

**CONSTRUCTING PERSONALITY:
MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON WRITTEN**

Rosa Lorés Sanz, Pilar Mur Dueñas and Enrique Lafuente Millán (eds.)
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The classic view of scientific communication as black and white and depersonalised is now outdated. Scientific texts are complex rhetorical artefacts where the management of interpersonal relationships, between authors and readers in particular, is crucial to their success. As a relevant specialist put it recently: “Academics do not simply produce texts that plausibly represent an external reality (...) academic writing is therefore an engagement in a social process, where the production of texts reflects the methodology, arguments and rhetorical strategies constructed to engage colleagues and persuade them of the claims that are made.” (Hyland 2005: 66-7). Writers use a myriad of rhetorical strategies to persuade their readerships, by projecting a positive image of their work and fostering a favourable attitude towards themselves and their research. Although this has always been a major concern of every scientific writer, it has long passed largely unnoticed to both specialists and teachers of academic language. Since the late 90’s, however, scholars in this field have awakened to the great importance of this dimension of scientific discourse and the publication of books and papers on the subject has been on the increase ever since (Fløttum, Dahl & Kinn 2006; Hyland 2000; Ivan c 1998).

The recent publication *Constructing Interpersonality: Multiple Perspectives on Written Academic Genres*, edited by Rosa Lorés-Sanz, Pilar Mur-Dueñas and Enrique Lafuente- Millán, reflects the current popularity of the subject in EAP

circles. Many individual specialists and leaders of research groups with an interest in interpersonality in academic discourse met recently at an international conference on the topic organized by the University of Zaragoza's InterLAE research group. This volume contains a careful selection of the papers presented at that conference, which brought together the most prominent figures in the field in Europe. The event served as a showroom of recent findings on the topic and as a perfect forum for the confrontation of ideas and the discussion of future avenues of research. The nineteen papers chosen for inclusion in the present monograph provide an unparalleled, updated and comprehensive view of the state-of-the-art and major concerns in the field.

The book covers a wide range of disciplines and genres. All major areas of science are represented, including disciplines such as medicine, linguistics, literature, economics, business organisation, psychology, law and physics. The catalogue of academic genres submitted to analysis is equally large, although most chapters focus on research-related genres, to the detriment of other "educational" genres.

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The concept of genre plays a major structural role in the volume, with the different contributions being grouped according to the generic nature of the materials analysed. Part II focuses on summarising and evaluating genres, with articles on abstracts (Bellés- Fortuño and Querol-Julián; Burgess and Martín-Martín) and book reviews (Gea Valor; Moreno and Suárez), while Part III deals with interpersonality in "the academic genre par excellence" (p. 6), the research article (Breeze; Hiltunen; Resinger; Tutin). Part IV, which is the largest part of the monograph, focuses on comparatively "lesser known" academic genres and reflects the current interest of the EAP community in new or previously neglected academic genres. This part is therefore something of a miscellany, with chapters on the student essay (Petri), the conference handout (Yakhontova & Markelova) and the academic weblog (Luzón), one of the new web-based communication tools that are gaining importance in academia and research, as well as a paper on the referee report (Fortanet-Gómez and Ruiz-Garrido), which might have fitted best in Part II on evaluative genres. This section also contains two papers on various forms of science popularisation (Herrando-Rodrigo; Lischinsky), which underscore the major differences between professional and popular writings resulting from the very different purposes and writer-reader configurations of the two genres (Myers 1989). Finally, Part I of the volume is the only one that is not genre-based and its chapters (Lafuente-Millán, Mur-Dueñas, Lorés-Sanz and Vázquez-Orta; Gotti; Dahl) provide a summary of the research carried out by three European research groups on interpersonality in written discourse. These chapters introduce the topic and serve as a perfect background for the rest of the contributions.

The growing interest of specialists in the interpersonal component of scientific discourse undoubtedly reflects the surge of interest in linguistics in general in phenomena of an interpersonal nature. A concept that has attracted much attention, especially in applied linguistics, is that of metadiscourse. Indeed, specialists in metadiscourse have traditionally found in academic language a rich source of data (Crismore 1989; Hyland 2005). Many of the interpersonality traits that are the object of study in this volume: evaluative comments, personal pronouns, self-mentions, attitudinal and opinion markers, positioning expressions, engagement markers, boosters and hedges figure prominently in most classifications of interpersonal metadiscourse.

Methodologically, most of the studies are corpus-based, but some (Herrando-Rodrigo; Petri) use ethnographic tools such as interviews and questionnaires to attempt to explain the phenomena observed. Studies in the EAP tradition have always been inspired by a practical application (Swales 1990), and some of the articles in the volume either allude to or are openly inspired by such a hands-on approach.

Many of the chapters adopt a contrastive perspective. Several dimensions of contrast are contemplated: different languages, different genres or different disciplines, and even multidimensional contrasts involving different genres and disciplines.

The cross-linguistic perspective is embedded in the rich Contrastive Rhetoric tradition (Connor 1996), which thrived in the late 1990's and has yielded and continues to yield such vast amounts of data on the differences in academic discourse across languages and cultures. The focus is either on contrasts between native materials in different languages (Bellés & Querol; Moreno & Suárez; Resinger) or on the peculiarities of the English texts written by non-native scholars, who find it difficult to assimilate English native models (Burgess & Martín-Martín). An interesting question raised by some of the authors is whether to aspire to this assimilation uncritically on pragmatic grounds (Burgess & Martín-Martín) or resist and appeal to the acceptance of “otherness and strangeness” by the English native speakers (Resinger). This is a hotly debated issue in the field nowadays —see for instance the recent debate by Flowerdew and Casanave in the JEAP— and one which is full of ideological implications and is naturally polarizing the expert community.

As regards the linguistic provenance of the materials analysed, with the sole exception of one chapter on French (Tutin), the volume is clearly skewed towards English and, to a lesser extent Spanish, scientific discourse, with other languages only being given minor attention. This slant towards English, which is not alluded to in the title of the volume, undoubtedly reflects both the academic and

professional profiles of the contributors, many of whom are researchers and/or teachers of English for Academic Purposes, and is also a natural consequence of the hegemonic position of English in present-day academia and research.

Cross-disciplinary studies show interesting differences in the management of interpersonal resources and offer compelling arguments for a re-evaluation of disciplinary variation in the field, which somehow had been swept under the carpet by an excessive zeal for overgeneralization among students of academic language. Several of the studies comment on the existence of interesting cross-disciplinary differences regarding the degree of use of expressions of self-advocacy or self-promotion in the written texts, such as the use of personal attribution or the overt positive assessment of one's own work, differences which are attributed to varying degrees of competitiveness across disciplines (Dahl; Burgess & Martín-Martín; Tutin). This presence of marketing-language features in present-day scientific writings seems to be a natural response to the increasing pressure on scientists to "sell" their research. These findings would confirm the widely recognized existence of a certain tendency towards a "commodification" of research, at least in some "big" areas of science (Swales 2004), and the resulting increase in manifestations of "boosterism" and "promotionalism" in the communicative practices of the specialists in these disciplines. An interesting finding (Burgess & Martín-Martín; Resinger), and one of particular concern for teachers of EAP in non-native contexts, is that this tendency does not seem to be universal and that non-native scholars writing in English tend to transfer their native self-promotion practices into their English texts, underrating their own research and compromising the success of their texts.

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Focusing on a very specific theme, interpersonality in written academic discourse, was a major strength of the conference and consequently of the present volume too. The conference managed to create the perfect atmosphere for a fruitful dialogue among people in a perfect communion of ideas, metalanguage and goals. The present result is a monograph that provides an authoritative, updated and forward-looking perspective on a major issue in the LSP and EAP fields. The different papers in the volume are not only of an outstanding academic robustness but also of much practical relevance for both EAP teachers and students. In our view, this brilliantly edited volume will be a landmark in the field, and an invaluable source of inspiration for researchers and scholars.

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