

Dialogic Heteroglossia in Doctoral Psychology Dissertations: A Discourse Study

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Abstract—This study aims at investigating the use of dialogic heteroglossia in the introductory chapters of doctoral dissertations in psychology. Applying the heteroglossic engagement system (White, 2003; Martin & White, 2005), the current study analyzes a corpus of four doctoral dissertation introductions (2000 words each) from well-recognized British universities. A mixed-methods research design is adopted for analysis. This research design comprises quantitative frequency analysis to identify patterns in the distribution of heteroglossic resources with qualitative discourse analysis to explore their rhetorical functions. The findings demonstrate that dialogic contraction (51.71%) slightly outweighs dialogic expansion (48.29%), in an indication of a preference for consolidating research positions and simultaneously maintaining a space for engagement with alternative perspectives. Among contraction strategies, proclaim-endorse (13.63%) and disclaim-counter (19.31%) are the most predominant. Expansion resources, particularly attribute-acknowledge (27.27%) and entertain (20.67%), echo the emphasis of the discipline on citing prior studies and acknowledging the contestability of knowledge. Remarkably, attribute-distance is entirely absent, indicating a strong commitment to direct source attribution. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how authors of doctoral psychology dissertations construct their research space through heteroglossic engagement. Moreover, they offer insights into the disciplinary writing conventions that sustain academic knowledge authentication.

Index Terms—dialogic heteroglossia, appraisal, engagement, dialogic contraction, dialogic expansion

I. INTRODUCTION

Acts of meaning-making are not entirely faceless but always engaged in that they recognize the interests, the positions, the perspectives and the standards of those who endorse them. Those who communicate meaning must, therefore, regard the impact it has on those who construe the meaning, the respondents who at that moment representatively establish an audience for the communicative process (Hyland, 2005). The transmission of academic knowledge was appropriately described by Lyotard as a language game in which “*the sender is supposed to be able to provide proof of what s/he says, and on the other hand s/he is supposed to be able to refute any opposing or contradictory statements concerning the same referent*”, henceforth creating “*a horizon of consensus to be brought to the debate between partners*” (in Sarup, 1993, pp. 135–136). In this context, the representation of reality is always sieved through acts of selection, prioritizing, and symbolizing. Manifestations of the real world are created through practices that are basically social and comprise constructing texts in ways which will be convincing to the reader. Therefore, academic discourse does more than echo research that reasonably epitomizes an external reality: it serves to convert research outcomes or armchair considerations into academic knowledge. This sort of knowledge, then, is not an elevated demonstration of reality, but an exchange between individuals. However, this should not lead to the idealist vision that repudiates existence itself (Hyland, 2009).

In general, language is not used for communicating with the world at large, but with individuals or groups of individuals. These groups are gathered into communities. One such grouping that is widely used to analyze written communication is discourse community (Borg, 2003). Academic disciplinary communities are depicted as clans, each with its own norms, categorizations, bodies of knowledge, sets of conventions and methods of investigation which constitute a distinct culture. Within each culture, individuals obtain a proficiency in specific discourses. In other words, they acquire an ability to systematize data and observations into meaningfully structured patterns for the reader. Constructing a persuasive reader-environment comprises the deployment of genre and discipline-specific conventionalities. By way of explanation, crafting a text as a member of a specific disciplinary domain encompasses wording work in a fashion that other members can see as doing psychology or doing sociology and so on (Hyland, 2005). In other words, the constraints imposed by the discourse community not only limit the ways in which something can be expressed but also confer legitimacy on the author to be recognized as a knowledgeable and credible contributor. In academic research writing, dialogistic heteroglossic resources play a critical role in engaging with and positioning the

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author in relation to different perspectives within the discourse. This comprises referencing or responding to prior views and anticipating possible reactions from the reader, thereby contributing to the social practice of scholastic communication (Fryer, 2013).

Advanced academic discourse of psychology, as best represented by doctoral dissertations, constitutes a captivating area for scrutinizing dialogic heteroglossia. According to Ash (2001), psychology, as both a discipline and a practice, occupies an eye-catching, socio-historical, academic position in the sense that it bridges the natural and social sciences. Its impact spreads beyond academia. It shapes public understandings of human behaviour and mental processes. Doctoral dissertations in psychology constitute a considerable and developing body of scholarly work that reflects the discipline's expansion and growing specialization. Thus, this study examines how dialogic heteroglossia is encoded in a corpus of doctoral psychology dissertations, with a specific focus on their introductory chapters. Adopting a discourse analytic approach, it investigates a range of linguistic resources employed to construct a heteroglossic background, encompassing prior scholarship and anticipated alternative perspectives. The primary aims are to explore how these resources are combined to position the author's voice within the academic discourse and to identify patterns and variations in their use. By focusing on introductory chapters, the study offers insights into how doctoral candidates in psychology establish their research space, position themselves within the disciplinary landscape, and contribute to the broader academic dialogue through the negotiation of multiple voices and perspectives.

II. CONCEPTUALIZING DIALOGIC HETEROGLOSSIA

All forms of verbal communication, whether written or spoken, are dialogic (Martin & White, 2005). In theorizing the concept of dialogic heteroglossia, Bakhtin (1981, p. 294) gave emphasis to the multi-voicedness of language in the sense that *“language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others”*. Multi-voicedness comes not only from those individuals that authors cite and or cooperate with but also from the overarching genres and discourses within which authors articulate their contributions. Thus, dialogic heteroglossia reveals that the voice of the text is best seen as a fusion of multiple voices, although the way these voices interact is shaped by the individualistic choices of the author (Tardy, 2012).

This dialogistic perspective lays emphasis on analyzing the relationship between a given utterance and prior utterances articulated within the same discourse community. It focuses on how an author aligns with or responds to previous positions on the issue under consideration, especially when those prior utterances have the potentiality of playing a central role in establishing a socially significant consensus or shared frame of beliefs and values. Thus, the emphasis is on the extent to which prior contributors are acknowledged and on the way in which they are negotiated. Analysts are basically concerned with whether authors introduce themselves as aligning with, as opposing to, as ambivalent, or as neutral with reference to these other contributors and their value positions. Simultaneously, the dialogistic perspective directs attention to the anticipatory dimension of the text – to the signs authors provide as to how they anticipate the intended audience to react to the current proposition and the value position it advances. Consequently, analysts pay meticulous attention to whether the value position is conveyed as one that is widely accepted by the audience, as one which is in some way innovative, problematic, or contentious or as one which is likely to provoke skepticism, resistance or rejection (Martin & White, 2005).

Dialogic heteroglossia refers to utterances that invoke, allow for, or in some way challenge other voices or viewpoints in the discourse (Fryer, 2013). It is basically concerned with *“linguistic resources by which speakers/writers adopt a stance towards to the value positions being referenced by the text and with respect to those they address”* (Martin & White, 2005, p. 92). It deals with the heterogeneous array of linguistic resources via which authors negotiate and adjust the debatability of their propositions and proposals (White, 2020). Thus, dialogic heteroglossia is intrinsically concerned with inter-subjective positionings and incorporates semantically based choices in order to adjust the argumentativeness of authors' propositional content and negotiate this content with external voices held by real or putative readers in a continuously communicative event. Martin and White's (2005, p. 92) treatment of heteroglossic engagement is based on a traditional configuration viewing that any oral or written utterance is *“dialogic”* in that *“to speak or write is always to reveal the influence of, refer to, or to take up in some way, what has been said/written before, and simultaneously to anticipate the responses of actual, potential or imagined readers/listeners”*.

Thus, authors employ the resources of heteroglossic engagement to indulge into a dialogue whereby, in varying strength, they are all concerned with acknowledging manifestations or viewpoints that are conceivably different from those of respondents. Within this socially driven perspective, resources of engagement are comprehended to have the potentiality of acknowledging the argumentativeness of a particular stance, and the inclination of the author to negotiatively argue with putative respondents holding a different viewpoint. The system of heteroglossic engagement operates with this dialogistic and heteroglossic perspective rather than the functional truth-based perspective (Lee, 2006).

III. DIALOGIC HETEROGLOSSIA WITHIN THE APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK

The focus now shifts to explicitly dialogistic locutions and the various orientations to heteroglossic diversity they designate. Prior to providing a more meticulous account of individual options, it is important to note that these resources of dialogic heteroglossia can be categorized into two broad groups based on their intersubjective functionality: those that are dialogically expansive and those that are dialogically contractive. The distinction is based on the extent to which an utterance, via specific linguistic choices, dynamically makes allowances for alternative dialogical positions and voices (*dialogic expansion*), or otherwise, seeks challenging, fending off or restricting the space of such (*dialogic contraction*) (White, 2003).

Different types of *dialogic contraction* can be distinguished based on the linguistic resources used to restrict or limit the dialogic space. Distinctions are determined by whether some dialogical alternative is dismissed or replaced (*disclaim*) or whether, “*through some authorial interpolation, emphasis or intervention, dialogic alternatives are confronted, challenged, overwhelmed or otherwise excluded*” (*proclaim*) (Martin & White, 2005, pp. 117–118).

Within *disclaim*, the author references existing or prior alternative positions and explicitly rejects them. Direct rejection is inherently contractive, and presents opposing viewpoints as unsustainable. By way of explanation, the textual voice establishes itself in opposition to or in direct contradiction with an alternative perspective. This process is sustained through two more delicate categories of meaning which are *deny* and *counter* (White, 2003). *Deny* refers to the meaning by which an author acknowledges prior or anticipated alternative positions and explicitly negates them. In other words, rejecting a proposition intrinsically recognizes the existence of alternative perspectives prior to dismissing them. This function is typically realized via negation, such as the use of *not* in English. The critical point is that negation is characteristically dialogistic, because it implies a contrasting affirmative assertion (White, 1998). According to Martin and White (2005), *counter* incorporates meanings by which a proposition is presented as supplanting or replacing an alternative proposition. The alternative proposition is not typically stated in an explicit fashion but is inferred with reference to prior discourse or orthodox expectations. For example, in “*Although there are many frailty measurement tools, there remains divergence in opinion as to what frailty actually entails*”, the underlying expectation that a large number of available tools should lead to consensus on the definition of frailty is acknowledged yet eventually rejected. Here, ‘*although*’ functions as a concessive marker that signals the view that the anticipated correlation between the existence of multiple measurement tools and definitional clarity does not hold. Consequently, the dialogic space for the countered proposition is closed off, as the statement asserts an opposing viewpoint. In English such unstated propositions are typically countered by the use of concessive (sometimes termed adversative) conjunctions such as *but, although, however* (Frier, 2013).

Proclaim refers to meanings through which propositions are reinforced, boosted, or defended against potential counterarguments. The author presents the proposition as highly credible, widely accepted or self-evident, and positions any contradictory viewpoints as fragile or indefensible. This sort of reinforcement demonstrates that an alternative perspective, which the author is actively refuting or dismissing, exists. As a result, *proclaim* is both dialogic and contractive in the sense that it engages with other voices while simultaneously restricting the scope of disagreement (Martin & White, 2005). White (2003) presented the system of ‘*proclaim*’ as having four delicate subsystems: *concur, pronounce, endorse* and *justify*.

Concur refers to formulations where the author presents a proposition as if it is already accepted by the audience. There is an assumption of alignment between the author’s stance and the reader’s perspective. The proposition is framed as shared knowledge or as self-evident within the communicative context. In English, this sense of agreement is often formulated through adverbials such as *clearly, evidently, naturally* and *unsurprisingly*. For example, in “*Naturally, social support plays a crucial role in mental health recovery*”, the author assumes that the importance of social support in mental health is widely acknowledged. This formulation is dialogistic in the sense that it positions the reader as someone who already accepts this view. Such a formulation reinforces the idea that the viewpoint expressed is not open to debate but is a commonly accepted reality (Martin & White, 2005).

Through the resource of *pronounce*, authors have the potential of interpolating themselves straightforwardly into the text as the overtly responsible source of the utterance (White, 1998). It involves formulations that basically incorporate an authorial emphasis or explicit authorial intervention or interpolation. For example: ‘*I contend ...*’, ‘*The facts of the matter are that ...*’, ‘*The truth of the matter is that ...*’, ‘*We can only conclude that ...*’, ‘*You must agree that ...*’, ‘*intensifiers with clausal scope such as really, indeed, etc.*’ (Martin & White, 2005). Authors thereby increase the interpersonal costs of any disapproval/skepticism of their utterances, rendering such straightforward challenges to the authors’ dialogical positions (White, 2003).

According to Martin and White (2005), the category of *endorse* is concerned with the attribution of propositions to external sources while simultaneously considering them as established truths. Unlike other forms of attribution, where an author may simply reference or report an external view, this resource involves presenting the attributed material as universally accepted. In English, this is typically attained through factive reporting verbs such as *prove, demonstrate, and show*. For example, in “*Factor analytic studies have demonstrated that depression and loneliness are different constructs*”, the author aligns with the attributed source, and minimizes potential counterarguments by positioning the proposition as already confirmed. This marks endorsement a dialogistic strategy in the sense that it comprises both referencing another voice and reinforcing the proposition as an accepted fact.

The *justify* resource introduces the textual voice as defending or arguing for a certain positional value, one that might be controversial or substantially require further support (White, 2003). Thus, justificational meanings are normally sourced by connectives and conjunctions such as *thus*, *because*, *accordingly*, and *for this reason*. For example: “*The government has betrayed the people because it didn’t maintain full employment*”. The textual voice considers that it is a matter of necessity to offer ‘*justification*’ for the assertive utterance that “*The government has betrayed the people*”. The textual voice introduces an overt explanation or motivation for the propositional content, signified by the conjunctive item *because*, and in doing so ‘contracts’ the dialogical scope for alternative clarifications. From an intersubjective perspective, the *justify* resource has the potentiality of acknowledging or anticipating an audience that might hold an alternative positional value and is in need of persuasion. The *justify* resource is therefore essential in the negotiation of alignment, functioning (at least potentially) to “*win over those who might be dubious or resistant*” to certain claimings (White, 2012, p. 64).

The focus now turns to the heteroglossic sub-system that is considered to be in contrast with the previously cultivated linguistic resources. This sub-system encompasses choices categorized as dialogistically expansive. These formulations explicitly situate propositions in individual and context-dependent subjectivity, and present them as one possibility among an array of possibilities that could be articulated within the given communicative context. Therefore, such formulations have the potential for acknowledging the presence of alternative voices with different value positions. Generally speaking, there are two primary resources through which propositions are anchored in this way in an author’s subjectivity: *entertain* and *attribute* (White, 2003).

According to Martin and White (2005), the *entertain* resource involves wordings that present the position of the authorial voice as just one among multiple possibilities, and therefore allows space for alternative perspectives. When analyzed from a dialogistic perspective—rather than through a truth-functional semantic lens, as is often the case—such wordings are seen as actively constructing a heteroglossic context for the text. This positioning can be rooted in the author’s subjectivity that is typically conveyed through epistemic modals, evidential markers, or similar formulations as in “*Cognitive-behavioral therapy may be/probably is/ is almost certainly the most effective treatment for generalized anxiety disorder*” and “*In my view/I believe, cognitive-behavioral therapy is the most effective treatment for generalized anxiety disorder*”. Relying solely on a truth-function perspective—common in some linguistic analyses—can be misleading if it suggests that such expressions merely indicate uncertainty or a lack of commitment to the truth of the proposition. As an alternative, these formulations fundamentally function to acknowledge the potential contestability of the proposition within the communicative context.

The resource of *attribute* involves formulations that are inherently dialogistic in that they introduce a secondary voice into the text as the source of the attributed proposition. This dialogism works on two levels: first, by explicitly referencing an external source, and second, by presenting the proposition as rooted in that individual and contingent subjectivity of that source. As a result, the proposition is positioned as but one possibility of a range of possibilities which could be advanced (Shibata, 2018). White (2003) identified two distinct sub-types of *attribute*. The first, which they describe as *acknowledge*, involves what can be considered a neutral form of attribution. This is achieved through certain reporting verbs and related expressions such as ‘*she said...*’, ‘*she reported...*’, ‘*she believes that...*’ or ‘*according to...*’. Through these formulations, the author appears to relay the ideas or propositions of the cited source without explicitly adopting a stance towards them. The second sub-type of *attribute* is *distance*. This sub-type is closely associated with the reporting verb ‘*to claim*’ and some relevant wordings, such as ‘*supposedly*’ and ‘*so-called*’ (Shibata, 2018). For example: “*The author is claiming that social media usage negatively impacts cognitive development*”, or “*Social media is supposedly a major factor in cognitive decline*”. Martin and White (2005) suggested that such formulations allow authors to create distance from the attributed material, and indicate a degree of authorial caution towards the claim. However, this does not imply that the proposition is intrinsically problematic or unreliable, but rather that it is still subject to further confirmation and verification. These formulations are dialogistically expansive in the sense that they open space for alternative viewpoints, especially for those who may challenge or dispute the stated claim.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Corpus Selection

The study investigates dialogic heteroglossia in advanced academic research of psychology via analyzing a corpus of four introductory chapters of doctoral dissertations (2000 words per chapter) submitted to British universities. The selection process follows the following criteria:

1. The introductory chapters must be explicitly labelled to guarantee consistency in analysis.
2. The dissertations must be from the 2020s to capture contemporary academic conventions and rhetorical practices.
3. The authors must be native speakers of English to reduce possible confounding factors that are associated with second-language interference.
4. The dissertations are obtained from institutional repositories to confirm data availability.

The selected corpus has the potentiality of providing a representative sample of how doctoral candidates in psychology use heteroglossic resources to present their research rationale within the disciplinary research area.

B. Research Design

Applying the heteroglossic engagement system (White, 2003; Martin & White, 2005), the current study adopts a mixed-methods design that integrates both quantitative and qualitative analyses to investigate heteroglossic resources in the introductory chapters of doctoral psychology dissertations. Thus, the research design of this study involves two phases:

1. Quantitative phase: A frequency analysis of heteroglossic resources is carried out in order to identify patterns in their distribution.
2. Qualitative phase: Qualitative analysis is applied to selected examples to substantially sustain the contextualization of the quantitative results. Moreover, the rhetorical functions of the used heteroglossic resources are scrutinized to realize how they contribute to positioning the author's voice with reference to the backdrop of other discursual voices.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Applying the heteroglossic engagement system to the selected corpus of the introductory chapters of doctoral psychology dissertations, it is evident that dialogic heteroglossia is distributed across multiple categories and sub-categories with different frequencies of occurrence. Across the corpus, the heteroglossic resources manifest at a frequency of approximately 22 per 1000 words, with *dialogic contraction* accounting for 51.71% and *dialogic expansion* for 48.29%, as shown in Table 1. This distribution indicates a relatively balanced yet slightly contraction-oriented rhetorical approach in psychology dissertation introductions. The marginal predominance of *dialogic contraction* over *dialogic expansion* suggests that while dissertation writers prioritize consolidating their research stance, they also maintain a substantial degree of engagement with external perspectives.

TABLE 1
OVERVIEW OF THE HETEROGLOSSIC RESOURCES IN THE CORPUS

Heteroglossia								
Contraction						Expansion		
Proclaim				Disclaim		Entertain	Attribute	
Concur	Pronounce	Endorse	Justify	Counter	Deny		Acknowledge	Distance
7	11	24	8	34	7	37	48	0
3.97	6.25	13.63	4.54	19.31	3.97	21.02	27.27	0

A. Dialogic Contraction

The slight prevalence of *dialogic contraction* (91 occurrences, 51.71%) in the introductions of doctoral psychology dissertations echoes a broader disciplinary tendency to emphasize claims, consolidate research positions, and selectively engage with opposing perspectives. In academic discourse, particularly within the context of dissertation introductions, *contraction* plays a central role in managing epistemic authority and positioning the author's research within established knowledge as well as justifying its contribution to the research area. This tendency puts forward that authors of psychology dissertations aim to create a well-ordered argumentative space in which alternative viewpoints are acknowledged but ultimately constrained to support their own perspectives. The presence of *contraction* resources shows an effort to preserve a persuasive stance, and to ensure that the research is not perceived as excessively tentative or speculative. Via limiting dialogic space, authors introduce their research as indispensable and reasonable within the ongoing scholarly sphere to align with disciplinary expectations that prioritize clarity and authoritative positioning in academic discourse.

(a). Disclaim Resources

Within dialogic contraction, disclaim resources (41 occurrences, 23.29%) play a crucial role in the introductions of doctoral psychology dissertations in the sense that they enable authors to explicitly reject, counter, or challenge alternative perspectives to reinforce the necessity of their research. The relatively high frequency of disclaim suggests that dissertation authors actively engage with competing viewpoints, positioning their research within existing debates and simultaneously establishing its unique contribution.

The prevalence of counter (34 occurrences, 18.99%) within the disclaim resources points out the tendency of authors of doctoral dissertations in the discipline of psychology to engage actively with opposing views rather than simply rejecting them outright. Counter serves as a rhetorical strategy that first acknowledges an alternative perspective before ultimately replacing it with the author's argument. This strategy is substantially evident in statements such as "Although many interventions have been put forward to tackle loneliness, for the most part, they have been deemed ineffective (Akhter-Khan & Au, 2020; McDaid, Bauer, & Park, 2017)". Here, the concessive structure introduced by 'although' recognizes the existence of interventions designed to address loneliness, only to encounter and eventually refute their effectiveness with supportive evidence. This way, authors position their research as contributing to an ongoing scholastic debate. Moreover, they reinforce the necessity of their research via demonstrating that existing perspectives are inadequate or contested. The high frequency of counter suggests that authors of psychology dissertations give greater emphasis to argumentation through engagement with competing viewpoints than to simple assertion. Thus,

ensuring that propositions are framed as responses to broader academic discussions rather than isolated findings reflects a key disciplinary norm in crafting psychology. By way of explanation, establishing a research gap requires not only presenting innovative evidence but also critically engaging with prior scholarship to justify research relevance.

In contrast, deny (7 occurrences, 3.97%) appears significantly less frequently, and indicates that introductions of psychology dissertations do not often involve outright rejection of competing perspectives. Rather than explicitly dismissing alternative perspectives, authors tend to engage with competing viewpoints through counter, which allows them to acknowledge and then contest prior research in a more dialogic way. The infrequent use of deny suggests a disciplinary preference for sophisticated argumentation more than categorical negation. This pattern is evident in statements such as “Additionally, the motivational profiles of mountaineers and low-risk sports participants before, during, and immediately after participation was not associated with sensation seeking”. Here, the phrase ‘was not associated with’ exemplifies deny, explicitly rejecting the notion that sensation seeking plays a defining role in these individuals. However, unlike counter, which frames an alternative perspective before challenging it, deny simply negates the proposition without engaging in a more extensive discussion of alternative interpretations. The lower frequency of deny reinforces the impression that authors of doctoral dissertations in psychology prioritize argumentative strategies that maintain academic engagement with existing literature over outright refutation in order to preserve the scholastic integrity of their discourse while ensuring that their contributions are positioned as part of an ongoing academic dialogue.

(b). *Proclaim Resources*

The relatively high occurrence of proclaim (50 occurrences, 28.40%) in the introductions of doctoral dissertations in psychology points out a resilient preference for strengthening statements and managing reader interpretation via assertively rhetorical strategies. Proclaim resources serve to enrich the credibility of the author’s argument through positioning central propositions as well-established or self-evident within the disciplinary discourse. This recurrent use indicates that authors of psychology dissertations prioritize a degree of epistemic authority to support the well-groundedness of their perspectives. Via strengthening their research within the broader academic background, authors advantageously close down the dialogic space for potential controversy. Doing so, they align with disciplinary norms that give emphasis to empirical validation and theoretical coherence.

The most frequently employed proclaim sub-category is endorse (24 occurrences, 13.63%), which indicates a strong tendency among authors of doctoral dissertations in psychology to align with authoritative sources as a means of firming up their arguments. Endorsement has the potential for positioning previous research as established knowledge, diminishing possible counterarguments and highlighting credibility. For example, in “Research has shown that public speaking anxiety (PSA) can negatively affect critical thinking skills in group discussions (Blume et al., 2010)”, the verb phrase ‘has shown’ is a factive reporting verb that marks endorsement via presenting the research findings as empirically validated rather than arguable. This choice restrains the dialogic space in the sense that it covertly dismisses alternative elucidations, and frames the proposition as an unquestionable contribution to scholarly discourse.

The relatively low occurrence of pronounce (11 occurrences, 6.25%) in the introductions of psychology dissertations reflects a cautious rhetorical choice by authors to lessen explicitly assertive propositions in favour of empirical confirmation. Rather than relying on direct authorial statements, authors in the psychology domain purposefully foreground external evidence to boost the legitimacy of their arguments. For example, in “Without research and novel solutions, this discrepancy and the prevalence of these age-related health conditions will continue to increase exponentially in the future,” the use of ‘will’ and ‘exponentially’ manifests a resilient authorial commitment to the proposition, and positions it as an unavoidable consequence. Nevertheless, the infrequent use of pronounce implies that researchers in the advanced academic psychology domain exercise caution in proclaiming propositions as self-evident. They tend to adhere to disciplinary writing practices that prioritize evidence-based argumentation over overconfidently subjective assertions. This tendency echoes the broader academic expectation that statements require substantiation through engagement with previous research rather than through authors’ imposing stance alone. Through the limitation of the use of pronounce, introductions of dissertations in the discipline of psychology sustain a sense of balance between persuasion and scholastic objectivity.

The relatively low frequency of justify (8 occurrences, 4.54%) puts forward that authors of psychology dissertations rarely rely on categorical justification to defend their positions. They conversely prefer to frame their arguments through alignment with established literature (endorse) or by opposing alternative viewpoints (counter). This tendency echoes the disciplinary emphasis on empirical grounding in the sense that the legitimacy of research decisions is often assumed, not explicitly argued. An example of justification is demonstrated in “As public speaking is a cognitively demanding task, an exploration of how anxiety influences the mechanisms of working memory and attention is worth including in this thesis”. The author justifies the inclusion of this focus by linking it to cognitive demands. However, such blatant rationalizations are uncommon because introductions of doctoral dissertations in psychology typically embed their justifications within broader disciplinary norms, such as referencing previous research or detecting research gaps. This tendency exposes that the relevance of academic research is often implied through citation patterns and established theoretical frameworks. Accordingly, the low occurrence of justify echoes that justification is more imperceptibly woven into the discourse rather than explicitly shown.

The least frequently occurring proclaim resource in the corpus is *concur* (7 occurrences, 3.97%). It indicates that authors of psychology dissertations rarely frame propositions as shared by the putative reader. Alternatively, they demonstrate a preference for aligning their arguments through endorsement rather than direct expressions of agreement. For example, in “Typically, those with trait PSA and/or FoPS are predisposed to respond to relatively unthreatening public speaking situations and stimuli with disproportionately high levels of state PSA and/or FoPS”, the use of ‘typically’ conveys a generalized assumption within the field, and invites the reader to recognize the proposition as a familiar or expected phenomenon. This indicates that authors are more inclined to support their propositions with authoritative sources, and refrain from assuming shared knowledge with the reader. In other words, they emphasize the broader disciplinary preference for evidence-based validation over unreserved concurrence.

B. Dialogic Expansion

Dialogic expansion, accounting for 48.29% (85 occurrences) of the heteroglossic resources identified in the corpus, demonstrates the extent to which authors of doctoral psychology dissertations engage with external voices, acknowledge alternative perspectives, and situate their research within broader disciplinary debates. Expansion resources allow authors to introduce, entertain, or attribute viewpoints that extend the discursive space of their argument, signaling an awareness of multiple positions rather than solely reinforcing a singular perspective. The relatively high occurrence of expansion suggests that, despite the prevalence of contraction, introductions of doctoral dissertations in psychology maintain a degree of epistemic openness, particularly when positioning research in relation to prior studies.

(a). Entertain Resources

Among the expansion resources, *entertain* (37 occurrences, 20.67%) is a prominent feature in introductions of doctoral psychology dissertations. The use of this resource reflects the disciplinary need for epistemic openness and cautious argumentation. Unlike truth-functional semantics, which focus on absolute propositions, a dialogistic perspective reveals that *entertain* actively constructs a heteroglossic backdrop via anchoring propositions in the subjective positioning of the author. This rhetorical strategy is particularly justified in psychology discourse, where propositions often comprise complex human behaviours, cognitive processes, and theoretical constructs that are intrinsically adaptable and context-dependent. Through the use of *entertain*, authors of doctoral dissertations in psychology acknowledge the probabilistic and interpretative nature of psychological research, recognizing that findings are rarely definitive but alternatively one possibility among multiple perspectives. For example, in “As social creatures, it is possible that social needs exist on a spectrum where the negative feeling or pain of feeling disconnected is loneliness”, the formulation ‘it is possible that’ signals *entertain*, and foregrounds the contingent nature of the proposition rather than asserting it as an established fact. Given the emphasis of psychology on empirical inquiry and theoretical debates, the frequent use of *entertain* aligns with the commitment of the discipline to preserving an open and exploratory stance. This allows for the accommodation of alternative explanations, methodological limitations, and future research directions. This way, propositions remain flexible and subject to scholarly scrutiny. Thus, the relatively high occurrence of *entertain* in the introductions of doctoral psychology dissertations reflects the epistemological stance of the discipline in the sense that authors must carefully navigate the balance between making knowledge claims and acknowledging their contestability within an evolving scientific landscape.

(b). Attribute Resources

Attribute (48 occurrences, 27.27%) is the most frequently employed resource, with *acknowledge* (48 occurrences, 27.27%) emerging as the single most common heteroglossic value in the corpus. The prevalence of *attribute-acknowledge* as the most frequently employed heteroglossic resource in the corpus calls attention to the commitment of authors of doctoral dissertations in psychology to explicit engagement with previous research. This strategic choice ensures that their investigations are firmly situated within an established scholarly framework. Authors use *acknowledge* to introduce external perspectives in a neutral manner, without necessarily endorsing or rejecting them. A case in point is the statement where an author attributes a theoretical distinction to previous scholars as in “According to these authors, three distinct neuropsychological systems of emotion and motivation exist.” In this example, the phrase ‘according to these authors’ exemplifies *acknowledge*, marking the proposition as derived from an external source while maintaining an impartial stance. The absence of *attribute-distance* (0 occurrences, 0%) further reinforces this pattern, and suggests that authors of doctoral dissertations in psychology intentionally avoid distancing when engaging with cited sources. Alternatively, they adopt a transparent citation style to ensure that their arguments remain firmly anchored within the disciplinary discourse.

VI. CONCLUSION

The analysis of heteroglossic resources in the introductory chapters of doctoral psychology dissertations reveals a cautiously attuned interplay between *dialogic contraction* (51.71%) and *dialogic expansion* (48.29%). This nearly equal distribution reflects the distinctive nature of psychology as a discipline that straddles the boundaries between the social and natural sciences. The prominent presence of *dialogic contraction* suggests that authors of doctoral dissertations in the discipline of psychology are enthusiastically concerned with consolidating their arguments, aligning with

established research conventions, and reinforcing the reliability of their propositions. Through the substantial employment of strategies such as rejecting counterarguments, and endorsing authoritative sources, they construct a sense of certainty and acceptability to position their research within a recognized body of academic knowledge. In addition, the significant use of *dialogic expansion* designates a sphere of openness to alternative angles, current scholastic discussions, and the intricacies that are intrinsically specific to psychological investigations. Doctoral candidates in psychology actively engage with multiple perspectives, and recognize diverse theoretical frameworks to contextualize their research rationale within the broader academic discourse. Their strategic use of expansion resources indicates an awareness of evolving and dynamic nature of the discipline. Contrary to disciplines that predominantly depend on experimental certainties or interpretative flexibilities, psychology demands a balanced approach—one that realizes procedural consistency and simultaneously allows for ideational diversity. Thus, the study shows that authors of doctoral dissertations in psychology use heteroglossic resources in a strategic fashion to navigate the unparalleled epistemological status of the discipline. This strategic employment of heteroglossic resources has the potential for echoing the conventions of academic writing in psychology as well as highlighting its broader identity as an academic discipline that incorporates empirical investigation and interpretative depth.

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