

Hyland, Ken

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Ken Hyland (b. 1951), a well-known and frequently cited scholar in English for academic purposes (EAP) research, has contributed significantly to his field by putting forward comprehensive and well-structured analytical frameworks. His research has aimed at discerning the discursive encoding of the writer–reader relationship, which, in the academic sphere, influences and is influenced by disciplinary membership and the intended audience. Hyland’s research has continuously underlined the interpersonal component of academic written exchanges. For a long time it was believed that scientific and academic knowledge was objectively and impersonally presented as a mere reflection of an external reality. However, due to a large extent to Hyland’s groundbreaking research, it is now well attested that knowledge is socially constructed and that certain discursive conventions and expectations need to be met for a text to be judged as credible and persuasive by the writer’s peers. In this context, Hyland has had a large role in unveiling the interpersonal forces driving academic communication.

One area of inquiry to which Ken Hyland has made significant contributions is in the study of what is called *metadiscourse*. Metadiscourse refers to “those aspects of the text which explicitly refer to the organisation of the discourse or the writer’s stance towards either its content or the reader” (Hyland, 2000, p. 109). Drawing on previous accounts of metadiscourse (Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore & Farnsworth, 1990; Crismore, Markkanen, & Steffenson, 1993; Mauranen, 1993), Hyland refined its categories and established a framework which has proved remarkably fruitful and has inspired a great deal of academic discourse research. Hyland (1998, 2000) organized metadiscourse into textual and interpersonal categories. Within textual metadiscourse he included the analysis of logical connectives (which express a connection between ideas), frame markers (aimed at structuring the discourse into discourse acts or text stages and which include sequencing markers, label stages, announcements of goals, and topic shifts), endophoric markers (which refer to other parts of the discourse), evidentials (indications of source materials), and code glosses (which introduce further information for the reader to grasp the writer’s intended meaning). Under interpersonal markers he grouped hedges (terms expressing the writer’s lack of full commitment to the accompanying proposition), boosters (elements marking certainty and conviction), attitude markers (indications of affective evaluation, including attitude verbs, necessity modals, and adjectives), relational markers (devices intended to bring readers into the text and which comprise second person pronouns, question forms, imperatives, and digressions), and person markers (references to the author(s) through first person pronouns and possessive adjectives).

Hyland then argued for a stronger interpersonal view on metadiscourse, where metadiscourse is understood as the cover term for discourse devices which embody the writer–reader interaction (Hyland, 2005a). Hyland and Tse (2004) presented a revised interpersonal model of metadiscourse, in which they articulated a distinction between external and internal text features, metadiscourse being restricted to those features which make an internal (in-text) reference.

Much of Hyland’s work has been devoted to exploring these metadiscourse categories as deployed in a wide array of academic genres, mostly in research articles, but also in

abstracts, textbooks, master and PhD dissertations, acknowledgments, final-year student reports, textbooks, and book reviews. His analyses look into the ways in which writers build convincing arguments and how metadiscourse contributes to positioning the author in relation to the text and in relation to readers in ways that are conventional and expected in particular disciplinary communities. Hyland's research findings have had important influences on academic language teaching.

Hyland's (2005b) model of writer–reader interaction based on the concepts of stance and engagement also provides a key framework for the analysis of academic communication. Stance is the expression “of a textual ‘voice’ or community recognized personality” (Hyland, 2005b, p. 176) and encompasses the use of hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions. Engagement, on the other hand, is the way through which “writers relate to their readers with respect to the positions advanced in the text” (Hyland, 2005b, p. 176). It encompasses the use of reader pronouns, directives, questions, and personal asides. With this model Hyland stresses how scholars need to offer a novel and valuable contribution to the body of disciplinary knowledge in rhetorically appropriate terms. This entails projecting a credible authorial voice, making appropriate judgments, establishing their credentials, and opening space for alternative views and evaluations, while claiming solidarity with, responding to, and bringing in their potential readers.

Hyland has applied the models outlined above in numerous corpus-based studies. His cross-disciplinary analyses have mostly, but not solely, focused on the analysis of a corpus of 240 research articles from 8 disciplines (mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, physics, biology, marketing, philosophy, sociology, and applied linguistics), totalling 1.4 million words. He has frequently complemented the quantitative data analyses with valuable ethnographic data taken from interviews with informants in the above disciplines following a semi-structured format. This process has enabled him to dig deeply into the discursive practices of the members of these communities and discover the rhetorical preferences of academic discourse communities. Hyland (2005) has reported a higher inclusion of interactive and interactional features in the soft-discipline (e.g., philosophy or sociology) texts than in the hard-discipline (e.g., physics or engineering) texts. The higher degree of interactional features, especially hedges and engagement markers, in the soft sciences is interpreted by Hyland to result from the more interpretive, less abstract nature of knowledge in the social sciences and humanities. Alternative voices and appeal to solidarity with readers are claimed to be strong in the social sciences and humanities. On the other hand, writers in the hard disciplines tend to downplay interactional positions, which results in a less reader-inclusive rhetoric stressing the impartiality and linearity of science production. His results also suggest differences in the use of interactive features in research articles across different disciplines, mainly regarding endophorics (i.e., markers that refer to information on other parts of the text), and especially, evidentials (i.e., markers which indicate the source of information from other texts). Academics in the more discursive, soft disciplines need to more clearly establish the contextual link between their research and previous work, as knowledge tends to be recursive, rather than cumulative. Overall, this comparison of discourse choices in research article writing across several fields has enabled Hyland to identify relationships between the ways in which disciplines see the world and conduct research, and the ways they socially turn this research into publishable articles.

Hyland has extended a cross-disciplinary approach to the study of other academic genres in addition to the research article, namely textbooks (Hyland, 2005), second language (L2) postgraduate writing (Hyland, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004), and book reviews (Tse & Hyland, 2006, 2008, 2009). He explains differences in the use of metadiscourse markers in textbooks and in L2 master and doctoral dissertations in soft versus hard disciplines as a direct consequence of the importance that personal interpretation plays in the former, more discursive disciplines. Hyland stresses how these genres are rhetorically constructed in

ways that mirror the building of knowledge in professional academic genres in a particular disciplinary community. Interestingly, book reviews have been approached from a double analytical perspective, taking both discipline and gender as variables (Tse & Hyland, 2006, 2009). In general, Hyland and his coresearcher do not find relevant gender differences in the use of metadiscourse features in philosophy, sociology, and biology book reviews. Male and female reviewers seem overall to portray themselves and their readers and express their views in rather similar ways, although to different extents in each of these three disciplines. Disciplinary affiliation, rather than gender, impinges on the reviewers' discursive choices.

Besides cross-disciplinary and gender-based analyses of academic writing, Hyland has compared student writing with professional writing (Hyland, 2009) and has explored differences between research article writing and popular writing (Hyland, 2009, 2010). According to Hyland (2009), popularizations, or science journalism, present distinctive rhetorical and discursive features from scholarly writing. Contrary to what tends to be the case in research articles, popularizations follow a deductive rhetorical pattern and present the main finding at the beginning of the text to foreground novelty. Information in these popular texts is framed so that it is likely understood by the nonexpert audience; thus, definitions and explicit indications of links between ideas become key rhetorical strategies. Also, the source of the information is commonly stressed in popularizations as a way of achieving reliability. Finally, the different communicative purpose of popularizations leads to "glamorizing material for a wider audience" (Hyland, 2009, p. 170). This includes an array of attitude markers expressing the writer's affection as well as a low number of uncertainty features. The different communicative purpose of popular science inevitably calls for different discursive and rhetorical features from scientific research reporting.

This cross-generic approach to the analysis of academic discourse has led Hyland (2010) to propose the term *proximity* to subsume both the way writers show authority by displaying an array of disciplinary conventions (proximity of membership) and the way writers show the material in such a way that it meets readers' expectations (proximity of commitment). Proximity is achieved differently in popular science and in research articles. Hyland finds that in popular science articles proximity entails the presentation of research so that it is easily processed by nonspecialists, whereas in research articles proximity entails the presentation of research following the conventions of the academic disciplinary community (i.e., displaying familiarity with the position of one's research in relation to previous literature, describing methods accurately, presenting results in a cautious way, and making claims which are supported on the basis of these). Proximity, explored through the analysis of organization, argument, credibility, stance, and engagement, helps unveil the different ways in which writers negotiate meaning with different audiences and for different purposes.

Through his overall analysis of academic discourse in general and through his detailed cross-disciplinary, cross-gender, and cross-generic studies of academic interaction in particular, Hyland has shown how language plays a crucial role in the social practices of the academia. It is through discourse that academics respond to the expectations, beliefs, and conventions of a given discipline, create their own identities and engage with their readers, constructing an effective argument. Thus only by appropriately managing discourse can academics significantly contribute to the process of knowledge creation in their communities.

Ken Hyland has shaped the recent directions of research on and teaching of written academic English. Besides his contributions to the field of EAP through published articles, chapters, books, and edited volumes, he was also the founding coeditor of the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* for seven years and he is now coeditor of *Applied Linguistics*. All in all, his more than 15 books and over 140 articles and chapters have established him as a leading scholar in academic discourse studies.

SEE ALSO: Corpus Linguistics: Overview; English for Academic Purposes; Genre and Discourse Analysis in Language for Specific Purposes; Metadiscourse; Research Articles in English for Specific Purposes

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Suggested Readings

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