# Interpersonal Stance in L1 and L2 Students' Argumentative Writing in Economics: Implications for Faculty Development in WAC/WID Programs[1]

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**Abstract:** This article offers a linguistic analysis of interpersonal stancetaking in four argumentative term papers written in an upper-level undergraduate course in economics. Two of the papers were written by English L2 writers who experienced particular difficulty with the assignment and two by English L1 writers who received the highest grades among the forty students in the course. My analysis is guided by the question of how recurring patterns of interpersonal meanings operate to construct an argumentative stance that indexes, or not, the specific goals and expectations for writing in the course. Considered alongside interviews with the professor and the graduate student instructor (GSI) who graded and commented on the papers, my analysis draws on the *Engagement* framework from systemic functional linguistics (Martin & White, 2005), which has proven useful in recent years for understanding the ways both professional and student writers (Chang & Schleppegrell, 2011; Derewianka, 2009; Wu, 2007) use language to construct an authorial stance within specific disciplinary contexts. Following my analysis, I consider implications of this line of research for working with English L2 writers in upper-level courses in the disciplines.

## Introduction

In recent years, the concept of stance has drawn increased attention from writing researchers and linguists who are interested in better understanding how interpersonal meanings[2] are managed in discourse (see, e.g., Barton, 1993; Biber, 2006; Engelbretson, 2007; Hunston & Thompson, 2001; Hyland, 2005; Jaffe, 2009; Martin & White, 2005; Soliday, 2011). In academic writing, as with other written discourses, stancetaking includes moves to mark one's level of commitment to assertions, comment on the significance of evidence, build solidarity with imagined readers, clarify anticipated misunderstandings, and other interactional strategies. As Ken Hyland's research shows (e.g., Hyland, 2005), these subtle interpersonal moves populate even the most formal and "objective" of disciplinary discourses, and they are guided by writers' (usually tacit) awareness of the specific interpersonal dynamics that are at play in the discoursal context, i.e., dynamics between writers, readers, and other discourse participants.

Stance is a useful concept for WAC/WID professionals because it helps bring into focus hard-to-pinpoint stylistic difficulties that many students encounter when writing in the disciplines. These difficulties have to do not only with use of personal pronouns ("Can we say 'I'"?), but also trickier questions about constructing an appropriate authorial presence in the text through such means as tuning up or down one's commitment to assertions, acknowledging alternative perspectives, responding to anticipated counterarguments, endorsing or distancing oneself from others' views, and so on. More generally, these language-related difficulties arise from the need in academic writing to evaluate propositions and give reasoned judgments without being "judgmental," or, as Mary Soliday (2011) puts it, to "take your own position" while also avoiding "bias" (p.39-40). An added difficulty is that experts' own decisions about these matters tend to be so ingrained in disciplinary ways of knowing and doing that they are often regarded as self-evident and therefore not discussed explicitly in instructional contexts (Hyland, 2007). The main argument I put forth in this paper, then, is that conscious awareness of the ways valued interpersonal meanings are built up in student coursework genres can help instructors attend to specific discursive goals that pose challenges for their students.

This focus on stancetaking, I'd further like to suggest, may be most important in the context of working with second language (L2) writers as they learn to navigate the challenges of writing in the disciplines. Many instructors find it difficult to pinpoint sources of awkwardness in student writing, as discussed in Barton (2004), and this difficulty can be exacerbated when working with L2 writers, especially when there are subtle infelicities in stancetaking, as found in Hyland & Milton (1997), Feak (2008), and Schleppegrell (2004). For student writers, learning to notice and resolve these infelicities is made difficult when instructors respond to them in an overly general way as "grammar problems." Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that L2 writers are often advised to "get help with your English," even when there are no observable "errors" to be found in their texts, because their stancetaking strategies do not correspond to their instructors' taken-for-granted assumptions about appropriate forms of disciplinary stance (Feak, 2008).

In addition to being perceived as "grammar" problems, subtle infelicities in stancetaking can also contribute to the impression that the student writer has not engaged in an expected level of critical reasoning, in-depth thinking, or engagement with course material. Lack of facility in taking a nuanced stance toward evidence used to support a claim, for example, can be read by instructors as insufficient engagement with the disciplinary discourse or even learning of course material (Soliday, 2011, p. 37). Close analyses of stancetaking patterns are therefore important for developing a robust metalanguage for talking explicitly and in detail about how language is used to construct valued interpersonal meanings in disciplinary genres. Such a metalanguage can be useful for facilitating discussions with instructors across the disciplines about ways to address the language needs of L2 writers in ways that move significantly beyond prescriptively-oriented views of grammatical accuracy.

Taking a step in this direction, in this paper I closely analyze four term papers that were written in the context of an upper level undergraduate course in economics at a large university. Two of the papers were written by L2 writers who experienced particular difficulty with the argumentative writing assignment and two by L1 writers who received the highest grades among the 40 students in the course. Drawing on detailed text analysis of the papers as well as interviews with the professor and graduate student instructor (GSI), my analysis takes into account the purposes of the assignment (as articulated by the professor), repeated stance patterns operating in the four papers, and the GSI's comments about each of the four papers. This analysis is guided by the question of how recurring patterns of interpersonal meanings in the four papers operate to construct an argumentative stance that indexes, or not, the specific goals and expectations for writing in the course. Following my

analysis, I consider implications of this line of research for working with English L2 writers in upper-level courses in the disciplines.

## Theoretical and Analytical Orientation

Linguistic resources of stance include phrase and clause level wordings that operate to construct an authorial presence in the text and to negotiate meanings with the anticipated reader and other participants in the discourse. The framework guiding my analysis is Appraisal theory from systemic functional linguistics, or SFL. Appraisal, which is developed most fully by James R. Martin and Peter R. R. White (2005)[3] builds on Michael A.K. Halliday's (1994) grammar of mood and modality. The framework makes use of three interrelated sub-systems to track choices in interpersonal stancetaking: *Attitude* explores how feelings, judgments of people, and evaluations of things are built up in texts; *Graduation* explores how feelings and evaluations are subtly adjusted in terms of force and focus; and *Engagement* explores how "values are sourced and readers aligned" (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 16) through such moves as conceding, countering, endorsing, and entertaining other voices and perspectives.

Past Appraisal analyses of student argumentative writing (Coffin, 2002; Derewianka, 2009; Swain, 2009; Wu, 2007) show that the system of *Engagement* is especially useful for homing in on salient differences between effective and less effective argumentative writing. This is because it offers means for tracking in detail the ways writers use language to position their assertions vis-à-vis their anticipated readers. In so doing, as Martin & White (2005) explain, the framework "provides the means to characterize a speaker/writer's interpersonal style and their rhetorical strategies according to what sort of heteroglossic backdrop of other voices and alternative viewpoints they construct for their text and according to the way in which they engage with that backdrop" (p. 93).

### The SFL Engagement Framework: Dialogical Contraction and Expansion

The Engagement framework models the choices that we as speakers/writers make for raising and lowering our commitment to propositions and thus for *contracting* and *expanding* dialogic space for negotiating with alternative perspectives and voices. At the most general level in the framework, we choose either "monoglossic" or "heteroglossic" expressions of the propositions we are putting forth. The statement *Competition is healthy for the economy* can be considered monoglossic because it puts forth just one voice, that belonging to the author; it does not acknowledge or invoke any alternative voices. In contrast, the statement *It is widely believed that competition is healthy for the economy* is heteroglossic, or dialogically engaged, because it shifts responsibility for the proposition to some unnamed external source. This shift allows the authorial voice to remain uncommitted to the proposition and, as a consequence, to open up dialogic space for negotiation with alternative positions. In contrast to this, monoglossic, or "bare," assertions often assume that the reader is already aligned with the perspective endorsed by the authorial voice and thus alternative positions need not be entertained or negotiated with: the proposition is understood to be unproblematic or uncontested (White, 2008; Martin & White, 2005).

At the next level of generality in the Engagement framework (see Figure 1), we choose from heteroglossic options that are more or less dialogically *expansive* (e.g., *It seems to me that competition is good*) or dialogically *contractive* (e.g., *It is obviously true that competition is good*). Expansive wordings, which include attributions (e.g., *according to …, it is believed that …*), lower our commitment to the proposition being put forth and thus expand space for the inclusion of alternative perspectives. Contractive wordings, in contrast, boost our commitment to the proposition; in so doing, they contract space for the inclusion of alternative perspectives.

An important point that the Engagement framework helps to reveal is that even strongly worded assertions like *It is certain that the interview was successful* and *Clearly, the reasoning of the courts is flawed* are dialogically engaged because they subtly bring into play alternative points of view. The use of certainty markers foregrounds the high level of commitment from the speaker and, as Halliday has famously remarked about such high force expressions, "we only say we are certain when we are not" (Halliday, 1994, p. 362). Halliday's point is that bare assertions—e.g., *The interview was successful* and *The reasoning of the courts is flawed*—paradoxically carry more certainty than forms especially marked for certainty, which can come off as somehow less than absolute. Highly committed forms, that is, may work to mask "an element of doubt" (Halliday, 1994, p. 363).

*Figure 1: The Engagement Framework. Adapted from Martin & White (2005, p. 134).*
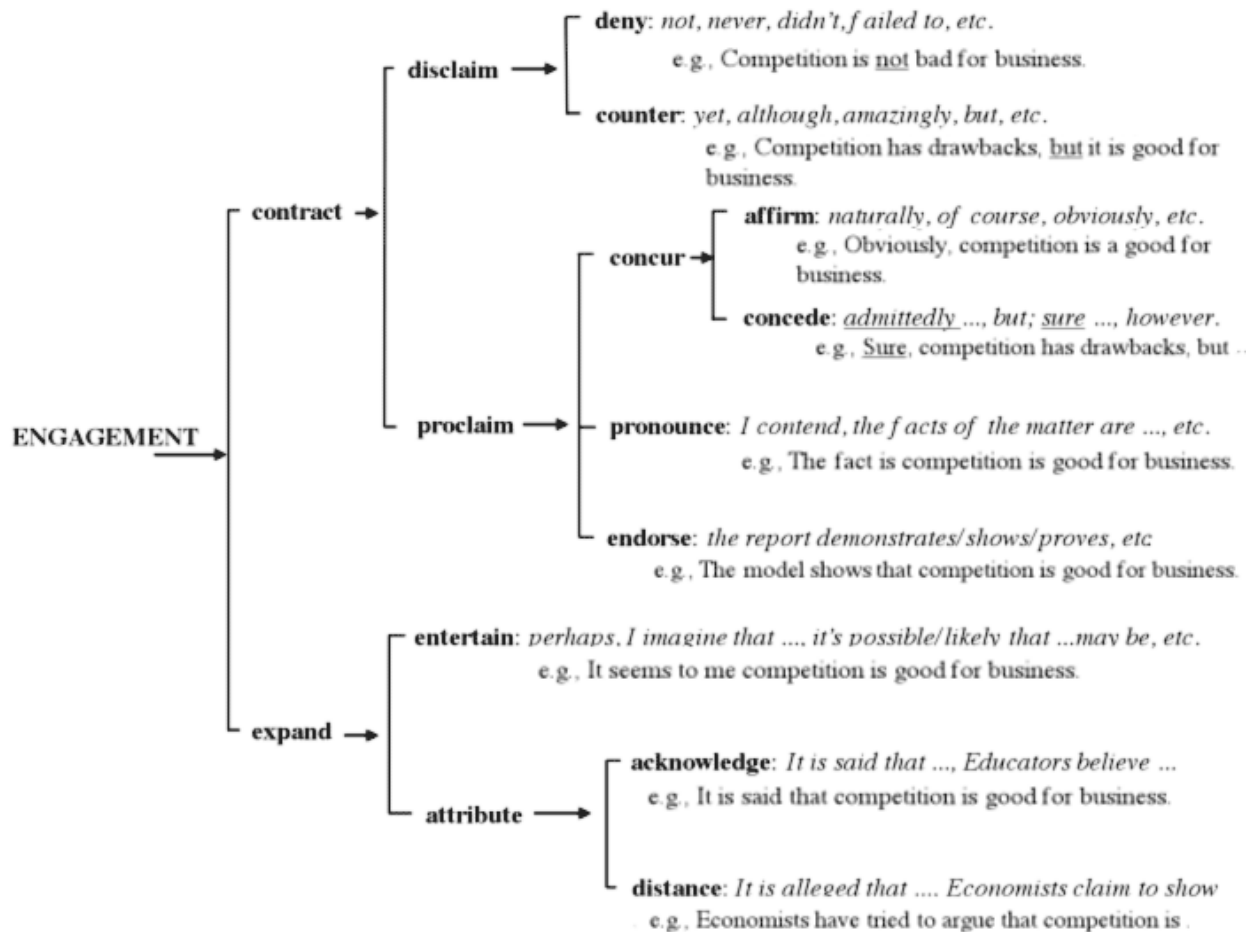


With such complex interpersonal meanings brought into play through variations in modalizations, it becomes clearer how other types of wordings such as *it may be that*, *possibly*, *seems*, *perhaps*, and *in my view* operate not just to lower the author's commitment to the proposition being put forth but also to increase the dialogic diversity afforded by the text. The various options for *expanding* and *contracting* dialogical space are represented in Figure 1.[4]

While the various options represented in this figure are subtle, the point of Engagement analysis is to unearth patterns of choices that recur in texts and that work to create a particular "interpersonal style" (Martin & White, 2005). Overuse of *contractive* options in some situations can create an uncompromising stance that runs the risk of alienating readers who hold alternative perspectives.

Overuse of *expansive* options, in contrast, can create an overly noncommittal stance that may result in missed opportunities to maneuver readers to accept the position(s) forwarded by the authorial voice. In the case of academic argumentation specifically, such a noncommittal stance may result in missed opportunities to persuade the reader to accept the significance of certain types of evidence (Soliday, 2011). These possibilities are suggested in previous investigations of stance in student academic writing.

## Previous Investigations of Interpersonal Stance in Student Academic Writing

Previous investigations of stance have found that argumentative texts written by more advanced writers in certain disciplinary contexts tend to be more dialogically open or interpersonally engaged than those written by less advanced writers. Beverly Derewianka (2009), for example, found that, through strategic use of attributions, concessions, and counters, more advanced student writers constructed stances that were "explicitly open to other voices and possibilities" (p. 162). Corroborating this finding, other research has revealed differential patterns in stancetaking between higher and lower graded papers (e.g., Coffin, 2002; Swain, 2009; Wu, 2007). Less successful papers may develop a stance of unwarranted assertiveness, as Wu Siew Mei (2007) found in lower-rated essays written by L2 writers in geography, or they may construct an incoherent evaluative stance, as Elizabeth Swain (2009) found in her comparative analysis of one successful and one unsuccessful argumentative essay.

Importantly, differences have also been identified in papers written by L1 and L2 writers. Ken Hyland and John Milton (1997) found that, in comparison to the L1 writers in their study of university students' writing in Hong Kong, the L2 writers relied on a more limited range of grammatical resources, including particular modal verbs and the expression *I think*. This partly resulted in a style of stancetaking that was less dialogically nuanced, as Wu (2007) found in the lower graded L2 papers in her corpus. The more *contractive* style in the papers written by the L2 writers in Hyland and Milton's (1997) study may have resulted from their more limited repertoire of options for subtly adjusting levels of certainty and doubt when building claims.

Mary Schleppegrell's (2004) study corroborates Hyland and Milton's (1997) finding. This study compared L1 and L2 students' writing of lab reports in chemical engineering and found that the L2 writers tended to overuse the modal verbs *must* and *should* to construct an authoritative stance. The L1 writers, in contrast, commanded a wider range of resources for constructing such an authoritative stance; for example they tended to use more "objective" grammatical markers of certainty like *It is obvious that …* and *Clearly*.[5] While both groups of writers were writing in an assertive, highly committed manner, as perhaps appropriate for the genre of chemical engineering lab reports, the L2 writers did not exploit the same wealth of resources for constructing an authoritative stance.

In sum, what these studies suggest is that argumentative stances valued in college-level writing assignments may be characterized, to evoke Wayne Booth (1963), as "rhetorically balanced." The balance is between, on the one hand, *expansive* meanings that work to open room for negotiation with an imagined academic reader who is, as Chris Thaiss and Terry Zawacki (2006) describe, "coolly rational, reading for information, and intending to formulate a reasoned response" (p.7), and, on the other hand, *contractive* meanings that work to pull these readers over to the author's perspective. Striking such a balance would seem especially valued in genres that call for reasoned argumentation and critical analyses of others' arguments. Importantly, these studies also suggest that developing such a balanced rhetorical stance may be especially difficult for L2 writers, many of whom do not control a wide range of linguistic/discursive resources for striking such a balance.

To continue with this line of investigation, it is important to be clear about how linguistic/rhetorical patterns in student writing work to influence readers' evaluations in particular disciplinary contexts. In this study I take a step in this direction by asking how recurring stancetaking patterns work to realize such discursive goals as "critical reasoning," "in-depth thinking," "sophisticated argumentation," and other values cited by the professor and GSI of one upper-level undergraduate course in economics.

## The Study

This study asks how differential patterns in stancetaking in the L1 and L2 students' term papers may interrelate with the professor's learning goals and the GSI's evaluations of the papers. Using the SFL *Engagement* framework, I closely analyzed four term papers, two written by L1 writers and two by L2 writers, and I draw on interviews with the professor and GSI in order to inform my interpretation of Engagement patterns. These interviews were conducted as part of a multi-year study that is investigating the effects of instructional strategies for fostering students' disciplinary thinking and writing (referred to below as "the Teagle-Spencer study").[6] Below I explain the focus of the course and the term paper assignment and then my method for selecting the four papers.

### The Course and Term Paper Assignment

The focus of the course was economic regulation and antitrust policy. It had 80 students who met together as a lecture twice a week, along with four associated discussion sections. These sections were led by two GSIs who, in addition to leading their two appointed sections of 20 students (40 students total), graded and commented on all the papers in their sections. Between the two GSIs, it is fair to say that Mark's expertise (Mark is a pseudonym) is more closely aligned with the focus of the course. At the time of the course, Mark was in his 5th year of a joint Ph.D. program in law and economics and had worked as an antitrust litigation consultant. In addition, the course was Mark's seventh time to work as a GSI in an economics course that required extensive writing. For these reasons, the papers I selected for analysis (explained below) came from Mark's sections.

The term papers, which are approximately 3,000-3,500 words in length, are best characterized as policy papers based on the economic consequences of legal decisions. The assignment required that students select and analyze an antitrust case that is "interesting" in terms of its public policy and economics consequences. It required that students provide:

1. a detailed description of the case they selected (the allegations, the defendants' arguments, the resulting case, the majority and minority opinions);
2. an explanation of the remedies adopted by the courts and the relevant public policy issues involved;
3. an analysis of how these remedies affected the market structure, conduct, and performance of the firms under analysis; and
4. an argument for new or modified remedies in the case, if different from the courts' remedies.

My Engagement analysis focused on the latter two stages in the four students' papers because it was in these sections that the writers departed from recounting events and arguments and began to develop their own evaluations and arguments. Stages 3 and 4 combined were approximately 2,000 words in length.

During a pre-term interview conducted through the Teagle-Spencer study, the professor explained the purpose of the course and the term paper assignment in terms of fostering critical thinking:

> What I try to teach and develop in students via critical thinking is to take a situation which is given to them, a real world situation ... and to get them to try to see which of the tools that they have learned are most relevant, which ones can be used to evaluate and assess the situation and to identify what some of the shortfalls in reasoning might be from very very smart people who just don't happen to be economists.

In a follow-up interview, Mark confirmed this emphasis on critical thinking when he listed the qualities of A-graded papers, which are evidence of "independent thinking," "a sound argument," and "acknowledgment of other arguments." Weaker papers, he explained, often lack "deep insight into what the case is about" or do not develop a "well-reasoned argument." On this latter point, he explained, "the really big problem that I see is ... many [students] just don't understand how I could possibly criticize their argument because 'it's obviously true'. There's always a counter argument to whatever you're saying. Many don't see that."

As suggested by these interview comments, this term paper assignment required a very high level of critical analysis and argumentation. As Mark helped me to understand during a post-term interview, it required that students understand complex legal cases; pick out the parts of the case that are most relevant to an economics analysis; analyze the effects of court decisions through the use of economic models; evaluate the reasoning of Supreme Court Justices in terms of the economic consequences of their decisions (and sometimes evaluate competing economic analyses of the chosen cases); and, finally, propose a new or modified set of remedies based on critical analysis of the courts' remedies. Clearly, this is a challenging assignment for all students because it requires several types of analysis, evaluation, and argumentation while at the same time moving back and forth between the discourses of antitrust law and economic regulation. For many L2 writers, therefore, the assignment must be more difficult yet because it requires carrying out these discursive moves with (quite likely) a more limited range of linguistic/discursive resources to draw upon. Therefore, making explicit the range of discursive resources employed by the more successful writers in the class can help throw light on the specific language areas with which L2 writers need particular attention.

## Selection of Papers

My analysis focuses on four papers. These are, using pseudonyms, David's and Brandon's papers, which received grades of 99 and 98, and Soohyun's and Mallorie's papers, which received grades of 87 and 82. David and Brandon, who are both L1 writers, received the two highest grades among Mark's 40 students. Soohyun and Mallorie, who are both L2 writers, received grades that fell in the mid-to-low end of the grade distribution, which ranged from 78 to 99. Mark explained that he graded the papers first holistically by deciding if they were A-range (90-100), B-range (80-89), or C-range (70-79), adding that "papers are pretty clearly in one of these three ranges." He then took off individual points for problems having to do with "analytic rigor," "argumentative logic," or "quality of writing."[7]

To select these four papers, I started by informally reading the papers written by the five L2 writers in the class. (These were students who, in a pre-term survey, identified English as their second language.) The general question with which I approached these papers was whether these students experienced significant problems with their writing or not. I found the answer to this question mixed: I ended up excluding two of the five papers because they received A-range grades and mostly positive comments from Mark in terms of writing and analysis. Importantly, these two students noted in the

pre-term survey that they were *more*comfortable writing in English than in their first language. I then excluded one other L2 paper because its problems had less to do with analysis and argumentation than with completion of the assignment.

Two of the L2 writers, Soohyun and Mallorie, completed the assignment with some degree of success but, according to Mark's written comments, their papers displayed problems with argumentation and/or analysis of the case. Soohyun's first language is Korean, and she moved to the US to attend university after having completed her primary and secondary schooling in Korea. Mallorie's first language is Spanish, and she grew up in Puerto Rico, also having completed her schooling there prior to college. In the survey, both students responded that they were more comfortable writing in their first language than in English.

When I brought these two papers to Mark's attention during our interview, he explained that Soohyun's writing displays "typical second language issues," which he identified as lack of "clarity" and "grammar" problems. In addition, her writing is "very simple, with short sentences that are very direct and following the assignment almost too closely." Interestingly, Mark was unaware that Mallorie was a L2 writer. He explained that he found Mallorie's arguments "hard to follow," which he attributed to her "poor understanding of the material." He conceded that her writing problems "could be a result of second language issues" but that she "definitely seems confused about the material and the points she wants to make." Finally, Mark explained that both Soohyun's and Mallorie's papers, while displaying "some understanding of the economics involved," are not very "complex" or "sophisticated" in their argumentation or depth of reasoning. In contrast, Mark confirmed that David's and Brandon's papers were the top two in his combined sections. Their papers, in addition to being "clearly written" and "well reasoned," displayed an awareness of "the big picture."[8]

## Results and Discussion

My procedure for analyzing these four papers was to code every sentence at the levels of word/phrase and clause according to the following eight categories.[9]These categories are presented here in order of increasing dialogical expansiveness.

*bare assertion*

       The mistakes made by the court were many.

*disclaim:deny*

       This argument does <u>not</u> explain the behavior of the share price.

*disclaim:counter*

       <u>While</u> there is no precise formula to figure out this question, common sense may go a long way in shedding light on the answer.

*proclaim:concur*

       <u>Indeed</u>, it is odd that both the FTC and courts have …

*proclaim:pronounce*

       <u>Clearly</u>, we also <u>know</u> that Herald had the capability to do this.

*proclaim:endorse*

       Waldman <u>shows</u> that the average lease price for …

*entertain*

For example, <u>let's say</u> a producer sells …

*attribute*

The <u>argument</u> is that physicians are concerned with making profit.

In order to reduce the effects of idiosyncratic selection or over-interpretation of these Engagement categories (Coffin & O'Halloran, 2005), I coded each of the papers twice, allowing an interval of one month between each analysis, during which time I received alternative suggestions from a department colleague also experienced in Appraisal analysis. Both procedures helped me refine my analysis, for example by identifying Engagement patterns that operate in coordinated pairs, e.g., deny/counter pairs and concede/counter pairs. Identification of these pairs (shown in Table 1 and discussed below) proved useful for identifying how certain Engagement options pattern together. Table 1 summarizes the relative frequency (per 1,000 words) of Engagement resources in each of the students' papers.

**Table 1: Relative Frequency of Engagement Resources (per 1,000 words) in the Four Papers**

| Engagement resources | David grade: 99 2,549 words | Brandon grade: 98 2,474 words | Soohyon grade: 87 1,810 words | Mallorie grade: 82 2,345 words |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| bare assertions | 20.8 | 19.8 | 18.8 | 15.8 |
| CONTRASTIVE MOVES | 33.9 | 28.67 | 31.54 | 32.98 |
| disclaim:deny | 10.0 | 8.1 | 12.7 | 7.3 |
| disclaim:counter | 14.5 | 11.7 | 11.6 | 14.1 |
| proclaim:concur | 4.3 | 4.0 | 1.1 | 0.4 |
| proclaim:pronounce | 3.1 | 2.0 | 2.2 | 9.8 |
| EXPANSIVE MOVES | 41.0 | 31.10 | 10.5 | 34.1 |
| entertain | 30.5 | 20.2 | 7.2 | 32.4 |
| attribute | 10.5 | 10.9 | 3.3 | 1.7 |
| RHETORICAL PAIRS | 13 instances | 11 instances | 3 instances | 1 instance |
| deny/counter | 5 instances | 4 instances | 1 instance | 0 instance |
| concede/counter | 8 instances | 7 instances | 2 instances | 1 instance |

As indicated by the wide range of expansive and contractive moves, all four papers are dialogically engaged. Bare assertions are used two to three times less frequently than heteroglossic options. This engagement with other views and reader expectations displays the students' (perhaps inchoate) awareness of the need to negotiate assertions with an imagined reader who is "coolly rational" (Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006, p. 7), questioning and critical.

Another commonality between the four essays is that the most frequently used contractive resources are 'disclaim', rather than 'proclaim', options. One reason for this may be that the subject matter deals with law and economics, a subdisciplinary discourse that Deirdre McCloskey (1985) identified in the discourse of the economist Ronald Coase as having a more "adversarial" rhetorical style than that found in more mainstream economics. In particular, McCloskey found that the use of counters (e.g., *but*, *however*, *nevertheless*), especially at sentence beginnings, appeared throughout Coase's famous paper "The Nature of the Firm" (1937). Coase's paper makes frequent use of sentences beginning with "But ..." and "Not only ... but also ...," formulations which, McCloskey points out, worked to create an adversarial and "lawyerly" style that "puzzled" fellow economists at the time. Interestingly, Soohyun's paper, which uses more 'disclaim' moves than all five other heteroglossic options combined, frequently refers to Coase's arguments in the course of her discussion. It is possible, then, that some of her stancetaking choices were partially modeled after Coase's prose style.

The one departure from this preference for disclaiming is Mallorie's comparatively frequent use of pronouncing her position through such wordings as *This is certainly the case because* and *Due to the fact that.* Use of such pronouncements was found by Wu (2007) to be more prevalent in the lower-

graded papers in her study; the higher graded papers more frequently used the 'endorse' option (another subcategory of 'proclaim') to express alignment with an attributed proposition, one often held by perceived sources of authority.

## David's and Brandon's Papers

As noted above, Mark explained that David's and Brandon's papers both display "independent" and "in-depth thinking"; they "take a step back," offering nuanced evaluative judgments of court decisions; and they display understanding of "the big picture." How do recurring stancetaking patterns contribute toward realizing these goals? To answer this question, it is first important to point out that both papers construct a steady balance between expansive and contractive options, with the expansive options used slightly more frequently. The numbers presented in Table 1 do not tell the whole story, however. Mallorie's paper, which was less successful, makes use of an equally close balance between expansive and contractive options. In addition to balance, therefore, it is also important to understand the specific options that are used and how they pattern together within paragraphs. Differences in these regards affect what I refer below to as *dialogical control*. Below I discuss how dialogical balance and control are managed on a paragraph level in David's and Brandon's papers, and then I turn to a discussion of Soohyun's and Mallorie's papers.

### Dialogical Expansion through Attributions

In terms of expansive moves, all four writers use the 'attribute' option frequently in the first stage of their papers, when they are recounting arguments from the principle participants in their selected cases. However, it is only David and Brandon who frequently infuse attributions into their analysis and argument sections. One specific attribution strategy they use is to weave others' voices and perspectives into their own building of claims through the use of scare quotes and phrasings such as *has been attributed, the reasoning*, and *saying*. This strategy is illustrated in the excerpts in (1).

> (1) As expected, the legislation was accompanied by a concurrent *"loosening"* of managed care insurance practices. Through case studies and interviews, this change in insurance behavior *has been attributed* in part simply to market forces stemming from the overwhelming dissatisfaction of patients, employers, and physicians. However, specific regulations reducing the types of procedures needing individual approval directly compelled additional changes in insurance business practice and improved physicians' autonomy to *"provide high quality care."*
>
> That looks like exactly what happened in this case. The court got so accustomed to associating increased competition with increased consumer welfare that it simply equated the two things. It *decided* that preserving distributors' freedom was essentially the same as preserving competition, which was always beneficial. That is *the reasoning* behind making maximum price fixing per se illegal, but unfortunately, that reasoning is wrong. Making something per se illegal is the same as *saying* there are no exceptions to the rule, when clearly there are exceptions in this case.

As illustrated here, David and Brandon's papers frequently open up the dialogical space in order to set up alternative views, which they then counter via *However* and *but unfortunately*. This attribute-counter strategy works to construct a stance that is at once adversarial, or contrastive, and "aware" of alternative positions. Such a stance corresponds to the rhetorical strategy of problematization that

has been identified in expert and high-rated student argumentative writing (Barton, 1993; Wu, 2006).

## Dialogical Expansion through Entertains

David and Brandon's papers also expand dialogical space by subtly *entertaining* alternative voices and perspectives. The option of 'entertain' works either by formulating the proposition as just one view among other possible views, or by foregrounding the contingent nature of the claim. Both options are seen in the examples in (2).

> (2) There is also a *possibility* that for new retailers to enter the market they *would* have to charge higher prices initially, in which case a maximum price *could* deter competition.
>
> *If* insurance were purchased directly by the patient, competition among providers *could* equate the objects of both provider and patient.
>
> *It appears that* maximum price fixing does the greatest harm when set below a competitive level.
>
> In addition to the oligopolistic nature of the market, consumers *can be assumed* to be at a significant informational disadvantage.

## Dialogical Contraction and Rhetorical Pairs

In addition to using the 'attribute' and 'entertain' options to increase dialogic diversity and negotiate with alternative views, David and Brandon also use a wide range of strategies for closing down the dialogical space and thus guiding the reader to their views. These resources include, most commonly, instances of 'disclaim:counter', 'disclaim:deny', and 'proclaim:concur'. Both writers use these options in a very specific way that Soohyun and Mallorie do not, or do with less control, which is to combine them into rhetorical pairs.

Rhetorical pairs identified in David's and Brandon's papers are instances of (a) a concession, or concur move, immediately followed by a counter and (b) a denial immediately followed by a counter. These pairings work to engage with an imagined reader who is carefully tracking and perhaps questioning the unfolding argument. This purpose is evident in the examples in (3):

> (3) *It is true* that Herald hired a firm to solicit customers and sold customers to another firm, *but* neither of those firms had incentive to help it fix prices.
>
> *While this is true*, if local markets each came to be dominated by a few individual health care provider companies with enough market power to balance that of the insurance firms, the same costs increases would occur.
>
> The employers' objective is again *not* the well-being of the patient. *Rather*, it is the maximization of profit through lower human resource costs.
>
> Price floors *do not* have a competitive justification; they *merely* protect retailers' profits and prevent consumers from getting the benefit of lower prices.

It is useful to see concede/counter pairs, as shown in the first two example in (3), as working to establish solidarity with a disagreeing reader by conveying willingness to give up some ground (White, 2008). In contrast, it is useful to see deny/counter pairs, as shown in the second two examples in (3), as working to "repair" a potential misunderstanding and thus maneuver the reader toward the author's perspective. While Soohyun's paper makes use of one deny/counter pair, Mallorie's does not make use of any. This is in contrast to David's use of five such pairings and Brandon's use of four. Likewise, Soohyun's paper makes use of two concede/counter pairs, while Mallorie's makes use of just one. This is in contrast to David's use of eight such pairings and Brandon's use of seven. These numbers are not huge, but the accumulated effect of these resources is identifiable as they work to generate additional discursive material that contributes toward the construction of an authoritative and reader-engaged contrastive stance.

## Alternating Dialogical Expansion and Contraction within Paragraphs

A final pattern found in David's and Brandon's papers and not in Soohyun's and Mallorie's is the strategy of closely alternating expand and contract moves within paragraphs. This alternation is graphically illustrated in Table 2, which shows a paragraph from the analysis stage of Brandon's paper.

### Table 2: Expand-Contract Coordination in Brandon's Paper

| heterogloss | | monogloss |
|---|---|---|
| **expand** | **contract** | |
| | | (57) * The result of this kind of market structure is a system in which insurance firms control significant market power, as a monopsony to medical practitioners and a monopoly to patients. |
| (58) The Supreme Court  rejected[*attribute*] the argument[*attribute*] that the Federation's actions were designed to protect patients from insufficient dental treatment, stating[*attribute*] that the idea of the provision of information leading to adverse outcomes was directly against the spirit of the Sherman Act. | | |
| | (59) However[*counter*], | |
| their reasoning[*attribute*] that insurance companies act almost as simple representatives of patients | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | is not[*deny*]upheld by the current situation. | |
| | | (59) The object of the health insurance company is to maximize profit, |
| | not[*deny*] to maximize the health of the patient. | |
| (60) If[*entertain*] insurance were purchased directly by the patient, competition among providers could[*entertain*] equate the objects of both provider and patient. | | |
| | (61) However[*counter*], a perfectly competitive market clearly[*pronounce*] is not[*deny*] available to many of the consumers who purchase insurance directly. | |

*The numbers are the sentence numbers in the respective papers.

The alternating expand-contract pattern in this paragraph, and elsewhere in David's and Brandon's papers, works to bring into play a subtle juxtaposition of perspectives. This juxtaposition of perspectives may be characteristic of academic writing valued for engaged and "critical" reasoning. In her study of the ways experts in anthropology evaluated student writing in a general education course, Mary Soliday (2004) found that readers tended to reward a "reflective stance," which involves a "student's ability to appreciate diverse positions and then to commit to a judgment within [that] context" (p. 74). Such appreciation, or at least awareness, of diverse positions is subtly infused throughout David's and Brandon's paragraphs as they open up dialogic space by acknowledging and entertaining other points of view, and their commitment to positions is then constructed in an "orderly" way as they tighten up the dialogic space through the use of concede/counter and deny/counter pairs. The back-and-forth process of expanding and contracting room for alternative views contributes towards the "textual complexity" that their essays achieve, and also, perhaps more importantly, the construal of reader-engaged "critical reasoning" valued by the professor and GSI.

## Soohyun's Paper

As mentioned above, Soohyun's paper makes use of many disclaim moves, both counters and denials, with far fewer expansive moves. The relative frequencies of denial and counter moves are, respectively, 12.7 and 11.6 (per 1,000 words), while the relative frequencies of entertain and attribute moves are 7.2 and 3.3. (Note, in contrast, that David's relative frequencies of entertain and attribute moves are 30.5 and 10.5, while Brandon's are 20.2 and 10.9). The imbalance between contractive and expansive resources in Soohyun's paper seems to contribute to an overly committed style of stancetaking that does not consistently signal awareness of alternative perspectives. Table 3 displays a representative paragraph from Soohyun's argument stage.

**Table 3: Engagement Patterns in Sooyun's Argument Stage**

| heterogloss | | monogloss |
|---|---|---|
| **expand** | **contract** | |
| | (72) First, a monopolist <u>cannot</u>[*deny*] exclude competitors more effectively by leasing than by selling. | |
| | | (73) A sale is a lease for the life of the product. |
| | | (74) Short term leases free customers from capital commitments to the monopolist's product. |
| | | (75) Leasing thus leaves those customers more able to switch to a competitor. |
| | | (76) The monopolist's lease-only policy prevents a second-hand market, |
| | <u>but</u>[*counter*] it facilitates a more effective form of competition through the entering of firms that make new competing goods. | |

This paragraph is direct and assertive and, at least from my perspective as a non-expert in economics, it is clearly written. Mark's own impression, which he revealed in our interview, is that Soohyun worked very hard to revise her papers for clarity and concision, which Mark had emphasized to students in his sections. Despite these strengths, however, close analysis of this paragraph reveals several missed opportunities to actively negotiate meanings with the reader by foregrounding the underlying semantic relationships between clauses. For example, the second sentence, sentence (73), could be operating as a counter, one that expands on the initial denial move in the preceding sentence. However, this sentence does not include a contrastive conjunction (e.g., *rather*, *in contrast*) or continuative (e.g., *only*, *simply, merely*) that would clearly bring the countering move into effect. Rather, it is presented as a bare assertion; as such it does not explicitly cohere with the preceding sentence. Likewise, the two clauses in (76) seem to be bound together in a concessive relationship, but this relationship is not clearly signaled in the first clause via *Certainly/It is true that the monopolist's lease-only policy prevents ...* or *The monopolist's lease-only policy does prevent*...).

The passage in (4) below shows a similar instance where Soohyun's writing, though direct, does not clearly signal a concessive relationship.

(4) (66) In brief, the remedies did <u>not</u> result in sufficient effects. (67) In the structure of the shoe machinery market, competition increased: United's market share declined, the number of entrants rose, second market developed, and the competitor's market share increased. (68) <u>However</u>, the remedies were <u>not</u> effective in the performance part because the price of shoe machinery leases did <u>not</u> decrease and there was <u>no</u> social welfare increase.

This short stretch of text, again, can be praised for its directness, and it clearly shows that Soohyun had carried out sufficient research to be able to speak about economic consequences of the court remedy. One problem, however, is that it is not entirely clear what is being countered in sentence (68). After stating in (66) that "the remedies did <u>not</u> result in sufficient effects," the authorial voice seems to be conceding in (67) that, in fact, there were some actual effects. That sentence, however, does not explicitly concur with the reader that "*yes*, there *were* some effects, but ...." Avoidance of an explicit 'concur' move is evident in the relatively low frequency of these moves throughout Soohyun's paper. This pattern, combined with the more general imbalance between *expansive* and *contractive* resources in Soohyun's paper, seems to corroborate Mark's evaluation of Soohyun's writing as lacking "complexity" in argumentation. Soohyun's preference for bare assertions and dialogic *contraction* points to a lack of facility in opening up the dialogical space to bring in and entertain alternative perspectives. Possibly, this preference also points to a lower level of awareness of the need to negotiate assertions with a critically questioning reader.

When I presented this analysis to Mark in the context of a follow up interview, he pointed out that many of Soohyun's sentences are structurally simple and "monotonous." He pointed specifically to sentences (73)-(75) in the paragraph I discussed above. In addition, however, he also agreed that clearer signaling of inter-sentential relations might have made his reading of the text easier and, importantly, might have demonstrated that Soohyun is, in his words, "more in control of the argument."

## Mallorie's Paper

Mallorie's paper displays quite different Engagement problems. As shown in Table 1 above, the paper makes use of a nearly even balance of *expansive* and *contractive* options (34.1 and 32.8, respectively). The graphic display of *expand* and *contract* patterns within paragraphs (as illustrated in Table 4 below) resemble paragraphs that recur in David's and Brandon's papers. Mallorie's writing, then, suggests a high level of tacit dialogical awareness, or awareness of the need to expand and contract room for alternative perspectives in the course of her argumentation. In addition, apart from very infrequent 'concur' and 'attribute' moves, the Engagement options are "balanced" in that there is a near equal representation of *expansive* and *contractive* resources in her paper. The problem for Mallorie, then, seems not to be about adopting an overly expansive or committed stance (as is the case with Soohyun) but rather one of coordinating or controlling the range and selection of Engagement resources in particular stretches of text. The problem seems to be less about dialogical awareness, in other words, than dialogical *control*, or control over the discursive resources used to construct an interpersonally engaged argumentative stance.

Table 4 displays a representative paragraph from Mallorie's paper in which the authorial voice seems to be struggling to control the interpersonal negotiation.

**Table 4: Engagement Patterns in Mallorie's Argument Stage**

| heterogloss | | monogloss |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **expand** | **contract** | |
| (52) <u>Assuming</u>[*entertain*] that Arizona's<u>claim</u>[*attribute*] was true and that the price caps were merely a tool for tacit collusion, the effect of the removal of the caps <u>would</u>[*entertain*] increase social benefit. | | |
| | | (53) This is so |
| | <u>especially</u>[*proclaim*] considering the <u>fact</u>[*proclaim*] that | |
| it is safe to<u>assume</u>[*entertain*] that the demand for healthcare is virtually inelastic. | | |
| | (54) Producer surplus <u>however</u>[*counter*], | |
| <u>would</u>[*entertain*] decrease, | | |
| | <u>but</u>[*counter*] <u>not</u>[*deny*] as much as | |
| consumer surplus <u>would</u>[*entertain*] increase. | | |
| (55) This becomes especially <u>evident</u> <u>when</u> we <u>consider</u>[*entertain*] | | |
| | the <u>fact</u>[*proclaim*] that there was price discrimination among those patients who did <u>not</u>[*deny*] have insurance plans that were approved by the foundation due to the <u>fact</u>[*proclaim*] that the medical professionals were free to choose what fees they would charge. | |
| (56) Therefore the gain to these consumers <u>would</u>[*entertain*] be | | |
| | <u>even</u>[*counter*] greater. | |

One way to look at some of the awkwardness in this paragraph is in terms of syntactic options. In particular, the over-complexity of clausal embedding may be working to bury the authorial stance.

Sentence (53), for example, embeds three clauses (*especially considering …*; *the fact that …*; *it is safe to assume that …*), while (55) embeds six (*when we consider …*; *the fact that …*; *who did not …*; *that were approved …*; *due to the fact that …*; *what fees …*). Coming to notice this syntactic over-complexity would be a useful first step for Mallorie to alleviate some of the awkwardness in this paragraph. However, after making this observation, the problem then becomes how Mallorie can learn to make decisions about managing the textual flow in a more controlled manner.

The concept of "control" is the subject of Robert de Beaugrande's (1979) *College Composition and Communication* article in which he argues that simply asking novice writers to revise by reformulating the combination of clauses is insufficient advice. If we do not enable students to make decisions about textual flow by providing them with linguistic criteria for making those decisions, then merely sending students out to reformulate and recombine sentences may give rise to other textual problems. "Plodding monotony," for example, may not lead "to interesting variation but to distracting chaos" (Beaugrande, 1979, p. 357). Beaugrande's solution is formulated in terms of helping students control the flow of information in texts: There are levels of priorities for making "control decisions," and "the top level is that of information priorities: the rate and the distribution of new information being presented against a background of known information" (p. 358).

This concept of learning to control the flow of information in text is useful when discussing stance, but it may be more useful to frame advice for making top-level control decisions in terms of managing the dialogical space rather than the flow of *information*. Sentence (53), for example, may be confusing, not because it is too densely packed with information, but because the proposition that is entertained in the first sentence is taken up as a bare assertion in the next sentence (*This is so …*). This bare assertion is then elaborated on both by proclaiming and entertaining the notion that *the demand for healthcare is virtually inelastic*. Sentences (52) and (53) could operate together more coherently if we revised in such a way that both propositions are entertained:

> (52) Assuming that Arizona's claim was true and that the price caps were merely a tool for tacit collusion, the effect of the removal of the caps would increase social benefit. (53) This possibility[*entertain*] seems particularly likely[*entertain*] given[*entertain*] that the demand for healthcare is virtually inelastic. (54) Producer surplus however …

In this revised version, the dialogical space has been opened up more consistently by reframing (53) as a suggestion rather than a bare assertion or pronouncement. This slight modification places the authorial voice in a more "controlled" position for then contracting the dialogical space in sentence (54). As it is now, though, the somewhat confusing nature of Mallorie's writing in this paper suggests an authorial voice still searching for a coherent stance vis-à-vis the reader and other invoked perspectives. The lack of coherence with regard to interpersonal stancetaking corroborates Mark's perspective that her arguments "were hard to follow" perhaps due to "poor understanding of the material." Mark confirmed my take on Mallorie's writing, agreeing that the slight modification above would have helped make this paragraph easier to read. Pointing out that Mallorie's understanding of the case is still tenuous, Mark agreed that some of her difficulties with argumentation may have resulted from her being a second language writer. He stated that he "definitely wished" he had known her language background during the course of the term because he "might have been more sensitive to her difficulties with the writing itself."

## Some Final Thoughts on the Analysis

Before considering pedagogical implications of this analysis, let me concede that this small study of four term papers written in one upper-level economics course cannot lead to general conclusions

about problems L2 college writers have constructing an argumentative stance. This study is situated in one upper-level course, and one that placed perhaps special emphasis on argumentation. It is also a course that shunts back and forth between the discourses of economics, law, and public policy, and so the frequent disclaim moves and rhetorical pairs identified in the higher graded papers may be more characteristic of the "lawyerly" rhetoric identified by McCloskey (1985) in Robert Coase's discourse. Within this specific context, however, it is apparent that the valued style of stancetaking is one that is, on the one hand, authoritative and adversarial, and, on the other, dialogically aware, or open to alternative possibilities and perspectives. A steady gaze on alternative possibilities is especially evident in David's paper, which adopted the strategy of discussing four hypothetical cases as a means to make an argument about the actual case under analysis. In sum, then, the valued argumentative stance in this term paper assignment is in line with the findings of Derewianka (2009), Swain (2009), and Wu (2007) that more proficient student academic writing, especially writing that calls for argumentation and critical "discussion," tends to be authoritative and dialogically open. In addition, it seems that successful realization of such a stance is one that is "controlled," as suggested by David's and Brandon's frequent use of coordinated patterns (via concede/counter and deny/counter pairs) to engage with reader expectations and by Mallorie's comparative difficulty navigating her tacit dialogical awareness into reader-friendly and coherent prose.

## Mark's Feedback

When I shared this analysis with Mark, he agreed that the concept of stance is useful for refining the ways that he addresses language issues with his students. He remarked that rhetorical pairs and alternation between expansive and contractive resources are useful concepts because they show specific means by which David and Brandon accomplished what he referred to as a "nice argumentative rhythm" in their papers. He elaborated on this point by explaining that quite a few L2 writers (but not only L2 writers) in the course have difficulty making arguments for modified remedies because they tend to put forth claims too assertively. At its worst, Mark suggested, relying on bare assertions and uncoordinated contractive moves has the effect of "merely reeling off facts" or "rushing to judgment."

Elaborating on what he found to be an effective stance, Mark turned to the paragraph from Brandon's paper that I discussed above in Table 2:

> Here, he actually steps outside economics for a little bit. ... Really, really good economics papers can recognize the shortfalls of how economists and lawyers think about these things. In standard economic models taught to undergrads, we don't consider something "silly" like patient welfare to be a goal of the healthcare system. And this student is able to kind of take a step back and say, "you know, patient welfare is important."

In terms of dialogical stancetaking, we can link this idea of "taking a step back" to specific Engagement strategies in Brandon's paper. For example, his use of the conditional structure in sentence (60) allows him to entertain a counter-factual situation before offering a high-force denial of this situation. Without this preceding entertain move, the strongly worded denial (*However, a perfectly competitive market clearly is not ...*) might otherwise come off as unjustifiably assertive. When working with weaker writers, therefore, it is important to discuss language choices such as these in ways that connect up to "higher order concerns" regarding valued rhetorical stances in specific genres.

## Pedagogical Implications for Focusing on Stance in WAC/WID

As noted above, the term paper assignment in this course required that students engage in a very high level of critical analysis and argumentation. It required that students evaluate legal decisions by identifying the implicit economic assumptions behind those decisions and analyzing their economic consequences; it then required that they argue for alternative legal remedies in terms of their likely economic consequences. Even though the majority of students were majoring in economics or industrial organization, many found the task of identifying and applying economic constructs to critically analyze the consequences of antitrust cases very challenging. Not all English L2 writers in the course experienced particular difficulties with the assignment (as noted above, two of the five L2 writers earned As on the paper); however, it is not surprising that many L2 writers like Soohyun and Mallorie, who reported greater comfort writing in their L1, would have trouble controlling the necessary discursive resources for constructing an effective argumentative stance.

It is also important to bear in mind that the notion of stance was not discussed explicitly in class, and so Soohyun and Mallorie may have found it especially difficult to become aware of and then construct the adversarial yet dialogically engaged stance that seemed to be implicitly valued. This valued stance is only suggested in the professor's interview responses when he explained, as quoted above, that one of his chief goals in the course was for students to learn how "to identify what some of the shortfalls in reasoning might be from very very smart people who just don't happen to be economists." The wording of this explanation suggests that students might do well in the course of their argumentation to display awareness that the case is complex and that the reasoning under analysis came from "very very smart people." Students might do well, in other words, to position their evaluations and counter-proposals in a dialogically expansive manner and to ease into their claims through the use of concessions and "repair" strategies (e.g., deny/counter formulations).

Considering that instructor expectations regarding stance often remain implicit, it is important that upper-level WID courses provide students with opportunities to reflect explicitly on language/rhetorical issues in their writing. Recent research in writing studies calls for increased opportunities for students to engage in meta-reflective activities focused on their understanding of disciplinary thinking and writing practices (Jarratt et al., 2009; Melzer, 2009; Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006). Providing opportunities for rhetorical/linguistic reflection is important for all writers but would seem especially so for English L2 writers, who often have difficulty with the advanced forms of argumentation required in WID contexts. Furthermore, in light of the findings from this study, it would seem particularly important to provide opportunities for reflection on authorial stance. Such opportunities can be provided in the context of instructor-led whole-class discussions or small-group activities, including peer review workshops, as well as office hour interactions and instructor-to-student feedback on paper drafts.

Specifically, instructor-led discussions with students about what sorts of critical stances are valued in certain disciplinary genres could go a long way toward making explicit what "critical" reasoning means for the purposes of the discipline or subdiscipline as a whole. Such a discussion can be guided by walking the class through paragraphs in students' papers from previous terms where the stancetaking is particularly well-handled, much as Mark did (above) when discussing Brandon's paragraph with me, and then comparing these paragraphs with ones that do not quite hit the mark in terms of valued disciplinary stance. Examples of questions that can guide these discussions include: How committed is the author to his or her assertions, and is this level of commitment warranted for this portion of the paper? How does the author comment on the status of evidence that is used to support claims (for example, as suggesting or "proving" a certain conclusion)? Where and

how does the author show awareness of alternative points of view? Does the author engage with readers' expectations and, if so, how?

Another valuable instructional practice is to have students rewrite excerpts from students' papers that they find problematic, as I attempted to do above with Mallorie's problematic sentences in (52) and (53). In general, the opportunity for students to engage in sustained reflection on texts that model (or fall short of) the discursive moves that they are expected to make can increase students' awareness of the range of stancetaking options that are available to them in a given genre or sub-genre, and it may enable them to become more mindful of their own stancetaking choices.

While engaging in close analysis of stancetaking strategies can help both English L1 and L2 writers to become more conscious of stance in disciplinary writing, it is likely that the activity of closely analyzing texts would be particularly beneficial to L2 writers. As suggested in Christine Tardy's (2006) comparative research on L1/L2 genre studies, it is possible that L2 writers refer to genre models when learning to write in a new genre more regularly than their English L1 peers. If this is the case, then the process of analyzing samples of the target genre (with the guidance of their instructors) could help alert these writers to important rhetorical meanings that underlie recurring linguistic features in the samples they are examining, and it can raise their awareness of the discursive options that are available for achieving valued meanings in the genre. Such rhetorical consciousness-raising could help L2 writers to use genre samples as models in more nuanced ways.

In addition to whole-class discussions about stance, it is important that instructors provide students with opportunities to engage in reflection on their own stancetaking strategies while writing. One of the instructional interventions used in the Teagle-Spencer study (see Kaplan et al. (2009) and Silver et al. (2011)) is the requirement that students insert metareflective "monitoring comments" in the margins of their papers (using the "Comments" function on Microsoft Word). Using this tool, students can raise questions about their understanding of course material, pinpoint areas in their writing where they have drawn on key disciplinary concepts, and express uncertainty about their writing decisions. Preliminary findings from this study suggest that both students and instructors find this commenting tool very helpful for engaging in dialogue about genre expectations and for drawing students' conscious attention to areas of strength and weakness in their writing. In light of this positive feedback, this commenting tool seems ideal for the purpose of initiating a dialogue between students and instructors (and potentially peer reviewers) about student writers' stancetaking strategies.

Again, while the opportunity to reflect on sentence/text-level choices would be useful for both English L1 and L2 writers, it may be that many L2 writers have a greater commitment to (and often linguistic preparation for) analyzing their writing at this level. Many L2 learners, that is, "know about grammar" and would be likely to take up offers to reflect on and raise questions about fine-grained textual choices in their writing. Specifically, instructors can encourage that students reflect on the relative degree of dialogic openness in particular stages of an argument (e.g., summary, analysis, counter-proposal). Students may want to ask whether their evaluations of others' arguments are organized and worded in a way that is both authoritative and dialogically open, or whether they are handling the requirement to be concise and assertive, on the one hand, and sophisticated and nuanced in their analysis, on the other.

A remaining issue to consider is the degree of metalinguistic knowledge that is needed to engage in discussions about stancetaking in disciplinary writing. One argument to make in support of using a specific metalanguage in instructional contexts (such as that provided by the SFL Engagement framework) is that it can enable students to adopt a "critical distance" from the texts they are analyzing (Wallace, 2003); in so doing, it can facilitate the process of noticing recurring patterns of

language use that are otherwise difficult to observe when scanning texts more casually. There is some research from English for Specific Purposes (ESP) which suggests that students equipped with specific constructs for analyzing texts are better positioned to engage in nuanced reflection on their own rhetorical choices. An Cheng (2007; 2008), for example, discusses the gains an L2 graduate student made reflecting on the rhetorical "moves" (Swales, 1990) that he used in his own writing and that were used in genre exemplars from his field of study. Close text analysis guided by the concept of "moves" may have enabled this student to develop, as Cheng puts it, "a deepened understanding of how writer, reader, and purpose interact in a piece of text that results in the use of certain generic features" (Cheng, 2008, p. 65). In contrast to internalized or tacit knowledge of language, explicit knowledge of the ways specific linguistic features give rise to socially valued meanings may be "more cognitively accessible for reflection and decision-making, and may therefore be a powerful enabling tool for writers tackling the cognitively complex task of writing" (Myhill, 2010, p. 141).

For the purposes of working with L2 writers in WID contexts, it is likely that taking on a specific language analytic framework would require too much time investment for students and instructors. In light of this reality, I would suggest a less technical recognition that stancetaking in disciplinary writing is important and pervasive, extending as it does well beyond discrete issues such as whether or not to use self mentions (like *I* or *my*) or whether to include explicit reader engagement devices like reader-based pronouns (*you*), directives (*Now consider ...*; *Refer to Table 1*), or rhetorical questions. In addition to devices like these, stancetaking also has to do with even less deliberate choices about degree of commitment to assertions, the use of counterargument strategies, patterns in modality and evidentiality (*perhaps*, *might*, *seems*, *could*), and many other choices regarding subtle authorial intrusions into the discourse. Providing opportunities for sustained reflection on genre texts, then, with or without the added benefit of a specific metalanguage, can help L2 writers gain increased awareness of the types of discursive moves that are valued within the specific disciplinary context as well as the range of resources that are available to them for arguing and interacting effectively in that context.

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## Notes

[1] I wish to thank Terry Myers Zawacki and Michelle Cox for their very helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. I am also grateful to John Swales, Peichin Chang, and Moisés Escudero for their feedback on the linguistic analysis that led to this paper.

[2] Interpersonal meanings, as explained by the linguist Michael A. K. Halliday (1994), involve the speaker's or writer's "own intrusion in the speech event: the expression of his [sic] comments, his attitudes and evaluations, and also of the relationship that he sets up between himself and the listener—in particular, the communication role that he adopts, of informing, questioning, greeting, persuading, and the like" (p. 91-2).

[3] For additional explanations of the Appraisal framework, see Hood (2006), Martin & Rose (2007), White (2003), and White (2008).

[4] The use of straight brackets in SFL system networks such as this one indicate that one option is selected over another. For example, a particular wording is contractive *or* expansive; if contractive, the option is disclaim *or* proclaim, and so on.

[5] See Halliday (1994) on the objective vs. subjective distinction with regard to modal expressions.

[6] This multi-year study, co-sponsored by the Teagle and Spencer foundations, is investigating the effects of metacognitive strategies for fostering students' understanding of disciplinary thinking and writing. See Kaplan et al. (2009) and Silver et al. (2011).

[7] Mark conceded that paper length and number of secondary sources probably correlates with the term paper grades because "these things usually point to level of effort." These two factors, however, do not seem to be deciding factors in Soohyun's and Mallorie's comparatively low grades. Both writers refer to at least 4 secondary sources (which is the average number of sources used in A-range papers) and, while Soohyun's paper is considerably shorter than the other three (as shown in Table 1), Mallorie's paper is actually longer than the average length in the class.

[8] In terms of educational level, Brandon, David, and Mallorie were all in their fourth year, and Soohyun was in her third year. In terms of majors, David and Mallorie were majoring in economics, Soohyun in industrial organization, and Brandon in chemistry. Based on this mix, the students' years and major areas of study do not seem to be important factors in the relative success of their term papers.

[9] These eight categories represent a slight modification of the various options represented in Martin and White's (2005) model (represented in Figure 1 above). The modifications were to collapse Martin & White's

distinctions between concur:affirm and concur:concede under the general category of "concur," as well as attribute:acknowledge and attribute:distance together under the general category of "attribute." These modifications were made due to the relative infrequency of concur and attribute moves in all four papers.

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