students use and serve as a useful guide for developing pedagogical materials to enhance the teaching and writing of LRs.

Finally, the findings of this study will provide an impetus for further studies on the LR and other rhetorical sections of the thesis.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The following issues are considered in order to set the present work in sharp focus and to establish the boundaries of the study. These issues are the

disciplinary communities involved in the study, the genre considered for data for the study, the thesis-part selected for analysis and the object of investigation for the study.

First, the study is limited to M.Phil. theses submitted to the Department of Linguistics, Department of Geography and Resource Development and Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences of the University of Ghana. I used these three departments to represent the Arts/Humanities, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences as three broad disciplines of study, considering the fact that this research is cross-disciplinary. The choice of these three disciplines is informed by the scarcity of appraisal studies on student writings, especially with studies that focus on engagement resources. Further, Linguistics is selected because it is a soft science and it is language-related. Geography is also selected as a soft-life-pure discipline (see Biglan, 1993) and like most of the Social Science discipline, “it acknowledges the usefulness of extended writing in the academy (Casanave & Hubbard, 1992; cited in Afful, 2005). At the extreme end of the continuum of academic disciplines, Food Science is also selected as a hard-life-applied discipline and it represents “a general discipline which allows researchers a better interpretability of the data as compared to other disciplines’ (Shokouhi & Baghsiahi, 2009:540).

In addition, the study ignores all other forms of written academic genres but concentrates on the thesis. Three reasons account for this choice. First, masters’ theses are considered “one of the most interpersonally loaded genre of the academy” (Tse & Hyland, 2006: 768) and also because of their “highly

interactive and evaluative nature” (Hyland, 2006: 773). Second, the under-representation of the masters’ theses (Hyland, 2004; Samraj, 2008) in appraisal and especially engagement studies informed the choice of this genre for the present study. Finally, masters (M.Phil.)theses are the focus of the current study because they are at the level of students’ writing where there is the likelihood that the MPhil student researchers, unlike undergraduate students, would be more familiar with the rhetorical conventions that govern the research enterprise (Musa, 2014).

The third issue concerns the selection of the LR section. Two main reasons guided the selection of Literature Review (LR) section as the thesis part selected for the study. First, many scholars may have observed that, compared to other sub-genres of the theses such as Introduction, Discussion and Conclusion, research on LRs has not been prolific (Flowerdew, 2000; Swales & Feak, 2000) since most researchers find investigating LRs to be boring and lengthy. By investigating LRs of M.Phil.theses, I explore one of the most relegated, but indispensable sub-genres of the masters’ theses. Second, as Swales (1990) reminds us, each of the various sub-genres of the thesis has a unique communicative purpose. The main communicative purpose of the LR section of the thesis is to afford the researcher the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery in the field where the research is being undertaken (Bitchener, 2010). Finally, being aware of the numerous linguistic variables operative in constructing the LR as a sub-genre of masters’ theses, I focus on one set of such variables – engagement resources. The choice of only one set of linguistic variables is to enable the

present researcher to do an in-depth analysis. Again, this choice is informed by the fact that of the three resources of the Appraisal Theory (the others being *graduation* and *attitude*), the engagement strand appears to be the least deployed in research on academic written discourse (Swain, 2007). By examining resources of engagement in LRs, I attempt at expanding the frontiers of knowledge in this field of study to enable researchers to become aware of the epistemological norms of interaction in the three selected disciplines.

### **Organisation of the Study**

The study is organized in five chapters. The first chapter, which is the introduction, highlights the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the research questions which underpin the study and the delimitations of the study. The significance of the study is also foregrounded in this chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to give a general background to the study. Chapter two provides the review of related literature for the study and highlights the theoretical framework as well as key concepts that guide the study. Chapter three discusses the methodology of the work. In this chapter, the research design and instrument, data source, data collection procedure, sampling techniques as well as mode of analysis are discussed. Chapter four presents the results, analysis and an in-depth discussion of the data collected in relation to the research questions. Chapter five provides a conclusion for the research. It summarises the methods and approaches employed in the study, discusses the research findings, and then establishes conclusions. It also draws implications from the findings and makes recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has given a general background for the study so as to provide the researcher with a clear direction for the study. First, the chapter discussed the topic within the context of academic writing, touching on the nature and some features of academic writing such as clarity of language, precision of concepts, and objectivity of discourse. The chapter then presented the LR as an indispensable sub-genre of most academic genres and especially the masters' theses. The chapter went on further to delineate the problem of the study. This was followed by the purpose of the study and which was then clarified by three research questions. The chapter further continued by discussing the delimitation of the study and concludes with operational definition of terms, the significance of the study, the synopsis of the thesis and a summary of the chapter.



## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

The review of related literature is organised as follows: first, the chapter discusses the theoretical framework and key concepts that underpin the study, with the aim of highlighting their relevance to the analysis and interpretation of data. Second, the chapter reviews some related empirical studies based on regional and thematic lines. Third, the relationship between the present study and previous ones is highlighted.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The study employs the appraisal theory propounded by Martin and White (2005) as its theoretical framework. Two other inter-related frameworks to the appraisal theory, Hyland's interpersonal model of metadiscourse and Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, are employed to support the theoretical framework.

The Appraisal Theory is rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics. Systemic Functional Linguistics is a linguistic theory propounded by Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999), who refers to language as a social practice. It employs language as a socio-semantic resource. The social semiotic feature of language shows the relationship between meaning-making practices, and the choice of appropriate social and cultural contexts. SFL thrives on three meta-functions of language: the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions. In the ideational meta-function, the speaker uses language to encode experiences and meanings. It thus dwells on logical and experiential sub-meta- functions. The

logical meta-function looks at how the different clauses in the text relate to one another through the logical correlation between hypotaxis and parataxis while experiential meta-function stresses the idea that language is used to discuss the experiences of the speaker; to describe events, the participants in the discourse and the circumstances involved in the events.

The second meta-function of language according to systemic functional linguists is the interpersonal function. It refers to the use of language to interact with the people, establish and maintain social connections, give and request information, and convey viewpoints, attitudes as well as beliefs about the world. The interpersonal meta-function suggests that when people are involved in a communicative event, they are not only transmitting and sharing meaning; rather they negotiate, establish and sustain relationships. Recent scholarship on the appraisal system refers to appraisal as an extension of Halliday's SFL that investigates the interpersonal function of language in discourse semantics it co-articulates meaning with two other systems- negotiation and involvement (Martin & White, 2005).

The textual meta-function, allows the ideational and interpersonal meta-functions to operate and interpret the relation of language to its verbal and situational environment (Halliday, 1978, p. 8). Just like the interpersonal meta-function, the textual is realized in two types of lexico-grammatical resources: the structural resources like thematic and information structures, which function at the level of the clause; and cohesive resources such as reference and conjunction

that make explicit the relations between clauses and clause complexes (Halliday, 1978, p. 8).

A well-established system within the Systemic Functional framework, the appraisal theory is a framework that deals with the resources of evaluative language. As Lancaster (2011) explains, the appraisal theory is useful for tracking the choices that speakers/writers make to encode attitudinal meanings, to adjust degrees of evaluations, and to contract and expand dialogical space. In the words of Martin and White (2005, p.1), the appraisal framework explores “how writers/speakers construe for themselves particular authorial identities or personae, with how they align or disalign themselves with actual or potential respondents, and with how they construct for their texts an intended or ideal audience”. The appraisal theory makes use of three inter-related sub-systems to track choices in interpersonal stance-taking. These are *Attitude*, *Graduation* and *Engagement*. These three sub-systems are presented in Figure 1 below:

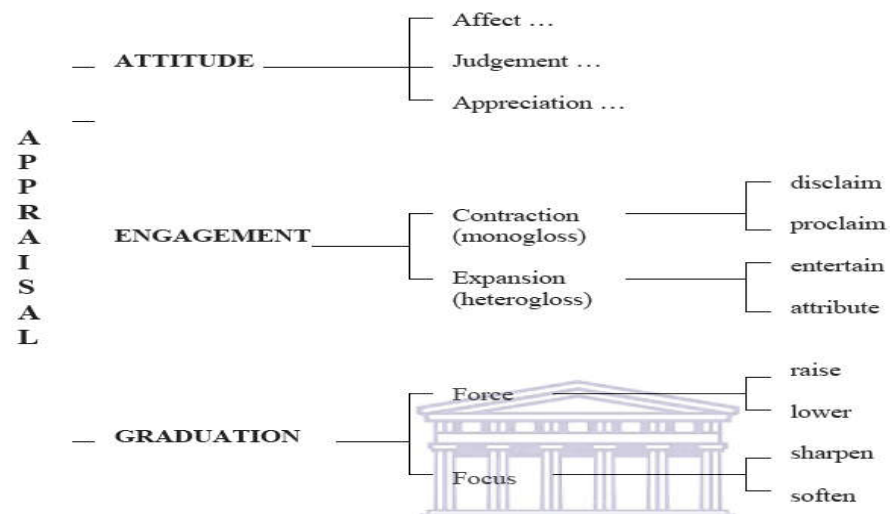


Figure 1: Overview of the Appraisal System of the SFL (Martin & White, 2005)

It should be noted that the core tenet of the appraisal theory envisages a very clear differentiation between these major systems on the grounds of semantic criteria, and not on structural features (Martin & White, 2005).

*Attitude* explores how feelings, judgments of people, and evaluations of things are built up in texts. The attitude system is further categorised into *effect*, *judgement* and *appreciation*. The affect sub-system deals with the linguistic resources that are used to express “positive” and “negative” feelings and emotions. The Judgement sub-system, on the one hand, looks at the resources for construing meaning in the attitude of people and the various ways they behave while the appreciation sub-system refers to the construing of meaning that involves "the evaluation of 'things', especially things we make and performances we give, but also including natural phenomena" (Martin & White, 2005. p.56).

The second strand of the appraisal theory, *Graduation* explores how feelings and evaluations are subtly adjusted in terms of force and focus. It relates to the extent to which any evaluation is rated along a continuum of intensity. The graduation system is further categorised into *Focus* and *force*. Whereas the former refers to the grading of meanings as being more or less definite, the latter entails the grading of meaning making from low to high intensity (Martin & White, 2005).

### **The Engagement System**

The third strand of the appraisal theory, *engagement*, inspired by Bakhtinian notions of *heteroglossia* and *dialogism*, tracks meanings related to engagement with others' voices and perspectives; thereby, exploring how "values

are sourced and readers aligned through such moves as conceding, countering, endorsing, and entertaining other voices and perspectives (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 16).” The engagement system is the focus of the present study. In what follows, I shall discuss the tenets of the theory of engagement in detail. The engagement resources are diagrammatically presented in Figure 2 below:

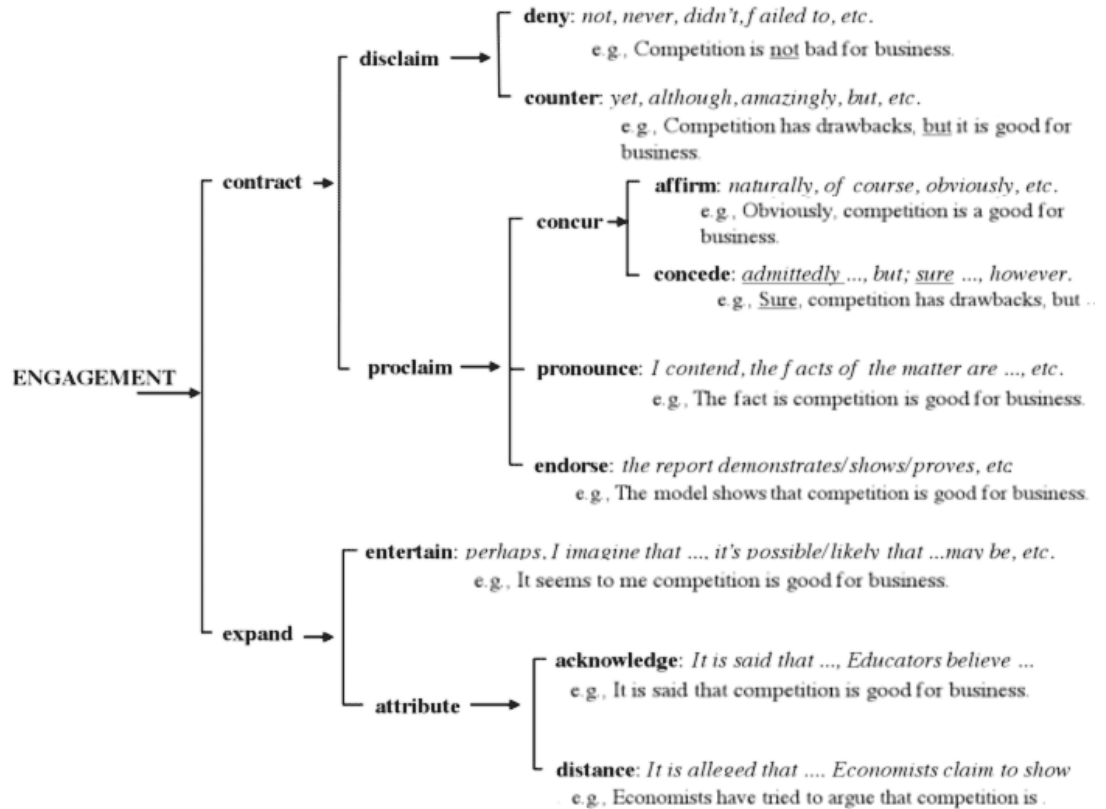


Figure 2: The Engagement Sub-System Categories (Martin & White, 2005)

The engagement system embodies resources by which writers adopt a stance towards the value positions being reinforced by a text and with respect to those they address (Martin & White, 2005). Specifically, it accounts for the “locutions which provide the means for the authorial voice to position itself with respect to, and hence, to ‘engage’ with, the other voices and alternative positions construed as being in play in the current communicative context (p. 94).”

However, the engagement system does not only embody those evaluative resources that speakers employ in taking a particular stance, but also encompasses those devices by which such writers interact with potential or real audiences. The engagement resources include reporting verbs, modal verbs, frequency adverbs, negative, contrastive discourse markers and comment adjuncts (Swain, 2007). Martin and White (2005) subcategorise engagement resources into two main streams: dialogic contractions and dialogic expansion. Dialogic contractive resources tend to challenge or constrain the scope of dialogically alternative value positions and textual voices, thereby, boosting a writer's commitment to the proposition by contracting space for the inclusion of alternative perspectives. On the other hand, the dialogic expansive resources are concerned with expressions that open up the dialogic space for alternative positions and textual voices, thereby lowering a writer's commitment to the proposition being put forth and expanding space for the inclusion of alternative perspectives.

The dialogic contractions are sub-categorised into *disclaim* and *proclaim* resources. For Martin and White (2005), disclaim resources, on one hand, include dialogic denials, typified by negative markers such as *not*, *fail*, *never* and counter-words which are typified by words such as *but*, *however*, *although*). Proclaim resources, on the other hand embody concurrence or affirmations, which are typified by words such as *obviously*, *admittedly*; pronouncements, which are typified by words such as *contend*; and endorsements, which are typified by words such as *demonstrate* and *show*.

Dialogic expansions are further categorised into *entertain* and *attribute* resources. The entertain category encompasses expressions by which the speaker/writer indicates that his/her position is one among different possible dialogic alternatives which are mostly probabilities (typified by epistemic modals such as *perhaps, it is likely that* etc.), expressions of deontic modality (such as those denoting obligation and permission) and meanings of evidence and appearance. Attribution resources concern the inclusion of other points of views by means of direct quotation or textual assimilations. This category includes verbs that indicate communicative and mental processes as well as some expressions of rumors.

The engagement theory is relevant in addressing the concern of this work. This work seeks to examine how students use engagement resources to fend off and allow for other views while reviewing works of scholars in their theses. Stance taking and dialogic positioning, as Swain (2010) notes, are common practices academics, including students, partake in while constructing the LR section of their research works. Such a cross-disciplinary study would help assessors and supervisors to develop pedagogical materials and academic literacy programs to meet the academic needs of students.

### **Hyland's Interpersonal Model of Metadiscourse**

Related to Martin and White's (2005) theory of appraisal is that of Hyland (2005) who focuses mainly on interpersonal stance and engagement. Hyland presents a model that provides a useful approach to systematizing the linguistic resources employed by writers in establishing their stance in respect of their

subject-matter and engagement with their audience. He postulates that interpersonal relationships in academic writing are achieved through a number of interactive and interactional metadiscoursal features such as evidentials, hedges, boosters and engagement markers as presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: *Hyland's Interpersonal Model of Metadiscourse*

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>FUNCTION</b>	<b>EXAMPLES</b>
<b>Interactive</b>	<b><i>Help guide the reader through the text</i></b>	<b><i>Resources</i></b>
<b>Transitions</b>	express relations between main clauses	in addition; but; thus; and
<b>Frame markers</b>	refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages	finally; to conclude; my purpose is
<b>Endophoric markers</b>	refer to information in other parts of the text	noted above; see Fig; in Section 2
<b>Evidentials</b>	refer to information from other texts	according to X; Z states ...
<b>Code glosses</b>	elaborate prepositional meanings	namely; e.g.; such as; in other words
<b>Interactional</b>	<b><i>Involve the reader in the text</i></b>	<b><i>Resources</i></b>
<b>Hedges</b>	withhold commitment and open dialogue	might; perhaps; possible; about
<b>Boosters</b>	emphasize certainty or close dialogue	in fact; definitely; it is clear that
<b>Attitude markers</b>	express writer's attitude to proposition	unfortunately; I agree; surprisingly
<b>Self-mentions</b>	explicit reference to author(s)	I; we; my; me; our
<b>Engagement markers</b>	explicitly build relationship with reader	Consider; note; you can see

Source:Hyland, 2005, p.49

For Hyland, engagement resources fall under interactional metadiscourse resources.



However, unlike Hyland's model, Martin and White's (2005) view of engagement resources considers stance and how writers dialogically contract or expand the dialogic space when they engage in academic conversations with their putative readers. Martin and White are of the view that engagement resources include reporting verbs, modal verbs, frequency adverbs, negative, contrastive discourse markers, hedges and comment adjuncts (Swain, 2007). The engagement framework of the appraisal theory is thus richer in resources than that of Hyland's as the taxonomy of engagement resources provided by Martin and White (2005) encapsulates a variety of linguistic resources used in limiting or expanding the dialogic space. These two taxonomies are, however, complementary and can be described as being in a symbiotic relationship.

Hyland (2009) corroborates this kind of relationship between both frameworks of engagement. However, Hyland's view of engagement concerns how language is used to anticipate possible reader objections, acknowledge their interpersonal concerns and bring readers into the text. He thus focuses more on "how writers explicitly mark the presence of what Thompson (2001) calls, the "reader-in-the text" and the most obvious indication of this dialogic awareness occurs where the writer overtly refers to readers by asking questions, making suggestions and addressing them directly (Hyland, 2009:124)."

### **Bakhtin's notion of dialogism**

Central to engagement system of the appraisal theory is the Bakhtinian notion of dialogism or heteroglossic diversity. Dialogism, according to Bakhtin (1981) is the notion that there always exists a variety of alternative positions one

might take up with respect to a single phenomenon. All utterances, therefore, are made and understood in the context of such alternatives. Bakhtin's (1981) concept of dialogism suggests that all utterances occur against a "background of other utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view, and value judgments" (Bakhtin, 1981: 281).

For Bakhtin, all utterances contain what he calls 'dialogic overtones'. He asserts that even utterances which are ostensibly monologic (e.g. written sentences in an academic essay) are 'dialogic' in that they exist 'against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgements . . . pregnant with responses and objections' (Bakhtin, 1981: 281). For him, speakers or writers are constantly engaged in a dynamic process of responding to or anticipating the real or imagined utterances of others. This implies that all utterances are 'dialogic,' in that, "to speak or write – to communicate – is always to reveal the influence of, to refer to, or to respond to what has been said or written – or communicated – before and to anticipate the responses of actual, potential, or imagined listeners or readers" (cited in Martin & White, 2005: 92).

Engagement is inscribed within a social dialogic perspective of communication, as proposed by Bakhtin (1981). This concept of dialogism by Bakhtin, in my view, is what Martin and White (2005) alluded to and termed as *heteroglossic engagement*. White (2003) argues that engagement resources are characterised as dialogic in the sense that they serve as tools by which the textual voice represents itself as acknowledging, engaging with, challenging or aligning

itself with other utterances, which provide in some way alternatives to that being advanced by the text. In this sense, dialogic positioning in discourse can be explained as the manner in which speakers or writers use language to position themselves with respect to the anticipated reactions and responses of the addressee. This implies that dialogic positioning refers to how the speaker or writer positions him/herself with respect to the anticipated reactions and responses of the addressee (White, 2003)

Comparing the relationship between engagement system of the appraisal framework and the notion of heteroglossic diversity, we see that the system of engagement is then a systematic semantic map of the different ways in which ‘heteroglossic diversity’ might be handled in discourse. Engagement concerns itself with whether the possible views of others are acknowledged or ignored in academic texts. The engagement system seeks to address the following issues: If the views of others are acknowledged, are they embraced, through dialogically *expansive* wordings; or dismissed, through dialogically *contractive* wordings? If embraced, how are the alternative views embraced? And, if dismissed, how is the dismissal done?

Having discussed the theoretical framework, I now proceed to discuss some key concepts that guided the study.

### **Key Concepts**

The following six key concepts guided the study: *academic writing, academic disciplines, disciplinary variation, discourse community, thesis and literature review*. The discussion of these concepts is aimed to provide

readers with a detailed overview of the conceptual thrust of the study, and to show how the above key concepts are used in the present study.

### **Academic Writing**

One of the key concepts in the present study is academic writing. Related to the notion of academic writing is the broader term, *academic discourse* which refers to the various forms of language used to enhance research, teaching and learning. Academic discourse can be classified into oral discourse (such as lectures, presentations, thesis defence, tutorials and group discussions) and written discourse (such as research articles, dissertations, journals, course outline, term papers and masters or doctoral thesis).

The term *academic writing* is used to describe varied text types in learner writings, ranging from undergraduate essays produced under timed examination conditions, to laboratory reports, and further to dissertation and thesis. Hartley (2008), commenting on the nature of academic writing, observes that “academic writing is unnecessarily complicated, pompous, technical, authoritative, humourless, and elitist and excludes outsiders (p.14).” More to these features, studies(e.g.Hartley, 2008) have shown thatthe language of academic or scientific texts is also the language of rhetoric and persuasion.

The features of academic writing cut across all levels of language study. Gillet, Hammond and Martala (2009) note that at the vocabulary level, the choice of words are formal. Ivrin (2010) distinguishes the language of academia from other professional disciplines and concludes that there is less use of multi-word constructions such as phrasal verbs in formal academic texts. There is also the

avoidance of contracted forms of words, abbreviations, clichés and colloquial expressions. At the syntactic level, there is the dominant use of passive constructions and complex sentences. Two key features that distinguish academic writing from other forms are referencing and criticality. Given that no one is a repository of knowledge, it is the norm among academics to draw on previous knowledge or what exists in the literature in order to construct new ones. These scholarly works are referenced in the form of in-text citation, end notes, footnotes, references and bibliography. Again, academics are critical in their writing as they tend to evaluate various propositions made by scholars, especially in the LR sections of their writings.

As regards the macro-structure of academic writing, Hartley (2008) posits that written academic texts (for instance, the research article) typically follow the IMRAD (introduction, method, results and discussion) pattern, although, there are variations on this basic format.

We can identify two broad categories of people who engage in academic writing: the experts and learners. This categorization leads us to identify expert academic writing (as in the case of research articles and monographs) and learner academic writing (exemplified in student essays, dissertation and term papers). This dichotomy also leads us to how knowledge is presented in academic writing.

The concept of academic writing is related to this study in that masters' thesis is seen as a genre of academic writing and as such, it follows the norms and practices that are accepted by the academic discourse community. Further, like other genres in academic discourse, masters' theses contribute to the general

communicative purpose of academic discourse which is to produce, disseminate and evaluate knowledge.

### **Academic Disciplines**

I draw on insights from Becher (1989), Hyland (2004), North (2005) and Krishnan (2009) to explain the concept, *academic disciplines*. Becher (1989) notes that disciplines are arguably the lifeblood of higher education and that within academic institutions; they serve as the main organising base of social framework. However, researchers of higher education such as Becher (1989) and Becher and Trowler (2001), as cited in Krishnan (2009), have pointed out by many researchers of higher education that the concept of a discipline is not a straightforward one.

Etymologically, the word *discipline* originates from the Latin words *discipulus*, which means *pupil*, and *disciplina*, which means *teaching* (noun). Related to it is also the word ‘disciple’ as in the disciples of Jesus. As a verb, the term *discipline* means *training someone to follow a rigorous set of instructions*, or *punishing and enforcing obedience*. It also means *policing certain behaviours or ways of thinking* (Krishnan, 2009). Historically, the term *discipline* was associated with the pseudo-militaristic and geopolitical metaphors, resulting in terms such as “territory”, “boundaries”, “borders”, “territories”, “kingdoms”, “fiefdoms”, “silos”, “empire building” and so forth. (Foucault, 1979).

Thus, disciplines are treated like a geographic territory over which one can fight and which can be controlled by “disciplinary factions” (Alise, 2008: 35). Often, the definition of an academic discipline is dependent on the nature of

inquiry. A discipline has been variously defined as founded on a base of knowledge (Kockelmans, 1979), representing the beliefs and behaviors of its practitioners (Becher, 1994; Del Favero, 2003) viewed from its situation in the structure of academic institutions (Clark, 1983) looked at as a method of inquiry or research (Del Favero, 2003), or studied as a conceptual structure (Biglan, 1973; Becher, 1989).

Hyland (2004) explains a discipline as an area of study that shares a network of communication, a tradition, a particular set of conventions, beliefs and values. Hyland (2000:3) contends that “while disciplines are defined by their writing, it is *how* they write rather than simply *what* they write that makes the crucial difference between them.” I share Hyland’s view in this regard because though what one writes is influenced by the norms and conventions that are accepted in the discourse community, how one writes to communicate effectively also constitute these academic norms. This view is also in consonance with North’s (2005) view that disciplines are now considered unique, not only in their subject matters but also *how* they use language to communicate. North (2005) claims that studies carried out in the Sciences typically involve a shared paradigm within which research moves forward by building on what has come before unlike those studies in the Humanities. Such a view is shallow because the majority of studies conducted in the Humanities do not only contribute to previous knowledge but also reveal more interesting findings that guide and shape national policies. Other studies in the Humanities also adopt, adapt and modify other frameworks or existing theories by scholars; thereby, building more on the extant literature.

Again, North (2005) postulates that the lack of such a shared paradigm in the Humanities and Social Sciences reflects a view of knowledge as open to interpretation, with research problems often revisited rather than treated as resolved. I find such a view by North (2005) quite problematic and shallow because researchers in the Sciences are also not immune to subjective interpretations by readers in the discipline. Again, studies in the Humanities are not repetitive for its own sake as North puts it; rather, the so-called repetitiveness of a particular study because it is carried out in other socio-cultural contexts gives a deeper insight into the phenomena being investigated in the study.

The pedagogical element in the notion of academic discipline has led to what scholars such as Hyland (2004) call discipline-specific writing. According to Hyland (2004), discipline-specific writing is influenced by the practices of the discipline it represents. He further explains that these practices do not only involve the genres and text types favoured by a discipline (that is, ‘what they write’), but also, they involve the strategies, principles, beliefs and practices adhered to by that particular discipline – ‘how they write’ (Hyland, 2004).

Adiko (2009) also offers a plausible description of an academic discipline. For her, a discipline is a distinctive branch of study that has a core body of knowledge and a set of methodologies in the field of study. In its human and institutional manifestations, a discipline has an organizational structure, an international community, professional organizations and genres (Adiko, 2009). However, this study subscribes to the definition of academic disciplines by Del Favero (2003). He defines academic discipline as:



The structure of knowledge in which faculty members are trained and socialized; carry out tasks of teaching, research, and administration; and produce research and educational output. Disciplinary worlds are considered separate and distinct cultures that exert varying influences on scholarly behaviors as well as on the structure of higher education (Del Favero, 2003, p. 10)

This definition includes as a key component the production of research, which is the subject of the study. The definition also stresses the influence of disciplinarity on teaching, the social culture of academics, and the structure of higher education, which are all impacted by differences in academic disciplines as suggested in the Biglan (1973) scheme.

The term, “academic disciplines” is related to the present work in the sense that the study seeks to examine the use of engagement resources among M.Phil.students in three disciplines namely, Linguistics, Geography and Resource Development, and Nutrition and Food Sciences which represent the Humanities, Social Sciences and the Natural Sciences respectively. These three selected disciplines have norms, conventions, principles, beliefs and practices that govern how researchers within these fields should write.

### **Disciplinary Variation**

The notion of *disciplinary variation* rests on the fact that there are varieties of disciplines in the academy, stressing disciplinary heterogeneity of academic cultures. The concept of disciplinary variation thus comes as a challenge to the view that academic writing is a monolithic, static and unchanging enterprise (Coles & Wall, 1987; Dillon, 1991; Zamel, 1998, cited in Afful, 2005). Hitherto, it was the general belief that there was less variation in terms of how

various disciplines present knowledge in scientific articles. However, later studies by scholars such as Hyland (2001, 2002a and 2004) have disputed this notion and established that knowledge in academic writing is presented by paying close attention to the norms and conventions cherished by the disciplinary community. This has led to the notion of academic writing as a social act and every successful text displays its writer's ability to engage appropriately with his or her audience (Hyland, 2001).

The literature indicates that studies have grouped disciplinary variation works into some thematic areas. First, studies on disciplinary variation, according to Afful (2005), are classified in four broad areas: those that focus on interdisciplinary variation as opposed to interdisciplinarity, those employing a synchronic and diachronic approach, those that deal with written as against spoken mode of discourse and the final group of studies are those that investigated specific linguistic features. The present study is a cross-disciplinary one and it adopts a synchronic approach to describe language use among master students in a Ghanaian university. The study also focuses on theses and investigates how engagement resources, as developed by Martin and White (2005), are employed in masters' theses. Engagement resources include those linguistic items used by writers to position themselves in a text and to align putative readers by fending off alternative views or allowing for the inclusion of their views in a text. These resources include reporting verbs, adjuncts, modals, negations, adversatives, hedges and boosters.

Other researchers have viewed studies on disciplinary variation from other lenses such as the cognitive (e.g. Biglan, 1973), historical (Shumway & Messer-Davidow, 1991) and sociological (Becher, 1989). The cognitive approach to disciplinary variations has resulted in the disciplinary dichotomies such as hard/soft disciplines, applied/pure disciplines, and convergent/divergent disciplines (cited in Adiko, 2009). In general, the natural Sciences and mathematics are classified as hard-pure, the science-based professions such as engineering are classified as hard-applied, the Humanities are classified as soft-pure and the social professions such as education and law are classified as soft-applied. These classifications, in my view, are problematic because disciplines are inter-related and it is quite difficult to classify each discipline as solely pure, hard, soft or applied. Indeed, those disciplines which are deemed as pure or theoretical like Religion, Philosophy and Linguistics, are also applied. For instance, fields such as Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics and Computational or Forensic Linguistics, are clearly applied disciplines rather than pure disciplines.

Becher (1989) also claims that knowledge in hard-pure disciplines is quantitative and tends to develop steadily and cumulatively; new findings derive linearly from an existing body of knowledge. However, for him, soft-pure knowledge is qualitative and new developments in these disciplines tend to derive from the combination and recombination of existing work and results (Becher, 1989; Becher & Trowler, 2001). This view, in my opinion, is shallow because the so-called soft disciplines, like those in the languages and Social Sciences, use both qualitative and quantitative data in constructing knowledge. Becher

(1989) again states that, whereas hard disciplines such as Engineering, Physics, and Computer Science – are associated with very little extended writing, the soft Sciences (e.g. Zoology, Botany, Food and Nutrition) encourage some amount of sustained writing. This assertion is plausible because due to the interpretive and objective nature of the studies carried out in the soft Sciences, academics are able to express themselves more in continuous prose than their colleagues in the hard Sciences.

Biglan (1973), corroborating the view by Becher (1989), added that while the hard disciplines have a high degree of paradigmatic consensus or objectivity where processes and methods are commonly verifiable, soft disciplines such as Communication Studies, Accounting, Religion and Education are those whose paradigms are more nebulous (Biglan, 1973). This assertion is misleading in that it is not entirely the case that the methods and findings of studies in the soft disciplines are unverifiable or unscientific. Scholarly studies are in themselves scientific in nature and thus, they hinge on scientific tenets such as objectivity, verifiability, observation and experimentation. The paradigms used by studies in the soft Sciences are not vague or ill-defined as Biglan postulates; rather, such paradigms are defining and they precisely tackle research problems in order to make significant contributions to knowledge.

Concerning teaching or instructional strategies characteristic of these disciplines, Biglan explains that hard disciplines, both pure and applied, are generally grounded in an epistemological stance that is *objective* and *absolute*. He, however, fails to indicate how to measure absoluteness in academic works.

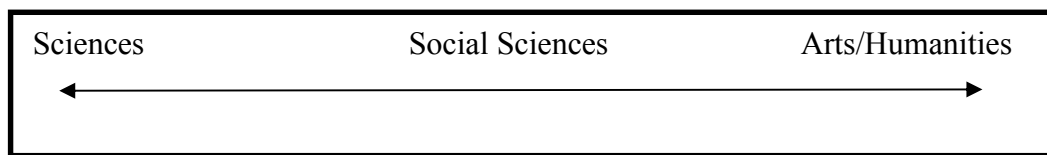
Interms of methodology, Biglan mentions that hard disciplines are generally quantitative, based on precise measurements and widely accepted theories. He again asserts that problem solving and practical skills are of high importance and priority in the hard disciplines. Harddisciplines, he posits, generally place a greater emphasis on mastery of content rather than on discussions. On the other hand, according to Biglan (1973), soft subjects, both pure and applied, are generally grounded in an epistemological stance that is *subjective* and *relative*, are generally qualitative and discussionsareoften employed as an instructional strategy in the soft disciplines.

This method of classification of disciplines, though mostly used by scholars, suffers some criticisms. One main criticism is that no one discipline can be tagged as strictly pure or applied. Becher and Trowler (2001) note that it is not always straightforward to determine a priori whether a particular discipline is pure or applied, since different researchers and different university departments give different emphasis to different aspects of their field. This study shares this view because I believe that disciplines are multi-faceted and dynamic (Hyland, 2004).

Other classifications of academic disciplines such as that by MacDonald (1994) have placed the three broad disciplines - the Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities- in a continuum where the Sciences and the Humanities are conceived as the two extremes of the cline while the Social Sciences are centered in this cline. MacDonald's (1994) view does not only accept the "traditional" classification of academic disciplines as the Sciences, the Social Sciences, and the

Humanities, but more importantly, she appears to debunk Biglan's (1973) classification of disciplines as pure, applied, soft and hard.

She thus suggests that in reality, bodies of knowledge do not always fall neatly into these three categories as they inevitably draw on one another. This notion of disciplinary variation seen as a continuum is diagrammatically illustrated in Figure 3.



*Figure 3: Continuum of Disciplines in Academia (MacDonald, 1994, p. 45)*

Some characteristics, according to MacDonald (1994), are typical of each of the three disciplines. For instance, she posits that, unlike the Humanities where knowledge is accepted based on well-advanced arguments or on arguments rooted in logical reasoning, the Sciences accept new knowledge on the basis of often objective, quantifiable, and verifiable proof. This view also suggests that whereas the Sciences usually make use of quantitative methods in collecting and analysing data, data collection in the Humanities is largely qualitative. MacDonald's view also suggests that the Social Sciences, which is centered between the two knowledge domains, adapts much of the scientific method to their less predictable data.

MacDonald (1994), as cited in Afful (2005), contends that four patterns of disciplinary variation are demonstrable through the construction and transmission of knowledge on a cline: first is variation from compactness to diffuseness;

second is variation in explanation and interpretative goals; third is variation from conceptually driven relationship between generalization and particularization; and fourth is variation in the degree of epistemic self-consciousness.

The various classifications of academic disciplines suggest that the distinction between pure and applied disciplines depends on the extent to which the discipline is concerned with theory, or practice. We see that although applied knowledge builds on theory and it is ultimately practical; it is concerned with 'knowing how' as opposed to 'knowing that' (Becher, 1989: 15).

It is seen from the foregoing discussion that there is a controversy surrounding the classification of academic disciplines (Farrokhi & Ashrafi, 2009). This study subscribes to the view given by MacDonald (1994) that disciplines are not seen as separate entities on their own; rather, they are interdependent with one another and are in a cline. However, a critique of MacDonald's view by MacDonald lies in the fact that the double edged arrows she provides in Figure 3 seems to suggest that the disciplines are finite rather than being in a cline (Farrokhi & Ashrafi, 2009).

The following two main issues must also be acknowledged. First, the review made here suggest that increasingly, our knowledge of disciplinary variation is being extended to include how it relates not only to research, as Becher (1989) admits, but to other pedagogical constructs such as teaching and learning as well as, lately, the use of digital information (cited in Afful, 2005). Thus, the view that disciplinary variation is related to research only (Becher, 1989) no longer holds. There seem to be a shift from such traditional views of

disciplinary variation and now, studies relate disciplinary variation to pedagogical issues such as students' approaches and perceptions of learning environments (Entwistle & Tait, 1995), student and teachers' beliefs about the nature of epistemology and learning (Hofer, 2000; Palmer & Marra, 2004), teaching preferences and practices (Neumann, 2001), and information technology (Jones, Zenois & Griffiths, 2004). The second issue, according to Afful (2005) is the fluidity, malleability, and overlap of the epistemological boundaries between otherwise "traditional" disciplines (Becher, 1989), giving rise to constructs such as multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary (Klein, 1990).

### **Discourse Community**

The concept of discourse community is underpinned by Hyland's (2000) view that "when we write in particular genres, there is strong pressure to take on their forms and represent ourselves in a way valued by that community (p. 200)." This implies that the discourse community determines the socio-rhetorical resources that writers or speakers choose in communicating their message (Akoto, 2011). A discourse community is described as a community that makes use of all available medium in conveying meaning in a context, be they religious, academic, social or recreational (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Members in such a community are bound by the goals, methods, norms and principles of communication through varied forms such as written, oral or computer-mediated discourse in a socio-cultural context.

The term, "discourse community" is often likened to a "community of practice" because both concepts highlight social interactions and beliefs (Hyland,



2000). However, the two terms differ in the sense that whereas a community of practice highlights the practices and values that hold a community together, a discourse community foregrounds their language *per se* (Bhatia, 2004).

An academic discourse community can be seen as a community of people who engage in the knowledge enterprise: a group of people who aim at producing, disseminating and evaluating knowledge and research. Swales (1990) outline some features that generally characterize discourse communities. First, the discourse community has a broadly agreed set of common public goals. In this sense, the primary goal of academic discourse community, in my view, is to produce, disseminate and evaluate knowledge. Second, the discourse community has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members. This is true of the academic discourse community in that there are channels of communication that academics use in disseminating information among its members. Again, an academic discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback.

Another feature of a discourse community is that it possesses one or more genres in the furtherance of its communicative aims. In academia, there are academic genres such as research articles, journal articles, dissertations, theses and conference proceedings that are used to further the aims of the academic institution. Swales (1990) again notes that in addition to owning genres, a discourse community has acquired some specific lexis. The last feature of a discourse community is that it has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of content and discourse expertise. It must also be noted that though they

share similar beliefs and norms, discourse communities are dynamic and heterogeneous (Hyland, 2000).

The concept of discourse community is relevant for the present study. Like other student researchers, master's students undertake both a learning process and a research process with tutoring supervision so as to achieve full participation in an academic discourse community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As Fryer (2013) notes, in such academic discourse communities, the way in which an author engages with and positions him/herself in relation to alternative voices in the discourse, by referencing or responding to what has been said before and by anticipating the responses of putative readers, is an integral part of the social practice of communicating research. Hyland (2000) draws our attention to the fact that both interactional and interactive forms of discourse are socially situated and they help to reveal the role of writers and readers in a text and that members in the community act according to the community-recognised norms.

Academic discourse communities such as members in the departments of Linguistics, Geography and Food Sciences (which are the study areas of the present study), have their dynamic epistemological and rhetorical practices that justify their distinctiveness and they can thus be considered as discourse or disciplinary communities. In other words, the members of these three academic discourse communities (e.g. experts, gatekeepers and apprentices) adhere to these disciplinary ideologies in their writings such as thesis, which is the focus of the next subsection. The three disciplines can also be considered as communities of practice because the academics in these disciplines adhere to some common

practices in the academia that help in teaching, learning and research (Hyland, 2009)

### **Thesis**

The final concept worth discussing is the thesis. The term *thesis*, in its literal sense can be described as a proposition stated or put forward for consideration to be discussed and proved or as a doctrine that is maintained or promoted in an argument. Etymologically, the term, “thesis” is Latinate and means “to argue or set down.” In academic circles, Afful (2012) notes that the thesis (also called ‘dissertation’ in American contexts) remains a very important genre in graduate research education and provides evidence of advanced academic illiteracies in several universities worldwide. Indeed, the thesis constitutes the most substantial piece of writing students do in their postgraduate careers (Hyland, 2001). According to Koutsantoni (2007), the thesis is seen as a research report that is generally persuasive in nature. It constitutes a proof of an individual’s familiarity with the research terrain and pool of knowledge in a chosen disciplinary community.

There is no universal consensus on the use of the terms, “dissertation” and “thesis” (Cone & Foster, 2006). In the British context, the term, “thesis” is used to refer to research reports written by graduate students while dissertation usually refers to the undergraduate research reports. The reverse is the case in Australia and other European countries. The duration of the postgraduate program as well as the level of study for the postgraduate program also determines whether a graduate piece of academic study is a thesis or a dissertation. Postgraduate studies

(usually a two-year program) require some empirical research to be conducted for the award of the degree is usually called the thesis while the reverse is called dissertation in British contexts.

Universally, the distinction between *thesis* and *dissertation* is murky (Cone & Foster, 2006). In the United States for example, *thesis* tends to be associated with master's degrees while dissertation tends to be associated with doctoral degrees. However, some universities in the United States use the two terms interchangeably. In most Ghanaian universities, the term, *dissertation* is associated with professional and practice-oriented master's degree while the term, *thesis* is associated with academic master's and doctoral degrees such as master of philosophy, commerce, nursing and the doctor of philosophy (Akoto, 2011). In this work, the term *thesis* is used to refer to graduate research report which is submitted in partial fulfilment for the Master of Philosophy degree.

Theses can be classified according to the level of the student in tertiary education. Thus, we can identify undergraduate theses, masters' theses and doctoral theses (Akoto, 2011). Citing Mauch and Park (2003), Akoto (2011) indicates that "the masters' thesis is a level in between an undergraduate student and a PhD holder, marking a movement from 'apprenticeship to the status of master' (p. xvi)." The two types of postgraduate thesis share some similarities and differences. The similarities lie in that fact that both are academic genres written especially by postgraduate students and researchers. They also tend to have the same focus in terms of their contribution to the knowledge enterprise in the specific academic discourse community at the higher level of education. Again,

they are both scholarly works of the results of a long period of research that is undertaken to partially fulfil the requirement for an advanced degree. However, these two genres differ from each other in terms of their authors in the academic discourse communities and the ‘power asymmetries between themselves and disciplinary gatekeepers’ (Koutsantoni, 2007: 56). Hence, each of them shows the degree of one’s enculturation in the disciplinary communities (Akoto, 2011).

It is also worthy to note that the postgraduate thesis is thought of not only as “a report of findings of a higher research study but more importantly, it represents substantial subject knowledge gained as well as the cultural, professional norms and practices acquired during years of socialisation in a discipline (Afful, 2012:135).” Soler-Monreal and Gil-Salom (2014) add that the postgraduate thesis is a highly complex multi-genre containing different subgenres (the LR, the essay, the experimental article) and that it engages the student in several contexts, depending on the types of audience addressed, whether they are primary audiences such as examiners or supervisors on one hand (Murray, 2003) or comprising a variety of academic readers: researchers and doctoral students of particular disciplines, who can adopt a stance or point of view on the knowledge conveyed in the theses (Bakhtin, 1986). Among the communicative purposes of postgraduate theses are to provide answers to questions, to confirm a hypothesis, to contribute to knowledge and understanding of a particular topic or to gain admission to a particular area of study (Afful, 2012).

In terms of research in Applied Linguistics and other allied fields, the thesis continues to attract considerable scholarly attention. A pedagogic genre, the thesis has necessitated a considerable number of research on its rhetorical features such as title (Afful & Akoto, 2010), acknowledgement (Hyland, 2004), generic structure (Swales, 2004), literature review (Kwan, 2006) and conclusion (Hewings, 1993, Bunton, 2005). Clearly, this perceptible and increasing interest in research on thesis writing continues to provide both exciting and useful insights regarding the extent to which novices (learners) are appropriating disciplinary variation.

### **Literature Review**

In this section, I draw on insights from Bruce (1994), Copper (1998), Thompson (2001) and Bitchener (2010) to explain the concept of Literature review (henceforth, LR). Generally, the communicative purpose of the LR, as Bitchener (2010, p. 60) notes, is “to provide an in-depth account of the background literature relevant to the context that one’s study is situated in and in doing so provides an ‘argument’, ‘case’ or ‘justification’ for one’s study”. Specifically, Bitchener presents seven communicative functions of a thesis LR, as illustrated in the Figure 4.

### **Functions of a thesis literature review**

1. A review of the non-research literature that summarises and synthesizes background and contextual information.
2. A review of theoretical perspectives that underpin or inform a research project
3. A review of the research literature relevant to one's study.
4. A critique that
  - a. identifies arguments for and against issues and controversies related to the functions 1-3 above and
  - b. assesses or weighs up the value of theories, ideas, claims, research, designs, methods and conclusions, including an identification of strengths and weaknesses
5. An identification of gaps or shortcomings in this knowledge and research
6. A rationale justifying why the gap was important and significant enough to be filled
7. An explanation of how the design and execution of your research project was informed by steps 1-6 above. This is likely to explain how the literature provided
  - a. a focus for the research questions or hypotheses that were investigated and
  - b. guidelines for an appropriate methodology and design

*Figure 4: Functions of the Literature Review section (Adopted from Bitchener, 2010)*

As can be seen in Figure 4, we realise that research articles presents a critical, factual and contextual overview of the literature related to a particular study, provides the reader with a theory base that pertains a research and generally presents a search and documentation of primary resources. In the view of Cooper (1998), two main elements typify LRs in postgraduate writings. First, LR sections use as its database reports of primary or original scholarship and does not report new primary scholarship itself. Second, the LR seeks to describe, summarize, evaluate, clarify, and/or integrate the content of the primary reports. This view corroborates that of Hartley (2008, p.87) who notes that "LRs integrate and synthesize work from different research areas, evaluate the current state of

evidence for a particular viewpoint, reveal inadequacies in the literature and point to where further research needs to be done.” For Bruce (2004), the LR comprises the following six elements: a list; a search; a survey; a vehicle for learning; a research facilitator and a report. Bruce also sees the literature review as a process and a product. By process, Bruce articulates that:

... the literature review involves the researcher in exploring the literature to establish the status quo, formulate a problem or research enquiry, defend the value of pursuing the line of enquiry established, and compare the findings and ideas with his or her own. The product involves the synthesis of the work of others in a form which demonstrates the accomplishment of the explanatory process” (cited in Zuber-Skeritt & Ryan, 1997)

A common notion that runs through all the definitions given by scholars on the nature of LRs is that LRs are not based primarily on new facts and findings, but on publications containing such primary information, whereby the latter is digested, sifted, classified, simplified and synthesized (Manten, 1973; as cited in Cooper & Hedges, 1994).

It is worth mentioning that the LR constitutes a broad constellation or colony of review genres in the academia (Swales & Lindemann, 2002). There are various types of such review genres. In terms of positioning or placement, we have those that may occupy an eponymous and separate section of a thesis or dissertation (Swales & Lindemann, 2002) or those that may be incorporated or embedded within an article, usually in the introductory chapter. Again, writers have the liberty to present the LR as an entire article. According to Bruce (1994), the review of relevant literature is nearly always a standard chapter of a thesis or dissertation. The review forms an important chapter in a thesis where a researcher



demonstrates mastery in the field of study and provides ample evidence of what he has read in the extant literature.

Unarguably, it is seen that LRs of masters' theses provide a platform where writers establish connection between their innovations and the work of their predecessors (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Researchers show that their works are built on previous knowledge and that their studies are not carried out in isolation. By showing such relations, a researcher establishes credibility of his/her assertions.

The notion of establishing adequate interpersonal and social relationships is particularly important when reporting on the work of others in LRs. This is against the backdrop that writers review previous knowledge in order to provide an adequate justification for their own work. Again, LRs are seen as a channel through which writers engage the real or putative readers in an academic conversation. Master students are no exception to this practice. In their theses, M.Phil. students negotiate their positions and aims within the academic discourse community in dialogue. As Hyland and Diani (2009) observe, when dialogic interaction is established in the LR chapter of a thesis, it creates an interpretive framework which allows the researcher to demonstrate his disciplinary knowledge of the field in critically engaging with prior research and with examiners.

### **Empirical Studies on the LRs of Academic Genres**

In this section of the review, I highlight studies carried out on LRs in genres such as research articles and dissertation, with particular emphasis on the thesis, given the focus of the entire work. I seek to do this along regional and

disciplinary lines. It must be noted that the review presented below is not intended to be exhaustive, but representative of such studies in the English-speaking world.

### **Studies on LRs in Non-African Settings**

Several studies on LRs have been conducted in Anglo-American and European settings. These studies employed various analytical frameworks such as genre analysis (Kwan, 2006; DeMello, 2011; Rafik-Galea, De Mello & Arumugam, 2013; Gil-Salom & Soler-Monreal, 2014), taxonomic and qualitative analysis (Onwuegbuzie, Collins, Leech & Dellinger, 2010) assessment of postgraduate LRs (Hart, 1998; Boote & Beile, 2005; Holdbrook, Bourke, Fairbarin & Lovat, 2007) and pedagogy (Turner & Bitchener, 2001; Fitt, Walker & Leary, 2009; Fit, 2011).

Using a genre analytical approach, Kwan (2006) investigated the schematic structure of LRs of 20 doctoral theses produced by native English speaking students of Applied Linguistics. She investigated the structure of rhetorical argument in relation to the steps and strategies that typify the moves in LRs of doctoral thesis in comparison with Bunton' (2002) revised CARS model which typify introductions of research articles. Examining 20 doctoral theses of native English students of Applied Linguistics, she found that the LRs of doctoral theses conform to the Introduction, Body and Conclusion moves. The results also showed that the moves identified by Swales in the introductions of research articles are similar to those in LRs. The key moves identified in her newly developed model of LRs of doctoral theses are Move 1: Establishing one

part of territory of one's own research, Move 2: Creating a research niche in response to Move 1 and Move 3: Occupying the research niche by announcing research aims and research questions. She observes that all the strategies used to realize the moves do not necessarily occur, nor do they always occur in a sequential order. Rather, the study found out that the moves can be recursive.

The concerns of Kwan's (2006) study are quite similar to those of Rafik-Galea, de Mello and Arumugam (2013) who also examined the rhetorical patterns of LRs. Rafik-Galea *et al.* (2013) investigated the rhetorical structure of the 20 LR sections of Hospitality and Management research articles by employing the Swalesian (2004) genre analytical approach. The paper found that LR sections display cyclical move patterns that show the presence of the 3 moves and their respective steps as suggested by Swales' (2004) revised CARS model, but with some variation.

A similar study, Gil-Salom and Soler-Monreal (2014) investigated the rhetorical structure of PhD LRs in computing in English and Spanish. Employing a genre analytical perspective in analyzing the theses, Gil-Salom and Monreal found out that the Spanish and the English PhD LRs have a similar rhetorical structure as found by Kwan (2006). The data, however, revealed that the English writers use more strategies for the development of each move than the Spanish writers.

Exploring the rhetorical structure of LRs to examine their rhetorical structure, Thompson (2009) concludes that LRs should be treated as part of a larger text and should be viewed as a sub-genre. His study examined LRs in 24

British theses from four main disciplines – Agricultural Botany, Agricultural Economics, Food Science and Technology and Psychology. The study revealed that the most dominant nouns among the Sciences are *evidence*, *problem* and *model*. He concludes by articulating some distinctive features of LRs in PhD theses as follows: First, LRs evaluate and are evaluated. Second, LRs can be one chapter or part of several chapters and typically has the following moves: establishing one part of the territory of one's own research, creating a research niche and occupying a research niche. The second finding corroborates that of Kwan (2006).

In the area of teaching and learning, studies such as Turner and Bitchener (2001) and Smallbone and Quinton (2011) have developed various frameworks for teaching LRs in schools. Such frameworks – for example, the one by Smallbone and Quinton – comprise pedagogical approaches such as how students can carry out a systematically informed search for relevant literature, how students can deconstruct texts in a critically informed way and how they can reconstruct, synthesize and add to the contributions of a research article. Though a very insightful article, Smallbone and Quinton (2011) failed to demonstrate the efficacy of the three-stage approach to teaching LRs. Again, it would have been more revealing if the study had gathered feedback from students on how helpful they found the proposed framework in writing their LRs.

Aside the genre and pedagogical studies conducted on LRs, other studies have now turned to investigating assessment reports of LR especially in written

thesis reports about LRs (Boote & Beile, 2005; Holdbrook, Bourke, Fairbarin & Lovat, 2007; Fit, Walker and Leary, 2009). A very insightful study, Boote and Beile (2005) suggests some criteria to evaluate the reports of doctoral dissertation literature reviews. The first criteria they mentioned is coverage, which seeks to assess how well doctoral students justify the inclusion or exclusion of studies in the review. The second criterion is synthesis which assesses how well a candidate has summarized, analysed and synthesized the selected literature on the topic. The third is methodology which examines how well the doctoral candidate has identified the main methods and research techniques that have been used in the field. The fourth criterion is significance which focuses on how well the dissertation rationalized the practical and scholarly significance of the research problem. The final criterion, rhetoric, measures whether the LR was written with a coherent, clear structure or otherwise.

Following Boote and Beile's (2005) ground-breaking study of LRs in doctoral dissertations, Fit, Walker and Leary (2009) attempted to replicate Boote and Beile's work in a focused area of education research, specifically Instructional Technology, and to examine the inter-rater reliability of the rubric. The analysis and discussion of the results revealed that subtle differences existed between the scores recorded by Boote and Beile and those of Fit et al. (2009). The study concludes that dissertation LRs in Instructional Technology show the same need for improvement as dissertation LRs from Education. The study, however, failed to account for the reason(s) why students excelled on the rubric.

As well, the study did not examine the validity of the rubric to ensure that all important facets of a dissertation LR are represented therein.

The review indicates that there has been a shift from investigating LRs from a theoretical perspective through a pedagogical and evaluative perspective - especially in the late 90s- to investigating LRs from a genre analytical perspective (Kwan, 2006; Rafik-Galea, de Mello & Arumugam, 2013, Gil-Salom & Soler-Monreal, 2014). A majority of such studies have also developed some frameworks and taxonomies that are aimed at helping novice researchers and learners to conform to the norms and practices accepted by the academic discourse community as far as LR writing is concerned (Hart, 1998; Boote & Beile, 2005; Holdbrook, Bourke, Fairbarin & Lovat, 2007). It is also seen in the review that many studies on LRs have shifted from investigating LRs in mono-disciplinary contexts to interdisciplinary contexts. An interdisciplinary study, the present work thus seeks to investigate how master students in three departments of the University of Ghana, Linguistics, Geography and Food Sciences dialogically position themselves when reviewing the works of others in their theses.

### **Studies on LRs in Africa**

Studies conducted on LRs in Africa seem to be relatively fewer than those conducted in the Anglo-American contexts. Two of such studies are worth mentioning.

A study by Akindele (2010) examines the problems which postgraduate students face in constructing the LRs of their theses. The analyses were based on

six criteria: whether the students were able to summarise the materials read, demonstrate the relationship of each work in relation to the other, highlight the gaps within the literature, resolve arguments given by various scholars, demonstrate awareness of the different arguments and whether they were able to link the review to the aim of the study. Using examples from the LRs of 30 master's theses submitted to the Faculties of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Botswana, Akindele found that of the three faculties, it was students from Social Sciences who demonstrated their awareness of the writing skills involved in constructing LRs. The study also revealed some general weaknesses of students in constructing LRs. These include their inability to evaluate relevant materials and their deficiency in being critical of the source of materials read. Students were also unable to show the relationship between their study and those studies they reviewed. However, most of the students were able to give an overview of the materials read. Based on his findings, Akindele concluded that most graduate students lack critical thinking skills and were unable to assert their voice and identity in their writing. Though it is a very seminal article on LR in Africa, the paper did not review current studies. The study is, however, significant to the present study since the present study also will also test the view that most graduate students are unable to assert their voice and identity in their thesis reports.

Using a reflective-narrative analytical model, Afful (2008) recounts some experiences he encountered while writing his doctoral theses. As regards the LR section, he recounts how he handled four aspects of the doctoral LR: source

identification, source use, positioning in relation to sources and technical accuracy. For our purposes in this study, I shall discuss one of these thematic areas. With regards to positioning, he made use of first personal pronouns in positioning himself to the available literature, a view that is shared by scholars such as Hyland (2000) and Swales (1990). Afful (2008) also added that the use of hedging and reporting verbs is crucial in doctoral theses as it helps the researcher to assert an authorial voice through a careful interaction between the researcher's view, other works and with his research activities. Afful's (2008) work is significant to this study in the sense that though he used a different framework, the suggestions and observations made in the paper fall within the purview of this study. This study seeks to look out for those engagement devices used by master students to contract or expand the dialogic space when they are reviewing the available literature in their theses.

The studies reviewed so far indicates that there appear to be a dearth of studies conducted on LRs in Africa. Studies on LRs in Africa tend to contribute to teaching and learning of LRs with a view to itemizing problems students face in constructing LRs (Akindele, 2010) and providing remedies and guidelines for students in constructing the LR. This study then becomes useful in that it goes beyond identifying problems and providing remedies and examines how students enact interpersonal relationships with their readers and drag them along their arguments or exclude their alternative views in their theses. In what follows, I review some studies on the use of interactive and interactional resources in academic writing.



### **Studies on Interactive and Interactional Resources in Academic Writing**

Some works on the interactive and interactional resources in academic genres have been studied in both student and expert writings (Hyland, 2004, 2005; Swain, 2007; Saeed & Fatemeh, 2012; Fryer, 2013; Sayah & Hashemi, 2014). A couple of these studies are reviewed given their prominence and currency.

Hyland (2004), for instance, investigated how genre and disciplinary communities influence the interactive and interactional resources in 120 masters' theses and 120 doctoral theses from six disciplines. The study dealt with a large corpus of data totalling four million words. In addition, there were some interview data. Two key findings emerged from the study. First, the study revealed that masters' students preferred interactive metadiscourse in their thesis while their doctoral students employed more of interactional metadiscourse resources. Second, it was found out, quite unsurprisingly, that the metadiscourse density in the PhD theses was higher than that of the masters' theses. What might have accounted for this could be the relative sophisticated nature of doctoral thesis (Hyland, 2004, 2005). This study was significant as it provided a fertile ground from which other inter-disciplinary studies emerged.

Adopting a similar approach, Hyland and Tse (2004) also explored interactional resources used by postgraduate students in twenty masters' and twenty doctoral theses from six disciplines, namely: Electronic Engineering, Computer Science, Business Studies, Biology, Applied Linguistics and Public Administration. The study showed that postgraduates used more interactive resources than interactional ones, a finding which is in tandem with Hyland

(2004). The study also confirmed Hyland's (2004) finding that text transition is preferred to all the metadiscourse resources by non-native users of English.

In an inter-disciplinary study, Hyland (2005) examined a corpus of 64 project reports written by a group of final-year Hong Kong undergraduates in a bid to establish how they demonstrated their awareness of the presence of their readers in their writings. The findings revealed that academic writing is not an impersonal monologue but it contains many dialogic interactions. Finally, distinguishing such engagement devices as *reader pronouns*, *asides*, and *references to shared knowledge* from *directives* and *questions*, Hyland (2005) concludes that the former devices are used to draw on the shared goals between the writers and readers, thereby bringing the reader into the discourse as a 'fellow disciplinary member. One main area worth commending is Hyland's attempt to compare students; product and professional academic practices to underscore the point that the writers' purposes are what determine the construction of readers in their works.

Three years later, Hyland (2009) explores how final year Hong Kong undergraduates in various disciplines construct their readers, respond to their expectations as members of the discourse community, and attempt to guide their reactions to the work being presented. The undergraduate students employed in this study were from eight different fields namely, Biology (Bio), Mechanical Engineering (ME), Information Systems (IS), Business Studies (BS), TESL, Economics (Econ), Public Administration (PA) and Social Sciences (SS). The study analysed 64 project reports (about 630,000 word corpus) written by the final

year students. Interestingly, the study revealed that directives were most heavily used by students in IS and ME, for example, while questions and inclusive pronouns were most frequent in the more discursive soft fields. The dominance of inclusive pronouns and questions in the soft fields is not surprising as these pronouns and questions reflect the subjective nature of the discipline as other disciplinary studies have confirmed (Derewianka, 2009; Swain, 2010).

Apart from undergraduate students' reports, a number of studies have examined interactional resources on student essays (Coffin, 2002; Swain, 2007; Wu, 2007; Derewianka, 2009; Lancaster, 2011). Such studies have found out, for instance that, argumentative essays written by postgraduate students are less interpersonally engaged or less dialogically open when compared to those written by more advanced writers in specific disciplinary contexts (Swain, 2007; Wu, 2007; Derewianka, 2009). It was found in Derewianka's (2009) study that postgraduate students take stances in their argumentative essays by making use of attributions, concessions and counter engagement resources, a finding that is similar to that of Lancaster (2011).

Recent studies have also examined interactional resources in research articles in various fields of study and socio-cultural contexts (Saeed & Fatemeh, 2012; Fryer, 2013; Sayah & Hashemi, 2014). Fryer (2013) explores heteroglossic engagement in 23 written medical research articles and found that there is considerable variation in the types of engagement resources used as well as in their distributions, both across and within different sections of the medical research articles. The usefulness of Fryer's paper is grounded on the fact that the

researcher triangulated the findings both at the data collection and analysis levels. All this strengthened the validity and reliability of the findings of the study. Notwithstanding the significant contribution of this paper, it appears that the data were under-analysed, given that the discussion focuses so much on the discussion section of the medical research articles with less emphasis given to the other rhetorical units.

A quite recent study, Sayah and Hashemi (2014) sought to investigate how stance and engagement are used in Sociology, Linguistics and Education research articles and whether there are significant differences in the way researchers use stance and engagement resources in these articles. They present an important discussion of how stance and engagement resources are used in postgraduate writings. Although I may not agree on all the issues raised in the article, I commend the authors for their attempt to examine the frequencies of occurrence of the engagement resources in such large corpora of data. Drawing on Hyland's (2005) model on stance and engagement, the study revealed that hedges occurred more frequently in Linguistics articles while boosters and attitude markers occurred more often in Education articles. Surprisingly, self-mentions occurred more in Sociology articles than in Linguistics, a finding that deviates from earlier studies (Dahl, 2004; Hewings, 2004). However, the study found that all the researchers used engagement resources such as personal asides and appeals to shared knowledge to perform two main functions. First, the resources were used by the researchers to express their commitment to the theoretical and empirical literature and second, to persuade readers by tacitly showing the authenticity of

their assertions. However, less adequate is their discussion on how the disciplinary knowledge account for the variation that were seen in the selected disciplines.

In Asian-Pacific settings, Saeed and Fatemeh's (2012) study also revealed similar findings to Sayahand Hashemis'. Investigating the differences between the use of stance and engagement in 120 English and Persian research articles in Sociology and Chemistry, Saeed and Fatemeh found that Persian RAs tend to involve or engage readers than English research articles. The analysis of 120 RAs demonstrated, unsurprisingly, that the expression of stance and engagement features was of great importance in academic writing, with 110 occurrences in each English Sociology article, 23 cases in each English Chemistry article, 112 ones in each Persian Sociology article, and finally 32 occurrences in each Persian Chemistry article. Of interest is their finding that there were more engagement resources in Persian Sociology articles than in Chemistry. The results also indicated that the Sociology rather than Chemistry academics attempted to interact more with their potential readers by including a greater number of stance and engagement markers mostly through hedges and attitude markers. Hyland (2005) and Hyland (2010) have revealed that, unlike academics in the natural Sciences where writers only report some scientific facts, those in the Social Sciences have more freedom to accompany the texts with their personal feelings and emotions. Nevertheless, their discussion on why English students preferred stance markers to engagement markers was not well accounted for.

In a corpus-analytical study, Holmes and Nesi (2009) investigated the ways in which student writers position themselves as members of their discourse community, as purveyors of hard or soft and pure or applied knowledge. Using the entire British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus, a 6.5 million word collection of student assignments, comprising 96 history assignments (309,761 words) and 68 physics assignments (196,487 words), the study concludes that the identification of discipline-specific clausal features helps to further our understanding of the way disciplinary knowledge is conceptualized and expressed, and may also inform the design of discipline-specific writing programmes for novice academic writers.

Studies reviewed in this section point to two main issues. First, as much as expert written genres such as the research article has received attention from scholars in Applied Linguistics as far as interactional resources are concerned (Saeed & Fatemeh, 2012; Fryer, 2013 and Sayah & Hashemi, 2014), learners writing has also received a considerable attention by applied linguists. There is a considerable number of studies conducted on learners' written genres such as student essays (Coffin, 2002; Swain, 2007; Wu, 2007; Derewianka, 2009; Lancaster, 2011), students assignments (Holmes & Nesi, 2009), project reports (Hyland, 2009) and masters and doctoral theses (Hyland, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004). Second, it is seen that most of these studies are conducted in non-African settings and in well known disciplines such as Medicine (Fryer, 2013), History and Physics (Holmes & Nesi, 2009), English, Chemistry and Sociology (Saeed & Fatemeh, 2012, Sayah & Hashemi, 2014). Fewer studies have looked at other

disciplines such as Linguistics (Sayah & Hashemi, 2014), Geography (Wu, 2007) and Food Science, though researchers in these disciplines use language to interact and engage other readers in their writings – a gap this study seeks to fill.

### **Studies on Reporting Verbs and Writers' Positioning in Academic Genres**

A number of researchers have examined the ways of expressing and interpreting evaluation in academic genres from specific disciplines. These include Thompson and Ye (1991) and Hyland (2000, 2002), who studied potentially evaluative reporting verbs used in academic papers; Stotesbury (2003), who analysed attitudinal language in RA abstracts, and Koutsantoni (2007), who explored appraisal resources in scientific RAs. Another domain that has attracted a lot of studies as far as the interface between reporting verb and writer' stance is concerned is print media discourse (Floyd, 2000; Nkansah, 2013).

According to Hyland (2004), reporting verbs are very significant in dialogic positioning, indicating the writer's position in relation to the information being reported. They have a bearing on heteroglossic engagement in the sense that the selection of appropriate reporting verbs allow writers to signal an assessment of the evidential status of the reported proposition and demonstrate their commitment, neutrality or distance from the fact the writer is presenting (Hyland, 2004). Hyland's (2004) study on reporting verbs in undergraduate essays across eight disciplines revealed that the Sciences are seen as conveying a neutral attitude to their findings. The study revealed that the 88 lexical verbs identified from the corpus, *point out* was the dominant reporting

verbs used by undergraduate students in Linguistics, Psychology and Economics only whereas those in Philosophy preferred to use *argue*, *think* and *mean*. It is seen that disciplinary knowledge influences the use of these verbs in that, Philosophy, as a subject, seeks to present argument about the existence of being and also concerns some epistemological and ethical issues of life. The study concluded that students in the Humanities and Social Sciences use more reporting verbs than the hard and natural Sciences. In the hard Sciences, the verbs *observe* and *explore* were common in essays from Biology, while *investigate* was dominant in Engineering essays.

In a similar study, Hyland's (2000) major work on reporting verbs revealed that writers in soft disciplines use more varied reporting verbs than writers in hard disciplines. This is because writers in soft disciplines need to support their arguments with references to other researchers whose works are known and respected. Conversely, in the hard disciplines, causal and logical relationships are relatively easily established from observations and quantitative data, and so there is less need to cite the opinions of others. As regards reporting verbs used in both disciplines, the study revealed writers in the soft disciplines use more 'discourse act' reporting verbs such as *ascribe*, *discuss* and *state*, whereas writers in the hard disciplines prefer to use 'research act' reporting verbs such as *observe*, *discover* and *calculate*.

Thompson and Ye's (1991) seminal research on reporting verbs in academic journals is also worth mentioning here. For them, reporting verbs are either evaluative or potential. They also establish that writers tend to vary their



commitment to certain propositions through the use of reporting verbs. Thus, they normally present information as true (e.g. verbs like *acknowledge*, *establish*, *point out*, etc.), false (e.g. verbs like *fail*, *overlook*, *exaggerate*, *ignore*, etc.), positive (e.g. verbs like *advocate*, *argue*, *hold*, *see*, etc.), neutral (e.g. *address*, *cite*, *comment*, *look at*, etc.), tentative (e.g. verbs like *allude to*, *believe*, *hypothesize*, *suggest*, etc.), critical (e.g. verbs like *attack*, *condemn*, *object*, *refute*, etc). This study is useful to the present study in the sense that the present study also seeks to find out how these verbs are used as engagement resources to include or exclude other people's views in the writing of masters' theses.

Like Thompson and Ye's (1991) study, Ferris and Hedgecock (2005) classified reporting verbs in academic journals as either evaluative or objective. To them, evaluative reporting verbs convey evaluative meaning. Thus, the use of such verbs indicates the degree to which a writer agrees or disagrees to a certain proposition. The evaluative verbs include *claim*, *allege*, *insist*, *imply*, *assume*, *believe*, *suppose*, and so forth while objective verbs include *argue*, *conclude*, *define*, *explain*, *maintain*, *suggest*, *state*, and so forth. Similar categorizations are evident in Thompson and Yiyun (1991).

The works reviewed here point to the fact that reporting verbs are key resources used in achieving interpersonal stance and engagement in academic writing. They also point to the view that in academic discourse, most frequently used reporting verbs are more lexically and semantically complex. As indicated earlier, reporting verbs are catered for under Martin and White's (2005)

taxonomy of engagement resources both under disclaim and proclaim resources (see Figure 2). The studies here are thus useful in the sense that they help me to look at reporting verbs from a different perspective so as to better appreciate how master students in Linguistics, Geography and Food Sciences dialogically position their putative readers while reviewing the available literature on specified topics in their theses.

### **The Relationship between the Present Study and Previous Studies**

Some issues arise from the review made. First, it is seen that a majority of studies (e.g. Coffin, 2002; Swain, 2007; Wu, 2007; Derewianka, 2009; Lancaster, 2011; Saeed & Fatemeh, 2012; Fryer, 2013; Sayah & Hashemi, 2014) have been conducted on the interface between the use of engagement resources and their role in interpersonal stance taking in academic discourse. While some studies (e.g. Saeed & Fatemeh, 2012) have investigated the phenomenon under discussion from a contrastive rhetoric point of view, others have investigated it from a different perspective. Again, while other studies were conducted in mono-disciplinary contexts (e.g. Lancaster, 2011), others have examined the issue of engagement in interdisciplinary settings (e.g. Hyland, 2005; Sayah & Fatemeh, 2012). Second, within interdisciplinary studies, little is known about how these resources are used in Linguistics, Geography and Food Sciences, a lacuna which this study seeks to fill.

Concerning the LRs, the literature perceptibly shows that, first, a study on engagement resources in LRs is lacking (despite the fact that LRs are the

pivot around which an entire research revolves and researchers make their voices heard in on-going academic debates). Second, the review shows that the African setting remains under-researched, the exceptions being Afful (2008), and Akindele (2010). To fill this research gap, there is the need for a study to be conducted on how masters students in Ghana engage in academic conversations and how they take dialogic positions in constructing the LRs of their theses. Such a study is useful because the purpose of writing is not only about producing some texts or explaining an external reality, but also constructing and negotiating social relations with the readers (Hyland, 2005). As Hyland (2009) observes, in presenting their work, writers (including postgraduate researchers, *emphasis mine*) adopt interactional and evaluative positions, anticipating readers' expectations and responses to participate in what amounts to a virtual dialogue with them. Additionally, the study provides useful insights on the disciplinary variation and dialogic function of language use in masters' theses.

### **Chapter Summary**

The chapter discussed the theoretical framework that underpins the study, the appraisal theory by Martin and White (2005), specifically, the engagement system, and other inter-related concepts such as Hyland's interpersonal model of metadiscourse (2005) and Bakhtin's (1981) notion of dialogism. These theories and models were useful in that they helped us to understand how writers interact with their putative readers, engage them in a text by aligning and disaligning their readers through the use of engagement resources to position themselves in relation to propositions put forth by other researchers. Next, the chapter also

highlighted six key terms that are necessary to be delineated for the present study. These key terms, *academic writing*, *academic disciplines*, *disciplinary variation*, *discourse community*, *thesis and literature review*, are discussed with a view to providing the reader with a general orientation of the conceptual terrain of the research study. Also discussed in the chapter are empirical studies on the interactive and interactional resources used in both student and expert academic writings. It is realised that though students are considered as peripheral members of the academic discourse community (Belcher, 1989), student writings have received a considerable interest in disciplinary studies, though some disciplines such as Linguistics, geography and Food Sciences have not been much explored. Next, the review looked at studies on the relation between stance taking and reporting verbs. The studies reviewed here point to the fact that reporting verbs are key resources used in achieving interpersonal stance and engagement in academic writing and that in academic discourse, most frequently used reporting verbs are more lexically and semantically complex. The review of empirical literature was done based on regional and thematic or disciplinary lines. This was needed in order to demonstrate the relationship between the present study and the previous ones and to establish the lacuna the present study seeks to fill. In the next chapter, I shall discuss the methodological issues that were considered in the collection and analysis of data.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The chapter describes the methodological procedures employed in this study. These include the research design, research site, data size, data collection procedure, sampling technique, analytical framework and procedures and research site. The chapter concludes with a discussion on issues of validity, reliability and ethics, challenges encountered in the data collection and analysis, and how such challenges were addressed.

#### **Research Design**

The present study employed a mixed research design. That is, the study employed both qualitative and quantitative research designs, in that, the qualitative research design was dominantly used to interpret which engagement resources were used by the M.Phil.students in their LRs and why these students use these engagement resources in the LRs (Dawson, 2002) while the quantitative design supported the interpretation of the text by providing both descriptive and inferential statistics to make the discussion more vivid. As Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) note, the qualitative research designs help researchers to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviours, and interactions towards a phenomenon.

The qualitative research design was relevant for this study because it helped me answer my research questions. The choice of this research design helped me to identify the kinds of contractive resources that were used by

masters students in the three selected departments under study. It also helped me understand the underlying motivations that underpinned the use of expansive resources in masters' theses. The research design also helped me to answer my third research question which is to understand how the disciplinary knowledge influence the use of the engagement resources in masters' theses submitted to the three selected departments.

The quantitative research paradigm was used to analyse data in numerical terms. I used both descriptive and inferential statistics to help me triangulate the findings. The descriptive statistics used in the study involves the use of percentages and frequency counts while the inferential statistics include a Pearson chi-square analysis to test the statistical significance of the variation in the resources used across the three disciplines. Again, given that identifying the engagement resources is meaning-based and could be subjective, an inter-rater reliability test was carried out to examine the validity of types of the engagement resources identified in the data.

### **Research Site**

In describing the research site, I draw attention to three pertinent issues: the institutional context of the research, social units and language use.

The institutional context considered for this study is the University of Ghana. Also described as the premier university, the University of Ghana (henceforth, UG) was founded by ordinance on 11th August, 1948 as the University College of the Gold Coast and was originally an affiliate college of the University of London, which supervised its academic programmes and

awarded degrees. According to available information on the university's official website, UG gained full university status in 1961 and now has nearly 40,000 students including undergraduate, international students and graduate students. The students can further be classified into two groups: students in their early adulthood, who are usually admitted directly from the senior high schools, and "mature" students who are already burdened with adult responsibility and pursuing further studies for various reasons.

As regards language use, UG is an English-medium university, given the country's historical ties with the British and that the language in education policy in Ghana is English. Expectantly, both students and lecturers communicate in English in both formal and informal contexts, although Ghanaian languages and Pidgin English are dominantly used in informal contexts.

As done in most public universities in Ghana, M.Phil. students in UG are required to present both hard bound and soft bound copies of their theses to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment for a Master of Philosophy degree in various disciplines. The theses, when passed by both internal and external assessors and defended at a viva voce, are then displayed on the university's institutional repository site to enhance its reputation as key contributors to the knowledge enterprise. An institutional repository, according to Crow (2006) can be described as an online archive for collecting, preserving and disseminating digital copies of the intellectual output of an institution, particularly a research institution. For a university, this includes materials such

as monographs, e-prints of academic journal articles as well as electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs).

Within the University of Ghana, three departments were chosen for the study. These are Linguistics, Geography and Resource Development and Nutrition and Food Sciences. The three selected disciplines for the present study, Linguistics, Geography and Food Sciences, belong to the Humanities, Social Sciences and Biological Sciences respectively.

The Department of Linguistics was selected for two main reasons. First, it is one of the earliest departments to have started the master's programme in the university. More importantly, the Department has a reputable record of having graduated many graduate students over the past two decades within the School of Languages. Having run the masters programme on regular and sandwich basis for about two decades, the Department had published a number of graduate theses on its institutional repository website, unlike other departments in the School of Languages. Hence, sufficient theses were available for the study, especially on the university's institutional repository site. Second, Linguistics as a discipline was chosen because it values the scientific study of language in general and writing in particular as powerful and fundamental tools of language pedagogy (Afful, 2005). It will be interesting to find out how M.Phil. students in such a language-related discipline use engagement resources to dialogically allow or contract alternative voices while reviewing the extant literature in their theses. The theses sampled for the study were studies on discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, L1 interference, error analysis, transformational



grammar, phonological processes in Ghanaian indigenous languages, language contact and critical discourse analysis (see Appendix A for the titles of the selected theses).

The second discipline chosen for the study is Geography. Based on Biglan's (1973) classification of academic disciplines, Geography is categorized as a soft-life- pure discipline. Formerly called the Department of Geography until 1985, the Department of Geography and Resource Development was established in 1948 following the establishment of the University College of the Gold Coast in that same year. It was among three departments within the Social Sciences that were first established alongside the Department of History and Economics. Since its formative stages, the department has grown in stature and gained international recognition and visibility based on its teaching, research and the quality of its faculty. The department's laboratory is one of the well-equipped GIS Labs in Ghana with the state-of-the-art computers, GIS softwares, large format architectural E-plotter, GPS equipment, and so forth. Currently, the department conducts researches in three broad areas: human geography, physical geography and geospatial Sciences. The theses sampled for the study cut across these areas and they include topics on land settlements, land acquisition, flooding, disasters, small-scale mining and environmental degradation.

The Department of Geography and Resource Development was selected because as far as interactional resources in student writing is concerned, the department has received less attention unlike other Social Science disciplines such as Sociology, Business Studies and Economics in the College of

Humanities and Social Sciences. It was thus considered for this study to represent one of the three broad disciplinary discourses – the Social Sciences (MacDonald, 1994). A soft science, Geography, like Sociology, recognizes the importance of extended writing skills (Myers, 1990; Casanave & Hubbard, 1992; as cited in Afful, 2005) and hence, it was selected for the study.

Nutrition and Food Science is the third discipline selected for the present study. Food science is a discipline concerned with all technical aspects of food, beginning with harvesting or slaughtering, and ending with its cooking and consumption. Based on Biglan's (1973) classification of academic disciplines, food science is a hard-life-applied discipline. The choice of this discipline also stems from the fact that it has not featured much in cross-disciplinary studies, unlike disciplines such as Chemistry, Engineering and Biology, especially in Ghana. That is, the field was chosen because it is a relatively recent discipline which has evolved very rapidly and has assisted the increasing demands on food security and food consumption. Being a prototype discipline in Sciences, Food Sciences also acknowledges the usefulness of extended writing in the academy (Casanave & Hubbard, 1992; cited in Afful, 2005) and it will be interesting to find out how master students use engagement resources in their extended writings. The choice of this discipline is also influenced by the availability of the data on the institutional repository site. Thus, UG institutional repository site had a majority of M.Phil. theses belonging to the discipline and these were enough to address the concerns of this study. More importantly, the department was selected given that it is “a discipline which allows researchers a better

interpretability of the data as compared to other disciplines” (Shokouhi &Baghsiahi, 2009:540).

Generally, the choice of the three disciplines was informed by the scarcity of cross-disciplinary appraisal studies involving the three disciplines, especially in terms of engagement resources. Investigating these three disciplines would thus enhance our understanding of interactional resources used in student writing. The three disciplines were also chosen because a majority of the M.Phil.theses on the institutional repository sites were found in these disciplines.

The justification of selecting the University of Ghana as the institutional context for this study is that, as far as I am concerned, no study of this kind has been conducted in this university. I therefore considered it appropriate to undertake this study in this university to fill this gap. Again, the majority of studies conducted in other universities such as the University of Cape Coast, have focused on investigating various linguistic variables using appraisal and metadiscourse frameworks in disciplines such as English (e.g. Afful, 2006; Akoto, 2011; Musa, 2014), Chemistry (Musa, 2014), Sociology (Afful, 2006; Akoto, 2011) and Zoology (Afful, 2008). It is also important for us to know how certain linguistic elements such as engagement resources are used in M.Phil.theses submitted to other universities. To this end, this study attempts to fill in the gap. Also, by using this site, the geographical location (Ghana) for this study is widened.

### **Data Size/Source**

Concerning data size, forty-five (45) M.Phil.theses submitted by students from Linguistics, Geography and Food Scienceswere purposively selected. That is, fifteen theses from each department were gathered for the analysis. The theses were submitted between 2013 and 2014. The selected theses met the institutional requirements and were passed theses, showcased on the university’s institutional repository site. A relatively sufficient selection of 45M.Phil.theses (286,104 words) was done in order to avoid the danger characteristic of large corpus – superficial analysis –and that of small corpus, less tendency of generalizability (Anthony, 2001). The choice of 45theses is also informed by earlier studies such as Musa (2014) and Akoto (2011) that used 30 to 40 masters theses respectively in their works. Coupled with this is the fact that the LR sections of the masters theses tend to be bulkier and lengthy. Each LR was about 5,900 words long, on average. Table 2 shows a summary and distribution of the data across the three disciplines.

*Table 2: Distribution of Pages and Words across the Selected Disciplines*

<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Number of thesis</b>	<b>Number of words</b>
Nutrition and Food Sciences	M.Phil. LRs	15	92,208
Geography and Resource Development	M.Phil. LRs	15	92,528

Linguistics	M.Phil. LRs	15	101,368
Total			286,104

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Source: Field survey, Afful (2015)

Table 2 provides statistical data concerning the lengths of the theses and of their corresponding LR sections. The table shows that there are subtle differences in the number of words in the theses submitted to each discipline, which may be explained by the fact that there are different thesis formats, depending on the complex nature of the writer's research topics and the varied objects that have been studied. Again, the textual space allocated to the LRs in each thesis was found to be comparable and to allow for an empirical study on the sample, regardless of its heterogeneity (Gil-Salom & Soler-Monreal, 2014).

I selected the theses from the institutional repository sites because as Bhardwaj (2014) notes, institutional repositories have advertising functions or serve as a positive marketing tool to enhance the reputation of an organisation. As such, universities showcase rich contributions made by members of the academic discourse community to the outside world. Given this, one can infer that the M.Phil. theses showcased on the sites represented the theses that adhered to the standard practices or to the accepted epistemological conventions and norms governing a particular discipline. Again, the institutional repository was chosen following similar recent studies done by scholars such as Akbas (2012) and Gil-Salom and Soler-Monreal (2014). Yet again, the institutional repository site was selected given the format of the data (softcopies) I needed to carry out the study. The AntConc corpus analytical tool processes data in Plain text formats (.txt) and so the softcopy of the theses, rather than the hard print copies,

were more preferred to facilitate the analysis. Finally, inaccessibility to the hard print copies of the theses and time constraints informed my choice of using those on the institutional repository site.

### **Sampling Technique**

The sampling technique used in the study was the purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling was used to select the LR sections of the masters' theses from each discipline. The LRs were purposively sampled if they fulfilled the following criteria: First, the LRs must be a separate section on its own and not embedded in other chapters like the introduction (Bruce, 1994; Bitchener, 2010). Second, the thesis must be an M.Phil. thesis and displayed on the institutional repository site. The purposive sampling technique helped me in selecting data that provided accurate response to the research questions (Creswell, 2003).

### **Data Collection Procedure**

In collecting the data for the study, I downloaded the forty-five theses from UG's institutional repository website. The forty five theses were enough for the study because per the theory of saturation in data collection, they represented the "optimum number necessary to enable valid inferences to be made about the population (Marshall, 1996:522; Thomson, 2011)." I then classified the theses under each discipline and purposively selected 15 LRs from the downloaded theses. The theses were available in Portable drive formats (.pdf) and were easily accessible. I then converted the pdf formats to word

document formats (.docs) and then to plain text format(.txt) to make the data processable by the AntConc corpus analytical tool.

### **Analytical Framework and Methods of Analysis**

The analytical framework adopted in the present study is textual, rather than dualist one (that is, textual and ethnographic), as posited by Flowerdew (2005). I employed the engagement system of the appraisal theory as propounded by Martin and White (2005) in analysing the textual data and this was supported by a content analysis. This enabled me to organise my analysis according to themes that emerged from the analysis and to understand the epistemological conventions that guide these disciplines as far as engagement resources are concerned. One major advantage for doing content analysis is its unobtrusive nature (Musa, 2014). A researcher can, for instance, observe a phenomenon without being observed (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000), and so avoids the dilemma of the observer's paradox.

In order to address the research questions, which were to find out the various kinds of engagement resources used by students to either contract and/or expand the academic conversation while reviewing existing literature on a particular topic as well as how the disciplinary knowledge influences the choice of these resources, I first coded the data gathered. I categorised the theses into their respective disciplines and labelled them as 'LIN', 'GEO' and 'FAN' for Linguistics, Geography and Food Science theses respectively. These codes were merely shortened forms of the three disciplines. In coding the data, each of the 15 theses from each department was numbered from 1-15 and I underlined the

various engagement resources used to dialogically position the researchers as well as their putative readers. Thus, I used codes such as LIN10, GEO10 and FAN10 to denote data number ten from Linguistics, Geography and Food Sciences respectively. Coding the data enabled me to easily identify the various distinctive patterns of contractive and expansive engagement resources in the data and analyse them.

Next, I processed the texts into analysable formats and fed them into the AntConc Corpus Analytical software. The LR sections (which constituted the second chapters) were extracted out from the entire theses and processed into plain text formats (.txt). An extract from the AntConc Concordance analysis is presented in Figure 5.

Hit	KWIC	File
1	supermarket deli departments. The authors contend that the 2004 data are consistent with pre	FAN 13.txt
2	son). In this direction, Jennings for example contends that a building stock made up of	GE03.txt
3	the risk of fire. Another possibility he contends is that, \x93overcrowding\x94 is another	GE03.txt
4	zards Mitigation Approach does not directly contend with the root causes of disaster (i.	GE05.txt
5	es several issues of concern. Some scholars contend that it is a short term event,	GE06.txt
6	president Jacques Chirac who was the last contender at the stage of the selection process	GE06.txt
7	bring people into the area. Fridgen (1991), contends that \x93attractions are the main power	GE06.txt
8	The Centre for Development Studies (2004) contends that the small-scale mining sector is	GE08.txt
9	to enhance their livelihoods. Palmer (2007) contends that informal sector activities are becom	GE11.txt
10	at all to the environment, rather they contend that additional people stimulate higher pr	GE12.txt
11	structural issue a learner is likely to contend with. Boadi et al (1968) observe that in	LIN 03.txt
12	n are not necessarily mutually exclusive. He contends that learners rarely select one form of	LIN 03.txt
13	English in the School? Boadi et al (1968) contend that it is not enough for the	LIN 03.txt
14	turn also have their long counterparts. He contends that, oral and nasal vowels may contrast	LIN 09.txt
15	ancement of the Tongue Root. The author contends that, a distinction in [+/-ATR] harmony i	LIN 09.txt
16	g the phenomenon in S?!?, Allen (1974: 83) contends that, \x93As the velum is lowered	LIN 09.txt
17	community. Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999) contend that to be a member of a	LIN 13.txt

Figure 5: A sample of the AntConc Concordance Analysis [AntConc (3.4.1w)]



Windows, 2014)

Guided by the engagement resources and the taxonomy proposed by Martin and White (2005), I searched for the dialogically contractive resources as well as the dialogically expansive resources used in the LR sections of the theses. I must add that though I was guided by the list of resources given by Martin and White (2005) and some interpersonal resources in the literature (e.g. Hyland, 2004; Lancaster, 2011; Yang, 2015), I searched through the entire text to examine other engagement resources which did not show in Martin and White's taxonomy of engagement resources. Each example was then examined in its individual concordance line to ensure it functioned as an engagement device and eliminated from the analysis if it did not. As a check on the original identification of resources, two second, naïve coders engaged in the same exercise with the entire coded data. The inter-rater frequency of agreement yielded a reliability score of 80. The unit of analysis was clauses and I also calculated the frequency of occurrence of the engagement resources by looking through each clause of the data.

### **Problems Encountered**

The section presents some challenges I encountered while collecting and analyzing the data for the study.

In gathering data, I realized that the LRs in some of the theses were not eponymous chapters. Some of the LR chapters were thus merged as sub sections with the introductory chapter (usually Chapter 1) with a few embedded in the

Methodology section. I found it quite difficult with such theses. To solve this challenge, I used the purposive sampling to deselect such theses and focused on those that had the LR chapter as a separate chapter on their own (Bruce, 1994).

In analyzing the data, I faced two challenges. First was the use of the AntConc corpus analytical tool. At the beginning of my analysis, I found it difficult working with the corpus tool as it appeared a bit technical and complicated for me. However, upon discussions and receiving coaching from a lecturer in the Department of English as well as watching online tutorial videos on how the tool operates, I was able to gain mastery in using the tool for the intended purpose. I also had to change my original plan of analyzing the data manually into using a more rigorous corpus-based approach to analyse the data. It appears current studies on disciplinary variations have migrated from the traditional manual analysis of gathered data to using corpus tools to facilitate the analysis.

Finally, regarding the classification of the contractive and expansive resources into the various sub-systems such as CONCUR, ENDORSE and PRONOUNCE resources on one hand and ACKNOWLEDGE and ENTERTAIN resources on the other hand, I found it difficult differentiating these resources especially when two of them occurred in the same sentence. For instance, in the sentence, "*However, according to Grace (1977), some cassava varieties grow at 2000m attitudes or in sub-tropical areas with annual mean temperatures as low as 16<sup>o</sup>c*", it became difficult classifying the engagement resources, "however" and "according to Grace (1997)" as either a dialogic

contractive (COUNTER) resource or dialogic expansive (ENTERTAIN) resource respectively. The context and the co-text within which the engagement resources occurred was helpful in resolving these difficulties. Again, I joined an international appraisal online group managed by Peter White (AppraisalAnalysis@yahoo.com) and the members of the group helped me in differentiating these resources. Thus, these issues were resolved through inter-raters reliability tests.

### **Chapter Summary**

The present chapter discussed the methodological orientations underpinning the study. The research designs adopted were qualitative and quantitative with focus on content analysis. Stratified sampling and purposivesampling procedures were used to select 45 theses submitted to the three disciplines under study. The data were analysed, using qualitative content analysis which was supported by descriptive statistics so as to strengthen the claims of the qualitative analysis. The latter part of the chapter discussed problems the researcher faced in the course of the study, which include, selecting the LR's, using the AntConc concordance tool and identifying the engagement resources when they occurred in gray areas. These were resolved through inter-rater reliability tests and assistance from faculty members in my department.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter Three presented the methodological procedures employed in the study. The present chapter analyses and discusses the engagement features employed in the selected M.Phil. theses. The discussions are presented in relation to the research questions guiding the study. The present chapter also provides qualitative and quantitative discussion on engagement features used by postgraduate students in the three departments under study – Linguistics, Geography and Food Sciences.

#### **Contractive Engagement Resources Employed in M.Phil. Theses**

This section of the chapter reports the findings and interpretation in relation to the first research question, *Which engagement resources are used by M.Phil.students to contract the dialogic space in LRs of M.Phil.theses submitted to the Departments of Linguistics, Geography and Food Science of the University of Ghana?*

The study revealed that master students in the three selected departments use contractive engagement resources while reviewing the existing literature on a particular field of study. The contractive resources in the M.Phil.theses comprise both DISCLAIM and PROCLAIM resources. Table 3 below presents the

frequency of occurrence of the contractive resources evident in the theses submitted to the Department of Linguistics (henceforth, LIN), Department of Geography and Resource Development (henceforth, GEO), and Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences (henceforth, FAN).

Table 3: *Distribution of the Contractive Resources in Masters' Theses*

<b>CONTRACTIVE RESOURCES</b>	<b>LIN</b>		<b>GEO</b>		<b>FAN</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>	
DENY	17	58%	1	3.4%	11	38.0%	29	100%
COUNTER	10	16.3%	8	13.1%	43	70.4%	61	100%
AFFIRM	19	43.2%	15	34.1%	10	22.7	44	100%
CONCEDE	9	60.0%	6	40.0%	-	0.0%	15	100%
PRONOUNCE	7	35.0%	8	40.0%	5	25.0%	20	100%
ENDORSE	10	8.8%	16	14.2%	87	77.0%	11	100%
DENY/COUNTER	10	91.0%	1	9.0%	-	0.0%	11	100%
TOTAL	78	26.6%	55	18.7%	156	53.2%	298	100%

Source: Field survey, Afful (2015)

Table 3 presents the quantitative data on the frequency of occurrence of each of the resources identified in the data as well as their percentages. In what follows, I present a detailed discussion on the contractive resources in the data set. I first present the discussion on the DISCLAIM resources identified in the data. This is then followed by a detailed discussion on the PROCLAIM resources.

## **DISCLAIM Resources**

The study revealed that master students use DISCLAIM resources to fend off alternative views while reviewing works of other scholars. First, they use dialogic denials which are typified by no negation and not negative markers as illustrated in the following examples:

1. For instance, his phonemic inventory **is not elaborate enough** to give the reader the opportunity to ascertain the claims being made in the study and **neither** did he provide a generous wordlist to buttress his conclusions [LIN09]
2. Languages **cannot** be learned merely in classrooms. Learning a language requires communication in real life situations [LIN03].
3. However, there is **nothing** done in Asogli appellations, an area which this work seems to delve into. [LIN01]
4. This definition of tourism can be criticized on the basis that, they **state nothing explicitly** about the tourist, the human element who is the focal point of the subject; neither do they recognise spatial or temporal elements which are equally significant (Wahab, 1975) [GE06].
5. Research completed in the early 1940s **did not** support the role of vitamin supplementation in enhancing athletic performance. [FAN 3]

In the examples above, it is seen that the M.Phil. students use not-negation to contract the dialogic space. For instance, in example 3, the denial formulation that *there is nothing done in Asogli appellations* is seen as dialogically driven in that the textual voice invokes and presents itself as responding to claims/beliefs that a lot of studies have been done in Asogli appellations. Similarly, the formulation, *Research completed in the early 1940s did not support the role of vitamin supplementation in enhancing athletic performance (FAN04)* limits the dialogic space by fending off other alternative voices. By the use of the negative or denial markers, the formulation challenges the view that research in the 1940 supported the role of vitamin supplementation.

Surprisingly, the data revealed that the DENY resources are more typically used in the Humanities and Sciences than the Social Science s. DENY resources occur 17 times (58.6%) in LIN theses, once (3.4%) in GEO theses and 11 times (38.0%) in FAN theses. By using dialogic denials, the students of the selected theses exclude the opportunity for alternative views. That is to say that the use of dialogic denials apart from boosting the writers' commitment to the proposition; also helps them to contract space for the inclusion of alternative perspectives. The finding that DENY resources least occurred in GEO differs from that of Wu (2007) who found that DENY resources, together with COUNTER resources are frequently used in geography undergraduate essays to express contractive meanings. The variation in the findings could be attributed to the differences in the genres,

albeit both the theses and undergraduate essays are genres prototypical of student writings. It could also be that though not experts, postgraduate students are more conversant with the norms of interaction in constructing LRs than undergraduate students.

Apart from dialogic denials, master students in their theses use COUNTER resources. The COUNTER resources are typified by conjunctions and adjuncts. These are exemplified below:

6. **Although** Bodomo (1997) touches on almost all the key areas expected in a phonological description, the work lacks detail in all the thematic areas addressed. [LIN09].
7. Thus, storms with high wind speeds cause tall and powerful waves, **but** low pressure fronts cause sea levels to rise above normal levels, creating dome of water which may be forced towards the land, inundating the coastal zones (Bariweni et al., 2012) [GE 05]
8. Generally the strength of this process is that activities are carried out through agreements with all the stakeholders, especially the land owners. But **still**, lots of negotiations and arguments remain and at the same time, the three types of losses mentioned above in (section a) is always there [GE14]
9. **Although** linoleic acid is an essential component for human nutrition, it is susceptible to lipid oxidation (Nawar, 1996). [FAN7]



10. Coconut oil is used very largely in the manufacture of cold-made soaps as it is well adapted for this purpose, **although** it is by no means true that other oils may not be employed [FAN13].

The examples above illustrate the use of counter resources in M.Phil.theses. We see from the examples that by the use of the adversative conjunctions, *although* and *but*, the writer boosts his commitment to the propositions put forth as well as limits the dialogic space of the proposition presented. We also see that unlike dialogic denials, the counter resources function as hedges to supplant the proposition given. For instance, in example 6, the proposition that the work lacks details counters the proposition that Bodomo (1997) touches on almost all the key areas expected in a phonological description. The second proposition defeats the normal expectation arising from the fact that the work by Bodomo (1997) touches on all key areas expected in a phonological description. As we read the sentence, we expect that given this premise in the first clause, the work would be detailed but the contrary is stated in the second proposition in a countering manner. The COUNTER resources are similar to what Gil-Salom and Soler-Monreal (2014) refer to as “praising and criticizing” resources used by doctoral students to position themselves in LRs. The use of these COUNTER resources is, therefore, not surprising given that one main tenet of a well-constructed LR is the ability of the writer to be critical or engage in the “praise-and-blame game”.

The COUNTER resources had similar occurrences in LIN and GEO theses occurring 10 (16.33%) and 8 times (13.1%) respectively. However, the study revealed that master students in the Sciences employed more COUNTER resources than researchers in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The data revealed 43 (70.4%) occurrences of these resources in FAN theses. This finding also attests to the assertion that researchers in both the Hard and Soft Sciences do not easily open up or expand dialogic space in their articles (Swain, 2010). Due to the epistemological norms governing the nature of the discipline, researchers in the Science fend off alternative views and present their arguments in a linear manner (Swain, 2010). That COUNTER resources had the least occurrence in GEO theses is surprising. Wu (2007) in an appraisal analysis of contractive engagement resources used in undergraduate geography essays written by NNE speakers found that COUNTER resources are the most dominantly used contractive resource in high-rated undergraduate essays while PRONOUNCE resources were dominantly used in low-rated essays. The variation could be attributed to the differences in the genres as well as the textual length.

An interesting finding this study revealed is what is generally called ‘rhetorical pairs’. In this case, the COUNTER and DENY resources occur simultaneously within the same sentence. This is seen in example 6 where the word “lack” which is inherently negative, is used as a rhetorical pair within a counter context which is signaled by “Although”. Other examples of such COUNTER/DENY rhetorical pairs are:

11. Soaked maize kernels were first coarsely milled crucial to the production of dough with high moisture using a 12 tooth rotor and a 4 mm screen. **However, not** much research works have been done to focus on the reduction of the cooking time which usually takes between 2 to 3 hours so as to cut down the processing time [FAN 15].
12. **Although** the festival has Muslim origins, it is **not** Muslims alone who join in the celebration of this festival [GE06]
13. These honorifics, according to Agyekum, are referred to as “fashionable name” or “mmrane” (nicknames). In this case, both interlocutors use the same terms as call and response. **However**, Agyekum **could not** give us enough ground to understand the difference between honorifics and appellations [LIN02]
14. **However**, I see **nothing** objective in the ostensibly scientific lucubrations of say, the new criticism or generative grammar, which make literature and language itself out to be something patently different than the linguistic, cognitive, and social resources and events that constitute them. [LIN07]:

The use of these rhetorical pairs indicates that postgraduate students are very critical of what they read or review in the literature. By using these rhetorical pairs, the postgraduate students, like most academic researchers, seem to emphasise what Hyland (2005) terms, ‘writer visibility’ in their woks. Thus, given that the literature review section is not just a catalogue of read materials, postgraduate students tend to make their voices heard on some assertions made

by existing scholars in the literature. For instance, in example 13, the writer demonstrates Agyekum's failure to clearly distinguish honorifics from appellations in his study although the work is very seminal. The use of the COUNTER "However" preceding the DENY "not" can also be considered as a way used by writers to supplant the propositions made by other researchers in the literature. These rhetorical pairs are thus used as hedges to tone down the face threats that are usually characterised by such denials.

The study found that the COUNTER/DENY pairs occurred 6 and 4 times in LIN and GEO theses respectively while occurring twice in FAN theses. This variation is statistically significant as the probability value (P-value) in a chi-square analysis proved a value (0.00) less than the alpha value of 0.05 or 5%.

### **PROCLAIM Resources**

PROCLAIM resources were also evident in the data set. Compared to the DISCLAIM resources, the study found that PROCLAIM resources were used more in theses from all three disciplines. One hundred and one (101) PROCLAIM resources as against ninety (90) DISCLAIM resources were used in the data.

By using PROCLAIM resources, M.Phil. students represent propositions made by scholars in extant literature as highly warrantable, compelling, valid, plausible, well-founded, generally agreed or reliable (Martin & White, 2005). When this happens, the masters students tend to project a textual voice that suppresses or rules out alternative voices. As earlier indicated, the PROCLAIM

resources are further categorised into three: CONCUR, PRONOUNCE and ENDORSE. CONCUR resources are further subdivided into AFFIRM and CONCEDE formulations.

CONCUR resources are generally expressions which explicitly present the speaker/writer as sharing a particular view presented in the text (Marin Aresse & Perucha, 2005). Like PRONOUNCE resources, CONCUR resources help the textual voice to explicitly convey its investment in the viewpoint being advanced and thereby to confront or rule out possible alternatives. However, they differ from PRONOUNCE resources in that they present the proposition/proposal as uncontentious or unarguable within the current communicative context, as being in accord with what is generally known or expected. That is to say that, the textual voice is represented as taking up a viewpoint held by the generality of the people in the academic discourse community.

Examples of CONCUR: AFFIRM resources evident in the data include:

15. **It is obvious** that a child has a greater level of attaining fluency in a second language than an adult [LIN3]
16. Goldsmith (1990: 108) **categorically** states that the syllable is a phonological constituent composed of zero or more consonants, followed by a vowel, and ending with a shorter string of zero or more consonants [LIN06]
17. **We know that** in logical reasoning, appealing to fear and threat in argumentation lead to fallacious reasoning [LIN01]

18. Ravallion and Datt (1999) **affirm** that persistent poverty of a substantial portion of the population could dampen the prospects for economic growth [GEO7]

19. Population pressure is typically greatest along the coast, **so it is not surprising** that human influences on the world's mangrove forests are significant and growing [GE09]

20. **It is obvious** from the statistics of the various countries and regions that EBF rate in the immediate postpartum period is often generally higher than the rate observed after 4 months after birth [FAN14]

AFFIRM resources occurred 19 (43.2%) times in LIN theses, 15 (34.1%) times in GEO theses, and 10 (22.7%) times in FAN theses. In the examples above, it is seen that the use of the AFFIRM resources (in bold fonts) construe for the text an audience that shares the writer's view, affirming the validity of the proposition and thus, limiting the scope for alternatives. That is to say that we see that the formulations 'overtly announce the addresser as agreeing with, or having the same knowledge as, some projected dialogic partner' who is usually the text's putative reader (Martin & White, 2005: 122). For instance, the use of the expression, "It is obvious" in example 15 construes for the text an audience which shares with the speaker the view that a child has a greater level of attaining fluency in a second language than an adult. Similarly, the overt use of the locution, "We know that" in example 17, projects the putative reader as a dialogic partner who shares the view of the writer. The use of such pronouns corroborates self-mentions in Hyland's (2005) framework for how authorial engagement in a text is realised. Ivanic

(1998), cited in Hyland (2004), reminds us that presenting a discursive self is central to the writing process and we cannot avoid projecting an impression of ourselves and how we stand in relation to our arguments, discipline, and readers. The use of such self-mentions was evident in only the LIN theses. This finding corroborates that of Hyland (2004) when he says that in the Humanities and Social Sciences, the strategic use of self-mentions allows writers to strongly identify with a particular argument and to gain credit for an individual viewpoint. Yet again, “it is not surprising” in example 19, limits the dialogic space of the conversation as well as overtly agreeing to the proposition given by the addresser.

Like AFFIRM resources, CONCEDE resources are used by students to contract or fend off alternative viewpoints in a text. Some examples of the CONCEDE resources identified in the data set include the following:

21. **Admittedly**, Bono personal names and the naming system at large are prototypically Akan [LIN2]
22. Halliday and Hasan (1976:88) **admit** that the classification of cohesive relations into different types should not be seen as implying a rigid division into watertight compartments [LIN12]
23. **Surely**, other health concerns like malaria, onchocerciasis, and tuberculosis in Africa show different patterns [ GE04]
24. Therefore, their cooperation and interaction with the leadership in achieving success in the response operation cannot be ignored either. This has been **acknowledged** by Alesch (2004) that, “whether a community system survives and becomes viable in the post-event setting depends in

part on the individual choices of a critical mass of people and institutions in the community.” [GE05].

It was revealed that while CONCEDE resources occurred 9 (60%) times in LIN theses, they occurred 6 (40%) times in GEO theses but never occurred in FAN theses. However, the chi-square analysis done to ascertain the statistically significant difference of the CONCEDE resource across the three disciplines showed that the difference is statistically significant, resulting in a P Value of 0.000 (see Table 3).

Together, CONCUR resources corroborate what Hyland (2004) refers to as “boosters”. Like boosters, CONCUR resources allow writers to express certainty in what they say and to mark involvement with the topic and solidarity with readers. While they restrict opportunities for alternative voices, they also often stress shared information and group membership as we tend to get behind those ideas which have a good chance of being accepted (Hyland, 2004).

PRONOUNCE resources were also evident in the data set, with an almost equal occurrence in theses submitted to the three disciplines. They occurred 7 (35.0%) times in LIN theses, 8 (40.0%)times in GEO theses and 5 (25.0%)times in FAN theses. It is worth re-echoing that under the engagement system of the appraisal framework, PRONOUNCE resources are formulations which involve certain types of intensification, authorial emphases or explicit authorial interventions or interpolations. The examples below illustrate the pronounce resources identified in the sample:



25. Boadi et al (1968) **contend** that it is not enough for the teacher of English simply to be able to speak and write good English. He needs to know English sufficiently well to distinguish the good from the bad, and where it is bad, to recognize what has gone wrong and how it can be put right. [LIN03].
26. Some scholars **contend** that it is a short term event, relatively smaller and is identified with a particular destination and in this case synonymous with the name of the place, unlike the Olympics or FIFA World Cup which tend to impact on the whole economies (national) and attract global media attention (Ritchie, 1984 quoted from Amenumey, 2008) [GE06].
27. Land degradation which essentially connotes deterioration of land resources, notably soil, vegetation and water according to the United Nations (1992), is the most important environmental problem affecting extensive areas of land in both developed and developing countries. This **stems from the fact** that productivity of large areas of land is declining just when populations are increasing [GE10]
28. Heindel and vom Saal (2009) **maintain** that maternal nutrition and exposure to environmental disrupting chemicals during the perinatal period also promote weight gain in infancy [FAN4]
29. Many researchers **hold the view** that twin births could be influenced by both biological and environmental factors [FAN14]
30. **Indeed**, pica will remain an attractive subject, in which our knowledge and understanding are far from complete [FAN01]

Like the afore-mentioned contractive resources, PRONOUNCE formulations are dialogic in that they acknowledge an opposed dialogic alternative while simultaneously acting to challenge or fend it off. They are dialogically contractive by dint of this action of confronting and fending off the contrary position. For instance, in example 25, the writer recognises an assumed opposing alternative viewpoint by some scholars that all that is needed for a teacher to be competent in the classroom is to be fluent in both speech and writing. While acknowledging this putative voice, the writer fends off such a voice, by pronouncing that Boadi et al (1968) overtly contend against this proposition. Similarly, the use of the verb, *maintain* in example 4, challenges a view that maternal nutrition and exposure to environmental disrupting chemicals during the perinatal period hinders growth and weight gain in infancy. By so doing, the proposition fends off other views from the putative readers. Other lexical bundles used by writers to indicate similar pronouncements as found in the data set include, *the fact is*, *there is no gainsaying that*, *hold the view that* and *indeed*.

Moving on, we observe that ENDORSE resources also serve as a fertile ground for master students in fending off other dialogic alternatives of propositions they put forth in their theses. The use of ENDORSE resources show that the writer is aligned with the source of the attributed material and thus, “endorses” and strongly agrees with the formulations as highly warrantable. The endorsement formulations occurred with restricted verbal processes such as *show*, *indicate*, *demonstrate*, and *prove*. Figure 6 presents the concordance analysis of the verb, *show* and its varied forms in the data set:

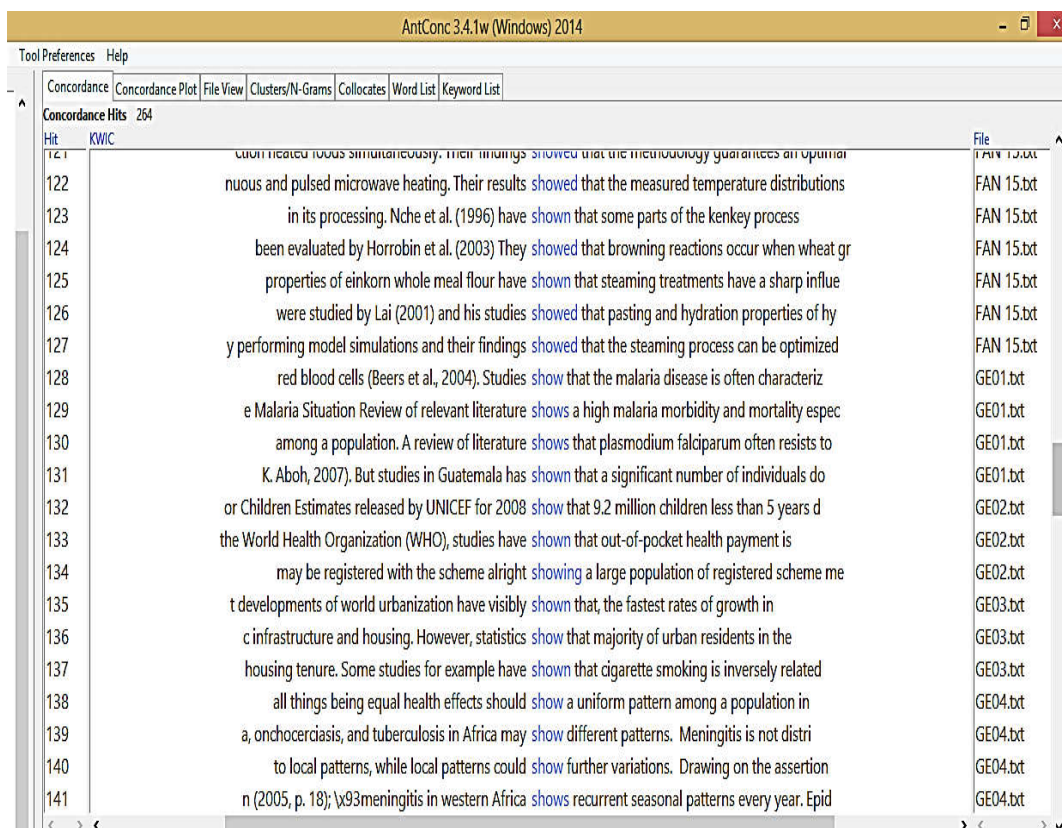


Figure 6: A Concordance Analysis of *Show* as an ENDORSE Contractive Resource [AntConc (3.4.1w) Windows, 2004]

The examples below are randomly selected from the three disciplines for illustrative purposes:

31. Etsey (2005) **shows** that schools with smaller class sizes perform better academically than schools with larger class sizes [LIN05]
32. On tone, Dakubu (1988:82) **indicates** that all the Guang languages are terraced level tone languages [LIN10]
33. Just like Weinreich (1953), Cook (1993) and Robins (1989) **point to** the phonological system as one of the systems of language in which interference can occur [LIN12]

34. Studies by (Pielke, 2000; 2006; Barthel and Neumayer, 2010; Crompton and McAneney, 2008; Swiss Re, 2010) **demonstrate** that the attribution of increased losses across exposure, vulnerability and hazard is currently weighted towards exposure and vulnerability rather than hazard [GE05]
35. **It is also proven** by researchers that severe malaria is caused by plasmodium falciparum which if not promptly treated can lead to complications of anaemia, breathing difficulties and sometimes coma [GE01]
36. Research **has shown** that the microbial content of clay is high and can increase microbial load in the body (Smulian et al, (1995). [FAN1]
37. Studies **have shown** that the rat has dietary requirements similar to humans. It has negligible preference.[FAN1]

It is revealed that master students in the Sciences use ENDORSE resources more than those in the Humanities and Social Sciences. From the data set, the study revealed that ENDORSE resources occurred 87 (77.0%) times in FAN theses. The dominance of ENDORSE resources, especially with the reporting verb, *show* in the Sciences corroborates the finding by Hyland (2000). Hyland (2000) found out that unlike the Humanities and Social Sciences that tend to use discourse activity verbs such as *argue* and *discuss*, the Sciences dominantly make use of verbs such as *observe*, *show*, *analyse* and *discover* which point to the research itself. The verb, *show*, and its varied forms such as *shown*, *showed* or *showing* occurred 74 (77.4%) times in FAN theses, 11 (11.6%) in LIN theses and 10 (10.5%) times in GEO theses.

GEO theses recorded the second highest number of ENDORSE resources. Here, the ENDORSE resources, occurring 16 (14.2%) times. This finding differs from that of Wu (2007) who found that students in Geography make dominant use of ENDORSE resources in order to support the evidences they present as well as persuading their potential readers into accepting the propositions put forth by these students. The ENDORSE resources least occurred in LIN theses, with 8.8% occurrence. This finding may stem from the fact that researchers in the Humanities tend to be dialogically accommodating in their writings than those in other disciplines and as such, they do not use reporting verbs that tend to restrict the views of other readers. When seen from the dialogic perspective, it could also mean that student researchers in the Humanities are more consistently tight in their allowance of negotiation space once evidence has been presented to support their stance (Wu, 2007).

As scholars such as Becher (1989) and Hyland (2000, 2004a) remind us, knowledge in the natural/hard science domain tends to be relatively analytical, structured and cumulative to establish empirical uniformities, while the soft science domain emphasises interpretation, diversity, and mutual understanding, and also allows for more tolerance on the part of reader. In their attempt to demonstrate the diverse nature of the disciplines, researchers in the Humanities and Social Sciences, in this case, LIN and GEO, tend to limit their use of contrastive resources especially the ENDORSE resource. Again, Poos and Simpson (2002) rightly observed that researchers in soft disciplines would rather prefer to hedge rather than make such categorical statements.

All in all, the analysis of contractive resources in masters' theses reveals that students in the Sciences (FAN theses) employ more contractive resources while reviewing the works of other scholars in the LR sections of M.Phil.theses. It was found that the contractive resources occurred 156 times in FAN theses, with the majority (87) occurring as ENDORSE resources. The total number of occurrence of contractive resources in the LIN and GEO theses is 78 and 55 respectively, a finding that suggests that students in the Humanities and Social Sciences use relatively less resources to challenge, fend off or restrict the dialogic space while engaging in academic conversations in LRs of theses. Perhaps, the variation in the occurrence of these resources is due to the social and epistemological norms and conventions governing how writers in specific disciplines communicate their thoughts, ideas and present factual information. These epistemological norms and conventions are addressed in the analysis present in relation to the third research question.

It must be noted that the contractive resources used by the master students have dual functions. First, these resources boost their commitment to the propositions they make and second, they become dialogic in that they contract space for the inclusion of alternative perspectives. That is, contractive meanings are aimed at pulling the real or putative readers over to the author's perspective, thereby, creating an uncompromising stance that runs the risk of alienating readers who hold alternative perspectives.

With the discussion of contractive resources in the master's thesis done, I now proceed to discuss the expansive resources identified in the data.

### **Expansive Engagement Resources in M.Phil. Theses**

The second research question sought to identify the expansive resources used by master students in the LR sections of their thesis. Table 4 summarises the expansive resources identified across the data set:

*Table 4: Distribution of the Expansive Resources in M.Phil.Theses*

<b>EXPANSIVE RESOURCES</b>	<b>LIN</b>		<b>GEO</b>		<b>FAN</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>
ENTERTAIN	44	33.3%	39	29.5%	49	37.1%	132
ACKNOWLEDGE	90	31.7%	79	27.8%	115	40.5%	284
DISTANCE	13	59.1%	5	22.7%	4	18.2%	22
TOTAL	147	33.6%	123	28.1%	168	38.4%	438

Source: Field survey, Afful (2015)

Table 4 presents the distribution of expansive resources used by master students in their theses. The table shows that M.Phil. students in the Sciences are more dialogically expansive in their writings than their counterparts in the Social Science and Humanities. Expansive resources occurred 168 (38.4%) times in the FAN theses while occurring 147 (33.6%) and 123 (28.1%) times in the LIN and GEO theses respectively. The frequency counts reveal the extent of dialogic interactions in the corpus and suggest that academic writing is not the impersonal prose it is often depicted to be (Hyland, 2001).

The expansive resources are generally categorised under ENTERTAIN and ATTRIBUTE resources with the latter category subcategorising

ACKNOWLEDGE and DISTANCE resources. In what follows, I present a detailed discussion of these resources found in the data set.

### **ENTERTAIN Resources**

As seen from Table3, the study revealed that students in the Sciences use more ENTERTAIN resources than their colleagues in the Humanities and Social Sciences. ENTERTAIN resources in FAN theses recorded 37.1% while recording 33.3% in LIN theses. GEO theses recorded the least occurrence as far as the use of ENTERTAIN resources is concerned, recording 29.5%. The latter finding is consistent with that of Wu (2007) whose work revealed that in undergraduate essays, out of the 1,440 engagement resources identified, students use just 226 (16.0%) ENTERTAIN resources to allow for the inclusion of alternative views.

The dominance of ENTERTAIN resources in the Sciences confirms the findings made by Musa (2014), who found that, as a purely lexical phenomenon, hedges employed in Chemistry were generally more than those used in English. The findings in this study also confirm Musa's (2014) findings that while those in the Humanities used hedges to create some form of a dialogue with their readers, those in the Sciences used hedges to make claims with precision.

Similar to the finding by Musa (2014), the ENTERTAIN resources in the present study were used by master students to indicate that the propositions they put forth are but one of a number of possible positions and thereby, the textual voice allows for, makes space for or entertains alternative possibilities.

The ENTERTAIN resources conveyed various shades of meaning. First, there are resources that encompass meanings of likelihoodness. This category of



ENTERTAIN resources is prototypically signalled by modal auxiliary verbs. The examples below illustrate such ENTERTAIN resources across the data set:

1. Alternatively, **it may be that** the geophagous women had extremely depleted iron stores before starting to eat soil. Iron depletion and anaemia are associated with geophagy (Geissler et al, 1998).[FAN1]
2. Also, as said earlier on, his discussion on honorifics is a true reflection of the Akan society. This **may** not reflect entirely on the Assogli state [LIN02]
3. Languages **may have** exact translation equivalents for words when these are used in their central senses, but not when they are used in more marginal or metaphorical ways [LIN03].
4. Housing type **may** influence malaria transmission depending on the degree of exposure of the outdoors, for instance the lack of windows or screens which can facilitate contact between an individual and the mosquito vector [GE01]

The extracts above illustrate how modal auxiliary verbs are used by master students to entertain other views as well as demonstrating that the propositions put forth are likely to be true or false. For instance, in example 4, it is likely that language could have influence on malaria transmission or otherwise.

The second category of ENTERTAIN resources is prototypically signalled by modal adjuncts such as *perhaps*, *possibly* and *probably* as seen in the following examples:

5. Protein is **perhaps** the most common nutritional ergogenic aid or dietary supplement used today [FAN3]
6. ...the eating of some clay has been used as a remedy for diarrhoea and stomach discomfort **probably** due to the presence of Kaolin in these clays and also due to its absorptive ability (Bateson and Lebroy; 1978; Morgan, 1984). [FAN1]
7. Microorganisms also attack cassava root and this is **probably** the most serious cause of losses in cassava roots [FAN6]
8. Despite these major developments in disaster management culture, emergency aid still tops the funding list of most donor agencies and national governments (CRED, 2004). This is **perhaps** due to the fact that emergencies are media friendly, funds are less flexible to obtain .... (CRED, 2004). [GE05]
9. NGOs receive Public or government funding directly or indirectly; they rely on tax deductible donations and **probably** have easier access to the media and government than others in society [GE17]
10. Partly out of envy, **perhaps**, a motley crowd of enemies have set out to attack CDA as a menace to such values as objectivity, [LIN07]
11. This **is probably the reason** why different frameworks of doing CDA are possible even within the works of an individual researcher as objects of research change [LIN7]
12. Other language teachers, **probably** influenced by the universal grammar theory, tend not to teach grammar at all [LIN03].

The ENTERTAIN resources used in the examples above also present the propositions made by the researcher as one of the possible alternatives that could be true or false. It is seen that these resources were mostly epistemic in the sense that the writers seem to have prior knowledge about the possibility of the propositions being true. Closely related to the modal adjuncts are the modal attributes signalled by lexical bundles such as *it is possible*, *it's probable* and *it's likely*, as illustrated in examples 13 to 20.

13. Second, as in Edoid, **it is possible** that all Ika vowels can be nasalized

[LIN10]

14. Since these languages are distinct from each other and operate with different grammatical systems, **it is likely** that the way cohesion is realized

in each will differ from the other [LIN12]

15. Moreover, since interference between the languages of the bilingual can manifest grammatically and lexically, **it is likely** that there will be interferences between English and Ewe in the use of cohesion between the two languages. [LIN12]

16. Most children begin speaking during their second year and by age two **are likely** to know at least 50 words and to be combining them in short phrases. [LIN03]

17. Therefore, with liaison highlighted between and among the components and leaders of each agency in the emergency response service, a well-coordinated response and recovery process **is possible**. [GE05]

18. **It is possible** that increased Fe status interfered with the mobilization of Cu store. [FAN10].
19. This perception of breast milk insufficiency which could frustrate the mother or caregiver and even other members of the family **is likely** to contribute to early breastfeeding cessation or shorter EBF duration (Field et al., 2008). [FAN10]
20. Therefore, childhood obesity **is likely** to translate into adolescent obesity and then adult obesity. [FAN4]

As earlier mentioned, these categories of ENTERTAIN resources are the finite clausal versions of the modal adjuncts that express possibility or probability. They mostly occurred in clause medial positions.

Another category of meaning the ENTERTAIN resources denote are those that relate to mental verbs or projected attributes such as *think* and *believe*. Examples from the data set include the following:

21. Therefore, these Spanish-English bilinguals code switch more when they converse in Spanish than when they communicate in English. I **believe** this can also be noticed among Nigerians, for example the Yoruba-English bilinguals in Nigeria [LIN08].
22. Kianiparsa and Vali (2010) **believe** that the linguistic knowledge in English consists of the ability to analyse and recognise the structural features and components in the language [LIN03]

23. Although there is no time series data, urbanization and economic development studies, researchers **believe** that these trends suggest that the numbers of female hawkers have increased over time [GE11]
24. The Queen Mother prepares fufu with the rest of the meat without any salt and places it before the stools. The **belief** is that spirits do not eat salt [GE06]
25. Rossi et al (2004) **think** that evaluation is the systematic application of social research procedures for assessing the conceptualization, design, implementation, and utility of social intervention programs [GE07].

The final category embodies those meanings that encapsulate evidence or appearance-based postulations. It must be noted that this category was the most viable of the ENTERTAIN resources. Examples include:

26. One of the current views of psycholinguistic research **suggests** that language dominance (i.e., which language is used more frequently) plays an important role in code switching [LIN08]
27. The results **suggest** that the Spanish solution to this device is that other mechanisms different from substitution are used [LIN12]
28. The crop was **apparently** introduced into South Africa by southward - migrating Tonga tribesmen, who settled in the Eastern Transvaal and Northern Natal. [FAN6]
29. The review of the germ theory in this context it was hoped would help broaden the scope of the study to cover various attributions made to the causation of the prevalence of disease in a given locality. This

**apparently** helped put people's knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, practices and even management choices in context, assisting in the explanations of such outlooks in given circumstances [GE14]

30. Recent manifestations **seem** to vindicate this argument as scholars and current development literatures are now shifting attention onto reducing exposure and vulnerability as against dealing with the hazards [GE05]

As Martin and White (2005) maintain, we see in the above examples that "each proposition is construed as contingent and subjectively based as a consequence of being derived via a process of deduction or surmise on the part of the writer (p.110)." Consequently, when one presents a proposition as surmised, he presents it as but one proposition among a range of potential alternatives and thereby, he opens up dialogic space for any such alternatives.

All in all, the ENTERTAIN resources were the second highest expansive resource used by students in their masters' thesis, occurring 132 times across the three disciplines. The ENTERTAIN resources were mostly realised by hedges. Hedges are devices which withhold complete commitment to a proposition, allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than fact (Hyland, 1999). They imply that a claim is based on plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge. The effect of the use of these resources is that they do not just lower the writer's commitment to the propositions being put forth, but also, they help to increase the dialogic diversity afforded by the text. Martin and White (2005) remind us that "The primary functionality, of such modalising locutions is to

make allowances for, and hence to make space for, alternative voices and value positions in the ongoing colloquy within which the text is located (p. 108).”

It is quite surprising that the Sciences used more ENTERTAIN resources than the other disciplines, given that propositions made by researchers in the science is made with much precision and that the dialogic space is less opened up for alternative views. Earlier studies by researchers such as Vázquez and Giner (2008), Varttala (2001), and Bloor and Bloor (1993) have revealed that authors in the Humanities are more likely to employ such ENTERTAIN resources much more frequently than their counterparts in the hard Sciences but this study proved otherwise. Perhaps, the dominant use of these resources by students in the Sciences (FAN theses) demonstrates that master students are increasingly becoming aware of the norms of the academic writing in general. One of such key norms is self-effacement. As such, no matter the discipline where such researchers come from, they involve their readers in the text by showing deference to the views of other scholars.

Hyland (2000) argues that hedges (which include low intensity modals) sometimes do not denote uncertainty on the part of the writer; rather, they are used to convey “deference, modesty or respect (p. 88).” It is also worth noting that the ENTERTAIN resources have pragmatic values and can thus be equated to other self-effacement resources such as hedges and evidentials as postulated by Hyland (2000). The use of hedges, modals and other ENTERTAIN expansive resources thus reflect the critical importance of distinguishing fact from opinion in academic writing and the need for student writers to evaluate their assertions in

ways that are likely to be acceptable and persuasive to their examiners and supervisors (Hyland, 2004). Myers (1989), as cited in Martin and White (2005), postulates that within the academic discourse community, modals and their related meanings are used not to mark knowledge claims as uncertain, but rather to mark the claim as ‘unacknowledged by the discourse community (p. 12)’.

Having presented discussion on the ENTERTAIN resources, I now proceed to discuss the ATTRIBUTE resources which also served as another viable means by which students expand the dialogic space in their writings.

### **ATTRIBUTE Resources**

ATTRIBUTE resources were yet another type of expansive resources evident in the data set. The study revealed that out of the 438 expansive resources, ATTRIBUTE resources occurred 306 times while the remaining 132 were designated as ENTERTAIN resources.

ATTRIBUTE meanings, as earlier on espoused, embody those formulations which disassociate the proposition from the text’s internal authorial voice by attributing it to some external source. Two sub-resources are identified in the ATTRIBUTE meanings: ACKNOWLEDGE and DISTANCE. As Fryer (2013) notes, the basic distinction between these two categories is the position adopted by the textual voice. In what follows, I first present a qualitative and quantitative discussion on ACKNOWLEDGE resources. This is then followed by the discussion on DISTANCE resources.



## **ACKNOWLEDGE Resources**

The ACKNOWLEDGE resources are those expansive resources that are attitudinally neutral and as such, they do not allow inferences of the author's position with respect to the propositions they project (Swain, 2007). By attitudinally neutral, the textual voices make no overt indication as to the author's position regarding the proposition though the author acknowledges the finding, locution or proposition made by the attributed or external source. As Martin and White (2005) remind us, in ACKNOWLEDGE attributions, the semantics of the framer (such as *say, believe, report, according to*) is such that there is no specification as to where the authorial voice stands with respect to the proposition, thus leaving it open to the co-text to present the authorial text as either aligned/misaligned with respect to the position being advanced, or as neutral or disinterested.

The study revealed that the ACKNOWLEDGE resources were more dominantly used in Science theses than in the other two disciplines. ACKNOWLEDGE resources in FAN thesis occurred 115 (40.5%) times while they occurred 90 (31.7%) times in LIN theses. The least occurrence of ACKNOWLEDGE resources was evident in GEO theses, occurring 79 (27.8%) times.

The ACKNOWLEDGE resources also connoted various shades of meaning. There are those that reported speech and thought, either directly or otherwise. For such category, communicative process verbs such as *say, report and state* were

dominantly used to introduce the attributed proposition. The following examples illustrate variations of the communicative verb processes evident in FAN theses:

31. Terra et al., (1983) **reported** that, during ripening of bananas, decreases in starch with increases in sugars occurred, causing the characteristic sweetness of most ripe fruits [FAN7]
32. Sokari, **asserted** that fermentation has nothing to do with detoxification and that linamarin breakdown is essentially a hydrolytic process which is catalyzed by the endogenous linamarin and enhanced by adding water [FAN6]
33. Aidoo (1992) **reported** that traditional cassava fermentation by itself is an unreliable detoxification method, as it does not achieve total cyanide elimination [FAN6].
34. Sokari (1992) also **noted** that adding water to the grated cassava reduced linamarin content up 99% with little or no change in pH of mash [FAN6]
35. Most past studies like those mentioned before in this section have **reported** obesity prevalence, stating gender differences without considering the possible influence of other economic indices [FAN4]

Such reporting verbs occurred 39 times in the FAN theses. As can be seen in the examples or extracts above, the reporting verbs used by the master students' position them to be attitudinally neutral in the propositions being put forth. For instance, by saying that Terra et al., (1983) *reported* that, *during ripening of bananas, decreases in starch with increases in sugars occur...*, the writer acknowledges the proposition put forward by an external source, Terra *et al*(1983)

but he remains attitudinally neutral by not overtly indicating whether he supports the proposition or otherwise. The effect of this positioning is that he allows his putative readers the opportunity to contest such a proposition on their own; thereby, opening the dialogic affordances in the text.

ACKNOWLEDGE resources denoting a reported proposition were also evident in LIN theses, as seen in the following examples:

36. Lyons (1977) **has said** that communication competence implies knowing linguistic forms and their appropriate use; pragmatic use of language has to do with appropriate choice of vocabulary and expression for communication [LIN03]
37. Robins (1989: 404) **expresses** the same view of bilingualism as Weinreich (1953) when he says: Contacts between languages have several effects [LIN12].
38. Kress (1985:5) **states** that every human being is part and parcel of a society [LIN01]
39. Finnegan (1970) **discusses** panegyric (praise poetry) with particular reference to the Bantus of South Africa. In her submission, she states that praises are not directed to only individuals, but also to clans, animals, inanimate objects and supernatural beings [LIN02]
40. Kraft (1994) in his study of the ideal class size and its effects on effective teaching and learning in Ghana **concludes** that class sizes above 40 have negative effects on students? Achievement [LIN05]

41. Painter (1967b) **makes the attempt** to describe Gua. He describes the various vowels and consonants of the language [LIN02]

The resources in LIN theses demonstrate an array of ATTRIBUTE resources which are not evident in theses submitted to the other disciplines. I found verbs such as “conclude” and “express” as typical of LIN theses.

Turning to GEO theses, it was observed that students also use such reporting verbs in their writings. The extracts below illustrate the use of communicative process reporting verbs in GEO theses:

42. Published data in fact **report** that between 5% and nearly 85% of original mangrove extent has been lost, particularly during the second half of the 20th century (Burke et al., 2001). [GE15]

43. Benneh (1996) **states** that the deteriorating natural fertility of soils is seen as the primary factor in the generally declining, stagnating or at best marginally increasing agricultural output. [GE14]

44. Desai and Potter (2000) **explain** that NGOs are popular because they demonstrate unique characteristics and capabilities. [GE07]

45. Notwithstanding, the services the users receive must be of the best standard to give them an overall satisfaction. In another instance, Smith **looks at** physical and social resources as the factors which influence accessibility of health care [GE02]

46. A study by Venema et al (2005) **notes** that proper mangroves forest monitoring and management can only be achieved by using remote

sensing techniques and creating spatial representations such as maps to know the exact locations and extent of degradation [GE09]

The communicative process verbs occurred 28 times in GEO theses while occurring 26 times in LIN theses. What is interesting here is that Geography master students preferred the verb “note” and its variant forms (notes, noted, noting) in attributing propositions to external sources.

The second category of ACKNOWLEDGE resources are meanings of verbs that reference mental processes such as *believe* and *suspect* (Martin & White, 2005). Surprisingly, this category occurred in only LIN and GEO theses. The examples below demonstrate the occurrences of verbs belonging to such a category:

47. Kianiparsa and Vali (2010) **believe** that the linguistic knowledge in English consists of the ability to analyse and recognise the structural features and components in the language [LIN03]
48. Fairclough (1995) **believes** that cultural norms are articulated through language [LIN01]
49. As an aspect of communications, Darden (1983), as cited in Ansu-Kyeremeh **believes** that personal names present an opportunity to determine meaning [LIN02]
50. The Queen Mother prepares fufu with the rest of the meat without any salt and places it before the stools. The **belief** is that spirits do not eat salt [GE06]

51. Their relationship with wildlife, plant and landscape features also give a significant meaning to the environment. It was their belief that ancestral spirits would punish all those who degrade the environment [GE12]
52. It is explained that Penkye Otu accepted the deer because its stripped skin looks like that of a leopard skin. Others **believe** that the deer was accepted as a substitute for the leopard because its blood and that of leopard, is similar to man's blood [GE06]

By the use of the verb, *believe*, master students leave the proposition open and contestable. It is also seen that sometimes, the noun form, *belief*, was used to convey the same idea being carried out.

The final category of ACKNOWLEDGE resources are the adverbial adjuncts such as *According to* and *In X's view*. The study found out that this latter group was unsurprisingly the dominantly used ACKNOWLEDGE resource across the three disciplines. The dominance of "According to" is not surprising given that one of the communicative functions of the LR is to afford the researcher the opportunity to demonstrate his mastery over the issues ongoing in the literature. Not only do the researchers draw on contributions of other scholars in advancing their arguments, but also, they duly acknowledge that such ideas are those of others, in order not to plagiarise. The adverbial adjunct, *according to*, occurred 70 (41.7%) times in FAN theses. A sample is shown in the concordance analysis presented in Figure 7.

Hit	KWIC	File
1	ibbling of plastic materials. 2.2 History of pica According to Danford (1982), the historical descri	FAN 1.txt
2	of the white clay ingested in Ghana According to Koduah (2000), the mean concentration	FAN 1.txt
3	practice has been attributed to several reasons. According to Bogert et al, (1973), this practice m	FAN 1.txt
4	ts (Ferguson and Kaeton, 1950; Keith et al, 1968). According to Ethel et al,(1978), pica is mainly	FAN 1.txt
5	powder is sometimes used as a substitute. According to Geissler et al (1998), 38 pregnant wo	FAN 1.txt
6	ingestion may be beneficial to the consumer. 11 According to Danford (1982), Barton et al, (1992);	FAN 1.txt
7	source of dietary iron for geophagous women. According to them, the seemingly contradictory res	FAN 1.txt
8	health, other researchers have a different view. According to them, so many benefits can be	FAN 1.txt
9	and the remaining 7 women (38.9%) were not sure. According to Wiaz (1997), the eating of some clay	FAN 1.txt
10	ok worms infestation (Bateson and Lebrov, (1978). According to Hunter (1993), the types of clay inge	FAN 1.txt
11	er, chromium, nikel and molybdenum. These amounts according to him, are nutritionally significant wh	FAN 1.txt
12	pregnant women in Ghana consume clay because according to them, it prevents vomiting and antena	FAN 1.txt
13	re cardiac deficit and death (Taboada, 1983). 3 3 According to Latham (1997), it is interesting to n	FAN 1.txt
14	their normal duties even though severely anaemic. According to him, severe anaemia can progress to	FAN 1.txt
15	A should be 450 mg (Leo and Lieber, 1999). According to the WHO (2011) VAD assumes severe pub	FAN 2.txt
16	3 million who have clinical signs every year. According to West (2002), 127.2 million preschoole	FAN 2.txt
17	ay suffer diarrhoea about 36 to 70 days annually. According to Black et al., (1982) the prevalence o	FAN 2.txt
18	throughout the developing world (Scrimshaw, 2000). According to the Malaysian Palm Oil Council (2006	FAN 2.txt
19	al, 2010; Xiao et al., 2013) than educated ones. According to Chiriboga et al. (2008), this happens	FAN 4.txt
20	increase bubbles even without sodium bicarbonate. According to Sopade and LeGrys,(1991), other parti	FAN 5.txt
21	ent at that level of fortification (Singh, 1992). According to Phillips and Bressani (1993), the opt	FAN 5.txt
22	from millet sorghum and groundnut maize blends. According to Karidas (1990), these roasted grain	FAN 5.txt

Figure 7: A Concordance Analysis of “According to” as an Adverbial adjunct in masters’ theses

Figure 7 showcases the corpus analysis of the occurrence of *According to* in the masters’ theses. When students introduce a proposition with this adverbial adjunct, they seek to be attitudinally neutral to the truth of the proposition being forth. By so doing, they expand the dialogic space.

The adverbial adjunct, *according to*, was also dominantly used in LIN theses. They occurred 47 times (28.0%) in LIN theses. Students in LIN theses use the adverbial adjuncts to dialogically open space for alternative views. For instance, in the proposition, *According to Asante (2009), Nkonya has 18 phonemic vowels [LIN10]*, we see that the writer shows his non-commitment to the proposition and by doing that, he remains attitudinally neutral to the proposition.

Thus, some other studies could corroborate or disconfirm the proposition that Nkonya has 18 phonemic vowels. It must be mentioned, however, that apart from according to as an adverbial adjunct in LIN theses, similar expressions such as *In X's view, for/to X* and *X is of the view that* were also identified. This is seen in the examples below:

53. Brown (2000) **is of the view that** both integrative motivation and instrumental motivation are not necessarily mutually exclusive [LIN03]
54. Walton (1997) **is of the view that** the aim of propaganda is to secure compliance of the interlocutors with the action being championed by the group[LIN01]
55. Dakubu (1988) **is of the view that** Nchumburu has nine while Krachi and Hill Guan have ten [LIN10]
56. **For Sowah** (2008), appellations do not only promote self-esteem, self-glorification and social recognition, but also, they serve as a guide to conduct [LIN02]

Yet again, adverbial adjuncts were pervasive in GEO theses. They occurred 51 (30.3%) times. Like ATTRIBUTE resources used in FAN and LIN theses, the study revealed that there is the dominant use of “According to” as an adverbial adjunct in GEO theses.

All in all, in the words of Martin and White (2005), “Acknowledgements are obviously dialogic in that they associate the proposition being advanced with voices and/or positions which are external to that of the text itself and present the authorial voice as engaging interactively with those voices (p.112).” This



assertion corroborates that of Hyland (2001, p.16) when he postulates that one key way in which writers seek to engage readers as cooperative participants in an argument is to project them into the text by anticipating a possible objection or inference that they are likely to make. By conceding what any reasonable and knowledgeable colleague might interject into the discourse, the writer assigns readers a role in the construction of the argument, acknowledging their contribution and implying a clear dialogue with them. It is seen from the analysis that the students in the Sciences use more ACKNOWLEDGE resources than those in the Humanities and Social Sciences. This suggests that the Sciences are more neutral to propositions they put forth in their masters theses when reviewing existing literature. Concluding, we see from the discussion on ACKNOWLEDGE resources that, wherever they occur in a text, that there is no specification as to where the authorial voice stands with respect to the proposition, thus leaving it open to the co-text to present the authorial text as either aligned/disaligned with respect to the position being advanced, or as neutral or disinterested (Martin & White, 2005).

The second strand of the ATTRIBUTE resources is DISTANCE. As the name suggests, where DISTANCE resources are used, the textual voice appears to disassociate itself from the attribute proposition. That is to say that, unlike ACKNOWLEDGE resources, when DISTANCE resources are used, the writer is not attitudinally neutral. He explicitly non-aligns himself from the proposition. The effect of the use of DISTANCE resources is that in presenting the authorial voice as explicitly declining to take responsibility for the proposition, they

maximise the space for dialogistic alternatives (Martin & White, 2005). To this end, the DISTANCE resources are clearly manifested in allegations, claims and rumours or what Lancaster (2011) calls “cautious judgements”.

Some examples of DISTANCE resources evident across the data set are:

57. Some researchers have reported that clay pica may be harmful to the consumer, while others **claim** that clay ingestion may be beneficial to the consumer [FAN1].
58. The drivers attributed their poor intake of fruits and vegetables to the difficulty of acquiring and eating fruits and vegetables during the working week due to the fact that the motorway services and other road outlets were their only source and fruits and vegetables and at these sites are not fresh, expensive, poor in quality and also the drivers **claim** eating of fruits and vegetables is more messier than eating of snacks [FAN11]
59. Second, Jennings **claims** that socioeconomic and environmental factors outweigh fire suppression factors, such as fire department resources, in determining losses from fires [GE03]
60. The growth of urban population in these countries is **claimed** to have proceeded at extraordinary rates often compressing into decades the process that has taken centuries in developed countries (Wossen, 2002). [GE03]
61. A comprehensive definition of land tenure was **postulated** by Malinowski (1935) as the relationship of man to soil in the widest sense; that is, in so far as it is laid down in native laws and customs and in the measure in

which it controls political life, affects the performance of public ceremonies and gives access to opportunities for recreation and sports [GE14].

62. Bemile (1983) **posits** that there are forty-five (45) segmental phonemes in Dagara. He justifies this **claim** and comes out with a list of six hundred and thirty (630) vowel phoneme oppositions and three hundred and fifty-one (351) consonant phoneme oppositions with examples drawn from Dagara dialect [LIN06]

63. Yule (1996) **posits** that many of the factors which are responsible for linguistic variation are often analysed in terms of cultural differences [LIN03]

We see from the propositions in the above examples through the use of reporting verbs like *posit*, *claim* and *postulate*, there is an explicit distancing of the authorial voice from the attributed material. For instance, in example 59, the writer chooses to distance or detach himself from, rather than acknowledge the claim made Jennings that socioeconomic and environmental factors outweigh fire suppression factors. Perhaps, he uses this resource to protect his image as a researcher. Similarly in example 63, the writer distances himself from the proposition made by Bemile (1983) that there are forty-five (45) segmental phoneme in Dagara. One can infer that the writer uses the distance resource to save his face. The DISTANCE resources then, can be seen as having pragmatic effect on the writer in that they provide a form of escape for the writer in subscribing to the views made by scholars in the literature. Given that knowledge

is dynamic and not static and that academic writing is generally characterised by an objective and impersonal language (Hartley, 2008), the writers seem to tread cautiously when associating themselves to certain claims made by other researchers in a particular discipline. The study revealed that DISTANCE resources are relatively used more in LIN thesis than in GEO and FAN theses. The DISTANCE resources occur 13 (59.1%) times in LIN theses, while they occurred 4 (18.2%) times and 5 (22.7%) times in FAN and GEO theses respectively. It is not surprising that students in LIN employed more DISTANCE resources because studies in the Humanities lay more emphasis on interpretation, diversity, and mutual understanding, and also allows for more tolerance on the part of reader (Hyland, 2009).

### **Disciplinary Variation in the Engagement Resources in M.Phil. Theses**

The third research question sought to examine how the disciplinary knowledge accounts for the variation in the use of engagement resources in master theses. The discussion in this section is mainly centered on quantitative evidence. The qualitative evidence which would have been used has been used in earlier sections; thus, the absence of the qualitative data in this section is to prevent repetitions.

Some differences were evident in the sample as far as contractive resources in masters' theses are concerned. The study revealed that out of the 101 DISCLAIM resources evident in the three data set, 54 (53.5%) of the resources were found in the FAN theses while 37 (36.6%) and 10 (10%) of the DISCLAIM resources were found in the LIN and GEO theses respectively. This suggests that

the Sciences use more DISCLAIM resources to fend off alternative views than those in the Humanities and Social Sciences. This variation is underpinned by some epistemological norms governing writing in the Sciences. Similarly, the study revealed that students in the Sciences used more PROCLAIM resources than in the other two disciplines. Out of the 192 PROCLAIM resources identified in the data set, 112 (58.3%) PROCLAIM resources were identified in FAN theses whereas 35(18.2%) resources were used in the LIN theses. The remaining 45 (29.6%) PROCLAIM resources were used in GEO theses. The variation in terms of contractive resources is presented in the Figure 8 below.

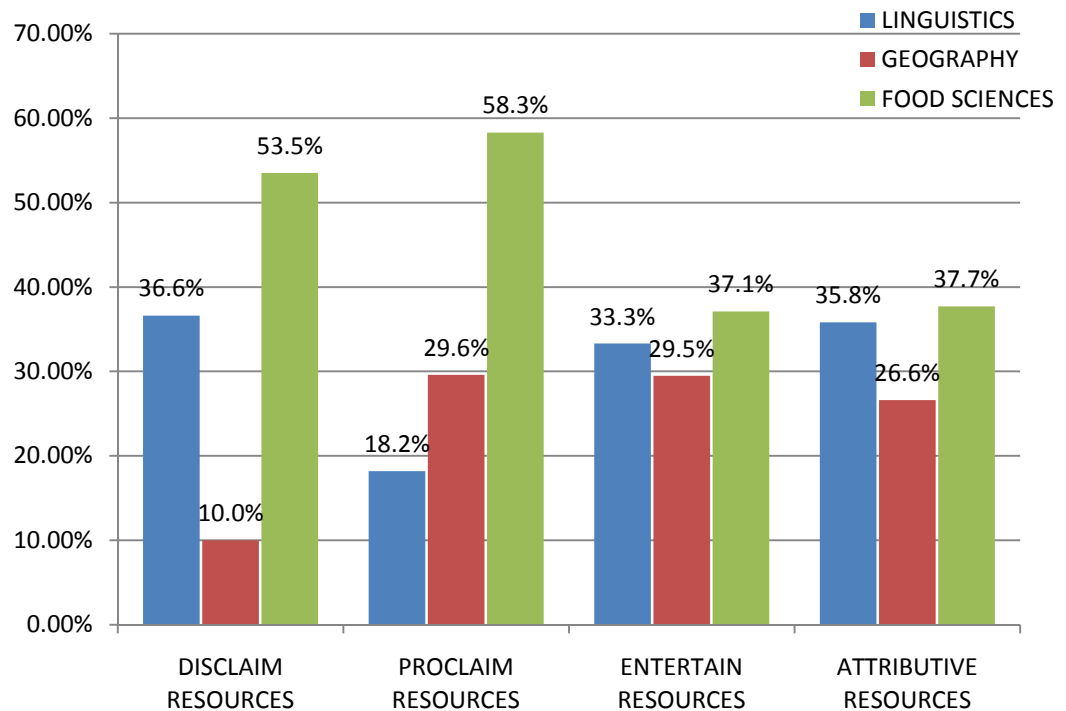


Figure 8: Disciplinary Variation in Engagement Resources in Masters' Theses

Figure 8 presents the disciplinary variation in engagement resources evident in the data set. Based on Figure 8, the study concludes that theses submitted to the Sciences (as seen in FAN theses) are the most contractively engaged. This finding is surprising and differs from that by Hyland (2004) who found that writers in the Social Sciences and Humanities work harder to establish the significance of their work against alternative interpretations and that they restrict possible alternative voices by using boosters. It also differs from the view by Hyland (2004) that a strong interpersonal element is not so necessary in the natural/hard Sciences. This study revealed otherwise that the student academics in the Sciences are more interpersonally engaged in their writings especially with regards to use of contractive engagement resources. However, the preponderance of contractive resources in the Sciences corroborates Hyland's view that in the Sciences (especially in the hard Sciences), "facts are meant to speak for themselves (Hyland, 2005)." As such, there is less room for the discursive space to be opened for the reader to dispute interpretations. It also lends credence to the view that Science by their nature generally uses sentences with a passive voice and verbs related to things other than participants of discourse to achieve the effect of fact speaking.

That the Sciences are more dialogically contractive also corroborates the view of MacDonald (1994) in her classification of academic disciplines. For her, the Sciences accept new knowledge based on an objective, quantifiable and verifiable proof. Master students in the Sciences are aware of this convention and as such, they fend off alternative voices in the LRs of their theses.

Moving on, we realise from Figure 8 that some differences are evident in the sample as far as expansive resources in masters' theses are concerned. The study revealed that out of the 438 expansive resources found in the data set, 147 (33.6%) were found in LIN theses while 123 (28.1%) and 168 (38.4%) were found in GEO and FAN theses respectively. With regard to the ENTERTAIN resources, the finding indicates that the Sciences (as seen in FAN theses) are the most dialogically expansive. That is to say that evasive resources such as modal auxiliaries, hedges and evidential are more dominant in the Sciences than in the Humanities and Social Sciences theses. This finding differs from that of Hyland (2004) who found that both hedges and boosters are more common in the Humanities and Social Science papers. For Hyland, that the Humanities and Social Sciences use more hedges is not surprising since such soft fields are more interpretive and less abstract and that the forms of argument in these disciplines rely more on a dialogic engagement and a more explicit recognition of alternative voices. This study, however, found otherwise. It was found that the Sciences are more evasive in LRs of master theses. What accounts for the variation in these two findings could be attributed to the different rhetorical sections of academic genres investigated. While this study looks at LRs of masters theses, Hyland (2004) used research articles as the source of data.

The finding that the Sciences employ more expansive resources especially with hedges supports that of Musa (2014) whose study on hedging in the introductions and discussion of English and Chemistry masters theses revealed that, as a purely lexical phenomenon, hedges employed in Chemistry were

generally more than those used in English. The study, again, corroborated the findings of Musa (2014) in that, the ENTERTAIN resources such as hedges performed three main pragmatic functions - expressing claims with uttermost accuracy, ensuring self-protection, and creating dialogue with readers. Master students, therefore, employed Accuracy-oriented, Reader-oriented, and Writer-oriented hedges to respectively achieve such discourse functions. The difference in both the frequency of the ENTERTAIN resources used and their various distributions emphasise the fact that master students in Sciences, who are expected to be more emphatic and more certain in their propositions (Vázquez & Giner 2008; Varttala, 2001; Bloor & Bloor, 1993), are rather more tentative than their colleagues in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Musa, 2014).

Yet again, the finding that the Sciences are more evasive and neutral in their writings confirms that of Hyland (2000) whose survey into reporting verbs across disciplines shows clear disciplinary variations with science representing the authors as conveying a neutral attitude to their finding. To Hyland, the findings convey a detached and impartial reporting style which reflects in their write ups. The present study also confirms the finding that writers in the soft disciplines (in this case, the LIN theses, representing the Humanities) were far more likely to depict authors as adopting a particular stance towards their work, either presenting their view as true, false or tentatively correct.

With regard to the ATTRIBUTE resources, the study revealed again that students in the Sciences mostly distance themselves, neutrally or explicitly, from propositions put forth in the LRs of their M.Phil.theses. This finding seems to



corroborate the finding by Hyland (2004) that the knowledge in the Sciences is an impersonal, inductive enterprise. It is also seen that in terms of their frequency, ATTRIBUTE resources are used more in masters theses than ENTERTAIN resources. ATTRIBUTE resources occur 316 (70.5%) times while ENTERTAIN resources occur 132 (29.5%). This means that ATTRIBUTE resource occurs 41% more than ENTERTAIN resources – a finding that corroborates the view of Jordan (1989).

### Use of Pearson Chi-square Analysis

It must also be noted that the variation in the use of contractive as well as the expansive resources across the data set is statistically significant as revealed by a Pearson chi-square analysis. This conclusion is arrived at because the probability value (P-value) in a chi-square analysis in the use of both contractive and expansive resources proved a value (0.00) less than the alpha value of 0.05 or 5%. While the P-value for the contractive resources across the data set was 0.00 for the contractive resources that for the expansive resources was 0.016. Table 5 presents the chi-square analysis for the contractive resource.

*Table 5: A Pearson Chi-square Analysis of Contractive Resources*

Disciplines	CONTRACTIVE RESOURCES								P value
	N- 293	Deny	Coun	Aff	Conc	Pron	End	Deny/ counter	
<b>Linguistics</b>	82	17	10	19	9	7	10	10	$\chi^2 =$ 114.069 <sup>a</sup> df = 12
<b>Geography</b>	55	1	8	15	6	8	16	1	
<b>Food Science</b>	156	11	43	10	0	5	87	0	$p =$ 0.000

As shown in Table 5, the chi square test demonstrates that there is a statistically significant difference of ( $\rho= 0.00$ ) regarding the frequency of contractive resources used in Linguistics, Geography and Food Sciences. In general, it can be said from the table that postgraduate students in Food Sciences significantly use more contractive resources than their counterparts in Linguistics and Geography. Table 6 presents the chi-square analysis for the expansive resources.

*Table 6: A Pearson Chi-square Analysis of Expansive Resources*

<b>Z</b>	<b>EXPANSIVE RESOURCES</b>			<b>P Value</b>
	N-	ENTERTAIN	ACKNOWLEDGE	
	438			
Linguistics	44	90	13	$\chi^2 = .628^a$ , df = 4 $\rho = 0.106$
Geography	39	79	5	
Food Sciences	49	115	4	

Source: Field survey, Afful (2015)

In general, it can be said from the Table 6 that the Food Science students in the study significantly use more expansive resources than the Linguistics and Geography students. This implies that the Sciences open up the dialogic space for the inclusion of alternative views than those in the Humanities and Social Sciences and this finding is attributed to the impersonal, objective and inductive nature of knowledge in the Sciences as opposed to knowledge in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

In effect, the analysis and discussions made so far points to two key findings. First, it is revealed that master students belonging to the Sciences are more dialogically contractive in their theses. This dual view challenges those of earlier studies by Hyland (2004) and Musa (2014). The study concludes that what accounts for the dominance of contractive resources in FAN is underpinned by the impersonal, objective and inductive nature of knowledge in the Sciences as opposed to knowledge in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Second, the study revealed quite surprisingly that apart from being more dialogically contractive in their writings, master students in the Sciences are also more dialogically expansive in their writings. Such a view appears to give credence to MacDonald's classification of academic disciplines that although the Humanities and Sciences are placed at two extremes of the cline of knowledge with the Social Sciences in the middle of the cline, bodies of knowledge (in this case, interactional resources) used in the three disciplines do not always fall neatly into these three categories as they inevitably draw on one another. That the students in the Sciences are more dialogically expansive in their writings seems to debunk earlier views that saw researchers in the Humanities to be more dialogically expansive (e.g. Hyland, 2004; Swain, 2007).

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the analysis and discussion of the data. Using both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms, the chapter spelt out the contractive and expansive resources used by M.Phil.students in dialogically positioning themselves to the propositions presented in the LRs of their theses. It

also discussed how disciplinary knowledge influences the dominance of these engagement resources. A key finding of the study is that LRs of master theses in the Sciences are both dialogically contractive and expansive – a view that seems to challenge earlier views by scholars such as Hyland (2000, 2004). The next chapter will present the summary of the study, key findings, implications of the findings and recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter seeks to provide a conclusion to the study. The chapter is organised into three major sections. First, I present a summary of the study, taking into consideration the three research questions the study sought to address. This is then followed by the implications of the findings made. The last section touches on the recommendations for further studies arising from the findings of this study.

#### **Summary of the Study**

The present study sought to investigate how postgraduate students (particularly, M.Phil. students) use engagement resources to show commitment to propositions made as well as to dialogically contract or expand the discursive space while reviewing related literature in their theses. A cross-disciplinary study, the present work examined theses submitted to three departments in the University of Ghana – Department of Linguistics, Department of Geography and the Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences. A total of forty-five theses constituted the corpus. Having downloaded the theses from the institutional repository website of the University of Ghana, I read through the LR sections to find out the engagement resources used, taking into account the context within which these resources occurred in the LRs. Guided by the sample of engagement resources given by Martin and White (2015) and from findings of other studies (Swain, 2007; Hyland, 2000, 2009, 2010; Lancaster, 2011, 2012), I used the Antconc Corpus Analytical Concordance Tool (version 3.4 1w) to search for the engagement resources. The engagement sub-system of the appraisal theory as

postulated by Martin and White (2005) which also draws on Bakhtin's idea of dialogism of discourse was used as the analytical framework to analyse the data collected. The framework helped me to understand how meanings are construed by M.Phil. students in interacting with real or putative readers. The study was also rooted in both the qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. The qualitative content analysis was adapted to arrive at various meaning patterns of the texts, and also to understand the types, characteristics and various organisational aspects of the documents as social products. With regard to the quantitative analysis, chi-square analysis, frequency counts and percentages were employed to demonstrate how statistical evidence could reinforce the qualitative claims of the study.

### **Key Findings**

This section presents the key findings of the study. The key findings are presented in relation to the research questions that the study sought to address.

#### **First Research Question**

The first research question was interested in examining the contractive engagement resources used by postgraduate students to fend off alternative views in the LR sections of their M.Phil.theses. It was revealed that LRs in the Sciences are the most dialogically contracted. That is to say that this study found that students in the Sciences use more contractive engagement resources than those in the Humanities and the Social Sciences. The quantitative data revealed that out of the 293 contractive resources found in the data set, those in the LRs of the students in the Sciences were 156 (53.2%) as compared to those in the Humanities (which occurred 78 times, representing 26.6%) and Social Sciences (which

occurred 55 times, representing 18.7%). The study further revealed that the most dominant contractive resource used by students are the PROCLAIM resources occurring 101 times while DISCLAIM Resources occurred 90 times across the data set. Out of the PROCLAIM resources in the three disciplines, the study revealed that the most dominant contractive resources used in the theses were the ENDORSE resources. Out of the 113 occurrence across the three disciplines, ENDORSE resources occurred 87 times (77.0%) in the Sciences. The most used verb in this category was *show* (42.9%) and its forms such as *shown*, *shows* and *showed*. The Social Sciences (represented by the GEO theses) employed the least of the contractive resources. The study also revealed that M.Phil. students employed rhetorical pairs (in the case of DENY/COUNTER) to emphasise writer visibility and to tone down the face threats of other researchers whose works are being reviewed. Summarising, the analysis on the contractive engagement resources revealed that the contractive resources performed two basic functions. First, they helped to boost the M.Phil. students' commitment to propositions while constructing their LR sections of their theses. Second, the resources performed dialogic functions in that they contract space for the inclusion of alternative views.

### **Second Research Question**

The second research question sought to identify the expansive resources used by master students in the LR sections of their thesis. The study revealed quite surprisingly that the Sciences used more expansive resources than the other two disciplines. This implies that the Sciences are the most dialogically

expansive. Out of the 438 expansive resources that occurred across all three disciplines, 168 (38.4%) were in the Sciences while 147 (33.6%) and 123 (28.1%) occurred in the Humanities and Social Sciences respectively. The study further revealed that ATTRIBUTIVE resources were more dominantly used (occurring 306 times) than the ENTERTAIN resources (occurring 132 times). The ENTERTAIN resources conveyed various shades of epistemic meanings such as likelihoodness, possibility, probability, mental-related attributes and meanings that encapsulate evidence or appearance-based propositions. The latter category of meaning was more viable and was realised by verbs such as *suggest*, *appear* and *seem*. That the Sciences used more ENTERTAIN resources challenged the earlier views made by scholars such as Bloor and Bloor (1993) and Vazquez and Giner (2008) that the Sciences make propositions with much precision and that are less dialogically expansive. Another key finding this study revealed with regards to expansive resources is that the ACKNOWLEDGE resources were dominantly represented by the adverbial adjunct, “According to X”, where “X” represents the author of a work being reviewed. These adverbial adjuncts, again, were more dominantly used in FAN theses (chalking 41.7% occurrence) than in LIN theses (chalking 28.0% occurrence).

### **Third Research Question**

The third research question sought to examine how the disciplinary knowledge accounts for the variation in the use of engagement resources in master theses. The study revealed that the Sciences (FAN theses) were both dialogically contractive and dialogically expansive in their writing than the other



two disciplines –Humanities and Social Science. This means that as much as researchers in the Sciences are generally seen as being objective, impersonal and dialogically contractive in their writings, they also employ a wide range of dialogically expansive resources. It is believed that the science being both dialogically contractive and expansive is attributed to some epistemological norms and conventions that govern how knowledge is constructed and accepted in the Sciences. Hyland (2005) maintains that in the Sciences, facts are meant to speak for themselves (Hyland, 2005).” Scholars such as Bloor and Bloor (1993) argue that science students are expected to be more emphatic and more certain in their propositions and that accounts for their dominance in the use of contractive resources. In the Sciences, knowledge is evaluated by adopting scientific methodologies that are objective quantifiable and verifiably proven unlike the Humanities which is more subjective and interpretive. Again, knowledge in the Sciences is more of an impersonal, inductive enterprise and so academics tend to use more expansive resources to distance themselves from some propositions.

### **Conclusions**

From the foregoing discussions and findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn with respect to the research questions:

It can be concluded that student writings are dialogically-engaged. Like expert writers in academia such as professors and lecturers, student writers adhere to the norms of interactions accepted by the academic discourse community. The present study identified 731 engagement resources in LRs of the M.Phil.theses collected.

The study brought to fore that the epistemological conventions and norms governing a particular discipline affect the linguistic choice of engagement resources used by students in their writings. What this study brought to the fore is that as much as researchers in the Sciences are generally seen as being objective, impersonal and dialogically contractive in their writings, they also employ a wide range of dialogically expansive resources. The difference in the frequency of the engagement resources used and their various distributions emphasise the fact that researchers in Food Sciences, who are expected to be more emphatic and more certain in their propositions (see Bloor & Bloor, 1993; Varttala, 2001; Vázquez & Giner, 2008), are rather more tentative than their colleagues in English. The study revealed that students in the Sciences employ more ENTERTAIN and ATTRIBUTE expansive engagement resources than their colleagues in the other disciplines.

### **Implications of the Study**

The study has implications for theory and practice. In terms of theory, the study has shown that the engagement system of the appraisal theory is worth utilizing in an investigation of learners written genre like the theses, though appraisal theory, especially the engagement system has often been applied to expert academic professional genres such as newspaper reports (Marin Aresse & Perucha, 2006). The study clearly shows that students in all three disciplines make use of both contractive and expansive resources in their theses to orient or position their real or putative readers, although they may not be conscious of doing so.

Further, the study adapted and modified the engagement theory as espoused by Martin and White (2005). This study revealed that some of the engagement resources occur simultaneously in a single sentence, a phenomenon I call, “rhetorical pairs” such as DENY/COUNTER and COUNTER/DENY contractive resources. Such a classification was relatively absent in the taxonomy of engagement resources given by Martin and White (2005).

Moreover, the study sheds some light on the importance of investigating learners writing as integral in the academic discourse community. Scholars such as Hyland (2000) have argued that expert writing is an archetype of academic writing and researchers might be argued that investigating learners writing to ascertain disciplinary variation is needless. This has resulted in giving power-laden descriptions such as apprentices, student, novice and novitiates (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to learners because they are as peripheral members of the academic community. However, I side with Afful (2005) and believe that if the enculturation or socialization of students into their various disciplinary communities is to be facilitated, then their writing practices (including masters or doctoral theses) with their attendant problems need to be systematically studied. North (2003) cited in Afful (2005) rightly points out that student writing can be a useful entry point for an investigation of emergent disciplinarity. This could account for the burgeoning number of studies that have over the last two decades been conducted in comparing learners writing to expert writing (Hewings, 2004) with a view to examining how learners negotiate their entry into disciplinary community.

In terms of practice, the study becomes useful to both learners and assessors and all who engage in postgraduate teaching and supervision. Learners would appreciate the kinds of engagement resources that are typically used in their respective disciplines to align/disalign putative readers or supervisees who read and assess their theses. Having gained much experience in assessing student written genres like the theses, supervisors and assessors can use this study as a basis for developing pedagogical materials to enhance the teaching and learning of how learners can construct an effective LR in their theses.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The study makes some recommendations for further study. The recommendations made in this section are based in the findings and implications that emerged from the present study:

First, a study could be conducted to examine whether student writers in other non-native English settings are conscious of the engagement resources that they employ to limit or allow for alternative views concerning certain propositions they posit in their writings. Such a study could interview students from various disciplines to find out whether there are any variations as far as student consciousness of the use of engagement resources is concerned. Some studies have been conducted by Hyland (2005) in Hong Kong and replicating such studies with a view to finding out what the situation is like in Africa would deepen our knowledge on inter-cultural disciplinary discourses.

Second, the present study has focused on one system of the appraisal theory: engagement system. There could be a study to examine how the other two

strands of the appraisal theory – Attitude and Graduation – are used by students in interacting with their audiences in their writings. A comparative study focusing on undergraduate written genres and postgraduate written genres would also be more revealing. A majority of the studies on attitude and graduation systems of the appraisal theory (e.g. Marin Aresse & Perucha, 2006) have focused on media discourse and it would be more interesting if further studies are conducted on attitude and graduation systems in both student and expert writings to ascertain what evaluative stances academics take in their writings.

Third, a contrastive appraisal study could be conducted on how native student writers and non-native student writers in various disciplines employ engagement resources in their writings. Such a study would contribute to our understanding of whether culture affects the kind of interactional resources students use in their writings. For instance, there could be a study that would investigate whether there exists any engagement resource that would be uniquely Ghanaian and would be different from the various engagement resources that the literature mentions. Given previous scholarship on the dominant use engagement markers in research articles and theses (Hyland, 2005; Swain, 2010; Saeed & Fatemeh, 2012; Fryer, 2013), with very little done in Non-Native settings, further studies can be conducted in non-native settings, with the view to broadening the scope of the scholarship.

Further, because the masters theses used in the present study were based on few (forty-five), one cannot generalize the findings for all three disciplines investigated in this study. For meaningful generalizations to be made, it is

suggested that a larger corpora of theses written by postgraduate students should be analyzed. Doctoral theses could also be analysed to determine the extent of acculturation in respect of appraisal resources, especially with engagement and the findings be compared with research articles. In addition, further studies could be conducted with a larger sample in the same departments, faculties, or university, or other English-medium universities elsewhere, for the purpose of verifying the results. For instance, it would be interesting to find out whether different sub-disciplines in the three disciplines in the present study (such as Discourse Analysis, Climatology and Food Microbiology) manifest different appraisal resources in other rhetorical sections of the theses.

Finally, it is recommended that further studies examine appraisal resources in spoken academic discourses, following recent works that have been done by Yang (2015). Generally, research on academic spoken discourse is relatively far less than that on written discourse, not to mention the fact that analysing academic speech across disciplinary variations is still rather under-represented. Such a study could explore the metadiscourse functions in academic speech such as the attitude, interaction or judgement of the participants and compare the findings written academic texts.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the summary of the study, key findings, implications of the findings, conclusions and recommendations for further study. The study revealed that postgraduate students in the Sciences use more contractive engagement resources than their colleagues in the other two

disciplines. Again, it was revealed in the study that the Sciences (FAN theses) used more expansive resources than those in the Social Sciences (as seen in GEO theses) and Humanities (as seen in LIN theses). This means that as much as researchers in the Sciences are generally seen as being objective, impersonal and dialogically contractive in their writings, they also employ a wide range of dialogically expansive resources. It was seen that the Sciences being both dialogically expansive and contractive could be attributed to the findings of other studies which propose that knowledge in the Sciences is evaluated by adopting scientific methodologies that are objective, quantifiable and verifiably proven unlike the Humanities which is more subjective and interpretive (Bloor & Bloor, 1993; Varttala, 2001; Hyland, 2005; Vázquez & Giner, 2008). The study has implications for theory in the sense the findings re-enforce that the appraisal theory is useful in analysing student written genres. It is also useful in terms of postgraduate pedagogy in that, supervisors and assessors can use this study as a basis for developing pedagogical materials to enhance the teaching and learning of how learners can construct an effective LR in their theses. The chapter also presented recommendations for further study in the areas of contrastive appraisal studies, world Englishes and conducting studies that focus on spoken academic genres.

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## APPENDIX A

### LIST OF THESES FROM THE FOOD AND NUTRITION

- Abban, H. A. (2013). *Cardiovascular diseases risk factors among commercial long distance bus drivers in Cape Coast*. Unpublished master's thesis. Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences, University of Ghana, Legon. [FAN11].
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- Ajediwe, G. A. (2013). *Serum Vitum A and nutritional status of children fed gari and beans stew*. Unpublished masters thesis. Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences, University of Ghana, Legon. [FAN2].
- Annih-Bonsu, F. A. M. (2000). *Cashew processing and quality indices*. Unpublished masters thesis. Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences, University of Ghana. [FAN7].
- Aryee, G. A. (2013). *Awareness and use of nutrition labels on pre-packaged foods among consumers in Accra*. Unpublished masters thesis. Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences, University of Ghana, Legon. [FAN10].
- Asare, E. K. (2013). *Extrusion of cereal based-legume blend: Process and product Characteristics*. Unpublished masters thesis. Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences, University of Ghana. [FAN 5].

- Ayesu, Y. E. (2013). *Prevalence, perception and socio-demographic determinants of overweight and obesity among Ghanaian women*. Unpublished masters thesis. Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences, University of Ghana.[FAN 4].
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## APPENDIX B

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## APPENDIX C

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