Dialogicity in Written Specialised Genres

Luz Gil-Salom, Carmen Soler-Leal (eds).
Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2014. 227 pages.
ISBN: 978-90-272-1040-1.

Dialogicity in Written Specialised Genres presents a collection of papers whose common thread is an analysis of authorial voice, dialogic relations, evaluation, and identity construction in written genres. The originality of this volume lies in the genres and languages analysed: usually, the study of interpersonality in texts is focused on journal papers written in English. In this case, there is a wider range of genres analysed (literature review chapters in PhD theses, film reviews, book review articles, fiction book reviews, traveller's opinion forums, tourism opinion forums, online specialised genres, and journal papers) while the languages covered are English, Italian, and Spanish.

After an introduction from the editors, JOHN FLOWERDEW provides a foreword where he draws attention to the research questions answered by the papers included in this volume. FLOWERDEW highlights the fact that this volume has identified linguistic and cultural differences in the expression of dialogicity across genres, disciplines, and languages. This is followed by an introductory chapter where KEN HYLAND begins with a summary of his research on engagement and stance achieved through hedges, self-mention, reader pronouns, and directives. He then compares how these strategies are used in journal papers belonging to eight different academic disciplines. HYLAND concludes that the dialogue between academic writers and their audiences happens because it is inherent to persuasive writing. He attributes the higher frequency of dialogicity in the hard sciences as compared to the soft sciences to the intrinsically interpretative nature of the humanities and social sciences.

The rest of the volume is divided in three sections: four chapters on authorial stance and the construction of readership, three chapters on dynamic dialogic interactions, and a concluding chapter. CARMEN SOLER-MONREAL and LUZ GIL-SALOM (pages 23-54) compare a corpus of 10 computer science PhD thesis literature review chapters in Spanish with

another corpus of 10 similar texts in English. They focus on the analysis of how PhD thesis authors use reporting verbs to mitigate threats to the positions appearing in the quoted literature. Their conclusion is that although both Spanish and English authors rely on similar strategies, preferences in the choice of politeness tactics are culturally bound. MARTA CARRETERO (pages 55-85) examines a corpus of 80 film reviews (40 in English and 40 in Spanish) to identify how engagement is employed in the genre. She further subdivides the corpus into professional and consumer generated reviews. CARRETERO finds not only differences in engagement use between professional and amateur reviewers, but also among English and Spanish ones. GIULIANA DIANI (pages 87-112) analyses two corpora: 45 history book review articles written in English and 41 specimens of the same genre written in Italian. The focus of her research is the dialogic dimension of argumentation. She looks at the occurrences of the pronouns "I" and "we" in English as well as "io" and "noi" plus their corresponding verbal forms in Italian. Her conclusions point to the existence of several voices in this genre and a cultural link of preferences in the dialogic presentation of arguments. MARIA-LLUÏSA GEA-VALOR (pages 113-133) looks at the use of interactional metadiscourse in fiction book reviews. Her chapter presents a genre that uses metadiscourse both to provide assessment on a novel and engage a readership that has a status similar to that of the writer.

The following book section begins with FRANCISCA SUAU-JIMÉNEZ's (pages 137-164) report on the use of writer's stance and reader's engagement in a corpus of on-line forum threads. She shows how forums are genres where writers and readers exchange their roles consecutively as they negotiate meaning and understanding with the help of interpersonal markers. This is followed by ROSANA DOLÓN's (pages 165-187) chapter on the discursive creation of child consumer identity within official information websites and opinion forums. For her study, she uses a corpus of 189 threads from a kid trip forum and a corpus of 204 texts from London's official tourism website. Her conclusions point to differences in how kids are presented within each corpus through the use of different interpersonal approaches. The section concludes with FRANCISCO YUS (pages 189-208) presenting an analysis of writer-reader interactions in four different on-line academic genres. His corpus includes four sub-corpora representing traditional computing journal articles online, web-adapted computing journal articles, blog entries within *Second Life*, and technology blog entries in *The Guardian*. His analysis indicates that the more adapted a genre is to the Web environment, the less control

that the author has over the interactions with the readership. The concluding chapter (SHAW, pages 209-220) extracts consequences from the previous chapters on how the use of interpersonality changes as web native genres take more prevalence.

The main weaknesses of this compilation are related to editing issues and the use of the corpus linguistics methodology. Regarding the first, I have noticed that some of the numerical data presented in tables (HYLAND: 7; CARRETERO: 77, 79, 80, 82) do not add up to the totals shown. In relation with the methodological issues, most authors mention what software was used for their research; unfortunately, others provide vague references such as: "a commercially available text analysis programme" or simply omit any mention. Most of the corpus data reported consists of tokens in the corpus and normalized frequencies every 1,000 words. This procedure deprives the readers from useful contextualisation figures (number of types, type/token ratios, percentage of Hapax Legomena, or keywords) while it relies on the convenient, but unrealistic assumption that words are evenly distributed across texts.

FLOWERDEW, in the book's foreword, presents this collection of papers as relevant "to anyone interested in language as multidimensional dialogue" (page xv) and then points to a mostly academic audience (PhD researchers, reviewers of the genres analysed, and researchers of Spanish, Italian, or English from the perspective of the interactive nature of writing). Let me suggest here how this compilation can be useful for some additional audiences. Among the several challenges of contemporary research, we can highlight the need to transfer the knowledge generated to non-research agents and sharing this knowledge with other research disciplines. *Dialogicity in Written Specialised Genres* is particularly pertinent for those analysing opinion in social networks for marketing, public relations, and sociological purposes by means of sentiment analysis (or opinion mining) techniques. In particular, chapters 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 deal both with linguistic features used to display opinions in writing and ways to interact with readers in online genres. The book is also of interest for people researching communication in opinion journalism. The papers compiled in this volume can be used as a model for other contrastive studies using different language pairs. There is also room for further research by increasing the size of the corpora used and refining the design and statistic measurements. Those concerned with the different uses of dialogicity between hard and soft sciences can test HYLAND'S explanations with diachronic studies assessing whether variation

among disciplines is the result of a stylistic evolution within the soft sciences or it has been there from the beginning. In conclusion, this volume is undoubtedly a source of research ideas and bibliography for those who are working with the interactive features of written genres.

Reviewed by **Ismael Arinas Pellón**
Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (Spain)
ismael.arinas@upm.es