THE DISCOURSE OF PEER REVIEW

Reviewing Submissions to Academic Journals

BRIAN PALTRIDGE

The Discourse of Peer Review

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Reviewing Submissions to Academic Journals

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Peer Review in Academic Settings

A number of researchers have discussed academic genres such as the research article and doctoral thesis (see Charles, 2013; Flowerdew, 2013a, 2013b; Kamler & Thomson, 2014; Paltridge, 2013a; Paltridge, Starfield, & Tardy, 2016; Swales, 1990, 2004; Samraj, 2016a; Thomson & Kamler, 2013; Thompson, 2013, 2016 for reviews of this work). Researchers have also discussed what Swales (1996) terms 'occluded' genres, that is, genres which are 'closed' and not public in nature. These genres are often high stakes yet difficult to obtain examples of (Starfield, 2016). Reviews of research grant applications, reviews of promotion and tenure track applications, reviews of book proposals, and reviewers' reports on submissions to peer-reviewed journals are examples of occluded genres. These are all examples of peer review and are discussed in this chapter.

Peer Review in Academic Settings

Peer review occurs in academic settings in somewhat different ways. Research grant applications, for example, are reviewed by experts in the field of research as well as by members of more broadly based committees

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who are charged with accessing the quality and feasibility of the applications. Applicants will not know however who is assessing their work although assessors will normally know the identity of the applicants. Promotion and tenure track applications are evaluated by academic peers within the applicant's institution (although not necessarily in the same discipline) as well as, in some cases, a reviewer (or reviewers) from outside the institution. While applicants will typically know who is assessing their application within their institution, they may not know who is doing this from outside (if there is an external reviewer), although they may in some cases be able to suggest possible people to do this. Journal articles are evaluated first by the journal's editor/s and then, if they are sent out for review, by other researchers in the same area of research. With journal articles, authors typically do not know who is reviewing their work although in some cases the reviewers may know the name of the author(s) (see 'The Process for editorial peer review' for further explanation of this). Reviewers of book proposals will typically know the identity of the author(s) as the author's publishing record is a consideration in this process. The author(s), however, will generally not know the identity of their reviewers. With published book reviews, given their very public nature, authors always know who wrote the review and reviewers know who the author is. The texts that are written for each of these evaluations are discussed below.

Reviews of Research Grant Applications

Obtaining research funding is becoming increasingly important with the decrease in funding for universities in many parts of the world. Research grants are, however, often difficult to obtain, and the process through they are awarded is often extremely competitive. Connor (2012) discusses the process of applying for research grants in the USA and, with Upton (Connor & Upton, 2004), analyses grant proposals in the areas of Health and Human Services, Environmental Studies, Community Development, Education, and Arts and Culture. Feng and Shi (2004) examine successful grant proposals submitted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, while Tseng (2011) examines proposals submitted to the National Science Council, Taiwan, basing his analysis on materials provided at a presentation he attended on the 'dos and don'ts' of writing grant proposals. Tseng uses the metaphors of 'genre as struggle' (p. 2260) and 'genre as performance' (p. 2261) to characterize this genre, as well as the acts of self-promotion, persuasion, and promise authors are expected to engage in in their construction of their texts and communicative performance of this genre. Flowerdew (2016), similarly, describes grant proposals as promissory, promotional, problem oriented, and persuasive. Quoting Englander (2014), Flowerdew points out that grant proposals are a high-stakes genre as they 'can affect the researcher's work for a long time' (Flowerdew, 2016, p. 2).

Myers (1990) examines the drafts and final versions of two biologists' grant applications in the UK as well as provides insights into their writing processes through the collection of interview data with the authors of the applications. Myers describes grant writing as the 'most basic form of scientific writing' (Myers, 1990, p. 41) as in many fields, such as the sciences, academics need to obtain funds to carry out their research. Grant applications, thus, as Connor (2000, p. 2) points out, are 'a significant part of the professional writing of most academics'. They are crucial to many academic researchers' work (Tardy, 2003) and a genre 'that all academics have to come to terms with at some point in their career' (Connor & Mauranen, 1999, p. 47).

Success in obtaining research funding also plays an important role in tenure and promotion decisions for academic staff. Funding applications are, however, challenging to write in that they need to match both funding agency guidelines and broader views of what is considered important and significant research (Tardy, 2003, 2011). Grant proposals also need to able to be read by both specialist and non-specialist readers (Tardy, 2011). In her study of 20 project summaries from successful National Science Foundation (NSF) grant applications in the USA, Tardy (2011) examines how writers demonstrate the merit and impact of their research. She also (Tardy, 2003) shows how grant proposals are part of a larger system of genres (Bazerman, 1994) where the grant proposal is one small part of a larger network of genres which involves multiple parties, such as colleagues, funding agencies, university administrators, and the researcher's broader academic community. Interactions with these parties, further, go back to long before the researcher begins to write their application for funding. To write the application, the researcher needs to work with material from the funding body's website and read the funding body's reports and mission statements, and abstracts of currently funded projects. They also need to work with the application form itself, understand what each section of the form requires, as well as provide multiple documentary and budgetary statements with the application (Tardy, 2003). The researcher also needs knowledge of the online requirements (and deadlines) for submitting the application. As Tardy (2003) points out, the genre knowledge that is required for successful grant writing extends far beyond the proposal itself 'and requires a certain procedural and socio-political knowledge' (p. 33) as well.

Once proposals have been submitted to the funding agency, they are sent out for review. In the NSF system assessors are selected based on their specific and/or broad knowledge of the field of research, and knowledge of the infrastructure of the research enterprise and its activities (National Science Foundation n.d.). For NSF proposals, applicants can suggest people they think would be suitable to review the application as well as people they would prefer not to do the review. The two main review criteria used to assess NSF applications are intellectual merit and broader impact. When a decision has been made on proposals, applicants are provided with copies of the reviewers' reports with the reviewers' identities removed.

In the UK Research Councils Framework (Research Councils UK, 2014), applications are assessed by invited experts and then by a Research Council Board. The names of the people on the Research Council Boards are publicly available although the names of external assessors are kept confidential. Assessors are asked to comment on the viability, quality, potential benefits, cost-effectiveness, and potential impact of the research. Applicants are given the opportunity to respond to the assessors' comments. The Council Boards then take these comments and the original assessments and use them to make a decision as to whether the project will be funded or not.

In her book *How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment*, Lamont (2009) describes a project in which she conducted 81 interviews with panel members of research project assessment committees in the USA, the American Council for Learned Societies, the Social Science Research Council, and the Woodrow Wilson Society of Fellows. The panel members worked in the areas of history, literature and anthropology, political science and sociology, anthropology, musicology, art history, economics, classics and philosophy, geography, and evolutionary biology. Lamont also interviewed project officers and panel chairpersons. In addition, she observed three panels carry out their deliberations.

Lamont asked her interviewees to reflect on what, based on their experience of being on the panels, were the features of the best and worst proposals they had seen. She did this to try to 'identify and explore the taken-for-granted criteria that panels members rely on to draw boundaries between deserving and undeserving research projects' (p. 253). The most frequently cited criteria were clarity, quality, originality, significance, methods, and feasibility. These were, by and large, the criteria for assessment listed by the funding agencies. These criteria did not have equal weighting for the reviewers, with originality being given more weight than feasibility, for example. Breaking this down into disciplines, however, Lamont found differences in that history and the humanities, for example, gave less importance to method than the social sciences. By contrast, the social sciences placed less emphasis on clarity compared to history and the humanities. She found that reviewers also use their own more informal criteria in making their assessments, such as 'signs of intelligence', 'elegance and cultural capital', 'personal qualities', and 'moral qualities'. Examples of 'signs of intelligence' were whether the author was articulate, competent, or talented. 'Elegance and cultural capital' covered what the interviewees called 'cultural ease and breadth'. Personal qualities that were mentioned included whether the proposal was 'interesting', 'exciting', or 'boring' and moral qualities included a 'sense of determination', 'humility', and 'authenticity'.

What Lamont found was that, regardless of different emphases in review criteria, in their first evaluations of proposals reviewers were basically looking for proposals that they could 'deselect' rather than looking for ones they thought should be funded. The panellists are paid very little, one of them said, and given 'a mountain of material, which they have to plow through and assess' (p. 168). Thus, they said, if the proposal is poorly written or written 'in such a way that bores people' (p. 168), it's not likely to rise to the top.

For many of the panellists that Lamont interviewed, there was a connection between clear writing style and orderly intellect. In the opinion of one of the English professors, 'the quality of the writing says something about the clarity of the mind' (p. 168). The proposals, thus, needed to be well and clearly written in addition to meeting other criteria, such as significance and originality that are normally applied to the assessment of grant proposals. In this kind of review, further, success breeds success, and researchers who gain research funds attract more opportunities for funding with the outcome of the selection process helping them 'either become or remain the best' (Benda & Engels, 2011, p. 173).

A number of years back I, with colleagues, submitted an application for funds to support a study of doctoral writing in the visual and performing arts. The proposal was sent to four reviewers. The reviewers were asked to evaluate the project in terms of the quality of the track records of the applicants, quality and innovation, feasibility and benefit of the project, and the quality of the research environment where the study would be conducted. Assessors were also asked to make suggestions for improvement for the project. While the assessments were positive overall, each of the assessors raised matters for us to address. For example, one reviewer felt that the study's aims and scope needed to be more clearly and succinctly articulated. Another reviewer felt that in the sampling stage the criteria by which supervisors will nominate 'high quality' theses to be analysed could have been specified in more detail. A further reviewer asked whether a multi-authored book could be produced from the study and if a symposium might be convened at the end of the project to bring international scholars together as an opportunity to debate best practice. The fourth reviewer felt the selection criteria for the institutions that were to be approached could have been clarified.

The response to assessors' reports that applicants write in this kind of situation is usually constrained by space and has a strict word limit. Even though the reviews may have been on the whole positive, the response needs to focus on how the concerns that are raised by the reviewers will be addressed in the project. In this case, we responded to the reviews by first thanking the reviewers for their useful and constructive assessments of the project and then addressed each reviewer's concerns in turn. The responses, thus, focused on the negative aspects of the reviews while only very briefly commenting that many of the assessors' comments had been positive. We, further, took care not to take a defensive tone in response to the criticisms and simply stated how each of the matters raised would be dealt with in the project, as can be seen in the following extracts from our response to the reviewers' reports:

> The assessments for our project are useful and constructive. They make suggestions for both improving and refining our project which we will incorporate into our project. We list our responses to each of the assessments below.
>
> Reviewer 1: This assessor suggests we clarify the scope of our project. We will extend the fields of practice beyond the creative and performing arts to include areas such as dance, film, creative writing and other areas of study that we identify in the initial stage of the project.
>
> Reviewer 2: This assessor asks for the criteria we will use to identify 'high quality' theses for inclusion in the project. We will employ Holbrook et al.'s (2004) definition of a high quality thesis as being one that has been 'accepted as submitted' by all examiners without requiring substantial revision. We will obtain this information in the site visits, via appropriate administrative channels.
>
> Reviewer 3: This assessor suggests we extend the outcomes of the project to include a multi-authored book and a symposium where we present the results of our research, as well as bring in international experts to debate best practice in this area. We will do this.
>
> Reviewer 4: This assessor asks about the criteria we will use for the selection of institutions for the study. We will, first of all, identify all institutions that offer practice-based doctorates in the visual and performing arts. We will then select 50 high quality theses across these institutions, taking care to cover as wide a range of sub-fields as possible.

The application was successful and the results were published in refereed journal articles (see, e.g. Paltridge et al., 2012a, 2012b; Ravelli, Paltridge, Starfield, & Tuckwell, 2013) and book chapters (see Paltridge, Starfield, Ravelli, Tuckwell, & Nicholson, 2014; Starfield, Paltridge, & Ravelli, 2012). An end-of-project symposium proposed by one of the reviewers also resulted in an edited collection (Ravelli, Paltridge, & Starfield, 2014) with chapters written by the researchers, students, and academic staff in the area of the visual and performing arts. Funds did not allow for the bringing of international experts to the symposium as one of the reviewers had suggested. International experts were, however, invited to contribute to the edited book, which gave the book a broader dimension than if it had only contained contributions by local authors.

Reviews of Promotion and Tenure Track Applications

Peer review also plays an important part in the promotion process for academics as well as, in some parts of the world (such as the USA), in gaining tenure. In the US university system, gaining tenure is linked to promotion in that entry-level appointments are generally at the Assistant Professor level, and when the position becomes permanent—that is, when the person gains tenure—they are automatically promoted to the rank of Associate Professor. In the UK and Australian systems a typical entry-level appointment is at the Lecturer level and when, after a period of probation (anything between 2 and 5 years), the position becomes 'confirmed', it stays at the same level. The person needs to make a separate application for promotion (to Senior Lecturer and after that Associate Professor) as the two processes are not inter-connected in these cases.

The process of gaining tenure in the USA is more complex than in many other educational systems and can take from 5 to 7 years of a junior academic's life (Twale, 2013) depending on the institution and whether the person was in the middle of a tenure track position before they took up their current appointment (Varghese, 2012). There are typically two main stages in this process, the third-year review and the final review, which takes place at end of the fifth year of appointment. The reviews focus on three aspects of the applicant's work: research, teaching, and service. The weight given to each of these will depend on the university, whether it is a research-intensive or a teaching-intensive university (Varghese, 2012).

The role of external assessors also depends on the university. For example, in the University of California system, research universities (i.e. universities 'with high levels of research activity and high faculty publications expectations' Hyon, 2011, p. 392) such as the University of California, Los Angeles, and the University of California, Berkeley, typically involve external assessors in the promotion/tenure process. Universities in the California State University system such as California State University, Sacramento, and California State University, San Bernardino, which are 'comprehensive' universities (universities 'whose primary mission is teaching but that still have publication expectations for faculty' Hyon, 2011, p. 392), by contrast, typically do not have external assessors for this process (Hyon, personal communication, 20 July 2015).

The American Association for Applied Linguistics (2015) has published guidelines for promotion and tenure based on the work of a special task force that was put together to investigate this issue. The guidelines are, the Association is clear to point out, purely advisory as the expectations and requirements for promotion and tenure can differ greatly across disciplines and institutions. They do, however, provide a broad consensus as to what constitutes quality research, teaching, and service in the area of applied linguistics. The scholarly outputs which are indictors of research quality are peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books/monographs, and refereed book chapters. Non-refereed articles and book chapters are not given as much value as those that are refereed. Edited volumes are another form of academic output in applied linguistics, although the standing of the publisher is important, as is the stature of the contributors to the volume, and reviews of the publication. Guest-edited special issues of journals provide evidence of a scholar's visibility in the field, impact and quality of their work, and the journal editor's respect for their work. This is especially the case if the articles were double-blind reviewed (see 'The process of editorial peer review' below). Textbooks vary in terms of whether they are teaching materials, in which they case they would be used as part of the teaching section of the application, or whether they are aimed at graduate students and demonstrate disciplinary expertise in which case they would be part of the applicant's research portfolio. Research grants that went through a process of peer review make a strong statement about the scholar's work, although applied linguistics is not an especially grant-based field. Plenaries, keynote addresses, and invited lectures also provide evidence of a scholar's standing in the field and the impact of their work.

Teaching is evaluated for promotion and tenure on the basis of student evaluations and, in some cases, by the applicant's academic peers. Other kinds of evidence that may be provided are philosophy of teaching statements, examples of course outlines, teaching materials, and examples of students' work. A narrative that explains the nature and quality of this material is useful, if allowed. Other activities that come under teaching are thesis and dissertation advising and the mentoring of graduate students working as teaching assistants. Applicants are often also required to show evidence of continuing professional development such as personal reading, conference/workshop attendance, and critical reflections on teaching.

Service is usually expected at the departmental or programme level as well as at the university level such as being a member of university-wide committees. Applicants are also often expected to serve on search committees and reappointment and promotion committees. They are also expected to have undertaken some level of programme administration and coordination as well as have been involved in community-based service such as activities that connect with teachers, political leaders, and other community groups. National and international service is highly valued such as serving on organizational committees, conference committees, and refereeing for international peer-reviewed journals. Journal editorship may count as a professional activity or service but either way is highly valued as it brings added prestige to the person's institution. Engagement with the mass media and social media can also provide evidence of connections to the community.

Hyon (2008) and Chen and Hyon (2005) provide analyses of promotion and tenure track application reviews in the English Department at California State University, San Bernardino, while Hyon (2011) looks at the same kind of data across a number of different universities, both research-intensive and comprehensive universities. Chen and Hyon (2005) and Hyon (2008) describe intertextual relations between the texts that assessors write in the retention, promotion and tenure process and discourse conventions in the reports they write. In particular, they discuss the *genre chain* (Swales, 2004) that exists between the various evaluative reports that are written in this process, showing how the reports are located within the larger system of faculty review wherein certain texts necessarily precede the creation of others (Hyon, 2008). Figure 1.1 illustrates the various tiers and the reports that are written at each of these levels. The first tier is the Faculty Activities Report, followed by Departmental level reports, and then College (i.e. university)-level reports. At each of these levels reports are written which focus on different aspects of the staff member's work. After all these levels of consideration a recommendation

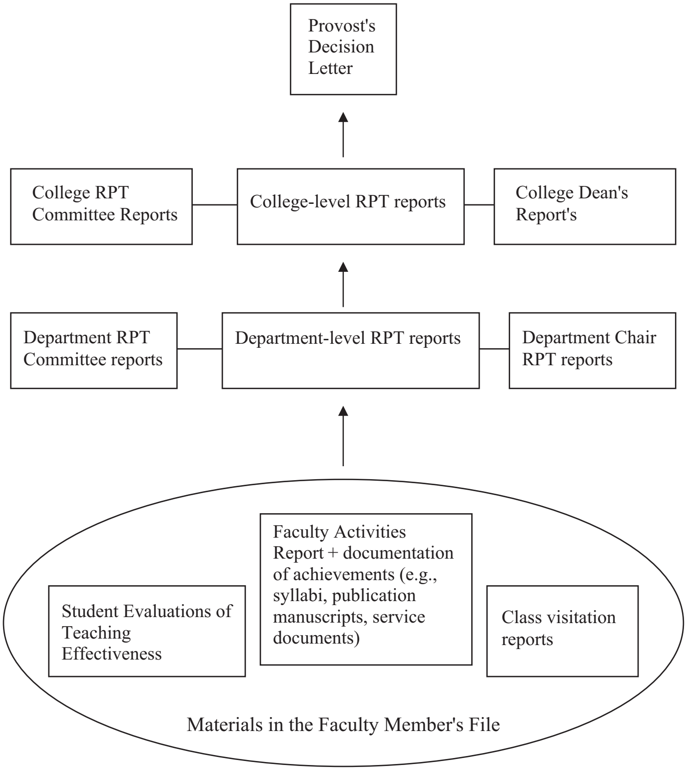

Fig. 1.1 The retention–promotion–tenure genre chain (Hyon, 2008, p. 180) © courtesy Elsevier

to grant tenure, promotion, and retention, or not, is made to the Provost who writes to the applicant to advise them of this.

Hyon (2008) discusses inventiveness in these reports and ways in which writers play with the genre conventions of the texts they write. She found examples of hyperbole where reviewers make an exaggeration and intend it to be understood as such. She also found humour and irony being used as ways of boosting the committee's evaluation of the applicant. Informal language such as sentence fragments and direct questions were also used in the reports. The reviewers may do this, Hyon argues, to show solidarity with the applicant, even though these are conventionally very serious reports.

In a further discussion of this process Hyon (2011) examines 95 retention–promotion–tenure letters written for 11 faculty members from eight universities in the USA in the areas of the humanities, social science, and natural science. Six of applicants worked in research universities and five in comprehensive universities. She found that applicants were evaluated in terms of seven key dimensions of their work: presentation, expertise, conscientiousness, affect, prestige, uniqueness, and productivity, each focused on in different ways in the areas of teaching, research, and service. For example, when referring to teaching, writers used terms such as 'organized' and 'clear' to refer to presentation, 'interesting' and 'beautifully written' when referring to research, and 'organizational' when referring to service. 'Command' and 'knowledgeable' were used to refer to teaching expertise, 'sophisticated' and 'expertise' to refer to research, and 'capable' and 'competent' to refer to service. Overall, however, she found the most valued attributes for teaching were dedication, knowledge, clear communication, and positive emotion. Prestige, significance of contribution, and intellectual enterprise were most valued in research, and time-consuming effort and leadership in service. While criticism was relatively rare (the reports she examined were all of people who were successful in their applications), when it occurred it was typically mitigated in some way by following the criticism with some kind of praise or by hedging the criticism or downplaying it in some way, showing a concern with politeness (see Chap. 4) when evaluating colleagues in the particular context.

Peer Review of Academic Books

Book Reviews

The most public form of peer review is reviews of academic books that appear in academic journals, and the endorsements that publishers ask academics to write on books they are about to publish. Hyland and Diani's (2009) *Academic Evaluation: Review Genres in University Settings* includes discussion of book reviews from the perspective of reporting and evaluation (Diani, 2009), discipline and gender (Tse & Hyland, 2009), phraseology and epistemology (Groom, 2009), and different languages, Spanish and English (Moreno & Suárez, 2009) and Italian and English (Bondi, 2009). Nodoushan and Montazeran (2012), building on the work of Motta Roth (1998), describe four main moves (Swales, 1990) that typically occur in book reviews:

- Introducing the book
- Outlining the book
- Highlighting parts of the book
- Providing closing evaluation of the book
  (Nodoushan & Montazeran, 2012, p. 6)

The final move, providing closing evaluation of the book, typically comes at the end of the review and is where the reviewer recommends or disqualifies the book, or recommends the book despite certain shortcomings (Nodoushan & Montazeran, 2012). The following examples of this final move are from reviews of my book *Discourse Analysis* (Paltridge, 2012):

> Overall, this book is an easy-to-read introduction to the field, while its depth and scope make it a comprehensive reference point for those experienced in discourse analysis. (Haines, 2013, p. 85)
>
> Students and researchers interested in discourse analysis should possess a copy of the book. Though the subtitle labels it an introduction to discourse analysis, the pages of the book provide simple yet shrewd coverage. (Mahfouz, n.d.)
>
> The book is written in a readable style and does not require previous knowledge of discourse analysis, as every term and concept is explained and ample illustrative examples are provided. (Timofeeva, 2008, p. 268)
>
> The main weaknesses of the book, however, are related to its strengths. Indeed, being particularly targeted at language teachers (and their students), and using a linguistic approach to discourse analysis, the book might lose social science readers interested in discourse studies (Timofeeva, 2008, p. 268).

Book Blurbs

Endorsements that appear on the back cover of books (book blurbs) and on the publisher's website are however much more enthusiastic than book reviews. They are shorter and never contain negative evaluations of the book (Gea-Valor, 2005). Book blurbs have both a descriptive and a promotional function in that they tell readers about the book at the same time as they aim to sell it to them (Basturkman, 2009; Gea-Valor, 2005). The following examples of endorsements, from the publisher's webpage for *Discourse Analysis* (Paltridge, 2012), illustrate this promotional function:

> Expanded and updated—still absolutely the best text for teaching and learning about discourse analysis.
>
> This volume is sure to appeal to anyone who wishes to advance their understanding and study of discourse in different contexts. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015)

Other sections of book blurbs are written by the publisher. They typically have three main moves:

- Description
- Evaluation
- About the author
  (Gea-Valor, 2005, p. 48)

These moves are illustrated by the following extract from the blurb for *Discourse Analysis* (Paltridge, 2012) published on the back cover of the book and on the publisher's website:

> This is the new edition of *Discourse Analysis: An Introduction*, an accessible and widely used introduction to the analysis of discourse. In its ten chapters the book examines different approaches to discourse, looking at discourse and society, discourse and pragmatics, discourse and genre, discourse and conversation, discourse grammar, corpus-based approaches to discourse and critical discourse analysis. …
>
> This engagingly written introduction to discourse analysis is essential for students encountering discourse analysis for the first time, whether at undergraduate or postgraduate level. It should be on every reading list.

Brian Paltridge is Professor of TESOL at the University of Sydney, Australia.

(Paltridge, 2012, back cover)

Peer Review of Book Proposals

Book proposals and reviews of book proposals are not however publically available and are further examples of Swales's (1996) occluded high-stakes genres. Indeed, in order to publish a book, the first thing that needs to be written is a proposal. Once the proposal has been sent to the publisher, if they want to proceed with it, it will be sent to reviewers who will be asked to comment on the proposal, addressing matters such as the aims and strengths of the book, the market for the book, the place of the book within the broader field, and suggestions for improving the book. The reviewers are also asked to make a recommendation on whether the publisher should offer a contract on the book. Completed books normally interact with other genres such as draft chapters, reviews on the proposal, communications with the publisher's commissioning editor, and conference and other academic presentations on the topic of the book before the book is finally completed. The book may be followed up with invited presentations, invitations to write on the topic, and published reviews of the book.

Figure 1.2 shows the *genre chains* and *genre sets* (Tardy, 2003; Devitt, 2004; Swales, 2004) that surrounded the writing of Swales's (1998) *Other Floors, Other Voices,* a book which examined the kinds of writing that people did in the building he was working in at the time at the University of Michigan. The figure shows the relationship between his book proposal and the other genres that he was involved in, and which influenced the production of the final text of his book. Other genres not included here would no doubt include the interviews that were conducted for the study the book is based on, the other data that were examined for the writing of the book, the publisher's contract, any permissions or ethics applications that were required for carrying out the research and publication of the book, and any other conversations that may have taken place between the author and the study participants in the process of carrying out the study

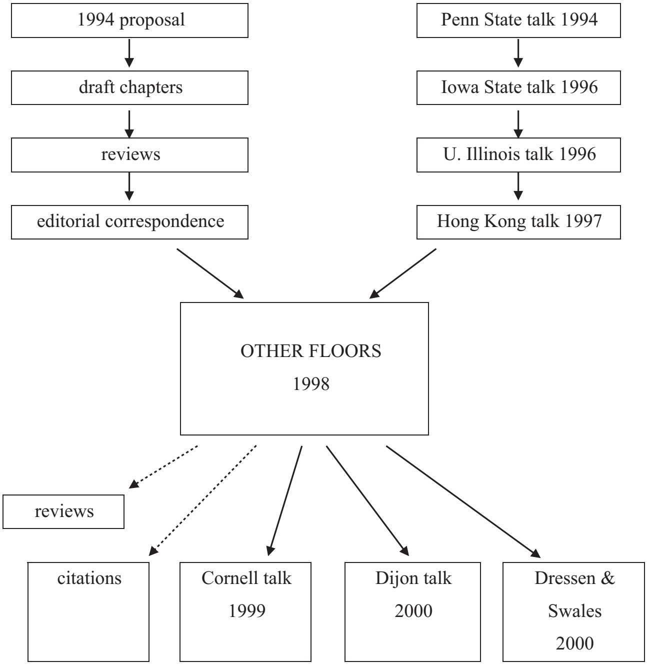

Fig. 1.2 Genre chains and genre sets for the writing of Swales's (1998) *Other Floors, Other Voices* (Swales, 2004, p. 24) © courtesy Cambridge University Press

on which the book is based. The figure also shows genres which followed on from the publication of the book.

Reviews for Book Proposals

The reviewers who were asked to write reports on the proposal for this book (*The Discourse of Peer Review*) were asked to provide a critical analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal and a recommendation as to whether the book merits publication as it stands or with revisions, should be resubmitted after reworking, or if it should be rejected. The key points they were asked to address in their review were:

- a general assessment of the proposal
- the proposal's usefulness and/or original contribution to the field

- the proposal's engagement with recent scholarship
- the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, commenting on:
    - the structure, organization, coherence and presentation of material
    - the quality of the writing
    - timeliness and likely shelf-life of the research
    - portions or sections of the book that will require substantial re-working
- revisions, if any, the author should undertake
- the suitability of the author to produce a high quality book on this topic
- the main readership of this book
- how the proposal compares to the main competing titles in this area in terms of quality of writing and content
- a recommendation as to whether the book could be published as it stands, or after minor revisions, whether the author should be asked to revise the proposal and resubmit it, or whether the proposal should be rejected.
  (Palgrave Macmillan, Reviewer Guidelines, n.d.)

The reports that were received on the book were extremely positive. Only one of the reports made suggestions for changes and revisions to the proposal all of which have been taken on board in the writing of the book. For example the reviewer, quite rightly, said that the data set on which the book was based was limited to English language reports written on articles submitted to an English-medium journal. As these reports exist in other languages as well, they suggested, an acknowledgement of this should be included in the book's introduction—and that these other language instances of reviewers' reports might quite likely have genre features that are distinctive from those of English language reviewers' reports. The other major comment the reviewer made was that as the data drawn on for the study comes exclusively from one journal, the ability to generalize from it, even within the field of applied linguistics/writing studies, will be limited. They, therefore, asked for a greater discussion of the limitations of the data and of the conclusions that can be drawn in the book, along with a discussion of the discipline from which the data set is taken. Each of these comments is addressed later in this chapter and, again, further in the book.

The only other main question that the reviewers raised was the market and audience for the book, whether it was intended as a practical guide for doctoral students and early career academics or whether it was more of a research-based evaluation and assessment of readers' reports which has findings which would be of interest to linguistics/language researchers or students. The commissioning editor also asked this question, saying she thought the latter was the most likely audience for the book. In my reply to the commissioning editor I wrote:

> Thank you for the reviews of my book proposal which I am delighted to receive. They are indeed very positive. The reviewers have made very good suggestions for improvement which I will deal with as I work on the book. In terms of audience, however, you are correct in that I see the book as a research monograph rather than a practical guide and this is how I would like to proceed. So if you could propose the book to your editorial board in this way, that would be great.

The proposal went to the board and was approved.

Reviews for a Second Edition of a Book

Books that are being considered for a second edition are approached in a slightly different way than first-time editions by publishers. People who have been using the book are asked to complete a questionnaire asking about their use of the book, its content and organization, and how it could be improved. The reviewers of the second edition of *Discourse Analysis* (Paltridge, 2012) were asked whether there were any features or chapters which they and their students particularly like and would want to see kept in the new edition. They were asked for the shortcomings of the current edition and ways in which these could be addressed in order to improve the book's competitive edge. Reviewers were asked to make recommendations on how the organization, content, and style could be improved, if there were important omissions to the text and if there were any pedagogical features not currently included in the book that they would like to see added.

The three reviews that were received for the book (each from a different part of the world), while all positive, raised issues such as the treatment of theory in the book, pedagogy (one reviewer thought there was too much), as well as making suggestions for additional chapters to be added to the book. Below are extracts from the response I wrote to the reviewers' reports. I started by stating my basic position on the book, then addressed each of the reviewers' concerns in turn.

> I am pleased to see that my book has been so well received. I think, with so many people adopting this book for their courses, the key thing for a second edition of this book is adding, updating and expanding the book, rather than changing it. My responses to the individual reviews follow.
>
> Review 1: This was a very helpful review. I am pleased to see that the book is working well on general courses on discourse analysis. The suggestions made for additions are all good. I will also work more advanced theory into each chapter, while keeping the level of the book introductory.
>
> Review 2: This reviewer thought there is too much pedagogy in the book. I think this is one of the selling points of the book and why it has been so well adopted. One course outline I saw on the web said:
>
>> Brian Paltridge's (2006) *Discourse Analysis* is the textbook for this course. You are expected to work through the entire book over the course of the next 12 weeks, and most weeks' readings will be assigned from it and/or you will be provided with some articles for the class discussion. We will also be using it for exercises in the workshop, so you will need to bring it with you.
>
> This suggests to me that the pedagogy side of this book is working well and I should not cut back on the pedagogic aspect of the book. There are, however, other points in this review that I am happy to add. I will …
>
> Review 3: In response to this reviewer's feedback, I will add a chapter on multimodal discourse analysis. I will add metadiscourse features, evaluation and engagement, appraisal theory, and discourse markers to the chapter on genre. I will …
>
> In all, I feel these are very positive reviews and give a very good sense of how the book is being used in different countries. They have also made many very good suggestions for revisions which I am happy to work into a second edition of the book.

Proposals for Edited Collections

Proposals for edited collections are reviewed in a similar way to single- or multi-authored books with the reviewer questions being adapted to fit this particular kind of book. Edited collections, however, can be difficult to put together well. They need to be both thematically and structurally coherent but, if done well, can be a valuable resource for people who want to read multiple views or aspects of a particular area (Belcher, Casanave, Hirvela, Sippell & Vandrick, 2010). Four reviews were received for the proposal for the *Handbook of English for Specific Purposes* I edited with Sue Starfield (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013), each from a different country. There were many more suggestions for changes than in the examples discussed above due, no doubt, to the very wide coverage of the topic and different views on the topic in different parts of the world. In response to the reviews we, similarly, wrote to the commissioning editor saying how helpful the reviews had been, then summarized the changes we would make, as well as those we thought we should not make, providing reasons for this.

Not all reviews of book proposals are as straightforward as the above examples might suggest however. *Genre and the Language Learning Classroom* (Paltridge, 2001) started off as a proposal with another publisher. The series editor persuaded me to write the whole book before it had been contracted, and then, when it went out for review, it was rejected by the publisher. I took on board the feedback I had been given however and re-wrote the book on the basis of this. When I sent the proposal to another publisher, the commissioning editor, by chance, sent it to one of the original reviewers of the book who was happy with the changes I had made to the book and recommended publication.

Another book, *Thesis and Dissertation Writing in a Second Language* (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007), started out with a different publisher from the one it finally appeared with. In this case, the book had been proposed for a series for which it really was not a good fit. The series editor provided extremely helpful advice on the proposal, saying a key problem with the book was that it was trying to aim at too broad an audience, both students and supervisors. Their advice was to decide on just one audience and make that the focus of the book. The proposal was re-written with an audience of supervisors alone. This meant the original publisher whose main focus was students and language teachers was no longer the right place for the book. A look at publishers' catalogues found a publisher where the book might however fit and indeed it did. Three reviews were received on the proposal, all very positive but also making suggestions for improvement. We took on board the reviewers' suggestions, revised the proposal, and were offered a contract. Interestingly, when asked by the publisher if the book would be an essential purchase, one of the reviewers said it would only be essential for a few hundred people around the world who specialize in the topic. That, however, has proved to not at all be the case as the book, since its publication, has sold more than 3000 copies and we are now writing a second edition of the book.

Peer Review of Journal Articles

Academic institutions across the world are increasingly being held responsible for their research output, and publication of journal articles is one way in which this can be demonstrated. The publication of journal articles is also a way in which the research productivity of individual academic staff is measured. Indeed, as Nygaard (2015a) points out, the funding and reputation of academic institutions often depends on the publication outputs of their academic staff. In some countries further, such as Iran, China, and Holland, it is a requirement that parts of a doctoral dissertation have already been published in an international journal in order for a student to graduate. In Europe, the PhD regulations at the University of Amsterdam, for example, say that the dissertation 'is a single academic treatment of a particular subject or a number of separate academic treatments, some or all of which have already been published, which together provide a cohesive study of a particular subject' (Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2010, p. 20). Key to this process (and indeed a requirement for published work to be considered an acceptable research output) is that the article has been through the process of peer review.

Peer review of journal articles is carried out by experts on the topic of the article by people who are not members of the journal's editorial staff (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, 2015). It is, thus, the process by which researchers' work is subjected to scrutiny and assessment by individuals with expertise in the area of research (Hames, 2012). When an editor receives an article, if they think it may be suitable for publication, they will send it to a number of reviewers (usually two or three) for their judgement as to the quality of the article and how it fits with the overall brief of the journal. The people who do this reviewing are, as the name suggests, the author's peers; that is, they are people who are carrying out research in the same general area of research as that of the article. The reviewers may be members of the journal's editorial advisory board or they may not be on the board but be people who are well regarded in the field and who have published on the topic of the research.

Peer review is generally seen as the cornerstone of academic publishing (Hames, 2012) and fundamental to the development and integration of new research (Hyland, 2015). Peer review, in the words of Ziman (1968, p. 111) 'is the lynchpin about which the whole business of science is pivoted' and 'an essential element of scholarly publications' (Mulligan, Hall, & Raphael, 2013, p. 146). Such is its standing that the research community, in general, views research that appears in the media without having been first published in a peer-reviewed journal with scepticism (Mulligan et al., 2013). In their study of 4000 researchers' attitudes towards peer review Mulligan et al. (2013) found that most researchers believe that its most important function is that it improves the quality of research that is published and that it is 'the most effective mechanism for ensuring the reliability, integrity, and consistency of the scholarly literature' (p. 149).

Reviewing submissions to peer-reviewed journals is a task that most researchers carry out in their academic lives. There has been little discussion, however, about how reviewers learn to carry out this task (Hames, 2007) and the issues they face in writing their reviews. The process of learning to write reviewers' reports is the focus of one of the chapters in this book.

The History of Editorial Peer Review

The use of peer review in academic publishing dates back nearly 300 years to when the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Royal Society of London started to consult their members about publication decisions that they were making for their journals (Hames, 2012; Spier, 2002). The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London was the first journal to make peer review a part of their publication process (Mulligan et al., 2013). The peer review of academic articles did not become more common, however, until after World War II when the range and complexity of submissions to journals increased and editors found they were no longer able to handle all of the submissions they were receiving (see Burnham, 1990; Hames, 2012; Rennie, 2003; Spier, 2002 for further discussion of the history of peer review). The process of peer review has, traditionally, been a somewhat private affair and one to which beginning academic authors have had very little access. More recently, however, there has been a number of public discussions and reviews in which the strengths and limitations of peer review have been discussed more widely (see, e.g. Brown, 2004; House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, 2011; Sense about Science, 2009; Ware, 2008; Weller, 2001).

The Process of Editorial Peer Review

Reviews of submissions to peer-reviewed journals are part of the chain of genres that results in a research article being published (or not). This process commences when an author submits an article to the journal. The journal editor will send it out for review, ask for revisions to be made to the article then send it out for review, or reject the article without sending it out for review (a 'desk reject'). If the article goes out for review, the reviewers will be asked to recommend publishing it as is (this is extremely rare), accepting the article with minor amendments (this is also rare), accepting it with major amendments (this is more common), revise and resubmit the article and be reviewed again, or reject. A paper can sometimes go through several rounds of reviews until it is published and involve a number of communications among editors, authors, and reviewers as it moves through the various stages of the review process.

In most cases the person who does the review of an article will be anonymous to the author; that is, the author will not know who it is that reviewed their article. This is called *blind* review. Reviewers often also do not know the identity of the author either. This is called *double-blind* review. Journals such as the *British Medical Journal* and *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics* use *open peer review* where both the author and the reviewers know each other's identity. Other journals, such as *Nature*, have considered using open peer review. They have decided not to implement it, however, largely because it was found not to be popular with the authors or scientists the journal asked for their views on it (Nature, 2006). Regardless of the system that a journal uses, however, it is through peer review that journals aim to maintain their standards, that is, by only publishing work that is considered worthy of publication by scholars working in the same academic area (see Lee, Sugimoto, Zhang, & Cronin, 2013 for a discussion of different approaches to peer review).

A number of criticisms have been raised, however, of peer review (see Weller, 2001; Jefferson, Rudin, Folse, & Davdioff, 2007). One of these is that it is slow, expensive, subjective, biased, and open to abuse (see Lee et al., 2013; Garcia, Rodriguez-Sánchez, & Fdez-Valdivia, 2015 for discussions of bias in peer review). Peer review is also poor at detecting errors and fraud in research (Groves, 2013). Others have said that peer review stifles innovation and is not reliable. There are also no clear standards for peer review in that different journals deal with peer review in different ways. There can also be problems when the quality of reviews varies or reviewers disagree with each other. Others have called peer review a 'flawed process' that is at the heart of scientific research as well as the life of academic journals (Smith, 2006). Its defects, however, Smith argues, are easier to identify than its attributes (see Weller, 2001; Lee et al., 2013 for discussions of the strengths and weaknesses of peer review).

Notwithstanding, peer review is generally accepted by the academic community, even if there are ways in which it could be improved (Davidoff, 2004). Studies of peer review have found that researchers generally feel the process helps ensure the accuracy and quality of work that is published (see, e.g. Ware, 2008; Sense about Science, 2009; Mulligan et al., 2013). Respondents in these studies have also felt that their work improved as a result of the peer review process and that, overall, it had generally been a positive experience for them. Peer review, further, is important in academic careers in that peer-reviewed publications, as mentioned earlier, count strongly in appointment, tenure, and promotion decisions as well as help researchers obtain research funding when a track record of publication outputs is an important consideration in making decisions about the awarding of research funds (Hames, 2012).

The aim of peer review, then, is to filter out work that has not been well planned, carried out, and written up. It aims to ensure that the work is reported on correctly and that connections are made to other work that has already been published on the topic. It also aims to ensure that results have been correctly interpreted and that other possible interpretations of the results have been considered. It, further, at a broader level, gives editors advice on whether an article will be of interest to the readership of the journal as well as ensures the general quality of papers that it publishes (Hames, 2007).

Ware's (2008) study into editorial peer review asked authors about their experience and opinion of peer review, the role the editor had played in the process, and what other approaches to peer review might be possible. It did not, however, ask how reviewers had learnt to write reviews and what they found most challenging and most straightforward in the writing of these reviews. These aspects of the reviewer experience are examined in Chap. 6 of this book.

Overview of the Study

The study on which this book is based is an examination of reports written on submissions to the peer-reviewed journal *English for Specific Purposes* (see Hewings, 2002 for a history of the journal; Johns, 2013 for a review of research in the field more generally). Articles published in *English for Specific Purposes* focus on the teaching and learning of English in areas such as English for academic purposes, English for business, and English for science and technology. The journal employs double-blind reviewing and received approximately 200 submissions in the year in which the data were collected. It has an acceptance rate of 14 per cent. Eighty-six per cent of papers that are submitted to the journal, thus, are not accepted for publication. In 2015, its 2-year impact factor was 1.143 while its 5-year impact factor was 1.911 (see Woodrow 2014 for a review of impact factors and acceptance rates for applied linguistics journals more broadly). Submissions to *English for Specific Purposes* come from many different countries and are not limited to any particular geographical region. In Volumes 36–38 of the journal, for example, authors who published in the journal were from Canada, China, France, Hong Kong, Iran, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, the UK, and the USA, with native English speaker authors in the minority.

Reviewers of submissions to *English for Specific Purposes* are asked, when they write their report, to consider whether the topic of the article is of interest to readers of the journal, whether the paper is an original piece of work, whether the author shows a high level of familiarity with the subject matter, if appropriate research methods have been employed, and if the level of writing is appropriate to that of a scholarly journal. They are then, when they have completed their review, asked to make a recommendation of either Accept, Minor revisions, Major revisions, or Reject. The publisher also provides guidance for reviewers on its website (http://www.elsevier.com/reviewers/reviewer-guidelines). These guidelines are more general than those given to reviewers by the journal, however, and focus on aspects such as the originality and structure of the article, reference to previous research, and ethical issues such as plagiarism and confidentiality of participants.

Ninety-seven reviewers' reports were collected for the study and 45 reviewers completed a questionnaire (see Appendix). The questionnaire asked about the reviewers' experience in doing peer reviews, how they had learnt to do write reviewers' reports, and the issues they faced in writing them. Follow-up emails were also sent to reviewers in order to seek further elaboration on answers that had been provided in the questionnaires. All of the reviewers whose reports are included in the project gave their permission for their reviews and other data they provided to be used in the study.

The questionnaire and email data were analysed by a process of identifying themes and cross-referencing these themes with the analysis of the data as it proceeded. The question that asked about the amount of experience the respondents had in doing reviews and the language backgrounds of the reviewers were then considered, as both of these have been suggested as factors which may affect the reviews that people write and the issues they face in doing writing them (Belcher, 2007; Burrough-Boenisch, 2003) (see Chap. 6 of this book).

The Reviewers' Reports

The corpus contained 74 reviews of original submissions and 23 reviews of revised submissions, a total of 71,661 words. The longest reviews (as with Hewings's 2004 study of reviews for the same journal) were for original submissions while the shorter reviews were for revised submissions. Nine of the reports made an Accept recommendation, 22 recommended Minor revisions, 39 recommended Major revisions, and 27 made a Reject recommendation. The average length of Accept reviews was 124 words, the average length of Minor revisions reviews was 570 words, the average length of Major revisions reviews was 1009 words, and the average length of Reject reviews was 693 words. The longest reviews, thus, were Major revisions reviews (whether the report was on an original or a revised submission) and were longer than the reports that recommended Minor revisions, Accept, or Reject.

As pointed out earlier in this chapter, this data is clearly limited, it should be said, to reports that were written in English and on papers that had been submitted to a specific English-medium journal. Reviewers' reports are, as one of the reviewers for the proposal for this book commented, also written in other languages and they may well be very different and have different genre features and reflect different understandings and expectations from those that are the focus of this book. Rottier, Ripmeester, and Bush (2011), for example, have examined differences between Dutch and English in this regard showing how different ways of expressing values and opinions can cause confusion when the two language groups come together, a point that is returned to later in the book. It also needs to be pointed out, as mentioned earlier, that the data that were examined were only from a single journal so cannot be generalized beyond this to other journals, although comparisons are made in the book to research on reviewers' reports in other journals in the same general field of study in order to expand the applicability of the conclusions reached in the book.

Overview of the Book

This book, then, examines reports that are written by reviewers on submissions to the peer-reviewed journal *English for Specific Purposes*. While the ways in which the reviewer's reports are written and are expected to be read may be obvious to experienced authors and, of course, journal editors, this is not at all obvious to beginning authors. The aim in writing this book, then, is to demystify this occluded, or 'out of sight', genre in a way that will be of benefit to new researchers and those that are not familiar with the process and expectations of peer review and what is expected of them when they respond to the reports they receive on their submissions to academic journals (see Chap. 7 for further discussion of this, also Paltridge & Starfield, 2016). The book also aims to show how reviewers' reports reveal the values of disciplinary communities through the comments reviewers make in their reports as well as what the reports reveal to be important to the disciplines. These are all matters that are essential for beginning writers to understand if they are to succeed in academic publishing.

A feature of the book is the set of reviewers' reports and questionnaire data that were collected for the purpose of writing the book which are often extremely difficult to obtain. A further feature of the book is the analytic perspectives it takes on the reviewers' reports. These include an examination of reviewers' reports from the perspective of context, content, and form (Chap. 2). The ways in which reviewers ask for changes to be made to submissions and the extent to which they do this explicitly and implicitly are also examined (see Chap. 3). The reports are then considered from the point of view of politeness (Chap. 4). The use of evaluative language in the reports is examined as well (Chap. 5). How it is that reviewers learn to write these reports is explored in Chap. 6. The results of the analyses are considered from the point of view of reviewer training in Chap. 7. Suggestions are made for how this kind of training can be made available, especially for early career researchers for whom much of this information is often unclear and unfamiliar to them. The book concludes, in Chap. 8, by providing an overview of the findings of the study as well as making suggestions for further research in the area of editorial peer review. The final chapter also considers what the results of the study mean for beginning academic authors and especially those who are new to the process of peer review.

The book, thus, aims to help beginning authors understand the peer review process in a way that will better prepare them for participating in the process of academic publishing. The book, further, aims to demystify the somewhat enigmatic world of manuscript reviewing, a world which even those who are successful at academic publishing find, at times, challenging to deal with. For newer authors this can be even more the case. This book aims to give these authors a sense of what it is they need to know in order to take part in this world and, hopefully, achieve their academic publishing goals.

2

The Genre of Reviewers' Reports

One of the key ways in which people communicate with each other is through their participation in particular communicative events, or genres. These communicative events, or genres, often share a number of features. They may, for example, be spoken or written in typical, and sometimes conventional, ways. They also often have a common function and purpose (or set of functions and purposes). Genres may be performed by a particular person aimed at a particular audience and there may be certain contexts in which a genre typically occurs. Genres also change through time. This may, for example, be in response to changes in technologies or it may be as a result of changes in values underlying the use of the particular genre.

We also use language in particular ways according to the content and purpose of the genre, the relationship between ourselves and the person we are speaking to or the audience we are writing for. The way we use language in a genre also depends on whether the text is written or spoken and the social and cultural contexts in which the genre occurs. When we do this, we draw on our previous experience with the genre to know how we would normally do this. This does not mean, however, that every instance of a genre is the same. Genres, rather, vary in terms of their

B. Paltridge, *The Discourse of Peer Review*,
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typicality. That is, a text may be a typical example of a genre, or a less typical one, but still be an example of the same genre (see Paltridge, 1995, 1997, for discussions of this).

Martin's (1984, p. 25) definition of genre as 'a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our culture' has been extremely influential in 'Sydney School' genre studies (see Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012). Martin and Rose (2007, p. 8), elaborating on this definition, add:

> Social because we participate in genres with other people; goal-oriented because we use genres to get things done; staged because it usually takes us a few steps to reach our goals.

Swales (2004, p. 61) prefers the notion of 'metaphor', rather than 'definition', for talking about genres, saying that definitions are often not 'true in all possible worlds and all possible times' and can 'prevent us from seeing newly explored or newly emerging genres for what they really are'. Quoting Bazerman (1997, p. 19), Swales adds that:

> [genres] are not just forms. Genres are forms of life, ways of being. They are frames for social action… Genres shape the thoughts we form and the communication by which we interact. (Swales, 2004, p. 61)

Genres, further, are not just texts or discourses. Rather, they are realized through language and the texts in which they are instantiated as *performances* of genres rather than reproductions of classes of texts (Swales, 2016). In addition, genres are dynamic, not static (Devitt, 2015a), or, in the words of Schryer (1994, p. 108), 'stabilized-for-now', in that they develop and evolve in response to changes in social situations and the views and ideologies that underlie the use of the genres. That is, users of genres and their discourse communities both remake and reshape genres (Schryer, 1994) (see Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995, for an example of this).

The notion of genre as social action is especially important in current discussions of genre. In this view, a genre is defined, not in terms of 'the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish' (Miller, 1984, p. 151). This action is recognized by other people and the genre is accepted over time as a way of doing something. Genre, thus, is a kind of 'social agreement' (Miller & Bazerman, 2011) about ways of doing things with language in particular social and cultural settings. Miller also discusses the notion of *typification* in relation to genre. That is, there are typical forms a genre might take, as well as typical content, and typical action that the genre performs, all of which we recognize and draw on as we engage with the use of genres.

All of this applies to reviewers' reports, in that reviewers' reports occur in a particular context, have a particular purpose, and are written for a particular audience, or rather audiences. Reviewers' reports discuss particular content, employ typical language choices, and are often organized in typical ways. These reports, further, have changed in response to changes in technology, especially with the use of online submission and review platforms where reviewers are, in some cases, given specific directions in terms of what they should address in their reports and how they should submit them. Reviewers' reports are also reflective of certain views of the world and, in particular, what in the particular discipline (or sub-discipline) is considered 'good research' and the characteristics it is assumed by the disciplinary community that are desired (or in some cases essential) features of that research.

These reports are also, like many other genres, part of a genre chain where one genre assumes that another genre precedes it and anticipates that another genre, or genres, will follow it. That is, there is particular *event sequence* (Paltridge, 2001) for the genres that are part of this process. Figure 2.1 is a (simplified) illustration of this in relation to reviewers' reports. Not all of the genres shown in this sequence occur in every instance, however. If the article is a 'desk rejection', it will not go beyond Step 4 in the sequence. The editor may also have to send out a number of reviewer invitations before the required number of reviewers has agreed to assess the submission. The review process may also end at Step 10 if the article is accepted at that stage or the process may continue and be repeated a number of times until a final decision is made on the paper. Steps 18, 19, and 20, of course, will only occur if the paper is accepted for publication. Not all of these steps, further, occur with all journals, for example, Step 17, the sharing of reports between reviewers. Also, some

1. Guidelines for authors	2. Research article	3. Editor's acknowledgement of article	4. Editor's decision on article or Reviewer invitations
5. Acceptances of invitations to review	6. Guidelines to reviewers	7. Reviewers' reports	8. Editor's acknowledgement of reports
9. Editor's decision letter to author	10. Sharing of reports to reviewers	11. Author's revised article/summary of changes made	12. Editor's decision on article or Reviewer invitations
13. Acceptances of invitations to review	14. Reviewers' reports on resubmission	15. Editor's acknowledgement of reports	16. Editor's decision letter to author
17. Sharing of reports to reviewers	18. Page proofs for author to check	19. Article published online	20. Article allocated to a volume and formally published in the journal

Fig. 2.1 Event sequence of written genres in the peer review process

genres may be automatically generated by a computer rather than being written by the editor (such as the editor's acknowledgement of the article, their acknowledgement of the reports, the invitations to review, and the sharing of reviewers' reports).

Beyond this, as with the genre chains discussed in Chap. 1, there will be other genres that are not part of the formal review process but might occur, such as conversations with colleagues and advisors on how best to write and revise an article, and informal communications between the author and the editor. There may also be communications between the editor and reviewers such as when the review form has a space for the reviewer to make comments on the submission to the editor that the author will not see. These kinds of informal communications might also occur with reviews of book proposals and retention-promotion-tenure applications, although in the latter case there may be restrictions on how this occurs. With grant proposal applications there is not likely to be informal communications between the granting body and the applicant, except perhaps on technical matters but most likely not on the matter of content.

The Context of Reviewers' Reports

Grabe and Kaplan (1996) provide a framework for examining the social and cultural contexts of academic genres in their proposal for an ethnography of writing. This view considers who writes what to whom, for what purpose, why, when, where, and how. That is, it considers the audience of a text, the writer's purpose, the writing context, and the genre required by the task. It considers the writing in terms of the situation in which it takes place and the context of the text in terms of its goals, purpose(s), and uses. Factors that might be considered from this perspective include:

- the setting of the text
- the focus and perspective of the text
- the purpose(s) of the text
- the intended audience for the text, their role and purpose in reading the text

- the relationship between writers and readers of the text
- expectations, conventions, and requirements for the text
- the background knowledge, values, and understandings it is assumed the writer shares with their readers, including what is important to the reader and what is not
- the relationship the text has with other texts.

If we consider research articles, the setting of the text is the journal in which it is located and the disciplinary focus of the journal. The discipline, further, may be a 'hard' or 'soft', pure or applied, convergent or divergent area of study (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Trowler, 2012a, 2012b). Hard disciplines, McGrath (2015) argues, 'tend to work with established theories, are cumulative in terms of knowledge construction, and produce [or aim to produce] generalizable results' (p. 22). Soft disciplines, by contrast, have 'more fuzzy boundaries, and investigate more "loosely defined" research problems' (p. 22). Pure disciplines do not directly address real-world issues, whereas applied disciplines make links to professional practice and other real-world matters outside the academy. Convergent disciplines 'have clear, standardized practices for knowledge verification and quality, whereas divergent disciplines have less agreement in terms of what to study and how' (p. 22). Boundaries between academic disciplines, however, are becoming increasingly fluid (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Trowler, 2014). Academic disciplines, further, are much less homogeneous than they seem (or seemed) to be, something which provides a challenge, at times, for academic writers and researchers (see Manathunga & Brew, 2012; Trowler, 2014, for further discussion of this).

The research approach taken in the article may be quantitative, qualitative, naturalistic, or mixed methods. This will influence the claims that can be made in the text, claims that cannot be made in the text, and what will count as 'evidence'. The orientation of the research will also be influenced by the discipline's (and at times the editor's) views on what is 'good' research, that is, the preferred paradigms within the area of study and the extent to which the field (or journal) expects authors to write a text (and carry out research) which fits with that paradigm.

Research articles have a number of different (and at times overlapping) purposes. These might include answering a question, solving a problem, or proving something. Research articles also need to display knowledge, demonstrate particular skills, as well as convince readers of their claims. They also need to contribute to knowledge on the particular topic. Research articles, also, by virtue of being published, are an important way of demonstrating membership of academic communities by means of producing an article at a level that meets the academic standards of the journal as well as being acceptable to the broader academic community as judged by the reviewers and editor(s) of the journal.

The role of the initial readers of a research article (i.e. the editor and reviewers) is to judge the quality of the research. Research articles also have the broader readership of the journal if and when they are published. Writers need to understand how their readers will react to what they read and the criteria they will use for assessing their text—that is, the journal's review criteria (see Chaps. 1 and 7 for examples of this)—and how their article fits with these criteria and the overall scope of the journal (Marsden, 2015). Readers will also have certain expectations for the style of writing of the text (Woods, 2006).

Research articles also have other expectations, conventions, and requirements. Crucial among these is an understanding and critical appraisal of relevant research literature right up to the point of submission of the article to the journal. The project reported on in the article also needs to be clearly defined and be a comprehensive investigation of its topic and have employed appropriate research methods and techniques for the research question under investigation. Authors need to show an ability to interpret results, develop conclusions, and link these to previous research on the topic. A particular level of critical analysis and originality is expected in this, and the literary quality and standard of presentation of the text needs to be extremely high. How the text is typically organized may vary for a particular research topic, area of study, kind of study, and research perspective even though there will be general expectations for what is typically contained in each section of the article (see Lin & Evans, 2012, for a review of organizational patterns in journal articles across a range of disciplines).

There are also certain background knowledges, values, and understandings it is assumed writers of research articles will share with their readers, as well as a sense of what is important and not important in the particular area of study. Other matters include how much knowledge writers are expected to 'display' in their texts, the extent to which writers should show what they know, what issues they should address, and what boundaries they can or cannot cross, all of which depends on the discipline and research paradigm in which the author is working (Christie & Maton, 2011; Maton, 2014).

Writers also need to understand the relationship their text has with other texts. They need to know the accepted ways of showing the relationship between their research, their previously published research, and other people's research, what counts as valid previous research, acceptable and unacceptable textual borrowings, and differences between reporting and plagiarizing (Pecorari, 2008; Sun & Yang, 2015).

Each of these features impacts on how the article is written, how it will be read, and, importantly, how it will be evaluated by editors and reviewers. These features are, of course, not as distinct as they appear in the listing that has been presented here. As Yates and Orlikowski (2007) point out, they are deeply intertwined, and each, in their way, has an impact on what a writer writes and the way they write it. The rules and expectations for research articles, and indeed all academic writing, are not necessarily binding or fixed in time. The extent to which they differ comes down to what the particular discourse community will accept as being an appropriate piece of writing in the particular setting, for the particular purpose at the particular time. What is appropriate, however, changes over time as views of research change and what is considered acceptable research changes (see Paltridge, Starfield, & Tardy, 2016, for a broader discussion of context and academic writing; Berkenkotter, 2007; Miller, 2015; Paltridge et al. 2012a, for discussions of genre change).

The Discourse Structure of Reviewers' Reports

Gosden (2003), Fortanet (2008), Fortanet-Gomez (2008), and Samraj (2016b) have identified typical discourse structures or *moves* (Swales, 1990, 2004) in reviewers' reports, or in Martin and Rose's (2007) terms, the *stages* through which the texts move in order to achieve their goals. Gosden (2003) examines reviewers' reports on manuscripts submitted to a scientific *Letters* journal, that is, journals in areas such as chemistry, physics, and microbiology which publish short technical papers variously called Letters, Research Notes, Rapid Communications and Brief Reports. He identifies a general two-part structure in the reports he examines, that is:

> a summarizing judgement regarding suitability for publication, followed by comments, sometimes numbered point by point, which may track criticisms in a sequential manner from beginning to end of the manuscript. (Gosden, 2003, p. 91)

Fortanet (2008) and Fortanet-Gomez (2008) develop this work further in an analysis of reviewers' reports in the areas of business organization and applied linguistics. A four-part structure of moves is proposed on the basis of this analysis:

Move 1: Summarizing judgement regarding suitability for publication
Move 2: Outlining the article
Move 3: Points of criticism
Move 4: Conclusion and recommendation (Fortanet, 2008, p. 35)

Samraj (2016b) analyses the discourse structure of 25 major revisions and 25 reject reviews, drawing from the same data set as is used for this study. She found similar organizational patterns to those proposed by Fortanet (2008) in the data that she examined. She also examines commentary sections (as opposed to the introductory and concluding sections) in the major revisions and reject reviews and lexico-grammatical realizations of recommendations and negative evaluations in these sections of the two sets of review. She found that the major revisions and reject reviews were quite different from an organizational point of view, something which will be explored in the analysis of the more complete data set drawn on for this chapter.

Following on from this research, this chapter presents a *move analysis* of the reviewers' reports which form the basis of the study described in this book. Move analysis was first proposed by Swales in his (1981) study of the discourse structures of introduction sections to research articles. His approach to the analysis of discourse structures has since become a standard for much research into the organizational patterns of written academic genres in the area of English for specific purposes (see Paltridge, 2013b, for a review of this work). A move analysis examines texts in terms of the rhetorical movement of each of the organizational stages of texts and describes these stages in terms of what each of them is achieving, in functional terms, within the text. The analysis, further, both describes and explains similarities and differences in social practices in academic writing and, more broadly, academic life.

Genres often have typical rhetorical patterns. These patterns are helpful for beginning authors to have an awareness of as they reflect shared practices (as well as attitudes and positions) within the context of the particular genre (Giltrow, Gooding, Burgoyne, & Sawatshy, 2014). The aim of the analysis presented in this chapter, then, is to alert authors as to what they can expect when they receive reviews of their work in terms of how they will be organized rhetorically and what they can expect each section of the review might address, that is, anticipated content of the reviews, and where different kinds of information might typically be placed.

The analysis of the texts examines the sequence of moves across the set of texts including which occur in all the texts (i.e. *obligatory moves*) and which occurs in only some of the texts (*optional moves*). It also examines whether the moves identified in this analysis vary across category of reviewer recommendation, such as accept, minor revisions, major revisions, and reject reviews. The analysis also identifies obligatory and optional moves in these subsets of the reviewers' reports. The analysis of obligatory and optional moves, in particular, gives authors a sense of what they might expect to be addressed in reports they receive in relation to review outcomes of submissions they make to peer-reviewed journals, within, of course, the limits of the sample size of the study and the specific disciplinary area and journal from which the reports are drawn.

The Accept Reviews

With the accept reviews, only one of the moves described by Fortanet (2008) occurred in all the reports and thus could be considered obligatory for reports that make this recommendation, that is, Move 1, Summarizing judgement regarding suitability for publication. After this, the most frequent move was Move 3, Points of criticism, which occurred in seven of the nine accept reports. Move 4, Conclusion and recommendation, occurred in six of the accept reports. The fact that Move 4 did not occur in all the reports does not, of course, mean that the three reviewers who did not include this move did not make a recommendation on the paper. This simply means that not all reviewers provided their recommendation in their reports. The online system for the journal requires reviewers to make a recommendation on submissions without which they are not able to submit their review. Reviewers are also able to make comments in a box titled 'Comments to Editor' where they might sometimes explain their recommendation to the editor or express uncertainly with the recommendation they are making. Moves 3 and 4, then, could be considered optional in the reports but do most often occur. Move 2, Outlining the article, did not occur in any of the reviews and so would not be considered a move that is required for this category of report. These occurrences of moves are summarized in Table 2.1.

Move 1 occurred as the first move in eight of the nine accept reports so authors could reasonably expect (within the context of the sample size) for this to be the opening move in accept reviews. In the reports where Move 3 occurred, in five of the seven cases it followed Move 1. Move 4 occurred after Moves 1 and 3 in all but one case. The typical move sequence, then, for accept reviews is Move 1, followed by Move 3, then Move 4. This is the same as the move sequence outlined by Fortanet (2008) in her work on this topic.

Table 2.1 Summary of moves in the accept reviews ($n = 9$)

Move 1: Summarizing judgement	Move 2: Outlining the article	Move 3: Points of criticism	Move 4: Conclusion and recommendation
9	0	7	6

Table 2.2 Accept reviews: three moves in a single paragraph

Move	Text
Move 1	The authors have now addressed the three changes that I suggested. The comparison with the academic word list is now the final chapter of the results section.
Move 3	There are a few minor language points to clear up in this,
Move 1	but I think it is a good addition to the article. The word 'family issue' has also been addressed, and the issue of technical vocabulary definition has been touched on a suitable way.
Move 4	With a small bit of language editing then the article is now acceptable for publication.

The moves in these reports were not however as neat and tidy as the above analysis might suggest. In one instance, for example, all three moves occurred in the one paragraph, with Move 1 being repeated after Move 3, as can be seen in Table 2.2.

In another example, all three moves were present in a single sentence, as shown in Table 2.3. This was then followed by a list of 24 points to be addressed by the author, a recurrence and expansion of Move 3 from the first sentence of the review.

What can be seen from this analysis, then, is that accept reviews are not completely linear in their presentation and that more than one move can occur in both a single paragraph as well as in a single sentence. It also shows that, in most cases, authors can expect to have to make some changes to their submission, even at this stage of the process (see Chap. 3 for examples of this).

The Minor Revisions Reviews

The only obligatory move in the minor revisions reports was Move 3, Points of criticism. This is in contrast with the accept reviews where Move 3 did not occur in all the reports. Move 1, Summarizing judgement regarding suitability for publication, occurred in 19 of the minor revisions reports so it could be considered optional although most likely to occur. This also contrasts with the accept reviews where Move 1 occurred in all of the reviews. Move 2, Outlining the article, appeared in only two of the minor revisions reports and so could also be considered optional

Table 2.3 Accept reviews: three moves in a single sentence

Move	Text
Move 1	For my part, I am satisfied that the authors have addressed my concerns with their earlier draft,
Move 4	and I recommend that
Move 3	with some attention to editing,
Move 4	this paper be accepted for publication.

Table 2.4 Summary of moves in the minor revisions reviews (n = 22)

Move 1: Summarizing judgement	Move 2: Outlining the article	Move 3: Points of criticism	Move 4: Conclusion and recommendation
19	2	22	10

but not very likely to occur. Move 4, Conclusion and recommendation, appeared in only 10 of the reports so could also be considered optional. These occurrences are summarized in Table 2.4.

Of the 22 reviews, 14 followed the sequence of Move 1 followed by Move 3. If there was a Move 4, this was always the final move in the minor revisions reviews. The only paper that included all four moves had these moves in the same sequence, from Move 1 through to Move 4. In the other eight reviews the sequence was more mixed with, in four cases, the review starting with Move 4. Beyond this, the sequence of moves varied with a number of reviews repeating moves in different combinations.

There were also instances, as with the accept reports, of more than one move occurring in the same paragraph. For example, one reviewer consistently did this, as did a number of the other reviewers. In these cases, Move 3 provides a qualification to the positive statement made in Move 1. An example of this is shown in Table 2.5.

Another reviewer combined Moves 1, 3, and 4 in the same paragraph, as shown in Table 2.6. In the section that follows this text, the reviewer listed 29 matters that needed to be addressed, showing how even minor revisions recommendations can still require a fair amount of revision to be undertaken before the paper will be accepted for publication.

In the case of Move 4, Conclusions and recommendations, sometimes reviewers qualified their recommendation in the Comments to the Editor box. Nine of the 22 reviewers did this. For example, one reviewer said:

Table 2.5 Minor revision reviews: two moves in a single paragraph

Move	Text
Move 1	The paper establishes well the need for the investigation of language use in accounting/client interactions, as discussed above. It also justifies well the use of simulations in the absence of naturalistic data in establishing typical language characteristics for use in ESP programmes.
Move 3	On page 4 in paragraph 2, however, I wondered if the author(s) could expand a little on the benefits of students engaging in simulations in terms of developing flexibility in language use, given the relatively non-prescriptive nature of the interactions.

Table 2.6 Minor revision reviews: three moves in a single paragraph

Move	Text
Move 1	In this second resubmission of this manuscript, the author has made very useful revisions in response to the reviewers' comments. The research questions and the results are much clearer and helpful information has been added to the methodology sections.
Move 4	I believe that the manuscript can be published in English for Specific Purposes provided that some additional, relatively minor revisions are made.
Move 3	Below I describe the remaining changes that I recommend. Although I have listed quite a few suggestions, they are, I think, quite do-able.

> I think the paper should ultimately be accepted or rejected on the basis of how well the authors provide concrete and principled recommendations emerging out of their study.

Another reviewer made a similar qualifying comment in the Comments to the Editor box:

> I would really like the author to give careful consideration to addressing some of my concerns, especially those to do with power/privilege factors. If she/he does so, at least briefly, I would recommend publication.

One reviewer, however, made a qualified recommendation in the Comments to the Author box so that the author would be aware of their reservations about recommending the paper for publication:

> Accept with suggested revisions or resubmit to the *Journal of Second Language Writing* if not appropriate for *English for Specific Purposes*

and later in the report:

> I was not sure whether *English for Specific Purposes* is the best home for this study. It seemed more appropriate for *Journal of Second Language Writing.* The editors will be able to help the author with this decision.

The Major Revisions Reviews

Move 1, Summarizing judgement, occurred in 32 of the 39 major revisions reviews, that is, in nearly all of them. Move 1 was nearly always very short in these reviews, often a single sentence, for example:

> Overall, the paper is not clearly written.

and

> This paper represents a useful addition to the literature on applications of SFL to the teaching of research writing.

Move 1 was most typically followed by points of criticism, Move 3. Move 2, Outlining the article, occurred less frequently in the major revisions reviews, in 11 of them. Move 3 occurred in all 39 reviews, as one would expect in a review that asks for changes to be made to a submission. Twenty-one of the 39 reviews included Move 4, Conclusion and recommendation. The frequency of moves in the major revisions reviews is summarized in Table 2.7. The moves in these reviews were largely in a

Table 2.7 Summary of moves in the major revisions reviews ($n = 39$)

Move 1: Summarizing judgement	Move 2: Outlining the article	Move 3: Points of criticism	Move 4: Conclusion and recommendation
32	11	39	21

Table 2.8 Major revisions reviews: two moves in a single sentence

Move	Text
Move 1	I think the subject of this article would be of interest to the readership of the journal
Move 3	However, there are many problems that would keep it from being published at this time.
Move 1	This is a very interesting article
Move 3	but I think that it needs to have more information added to it.
Move 1	Your article is interesting and worth publishing
Move 4	after major revisions.
Move 1	Although the topic of the paper is interesting
Move 4	I do not think that the paper is publishable in its present form.

linear sequence, moving from Move 1 through to Move 4 when they all occurred, although some were repeated more than once in the reviews.

As with the accept and minor revisions reviews, there were also examples of two moves occurring in a single sentence. Examples of these are shown in Table 2.8.

There were also cases where a reviewer expressed uncertainty about their recommendation in a comment to the editor, as in:

> I was not sure whether my recommendation should be 'reject' or 'resubmit with major revision'. I think the author can potentially redo the paper in a way that will be of interest to readers, but (as I note in the review), this will involve redoing his/her study and writing an essentially new paper.

In the actual review this comment was reframed for the author as:

> If the author were to redirect his/her study, I think the findings could be of interest and value to ESPJ readers. It would involve, however, doing essentially a new study and paper.

The reviewer then provided the author with a long list of suggestions, in the case that they decided to do what they had advised.

The Reject Reviews

In the reject reviews the most frequent move was Move 3, Points of criticism, which occurred in all the reviews. Thus, in every case, reviewers explained why they had recommended that the article not be accepted for publication. Often this move was extremely long, in one case six full pages of criticism. After this, the most frequent move was Move 1, Summarizing judgement, which occurred in 20 of the 27 reviews. Move 4, Conclusion and recommendation, was less frequent, occurring in only 13 of the reviews and Move 2, Outlining the article, was even less frequent, being present in only 6 of the 27 reviews. These occurrences of moves are summarized in Table 2.9.

The only obligatory move in the reject reviews, then, was Move 3, Points of criticism. The fact that Move 4, Conclusion and recommendation, was not present in all the reviews does not mean however that the reviewers did make a recommendation. On all occasions the reviewers had clicked the 'reject' box when asked by the online system for their recommendation on the submission. Sometimes, however, they used the Comment to Editor box to be more frank and make more direct comments than those that were written for the author, as in:

> This paper is fatally flawed.
>
> No amount of rewriting or reanalysis will redeem it in my opinion.
>
> This article seems to be offering little new—it's really just another take on very familiar issues.

There was no typical order of the moves in the reject reports. Some authors started their review with Move 4, as in:

> I recommend that ESP reject this manuscript.

Table 2.9 Summary of moves in the reject reviews ($n = 27$)

Move 1: Summarizing judgement	Move 2: Outlining the article	Move 3: Points of criticism	Move 4: Conclusion and recommendation
20	6	27	13

Others, by contrast, placed Move 4 at the end of the review combining a concluding statement with their recommendation, as in:

> A study taking account of the issues raised above would potentially yield a much more significant discussion, methodology and set of findings. I am afraid, however, I am not able to recommend this submission for publication in ESP Journal.

There were no examples in the reject reviews of more than one move in the same sentence. There were, however, examples of more than one move in the same paragraph. Table 2.10 is an example of this, in this case in the opening lines of the review.

There were also examples of 'good news' followed by 'bad news' (Belcher, 2007), a point that will be returned to later in this chapter. Examples of this are:

> Although the theoretical frame is well expressed and appropriate [good news], the literature review is inadequate, appearing to miss many of the studies that, unfortunately, have already produced the very same kinds of findings that this study turned up [bad news].

and

> I applaud the authors' effort to address reviewers' comments [good news], but I'm afraid this manuscript is still not appropriate for publication [bad news].

In sum, then, it can be seen that each category of review had particular moves that could be considered obligatory for the particular category of recommendation. For example, accept reviews all contained Move 1 in which the reviewer summarized their judgement on the paper. Minor revisions, major revisions, and reject reviews all contained Move 3 in

Table 2.10 Reject reviews: two moves in a single paragraph

Move	Text
Move 4	I recommend that ESP reject this manuscript.
Move 3	It is almost empty in its ten pages and readers would find nothing of value from reading this manuscript.

which the reviewer raised issues they had with the paper. This is not surprising given that in each of these categories of recommendation the reviewers are explaining why they are not recommending publication as is. It is interesting however, as noted earlier, that even accept reviews contained points of criticism that the reviewers expected the author to address before the paper be finally accepted for publication. This could be as simple as a missing reference or it could be a list of matters that still need to be addressed in the submission.

The results of this analysis are similar in some ways to Fortanet's (2008) analysis of reviewers' reports in the areas of linguistics and business organization, except that in her analysis Move 3 was present in all the reviews which was not the case with this study. Fortanet does not explain, however, the category of recommendation of the reviews she examined. It may be that her data did not include accept reviews or, if it did, that there were points of criticism in her accept reviews as well, which was not the case with all the reviewers' reports examined in this study.

The move analysis presented here is somewhat broader than that presented by Samraj (2016b), as her study did not include all categories of recommendation, only major revisions and reject reviews. Notwithstanding, the analysis of the data presented here supports her view that the major revisions reviews appear to have a largely directive function while the reject reviews are more mixed, having more negative commentary and less recommendation units than the major revisions reviews (see Chap. 4, where this is discussed further).

While the sample size of this study is somewhat small and the reviews are only from one specific journal, one point to come out of the analysis is that in all categories of recommendation, authors can expect to be asked to make changes to their paper, even when it is at the point of about to be accepted. And sometimes these requests for changes can be substantial.

The Content of Reviewers' Reports

A number of researchers have discussed the content of reviewers' reports. Coniam (2012) and Woods (2006) discuss the most common matters they comment on in their own reviews of submissions to peer-reviewed journals, whereas Belcher (2007), Gosden (2001, 2003), and Hewings (2004) examine reviewers' reports written by others. A number of researchers have made comments on authors' language the focus of their examination and, in particular, the use of language in the submissions by non-native-speaker scholars. This includes the work of Bocanegra-Valle (2015), Mungra and Webber (2010), Hyland (2016a), Lillis and Curry (2015), Mur Dueñas (2012), and Flowerdew and Wang (2016).

Woods (2006) provides examples of comments he has written on articles he has been asked to review. His categories of commentary include *inadequate methods or explanation of results* (e.g. it is based on a very small, unbalanced sample), *limited or misused data* (e.g. the paper is weak theoretically), *inappropriate journal* (e.g. I wonder if the article would be more appropriate in a psychology journal), and *presentation and style* (e.g. the tone adopted is one of exhortation rather than argument and analysis). Other matters he commented on were *unacknowledged bias* (e.g. the author takes this for granted, so it not explained, nor argued for), *inadequate knowledge* (e.g. the presentation is too simplistic in the light of the existing literature), *limited analysis* (e.g. this article is almost purely descriptive), *inadequate discussion* (e.g. there are dubious arguments, elementary arguments, and unconvincing arguments), and dubious ethics (e.g. I am concerned about the ethics of the approach).

Coniam (2012) carried out a similar analysis, in his case examining 122 of the reviews he wrote for the journal *System*. The areas he most frequently commented on were the *acceptability of claims* (these occurred in 96 of the reviews), *appropriacy of the methodology* (in 79 of the reviews), *appropriate nature of the data* (in 73 of the reviews), and *clarity of the research questions* (in 71 of the reviews). He does not, however, provide examples from the reports to illustrate each of these categories. Gosden (2001, 2003) examined 40 reports written by reviewers on submissions to *Letters*. The most common categories of comment in the reports he examined were *technical detail* (26.9 per cent of the comments), *claims* (19.8 per cent of the comments), *discussion* (30.8 per cent of the comments), *references* (11.5 per cent of the comments), and *format* (7 per cent of the comments).

Hewings (2004) examined 228 reviews for the journal *English for Specific Purposes,* looking at what was evaluated in the reviews. He found the most common of these were comments on *the paper* (22 per cent of the comments), *expression* (20 per cent), *claim* (19 per cent), *analysis* (18 per cent), *goal* (7 per cent), *evidence* (6 per cent), *literature* (4 per cent), *procedure* (2 per cent), and *knowledge* (1 per cent). Belcher (2007) examined 29 reviewers' reports, also submissions to the journal *English for Specific Purposes.* All the reviews she examined were of papers submitted by off-network scholars, that is, authors who were from outside the 'so-called English centre, for example, Australia, the UK and US' (p. 5), both native and non-native speakers of English. Belcher examined both positive and negative commentaries on rejected and accepted papers. The areas of comment that were most frequent were the *topic* of the paper (72 per cent of the reviews were positive and 17 per cent were negative in this regard), *audience* (28 per cent positive, 28 per cent negative), *purpose/problem statement/research questions* (7 per cent positive, 62 per cent negative), *literature review* (14 per cent positive, 52 per cent negative), *methods/research design* (17 per cent positive, 66 per cent negative), *presentation and analysis of results* (10 per cent positive, 41 per cent negative), *discussion/significance* (10 per cent positive, 41 per cent negative), *pedagogical implications* (10 per cent positive, 28 per cent negative), and *language use/style* (21 per cent positive, 90 per cent negative). The most frequent area of positive comment in Belcher's study, then, was the topic of the paper and the most frequent area of negative comment was language use and style. Most areas of comment, however, were largely negative rather than positive.

Belcher (2007) found similar examples of comments to those presented earlier in this chapter where 'good news' was followed by 'bad news', for example, a paragraph that started with 'I find your manuscript … very informative and engaging' followed by several bad news paragraphs where the reviewer makes reference to significant problems with the research on which the article is based. As she points out, 'a good news opening is no guarantee … of a happy ending for the author' (p. 10). Other reviews she looked at had no good news opening and were substantively made up, sometimes unrelentingly, of bad news—and a reject decision.

In the process of analysing her data, Belcher first read her reviews to get a global impression of the frequency of commentary types. She did this to get a sense of which were focused on more, and less, in the reviews. She then identified what seemed to her, as an experienced editor, to be the most common and salient comments in the reviews. She looked at the reviewer guidelines employed by the journal (see Chap. 1) but found that the categories she was observing were more extensive and specific than the areas that were covered in the guidelines. This resulted in the set of categories listed above. Because, however, of the difficulty of deciding where each of the comments began and ended in the reviews, she decided to count the number of reviews that commented on these features, rather than the number of individual comments. The findings she presents, Belcher points out, need to be seen as indicative and only one possible reading of her data. Notwithstanding, they do suggest she says, 'why manuscript authors may respond quite emotionally to reviews' (p. 7), especially when so many of the comments made by reviewers are negative.

In order to continue on from the work of Belcher (2007) this chapter examines the reviews that make up the data set on which this book is based (also from *English for Specific Purposes*) by examining the content of reviewer comments in relation to the review outcomes of accept, major revisions, minor revisions, and reject. Following Belcher, the analysis will be of the number of reviews that commented, positively and negatively, on the features she identified (although not assuming there may not be others), rather than the number of individual comments made in the reviews.

The Accept Reviews

All of the accept reviews, not surprisingly, made positive comments about submissions. They all contained a general positive statement about the paper, as in:

> The author has revised well in response to comments on his/her manuscript. The paper reads clearly; the pedagogical materials and study are interesting; and the work makes a useful contribution to the literature. I believe that the manuscript is now publishable in *English for Specific Purposes.*

Comments such as these were, however, in most cases (7 of the 9 reviews) followed by a comment about language use/style as in:

> My remaining suggestions are few and editorial in nature.

This was then followed by a list of editorial matters that the author needed to address (in the case of this review, 24 items).

Beyond this, positive comments were made about the literature review (two of the reviews), presentation and analysis of the results (two reviews), pedagogical implications (two reviews), methods/research design (one review), and language use/style (two reviews). Two of the reviews also made negative comments about the presentation and analysis of the results. These were, however, extremely minor and may not necessarily have required the author to make any changes. An example of this is:

> I do not quite see the pattern of the lines connecting the various frames in Figure 2. This may be due to a problem in downloading the manuscript, but may be not, so I just mention it in case this needs revision.

One of the reviews made both positive and negative comments (albeit very minor) in the same review. The review started with:

> The manuscript is well documented, well structured and relevant to genre-based ESP/EAP teaching settings. It is also extremely well written

then followed with:

> My only suggestions, since, as I said above, the paper reads extremely well, would be to omit the first part of the title and leave the second part adding another ending

and:

> I would change the name of Table 1 to Figure 1, since it actually contains no quantitative data, and then renumber the other Figures.

Table 2.11 Positive and negative comments in the accept reviews (n = 9)

Text features evaluated	Reviews with positive commentary		Reviews with negative commentary	
Literature review	2	22.2%		
Methods/research design	1	11.11%		
Results: presentation and analysis	2	22.2%	2	22.2%
Discussion/significance	1	11.11%		
Pedagogical implications	2	22.2%		
Language use/style	3	33.3%	7	77.78%

Table 2.11 summarizes this analysis. It needs, of course, in reading this table, to bear in mind the small sample of this set of the reviews (n = 9) and that a figure such as 22 per cent is only referring to two reviews.

The Minor Revisions Reviews

In the minor revisions reviews (n = 22), the areas which received the most positive commentary were the topic of the article (10 of the reviews), the quality of the literature review (7 of the reviews), and the use of language and style of the article (6 of the reviews). The most negative comments focussed on methods and research design (16 of the reviews), language use and style (15 of the reviews), the literature review (12 of the reviews), the discussion and significance of the study (11 of the reviews), and presentation and analysis of the results (8 of the reviews). A further category was added, however, in this stage of the analysis, namely, ‘Clarity’, which was present in eight of the reviews. Comments in this category seemed to be different from language and style in that they were commenting on a lack of clarity on a particular point that was not related to either language or style. Examples of this are:

> ISKDs are referred to without ever being defined or explained

and

> You have explained relational and material processes, but not existential. For consistency, it would be advisable to explain all these terms.

In total, 15 of the reviews contained positive comments whereas all of the 22 reviews contained negative comments. This is not surprising given that the reviewers had recommended minor revisions rather than accept for these submissions. Some of the minor revisions, however, required very little change. For example, one of the reviews only asked for a single change in relation to the literature review:

> I would suggest to the author(s) that they make a brief reference somewhere in the paper to David Russell's Activity theory and genre, and explain how and why the approach that they describe is necessarily different than Russell's.

Some reviews, further, contained both positive and negative comments on the same feature. For example, one reviewer said, with regard to language and style:

> the paper overall is well constructed, clear, and persuasive

then later added:

> There are a few infelicities. … on page 6, on the 3rd line from the bottom, 'little' should be 'few.' There are also a couple of split infinitives on pages 10 and 11 that are a tad awkward.

Other reviews contained both positive and negative comments on the same feature in the same sentence. For example, when commenting on the methodology one reviewer said:

> The level of sophistication of genre analysis is adequate to the task here, although I feel that the application has been somewhat formulaic.

The frequencies and percentages of positive and negative comments in the minor revisions reviews are shown in Table 2.12.

The minor revisions reviews contained comments on a number of areas that did not occur in the accept reviews, that is, in the areas of topic, audience, and purpose/problem statement/research questions. The

Table 2.12 Positive and negative comments in the minor revisions reviews (n = 22)

Text features evaluated	Reviews with positive commentary		Reviews with negative commentary	
Topic	10	45.45%	3	13.64%
Audience	3	13.64%	1	4.55%
Purpose/problem statement/research questions	2	9.09%	3	13.64%
Literature review	7	31.82%	12	54.55%
Methods/research design	1	4.55%	16	72.73%
Results: presentation and analysis	1	4.55%	8	36.36%
Discussion/significance	2	9.09%	11	50%
Pedagogical implications	1	4.55%	2	9.09%
Language use/style	6	27.27%	15	68.18%
Clarity	–		8	36.36%

proportion of reviews that made negative comments on language use and style, however, was lower in the minor revisions reports (68.1 per cent) than in the accept reviews (77.78 per cent).

The Major Revisions Reviews

The most frequent positively commented-on feature of the submissions in the major revisions reviews (n = 39) was the topic of the paper. This was similar, although slightly higher, than the minor revisions reviews. Beyond this, other features positively commented on, but to a lesser extent, were results, the literature review, audience, purpose, and methods. There were no positive comments, however, on discussion/significance, pedagogical implications, language use/style, and clarity. This is different from both the accept and the minor revisions reviews where there was some positive comment (although not a lot) on discussion/significance, pedagogical implications, and language use/style. The areas which received the most frequent negative commentary were the literature review, methods/research design, results, language use/style, and clarity. The high number of reviews which commented on language matters in the major revisions reviews is similar to that reported on by Hewings (2004) and Mur Dueñas (2012) who found a similar level of negative comments on language in this category of recommendation.

Examples of comments in the major revisions reviews were:

> Although linguistic research in the analysis of academic writing is cited, applications of this research in the teaching of academic and research writing are not acknowledged well. This is the main weakness of this paper [Literature review]
>
> My biggest concern is that it appears a true intervention never took place [Methods/research design]
>
> The writer seems to have adopted a deficiency approach to the interpretation of the phenomena observed in the texts [Results]
>
> The paper is very wordy. The authors should focus on brevity [Language use/style]
>
> In reading through the Introduction, a linear flow is missing [Clarity]

There were, further, more negative comments on the literature review in the major revisions reviews compared to the minor revisions reviews, although fewer negative comments on methods/research design compared to the minor revisions reviews. By contrast, there were more negative comments on results compared to the minor revisions reviews. There were fewer negative comments on language use/style than in the minor revisions reviews but more negative comments on clarity than in the minor revisions reviews. The frequencies and percentages of positive and negative comments in the major revisions reviews are shown in Table 2.13.

Examples of negative comments on clarity in the major revisions reviews were:

> The authors know what they did but haven't conveyed the process clearly to the reader.
>
> The authors need to rewrite the paper with a focus on clarity and brevity.

Table 2.13 Positive and negative comments in the major revisions reviews (*n* = 39)

Text features evaluated	Reviews with positive commentary		Reviews with negative commentary	
Topic	18	46.15%	–	
Audience	3	7.69%	–	
Purpose/problem statement/research questions	2	5.12%	3	7.69%
Literature review	4	10.25%	25	64.1%
Methods/research design	1	2.56%	22	56.4%
Results: presentation and analysis	5	12.82%	22	56.4%
Discussion/significance	–		9	23.05%
Pedagogical implications	–		–	
Language use/style	–		21	53.84%
Clarity	–		19	48.71%

This paper was however, on resubmission, rejected with the reviewers making similar comments again about clarity, as well as more substantial matters related to the methodology of the paper and analysis of the data.

Other comments on clarity made on another submission were:

> I don't quite understand your last sentence
> What do you want to convey here?
> The logic of argument in the last paragraph is not clear

These matters, by contrast, were successfully addressed by the author and the paper was subsequently accepted for publication.

There were examples of both positive and negative commentaries (i.e. good news and bad news) in the same sentence in the major revisions reviews, as in:

> While the findings of the paper are interesting [positive comment], a number of shortcomings mean that it is not publishable in its present form [negative comment].

and in adjoining sentences as in:

> The results of the study are carefully presented [positive comment]. My main concern regarding the paper is that the findings seem to be not especially striking [negative comment].

and

> I have the impression that the author is drawing on a body of information which it may have taken some time to amass [positive comment]. However, I feel that the literature referred to has not always been well-digested and that the diverse quotes do not always lend themselves to the advancement of a consistent and coherent line of argument [negative comment].

In terms of language issues, the major revisions reviews contained comments such as:

> I do not feel that its 'literary' quality is yet at an acceptable publication level. The language is at times in a fairly colloquial register and I would encourage the author to consider a slightly more formal tenor.

and

> Have the English proofread by an experienced native speaker (I know this is easy to say and can be hard to do, but there are so many errors and infelicitous things here that it is way beyond a list of typos from me).

One of the reviewers, interestingly, addressed the matter of language in her review of a submission on non-native English speakers writing for publication thus:

> This paragraph gives the impression that when a paper written by NNES is not accepted for publication, this is mostly due to linguistic aspects; that is, the paper is poorly written. Although it is well known that badly written articles correlate with a high rejection rate, the idea expressed in this paper is an obvious oversimplification since several studies conducted by medical researchers themselves have shown that the scientific quality, soundness,

> and/or rigour of papers submitted for publication is the main reason for accepting or rejecting a paper. Other main determinants of an article's fate are its high methodological quality, the presence of RCT (randomized clinical trial) study design, descriptive or qualitative analytical methods, relationship between the experimental design, the results and the conclusion, and the paper's originality. A recent study (Ehara & Takahashi, 2007) even indicates that language problems are not a major reason for rejection. (at least in the *American Journal of Roentgenology*)

This is a position that is supported by researchers such as Belcher (2007), Bocanegra-Valle (2015), Burrough-Boenisch (2003), Gosden (1992), Hewings (2006), Lillis and Curry (2015), and Mungra and Webber (2010). Mungra and Webber (2010), for example, carried out a study where they looked at reviewers' comments made on submissions to international medico-scientific journals written by Italian authors, finding that the feedback they received could be equally made to native speaker authors. Examples of areas of commentary in the reviews they examined were an incomplete review of the literature, a lack of association between claims and the data, a lack of procedural rigour in the research, a lack of explanation of why data were unusual, and scientific reasoning errors in researchers' own data. Belcher (2007), similarly, argues that factors such as a lack of knowledge of the topic, relevant research literature, research methods, textual conventions, audience expectations, and access to resources may play a more important role than whether the author is a native speaker of English or not. Hewings (2006) found that when comments were made about language in reviewers' reports, these comments were not confined to texts written by non-native speakers. Bocanegra-Valle (2015) presents a similar view in a study that examined reviewers' recommendations for language improvement, arguing:

> deficient or excellent use of the English language does not portend the respective rejection or acceptance of a proposed submission.... A detailed examination of reviewers' comments suggests that other factors outweigh a poor use of English in the final decision for acceptance or non-acceptance. (p. 225)

Lillis and Curry (2015), in their reporting of second-language scholars' attempts to publish in English, found that although many of the reports they examined contained comments about language, language by itself was not a reason for the dismissal or rejection of an article. Indeed, the acceptance of non-standard forms of English in published research articles seems to be increasing with English language proficiency no longer the absolute barrier to academic publishing than it may once have been. Rozycki and Johnson (2013), for example, report on a study where they examined non-canonical use of English in prize-winning papers in *IEEE Transactions* in the fields of software and hardware engineering. They found it was sometimes difficult to distinguish between papers written by native and non-native speakers of English. The only paper that was error-free in their corpus, further, was written by a non-native rather than a native speaker of English. Indeed, most authors that publish engineering research internationally, they point out, are non-native speakers of English as were the Best Paper award winners whose work they examined (see Lillis & Curry, 2015, for further discussion of non-native speaker authors and peer review; Flowerdew & Wang, 2016, for a critique of the Rozycki & Johnson, 2013 study).

The Reject Reviews

Twenty-seven of the reviews had recommended that the submission be rejected, in one case after two rounds of revisions and another after a first revision. Eight of the reviews is this set of reviews were for papers written by native speakers of English and 19 by non-native speakers of English. The papers that were rejected after revision were both written by native speakers of English.

The frequencies and percentages of positive and negative comments in the reject revisions reviews are shown in Table 2.14. As can be seen in this table, some positive comments were made about the topic, audience, purpose, and methods in several of the reviews. This was counterbalanced, however, by many of the reviews making negative comments about the methods, results and discussion and significance of the studies reported on. Examples of comments in these areas include:

Table 2.14 Positive and negative comments in the reject reviews (n = 27)

Text features evaluated	Reviews with positive commentary		Reviews with negative commentary	
Topic	3	11.1%	–	
Audience	2	7.4%	1	3.7%
Purpose/problem statement/ research questions	2	7.4%	3	11.1%
Literature review	–		9	33.3%
Methods/research design	1	3.7%	21	77.7%
Results: presentation and analysis	–		16	59.2%
Discussion/significance	–		13	48.1%
Pedagogical implications	–		–	
Language use/style	–		5	18.5%
Clarity	–		2	7.4%

> There are methodological problems with the study, For example, the study does not contain explicit research questions or hypotheses. [Methods]
>
> The results should have been presented more clearly with the inclusion of tabular data. [Results]
>
> Yang and Allison's (2003) study is taken as an analytical framework, but no discussion is provided regarding what this study does that Yang and Allison's study does not. [Discussion and significance]

In stark contrast with the reviewers' reports making other recommendations, however, only 5 of the reject reports commented on language and only 2 of the reports commented on clarity. The language-related comments included suggested rephrasings of sections of text (3 reviews), minor editing for language (1 review), and comments on sentence construction (1 review). Not all of the papers that received comments on language use, however, were written by non-native speakers of English. Two of these papers had been written by native speaker authors. None of these reviews, however, mentioned language as a reason for rejection of the papers (see Lillis & Curry, 2015, for further discussion of reviewers' responses to language in their reports).

The main reasons for rejection, then, in the reject reviews were to do with methodology, presentation and analysis of results, and discussion of the findings. This concurs with the views presented earlier in this chapter that language-related matters were not considered a key issue for rejection with the submissions in the set of reviews that were collected for the study.

Positive and Negative Comments in All the Reviews

Table 2.15 summarizes positive and negative comments across all of the reviews. The most frequent area of positive comment across all the reviews was the topic of the article. This was outweighed, however, by many more negative comments on methods and research design, presentation and analysis of the results, language use and style, the review of the literature, and clarity of the submission.

These frequencies vary from Belcher's (2007) study where she found many more positive and negative comments on the topic and audience of the papers in her data set, more negative comments on purpose/problem statement/research questions, more positive comments on method and research design, more positive and negative comments on pedagogical implications, and many more comments on language use and style. This is, of course, the result of the different set of reviews she examined which were based, in turn, on a different set of submissions from those that were examined in this study. The areas where there was, however, some level of comparability between this and Belcher's study were negative comments on the review of the literature, method and research design, presentation and analysis of results, and discussion and significance of the study. This suggests that these are areas that authors need to pay particular attention to as they are matters which are frequently commented on in negative terms in reviewers' reports, especially in minor revisions, major revisions, and reject reports.

The analysis presented in this section of the chapter contrasts with reviews of published books (see Chap. 1) which are typically much less negative than reviews of journal articles and book endorsements which are always supportive of the book (see Chap. 1). Grant proposal reviews, however, can be equally as negative as reviews of journal articles (see Chap. 1), as can reviews of book proposals (depending on the proposal) and retention-promotion-tenure applications (depending on the application).

Table 2.15 Positive and negative comments in all the reviews (N = 97)

Text features evaluated	Reviews with positive commentary		Reviews with negative commentary	
Topic	31	31.9%	3	3.09%
Audience	8	8.24%	2	2.06%
Purpose/problem statement/research questions	6	6.18%	9	9.27%
Literature review	13	13.4%	46	47.4%
Methods/research design	4	4.12%	59	60.82%
Results: presentation and analysis	8	8.24%	48	49.48%
Discussion/significance	3	3.09%	33	34.02%
Pedagogical implications	3	3.09%	2	2.06%
Language use/style	9	9.27%	48	49.48%
Clarity	–		29	29.89%

Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the very particular context of reviewers' reports, the typical discourse structure of the reports and areas of positive and negative commentary in the accept, minor revisions, major revisions, and reject reports. The accept reviews all contained a 'Summarizing judgement' move and, frequently, a 'Points of criticism' move. This may surprise some authors who might expect an accept decision to require no further changes to their submission. A 'Points of criticism' move, not surprisingly, occurred in all the minor revisions, major revisions, and reject reviews. The most frequent areas of criticism across all the reviews focused on methods and research design, presentation and analysis of results, language use and style, the review of the literature, and clarity of the submission. Language use and style and clarity were commented on more frequently, however, in the accept, minor revisions, and major revisions than in the reject reviews where these areas were focused on very much less, suggesting that the issue of language was rarely given as a dominant reason for rejection.

All of this suggests that the reviewers had learnt what matters most in making judgements in this particular context as they took on the role of experts and behaved in expected ways in their performance (Butler, 1990) of their role as reviewers of submissions to peer-reviewed journals. That is, they had learnt how to perform the role and identity of peer reviewers as, through the use of language, they presented themselves to authors and, of course, the editors of the journal. As they did this, they indexed (Ochs, 1992; Strauss & Feiz, 2014) their membership of the community of practice of peer reviewers as they performed and positioned themselves (Devitt, 2015b) through the genre of the reviewer's report.

Membership of the community of peer reviewers, then, is achieved by performing the ways of doing (and ways of using language) which fit with that of expert members of the community (English & Marr, 2015), that is, through the 'set of repeated acts' (Butler, 1990, p. 33) that are both reaffirmed and displayed by the repeated use of these acts (Cameron, 2014) in accordance with the community's norms, values, conventions, and expectations for the particular genre (Tseng, 2011). These acts of identity (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985), thus, both displayed and confirmed membership of the group as the reviewers participated in the community of practice of reviewers of submissions to academic journals, a group which has 'its own beliefs, categorisations, sets of conventions and ways of doing things' (Hyland, 2012a, p. 11) (see Paltridge, 2015, for further discussion of language, identity, and communities of practice; Jones, 2016, for a discussion of discourse communities more broadly).

3

Pragmatics and Reviewers' Reports

This chapter examines the reviewers' reports from a pragmatics (Birner, 2013; Chapman, 2011; Huang 2014; Levinson, 1983; O'Keefe, Clancy, & Adolphs, 2011) point of view. In particular, it looks at how reviewers ask for changes to be made to submissions drawing on shared understandings of the relationship between literal meanings and intended meanings as they do this. The aim of this analysis is to give academic authors an understanding of the way in which they need to read reviewers' reports. The chapter argues that many of the comments that reviewers make in their reports need to be read in ways other than their literal meaning might suggest. The analysis is then considered in relation to the responses the reviewers gave in the questionnaires about their experience in doing peer reviews and how this impacted on the ways in which they wrote their reports. The reviews are also considered in relation to the language background of the reviewers in terms of whether they were native or native speakers of English as this has been suggested by previous research as something that might affect how they wrote their reviews.

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Pragmatics and Discourse

Pragmatics is interested in the relationship between language and context, in the sense that how context gives rise to particular readings and interpretations of texts. It also looks at ways in which people typically perform speech acts (such as suggesting or criticizing) through their use of discourse (Robinson, 2006). Pragmatics, then, is the study of meaning in relation to the context in which the discourse takes place. Pragmatics, further, assumes that when people communicate with each other they normally follow some kind of co-operative principle (Grice, 1975), that is, they have a shared understanding of how they should co-operate in their communications.

The relationship between linguistic form and communicative function is of particular interest in the area of pragmatics. People need to know (or rather recognize) the communicative function of an utterance, that is, what it is 'doing' in the particular setting in order to understand how they are expected to respond to it. For example, if a reviewer says 'the logic of the last paragraph is not clear' they are not just making a statement of fact, but they are also asking the author to do something, that is, re-write the paragraph so the logic is clearer.

An understanding of how language functions in context, then, is central to an understanding of the relationship between what is said and what is intended to be understood in a text (Strauss & Feiz, 2014). The *context of situation* (Halliday, 1989, 2009) of what someone says, therefore, is crucial to understanding and interpreting the meaning of texts. This includes the physical context, the social context, and the mental worlds and roles of people involved in the interaction. Each of these impacts on what people say and how other people interpret what is said in a text. The linguistic context, in terms of what has been said and what is yet to be said, also has an impact on the intended meaning and how someone may interpret this meaning in a particular text (see Paltridge, Starfield, & Tardy, 2016 for further discussion of the relationship between text and context).

There are a number of key aspects of context that are crucial to the production and interpretation of texts. These are the *situational context* and features of that situation (see Chap. 2), the *background knowledge* *context,* and the *co-textual context* (Auer, 2009; Cutting, 2008) of the text. Background knowledge context includes cultural knowledge and interpersonal knowledge. That is, it includes what people know about the world, what they know about various areas of life, what they know about each other (Cutting, 2008), and what they know about the norms and expectations of the particular *discourse community* in which the communication is taking place. Contextual knowledge also includes social, political, and cultural understandings that are relevant to the particular communication (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). As Thomas (1995, p. 22) explains:

> meaning is not something that is inherent in the words alone. … Making meaning is a dynamic process, involving the negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer [in the case of reviewers' reports, between writer and reader], the context of utterance (physical, social and linguistic), and the meaning potential of an utterance.

Speech Acts and the Interpretation of Texts

Two works that are central to understanding the production and interpretation of texts are Austin's (1962) *How to Do Things With Words* and Searle's (1969) *Speech Acts.* Austin and Searle argue that language is used to 'do things' other than just refer to the truth or falseness of particular statements. Their work appeared at a time when logical positivism was the prevailing view in the philosophy of language. The logical positivist view argued that language is always used to describe some fact or state of affairs and, unless a statement can be tested for truth or falsity, it is basically meaningless. Austin and Searle observed that there are many things that people say which cannot meet these kinds of truth conditions but which are, nevertheless, valid and which do things that go beyond their literal meaning. They argued that in the same way that people perform physical acts, they also perform acts by using language. That is, they use language to give orders, to make requests, to give warnings, or to give advice; in other words, to do things that go beyond the literal meaning of what they say.

A central issue which underlies this is the relationship between the literal meaning of what someone says and what the person intends by what they say. Thus, if someone says ‘I do not quite see the pattern of the lines connecting the various frames in Figure 2’ (an example cited in Chap. 2) they are not just saying they cannot see something, but they are also requesting someone (i.e. the author) to do something, that is, connect the lines. What people say, then, often has both a literal meaning and an illocutionary meaning, that is, a meaning which goes beyond what the person, in a literal sense, has said.

Austin argued that there are three kinds of act which occur with everything people say. These are the *locutionary act*, the *illocutionary act*, and the *perlocutionary act.* The locutionary act refers to the literal meaning of the words (such as ‘I do not quite see the pattern of the lines connecting the various frames in Figure 2’ referring to a problem in how the Table has been drawn). The illocutionary act refers to the writer’s intention in saying this (i.e. a request to make a change to the text). The perlocutionary act refers to the effect this utterance has on the thoughts or actions of the other person (i.e. the author making the change). Often indirect speech acts of this kind are used for reasons of politeness where a particular speech act (such as criticism or disagreement) may be seen as impolite and threatening to the other person’s face (see Chap. 4 for further discussion of this, also Leech, 2014a).

Writers of reviews on submissions to peer-reviewed journals, then, often say things indirectly. That is, they often intend something that is quite different from the literal meaning of what they have said in their report. All of this makes reviews difficult for beginning authors to decode, a point that will be returned to later in this chapter.

A further important notion in the area of speech act theory and pragmatics is *presupposition* (Delogu, 2009; Levinson, 1983). Presupposition refers to the common ground that is assumed to exist between language users such as assumed knowledge of a particular situation. A speaker (or in this case a writer) says something based on their assumption (or presupposition) of what the hearer (or reader) is likely to ‘know’ and what the reader will infer from what they say. That is, communication ‘takes place against a background of beliefs and assumptions shared, or presumed to be shared’ (Delogu, 2009, p. 198) by participants in the interaction.

Presuppositions, then, are crucial to an understanding of what people mean by what they say in spoken and written discourse.

A further key notion in the area of pragmatics and textual interpretation is, as mentioned earlier, the *co-operative principle*. Grice (1975) argued that in order for a person to interpret what another person says, some kind of co-operative principle must be assumed to be in operation. People assume, he argued, that there is a set of principles which direct people to a particular interpretation of what someone says, unless they receive some indication to the contrary. The co-operative principle says people should aim to make their contribution 'such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction' (Grice, 1975, p. 45) of the exchange in which they are engaged. Thus, people base their understanding of what a person is saying on the assumption that they are saying what needs to be said, rather than more than needs to be said, they are saying it at an appropriate point in the communication, and they have a reason for saying what they say.

Grice based his co-operative principle on four sub-principles, or maxims. These are the maxims of quality, quantity, relation, and manner. The maxim of quality says that people should only say what they believe to be true and what they have evidence for. Grice's maxim of quantity says people should make their contribution as informative as is required for the particular purpose and not make it more informative than is required. The maxim of relation says people should make their contribution relevant to the interaction, or they should indicate in what way it is not. His maxim of manner says people should be clear in what they say, they should avoid ambiguity or obscurity, and they should be brief and orderly in their contribution to the interaction. People, thus, expect a person's contribution to an interaction to be genuine, neither more nor less than is required, as well as clear and appropriate to the interaction. Grice argues that people assume other people are following these maxims and combine this with their knowledge of the world to work out what is meant by what is said.

In order to do this, Grice argued people draw on a process that he calls *implicature*. Conversational implicature refers to the inference a person makes about another person's intended meaning that arises from their use of the literal meaning of what they say, the conversational principle and its maxims. To calculate an implicature, Grice argues, hearers (and in this case readers) draw on the conventional meanings of the words, the co-operative principle and its maxims, the linguistic and non-linguistic context of the utterance, items of background knowledge, and the fact (or the assumption) that all of these are available to participants in the interaction and everyone assumes this to be the case (see Chapman, 2011; Lakoff, 2009; Papi, 2009 for discussions of implicature). While Grice was speaking about conversational interactions in his discussion of these matters they, of course, equally apply to writers and readers (and in the case of this book, reviewers, editors, and authors) although what it takes to make sense, as Lakoff (2009, pp. 109–110) notes, 'to be seen as co-operative, appears to differ from one kind of discourse to another, based on participants' understanding of the underlying purposes of the discourse type in which they are involved'.

The Language of Reviewers' Reports

A number of researchers have examined the language of reviewers' reports. Kourilova (1998), for example, examined commands, hedges, and compliments in reviewers' reports of articles submitted to medical journals. She found that criticism is more direct and less hedged in reviewers' reports than in other forms of academic writing. There were, she found, more examples of blunt criticism than hedged criticism in the reviews that she examined. This is partly due, she suggests, to the difference in power relations between reviewers and authors in the context of peer review. Also, given that reviewers are very often anonymous, they are able to be more direct and authoritative than they would perhaps be in other situations (Kourilova 1998). She argues that attacks on the quality of an author's work in more public domains like lectures and conference presentations are extremely face-threatening and may be considered offensive by the disciplinary community. Peer review, however, is much less public, she argues, and blunt critique of this kind is not only more possible but indeed common.

The ways in which reviews are written, further, can make it hard for beginning academic authors to know what they need to do to improve their paper due to conflicting signals they often receive in reviewers' reports (Gosden, 2003). For example, a reviewer might describe a paper as 'interesting' and 'carefully studied' then say that it was hard to find the point of the research. Gosden (2001) gives examples of this, arguing that the 'good news/bad news' nature of reviewers' reports (referred to in Chap. 2) can often be confusing for authors and make it hard, especially for beginning academic writers, to decode the reports.

Reviewers of journal articles, then, are often seen as gatekeepers within the academic publishing community. As Leki (2003, p. 103) argues, there is a 'tangle of social relationships' between reviewers, editors, and authors in the writing for publication process. In her view, reviewers rather than the editor are the key people who determine a paper's publication success (or not). It is important, then, to examine what reviewers say in their reports, as dealing with this is crucial to an author's chances of getting their paper published.

This section of the chapter, then, focuses on the ways in which reviewers asked for changes to be made to the papers they reviewed. As Thomson and Kamler (2013) point out, it is not always clear to academic authors what reviewers' comments actually mean. In their words:

> When writers receive reviewer comments we may not yet even know the journal codes and often wonder: What do they mean? However, when we read real estate ads, we understand there is a code. 'Renovation potential' means it's a dump. 'First home buyers' dream' means it's a dump. 'Original condition' means it's a dump. (pp. 137–138)

Further, as Kwan (2013, p. 213) points out:

> Many first-time writers are confused, discouraged or even shocked by the negative reviews they receive and the substantial revisions requested. … Some never attempt to revise and resubmit their work that reviewers see as having potential for publication.

A problem for beginning academic authors, then, is that what reviewers say cannot always be understood literally. Their comments need to be interpreted by considering both the linguistic and non-linguistic context of what was said and combining this with more general background knowledge of the particular event (Grice, 1975), that is, of the peer-review process and the role that reviewers' reports play within this process. This is complicated further when writers and readers of reviews do not share the same linguistic backgrounds. For example, Thomson and Kamler (2013) point out, quoting Rottier, Ripmeester, and Bush (2011), that when a British reviewer writes 'I would suggest' this is very often a requirement, not a suggestion. Dutch writers, however, they argue, would understand 'I would suggest' as meaning they have the option to make the change or not; that is, Dutch authors, they say, would see it as a suggestion. Similarly, when a native English-speaking reviewer writes 'Please consider' they are not saying it is up to the author as to whether they should act on the comment or not. The reviewer actually means that the author should do what they are saying. By contrast, a Dutch reader would interpret 'Please consider' as meaning it is up to them as to whether they do what was asked for or not. Individual reviewers, further, often have their own particular way of saying what they think that should be done in order to improve a submission (Belcher, 2007; Thomson & Kamler, 2013) which can complicate matters even more.

Speech Acts and the Reviewers' Reports

In order to commence the analysis of the language of the reviews, a speech act analysis (Sbisà, 2009) was conducted of the ways in which the reviewers had asked for changes to be made to the submissions. These were classified into kinds of speech act (such as a direction or suggestion), whether the speech acts were direct or indirect, and the relation between the occurrence of the speech acts and the category of recommendation that had been made by the reviewer. The experience of the reviewers who had written the reviews was also considered as was as the language background of the reviewers in relation to their speech act use.

The texts were examined, in the first instance, to see whether there was an item such as 'suggest' or 'recommend' that might indicate a particular speech act (Searle 1969) such as a suggestion or recommendation, or items such as 'change' or 'delete' that might suggest the speech acts was a direction. The rate of occurrence of each of the speech acts was then calculated in relation to the outcomes of the reviews, that is, accept, major revisions, minor revisions, or reject. The proportion of direct and indirect speech acts was then calculated for each of the categories of speech act that had been identified.

The speech acts where reviewers asked for changes fell into four main categories: *directions*, *suggestions*, *clarification requests*, and *recommendations.* These request for changes were then considered in terms of whether they were mostly direct or indirect speech acts. In the case of directions, for example, *Reanalyze your data* is an example of a direct speech act as the literal meaning is the same as the intended meaning of what has been said. By contrast, *Research question 1 has not been dealt with in the paper* is an example of an indirect speech act, as the literal and intended meanings do not match each other. Thus, *Research question 1 has not been dealt with in the paper* is not just a statement of fact but is also telling the author to make a change to their submission; that is, it is a direction. *Below are some references to intercultural communication I suggest you familiarize yourself with* is, on the surface, a direct speech act (a suggestion) as it contains the performative verb 'suggest'. It is more likely, however, that the reviewer intended the author to read the references that were referred to in the report and incorporate them into the paper, making it an indirect speech act, a direction, rather than a suggestion. Similarly, *It would be worth citing a more recent volume* may sound, to an author, like a suggestion but it is most likely, from the reviewer's point of view, a direction to do something, making it also an indirect speech act. *Clarify what is meant by 'business discourse'* is an example of a direct speech act performing a clarification request. Here, the literal and intended meanings of what was said are a direct match with each other. However, *Are you saying that bilinguals are naturally more creative than monolinguals?* is an indirect speech act. The reviewer is not asking a question but is wanting the author to clarify something. *I recommend a thorough re-write of the paper before submission* contains the performative verb 'recommend' and, on the surface, would seem to be an example of a direct speech act performing the function of a recommendation. The reviewer is, however, most likely telling the author to do a thorough re-write of their paper before re-submitting it, making it also a direction, rather than just 'recommending' a re-write.

The frequency of the speech acts of *directions*, *suggestions*, *clarification requests*, and *recommendations* was then calculated in each category of recommendation, accept, minor revisions, major revisions, and reject. These frequencies were normed per 500 words so as to make the frequencies comparable across all the texts and not be affected by the different lengths of the texts (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998) which, as stated earlier, varied considerably.

The highest proportion of directions occurred in the accept reports (8.5 per 500 words) and the fewest directions in the reject reports (0.8 per 500 words). Across all of the reviews, however, directions occurred less frequently (3.8 per 500 words) than suggestions, clarification requests, and recommendations, when combined together as a single category (4.04 per 500 words). There were, further, equal numbers of suggestions and clarification requests across all of the reports (2.0 per 500 words for each category) and recommendations were much less frequent (0.04 per 500 words). There were no recommendations, at all, in the accept reviews.

Across all the reviews, there were almost as many directions occurring as direct speech acts (2.0 per 500 words) as indirect speech acts (1.8 per 500 words). There were, however, more direct speech acts (7.6 per 500 words) performing the function of directions rather than indirect speech acts (0.9 per 500 words) in the accept reviews. Indirect speech acts predominated in suggestions (1.5 per 500 words) and clarification requests (1.6 per 500 words); however, across all the reviews recommendations were performed, in every case, by an indirect speech act, that is, even though reviewers used the word 'recommend', their intention was most likely for the author(s) to so something in particular with the submission, making the speech act a direction rather than a recommendation.

Returning to the earlier discussion of the co-operative principle and how reviewers' reports work in relation to this, one can assume that reviewers follow the maxim of quality in that they say what they believe to be true and what they have evidence for. Or, if they are not completely sure, they might use a *hedge* (Hyland, 2005a) to show they are aware of this principle. The following is an example of this where the reviewer adds the word 'quite' to withhold their complete commitment to what they say:

I don't quite understand the last sentence.

Another reviewer added 'seems to' in the following example for the same reason:

> The author seems to have adopted a deficiency approach to the interpretation of the phenomena

And 'perhaps' is added in another example to show this as well:

> The methodology seems quite solid but is perhaps described in a bit too much detail.

In terms of following the maxim of quantity, reviewers by and large seemed to avoid referring to matters that they assume to be already part of the common ground so as to avoid redundant, non-informative statements. That is, they make their contributions as informative as is required for the particular purpose and not more informative than is, on the occasion, required. If they are not sure of this however, they might use a hedge to show they are aware of this maxim, as in:

> I might be stating the obvious, however.

Very often, though, reviewers don't hold back on providing detail in their reviews, as they clearly do not see the information they are providing as either redundant or obvious (i.e. to the authors).

Reviewers observe the maxim of relation by making contributions that are relevant to the task they are undertaking, or indicate in what way it is not by using hedges such as 'I don't know if this is important, but' to show they are aware of this expectation. Reviewers also make comments that reflect the maxim of relation in reaction to papers they are reviewing by saying, for example:

> This paper covers an interesting topic of clear relevance to readers of the journal

and

> This paper has significant features that make it a potentially useful contribution to the literature.

At times, however, a reviewer might make a negative comment suggesting that an author has not handled this maxim well in their submission. Examples of this are:

> There are a number of logical non-sequiturs and gaps in the reasoning process

and

> This manuscript has largely ignored key issues for a study of this type.

The final maxim, that of manner, seems to be most striking in the reviewers' reports. This maxim requires that reviewers be clear in what they say and avoid ambiguity or obscurity in their reports. The very high use of indirect speech acts referred to above, however, shows that this is not always the case.

As Strauss and Feiz (2014) observe, when writers write they need to provide sufficient information so that their reader will be able to make sense of what has been said by:

> not providing too much information, not providing too little information, providing relevant connections, and expressing content and ideas clearly. (p. 223)

It seems, however, that this is not always the case with reviewers' reports, especially in relation to the changes that reviewers want authors to make to their submissions so that, in their view at least, the papers are of a standard that is acceptable for publication in an international peer-reviewed journal. It is not the case, however, that reviewers' reports are the only genre where this is the case. A study of PhD examiners' reports carried out by Starfield et al. (2015), for example, showed that these texts can be equally ambiguous and interpreting what changes need to be made in order to achieve success can be just as difficult. Starfield et al. found, for example, there was a high level of modality in examiners' reports with modal verbs such as *should, could,* and *would* and adverbs such as *perhaps, probably,* and *certainly* being used to express degrees of certainty or to withhold certainty, as in:

> You should strive to use more references when making significant statements. (p. 140)
>
> Some correction is probably needed. (p. 140)

Similar to this study, Starfield et al. (2015) found the use of imperatives when examiners tell a student to do something and interrogatives where they are asking for further clarification. Examples of this are:

> Reword this paragraph in full sentences with full stops (p. 141) [an imperative used as a directive]
>
> Can the candidate expand on the explanation for the disparate responses between the genotypes? (p. 141) [an interrogative used as a directive]

As Starfield et al. (2015) point out, this lack of clarity can lead to misinterpretations and frustrations for PhD students, something that can be equally said about reviewers' reports on submissions to peer-reviewed journals.

Similar examples of indirect speech acts can be found in reviewers' reports on research grant applications. For example, in the following comments on the grant application referred to in Chap. 1, each of the statements and questions in these comments are intended to be read as directives to incorporate these 'suggestions' into the project.

> The proposed workshops could be expanded or clarified to apply the benefits of the project across the sector as a whole, rather than to specifically targeted institutions.
>
> The researchers might reconsider their outcomes. Is it that the area is small that a multi-authored book is not envisaged? Would they consider convening a symposium to bring international scholars to Australia as a desirable outcome and an opportunity to debate international best practice? Further, there is scope to produce on line materials for future reference and a question about what happens to the data after the completion of the study.

We recognized this in our reading of the assessor's report and replied thus in the rejoinder that we wrote on the reports:

> The assessor recommends that the workshops we propose be aimed at the sector as whole, rather than just the institutions where we carried out the research. We will make these sector-wide workshops part of the end of project symposium referred to above.
>
> The assessor suggests we extend the outcomes of the project to include a multi-authored book and a symposium where we present the results of our research, as well as bring in international experts to debate best practice in this area. This assessor also suggests we develop online materials based on the research results. We will include each of these as project outcomes.

In Hyon's (2011) study of tenure and promotion letters, she found examples of writers showing their awareness of the maxim of quantity saying:

> Although I am in danger of repeating myself, I would rather be too explicit than too subtle. Unless Dr X increases her scholarly output in respected journals, she is in danger of not being promoted and tenured. (p. 401)

This writer (the Department Chair) clearly wants readers to understand this is a criticism that is being made. The Dean, in a summing up statement, however, hedges in the following comment making it sound like a suggestion when in reality it is anything but:

> She may wish to pay heed to some of the suggestions found in both department level reviews concerning the content of certain courses. (p. 403)

Reviews of book proposals can be equally indirect. For example, in a review of a proposal for a book (Paltridge, 1997) based on my PhD thesis a reviewer said:

> Is it really necessary to present the systemic functional concept of genre in such detail? It reads much like a student's summary paper on this concept of genre.

I took this as a directive to remove this material from the book, indeed a whole chapter—which I did. A further statement in the review was also meant to read as a directive:

> If one claims to present an overview of the main approaches to genre analysis, one should not reduce existing approaches to genre analysis to justify these approaches. There are major linguistic and semiotic traditions of genre analysis which are missing in the discussion.

On the basis of this comment I wrote a new chapter that had not been in the proposal and which expanded the view of genre I was presenting in the book (see Paltridge, 2017 for further discussion of this).

Experience of the Reviewers

Most of the reviewers who took part in the study and who completed the questionnaire were experienced reviewers (in contrast with Belcher's 2007 study where most of the reviewers were inexperienced in writing reviewers' reports). The reviewers ranged from having written reviews from 3 to 30 years. Two of the respondents who had three years' experience in doing reviews had reviewed two to three submissions per year during that time (in total, not just for *English for Specific Purposes*) while one had written five to eight reviews over the three years. The majority of the reviewers had, however, written many more reviews than this. The reviewer who had been doing reviews for 30 years, for example, had written 20–25 reviews per year and a reviewer who had been reviewing for 25 years had written an average of 10–12 reviews per year. Thus, while there were some relatively inexperienced reviewers in the study, the majority of the reviewers who took part in the study were very experienced. Notwithstanding these differences, the less-experienced reviewers' reports were not substantially different from the reports written by the more experienced reviewers in terms of the speech acts they used and whether they were predominantly direct or indirect when they asked for changes to be made to submissions.

One of the reviewers explained why the comments he made in his reviews were often not as direct as they might have been. In his words:

> The most challenging aspect of writing a review is how to strike a good balance between being strict and being kind. On the one hand you feel that you need to maintain a high standard and point out as many problems as possible so that an article can meet the high publication standard of a journal. … On the other hand, you feel that you have to frame your review in such a way that an author, especially a new author, wouldn't feel that you are shutting him/her down or discouraging him/her excessively. I always end up spending a fair amount of time reframing comments so that my report would look as courteous as possible.

He also said:

> I also find it hard to say 'reject' even though I know in my heart that a project is fundamentally flawed. What I usually do is point out as many problems as possible about the article. I then add something like 'I encourage the author to revise and resubmit', although I am not sure some of the problems in this manuscript can be solved merely through the revision process.

When asked what the most challenging aspect of writing a review was, another reviewer simply said:

> Being about to say 'no' to an author gently.

A further reviewer added:

> I do often spend quite a bit of time re-reading and revising to try to keep the review supportive in tone.

These comments suggest why reviews' reports are often indirect, in that they often make suggestions and recommendations, and ask for clarification, rather than being more direct in what they say.

Language Background of the Reviewers

Forty-three of the reviewers who took part in the study were native speakers of English and 14 were non-native speakers of English. While there were not as many non-native speaker reviewers as there were native speaker reviewers, there were, however, differences in the two sets of reviews. In particular, the non-native speaker reviewers typically used fewer indirect speech acts than the native speaker reviewers when they requested changes to be made to submissions. One possible reason for this is suggested by second-language acquisition research which has argued that with high proficiency second-language users (which the non-native speaker reviewers in the study would be), their linguistic competence is often more developed than their pragmatic competence (see Beebe & Waring, 2005). As a result, the non-native speaker reviewers were sometimes not as indirect as the native speaker reviewers when they asked for changes to be made to submissions. One of the non-native speaker reviewers suggested that he was indeed aware of this when in his questionnaire response, he said:

> Being a non-native speaker I always find it hard not to sound too harsh in my reviews.

Belcher (2007), in her study of reviewers' reports, makes a similar observation. She found that some of the non-native speaker reviewers in her study were quite blunt when they were criticizing an author's work. This could, of course, be a matter of personal style. For example, one native speaker reviewer used direct speech acts to ask for changes in all of the reviews he wrote whereas another native speaker reviewer used indirect speech acts consistently to do this in his reviews. None of the non-native speaker reviewers, however, wrote reviews that contained only indirect speech acts. Beyond this, as with Burrough-Boenisch's (2003) research, there were not any specific differences in the kinds of things that the native and non-native speaker reviewers commented on in their reports.

Discussion

There were, then, many occasions where the reviewers used indirect speech acts in the reports that they wrote which required the author to work out what the real intention of the reviewer was. The example below from one of the reviews, thus, is not just a statement of fact but is meant to be read as a direction to do something:

> The quote by Nystrand is repeated from page 10

In the same way,

> the paper does not provide any explicit recommendations for the advancement of ESP teacher education based on the findings of the study

and

> the author provides no conclusion

are meant to be read as directions to make changes to the submission and are not just statements of fact.

In the case of suggestions, there were many cases where they were intended to be read as directions, as in:

> I suggest that the claim be removed unless it can be warranted by more convincing data from the interviews.

Equally, there were examples of recommendations that were meant to be read as directions:

> The author does not demonstrate familiarity with a body of recent literature on advanced academic writing, including dissertation writing, that specifically examines the role of groups in the writing process but is not solely focussed on the non-native speaker. I recommend that the author familiarize him/herself with, for example

This also occurred with clarification requests where a statement of fact was intended to be read as a direction:

> The term academic literacy should be defined as it is not clear how the author is using the term.

The reviewers' reports, then, contained a good number of suggestions, clarification requests, and recommendations that also functioned as directions. This is underlined by a comment made by one of the reviewers when he was commenting on a paper he had previously reviewed, in saying:

> It is still not clear to me why the major changes I have suggested have not been done.

It is clear, then, that, he saw his 'suggestions' as directions.

O'Keefe, Clancy, and Adolphs (2011) argue that it is often the case that suggestions are in fact directives. This is especially the case if the person who is doing the suggesting is in a position of power over the other person, which is the case with reviewers of submissions to peer-reviewed journals. Gosden (2001) discusses the unequal power relations that exist between reviewers and authors in describing the peer-review process as an 'unequal exchange'. If an author wants to get their paper published they will very often do what the reviewer asks, rather than resist the reviewers' requests (see Paltridge, 2016 for an example of this). When authors write their response to reviewers, they often commence by using a positive politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987) by thanking the reviewer, as in:

> Thank you for your critical comments and helpful suggestions. (Gosden, 2001, p. 11)

If the author has not been able to (or does not want to) address all the matters raised in the reports they may say:

> We have done our best to rewrite our article according to your suggestions. (Gosden, 2001, p. 11)

The author will then explain what changes have not been made and why they have not been made. There is a cost however, Gosden argues, of not taking account of the status of reviewers. If an author wishes to resist what the reviewer has said, it needs to be done in a polite and professional manner (Feak, 2009; Swales & Feak, 2011), even if some of the comments the reviewers have made may not seem to be polite. There is, further, the matter of the extent to which authors (especially beginning authors) feel that they are able to challenge criticisms that have been made of their work and, to what extent, they feel they can resist requests for changes to their submissions. And if they decide to do this, how they might most successfully resist these requests, without getting off-side with the reviewers, especially when reacting to reports that they consider to be lacking in politeness.

There is, further, the matter of how impolite a review might seem. In Culpeper's (2011, p. 111) view 'impoliteness is a scalar notion'. That is, something may be very impolite, rather impolite, or somewhat impolite, for example. And there are some contexts where impoliteness is 'licensed' or seen as being normal, such as in parliamentary debates (see Harris, 2001; Leech, 2014b). Some of the comments in the reviews that were collected for the study were, indeed, blunt and could be easily read by an author as being impolite. For example:

> the resubmitted paper did not present a convincing argument that adds to understandings about

and

> I recommend that ESP reject this manuscript. It is almost empty in its ten pages and readers would find nothing of value from reading this manuscript. … The literature review provides nothing of value to an interested reader and builds no detailed awareness of what could be a potentially useful topic.

Interestingly however, one reviewer said, when asked about issues he faced in writing reviewers' reports:

> I received many viciously-worded reviews when I started publishing and decided at the time that I would not be like them. We do our best work when we are prodded gently, not hit over the head with hammers!

Another reviewer said:

> On two occasions, I have received what I regard to be uncivil comments, and have made sure I don't do the same!

When asked what she found the most challenging aspect of writing reviews, a further reviewer commented:

> Expressing any negative evaluation in a way that will be useful to the author, and that will encourage him or her to keep working on getting the manuscript published. I try to imagine what it would feel like to be the recipient of my comments.

These comments, then, could perhaps explain why reviewers often framed their comments as suggestions, clarification requests, and recommendations when asking for changes to be made to submissions. They could be doing this in order to save the author's face (Brown and Levinson, 1987), even if they really mean to criticize the author and require that changes be made to the submission (see Chap. 4 for further discussion of politeness and the reviewers' reports).

Conclusions

This chapter has examined the way in which reviewers ask authors to make changes to their submissions and the typical speech acts they use to do this. It is often the case that reviewers are indirect in the ways that they ask for changes to be made and that very often, what might seem to be a suggestion, a recommendation, or a request for clarification is indeed not one. It is, rather, a direction where the reviewer wants the author to make, usually very specific, changes to their submission. All of this may seem obvious to experienced authors and, of course, to editors. This is not so obvious, I would argue, to beginning authors.

When I teach writing for publication I take copies of the reviews I have received on my published papers to class to show my students. They find this extremely useful as they rarely get to see these texts and especially of publications submitted by someone they see as being a successful author in the field (see Chap. 7 for suggestions for how reviewers' reports might be usefully drawn on in reviewer training courses).

Even though a review might be short and it might be blunt it does not necessarily mean that the paper is not ultimately publishable. Below is a response I received from a journal editor some years ago on a paper I had sent to his journal. It read:

> Your paper has now been evaluated. It did not survive on to the editorial committee's shortlist of articles for publication in 2006.

That was it. There was no reason given for the rejection and there were no reviewers' reports. I have since, however, published the work from that paper elsewhere (see Paltridge, Thomas, & Liu, 2011).

There are, of course, a number of limitations to the analysis described in this chapter. The authors' actual submissions, whether original or revised, were not available to me for the study. I also did not have access to the responses they wrote to the reviewers' reports or the communications between the editor and author(s). I am therefore not able to judge the extent to which authors took up reviewers' requests for changes in their papers or not. I didn't (or wasn't able to) analyse, in Lillis and Curry's (2015, p. 130) words, the 'sets or clusters of reviews relating to each paper and the consequences of these clusters' in reviewers' and editors' uptake of the papers, as Belcher (2007) Englander (2009), and Lillis and Curry (2010) have done in their work. I was not, as a result, able to see the process through which those that achieved publication did this, or the individual advice, beyond the reviews, that editors gave to authors that did not. This is especially important with regard to the analysis presented in this chapter. Context, as Jones (2016) points out, is dynamic and something that is negotiated over the course of interactions between participants. It also includes the histories of the people involved and the relationship between them. Quoting Derrida (1984), Jones (2016, p. 100) points out that 'what creates the illocutionary force of a speech act is not just the way a person's words interact with the context in which they are uttered, but rather, the way the utterance connects the present context to previous contexts', that is, the connections between current and previous iterations of the speech act (Derrida, 1984; Jones, 2016). The reviewers' views, further, were limited largely to questionnaire data, although I was able to carry out follow-up email interviews if there was a matter I wanted to pursue in more depth (see Chap. 6 for examples of this).

The issue of the intended reader of the reviews is also an important one. While the reviews were written to be passed on to the author, the online platform used by the journal, as mentioned in Chap. 2, also has the option for reviewers to submit comments on submissions to the editor (only). I did not, however, have access to all these extra comments so I am not able to see to what extent the reviewers made comments to the editor about which parts of their review they considered more important to be addressed than others. This does, though, complicate matters further. Sometimes an editor may tell an author directly which comments they can disregard in a review or which issues they should make the main focus of a re-submission. When this occurs, it makes the author's task easier in terms of decoding the reviews they receive. Many times, however, the letter that editors send to authors use the same face-saving strategies as reviewers do when they present criticisms to authors. Flowerdew and Dudley-Evans (2002) found exactly this in their study of editors' letters to international journal contributors (in their case, the journal *English for specific purposes*, also the focus of this study). They argue that this intent on the part of editors to save an author's face (see Chap. 4) may, in fact, lead to further confusion for authors.

It also needs to be pointed out that the analysis presented in this chapter is based solely on just a single feature in single reviews, a limitation pointed out by Hewings (2004) and Lillis and Curry (2015). And, of course, the frequencies referred to earlier in the paper need to be treated with caution (Baker, 2013). What was seen in this genre in the use of indirect speech acts to save an author's face may, of course, be typical of other genres as well. Certainly, face-threatening acts of this kind are often performed (in English at least) through the use of indirect speech acts with the aim of minimizing the threat to the other person's face that criticisms entails (Brown & Levinson, 1987). There is, however, no large-scale reference corpus (Reppen & Simpson, 2002) which focuses on the speech acts identified in the study that can be used to compare the results of the study with so we can see to what extent this is the case (see Aijmer & Rühlemann; 2014; Weisser, 2014 for a discussion of what the development of such a corpus entails).

4

Politeness and Reviewers' Reports

The previous chapter examined the reviewers' reports from the point of view of speech act theory. This chapter considers the reports in terms of theories of politeness (e.g. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Kádár & Haugh, 2013; Leech, 2014b; van der Bom & Mills, 2015; Watts, 2003). While the use of indirect speech acts is a strategy writers might use to save the face (Goffman, 1967) of an author who is being criticized for their work, there are many other strategies reviewers might use to achieve this purpose, such as apologizing ('I am sorry to have to') and impersonalizing an issue ('It is generally not acceptable to'). Examples of these (and other) politeness strategies are examined in this chapter.

The reviews are also examined to see whether there are any gendered differences (Belcher, 2001; Sunderland, 2004) in terms of politeness in the reports. The reviews are then considered from the point of view of politeness as social practice (Haugh, 2013) in which participants (in this case reviewers and authors) understand what is polite and what is impolite (Watts, 2003) in the particular context of a reviewer's report. For example, the chapter considers whether something such as disagreement which is referred to in the pragmatics literature as a face-threatening act

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(Huang, 2014) is indeed one in the context of reviewers' reports, that is, whether face-threatening acts which are typical of reviewers' reports are intended to be read, not as criticisms but, rather, as requests for improvement in such a way that will enable an article to meet a journal's standards for publication (Fortanet, 2008).

Politeness and Face

Two key notions in the area of pragmatics are *politeness* and *face*. The notion of face comes from Goffman's (1967) work on face and from the 'folk' notion of face which ties up with notions of being embarrassed, humiliated, or 'losing face' (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Huang (2012) describes face as the basic need of individuals in a society to have self-respect, that is, 'the public self image that an individual claims for him- or herself' (p. 113). In order to maintain social relationships, Brown and Levinson (1987) argue, people need to acknowledge the face of other people. Thus, people seek to make other people feel good, thereby maintaining their *positive face*. People also, at the same time, avoid treading on each other's physical territory, field of knowledge, or friendship, thus maintaining the other person's *negative face*. As people do this, they draw on particular *positive politeness strategies* which show closeness, intimacy, rapport, and solidarity and *negative politeness strategies* such as giving the other person choices and allowing them to maintain their freedom (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Politeness and face, thus, are important for understanding why people choose to say things in particular ways in spoken and written discourse.

Although Brown and Levinson's work on politeness was published some time ago, it is still seen as fundamental to theories of politeness (Christie, 2015; Kádár & Haugh, 2013), even though it has been criticized for overstating its initial claims to universality (Mills, 2003), not sufficiently analysing interactions between participants (Haugh, 2007; Haugh & Obana, 2011; Kádár & Haugh, 2013) and not examining how meaning is constructed over longer stretches of discourse (Mills, 2011; van der Bom & Mills, 2015). It has also been argued that their work does not take account of the perceptions of people involved in the interaction in terms of what they judge to be polite or not (Haugh, 2007; Kádár & Mills, 2011; van der Bom & Mills, 2015) and overlooks the importance of culture in making politeness decisions (Song, 2012). It is, further, important to consider the situated context (Fukushima, 2015; Haugh, Davies, & Merrison, 2013) in which the language occurs, as politeness is constructed by people through their use of language. Politeness, further, is dynamic rather than static, being assigned 'to an utterance in the process of an interaction' (Christie, 2015, p. 362).

Politeness strategies and co-operative principles (see Chap. 3), however, are often in conflict with each other. There are also situations in which one principle might become more important than another. For example, a reviewer may devote a lot of space in their report to delivering 'bad news' on a submission (see Chap. 2) which, in some contexts, may seem to be flouting (Huang, 2014) the maxim of quantity, to be sure they have said all they need to say about the paper for it to reach a required standard for publication. In this case, the reviewer expects the author to realize they are doing this on purpose with the anticipation that the author will recognize this infringement and the reasons for it (Huang, 2014).

Scollon, Wong-Scollon, and Jones (2012) and Jones (2016) discuss politeness in terms of *involvement* and *independenc*e. Involvement refers to the need people have to be involved with others and to show this involvement, that is, a person's right and need to be considered a normal, contributing, supporting member of society—in other words, to be treated as a member of a group. People might show this involvement by showing their interest in someone, by agreeing with them, or by approving what they are doing. Independence refers to a person's right not be dominated by others, not to be imposed on by others, and to be able to act with some sense of individuality or autonomy. People might do this, for example, by not presuming other people's needs or interests, by giving people options, by not imposing on other people, or by apologizing. In order to maintain social relationships people acknowledge both of these aspects of a person's face at the same time. People thus aim to build up closeness and rapport with each other, while at the same time trying to avoid being a threat to each other's social distance, that is, maintaining each other's involvement and independence.

There are a number of involvement strategies that people use when they interact with each other and which are particularly relevant to the context of peer review. An example of this is when a reviewer might say 'This is a really interesting study', intensifying their interest in what the author has done or 'I really like this approach to examining the data', expressing approval for the methodological choice an author has made. A further example would be 'I hope the author will agree that these changes are needed' where the reviewer seeks agreement with the author. At the same time, the reviewer might seek to avoid disagreement with the author by hedging as in 'I am not sure if I have understood what the author wants to say'. A reviewer might presuppose or assert common ground with an author by saying 'As I am sure the author will agree' or they might express sympathy and understanding by saying 'I know this is a lot of work, but I hope the author will agree to make these changes'.

Examples of independence strategies are when a reviewer is indirect when suggesting that the author make a change to their submission (see Chap. 3). A reviewer might avoid presuming or assuming by asking a question such as 'Would the author be able to'. The reviewer might also try to minimize an imposition on the author by saying 'I just wonder if the author could'. Further examples of negative politeness strategies are when a reviewer writes 'I am really sorry to say this' or indicates reluctance by saying 'I hesitate to make this comment'. A reviewer may also impersonalize a statement by using the plural 'we' rather than 'you' as in 'We don't generally show statistical measures in that way' or they may state an imposition as a general rule by saying 'Authors are expected to use APA formatting for all their Tables'.

The specific nature of face and politeness, however, varies from society to society, from culture to culture, within certain subgroups of societies, between languages (Bargiela-Chiappini & Kádár, 2010; Haugh, 2012; Huang, 2014; Kádár & Mills, 2011; Mills & Kádár, 2011) as well as from situation to situation. Gu (1990) discusses politeness in relation to Chinese culture while Ide (1982) and Matsumoto (1988, 1989) discuss politeness in Japanese. Gu sees politeness in Chinese not so much in terms of psychological wants but rather in terms of social norms. Face is threatened, he argues, not when someone's needs are not met but when someone fails to live up to social standards (see Kádár & Pan, 2011 for a discussion of politeness in China). Ide sees politeness in Japanese as something which helps to maintain communication. In Japanese, politeness is less strategic and more a matter of socially obligatory linguistic choices through which social harmony is achieved (Eelen, 2001) (see Haugh & Obana, 2011 for a discussion of politeness in Japan). It is important to remember, then, that the use of language from a politeness point of view varies across cultures and in relation to the social realities of these cultures (Leech, 2007, 2014b). As English and Marr (2015, p. 53) note, 'all cultures have strategies for performing politeness, sometimes encoded verbally and sometimes not'. While some of these strategies, they suggest, may appear rather complicated and others might seem rude, it is important to remember that, in cross-cultural contexts, strategies for performing politeness can easily be misread. They also point out the importance of not over-generalizing about politeness norms and strategies. Norms, they point out, are just that, norms. This does not mean, they say, 'that everyone abides by them or even follows them' (p. 53). And, as Watts (2003, p. 252) observes, 'not everyone agrees about what constitutes polite language usage' and what does not.

Politeness and Gender

Cameron (2007) discusses politeness and gender at length. Her work reveals that the relationship among gender, politeness, and language is complex and depends on what we mean by 'polite' as well as which women and men are being compared and the setting or *community of practice* (Wenger, 1998; Paltridge, 2015) in which the interaction takes place, that is, the particular local conditions in which the man or woman is speaking (Cameron, 1998). In her book *Gender and politeness,* Mills (2003) points out that context has an important role to play in terms of whether what someone says is interpreted as polite or not. This communities of practice (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, 2007) view of politeness and gender is also discussed by Christie (2002) who looks at politeness and gender in parliamentary debate in the UK. Christie argues that while there are many instances of men and women publicly criticizing, ridiculing, and challenging each other in parliamentary debates, these are not so much instances of gender-specific impoliteness but rather *politic verbal behaviour* (Watts, 2003). In this case, Christie argues, insults, for example, are part of the discourse expectations of a good parliamentary speaker, regardless of whether they are male or female. She also found in her data that female Members of Parliament rarely apologize, a finding that runs counter to other, more general politeness and gender research that suggests that women apologize more than men. Indeed, politeness and gender research suggests that it may not always be a person's gendered identity that is the most salient in a particular situation but perhaps some other aspect of their identity that more influences their linguistic behaviour (Mullany, 2002; Swann, 2002). It is also important to remember that a community of practice does not exist in isolation from other cultural groups and cultural values. There are always connections between individuals, groups, social norms, and communicative practices. None of these work in isolation from the other. There will, further, always be a range of norms and views on appropriateness within a community of practice and, indeed, within a culture as a whole (Mills, 2008).

Face-Threatening Acts

Some acts (such a complaining and criticizing) 'threaten' a person's face. These are called *face-threatening acts*. In most circumstances a person will want to minimize the threat of such an act. A person may, equally, employ a 'face-saving act'. A face-saving act which is oriented towards a person's negative face or their independence might express deference or emphasize the importance of the other's person's concern. It might even express reluctance or include an apology. That is, it might use a number of Brown and Levinson's (1987) negative politeness strategies. A face-saving act which is oriented towards a person's positive face or involvement might express closeness or solidarity and emphasize that both speakers have the same goal.

According to Brown and Levinson when we perform a face-threatening act, we chose from a number of strategies. Thus, in the context of peer review, a reviewer may choose to do the act 'on-record' without using any politeness strategy by saying, for example, 'Delete this section of the text'. Or the reviewer may perform the act on-record but with a positive politeness strategy as in 'I hope the author will agree to delete this section of the text'. A reviewer may also perform the act on-record but use a negative politeness strategy such as 'Could the author delete this section of the text?' Alternately, a reviewer might perform the act off-record by the use of an indirect speech act as in 'This section of the text seems out of place' or they may do nothing at all. The choice of which strategy to use, however, is not always in a fixed order as all of this might suggest. People choose which strategy to use by considering factors such as social distance, power relations (see Jones, 2016), and degree of imposition. We then, Brown and Levinson argue, calculate the degree of face threat that needs to be compensated for by the use of an appropriate strategy. These matters, however, also differ across cultures and context (see above, also Haugh, 2012; Song, 2012) as, for example, when an author and reviewer are from different cultural backgrounds. This is especially complex when the author and the reviewer do not know each other's identity and, in turn, their cultural backgrounds. What may be a face-threatening act in one culture, further, may not be seen as the same in another. Also, what might be seen as polite, in a person's first language could be seen as rude in another (Wijayanto, Laila, Prasetyarini, & Susiati, 2013). The linguistic encoding of the strategies people use to address face-threatening acts, thus, sometimes varies enormously, across languages and cultures (Leech, 2007, 2014b).

Belcher (2007) describes some of the mitigation strategies reviewers employ to deal with the face-threatening act of criticism in their reports, such as using a good news first/bad news later frame (see Chap. 2), praise/criticism pairs, hedging (see Chap. 5), taking personal responsibility for a comment, metadiscoursal bracketing (see below), and indirectness (see Chap. 3). Hyland (2000) argues that these kinds of strategies are often used to mitigate criticism in published book reviews, for example, and save the face of the author. For example, as an example of a praise/criticism pair, a book reviewer might say:

> I found the book quite strong on low-level policing issues, but less convincing on the nature of drug trafficking. (Hyland, 2000, p. 56)

Or the reviewer may hedge their comments as in:

> Much of the text is not particularly easy to read. (Hyland, 2000, p. 56)

A reviewer may take responsibility for a comment by saying:

> Personally, I would like to have seen more attention paid to the ambiguities. (Hyland, 2000, p. 57)

Reviewers might bracket off negative comments from the general positive flow of the review, as in:

> One small criticism would be that. (Hyland, 2000, p. 59)

And they might choose to offer limited praise as a way of indirectly making a criticism, as in:

> This is in many respects a good book. (Hyland, 2000, p. 60)

Reviewers' reports, however, tend to be rather less polite than this with much less obvious effort being made to mitigate the face-threatening acts of criticism compared to more public responses to academic work, such as published book reviews. Notwithstanding, Belcher argues, reviewers should not give up attempts to mitigate criticism in their reports. At the same time, however, they should not overly encourage authors to revise their work when there is clearly an inappropriate topic choice or a flawed research design that no amount of revision can address.

Politeness and Reviewers' Reports

McPeek et al. (2009), in an editorial to the journal *The American Naturalist*, provide the following golden rule of reviewing:

> Review for others as you would have others review for you. (p. E155)

As they continue, all authors want a thorough, fair, and constructive critique of their manuscript, and we all, like Blanche DuBois, depend on the kindness of strangers to do this for us.

Logue (2015) in a chapter titled 'Rules for referees' makes a similar comment:

> Treat every paper you are asked to referee as you wish your papers were refereed. (p. 167)

Both of these comments underline the importance of providing helpful and constructive comments in reviewers' reports, and in a way that will help the author move forward with their work, rather than permanently discourage them from writing for publication. Some of the reviewer comments referred to in Chap. 3 reflect this view, repeated again here:

> I received many viciously-worded reviews when I started publishing and decided at the time that I would not be like them.
>
> I have received what I regard to be uncivil comments, and have made sure I don't do the same!

Reviewers, thus, should provide a critique that is positive, balanced, and critical yet objective. It should avoid personally offensive comments and indicate what the problems are and how they might be overcome (Benos, Kirk, & Hall, 2003). As Benos et al. (2003, p. 48) point out:

> A confusing or uninformative critique is not helpful either to the authors or to the editor.

All of this underlies the importance of politeness in reviewers' reports and of reviewers providing constructive criticism to authors, regardless of whether the manuscript is acceptable for publication or not (Provenzale & Stanley, 2006).

The Accept Reviews

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, all the accept reviews expressed solidarity (Scollon, Wong-Scollon & Jones, 2012) with the authors by expressing approval of what the author(s) had done. Typical examples of this are:

> The author has revised well in response to comments on his/her manuscript
> The author has done very nice work revising this manuscript.
> The author has revised the manuscript thoughtfully.

Two of the reports elaborated on this as in:

> The introduction and literature review display a broad, sophisticated knowledge of the relevant fields and concepts. The case study itself is original and at the cutting edge in terms of the field's development. The writing is clear and concise.

and:

> The manuscript is well documented, well structured and relevant to genre-based ESP/EAP teaching settings. It is also extremely well written.

One of the reports intensified interest by saying in the comment box for authors:

> This is an excellent piece of work in all respects

and continued with this in the comments box for editors, adding a few minor revisions that could be made to the manuscript:

> This is an outstanding piece of work, almost a model for the kinds of papers we want. As I note in my blind comments to the author, it is excellent in all respects. It certainly satisfies all five of the criteria we reviewers are asked to use in our assessment. I do note, however, a need to clarify the key terms. I have inserted comments in the manuscript to this effect. If any trimming needs to be done, I would suggest it come from the middle section of the paper, before the case study.

These minor amendments were then elaborated on in the comments to the author.

Six of the nine accept reviews aimed to minimize the imposition they were making on authors in relation to the changes they required as in the following examples:

> My remaining suggestions are few and editorial in nature
> There are a few minor language points to clear up
> I have two requests of the author in the interest of strengthening an already fine paper.

One of the reviews contained an example of metadiscoursal bracketing with the reviewer 'rhetorically announcing their presence in the text' (Hyland, 2000, p. 59) as they made a point of criticism, bracketing their comment from the otherwise overall positive review:

> I recommend that, with some attention to editing, this paper be accepted for publication.

There were only a few instances of indirectness in the accept reviews employed as a politeness strategy with most of the changes to submissions being asked for directly (see Chap. 3 for further discussion of this) and a small amount of hedging.

One of the reviewers used the comments box to explain their judgement on the submission they had reviewed:

> Some may argue against the publication of manuscripts of this kind which are focused on one single student and, accordingly, contest the conclusions for being based on just one student. However, to this it may be argued that, if done properly, as I find it is with the current paper, this type of article may be quite relevant. This is because the author manages to present a thorough study of a fairly advanced student who is able to benefit from a complementary course in academic writing even though she already seems to have a significant knowledge on academic English nuances, genres and rhetoric.

The reviewer did not, however, raise this issue with the author, leaving it to the editors to make their own decision as to whether they would accept this point of view (which they did) or not.

The Minor Revisions Reviews

All but one of the minor revisions reviews expressed approval of the authors' submissions, whether it was a first review of a paper, as in:

> The study is interesting and the paper is well written.
>
> I enjoyed this paper for a number of reasons. … As well, the paper overall is well constructed, clear, and persuasive.
>
> This is a very good article, which builds on previous work on lexical bundles. … The author is suitably tentative where necessary

or a revised submission that was being commented on:

> The responses to the reviewers' comments on the revised submission are gracious, considered and detailed. It is now a much stronger paper
>
> The article is much improved from the previous version and the authors have taken the feedback into consideration in making revisions.

All of these comments however came as part of praise/criticism pairs, where a positive comment was followed up by a comment in which the authors were asked to make further changes, as in the examples below:

> The paper is interesting, well written and well structured. To my standpoint the review of the literature is comprehensive enough. I believe it will be of interest to the broad readership of the journal. I have a few comments to make, though, which the authors could address in the final version of their paper.
>
> This paper is well written and acceptable to English for Specific Purposes with minor revision in my opinion. This classroom-based study was carefully designed and its findings are encouraging to the classroom teachers. However, I do have a few suggestions for the author to consider.
>
> I think your paper reads a lot more clearly now that you have made changes as suggested. There are still a few little things that I think would improve the readability of your paper.
>
> The paper presents ideas of interest to the field. Editing of the paper for issues of style and grammar will also make the paper stronger and clearer.

These criticisms were not, however, especially strong, in keeping with the recommendations the reviewers had made of minor revisions.

Only two of the minor revisions reviews intensified their interest in the paper:

> The argument is powerful, and the authors very articulate.
>
> It is wonderfully written with the key points easy to follow and well made

while three of the minor revisions reviews asserted common ground with the author:

> We need to be reminded that plagiarism is more of a learning issue than one of intentional theft or deception.
>
> I agree that in addition to contributing to the EAP genre studies literature, this kind of study provides an invaluable insight into hidden academic processes
>
> I wholeheartedly agree that professors need to be made more aware of the nature of the expectations they hold for student writing

Two of the minor revisions reviews aimed to minimize the imposition on the authors that changes to their paper would take:

> These revisions are much smaller in scope than the revisions needed on the previous version
>
> It would have been better if the authors included an interview or survey of current MA students in the three programs about where they got the information about how to write the statement of purpose. But I know that's a lot to ask, and the authors can pursue it as part of their future, larger-scale studies.

and one of the minor revisions reviews avoided presuming or assuming, as in:

> I think there's a mislabelled sub-heading in Table 5. Should 'Genre' read 'Discipline'?

In terms of other mitigation devices (Hyland, 2000) five of the minor revisions reviews took personal responsibility for their comments, as in:

> My other comments involve my own beliefs and experience in the academic writing of bilingual students.
>
> A larger question, in my opinion, is the limited acknowledgement of the role of power and privilege in academe.

Reviewers hedged their comments more than they did in the accept reviews:

> Perhaps the author could state more explicitly that it is the addressing of this first question that forms the focus of the paper.
>
> It might be useful to say at least a little bit about the role of intentionality and conscious use of the elements described here

Two reviews contained examples of metadiscoursal bracketing:

> While the tables are clear, a more summarizing comparison between the differences in the two domains might be helpful.
>
> I have two requests of the author in the interest of strengthening an already fine paper.

There were, however, many more instances of indirectness being used as a politeness strategy than in the accept reviews. Indeed, in the minor revisions reviews changes to submissions were more often asked for indirectly as suggestions, clarification requests, and recommendations than as directions (see Chap. 3 for further discussion of this).

Five of the 22 minor revisions reviews made asides to the editors where they elaborated on their reviews, as in:

> I think the paper should ultimately be accepted or rejected on the basis of how well the authors provide concrete and principled recommendations emerging out of their study.
>
> The author has attended to all my concerns, in a very thorough way, so provided these small things are attended to I don't think I need to see this manuscript again.

I think this manuscript is—despite its limitations as outlined in my author comments—original enough, and interesting enough, to merit publication, especially as it is clear and well written. I would really like the author to give careful consideration to addressing some of my concerns, especially those to do with power/privilege factors. If she/he does so, at least briefly, I would recommend publication.

The Major Revisions Reviews

All but six of the major revisions reviews contained some politeness strategies. The most common politeness strategy was expressing approval which occurred in 33 of the reviews. Examples of this are:

> This paper represents a useful addition to the literature on applications of SFL to the teaching of research writing.
>
> This paper covers an interesting topic of clear relevance to readers of English for Specific Purposes. The issue of how ESP teachers deal with technical content is also an area in need of research.
>
> The topic is of interest to teachers at tertiary and other levels as group work can be used in almost all circumstances regardless of the discipline involved. This kind of classroom based research can be very valuable and also can give students and teachers added value in their lessons.

These expressions of approval always occurred at the start of the review with, in all but one case, no further positive commentary on the paper.

The expressions of approval ranged from 5 words as in:

> The methodology seems quite solid

to 140 words:

> This paper is located in significantly under-researched areas within the language teacher cognition literature: ESP as content, non-Western teaching and learning contexts, and the socio-cultural dimensions of teacher cognition. It presents a clear case for examining interactive teacher decision-making related to lack of knowledge in the content area. The pedagogical

implications of this lack of knowledge are not always frankly and thoroughly addressed in ESP teacher education courses. The use of stimulated recall procedures centred around critical episodes in actual lessons is an appropriate methodology, and the transcribed excerpts from the lessons and the stimulated recall interviews provide the reader with direct access to the data. It is important to hear the voices of Chinese teachers (and students) of English, and useful to see in-context examples of the culture of the Chinese language classroom and how it impacts on pedagogy.

This approval, however, was, in two of these reviews, slightly withheld by the use of hedging such as 'may' and 'might' as in:

I think a good case study may be here

Some ESP educators might be interested in how ESL/EFL nursing students' use stress coping strategies.

In nearly all cases, though, the expressions of approval were followed by negative comments on the paper (in 24 of the reviews) or requests for changes (in nine of the reviews). Thus, all but six of the major revisions reviews contained praise/criticism pairs (Hyland, 2000) with the criticism component of the pair in very case far outweighing the praise component of the review.

The only other politeness strategy to occur in this set of reviews was apologizing which was seen in only three of the major revisions reviews:

I regret not being able to simply recommend publication

I regret to say that a number of the points [the paper] raises need to be substantially revised

Unfortunately, I find myself having to conclude that this study has yet to distinguish itself from other 'uncritical and oversimplified treatments' of the issue

One of the reviewers also apologized in an aside to the editor:

I feel sorry to have to give the above recommendation to resubmit after major revision for this paper. The author has clearly made a great number of changes to try and accommodate the reviewer's suggestions. However, the more closely I read the paper, the more problems I seem to find.

A number of the reviewers, however, took personal responsibility for their views, more so than in the minor revisions reviews, as in:

> I think the subject of this article would be of interest to the readership of the journal
>
> In the view of this reviewer, more revisions, some easy to accomplish, and others not, should be made
>
> According to my view, the article is worth publishing after major revisions.
>
> This was a very well written paper and I found it very interesting to read.

By contrast with the minor revisions reviews, changes were more often asked for directly than indirectly in the major revisions reviews although indirectness was still a feature of some of the reviews (see Chap. 3 for an elaboration on this).

Thus, in this category of review, the most common politeness strategy was expressing approval which, in every case, was in a praise/criticism pair where the criticism component of the pair outlined the changes, very often substantial, that needed to be made to the paper in order for it to be publishable in the journal.

The Reject Reviews

As with the other categories of review, the most common positive politeness strategy in the reject reviews was expressing approval which occurred in 14 of the 27 reviews. In every case, this approval was followed by criticisms, often extensive, making praise/criticism pairs (Hyland, 2000) the most common politeness strategy in the reviews. Examples of this are:

> I applaud the authors' effort to address reviewers' comments but I'm afraid this manuscript is still not appropriate for publication
>
> While the author of this paper has to be lauded for taking on the large and impossible topic of culture, the manner in which the issues relating to it get dealt with are problematic
>
> The ms is very well written and organized and presents interesting, though not particularly new, findings.

Thirteen of the reject reviews, however, opened directly with criticism, often quite blunt, which was not softened by the use of a politeness strategy, as in:

> This manuscript is not ready for publication. It does not have a clear focus, and needs quite a lot of developing before it is publishable.
>
> I doubt that the author's treatment of the topic would be of interest to ESP professionals, mainly because the review of literature and references are very limited as the author does not show familiarity with research that has already been done in this field.
>
> I recommend that ESP reject this manuscript. It is almost empty in its ten pages and readers would find nothing of value from reading this manuscript. The title is actually promising, but that is about all that can be said positively for this manuscript.

A number of the reviewers apologized for their recommendation, as in:

> I am afraid I am not able to recommend this submission for publication
>
> I'm sorry that the review is negative.
>
> The ms has, regrettably, largely ignored what would seem to be key issues for a study of this type

These apologies were rather rare with only four of the 27 reviewers doing this.

Hedging was at about the same level as in the major revisions reviews, although less than in the accept or the minor revisions reviews (see Chap. 5 for further discussion of hedging in the reviews). Examples of this are:

> It may be there in the data but the write up does not do a good job of making it salient
>
> A more careful and thorough reading of the literature might allow the author to see better how this study might make a unique contribution to the disciplinary discussion that would advance our understanding of L2 students' enculturation/appropriation processes

As with the major revisions reviews, reviewers frequently took personal responsibility for their view in the reject reviews as in:

> To my mind it is always positive when research challenges stereotypes and certainly stereotypes of East Asian students need to be challenged.
>
> I believe this author shows a great deal of promise as a qualitative researcher but that a more careful and thorough reading of the literature might allow the author to see better how this study might make a unique contribution to the disciplinary discussion that would advance our understanding of L2 students' enculturation/appropriation processes.

Where changes were proposed to papers in the reject reviews, while there were not many compared to the other categories of view, they were more often proposed indirectly as suggestions and clarification requests than as directions (see Chap. 3). This is perhaps not surprising when the overall recommendation for these reviews was reject rather than major, minor reviews or accept.

Fourteen of the 27 reject reviews contained an aside to the editors which were not visible to the authors. This was many more than in the other categories of recommendation. Very often these asides were much more blunt, and less polite, than the actual review showing the reviewers' awareness of the rejection of a submission as a face-threatening act (Flowerdew & Dudley-Evans 2002). These asides, in all cases, contained 'bad news' (Belcher 2007) on the submission. Examples of this are:

> This paper is fatally flawed. The questionnaire with 10 yes/no questions is inadequate for exploring the concepts under discussion. No amount of rewriting or reanalysis will redeem it in my opinion.
>
> The flaws at the methodological and argumentative level are so serious that I don't think that a thorough revision of the article could make it publishable.
>
> The article in general lacks a perceptive restructuring of existing knowledge and does not have an extensive review of the literature that can reflect the author's familiarity with and sophistication in the subject matter field (for example, thesis research, peer feedback). Neither the reporting nor the treatment of data can meet accepted standards. The conclusion carries very little substance and is on the whole very poorly written.
>
> The questionnaire with 10 yes/no questions is inadequate for exploring the concepts under discussion. No amount of rewriting or reanalysis will redeem it in my opinion.

> I found this article confusing. There is limited mention of this previous research but it is not sufficiently fore-fronted or linked to the framework used.

Occasionally the reviewer softened the bad news in their comments to the editors with some good news but this did not affect their overall recommendation:

> This article seems to be offering little new—it's really just another take on very familiar issues, and it's not very carefully done. My main problem is that the research is not good, even though the text is fluently and pleasantly written.
>
> On the whole, the author has interestingly provided an insight into the rhetorical organizations prevailing across two cultures. However, the manuscript has major limitations in presenting data, data analysis, and the proposed extended model.
>
> This one might be salvageable with a serious return to the data and more reading in the field but since it seems such a daunting prospect, I recommend rejection.

There were examples where the reviewer apologized for their review as in:

> Sorry I can't be more positive about this. I guess it's an attempt to publish out of a piece of MA research, which it's nice to be able to encourage. I toyed with the idea of suggesting it gets turned into a Research Note, but I think there are pretty serious flaws in the methodology (not to mention the presentation) that make it not worth pursuing.

And in one case the reviewer explained their recommendation indicating to the editor that the paper could also be given a major revisions outcome if the editor thought that might be more appropriate:

> My sense is that this paper is written by a student trying to come to terms with complex theories and struggles with ethnographic research. I have written my review keeping in mind what might aid him/her in his/her thinking, and to this end have provided a list of suggestions. The paper, as it currently stands, is poorly written and underdeveloped. But seeing how

hard the whole process of publishing is and remembering the kind help that I myself received, I'm happy to re-read another version, if you think it can be revised and resubmitted.

Conclusions

Across all the reviews, then, the most common politeness strategy or way of showing involvement (Scollon, Wong-Scollon, & Jones, 2012) was by expressing approval for what the authors had done, although this was much less common, not surprisingly, in the reject reviews. A further politeness strategy was the use of indirectness (Hyland, 2000) across all the categories of review. Just under half the reject reviews, however, opened with criticisms which were not softened in any way by a politeness strategy such as expressing approval or the use of indirectness. This is an important point for beginning authors to note, who may not be used to such negative commentary on their work. A common editor's letter to an author on a rejected submission might contain a sentence such as:

> I append the reviewers' comments and hope they will be useful to you should you decide to revise your article and submit it elsewhere.

Authors who are new to the publication process might find it hard to see how reviewers' reports are useful when they contain only bad news and very little, if any, encouragement to continue with the work. Rosamund Mitchell, a former editor of the journal Applied Linguistics, once said:

It is important to bear in mind that a rejection from one journal doesn't mean your paper is unpublishable. … Rejection is common, it is normal, it is frequent and by no means means that the paper won't find a home somewhere else. (BAAL, 1993, pp. 10–11)

This is a point beginning authors need to keep in mind when dealing with these kinds of reviews (see Paltridge & Starfield, 2016 for advice on how to deal with reject reports).

In terms of gender, 36 of the reviewers were male and 61 were female. There were, however, no gendered differences in the accept reviews in the terms of the use of the most common politeness strategies of expressing approval and indirectness. This was equally the case with the minor and major revisions reviews. The minor and major revisions reviews all contained praise/criticism pairs, regardless of the gender of the reviewer. There was also no gendered difference in the reject reviews in the use of praise/criticism pairs, although not all of the reject reviews contained these. Of the 13 reject reviews that did not express approval and went straight to criticism, 6 were written by males and 7 by females, suggesting there was not a gendered difference here either.

All of this, then, considered from the point of view of politeness as social practice (Haugh, 2013), would suggest that reviewers, regardless of gender, have an understanding of what is polite in the context of a reviewer's report and seemed, in this data set at least, to use very similar strategies for showing this. This also suggests that, with the exception of reject reviews, disagreement in the context of reviewers' reports is generally seen as a face-threatening act which needs to be mitigated in some way by the use of a politeness strategy such as expressing approval or indirectness. This disagreement, further, which is typical of reviewers' reports is intended to be read, it could be argued, not as criticisms but, rather, as requests for improvement in such a way that will enable articles to meet the standards set by journals for publication.

As with the analyses presented in the previous chapters, however, it needs to be remembered that the size of the data set on which the analyses in this chapter are based limits the generalizability of the findings outlined in this chapter. The data, further, is only from a single journal and is not necessarily representative of reviewers' report written in other journals in the same field as well as in other disciplines. It is hoped however that what has been outlined here at least adds to what has been said about reports written for this particular journal as well as provides examples of analyses that could be pursued with larger data sets and with other journals.

There are also limitations in the analysis of terms of current views and debates that surround politeness theory (see Mills, 2003; 2012; Huang, 2014; Kadar & Mills, 2011; Leech, 2014b; van der Bom & Mills, 2015). Mills (2003), for example, outlines what she sees as limitations of speech act theory in relation to politeness, arguing that it does not take account of relations between people and that politeness research needs to move 'away from analyzing single utterances to analyzing politeness at the discourse level' (Kadar & Mills, 2011, p. 12) (see also Agha, 2006 for a similar argument). That is, the analysis needs to focus less on 'the analyst's notion of what politeness means' (van der Bom & Mills, 2015, p. 183) and more on how individual speakers and hearers understand norms of politeness. This discursive approach to politeness is, van der Bom and Mills (2015, p. 187) argue,

> a more localized, interactive and context-focused form of analysis which takes into account the interaction between participants, chooses longer stretches of discourse for analysis, and focuses on the perceptions of the individuals concerned in terms of what they judge to be polite and impolite.

This, they argue, is 'concerned with a more contextualized, localized interpretation and a more socially focused approach' (p. 187) to the analysis of politeness. It is, for van der Bom and Mills (2015, p. 188) 'the participants' views of what constitutes directness and indirectness, rather than simply the theorists' analytical views' that matters in this research, suggesting that researchers might aim to get at this by asking participants about their analysis and what, in their view, constitutes politeness (or impoliteness) in particular interactions. This is important as politeness and impoliteness are often not explicitly commented on in discourse (Haugh, 2011) and need, thus, to be explored in other ways.

5

Evaluation and Reviewers' Reports

This chapter examines evaluative language used by the reviewers as they made comments on the papers they were asked to review. It first, however, provides an overview of previous studies that have examined evaluative language in reviewers' reports. It then outlines the approaches to the analysis that will be employed in the chapter, that is, a *corpus-informed discourse analysis* (Hyland, 2009b; Lee, 2008), which focuses on the *stance* (Hyland, 2005a, 2005b) taken by reviewers in their reports. The chapter also examines what reviewers value in the reports (see Hewings, 2004) and the roles they assume as they do this through an analysis of *transitivity* patterns (Halliday, 1994; Hart, 2014) in the texts.

The examination of how writers of reviewers' reports evaluate what they are reading provides an insight into the disciplinary values and ideologies of the area of study in which authors are writing (Hunston & Thompson, 2000a; Hyland, 2015) as well as what reviewers positively or negatively evaluate, that is, what, in the reviewers' views, are the essential features of publishable research articles in their field of study. As Hyland (2002b, p. 352) argues, 'almost everything we write says something about us and the sort of relationship that we want to set up with our readers' and, in turn, the identity we want to display in our

B. Paltridge, *The Discourse of Peer Review*,
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writing. The use of evaluative language is an important way in which reviewers do this.

There are a number of ways in which the language of evaluation could be examined in the reviewers' reports. A number of these are discussed in Hunston and Thompson's (2000b) *Evaluation in Text*. Among the approaches presented in their book are Martin (2000) and Martin and White's (2005) *appraisal* framework, which Hood (2010) uses to analyse academic writing, in her case the introductions to research articles. A further approach is an analysis of *stance* (Hyland 2005a, 2005b) in the texts and what this reveals about the writers' attitude and commitment to what they write.

Ivanić (1998) discusses the notion of self-representation in academic writing and, in particular, the concept of the *discoursal self*. As she points out, there are always a range of alternatives writers can choose from in order to represent themselves in a text, their relationship with their readers, and their relationship to the knowledge they are discussing. This can be through the use of *stance* features such as *self-mentions* (*I*, *we*, *my*), *hedges* (*might, perhaps, almost, suggest, believe*), *boosters* (*definitely*, *in fact, beyond doubt, clearly*), and *attitude markers* such as *unfortunately*, *surprisingly, admittedly,* and *important* which express their attitude towards a proposition. Writers also draw on *engagement* strategies such as *reader pronouns*, *personal asides*, *appeals to shared knowledge*, *directives,* and *questions* as they establish relations with their readers (Hyland, 2005a; 2005b). Examples of each of these strategies are shown in Table 5.1. Through the use of these strategies, writers both acknowledge and recognize the presence of their readers at the same time as they position themselves in relation to what they are writing (Hyland, 2010, 2011a, 2011b).

Writers, thus, aim to represent themselves in a way that is valued by their discipline as they adopt the beliefs, expectations, and identity of a successful academic writer in the particular genre and context. This involves 'negotiating a self which is coherent and meaningful to both the individual and the group' (Hyland, 2011a, p. 11). This identity, further, is only successful by the extent to which it is recognized by the discipline and the group (Hyland, 2010). Writers, thus, choose ways of expressing themselves that will resonate with members of their group so that their claims to be one of them will be seen to be credible and valid (Hyland, 2011a).

Table 5.1 Examples of stance and engagement markers in academic writing (based on Hyland, 2005b)

Strategy	Examples
Stance	
Attitude markers	The first clue of this emerged when we noticed a *quite extraordinary* result.
Boosters	With a few interesting exceptions, we *obviously* do not see a static image as moving.
	This seems *highly* dubious.
Hedges	Our results *suggest* that rapid freeze and thaw rates during artificial experiments in the laboratory *may* cause artificial formation of embolism.
Self-mentions	This experience contains ideas derived from reading *I* have done.
Engagement	
Reader pronouns	Although *we* lack knowledge about a definitive biological function for …
Personal asides	And—*as I believe many TESOL professional will readily acknowledge*—critical thinking has now begun to make its mark
Appeals to shared knowledge	Of course, *we know* that the indigenous communities of today have been reorganized by the catholic church …
Directives	*It is important to note* that these results do indeed warrant the view that …
Questions	*Is it, in fact, necessary to choose between nature and nurture?*

In his book on disciplinary identities, Hyland (2012a) discusses *proximity*, 'represented through the social and discursive conventions of a discipline and the underlying power relations these draw upon' (p. 43), and *positioning*, 'adopting a point of view to the issues discussed in the text and to others who hold points of view on those issues' (p. 43), that is, the ways in which writers use language 'to acknowledge, construct and negotiate social relations' (p. 63). As they do this, writers take on roles and identities that align with institutional and disciplinary practices and 'the attitudes one is expected to have toward these practices' (Martin 2000, p. 161). Writers, thus, through their use of evaluative language, index ways of demonstrating membership of their particular disciplinary group (Hyland 2012).

Hewings (2004) examined the use of evaluative language in reviewers' reports on submissions to *English for Specific Purposes,* the same journal which is the focus of this study. He looked at what reviewers value and do not value in their reports and the language they use to indicate this. He found that most of the reviewers' evaluative comments related to the paper's overall quality and contribution to the discipline, the way in which the research is expressed and presented in the paper, the quality of the analysis and findings, and the claims that have been made in the paper. Evaluative comments on the papers as a whole were largely positive whereas comments on the way in which the papers were written were largely negative as were comments on the claims that were made in the papers. This suggests, he argues, that the reviewers' overall preoccupations were with these particular aspects of the submissions.

Fortanet (2008) has also examined evaluative language in reviewers' reports, in her case in the areas of business organization and linguistics. She looked at patterns of criticism and recommendation and how questions are used to seek clarification or to obtain further information on submissions. Fortanet-Gomez (2008) discusses this analysis further, finding criticism patterns the most common in her data set, followed by recommendations for improvement, and requests for modifications and clarifications. Within this, most of the occurrences of evaluative language were negative, with only 11 per cent of the occurrences of evaluative language containing positive comments. She then discusses how these evaluations are expressed in linguistic terms. Common criticism patterns she found were the negation of a verb (The background *does not specify* or discuss entrepreneurial orientation to a sufficient degree) and the use of a negative adjective (The results are presented in a *too subjective manner*). Recommendation and improvement patterns often involved a directive (*Close* brackets on definition here), addressing the author(s) directly (*The authors* need to explain where these eight competences come from), and the item being evaluated being placed at the front of the clause in order to emphasize it (*Your use of the term evaluation* needs to be discussed). Requests for modification or clarification patterns often involved incomplete questions (*No quantitative difference?*) and the use of yes/no questions (*Isn't … placed the responsibility of the writer?*). Fortanet-Gomez and Ruiz-Garrido (2010) examine the same data set in terms of the *stance* taken by the reviewers and how this stance is expressed. They examined the reports, in particular, for the use of hedges (e.g. *would*), boosters (e.g. *very*), and attitude markers (e.g. *difficult*). They then compare the results of their analysis with Hyland's (2005a) analysis of research articles, finding attitude markers were three times more frequent in the referees' reports they examined than in Hyland's collection of research articles. Boosters were a little more frequent in their referees' reports and while hedges in the linguistics reviews were similar to research articles in that area, they were twice as frequent in business organization research articles than in the business organization referees' reports.

Samraj's (2016b) examination of a subset of the data that is the basis for the study reported on in this book explored linguistic features and recommendations and negative evaluations in major revisions and reject reports. She found the most common lexical items in recommendations were *could*, *would*, *should*, *need* (to), and *suggest*, as in:

> I think the introduction *could* do more …
> I *would* like to see some research implications.
> There *should* be a detailed discussion of …
> You *need* to be very careful about these justifications …
> I *suggest* that you ….

She also examined the data for the use of *not*, *n't*, and phrasal negations (*no*) used as an indicator of negative evaluation where the reviewer was negating an aspect of the paper, such as the analysis of data, the coherence of the paper, something that is missing, or a claim being made in the paper, as in:

> Since there was *no* analysis of the data ….
> The paper does*n't* flow well …
> The author(s) do(es) *not* use any kind of control group ….
> The abstracts do *not* correspond to transitivity

Samraj found that *not* was the most common form of negation in both sets of reviews, with grammatical negation being employed in the reject reviews 45 per cent more frequently than in the major revisions reviews. Between the two data sets she also found more markers of recommendation in the major revisions reviews than in the reject reviews. By contrast, the reject reviews contained more negations than the major revisions reviews. These differences, she proposes, are reflective of the different communicative foci of the two sets of review, one encouraging resubmission (the major revisions reviews), and the other (the reject reviews) not.

Starfield et al. (2015) analyse evaluative language in PhD examiners' reports. They also examine who and what is evaluated in the reports as well as the roles that examiners adopt in their reports, such as expert, evaluator, commentary, and editor roles by carrying out a *transitivity* (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) analysis of the reports. The difficulty in differentiating between some of these roles, they argue, can be frustrating for the audience of examiners' reports, students and their supervisors, particularly when interpreting whether a comment represents an evaluation, an instruction, a suggestion, or an aside, and the extent to which students are required to make changes to their theses based on these comments, as was argued for reviewers' reports in Chap. 3 of this book.

The research referred to above will be extended in this chapter by carrying out an analysis of the evaluative language used in the reviewers' reports, what the reviewers evaluate in their reports, and the roles they take on as they do this. As with each of the other chapters of the book, the analyses will focus on each of the categories of recommendation of reports, that is, the accept, major revisions, minor revisions, reject reports. This will be done by the means of *corpus-informed discourse analysis* (Hyland, 2009b), that is, the bringing together of corpus and discourse approaches to explore the use of evaluative language and reviewer roles in the reports.

Corpus Studies of Academic Discourse

Corpus studies have been extremely useful for exploring how language is used in academic genres. Hyland's (2002a) study of the use of personal pronouns in students' academic writing is an example of this, as are his (Hyland, 2008a, 2008b) analyses of word clusters in published research articles and graduate student writing. Biber's (2006) book *University Language* examines linguistic features of written (and spoken) academic genres as well as describes methodological tools for carrying out this kind of analysis. The Appendix by Federica Barbieri in Biber and Conrad's (2009) *Register, Genre, and Style* provides an extensive summary of major corpus-based genre studies, approaches and methods of analysis used in the studies, and the findings of each of the studies, many of which focus on academic writing.

Biber, Connor, and Upton's (2007) *Discourse on the Move* describes studies that use corpus techniques to carry out discourse-oriented analyses of academic genres. They do this by employing both *top-down* and *bottom-up* approaches in their analyses. A top-down approach identifies the discourse structures first (as has been done in Chap. 2 of his book) and then examines lexical/grammatical characteristics of the units that make up the discourse structures. A bottom-up approach identifies discourse structures based on shifts in the repetition of vocabulary items and other linguistic features as indicators of the start of discourse unit boundaries in the texts. Organizational tendencies in the texts are then identified on the basis of this analysis. Hyland's (2005a) *Metadiscourse,* his (2009a) *Academic Discourse,* and his (2012a) *Disciplinary Identities* are further examples of the use or corpora to explore language use in academic genres. Nesi and Gardner (2012) employ both corpus and contextual data to explore the genres that university students write in the UK, from the first year of study through to master's degrees. They also carry out semi-structured interviews with teachers and students across levels of study and academic disciplines in order to explore this matter further.

Flowerdew (2011), drawing on Hyland (2009a), describes three main approaches to corpus-based discourse analysis that have been used in the study of academic writing. These are *textual*, *critical,* and *contextual* approaches. Textual approaches include Biber, Connor, and Upton's (2007) top-down and bottom-up approaches to corpus-based discourse analysis. These sorts of studies focus on, for example, language patterns in texts, often, although not necessarily, in relation to the discourse structures of texts. Critical approaches aim to draw together insights from critical discourse analysis (see Fairclough, 2013; Machin & Mayr, 2012; van Leeuwen, 2008; Wodak, 2011) and the tools of corpus-based analyses (see Kandil & Belcher 2011 for an example of this). Contextual approaches take situational factors into account using, for example, interview data and other ethnographic techniques to try to gain an 'insider's view' of the worlds in which the texts are written. Hyland's (2002a) study of Hong Kong students' academic writing and Harwood's (2005) examination of personal pronouns in published research articles are examples of this.

There have, however, been criticisms of corpus studies. Flowerdew (2005) and Handford (2010) provide a summary of, and response to, some of these criticisms. One criticism is that corpora are so large they do not allow for a consideration of contextual aspects of texts. Tribble (2002) counters this view by providing a detailed discussion of contextual features, such as the social context of the text, communicative purpose of the text, roles of readers and writers of the text, shared cultural values required of readers and writers of the text and knowledge of other texts that can be considered in corpus studies to help address this issue (see Chap. 2 for a discussion of this in relation to reviewers' reports). Each of these features, Tribble argues, can be drawn on to locate the analysis and to give the findings a strong contextual dimension (see Aull, 2015; Nesi & Gardner 2012 for examples of context-informed corpus studies). As Tribble argues, understanding language use includes understanding social and contextual knowledge, not just knowledge of the language system. One way of gaining contextual information for an analysis is by the use of interviews with users of the genre and consideration of the textual information revealed in the corpus study in relation to this information, as Hyland (2004a) did in his *Disciplinary Discourses* and Lancaster (2012; 2014) did with course instructors in his study of upper-level student academic writing. A further way is by the use of survey data, as is the case with this book. Each of these approaches aims to close the gap between text and context by gaining insiders' perspectives on texts and the contexts in which they are produced (see Lillis 2008; Paltridge, Starfield, & Tardy, 2016 for further discussion of this).

Stance and Academic Writing

The focus of the analysis of evaluative language in this chapter will be on the stance (Hyland, 2005a, 2005b) that reviewers take towards the submissions they are reviewing. A brief overview of stance categories was presented earlier in this chapter (see Table 5.1). Hyland (2005b, p. 176) describes stance as:

> 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.

Writers do this as they take up or anticipate the voices and positions held by their potential readers. They do this as they comment on claims that they make, establish solidarity with their readers, and represent their credibility in terms of what they are saying (Hyland, 2005b). This can be through the use of lexical items such as *agree*, *prefer*, *unfortunately*, *remarkable,* and *interesting* (attitude markers); items which express certainty such as *clearly*, *obviously,* and *demonstrate* (boosters); language features such as *possible*, *might,* and *perhaps* which withhold commitment (hedges); and first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives such as *I* and *my* (self-mentions) which make it clear who is taking the stance on what is being said (Hyland, 2005a, 2005b).

Hyland (2004b, 2005a) and Hyland and Tse (2004) examine stance in postgraduate student dissertation writing, arguing that the use of stance (and engagement) features allows writers to frame what they say, to position and engage readers, and to enter into a relationship with their reader(s). An analysis of this can help reveal the expectations and understandings of the audience for whom the text is written which, in turn, reveals 'something of their social practices, values and ways of thinking' (Hyland, 2005a, p. 58).

Hyland and Diani's (2009) and Hyland and Sancho Guinda's (2013) edited collections provide examples of academic evaluation in genres such as book reviews (Groom, 2009; Tse & Hyland, 2009), book blurbs (Basturkman, 2009), academic bios (Tse, 2012), research articles (Gross & Chesley, 2012; Hood, 2012), and undergraduate students' final-year reports (Hyland, 2012b), analysed from a number of different perspectives. Hyland's (2012b) chapter focuses on stance in undergraduate student writing at a university in Hong Kong. The use of stance features, he points out, is a complex task for second-language writers (see also Chang, 2016; Chang & Schleppegrell, 2011), as well as for beginning L1 academic writers (see Aull, 2015; Aull & Lancaster, 2014), who might often hedge what they write much less than expert writers do. The more tentative stance of an expert writer, Hyland (2012b, p. 146) argues, is a 'clear signal of insider membership and disciplinary identity'. The use of hedging to express tentativeness has been seen to be an indicator of more successful student writing, both L1 and L2 (Lee & Deakin, 2016), where findings and results are explained 'with the appropriate degree of precision and caution' (Koutsantoni, 2007, p. 105), reflecting 'the need for negotiation of knowledge before claims are accepted and consensus is reached' (Koutsantoni, 2004, p. 179). McGrath & Kuteeva (2012) reveal this in their study of published research articles in the area of pure mathematics where tentativeness (or rather hedging) is a more frequent stance feature than attitude markers, boosters, or self-mentions. Khamkhien (2014) also finds tentativeness, expressed through the use of modal items such as *can*, *may*, and *could* to express degrees of possibility and confidence, a common feature of published research articles in the area of applied linguistics, especially where authors compare their research to previous studies in the discussion section of their article. Pho (2013), in her examination of stance in published research articles in applied linguistics and educational technology, finds that the occurrence of stance features varies between moves in the various sections of research articles and that 'authorial stance changes from one move to another, when the communicative purpose changes' (Pho, 2013, p. 157). In the section which follows, this will be addressed in the examination of the different categories of reviewers' reports each of which have different purposes, to indicate acceptance of the submission (the accept reviews), to accept the submission subject to minor changes being made (the minor revisions reviews), to accept the submission subject to the making of major changes (the major revisions reviews), and to explain why a submission is not suitable for publication (the reject reviews).

Evaluative Language in the Reports

The Accept Reviews

Table 5.2 shows the frequencies of stance markers that occurred in the accept reviews. The most frequent markers in the accept reviews were attitude markers, followed by self-mentions, hedges, and then boosters.

Examples are given below of how the reviewers employed these markers to express their attitude towards submissions for which they recommended the paper be accepted for publication. Not surprisingly, all of

Table 5.2 Stance markers in the accept reviews (n = 9)

	Items per 500 words	% of total
Attitude markers	6.7	48.9
Self-mentions	4.9	36.1
Hedges	1.4	10.6
Boosters	0.58	4.4

these evaluations, in the accept reviews, were positive. The most frequent of these, a mentioned above, was *attitude markers* as in:

> The manuscript is *well documented*, *well structured* and *relevant* to genre-based ESP/EAP teaching settings.

By the use of these markers, the reviewers signal 'an assumption of shared attitudes, values and reactions', thereby pulling 'readers into a conspiracy of agreement' (Hyland 2005b, p. 180), making it difficult for their judgement to be disputed (Hyland 2005b).

The use of self-mentions was also frequent in the accept reviews where the reviewers took responsibility for a comment, although they were not as frequent as attitude markers in the accept reviews. For example:

> *I* am satisfied that the authors have addressed my concerns with their earlier draft.
>
> *I* find your revision very good.

There was much less use of *hedging* as a stance marker in the accept reviews:

> *Perhaps* rephrase the first sentence

and only a number of occasions where the reviewers raised the *force* (Martin & White, 2005) of their evaluation by the use of *boosters*:

> It is also *extremely* well written.

The object of evaluation in the accept reviews covered a range of areas: the author of the article, the article itself, a section of the article, the revisions, the quality of the writing, the study, or the work as a whole.

The Minor Revisions Reviews

The frequency of stance markers in the minor revisions reviews is shown in Table 5.3. As with the accept reviews, the most frequent stance markers in the minor revisions reviews were attitude markers, followed by self-mentions, hedges, and boosters.

The minor revisions reports employed a wide range of attitude markers in the reviewers' comment on the submissions. In contrast to the accept reviews, however, the attitude markers expressed both positive and negative judgement. For example:

> I am *generally satisfied* with the corrections and incorporations that the author has introduced in the paper [positive]
>
> I *enjoyed* this paper for a number of reasons [positive]
>
> The author *has not made a clear case* for the extension of this term [negative]
>
> The number of classes taped and analysed is adequate for some preliminary conclusions to be made, but *not,* in my view, *for wider generalizations* [negative]

Self-mentions were almost as frequent in the minor revision reviews as in the accept reviews. For example:

> *I* was very interested throughout.
>
> *I* think your paper reads a lot more clearly now that you have made changes as suggested.
>
> *I* think that this paper is suitable for publication

There were more examples of hedges in the minor revision reviews than in the accept reviews. Examples of these are:

Table 5.3 Stance markers in the minor revisions reviews (*n* = 22)

	Items per 500 words	% of total
Attitude markers	3.6	41.4
Self-mentions	3.2	36.3
Hedges	1.4	15.8
Boosters	0.57	6.5

> *Perhaps* the author could state more explicitly that it is the addressing of this first question that forms the focus of the paper.
>
> It *might* be useful to say at least a little bit about the role of intentionality and conscious use of the elements described here.
>
> The author(s) *might* wish to comment on the implications of this for language development and ESP teaching

As with the accept reviews, the force of some of the positive evaluations was raised by the use of boosters. Examples of this are:

> I was *very* interested throughout.
> The author does *a very* skilful job
> The author has made *very* useful revisions
> The authors are *very* articulate.

The main focus of evaluations in the minor revisions reviews was, in many cases, either the article or the author. It was also, on occasion, the author's revisions, the author's responses to reviewer comments, the review of the literature, the analysis, or the results.

The Major Revisions Reviews

Table 5.4 shows the frequency of stance markers in the major revisions reviews. In this set of reviews, in contrast to the accept and minor revisions reviews, the most frequent stance markers were self-mentions which occurred more than double the amount of attitude markers. Hedges were much less frequent in the major revisions reviews as were boosters, indicating the high level of certainty with which reviewers

Table 5.4 Stance markers in the major revisions reviews (*n* = 39)

	Items per 500 words	% of total
Self-mentions	1.58	64.8
Attitude markers	0.69	28.1
Hedges	0.1	4.3
Boosters	0.07	2.8

made comments on the submissions for which they made this category of recommendation.

Self-mentions most frequently occurred in the major revisions reviews when the reviewer expressed a negative feeling as in:

> *I* regret not being able to simply recommend publication and was moving in that direction until *I* got to the most important part of the paper, the discussion of the findings. To be publishable this section would need to be extensively re-worked.

> *I* feel sorry to have to give the above recommendation to resubmit after major revision for this paper. The author has clearly made a great number of changes to try and accommodate the reviewer's suggestions. However, the more closely *I* read the paper, the more problems *I* seem to find.

> While it can provide a snapshot of the EAP training and support provided for postgraduate students in their thesis undertaking in a university in Taiwan, *I* regret to say that a number of the points it raises need to be substantially revised

> *I* regret to say that there are a number of issues that need be addressed before the paper can be considered for acceptance.

Attitude markers, in every case, were followed by an expression of negative judgement. For example:

> The methodology seems *quite solid* [positive] but is perhaps described in *a bit too much* [negative] detail.
>
> The results of the study are *clearly* and *carefully presented* [positive]. My main concern regarding the paper is that the findings seem to be *not especially striking* [negative].

Boosters were occasionally used to express certainty, as in:

> In all, the author's theoretical framework is *very* interesting and his/her writing style is clear.

The author's theoretical framework is *very* interesting
The revised version is a *substantial* improvement from the earlier version

There was also some use of hedges in the major revisions reviews, although not a large amount. For example:

This is an interesting paper that *could* make a useful contribution to our knowledge.
I therefore think that if the submission were much condensed and made more readable, it *might* be publishable
A good case study *may* be here. It's just difficult to determine what it is.

The focus of evaluation in the major revisions reviews was as varied as in the other categories of review. That is, it may be the author, the paper as a whole, the topic of the article, the study, the methodology, the results, or revisions the author has made, for example.

The Reject Reviews

The frequency of stance markers in the reject reviews is shown in Table 5.5. As with the major revisions reviews there were more self-mentions than attitude markers in these reviews, in fact more than double. There were few hedges and boosters in the reject reviews, about the same as the major revisions reviews.

Self-mention in the reject reviews, similar to the major revisions reviews, was used in positive/negative evaluation pairs with the reviewer taking responsibility for their judgement, as in:

Table 5.5 Stance markers in the reject reviews (*n* = 27)

	Items per 500 words	% of total
Self-mentions	1.05	64.2
Attitude markers	0.49	29.8
Hedges	0.07	4.5
Boosters	0.02	1.5

> *I* applaud the authors' effort to address reviewers' comments but *I*'m afraid this manuscript is still not appropriate for publication.

At times, though, the self-mention was used for negative evaluation alone, without being prefaced by a positive comment. For example:

> *I* am afraid *I* am not able to recommend this submission for publication in ESP Journal.
>
> *I*'m sorry that the review is negative.
>
> *I* found the conclusions rather disappointing and the implications for teachers extremely thin.
>
> *I* doubt that the author's treatment of the topic would be of interest to ESP professionals

In the reject reviews, many instances of attitude markers were negative. There was, further, like the major revisions reviews, no stand-alone use of positive attitude markers in the reject reviews. Mostly, the reject reviews contained positive attitude markers which were, in all cases, followed by a negative statement. For example:

> This is a *very important* [positive] topic of international significance. However, the resubmitted paper did not present a convincing argument that adds to understandings about the importance of scaffolding in assisting students with reading academic texts [negative].
>
> The author is to be commended for attempting to investigate this *important* [positive] area of specific purpose English training. However, the way this study is carried out is very simplistic and considers only the effect on test scores of the duration of training [negative].
>
> Although the topic is *interesting* [positive] and fills in the gap of current research in ESP both the design and presentation of the study are not clear or problematic [negative].

The focus of evaluation in the reject reviews was the article as a whole, the author, the topic, the study, revisions the author had done, the review of the literature, and the author's argument or their discussion.

Summary

In all of the reports, the reviewers displayed a high level of certainly in what they had to say, especially in the major revisions and reject reviews where there were fewer hedges than in the other categories of review, suggesting the reviewers did not want to appear as being uncertain about the judgements they were making. There was also a high level of responsibility taken for the comments across all the reviews as reflected in the high frequencies of self-mentions in the reviews. This was especially the case in the major revisions and reject reviews where self-mention was the most frequent stance marker used by the reviewers. All of this displays a voice (Matsuda, 2015; Tardy, 2012) or discoursal self (Ivanić*,* 1998) of authority in the reviews with little space left open for negotiation. This identity is both manifested and constructed through the reviewers' use of language (Matsuda, 2015) as well as what they choose to focus on in their comments. This identity of authority, of course, needs to be recognized by the readers of the reviews, the editor, and the authors, as it is not just through the performance of identities that they are created. Identities are also created by the fact that other participants in the interaction recognize them. In Blommaert's (2005, p. 205) words, 'a lot of what happens in the field of identity is done by others, not by oneself'. Identity, thus, is something that is constantly constructed and re-constructed as people interact with each other and participate in particular communities of practice. It is through their use of language, then, and use of the kinds of features described in this chapter that reviewers display who they are and how they want to be seen, that is, as people with authority and expertise on the particular topic (see Paltridge, 2015 for further discussion of language, identity, and communities of practice).

The accept and minor revisions reviews, further, contained more positive evaluations than the major revisions and reject reviews. Where positive evaluations were made in the major revisions and reject reviews they were, in every case, followed by a negative evaluation. This is similar to the 'good news/bad news' features of reviewers' reports discussed in Chap. 2 where 'bad news' comments represent face-threatening acts (see

Chap. 4) which are softened by placing them after ‘good news’. The high incidence of ‘bad news’ and the use of negative judgements in the reject reviews, especially, is reflective of the aim of this category of review, that is, not encouraging resubmission of the article (Samraj, 2016b).

The aspects of the articles that were evaluated in the reviews reflect the values and expectations of research articles, the academic and social context in which they are located (see Chap. 2), and the features of the papers with which reviewers are preoccupied (Hewings, 2004). In the cases of the reviews examined in the study this was predominantly the review of the literature, the analysis of the data, the results, the topic of the article, the methodology employed, the quality of the writing, and the author’s argument and discussion.

Reviewer Roles in the Reports

In their study of PhD examiners’ reports, Starfield, Paltridge, and McMurtrie (2014) examine the various roles examiners take on as they assess students’ work by means of a *transitivity* analysis of the language of texts. Transitivity refers to the linguistic encoding of ideational or experiential content in texts (Halliday, 1994). This content is typically expressed by patterns of *processes*, *participants*, and *circumstances*. Processes are typically realized by verbal groups and described in functional terms such as material processes (for ‘doing’ verbs), mental processes (for ‘sensing’ verbs), verbal processes (for ‘saying’ verbs), relational process (for ‘attributing’ and ‘identifying’ verbs), and existential processes (for ‘existing’ verbs). Participants are typically realized by nominal groups and described in terms such as actor and goal (in the case of material processes), sensor and phenomenon (in the case of mental processes), sayer and target (in the case of verbal processes), carrier and attribute (in the case of relational processes), and existent (the case of existential processes) (Halliday, 1994). Circumstances describe aspects such as location, time, and manner and are typically realized by adverbial or prepositional groups. Examples of these processes and participants (from Starfield, Paltridge, & McMurtrie’s 2014 study of PhD examiners’ reports) are:

The student	has performed	an in-depth study
(Actor)	(Material process)	(Goal)
I	like	the engagement with Popper
(Senser)	(Mental process)	(Phenomenon)
The candidate	states	that the main research questions [are] ....
(Sayer)	(Verbal process)	(Target)
The thesis	is	a fine example of a good PhD
(Carrier)	(Relational process)	(Attribute)
There	is	no information about them [in the results or discussions sections]
	(Existential process)	(Existent)

Thus, in 'The student has performed an in-depth study', both 'The student' and 'an in-depth study' are participants in a material process. In 'I like the engagement with Popper' both 'I' and 'the engagement with Popper' are participants in a mental process. In 'The candidate states that the main research questions are', 'The candidate' and 'the main research questions' are participants in a verbal process. 'The thesis' and 'a fine example of a good PhD' are participants in a relational process. In the existential process the only participant is 'no information about them' with 'There' having no representational or participant function; it is only there because of the need for a subject in the clause (Halliday 1985, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

Starfield, Paltridge, and McMurtrie (2014) found through their analysis of processes and participants in the examiners' reports that the examiners adopted a number of different roles as they wrote their reports. They took on an *examiner role* when they addressed criteria they had been given for assessment, the degree itself, made a recommendation, or asked for some action. For example:

> I recommend that the candidate should be awarded the degree on the basis of this thesis.

Examiners took on an *expert role* when they positioned themselves in relation to knowledge, as in:

> Direct mass balance measurements cannot a priori claim to exactly catch the end of the ablation season. The Norwegian glacier delivers a perfect example.

They assumed an *editor role* when they pointed out issues in spelling, punctuation, formatting, and grammar:

P. 60 “to small” should be “too small”

A *mentor role* was taken on when the examiner gave the student advice beyond the completion of their thesis, as in:

The student should consider publishing the introduction, in a shortened version, as a review paper.

An *evaluator role* occurred when the examiner made points about the quality of the thesis or made a comment about the student. For example:

A thesis like that is brave
The candidate shows a good knowledge of this field of research

The *reporter role* involved the examiner providing an overview of the thesis or parts of it, or paraphrasing or quoting from it:

This thesis reports the results of what is essentially a single study with boys with ADHD and a control group of normally developing boys

The *commentator role* occurred when the examiner made comments such as:

I worry about your mention of analysing relations among concepts
I wonder if reciprocal blasts were used

They also take on a commentator role when they made a statement that referred to a hypothetical, imaginary situation:

I would have liked to have seen some more consideration being given to how future studies might address some of the unanswered questions from the reported research

Sometimes, however, more than one role was present in a comment, making it difficult for a student to differentiate between the roles that examiners were adopting when writing their reports. These roles, thus, are not only multiple, but also, on occasion, co-present throughout the reports.

Following Starfield, Paltridge, and McMurtrie (2014), this section of the chapter examines the roles that the reviewers adopted as they wrote their reports on submissions to the journal. The categories identified in the Starfield, Paltridge, and McMurtrie study are the starting point for this analysis. They are, however, adapted where appropriate for the context of the present study.

The Accept Reviews

The analysis of the accept reviews showed which were the most prominent roles taken on by the reviewers as well as which roles were co-present in their comments. The most frequent roles were, in order of frequency, an evaluator role, a reviewer role (equivalent to the examiner role in PhD examiners' reports), and an editor role. There were no examples of the reviewers taking on an expert role, a mentor role, or a reporter role in the accept reviews.

Examples of the most frequent roles taken on in the accept reviews are:

> The author has done very nice work revising this manuscript [evaluator role]
>
> I recommend this paper be accepted for publication [reviewer role]
>
> There are a few minor language points to clear up in this [editor role]

More than one role, however, was co-present in many of the reviewers' comments. For example, in:

> I have two requests of the author in the interest of strengthening an already fine paper

the reviewer takes on both a reviewer role and an evaluator role.

Perhaps not surprisingly, material and relational processes were most prominent in the accept reviews, that is, processes which focused on doing something (material processes) and processes which present an attribute of something (relational processes). Examples of these are:

The author has revised [material process] the manuscript thoughtfully.

The case study itself is [relational process] original and at the cutting edge in terms of the field's development.

These processes are, on occasion, however, combined with other processes as in the following examples where the second process is in a *projected clause* (Halliday 1994):

I believe [mental process] that the manuscript is [relational process] now publishable

and:

I suggest [verbal process] you rephrase [material process] the two sentences about Johansson (1997) and Louhiala-Salminen (2002).

In terms of the relationship between process types and reviewer roles, material and relational processes were used in almost even distribution in reviewer and editor roles while relational processes were the most frequent process type when reviewers adopted a commentator role.

The Minor Revisions Reviews

The most common roles in the minor revisions reviews were the evaluator role and the commentator role. That is, the reviewers made points about the article or commented about the author (the evaluator role). Or they made it clear they were expressing their own view about the submission (the commentator role). These roles appeared in approximately equal part. Examples of these roles are:

This paper is much improved in its revised version [evaluator role]

I feel that the application has been somewhat formulaic [commentator role]

This was followed by the reviewer role where the reviewer made a recommendation or asked for some action. For example:

I think that this paper is suitable for publication with some slight modifications [reviewer role]

I feel further revisions are required [reviewer role]

It might be useful to say at least a little bit about the role of intentionality and conscious use of the elements described here [reviewer role]

There were many fewer cases in the minor revisions reviews where the reviewers took on an editor role and no instances of a reporter role or a mentor role in the minor revisions reports. As with the accept reviews, there were cases of more than one role being co-present in a reviewer's comment, although not as many as in the accept reviews. An example of this is:

I would have liked to have seen a bit more explanation for the choice of Eggins and Slade's concept of "chunking" and some gloss of SFG terminology

Here, the reviewer makes a recommendation (the reviewer role) but makes it clear that this is their own point of view (the commentator role).

In terms of process types, when reviewers adopted an evaluator role they mostly employed relational processes in the minor revisions reports, as in:

The author is [relational process] suitably tentative where necessary

The authors are [relational process] very articulate.

The approach you have taken would be [relational process] of interest to many ESP practitioners.

When taking on a commentator role, reviewers largely used mental processes, as in:

I enjoyed [mental process] reading and thinking about the paper

I liked [mental process] this paper.

I do feel [mental process] that the authors give an undue emphasis on confirming the occluded nature of the genre; it seems like a preliminary step rather than a major finding.

If they took on a reviewer role they mostly employed relational processes:

> My suggestions and comments are [relational process] minor
> I just have [relational process] a few minor comments for consideration

Material processes, relational processes, and mental processes were employed when reviewers adopted an editor role:

> Editing of the paper for issues of style and grammar will also make [material process] the paper stronger and clearer
> My only criticism would be [relational process] that the layout of the tables that show frequency of moves across the various RA sections analysed, remain unclear.
> I did not understand [mental process] the display.

The minor revisions reviews, thus, in contrast to the accept reviews, showed an alignment towards the use of particular process types for each of the roles the reviewers adopted. That is, they largely drew on relational processes when adopting an evaluator role and mental processes when taking on a commentator role. Few material processes occurred in these roles in the minor revisions reports.

The Major Revisions Reviews

In the major revisions reviews, the largest group of reviews in the data set, the most common roles adopted by reviewers were an editor role and an evaluator role. Of these two roles the editor role was by far the most prominent. That is, reviewers spent most of the text of their reviews raising issues related to clarity, argument, style, formatting, and (on occasion) grammar. Examples of reviewers adopting an editor role are:

> I would encourage the authors to rewrite the paper with a focus on clarity and brevity
> The logic of argument in the paragraph is not clear to me
> I strongly recommend the author use some subtitles, especially in the section of the study such as method, participants and context, data analysis
> There are numerous punctuation and grammatical errors in this submission, as well as some poorly constructed, long and overly complex sentences.

The editor role was, further, in this category of recommendation, much more prominent than in the accept and minor revisions reviews.

On every occasion, however, an evaluator role was accompanied by an editor role, in most cases preceded it, as in:

> This is a better version than the previous one and, with considerable additional work, it certainly should be publishable. The decisions about reorganization are good ones and the approach seems both unusual and useful [evaluator role]. However, more revisions, some easy to accomplish, and others not, should be made [editor role]

The reviewer and commentator roles were less prominent than the editor and evaluator role in the major revisions reviews. However, there were cases of reviewers taking on an expert role more than was the case with the accept and minor revisions reviews. For example:

> The author presents Swales' CARS model as "pattern-imposing". This, in my opinion, means that the author has missed the main point in Swalesian research which has never been pattern-imposing but descriptive
>
> The author seems to be attributing the notion of t-unit to Peter Fries (1994), but it was actually developed by Kellogg Hunt (1965).
>
> The linguistic expression of attitude has been described by some as "stance," a focus of much recent research on evaluative discourse (Hyland, 1999; Hunston & Thompson, 2000; Del Lungo Camiciotti, & Tognini Bonelli, 2004).

The reporter role, where reviewers provided an overview of the paper or parts of it, or quoted from it, also appeared more in the major revisions reviews than in the accept and minor revisions reviews. There were no cases of the reviewers taking on a mentor role in the major revisions reviews.

In terms of transitivity, relational processes were common in the editor role in the major revisions reviews as in:

> The paper is [relational process] very wordy
>
> A linear flow is [relational process] missing
>
> Weissberg and Buker (1990) is [relational process] not a 'research' study

In the evaluator role reviewers in the major revisions reviews, as with the minor revision reviews, also made frequent use of relational processes:

> The latter, empirical, part of the article is [relational process] interesting
>
> The author's insight is [relational process] an excellent one

In the reviewer role there was a range of process types in the major revisions reports. For example:

> The article is [relational process] worth publishing after major revisions.
>
> There are [existential process] a number of issues that need be addressed
>
> The author claims [verbal process] that "it appears that a genre analysis approach, which emphasizes the situation, context, and stimulus of a genre, does allow students to produce writing samples that better match the expectations of the genre and of the reader."

There was also a variety of process types in the commentator and reporter roles in the major revisions reports.

The Reject Reviews

The most common role in the reject reviews was the evaluator role, as in:

> The ms has, regrettably, largely ignored what would seem to be key issues for a study of this type [evaluator role]

The evaluator role was often combined, however, with other roles such as the reviewer and editor roles in the reject reports. For example:

> While the major reworking of this article has greatly improved the flow of the argument [evaluator role], I cannot recommend it for publication [reviewer role]
>
> However, the review lacks comprehensiveness [evaluator role]. Also, the argument or discussion lacks clarity and depth [editor role]

The reviewer role occurred less frequently in the reject reviews but when it did it was combined in every case with other roles such as the evaluator role:

> [This] is an interesting study in that it provides some empirical evidence from Canadian and American language arts textbooks to show the gap between what the textbooks say about the structure of essays on the one hand and what the sample essays actually do on the other hand [evaluator role]. Yet, this manuscript in its current form is not appropriate for publication in English for Specific Purposes [reviewer role]

The commentator role, when it did occur in the reject reports, was often combined with other roles such as reviewer and evaluator roles:

> I applaud the authors' effort to address reviewers' comments but I'm afraid this manuscript is still not appropriate for publication [both reviewer and evaluator roles]

There were, thus, many instances of more than one role being co-present in the reviewers' comments in the reject reviews than in the other reviews.

Where reviewers took on an editor role in the reject reviews they did not make directions for changes, in contrast with the major revisions reviews where this occurred extensively.

There were no mentor, reporter, or expert roles taken on by reviewers in the reject reviews.

In terms of process types, relational processes were most common in the evaluator, reviewer, and commentator roles in the reject reviews. For example:

> This is [relational clause] an interesting study [evaluator role]
>
> This manuscript is [relational process] still not appropriate for publication [reviewer role]
>
> I do not think that the design of the study is [relational process] sufficiently rigorous for useful generalizations to be made [commentator role]

In the editor role there was an even spread of material and verbal processes in the reject reports. For example:

> While the major reworking of this article has greatly improved [material process] the flow of the argument, I cannot recommend [verbal process] it for publication.

The reject reviews, thus, consisted largely of the evaluator role being taken on by reviewers in contrast with the other categories of review where there was a wider spread of roles adopted in the reports.

Conclusions

The analysis of stance in the reviewers' reports showed very strong differences between this genre and postgraduate dissertation writing, for example, where hedges are the most common stance marker followed by boosters, self-mentions, and attitude markers (Hyland, 2004b, 2005a; Hyland & Tse, 2004). By contrast, in the reviewers' reports the most frequent stance marker was attitude markers in the accept and minor revisions reviews and self-mentions in the major revisions and reject reviews. There was also less use of boosters and hedging in the reviews than occurs in dissertation writing. This suggests that reviewers have a much stronger wish to appear certain in their judgements than do postgraduate dissertation writers. This certainty highlights the all-powerful role (Johns, 1990) of reviewers of submissions to peer-reviewed journals who can either accept or reject authors' papers as being coherent and consistent with the attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of the target discourse community or not. Indeed, often reviewers have more influence on the outcome of a submission than journal editors, especially if the article is not in the editor's specific area of expertise (Leki, 2003). In this case, the editor is very much reliant on the views of the reviewers, and it will be their view in the end, rather than that of the editor, that will prevail (see Paltridge & Starfield, 2016 for further discussion on this).

The high use of attitude markers and self-mentions in the reviewers' reports contrasts with the use of these features by writers of published research articles where McGrath and Kuteeva (2012) showed that, in the area of pure mathematics at least, hedges are more common than attitude markers, followed by boosters and self-mentions. Hyland (2006), similarly, in a review of research into stance features in published research articles in a wider range of disciplines, found hedges to be the most frequent stance marker followed by, as with McGrath and Kuteeva (2012), attitude markers, boosters, and self-mentions.

In terms of the reviewers' evaluations, what they evaluated and the roles they took on as they did this were somewhat different depending on the category of recommendation they made on the submission. There were more positive evaluations in the accept and minor revisions reviews than in the major revisions and reject reviews. There was an element of boosting in the stance that the reviewers took but very little hedging in the reports.

Reviewers took on evaluator, commentator, and reviewer roles in all the reports although the evaluator role was most prominent in the reject reviews. The editor role was also adopted by reviewers in all the reports but it was most prominent in the major revisions reviews where it was the most dominant of all the reviewer roles. This is perhaps not surprising when, as Samraj (2016b) has pointed out, major revisions reviews encourage authors to resubmit their paper and give them direction for doing this, whereas reject reviews do not and, as a consequence, provide much less direction for possible reworking of a submission.

In terms of process types, all categories of recommendation made frequent use of relational processes when commenting on the qualities of a paper, a typical use of this kind of process type (Halliday, 1994). Reviewers also made use of material processes when they commented on something an author had done or when they proposed a certain course of action to an author. They employed mental processes when they said how they felt about the paper they were reviewing, again a typical use of this kind of process. This fits with the observations made by Starfield, Paltridge, and McMurtrie (2014) in their analysis of PhD examiners reports. By contrast with Starfield, Paltridge, and McMurtrie's study, however, the reviewers in the study reported on in this book took on fewer roles than the PhD examiners did in the reports that Starfield and her colleagues examined. None of the reviewers in the current study took on a mentor role. There were also fewer cases of reviewers taking on expert and reporter roles in the reviewers' reports than in the examiners' reports. Similar to Starfield, Paltridge, and McMurtrie's study, however, the co-presence of more than one role in a reviewer's comments, as well as in the report overall, occurred. This mixing together of roles can make it difficult for authors to decide on what course of action they should take on the basis of reports they receive on their work. This, combined with the indirect manner in which some of this direction is provided (see Chap. 3) and other politeness strategies (see Chap. 4), can make it difficult for authors, especially less experienced ones, to know how to proceed with their paper, whether they should resubmit it to the same journal or to another journal after having received the reviewers' reports.

6

Learning to Do Peer Review

Training and Mentoring in Peer Review

Training in peer review is an important part of researcher development, given the importance peer review has in the academic community as a whole. The British Medical Association recommends providing training in peer review as an option in the training that research higher degree students receive (House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, 2011). The UK House of Commons Science and Technology Committee also recommends that early career researchers be given this training, especially since it is such an important mechanism for ensuring scientific quality. Learning how to do peer reviews is also important for early career researchers in that it provides a way of giving them expertise that they will need to draw on as they become members of their particular academic communities.

Until recently, very little training in peer review has been available. The *British Medical Journal*, however, now offers training to its reviewers through materials on its website and a series of regular half-day workshops (see http://www.bmj.com/about-bmj/resources-reviewers/training-materials). However, a study which examined this training (Schroter et al., 2004)

B. Paltridge, *The Discourse of Peer Review*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-48736-0_6

found that the *British Medical Journal's* training has had little impact on the quality of reviews that have been written for the journal and the changes that did occur in the reviewing were not sustained. This could, of course, be the result of the way in which the training was delivered. Davidoff (2004), for example, describes the *British Medical Journal* training as being largely didactic, rather than experiential. That is, the participants that underwent the training were not actively engaged in reflecting on the training materials, or on what they were doing as they were writing their reviews. They were, rather, largely passive recipients of the material which may have led to the low uptake of the matters covered in the material. Elsevier has also launched a training programme for reviewers through the Elsevier Publishing campus (https://www.publishingcampus.elsevier.com/), which offers online lectures, interactive courses, and videos on its website that focus on peer review. Springer has also launched a similar training programme (http://academy.springer.com/peer-review-academy#.VbwyzXjldSU) through its Author Academy.

Some journals, however, such as the *Asian EFL Journal,* have developed mentoring programmes for new reviewers which involve new reviewers working with experienced reviewers in a mentor/mentee relationship as a way of both developing and sustaining reviewer quality (see Adamson, 2012; Adamson & Fujimoto-Adamson, 2016). This programme was the result of having carried out a study which examined the beliefs of reviewers for the *Asian EFL Journal,* the *Asian ESP Journal*, *The Linguistics Journal, The Language Teacher*, and the *JALT Conference Proceedings* (Adamson, 2012; Adamson & Fujimoto-Adamson, 2015). As a result of this study, senior editors decided to introduce a mentoring programme for new reviewers of *Asian EFL Journal* submissions which had the aim of raising awareness of the peer review process and providing reviewers with support while they do their reviews.

The *Asian EFL Journal* is a relatively new journal, having been established in 2002. In 2014 it received 726 submissions in all its categories of submission (full-length research articles and practical teaching articles) and, in 2015, had an acceptance rate of 8.5 per cent. The journal draws on a pool of 100 reviewers to do its evaluations. Eighty per cent of submissions to the journal are from multilingual scholars for whom English is not their first language. New reviewers take part in an induction programme before they start to do reviews for the journal. The induction programme involves new reviewers undertaking an assessment of previously submitted articles available on a closed Google Drive site. They then compare their reviews with the original reviewers' reports and the editors' verdicts on the submissions. When they commence their actual reviewing for the journal, the new reviewers pair up with an experienced reviewer in the mentor programme for their first few reviews. During this period they get feedback on their reviews, focusing on matters such as ways of evaluating academic research, including providing appropriate, constructive feedback to authors that is neither too harsh yet not overly generous. The focus, thus, is not just on new reviewers' content knowledge but also on developing their review practice. Once they have become familiar with the review process, mentees are then able to take on the role of mentors for other new reviewers, thereby creating a cycle through which they pass on their newly gained reviewer knowledge to other beginning reviewers (Adamson & Fujimoto-Adamson, 2016).

Adamson and Fujimoto-Adamson (2016) report on a study which examined the *Asian EFL Journal* induction and mentoring programme. They examined reviews written during the programme, reflections on these reviews, email correspondence between new reviewers and their mentors, and email correspondence between new reviewers and editors. The data, thus, consisted in large part of 'talk around text' (Lillis, 2008, p. 355) which aims to gain insiders' perspectives on the beginning reviewers' texts. The approach, thus aimed to contextualize the analysis of the reports (Paltridge, Starfield, & Tardy, 2016) as well as focus on the values and expectations for the particular kind of writing by examining 'what writers do, why and in which contexts' (Lillis, 2013, p. 159). The conclusions Adamson and Fujimoto-Adamson (2016) reach in their study is that the induction programme has been an effective means of preparing reviewers to undertake reviews and that the mentoring programme has been valuable in that it monitors both new and mentor reviewer behaviour and, therefore, sustains review quality, an important motive for establishing the programme. A further benefit of the programme has been the emergence of a 'community of (editorial) practice' (Adamson & Fujimoto-Adamson, 2016, p. 48) with mentors and editors playing the role of 'brokers' (Lillis & Curry, 2010) of the new reviewers' practices.

Learning to Do Peer Review

This section of the chapter draws on an analysis of the survey data and follow-up interviews that were collected for the study to explore how the reviewers who took part in this study had learned to write the reports that they submitted to the journal. This analysis is based on the questionnaire responses which asked about the reviewers' experience in doing peer reviews, how they had learnt to do them, and the issues they faced in doing the reviews (see Appendix). These issues are also considered in relation to the experience of the reviewers and the language background of the reviewers.

Over half of the reviewers, it was found, had learnt to do reviews by reading reviews of their own submissions to peer-reviewed journals. Others had learnt to write reviews by just doing them, that is, by practice. The most challenging aspect for all the reviewers was writing reviewers' reports that were critical but still constructive. There was no consensus on the most straightforward aspects of writing peer reviews. Each of these matters are discussed in more detail below.

The average time spent on writing reviews for all the respondents in this study was three hours. Some respondents (three of the reviewers), however, only spent one hour on writing their reviews whereas seven of the reviewers spent six hours writing their reviews. There was no particular difference, however, between the amount of experience respondents had in writing reviews and how long they spent on them. The reviewer with 30 years' experience (referred to in Chap. 3), for example, only spent one hour on average on writing reviews. The reviewer with over 20 years' experience, by contrast, spent up to 15 hours writing each of his reviews.

How They Learnt to Write Reviews

A good number of the reviewers (31 of the 45 respondents) said they had learnt to do reviews by reading reports on their own submissions to academic journals. Other reviewers (13 of them) said they had learnt to write reviews simply by doing them, that is, by practice. Two said they learnt to write reviews 'by trial and error' and another said:

> I'm not sure I learned; just had to start doing it.

One reviewer took a particularly analytical approach, in saying:

> I learned to write a manuscript review the same way that I teach my students to write research articles or anything – I analysed the generic features of the reports that other people wrote about my own manuscripts. I looked at these reports and tried to figure out what purpose or purposes each section serves, where the review writers put their summary and evaluative comments, how they phrase these comments, and other generic aspects. That's how I learned to write my own manuscript reviews.

This respondent's comment on 'generic' features reflects the journal's interest in genre (see Paltridge, 2013b) as a way of talking about texts and their organizational structures (rather than in the sense of 'general' features of the texts).

The reviewer who had been reviewing for 30 years said:

> Good question. Probably from being a co-editor of …. And seeing them come in, and so learning things to include and things to exclude.

Two of the respondents said they had learnt how to review submissions to journals in a course they undertook during their doctoral studies. One of them said:

> It was an assignment in one of my graduate classes. We read a manuscript that was actually being considered for a journal, wrote a review, and received feedback from the editor of the journal.

The editor, at the time, was also the students' course instructor. He had access to reviewers' reports for the journal he edited as well as inside knowledge of the issues that were raised by reviewers of the submission that was used in the class. He also knew how the authors of the submission had responded to their reviews and, of course, the communications he had had with the authors as they worked on their revisions.

One reviewer said he had found it especially helpful getting to see other reviewers' reports on a submission he had reviewed, something that is common practice for the journal *English for Specific Purposes* but not for all academic journals. If he felt he had written an especially tough review on a paper he said:

> I specifically ask to see the other reviewer's comments … to ensure that I have given the paper a fair appraisal.

Very few of the respondents (only three) said they used the guidelines for reviews that were sent to them by the editor when they were invited to do the review.

The most common way in which reviewers learnt to write reviews, then, was by reading the reviews that they had received on their own submissions to journals and experience. Very few of the reviewers said they consciously used the journal's review criteria when they were writing their reviews. The less experienced reviewers, in particular, all said they had learnt to write reviews by looking at the reports they had received on their own submissions to academic journals. While a good number of the more experienced reviewers said this as well, they also gave other ways in which they had learnt to write reviews, most typically 'by writing them'.

Language Background of the Reviewers

Of the 45 reviewers who completed the questionnaire, 31 were native speakers and 14 were non-native speakers of English. The first language of the non-native speaker reviewers was Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Swedish, Dutch, or Italian. Seventeen of the native speaker reviewers who took part in the study said they had learnt to write reviews from reading reviews of their own submissions. Five of the native speaker reviewers said they had learnt by practice and three of the native speaker reviewers said they had learnt by doing both. The other six native speaker reviewers gave various responses to this question. Amongst these, however, one reviewer said, as mentioned in Chap. 3:

> I received many viciously worded reviews when I started publishing and decided that I would not be like them.

This reviewer, then, had clearly learnt from her experience of receiving reviews of papers she had submitted to academic journals what not to do when writing a reviewer's report.

There were mixed responses among the non-native speaker reviewers in terms of how they had learnt to do reviews. Eight said they had learnt to write reviews by reading reviews on their own submissions to academic journals, two said they learnt by actually writing them, and three said they had done both. One non-native speaker reviewer, further, said:

> I probably just figured it out from my general experience as an academic scholar.

The Most Challenging Aspects of Writing Reviews

Over half of the reviewers, 26 of them, said the most challenging aspect of writing their reviews was providing feedback to authors. They said they found it difficult 'being critical without being negative and unfair', 'being supportive yet critical', and 'saying no to an author gently'.

One reviewer said she found it difficult:

> expressing any negative evaluation in a way that will be useful to the author, and that will encourage him or her to keep working on getting the manuscript published. I try to imagine what it would feel like to be the recipient of my comments. I try to be as specific and constructive as possible in my comments to the author, and I also try to write nothing in my comments to the editorial committee that I would not be satisfied for the author to see.

This is in line with research in the areas of pragmatics and politeness theory where criticism and disagreement are seen as 'face-threatening acts' (see Chap. 4), in English, at least, that is, criticism and disagreement threaten the author's self-esteem and image they have of themself (Birner, 2013). As a result, they are very often expressed indirectly rather than directly in reviewers' reports (see Chap. 3) as a politeness strategy which aims to avoid open and blunt conflict with an author as a kind of, what Leech (2014b, p. 99) terms, a 'face maintaining act'.

In sum, then, the reviewers said in their comments that they aimed to be constructive and supportive in the feedback they gave to authors even if, at times, this was not easy to do. They followed, it seemed, the golden rule of reviewing (McPeek et al., 2009, p. E157) referred to earlier in the book. That is:

> Review for others as you would have others review for you.

It is encouraging, then, that the reviewers who completed the questionnaire were concerned about writing reviews that did not discourage authors when they felt there were issues with an article, that it needed a great deal more work, or indeed may not be publishable. Reviewers, then, can be firm and maintain standards while at the same time be gracious and kind (Schneiderhan, 2013).

The Most Straightforward Aspects of Writing Reviews

There was much less agreement amongst the respondents, however, about the most straightforward aspect of writing reviews. Indeed, six of the reviewers said that there was nothing straightforward about writing a reviewer's report. In one respondent's words:

> I don't think any phase of writing a review is straightforward.

Five of the reviewers said making the final recommendation on a paper was the most straightforward part of doing the review while four of the respondents said identifying strengths and weaknesses of papers and areas of the papers that could be further developed were the easiest to deal with. So while there was general agreement on what reviewers found most challenging in writing reviews, there was very little agreement on what was most straightforward about writing them.

Discussion

This chapter has examined how the reviewers who took part in the study had learned to write reports on submissions to peer-reviewed journals and the issues that they faced in doing this. One key observation is that a good number of the reviewers learnt to write reviews by looking at the reviews they had received on manuscripts that they had submitted to journals. They did this in terms of how they framed their reports as well as the tone they adopted in their reports. Many of the reviewers also said they had learnt to do reviews simply 'by doing them'. The most challenging aspect of writing reviewers' reports, for all of the reviewers, was writing them in a way that is both supportive and constructive but, at the same time, does not hide the point that needs to be made. There was no agreement however on the most straightforward aspect of writing reviewers' reports.

The observations made in this chapter are similar to those described by Ware (2008) who found that academics are generally committed to the process of peer review. Despite the criticisms that are made of it, Ware (2011) argues, peer review is alive and well. The comments made by the reviewers reported on in this chapter also support the view that 'learning by doing' and 'experiential learning' are important ways in which reviewers can learn to carry out the task of assessing each other's work (Davidoff, 2004). Starfield (2016) points out the importance of these kinds of tasks in academics' lives and how they very often play a gatekeeping function in deciding who gets to publish and what other opportunities will arise for authors as a result of this, such as gaining tenure or getting promoted. How then, she asks, if these texts are not publicly available, do early career academics and beginning researchers learn to write (and read) them? This is a matter that is taken up in Chap. 7, the next chapter of the book.

This chapter, then, has extended what is known about the review process for the journal *English for Specific Purposes* by using questionnaire and email data to gain insights into how reviewers for that journal learn to do peer reviews. It, further, builds on research such as that of Belcher (2007) and Hewings (2004, 2006) who have examined reviewers' reports on submissions to the journal. The chapter, in particular, has taken a 'behind the scenes' perspective on the process of peer review by looking not just at the texts that were produced by the reviewers but also the issues they faced in writing them.

Implications for Reviewer Training

Many of the reviewers who took part in the study said they used reviews of their own work to learn how to write reviews. Other reviewers commented on the importance of 'learning by doing' as a way of becoming better at writing their reports. This all highlights the importance of having an experiential component in reviewer training programmes which is, at the same time, both reflective and explicit. The kind of reviewer training described by Adamson (2012) and Adamson and Fujimoto-Adamson (2016) is an example this. Their programme aims to limit, or at least minimize, the kind of 'pitbull' reviewing described by Walbot (2009), the 'venting of personal preferences or antipathies' (Becher & Trowler, 2001, p. 89), or 'bloodletting' (Martin, 2008, p. 302) in reviewers' reports where '"falsification takes precedence" (p. 302) over diplomatic and constructive feedback' (Adamson & Fujimoto-Adamson, 2016, p. 35). It is now up to all of us, Walbot (2009) argues, to teach best reviewing practices to students as well as to use them ourselves.

People who are new to reading and writing reviewers' reports, then, could be asked to read examples of reviewers' reports and critique them for what they find most and least useful in the reviewers' comments (see Chap. 7 for an example of this). They can then create their own list of issues to focus on in the writing of reviews based on the observations they make from reading the reports. They can then be given advice in terms of how the issues they list can be both expanded and further refined. The two respondents in the study who had had this experience in graduate school both commented on how useful this kind of task had been for them (see Chap. 7 for further discussion of this).

It would seem, then, that it is not that the training of reviewers does not work but that the training needs to be a hands-on reflective experience under the guidance of an experienced reviewer (or editor) (Davidoff, 2004) who coaches the new reviewers as they undertake the tasks of reading and writing reviews. This coaching, problem-solving style of learning to write reviews, contrasts with the information-transmission style of delivering this training that seems to be characteristic of some of the reviewer training that is currently available to new reviewers (Schroter et al., 2004) and could, perhaps, better mentor new reviewers in this process, a point that will be returned to in the following chapter of this book.

Limitations

There are, of course, limitations to the analysis presented in this chapter. One, as pointed out earlier in the book, is that the data that were examined were only from a single journal. The results of this chapter, therefore, cannot be generalized to reviewers for other journals. The data in this chapter, further, relied entirely upon reviewers' self-reports. There is, of course, no guarantee that what the reviewers said they do is actually what they do. Notwithstanding, there was enough similarity across their responses to suggest that most reviewers seem to find previous reports on their own work useful for learning how to write reports themselves. Many of the reviewers also seemed to find it a challenge writing firm but constructive reviews.

It would be useful, however, to know more about how reviewers go about making judgements on the papers they review and the how they deal with the difficult side to writing reviewers' reports, giving 'bad news' (Belcher, 2007) to authors. This particular feature of writing reviews would be worth examining on its own, perhaps by the use of diary studies where reviewers could be asked to take notes of every time they faced this issue and how they thought about the language they use to deal with this. It would also be useful to know if reviewers view the process of evaluating other people's manuscripts as being beneficial to their own practices of doing research and writing about it for publication.

Conclusion

The need to have the academic community's acceptance of new research points out how important peer review is and for the public to know what claims in that research can be trusted and 'which study is right'

(Brown 2004, p. ix). These are matters that are central to the process of peer review and are something that it, hopefully, can provide, that is, an evaluation of whether the research that is published is reliable, well carried out, and of value. To do this, the work needs to have passed the judgement of experts in the particular area and acknowledged by them as being a contribution to the field (Brown, 2004).

Publishers of academic journals, then:

> have a responsibility to ensure that the people involved in the peer review process are adequately trained for the role that they play (The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, 2011, p. 3).

The next chapter of this book provides suggestions for how this might be done.

7

Implications for Reviewer Training

This chapter suggests ways in which the analyses presented in this book can be taken up in reviewer training and development courses. The chapter proposes an experiential, 'learning by doing' approach to reviewer training, rather than a didactic, information-transmission-style one, that is, activities which are both reflective and experiential yet at the same time explicit, drawing on the findings that have been presented in this book.

The example referred to earlier in the previous chapter, where students learnt to do peer review in graduate school, is something that many doctoral programmes could follow. The seminar in which this particular activity took place was part of a doctoral programme in second language studies at a research-intensive university in the USA. The professor who ran the seminar gave an assignment to the class in which everyone had to write a review of the same manuscript. The students wrote their reviews and made a recommendation for the manuscript of either 'reject', 'revise and resubmit', or 'accept'. They then shared their reviews with other members of the class. The professor gave them feedback on the reviews they had written, after which they read the actual reviews (with the authors' permission) that the manuscript had received. The reviewer

B. Paltridge, *The Discourse of Peer Review*,
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who mentioned this said, in a follow-up interview, that the experience had been extremely useful in learning how to write these kinds of reviews. In her words:

> It was really helpful to see and even work through this process of peer reviewing which was very mysterious to me at the time. I remember not feeling 'legitimate' in writing my review … I definitely did not feel like a 'peer' and doubted my ability to provide useful comments or to properly evaluate the publishability of a paper. I do also remember, though, gaining some confidence in my ability to review a manuscript, as several points in my review were validated through our class discussion. I also remember finding it interesting (and reassuring) that comments on the paper were somewhat critical, though the final version of the paper won the best article award for that year in [the journal] … It was rather eye-opening to realise that even experienced authors don't always get acceptances on the first submission!

An advantage the students had in this particular situation was that the professor taking the class was also an editor of a leading journal in the students' field of research which, of course, gave him insights (and access to reviews) he was able to share with his students that someone who was not in that position may not have been able to do. Many senior scholars do, however, have extensive editorial experience and should be encouraged to conduct workshops of this kind with doctoral students in their faculty of department. In this way, the peer review process can be simulated in the classroom. The experience that students gain from these kinds of activities can, further, help prepare them for their future world of work, a world in which peer review plays a key role in how they will progress in their careers. This kind of 'purposeful action' (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008) can enhance the doctoral student experience as well as better prepare the next generation of academics (Park, 2007) for the tasks that lie ahead for them. It, thus, contributes to students' development as scholars (Vekkaila, Pyhalto, Hakkarainen, Keskinen, & Lonka, 2012) by providing them with experiences through which they learn more about referees' reports and what is involved in writing them.

Publishers, also, could play a greater role in the training of reviewers than they presently do. As Hames (2012, p. 45) argues:

> Editors and publishers need to work together to ensure not only that their peer review processes are of the highest quality, but that they also evolve and adapt to what is required by the communities they serve.

This includes how reviewers are prepared for the task they undertake, as well as the way in which this preparation is delivered. Publishers can be encouraged to provide 'train the trainer' sessions at their meetings for new editors in which they learn about ways in which they can most effectively provide training for new reviewers for their journals. All of this is important in a time when submissions to peer-reviewed journals are increasing at such a dramatic rate (Zuengler & Carroll, 2010) but the pool of suitable people to review these submissions is not.

Workshop: Understanding the Peer Review Process

One possible approach to reviewer training is to offer workshops for authors with little or no experience in academic publishing which focus on understanding the peer review process. The aim of these workshops is to mentor beginning authors in getting published with a focus, in particular, on understanding the process of peer review. This is a crucial component of the process of getting published and one that many authors who are new to academic publishing are not familiar with.

The workshop leader, if she or he is happy to do this, can base activities around an article they have submitted for review to a peer-reviewed journal and the reviews and editorial correspondence they have received on it. Alternatively, they may ask a colleague if they are willing to share material for the workshop from an article they have sent to a peer-reviewed journal.

Prior to attending the workshop, participants are sent an article to review together with the journal's guidelines for reviewers (a typical

Table 7.1 Typical reviewer guidelines (adapted from Mahboob et al., 2016, p. 44) © courtesy Wiley

1.	Does the manuscript contain new and significant information to justify publication?
2.	Is the problem significant and concisely stated?
3.	Are methodological and/or theoretical matters comprehensively described?
4.	Are the interpretations and conclusions justified by the results?
5.	Is adequate reference made to other work in the field?
6.	Does the manuscript appeal to the general interests of the readership of the journal?
7.	Does the manuscript strengthen the relationship between theory and practice?

example of reviewer guidelines is shown in Table 7.1). The article that is sent to participants is an original version of a submission (obtained with permission of the author(s) of the article), rather than one that has already been through the review process. After they have written their review, participants are asked to make a recommendation on the submission, that is, whether the article be accepted, the author be asked to make minor revisions to the article, major revisions to it, or it should be rejected. Participants bring their reviews of the article to the workshop with them.

The workshop commences with an overview of the peer review process and discussion of how this fits in to the broader process of academic journal publishing. Participants take part in discussion tasks in which this process is clarified and the key stages of peer review are established. Participants then discuss the reviews they have written prior to coming to the workshop, comparing each other's reviews and explaining their reasons for the reviews that they wrote. They then see the actual reviews that were written for the submission, along with the author's response to the reviews so as to compare their reviews with those that were written when the article was submitted to the journal. The final version of the article is then presented to participants. The workshop leader then explains what further changes were made to the article before it was finally published. Participants are also shown the correspondence between the author and the editor as the article moved through the review and revision process to final acceptance of the article.

Table 7.2 provides an overview of the workshop, the focus and nature of the activities that participants undertake, and the objectives that are achieved in undertaking each of the tasks. The tasks that participants engage in are described in the section which follows.

Table 7.2 Overview of the workshop

Focus of the activities	Kind of the activities	Objectives achieved by the activities
1. The peer review process	Group discussion task focusing on the process of peer review	Participants gain an understanding of the process and stages of peer review in relation to publishing in academic journals
2. Review criteria and types of journals	Group discussion task focusing on the criteria journals use to evaluate submissions and types of academic journals	Participants become familiar with the criteria by which journals evaluate submissions to academic journals and how these relates to different types of academic journals
3. Reviewing submissions to academic journals	Group discussion task in which participants discuss the reviews they wrote prior to coming to the workshop with other participants Group discussion task in which participants compare their reviews with those that were actually written for the submission	Participants experience the process of peer review and what it involves Participants gain an understanding of the kinds of comments they can expect to receive on their work when they submit it to a peer-reviewed journal
4. From reviewers' reports to the final version of an academic article	Participants compare the final version of the article with the original submission and identify changes that were made to the submission Participants examine the correspondence between the author and the editor as the article moved through the review and revision process to final acceptance of the article	Participants gain an understanding of the work that needs to be done to a submission to move it from the review stage to successful publication of the article Participants understand the role and nature of communications between editors and authors

Tasks: Understanding the Peer Review Process

The Peer Review Process

As mentioned earlier, the workshop commences with a discussion of the process of peer review and what this entails (see Chap. 1, also Paltridge & Starfield, 2016). This then leads to a discussion of double-blind, single-blind, and open peer review, after which participants complete the task in Fig. 7.1 which focuses on pros and cons of each of these types of review. While most journals specify in their guidelines to authors which type of peer review they carry out, it is worth thinking about the reasons for blind review and the arguments being made against it. There are also different disciplinary traditions involved with the social sciences and humanities typically practising double-blind peer review and the sciences often opting for single-blind review.

The Elsevier website http://www.elsevier.com/reviewers/peer-review provides an overview of the pros and cons of each of these types of review. One of the reasons given in favour of single-blind review (where the reviewer knows who the author is but the author does not know who the reviewer is) is that it allows for decisions that are impartial and free from influence by the author. The argument against this, however, is that authors may fear that reviewers working in the same field as them may withhold submission of the review in order to delay publication, thereby giving the reviewer the opportunity to publish first. Reviewers may also use their anonymity as justification for being unnecessarily critical or harsh when commenting on the author's work.

The argument in favour of double-blind review is that it prevents reviewer bias based on, for example, an author's country of origin or previous controversial work. Articles written by well-known authors are

> What do you see as the pros and cons of *single blind review, double blind review* and *open peer review.* Make a list of the pros and cons of each type of review. Then discuss your answers with another member of your group.

Fig. 7.1 Task: pros and cons of types of peer review considered on the basis of the content of their article, rather than their reputation. People who argue against double-blind review say that no review can ever truly be 'blind'. This is especially the case in specialist areas of research. Reviewers, it is argued, can often identify the author through the paper's style, its subject matter or self-citation, even if the paper has been blinded (i.e. the author has removed their name from citations of their work, referring to their previous work as simply 'Author').

Some researchers feel open peer review is the best way to prevent harsh reviewer comments and to prevent reviewers from pushing their own research agendas. Others argue for the opposite view, saying that politeness or the fear of retribution may cause a reviewer to withhold or tone down criticism. Junior researchers, particularly, may hesitate to criticize more well-known authors for fear of damaging their career prospects (http://www.elsevier.com/reviewers/peer-review).

The Initial Culling of Submissions

Many journals receive hundreds of manuscripts a year and only have space to publish a dozen or so of these each year. Given this, most journals now only send out submissions for external review that show potential for being published. A further reason for this initial culling is that good reviewers are a scarce resource and editors generally only want to ask reviewers to evaluate an article which they think has the potential to be published. Editors, first of all, internally evaluate all submissions. In order to be consistent, some journals use a checklist to make an initial decision as to whether submissions are potentially publishable. The checklist shown in Table 7.3 is adapted from the list used by the editors of *TESOL Quarterly* for the initial vetting of articles. Not all of the points in this list would lead to a desk rejection if the answer is no but some (e.g. questions 1, 2, 4 and 5) would. In the case of questions 6–13, the author may be asked to revise their submission and re-send it to the journal. With question 14 (Is it under the word length for submissions to the journal?), this depends on how much the article is under the word length. If the article is a little under the word length this is not normally an issue. However if the submission is substantially under

Table 7.3 A checklist for the initial in-house review of submissions (adapted from Mahboob et al., 2016, p. 43) © courtesy Wiley

1.	Is it the correct journal for the submission?
2.	Is the article of interest to the international readership of the journal?
3.	Is textual similarity a problem with the submission?
4.	Does the article report on research?
5.	Is it original?
6.	Are the sources referred to in the literature review up to date?
7.	Are crucial sources omitted?
8.	Does the author compare the results of the study to previous research on the topic so we see how the study moves the field forward?
9.	Has it been prepared for blind review?
10.	Has the author used APA referencing?
11.	Can the author be identified from the acknowledgements?
12.	Are all figures and tables attached?
13.	Is it over the word length for submissions to the journal?
14.	Is it under the word length for submissions to the journal?

the word length, this could suggest the author has not treated the topic at the required level of depth expected by the journal and the article could, for this reason, be rejected.

Table 7.4 shows examples of the kinds of desk reject message an editor might send an author based on this initial assessment of their article. While these messages are fairly brief, it is important that authors take on board the reason for the rejection and deal with it before they send their article to another journal.

If, however, on the basis of the initial in-house review, the editors think the manuscript is potentially publishable, it is then sent to external reviewers. Otherwise, the editors may either: (a) send the manuscript back to the author(s) and ask them to make changes and resubmit their article; or (b) reject the manuscript without an option of resubmission. This process allows the editors to give due attention to each submission and to monitor the quality of articles sent out to the reviewers.

Figure 7.2 shows a task that workshop participants undertake which focuses on the in-house reviews of submissions

As mentioned above, an answer of ‘no’ to points 1, 2, 4 and 5 in Table 7.3 would be most likely to lead to an immediate in-house (or ‘desk’) rejection (A yes to point 3 could have the same result). Editors regularly report that the most common reason for this type of rejection is that

Table 7.4 Editors' messages on desk rejections

Reason for rejection	Editor's message
The article has been sent to the wrong journal	I am afraid ours is not the most appropriate journal for your paper given the very broad readership of our journal. A more appropriate journal would be one which has the specific focus of your paper such as … where I would suggest you send your submission.
The article is not of interest to the international readership of the journal	Unfortunately, given the breadth of our journal's international audience, ours is not the most appropriate journal for your paper. A more appropriate journal would be … where I would suggest you send your submission.
Textual similarity is a problem with the submission	In our internal review of your paper, we found a number of passages in your text that match various other sources without appropriate attribution. The similarity report for your paper is attached. We are not interested in further review of your paper.
The article does not report on research	I am afraid we are not able to consider your paper for publication as it does not report on empirical research, a requirement for research papers in our journal.
The article is not original	Your paper reports on findings that are already known about your topic. As a result, your paper does not move the field forward in relation to work that has already been published on your topic.
Sources referred to in the article are not up to date	I am afraid your paper is not sufficiently located within current scholarship for a research publication in our journal. Readers (and reviewers) would expect the literature on which research articles are based to be as up to date and state of the art as possible which, I am afraid, is not the case with your submission. As a result, readers are not able to see how your study moves the field forward in relation to the research that has already been published on your topic.
Crucial sources are omitted in the article	There are crucial sources missing for your article such as the work of … and …, showing, I am afraid, an incomplete knowledge of previous research on your topic.

the article is not within the journal's aims and scope (point 1). A lack of originality (point 5) is another frequent cause of an article not being sent out for review. Sometimes this is due to an absence of 'new' news, particularly when the author, for whatever reason, is not up to date with issues and debates in the field. Sometimes the issue is more rhetorical in

Look at the checklist in Table 7.3. Which of these do you think would lead to a decision to reject the article and which would be used to ask the author to make revisions to their article?

Fig. 7.2 Task: in-house reviews of submissions

that the author has not drawn the reader's attention to what is original in the study and made a strong enough claim for the original contribution. What is considered 'research', further, will vary from field to field (point 4). Points 6–14 may not lead to an in-house rejection but 'non-compliance' may well lead to the article being sent back for amendments, causing a delay in the article's processing, particularly if it goes to the back of a long line of submissions that have since been sent to the journal.

Review Criteria and Types of Journal

This stage of the workshop focuses on the criteria that journals use to evaluate submissions. The review guidelines (see Table 7.1) that were sent to participants are discussed. A key point raised in this discussion is the fit between the article and the journal it has been aimed at. To do this, participants need to examine the journal's description of its aims and scope. These will vary depending on whether the journal is a *disciplinary journal* (one that focuses on a specific discipline), a *field journal* (a journal that publishes research in a subcategory of a discipline), or an *interdisciplinary* journal (a journal that publishes work that cuts across more than one discipline) (see Paltridge & Starfield, 2016 for further discussion of this).

TESOL Quarterly, a journal that publishes work in the area of English language teaching, is an example of a disciplinary journal. *English for Specific Purposes*, which publishes research in the area of specific purpose language use, is a field journal. The *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* is an interdisciplinary journal, cutting across the areas of language studies, identity studies, and education. Each of these journal's descriptions reflects these differences. *TESOL*

Quarterly, for example, has a very broad focus and describes itself thus:

> [*TESOL Quarterly*] encourages submission of previously unpublished articles on topics of significance to individuals concerned with English language teaching and learning and standard English as a second dialect. As a publication that represents a variety of cross-disciplinary interests, both theoretical and practical, the *Quarterly* invites manuscripts on a wide range of topics. (Wiley Online Library, n.d.)

English for Specific Purposes has a much more specific focus than *TESOL Quarterly* which is reflected in the specialized area in which it publishes. All submissions, further, need to be related to the area of English for specific purposes, rather than just the broader field of English language teaching:

> *English For Specific Purposes* is an international peer-reviewed journal that welcomes submissions from across the world. Authors are encouraged to submit articles and research/discussion notes on topics relevant to the teaching and learning of discourse for specific communities. (Elsevier, n.d.)

The *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* highlights its interdisciplinary and diverse nature in its description:

> The *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* is an international forum for interdisciplinary research that is grounded in theory and of interest to scholars and policymakers. This journal seeks cutting-edge interdisciplinary research from around the world, reflecting diverse theoretical and methodological frameworks and topical areas. (Thomson Reuters, 2015)

After having discussed the similarities and differences between each of these types of journal, participants then carry out the task shown in Fig. 7.3, which aims to relate these differences to their own areas of research and goals for publication.

Reviewing Submissions to Academic Journals

In the task which follows (see Fig. 7.4) participants discuss the reviews they wrote prior to coming to the workshop. They then compare their reviews with those that were actually written for the submission.

An alternate task is to ask participants to review each other's reviews using the questions shown in Fig. 7.5 then give each other feedback

Complete the following chart for your own field of study. Identify the kinds of articles each type of journal publishes.

Type of journal	*Names of journals*	*Focus of articles published in the journals*
Disciplinary journals		
Field journals		
Interdisciplinary journals		

Fig. 7.3 Task: types of journals and areas they publish in

1) Compare the review that you wrote with other members of your group. In what ways is your review similar to theirs? In what ways is it different?
2) Now compare your reviews with the reviews that were actually written for the submission. In what ways are they similar or different to yours? In what way/s would you revise your review now that you have seen the actual reviewer's reports on the submission?

Fig. 7.4 Task: discussing and comparing reviews

1) How far has the reviewer engaged with the content of the review?
2) How constructive is the review?
3) How clear is the review in terms of what needs to be done to improve the article?
4) Has the reviewer given reasons for their recommendation?
5) How appropriate is the tone of the review?
6) How would the author react to the review?
7) How could the review be improved?

Fig. 7.5 Task: reviewing reviews. *Source:* Mockler (2016) © Nicole Mockler

on the review that they read. After this, they can discuss how they would change their review on the basis of the feedback they have received.

Once participants have completed these tasks, the workshop leader can introduce advice that experienced reviewers (see below) have given on writing reviewers' reports and participants can be asked if, on the basis of this, they would now revise the reports that they wrote. For example, Bol and Hacker (2013), on the basis of their experience, suggest an eight-step method for reviewing articles that is useful to discuss with workshop participants. These are:

1. Read the abstract
2. Peruse the references
3. Examine the tables and figures
4. Read the introduction
5. Read the methods section
6. Read the results section
7. Read the discussion section
8. Say all you have to say in the fewest possible words

As Bol and Hacker point out, the abstract is the gateway to the research. It needs to make it crystal clear what the paper is about and what the results of the study are. A poorly written abstract can create a bad impression on reviewers and set a negative tone for how they will read the manuscript. A quick look at the references can enable the reviewer to see if the paper is based on a clear set of previously published (including recent) work. Whether there is empirical evidence for the claims made in the paper as well as whether it has been sent to the right journal are also important considerations. Tables and figures should give a good idea of the results of the study and the introduction should give a good sense of the research problem, the purpose of the research, research questions, and how the questions were answered. Bol and Hacker suggest reading the Methods section of the paper to look for sound study design, the Results section to see whether it answers the research question/s, and the Discussion section to see that the results are compared with other research on the topic, highlighting what the new contribution of the paper is, what the limitations of the study are, and what implications can be drawn for further research and practice. Finally, and importantly, they say reviewers should say what they need to say about the paper using the fewest and plainest possible words. That is, reviewers shouldn't use the review to repeat what the author has done. Rather, the reviewers should say what they think are the strengths (and if necessary the weakness) of the paper and provide concrete advice for how the paper could be improved, that is, following Martin's (2008, p. 301) advice:

> Say what is good about a piece of work and how it can be improved.

As Martin (2008) points out, reviewers' reports can often be demoralizing for authors, but by following this advice, it is possible to write a report that is both supportive and helpful. It is important, he says, to provide the author with reassurance of their work and to outline positive aspects of the article that are worth retaining and building on before moving to the issues that need to be addressed in the paper. This is an example of how he has done this (omitting identifiable specifics of the paper):

> This is an excellent analysis of theory and practice in relation to […]. The critique of formulaic positions is well done, as is the discussion of […]. The

> four responses to the question of […] are astute and serve very well to highlight creative ways of thinking. The second half, on […], is even more stimulating. The role of […] is explained vividly, with informative commentary on issues such as […]. (Martin, 2008, p. 303)

Examples of what might be written in the description of what needs to be done are:

> A much expanded data set is needed to draw convincing conclusions
>
> Instead of the last two paragraphs of the article, it would be more helpful to have a separate conclusion section with a summary of the key points made in the article, an assessment of […], and possibly some comments on how insights from this assessment might be used in other parts of the world.
>
> (Martin, 2008, p. 303)

Thomson and Kamler (2013) also discuss the writing of referees' reports, following a similar approach to that proposed by Martin (2008). In addition, they suggest, if the recommendation is for major revisions, focus on the most important matters the author(s) should address. Too much detail, they argue, may lead to the author(s) getting confused, overwhelmed, or dispirited. Equally, if there is reading that needs to be done, providing the references will help the author(s) enormously.

Within all this, as Hartly (2008) in his book *Academic Writing and Publishing* points out, it is important to be courteous. In his words:

> There is no need to be superior, sarcastic or to show off. Remember that the paper that you are refereeing might have been written by a postgraduate, and it could be a first attempt at publication. (Hartly, 2008, p. 154)

And, finally, as Sue Starfield (2016) points out, we should bear in mind the golden rule of reviewing karma:

> What goes around, comes around. Reviewing, although unrewarded and under-recognised in university life, is a sustaining part of our daily practice—one day we are reviewers and the next we are being reviewed. So, do as you would be done by.

From Reviewers' Reports to the Final Version of an Academic Article

The next stage of the workshop focuses on the stages submissions go through from the reviewers' reports to the finally accepted version of the article. Participants compare the final version of the article with the version that they reviewed and identify changes that were made to it before it was finally accepted. The aim of this task is for them to understand how much work typically needs to be done for a submission to move from the review stage to being successfully accepted for publication.

Responding to Reviewers' Reports

A focus of this stage of the workshop is how to respond to reviewers' reports and the extent to which it is clear (or not) what reviewers are asking authors to do. A number of years back, colleagues and I published a paper in *Studies in Higher Education* titled 'Doctoral writing in the visual and performing arts: Two ends of a continuum' (Paltridge, Starfield, Ravelli, Nicholson, & Tuckwell, 2012b) from the study referred to in Chap. 1. A particular feature of doctoral submissions in the visual and performing arts is that they contain both a visual or a performance component as well as a written text. The kinds of texts that students write for these degrees further are, at times, different from the texts that students write in the conventional thesis-only degree. The paper that we submitted to *Studies in Higher Education* described the texts that students write for these degrees as being on a continuum from those in which the link between the student's text and the visual project is clear, through to those where there was no obvious link between the text and the project, each answering the research question in its own way. We received three reviews for this paper. The reviewers each started their review by saying what they liked about the paper before moving on to the issues they had with our submission.

One of the reviewers said that, given that this is a new form of thesis, we should describe the organization of the texts and consider to what extent they resemble those found in a traditional thesis (e.g. review of the literature, methodology, results, discussion). We had done this, but this was the subject of another paper we had, at that time, under review with a different journal so couldn't elaborate on this in our paper without overlapping too much with the other paper. We did, however, refer to the other paper in our Discussion section, so it would be clear we were aware of the importance of this matter.

This is how we commenced our response to the reviewer:

> We would like to thank the reviewers for their helpful comments on our work. We have addressed each of the issues raised by the reviewers in our revised submission. A summary of the reviewers' comments and the changes we have made are listed below.

We then summarized the changes we had made to the submission. We also explained why we wouldn't be able to make the change suggested above by saying:

> In a different paper, currently under review, we have carried out an analysis as suggested by the Reviewer and we now briefly mention this paper in our discussion section. We have developed the contrast between the two written components under discussion somewhat more by adding a description of Fenton's chapter headings [one of the texts we examined in the paper] and reasons for his choices from the interview data.

The reviewer also asked us to provide textual examples from the texts we examined to illustrate our claims which we did. We also addressed each of the issues raised in the other reports and indicated in our response to the reviewers how we had done this (see Paltridge & Starfield, 2016 for the other reviews on this submission as well as a broader discussion of responding to reviewers' reports; Nygaard, 2015b for advice on dealing with feedback).

At the Final Stage, Before Acceptance of an Article

Even once an article is considered ready for publication there are still changes that an author may be asked to make before it goes from the editor to the publisher. Below are examples of the kind of message you might get from an editor at this stage of the process:

Please check all your references follow APA guidelines.

Make sure all 'author references' have been unblinded in the text and in the reference list.

Add a bio to the article just before the References. The bio should be titled 'The Author' (or The Authors).

If you wish to add any Acknowledgments to your article do this now and put it at the end of the article, just before the Bio.

Please move the tables in your manuscript to the end of the file and replace them within the document with "Insert Table X about here."

Implications for Successful Academic Publishing

In the final section of the workshop, participants discuss the activities they have undertaken and the issues that have been raised in the workshop that they need to understand in order to publish in academic journals. These include understanding the genre of reviewers' reports (see Chap. 2), what to expect to find in a reviewer's report (Chap. 2), pragmatic and politeness features of reviewers' reports (Chaps. 3 and 4), and the language that is typically used in reviewers' reports (Chap. 5). Tasks which focus on each of these areas are described in the section which follows.

Tasks: Understanding Reviewers' Reports

The Genre of Reviewers' Reports

Samraj's (2016b) study of major revisions and reject reviews has shown reviews that make these two recommendations are quite different in terms of their organizational patterns. This book has explored this further by analysing accept and minor revisions reviews as well. The task in Fig. 7.6 focuses on identifying moves in reviewers' reports so that participants gain experience in not only locating positive commentary on their submission but also the points of criticism they need to address. This, and the tasks which follow, can be done with the workshop leader's reviews or reviews provided by a colleague.

Below are the four main moves that are typically found in reviewers' reports.

Move 1: Summarising judgment regarding suitability for publication

Move 2: Outlining the article

Move 3: Points of criticism

Move 4: Conclusion and recommendation

Look at the reviewers' reports and identify which of these moves are present in the reviews and where they are located. Then make a list, in dot point form, of what the reviewers liked about the submission and what changes they were asking to be made to the submission.

Fig. 7.6 Task: the genre of reviewers' reports

The Content of Reviewers' Reports

Chapter 2 listed the positive and negative comments that were made in the reviews that were examined in this study and what features of the texts were evaluated in these comments. The task shown in Fig. 7.7 involves identifying these kinds of comments in reviews and categorizing them as either positive or negative to give workshop participants a sense of how much is required of authors when they receive major revisions reviews on a submission.

Pragmatics and Reviewers' Reports

Chapter 3 showed that reviewers' requests for changes to submissions are very often indirect rather than direct. Thus, while some of the reviews made it clear that a change is required by making use of a directive (e.g. *Reanalyze your data*), often indirect speech acts were used to do this such as making suggestions (*It would be worth citing a more recent volume*), Examine the reviews and complete the following chart which asks you to identify the features of the texts that were commented on in the reviews. Which of these features - positive and negative –predominated in the reviews?

Text features evaluated	*Positive comments*	*Negative comments*
Topic		
Audience		
Purpose/problem statement/research questions		
Literature review		
Methods/research design		
Results: presentation and analysis		
Discussion/significance		
Pedagogical implications		
Language use/style		
Clarity		

Fig. 7.7 Task: the content of reviewers' reports

asking for clarification (*Clarify what is meant by 'business discourse'*), and making a recommendation (*I recommend a thorough rewrite of the paper before submission*). The task in Fig. 7.8 examines this use of direct and indirect speech acts in the reviews so as to give workshop participants experience in interpreting the kinds of requests for revisions that are typical of reviewers' reports.

Politeness and Reviewers' Reports

Chapter 4 examined the politeness strategies that the reviewers used in their reports to lighten the threat to the author's face by criticizing them and their work. These included expressing approval, asserting common ground with the author, intensifying interest, minimizing an imposition, avoiding presuming or assuming, praise/criticism pairs, taking personal responsibility for a comment, hedging, and apologizing. The task in Fig. 7.9 examines these kinds of politeness strategies in the reviewers' reports and the reasons for the use of these strategies.

Evaluation in Reviewers' Reports

The use of evaluative language in the reviewers' reports was the focus of Chap. 5. The task in Fig. 7.10 identifies examples of positive and negative evaluations in the reviews and considers whether the negative evaluations in the reviews outweigh the positive evaluations in the reviews; that is, whether the negative evaluations are such that they might lead to the article being rejected if they are not properly addressed by the author(s).

Conclusion

This chapter has considered ways in which the issues that have been raised in this book can be taken account of in researcher training and development courses. An example of a workshop which has this as its

Look at the reviewers' reports and identify how changes are asked to be made to the submission. That is, whether they are asked directly as directives, or indirectly as suggestions, clarification requests or recommendations.Complete the chart below as you do this.

Speech acts	*Examples*	*Direct or indirect?*
Directions		
Suggestions		
Clarification requests		
Recommendations		

Fig. 7.8 Task: pragmatics and reviewers' reports

Examine the reports for the use of politeness strategies, completing the chart below as you do this. Why do you think the reviewers have used these strategies?

Politeness strategy	*Examples*
Expressing approval	
Asserting common ground	
Intensifying interest	
Minimising an imposition	
Avoiding presuming or assuming	
Praise/criticism pairs	
Taking personal responsibility	
Hedging	
Apologising	

Fig. 7.9 Task: politeness and reviewers' reports

Look at the reviews and identify examples of positive and negative evaluations. Complete the chart below as you do this. Do the negative evaluations in the reviews outweigh the positive evaluations? To what extent do you feel the author needs to address the negative evaluations in order to get their article published?

	Examples
Positive evaluations	
Negative evaluations	

Fig. 7.10 Task: evaluation in reviewers' reports

focus has been given as well as individual tasks which focus on the different areas of analysis presented in the book. The ways in which authors can respond to reviewers' reports has also been discussed. Knowing how to respond to reviewers' reports is an important requirement for publishing success. Hence the particular focus on this in this chapter. Curry and Lillis (2013) in their book *A Scholar's Guide to Getting Published in English* give further advice on communicating with editors about revisions as do Paltridge and Starfield (2016) in their *Getting Published in Academic Journals*. The following advice from Swales and Feak's (2011) *Navigating Academia: Writing Support Genres* is important in all of this:

> Remember that an invitation to revise is usually a positive sign. So do not take criticisms personally. (p. 71)

Anything other than a rejection is a good outcome. If an editor has asked you to revise your paper it means they are interested in publishing it. If they weren't interested in publishing it, your paper would have been rejected!

8

Conclusions

This book has examined reviewers' reports from the points of view of genre, pragmatics, and politeness. It has also examined reviews in terms of content, context, and the use of evaluative language. It has then presented suggestions for how the analyses presented in the book might inform strategies for researcher (and in particular reviewer) training and development by outlining tasks and activities based on the findings of the book.

The first chapter of the book discussed the role of peer review in academic settings and then in the areas of research grant applications, promotion and tenure track applications, reviews of published books, book blurbs, and reviews of book proposals and of journal articles. Of all of these, only reviews of published books and book blurbs are available to outside readers. Book blurbs are never as critical as book reviews, as book blurbs are commissioned by the publisher as an endorsement for a book. Reviews of published books typically do contain some critical comment but, because of their very public nature, are generally much less critical than other kinds of peer review which, as this book has shown, can be extremely critical. The discussion of the history and process of editorial peer review has highlighted arguments both for and against peer review.

B. Paltridge, *The Discourse of Peer Review*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-48736-0_8

There is little doubt however that peer review is here to stay, especially with the ever-increasing imperative for academics and research students to publish in academic journals (Bush, 2016) and peer review being the process by which the quality of that work is assured (Hames, 2007). The chapter then outlined the study on which the book is based and the data that were collected for it. The particular nature of journal for which the reviews were written was described so that readers can consider to what extent the findings of the book might be comparable or transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to other academic journals with which they are familiar. The combination of textual analysis and other data, in this case survey and interview data, and the different analytical perspectives taken in the analysis of the data, aimed to provide a level of triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Hammond & Wellington, 2013; Patton, 2014) to the study so as to provide more integrated insights (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006) into the topic than might be obtained from just the textual data alone (see Paltridge, Starfield, & Tardy, 2016 for an extended discussion of this) or the use of just a single approach to the analysis of the data.

Chapter 2 considered the data in terms of context, content, and genre. The socially situated nature of the texts was discussed before moving to an examination of the discourse structures and content of the texts. It was shown that there were typical moves in the texts that were related to the recommendation being made on the submission. Thus, in the accept reviews all the texts contained a move in which the reviewer summarized their judgement on the paper. All the reviews in the other categories of recommendation (minor revisions, major revisions, reject) had a move in which the reviewer raised issues they had with the paper. In terms of content, the reviews with the most negative content were reject reviews and, in some cases, there was only negative content in these reviews. Reviews that made other recommendations (accept, minor revisions, major revisions) were more directive, however, in line with Samraj's (2016b) observations of these categories of review being to encourage authors to continue working on their paper so that it reaches the standard required by the journal for publication. The chapter, thus, shows how the reviewers had learnt the 'ways of doing' that are particular to and expected of writers in this particular context as they wrote their reviews. This was in relation to both the values of the discipline in terms of expectations for what ‘counts’ as research, how it should be framed, theorized, investigated as well as how it should be reported on. In doing this, the reviewers present themselves as expert members of the community through the matters they give attention to, what they feel needs to be addressed for an author to reach expected standards, and the level of detail at which they do this. The texts reviewers write, thus, performed certain actions in the world as well as invoke certain structures of knowledge (Frow, 2015) in line with agreed-upon sets of beliefs, values, and views of the discipline. The texts, then, are performances of the genre of reviewers’ reports (Swales, 2016) rather than just reproductions of them (Frow, 2015), even though there were similarities between the reports based on the writers’ experiences of reading others’ reports, writing their own, and responding to the expectations of the communicative goal of the texts and the disciplinary situation.

The third chapter examined how reviewers asked for changes to be made to the submissions. The study found that requests for changes were largely made as directions, suggestions, clarification requests, and recommendations. While a good number of these changes were requested directly, a large number of them were not and would be difficult, it was argued, especially for beginning authors, to decode. The decoding of these indirect speech acts required both writers (the reviewers) and readers (the authors) of the texts to have a shared understanding of how the suggestions, clarification requests, and recommendations were intended to be read and acted upon. That is, they require authors to recognize both the locutionary and illocutionary force of what is being said and act on these in the (reviewers’) intended way. To do this, readers need to recognize the literal or conventional meaning of the text (its locutionary force), the writer’s intention (the illocutionary force of the text), and combine this with the co-operative principle and its maxims (Grice, 1975), the linguistic and non-linguistic context of what was said, as well as relevant background knowledge related to what was said. All of this, further, needs to be mutual and shared in that the inference that is drawn from what is said arises from the content, context, and shared mutual assumptions that underlie the text (Strauss & Feiz, 2014). For people who are new of the world of peer review or authors from a different language and cultural background from the reviewer, this may not be at all clear and the reviewer's intended inference (i.e. to make a change to a submission) might not be drawn.

The next chapter focused on another area of pragmatics research, namely, politeness. One key reason for reviewers to avoid saying directly what they want an author to do to a submission is to do with politeness. That is, disagreement is typically seen in English as a face-threatening act and people try to avoid this threat by not being direct about what they are saying. Other politeness strategies do this as well, as was seen in the analysis of the data. These include using a good news/bad news frame, praise/criticism pairs, hedging, taking personal responsibility for a comment, or bracketing off negative comments from the general flow of the discourse. Examples of each of these, in relation to each of the review outcomes, were presented in the chapter. Positive politeness (or involvement) strategies were also examined where the reviewers intensified their interest in a paper, expressed approval, avoided disagreement, and asserted common ground and understanding with the author. This then led to a discussion of politeness as social practice in which both the author and the reviewer share some agreement about what is polite and what is not in the particular setting. This again, however, requires both the reviewer and the author to have a shared understanding of politeness within the context of peer review for this to work in the intended way. It was found, however, that there were no gendered differences in terms of how polite or impolite the reviews were. That is, both male and female reviewers followed a community of practice view of politeness (Mills, 2002) in that aspects of the reviewers' identity other than gender, such as being an expert in the field, had more influence on their linguistic behaviour than did their gender. This, of course, is not to say that everyone in the community of practice of peer review will have the same views on what is polite and what is not. There will always be a range of norms and views on politeness and appropriateness within a community of practice and, indeed, within a culture as a whole (Mills, 2008).

Chapter 5 examined the stance that reviewers took in their reports. The most frequent markers of stance were attitude markers in the accept and minor revisions reviews and self-mentions in the major revisions and reject reviews. There were, compared to published academic writing, for example, many fewer instances of hedging in the reviews. This, coupled with the high use of self-mentions across all the reviews, showed a high level of certainty in the views expressed by the reviewers. The accept and minor revisions reviews contained more attitude markers than did the other two categories of review, major revisions, and reject. In all of the major revisions and reject reviews, a pattern of positive evaluation followed by negative evaluation occurred, rather like the praise/criticism pairs referred to in Chap. 4. In terms of what was commented on in the evaluations, the most commonly commented-on features of the papers were the review of the literature, the analysis of the data, the results, the topic of the article, the methodology employed, the quality of the writing, and the author's argument and discussion, showing these to be the most important (and most valued) aspects of the papers to the reviewers. The chapter also examined the roles that were more frequently represented in the texts by the reviewers. The most common roles adopted by the reviewers in the reports were evaluator, commentator, reviewer, and editor roles, with the latter role being most prominent in the major revisions reviews. These roles were not as clear-cut as this might suggest, however, with more than one role being co-present with another in a reviewer's statements or in their overall review. This can be difficult for beginning authors as they may feel a reviewer is just making a comment (i.e. taking on a commentator role) which needs no response, when really they are evaluating an aspect of the paper which they expect the author to address in their revisions.

How reviewers learn to do peer review was the subject of Chap. 6. The questionnaire and follow-up data collated for the study asked reviewers' how they had learnt to write reviews and the challenges they faced in writing these reviews. These matters were considered both in terms of the level of experience of the reviewers as well as their language backgrounds. The study found that many (over half) of the reviewers had learnt to do reviews by reading reviews of their own submissions to peer-reviewed journals. Others had learnt to write reviews by just doing them, that is, by practice. The most challenging aspect for the reviewers was writing reviewers' reports that were critical but still constructive. There was no consensus on the most straightforward aspects of writing peer reviews.

Chapter 7 suggests ways in which the issues and analyses presented in the book can be taken up in training and development courses for beginning researchers. The chapter also suggests strategies for reviewer training which can have benefits for improving the consistency of reviewers' reports. The chapter proposes an experiential, 'learning by doing' approach to reviewer training, rather than a didactic, information-transmission-style one, that is, development activities which are both reflective and experiential, yet at the same time explicit, drawing on the findings that have been presented in the book. This kind of support is important both for research students who are seeking an academic appointment on the completion of their degree and wish to get published and academic staff in the early stages of their career who, once they have obtained an academic appointment, need publications to establish themselves in their field as well as meet tenure track requirements that have been set by their employing institutions. This is as true for native speaker writers as it is for non-native speaker writers, all of whom have to be able to write academically in English, the international language of research, and often face challenges in doing this (Habibie, 2015, 2016).

There are, of course, ways in which the process of peer review can be explored beyond what has been done in this book. Lillis and Curry (2015) suggest what some of these might be. As they point out, the focus on much research in this area has been on individual reviews rather than sets or clusters of reviews for each paper and 'the consequences of these clusters' (p. 130) in terms of how they are taken up in authors' revisions to their papers (see Chap. 3 for an elaboration on this point). Exceptions to this are the work of Belcher (2007), Englander (2009), and Lillis and Curry (2010). Belcher (2007), for example, examined submission histories of both accepted and rejected manuscripts to explore how non-native speaker authors gain acceptance in the English dominant world of published research. Englander (2009) carried out a collective case study of three Spanish-speaking Mexican scholars, exploring manuscript revision and its effect on the 'autobiographical self' (p. 35) of the researchers. Lillis and Curry (2010) employed text analysis, interviews, observations, document analysis, written correspondence, and reviewers' and editors' comments to examine second language writers' experiences of getting published in English. From this they created text histories of individual writers in order to explore 'the trajectories of texts towards publication' (p. 4).

Paltridge, Starfield, and Tardy (2016) provide examples of ethnographically oriented research strategies that could be drawn on in research into the writing and impact of reviewers' reports. This research, following Lillis (2008), aims to close the gap between text and context by providing an orientation to writing research that moves 'beyond the text' (Freedman, 1999) in order to explore the socially situated nature of texts. As Lillis (2013) argues, texts cannot and should not be viewed as separate from contexts of use and users. Texts, uses, and users, she argues, need to be the focus of research. Issues of power, identity, participation, and access, further, which are central to writing practices, also need to be accounted for in examinations of what writing is and what it does. These are all matters that need further exploration in the area of peer review (see Hyland, 2016b for other methods and methodologies for conducting writing research; Belcher, Barron Serrano, & Yang, 2016 for recommendations for future research in writing for publication purposes).

As Belcher et al. (2016) point out, beginning academic writers can find it challenging to interpret reviewer comments, especially when they are expressed indirectly, as has been shown in this book. Their proposal for exposing novice scholars to real examples of reviewers' reports and authors' responses to them is one that is supported by this book. As Mertkan (2016) argues:

> Those new to peer review are largely unaware of the (sometimes) harsh criticism that is part of the cut and thrust or negotiating the process, one which more established scholars recognise as par for the course. (p. 148)

And as she continues:

> Less experienced authors need to be encouraged to persevere, and not lose faith in the manuscript they have struggled to create, and importantly, their own scholar-in-the-making. (p. 148)

These are matters that we need to keep in mind as we support beginning academic writers so that they can achieve their goal of getting published in academic journals and, thereby, join the conversations of their disciplines (Bazerman, 1980; Curry & Lillis, 2013).

Getting published in academic journals is never an easy task regardless of whether the writer is a new or established author. Johnson (2011), in the book on publishing from a PhD referred to in Chap. 3, describes this, for beginning authors, as negotiating a crowded jungle. In her words:

> The known paths or trajectories are not present. There is no well-trodden path to follow. There are many bugs, draining humidity, miserable rain, not to mention the exertion of blood, sweat and tears, as you seek to survive the journey. (p. 1)

While all of this may seem daunting, it is not impossible. Millions of scholars do get published in academic journals every year (Hyland, 2015). Books such as Curry and Lillis's (2013) *A Scholar's Guide to Getting Published in English,* Liebowitz's (2015) A *Guide to Publishing for Academics,* and Paltridge and Starfield's (2016) *Getting Published in Academic Journals* provide advice and strategies for doing this.

Curry and Lillis's (2013) book draws on their long-term study of the academic writing and publishing practices referred to earlier in this chapter. Their book covers topics such as making decisions where to publish as well as institutional pressures to publish and making sense of the criteria by which the institution will evaluate publications which will often drive, or at least, influence these decisions. Curry and Lillis also discuss ways of entering the academic conversations of a discipline, such as attending and presenting at academic conferences. They then extend this to a discussion of ways of identifying the conversations of academic journals. This includes targeting journals by ranking and citations and working out the expectations for specific journals. They discuss whose work authors should cite, pointing out that:

> [citing] others' work is a key way of demonstrating familiarity with relevant research and locating your work within existing scholarly conversations. (Curry & Lillis, 2013, p. 70)

Other matters covered in Curry and Lillis's book include understanding time and trajectories in the publishing process, accessing resources for writing for publication, participation in academic research networks, and collaborating with others in writing for publication. Their chapter on literacy brokers provides advice on getting help from others in the writing for publication process and on communicating with people such as journal editors, highlighting how this 'can be crucial to ensuring publishing success' (p. 139). They provide examples of instructions to authors, cover letters to editors, and writing a response to reviewers' reports.

The subtitle to Liebowitz's (2015) book *A Guide to Publishing for Academics*: *Inside the Publish or Perish Phenomenon* highlights the focus of this extremely useful book. The chapters are written by journal editors who provide insights from their experience for potential authors so that they can understand what happens to a submission once it has been sent to an editor. There is guidance on what and where to publish, matters to consider when writing a title for an article, preparing and submitting manuscripts to journals, and how to position a paper for potential publication. While the focus of the book is mainly the areas of information technology and business, the advice given in the book crosses across fields of study and is applicable to writers working in many other areas as well. The focus of some of the specific chapters is on the broader contribution of a paper (Woodside, 2015), 'well-done' literature reviews (Jennex, 2015), reasons for papers getting rejected (Marsden, 2015), doing interdisciplinary research (Brown, 2015), and the roles of editors and editorial boards (O'Leary, 2015; Gordon, 2015). The chapters on challenges facing new and international authors seeking publication (Wensley, 2015) and advice for early researchers on getting published (Sarker, 2015) are especially relevant to the topic of this book.

Paltridge and Starfield's (2016) *Getting Published in Academic Journals* aims to provide insiders' perspectives on the process of getting published. Written by two journal editors, the book draws on their experiences of getting published in academic journals, in teaching writing for publication, in reviewing articles for academic journals, as well as their experience in editing peer-reviewed journals. The audience for their book is graduate students and junior scholars who are new to the peer review process and who wish to get published in peer-reviewed journals. The book explores what is involved in the writing for publication process, and the submission and review processes that are essential for authors to understand in order to get published in academic journals. Topics covered include writing in an appropriate style, writing for an audience, making time for writing, and publishing from a dissertation. Co-authoring and getting feedback on writing are also discussed. The second chapter of their book focuses on choosing an academic journal, impact factors, acceptance rates, internationalizing a research article, and ways in which articles are evaluated by academic journals. The chapter on connecting with readers discusses choosing keywords for an article, the importance of a good title, writing a successful abstract, and the importance of a discussion section and current references. The book also discusses what is involved in the peer review process and gives advice on dealing with reviewers' reports. Throughout the book Paltridge and Starfield provide examples from their experience as authors, editors, and reviewers as a way of illustrating the points they are making. They conclude their book by citing a chapter by Guofang Li, who moved from China to Canada in the mid-1990s to earn her PhD and is now a professor at the University of British Columbia. Li gives this advice to beginning academic authors: 'Write, write, write!' (Li, 2012, p. 161), stressing the importance of planning writing, putting aside time for writing, and, of course, writing for publication.

Books such as Swales and Feak's (2011) *Navigating Academia: Writing Support Genres* and their *English in Today's Research World* (Swales & Feak, 2000) include chapters which provide advice to writers on managing the publication process and practical activities related to this. Other books that cover the writing of journal articles more broadly are their *Creating Contexts: Writing Introductions Across Genres* (Feak & Swales, 2011), *Telling a Research Story: Writing the Literature Review* (Feak & Swales, 2009), and *Abstracts and the Writing of Abstracts* (Swales & Feak, 2009). An important point Swales and Feak make in the general introduction to these volumes is that distinctions that are made in the literature between native and non-native speaker writers in the context of scholarly publication are now less clear cut and that the distinction that is more important is between those that are more experienced at getting published in academic journals (i.e. senior scholars) and those that are less experienced in doing this (junior scholars) (Swales & Feak, 2009). This point is also brought to attention by Curry (2016) who argues that what is important is gaining control of genres specific to particular disciplinary contexts and learning to write as a matter of 'disciplinary becoming' (Curry, 2016, p. 78), rather than just being about language. To successfully publish in academic journals, (all) writers need an understanding of the culture, circumstances, purposes, motives, and epistemologies that prevail in the particular academic setting (Johns, 1997; Wingate, 2015) and strategies they can employ to engage with these (Starfield, 2004). This is as true for native speakers as it is for non-native speaker writers, all of whom need support and guidance when they are new to the process of getting published in academic journals.

As Leki (2003, p. 112) has observed, writing for publication is 'a minefield', 'a roller coaster ride', 'or at least an obstacle course', that is strewn with difficulties for everyone involved in the process, editors, reviewers, and authors. It may be gratifying, she says, and it may be bruising but there is no other way of staying in the academic conversation with the same level of intensity and effect. In the words of Nicola Johnson (2011, p. 174):

> In order to survive and successfully navigate the jungle [of academic publishing], you need to keep your bearings and spend ample time thinking about how you fit in to the jungle [and] which paths are right for you.

As Johnson argues, we need to write and we must write. Further, as Kress comments in *Passion and Politics: Academics Reflect on Writing for Publication* (Carnell, MacDonald, McCallum, & Scott, 2008), a book which examines the experiences of academics writing for publication:

> Writing is about a means of saying who you are, and locating yourself in the world, and representing yourself in the world. (p. 57)

In the view of Carnell et al. (2008, p. 45), 'as an academic more and more you live by virtue of your writing'. Academic writing and publishing provides evidence of a person's capability in their field, enhances their reputation, and provides a wider readership for their work. It is a key way in which people can be informed about the latest research as well as a way in which academics and the field can be influenced more generally. Getting published in academic journals, further, adds to the body of knowledge that is part of a field of study. A field only grows because people add to it. It is where beginning researchers can start to become part of the professional conversation of their discipline. As Rocco (2011) argues, a lot of new knowledge can be lost because new writers often do not know how to join the conversation of their disciplinary community. Through writing and success in getting it published, they are showing they are able to do this.

Appendix: Questionnaire for the Reviewers

1. How many reviews do you perform per year (for all journals, including *English for Specific Purposes*)?
2. How many editorial boards do you serve on?
3. For how many years have you been writing reviews?
4. How much time do you spend on writing reviews?
5. What do you find most challenging about writing a review?
6. What do you find most straightforward about writing a review?
7. How did you learn to write a manuscript review?

B. Paltridge, *The Discourse of Peer Review*,
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