**An exploration of how Higher Education L2 learners conceptualise and articulate voice in assessed academic writing on an intensive pre-sessional EAP course at a UK University**

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*Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion - invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like History or Anthropology or Economics or English. He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community. Or perhaps I should say the various discourses of our community, since it is in the nature of a liberal arts education that a student, after the first year or two, must learn to try on a variety of voices and interpretive schemes - to write, for example, as a literary critic one day and an experimental psychologist the next, to work within fields where the rules governing the presentation of examples or the development of an argument are both distinct and, even to a professional, mysterious*. (Bartholomae, 1986, p.4)

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**Dedication**

To the memory of my father, Kenneth Matipano, he expected nothing but the best from me.

**Abstract**

This research was an exploration of L2 learner’s conception and articulation of student voice at a UK University in end of course Academic Research Project (ARP) on an intensive English pre-sessional course using Hyland’s (2005) conceptual framework of voice to conduct a text analysis. The research analysed six texts from two disciplines, namely Political Science and Civil Engineering. Each ARP was randomly selected from the top, middle and lower tier from the two disciplines. The aim of the research was to conduct an Exit Interview as a form of a Needs Analysis in reverse formation for purposes of updating the pre-sessional English for Academic Purposes course at this institution. The results indicated that the debate of whether academic writing is a genre in its own right or not (Spack, 1988) is still very much alive in the field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). This was exhibited in diverse ways as L2 learners in these two disciplines rhetorically manipulate the concept of leaner voice in academic writing in very different ways across the divide. The research also acknowledged that ‘Writing with authority’ (Hyland, 2002a) was a concept that was valued across the divide and more so in Political Science. The use of voice parameters from the conceptual framework called, Attitude Markers (AM) and Appeal to Shared Knowledge (ASK) were key to presentation of arguments or propositions from both the writer (stance) and reader (engagement) perspectives in both disciplines but it was quite apparent that THE use Boosters (B) to express certainty is highly valued in Civil Engineering. It was also clear that poor handling of voice and increased use of Hedging (H) did not impress assessors of ARPs in terms of the grade awarded to the ARPs in this sample. This research also reiterated that the concept of voice is still much alive in UK classrooms at tertiary institutions that have L2 learners of English (Grow, 2007) despite the views by (Helms-Park and Stapleton, 2003) that the concept is over-rated. Another finding of the research was that language, culture, power and ideology are at the centre of the concept of student voice in academic writing (Fairclough, 2014a). From the research it was also clear that student’s writing a ‘high stakes’ (Beck and Jeffrey, 2007) assessment in English need to draw from their various identities (Bartholomae, 1986; Shen, 1989) to socially mediate meaning in academic writing in English.

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**Glossary of Technical Terms and Acronyms**

**EAP Practitioners** – Course Directors, Managers, Teachers, Teaching Assistants and Teaching Material Producers

**Voice**- The way in which a learner/student projects themselves or show their presence in a written text

**Contrastive Rhetoric**- The practise of learning the communicative structure and styles of other cultures with the view to learn about how to help them with the acquisition of another academic culture and language

**Conversational Implicature**- The study of conversation styles in specific cultures

**On record**- A term used in Politeness Theory to describe a speaker saying something that could be deemed face threatening

**Off record**- a term from Politeness Theory about a speaker deliberately avoiding use of face threatening language

**Politeness Theory**- A theory from Pragmatics that explains the desire to preserve the other’s face in conversation

**Illocutionary force** of an utterance is the speaker's intention in producing that utterance.

**Academic Repertoires**- A term used by Busch (2012) to describe the totality of different facets of skills and language that learners need to learn for effective academic communication

**Target Situation**-A term in EAP that used to explain the language needs of a specific context that the learner will be needing to acquire the language for

**Needs Analysis**- is a diagnostic inquiry that is made by an EAP practitioner before creating a language course for a leaner or group of learners

**Exit interview**- Is an interview carried by an EAP practitioner at the end of a language course to establish areas that can be improved on in the next course

**ARP** – Academic Research Project/Paper, an acronym used to refer to the major end of course assessment at this university where this research was undertaken. It is these texts that will be analysed in this research

**EiYS** – English in Your Subject, acronym used to describe subject specific knowledge facilitated by a Teaching Assistant in specific discipline that the pre-sessional L2 learner will be studying after the EAP course

**Stance** concerns writer-oriented featuresof interaction and refers to the ways academics annotate their texts to comment on the possible accuracy or credibility of a claim, the extent they want to commit themselves to it, or the attitude they want to convey to an entity, a proposition, or the reader

**Engagement** refers to ways writers bring readers into the discourse to anticipate their possible objections and engage them in appropriate ways

**Intersubjectivity** is a concept in Social Constructivism pertaining to shared understanding among individuals whose interaction is based on common interests and assumptions that constitutes the basis for their shared understanding of knowledge within a discourse community

**More Knowledgeable Other** (MKO)-is a term in Vygotsky Social Constructivism that explains how learners acquire knowledge from teachers, peers and other members of the discourse community that know more about discipline than they do

**Zone of Proximal Developmen**t (ZPD) is the difference between what a learner can do without help and what they cannot do without external help, concept was introduced by Vygotsky but later developed by other scholars

**Evidentiality** refers to the writer’s expressed commitment to the reliability of the propositions he or she presents and their potential impact on the reader

**Affect** involves a broad range of personal and professional attitudes towards what is said, including emotions,

perspectives and beliefs

**Presence** concerns the extent to which the writer chooses to project him or herself into a text

**Meta-Genre** the broad guidelines or (written or unwritten) regulations for the production of a genre

**ESP**- English for Specific Purposes

**EAP-** English for Academic Purposes

**EGAP**- English for General Academic Purposes

**ESAP**- English for Specific Academic Purposes

**L2**- Second language learner

**L1**- the first language of a learner learning a second language

**RP**- Reader Pronouns

**PP**- Personal Pronouns

**ASK**-Appeal to Shared Knowledge

**AM**- Attitude Marker

**B**- Boosters

**Q**-Questions

**H**-Hedges

**D**-Directives

**PA**-Personal Asides

**PSL**- Political Science Low (code name given to the student text for analysis purposes)

**PSM-** Political Science Middle

**PSH**- Political Science High

**CEL**-Civil Engineering Low

**CEM**- Civil Engineering Middle

**CEH**- Civil Engineering High

**Chapter 1**

**Introduction**

* 1. **Background**

This thesis seeks to explore how Second Language learners of English (L2) conceptualise and articulate ‘student voice’ in their Academic Research Projects (ARPs) at the end of their ten-week pre-sessional course at a UK university. This concept that I am calling student voice is closely related to what Ivanic (1998) calls identity in academic writing. The reason why I am interested in student voice and identity is, I teach academic writing to International students and one of the concepts that they find difficult to grasp is the notion of voice in academic writing. I have an English as a second language background, therefore, issues to do with second language learning captures my research interests. At a personal level, I have also encountered these voice issues on different sides of the academy, as a student, as well as a young academic, when I started teaching in Higher Education.

Because of my background, and how over time academic English has almost become my native form of ‘English’, when I see the struggles that my L2 learners have with some of these language issues, in a peculiar way, I sympathise with their language problems, as I see their challenges through the prism of how I worked through some of these issues over a long period of time. The language competence that I currently have, where academic English is almost my ‘default’ first language, involved being immersed in the practice of learning and using language in this context. Therefore, every time that I am teaching on a pre-sessional course, I always ask myself how realistic we are as a teaching team, in having the expectations that we have on what the students ought to have achieved by the end of a short intensive course.

At the university where this research was conducted, the Academic Research Project (ARP) contributes 60% of the total assessment that determines whether a student proceeds to study at this university in their chosen course or not. An Oral Presentation based on the research project contributes 20% of the assessment, which effectively means that 80% of the total assessment is related to the ARP. The final 20% is from a listening exam. It is apparent that a significant proportion of the assessment is based on this written project, which clearly demonstrates the importance attached to doing well in academic writing on the pre-sessional course. The implication of this type of assessment for L2 learners is that, for them to successfully complete their Pre-sessional English course, they must apply the academic writing conventions that will have been taught during the 10 week pre-sessional English course. An analytical reading of the descriptors that are used to award a grade for the ARP shows that there is explicit mention in failing Bands that “the writer has poor control over information from outside sources which mostly obscures his or her **voice**” (Band 4), the descriptors for Band 5 says, “the writer has made little or no attempt to control information from outside sources and no **voice** is discernible”. The implication of this is clear; if students do not articulate their voice clearly they are likely to fail their assessment. Having said this, the question that arises is: do these L2 learners understand what **student voice** is, and is it possible to acquire all the expected academic repertoires (Busch, 2012), writing conventions and competences for these L2 learners to be able to have “total control over information from outside sources in a variety of ways?” (ARP Descriptor: Band 1). My interpretation of this Band 1 descriptor quoted above in ‘voice’ terms, means the writer is in control of their sources such that the voice of his or her sources does not drown the voice of the L2 learner. It is important at this stage to underscore that the concept of voice is closely related to the notion of discourse (Ivanic, 1998). Discourse is a concept that acknowledges that members of a disciplinary community have particular ways that they use and manipulate language to achieve the purpose of their community (Foucault, 1971; Fairclough, 2014a). Therefore, the notion of student voice being explored here is about L2 language usage in an (English-Western) academic context.

Concisely, this thesis seeks to explore how after 10 weeks the students will be handling the concept of voice in their academic writing in terms of conception and articulation. It is important to underscore that this study does not seek to prove the effectiveness of pre-sessional English teaching or anything related to that. It seeks to establish the different levels of communicative voice competence that various students in the two disciplines would have by the end of the course, with a view to try and learn how this knowledge can help a course designer and an English for Academic purposes teacher, to better prepare L2 learners in understanding and appreciating the importance of student voice in academic writing in their disciplines.

The purpose of this research can best be presented in the words of Hirvela and Belcher (2001) when they argue that, what they are attempting to do in both their teaching and research is to “locate ‘the person behind the words’” in order to enhance efforts to “help students to engage voice in a meaningful ways” (p.85) The varying degrees of success in these learners’ understanding and articulation of student voice is also influenced by how they understand and apply academic writing conventions in English. It should be noted that the exploration of student voice cannot be done outside the totality of an appreciation of academic repertoires (Busch, 2012) in academic writing as a whole. The understanding of how L2 learners conceptualise and articulate voice will help me as teacher to find better ways of teaching the concept with a view to help learners present a distinct voice in their academic writing as dictated by their discourse communities (a concept described in this institution as English in Your Subject (EiYS)).

According to the consent forms that the respondents signed as part of the agreement to participate in this research, all the students had no historic extensive experience of using English in an academic context. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that for the greater part the academic English competence to be assessed at the end of the course will have been influenced by the teaching intervention during the pre-sessional course, but this is by no means saying that there are no other factors that might influence the competence of these L2 learners in academic writing. It must also be acknowledged that these learners at the time of their participation in this research project were living in the UK surrounded by the language they were studying on the pre-sessional course, this had the potential to improve their English competence at least at the speaking and listening levels, and maybe to some extent their academic writing as well. This exposure however might have had a direct impact on the researched aspect of student voice in academic writing, therefore one should not dismiss a possible influence of the above other historical language factors.

The main purpose of this research must be understood from a Course Design perspective within the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in general, and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in particular. Hutchinson and Waters, (1987) and Johns (1991) contend that a Needs Analysis is the most important stage in designing a language course, as it informs what the course content should cover, as dictated by the needs of the learners and the Target Situation or the professional expectation about where the language is going to be used by the learner. But, for the pre-sessional English course for this group of learners (and others in similar circumstances), the learners are not geographically present in the same place in order for a Needs Analysis of their English language needs to be determined for course design purposes. Therefore the Course Directors and designers have no means knowing precisely where their cohorts of learners are in terms of their English language needs.

The EAP Course Directors, Course Designers and teaching material producers use the Target Situation (the competency that the students are expected to have at the end of the course as the basis for course design) to determine their needs. This approach has problems because, a ‘Present Situation Analysis’ (Dudley Evans and St. John, 1998) will not have been carried out, which actually locates where each student is (in terms of language needs and level of intervention required), in terms of English language competency for the purpose of this research, their academic writing competence. The IELTS (International English Language Testing System) score in English language competence is an instrument that is used mainly for immigration purposes, but has also been accepted by the UK border Agency as a test to approximate the English language entry requirements for students applying to study at UK tertiary institutions. It is however not an apt or accurate measure of academic writing competence (ielts.org). Even though there are two IELTS tests, namely, IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training, the academic IELTS is not ‘academic enough’ for the purpose of postgraduate study (where English is used as a medium of instruction) at a UK university where the L2 learners receive instruction in English alongside their native speaker counterparts. Here is the remit for the writing task for IELTS Academic, and why I think it is inadequate for preparing an L2 learner to receive instruction in English at postgraduate level:

writing task of at least 150 words where the test taker must summarise, describe or explain a table, graph, chart, or diagram, (or) short essay task of at least 250 words. (IELTS guide, p.3)

The verb question-forming words (task words) in the above remit, are, “summarise, describe, or explain” are not the type of task words one will expect to see on assignment questions, especially in the humanities at level 7. Level 7 tasks ask students to critically evaluate, discuss and justify how certain concepts can be applied (Bailey, 2003). The EILTS test therefore fails at two basic levels, first at the rhetorical complexity as well as at the length (250 words) levels. In this regard therefore, what the IELTS test actually tests is not at the level of linguistic and rhetorical competence that is expected of these students when they enrol onto their post-graduate courses at UK universities.

Another aspect about the unreliability of the IELTS test is the wide disparity of the actual language competence of learners that have the same score. From my experience of teaching on the summer pre-sessional English course, it is common that students from different countries will have such a wide variation in competence within a specific skill, despite having the same IELTS score. Even students with the same score from the same country also exhibit wide variance in communicative competence. This is a clear indicator that the IELTS score is not a reliable indicator of practical language competence of these learners in the classroom, nor as a basis for course design.

This study must be understood as a form of a Needs Analysis in reverse formation, as it is undertaken at the end of the course rather than at the beginning. The idea is to use the results of this study as an instrument of informing a possible revision of the current teaching material as informed by the gaps in application found in student writing as they grapple with voice in academic writing within their Academic Research Project (ARP). Within the ESP model proposed by Munby (1978) what I am calling in this thesis a ‘reverse Needs Analysis’ is technically called an Exit Interview. Here is what a standard Need Analysis flow chart for a language course would look like.

Figure 1 **An illustration of** **EAP Needs Analysis for Course Design**



uefap.com

The purpose of an exit interview is to inform the reviewer of the course about the shortcomings for purposes of introducing necessary changes required in terms of meeting Needs of the Target Situation (Dudley Evans, 1998).

Target Situation Needs or professional expectation refers to the competence that the students are expected to have at the end of their language course (ibid). For these pre-sessional L2 learners, their target is to have academic writing competence that enables them to effectively undertake a postgraduate course at a British University where English is the language of teaching and academic writing. A closer scrutiny of the descriptors used for grading these ARPs indicates that in the passing Bands especially Bands 1 and 2, there is constant reference to “native-like proficiency” in a number of areas (Appendix 1). From a practical point of view, this expectation of native-like proficiency after a ten-week intervention seems too optimistic for the majority of learners having an IELTS score of around 5.5 or less in writing. The Target Situation requires a high level of competency where the writer is expected to clearly articulate their voice and be in control of the contribution from outside (secondary) sources. In the case of pre-sessional course design, since the initial ‘obligatory’ Needs Analysis would have been omitted for the reasons stated above, the outcome of this research will be a form of a ‘Needs Analysis’ in reverse emerging from an Exit Interview for purposes of informing Course Design in academic writing.

It has been established that there are challenges in trying design a course that addresses the deficiencies as well as the expectations of an student cohort that is physically present at the time of course design, the next section will explore the challenges that L2 learners face in grasping an elusive concept such as voice which is difficult to define.

**1.2 The problematic nature of defining student voice**

As alluded to earlier in this chapter, student voice, because of its abstract and elusive nature (Allison and Siew Mei, 2001), is not easy to define and more so, to teach to an L2 learner of English on an intensive course, who has so much to learn in a short time and also has to do ‘high stakes’ (Beck and Jeffery, 2007) assessments at the end of the course. This section will start by exploring three definitions of voice from three different scholars before explaining the problematic nature of the concept. Zhao (2012, p. 202) cites Stewart (1992) who defines voice simply as, “the expression of the essential individuality of a particular writer”. This definition is closely related to Bowden’s (1999, cited in Hirvela and Belcher 2001) who argues;

 Voice as metaphor has to do with feeling-hearing-sensing a person behind the written words, even if that person is just a persona created for a particular text or a certain reading. (p.85)

The second definition and the most critical for this research is from Matsuda and Tardy (2007, citing Matsuda, 2001) who argue,

voice is the amalgamative effect of the use of discursive and non-discursive features that language users choose, deliberately or otherwise, from socially available, yet ever changing repertoires. (p.235)

The third definition to be explored is from Hyland (2005) who sees voice in academic writing as, essentially an interaction between writers and readers. This definition from Hyland is the foundation of the conceptual framework to be used to analyse L2 learner’s texts (ARPs) in this study. It is this interaction between L2 writers on a pre-sessional course and their assessors (EAP practitioners) that this study seeks to interrogate.

Stewart’s definition underscores that voice is an expression of the individuality of a particular writer. If this is a valid way of defining voice, the question that arises is, is it feasible to try and assess individuality since people express individuality differently? If it is not possible to measure individuality then the best thing might only be to encourage its expression rather than reward or punish its improper use or absence. This is an issue that is at the centre of this research and will be explored in the analysis section of this thesis.

A critical look at Matsuda’s definition reveals that voice is not one distinct phenomenon that can be singled out, but, an amalgamative effect of the use of discursive and non-discursive features that produce this concept called voice. Therefore, if voice is not a feature that can be singled out, but the cumulative or combined *effect* of a number of rhetorical features carefully crafted, it entails that it is not an easy concept for EAP teachers to teach and more so, a difficult concept for L2 learners to understand as it requires piecing together various “discursive and non-discursive features” to produce expected voice in their academic writing. Using the same argument, it should not be an easy task for EAP practitioners to assess the presence and possible effect of a number of rhetorical features in the context of a single end-of-course assessment.

The implications for the definition of student voice from Hyland, (introduced above) are far reaching, if voice in academic writing is essentially the interaction of the ‘worlds’ of the writer and of the reader, it means that, voice, is the interpretation of how the reader understands what the student writer has communicated in a written text. The reader’s interpretation of the student’s written text is influenced or informed by the reader’s own worldview and the various discourses that have shaped that individual (Foucault, 1971), irrespective of what the writer has actually presented in a written text. Therefore, if voice is essentially an interpretation of how the reader decodes the written message from their own perspective, trying to understand voice is therefore a complex and daunting task as it involves ‘the reader interface’ as explained in Hyland’s 2005 framework. Even after using this Hyland framework, which Zhao (2012) described as ‘comprehensive’, some questions still remain unanswered about how voice can best be understood in the teaching and learning contexts. This research is a further attempt to finding insights of exploring ways of understanding L2 student voice in academic writing for both teacher and learner.

**1.3 The importance of writing in English for Academic Purposes (EAP)**

EAP is concerned with the teaching and learning of four major study skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing (Dudley-Evans and St. Joan, 1998; Hyland 2013). Of these four skills, writing is arguably the most important, as the majority of academic assessments such as reports, essays, dissertations and theses are assessed in written form. Therefore, the importance of mastering academic writing conventions cannot be overemphasised in academia, because the vast majority of communication in the process of knowledge creation and assessment is through student written assignments. This is why this research focuses on student voice in academic writing. On the importance of writing in academia, Rahimivand and Kuhi (2014), cite Canagarajah, (2002) who argues that:

One of the most important social practises in the academy is writing. When social interactions occur in the academic community, text is a place where knowledge and writer’s identities are constructed, negotiated and created. (p.1492)

Even though Rahimivand and Kuhi were describing writing in the context of academic scholars rather than post-graduate students, their comments about the importance of writing for the academy, which is what some of the post-graduate students are being trained for remains the same. The major emphasis in academic writing on a pre-sessional English course is about how L2 learners can acquire the conventions of academic writing to enable them to study their chosen discipline in English (Bailey, 2003). The construction, negotiation and creation of knowledge is specific to discourse communities in a given cultural context (Coffin and Donohue ,2014). Therefore one cannot discuss ways of knowing without defining the context of the production of this knowledge.

Zhu (2004), cites Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, (1991) who argue that:

students entering academic disciplines need a specialized literacy that consists of the ability to use discipline-specific rhetorical and linguistic conventions to serve their purposes as writers, (p. 19)

The need to have a specialised literacy or communicative repertoires (Rhymes, 2010; Busch, 2012) is what makes the issue of student voice a concept worth exploring given the salience of writing to knowledge acquisition and dissemination to academia. In their bid to learn the rhetorical and linguistic conventions that serves them in their academic writing endeavours, L2 learners have to acquire the skills needed in their discourse communities as receptors and creators of knowledge. These rhetorical and linguistic conventions are not the same in every language and culture, therefore the L2 learners have to be initiated into their discourse communities in English, and for learners in this sample, this mediation is done through the EAP pre-sessional course.

**1:4 Importance of voice in Academic Writing**

When Students are being assessed (through a written piece) at postgraduate level, they are not merely expected to regurgitate the ideas of the sources that they consult but to critically engage (Benesch, 1999) with them in terms of interrogating the ideas from their sources through a form of self-representation (student voice), where the learner puts across his or her views about the issues under discussion in order to contribute to the academic debate in their field of study (Hyland, 2002a). But the form that this self-representation ought to take is not clearly defined by course material producers or EAP teachers even though learner voice is expected and highly valued (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004). This makes the articulation of voice by L2 learners a problematic concept (Elbow, 2007). Firstly, it is an abstract concept such that some course designers and even teachers struggle to pinpoint exactly what it is (Crossley and McNamara, 2011) let alone have clear strategies of teaching the concept, but that does not by any means diminish its importance for new entrants (L2 learners) in their new discourse community (Ivanic and Camps, 2001; Hyland, 2002a).

Voice is important in academic writing as it marks individuality and identity (Ivanic, 1998), it offers that special, personal critical perspective that distinguishes one student from another, like a fingerprint, it is an attribute that the academy looks for especially from their post-graduate students (Allison and Siew Mei, 2001). The ability to project a clear student voice in academic writing enables students to align fully or partially, contradict and critically examine the views of experts and scholars in the field as they contribute to the debates that take place in their field (ibid). Because of the critical significance of voice in an L2 learner’s academic career, it is a concept worth exploring (Ivanic and Camps, 2001). As pre-sessional learners approach the end of their summer pre-sessional English course, they are expected to be ready (at the language level) to join their native speaker counterparts at post-graduate level. But the concern of this study is to establish, to what extent these L2 learners from diverse backgrounds and language abilities would have managed to conceptualise this rather ‘elusive’ but important concept in academic writing at the end of a ten-week pre-sessional course.

**1.5 Justification**

The concept of voice in academic writing has been a subject of serious academic debate with some scholars arguing that it is over-rated (Stapleton, 2002; Helms-Park and Stapleton 2003) and other scholars arguing that it is a key and vital concept in academic writing and needs to be treated as such (Zhao and Llosa, 2007; Matsuda and Tardy, 2007; Hyland, 2008 and Zhao, 2012) among others. Helms Park and Stapleton (2003, p.245) argue that their study on L2 learner’s writing about a Canadian Immigration policy did not find any correlation between “voice intensity” and “overall quality”. Their arguments have, however, been severely criticised for poor choice of subject and the way it was conducted by scholars that contend that voice is important. The majority of other scholars in this debate listed above, argue that voice remains a key element in the conventions of academic writing and therefore deserves to be at the centre of debates surrounding academic writing. I find this argument quite compelling as an EAP practitioner who teaches on such pre-sessional English courses and this explains my interest in this concept as a practitioner.

Voice remains an important aspect that gives students identity throughout their academic career, so arguing that it is ‘overstated’ (Stapleton 2002) will not diminish its value in academic writing. Because the concept of voice is abstract in nature, if L2 learners fail to grasp it during their pre-sessional course, it is highly likely that they will continue to struggle with it in their studies as they might not have any specialist language support as they progress with their studies at a UK university. Their subject/discipline specific lecturers and instructors have no time to do remedial language work with these students as they focus mainly on content. Since voice is an integral part of academic writing, it probably explains why it is included in the descriptors at this highly rated university even though it has been characterised in scholarly papers and texts as an elusive and slippery concept.

**1.6 Situating the research in my area of practice**

It is important at this stage to explain what a pre-sessional English course is, and what it seeks to achieve for L2 learners that are preparing to join an academic discipline of their choice and have been granted a conditional offer, subject to their successful completion of the pre-sessional English course. It is important to underscore that these L2 learners would have been given an unconditional offer if their competence in English in all the four major skills, reading, speaking, listening and writing had been adequate. A pre-sessional English course needs to be understood as a form of remedial intervention. In a pre-sessional English course, students learn the English language skills that enable them to study their discipline of choice (Green, 2007). The major form of assessment on the pre-sessional course, at this institution, is a writing assessment in the form of an Academic Research Paper (ARP).

The Academic Research Paper accounts for 60% of the overall assessment. Commenting on the critical importance of writing for L2 writers of Academic English, Hyland (2013) argues,

[writing] is the principal means of establishing a visible and measurable form of quality control while developing skills of disciplinary appropriate description, argument, and critique. A key aspect of disciplinary acculturation involves the gradual acquisition of both the socially recognised conventions of writing and the established practices of knowledge construction. (p.243)

This assertion from Hyland emphasises the importance of writing as a skill for these learners. What is clear from the argument above is that, for L2 learners to function appropriately in their new discourse community, they should be able to describe, argue and critique sources they use through a process of gradual acquisition of, “socially recognised conventions” of knowledge making. This means students have to acquire the academic writing genre conventions by mirroring experts (Swales, 1990) as they negotiate themselves into a new discourse community. The second and major point from the above quote is that students should endeavour to follow, “established practices of knowledge construction”. What this means is that, the L2 learner cannot introduce new ways of presenting knowledge in their discourse community but should follow the communication and language conventions that have been created over time by experts in the discourse community. Therefore, the rhetorical repertoires for communicating in academic writing are convention bound (Swales, 1990) and new entrants have to adopt the disciplinary culture and new ways of communicating that are ‘prescribed’ by this specialised genre (Bhatia, 2012).

**1.7 Research Questions**

The main and overarching research question for this study will be:

How do Higher Education L2 learners conceptualise and articulate voice in their academic writing in the Academic Research Paper?

The subsidiary questions are as follows:

(a) Is there a relationship between strong student voice and quality in L2 academic writing?

(b) Are there major differences between how the students project voice in the two disciplines?

(c) Are there features in the student’s writing that suggest that their writing and engaging with voice is inhibited by the writing traditions in their first language and culture?

(d) To what extent do the two high scoring ARPs in the two disciplines fall short of the expectations in the descriptors (marking descriptors of the ARP from this Midlands university where this research was carried out) in terms of a voice that exhibits so called native-like proficiency (see band 1 and 2 from the marking descriptor)

(e) What can be learnt from the results of this research for pedagogic purposes?

 (f) Are there areas where L2 learners face challenges in terms of trying to project their voice in academic writing? What interventions, if any can be put in place by course designers, directors and teachers to try and mitigate the challenges that L2 learners face when attempting to articulate voice in academic writing?

One issue that I need to make clear from the onset is that this thesis is not about investigating the problems that L2 learners have with academic writing conventions in English, in general. This area has been thoroughly researched and several books and papers have been written on this. What this thesis seeks to do though is to single out the issue of student voice as being central to the other issues that revolve around academic writing conventions. Therefore, the next few paragraphs seek to give a broad and brief overview of the issues surrounding student voice.

L2 students have to contend with a number of problems as they try to communicate in the new language (English). Ballard and Clancy (1991) put the language problems faced by L2 learners into three broad categories.

problems with English (largely interpreted in terms of surface language correctness); problems with the ways in which ideas are structured and presented (the issue of rhetorical styles); and, most importantly but least easily recognised, problems arising from a disjunction between the attitudes to knowledge held by students and the assumptions about appropriateness of different (culturally shaped) attitudes to knowledge held by staff who are now assessing their academic work. (p. 20)

From this quote it is clear that L2 learners have many issues to contend with in being assessed in a new language and culture. The last two areas are in the domain of how voice is conceptualised and articulated. The third problem is at the centre of what students struggle with because of the “…disjunction between the attitudes to knowledge held by students and the assumptions about appropriateness of different (culturally shaped) attitudes…” of understanding how knowledge has to be communicated in academic writing.

Epistemological views are steeped in the culture of the learners, so when one moves into a new culture and uses a new language, what readers expect in a piece of academic writing becomes different to what an L2 learner is used to communicating knowledge in their native language and culture (Connor, 2002). In some cultures, the issue of voice and critical thinking are not emphasised in the same way as they are in ‘Western’ English academic writing (Preiss et al., 2013). Therefore, as L2 learners contend with the new language, they are also contending with this disjunction between their L1 cultures and the L2 regarding what knowledge is, as well as struggling with new structural patterns in terms of its presentation (Quinn, 2012). Therefore, knowledge creation, testing and assessment are best understood in a cultural context shaped by the way language is used in a particular discourse as governed by the rules of a given discourse community (Benwel and Stokoe, 2006; Coffin and Donohue, 2014). As a result, all these issues have to be put into proper perspective when carrying out this research.

**1.8 Conclusion**

This study is expected to reveal insights into ways L2 learners understand the concept of voice in academic writing in English. It is also expected to highlight the challenges that they might be facing when applying these elusive conventions into their writing. Insights into the challenges that students face might help in making recommendations about pedagogical strategies that could be used to understand these concepts and improve the way they are learnt by L2 learners. It is hoped that after the analysis of L2 research papers in this study, there will be a clearer picture about the nature of the relationship between the presentation of a strong student voice and overall quality in the assessment of L2 written assignments. It is also expected that this research will shed more light on how other academic writing conventions relate with discursive and non-discursive features that shape the rhetoric of what is being called ‘student voice’ in L2 academic writing.

The next chapter explores the literature and debates around the conception and articulation of student voice by L2 learners.

**Chapter 2**

**Literature Review**

**2.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins by exploring the major debates and issues around the notion of student voice and identity in academic writing during the past three decades, then proceeds to analyse a number of definitions on what student voice is. From this point, it will introduce how the commodification and marketization of Higher Education (Judson and Taylor, 2014) has led to the proliferation of English pre-sessional courses at most UK Universities. This leads to the discussion on the importance of student voice in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses, especially in academic writing. The next section highlights the importance of student voice in academic writing and how student voice is fundamental in in terms of how L2 learners develop critical thinking skills. This section ends by discussing the importance of academic writing to Academic Repertoires (Busch, 2012) as a whole.

The next section will briefly introduce the Hyland (2005) perception of voice in academic writing. The chapter will then analyse Gemmell’s (2008) reasons as to why academics give students writing tasks. The six reasons extrapolated from Gemmell are then analysed in relation to the concept of student voice. The next section will discuss the concept of student voice as it relates to intertextuality and referencing, issues that are at the heart of establishing scholarship in academia.

The final part of the Literature Review will then proceed to explore Foucault’s notion of the power of discourses in terms of ideology at the pedagogical level, and how voice is embedded in the ontology and epistemology of any educational system (Kanakri, 2015). The discussion will move on to explore how the concept of voice is a significant in terms of establishing an L2 writer as a member of the discourse community of academic writing. The last section of this chapter will explore the importance of culture and context of L2 learners and how this interfaces with L2 learner struggles with the acquisition of a western academic student voice. An understanding of Contrastive Rhetoric is further investigated with the view to finding how it relates with the academic and ideological background of L2 learners. This knowledge may be used by EAP teachers to approach the teaching of voice differently, if these factors have a bearing on how L2 students conceive voice from their historical, ontological and epistemological background, this research will explore whether there is a difference in terms of how this concept of voice is conceptualised in academic writing in English (which is from a different culture).

**2.2 Background to the debate on student voice in Academic Writing**

The main reason for embarking on this research was to explore more pedagogical insights that may aid EAP teachers to have a clearer understanding of the concept of student voice in academic writing in order to help L2 learners have a better grasp of the concept on pre-sessional intensive English courses in the context of UK universities. Zhao (2012) was equally concerned about the need for a study that informs EAP practitioners about the way voice can be better understood when he argues,

While theoretical conceptualisations of voice proliferate in the literature, no empirical study has yet been done to translate any of these theoretical, often also rather abstract, conceptions of voice into research friendly instruments or pedagogically useful tools that writing researchers and teachers could employ to either facilitate empirical research or inform writing pedagogy for the teaching and learning of voice. (p.203)

Dornyei (2007, citing McKay, 2006) contends that research should not be for its own sake, but it should serve a practical purpose, he argues, research is important for practitioners for these reasons:

For teachers, a primary reason for doing research is to become more effective teachers. Research contributes to more effective teaching, not by offering definitive answers to pedagogical questions, but rather by providing new insights into the teaching and learning process. (p.1)

Therefore, a clear analysis and understanding of how L2 learners articulate and conceptualise the notion of voice might, to some extent, help EAP practitioners to obtain a clearer understanding of how they should teach this concept, which is crucial in terms of developing a learner’s critical perception about debates that take place in their chosen field of study (Durkin, 2008).

What makes a field of study interesting is how scholars engage in robust debate about concepts that are considered important within a given discourse community (Carr, 2000). This is why universities in the UK and those in the ‘English speaking world’ (USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) are not keen to recruit students without a certain minimum ability in the English language on their degree programmes, as they are aware that without a certain level of competence in the language, these students will not possess adequate linguistic repertoires (Busch, 2012) to engage in contemporary debates in their field of study that allows them to engage in such debates at an expected level of critical engagement (Benesch, 1999), especially at postgraduate level. There is also another issue that is putting pressure on universities in the English world to recruit more international students. Offering a degree programme to international students has become ‘big business’ for universities as international students are willing to pay significantly more in tuition fees in comparison to local students to obtain a degree from one of these universities (Judson and Taylor, 2014). What this means is, the more international students a university has on its enrolment records, the better its bank balance is. Therefore, Universities are pushing for more enrolment of international students for business purposes.

Ivanic (1998) describes this business side to education as marketization, corporatisation and commodification of education. This has resulted in massive enrolments of students who do not meet the basic English language requirements onto pre-sessional English courses on a conditional offer at British universities (Jordan, 2002; Ryan, 2011). The conditional offer would be subject to the L2 learner obtaining a satisfactory competence grade in academic English. Consequently, these intensive pre-sessional courses are designed to ‘upgrade’ these L2 learner’s English level within a limited time, typically ranging from 4 to 15 weeks across most universities in the UK, before they get an unconditional offer to enrol and study alongside their native English speaker counterparts on their chosen degree programmes (Banerjee and Wall, 2006).

Different departments/schools or faculties within UK universities are concerned about the level of English of their new international students and look up to EAP practitioners to provide ‘a quick fix’ solution in a limited time (Banerjee and Wall, 2006). Having students who have the ability to have their voice heard is one of the most cherished skills in the academy, as students are encouraged to be critical of the information that they use from diverse sources (Canagarajah, 2002; Choy and Cheah, 2009). Critical Thinking is of the essence and has been defined by Scriven and Paul (2003) as:

“the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action”. (para.1)

Critical Thinking is such an important aspect of training at post-graduate level as it teaches students not to accept ideas at face value, in order to develop an intellectual capacity of inquiry, which once mastered, is the mark of an accomplished graduate in academia (Choy and Cheah, 2009). One crucial link between critical thinking and language competence emanates from the fact that when a student has poor academic writing skills, the assessor will not know how competent the assessed student is (content wise), as this might be conflated with poor language competence (Elander et al., 2006). This is the reason why these L2 learners are required by their subsequent universities to upgrade their language skills, so as to showcase their critical thinking ability (Benesch, 1999) when they have acquired adequate communicative repertoires to do this (Rhymes, 2010). Within ten weeks, they are expected to have a broad understanding of the conventions of academic writing in general, alongside an understanding of this notion called student voice as they write their final written assessment (see grading criteria).

**2.3** **The importance of writing in academia**

The way knowledge is assessed in Higher Education has been changing over decades. Currently, students are expected to critically engage with the sources they read and make a conscious personal contribution to the debates taking place in their discipline and discourse community (Jordan 2002). Hyland (2005) captures this shift from the previous academic endeavour of presenting an academic argument that was objective and impersonal to the current shift where it is acceptable if not desirable that the personal voice of the writer should be distinct. Hyland argues:

Over the past decade or so, academic writing has gradually lost its traditional tag as an objective, faceless and impersonal form of discourse and come to be seen as a persuasive endeavour involving interaction between writers and readers. (p.173)

Effectively, this means the importance of the voice of the writer has been elevated in academic writing so that writing that lacks that distinct, interactive personal voice is not highly regarded but viewed as lacking that personal appeal that makes it a unique personal contribution (ibid). This explains why the word ‘critical’ has become almost synonymous with academic writing tasks at postgraduate level (Besesch, 1999; Egege and Kutieleh, 2004). When academics request their students to ‘critically’ engage in their academic writing, they need to perceive a unique student voice and an individual opinion in the debates and arguments being presented (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004, Preiss et al., 2013). Therefore, whilst the term ‘voice’ might not necessarily appear all the time in the descriptors (on academic writing, or writing assignments for H.E. Students) the concept will be tacitly implied in one form or other as will be explained later using Gemmell, (2008).

For the L2 learner then, the ability to manipulate language in order to achieve this critical rhetorical endeavour (Matsuda and Tardy, 2007) is paramount for faculty academics. It also explains why they require the pre-sessional L2 learners to have sufficient language skills to be able to present a distinct student voice in their academic writing (Egege and Kutieleh 2004; Gemmell 2008; Zhu, 2004). An examination of just two parameters of ‘Stance’ and ‘Engagement’ in the Hyland (2005) framework of voice, clearly shows that ‘student voice’ is a very complex concept (even for native speakers) as it involves the manipulation of complex rhetorical strategies (Matsuda and Tardy, 2007). Hyland’s (2005) voice framework helps to explain how **Hedges**, **Boosters, Attitude markers, Self-mention, Reader mention, Directives, Personal asides, Directives** and manipulation of **Questions** in expressing student voice in academic writing. These parameters will be explored in detail in Chapter 3.

Hyland (2005) captures the centrality of language and the ability of writers to manipulate rhetorical moves needed to project a personal interpretation of the arguments in academic writing. He contends:

Writers seek to offer a credible representation of themselves and their work by claiming solidarity with readers, evaluating their material and acknowledging alternative views, so that controlling the level of personality in a text becomes central to building a convincing argument. (p.173)

Even though Hyland here is referring to academic writers in the sense of seasoned scholars who write academic articles and publish academic textbooks, it is equally applicable to L2 writers (learners) on a pre-sessional English course. As some of these academics could be the readers/assessors that these L2 learners will be writing for in the pre-sessional context and in their discipline when they complete the pre-sessional programme, they are in the same category as scholars that write academic articles. Instructors and lectures of L2 learner’s use authentic texts (academic articles) as a standard of what academic writing ought to be (Henry and Roseberry, 1998). L2 learners as ‘initiates’ to academic writing are supposed to model their writing on the work of these ‘experts’ in their discourse community (Swales, 1990, Swales and Feak, 1994). Therefore, what is key in Hyland’s argument is that, the presence of a unique student voice, is what makes an academic argument have a persuasive personal academic appeal and value.

Gemmell (2008) describes what faculty academics look for in written assignments succinctly.

He neatly summarises the reasons from a survey conducted at the University of California,

as follows:

College faculty assign writing to get to know how students think, to help students engage critically and thoughtfully with course readings, to demonstrate what students understand from lectures, to structure and guide their inquiry, to encourage independent thinking, and to invite them into the on-going intellectual dialogue that characterizes higher education. (p. 65)

 A critical reading of the six reasons raised in the above quotation on why Higher Education Lecturers give their students written assignments situates the concept of voice as being at the centre of all the six points above, this shows that the expression of student voice is critical to what students are expected to demonstrate or exhibit in their writing even though it might not be explicitly mentioned (Ivanic and Camps, 2001). The implication of this argument about student voice is clear, it means, it is not merely a peripheral attribute in academic writing (including ARPs) but it is at the centre of what students have to do in in their academic writing (Ivanic, 2001; Hyland, 2002a; Gemmell, 2008).

To further illustrate the above argument, assuming that these six points (mentioned above) were an exhaustive list of what faculty staff expect in student’s writing, it would mean that 100% of what instructors and lecturers are looking for has voice as an integral part of it. Tabulating the above quotation in relation to student voice makes the point easier to appreciate. Here is a visual presentation of the argument.

Table 1 **How central voice is to the genre of academic writing**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **What students are expected to do in their writing assignments at University** | **Is student voice a major part of it?** |
| 1. get to know how students think
 | Definitely |
| 1. to help students engage critically and thoughtfully with course readings
 | Definitely |
| 1. to demonstrate what students understand from lectures
 | Definitely |
| 1. to structure and guide their inquiry
 | Yes |
| 1. to encourage independent thinking
 | Definitely |
| 1. to invite them into the on-going intellectual dialogue
 | Definitely |

Idea adapted from Gemmell, 2008

Therefore, whether the notion of voice is explicitly mentioned in the descriptors or not, the expectations of faculty staff who read the L2 learner’s work will be to see voice issues addressed in the context of the categories discussed in the table above.

For me, the most intriguing aspect of student voice from the table above is point 6, which invites students to engage in on-going intellectual dialogue, which is referred to elsewhere in the literature as the ability for students to enter into an ‘intellectual debate’ or ‘ongoing conversation’, that was started by scholars in their field in the ‘academic past’ of any given discipline (Hyland, 2002a). Commenting on the issue of students entering an academic debate like it were a natural conversation, Thonney (2011) evokes Kresteva’s notion of intertextuality as follows:

When academics write, they join a conversation. To show they understand this, they refer to what others have already written about their subject. (p. 349)

When L2 learners join their new discourse community in English, they join the conversation by modelling their communication style, that is, writing in the style of experts already in the conversation (Bhatia, 2004). Further exploration of the notion of ‘an academic conversation’ and how it relates to student voice will be explored a little deeper in ensuing paragraphs.

**2.4 Voice and Intertextuality**

Intertextuality is a concept that was developed by Kristeva (2002), who argues that in academia, texts are made of other texts, and texts cannot be created outside the context of other texts in the same discourse community. Whitney (2011) clearly captures the overlap between the notions of voice and intertextuality when he defines voice as the:

successful integration of the words and ideas of others, without loss of one’s own authority over the ideas, that is called for when writing in an academic voice. (p.187)

An interesting aspect of this definition lie in how it does not define student voice as being separate from the voices from other sources that the student learner or writer has read, but it expresses the concept of student voice as the ability to present the other voices in a new context but maintain authority in the way in which these voices are projected (ibid). This way of conceptualising voice invokes the idea of ‘intertextuality’, and how intertextuality relates to the notion of discourse community (Spack, 1988; Ivanic, 1998) in the voice discussion. This is an intriguing way of conceptualising the notion of voice. What emerges here is a fresh perspective that looks at voice as a fusion or weaving of voices from past encounters (Kristeva, 2002: Foucault, 1971). Alfaro (1996) developing Kristeva’s notion of intertextuality argues:

The concept of intertextuality requires, therefore, that we understand texts not as self-contained systems but as differential and historical, as traces and tracings of otherness, since they are shaped by the repletion and transformation of other textual structures. (p.268)

When this argument is understood in the context of discourses ‘making’ the writer who they are (Foucault, 1971), the concept of student voice begins to emerge in a different pedagogic dimension. If one’s identity as a writer comes from the discourses that one has encountered, historically over a period of time (ibid), it explains why ‘more knowledgeable others’ in the discourse community find it easy to project their voice with authority within their discourse community, unlike new entrants (Prawat and Floden, 1994). As a result, it is easy for experts to project a view and a voice that is authoritative in their writing (Benwel and Stokoe, 2006). The opposite, it could be argued, is true for L2 learners on a pre-sessional course, they are new entrants to this discourse community in English and for some of these L2 learners, it would be their first time writing a serious piece of academic writing of a considerable length in English and are trying to find their academic voice as well (Elander et al., 2006) in the midst of other academic voices in a ‘new discourse community’ (Banerjee and Wall, 2006).

Whitney (2011) contends that voice is created by the way we present ideas or knowledge where the writer retains authority over how the ideas are presented. This argument supports the notion that the concept of voice lies in the realm of rhetorical manipulation of language (Matsuda and Tardy, 2007) where L2 learners present their academic arguments in a Research Project as part of their final assessment. ‘Writing with authority’ is a stylistic feature similar to flair, strictly speaking, something that cannot be taught but it comes with considerable exposure and practice over a period of time, (Lillis, 2001; Stewart, 1992) where ten weeks of tuition in academic discourse is arguably not enough to develop this sort of writing with authority (Whitney, 2011).

Berkenkotter and Huckin (2009) take the concept of intertextuality to another level when they argue that new research adds to knowledge within a discipline only if it can be discussed and analysed in the context of old information that already exists in the discipline. Therefore, disciplinary knowledge and conventions are key in the way that new knowledge can be negotiated into a discipline (Lillis, 2001; Kim, 2001), it has to conform to the unwritten rules about how knowledge is communicated within a discipline or a genre (Swales, 1990). Therefore, genre knowledge is key in terms of the epistemology of a discipline. Presentation of knowledge cannot be divorced from the language that is used to present this knowledge (Scovel, 1994). As argued earlier in this work that language is an embodiment of culture (ibid). The choice to use a particular language as the language of education at a particular point in the history of any community has significant ideological, historical and political ramifications (Fairclough, 2014a). Issues to do with language and power are usually underplayed because of the social dominance that is carried by the influential group or class of people that influence the adoption of such decisions regarding what language is to be used as the language of education at a particular period in the history of a given community, whether academic or social (Berthoud and Ludi, 2011). Therefore, in terms of intertextuality the text analysis will be interested in exploring whether the conventions that will be exhibited in these texts is a result of their historical epistemological connections or the recent past texts (in English) that is influencing the voice rhetorical patterns manifest in the text, given the Foucauldian view that people are products of the historical texts that created them.

**2.5 Foucault and the power of discourses**

Jones (1993) summarises the Foucauldian view of discourse in ways that are interesting in terms of how L2 learners conceptualise and articulate voice in academic writing. Foucault does not consider language in terms of discrete entities such as English, French or Spanish but his notion of language is at the discourse level (ibid). Foucault’s conceptualisation of discourse is important in the exploration of student voice for L2 learners on a pre-sessional EAP course for these reasons: Jones (1993) argues;

He [Foucault] is concerned to show how specific ways of thinking and talking about aspects of the world are forms of knowledge which work like languages. He calls such ‘languages’ - such ways of thinking/talking- discourses…. A discourse provides us with a way of knowing about reality; because we can only think/talk at all by using a discourse of one kind or another, a discourse provides us with our knowledge about the world. Furthermore, since we are compelled to know by means of discourses, they exercise power over us. Who we are – what we think, what we know, and what we talk about – is produced by various discourses we encounter and use. (p. 106)

What is interesting in Foucault’s concept of discourse is that it combines the concepts of ontology and epistemology (Sikes, 2004) into this single notion called discourse. The implications for voice from this perspective are immense. If the way reality and knowledge is conceptualised is embedded in the concept of discourse (Ivanic, 1998), it means knowledge acquired on a particular subject (for instance engineering) in Chinese Mandarin might not conceptually be necessarily the same if that knowledge was acquired in British English in the UK (in a different culture) (Connor, 2002; Quinn, 2012). In Social constructivist terms, learning and knowledge creation are closely related to how the learner interacts with the environment, meaning that learning is situated in a particular context (Kim, 2001).

Therefore, if the concept of voice and how it is conceptualised and articulated in academic writing are steeped in discourse (Ivanic, 1998), this means that the kind of voice that EAP teachers expect to see from an L2 learner in their academic writing after 10 weeks of tuition in English is not necessarily the discrete ‘individual student voice’ concept as it is understood in the western sense of academic writing (Norton, 1997), but it is a student voice heavily influenced by the other discourses that have been part of the education of these learners in different cultural settings (Leffa, 2002; Quinn, 2012). Who these students are, how they think, what they know and how they communicate what they know (verbal and written) is shaped by the discourses they have encountered that makes them who they currently are (Foucault, 1971). The tuition they have had in the summer English pre-sessional course is a very small fraction of all those discourses that have created them over the years. When this is viewed through the prism of Foucault’s argument about discourses creating people and having power over them, what they have learnt from the pre-sessional course is just a small fraction of the discourses that have created them up to this stage in their lives. The discourses that have created these L2 learner’s therefore, theoretically ought to have a profound influence on the L2 learner’s rhetorical style in academic writing in English (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995).

A more realistic way of anticipating how voice will be projected in L2 academic writing is to think of it as a hybridised discourse (Bizzell, 1999), shaped by all the discourses that have influenced these L2 learners from when they started learning, up to their current course in English at a UK university. It is to be expected that the way L2 learners project their voice could be best be understood from their historical academic knowledge landscape (Connor, 2002; Quinn, 2012), as this is what has shaped their ontological and epistemological backgrounds up to the present (Sikes, 2004). In post-structuralist terms, individuals are constituted by discourses. (Jones, 1993)

Foucault believes that the notion of discourse or discursive practices cannot be separated from power (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995). He argues that there is a link between the formation of new discourses and how these discourses come to be what they are in the historical context in which they are developed, and why they were conventionalised in a particular way. Foucault argues that this is linked to how people with power influence how certain discourses have to be, at specific junctures in history. For purposes of this research, the development of English as the world’s lingua franca comes into play (Leffa, 2002, Mustapha, 2014). It will logically be followed by how English (western) academic writing has developed into what it is today, and how the notion of critical thinking (Preiss et al., 2013), led to the expectation that students projecting their individual voice is central to academic writing (Ivanic and Camps, 2001).

Jones (1993) summarises Foucault’s link between power and discourse this way:

For Foucault then, power is exercised in two ways. Firstly, it is exercised in order that a discourse will come into being. Secondly, it is exercised by a discourse, since it constitutes identity – it determines what people think and know, and therefore act. So for Foucault, discursive practices are the root of social life; the exercise of power through discourse is everywhere. (p.107)

Britain’s imperial and colonial history of the 18th century made English the language of choice for academic writing and international publication in academia (Phillipson, 2008). This discourse, called academic writing in English is now being used to prescribe how knowledge should be created and communicated for worldwide academic consumption (Leffa, 2002). Consequently, the genre of academic writing in English is as a discourse that is controlling the way people think, communicate and view the world (Jones, 2003). When EAP practitioners are teaching academic writing conventions using the English language, they are actually helping to enforce a particular hegemonic view of communicating in academia (Bhatia, 2004). In other words, knowledge is perceived, created and articulated as a western construct, through the use of the English language, using a western perception of constructing reality and knowledge as the default ‘norm’ (Norton, 1997). In other words, the demand for student voice to appear in L2 academic writing is a way of maintaining, and to some extent enforcing this westernised paradigm of academia (Phillipson, 2008), a form of ‘banal nationalism’. (Billig, 1995)

Banal nationalism, according to Billig, is contained in the way people use language in everyday activities and the media, using subtle symbols and language which carries national identity and ethos as well as uphold it (ibid). It is a form of linguistic and cultural imperialism which invokes the notion of social dominance in very subtle ways (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). The way these language issues are part of the language and power dynamics is so covert that some of the players in the pedagogic paradigm participate on either side of the divide (teachers and students) without being conscious of the power of language in perpetuating social dominance (Fairclough, 2014a). It is highly likely that most of the L2 learners will be unaware of the linguistic hegemony and ideological issues at stake when they learn English at a pre-sessional course at a UK university, or when they use English as the language of education after the pre-sessional course (Leffa, 2002).

Foucault (1971, p.147) has another concept that he describes as the “social appropriation of discourse”. In this social appropriation of discourse, the language of education ends up with certain discourse structures that become almost a default standard for people who have an education akin to Busch’s (2012) notion of linguistic repertoires. This discourse of education allows an educated person to feel as though they have a privileged position of power over those that do not have the same linguistic repertoires (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). Foucault contends:

“Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and powers it carries with it”. (p. 147)

In a very broad sense, the nature of the discourse referred to as English academic writing is based on conventions on how voice needs to be projected, which cannot be divorced from the western worldview (Mustapha, 2014). Conversation rules or academic writing conventions are not the same across cultures (Kaplan, 1966; Severino, 1993).

At another level, when one analyses the apparent disregard of the L2’s learner’s previous linguistic experience (in other languages) in terms of creating and articulating knowledge in academic writing (Whitney, 2011), it would appear as if the discourse community of academic writing exists completely outside of the influence of the L2 learner’s historical, ideological, philosophical and theoretical approaches acquired from childhood to the present. Using Foucault’s (1971) argument that discourses shape who we are, it would be disingenuous to think that all the historical discourses that these learners have in their repertoire will count for nothing when they learn academic writing in English. Therefore, arguing that the only relevant approach for every student irrespective of their historical worldview should be the ‘western’ English academic writing conventions, this constitutes a parochial sense of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995). As a result of these circumstances, for one to enter the ‘mainstream’ of global scholarship one needs to write or publish in English, therefore English has become academia’s ‘lingua franca’ by default (Phillipson, 2008). This is the reason why these L2 learners are enrolled at an institution that uses English as the language for gaining globally accepted knowledge, this is not only knowledge about a subject area but also about the language that it comes with, a carrier of culture and a certain worldview (Leffa, 2002; Norton, 1997). Language and culture are inseparable, and one way of perpetuating social dominance is by prescribing the language of education, something that is very apparent on the pre-sessional courses in English. It is similar to the way in which the 18th century colonial powers imposed their language as the official language in the countries that they colonised (Norton, 1997).

Consequently, when one examines the concept of student voice, something that appears as an innocent way of articulating how one communicates knowledge in academia (Allison, et al. 2001), it does contain covert underlying ideological overtones (Kress et al., 1982). For these reasons, English academic writing discourse may carry social appropriations linked to how language can be used as a subtle instrument of controlling social dominance (Bourdieu, 1977, Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). Being prescriptive about academic writing conventions through the manipulation of the language of education persuades learners to have a certain ideological worldview (Leffa, 2002). It could be true that the product of an L2 learners ARP’s voice could be the result of the psychological battle of diverse ideological perspectives from their past, battling with the current approaches and conventions in academic writing in English (Kress, 1982) resulting in a hybridised projection of student voice in their academic writing in English (Hinkel, 1999, Quinn, 2012). The battle could be, whether to project their voice the way they are accustomed to from their educational, cultural, ontological and epistemological background (Connor, 2002), or the way it ‘has’ to be projected in English academic writing with its ‘imperial’ institutional overtones (Phillipson, 2008).

As has been argued above, these L2 learners have not yet been immersed in their discourse community or discipline in English (Fairclough, 2014b), but would have just read a handful of academic articles and books in their discipline in English (probably for the first time) for purposes of completing the research project in order to fulfil their conditional offer at the University. It would be very difficult to assume that at the end of ten weeks they would have been immersed in the discipline for a sufficient time to have picked the linguistic repertoires (Busch, 2012) needed to correctly project the required voice in their academic writing (Allison, et al. 2001; Thonney, 2011). In a way, I believe that the expectations that pre-sessional course designers have on these learners is practically beyond reach in relation to the input that is possible for the time that they receive tuition.

The quote cited earlier from Foucault (1971, p.147) contends that the discourses people encounter shape them. It can be argued that at this stage, these L2 learner’s voices are shaped more by historical discourses (Quinn, 2012) that they have encountered elsewhere before their joining the pre-sessional English course (Connor, 2002). The newer discourse that they will be and are learning, is a very new discourse, (Swales, 1990) and this new discourse is at the incubation stage and is still in the process of being ingrained into their repertoire of discourses (Busch, 2012). What this entails is that it is not an obvious and natural system that comes to the fore when they are engaged in communicating knowledge in an academic setting (Whitney, 2011). This new discourse is something that they are making a conscious effort to acquire and be proficient in, whilst the old discourses that come naturally to them are not even acknowledged within the knowledge system of the new discourse. My guess would be that this could be frustrating to the L2 learners learning academic English on a pre-sessional course. It would entail therefore that these L2 learners are caught in between the tension of two writing and knowledge systems. This does in no way makes their task easier as they write this high stakes ARP.

**2.6 Voice as an embodiment of the genre and discourse community of academic writing**

To fully understand student voice, there is need for a clear understanding of the genre of academic writing in English (Bhatia, 2000; 2004) and the conventions of the discourse community regarding what and how facts and opinions have to be expressed (Bailey 2003). A genre has been defined by Swales (1990, p.58) as, “…a class of communicative events that share some set of communicative purposes”. Swales (2004) goes beyond this rather limited definition to include concepts of connectedness, embeddedness and co-dependence as central issues in understanding the notion of genre. Therefore, expert members of a discourse community know the socially recognised and acceptable conventions of writing in their genre, to use the language of social constructivism, they are the ‘more knowledgeable other’ whilst the new entrants, in this case L2 learners, are trying to acculturate themselves to the conventions of this new genre called academic writing in English (Swales, 2004; Bhatia, 2004). In my experience, this acculturation needs quite an extended period of exposure to language and conventions spanning over years for it to become second nature to an L2 learner. Therefore, the discourse community plays a crucial role in determining what eventually ends up in the learner’s repertoire in terms of linguistic competence (Bhatia, 2004). Social Constructionism acknowledges that some individuals have the power to determine what constitutes knowledge in a given discourse community.

A discourse community is made up of a group of experts who use language in order to achieve common goals for that community (Swales, 1990). Swales argues that these communities have ways of accepting new entrants in their community and this also, is governed by the discursive conventions of the group (Bhatia, 2012). What is important to underscore is that, an understanding of the conventions of a particular genre (Swales, 1990) and its rhetorical patterns (Graff and Birkeinsten, 2005) is the logical starting point for one to explore how student voice is configured in academic writing. Busch (2012) contends students learn holistically the linguistic repertoires that are related to the genre of academic writing as opposed to the skills approach, where reading, writing, speaking and listening are taught as discrete skills on EAP course-books such as Bailey (2003; 2011). Therefore, understanding how L2 learners acquire language competence is crucial for EAP practitioners if they are to be able to teach various aspects of the skills that these learners need for the academy (Busch, 2012). These concepts of genre and discourse community are central to the overall appreciation of the concept of student voice in terms of teaching and learning, therefore the issues raised here will be explored further in subsequent sections of this research.

A number of L2 participants in Allison and Sui Mei’s (2001) research argue that they write what their EAP teacher wants to see, as opposed to how they configure their understanding of the English language (this is what has been referred to as the ‘language game’ above). At this level students are quite aware of the reasons that they are learning the language and what is at stake, therefore if ‘parroting’ produces results they are happy to play along. Bhatia (2012) contends that the person who is given the power to interpret a genre has a lot of power in determining its acceptability or not, this could be the reason why some L2 learners are happy to go over the line through mimicking rather than by acquiring real competence. This is not the case with every L2 learner, but it is important to approach the research with such insights and be able to recognise these aspects when they occur in the data at the analysis stage. Although Bhatia (2012) made this statement in relation to legal discourses, it is equally applicable to voice and academic writing. He argues:

“One needs to consider other issues such as who is given the power to interpret the genre and who ultimately will be assigned control over its interpretation, and in what sort of jurisdiction and socio-political context”. (p. 18)

An L2 learner will be writing primarily for the EAP practitioner (Allison and Sui Mei, 2001) for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of a ‘conditional offer’ for a place to study at a UK university in terms of language competence. Therefore, the L2 writer is caught between two language systems and is in a quandary about the academic voice they have to project: their own or the expected voice (Whitney, 2011). It is to be expected that there will be differences in the cultures and sometimes opposing conventions in academic writing (Thonney, 2011), from the student’s L1 (first language) and culture and the other taught by the EAP practitioner (Quinn, 2012). As a result, in the learner’s mind, there will be an internal battle of wits on which style or voice will be projected in the assessed ARP in English (Whitney, 2011). Even though most L2 learners are aware that the conventions that they are being taught on the pre-sessional course are the ones that will likely make them pass the assessment, the battle of wits at the ideological level will still be apparent, at least at the cognitive level (Quinn, 2012).

One of the issues highlighted by Bhatia (2012) is that the person who interprets the genre is very important, and the social status that they have is also important in how the genre is going to be interpreted. Essentially, when an L2 learner consciously selects a voice to project in their academic writing, it is not necessarily their ‘preferred’ voice that they are projecting (Allison, et al., 2001), but the voice that they know that their lecturer/ instructor (the person that has power) wants projected (Elbow, 2007), if they are to pass their English assessment. Therefore, the L2 learner would be happy to play along with ‘the language game’ to get the desired result. The person that controls which language or genre has be used in a particular setting has power or hegemony. Explaining the concept of language hegemony, Mustapha (2014, citing Tietze and Dick, 2012) argues:

Hegemony means the rule of one social group over another that is achieved when a dominant group successfully projects its own particular ways of seeing the world, human and social relationships, such that those who are actually subordinated by these views, come to accept them as being “common sense” or natural; the dominated group internalizes the norms and ideology of the dominant group, even though this is not necessarily in their interest. (p.85)

Therefore, in the context of the ‘language game’ and hegemony, the L2 learner does not have any power to determine what academic discourse ought to be in English, in comparison with the reader, (from the dominant group) who has the power (Bourdieu, 1977) not only to pass or fail the L2 learner, but also to endorse the product as appropriately meeting the required academic standard at the rhetorical level. In most cases, the L2 learner is happy to play along the language game and project the expected voice (Allison and Sui Mei, 2001) if they understand what that voice has to be (something that is not very obvious given the slippery nature of the concept) (Helms-Park and Stapleton, 2003; Ivanic and Camps, 2001).

In the above scenario, the EAP practitioner (Teacher/ Examiner) has the power to decide the future of the assessed L2 learner by passing or failing the student depending on how this EAP practitioner interprets the descriptors (something that is very subjective) based on his/her social, educational and ideological background (Carr, 2000). All these contextual social factors that influence bias, come into play when teachers assess student work. Assessing a written piece of work is a very subjective process (O’Hagan and Wigglesworth, 2015) as often exhibited by the disparities in scores awarded to the same piece of work by different markers (during the moderation process at the university where this research is being conducted, often the markers agree though).

From the subjectivity of the assessment procedures, the next section explores the subjectivity of what constitutes knowledge on a pre-sessional course. It explores whether the knowledge that the L2 learner has acquired in another language and culture matter in the way they conceptualise and articulate voice in academic writing in English.

**2.7 Voice and Contrastive Rhetoric**

Connor (1996, cited in Chien, 2007) defines Contrastive Rhetoric this way:

Contrastive rhetoric is the area of research in second language acquisition that identifies problems in composition encountered by second language writers and, by referring them to the rhetorical strategies of the first language....[C]ontrastive rhetoric maintains that language and writing are cultural phenomena. As a direct consequence, each language has rhetorical conventions unique to it. (p. 133)

Because “language and writing are cultural phenomena”, it means that when a student uses a particular language in writing they are actually immersing themselves in a certain social practice that has a specific cultural ideology (Kanakri, 2015). In the case of postgraduate students who have studied and have written academically in another culture, when they come into a new academic writing tradition, they bring with them “rhetorical strategies of the first language” in the language classroom (Severino, 1993). Therefore, an appreciation of Contrastive Rhetoric can be an asset for the EAP teacher as they become aware of the potential areas of difficulty as they have a better understanding of how the L2 learner’s rhetorical strategies in their first language and culture that are different from western academic writing in English.

A useful way of defining Contrastive Rhetoric is by identifying what it seeks to do. Quinn (2012) defines it as follows:

 Contrastive rhetoric studies the writing of second language learners to understand

how it is affected by their first language and culture. The field of contrastive rhetoric is as multidimensional as second language writing is complex (p. 31)

The above definition explains that Contrastive Rhetoric is a purposeful activity that seeks to understand how the historical academic culture of the L2 learner may influence the new academic conventions that the learner is acquiring in English. I believe it is the same goal that L2 learners have as they acquire academic English on a pre-sessional course. The only issue from my experience is that the EAP teachers do not want to know or acknowledge that such knowledge exists, or if it does, it has no relationship with what they are trying to achieve on a pre-sessional course. In defence of why the EAP teachers generally refuse to be drawn into such theoretical extrapolations, it may be that there is no time on the pre-sessional course to dig into such matters.

Scholars of Contrastive Rhetoric beg to differ with any view that seeks to relegate how useful for pedagogical reasons this knowledge can be in the teaching of academic writing in English for L2 learners. Chien, (2007) argues that,

Resolving the issue of rhetorical difference is of particular importance to the teaching of writing, since awareness of any such variation is crucial to the development of communicative competence in language learners. (p.132)

It has been underscored in the arguments in this chapter that ontological and epistemological views are embedded in a specific social context as determined by the language and culture of education in that academic or professional context of practice. It can be argued therefore that, having at least an understanding of the worldview of these L2 learners should help the EAP course designer and pre-sessional English teacher to understand how students approach academic writing in English, in the context of their historical knowledge systems and how they might interpret the notion of student voice in a foreign language and culture.

Ballard and Clancy (1991) agree with Quinn’s second point from the above quote that Contrastive Rhetoric is indeed multidimensional and complex, and as result, L2 learner’s problems arise,

…from the disjunction between attitudes to knowledge held by students and the assumptions of appropriateness of different (culturally shaped) attitudes to knowledge held by the staff who are assessing their academic work. (p. 20)

Therefore, there is need for EAP practitioners to at least have some awareness of how these L2 learners have been expressing themselves in their culture with a view to understand which aspects these learners might struggle with and why. It is important to underscore that Contrastive Analysis is not the same as Stephen Pit Corder’s (1967) study of Error Analysis, where the emphasis was on predicting what errors second language learners were likely to make based on a comparative study of the differences between their first language and the second language. Contrastive Rhetoric does not make simplistic assumptions about possible outcomes but goes further and proposes that there is something to learn from the language and culture of the L2 learner that has substantial pedagogic value to the teacher and learner in the context of learning a new language for a specific purpose.

Quinn (2012) highlights the importance of Contrastive Rhetoric and how it helped her overcome her frustrations about assessing L2 learner’s writing. She argues,

It wasn’t until I learned about contrastive rhetoric that I understood my frustration. Learning how other cultures organize their ideas has helped me read my students’ papers with better understanding, which has ultimately led to better teaching. (p.31)

Risager, (2007) argues that everything that people do, is steeped in their culture. Culture, whether social or academic, is an entrenched system that is difficult to ignore because it is the framework where everyone centres their values (ibid). Scovel (1994) relates culture to language succinctly as follows:

Culture is the social cement of all human relationships; it is the medium in which we move and breathe and have our being. Thus defined, all languages are proper subsets of all our cultures, and since languages are part of culture, it is easy to understand why some people might perceive the two as indistinguishable. (p.205)

Using the Foucauldian principle of equating languages to discourses, discussed earlier, it is apparent that an L2 learner cannot be separated from the historical language/discourse that has made them who they are (Quinn, 2012). Therefore, if language and culture are thus difficult to separate, there is therefore need for EAP practitioners to have some understanding of the rhetorical background of their pre-sessional students, for purposes of establishing at least the point of departure in terms of the system that they have been used to and the new one that they are learning (Canagarajah, 2002). Scovel, (1994) sums up this argument by pointing out that the writing style of L2 learners can only be viewed outside the context of the language and culture of the learner only at the expense of the credibility of such knowledge and training. Where the knowledge of the culture of the L2 learners can be available, there is a strong case for using this Contrastive Rhetoric knowledge in aiding the understanding of concepts such as student voice, that are heavily embedded in the culture of L2 learners (Connor, 2002).

Commenting on how learners are socialised into discourse communities, Hinkel (1997, citing

Gee, 1990) argues that:

Schooling and education in essence represent the apprenticing of learners to social and discourse practices. For many “outsiders” this necessitates acquiring a new identity that may conflict with their initial enculturation and with the identities connected to other social practices. (p.363)

Hinkel further argues that:

In writing traditions based on Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist philosophical precepts, rhetorical indirectness has the goal of maintaining harmony and avoiding impositions on both the writer and the reader. (ibid)

Directness and indirectness are issues at the centre of student voice, which makes it all the more compelling for EAP practitioners to use this knowledge to influence how they design and teach academic writing issues in general and student voice issues in particular (Hyland, 2006). However, because academic English approaches indirectness differently, many students who come from these more collective societies, (Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist) struggle with the directness of Western academic writing which is heavily influenced by Greek Philosophical traditions (Biggs, 1997; Egege and Kutieleh, 2004). The Western tradition of academic writing encourages personal projection of an individual voice that makes a piece of writing distinct from others, something you do not find in the Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist philosophies that influence most Asian students that enrol for the pre-sessional English courses at UK universities (Biggs, 1997; Egege and Kutieleh, 2004).

Consequently, students that come from these collectivist traditions cited by Hinkel (1997) above might find it quite challenging to come up with a distinct student voice because of their social, cultural and educational background (Shen, 1989). Rather than take a distinct stance on an issue being debated, many of these students tend to shy away from expressing their individual voices as they are more comfortable in the ‘we’ consciousness of Confucianism (Ramanathan and Atkinson, 1999; Zhao, 2012). They might be more concerned with preserving ‘face’ (Brown and Levinson, 1978) rather than being critical of a source they are using, something that I have noticed from my experience of teaching Chinese students over a period of five years at postgraduate level.

Ryan (2011) argues that the way students learn and project their views is culturally specific to an individual’s background. He neatly summarises this argument as follows:

Socio-cultural theories of learning help us to understand that learning is individually constructed, socially supported and culturally situated and mediated. (p.636)

It is therefore important that EAP practitioners have a clear understanding of the ontology of the L2 learners, in order to provide a teaching intervention that will be appropriate to the needs of a specific group of learners (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2006). Learning is a mediated intervention in a given cultural context, therefore it is important that EAP practitioners have some understanding of the L2 learner’s educational historical culture, for them to be able to plan and design a language course that will be effective in addressing the reasons for a specific intervention (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). This is the theoretical basis for justifying a teaching intervention called English for Academic Purposes (EAP), (Dudley Evans and St John, 1998; Jordan, 2002; Hyland, 2006).

It is therefore apparent that having an understanding of Contrastive Rhetoric is important for the EAP practitioner. Quinn (2012) humorously captures the importance of this knowledge as foundation of an intervention rather than it being an end in itself:

Teaching differences and similarities in rhetorical patterns can begin at any level. While the information doesn’t instantly correct problems in writing (just as knowing how to lose weight doesn’t instantly result in weight loss). (p. 37)

She goes on to argue that,

Language learners generally enjoy and benefit from learning about various linguistic tools, and it seems that the direct learning of rhetorical patterns can both help them become better writers in English and empower them to embrace their new discourse community. (ibid)

There is therefore a strong case for teaching pedagogy that appreciates the knowledge systems that the L2 learner brings to the EAP table. Canagarajah (2002) captures what a good appreciation of Contrastive Rhetoric should be able to achieve when incorporated into EAP methodology. He contends:

 Contrastive rhetoric (CR) displays the openness to take the student’s culture seriously

and understand the conflicts in interacting with academic communities. It treats the discursive deviations of the students with more tolerance and appreciation (p, 34).

It is my contention therefore that there is a strong case for EAP teachers to at least have some knowledge about the rhetorical patterns of the L1 academic writing traditions of their L2 learners on a pre-sessional course as background information on which to build an informed perspective of who their L2 learners are.

**2.8 Voice and Evaluation**

From the arguments presented in this chapter it is expected therefore that these L2 learners in this sample are bound to have an evaluative opinion about issues raised in the academic debate (on the topic of their choice) from the sources that they use in their research paper. Therefore, the ARPs are an appropriate place to investigate the conceptualisation and articulation of student L2 voice in academic writing. Hunston and Thompson (1999) have a comprehensive definition about evaluation that captures the essence of what L2 learners are trying to achieve in terms of voice in most pieces of academic writing at postgraduate level. They argue;

Evaluation is the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writer’s **attitude** or **stance** towards, **view point** on, or **feelings** about entities or propositions that he or she is talking about. That attitude may relate to **certainty** or **obligation** or **desirability** or any number of other sets of values. (p.5) (my emphasis)

It is clear when one looks at the highlighted words in the definition of evaluation, that what academic writers do when they evaluate ideas is to value judge propositions by adding their voice to the academic discussion. Attitude, stance, view point, feelings, certainty, obligation and desirability are all related to the parameters of voice in the conceptual framework (see chapter 3).

It is the expectation of this research therefore that, the sample of ARPs selected will contain numerous instances of evaluation that carry with them the voice of the L2 learners that are writing them. As already mentioned above, it is important that the authorship of the work to be analysed be unquestionably from the students concerned, as it would be futile to investigate student voice on work produced or heavily assisted by an outsider, as this would defeat the purpose of this research. In essence, the arguments, evaluations and the academic ethos of the paper remains that of the student. Therefore, the instances of evaluations that will be analysed are expressions of the voice of the L2 learner.

Hunston and Thompson (1999) developed this notion of evaluation in ways that are very interesting about how voice is conceptualised and articulated in speaking and writing. In an attempt to answer the question about the importance of evaluation, which is the carrier of voice in academic writing, they come up with three reasons that will be reproduced here. The reasons for evaluation are as follows:

1. to express the speaker’s or writer’s opinion, and in doing so to reflect the value system of that person and their community.
2. to construct and maintain relations between the speaker or writer and hearer or reader.
3. to organise the discourse. (p.6)

These three points are in tandem with the issues raised in this chapter about how voice is linked to the concepts of genre, discourse community and ideology (Foucault, 1971; Fairclough, 2014a); Hyland, 2008). From Hunston and Thompson’s first point, it is clear that when a writer writes in academia (and in the case of this research) the L2 learner’s writing reflects not only the value system of the learner but that of the discourse community as well. This could be the reason why subject specialists expect the EAP teachers to orient the L2 learner on Academic repertoires (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995) before they join their discipline specific courses, because when these students write for them (subject specialists) in their departments, they will be expected to represent not only their individual value system but that of the discipline as well. I believe this is the reason why academic staff require students enrolling on to their courses to possess the requisite academic and linguistic repertoires to be able to adequately represent their views and that of the discourse community at large (Chien, 2007).

The second point mentions the construction and maintaining of relations between the writer and reader, something that Hyland (2005) argues as being at the centre of the concept of voice, that is why his voice framework has two main strands, **Stance** and **Engagement**, which are an attempt to maintain a relationship between the writer and the reader. This framework from Hyland for analysing student voice has been deliberately chosen as the main analytical framework for this research, because it explores both the reader and writer dimensions to academic writing that is very comprehensive.

The third and final point argues that evaluation helps to organise a discourse, this means that the conventions for academic writing help to shape how knowledge is created and communicated within a given discourse community (Hyland, 2008b). In other words, how voice is articulated, how opinions and evaluation are presented in specific discourse communities helps shape the minds of learners. Forms that are acceptable within a given discourse community guide learners on best ways to mirror the patterns of communication that they observe from established scholars who are the guardians and custodians of the discourse community into their own discipline (Bhatia, 2004). Being functional at an acceptable level in these rhetorical skills requires an extended period of exposure in a particular discourse community, something worth exploring as the L2 learners in this research have a limited exposure to both the language and discourse community in English.

**2.9 Conclusion**

This Literature Review began with an exploration of the debate on student voice. It then proceeded to discuss the marketization of Higher Education and the resultant increase in the need for intensive EAP pre-sessional courses. The following section explored how student voice is related to critical thinking, then the discussion extended to analysing the importance of academic writing in EAP. The subsequent section briefly introduced the Hyland (2005) framework of analysing student voice. From there, the discussion moved to the parallel between Conversion Analysis and academic writing conventions in English and how voice can be envisaged as a cultural construct. After that, the chapter explored the concept of intertextuality and student voice before examining the Foucauldian notions of discourse community and ideology and how they impact the L2 learner’s ontological and epistemological underpinnings in education. The penultimate section explored how an understanding of Contrastive Rhetoric may influence how EAP teachers could possibly approach the teaching of voice on intensive pre-sessional English courses, and the last section explored the link between evaluation and student voice. The next chapter will explore methodological concerns and the Conceptual framework.

**Chapter 3**

**Methodology and Conceptual Framework**

**3.1 Introduction**

The aim of the methodology section is to explain how the research was carried out and justify the methods, research tools and research design. This chapter will also explain the conceptual framework and the major technical terms that will be used from Hyland (2005). It also seeks to justify the sample chosen to collect data and why this was the most appropriate in the context of the constraints of this research. This chapter will begin by explaining the research design, followed by a discussion of the Methodology chosen, whilst exploring related methodologies that were not selected as a way of justifying the chosen methodology. Justification of the research instruments selected for data collection will follow, after that the chapter will proceed to discuss ethical concerns regarding respondents, self-reflexivity, institutional practices and related issues.

**3.2 What is Methodology?**

Methodology is a word generated from three Greek words, *meta* (beyond), *odos*, (path) and *logos* (study) (Callaos and Callaos, 2014). This section therefore seeks to explore issues that are beyond what has been studied on the issue of L2 student voice by choosing the path of analysing authentic student writing created for an actual need (to fulfil a course requirement).

Methodology has been defined by Sikes (2004) as,

the theory of getting knowledge, to the consideration of the best ways, methods or procedures, by which data that will provide the evidence basis for the construction of knowledge about whatever it is that is being researched, is obtained. (p. 16)

It is my belief that the best method of obtaining answers to issues raised in this research could best be done through a textual analysis of L2 learner’s writing. This research was conceived through my practice as an EAP teacher on pre-sessional English courses at three different universities in the United Kingdom in the past seven years. It is a form of research that is expected to change the way I teach academic writing and the understanding of the concept voice in writing (Scott and Morrison, 2007), as they relate to academic writing in English. Scott and Morrison (2007, cite Carr and Kermis, 1986) who describe action research as:

A self-reflective, self-critical and critical inquiry undertaken by professionals to improve the rationality and justices of their own practices, their understanding of those practises and wider contexts of practice. (p. 4)

The motivation for undertaking this research directly emanates from my context of practice as an English for Academic Purposes teacher for Second Language learners at a UK University.

The selection of the six reports in the sample was based on the grades they were awarded when they were assessed as a final assessment at the end of course. All six ARPs in this sample passed in different categories, those ARPS in the High (H) category obtained 70%+ in Political Science (PS) and 65%+ for Civil Engineering (CE), Middle, (M) were between 60-69%, for (PS), and 56-64% for (CE) and Low (L) pass was between 50-59% for (PS) and 40-55% for Civil Engineering. Therefore, when there is reference in this research to the High, Middle and Low tiers of the ARPs in this sample, it will be referring to grades that the analysed research projects were awarded.

**3.3 Research Design**

The participants were selected from L2 learners studying English at a pre-sessional course at an established university in the West Midlands County, in the United Kingdom. In EAP there is an emphasis on use of authentic texts in teaching (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001). The texts were selected from post-graduate international students studying Academic English to meet the demands of a conditional offer to enrol for a post-graduate master’s degree course in either Civil Engineering or Political Science. The reasons for picking texts from a Science subject and the Humanities, was to provide a broader cross section of how voice is conceptualised and articulated across the extreme ends of the disciplines that are on the ten-week pre-sessional course in English could be achieved. The research question these learners have to answer in their ARPs is the same, in both disciplines. The descriptors and passing bands are also the same except that the lowest passing mark for Humanities is higher at 50% whilst that for Sciences is 40%, because students in the Humanities need to be more rhetorically astute when presenting their arguments as opposed to students in the Sciences, who in most cases are presenting indisputable facts (Hyland, 2004). The teaching material in terms of the in-house course-book used is the same, although all teachers are given personal discretion in how they use the teaching material and supplement the materials in the course-book as they see fit. At this institution, emphasis is not on uniformity of instruction but on uniformity of expectations at the end of the course. Learner are expected to have sufficient academic repertoires to manipulate the complex rhetorical strategies (Matsuda and Tardy, 2007) in academic writing in English and be able to project ‘student voice’ to varying degrees of success.

The reason for choosing the end of course assessment is because the ARPs undergo a stringent process of moderation where the class teacher is not the one responsible for assessing the work of the students that they taught, and the moderator is not the class teacher for that cohort of students. Therefore, there is a systematic attempt to achieve objectivity about the final grades that these texts are awarded in the final assessment. The ARPs are marked anonymously thus their grading is as objective as is possible. The standard of English for these students is within the same IELTS range (an average of 3.5 to 5.5) where they do not qualify for an unconditional offer but are allowed to enrol for the pre-sessional course on a conditional offer pending a successful completion of the pre-sessional English course.

At this Midlands university, the whole thrust of the pre-sessional English course is predominantly geared towards the Academic Research Project (ARP), as it is the major form of assessment for these L2 learners. Consequently, the course gives instruction on the conventions of academic writing, covering all the major issues in academic writing such organising and developing an essay with emphasis on having an appropriate structure and style expected in academic writing, in other words all academic repertoires or communicative repertoires are taught on the course (Rhymes, 2010). Aspects of formal writing including use of formal language, appropriate academic vocabulary, focusing on the structure of essays such as paragraph structure, topic sentences, thesis statements, supporting sentences, summative statements and related issues (Bailey, 2003). The course also focuses on the structure of a research paper and the different sections that characterise it, such as the introduction, body and conclusion (ibid). Therefore, the purpose of the pre-sessional English course is to prepare students to develop academic writing skills necessary to produce a research paper in preparation for their intended degree course in English. It is expected that these students will have received tuition directly or indirectly on what student voice, evaluation and critical thinking are and how they are achieved in academic writing in English (Chien, 2002; Egege and Kutieleh, 2004). It is expected that these students would have been, in one way or another been made aware about the need to have their voice or opinions being presented in their research paper. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the concept of voice is slippery for both teachers and students hence this study’s interest in conducting this research (Ivanic and Camps, 2001; Helms-Park and Stapleton, 2003).

The fact that all these participants had received instruction for ten weeks in academic writing in English was enough basis to explore the linguistic notion that is of interest without warranting digging deeper into the background of the experience that these students have in academic writing in English. To cater for the need to eliminate whether prior experience in using the English language would influence the outcome of this research, an ancillary question on whether any of the students had previous extensive exposure in use of English in education or work, all learners from both groups answered “no” except one. I am not at all suggesting that further knowledge about the student’s background on using English prior to this research would not be helpful in trying to understand their approach to the articulation and conceptualisation of student voice in their writing. Apparently, none of them had experience of using English in a formal academic setting that exposed them to the conventions of academic English. Only one student from the Political Science class had studied for his/her first degree in English in Canada, this ARP was excluded from the scripts that were used for analysis.

**3.4 Data Collection Journey**

When the six research projects for analysis were selected, they were given new letter names, such as CEH (Civil Engineering High) and PSL (Political Science Low), when they were given these new names, the student number that identified them for assessment purposes were deleted in order to maintain anonymity. At this stage they were ready for the manual coding of various parameters from the Conceptual framework for analysing voice from Hyland (2005).

3.4.1 Familiarising with data

Data for this thesis was collected in summer of 2015 and was not analysed for a whole year. One of the feelings that I had was the fear that after collecting the data, what if the analytical framework fails to work? What if no patterns or themes emerge from the data? I was asking myself what if the emotional, financial and time investment had failed to produce something worthwhile? Those questions and doubt really petrified me, and for a whole year I was in limbo. When I finally selected the Academic Research Projects (2 in the high band, 2 Middle band and 2 Low passing bands) that I was going to analyse, I started to feel a little bit more confident. I read through the sample to see if the issues that I was going to investigate were in in the texts, I was quite relieved when I did the initial reading and found that at least half of the parameters were in the student texts. I went back and re-examined the framework and read through the texts for a second time. At that stage, I started to feel confident again that the framework was a useful starting point to explore the data.

My next fear was on generating initial codes. I was sure that I was not comfortable enough to use *NVivo* for coding even though I attended the training course twice, the fear of losing electronic data at some point during the research process, made me to stay clear of this option. I decided to manually code the data because the data did not need complex coding as the conceptual framework was straightforward and coloured pens were capable of achieving the task. The decision to manually code my data removed the anxiety that was triggered by electronic systems.

3.4.2 Generating initial codes

 Before I generated my initial codes, I volunteered to make a presentation at one of the EdD weekend schools based on the conceptual framework that I was going to use, as a way of boosting my confidence. If I was going to be able to be confident enough to make a presentation to my peers and one of the course directors, I knew I could be confident enough to use the framework to analyse the data. The presentation for me had two major purposes, to test the ideas that I had for the thesis, and secondly, that if the ideas were not solid, I would receive feedback from both my colleagues as well as the facilitator. Before the October weekend school, I started generating the initial codes and started coding the data. It was as nerve-wracking as it was exciting; it was a moment of truth. That which I was apprehensive about for a year, I was going to face it through initial coding as well as through the presentation. I read the article by Hyland (2005) several times that weekend before the presentation so that I would not appear as a fraud before my colleagues and the facilitator. The outcome of the presentation was positive and that was a huge relief and a boost to my confidence. Extracting myself from of a mind-set of questioning whether it would work or not and getting excited that it works gave me positive energy to delve more into further familiarising with the data through further phases of coding. The oral presentation was a liberating experience in more than one way and I was glad I did, as it helped to boost my confidence on the research.

3.4.3 Searching for themes and their development

Searching for patterns and themes was a continuous process in the three phases of coding. The conceptual framework was a logical starting place to look for themes. The parameters of Stance and Engagement were a logical starting point for a thematic analysis. From the framework there emerged the first two major themes, Stance and Engagement, from these two major themes emerged the nine sub themes to create a second tier for the thematic analysis. The third level was to investigate the other themes that were not captured by the framework but appeared to be important for the Needs Analysis of the English pre-sessional course, where the ARP voice analysis was a form of an exit-interview to inform course review. The main reason for this research, was to explore the gaps in knowledge in terms of student voice as a way of understanding what the learning needs for these language learners might have been, had an initial needs analysis for the course had been carried out prior to the commencement of the pre-sessional English course. The knowledge gaps when found will help the reviewing of course materials for future courses.

The process of reviewing themes continues throughout the process of analysis, where one continuously evaluates, edit, add, question and subtract from the initial themes. This distillation process influences the surfacing of salient features of data that ends up in the final analysis. It is a process of filtering and refining data until patterns begin to emerge with certain levels of clarity (Boeije, 2010). This stage is followed by the defining and naming of themes. This stage marked the beginning of the write-up of the final analysis.

In a paradoxical way, there is nothing final at all about the choices that I made on what to include in the final report, because the more I read the analysis, the more I re-examined the data. When you continue to re-examine data different insights about the patterns emerging from the data will continue to manifest, although the salient features stabilise after investigating the data several times. Doubts about what examples best illustrate a particular point continue to until the submission date for the research. In my mind there will always be ways in which different examples could have been picked and concepts explained differently. It is a thought that a researcher continues to toy with until they have submitted their research paper. The following subheadings explore the conceptual framework in detail and how it will be used to explore the concept of voice in this sample.

**3.5** **Understanding Stance and Engagement**

Background to the conceptual framework.

This conceptual framework was developed by Hyland (2005) to explore how voice was projected in research papers by academics across a huge cross section of disciplines. It was also further used by Hyland (2008) to further explore the same concept in a different sample. Zhao (2012) also used the same framework to explore voice in student work and described the framework as comprehensive. The way in which the framework explores the reader and writer dimensions of voice through the Stance and Engagement paradigms makes it an appropriate tool for exploring the articulation and conceptualisation of voice by L2 learners. This conceptual framework is from a social constructionist paradigm that concurs with the view; “that all language use is related to specific social, cultural and institutional contexts” (Hyland, 2005, p. 174). What this entails is that, the student texts that will be analysed in chapter 4 will have to be understood in the context of the production of the texts as extant texts produced to meet the requirements of a pre-sessional course at a UK University. This chapter will also examine the concepts of **genre** and **discourse community** in greater detail and how their theoretical underpinnings can be used to probe the issue of student voice in academic writing by L2 learners. The following sections will explore the conceptual framework in greater detail.

Figure 2 **Hyland’s Conceptual Framework of voice**



Hyland (2005, p. 177)

This is a very useful way of conceptualising the notion of voice given its slippery nature discussed above, as a result, this analytic framework together with genre theory as espoused by Bhatia (2002) will be used to analyse academic texts from student research projects in order to assess the various degrees and levels of understanding and application of the concept of student voice alongside other academic writing conventions at the end of their intensive pre-sessional English course.

It is important to underscore that the above framework was created for academic scholars, but in this research it is used to analyse L2 student writing in a similar way that this framework was used by Zhao (2012).

3.5.1 What is Stance?

The best way to explain what stance is, can be made using the scholar who coined the term. Hyland (2005) describes stance thus:

This can be seen as an **attitudinal dimension** and includes features which refer to the ways writers present themselves and convey their **judgements, opinions**, and **commitments**. It is the ways that writers intrude to stamp their personal authority onto their arguments or **step back** and disguise their involvement (p. 176). (*My emphasis)*

Stance is a rhetorical feature of language where the author’s voice is deliberately positioned to enter the fabric of the argument being presented either strongly or in a withdrawn fashion depending on what effect the writer wants their voice to have in the academic argument being presented (Bailey, 2003; 2011). Therefore, there is need for the writer to have some high- level language competence to be able to do this effectively (Matsuda, 2001). This rhetorical strategy goes beyond knowing how to create grammatical sentences in English (ibid). Therefore, for an L2 learner to be able to manipulate language to that level where they balance presenting a plausible academic argument with adequate student voice, is not a mean task (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004). Presenting an academic argument without any student voice is relatively easier when one has the facts, but is not rated as good scholarship, especially at postgraduate level in the UK (Bailey, 2003).

The following paragraphs will explore the different parameters under stance from the Conceptual framework, starting with hedges. Hyland (2005), describes them as follows:

***Hedges****:*

are devices like *possible, might* and *perhaps*, that indicate **the writer’s decision to withhold complete commitment to a proposition, allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than accredited fact**. Because all statements are evaluated and interpreted through a prism of disciplinary assumptions, writers must calculate what weight to give to an assertion, attesting to the degree of precision or reliability that they want it to carry and perhaps claiming protection in the event of its eventual overthrow (p. 178). (*My emphasis)*

The above definition is a very comprehensive definition of what hedges are in academic writing. Of all the parameters of voice, I think hedges are the most commonly known and ‘taught to death’ convention in academic writing. I guess the reason for this emanates from the time when striving for objectivity (Carr, 2000) was a major preoccupation of research in many fields, and the use of hedging devices was one way of presenting academic arguments in ways that were considered as objective as was possible, a hedged argument allowed other voices to be heard besides that of the current writer (Bailey, 2003). My hunch is that it will be one of the most prevalent of all the voice parameters from both categories based on how course books and EAP teachers emphasise it on pre-sessional training and teaching. When the data has been analysed, I could be proved wrong though.

The next Stance parameter to be explained is that of Boosters.

***Boosters****:*

are words like *clearly, obviously* and *demonstrate*, which allow writers to express their certainty in what they say and to mark involvement with the topic and solidarity with their audience. They function to stress **shared information**, **group membership, and engagement** with readers (p. 179). *(My emphasis)*

Boosters are the opposite of hedges in a way, as they mark **certainty** about ways of knowing (epistemology) and they do not leave room for anything else to be said about an argument, as there is **a sense of finality** about how things are and ought to be. This is something that EAP practitioners are most likely discourage their learners to use. Being modest in academic writing is considered more of a virtue than ‘going on record’ (Brown and Levinson, 1987) about how one feels about certain things. My hunch would be that there will be many instances of the use of hedges than boosters for the reasons given above.

***Attitude Markers****:*

indicate the writer’s affective, rather than epistemic, attitude to propositions, conveying surprise, agreement, importance, frustration, and so on, rather than commitment. While attitude is expressed throughout a text by the use of subordination, comparatives, progressive particles, punctuation, text location, and so on, it is most explicitly signalled by attitude verbs (e.g. *agree, prefer*), sentence adverbs (*unfortunately, hopefully*), and adjectives (*appropriate, logical, remarkable*). By signalling an assumption of shared attitudes, values and reactions to material, **writers both express a position and pull readers into a conspiracy of agreement so that it can often be difficult to dispute these judgements**. (p.180)

Attitude markers are a way of ‘going on record’ (in politeness terms, Brown and Levinson, 1987) about how one feels about an argument or proposition being made in a piece of academic writing. Use of attitude markers is more about how the writer feels about what they are writing about as opposed to whether they are committed to the argument or not. For example if a writer says this about the OJ Simpson murder trial. “It was **remarkable** that OJ Simpson was acquitted of any wrong-doing, by the jury in the criminal case and was found guilty in civil case” (own example). The use of the adjective, **remarkable** shows the attitude of the writer about the result of the criminal case and wants to draw the reader to feel the same or have the same attitude as the writer about the acquittal. The use of that affective adjective ‘remarkable’ says a lot about the writer’s voice as regards the subject under discussion. Therefore, the ability to express student voice in academic writing is a very important rhetorical device that L2 learners need to learn if they are to be accomplished students in their fields of study.

***Self-Mention****:*

refers to the use of first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives to present propositional, affective and interpersonal information. (p. 181)

The issue of use of personal pronouns is a very controversial one, with EAP practitioners split about the best advice to give to students on a pre-sessional English course (Lascher and Melzer, 2013). The general advice is that learners are discouraged from using personal pronouns for the purposes of trying to be as objective as is possible as discussed above in the section on hedges (Bailey, 2013). Other EAP teachers strongly advise against the use of personal pronouns arguing that students are not authorities and should not use personal pronouns. But as an experienced EAP professional, I am aware there are other disciplines were the use of personal pronouns is not frowned upon but rather encouraged, as in philosophy (Hyland, 2005). Scholars like Ivanic (1998) argue that one can discuss the issue of identity in writing without using the most obvious way establishing identity through use of personal pronouns. This is an argument that is acceptable across many disciplines especially in the humanities.

3.5.2 What is Engagement?

Hyland (2005) explains that reader engagement is achieved by two strategies as indicated below:

1.Acknowledgement of the need to **adequately meet readers’ expectations** of inclusion and disciplinary solidarity. Here we find readers addressed as participants in an argument with **reader pronouns** and **interjections**.

2. To rhetorically position the audience. Here the **writer pulls readers into the discourse at critical points**, predicting possible objections and guiding them to particular interpretations with questions, directives and references to shared knowledge (p. 182). *(my emphasis)*

Whilst acknowledging that there are two strategies in principle, namely **stance** and **engagement**, in practice they might be combined to achieve the same effect of projecting the writer’s voice. That is the reason why (Matsuda and Tardy, 2007) speak of manipulation of rhetorical devices at the text level rather than use of distinct word classes (e.g. nouns or adjectives) as being responsible for achieving a specific effect. Expressing aspects of student voice or evaluation can be a complex thing that cannot be ascribed to a specific word as marking an instance of a particular articulation of voice, this expression of voice might not even be realised at the phrase or sentence level but could be something that can be achieved at the text level. Therefore, the flagging up of certain words as markers of the presence of a particular parameter of voice is only indicative of that type of voice but not the full expression of the entirety of its illocutionary meaning at the rhetorical level (ibid). The singling out of specific parameters of voice only helps to explain what is happening in terms of evaluation at that specific point in the text. The framework is a simplified way of expressing a complex concept (for pedagogical reasons). It is by no means an exhaustive expression of the reality taking place in the mind of an L2 learner when producing a value- laden proposition in academic writing. The first engagement parameter to be examined is that of Reader Pronouns. Hyland 2005 explains this parameter as follows:

***Reader Pronouns****:*

are perhaps the most explicit way that readers are brought into a discourse. *You* and *your* are actually the clearest way a writer can acknowledge the reader’s presence. (p.182)

As explained above, the use of reader pronouns clearly demonstrates that the writer is aware of the presence of the reader in the discourse they are sharing through writing, and the writer acknowledges this by use of reader pronouns. For example, “**you** might be aware of the holocaust and the millions of Jews that died as a result” or another example would be “in **your** childhood **you** might have sung this nursery rhyme” *(Own example).* In the second example, the writer is trying to draw the reader into the argument by suggesting that the writer and reader might have shared the same upbringing and therefore feel the same about certain issues or arguments being presented in a piece of writing. The next parameter is that of Directives.

***Directives:***

**instruct the reader** to perform an action or to see things in a way determined by the writer. They are signalled mainly by the presence of an imperative (like *consider, note,* and *imagine*); by a modal of obligation addressed to the reader (such as *must, should,* and *ought*); and by a predicative adjective **expressing the writer’s judgement of necessity/importance** (*It is important to understand ...*). (p. 184)

As the name suggests, directives give the reader an order to do something, or singles out something as important or significant not only for the writer but for the reader as well. It is a strategy that gives the writer the power to coerce the reader to go along with the voice of the writer in a particular argument. Hyland (2005, p184-5) continues to explain that directives “engage in three main kinds of activity, …1. Textual acts, 2. Physical acts, 3. Cognitive Acts”. He explains the different realisations as follows:

*Textual acts* are used to metadiscoursally guide readers through the discussion, steering them to another part of the text or to another text

*Physical acts* instruct readers how to carry out research processes or to perform some action in the real world

*Cognitive acts* guide readers through a line of reasoning, or get them to understand a point in a certain way and are therefore potentially the most threatening type of directives. (p.185)

The next parameter is that of, Questions.

***Questions:***

are the strategy of dialogic involvement *par excellence*, inviting engagement and bringing the interlocutor into an arena where they can be led to the writer’s viewpoint. (p.185)

Hyland describes questions as a strategy of dialogic involvement par excellence, as the writer poses a rhetorical question, they guide the reader into what they think is the possible and only solution or best way to answer the presented question. For example, in a business report about a country that does not have the rule of law, a writer might pose a question like this, in a piece of academic writing. “What would a foreign investor do in a situation where there is no rule of law, leave the country or wait to see what will happen next? Any logical reader will suggest what the writer wants the reader to say, which is to leave. So, the writer will be using a question to enter a dialogue with the reader where the writer is manipulating language to engage in a dialogue with a reader that is not in the text but also wooing the reader to view the situation or take sides in an argument that the writer is presenting. It is a very clever reader-engagement strategy. This example shows how the manipulation of student voice is an important aspect in academic writing. The next parameter to be explained is Appeal to Shared Knowledge:

***Appeal to shared Knowledge****:*

seek to position readers within apparently **naturalized boundaries of disciplinary understandings**. The notion of ‘sharedness’ is often invoked by writers to smuggle contested ideas into their argument, but here I am simply referring to the presence of **explicit markers** where readers are asked to recognize something as familiar or accepted. (p. 184)

Appeal to shared knowledge is another reader engagement strategy that is very subtle but a very effective way of manipulating voice concept by making it appear like the arguments being presented are shared knowledge rather than as contested or contestable arguments. For instance, someone arguing for the UK to leave the EU might write. “It is common knowledge that immigration is the biggest problem affecting the UK as a result of being part of the EU”. This statement is highly contestable within the EU debate, but when a writer puts it across like that, they make it appear like a fact when in actual fact it is a highly-contested issue within this debate, but the writer’s presentation of the idea is supposed to draw in the reader, in a clever way to accept something for what it is not. The final category is that of Personal asides.

***Personal Asides****:*

allow writers to address readers directly by briefly interrupting the argument to offer a comment on what has been said. While asides express something of the writer’s personality and willingness to explicitly intervene to offer a view, they can also be seen as a key reader-oriented strategy. (ibid, 182)

Use of Personal asides is a very ingenious way of bringing in personal prejudices and opinions into an argument whilst the writer is posing as someone wanting to clarify something, but it can be an astute way of smuggling ideas by appearing like the writer wants the reader to have more insights about the matter. For example, if someone writes this about the just ended London Mayoral race. “The London mayoral race was between Sadiq Khan (the son of a bus driver) and Zac Goldsmith (a private school educated ‘Eton boy’)”. The personal information in the brackets helps the reader to have an opinion because of the information in brackets, even though it appears as a personal aside. The information in the brackets makes one of the candidates appear more appealing due to his social status, either way.

In conclusion this brief overview of the Conceptual framework provided explanations of what each voice parameter entails and how these aspects will be applied in this research. Trying to understand student voice from this framework makes it apparent that the language skills required to manipulate academic writing in English involves intricate and clever ways of manipulating language at a very high linguistic and rhetorical levels, that requires an L2 learner to be considerably proficient in the language.

**3.6 Qualitative and Quantitative Methods**

This research uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the concept of L2 voice in academic writing in almost equal measures. The statistical picture painted by the data feeds into the qualitative side of what the data means. Therefore, this section first explores what qualitative methods are before exploring quantitative methods.

Richards (2003) summarizes neatly the characteristics of qualitative research as follows:

It studies human actors in the context of their ordinary everyday world, it seeks to understand the meanings of these actions from the perspective of those involved, it usually focuses on a small number of individuals or small groups of settings. Qualitative research employs a wide range of methods in order to establish different perspectives on the relevant issues, it only uses quantification where this is appropriate and as part of a broader approach. (p.10)

This research falls into the broad category of a qualitative research. It is research that places under the spotlight a portion of an everyday teaching and learning situation in order to explore more about these issues with a view to finding better ways of understanding this pedagogical context.

Richards (ibid.) contends:

… the power of qualitative research derives from its ability to represent the particular that distinguishes it from those sorts of research which depend on generalizability (p.10).

The argument being presented in this research is not about the teaching, learning and assessment of student voice in all similar pre-sessional English programmes in the UK, but the outcome of the research would be firstly, a useful pedagogical reference for me as an EAP practitioner, secondly, the results could be of use at the institution where this research will be carried out and finally, should there be findings that are applicable to other institutions running similar programmes it would be a bonus. Case studies have this unique characteristic of boundedness in their natural setting where they illuminate information about a specific context of practice which though is not a very positive attribute for generalisability of research findings (Scott and Morrison, 2007).

On the other hand, Quantitative Data involves the use statistical data in terms of numbers, tables, charts and graphs as a way of making sense of the data collected. Junyong and Sangseok (2017), when describing what a graph does in data analysis and presentation, capture the importance of analysing and presenting data quantitatively:

A graph is a very effective visual tool as it displays data at a glance, facilitates comparison, and can reveal trends and relationships within the data such as changes over time, frequency distribution, and correlation or relative share of a whole. Text, tables, and graphs for data and information presentation are very powerful communication tools. They can make an article easy to understand, attract and sustain the interest of readers, and efficiently present large amounts of complex information (p.267)

Even though Junyong and Sangseok are explaining just what one tool or mode of quantitative data does, namely the graph, they essentially present the essence and ethos of what quantitative methods are and what they seek to achieve in research. The use of quantitative data in this research is important as it helps to visually capture some of the patterns that emerge from the data without the clutter sometimes apparent from written descriptions.

One of the misconceptions in research circles emanates from the erroneous binary view that quantitative and qualitative methods are polarised approaches that are mutually exclusive or need to be (Pring, 2000). Nothing is further from the truth, as Hammersley (1992) argues,

We are not faced, then, with a stark choice between words and numbers, or even between precise and imprecise data; but rather with a range from less to more precise data. Furthermore, our decisions about what level of precision is appropriate in relation to any particular claim should depend on the nature of what we are trying to describe, on the likely accuracy of our descriptions, on our purposes, and on the resources available to us; not on ideological commitment to one methodological paradigm or another. (p.163)

Reference to statistical data in terms of how many times a specific voice attribute appears in a particular research project will be made as the starting point in exploring the concepts related to the perception and articulation of voice, before exploring the qualitative implications of the data. This reference to statistical aspects of certain vice parameters does not mean that a parameter that appears more than others is significantly more important than say an attribute that appears only once or a fewer times. The basis of any significance of issues that will be analysed will still be valued at the qualitative level. Possibly the lack of prevalence of a single attribute is more significant than the prevalence of others. Therefore, quantitative methods will both be used alongside qualitative ones to help answer research questions raised in this study. More often than not these two approaches will be used in a complementary way. I will also be drawing upon issues that I have observed in my practice where it is appropriate, but these observations are a small proportion of the procedures that will be used to explore the phenomenon under investigation.

**3.7 Justification of sample**

The Academic Research Projects (ARPs) to be analysed are mainly student work with the teacher’s input being that of a facilitator, the argument for the teacher’s minimal input is, if the teacher were to have considerable input, what will be assessed at the end will not be student work, but the teachers writing (Borko, 2004). If the latter situation were to arise, the result would not be beneficial to the English pre-sessional department or the academic staff in the learner’s intended discipline they hope to join at the end of the EAP pre-sessional English course. Therefore, it is in the stakeholder’s interest that the work to be assessed be genuine student work. The assignment remit asks students to come up with a research question from the discipline that they intend to study after the pre-sessional course and answer the question using secondary sources. The ARP was chosen because the students are writing on a topic that they have chosen themselves and in most cases the L2 learners choose a topic from their home country or an issue close to their heart, as a result the learners are likely to be passionate about the academic debate and issues raised on their chosen topic, hence they are expected to have an opinion about the issues raised on the subject.

I believe this sample of six projects, two top, two middle and the bottom two from each discipline is appropriately representative because it will give a balance in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of not just one level of student ability but various levels. The rationale was to avoid analysing results from a single group of L2 learners who might either be exceptionally good or poor students, or learners that might be having a good or bad teacher. Therefore, an examination of two different groups from two different fields of study taught by two experienced EAP practitioners was an attempt to counter these possible scenarios. I believe six are not too many or too little for this size of research, for example Ivanic and Camps’ (2001) research used six texts from six students. The most important aspect about this sample is that it is illustrative rather than representative. Abasi (2012, citing Allright 1997, p. 369) argues that a teacher led research is a ‘‘search for local understandings rather than for incontrovertible findings and universalistic theory’’ Abasi further argues that:

While such research does not aim to produce generalized laws about educational practice, the results, … could point to broad patterns or tendencies and thereby help generate questions for formal research or even serve to verify the findings of formal research in a classroom context. (p. 197)

Sometimes researchers are consumed about the need to produce research findings that have a wider sense of generalisability to a wider context, this research is not intending to do so, it is making a particular case for this particular context, but it is possible that there could be some issues that can be generalised to similar context at UK institutions and other universities elsewhere that have similar contexts in the USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

**3.8 Academic Research Projects and Evaluation**

Hunston and Thompson (1999) contend that every text is embodied in ideology. As a result, every instance of projecting voice in academic writing through evaluation is a way of expressing an ideological consideration from an epistemological point of view. Here is what Hunston and Thompson say about communal value systems and ideology in texts:

Every act of evaluation expresses a communal value-system, and every act of evaluation goes towards building up the value-system. This value system in turn, is a component of the ideology which lies behind every text. Thus, identifying what the writer thinks reveals the ideology of the society that has produced the text. (p.6)

Consequently, when L2 learners are writing in the context of a UK university, the knowledge systems that they are contributing towards are UK knowledge systems rather than those of the countries that they come from, at least at the expectation level. Therefore, there is justification in the demands by university admissions and faculty staff that L2 learners should have a certain minimum level of Academic English competence if they are to function at an acceptable level within institutional standards (Bailey, 2003; 2011). Academic standards and values are steeped in the ideology of an institution, consequently, institutions feel that they have the right to impose standards regarding how knowledge communicated (in oral presentations, written assignments and dissertations) ought to be to be acceptable within institutional context.

It could be expedient at this stage to define ideology in the context of education. Meighan and Harber (2007) define ideology as follows:

Ideology is defined as a broad interlocked set of ideas and beliefs about the world held by a group of people that they demonstrate in both behaviour and conversation to various audiences. These systems of belief are usually seen as ‘the way things really are’ by the groups holding them, and they become the taken-for-granted ways of making sense of the world (p. 212).

Therefore, when a student is studying at a UK university they are expected to present knowledge from a ‘western’ academic point of view in terms of structure and language, as learning and knowledge is situated in context (Kim, 2001). The ARP promises to be fertile ground for exploring the relationship between student voice, ideology, discourse community, stance and engagement in L2 academic writing (Hyland, 2008).

The other reason for choosing the research project as a place for investigating student voice is because the ARP is summative assessment (Taras, 2008) that comes towards the end of course and students would have acquired most of the writing conventions that they are expected to have learnt on the pre-sessional English course, student voice included. In these research projects, it is hoped that L2 learners are sufficiently motivated to produce the best quality of written work as is possible, as passing this paper usually determines whether they stay and study their course of choice in UK or go back home. It is ‘highstakes’ writing (Beck and Jeffery, 2007).

Another reason why the research project is an ideal place for assessing student voice is because students will be writing on a topic in the discipline that they will be studying after the pre-sessional, therefore there is an opportunity for them to align their voice with those of seasoned scholars in their field. It will be akin to Ivanic and Camps (2001) notion of negotiating their way into a new discourse community. It is expected that there will be numerous instances of evaluations that project student voice in these authentic student texts.

**3.9 Social Constructivism and voice**

Social Constructivism is related to modern developmental theories by Vygotsky, Bruner and Bandura (Kim, 2001). Social Constructivism has specific assumptions about reality, knowledge and learning (ibid). Members of a society, in the context of this research, the discourse community of academic writing in English, have created a social reality called Academic Writing. This is the reason why there are books written for international students or L2 learners of English that covers topics like conventions of academic writing, for example Bailey (2003: 2011) Academic writing for international students.

For social constructivist reality cannot be discovered, it does not exist before its social creation. This is true for the issues raised in this research concerning concepts such as, English for Academic Purposes, Discourse Analysis, academic disciplines such as Civil Engineering and Political Science. At some point in time the above social realities did not exist, but they were created as ways of building knowledge and discuss concepts at an intellectual level. Social Constructivist such as Vygotsky believe that knowledge is a human product and is socially and culturally constructed (Kim, 2001). Individuals and in our case L2 learners create meaning through their interactions with each other and with the environment they live in and this shapes how they will know what they know, in other words their epistemology (ibid). These L2 learners’ knowledge systems are created with interactions with their peers EAP Teachers and the teaching and learning materials that they access in the process of producing their Academic Research Papers (ARPs)

On the difference between social constructivism and social constructionism, Kim (2001) cites Papert (1991, p.3)

The word with the v expresses the theory that knowledge is built by the learner, not supplied by the teacher. The word with the n expresses the further idea that happens especially felicitously when the learner is engaged in the construction of something external or at least sharable.

For this research the above distinction suffices in showing that Social Constructivism and Constructionism are not the same, though they have considerable overlap. At the theoretical level, the social constructivism that this research aligns with is Vygotsky Social Constructivism with at its centre theories of how learners acquire knowledge as they interact with the “more knowledgeable other” (MKO) as they scaffold through the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD) (Kim, 2001). The MKO are the custodians of the discourse community such as such as scholars, editors of peer reviewed journals and academics. The zone of proximal development is a concept that explains the different levels that a learner has to go through in terms challenging themself to reach the next level with the help of the MKO in acquiring knowledge in a given discourse community, as they scaffold their knowledge from one level to the next (Ibrahim and Nambiar, 2012). One key element that needs pointing out is that language, is a crucial fundamental in the learning process and is at the centre of knowledge creation as it is used to acknowledge, construct and negotiate meaning and knowledge in social relations in and out of the classroom (Ballard and Clancy, 1991; Prawat and Floden, 1994). Therefore, the language that is used to mediate knowledge is very important since language is a carrier of people’s culture as well (Ibrahim and Nambiar, 2012).

More on Social Constructivism will be incorporated into this research as it progresses. MKO, ZPD and other technical terms on this topic such as Intersubjectivity are explained in the glossary of technical terms in the preliminary section. The next section will focus on the importance of carrying out a textual analysis.

**3.10 Academic writing as meta-genre**

This section seeks to explore academic writing as a meta-genre (Giltrow, 2002) and how this aids our understanding of the concept of voice. This meta-genre called academic writing could be referenced in other literature as the register of academic writing. The standard approach in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is that academic writing in its broad sense is a meta-genre that seeks to achieve a particular purpose and therefore has a certain structure to it, this results in concepts like conventions in academic writing, which supposes that there is broad structure and purpose to all forms of academic writing (Dudley Evans and St Joan, 1998; Jordan, 1997 and Hyland, 2006). In EAP literature therefore more often than not there is reference to Academic writing as genre. Therefore, when I make reference in this research to the genre of academic writing, it is the same as what other related disciplines refer to as the **register** of academic writing.

Geertz, (1983) has a peculiar perspective of genres and their relationship with local knowledge when he argues, “…the shapes of knowledge are ineluctably local, indivisible from their instruments and encasements” (p.4). There are two technical terms that need explaining. What are ‘instruments’ and ‘encasements’? Rappaport, (2013) explains instruments and encasements as follows: “instruments of knowledge are what we call “texts” and encasements for those texts are what we call genres” (p.197). Geertz’s argument appears to be paradoxical when one views it from an L2 academic writing perspective. His argument is that, the way knowledge is conceived is unavoidably local, to a particular context or person, but, it cannot be understood outside the text that carries it, and that text is part of specific genre. According to Swales (1990), genre creation is a purposeful activity. The subsequent paragraphs will explore the paradoxical nature of the quote and why it is an interesting idea for student voice.

The first part argues that the way knowledge is conceived and communicated is unavoidably local, that implies several things about the ontological background of L2 learners of English on a pre-sessional course. Taking a postgraduate Civil Engineering student from China as an example. The way they understand engineering is from a Chinese context (local) and they have been communicating that knowledge in Chinese Mandarin (local). Here they are on a pre-sessional English course and their ARP is on an engineering topic (picked from a Chinese context), but it must have English language ‘instruments and encasements’, in other words the text and genre conventions that it must adhere to are foreign, that is, English, western academic writing conventions. The result is, there is a clash between the ‘local’ aspect and genre conventions, and the voice concepts in Chinese academic writing and English/Western academic writing are different (Chan, 1999). Therefore, before the L2 learner begins to tackle the language proficiency side of things, the cultural and ontological perspectives are already clashing (Kress, *etal*, 1982). This makes student voice in academic writing for these students a highly-contested concept (Egege and Kutieleh 2004).

Berkencotter and Huckin (2009) introduce the concept of genres in interesting terms as follows:

Genres are the media through which scholars and scientists communicate with their peers. Genres are intimately linked to a discipline’s methodology, and they package information in ways that conform to a discipline’s norms, values, and ideology. Understanding the genres of written communication in one’s field is, therefore, essential to professional success. (p.1)

The sense in which I am using genre emanates from the historical debate in English for Specific Purposes on whether academic writing is a meta-genre or not (Harwood and Hadley, 2004). There is a school of thought that argues that the concept of academic writing as genre does not make much sense because different disciplines use academic English differently, therefore scholars in this school of thought argue that an English teacher needs to have subject knowledge if they are going to teach say Engineering or Economics (Spack, 1998). There is some merit to this argument, but I agree more with the school of thought that argues that academic writing in English is a meta-genre in its own right (Dudley Evans and St Joan, 1998; Jordan, 1997; Hyland, 2006) which is why teachers of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) can teach Academic English across the Higher Education disciplines even though they are not subject specialist in the disciplines they teach. If an EAP practitioner has an understanding of the genre of academic English, one can apply it to any discipline without being a subject specialist (Hyland, 2006).

If an EAP teacher understands the Target Situation (Dudley Evans and St John, 1998), then they should not have any issues with applying the genre conventions in differentiated settings. Therefore, where Berkencotter and Huckin (2009) say “professional success”, for the purposes of this study it should be understood as referring to academic success for the L2 learner of English. Academic writing conventions impose form and structure on what students can say or not say in these ARPs, that is why it is important to understand what a genre can encourage or inhibit in subtle ways through unwritten rules.

The relationship between student voice and conventions of academic writing can be understood using genre theory. Academic writing can be understood as a genre that has a specific discourse community and conventions that uses language in a specific way to achieve its own goals (Swales, 1990). The presentation of a distinct student voice is one of the parameters that experts in the field expect new entrants to acquire as they try to negotiate their way into any discourse community.

As this research analyses L2 student research projects for student voice, the expectation for student voice in these projects will be examined according to the standard expected in the marking descriptors. These descriptors will be treated as the default standard for the conventions of the academic writing genre in this research. Bhatia, (2002) looks at genres as “conventionalised constructs”. He explains genre theory as having these seven attributes: see Table 2, below.

Table 2 **Genres as conventionalised constructs**

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| 1 | Genres are reflections of disciplinary cultures and, in that sense, those of the realities of the world of discourse |
| 2 | Genres focus on conventionalised communicative events embedded within **disciplinary** or professional practices |
| 3 | All disciplinary or professional genres have integrity of their own |
| 4 | Genres are recognizable communicative events |
| 5 | Genres are highly structured and conventionalised constructs |
| 6 | Established members of a particular professional community have greater knowledge and understanding of generic practices. |
| 7 | Expert members of a community know how to manipulate the conventions in new ways |

Adapted from Bhatia (2002, p.23)

L2 learners are just new entrants in the genre of academic writing in English, therefore they are trying to negotiate their entry into the field by imitating what they read in order to acculturate themselves into the discipline. The point of interest for this research is to explore how these new entrants manage to negotiate their way into this highly conventionalised genre of academic writing that has highly experienced experts that are invisible custodians and regulators of the genre.

Zhao (2012), cites Hyland (2008) as offering a comprehensive model for analysing voice that involves the interaction between writers and readers. Zhao (ibid.) describes the model as follows:

One is the writer-oriented ‘stance’ dimension, which refers to how writers present themselves, their opinions, and their arguments through the use of four linguistically available elements: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and authorial self- mention. The other is the reader-oriented ‘engagement’ dimension that is realised through the use of five other linguistic- and discourse level elements: reader pronouns, personal asides, **references to shared knowledge**, directives, and (rhetorical/audience directed) questions. (p. 203)

It is my contention though that these nine parameters in the stance and engagement framework are not an exhaustive and finite list of lenses that student voice can be explored through, as additional parameters will be suggested in the analysis. Having said this, it is also important that the framework is a very important base to start the interrogation of this complex phenomenon called student voice. Hyland’s (2005) framework of voice is easier to understand visually as in the tree diagram below:

**3.11 Textual Analysis**

The texts that will be analysed in this research are extant texts, as they are authentic texts that were created for purposes of assessing the L2 learners who produced them to fulfil the conditions of their conditional offers at this institution (Hyland, 2005). As this research is in the area of my practice, it was important to use authentic texts as a way of exploring the notion of student voice in L2 writing.

These texts do not have all the answers on how student voice is conceived and articulated by L2 learners because they are extant texts, but the outcome reflects results from the practical context of my practice and reflects this sample’s conception and articulation of student voice at the end of the ten-week pre-sessional intensive English course. Even though these language learners were writing this piece of text for assessment on a pre-sessional course, some of them were writing about issues that are close to their hearts, there were some passionate sections within these texts. It is important to situate texts in their contexts so that readers are fully aware of the possible idiosyncratic features that a text might have outside the normal conventions of a given genre (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006).

The contexts of production of these texts helps to enlighten the process of their interpretation, because the reader and researcher understand who the participants are and the reasons for producing these texts, and the fact that they were fulfilling a real-life social need. The context of the production of the texts makes the consumers of the texts also understand whom these learners were writing for (Ryan, 2011), their primary audience being the EAP practitioner, and probably the second invisible audience is writing to their discipline (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995). Therefore, the rhetorical choices that they make are influenced at this stage by two major factors, the academic writing conventions that they are currently learning on the pre-sessional course and the historic academic writing repertoires in the language and culture they were immersed in when they studied their first-degree (Foucault, 1971; Quinn, 2012)). This is the reason why in the analysis section I have a heightened awareness of the possibility of the learner’s conception and articulation of voice being influenced by their previous ontological and epistemological considerations.

McKee, (2003) captured valuable points about the importance of a textual analysis which are valuable for this research. He contends:

Textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world. It is a methodology—a data-gathering process—for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live. (p. 1)

By using a textual analysis, this research seeks to explore how L2 learners make sense of the world of academic writing, and how they project their voice in the process. From a Social Constructivist point of view, the way individual students communicate (in spoken or written discourse) is influenced by their cultural, ontological and epistemological backgrounds (Kim, 2001). Therefore, this research seeks to explore how this subculture of learners, that have learnt the subject matter of their discipline in a different language and culture make sense of writing about their discipline using academic writing conventions in English, in a new and foreign academic culture and environment (Quinn, 2012).

The last part of McKee’s (2003) quote above refers to how a textual analysis helps to find out how the subjects fit into the world they live in. There is a paradox to the concept of ‘fitting into the world they live in’ as L2 learners on a pre-sessional course are acquiring knowledge for all intents and purposes not for the country where they are currently living and studying, but for their home countries where they will return after the completion of their studies (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004). This perspective makes this idea of changing the world view of these students more questionable as they will only need this ‘western worldview’ probably for just the duration of their study, which is normally a year (for master’s students) and revert to their cultural world-view at the end of their studies (ibid). Arguments can be made that education is training, and therefore, when one gets education they are being trained to function in the global world (Psacharopoulos, 1994). There are merits to this argument but, I believe one’s education must be relevant for a learner, first for their local context before being relevant for the global market.

The practicality or impracticality of the expectations that EAP teachers have of an intensive pre-sessional English course is what drove me to have interest in this area in the first place. I wanted to further understand how realistic are the myriad of expectations that EAP teachers have about what these L2 learners can realistically achieve after a short period of tuition. The question that arises from this context is, with what success can these L2 learner’s research projects attain the expected ‘native-like’ level of proficiency in student voice in academic writing in English. Given these circumstances, a textual analysis seemed to be an appropriate research tool to explore how L2 learners conceive and articulate voice in academic writing on a pre-sessional English course. This study is making a case of this bounded group of learners. The best way to understand their written communication repertoires is through taking an authentic piece of communication from their standard coursework and analyse it for specific research outcomes.

A textual analysis will also allow this work to interrogate the major theoretical issues raised by the research questions. The argument being presented here is that academic writing is a genre that has specific conventions which have been put in place by members of that discourse community to try and achieve a particular purpose (Bhatia, 2004; Swales, 1990; Swales and Feak, 1994). Therefore, L2 learners have to master the conventions of the genre of academic writing reasonably well for them to successfully complete their assessed Academic Research Project (APR). As argued earlier, it was established that the notion of student voice can be an elusive concept, and according to Grow (2008), a difficult one for EAP teachers to understand and more so teach on a pre-sessional course that has limited time. Because of the slippery nature of the concept of student voice, it is reasonable to assume that it is difficult for students to learn as well. This explains why this study is interested in finding better ways of understanding this concept and subsequently trying to explore better ways of teaching the concept. Despite voice not being overtly stated on the list topics on the contents page of the ten-week pre-sessional course-book to be used for teaching on the pre-sessional writing course, it is however explicitly mentioned in the descriptors (Appendix 1) for assessing written work, something that is intriguing at different pedagogical levels.

The next chapter will be on Data Presentation and Analysis

**Chapter 4**

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

**4.1 Introduction**

Boeije (2010) contends the essence of data analysis is about:

Breaking up, separating or disassembling of research material into pieces, parts, elements or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes or patterns or whole. The aim of this process is to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion. (p. 76)

As described above, the aim of data analysis is that the broken-down data should be made sense of, in terms of trying to understand how a concept works. The reason for collecting data in this research was to further understand how L2 learners articulate and conceptualise student voice on a pre-sessional course at a UK University, with the view to find areas where they have gaps in knowledge and propose ways of addressing these gaps in future course design. The conceptual framework helped in analysing the different “pieces, parts, elements” being examined into “manageable pieces” in order to address the research questions raised at the beginning of this research process.

The analysis of data using Hyland’s framework was for the purposes of understanding how L2 learners’ voice manifest in their writing, with a view to explore if there are areas where they are particularly struggling with learner voice in their academic writing in English so that EAP practitioners may create courses that address these issues. The way that the conceptual framework is, entails that the voice parameters will be explored as segments, then these disassembled parts will then be assembled together in order to create a unified research outcome, through the process of sifting for types and patterns from the data (Ibid). This will be done with the view to improve the way students comprehend these concepts as well as highlight to EAP practitioners, issues that they may need to focus on more or approach differently, in terms of course design, teaching materials production and course delivery. Course Design and teaching materials production are key processes in the discipline of English for Academic Purposes. What necessitates the creation of an EAP course is determined by the Target Situation Needs (why a particular group of students need to learn a language) (Hutchison and Waters, 1987; Dudley Evans and St. Joan, 1998). These needs, when they are established, are the basis and justification for creating a language course that addresses those specific needs.

The reasons for conducting this research were twofold. Firstly, it sought to find out how L2 learners are expressing their voice in academic writing in their ARPs in order learn which aspects of voice they are struggling with and which ones they are comfortable with. Informed by these results, especially on deficiencies found, this knowledge will be turned into recommendations to be used by Course Designers and teaching material producers to create a course that better informs the teaching and learning of student voice in particular and academic writing in general for L2 learners in this context. This research therefore, is a form of an exit interview (textual though) that will inform the Needs Analysis that is not carried out in the first place at the beginning of the course because the learners are not physically available in the same place for this purpose (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Dudley Evans and St. Joan, 1998; Hyland 2006).

Pole and Lampard (2002, p. 206) reckon that a proper analysis of the data can only result from an “intimate relationship” between the researcher and the collected data. When a certain level of intimacy has developed between the two, then the salient points and patterns from the data will begin to emerge, as meaning is created in the process of the interplay between various codes and categories begin to make sense (ibid).

Pole and Lampard (2002) contend that the researcher should be able to have these five things at their fingertips: “Know the data in and out, …thoroughly code the data, …identify concepts, …ground the concepts into the data and open the findings for scrutiny by others” (p.209). Data can only be of use if the researcher thoroughly knows the data, because failure to do so will inhibit an informed outcome to emerge from the data (ibid). The codes used must be good enough to make patterns or types begin to emerge as the coding process ensues. Identifying concepts and patterns underlie the reason for carrying out research. When patterns fail to emerge from the data being analysed, it is an indicator of some kind flaw in the research process or methodology. Finally, the findings ought to be open for scrutiny by others, something that this research cannot escape from as it has to be examined, but at the end of the examination process it is hoped parts of this work can be further developed into research papers, that can be open to scrutiny by anyone interested in the topic. To a large extent, this analysis was guided and shaped by these five processes.

**4.2 Themes from Political Science**

The ensuing section will present the patterns emerging from the data quantitatively, in tables showing the distribution of the various voice parameters as they appear in each of the six Academic Research Papers (ARPs), but the narrative of the analysis will both be quantitative and qualitative. The statistical picture about the distribution of the various voice parameters in student texts does not tell the whole picture of how learners conceive and articulate voice in academic writing within this pre-sessional context. Theoretical foundations will also be drawn from educational theories such as Social Constructionist and Social Constructivist theories amongst others. Insights from these theoretical backgrounds will explore the way L2 learners conceive and articulate voice in their research projects.

The first part of data presentation shows the number of times each voice parameter appears in each L2 learner’s text, (starting with Political Science, followed by Civil Engineering) and then it is expressed as a percentage of the total in the last row. For example, in Political Science Low (PSL) for Hedges, (H) there are 14 occurrences in the whole Academic Research Paper (ARP), representing 13.3 % of the total number of the voice parameters used by this particular learner. The purpose of these tables is to give a visual picture of the distribution of the various voice parameters within this corpus. After this quantitative picture has been painted, the next section embarks on a qualitative analysis about the impact that using or not using the diverse voice parameters that the students choose to use has an impact in the overall student voice and how this might have a link with the perceived quality of the writing as represented by the grade awarded to the ARP. The qualitative analysis asks questions on why a given parameter was absent or how it was used in a specific ARP and not in certain ARPs. Through these explorations it is hoped they will help shed light on what might be influencing these learners to conceive and articulate voice in particular ways.

4.2.1 Statistical picture

Figure 3 **Political Science Low (PSL)**

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Figure 4 **Political Science Low (PSM)**

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Figure 5 **Political Science High (PSH)**

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4.2.2 Patterns emerging from statistical data

There is an interesting pattern emerging from Political Science, and the first part of the story is very neat. The lowest scoring ARP- PSL (low), has the lowest instances of a marked voice (evaluation) 105, PSM (middle) has 123 and PSH (High) has 236. I should explain at this stage that the conceptual framework is not exhaustive of all instances where student voice is being projected. There are other ways in which learners can express their voice that is not captured by the framework, therefore the analysis will not be constrained by the limitations of the conceptual framework, further details will be explored later in section 5.4.

The best way to think about student voice is to think of it as a form of evaluation (Hunston and Thompson, 1999), therefore what the framework is doing is to highlight instances of marked evaluation. Markedness “is a state in which one linguistic element is more distinctly identified (or marked) than another (unmarked) element” (Nordquist, 2016, para. 1). The point being made is that, taking Appeal to Shared Knowledge (ASK) as an example, when writers are writing, they are invariably making an appeal to shared knowledge, but they often are not doing it in a marked way. What is described as Appeals to Shared Knowledge is an explicit reference to shared knowledge as in this example. (a) “*it is common knowledge* that living and working in dusty environments may cause TB” the unmarked counterpart would be (b) “continued exposure to dusty environments *may* result in respiratory diseases such as TB”. Therefore, it is the part that is in italics that is showing **marked** student voice. The marked aspect in (b) is the use the modal verb *may* which marks it as a form of hedging. Whilst there is student voice in the evaluation in the second statement it will not be considered as an instance that counts for student voice in terms of Appeal to Shared Knowledge but the overarching sense of appeal to shared information is still present. The other thing to note as well with the framework is that it is not exhaustive of all the possible ways of presenting voice, but the nine parameters it contains can give a comprehensive (though incomplete) picture about how the texts in the sample carry the concept of student voice.

From the patterns emerging from the data, an assumption can therefore be made that the more student voice there is in a piece of academic writing, the more favourably assessed it is by EAP Practitioners. This of course is not the complete picture but is quite a significant portion of the reality of this sample. Both PSL and PSH have Attitude Markers (AM) as the parameter with the highest voice frequency. PSL has 55 instances of AMs representing 52% of student voice from the whole text, whilst PSH has 85 instances of AM representing 35 % of student voice from this ARP. Attitude Markers “indicate the writer’s affective rather than epistemic attitude to propositions” (Hyland 2005, p. 180). The writer’s affective (feelings) are not highly valued propositions in academia but facts that are related to knowledge- epistemic, are more valued (ibid). Therefore, PSL has more than 50% of student voice pertaining to how the writer feels about propositions. Personal feelings concern very subjective ways of conceiving ideas, a perception that is not highly regarded in western academic writing (Bailey, 2003). In western academic writing striving for objectivity has been a cherished value of the academy (Carr, 2000). PSL’s heavy slant on affective appeal could be the reason the paper was awarded a low passing grade.

On the other hand, even though PSH has a high frequency of AM of 83 occurances, it represents only 35% of the total evaluations in the text. The second highest scoring category for PSH is ASK (Appeal to Shared Knowledge) with 74 instances representing 31% of the total voice evaluations. This indicates that there is a balance in the distribution of student voice in this ARP. Boosters are third with 19% and Hedges fourth with almost 11%. This balance in the distribution of the various ways of projecting voice indicates awareness of the various rhetorical strategies that are available in the repertoire of the L2 learner to present evaluative propositions in academic writing. I believe this balance has a persuasive appeal to the EAP practitioner that is evaluating the peace of writing impressionistically, given that the voice parameters under discussion in this research are not explicitly mentioned in the descriptors used to assess these research projects. This point will be explored further in the analysis section. PSM also shows the same balance in the top four parameters having only 8 percentage points separating the first and fourth ranked parameters of voice. ASK has 27%, H, 22%, AM, 20% and B, 19%.

4.2.3 Analysis by voice parameters

This section will analyse how the different L2 learners presented the various voice parameters across the discipline in Political Science. The first parameter to be explored is that of Personal Pronouns (PP).

Personal Pronoun (PP)

The reason why *I* have chosen this topic is that the Egypt’s case is likely to be repeated in Arab spring countries particularly Libya and Yemen. (PSH, p.1)

The use of Personal Pronouns at the generic level is discouraged in academic writing, and I believe that most teachers make an effort to draw their learner’s attention to this recommendation. The use of the PP ‘I’ in this sentence shows that the Learner, despite convention is proud of taking ownership of choosing the topic despite the convention recommending non-use of personal pronouns.

If the learner had taken the advice about the “dominant discourse conventions” (Pennycook, 1997, p.265) and taken the passive option, which is what is it recommended in academic writing in English for supposedly making academic discourse more objective and less personal (Baratta, 2009). The passive construction would appear something close to this, “*this topic was chosen because…”.* This passive option has the illocutionary effect of creating distance between the writer and the decision to consciously choose the topic. Even though the general advice on the pre-sessional course is to advise students not to use personal pronouns (Bailey, 2003), this L2 learner preferred to be swayed by how they know how to communicate probably from their L1 culture and language and saw the expedience of communicating using a personal pronoun rather than what the dominant discourse conventions say.

As an EAP practitioner, this example questions the notion of giving generic advice about academic writing conventions because the genre of academic writing is sometimes quite fuzzy in terms of whether it is genre or not, as Lillis (1999) cited by Harwood and Hardley (2004) rightfully calls it an ‘institutional practise of mystery’. In this situation, the use of a personal pronoun does add value rather than detract from it, therefore I see very little merit in this advice in a context such as above. If a learner chooses a topic for research and takes ownership of that fact by using the personal pronoun ‘I’, I have no problem with that, and as an EAP teacher I do not understand why we advise L2 learners to use an impersonal alternative that creates distance between the decision and the person that took the decision.

I find the passive alternative quite unappealing and to some extent dishonest in terms of textual integrity. Why would using a passive construction be deemed more academic when it makes more intellectual than owning a choice made as follows: “I chose this topic for the following reasons…”. The boldness of this L2 learner to use a PP in this way is quite apt. I will not though neglect to make my students aware of what the dominant discourse conventions say about these academic writing conventions. I will appreciate a learner’s choice in wanting to use personal pronouns where appropriate as in the case above. From my professional context, this is a clear case of action research, where the research being undertaken by the practitioner changes the way one operationalize new knowledge in practise.

One of the contradictions that also comes with this issue of personal pronouns is that when one is studying at the doctoral level for instance, the advice changes from avoid using personal pronouns to take ownership of your ideas by using personal pronouns. Since these learners are post-graduate students, it can potentially be confusing for them to get different types of advice at different stages in their postgraduate studies on the use of personal pronouns (PP). Using the passive voice as a way of expressing student choice regarding a reason to embark on a particular piece of research does not make the choice more or less academic. It only makes it more awkward and less sincere to take the passive voice option. Here is the next example from:

Political Science Middle (PSM)

As *I* see the advantage of this act, Obama can use the procession to confirm with the partners that the deals will not be edited during congress’s progression (p.8).

In *my opinion* this meeting ended without any headway (p.8).

It *seems* (H) to *me* (PP) that another possible reason for this might be the era of internal political conflict which involved an impact on the policy maker’s decision (p.9).

In these examples, it is clear the student really refuses to have their voice stifled by academic writing conventions in English. In situations when the L2 learners feel they have to express their personal opinion they choose not to conform to the pre-sessional advice concerning academic writing conventions which discourages the use of personal pronouns. In above examples the learner could have felt that it is more expedient for them to say what they feel about the arguments that they are expressing rather than bottle them in being ‘academically correct’. I feel this student encapsulates the argument by Foucault, (1971) that the discourses that we have encountered create who we are academically. The arguments from Contrastive rhetoric also suggest that students can not completely shake off the writing conventions of their first language and culture when they go abroad to learn in a foreign language and culture (Connor, 2002; Kaplan, 1966; Quinn, 2012). I believe that despite how much EAP Teachers discourage the use of personal pronouns, EAP teachers will encounter not only from linguistically weak learners but average learners still insisting on using of personal pronouns, to express how they feel. As an EAP practitioner there might not be any need to be too legalistic about writing conventions when it is clear why a L2 learner like PSM chooses to write like this. It could be a case where a leaner is refusing to be bent by the rules but they choose to stick with what they know to be right from their L1 language and culture.

*“In my opinion* this meeting ended without any headway”. In this example, it is clear that the writer felt very strongly about the opinion that it would be a world of injustice to use a passive expression for such a strongly felt opinion. The feeling that I am having about reading some of these instances where the L2 learner is clearly going against the conventions, I feel that it is a situation where the Learner feels that what they already know about academic writing and its conventions but the voice that serves them better in expressing their opinions is what they know already from their L1 and culture rather than what they are learning in English academic writing (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004) .

Political Science Low (PSL)

First, *I* will give a brief background about the relationship development between china and African countries. Second, *I* will explain the foreign policy of china towards African countries. (p.3)

Fourth, *I* will analyse the challenge that china face in two countries. (p.3)

It is rare to have such an explicit use of three Personal Pronouns in the same paragraph. The way I interpret the use of these PPs is not because the student is not aware of the convention that discourages the use of PPs but they are just defying convention and just being themselves, the way they are in their language and culture (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004). This is where an understanding of Contrastive Rhetoric could be helpful in explaining what might be taking place in the mind of student that comes from a different ontological and epistemological background (Connor, 2002). I am sure this is akin to what Shen, (1989) argues that sometimes L2 learners feel like a fraud when they are forced to follow an academic writing convention that goes against the grain on what they believe in terms of what academic writing ought to be from their L1 and culture (Chan, 1999). Because this is a statement of intent, the writer feels they cannot hide behind using ‘the author’ or ‘the researcher’ to refer to them self, an argument that I find quite appealing. Elsewhere in the APR, the learner (PSL) does not use personal pronouns, which makes me believe that he/she knew what the convention says but felt wrong to use an impersonal form to express intent.

Questions (Q)

PSM

Noticeably, the joining in the trade agreement can give both huge and positive and negative impacts, many countries accepted to raise their economy. *But why is Thailand still hesitating and standing at the crossroads*? (p.1)

Hyland (2005) says that Questions are a dialogic device per excellence in that the writer is expecting the reader to think about the question that has been posed, thereby actively engaging the reader to participate in the consumption and consequent knowledge creation within the discourse. The writer does not want the reader to be a passive participant but to be someone the writer is engaging in a dialogue, hence the use of Questions. Therefore the reader encouraged to think about the possible diverse ways of answering the question that has been posed in the text. The reader is expected to think about why Thailand is standing at crossroads if having a trade agreement has the benefits explained in the first sentence in the quote above. Hyland (ibid) argues that using questions is the best way of acknowledging the presence of the reader in a text, because in an ideal interpersonal communication context, when an interlocutor asks a question, the other party is expected to provide a response (Fielding, 2006). Therefore, a question like the one cited above is an acknowledgement by the student writer that there is a reader out there that they need to communicate with. A question in a text is a clear engagement strategy inviting the reader to be a participant a communicative act.

Personal Aside (PA)

Political Science High

Al-Sisi: the chief of Egyptian intelligence during Mubarak’s ruling era, the defence minister at Morsi’s time, the leader of the coup against a legitimate president (Morsi) and the recent president of Egypt (p.5)

In this Personal Aside (PA) that is presented as a footnote, the student writer wants to give as much information as is possible about this man called Al-Sisi. This is not information for its own sake, but it is calculated information that is supposed to make the reader have an opinion about this man. The learner is keen to portray Al-Sisi as the person that betrayed Morsi, he was the defence minister, who was ideally ‘supposed’ to defend the country and the President, but he, ironically is the coup leader and current President. The extra information being provided by this PA also links Al-Sisi to Mubarak, the military President of Egypt who was heavy handed (Hirschkind, 2011). It is also intended to portray Al-Sisi as someone that could not to be trusted in the first place because of the historical links with Mubarak. If this information in the PA had not been supplied, Al-Sisi would just have been presented as another politician in the history of the Egyptian revolution. But this PA affords the writer an opportunity to negatively evaluate Al-Sisi in a very subtle way.

There is a high level of rhetorical manipulation in this ARP where carefully selected diction like coup against *a legitimate President* is meant to show that the writer has sympathy with Morsi and Al-Sisi is cast as a betrayer of democracy. This PA gives four key perspectives of Al-Sisi. Firstly, as a close ally of Mubarak, secondly, Morsi’s defence Minister, third, as Coup Leader and finally as the current President. It’s a prefect word picture of someone that cannot be trusted.

Political Science Middle (PSM)

*See* (D)more at <http://www.iiss.org/en/events/shangi-s-la-s-dialogue> (p.5).

The above is an excellent example of two voice parameters working well together. This is an example of a Directive (D) and a Personal Aside (PA) in one. The Personal Aside is giving more information by encouraging the reader to find more information by following the link provided. On the other hand, it is a Directive that is giving an instruction to the reader on what they have to do. Introducing an aside through a link, can be an ideologically subtle way of smuggling contestable information. In the case of this particular link, it is just giving information about events.

Here is another example where there are different voice parameters used in the same sentence:

*Fast forward* *to November 2012* (D), by Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra (*younger sister of ex-PM Taskin) (PA)*, the government announced a high interest to take part in the TPP after officially visiting of the US President Barack Obama.

Here we have a very clever insinuation that is being brought by the Personal Aside, that there is something not right when members of the same family, that is, sisters, continue to occupy the high office of Prime Minister. The way in which the Personal Aside (PA) has been inserted in the text is a very clever way of introducing an evaluative voice which will make the reader to think about what they are reading. In this instance, a PA has not used as an innocent way of giving extra information to inform the reader. A closer reading of the text suggests that it is a very subtle form of interrogating Thai politics, inviting the reader not to accept the face value of the facts. There are many different ways that this PA can be interpreted by different readers, but I believe it would not be complimentary.

Appeals to Shared Knowledge (ASK**)**

Political Science High (PSH)

Indeed, Muslim Brotherhood *is considered as the strongest and the oldest party*, (ASK) thus, *axiomatically* (B) Al-Sisi who was the chief of military intelligence during Mubarak’s govern[ment], should not have expected a victory of elimination of Brotherhood by declaring it as a terrorist organisation, *notably* (B) in this globalization era (p.5)

The presentation of voice requires complex rhetorical manipulation involving various voice parameters in order to achieve a particular communicative effect. Here, the writer makes an Appeal to Shared Knowledge (ASK) by making it sound as if the information that the Muslim brotherhood is the strongest and oldest political party in Egypt as something that everyone knows about and is not contestable. The writer is in fact actually ‘constructing’ the reader by presupposing that they agree with the presented view (Hyland 2005, p. 184). This ASK is further strengthened by using the Booster (B) *axiomatically* to further emphasise that some information is obvious and it is foolhardy for a general such as Al-Sisi to think that he could wish away a party that has such history and stature as the Muslim Brotherhood by merely declaring it as a ‘terrorist organisation’. This student had very advanced rhetorical manipulation skills (Matsuda and Tardy, 2007) of voice features, and it is not a surprise the student attained a high score for this ARP. The learner’s level of linguistic manipulation is highly evaluative and the arguments are presented convincingly.

Another example of ASK:

*As a logical consequence* (ASK) of every military coup, *miscarriage of justice* (ASK), plays a massive part in the coercion of individuals to accept the new *dreadful status* (AM)*.* (p.9)

Appeal to shared knowledge (ASK) is used in an almost cunning way to force the reader to have only one way of understanding a military coup in the above example. The writer is coercing the readers to accept this generic view of a military coup as having the same *logical consequence,* but the truth is that military coups have different effects in different countries (taking the 2017 military coup in Zimbabwe as an example, it had popular support from the population). The writer is also projecting this idea that every military coup will result in *miscarriage of justice.* There is no single way of relating the concept of justice to governance, because justice means different things to different people. The writer is very good at presenting contested information or arguments as shared knowledge in order to present a strong proposition through clever manipulation of voice in their academic writing. The use of Appeal to Shared Knowledge (ASK) together with an Attitude Marker (AM) completes the argument that “ *logical consequence” (ASK)* of a military coup leads to “*miscarriage of justice” (SK)* which leads to “*dreadful status” (AM)*. If you analyse that sentence further beyond the parameters of voice, you will also notice that there is use of exaggeration or hyperbole in it *“plays a massive part”.* There is no logical consequence in that what the writer is saying is what happens each time there is a military coup, in some situations the populace can be better off after a military coup, but here, the writer’s rhetorical manipulation is of a high standard that he carries the reader along with their contestable arguments and presenting them like they were fact (Hyland 2005).

Another interesting pattern to emerge from the data was the manifestation of instances of voice that could be classified as belonging to more than one category, for instance, *miscarriage of justice* can be classified as AM, B or ASK. The way in which miscarriage of justice has been categorised as ASK has been explained above. How then is it an Attitude Marker? When the writer says that …a military coup leads to miscarriage of justice, they are presenting this in an “affective” (Hyland, 2005, p.180) way, where they are not actually concerned about verifying the truthfulness of the proposition but is simply saying, this is how I feel about it, accept it that way.

In a seemingly contradictory way from the explanation above, the same voice parameter can be viewed as a Booster, in the sense that the writer is making an “epistemic” (ibid) judgement about coups leading to miscarriage of justice, they actually believe that this is true and there is no need to present the idea in a hedged way. This ability to have an authorial voice that can be classified into several categories is a mark of a good writer. The L2 writer is able to appeal to the reader at more than one level and still be convincing as presenting authentic student voice within the various parameters explained above, where one voice feature can transcend one of type interpretation in terms of voice categorisation. Having such voice a parameter that can fit into more than one category in a way shows that segmenting the parameters as discreet linguistic categories also highlights the limitation of a segmented approach as it fails to capture complexity of the text as a broader piece of a larger communicative act.

A full understanding of what is happening with the language of evaluation is best understood at the textual level, where the whole illocutionary sense of proposition is interpreted in the social context of its production (Hyland, 2008). I am in no way discrediting the conceptual framework, (otherwise it defeats the idea of choosing it in the first place), but this is an argument about how a segmented approach to analysing a linguistic phenomenon fails to capture the essence of the whole, it is akin to teaching academic repertoires as separate skills, such as reading, writing, listening and speaking without showing how they work together in the learning process (Busch, 2012).

Hedges (H)

PSH

Secondly, according to the Economist (2013) Morsi blunted independent institutions, media, judiciary, civil services, furthermore, he tried by all means possibilities (sic) to cripple the army and the police in order to become more powerful and transform to a dictatorship. Yet *it can be easily argued* that the Economist claimed (sic) *might not be true*. (p.7)

Hedging is about presenting propositions or arguments with caution and allowing the possibility of other scholars to present contrary propositions (Hyland, 2005). The above example is interesting because hedging strategies are used in an unusual way in conjunction with other voice parameters. *Can* is a modal verb that is normally associated with hedging (Bailey, 2003), but here it is juxtaposed with a booster, *easily* a voice parameter that shows certainty which is almost the opposite of the cautionary concept of introducing a hedge. As a result of this strange combination, there is an expression of voice that has the strength of a booster and the caution of a hedge. It is a very unique and powerful way of expressing voice, something that cannot be taught, similar to writing with flair, which is an individual signature that someone develops after a long time of exposure to a discourse community (Lillis, 2001). The writer also uses the second hedge, the modal verb *might* in an intriguing way. Hedging is usually a way of accommodating alternative ways of expressing an argument but in this case the hedging modal verb is used as a rebuttal to quash an alternative view. It is very interesting when L2 learners use voice parameters in unusual and interesting ways like this. This also shows that once the learners have a good appreciation of the academic repertoires they will develop their own style as a result of exposure within the discourse community.

The way this L2 writer shows creativity in using the English language something beyond the expression of ‘giving back my teacher the English I learned from him/her’ (a phenomenon that I have observed from mostly Chinese learners, who tend to be formulaic, especially the low level students) but this student has learnt to be creative with the language and is finding new ways of expressing them self without playing the ‘language game’. This kind of confidence of experimenting with new ways of expressing oneself can be found in learners with higher language competence. This also gives credence to the argument that students that are more robust with expressing their voice in their writing are rated highly. When one compares the language competence even before getting into the content aspect, it is clear that PSH higher linguistic competence compared to PSM and PSL.

Even though this research was critical of the use of the term ‘native-like proficiency’ in the descriptors as something that cannot be easily qualified, I believe it is ability to write with freedom and experimenting with new ways of expressing oneself that the descriptors refer to as native-like proficiency. PSH does show this kind of being comfortable with academic and linguistic repertoires in this genre that enables a learner to operate at this higher level of language competence.

Attitude Markers (AM)

Political Science High (PSH)

Since Jan 2011 Egypt has experienced all forms of violence and murder rate has risen to *alarming* proportion, but the most *grisly* massacres happened after the military coup in 2013… (p.9)

The AMs used in this example illustrate how the writer is projecting affective side of what they are writing about (Hyland, 2008), they are painting a picture story in the mind of the reader with these descriptive terms, *alarming, grisly* (adjective and adverb respectively)*.* These AMs have the effect of drawing in the reader by appealing to their emotions and not their intellect, causing the reader to view the argument from the writer’s point. Hyland (2005) argues that writer pull in readers into a “conspiracy of agreement” with their views (p. 180). As one reads, they start to have a mental picture of the proportion and magnitude of the murders. The effect of the mental picture painted by the writer as alarming and grisly, is that it transforms into a different mental picture in the head of the reader as they try to imagine *alarming* and *grisly* from their social context. Even though Attitude Markers are listed under Stance in in the framework, they also can have an effect of drawing on the reader’s emotions in terms of Engagement. As the reader is trying to identify with that which appealed to the emotions of the writer, it also draws on the emotions of the reader. Therefore, a powerfully presented voice parameter has the capacity to transcend the Stance and Engagement dichotomy and has a persuasive appeal on both ends of the cline, an argument that underscores the point raised earlier that evaluation of voice is best appreciated at the textual level.

Another example of an AM:

…a Shiite village was attacked by virtually 3 000 Sunni Muslims, several houses were burned and four people were murdered, but *unfortunately* Morsi maintained silent about that,… (p.7)

In this example the writer wants the reader to understand this affective feeling that they have about the failure to react by President Morsi. The writer is clear that he wants his feelings to be known about the events that were unfolding hence they use the adverb *unfortunately* (AM) to express their displeasure with what happened. The use of this AM really sets the tone of the whole argument that the student writer presents in the whole paper. The student writer is clearly sympathetic with President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood and their supporters, and the writer is less impressed by Al-Sisi, the coup supporters who were against a *legitimate government.* The writer labels the coup plotters as *the insurgency*. The use of labels like *legitimate government* and *insurgency* shows where the writer’s sympathy is. This L2 learner was very clever in the way he/she manipulated diverse rhetorical features to maintain a student voice that made it clear what his/her feelings concerning the events of Arab Spring uprising in Egypt. The point of view that the student takes in this essay would probably not be the point of view that many neutrals to the situation would take, but he/she is good at manipulating the evaluative voice to be effective in what he/she wanted the reader to know about the events happening in Egypt at that time.

Political Science Low (PSL)

A *friendly* (H) relationship between China-Africa developed in the 1955 where 29 representatives of the African and Asian met in the first Asian-African Conference (ACC) in Bandung, Indonesia where China pointed out about establishing *healthy* (H) Asian-African relations which is based on the ideology of China whereby to oppose the colonialism and neo-colonialism. (p.3)

According to FOCAC (2013) *it is argued* (H) that the objectives of the forum are *equal consultation (AM)*, *enhancing understanding (AM), expanding consensus (AM), strengthening friendship (AM)* and *promoting cooperation (AM)*. (p.6)

Pattern-Hedge + 5 AMs

The interesting thing about these two examples concerns the ideological argument that is being presented in ARP. In the quote from page 3, the student writes that China is opposed to colonialism and neo- colonialism by trying to create “*friendly”*, and “*healthy”* relationships with African countries. But what the writer describes in the second example is a form of neo- colonialism presented in affective language (Hyland, 2005), the L2 writer very cleverly uses rhetorical manipulation at an ideological level to present a particular slant that has a sense of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995). Even if the learner borrowed this diction from a pro government source, still it is a clever way of presenting an ideological point of view using affective language such as (Fairclough, 2014a) “*equal consultation*, *enhancing understanding, expanding consensus), strengthening friendship* and *promoting cooperation”.* This is a case where the language of attribution has ideological underpinnings. More often than not, especially for Chinese students, they are happy to hide behind the voice of their sources as a way of towing projecting pro government ideology. This could be attributed to the Confucian ‘we consciousness’ that tries to maintain “harmony by avoiding, impositions on both the reader and the writer”. At the ideological level, the scholars or publications a writer (student or academic) chooses to use as references in their research project has a bearing on the voice that the paper ends up projecting. This is the reason why in many fields in the humanities such as Linguistics, Psychology and Sociology, there are different schools of thought on the same topic and a new entrant in the discipline would need to pick which school to align with and why. The point being made here is, the choice of who to reference is laden with ideological considerations that influences the voice of the writer, something akin to Nigel Gilbert’s (1977) argument of referencing as persuasion.

Boosters (B)

PSH

One of the *most significant* (B) findings to emerge from this study is that the Egyptian people understand the conspiracy which was woven against not only Morsi, but also against the legitimacy, democracy and Egyptian revolution 2011. That can be *easily* (B) proven by the reluctance of polling which has been *obviously* (B) seen at the last presidential election which was organised by the armed forces. (p. 15)

The effect of the Boosters in this extract is that the writer is presenting issues as having undisputable certainty (Hyland, 2005), hence, use of *most* *significant, easily* and *obviously* are ways of expressing that there is no dispute about how things were on the ground at the time of writing. Boosters in a way are like the opposite of hedges, in that whilst hedges are cautionary Boosters are ways of presenting strong arguments and propositions. There is therefore need to balance the way the voice parameters are used without conflicting with disciplinary expectations. Hyland (2005) captures what this balance ought to be as follows:

Both boosters and hedges represent a writer’s response to the potential viewpoints of readers and an acknowledgement of disciplinary norms of appropriate argument. They balance objective information, subjective evaluation and interpersonal negotiation, and this can be a powerful factor in gaining acceptance for claims. (p. 180)

What this entails therefore is that, the mark of an L2 learner that understands disciplinary norms is demonstrated by the ability to balance the use of voice parameters on different ends of the cline with hedges on one end and boosters on the other.

It is beginning to make sense why there is so much emphasis on teaching students about hedging and presenting cautionary arguments on pre-sessional courses because of the limited contact time between teachers and learners. When the basics of student voice have been acquired it should be easier for other academic repertoires to quickly develop into higher level voice parameters such as Boosters. When students are alerted to the possibility of using such voice features it would be easier, I believe for the more adventurous ones to experiment with such features according to their individual abilities. Pedagogically it is a better approach to give students a full picture of the voice terrain in academic writing in English than to erroneously advise them that voice parameters such *unfortunately* and *certainly,* are unacademic language as is the current practise in in-house training and some course books on EAP.

PSM

In brief, from the table, *obviously* (B), the proportions of the TPP has a greater number than ASEAN. (p.11)

*Certainly*, if the agreement was achieved and enforced, American tradesman would rather make a deal with Vietnam or Malaysia instead because they have similar products like to Thailand. (p.13)

*Definitely*, all governments pay attention on influential businessmen rather than citizen sectors. (p.13)

These examples show instances of use of boosters from a different text.

Directives (D)

PSM

*See* (D)the comparing table; (p.11)

Directives are on the Engagement divide of the framework. They give the reader a direct command or instruction about what they need to do, hence the term – Directive (Hyland, 2005). The above example is asking the reader to *see* the table in the text. Directives are not a voice parameter that are in extensive use, with only 7 Directives from the whole corpus, 4 appearing in one text in Political Science and the other three appearing in a single text in Civil Engineering. This voice parameter according to Hyland (ibid) appears more regularly in Science papers, where the writer is describing an experiment where the writer is giving specific instructions to the reader about what they need to do, similar to how directives are used in manuals and recipe books. The other three directives from this paper use the same verb, *see.* The directive is specifically addressing the reader and asking them to do something. This example exhibits awareness from the L2 writer that they are conscious of the presence of a reader ‘somewhere’ and is using a verb that is directed at the reader.

Another example is:

*Fast Forward* to November 2012, …(p.10).

In this example the writer is directing the reader to quickly move their focus to the events that happened at a particular time. It is as if the writer is dictating how the reader ought to perceive events on given trajectory. It is a clever use of language that brings in an element of interactivity in activity (writing) that can be very lonely.

Reader Pronouns (RP)

Political Science Middle (PSM)

*We* may see this role in the next government. (p.18)

However, *I* (PP) have an optimistic view that no one will refuse this agreement in the future, but now *we (RP)* *should (D)* study this track closely and carefully. (p.18)

Hyland 2005 (p. 182) says this about the inclusive *we,* it “…is the most frequent engagement device in academic writing” as it binds the reader and writer together as members of the same discourse community. “it sends a clear signal of membership by textually constructing both the writer and reader as participants with similar understanding of the same goals” (ibid).

In the examples above it can be observed that the student writer is trying to project a view where the reader and writer have the same expectations, “we may [all] see this role in the next government” (brackets are my addition, for emphasis). The second example is more intriguing, in that it combines the use of a personal pronoun, reader pronoun and a directive in the same sentence. As mentioned above, directives are one of the rarer categories in this sample. The writer, while they are going ‘on record’ by sticking out the personal pronoun, ‘I’, they are trying to soften the strength of that view by including the coercive ‘we’, so that the view appears to have a wider appeal as the writer has the same expectations as the reader that is being drawn into the argument by the inclusive ‘we’. The modal verb of obligation *should* is accentuating this idea of ‘we are together’ in this argument and therefore “we should study the track closely and carefully”. The writer is invoking a sense of incorporating the reader into coming on board to study the track.

This section explored various ways that L2 learners in the Political Science in this sample conceived and articulated voice in their ARPs. Without having received extensive tuition on student voice they still managed to use the various voice parameters in the framework. The more accomplished writer who used the parameters extensively was PSH. PSH was more robust and more daring in the way they expressed themselves in terms academic writing as a whole. PSH did manipulate complex rhetorical features not just of voice but other aspects that made their writing quite endearing (Matsuda and Tardy, 2007), this could be the reason why their work was assessed favourably by assessors. Examples from PSM and PSL were quite standard in their use of the whole range of voice parameters. PSL was dry and factual and it is probably the reason why it did not achieve a low passing grade.

The next section will present data from Civil Engineering in tables showing the distribution of the various voice parameters, for each of the three texts in the discipline, starting with Civil Engineering Low (CEL) and ending with Civil Engineering High (CEH) followed by a qualitative analysis of the various voice parameters in each text as was done above for Political Science.

**4.3 Themes from Civil Engineering**

4.3.1 Statistical picture

Figure 6Civil Engineering Low (CEL)

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Figure 7Civil Engineering Middle (CEM)

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Figure 8Civil Engineering High (CEH)

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4.3.2 Patterns emerging from statistical data

An interesting pattern is emerging from the numbers. The ARP assessed to be the low tier; CEL has only 32 instances of voice evaluations for the whole text compared 117 and 98 for CEM and CEH respectively. CEM has a single parameter that has 45 voice evaluations and CEH has 44 in a single parameter, figures that are higher than the combined total of just 32 for CEL. This also gives credence to the argument that the prevalence of voice evaluations has something to do with the ultimate quality of a piece of writing (Zhao, 2012). As in PSL, the highest percentage of voice marking for CEL is on Attitude Markers (AM) with 37.5%, a parameter that has been identified as not being highly valued in academia as it is not based on fact but sentiment (Hyland, 2005). In situations where learners are not as confident in either linguistic competence or factual content, as revealed by PSL and CEL, there is a tendency, consciously or unconsciously to highlight the affective value of propositions at the expense of epistemic ones. At the institution where these research projects have been drawn from, the notion of voice is assessed impressionistically without using the parameters in the framework, what is significant here is that this pattern of using more Attitude Markers has appeared is very interesting. Attitude markers could be used by these students as a coping mechanism of some deficiency of some kind.

The second significant scoring parameter for CEL is that of Boosters with 31.25%. Within CEL parameters of AM and B are the only ones scoring voice evaluations in significant numbers, the rest have token scores, Hedges, 1; Personal Pronouns, 2; Directives, 3 and Appeals to Shared Knowledge, 4. CEL has four times less Boosters than both CEM and CEH, which shows the lack of assertiveness an assurance in their writing (Hyland, 2005). Based on frequency only, it is apparent that CEL did not do much in terms of projecting their voice in this piece of academic writing, despite which voice parameters have the highest frequency. This resonates with the conversation that I had with one of my colleagues in a moderation session when one student from my class scored very low and I was asking my colleague why the low score, she said it had “no student voice at all”. It follows therefore that when the voice of the student is not presented effectively in their academic writing, the piece of writing becomes just a plain narrative, lacking the academic rigour expected at this level (Niemann, 2013). A writing style that simply narrates ideas and concepts exported from the reference texts without the L2 learner giving their opinion or evaluation of the material is not highly regarded in the genre of academic writing at postgraduate level (ibid). I am convinced that is why there is continuous reference in the higher passing bands of the marking descriptors (from this institution) under **Register** that, “student should not rely on the words of their sources” (see appendix 1). This reference in the marking descriptors shows that student voice is valued at this institution even though it is not mentioned explicitly; this echoes the argument of scholars like (Ivanic, 1998; Hinkel, 1999; Ivanic and Camps; 2001 and Hyland 2005 and 2008a) among others who contend voice is alive in our classrooms currently, unlike Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003) who argue that voice is an overrated concept in academic writing.

There is not much separating CEM and CEH in terms of statistics except on the parameter of Hedges (H), where CEM has 26 and CEH has 8. An incredible finding here is that hedging, as much as it is emphasised in EAP teaching, training and course books, based on the salience it is given in training, it would appear as if it were the most significant parameter of voice in academic writing, but it turned out that the ARP with more hedging CEM was assessed to be weaker when compared CEH. This trend was also found in the Political Science papers, where the high frequency of hedging did not necessarily correspond with better quality evaluation holistically. This not to suggest that voice is the only parameter that is important in consideration when EAP practitioners assess student ARPs as evidenced by the four key areas considered when assessing a piece of writing at this institution (Appendix 1) but from the way Gemmell’s (2008) reasons why faculty staff give their students written assignments in Higher Education, (see table 1) by extension it should also mean that student voice is important in Organisation, Range, Accuracy and especially in Register (Appendix 1)

From the six ARPs in this sample there is no suggestion that hedging is a key aspect of student voice, on the contrary, the two ARP in the higher band, PSH and CEH have fewer hedges than the middle-banded ones, PSM and CEH (see tables 4, 5, 7 and 8). If this finding is reflective of a general trend across the two disciplines or even beyond, then there is need a shift the way student voice is taught to L2 language learners on EAP pre-sessional courses at this university and other UK universities where I have taught where the approach was similar. This sample though is too small to make such a definitive generalised claim; a larger sample would need to be used to arrive at a wider generalised conclusion. This result however could be indicative of what course designers, teaching materials producers, teachers and course directors ought to think about in terms of incorporating in course books and teacher-training materials. From my experience as an EAP teacher and teaching materials producer, this is a significant finding, based on the in-house training obtained at all the universities where I have taught, I would never have imagined that it could be possible that a piece of academic writing that has fewer hedges could be assessed more favourably than one that had more hedges, given the salience that hedging is given in academic writing (Bailey, 2003; Hyland 2008b)) at all the universities that I have taught English for academic writing (2 overseas universities and 3 UK universities).

The following section will explore how student voice was conceived and articulated in Civil Engineering, parameter by parameter, starting with Personal Pronouns.

4.3.3 Analysis by voice categories

Personal Pronouns (PP)

CEM

If *our* (RP) buildings have a very good thermal insulation, building energy consumption will be greatly reduced. (p.3)

Therefore, the construction of energy-saving will improve *our* living environment objectively. (p.15)

CEL

Although China and the UK has (sic) different policy on water treatment, *we* (PP) also learn the UK’s water company latest technology to improve *our* (PP)water treatment method. (p.17).

What draws students to use Personal Pronouns (PP) on the English pre-sessional course is the need to express a personal opinion as seen from examples in Political Science (Hyland, 2002a). What can be observed in this case however is the use of *we* and *our* in a Confucian sense of communal ownership of state or government property as belonging to the people (Hinkel, 1997). There is that sense that ‘we’ (the Chinese people) will learn from the UK and *we* (at the state-run water company) will improve our technology. The way that the personal pronouns ‘we’ and ‘us’ have been used here is closely related to the ideology (Fairclough, 2014a) of Chinese academic writing which does not frown at the notion of identifying with a specific political ideology (Chien, 2007)). Therefore, when an EAP teacher is aware of knowledge from Contrastive Rhetoric, they will be conscious that when a an L2 learner is using personal pronouns as above (Shen, 1989; Soverino, 1993), they are not defying the recommendations of English academic writing but they are just resorting to their default L1 approach, something similar to what Foucault, (1971) says about people being shaped by the discourses that they have encountered over the years.

In western academic writing, disciplinary conventions do not encourage the use of Personal Pronouns in this way (Bailey, 2003; Hyland, 2002a), whenever it is possible, the general recommendation is to be as impersonal as is possible with the view to be as objective as one could be in their academic writing (Carr, 2000). This proposition on objectivity is supposed to be given to L2 learners as advice rather than as a rule (Bailey, 2003), but from my experience in moderation sessions (moderating ARPs) at this institution, some teachers actually teach their L2 learners that this is a rule in academic writing in English and they penalise students that use personal pronouns in their ARP assessment, something that reflects a poor understanding of the spirit of academic conventions in English. An appreciation of the L1 academic writing traditions of these L2 learners would really help in the teaching and assessing of such students (Connor, 2002 ; Quinn 2012), if the EAP teacher believe that these students had a system that is valuable from their L1 culture and Language (Hyland, 2002a). From my observation, the general attitude is to say if it ‘non-standard’ there is nothing to learn from it, a situation that is quite regrettable, as the literature on Contrastive Rhetoric has shown that there is a lot to learn from understanding the ‘doodles’ (Kaplan, 1966; Ryan 2011)

Questions (Q)

There are no questions from this corpus, something that I find quite remarkable. Students on pre-sessional courses are routinely discouraged to pose questions in their academic writing (Bailey, 2003), something that seasoned scholars occasionally do, especially in the humanities (Hyland 2005). The reason for absence of Questions in the Engineering ARPs and their presence in Political Science ARPs could be about the way arguments are presented in the Sciences is to do with facts most of the time, therefore, the need does not arise to try and draw the reader in by using questions (Hyland 2005). In the Humanities, because a significant number of arguments that are presented are contestable or potentially contestable, therefore asking questions is a rhetorical manipulation that writers use to draw the reader into the academic discussion (ibid).

Personal Asides (PA)

It is also interesting to note that there are no Personal Asides from the ARPs in CE, I would have thought there could have been opportunities in the Sciences as well where one could effectively use PAs in academic writing. There are certain things that need to be explained not as part of the main argument, but as an aside, for example when explaining the way certain materials react or when giving other options when considering materials for constructing a bridge for instance. One might consider explaining in brackets the advantages of steel over wood or concrete. From a pedagogic point of view, I believe students in the sciences need to be taught that using of asides is a strategy that can be used to bring an evaluative voice in a piece of academic writing (Hyland, 2005). This is a gap in the academic repertoires (Busch, 2012) of learners in Civil Engineering from this sample, where they could benefit from proactive targeted awareness of a concept that seem to be absent from their academic repertoires in this sample.

Appeals to Shared Knowledge (ASK)

CEH

For a long time, *it is widely believed* **(AM/ASK)** that concrete is a kind of durable material…(p.11) (see note on the text)

*Because high performance concretes are still not known to the public*. (p.16)

CEM

There are three common types of wall protection, which are, exterior wall, interior wall and the wall itself. (p.2)

Currently China is at the peak of housing construction that the number of new housing each year is more than the sum of the other countries. (p.6)

This method is *one of the preferred methods* of building energy-saving in the world. (p.12)

CEL

Unlike China, in the UK there are twelve companies or organizations providing drainage and sewage services, while *China is under unified management by the government* (ASK) (p.4)*.*

An interesting aspect about this example from CEL of Appeal to Shared Knowledge (ASK) is that, the way in which this student describes a state run water and sewage services company as being *under unified management by government*, it is quite remarkable that someone describing a state run service in these complimentary terms. It is akin to the category that we have described as Labelling as Voice (LV), where the label that you attach to something makes it carry an evaluative voice. The other examples from CEM, “…*one of the preferred methods…”* and from CEH “…*Because high performance concretes are still not known to the public…”* brings the idea of ‘sharedness’ of disciplinary knowledge mentioned by Hyland (2005). Appeal to Shared Knowledge is employed to make readers accept an idea as “familiar and accepted” (ibid, p. 184). This sample shows that learners are quite comfortable with this form of voice evaluation.

Hedges (H)

CEL

The World health organisation (2008) *suggest(s)* (H) that access to safe drinking water *is essential* (AM) to health, …(p.2)

This example is a good way of demonstrating how Hedges are ways of presenting arguments with caution, which allows other voices and opinions to be heard in the debate or conversation that is being presented (Bailey, 2003; Hyland 2008a). This is a perfect way of bringing in a view from a source, in this case the World Health Organisation and say they “*suggest”* but other suggestions from elsewhere can still be valid. An example such as this could be the reason why EAP training and course books emphasise the notion of hedging in terms of presenting academic arguments (Bailey, 2011). The argument usually accompanying the advice on use of hedges in academic writing is that, when one has presented a proposition, they should allow other voices to be heard in the same academic debate (Niemann, 2013).

See other examples below

CEH

*It is generally believed* that the durability of the material is in a process to resist various factors of damage…(p.5)

First and foremost, *it has been suggested* that reinforcement corrosion is one of the biggest factors that affects the durability of reinforced concrete bridges. (p.12)

CEM

*If insulation technology can be used well*, it will bring many benefits to society. (p.13)

In ancient times, people used to sit on the ground and the platform *could effectively* prevent moisture and cold from the ground. (p.17)

Some of these technologies are *relatively mature (H)*, *low cost (B)*, *convenient (AM)* construction and maintenance…(p.20)

All the above examples reiterate that the argument being presented is not the only one or only way of projecting the propositions being presented but room is left for alternative views to be presented (Canagarajah, 2002)

Attitude Markers (AM)

CEH

It has become *a great concern* socially. (p.2)

In spite of this, the durability of the concrete bridge *is far from satisfactory. (p.10)* (AM)

However, it is *very unfavourable* to improve the durability of concrete bridges. (p.16)

CEM

Therefore, the construction energy-saving is *very significant (AM/B)*. (p.4)

With the advent and coming into use of a variety of new insulation materials, composite walls becomes *more and more* *popular* in building energy conservation (p.11) (**AM**)

*Fortunately*, building energy-saving will bring many benefits to china, particularly evident in the following points: (p.14)

In the above examples the writers are showing their feelings about the ideas being resented by describing things as “*very significant, a great concern, far from satisfactory, and more and more popular”*. When a writer presents their personal opinion or preference when presenting academic arguments, these individual opinions are not very highly regarded, because they are just opinions from someone that is not expert. Therefore scoring highly in this affective category does not account for much (Hyland, 2005). Objectivity is a value that is highly cherished in academic writing, (Hyland, 2002a) and the more personal values you project by using adverbs like *fortunately*, the less you achieve in terms of objectivity (Bizzell, 1992).

The last example from CEM has a beautiful example of textual use of voice features, see the Hedges (Hs) that follow the above Attitude Marker (*fortunately*).

Firstly the economy *could* be promoted…

Construction of energy saving *might* increase…

…operational cost *might* be greatly reduced…

It *can* bring a lot of additional economic benefits (p.14)

The next voice parameter to be explored is that of Boosters.

Boosters (B)

Hyland (2008) argues that Boosters

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 (pp.7-8)

CEH

Hence one can see that the analysis on durability can not only create economic and social benefits, but also *has* *very important academic significance* to improve the level of design…(p.4)

From this example, the persuasive appeal of the Booster, *has very important academic significance* is obvious to see in terms of how it draws the reader to agree with argument being presented. From the quotation above from Hyland (2008a), he contends that even though Boosters have a tendency to ‘restrict opportunities for alternative voices, they often stress shared information and group membership’. In this example the Booster is functioning in both ways described by Hyland (2008a) where it is not giving the reader an opportunity to have an alternative view about the importance of ‘analysis on durability’ has in terms of academic significance. At the same time it also projecting the ‘sharedness’ of knowledge in the discourse community and has to be accepted as it is (Hyland, 2005, p.184).

This type of rhetorical persuasion found in the use of Boosters presupposes an appreciation of the functions of diverse academic repertoires working in a complementary fashion (Busch, 2012). Understanding how Boosters function is best understood in a context where learners are immersed in the target language and discourse community over a period of time (Canagarajah, 2002). When learners are immersed in a discourse community, mirroring the language and style of expects become easier (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004). The way that this learner (CEH) uses this Booster “*has very important academic significance*”, has an aspect of natural flair that suggests they were not taught how to present arguments like this but it is a style they picked from the discourse community and adapted. This brings back the argument presented earlier, that at times, the expectations EAP teachers have on L2 learners at the end of a short intensive pre-sessional English course can be too high (Harwood and Hardley 2004), as they (L2) would not have sufficient time to immerse themselves in the discourse community to effectively mirror its language and style, especially for students with limited linguistic ability. For a sharp student in terms of linguistic and rhetorical awareness who grasps concepts quickly, such as (CEH) the supposed standard of ‘native-like proficiency’ could be a reasonable standard to aspire for, but it is also debatable whether L2 learners should strive for this ‘standard’ (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004) . For the low band student who is struggling even with constructing a grammatical sentence, this standard is very difficult to attain.

My recommendation therefore is that, if from this ‘exit interview’ (this analysis) there are students who are capable of distilling this awareness from the discourse community and apply it in their writing, it would be valuable if all L2 learners were proactively taught how to use Boosters to help bring assertiveness to their writing, something that is valued in academia (Niemann, 2013)

Use of a Booster such as *very important academic significance,* shows that the writer understands the unequivocal significance of the argument being presented. There are instances in academic discourse that requires the presentation of strong arguments (Hyland, 2005).

Below are examples of other Boosters from Civil Engineering:

CEM

Building energy saving problem is one of the *most worthy* aspects of research and attention. (p.2)

Heat transfer performance of thermal bridge is *obviously higher* than that of thermal insulation materials. It *can* (H) lead to the overall building losing heat *easily*. (p.7)

Secondly, construction energy-saving plays a *certain* positive effect on the environment. (p.15)

CEL

As well as, this method is *the most efficient method* (B) of removing ammonia and nitrogen. (p.7)

It can *effectively remove* (**B**) the dissolved organic matter, odour and micro pollutants. (p.8)

*It is well known* (**B/ASK**) that in chemically speaking, water consists of hydrogen and oxygen, namely the H2O. (p.10)

Firstly, control of microbial contamination *is extremely important* (B). (p.11)

Directives (D)

The modal verb ‘*should*’ is in some instances used as an imperative in the manner of a directive, it may not be directly aimed at the reader but at a third party in this ‘pedagogic dialogue’, where the writer is suggesting “a cognitive” that must take place or how someone ought to act in prescribed circumstances (Hyland, 2002b). The Directive projects student voice the writer is dictating to the reader how things ought to be. Hyland 2005 argues that, *“…cognitive acts* guide readers through a line of reasoning, or get them to understand a point in a certain way”, therefore using this kind of directive is quite a sophisticated way manipulating voice in academic writing.

CEH

engineers *should* focus on the qualities of concrete materials (p.20)

The structure *should* obey the standard… (p.21)

Lastly, the maintenance and repair costs of existing bridges *should* be increased (p.21)

When a student is making a recommendation such as the above they are aware that there are alternatives to the way things could be, but saying this should happen, they are effectively arguing that in their opinion, this is the best alternative or the only alternative as far as they are concerned. For example, in this example, “engineers *should* focus on the qualities of concrete materials…” (p.20), the way the information is relayed, it is as if the engineers have no choice except to focus on the quality of concrete materials, but in reality, they could choose focus on cost and or availability. The bottom line is, this Directive *should* is used as a way of projecting a strong voice from the writer.

The next parameter to be explored is, Reader Pronouns

Personal Pronouns (RP)

There are no instances of the use Reader Pronouns from this sample from Civil Engineering as the strategy of using Reader Pronouns is mainly used in Philosophy (Hyland, 2005). According Hyland, the use of reader pronouns, “sends a clear signal of membership (to a disciplinary community) by textually constructing both the writer and the reader as participants with similar understanding and goals” (p.182). As I highlighted earlier, that pre-sessional students are not totally immersed in the discourse community of Civil Engineering in English, as a result they are not fully able to distil the way to communicate concepts in the discipline and let alone try to persuade readers to perceive ideas from their point of view by using reader pronouns. Use of Reader Pronouns is a strategy that established members of the discourse community use, and not new entrants as they are not fully aware of the issues that are contestable in the discourse community.

**4.4 Themes beyond the Conceptual Framework**

4.4.1 Labelling as Voice (LV)

Use of highly emotive diction for evaluation was a strong feature in Political Science and not in Civil Engineering, because in the sciences, the nature of the subject does not necessarily require writers to ideologically **label** certain concepts or things as a way of smuggling an evaluative voice through the clever selection of words (Fairclough, 2014a). This was a feature that manifested strongly through the process of analysis even though it was not was not part of the conceptual framework, I felt that I would not have done justice to the analysis if I did not mention how it manifests student voice. As a high level rhetorical skill, labelling, when it is used effectively it is quite a powerful feature in terms of carrying an evaluative voice. In this corpus, one of the papers from the humanities (PSH) about a military coup in Egypt clearly demonstrates why the use certain diction or labels is embedded in an ideologically evaluative voice (Kanakri, 2015).

Use of labels such as *legitimate President,* presupposes thatthe writer wants you to have a particular view about what was happening in Egypt at the time of the coup being discussed in this paper (Arab spring). I remember following the news on these events on Sky News, BBC and CNN, they had a less sympathetic perspective about Morsi and did not have much sympathy about what happened to him. This was shaped by the ideology in these media institutions and the countries where they are from (Van Dijk, 2008;2009). Other examples are *democratically elected president,* and referring to a ruling government as *the junta,* these labelscarry ideology that forces you to perceive issues being presented from a different point view as opposed to when neutral terms such as *president* or *government* had been used respectively.

Here is an example from Political Science (LV)

Political Science Low (PSL)

Another reason for the *insurgency* against Morsi could be the *minorities* situation and the increase of violence with obvious absence of security. Wall street Journal (2013) provides explanation that besides the conflict between Egyptian Coptic Christian minority and Muslims being repeated,… (p.7)

Labelling a group that is fighting for political space as an *insurgency* (an active revolt or uprising) is highly evaluative, as the label insurgency has implications about right and wrong about the cause of why a group of people are fighting. Consequently, the use of the label *insurgency* is a way of projecting voice in academic writing. Giving a group of people the label *Minorities* (group differentiated in term of social treatment) is also evaluative in the sense of labelling. It is not necessary a neutral reference. In the next sentence the writer refers to Egyptian Coptic Christian *minority*, as a way of suggesting they deserve different treatment from the Muslim majority. Words carry power and ideology (Fairclough, 2014a) Therefore, labelling a group of people as minorities is highly expressive in terms of an evaluative voice. Labelling a group of people as minorities has the ideological effect of either belittling their issues or making them salient as a group that needs protection as they are oppressed by the majority that has a voice.

Here is another example from PSH.

Since Jan 2011’ Egypt has experienced all forms of *violence and murder rate has risen to alarming proportion*, but the *most grisly massacres* happened after the military coup in 2013 primarily against brotherhood supporters especially against protestors who were sitting in demanding the return of the *legitimately elected president* in Rabia Aladawia and Al-Nahda squares (p.9).

In this case, there is again use of labelling as evaluation, the net effect or illocutionary force of this statement is to justify the protest by the supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood because they were *sitting-in* demanding the return of the *legitimately elected president.*  There is an attempt by the writer to label the protest by Brotherhood supporters as peaceful (sitting in) and demanding the return of *legitimately elected President* as noble enterprise. The labels that were put on these situations and names makes them to have a certain persuasive pull on the reader where they are drawn to view facts in a certain way similar to how Attitude Markers work, where the writer’s authorial intrusion makes the reader view arguments in certain way because the issues or concepts being projected have the voice of the author in the label that they give to certain propositions (Hyland 2005).

PSM

Although there is tension between the US and the *Junta* (LA), but for dealing, the US still be the Thai’s main commercial market after ASEAN and China. (p.10)

In this example labelling the government as a *Junta*, is an obvious way of refusing to look at the government as a ‘normal’ government but the emphasis is on it not being an elected government but one that came into being as a result a military coup. Therefore, the label Junta is an evaluative voice as opposed to just a neutral reference such as government.

4.4.2 Voice at the textual level

As argued earlier, the way in which the framework has segmented the notion of voice is just for the practical purposes of emphasising various aspects of this very complex phenomenon. The natural way that voice manifests itself in writing is at a textual level, rather than as a segment of a sentence. This sub section therefore explores the combination of several parameters of voice in a bid to understand the natural appeal of these aspects of voice in L2 writing. Here is an example:

CEH

At the same time, it is also demonstrated that faults of design also *do harm* **(B)** to the durability of bridges (Berger, 2011). Due to the different level of different periods, the design of bridges was *not perfect* **(AM)**. In the design of bridges, *engineers often pay more attention to stiffness and strength rather than durability***(ASK***)*. Such as smaller sectional dimension of the member, thickness of the protective layer and some other factors. *Although these can meet the requirement of the strength of structures, but they cannot ensure the strength of structures, they cannot ensure the requirements of durability* (**ASK**). (p.15)

The argument being presented by the writer here is that durability of bridges is affected by more than one factor but there is need to explore other factors. The combination of the use of the use of a Booster (B), an Attitude Marker (AM) and two Appeals to Shared Knowledge (ASKs) combines to give a holistic argument what is important when considering the durability of bridges. Therefore understanding the illocutionary sense of the rhetorical impact of the evaluative nature of voice features requires an analytical level beyond merely recognising the use or counting how many times each parameter features in a particular text (Hunston and Thompson, 1999). What is important to understand is how the writer is combining the various voice parameters to come up with a unified persuasive argument (Hyland, 2008b). One needs to understand how academic repertoires work (Busch, 2012) to accomplish the purposes of the genre (Swales, 1990). The above piece of text is not the most beautiful pieces of writing, but what the L2 writer wants to achieve is clear, without focusing on the various voice segments. Academic argumentation is a cultural phenomenon that has to be understood within the context of its production, at the institutional and discourse community levels (Durkin, 2008, Kanakri, 2015)

Another example from Political Science could help show how different voice parameters combine to create a persuasive argument in a text.

PSH

In addition to the *eminent status* (AM) within Islamic and Arabic history, Egypt has the *highest population*, (ASK) the *highest number of immigrants* (ASK) in Arabic countries, and the *highest number of media outlets* (ASK) compared with other Arabic countries. Therefore, Egypt has a *pivotal role* (B) in influence over the rest in this region, *notably* (B) those countries which were involved in Arab Spring.The reason why *I* (PP) have chosen this topic is that the Egypt's case *is likely* (H) to be repeated in Arab spring countries *particularly* (AM) Libya and Yemen (p. 1)

 The purpose of this paragraph as a text is to justify, why the writer chose to write the Egyptian revolution in the so called ‘Arab Spring’. The writer cleverly combines an Attitude Markers, with 3 Appeals to Shared Knowledge, 2 Boosters, 1 Personal Pronoun and another Attitude Marker. The persuasive appeal of the paragraph which is an introduction, is achieved by the force that the ASKs and the repetition of the superlative, *highest* three times*.* These ASKs are reinforcing the Attitude Marker, *eminent status* of Egypt that the reader is left with no doubts about why the Egypt has been chosen as it has this huge significance as an Arab country. Then two Boosters, *pivotal role* and *notably,* are further used to cement this idea that Egypt is at the centre of what could be learnt about the Arab Spring. The writer again uses the Personal Pronoun, *I* to justify the selection of Egypt as a worthy case study about the Arab Spring revolutions. The writer throws in a hedge *likely* in order to introduce an aspect of objectivity. The writer rounds off the paragraph by a second Attitude Marker, *particularly* which is used as if it is bringing, shared values and attitudes, (Hyland, 2005). This paragraph as a text is joined with other paragraphs to come up with this ARP which we have called PSH. Therefore the persuasive appeal introduced by the various voice parameters combining intricately, has the purpose of creating a piece of academic writing that is appropriate to the genre and discourse community of academic writing in English in terms of appropriate content, language and style (Hyland, 2004).

The impact of the voice features in this piece of text are quite complex and best understood when analysed at the textual level rather than at the sentential or lower levels as most of the examples used in the rest of the analysis. Evaluation and voice are best understood at the textual level when the voice parameters are used in conjunction with each other in the genre of academic writing (Hyland, 2008b). As highlighted earlier, genres are purposeful activities (Swales, 1990), therefore the whole piece of writing is endeavouring to communicate something as a text. Commenting on social practices and disciplinary interactions, Hyland (2008b) argues that academic writing is a form of persuasion. Persuasion implies high level rhetorical awareness about ways of presenting information within a disciplinary boundary. Because an academic argument is a form of persuasion (Hyland, 2004) the best way to teach it is through use of authentic sources (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001) from previous L2 learners and from native students. Use of authentic sources is a teaching strategy that is highly recommended in EAP (ibid). This solves two basic problems, firstly the question of methodology on how best to teach awareness of voice features on a pre-sessional course given the limited contact time between the teacher and the learner.

The second problem that needs resolving comes from the frustration that I had with the descriptors as they mentioned ‘native-like’ competence without there being examples anywhere which validates the ‘standard’. If the L1 authentic sources were to be provided, then the L2 would select examples from native students specimens and try emulate how they use specific voice parameters such as (B), AM, ASK and others. Availing these authentic L1 research pares would solve more than the two listed issues above as opposed to the current scenario at the institution where this research was conducted where there is reference to a standard that is not available on the ground. Other institutions might be providing these authentic L1 examples,

The essence of an argument or persuasion cannot be carried in a single word or phrase or sentence even. Therefore, it is important for this research to acknowledge that probably student voice is best understood at the textual level where rhetorical discourse can best be understood. This acknowledgement does not in any way diminish the importance of exploring specific linguistic features of voice, because of the complexity of academic repertoires one could easily be distracted by other features that are not necessarily part of this research. Academic writing is a field of study in its own right, and it also has a branch called English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Jordan, 1997; Dudley-Evans and St. Joan, 1998 Hyland, 2006). This is the reason why Matsuda and Tardy (2007) argue that voice issues are an amalgamation of various rhetorical features.

Textual level voice is a different level of language competence that enables an L2 learner to link different forms of voice to create something that is elegant at the textual level (Durkin, 2008). This reinforces the point that I made earlier, about the understanding and knowledge of voice features being similar to flair in creative writing, something that one cannot be taught but something that develops with continued immersion and use of the language within a given discourse community. An attribute that belongs to the unwritten rules about a discourse community where experts are the custodians of the conventions and their evolution, and new entrants have to learn as they participate in the academic debates and knowledge creation through their contribution to disciplinary knowledge (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2004).

4.4.3 Attribution as Voice (AV)

Referencing language can be used as a way projecting student voice, because in the process of acknowledging other scholars in the academic debate taking place, there are ways in which the language of attribution has a voice of its own.

EH

Secondly, *OECD (1989) pointed* (attribution verb) out that engineers *should* pay more attention to the effect of fatigue and overload on the durability of bridge structures (p. 17)

Fourthly, *Berger (2011) suggests* that scientists *should* make research on new materials and new technologies. Engineers *should* improve high-tech materials, including new chemical additives, mineral admixture, polymer, composite materials, and some other materials. At the same time the study of advantages and disadvantages of these technologies or materials *should* also be done (p.18)

Pattern *attribution verb* + *should* (a modal verb of obligation)

In the above examples where there is the use of a referencing verb or verb of attribution together with the modal verb, *should* the illocutionary meaning is not only to say that, OECD or Berger, pointed out or suggested something respectively but the writer is implicitly saying I agree as well that this is what *should* happen. The writer is using the source to project how they feel about how things ought to be. In a sense the L2 writer is hiding their voice behind the voice of the writer mentioned.

EM

According to Sadineni (2011) *a significant portion (B)* of the total primary energy is consumed by today’s buildings in developed countries. (Sadineni et al., 2011) (p.7)

A closer reading of the descriptors, for marking and moderating ARP at this institution clearly distinguish between the voice that is derived from the sources and the learner writer’s voice. In the Register column the descriptors say this about references from outside sources; in band 1 it says, “the writer is in total control…, band 2, the writer shows a high level of control…, band 3 shows a degree of control of information from outside sources” (Appendix 1, p.1). In this regard, therefore, it is clear at least from the descriptor’s perspective that there is a distinction between the voice of the learner writer and the voice that is coming from outside sources. In the failing bands, 4 and 5, the descriptors say, “the writer has poor control…, the writer has made little or no attempt to control information from outside sources” (Appendix 1, p.2). Therefore the ability to control or not to control the voice of outside sources constitutes learner voice in itself. Based on the above and other examples from the sample, the handling of the attribution affects the voice of the text, wittingly or unwittingly and by default it becomes the voice of the learner.

4.4.4 Using the language of quotes to uphold an ideology

PSL

“*China is the largest developing country in the world* (ASK) and *Africa is the continent with the largest number of developing countries* (ASK). At the turn of the millennium and the century. China and Africa are faced with both *historical opportunities* (AM) *for greater development and unprecedented challenges (AM; B)*. At this important historical juncture, an in-depth discussion between *us* (RP)on how to *strengthen cooperation* (AM) and *promote common development (AM) will undoubtedly (B)* exert *a far-reaching important impact* (B) on the cross-century development of Sino-African relations, *closer South-South co-operation* (AM) and the establishment of an *equitable and just* (B) international political and economic order”. Focac, 2015 (p.7)

When an L2 writer chooses to quote so extensively from a single reference as above, they are implicitly acknowledging that the quoted excerpt captures their point of view, unless they are quoting it to refute it. The above text has the ‘we consciousness’ of the Confucian ideology, and the way Boosters and Affective Markers are used, has the illocutionary effect of painting such a glorious picture of opportunity on both sides and mutual benefit in the Sino-African relations (Chien, 2007). The reality on the ground shows that the relations are not as mutually beneficial to both parties concerned as this quote suggests (Manero, 2017). China is a force of neo-colonialism and it seeks to exploit the resources of African nations using rhetoric like, promote “*common development”, “south-south cooperation”, “equitable and just international and economic order”.*

Whilst the student writer did not use this language his/her self, it is clear that it is language and an ideological persuasion that they subscribe to as they do not seek to analyse or question the validity of the quote (Ibrahim and Nambiah, 2012). By quoting extensively from a pro-government source, the writer is displaying an ideological stance that is Confucian in nature, where sources are not supposed to be challenged (Shen, 1989; Chien, 2007). The student learner it seems is happy to embrace what the text is saying without being critical, something that goes against the grain of conventions in academic writing where views from sources can be challenged especially when they contain controversial and unsubstantiated views (Bizzell, 1992) such as those projected in the passage quoted above. The total illocutionary force of the Attitude Markers (AM) in the quotation above is to paint a win-win situation where there is mutual benefit. But the reality on the ground is that China is or wants to exploit African nations in the name of development (Manero, 2017). Therefore, the use of the language of attribution whether as direct quotes or as paraphrases as demonstrated in the other example, is a subtle way of ‘smuggling’ contestable ideas in the name of attribution with the aim of projecting a particular form of an ideological voice (Hyland 2005).

If one looks at the language that the student uses after this lengthy quotation from the Chinese President, it is all in agreement with the views presented by the person in authority. The Confucian ideology is very clear about not being ambiguous about with whom power belongs and the expectation that citizens should tow the government line being reflected in their thinking and academic writing (Chan, 1999).

A closer scrutiny of what the student writer says to buttress the views in the FOCAC reference:

Regarding that idea, China seems to be inviting African countries to *cooperate* in order to *increase their common interests* such as *economic development and international political order.* (pp. 7-8)

Most of it is empty rhetoric where the diction of cooperation is used to portray an expectation of what things ought to be rather the way they are. There is an underlying tone of a ‘we consciousness’ typical of the Confucian ideology of promoting the official position of the government in these so called ‘mutual relations’ with Africa. Rather than embrace the critical aspects of Academic Writing in English where everything has to be scrutinised and critically evaluated (Benesch, 1999), on the contrary, the student chooses to maintain the official government position, where one respects one’s leaders and elders and upholds the ideology of the written source (Chan, 1999).

In some sections of the text, PSL, the way the student quotes from official government sources and the way the argument about the relations between China and African nations is so blatantly pro-government that at times the ARP reads as if it was written by a Chinese government official. This can be explained by the statistics from this ARP, as Attitude Markers (AMs) constitute more than 50% of all the voice evaluations in the text. AMs are forms of voice evaluations that make claims based on feelings rather than on epistemic grounds (Hyland, 2005) about the truth value of propositions, something that is not encouraged in western academic writing as being critical of sources is a cherished value of the academy (Benesch, 1999; Preiss etal., 2013)

 The evidence that a writer chooses to quote or paraphrase also has an impact in terms of the overall voice being projected by a writer (Bailey,2003), especially if the learner chooses to rely on the voice of the texts they consulted as sources of information, especially in contexts where the sources used have a particular ideological slant as observed in the above extensive quote from FOCAC 2015.

**4.5 Key similarities and differences from the two disciplines?**

Similarities

The parameters with the highest frequency from this sample are; Hedges, Boosters, Attitude Markers and Appeal to Shared Knowledge. They are in the top 4 in 5 out of 6 ARPs from both disciplines, except CEL that does not have this pattern, CEL is not very radically different though as it has its top three in the above category, with hedges being taken out by Personal Pronouns by just one extra parameter. Why then are Boosters, Attitude Markers, Appeal to Shared Knowledge and Hedges the most popular parameters?

The first and probably the most important point to note is, Boosters, Attitude markers and Hedges are on the stance side of the voice paradigm (Hyland, 2005). It is clear that these students, although they are new entrants into the genre of academic writing, they understand the importance of taking position when one joins the conversation in an academic debate (Bartholomae, 1986, Gemmell, 2008). Boosters have a clear link with the concept of writing with authority (Hyland, 2002a; Whitney, 2011) and assertiveness something that new entrants in a discourse community shy away from because they are tentative about joining the academic debates that have been taking place in their discourse community before they joined it (Hyland 2002a). This could be the reason why hedging is emphasised on the pre-sessional courses as already mentioned earlier, I am sure the EAP practitioners are aware of the merits of presenting guarded or cautious arguments before graduating to writing with authority. Once learners become comfortable with hedging they will then gravitate towards Boosters which in this sample are used increasingly by the top students from each discipline.

Why are Attitude Markers and Appeals to Shared Knowledge also in the top four of the most used voice parameters in this sample? I believe that Attitude Markers are a safe way of easing these students into projecting their voice in a non-face-threating way (Shen, 1989). When learners are using Attitude Markers, they are expressing their “affective” opinion about propositions which do not fly in the face of other experts in the discourse community (Hinkel, 1997; Hyland 2005). It seems to be a safe way of introducing one’s voice even though they are a new entrant (Chan, 1999; Chien, 2007). I would argue that Appeals to Shared Knowledge works in a similar way but on the engagement side of the divide, where the writer is textually constructing the reader and bringing them on board to agree with the writer (Hyland 2005). Hyland (ibid) contends that this is a way of creating solidarity with the reader. From this sample, in both subjects, students in the High and Middle bands all have high scores in Boosters, Attitude Markers and Appeals to shared Knowledge for the reasons above. They try to play around the balance of writing with authority using Boosters as well as being persuasive and accommodating, using Attitude Markers and Appeal to shared Knowledge (Hyland 2005). Hedges are apt for presenting cautious statements although the top students in each discipline have fewer hedges that the Middle tier ARPs in both disciplines, which gives credence to my hunch that hedging is a basic voice skill and Boosters are for the more rhetorically agile students in the upper bands. This suggests that the prevalence of hedges does not really sway assessors in thinking that a work that has many hedges is necessarily of a good quality.

Differences

This research has to a greater extent shown a correlation between increased occurrence and complexity in voice rhetorical manipulation translating into good writing and higher attainment in assessment. As I expected there were more instances of explicit student voice in Political Science when compared to Civil Engineering, a result similar to Hyland’s (2005) and Zhao’s (2012) findings. The distinction is very clear at the numbers level. See table below:

Table 3 **Total scores of voice projection from the two disciplines**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Low Scoring** | **Middle Scoring** | **High Scoring** | **Total** |
| **Civil Engineering** | 32 | 117 | 98 | 247 |
| **Political Science** | 105 | 123 | 236 | 464 |
| **Difference** | 73 | 6 | 138 | 217 |

The statistics above clearly show a significant variation in rhetorical and linguistic competence by learners from the two disciplines. In Civil Engineering, the highest scoring text has only 98 instances of overt voice evaluation, which is three times as many instances of voice projection as the lowest, at 32. In Political Science, the highest scoring text has more than twice as many voice evaluations 236 with the lowest scoring one having 105, which is more than the highest scoring ARP in Civil Engineering at just 98 evaluations. There is a clear correlation between the number of voice projections and quality of the writing according to these end-of-course assessments in both disciplines.

The lowest scoring Political Science text has more instances of voice evaluations than the highest scoring text in civil Engineering showing that the subject matter in the two disciplines requires different levels of language competence (Zhao, 2012 Hyland, 2005). This was expected as the awareness of communicative repertoires (Rhymes 2010) of scholars and learners in the humanities is more robust in comparison with that of scholars and learners in science subjects as the subject matter they handle require different levels of linguistic and rhetorical awareness (Hyland, 2002a), something that the institution that runs the Pre-sessional courses is aware of, as the students in the sciences require only 40% in their final assessment to progress and the students in the humanities require 50% to progress. In Political Science (and other Humanities subjects) there is need to be persuasive in order to convince the reader that the writer understands and know what they are presenting, as a consequence their amalgamation of rhetorical awareness has to be better than that for the sciences where at time it is acceptable to describe and explain processes without argumentation (Matsuda and Tardy, 2007; Zhao, 2012).

The language skills on the ground show that there is an even bigger differential on the ground, much more than the 10% difference implied in the minimum requirement. What this means to me as an EAP teacher on the pre-sessional course is that, there is need to reflect this difference in terms of teaching input at the level of teaching materials, having a separate course book or supplementary materials that show the differences in voice needs for the two areas of study, Humanities and hard sciences. Having separate course books would have an impact on the institution in terms of costs but I believe it is an investment worth financing. From the results from this and other studies, it is clear that the L2 learners in the different disciplines require voice parameters to do different things (Hyland 2005).

Attitude Markers are in the top three of all six but they do not seem to be highly valued by assessors. This is not surprising as the bottom 2 in both disciplines have this category as their highest instance of voice projection in their work, PSL has 55 AMs and CEL has 12. As explained from the framework, Attitude Markers, are about the affective an not epistemic response of a writer about what they are writing, in terms of academic writing conventions, this does not hold much value (Hyland, 2005). I think this is the reason why the low scoring texts have AMs as their highest category as the L2 learners (new entrants) are not very confident about the material that they are presenting, therefore rather than be bold about a claim using Boosters they hide in the shell of evaluating the subject affectively rather than epistemically (ibid).

Differences in marking certainty

One of the major differences between the two disciplines is the use of ‘will’ as a marker of certainty. Certainty is a good thing in the Sciences as materials or chemicals will be behaving according to their properties, and in certain cases, this could be the reason why certain materials with specific properties will have been chosen over other possible substitutes (Hyland, 2004a). On the other hand certainty is not expected or encouraged, because of the nature of arguments in humanities, in most cases the propositions or arguments hinge on the relativity of the context and sample being analysed (Kanakri, 2015). A few examples from engineering could help clarify this point.

Examples

CEH

…reinforced concrete structures *will* produce surface cracks…(p.2)

These faults *will* reduce the bearing capacity of the deck…(p.2)

When steel bar rusts, it *will* produce moisture, which makes the steel bar expand…(p.12)

When the corrosion is larger than 1 %, the corrosion of the reinforcement *will* decrease the bond strength between concrete and steel bars. (p.13)

The decrease of bond strength between steel bar and concrete *will* decrease the durability of reinforced concrete structure. (p.13)

The examples above clarify the point that I made above that describing, explaining or narrating concepts and matter is an acceptable way of presenting information in the Sciences, but doing the same in the Humanities is not acceptable the above type of work will be labelled ‘too descriptive’, in the humanities good academic writing is analytical and critical (Kanakri, 2015).

**4.6 Conclusion**

At the higher levels the projection of voice and mastery of academic writing conventions in English was more evident. Use of complex sentences, noun compounds, passives, western style of argumentation and evaluative diction that is closer to the ‘native-like’ standard was realised, especially in Political Science. This shows that the more the learners become comfortable with the language the easier it is to appreciate the academic repertoires that are part of the discourse community of academic writing (Rhymes, 2010; Busch, 2012).

**Chapter 5**

**Findings**

**5.1 Findings Overview**

One of the major findings from this research is that the articulation of student voice is still a significant feature in academic writing at postgraduate level in general and for this sample in particular. With one in every 33 words in Civil Engineering (CE) exhibiting the occurrence of a ‘marked’ instance of student voice, whereas in Political Science (PS) one in every 20 words is articulating student voice. What is astounding in these results is that the findings of Hyland (2005) who analysed research articles from peer reviewed journal articles across a huge diversity of disciplines found out that one in every 28 words was an expression of voice, the average from the two disciplines in this sample is 27.5, which when rounded up is the same (28) as that of seasoned scholars. The story of the averages being almost the same for new entrants and seasoned scholars across the disciplines shows there is awareness among these L2 learners that evaluation or projection of student voice is a significant and integral part of the genre and discourse community of academic writing (Kanakri, 2015).

Even though the L2 learners in this sample are just new entrants in the discourse community of academic writing in English, they on average attach the same value to projecting their voice as much as experts, they know how to put on different selves in their academic life (Bartholomae, 1986; Shen, 1989). Contrary to my expectations that the L2 learners would fare very poorly against the experts, it proved to me that the input that these learners receive on the pre-sessional course does prepare them in terms of expressing their voice in academic writing (Biggs, 1997; Elbow 2007). This finding is intriguing for more than one reason, as was mentioned earlier in this research that Hedging is one of the few parameters that is proactively taught and emphasised, with other parameters in the framework like Questions, Reader Pronouns and Personal Pronouns being actively discouraged (Bailey, 2003). The other parameters such as Boosters, Attitude Markers and Appeal to Shared Knowledge being more or less invariably left to learners to assimilate through immersion, depending on individual teacher’s approach and the learner’s understanding of the language and communication style in the discourse community (Canagarajah, 2002). The level of voice awareness displayed by these L2 learners is beyond what I thought it to be, I am by no means implying that their writing was very good, but their awareness and use of the diverse range of voice parameters was beyond my expectation. Whilst it was reasonable to assume that because these L2 learners were still grappling with the language and academic conventions for academic writing in English, the majority of them displayed an appreciation of the importance of identity and projecting a distinct student voice in their writing (Ivanic, 1998).

It is clear, despite some voice parameters not being taught explicitly and despite their level of English, these L2 learners were competent enough to express their voice in varying degrees of success and present credible ARPs in the short space time that they had to write this research paper (Chan, 1999). The few instances of Directives, Personal Asides, Questions, Reader Pronouns and Personal Pronouns indicate that even though these parameters sparingly used, that still demonstrated their awareness. It should be noted though that Hyland’s sample was from seasoned scholars and more comprehensive, it had a diverse number of subjects and was made up of 240 research articles and the sample in this research only had just six papers from two disciplines, but the fact that the distribution of the parameters is still very close is quite remarkable (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004).

The distribution of the diverse voice parameters is different from the two data sets, (Hyland 2005 and the 6 ARPs in this research) as was expected. Most academic scholars tend to be more candid and self-assured as they are authorities in their discipline (Hyland 2004a). In the work of seasoned scholars, there is more Self-Mention, Reader Pronouns, Directives and rhetorical Questions as they try to persuade their readership to accept their arguments and research findings (Hyland 2005). The tables below show the distribution of Stance and Engagement parameters from each discipline, first, as a percentage of Stance and Engagement as separate entities, then all the 9 parameters as a percentage of all three ARPs in each discipline.

Figure 9 **Stance in Political Science**

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Figure 10 **Engagement in Political Science**

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Summary from the two tables from Political Science

Stance-67%

Engagement-33

Top four Voice Parameters are: AM-35%

 ASK-29%

 B-16%

 H-14%

Figure 11 **Stance in Civil Engineering**

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Figure 12 **Engagement in Civil Engineering**

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Summary from the two tables from Civil Engineering

Stance-78%

Engagement-22%

Top four Voice Parameters are: B-40%

 AM-23%

 ASK-20%

 H-14%

The major differences emerging from the tables above

Academic writing in English is a ‘writer responsible’ (Hinds, 1987; Salager-Meyer 2011) language where the burden of being understood in a communicative situation is the responsibility of the writer as opposed to a ‘reader responsible’ language where the distilling of meaning is the responsibility of the reader. It is no surprise therefore from the tables above that in Political Science, the Stance to Engagement ratio as percentages is 67:33, and in Civil Engineering the ratio 78:22. It does not come as a surprise that the L2 learners in this sample understand that their major obligation is to project their position in the presentation to those that may or may not have other views on the same academic debate (Hyland 2005). The statistics from humanities indicate that it is not only ‘positioning’ by the reader that is important but persuading the reader to see things from the same perspective as the writer, hence, Appeal to Shared Knowledge has a 90% of the total Engagement parameters and is second in the overall standings (with Stance included) with 29% after Attitude markers that have 35%. The interesting aspect to these findings is the delicate nature of the balance that the students in political Science try to achieve between showing commitment to propositions by persuading the reader to come on board to view the arguments or positions being presented in a similar way.

On the other hand, in Civil Engineering whilst the L2 writers are still just as aware that the positioning of their arguments is key by the 78:22 ratio between Stance and Engagement, the pattern is slightly different from that in Political Science. The most prevalent voice parameter is that of Boosters-40%, followed by Attitude Marker with 23%, both from the stance side of the paradigm, then comes Appeal to Shared Knowledge with 20% (engagement). These statistics shows that in Civil Engineering, to present the certainty of facts through Boosters is more important than the need to have a persuasive appeal that was exhibited in Political Science. Engaging the reader in Civil Engineering is much less the preoccupation of the L2 learners in this sample. I am sure that these findings are consistent with Swales’ (1990) notion of how new entrants mirror the language and style of what Vygotsky’s constructivism calls the “more knowledgeable other” (Kim 2001).

Another observation worth noting is that in Political Science, Boosters come a distant third with only 16% and almost having the same percentage with Hedges in fourth place at 14%, this is a marked difference from Civil Engineering where Boosters are the most widely used vice parameter with 40% of all voice evaluations. The need to persuade the readership with balanced arguments is quite apparent in Political Science as L2 writers try to balance the presentation of strong arguments using Boosters is delicately balanced with hedging. This is a clear indication of the persuasive nature of the discourse in political Science where the L2 learners are trying hard to maintain a balance between presenting strong points forcefully through Boosters and hedging where cautious evaluation is encouraged in order to allow alternative arguments can be presented (Hyland 2005/8). There are major rhetorical differences in the two disciplines and the way the voice parameters are distributed in the two disciplines. There is a marked difference in the need to appeal to the readership in a balanced persuasive way, in Political Science without being too direct as in Civil Engineering.

Hyland (2005) argues that for a writer to be persuasive is academic writing, they need to connect with the value system in their discourse community. From the above observations, it is clear that the **evidentialility** and **affect** side of arguments are more important in Political Science than in Civil Engineering. **Presence** is more important as well in Political Science than in Civil Engineering, as the L2 learner has to show their stand point amongst the myriad of voices and opinions in their discipline. Here is what Hyland (2005) says about, evidentiality, affect and presence:

**Evidentiality** refers to the writer’s expressed commitment to the reliability of the propositions he or she presents and their potential impact on the reader; **affect** involves a broad range of personal and professional attitudes towards what is said, including emotions, perspectives and beliefs; and **presence** simply concerns the extent to which the writer chooses to project him or herself into the text. (p.178) (my emphasis)

The arguments or propositions in Civil Engineering are facts, and therefore is not as much need to be rhetorically persuasive when presenting facts that potentially do not change as opposed to when one is presenting an argument in the humanities such as in Political Science where each reader is try to construct their understanding of reality where every member of the discourse community could have a different take on the issues or concepts being presented and can equally present contrary arguments regarding the same issues. Therefore the way in which the writers in the two disciplines use evaluative voice categories is different because the differences in the intersubjectivity of the different communities of practise (Kim, 2001).

Appeal to Shared Knowledge (ASK) is the most popular feature by far with a massive 90% of all instances of engagement. The reason for this could be, L2 learners as new entrants into the discourse community, either in PS or CE are trying hard to have common ground with the reader as they are trying to carve out some communication space for themselves as members of this new disciplinary community in English. By appealing to shared knowledge, it is an engagement strategy of creating common ground between the writer and the reader. In one sense they are also aware that they are writing for a non-technical or non-specialist reader, therefore the most appropriate engagement feature is to appeal to what might be shared knowledge.

In a similar way to Appeals to Shared Knowledge but different, Hyland (2005) argues that Attitude Markers signal

…an assumption of shared attitudes, values and reactions to material, writers both express a position and pull readers into a conspiracy of agreement so that it can often be difficult to dispute these judgements (p.180).

The reason for appealing to shared values and attitudes is to persuade the reader that they and the writer share common values and therefore the use of this feature has the same effect as appealing to shared knowledge as an engagement strategy. In this regard I am not surprised as to why ASK and AM are top on the two branches of the student voice tree.

A clear finding from the data is that learners from both disciplines are relatively stronger in expressing their voice in terms of Stance with five texts all having the Stance parameters in the top four of their voice evaluations. Even the only text that does not fit in this category CEL, it has the highest and second highest instances of voice evaluations on the Stance side of the divide. The implication of this finding from a pedagogic point of view is that, it would appear that L2 learners do not struggle as much in terms projecting their voice from a writer’s perspective and are aware of the reason why faculty staff give them written assignments, (see Table1) Gemmell, (2008).

My observation over the years about how academic conventions are taught, Personal Pronouns and Questions are discouraged if not labelled as unacademic (Bailey, 2003). The results from this research show that this rather misguided advice tends to be heeded by students given the non-use or minimal use of such parameters in this sample.

At this institution EAP L2 learners have two sessions in a week called English in your Subject, (EiYS) with Teaching Assistants (TAs) from the discipline the L2 learners intend to study. Under the guidance of the EAP teacher, the TA help in making learners aware of subject specific linguistic repertoires (Busch, 2012) that they have to learn, in order to bridge the gap they might have in terms writing conventions which their native speaker counterparts already possess. In practical terms, the English in your subject approach is a better way of meeting the Target Situation Needs as opposed to the general academic writing approach. Therefore, what are the pedagogical implications for this?

**5.2 Pedagogical implications**

Whilst the descriptors mention native-like proficiency, as the target of L2 learners’ writing (at the pre-sessional level at least), as far as I am aware, there is nowhere else in academia where native-like proficiency is explicitly mentioned as a desirable standard in the UK. The desirable standard for postgraduate L2 learners, even though it is not explicitly stated, is to communicate as close as possible with the ‘more knowledgeable other’ members of the discourse community. These scholars or academics of peer reviewed journal articles and books, are the custodians and gatekeepers of the genre of academic writing, its values and the way knowledge is gathered, created and disseminated within the discourse community (Bhatia, 2004/12). Using native-like proficiency as a standard is slightly disingenuous and it is not surprising that despite its mention in the descriptors, there are no exemplars of the standard in the teaching materials at all the institutions that I have taught, because it is in the main an ‘imagined standard’.

Therefore, in terms of this research, all the areas where there are differences between where the learners are at and the target situation, the teaching material production and classroom teaching should try to address the gaps that emerged from this research. Course Directors and teaching material producers have to bear in mind the areas where these L2 learners tend to be strong and areas were they could benefit from more targeted tuition in order to address the gaps in linguistic knowledge and academic repertoires (Busch, 2012). Addressing these gaps is the main reason for creating an English for Specific Purposes course(s) in general and English for Academic Purposes course(s) in particular (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

After conducting this research, I am convinced that in the absence of a Needs Analysis at the beginning of the English pre-sessional course, a research such as this one goes a long way in helping course designers to create a course or courses that address the needs of L2 learners. The academic repertoires that these learners need to acquire can be split into immediate, medium and long term needs (Jordan, 1997). The immediate needs of these students is to pass the pre-sessional course and obtain an unconditional offer to study the degree of their choice, hence, the ‘language game’ strategies that these students employ in order to pass the pre-sessional. Their medium term needs involve their acquisition of linguistic and academic repertoires that enable them to fulfil their course requirements in terms of assignments, presentations, dissertations or thesis. Their long term needs are to obtain enough academic repertoires that enable them to function in the discourse community as researchers, teaching assistants, lecturers and scholars in their areas of specialisation. The articulation of a distinct voice in their academic writing in English will be an integral part of their functioning as postgraduate student and beyond in their various discourse communities (Ivanic, 1998). Whilst this research focused on the conceptualisation and articulation of voice, similar studies could be carried to address specific language issues that L2 learners need to learn that are hampered by the absence of a Needs Analysis at the beginning of the pre-sessional English course.

The bottom line though is that this research demonstrated that it is important for learners in Social Sciences and in Natural Sciences that they present a distinct voice in their academic writing. When L2 learners get stuck in terms of language and conventions regarding evaluation academic writing there is a natural tendency of reverting to L1 rhetorical patterns (Quinn, 2012). For some of these students, because this is a high stakes piece of writing (Beck and Jeffery, 2007), the occasion could be somewhat overwhelming for them, given the importance of this ARP assignment for their lives and their future. Therefore, resorting to the default writing tradition in their repertoire would be the logical and safe thing to do, but for an outsider, this does not make sense at all. I am persuaded that a closer Contrastive Analysis of the L2 learner’s writer’s rhetoric tradition and that of English academic writing will reveal more about the cognitive processes that take place in the learners mind, in terms of the interaction between the old and new ontological systems (Connor, 2002). I believe this kind of study with any sample of students on the summer pre-sessional courses in English would reveal more about how the writing product is influenced by the writing traditions of the language and culture of their L1, just like Foucault (1971) argues that we are shaped by the discourses that we have encountered and used over a period of time.

What I have observed over the couple of years that I have been teaching pre-sessional EAP at this institution is that the students that struggle most with their ARP are those that have a problem of conceptualising ideas in English. After conducting this research, it has become that the projection of a particular student voice lies in the way the thought is conceptualised. I remember two students in particular, both of them, Chinese, and not from the cohort in this sample. In ARP feedback sessions, one of them admitted to being slowed down because they thought in Chinese, writes in Chinese then translate what they had written into English. In such cases it would not be far fetching to suggest that some of these problems could be emanating from the L1 linguistic and rhetorical patterns (Quinn, 2012).

The other student acknowledged that they had to think and formulate concepts in Chinese, after conceptualising these thoughts in their L1 they would then translate the concept into English. Consequently, for this type of learner, if their L1 has a different conception of the notion of voice or the concept is non-existent in their repertoire or historic discourses, it must be difficult to conceptualise and even more so more difficult to articulate, as it is a foreign concept for the L2 learner (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004; Whitney 2011). For this student in my class, the ontological process was in a completely different culture and language than the one used for writing. In the worst cases that come from my teaching and L2 grammar checking experience, some L2 learners wrote their assignments in Chinese and then used an online translation tool such as Google translate and the product sometimes is not recognisable as a text in English. Therefore it is important that a thought or knowledge is conceptualised and be articulated in the same language, soothing easier to say than is done in practise.

It is important to understand that the written product of these students, in terms of its deficiencies, despite the ten-week teaching intervention, is one of the reasons why EAP practitioners come to have a clearer understanding of what these students need to learn, in the absence of real time diagnostic Needs Analysis at the beginning of the course. If there are still obvious gaps despite nine or eight weeks of tuition (minus enrolling, induction and assessment time), this would better inform Course Directors and Learning Material Producers about how the learning needs that the students have at the beginning of the course might have been, not by merely looking at the Target Situation needs as the basis of producing teaching materials on writing

**5.3 Implications for the wider academic community**

One of the findings from the research question on whether the ability to manipulate rhetorical features of voice is related to the quality of a piece of student research paper produced unexpected results. Having an assertive voice proved to be a more desirable attribute than having a more hedged voice. The certainty of Boosters and to some extend and the presence of Attitude Markers exhibits the ability to use academic repertoires more like the ‘more knowledgeable other’ as opposed to a new entrant in the discourse community (Kim, 2001; Swales, 1990)

Consequently, it was quite logical for EAP teachers and assessors to reward writing with authority in a learner, as the learner assertively establishes his or herself among the voices of scholars within the discipline (Ivanic, 1998; Benwell and Stokoe 2006). On the contrary a severely hedged paper has undercurrents of a learner who is battling for acceptance within the discourse community and is unwittingly exhibiting it in their writing that they are a novice (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004). As a result, the EAP assessor is unlikely to score a paper that has too many hedges highly given that student voice is assessed impressionistically at the textual level. From this it is apparent that writing with authority is much more valued than presenting a cautious voice (Hyland, 2002a; Ivanic, 1998).

In the context of the above finding about writing with authority, it is important to note the argument presented earlier about hedging being emphasised in pre-sessional EAP teaching than Boosters or Attitude Markers for example, the reason could be; hedging is emphasised for new entrants into a discourse community, as it is one of the basic academic convention that every student should master before they move on to more robust and more complex rhetorical and linguistic repertoires such as Boosters (Bailey, 2003). There seems to be a subtle paradox in the way EAP is taught to postgraduate students, whilst in some contexts they are viewed as beginners, who need to heavily hedge their arguments on the other hand they are expected to be ‘accomplished’ as post-graduates in their arguments (Zhu, 2004). According to the descriptors for assessing ARPs (at this institution) they are expected to have native-like proficiency similar or close to that of postgraduate native speakers of English. What this means in practice is that they have to learn the basics of the academic repertoires in their discourse community and within a short time they are supposed to have an academic voice in their writing which is more like that of the ‘more knowledgeable other’ (Busch, 2012; Kim, 2001).

In a remarkable way, these learners are expected to learn the basics of academic writing in English such as the use of hedging, logic and argumentation and in the same breath start using them almost instantaneously. They are expected to do the same with higher level rhetorical manipulations such as Boosters, Appeal to Shared Knowledge and Attitude Markers in ways close to their native speaker classmates who possess these language skills already. Possibly the reason why in the current teaching approach (as far as I know it) use of Boosters, Attitude Markers and Appeal to Shared Knowledge are not taught explicitly is because, as far as the EAP teachers are concerned, they are not part of what they consider to be foundational academic skills such as hedges but something that develops as flair when one becomes more confident in their discourse community. This is an observation I have made in my own academic and professional development as a second language learner of English. This brings back the question on whether the expectations that ‘the University’ has in a Bartholomae (1986) sense is not very realistic on these L2 learners in the short space of time (ten weeks) that they have to upgrade their English before enrolling on their courses of choice (Shen, 1989). The next few paragraphs explore the implications of these findings for Home students

One thing that is clear at the end of this research process is that the concept of student voice is more central to academic writing than it is currently credited with, quite contrary to what other scholars such as Stapleton, (2002); Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003) who argue that voice is an overstated concept. This research showed the importance of student voice as being undisputable in academic writing at postgraduate level as students have to critically analyse concepts and ideas, and this essentially involves the ability to use material from diverse sources, weigh, integrate and evaluate them (Elander, *et al*, 2006). All these processes require the conceptualisation and articulation of a clear student voice. As argued in this research, the notion of voice is quite entrenched into the culture of the writer and how L2 learners perceive the world, something that does not come naturally to them (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004).

 The outcomes from this research are not causal but rather correlational, the presence and or absence of certain voice parameters are associated rather than cause the attainment of a particular assessment grade but the outcomes suggests that the voice parameters investigated could be influential to the results presented in this thesis.

It is quite apparent that students on a pre-sessional English course do not emerge at the end of the course as expects in articulation of student voice, but they are at different levels of struggling rather than on the efficiency continuum. I therefore think that it is reasonable to suggest that most international students need proactive conscientisation in addressing voice issues and other academic repertoires that are integral to their ability to successfully communicate either as students or academic scholars in their discourse community, something that is a must for anyone who wants to communicate anything in writing at this level (Elander, *et al*, 2006; Busch, 2012).

Whilst it cannot be contested that home students do not have as many academic writing problems as international students, the English language competence they possess is in general English is not necessarily academic English (Bailey 2003/11; Dudley Evans and St, Joan, 1998), as most of them would not have been deliberately taught what academic English is, but it is something that they would pick from the discourse community as they acquire knowledge in their respective disciplines. The justification for having a discipline called English for Specific Purposes (ESP) emanates from the fact that ESP is different from general English (Dudley Evans and St. Joan, 1998; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). This argument that general English is different from English for Academic Purposes is what makes EAP a separate and distinct genre (Hyland, 2006). This means that members of this discourse community use it (EAP) to achieve a specific purpose (Swales, 1990).

Therefore, home students also need awareness on how to critically apply the conventions of academic English regarding student voice when presenting arguments in a postgraduate academic context (Harwood and Hardley, 2004) . Despite the fact that these native students used English at undergraduate level and therefore picked most of the conventions of academic writing, there are some rhetorical features of student voice that they can learn from the conceptual framework and the outcomes from this research (Hyland, 2005). This therefore means that to certain degree there are student voice issues in genre of academic writing they also need to be aware of through the instruction given by EAP teachers.

Some Home students or native speakers of English also struggle with the same issues that international students struggle with in terms of writing essays, they struggle with paragraphing, noun compounds and use of passives and referencing (Prendergast, 2013). In the United States at some universities, some students in certain courses, especially in the humanities have to enrol for composition writing classes (Prendergast, 2013). In the UK, generally, it is not the practice to offer academic English courses to home students, but at the university that I am currently working, they have a Language Support Department that offers, international students with proof-reading services as well as English Development Courses, in academic writing, reading, dissertation writing and oral presentation skills among other academic repertoires. Some home students with language difficulties such as dyslexia are allowed to access these services (primarily targeted at international students) offered by language support to International Students. Home students with Special Needs when they tell their friends about the support services they receive from the Language Support Department, some Home Students who do not have learning difficulties then approach the Language Support Department requesting similar services offered to International Students and Home Students with Special Needs. This is an indication that there is scope to offer Home students with EAP courses that addresses such issues as student voice in academic writing.

The final chapter will present conclusions and recommendations

**Chapter 6**

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

**6.1 Research Questions Revisited**

This thesis posed several research questions and this concluding chapter explores very briefly the answers to those questions as justification that this research sought to do what it set out to investigate in the first place.

The first research question was: Is there a relationship between strong student voice and quality in L2 academic writing?

The findings clearly show that there is a relationship between strong student voice and the quality of a student’s writing (Ivanic, 1998). This was demonstrated especially at the level of rhetorical manipulation of voice features and not necessarily by sum total parameters used, but rather by the prevalence of what I call ‘high value parameters’ such as **Boosters** and **Attitude Markers** and to some extent **Appeal to Shared Knowledge**. The use of these voice parameters exhibited the extent of the confidence that the L2 learners using them had on arguments and propositions that they expressing in the research. From this research, those learners that were more robust in terms of number and diversity of voice parameters used turned out to have better quality work as shown in the passing grades of the assessed ARPs.

The next research question was: Are there major differences between how the students project voice in the two disciplines? From the findings, especially at the lower and higher end, it is clear that there is a major difference in terms how students use voice. In Political Science, especially at the higher level, there was a lot of complex rhetorical manipulation of linguistic features such as connectives, nominalisations, passive constructions and complex sentences (Elander, *et al.*, 2006). Increasing numbers of strong opinions were presented at the upper end of the scale and there was the use of labelling or cleverly selected diction that was very emotive. In Civil Engineering on the other hand there was no need to use these kinds of linguistic manipulations as the subjects being discussed such as the durability of bridges, insulation technologies and water treatment technologies did not require this level of linguistic dexterity and emotional attachment as the arguments were factual as is the case in hard Sciences (Hyland, 2004). This was an expected outcome because Sciences tend to be factual whilst in the humanities a lot of argumentation and persuasive language has to be used to persuade the reader to align with the arguments being presented (Hyland 2005/8).

From the research question: Are there features in the student’s writing that suggest that their writing and engaging with voice was inhibited by the writing traditions in their first language and culture? At the lower level bands in both disciplines it is clear that there are traces of the influence of the rhetorical styles from their first language and culture. Both ARPs are from Chinese students who have writing traditions that are influenced by Confucian traditions that are comfortable in presenting a ‘we’ consciousness. There is a lot of quoting or referencing of government sources without querying the authenticity of the data or trying to use other sources to corroborate the validity of the information (Crossley and McNamara, 2011; Chan, 1999). The learners tend to struggle at the grammatical level although it is difficult to categorically pin them to the disparity in the language and culture of the L1 and L2, but when low level learners shy away from going ‘on record’ with their evaluations, one is inclined to suggest that it is because it is an aspect that learners shy away from in their culture (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2006).

The next research question was: In what ways do the two high scoring ARPs in the two disciplines fall short of the expectations in the marking descriptors in terms of a voice that exhibits so called native-like proficiency (see band 1 and 2 descriptors). Given the argument presented earlier in this research from Gemmell (2008) (see table 1) on why faculty staff give students written tasks, the conclusion was that of the six points raised, student voice concerns where at the centre of five of faculty staff’s reasons for requiring written assignments from learners in Higher Education (ibid). Therefore, the contention being made is, the way the genre of academic writing is organised is linked to purpose in terms structure and form (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2004). Therefore the language and structure that L2 learners use have to correspond to the purpose of the given assignment (Bailey, 2003). L2 learners in this sample used voice features that helped them to answer the research. The understanding and appreciation of register and associated academic repertoires where learner voice is key helped or inhibited the students to accomplish the ARP task.

The fifth research question was: What can be learnt from these results for teaching purposes in terms of the target situation? One thing that was very apparent was the need to have two separate course books for the Humanities and Sciences in order to cater for the differences in academic writing for Humanities and Sciences (Hyland 2004). Based on just one aspect of the academic writing conventions, namely student voice, there is overwhelming evidence that the way L2 learners in each discipline approach and manipulate academic repertoires is very different (Rymes, 2010). The way they approach argumentation is different and this clearly needs to be reflected in the teaching materials that represent these distinct discourse communities (Green, 2007). There is a definite need for proactive teaching of voice parameters such as Boosters, Attitude Markers, and Appeals to Shared Knowledge as they are strong and desirable ways of evaluating propositions in academic writing. There is also need to provide authentic exemplars of native speaker pieces of academic writing as a way of mitigating the vagueness and ambiguity of the term native-like proficiency (Graff and Birkestein, 2005).

On the question of: Are there specific challenges that L2 learners face when they try to project their voice in academic writing? It was apparent from the research that the problems that L2 learners face are not merely linguistic, some of them have a social and cognitive background where the minds of the learners are battling with the new conventions at the ideological level (Chan, 1999; Shen, 1989) because their language and cultures have different values to those cherished in western academic writing, being critical is a case in point (Preiss, *et al.*, 2013). Western ideology however believes in questioning and interrogating every detail that is why they value being critical highly (Benesch, 1999). This argument validates Foucault’s argument that every person is a product of the discourses that created them. Academic writing in English involves complex nominalisations which are difficult for students to understand and mirror in their writing (Grow, 2008; Hyland, 2013).

The final research question was: What interventions can be put in place by course designers, directors and teachers to try and mitigate the challenges that L2 learners face when learning about voice in academic writing? One thing that is apparent from my teaching experience and conducting this research is that there is a gap between what students are taught about voice and the levels of voice that they are expected to project in their final assessments. There is therefore need to proactively instruct learners concerning all the nine voice parameters and the other categories that were added by this research that were not part of the conceptual framework such as textual voice, labelling as voice and referencing as voice. This research showed that voice in academic writing is more than just hedging and is complex and elusive (Allison and Siew Mei, 2001). Teaching materials at the universities that I taught lacked authentic exemplars from the native student’s writing to learn from’ authentic examplers are crucial in EAP pedagogy (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987) The texts that are used as authentic texts from the discourse community as examples are from journal articles by accomplished scholars, and therefore their rhetorical manipulation of academic repertoires are very accomplished in terms language use and consequently difficult to mirror for these L2 learners that are just new entrants into the discourse community (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004). If native student’s academic writing exemplars were available it would go a long way to eradicate the ambiguity of the ‘standard’ so called native-like (Elander, et al., 2006).

**6.2 How this research contributes to the literature on student voice**

This research contributes to the literature on student voice, evaluation and academic writing in the following ways: The outcome of this research clearly shows that the projection of the student voice is a key aspect in these L2 learner’s academic writing. The sample proved that those students that were robust in projecting “interpersonal intrusion” (Hyland, 2005, p. 190) were judged by the assessors more favourably than those who did less in that regard. I concur with the conclusion that Hyland (ibid) arrived at in his research on published academic articles, using the same voice framework adopted for this study. He concludes that, “effective academic writing depends on rhetorical decisions about interpersonal intrusion…” (ibid). The ability to handle sources from a multiplicity of sources without losing the learner’s voice is a highly cherished academic skill (Appendix 1). From this sample those students that were capable of rhetorically interweaving their voice with that of other scholars were assessed as having better quality writing than those that struggled in this regard (PSH). This shows that skills of interpersonal intrusion are highly regarded in postgraduate academic writing (Elbow, 2007).

Hyland (2005) from his sample, argues that, “writers select and deploy community sensitive linguistic resources to represent themselves, their positions and their readers” (p.190), something that is not necessarily true for this sample, as these L2 learners are not yet completely immersed in their discourse community, as a result they are not yet sure about the apt “community sensitive linguistic resources” that they can use to represent themselves. This marks the difference between experts and new-entrants in a discourse community (Swales, 1990). One thing that this research has underscored is that the writers in this sample are firstly, new entrants to the discourse community, secondly, they are still struggling with the language at various levels and lastly if not most importantly they are writing a “high stakes” (Beck and Jeffery, 2007) piece of academic writing that has a huge implications on what their future is going to be. Because of what is at stake some of these L2 learners were willing to shed off every discourse that has created them in the past (Foucault, 1971) and adopt everything new about English academic writing conventions as exhibited in the top ARPs (Shen, 1989). It was clear from this research that immersion into the discourse community or its absence is a huge factor in the development of an academic voice as one is inventing or reinventing themselves when they are writing for ‘the university’ (Bartholomae, 1986; Prendergast, 2013). Therefore, expecting to see an explicit student voice for the L2 learners with varying degrees of basic English competence is not something to be taken lightly given that these L2 learners are new entrants in the discourse community of academic writing in general and in their specific discipline in English in particular (Hyland, 2004/13).

From this research it can be argued that there is no shortcut to being a member of a discourse community (Fairclough, 2014b), and the way new members are initiated and begin to be part of the discourse community is through going through the rigour of reading scholarly texts (Graff and Birkenstein, 2005). As a new entrant gains knowledge in the discipline, they will begin to write mirroring experts in the discourse community (Hyland, 2004). As most the students in this sample (5/6) come from Eastern collectivist cultures (Hinkel, 1997) they have varying degrees of difficulty in the rigours of western academic writing in English that are derived from a completely different culture. Student voice is something that we cannot afford to ignore as it is “alive in our classrooms” Elbow (2007, (p. 2).

It is apparent from this research that academic scholarship and credibility is to a large extent influenced by voice, with those learners poor at handling voice likely to be viewed as less effective academic writers (Gemmell, 2008). Using Kristeva’s (2002) intertextuality argument, which contends that every text is a product of other texts, the ability to evaluate information from other sources (Hunston and Thompson, 1999) is a highly valued aspect of the academy. Essentially, it is the ability to evaluate material from a multiplicity of sources and introduce one’s perspective in terms of authorial voice that separates pretenders and credible budding academics (PSH).

An appreciation of the concept of Contrastive Rhetoric is important to the appreciation of the challenges that L2 learners have in trying to conceptualise and articulate voice on a pre-sessional course, as Quinn (2012) argues that her frustration in trying to understand her L2 learner’s ways of organising texts in English academic writing only ended when she understood how they culturally organised their writing in their L1. An appreciation of Contrastive Rhetoric would definitely be beneficial for EAP teachers not only in understanding the voice domain of academic writing but academic writing conventions as a whole (Connor, 2002). The issue of writing style is heavily linked to language and culture (Kim, 2001), and voice is found and established within a specific discourse community and cultural context (ibid). Voice and identity in writing are inseparable from the language used and its wider culture in terms of permissible and non-permissible rhetorical styles (Ivanic, 1998). This does not suggest that there is no place of originality within these repertoires, Busch, (2011) contends these linguistic repertoires are spaces for “both of restrictions and of potentialities” (p.509) something that was apparent in the ARP- PSH.

The expectation of EAP teachers to find a distinct Western style student voice in L2 writing from these pre-sessional L2 learners is a huge expectation which sometimes is simply beyond what these learners are capable of (Bartholomae, 1986) as demonstrated mainly by students from the middle and lower tier in this sample. Even the top-level ARPs from both disciplines struggled to have a distinct native-like voice proficiency (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004).

This exploration of the conception and articulation of voice has demonstrated that voice and identity are not static and cannot be easily localised to a particular geographic or linguistic context (Harwood and Hardley, 2004), consequently, epistemological awareness is increasingly getting more global (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2006). The product and identity of the work ARPs analysed in this research therefore captures the essence of Li Wei’s concept of translanguaging, where “different identities, values, and practices do not simply co-exist, but generate new identities, values, and practices” (Busch, 2012, p.506 citing Bhabha, 1994). When this happens, the product and identity of the student is a hybrid of the discourses that the student has encountered in the entirety of their educational journey irrespective of the cultural, institutional or linguistic boundaries (Bizzell, 1999, Foucault, 1971). The L2 learner’s voice and identity in this research is the sum total of their entire education from pre-school to their current experience on the pre-sessional English course at the UK university where they are studying. These L2 learners end up with what Busch (2012) calls ‘translocal repertoires’, who “under the conditions of global mobility and super-diversity, have to deal with a multitude of different spaces of communication” (p. 519) and as a result it is increasingly difficult to attach a single identity on them and this permeates their voice projection in academic writing (Bizzell 1999).

The findings of this research demonstrated that voice issues are not at the periphery of what matters in academic writing in English but are at the centre of what is critical in academic writing (Gemmell, 2008). How a student writer handles the issue of voice shapes the deeper aspects of the epistemic value of a text, which is a fundamental aspect of the ideology of any academic text (Kanakri, 2015).

These findings are of interest to various EAP practitioners in that, it still showcases the importance of student voice in academic writing and reiterates the need for course directors, teaching material producers as well as EAP teachers of the need to have as update pre-sessional English course despite the logistical nightmare involved in conducting a proper needs analysis before the creation of a language course (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). The other group of people that could benefit from these research outcomes are international students who are planning to go a pre-sessional English course and are not sure of what to expect as well as those who have conditional offers and those that do not have but wish to pursue postgraduate studies in countries where English is the language of teaching and instruction (Egege and Kutieleh 2004). Institutions and individuals that prepare students for academic writing courses in countries where English is not the language of education will also benefit. An understanding of the value of academic repertoires and their intertextuality can only be a good thing for students wishing to study in a country where English is the language of learning ( Busch, 2012; Kresteva, 2002).

**6.3 Recommendations**

I recommend that EAP teaching materials on student voice be developed in booklet form, (as opposed to a massive course book) to address this very important topic, with each voice parameter clearly illustrated with examples from a diverse range of subjects, my recommendation would be that there should be at least three separate booklets covering, Humanities, Sciences and Commercial subjects. From this research it was clear that the importance of conceptualising and articulating a strong student voice is fundamental in different ways in the two disciplines (Ivanic and Camps 2001). The downside of the booklet approach would be that at the end of the course both learners and teacher would have several of these booklets and for those with a poor filing system, there is danger of losing some of the teaching and learning materials.

From my teaching experience, referencing conventions change all the time and sometimes different departments in the same institution use or prefer slightly different conventions. If the learning and teaching materials are contained in a single topic booklet, it would be easier to change those specific aspects that are different in different university departments as opposed to a topic being part of 200 or 300 page Course-book. In keeping with the current global trend on saving the environment, rapid developments in technology, affordable prices in personal computers, tablets and smartphones, alongside the need to minimise costs, it should be much easier to provide the teaching and learning materials in electronic form (Ryan, 2011). Updating electronic teaching materials is much easier and much more cost effective than materials in print (ibid).

My recommendation for course-books, if any institution or course director is that inclined, they should at least respect that generic divide between humanities and the hard sciences to be recognised by having separate course books (Spack, 1988). The variations in usage of voice evaluations from this research were quite significant and deserves to be presented differently as these voice evaluations do impact the quality of the written piece of work and its appeal to the reader in general and assessors in particular within the two discourse communities as different forms of intersubjectivity are at play in the two different disciplines (Kim, 2001).

Another recommendation that this research makes is that issues not covered due to size constraints be investigated in subsequent research. There is need investigate the EAP teacher dimension to establish their insights on student voice how it should be pedagogically approached on an intensive pre-sessional course. Connected to the same point there is also need to explore the L2 learner dimension about how they view the Hyland conceptual framework of voice and the findings from this research. These two dimensions are key to the holistic understanding of student voice on a pre-sessional course. Still on the student dimension perhaps it will be useful to conduct a longitudinal study of how the concept of voices awareness grows at different points on their studies. This might be able to help shed light on how effective the teaching intervention would have been from start, middle and end of course. This researcher was aware of these possible approaches that this research could have taken but the size of the research and time constraints would not allow proper justification of an all rounded research that plugged all the possible gaps.

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