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THE TEXTUAL EXPRESSION OF CRITICAL THINKING IN PHD DISCUSSIONS IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the textual resources used to express critical thinking in the Discussion chapters or chapter sections of PhD theses from the discipline of Applied Linguistics. Five Discussions were manually analysed using the social genre/cognitive genre model of the author (Bruce, 2008a) as the analytical framework. Three generic elements, used integratively, were found to express critical evaluations as part of constructing an overall argument in the Discussion chapters examined. The first element was the recursive use of an organizing content schema (move pattern), described as: *Point, Support, Evaluation*. The second was the use of key coherence relations to make critical statements in the 'Evaluation' part of this content schema. The third element was the embedding within the critical statements of the metadiscourse devices of *hedging* and *attitude markers* (Hyland, 2005). While not providing a prescriptive approach to expressing critical evaluation in this genre, the findings offer an analytical lens through which novice writers may examine and develop awareness of the types of textual resource used to develop this important element of Discussions.

2

Key words

discussion chapter, critical thinking, content schema, critical statements, metadiscourse, genre.

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