

# Invoking attitude, identity, and text organisation

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**Ways and functions of invoking Attitude, invoking targets of Attitude, and making Attitude ambiguous in written interactive environments:**

**part i: rhetorical organisation**

# outline of talk:

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- Part of wider project in which attitude & invocations are related to rhetorical organisation of individual texts, norms of interaction in groups, and construal of textual identity
- Units of analysis and context of interaction
- Prevalent in my data
- Ways of invoking attitude: a topology
- Discourse organisational functions of invoking attitude in context
- Illustrated today by reference to 2 or 3 texts, 1 [Rob], 2 [Simon] & 3 [Sally]

## wider project involving invocations ~

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- cover term for invoking attitude, targets of attitude, ambiguous evaluation
- Involved in the organisation of argument & co-positioning of addressees
- logogenetic development of text's meanings dependent on accumulated co-textual meanings + phylogenetic resources (in wider and local communities 'reservoir') + ontogenetic resources ('repertoire')
- contribute to accumulation of 'textual identity' – seen against some context (study thus involves both)
- focus today on the notion of a 'cline of invocations' wrt rhetorical organisation potential

# units of analysis

## : contributions rendered as objects of study

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- mode of communication: computer-mediated, member-subscription discussion list
- reading position: participant-observer
- One contribution to the list: a whole message sent or 'posted' to the group discussion as a whole.
- Such posts include technological information.
- 'Post' is a label for the utterance in context, while 'text' refers to any re-presentation of the posted matter for analysis
- Relies on signs of finalisation of the speaking subject/creating subject after Bakhtin 1986
- synoptic view of **the texts**,
- negotiatory view of **the contributions to written interaction**

## prevalence of invoked attitude in written interactive contexts -

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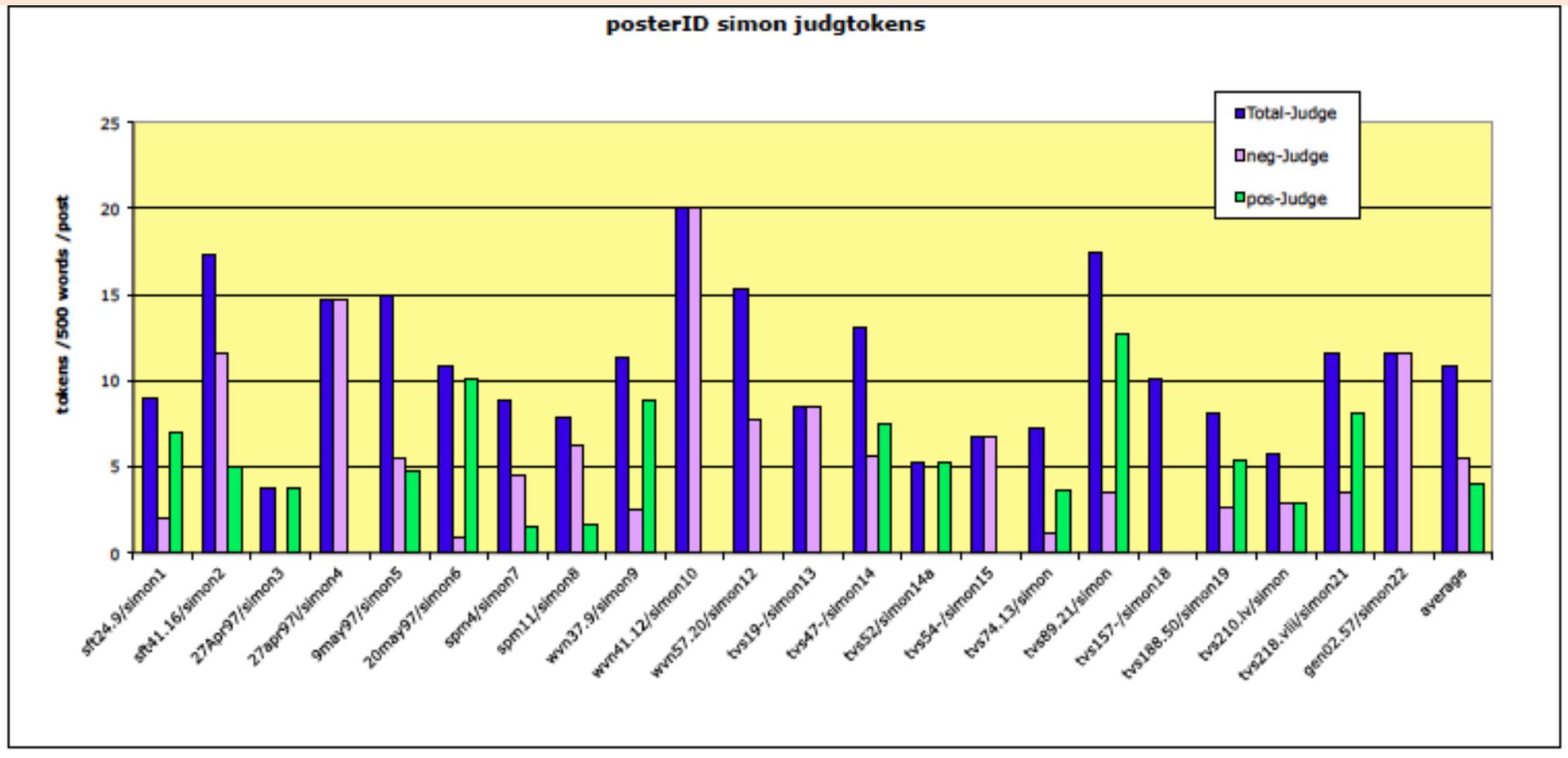
- negotiating alignment and affiliation (identity) in written interactive environment
- mediated context leads to increased awareness of addressees and potential for response
- negative responses can be ‘shaming’ in front of group, where identity is constituted entirely in written contributions and responses
- need to be accepted for contributions only – withdrawal is alternative

# data: example texts in context

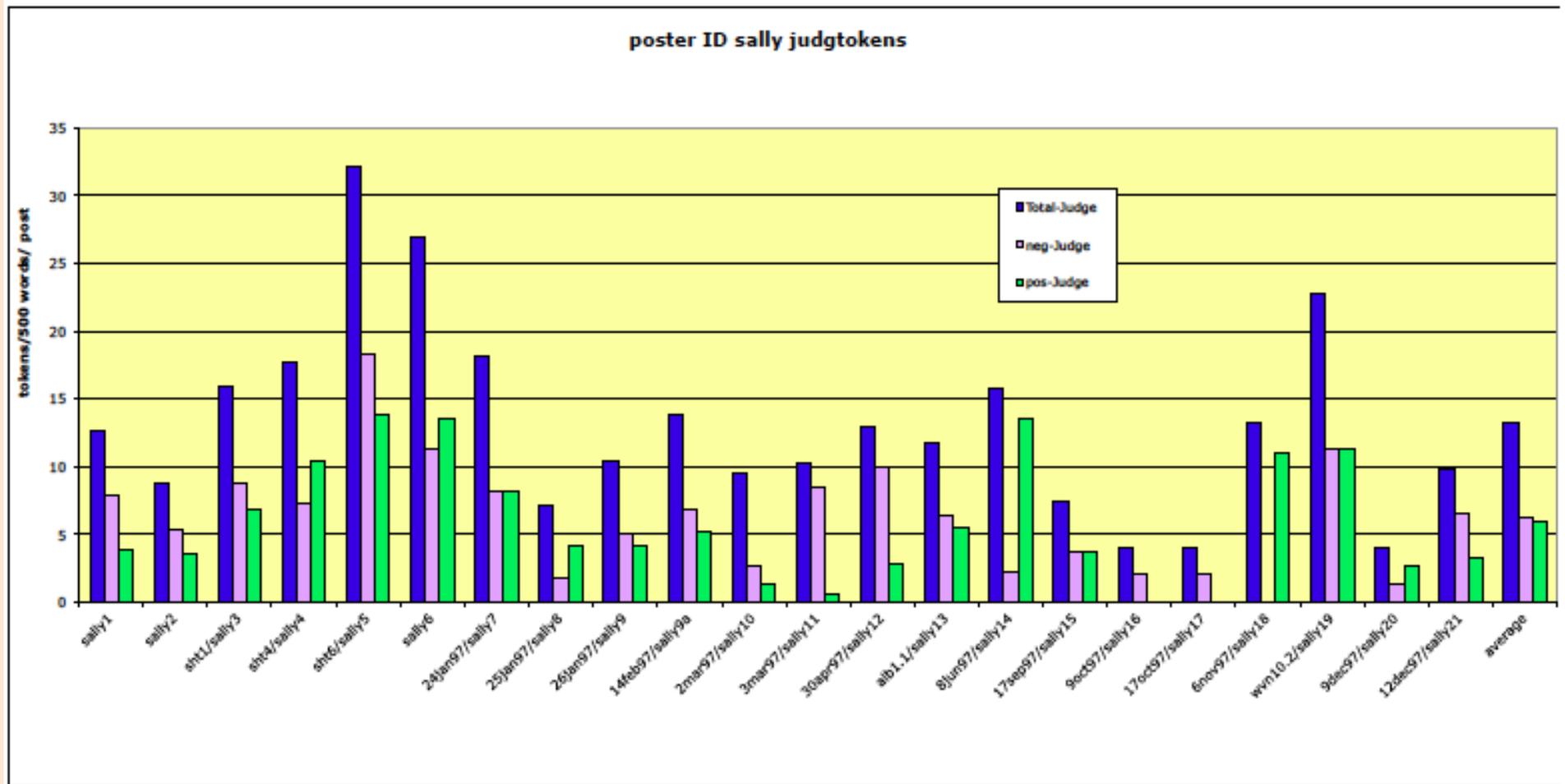
	words	posts	mean words/ post	lexical types	lexical tokens	lexical density/ words	ranking clauses	lexical density/ clause
unedited set	45,623	240	190	--	--	--	--	--
ALL	53,742	163	330	6,943	21,873	40.7%	--	--
SIMON	8,694	25	347	1,889	3,502	40.2%	961	3.64
STAN	10,830	38	285	2,576	4,839	44.6%	1,308	3.69
SALLY	12,895	22	586	2,294	4,766	36.9%	1,561	3.05

*Comparison of main subcorpora used in the study*

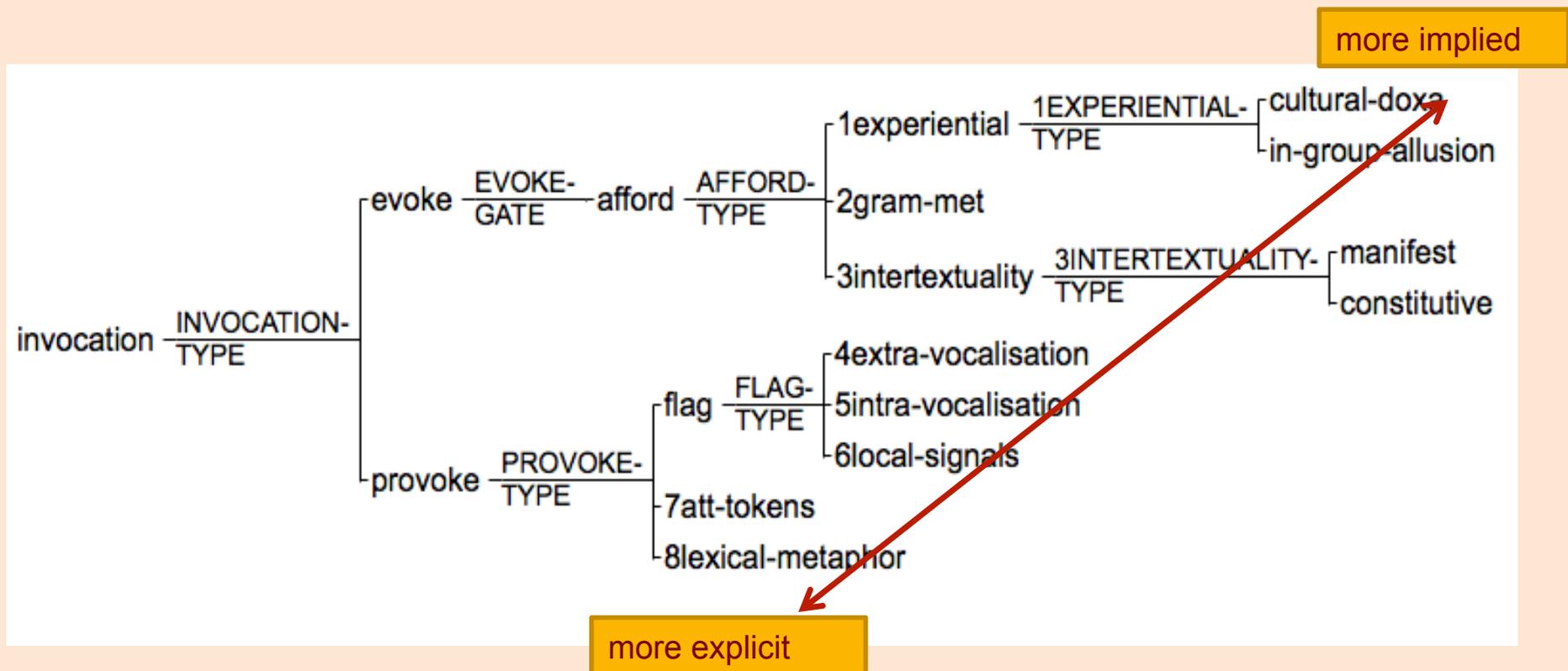
# frequency of invoked judgement in the data ~ Simon



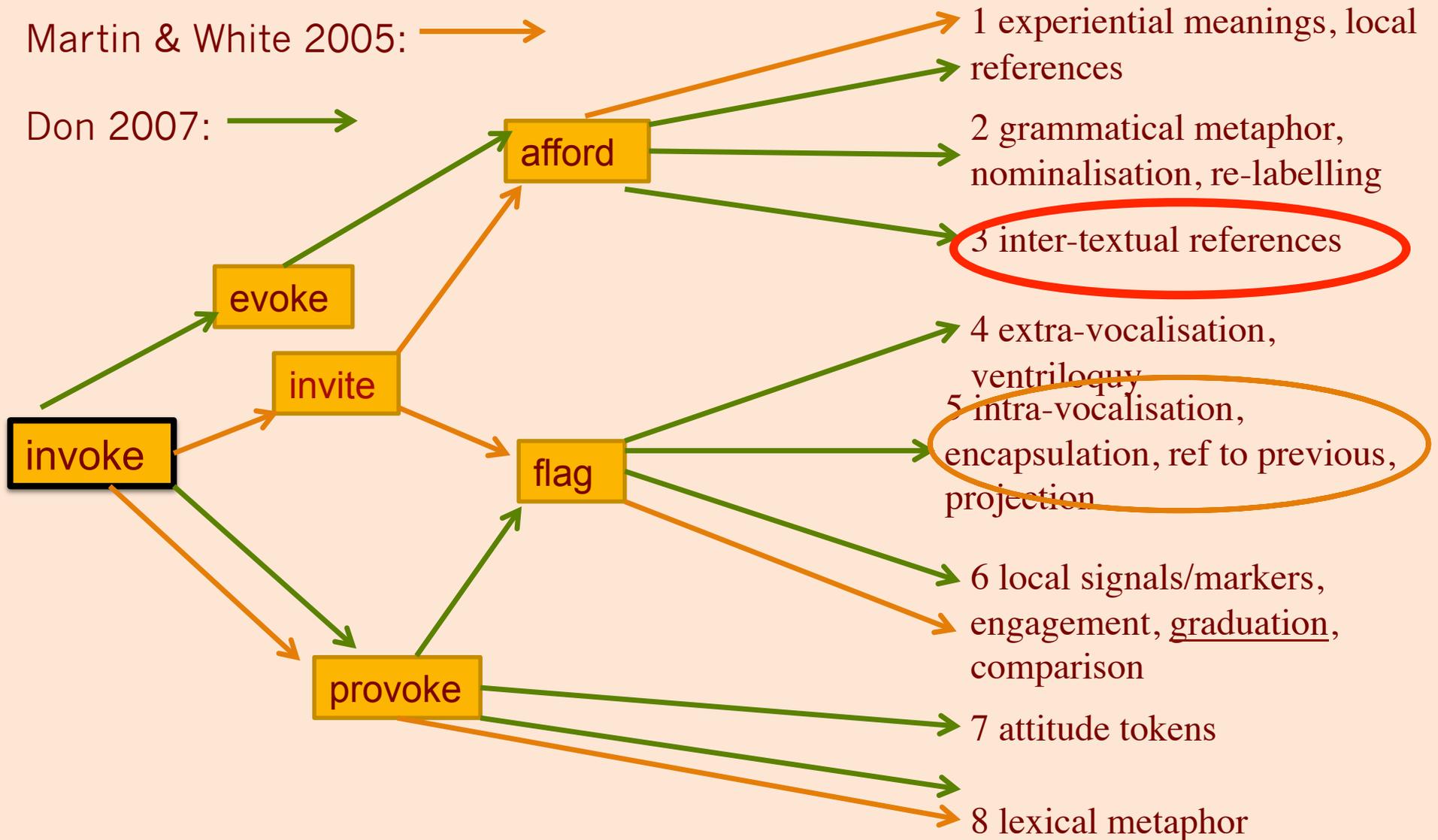
# frequency of invoked judgement in the data ~ Sally



# invoking attitude as topology/overlapping types ~ courtesy Mick's tagger



# a prettier, comparative version



# functions of invoking attitude I.

Signal or become **part of the rhetorical organisation** of the argument/positioning being developed:

- ambiguous targets and values set up change in attitudinal prosody;
- ‘coupled’ with thematic changes, e.g. subject changes, tense changes & other orientational changes, i.e. in *footing* (Goffman 1981);
- cluster at the close of contributions in tandem with other changes in orientation
- Logogenetic associations dependent on co-textual argument
  - invoked attitudes dependent on co-association via logogenesis
  - clustering of attitudinal targets as discourse organisation / boundary marking
  - dispersion of specific attitudinal values as text-organising
  - function is \* to ‘open heteroglossic space’/ project responses....

# functions of invoking attitude II.

## To **project responses/ orient to addressivity**:

- to acknowledge plurality of voices;
- to acknowledge that addressees (group members) have different positions;
- to jockey for neutral space among these voices;
- to avoid being definitive and pinned down...
- to encourage responses...

## To **signal in-group/out-group affiliations**: [high linguistic abstraction (inscribed) vs low linguistic abstraction (invoked)]:

- out-groups may be evaluated negatively as a means for positioning the self as *not* a member of such a group and its negatively evaluated practices
- c.f. Wigboldus, Spears and Semin (1999): descriptions of **in-group members'** desirable behaviour realised by 'high linguistic abstraction'—what the appraisal framework would term 'inscribed attitude'—while undesirable behaviour was described by means of 'low linguistic abstraction', or 'tokens' of attitude..... :

# affording references:

## I. experiential type

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AFFORD: 1.experiential:

- dependent entirely on members of community of practice recognising the negative or positive 'connotations' in any described condition [intertextuality is more obviously citing a valued text, explicit mention of referents]

- cultural doxa, common sense cultural norms, accepted truths
- in-group allusions, referents privy only to addressees/in-group: contact/affiliation foregrounded, i.e. shared experience rather than shared values (alignment) or knowledge (status)

AFFORD: 2.grammatical metaphor:

- nominalisation, set phrasings, re-labelling of passages: in tandem with other experiential values

# AFFORD: 1.experiential.i

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- >I do feel 'under the microscope' as any new member is going to feel, and be, in any group (not just the Web).
- >I even assumed that it had been a by-invitation-only group before the Tracy trauma until Simon set me straight.[sht4/sally4]
- >And, yes, humor is a repositionings of all the nasties of the past. A coming out party. Wanna have one? We'll invite Robin, too. [gen02.30/harry]

# AFFORD: 1.experiential.ii

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>Let 'em have the WTC, and the Space Needle. The Pentagon by all means, I wouldn't mind lending a hand.

But if they touch the Chrysler building....

[gen02.2/rob]

>The concept of "task," has a rich history here. Not only is there a common sense meaning of task as the job to be done, but it is a technical term in Bion's group psychology. [alb103.43/27-vi/simon6]

# AFFORD: 1.experiential.iii

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>Sig files with degrees, official positions, etc. are the Net equivalent of wearing suit or lab jacket, tie (and/or pearls) and official nametag.

>That "Yanx-Dep Subscriber" stuff is like wearing a rubber clown nose in public constantly.

[sft5.1/brian]

# affording references:

## II. intertextuality

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AFFORD: 3. intertextuality:

dependent on **wider community members** recognising or picking up reference to culturally-accepted values associated with a particular reference – explicit allusions to 'historical' referents (e.g. political references, pop culture, literary references, generic/activity schema use).

- Intertextuality: manifest:  
quoting, mentioning, citing, alluding to specific elements assumed as available to wider community/culture, e.g. biblical allusions, movies, science concepts, writers, political figures,
- Intertextuality: constitutive:  
underlying reference, parallelism, or use of dialogic norms; conventions, rather than conventional; generic or registerial framing; forms of 'inter-discursivity'.

## affording references:

### II. Intertextuality: manifest i

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>we are **on par with Bill Clinton & Bill Gates** in  
"broadcast power" and access.[sft8.3/stan1]

>BTW these **Seattle** coffee shops seem to favor as  
background music Frank Sinatra and 'The Three  
Tenors Sing Broadway Show Tunes' -- where's the  
**cutting-edge rock** to be found?[sft11.5/matt]

# affording references:

## II. Intertextuality: manifest ii

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>But if you even thought of asking the true G\*d for permission to send a valentine the next seven generations of your offspring would get boils and bad breath. [gen02.12/rob]

>Oh, I suppose -- at least about the misrepresentation. After all **the map is not the territory**. [wvn37.9/simon9]

>"If put-downs leak out, you can't hold me to them. 23. Ignore the man behind the curtain." [tvs180.43/stan28]

## affording references:

### II. Intertextuality: manifest & constitutive

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- **<tongue in cheek>** I proclaim TRIPLE BULLSHIT!!  
I challenge you to a snottiness dual, mon ami,  
name your weapon, time, place.... go ahead,  
make my day **</tongue in cheek>** [wvn60.23/TK]
- Heh. Carl Rogers and Gerard Egan have a bit to  
answer for, too. **Foot-fault, five to me.**  
[tvs225-/rob]

# flagging attitude

[not the almost exhausted type]

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FLAG: extra-vocalisation:

ventriloquy and attribution may be used to signal attitude, especially in cases of overt inter-discursivity - other voices suggest associations with attitudes recognisable in the community of practice or wider culture: like intertextuality but more obviously signalled ('flagged') c.f. engagement: attribution

FLAG: intra-vocalisation:

'encapsulation', i.e. related to co-associative reference in the same text: relying on accumulation of intra-textual meanings and references; 'prospection', the cueing of some expected argument or element to follow; matching relations: product of *logogenesis*

FLAG: local signals:

discursive markers in the local co-text: engagement and graduation: negation, counter-expectation, comparison, parallelism

## flagging attitude: extra-vocalisation

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>Biker T-shirt: "I AM the man from Nantucket." [tvs228.56/stan33]

>Would God mind? Of course not - God is love, the God of those namby-pamby peace-marchin', tree-huggin, feminist- marryin' jews who think Arik Sharon is a war criminal. [gen02.12/rob]

## flagging attitude: intra-vocalisation

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>So off to the forklifts. [alb103.43/27-vi/simon6]

>An open system is not defined by public archives and open subscription, it is defined by how a family responds to its new babies and external influences. [sht4/sally4]

>**I** am not safe. **I** am as dangerous as **anyone here** who is willing to be honest. [sht4/sally4]

# provoking attitude:

tokens of attitude

lexical metaphor

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TOKENS OF ATTITUDE: Attitudes of Appreciation and Affect can commonly invoke forms of Judgement, and vice versa. Some tokens of Judgement also may invoke other Judgement values. (**see previous**)

LEXICAL METAPHOR: the metaphors one chooses carry with them negative and positive connotations in the wider community

>New members in any group are **the lifeblood** of the group...they are **the new babies of that family**.

[sht4/sally4]

## text 1: rob

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Making sense of the “involved text-type style”

Whole text

as response to ~

## Text 2: simon

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Whole text

as response to ~

Dispersal of tenacity values and targets

Example i): *it is hard to mesh all this*

Example ii): *we are quite productive*

Beginning, middle, and end: tenacity-related, not so attitudinal (& moodless) clauses

# Text 3: sally

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Whole text

~ as response to

Dispersal of capacity values

Example i): *I need information*

Example ii): *no one identified the presence of an active new member....*

Example iii): *I am not safe*

# summary

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invocations of Attitude can function as 'strategies':

- interpretation of evaluative positioning is less easily made,
- function as sites of ambiguity or semantic tension.
- the location of these sites of semantic tension appear to occur at strategic junctures in the development of text organisation.

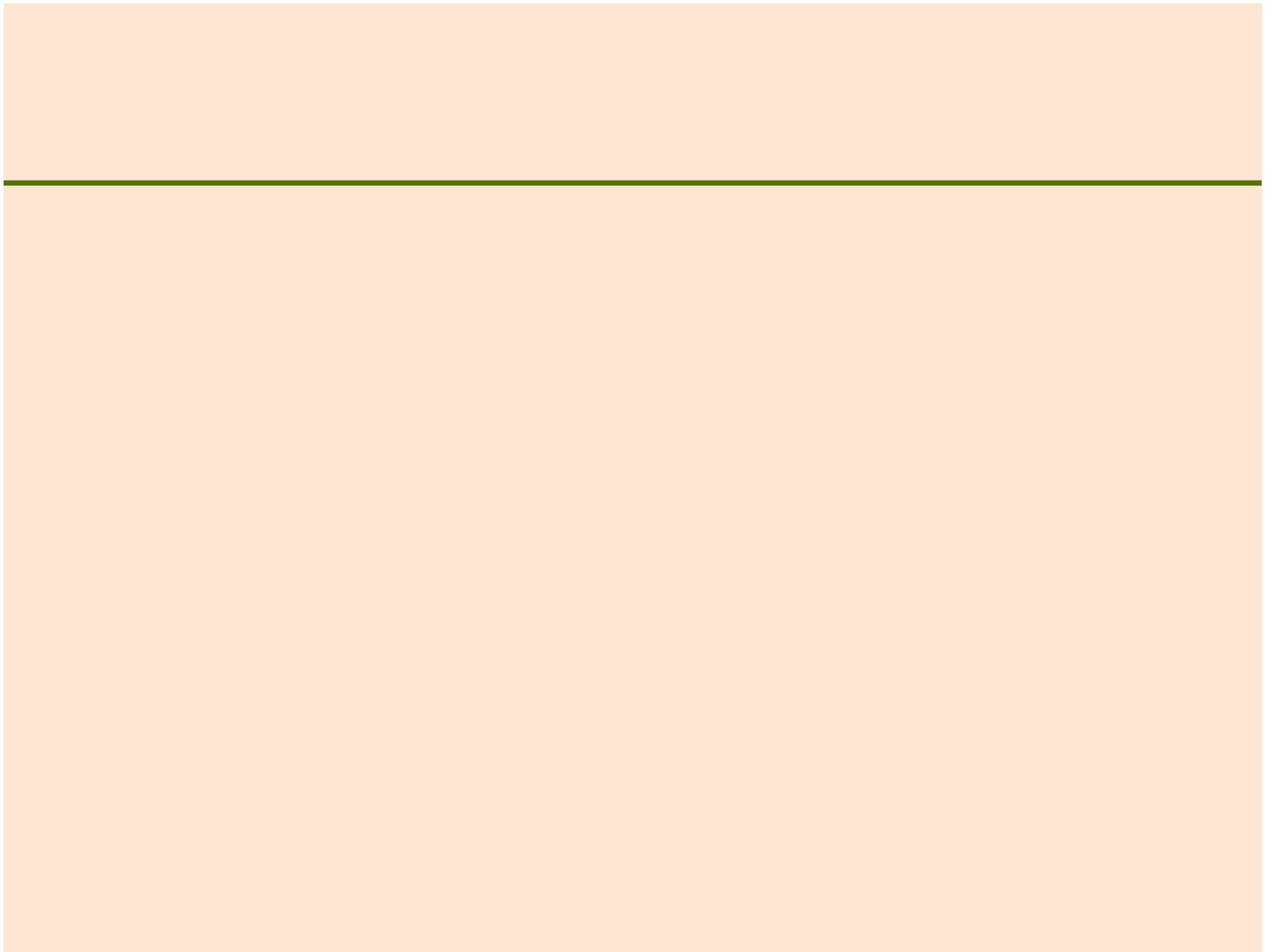
targets of evaluation may act to construe the writer's **dis/alignment** with other **values associated with** these targets,

- intertextual knowledge may be assumed, and/or
- assumptions regarding **values associated with** targets may act to position interlocutors without specifically addressing them....

# A bientôt

- sooner – in Sydney or Armidale  
or later – in Sydney or wherever





# rhetorical organisation potential

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invocations of Attitude can be regarded as 'strategies' through which the interpretation of evaluative positioning is less easily made, and hence function as sites of ambiguity or semantic tension. In turn, the location of these sites of semantic tension appear to occur at strategic junctures in the development of text organisation.