

# **Writer-author presence and responsibility in attribution and averral: A model for the analysis of academic discourse**

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## **Abstract**

Metadiscourse studies, inspired by Halliday's interpersonal metafunction of language, have dominated academic discourse analysis. They tended to exclude the ideational metafunction in discourse and to reduce the reader/analyst to a concordance programme that scans texts for lists of pre-established, but not always clearly defined, linguistic features. This paper does not purport to present an alternative to metadiscourse studies. It capitalises on their findings, rehabilitates propositional content and restores the role of the reader and the analyst. It takes the research paper as the central core genre in academic discourse (Schmied, 2014, p.11) and approaches it as a Quadric Writer-(Author-Author)-Reader Encounter. The paper proposes a model for the analysis of academic discourse. It unpacks Sinclair's (1986) Attribution, Averral dichotomy into an Attribution categories cline and an Averral categories cline and relates the categories to levels of Writer-Author Presence and Responsibility. It operationalises the Attribution categories and Averral categories it defines by delimiting the Discourse Unit constituting them. To achieve this delimitation, it upgrades Hunt's (1965) T-Unit and draws on Genette's (1997) Paratext. Because the paper targets academics, irrespective of their specialism, it chose to accompany the model it proposes by illustrative analyses of discourse samples from research papers dealing with issues in academic writing and publication.

**Keywords:** *Academic Discourse; Attribution; Averral; Discourse Unit; Genre, Paratext; T-Unit.*

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## **Introduction**

Articulating and integrating other authors' words and ideas while developing one's views and anticipating and reacting to counter arguments pervade academic discourse. These complex persuasion strategies are realised through what Sinclair (1986) called Attribution (of content to source) and Averral (no attribution of content to source). Subsequent to Sinclair's dichotomy, attempts at accounting for Attribution categories and Averral categories have been made (e.g., Charles, 2006; Tadros, 1993; Thompson, 1996; Rouissi, 2013), but there has been little consensus on their definition, number, or function. Metadiscourse studies, which have dominated the scene in academic discourse analysis for more than thirty years, define metadiscourse as discourse minus content (Hyland, 2017, pp. 17-18). This conception has severed the ideational level from the interpersonal level in discourse and has inadvertently contributed to turning many researchers' attention away from Attribution and Averral.

However, a typescript that does not weave strands of Attribution and Averral hardly stands a chance of persuading high ranking journals' editors, reviewers, and peers of its worth. I present in this paper a model for the analysis of academic discourse. I propose an Attribution categories cline and an Averral categories cline and relate the categories chiefly to Writer-Author levels of Presence and Responsibility. I define the Discourse Unit constituting Attribution categories and Averral categories and suggest procedures that can help researchers account for the flow of discourse in different academic genres and part-genres.

## **Background**

The view that academic discourse has to be impersonal and faceless goes back to the heydays of positivism in the 1920s, for which scientific knowledge is the outcome of empirical evidence derived essentially from sensory experience and represented in verifiable, truth-contingent propositions (Ayer, 1936). Advocates of positivism often cited “the eye and the visual field” metaphor, which the young Wittgenstein (1921) used, to defend objectivity. They referred to propositional logic and predicate logic as antidotes to subjectivity and irrationalism. They argued that one's eye (I) is not, and ought not to be, part of experience of facts in science, and they insisted that scientific thought and language be constituted of analytic propositions and of synthetic propositions.

The relatively recent view that academic discourse involves ego presence, responsibility, and judgement (e.g., Biber, D. & Finegan, E. 1989; Hyland, 2008) can be traced back to earlier debates on and approaches to language, thought, and the world. The debates included the thorny issue of knowledge and certainty (Unger, 1971) and the approaches included modal logic and possible worlds semantics (Moss & Tiede, 2007, p. 1036). Speech act theory (e.g., Austin, 1975; Grice, 1989; Wittgenstein, 1953) also defended the performative function of language and reinstated both speaker and hearer. It contributed to the short-lived performative hypothesis (Ross, 1970) in generative linguistics, which the Chomskians had to abandon, mainly because it ventured out of the confines of the study of the ideal

speaker-hearer's linguistic competence and diverted from their quest for language universals.

This acknowledgement of writer/speaker and reader/hearer presence and responsibility in discourse dovetails with the current trend in the philosophy of science, which no longer limits itself to the old view that science is merely puzzle-solving, cumulative, unidirectional, incremental, and impersonal (Popper, 1959). Doing science also involves venturing in uncharted territories, making hypotheses, evaluating competing ideas, formulating agreement or disagreement with fellow scientists and expressing degrees of indeterminacy and confidence, and, at some points that are few and far between, doing science revolutionises knowledge by effecting astounding leaps (Bird, 2011; Kuhn, 1970). Thus, the scientist's subjectivity plays an important role in contributing to scientific progress.

The recognition of writer/speaker and reader/hearer presence and responsibility in academic discourse finds support in Systemic Functional Linguistics: A theory of doing (Berry, 1975) that is primarily data-driven (Martin, 1998). In this school of linguistics, whose foundations Halliday laid out in the early 1960s, language is not a mere inventory of rules and lexical items that are out there or just inside one's head; language, thought, society, and participants are intertwined (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). A speaker (or writer), in the process of meaning making, is within the language system networks of possibilities and within its discourse semantics resources for integrating clauses with one another (Martin, 2009, p. 11). He makes choices from within the lexicogrammar and the discourse semantic

resources to encode experience, evaluate it, and organise it as he interacts with (actual or potential) interlocutors in contexts of situation and culture. Text, written or spoken, is thus an instantiation of the language system. It also reflects its producer's selections from language constituency (larger units containing smaller units), particularly its lexicogrammar, to construe meaning and negotiate it with audience. The hearer (reader), in the process of message understanding and interpreting, relies on the grammar he shares with his interlocutor and makes use of relevant socio-cultural and psychological contextual correlates (Van Dijk, 2006; Wu, 2011, 112). The process of communication is thus very complex.

Indeed, traces of traces, senses evoking senses, voices within voices, genres within genres, texts within texts, and power and counter-power characterise groups' and individuals' discourses, as philosophers, literary critics, sociologists, and psychologists have revealed. Discourse analysts have been engaged in refining their tools and varying their approaches to account for the diffusion, complexity, and interaction of meaning, source, and participants (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2018). They have been engaged in debates with their critics (e.g., Widdowson, 1995 vs. Fairclough, 1996), while acknowledging that their findings are neither complete nor absolute (that the sky has long ceased to be the limit!) and that division of labour helps achieve efficiency and better insights into the rhizomatic process of human thinking (Clarke & Parsons, 2013) and into the complexities of discourse, but they have not gone as far as advocating complete compartmentalisation or balkanisation of disciplines, especially theirs.

Attribution and Averral (Sinclair, 1986), the focus of this paper, pervade academic discourse. They bear witness to the polyphonic nature of language (Bakhtin, 1986) and testify to the challenges polyphony poses to linguistics, and to the field of discourse analysis in particular. Indeed, Attribution categories and Averral categories are still difficult to delineate and disentangle from one another in literary discourse, media discourse, or even conversation. However, Attribution is more tangible in research work because the community of academics, which has developed rigorous citation techniques, criminalises those who deliberately or unscrupulously fail to attribute what is not theirs. Making an attempt at identifying Attribution and Averral categories, defining them, and relating them to levels of Writer and Author Presence and Responsibility could shed more light on academic discourse, and by extension, on the indomitable polyphony of discourse.

Two major traditions have developed in academic discourse research: (a) rhetorical pattern studies and (b) metadiscourse studies. Both traditions adopt the notion of Genre as a purposeful communicative event with recurrent linguistic and rhetorical manifestations. I introduce the first tradition and dwell on the second because it is more relevant to this paper.

Rhetorical pattern studies first developed in the early 1980s to consolidate a notion of Genre that transcended the classical literary definition. Researchers first focused on the Introduction (Swales, 1990) and moved later to analysing other sections of the research paper and other genres. Pattern, for them, is the occurrence of Moves in a recognisable order. Move has a semantic function and Step enables Move

to fulfil its function often through particular linguistic indicators (Yang & Allison, 2003, p. 370). As those who have conducted rhetorical pattern analyses know, the identification of Moves and Steps in texts is not as easy as their definitions say. The analyst is often compelled to engage in a close reading of the text at hand (Abdessellem & Costello, 2018).

Metadiscourse studies have focused on the linguistic resources writers (speakers) make use of (a) to organize discourse and (b) to convey their stance towards content and towards readers (hearers). This has resulted in various classifications of organisational expressions and stance indications in spoken discourse (e.g., Ädel, 2010, p. 83) and in written discourse (e.g., Hyland & Tse, 2004, p. 169; Hyland, 2005, p. 177), regardless of their occurrence in Attribution or Averral. It has also given rise to computational linguistics analyses of corpora, whereby researchers would often adopt lists of linguistic realisations of particular metadiscourse categories and have them quantified, often, via software programmes. Comparisons of frequencies and distributions of categories within the same genre, across genres, and in different contexts have yielded interesting results (e.g., Rezoug & Vincent, 2018; Wei & Duan, 2019), but the process has often turned into "hunting down and counting features on a pre-defined list" (Hyland, 2017, p. 19). Content, which has always been a challenge to most ESP teachers, including those teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) on account of their having a background in the Humanities, has often been kept on the sidelines. Searching for metadiscourse features via popular concordance programs, while varying genres, texts, or contexts

has flourished, despite a host of issues related to category definition, delimitation, and function (Hyland, 2017, pp. 17-19). A path of least effort seems to have prevailed among many metadiscourse researchers, especially academic discourse analysts (Abdesslem, 2019, iii).

The model proposed in this paper rehabilitates content, which Halliday has never dissociated from the interpersonal and the textual metafunctions of language. It reinstates the analyst's eye (I), for it does not delegate the reading task to a software programme that scans texts for a list of predetermined linguistic items. It emphasises the role of Author, whom, it suggests, Writer animates (Goffman, 1981; Goodwin, 2006 pp. 5-6; Haugh, 2013, p. 61) as originator of talk and (or) responsible for thought.

Author as animated participant in discourse can be detected in Chafe (1986, p. 268-269), Biber et al.<sup>1</sup> (2002, p. 382-384), Martin & White (2005, p. 98), and Hyland & Tse (2004, p. 169). For Chafe, Author provides "Hearsay Evidence"; for Biber et al., he is "Source of Knowledge"; for Martin and White, he is manifest in "Engagement", particularly "Expand" where other voices and alternative positions are "Acknowledged" or "Distanced" through "Attribute"; and for Hyland, Author is present in "Evidentials" that Writer uses as an "Interactive Resource" to guide Reader through text. Yet, an overall dyadic conception of discourse as speaker-hearer encounter has prevailed.

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<sup>1</sup> . I provide the names of all co-authors in the Reference Section entries.



The model I propose in this paper benefited from metadiscourse studies; it points to the role metadiscourse features have in defining Attribution categories and Averral categories and in delimiting their constituent Discourse Units. The model has the potential of contributing to rhetorical pattern studies; it can help researchers locate Moves and Steps on the Attribution and Averral categories clines with more precision and account for them with more insight. The model can also help metadiscourse analysts distinguish linguistic indicators occurring in Attribution categories from those occurring in Averral categories, and reconsider dealing with them wholesale. As shall be seen, the model makes an attempt at delineating levels of convergence and divergence of Writer-Author voices. It shows that Writer animates Author-Author dialogue and anticipates potential Reader reactions and reacts to them.

The model building process was preceded by a deconstruction of Sinclair's Attribution and Averral into subtle categories and an unlocking of categories' interdigitations. The deconstruction benefited from a thorough review of the literature.

### **Review of the Literature: Attribution-Averral categorisation**

Sinclair (1986) proposed a binary definition of Attribution and Averral. He defined Attribution as that part of text which is clearly marked as that of an authority other than that of Writer and he defined Averral as the unmarked part of text which is assumed as that of Writer. Sinclair's distinction maintained teachers, students, and researchers' long standing interest in explicit Attribution, which they often refer to as

Citation (e.g., Ädel & Garretson, 2006; Groom, 2000; Swales, 1990). Citation includes Quotation, Integral Citation, and Non-Integral Citation. These explicit Attribution categories have concrete indicators and they are assumed to be easy to identify and to teach.

However, as soon as researchers attempted to account for Attribution categories and Averral categories in genres within and across academic disciplines (e.g., Groom, 2000; Harwood, 2009; Swales, 1986; 1990), in native and non-native students' papers (e.g., Ädel and Garretson, 2006; Borg, 2000; Campbell, 1990), in experts' and novices' papers (e.g., Rouissi, 2013), and in different discourses (e.g., Ädel, 2008; Thompson, 1996), a plethora of disparate categories and functions emerged.

Indeed, some categories that researchers and teachers have taken as belonging to Averral, other researchers have associated with Attribution. Tadros (1993), for instance, considers a part of a text containing an evidential expression such as "I think, I believe, I suggest that p" Self-Attribution, while Charles (2006) considers it Self-Averral.

Furthermore, an Averral may turn out to be an exact copy, a near-copy, or an unattributed paraphrase that betrays a muted author's voice and a hijacking of an author's thought (Rouissi, 2013, p. 32). A writer's Averral may coincide with or echo an author's Averral, but proving that it was unduly appropriated can be challenging to the shrewd forensic linguist and the sophisticated plagiarism detection software programme. An Averral may be an idea, a synthesis of ideas, or a description of a

state of affairs or practices that the writer thinks he is under little or no obligation to cite his source or sources because the Averral is part of his audience's shared knowledge; it is not crucial for the point he is making or the genre he is writing in; he does not recall where he came across it; or simply the idea happens to correspond to that of some source he did not read. A research paper could be produced by a ghost writer or peers who might have gone too far in assisting the writer. It may not include citations of authors from whom a given writer, or a ghost writer, appropriated ideas, words, tables, figures, or statistical results. It may even be some full or partial rendering of a given research work from another language. These complex issues are beyond the scope of this paper and the model it presents.

Sinclair's "part of a text" is not amenable to hard-boarder delimitations. Within the same sentence, an Averral may end with an Attribution, an Attribution may end with an Averral, and an Averral may have an Attribution embedded in it. A set-off Quotation may extend over a number of sentences and even over more than one paragraph. An in-text Quotation can be more than one sentence, as it can be a word or a phrase (i.e. a small quote). An Averral may be a sentence, a series of sentences within a paragraph, a whole paragraph, or even a sequence of paragraphs.

Reporting verbs do not only signal Writer presence, they also express Writer stance towards the attributed content and (or) its source (Charles, 2006; Thompson, 2003). An author's name, accompanied by date of publication and page number, followed by a reporting verb and content between inverted commas constitutes a Quotation. Adverbs preceding and adjectives following reporting verbs cannot be

severed from the content cited on the grounds that they signal Writer presence and stance. In fact, the very act of opting for, say, a Quotation instead of an Integral Citation, testifies to Writer level of presence and degree of responsibility (Hunston, 1999, 191; Rouissi, 2013, p. 35): it positions the Citation in the on-going exposition or argumentation, conveys Writer stance towards content and Author, and anticipates peers' reactions (Hyland and Tse, 2004). Indeed, Attribution is never Writer-free, nor is Averal always immune to a certain presence of authorities other than that of Writer.

An Attribution or an Averal can have more than one function. For example, in an Introduction that follows Swales' Moves and Steps, a Citation that "reviews items of previous research" (Dudley-Evans, p. 5; Swales, 1990, p. 141) precludes the paper's problematic, indicates the writer's stance towards its content, engages its writer in a critical dialogue with its author, and invites the reader to side with the writer and to trust his knowledge and expertise. However, from a rhetorical perspective, announcing the paper's problematic is more prominent than the other functions.

The model I am introducing here unpacks Sinclair's Attribution into an Attribution categories cline and his Averal into an Averal categories cline. The Attribution categories are defined principally in relation to Writer-(Author-Author) Presence and Responsibility. However, because non-experts are not authors, as Ädel (2008, p.86) has observed, their citations are not accounted for. The Averal categories are defined chiefly in relation to Writer-Reader Involvement and Writer Presence and

Responsibility. The suggested clines do not imply that Writer moves from one category to the one next to it, as is the case with Labovian style-shifting models. For this reason, it is possible that researchers and teachers treat the categories proposed as lists from which they can choose those they want to study in accordance with their purposes.

The model, as can be seen in the next section below, expands the prevalent dyadic conception of academic discourse. It considers it a Quadratic Encounter of Writer-(Author-Author)-Reader. In this encounter, Writer, Author (or Authors), and Reader are assumed to have multilayered self-hoods of which their academic "discoursal-self" (Ivanič, 1998), or in the words of Hyland (2002, p. 1093) "rhetorical identity", is prominent. Author is Writer animated participant (or participants), and Reader (Audience), though unspecified, is Writer assumed specialised peer. Co-writers are taken to have one rhetorical identity or one discoursal-self and are referred to as Writer. Thus, the reader is invited to think of the model as "an approach to reality, which concentrates on major aspects" (Leinfellner-Rupertsberger, 1990, p. 868).

### **The Attribution-Averral model**

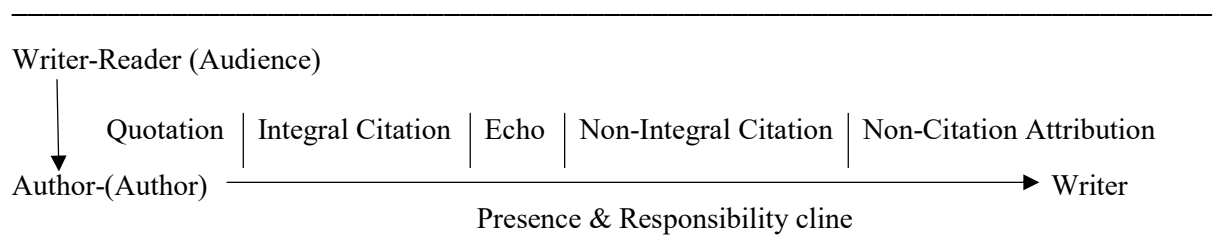
This section defines the categories on the Attribution cline and their counterparts on the Averral cline. It then delimits the Discourse Unit as the constituent of the Attribution categories and the Averral categories.

### *Discourse categories*

I concentrate in this section on defining the Attribution categories and then the Averal categories on each cline. Because this paper advocates the researcher's I (eye) and addresses itself to academics regardless of their disciplines, I have made sure that most of the examples I provide below are taken from Hyland's (2001) study of Writer Self-mention in articles published in eight scientific disciplines.

The Attribution cline includes the categories Quotation, Integral Citation, Echo, Non-Integral Citation, and Non-Citation Attribution. I borrow the term Echo from Thompson (1996, p. 514) and I borrow the term Non-Citation Attribution from Tadros (1993, p.107), which Charles (2006, p. 496) refers to as "other sourced report". Author Presence and Responsibility are dominant in Quotation and they are prominent in Integral Citation. Linguistic indicators of Quotation and Integral Citation include Author Agency (e.g., X claims, For X, According to X). Echo is an explanation or extension of the Quotation or Integral Citation that precedes it. Echo does not make any reference to Author, but Author Presence and Responsibility is implied. Indicators of Echo often include reuse of key words in the Quotation or Integral Citation. Author is dominant, prominent, and implied in Quotation, Integral Citation, and Echo respectively. But when it comes to Non-Integral Citation, it is Writer Presence that is foregrounded. In this Attribution category, Writer may report, often approvingly, ideas expressed or actions undertaken in a particular research work or he may acknowledge that his thoughts or actions are in line with, comparable to, or having the same origin as those developed in previous research

works (see Thompson & Tribble, 2001, 95). Author Agency is not made pertinent or it comes as an aside or asides (i.e. between parentheses, according to APA style), within (e.g., 1. (d).a, below), but often towards the end of the Non-Integral Citation (e.g. 1. (d).b., below). Non-Citation Attribution may be a synthetic description of a familiar aspect of a theory, approach, or method in the specialism. It may also be a brief mention of a belief or an assumption held by members of the discourse community (c.f. Thompson's "community as source", 1996). Author covert Presence in Non-Citation Attribution makes Writer Presence and Responsibility conspicuous by its absence.



**Figure 1:** Writer-Author Presence and Responsibility in Attribution

Figure 1 shows that while Writer regulates and monitors Author Presence and Responsibility, he does not lose sight of Reader (Audience). The five Attribution categories that Writer makes use of are presented here for ease of exposition as being discrete: They define one another and are defined and delimited by Averal categories that precede or follow them. However, the analyst may come across indeterminate cases. In such cases, he will have to decide which category is more prominent.

I present instances of Attribution categories to illustrate the Writer-Author, Writer-(Author-Author), and tacit Writer-Reader Presence and Responsibility on the Attribution Cline. The categories are in italics.

## 1. Attribution categories

### **(a). Quotation (Q)**

*Albert Einstein (1934, p. 113), for example, wrote, "when a man is talking about scientific subjects, the little word 'I' should play no part in his expositions."* [Hyland, 2001p. 208]

### **(b). Integral Citation (IC)**

*Rowntree (1991), for example, advises caution in use of the first person, while Spencer and Arbon (1996, p. 26) recommend complete abstention.* [Hyland, 2001, p. 208]

### **(c). Echo (E)**

To explain the changing nature of L2 motivation, Dörnyei (2005, 2009) proposed the ideal L2 self as a key component of his L2 motivational system. *The ideal L2 self refers to what kind of L2 speaker the L2 learner wants to become in the future.* [Al-Murtadha, 2019, p. 136]

### **(d). Non-Integral Citation (NIC)**

*a. Munezane's (2015) quasi-experimental study was the first intervention study that used visualization of an ideal L2 self and goal setting to enhance L2 WTC. Participants (N= 353) were Japanese EFL university students in Tokyo.* [Al-Murtadha, 2019, p. 137].

*b. All writing carries information about the writer, and the conventions of personal projection, particularly the use of first person pronouns, are powerful means for self-representation (Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Simpson, 1992).* [Hyland, 2001, p. 209]

### **(e). Non-Citation Attribution (NCA)**

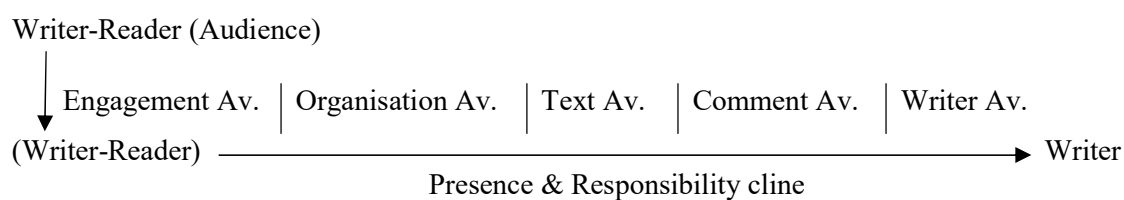
*Until fairly recently scientific and academic writing was seen as largely objective reporting of an independent and external reality.* [Hyland, 2001, p. 207]

The order of Attribution categories shows that the more Writer Presence and Responsibility grows along the cline, the more Author Presence and Responsibility recedes. Hyland in 1. (a) cites Einstein verbatim. In this Quotation, Einstein is present



and responsible through his own thought and words. In 1. (b), Hyland provokes, as it were, an Author-Author dialogue where Arbon has a stronger position than Rowntree and Spencer. In these two clauses, which are conjoined by the Contrastive DM "while", the words are Hyland's, but the conflicting thoughts are the two authors'. The Echo in 1. (c) provides an explanation of what Dörnyei means by the term "the ideal L2 self" cited in the Integral Citation preceding the Echo. The Non-Integral Citation in 1. (d).a. extends over two sentences. The first introduces the study Munezane conducted and the second introduces the participants in that study. In 1. (d).b., Hyland articulates ideas that resonate with those of two authors whose names he put between parentheses. The Non-Citation Attribution in 1. (e) refers to an erstwhile state of the art in academic writing. Here, Hyland cites an old belief among earlier scientists (which he criticises in his paper). The passive voice is indicative of a presence and a responsibility along with that of Hyland, but no Author is specified.

The Averral cline includes five categories. They are Engagement Averral, Organisation Averral, Text Averral, Comment Averral, and Writer Averral. The categories are the outcome of a review of the literature (e.g., Charles, 2006; Hunston, 1999; Hyland, 2001, 2002; Rouissi, 2013; Tadros, 1999) and more importantly they are the outcome of readings and analyses of academic discourse research papers.



**Figure 2:** Writer-Reader Presence and Responsibility in Averral

Categories on the Averral Cline progress from Writer involving Reader to Writer explicit Presence and Responsibility. In Engagement Averral, Writer addresses Reader or invokes, as it were, Reader Presence (Hyland and Tse, 2004, p. 169). Engagement Averral can be manifest in a direct address, an instruction, a direct question, or an indirect-speech question. Organisation Averral provides explicit information, with Reader in mind (Hyland and Tse, 2004, p. 164), on how a given text is structured or an argument or exposition is ordered. Organisation Averral can be in the form of titles and section titles and what De Carrico & Nattinger (1988) term as "prospective and retrospective global macro-organisers". Text Averral has no linguistic indicators that Writer is speaking, or Reader is being addressed. It tends to occur at the beginnings or ends of paragraphs. However, Writer is fully responsible for the veracity of the propositional content stated and is clearly accountable to Reader. Comment Averral can be an inference from or a countering of a preceding Attribution category or Averral category. Possible linguistic indicators of Comment Averral include what Fraser (2015) calls Contrastive DMs (of the "But-type") or Implicative (Inferential) DMs (of the "So-type"). A Comment Averral may also be reinforced by what Martin and White (2005) call Attitude Markers (e.g., *convincing*,

*eloquent, astounding*) that may be up-scaled (e.g., *truly* convincing), downscaled (e.g., *sort of* convincing), graded up (e.g., *really* eloquent), or graded down (e.g., *slightly* convincing). In theory at least, any of the four Averal categories, so far described, can be turned into a Writer Averal. Writer Averal is where Writer identifies himself openly or somewhat openly as the speaking discursal-self. First person pronouns (*I, We*), possessive adjectives (*my* paper, *our* study), demonstrative adjectives (e.g., *this* view), agentless passive constructions (e.g., All cases *were examined*), or words standing for, or implying Writer (e.g., *author, researcher, study, results, findings*) can be indicators of Writer Averal.

The following are examples of Averal categories. They are presented in italics.

## 2. Averal Categories

### (a). Engagement Averal (ENGAV)

*What proportion of exercises on phrasal verbs are implemented in a way that invites trial and error rather than retrieval of previously presented information?* [Strong and Boers, 2019, p. 296-297]

### (b). Organisation Averal (ORGAV)

*As mentioned, textbooks also provide quizzes in a trial-and-error fashion, without a study episode preceding them.* [Strong & Boers, 2019, p. 294]

### (c). Text Averal (TAV)

*Arguments have to be made in ways that readers find most acceptable and convincing, and research claims framed to project appropriate certainty and maximum plausibility.* [Hyland, 2001, p. 209]

### (d). Comment Averal (COMAV)

Hedges (Hyland, 1996, 1998), reporting conventions (Hyland, 2000; Thomas & Hawes, 1994), and evaluation (Hunston, 1993; Thompson and Ye, 1991) are among

the features that have been examined for the ways such writer-reader interactions are realised in journal articles. *Perhaps surprisingly, the vexed topic of self-mention has received considerably less attention.* [Hyland, 2001, p. 208]

**(e). Writer Averral (WRAV)**

**a.** *I begin with a brief outline of the issue presenting an overview of how impersonality is seen among style manual writers, applied linguists, and composition scholars (...).* [Hyland, 2001, p. 208]

**b.** *The study employs both qualitative and quantitative approaches, comprising frequency counts and text analysis of corpus published articles and a series of interviews with academics from the relevant discourse communities.* [Hyland, 2001, p. 211]

The question in Strong and Boers' Engagement Averral in 2. (a) contributes to focusing readers' attention (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p. 168) and indirectly invites them to share the writer's quest for an answer. The Organisation Averral in 2. (b) is initiated by the referencing indicator "As mentioned" and restates an idea that Strong and Boers presented earlier in their paper. In 2. (c), Hyland produces a Text Averral, for he does not indicate who is speaking. He produces a compound sentence having two separate ideas of equal weight conveyed each in an independent clause. The two clauses are conjoined by the Elaborative DM "and" (Fraser, 2015), with the modal verb "have to" in the second clause ellipsed. In 2. (d), the Comment Averral (in italics) counters a densely documented Non-Integral Citation. The Counter, initiated by a hedging "Perhaps" and an attitude marker "surprisingly" (Hyland & Tse, 2004, 169), is "inscribed" (Martin and White, 2005) in the whole proposition. Hyland uses an overt Writer Averral in 2. (e).a. to present the organisation of his paper. The use of the first person personal pronoun "I" indicates the Averral category. In 2. (e).b., Hyland introduces and describes "The study" he conducted.

This section has made an attempt at defining Attribution categories and Averral categories. However, academic discourse analysts and academic reading and writing teachers and students would be at a loss, if they did not know where a particular category begins and where it ends.

### *Discourse Unit*

Attribution categories and Averral categories often contribute to delimiting one another through Alternation<sup>1</sup>. For instance, a Non-Integral Citation may be followed by a Comment Averral (e.g., 2. (d), above) which may be followed by a Writer Averral; an Echo may follow an Integral Citation (1. (c), above); and a Writer Averral may follow or precede a Text Averral.

However, two major issues bring back to the fore the old-new polemic over the delimitation of the Discourse Unit (Degand & Simon, 2009). As pointed out earlier, the same Attribution category or Averral category may extend over a series sentences, while two or more categories can share one sentence. Thus, any quantification of the realisation Attribution categories and Averral categories that does not delimit the Attribution-Averral Discourse Unit<sup>2</sup> it adopts would be problematic.

I take as a starting point for the delimitation of the Attribution-Averral Discourse Unit<sup>3</sup>, the "minimal terminable unit", for short T-Unit, which according to Hunt, "includes one main clause plus all the subordinate clauses attached to or

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<sup>1</sup> The terms Sequence, Alternation, and Interplay are used in Rouissi (2013).

<sup>2</sup> . Henceforth, I shall be using Discourse Unit for Attribution-Averral Discourse Unit.

embedded within it" (1965, p. 154). For him, a T-Unit can be of three Types: Type 1. an independent (simple) sentence, Type 2. a complex sentence having a main clause plus a subordinate clause or clauses, and Type 3. a clause in a compound sentence.

Hunt's T-Unit has been criticised for not having a solid enough psychological reality, for limiting grammatical complexity to subordination (Biber *et al.*, 2011), and for eliminating coordinate sentences from any quantification (Bardovi-Harlig & Bofman, 1988). I adopt Hunt's Type 1 T-Unit (simple sentence) and Type 2 T-Unit (complex sentence). As for his Type 3 T-Unit, I propose, in line with his critics, that the whole compound sentence makes a T-Unit. I prefer to speak of T-Unit, instead of Sentence, because the term applies to the spoken mode and the written mode, and may be extendable to other modes. I use the annotations Q, IC, ORGAV, etc. to tag (annotate) the Discourse Unit constituting a particular Attribution category or Averal category.

I suggest that an Attribution category or an Averal category that is coterminous with a T-Unit has a Discourse Unit and is allocated the annotation that corresponds to it. An Attribution category or an Averal category that extends over a number of T-Units has a Sequence of the same number of Discourse Units. For instance, a Quotation that extends over a series of T-Units is allocated the annotation Q as many times as the number of T-Units it contains. A Writer Averal that extends over a series of T-Units is allocated the annotation WRAV as many times as the number of T-Units it contains. When two T-Units, making each a different Discourse Unit, occur in succession, there is Alternation of Discourse Units. Each Discourse

Unit receives one corresponding annotation; e.g., IC followed by COMAV, or Q followed by E.

However, two (sometimes more) Discourse Units may share a Type 2 T-Unit (complex sentence) or a Type 3 T-Unit (coordinate sentence). In such cases, I suggest that there is Interplay of Discourse Units. Interplay takes place within the single T-Unit; it is Sequence or Alternation. A T-Unit having a Quotation – often a small quote – occurring within or towards the end of an Integral Citation has two Discourse Units, IC Q. A T-Unit having a Quotation within a Comment Aversion has two Discourse Units, COMAV Q. A Type 3 T-Unit (a coordinate sentence) where two authors' thoughts are attributed in an Integral Citation has two Discourse Units, IC IC (e.g., 1. b., above).

In addition to pertaining to an Attribution category or an Aversion category, a Discourse Unit often has metadiscourse boundary indicators, including Discourse Markers, which according to Fraser (1999, p. 938), "impose a relationship between some aspect of the discourse segment they are part of, call it S2, and some aspect of a prior discourse segment, call it S1"<sup>1</sup> and Discourse Structure markers (Fraser, 2009), which regulate the unfolding of discourse at a larger scale. Other indicators of Discourse Unit boundaries include sentence initiating enumeration marks (e.g., First, Firstly, Finally), disjuncts (e.g., Interestingly, Surprisingly), and capitalisation of the first letter of the new sentence. They also include punctuation marks (full stop,

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<sup>1</sup> . Discourse Unit saves Fraser from his indecision and vagueness in using the labels "S1" and "S2"!

colon, semi-colon, question mark, exclamation mark) that somehow substitute intonation and pause in the spoken mode.

As I chose T-Unit instead of Sentence, I adopt Phase instead of Paragraph so that the model would contribute to accounting for the spoken mode, and other modes. I suggest that Sequence, Alternation, and Interplay be studied within Phase. A Discourse Unit occurring at the transition from Sequence to Alternation contributes to both Sequence and Alternation. In other words, two Discourse Units (aa) followed by one different Discourse Unit (c) will count as one Sequence (aa) and one Alternation (ac). For instance, two Qs followed by one COMAV make up one Sequence (QQ) and one Alternation (Q COMAV). The second Q is constituent of the Sequence and the Alternation. Each Phase has its Sequences, Alternations, and Interplays. They do not cross over Phases (Paragraphs).

I borrow the term Paratext from Genette (1997). Genette maintains that Paratexts enhance the core text's presentation and reception. Paratexts are inside the core text, around the core text, and outside it. As far as the model proposed here is concerned, Inside Paratexts include Vertical Lists<sup>1</sup>; Outside Paratexts include Titles; and Around Paratexts include Aside Information or Commentaries in Footnotes or Endnotes. A Paratext is often a Discourse Unit occurring in a truncated T-Unit. A Discourse Unit, such as a Section Title, often contributes to the organisation of the text for the reader and is thus assigned the annotation ORGAV. A Vertical List, preceded by a T-Unit or a stem (i.e. less than a T-Unit), contains as many Discourse

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<sup>1</sup>. A vertical list can be a Bullet list, a Lettered list, a Numbered list, an Alphabetical list, or any other paradigmatic ordering of sentences or phrases in the core-text.



Units as the items on the List. The Introductory T-Unit or stem is understood to precede each of the items on the list.

Because a Vertical List often constitutes a paragraph-like entity or is part of a paragraph inside the core text, it is reasonable to account for it when dealing with Sequence, Alternation, and Interplay at the Phase level. Outside and Around Paratexts can be accounted for in case the researcher wishes to account for the Discourse Units in the whole research paper or chooses to concentrate on Paratexts only.

The following illustrative extracts are selected from an opinion paper on the contribution multilingual researchers can make to international scholarship. The topic, I hope, is appealing to academics in the Humanities and Hard Sciences, especially those working and studying in the Periphery. The author, Francoise Salager-Meyer, is the kind of scholar researchers in the Periphery would consider a role model to them. She has published research work in English, Spanish, and French in both "Centre and Periphery" journals and is currently based in Venezuela. The illustrative examples are in italics.

### 3. Discourse Units

#### (a). Sequence

NIC *[Non-native English speaking scholars are often required to invest vast resources of time and money to produce manuscripts that fulfill the expectations of these mainstream journal reviewers, board members and editors who are quite frequently based in high-income countries and have a good to excellent mastery of English (Harzing & Metz, 2012; Lown & Banerjee, 2006; Salager-Meyer, 2008).]*

NIC *[Moreover, many of these non-native English-speaking scholars have grown frustrated by the high rejection rate of their papers submitted to elite journals (Coates, Sturgeon, Bouhannan, & Pasini, 2002; Mur Duenas, 2012; Shashok ,*

**(b). Alternation**

- TAV [Another powerful reason for publishing in national peripheral journals is that these journals allow local staff to achieve career promotion.][ Indeed, most of them are owned, funded and published by universities (the government sector), and they usually publish articles written by the academic staff of the publishing university (Guedon, 2010; Li, in press; Salager-Meyer, 2008).][ Referring to the national journals situation in Iran, Habibzadeh (2006b) argues that the major role of these local journals is to help the academic staff to get published to earn tenure and promotion.] [Salager-Meyer, 2014, p. 80]
- NIC
- IC

**(c). Interplay**

- TAV [Science is part of culture.] [It is not done in an ivory tower separated from the rest of society (Meneghini & Packer, 2007).] [and it is an essential source of knowledge for economic and technological development.] [Salager-Meyer, 2014, p. 81]
- a. NIC
- TAV
- b. TAV [The problem of ["lost science" (Stolerman & Stenius, 2008)] would not be an issue any longer because the bi/trilingual presentation of peripheral journals coupled with the presence of extended English abstracts and keywords would allow the international scientific community to be aware of the worthwhile peripheral insights and research results.] [Salager-Meyer, 2014, p. 81]
- Q

**(d). Paratext**

- a. ENGAV [Writing and publishing in peripheral scholarly journals:] [How to enhance the global influence of multilingual scholars?] [Salager-Meyer, 2014, p. 78]
- ENGAV
- b. ORGAV [1. Academic publishing: A hierarchical and competitive system]
- ORGAV [1.1. Mainstream/center publications.] [Salager-Meyer, 2014, pp. 78, 79]
- c.
- NCA [<sup>1</sup>. Scopus is the world's largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature.][ It contains over 41 million records across 18,000 journals in all disciplines and covers regional as well as international literature.] [Salager-Meyer, 2014, p. 78]
- NCA

Extract 3.(a). is constituted of two type 2 T-Units, each T-Unit is coterminous with the Discourse Unit NIC. Towards, the end of each NIC, the writer cites three sources. In the first NIC, there is reference to four co-authors and one author,

Salager-Meyer herself. The second NIC makes reference to four co-authors and four authors. The Sequence of the two NICs is not random or reversible. The first NIC reports on the difficulties non-English speaking scholars encounter in getting their work produced and accepted for publication. The second reports on the frustration many of them experience due to the high rejection rate their work is subjected to upon submission. At the level of content, the second NIC has a relation of addition to the first NIC, signalled by the adverb "moreover". This relation is coupled with a movement from whole ("scholars") to part ("many of these scholars").

Extract 3.(b). contains three T-Units; each T-Unit is coterminous with a Discourse Unit. The first Discourse Unit is a TAV, the second is a NIC, and the third is an IC. The TAV is the topic sentence of the whole paragraph. It indicates that the paragraph is related to its preceding counterpart and announces "Another powerful reason" for local scholars to publish in national, peripheral journals. This "powerful reason" is that local scholars can obtain career promotion. The NIC, initiated by the elaborative DM "Indeed", expands on the TAV and backs it up; it provides information about the publication opportunities national university journals offer local academics. The IC supports the NIC by referring to the case of Iranian university journals, and local scholars. Salager-Meyer has moved in this extract from having high Presence and Responsibility in the TAV, to acknowledging other authors' Presence and Responsibility in the NIC, to making room for an author through the IC. As said about Sequence, Alternation is not random or reversible. The order TAV, NIC, IC here indicates a movement from general, to less general, to

particular and it conveys the writer's progressive devolution, as it were, of her Presence and Responsibility. The TAV without the NIC and IC would be a wild claim. The content of the TAV followed by that of the IC would make the NIC's content redundant. Putting the content of the TAV last would result in a COMAV, disrupt the flow of the exposition, and confuse the reader.

Extract 3.(c). occurs at the beginning of Section 4., titled Conclusions, in Salager-Meyer's paper. It starts with a TAV that is coterminous with type 1 T-Unit. The Type 3 T-Unit in 3.(c).a. is conjoined by the elaborative DM "and". The first clause mentions two co-authors with whom the writer shares Presence and Responsibility. The second clause has no overt indication as to who is speaking. Within this T-Unit, Salager-Meyers' Presence and Responsibility is mitigated then reinstated, hence the Interplay between the two Discourse Units NIC and TAV. In 3.(c).b., Salager-Meyer includes a small quote within a type 2 T-Unit. The T-unit contains an Interplay between the Discourse Units Q and TAV, whereby the writer brings in a brief and transient Presence and Responsibility within her Presence and Responsibility.

Extract 3.(d). contains paratextual illustrations of Discourse Unit occurrences; each is assigned the annotation ENGAV. The example in 3.(d).a. is the title Salager-Meyer gave to her article. It has two Discourse Units and neither is a complete T-Unit. The first announces the overall topic of the paper and the second presents, in the interrogative form, the paper's problematic. They both engage the Reader in that they invite and challenge him. The examples in 3.(id). b. are a section title and the

same section's subsection title. Each is a Discourse Unit and is assigned the annotation ORGAV. Like all titles, sections titles are inviting and challenging, but more importantly, they are here Organisational. The example in 3.(d). c. is peripheral. It is a footnote containing a type 1 T-Unit and a type 3 T-Unit making each an NCAT Discourse Unit. Salager-Meyer chose not to cite her source perhaps because she assumed that these days information on Scopus is easily accessible.

### **Conclusion**

This paper rehabilitated propositional content that metadiscourse studies have tended to neglect and reinstated the academic discursal-self's presence and responsibility. It showed that engaging in in-depth reading can be more rewarding than delegating to the computer the task of scanning texts for a list of pre-established metadiscourse features.

The paper argued that a research paper is a Quadric Writer-(Author-Author)-Reader Encounter. It proposed a model that unpacks Sinclair's dichotomy into an Attribution categories cline and an Averal categories cline and relates the categories to Participants' levels of Presence and Responsibility. The model adopted Hunt's T-Unit to delimit the Discourse Unit constituting Attribution categories and Averal categories. It defined Sequence, Alternation, and Interplay of Discourse Units and adopted Genette's Paratext to account for particular Discourse Units inside, around, and outside the research paper's core text.

As Giere (2004) rightly put it, reality is more complex than the models scientists produce. The Attribution-Averal model in this paper is no exception. It is

presented through filtered data, i.e. selected extracts from research papers produced by experts and published in high quality journals. Its construction involved abstraction and idealisation. However, because academic discourse genres are neither fixed nor stable, because academics' writing and reading vary, the model is open to revision and extension. Its application makes room for the alert specialist's sharp I (eye).

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