



ESSE-8: LONDON 2006

29 August – 2 September 2006

S17. Rhetoric of Science across Times and Disciplines

Tuesday 29 August: 2.00-4.00pm

Convenor: Päivi Pahta (University of Helsinki)

Email: paivi.pahta@helsinki.fi

Co-convenor: Elena Seoane-Posse (University of Santiago de Compostela)

Email: iaelena@usc.es

Rhetoric of science is a flourishing and increasingly cross-disciplinary field of enquiry. The core questions include the role of language in shaping knowledge, the persuasive means by which scientists negotiate over knowledge claims, aiming to convince their audiences of their authority. We welcome empirical research that sheds new light on the development of the rhetoric of science, its social and disciplinary embedding, and its change over time.

Aspects of Rhetorical Communication in Cognitive Neurosciences: *The Cognitive Neurosciences* (2004): a case study

Lucia Abbamonte (Second University of Naples)

Linguistic research has turned increasing attention to covert/overt strategies to modulate authorial stance and positioning in scientific texts. This paper will discuss some theoretical implications of the use of rhetoric in scientific communication, and it will analyse qualitative data from the authoritative *The Cognitive Neurosciences* (2004) volume (CN). Its genre-identity, status and readability will be considered, in the social, interactive context of contemporary disciplinary discourses. Evidence will be given of the ways its famous authors negotiate and shape knowledge and research results – explicitly appraising team work and promoting faith in the fast-paced progress of CN, also through experiential metaphors – by presenting a set of examples, ordered according to their dominating rhetoric quality.

The Prefatory Material in 17th-century English Treatises on Midwifery

Francisco Alonso-Almeida & Alicia Rodríguez-Álvarez (University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria)

The early Modern Period witnessed a spread of printed books both for recreation and profit that reflected a change in social customs and needs. These books present a preface whose aims are twofold: (1) to show the contents and inspiration of the book, and, more importantly, (2) to persuade the reader of the benefits and necessity of having a copy. We have selected a group of prefaces from midwifery books written in seventeenth-century England. For space limitations, this presentation will cover the epistles included within the prefatory material. The analysis of this corpus reveals the use of certain persuasive strategies, such as (1) qualifying labels, (2) appeal to experience, (3) comparison with

other authors, (4) use of expressions of involvement, and of (5) colloquial language, among others.

Move Structure Analysis of Calls for Papers

Sara Gesuato (University of Padova)

Calls for papers are complex texts that pragmatically function as announcements (of advancements in science), offers (of opportunities to exchange ideas), orders (establishing criteria for admission), and requests (for participation in conferences). An analysis of 80 such texts representatives of four disciplines reveals that they consist of various moves justifying their overall communicative function (e.g. identification of the conference's goal, provision of background information about its theme, listing of guest speakers). The study examines the degree to which moves are shared across genre exemplars, the sequencing patterns of moves in the texts, and the (mis)match between moves and text segments.

Representing Discovery in the Soft Sciences: Coming-to-know Verbs in Research Articles in Literary Criticism and Academic Law

Turo Hiltunen (University of Helsinki)

My paper compares the use of coming-to-know verbs research articles in two academic disciplines, academic law and literary criticism. These verbs are used to indicate epistemic achievements in academic texts. Drawing on a corpus of research articles in the two academic disciplines, my research suggests that there are similarities in the way these verbs are used in both disciplines. However, while many of the most frequently used verbs are the same in both disciplines, the manner of using them may in fact be quite different.

Interaction and Argument in Science

Ken Hyland (Institute of Education, University of London)

This paper proposes a model of metadiscourse for analysing interactions in academic writing. Metadiscourse is self-reflective linguistic material referring to the evolving text, to the writer, and to the imagined reader of that text. It is based on a view of writing as social engagement and in academic contexts reveals the ways writers project themselves into their discourse to signal their attitude towards both the propositional content and the audience of the text. Its use is particularly important at advanced levels of student writing and professional writing as it represents writers' attempts to present and negotiate propositional information in ways that are meaningful and appropriate to a particular disciplinary community. In the paper I will briefly outline the model and sketch what it means in an analysis of research articles/graduate dissertations from a range of disciplines to suggest how writers used metadiscourse to offer a credible representation of themselves and their work in different fields. I argue that metadiscourse offers a way of understanding the interpersonal resources writers use to present propositional material and therefore a means of uncovering something of the rhetorical and social distinctiveness of disciplinary communities.

**A Note on the Rhetorical Conventions of the First Outstanding Tudor
“Scientist”: Robert Recorde (c. 1510 - 1558) and *The Whetstone of Witte* (1557)**
Sonia Piotti (Sacred Heart Catholic University, Brescia)

This is the preliminary phase of a study focusing on the origin and development of the language of mathematical science in Tudor England. It explores the rhetoric of Robert Recorde’s scientific thought and expression with particular regard to his algebraic textbook entitled *The Whetstone of Witte* (1557). “Rhetoric” of science in this study reflects this author’s eloquence and conventions in sustaining his own views on the intent, premises and pragmatic purposes behind his scientific thought and, accordingly, appropriate language for dealing with arithmetic and algebra, as well as necessary features for such didactic texts. Recorde was the most influential period textbook writer in the English language and author of the first competent introductions to arithmetic, algebra, geometry and astronomy in the vernacular language. Arithmetic apart, his treatises were the very first books totally devoted to the mathematical science printed in English. Therefore, Recorde’s concern about the language to be used in science and the form in which his works were cast was of paramount importance to his idea of learning and science.