



Power, Persuasion and Manipulation in Specialised Genres: Providing Keys to the Rhetoric of Professional Communities.

María Ángeles Orts Llopis, Ruth Breeze and Maurizio Gotti (eds).

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The volume edited by Maria Angeles Orts, Ruth Breeze and Maurizio Gotti assembles a comprehensive and innovative collection of studies that take a constructivist approach to analysis of genres as tools available to professional communities to generate their practices and discourses. Professions are regarded as “specialised communities aiming to dominate, police and protect their particular area of expertise” (page 10). Thus, professions and the institutional frameworks they have created are strongly connected to ideologies, power and legitimation, often constituted and manifested through language. Genre theory connects language study with disciplinary cultures by exploring the role of language in constructing and expressing social reality. It offers a generous conceptual framework to analysts interested in exploring professional communication.

The studies collected in this volume investigate a comprehensive range of professional environments and an impressive variety of discourses, from intensely explored ones such as media, business and legal discourses to less frequently analysed ones such as surrogacy websites or air-accident dockets. They explore very specific and well-defined discourses and describe clearly the methodological tools they use in order to highlight specific instances of language use.

In line with the comprehensive range of professional environments, complex corpora were analysed using appropriate discourse and rhetorical analysis instruments. Each study has strong theoretical underpinnings while the analyses integrate textual, rhetorical and socio-pragmatic elements. They do so in order to show how language promotes the interests of professional groups, often through persuasion and manipulation. These are the key concepts that provide the organisation principle of the volume: the chapters in Part I are dedicated to concepts of manipulation while those in

Part II look at discourses centred on persuasion. The distinction between the two concepts is sometimes difficult to establish and indeed, many of the studies in the volume detect both manipulation and persuasion strategies in the discourses they analyse. The introduction to the volume does admit this rather blurred distinction and adds a necessary explanatory element: the volume groups together studies on texts where “manipulation seems to dominate” and “studies where more open-ended forms of persuasion are discussed” (page 16). Studies dedicated to analysis of media reporting, to editorials or texts that construct institutional profiles and interests are grouped in the first category, while genres intended for promotional, educational and conflict resolution situations are grouped in the second part.

The volume appears very ambitious in scope, with clear interest for the diversity of professional fields, of genres and specific discourses, of methodological and analytical tools. Through diversity of discourses, corpora and research methods the volume makes an impressive, outstanding contribution to the understanding of genre as a valuable analytical tool. The research findings communicated by the studies contribute to increasing awareness of the power and versatility of genres in exploring professional communication strategies.

The section “Power through manipulation” is opened by the study by Vijay. K. Bhatia and Aditi Bhatia, which investigates the creation of hybrid genres in the media and explores the concept of interdiscursivity as a key factor in the “construction, interpretation, use and exploitation of media genres” (page 32). “Interdiscursive appropriation” of discourse and generic features helps create “an illusion of objectivity” (Bhatia & Bhatia, 2017: 32) and indicates manipulative intent and effect.

The discourse of globalisation in international organisations is the focus of the article by Ana Bocanegra-Valle. The study highlights the connection between discourses and institutional frameworks through well-evidenced analysis of the use of discourse to construct institutional dominance. The power of discourses as tools to further institutional interests and to exert control is convincingly demonstrated by the analysis.

Shirley Carter-Thomas and Elizabeth Rowley-Jolivet have investigated syntactic resources used to deploy power in medical journal editorials as opinion vehicles of an elite, highly regulated professional community. Their article analyses the diverse communicative functions of editorials and

compares editorials with research articles, texts with different communicative functions and a covert rhetoric.

Texts posted on the websites of surrogacy organisations were analysed by Giuliana Elena Garzone in order to highlight rhetorical and discursive strategies institutions use to present themselves as highly professional and trustworthy. The focus on ethical arguments, the attempt to influence the emotions of the audience while appealing to rational thinking are rhetorical tools revealed by analysis of these websites.

The use of face-work as an ideological instrument in judicial discourse is explored in the study by Esther Monzo-Nebot. The analysis reveals linguistic elements used to portray the victim and the offender and demonstrates how face-work can influence public perception in cases where the victim is a member of an unprivileged group while the perpetrator belongs to a dominant group.

The 2015 UK higher education green paper and the social media debate that accompanied its introduction are analysed in the chapter by Pascual Perez-Paredes. The study used corpus-aided discourse analysis methods and social data mining techniques to explore the role of keywords in shaping discourses of power and manipulation in higher education policy.

The second section of the volume is dedicated to genres that display persuasive features deriving from a more balanced power relationship between participants. Some of the chapters in this section centre around specific themes, (eg. violence against women) while others approach specific professional fields (eg. banking, arbitration, etc).

Acknowledging that professional genres are associated with “purposeful, strategic action” (page 196) the study by Antoinette Mary Fage-Butler uses critical genre analysis of campaign materials meant to promote gender-equality and to advance health-promoting, ethical changes. The analysis is based on Bhatia’s concept of interdiscursive analysis that invites analysts to look at the multiple discourses integrated in genres.

Website promotion of banking products is the genre selected by Daniel Gallego-Hernandez. The author used a pilot corpus of business and economics texts in French, Spanish and English, which were classified according to a rigorous set of criteria and analysed using the software *AntConc*. The significance of the findings for translation practice is highlighted and so are the implications for teaching business translation.

Acknowledging the expansion of arbitration as an alternative dispute resolution method, Diana Giner investigates persuasion in legal discourse with particular reference to a collection of arbitral awards. Persuasion is displayed through the rhetorical strategies of intensification, hedging and attitude and help construct the line of argumentation justifying the final decision.

The discourse of dispute resolution is investigated in the chapter authored by Maurizio Gotti, in which Alternative Dispute Resolution strategies – arbitration and mediation/conciliation – are thoroughly examined in the context of their legal tradition and the local culture. A comparison of Western and Eastern traditions highlights the roles played by power and persuasion in the practice of arbitration and proposes a perspective that may change the role of arbitrators and arbitration practice.

Business relations and the way companies create their international, global corporate image is the focus of the study by Juan C. Palmer-Silveira. Texts presented by Spanish, European and North American corporations were analysed in order to highlight the persuasive use of language by companies attempting to strengthen their international profile.

Discourse as both the product of power relations and as a means of exercising power is investigated in relation to risk communication strategies in the chapter by Carmen Sancho Guinda. The structure of online aviation accident dockets issued by the national Transportation Safety Board is related to their prevention role and displays a “discursive hybridization character” (page 313).

Supreme Court Majority and Dissenting opinions are the genre analysed by Holly Vass in the final chapter of the section. Both types of decisions carry salient information about judicial practice and attempt to convince the public of the robustness of their reasoning, thus becoming highly persuasive documents.

The studies in this volume highlight the role of language as both representing and constituting reality. They discuss the significance of their findings for advancing genre theory and analysis, for the practice of teaching and translation, etc. This can only help widen the readership of this volume which makes a very informative and relevant resource for researchers, practitioners and students alike.

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