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# **BAAL / CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS SEMINAR 2021-22:**

Going Meta: Bringing together an understanding of metadiscourse with students’ metalinguistic understanding.

**ROOM: BARING COURT 220**

**Seminar Focus Questions**

1. How might **Hallidayan functional orientations to language** provide a way to bring together metadiscourse and metalinguistic understanding?
2. How can/should metalinguistic understanding of metadiscourse be incorporated into **writing pedagogy?** Why does **corpus linguistics** matter in our understanding of metadiscourse and how might it be useful to teachers of writing?
3. What are the **synergies and dissonances** between metadiscourse research and research into the metalinguistic understanding of argument writing?
4. Can we create a **coherent and unified model** of metadiscourse and metalinguistic understanding in argument writing?

10.00 Welcome and Introduction to the Purpose of the day

10.15 **Keynote 1: Metadiscourse: what’s in a prefix?**

Professor Ken Hyland, University of East Anglia

Research into metadiscourse in writing has become something of a minor industry among discourse analysts and those interested academic persuasion. The *meta* prefix, however, is a slippery one and has mislead some into thinking that it is ‘a technical terminology to describe language’ rather than the ways that writers monitor their ongoing text to make it coherent, relevant and persuasive to a particular community. Essentially, metadiscourse is discourse which refers to itself and not another text. It is the language we use to help others interpret, evaluate, and react to propositional information in ways that we intend. In this presentation I provide a brief overview of metadiscourse, what it is and recent research which uses it, and then revisit the *meta* prefix to see it as a means of characterizing target discourses for classroom use. Here metadiscourse offers insights into a communicative context and the perceptions of its participants which can be productive in writing instruction.

11.00 Coffee break

11.15 **Keynote 2: Getting ‘meta’ in school disciplinary writing: a functional perspective**

Professor Honglin Chen, University of Wollongong

Metalinguistic understanding – the capacity to reflect and articulate the making of writing choices – is a characteristic of more developed writers (Chen & Myhill, 2016; Macken-Horarik & Morgan, 2008; Myhill et al., 2016). Recent research in applied linguistics has examined the potential of metadiscourse, textual devices in exhibiting the writer’s awareness of the reader, text and self (e.g., Hyland, 2005a, 2005b, 2017; Hyland et al., 2021). However, getting ‘meta’ in writing involves more than incorporating explicit discourse markers of textual orientation. It entails a purposeful awareness of meaning-making choices at the sentence, clause and whole text levels and combinations of choices to shape meaning (Myhill & Chen, 2020).

This paper draws on the Hallidayan social semiotic theory of meaning-making (Halliday, 1978, 1993; Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999) to provide a complementary view of what it means to get ‘meta’ in school disciplinary writing. The data include high scoring HSC (Higher School Certificate) work samples written for Standard English, Modern History and Biology (Chen et al., 2021-2023). The analysis focuses on semantic and structural relations construed through relational transitivity within sentences, logical meaning between clauses, and thematic progression at the whole text level. The paper suggests that the capacity to construe and orchestrate deeper meaning relations or ‘meta-relations’ (Macken-Horarik, 2003) is a crucial language resource for becoming competent writers.

12.00 Group Discussion 1: addressing questions 1 and 2 above

* 1. Group Feedback

12.45 Lunch

1.30 Keynote 3: **Guiding the reader through narrative fiction**

Professor Michaela Mahlberg, University of Birmingham

Corpus linguistic methods can identify common features of texts. They can also uncover ways in which writers contribute to meanings that are shared across a number of texts. In this paper, I look at narrative fiction and especially novels by Charles Dickens and other nineteenth-century authors. Dickens was a master of engaging with his audience. He showed great skill in connecting his texts with the contexts in which they were received. I will discuss some of the linguistic devices that can be seen as evidence of Dickens’s familiarity with his audience. These devices also demonstrate more general links between fiction and the real world. The connection between fiction and the real world is crucial for guiding readers through narratives. I am particularly interested in how corpus linguistic findings for fiction might be relevant to the teaching of creative writing. For the pedagogical dimension, I am also drawing on data from the Birmingham Stories Corpus, a corpus of short stories written by children and young adults.

2.15 Group Discussion 2: addressing questions 3 and 4 above

2.45 Tea break

3.00 Group Discussion 3: creating a model - question 5*.*

3.30 Plenary: sharing each group’s graphical representations

Next steps - Seminar Day 3

4.00 Close