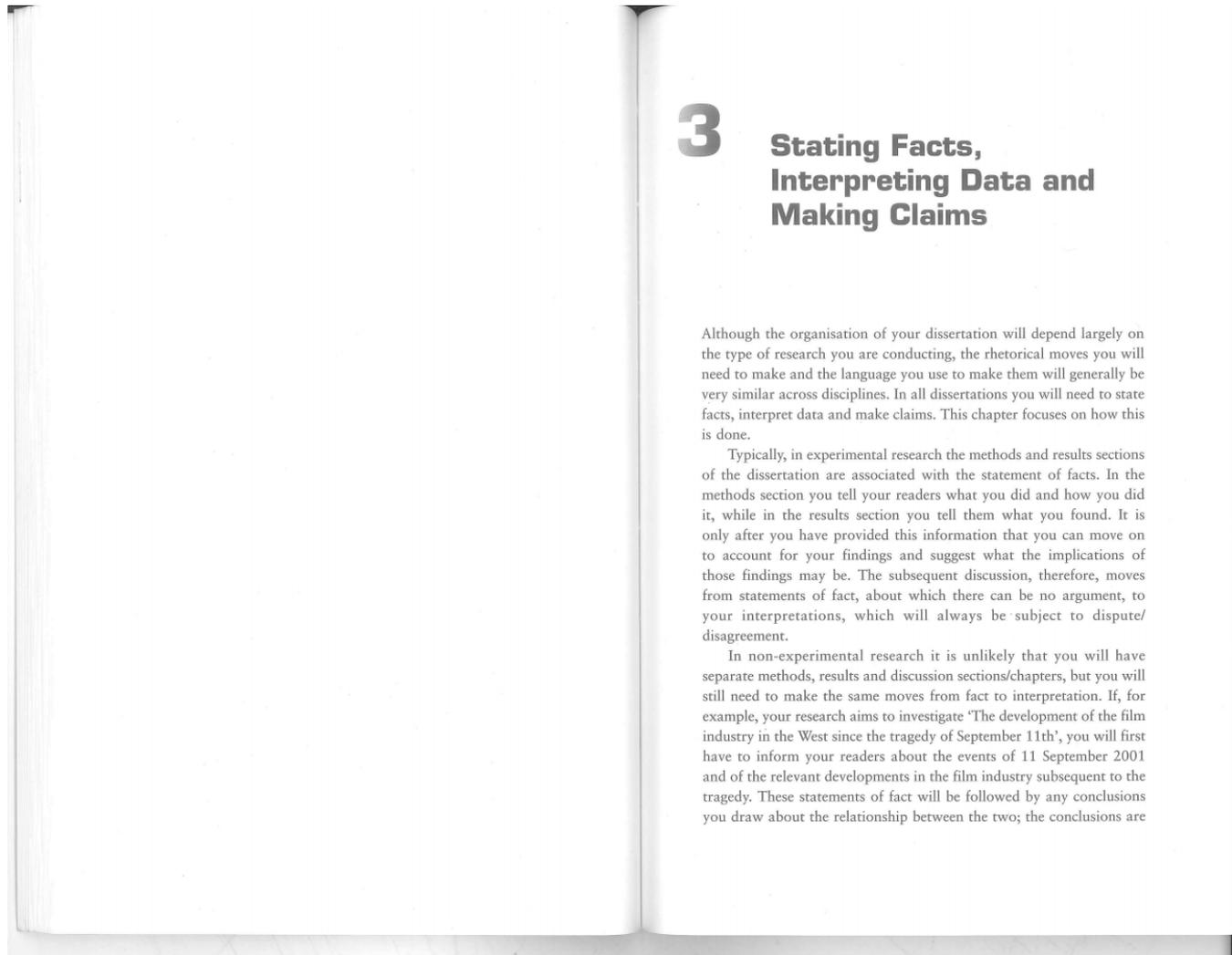


The Academic Argumentation Language that is Used for Writing Dissertations:



your interpretations only and you will need to make that clear to your readers through the language you use.

Understanding how we distinguish fact from interpretation is very important, particularly at this level of writing. In the task that follows we look at how this is achieved.

EXAMPLE 3.12

This begs the major question about African perception of white people and colonial authority in Africa before the war. Certainly the strikes, riots and 'hold-ups' of the nineteen-thirties *do not indicate* that Africans invested whites with god-like status. Despite Sithole's argument, it is *probable* that views about white prestige emanated mainly from white people themselves!

Many historians since the nineteen-sixties have stressed the important role of ex-servicemen in post-war nationalist politics, but the evidence for this is thin. Recent research presents a different view – that ex-soldiers were no more significant in territorial politics than any other occupational group. The idea that men from the bush

might sit in Bombay bars discussing with Indian nationalists the overthrow of colonial rule *seems* far-fetched. The rare soldier's letter arguing for political change and intercepted by the censor, needs to be placed alongside the hundreds of letters which express the real concerns of soldiers away from home – family, land, crops, cattle and prospects after demobilization. Certainly such domestic and social concerns *could be* translated into political demands, but they rarely were. Most African soldiers returned to their rural homes, where some exercised a significant political role challenging the authority of chiefs and questioning accepted ideas and practices. Unfortunately relatively little research was done on grassroots rural politics in the late nineteen-forties and early nineteen-fifties and now it *may be* too late to recapture that interesting and significant aspect of African history.

EXAMPLE 3.13

The results of Hawkes (2001) study among hunter gathers *suggest* that male hunters *generally* share their meat among the whole group rather than reserving it for mates and offspring. Hawkes believes that this behaviour *probably* adds to their prestige and thus increases the number of mates they acquire as the females *tend* to be attracted to those men who are seen to be good providers. In similar vein, Weissner's (2002), study of foragers in Botswana and New Guinea *indicates* that the sharing out of meat is intended to be influential in the political arena, as those who have been regularly provided with meat by a hunter will feel an obligation to follow or support that man in any leadership challenge.

Hrды (2003) notes that these findings *appear* to cast doubt on the presumptions made by earlier researchers that fathers hunted to provide for their own offspring only and that, for this reason, a woman would mate with only one man so that the paternity of her children was not in question and these children would, therefore, be provided for. This idea does not take into account that a hunter *may not return* with a good catch for his children and, indeed, *may not return* at all, death on hunting trips being far from uncommon. In

these circumstances, relying on one mate as a provider of food would be distinctly disadvantageous to a woman. Hrды's (2002) studies amongst the Canela and Ache tribes of the Amazon *suggest* that the "one-man" woman is not the norm in hunter gather society. Women *often* have multiple partners as each man who has had sex with a woman in the 10 months or so before she gives birth is considered to be a possible father and is, therefore, responsible for the upkeep of that child. This practice, of what Hrды (2003) refers to as "polyandrous motherhood", *seems to be* a deliberate strategy on the part of the women of the tribes to ensure support for any children they bear. Other tribes in the region, for example the Bari and the Yanamamo, hold the belief that a foetus is created by a build up of semen from different men (Hill, 2002), *implying* that a child *could be* supported by many fathers.

Appendix: The Dissertation Writing

There are a number of ways in which claims can be made more tentative. Table 3.2 on p. 82 summarises the range of linguistic devices commonly used to hedge claims. Complete the table with further examples from this chapter or ones you identify in your own reading. Try to identify at least three examples for each category.

Table 3.2 Hedging devices

Device	Example	
Hedging verbs	indicate	Feedback from this group at the end of the task <i>indicated</i> that although they had not had enough time to complete the task ... (Example 3.3)
Adverbs	probably	... the degradation of benzoate into acetate was <i>probably</i> conducted completely inside the cell ... (Example 3.14)
Adjectives	likely/unlikely	Our findings of a low melanocytic naevi in redheads is <i>unlikely</i> to be due to small sample size (Task 3.1)
Modal verbs	may	Our results suggest that this <i>may</i> be explained by sun-avoidance in the most sunsensitive group (Task 3.1)
Modal nouns	probability	There appears to be a strong <i>probability</i> that the students' use of English discourse patterns reflects the fact that Arabic discourse patterns do not differ radically from English ones ... (Example 3.15)
Reference to model/theory	if (this theory is correct), then ...	<i>If</i> the relation between melanocytic naevi frequency and melanoma risk is the same for children as for adults, <i>then</i> ... (Task 3.1)