Engagement in Research Article Conclusions: Exploring Dialogic Space Across Disciplines

This paper explores how conclusion sections in research articles across science/technology and social science domains differ in their use of engagement resources within the Appraisal framework (Martin & White, 2005). Drawing on a small corpus of ten articles, the study undertakes a close qualitative reading of conclusion sections, focusing on how writers manage dialogic contraction and expansion at the point of rhetorical closure.

Initial observations suggest that science and technology texts tend to rely more frequently on contractive engagement resources, particularly endorsement, pronouncement, and proclaim, presenting findings as consolidated and relatively secure. In contrast, the social science texts examined allow greater dialogic expansiveness, often employing entertain and attribute resources that position claims as open to interpretation and contextual variation. Rather than treating these tendencies as fixed disciplinary characteristics, the paper considers whether such variation is shaped by genre conventions that regulate how conclusions are expected to stabilise knowledge claims. From a systemic functional perspective, the conclusion stage is significant because it reflects how writers manage certainty, negotiate alternative voices, and signal epistemic responsibility. Differences in engagement patterning at this stage may therefore influence how novice writers interpret expectations around authority and caution in academic writing.

By foregrounding interpersonal meaning-making in conclusion writing, the paper contributes to ongoing discussions about disciplinary literacy and SFL-informed pedagogy in making rhetorical expectations visible. It suggests that drawing students' attention to engagement resources in the conclusion sections can help them navigate writing across disciplinary contexts and across different sections in a research article more confidently.

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