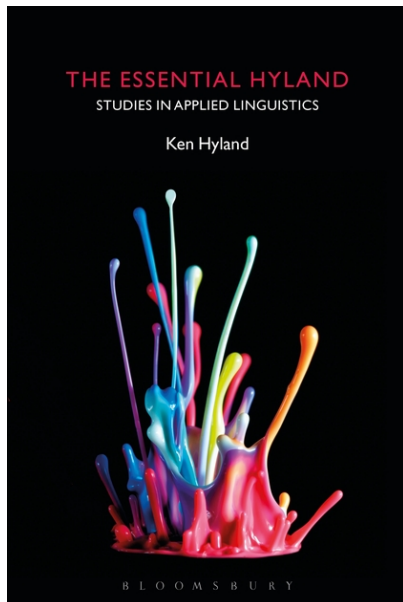


## Book Review



### **The Essential Hyland: Studies in applied linguistics**

Ken Hyland and contributors. Bloomsbury Publishing. 2018. 506 pp. ISBN: 9781350037892

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Academic discourse has blossomed into an established and fruitful epistemological site, based around which numerous publications are produced every year. We are undoubtedly indebted to Ken Hyland, one of the most prolific EAP researchers, for his seminal works on disciplinary specificity, stance and engagement, metadiscourse, and genre, to name just a few. *The Essential Hyland*, as the name suggests, reprints some of Hyland's significant publications about academic discourse, coupled with commentaries from equally leading EAP scholars, notably Charles Bazerman, Brian Paltridge, Vijay K. Bhatia, Diane Belcher and Ann Johns.

The book is divided into five parts, with three to four publications and an expert commentary in each part. The first part, titled *Writing, participation and identity*, covers a lot of important grounds vis-à-vis the centrality of writing in higher education, which is concerned with the construction of knowledge and, equally importantly, the shaping and performing of social identities and roles. In other words, writing itself is both a *reification* and *participation* within an academic community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

The second set of papers highlights Hyland's ground-breaking work that greatly enhances, and perhaps revolutionizes, our understanding of academic writing – the

development and application of the stance and engagement model of interaction. The model illustrates a paradigm shift from the traditional perception of academic texts as purely an objective entity to one that foregrounds writers' efforts to interact with readers, often through the use of a combination of metadiscoursal features. The model has been adopted to analyse the interpersonal aspect of a range of academic genres across disciplines such as research articles (as reported in Chapters 6 and 8) and postgraduate theses (Chapter 7).

The third part of the book focuses on the construction and consumption of three academic yet peripheral genres. Using the notion of *proximity*, Chapter 9 compares and contrasts the ways writers position themselves in "two interdiscursively related genres" (p. 278), i.e., academic journal articles and popular science, as they target different audiences. The subsequent chapter looks at how postgraduates express gratitude in dissertation acknowledgements across six disciplines. The last paper in this section places academics at the centre of attention, investigating how they represent themselves online, through exploring both the content and design of their academic homepages. This eye for genres which have been overlooked by most EAP researchers, further proves Hyland to be a well-rounded scholar of academic discourse.

Part four of the book presents four of Hyland's publications that analyse key features of academic writing. Firstly, Chapter 12 investigates the variations of citation practices across eight disciplines using a corpus-based discourse analysis and drawing on an emic perspective through interviews with expert informants. Hyland concludes that "the imperatives that motivate citations are contextually variable and are related to community norms of effective argument" (p. 310). The next chapter delves into disciplinary variations in self-mention in research articles. While the use of the personal pronoun 'I' appears to be a taboo in academic writing, it was found to be far more common than expected, especially in soft fields that emphasise "discursive engagement" (Clifford, 2009, p. 134). The next two chapters take a broader perspective examining academic vocabulary and lexical bundles. Hyland and Tse (Chapter 14) challenge the design and results of Coxhead's Academic Word List by flagging disciplinary specificity as one of their concerns. Similarly, Hyland (Chapter 15) argues in his award-winning article published in 2008, for a discipline-specific treatment of lexical bundles, i.e., "commonly occurring strings of words" (p. 285).

The final set of papers highlights the pedagogical significance of Hyland's research. Chapter 17 reiterates the importance of raising students' awareness of the use of hedging devices in making propositions. The next chapter, co-authored by Fiona and Ken Hyland, investigates written feedback and suggests that the interpersonal aspect of feedback (the affective dimension) is just as important as the ideational one. The final chapter serves to reiterate the importance of disciplinary specificity in designing ESP courses.

Having one's own name in a book title may seem a rather bold move which will inevitably set high expectations; Ken Hyland has indeed lived up to those expectations. *The Essential Hyland* is not simply a collection of his influential works, it also encompasses the building blocks that lay the strong foundation for our understanding of academic discourse. The book is thus "essential" reading for anyone who is interested in how writing plays a key role in academia and the various ways in which writing connects readers and writers. This book will also be essential for novice researchers dealing with textual data because it showcases how the adoption of corpus technology (and hence large data sets) and specialist informant interviews can improve the rigour of discourse analysis, a methodological approach which is often criticized as being rather subjective and, at times, prone to cherry-picking.

## References

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## About the reviewer

Ken Lau teaches in the Centre for Applied English Studies at the University of Hong Kong. His research expertise revolves around English language education and higher education issues (specifically the notion of internationalization). He has published widely in these areas and his works have been featured in top-ranking journals such as *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *Higher Education* and *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*.