



Engagement in Professional Genres

Carmen Sancho Guinda (Ed.).

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The notion of engagement is a broad concept that explains how writers rhetorically acknowledge the presence of the readers in their text. Based on the Bakhtinian view that all verbal communication is dialogic (1982), the study of engagement centres on the different forms of interaction that take place through text. When a writer tells a story or sets out an argument, he/she uses a range of strategies to involve readers. This often means drawing on shared beliefs and experiences, making use of arguments that peers could recognize as effective, and bearing the interests, background knowledge and expectations of readers in mind. Consideration of engagement also focuses on discursive features such as the use of pronouns, hedging or boosting, and modality, which shape the relationship between writer and reader. In the case of professional groups, engagement is particularly interesting in what it reveals about how this community, the relationships within it, and its activities are conceptualized and materialized discursively.

Focusing specifically on engagement in professional discourses, this volume is divided into two main sections with a total of eighteen chapters. In the first section, the authors present specialized studies of engagement in monomodal professional genres while the second section is centered on intersemiotic genres. The chapters explore the potential for engagement in a range of professional and academic genres, shedding new light on the way engagement is materialized in face-to-face, computer-mediated, and multimodal communication contexts.

The introductory chapter by the editor Carmen Sancho Guinda explores the concept of metadiscursive engagement, providing an overview of research on this field and addressing the personal and interpersonal assumptions that underlie it. Sancho focuses on the idea of ‘di(stance)’ related to engagement and establishes connections among the diverse contributions of the whole volume, presenting a clear picture of engagement seen from different

perspectives. Importantly, this introductory chapter contextualizes research on metadiscursive engagement, bringing together the three theoretical frameworks used in the volume, that is, the Appraisal system, Hyland's metadiscourse model and multimodality.

The first section of this volume has seven chapters covering topics ranging from news to legal and healthcare communication. In chapter 2, Feng Jiang and Xiaohao Ma compare authorial identity and engagement with the reader in expert and novice academic writing, finding a greater range and degree of engagement in the former. Chapter 3, by María Luisa Carrió-Pastor, draws attention to a genre that for practical reasons is rarely studied, namely business emails written by managers, comparing messages written in English by Spanish and Chinese businesspeople. She finds that Spanish writers use more attitude and engagement markers, and try harder to include readers in the discourse, while Chinese writers tend to be very concise and avoid relational elements. Chapter 4, by Anne McCabe and Isabel Alonso Belmonte, uses Appraisal for a detailed textual investigation of how news articles align readers ideologically despite an outward display of strict neutrality. In the next chapter, Yvonne McLaren-Hankin examines press releases addressing customer complaints in the banking sector, showing how one bank seeks to transmit ability and benevolence to reshape its relationship with dissatisfied clients. Following on from this, Michele Sala's chapter on "interrogative engagement" as a pragmatic and textual function in academic law papers demonstrates how questions are used strategically to align readers to the writer's position and nudge them towards the desired interpretation. He stresses the high frequency of interrogative resources in legal research compared with academic papers in other areas, explaining their special role in guiding information processing and persuading readers in this context.

Chapter 7 turns to how patients engage doctors in healthcare. Experts Robyn Woodward-Kron, Emily Wilson and Jane Gall examine the contributions of patients as co-participants in patient-centered care by studying 15 audio-recorded doctor-patient consultations from a general practice in Australia. Stressing the importance of conceiving the relation patient-doctor as an alliance, these authors highlight the importance of treating the patient as a person rather than a disease, emphasizing the construction of 'relationship-centered care' as a better way of explaining collaboration between patients and doctors. The last chapter in section one is by Belinda Crawford-Camicciottoli, who extends her work elsewhere on

earnings conference calls (Crawford-Camiciottoli, 2019), this time through an analysis of engagement in this context.

The second section of this volume is composed of ten chapters including studies on visual-verbal intersemiosis, engagement in video, verbal and nonverbal engagement devices, multimodal engagement in online science news, gestural silence, organizational metadiscourse across lecturing styles and client engagement in tourism. In chapter 9, Daniel Lees Fryer addresses the interplay of visual-verbal resources in an online medical research article, developing an interstratal approach (i.e. top-down and bottom-up) to understanding interaction with readers. Chapter 10, by Jan Engberg and Carmen Daniela Maier, also looks at academic user engagement and knowledge construction processes, this time in the context of video articles from the *Journal of Visualized Experiments* (Hafner, 2018). In chapter 11, ‘Recruitment websites and the socialization of new employees’, Ruth Breeze uses the Appraisal framework to analyse the system of engagement operating multimodally in the recruitment and careers websites of twenty high-profile companies. She illustrates how text and multimodal messages are deployed to shape employees’ feelings and expectations, balancing positive presentations of the company with positive qualities associated with those who want to work there, and proposing suitable roles and attitudes to be adopted by novice employees. Still in a business context, Mercedes Díez Prados then turns to the “elevator pitch” in a chapter on engagement devices in persuasive discourse that combines linguistic approaches from Appraisal with analysis of non-verbal signs. Returning to the area of science, in chapter 13 Yiqiong Zhang looks at engagement on a science communication website, showing the increasing importance of multimodal resources in the move towards “scifotainment” over a period of four years.

Interestingly, the next three chapters revolve around the theme of silence or non-engagement. Ismael Arinas Pellón’s chapter looks at the absence of references to readers and drafters in the patent genre, while Chlœe Fogarty-Bourget, Natasha Artemeva and Janna Fox develop the theme of “gestural silence” and explore its communicative functions in university mathematics classes. The third of these chapters, by Mercedes Querol-Julián and Blanca Arteaga-Martínez, analyses silence and engagement in the multimodal genre of lectures delivered through real-time videoconferencing, emphasizing the importance of multimodal strategies to repair silences in response to teachers’ questions or while interacting with course materials.

The next chapter, by Edgar Bernad-Mechó and Inmaculada Fortanet-Gómez, builds on their previous multimodal research on university teaching, distinguishing three approaches to lecturing, which they term a “reading style”, a “conversational style” and a “rhetorical style”. These styles can be distinguished through the differential use of semiotic resources and can be arranged along a continuum from low to high modal density. The final chapter, by Francisca Suau-Jiménez, returns to the theme of engagement in customer communication, and uses material from the COMETVAL corpus to investigate e-genres in tourism in English and Spanish.

The chapters in this volume bear witness to the potential of engagement in very diverse areas and in combination with various other approaches to shed light on a range of professional and academic genres. It illustrates how the principled study of engagement can provide fascinating insights into writer-reader and speaker-listener relations. As for research, this volume can be considered as a follow up work of the author’s and Hyland’s book *Stance and Voice in Written Academic Genres* (2012). The main contribution of the present volume consists in bringing the so far scarce and disperse research on engagement together and expanding its definition with notions such as proximation, detachment, distance and stancetaking. Besides, new variables (such as placement of images, sound, humour, deixis, titles, headings and emojis) are explored and authors pinpoint some current challenges and emerging issues in applying the concept of engagement. By and large, for ESP researchers and practitioners and for students of applied linguistics, this book opens up new fields of inquiry and should provide an inspiration for further research.

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