Overall, this engaging volume presents an important study of contemporary academic discourse that will certainly serve as a point of reference for future investigations in the field. Furthermore, because the author does not simply use a 'corpus driven' approach, but counterbalances discourse-based and corpus-based analyses to establish a constructive dialogue between the two approaches, the readers interested in the application of these two methodologies will find in this volume a valuable example of good practice.

[Larissa D'Angelo]

HYLAND, Ken / BONDI, Marina (eds.), *Academic Discourse Across Disciplines*, Peter Lang, Bern [Linguistic Insights 42], 2006, p. 320, ISBN 3-03911-183-3, € 50,30 + VAT.

In the last two decades, academic discourse has undergone several significant changes. The original view of the 1980s (cf. Bloor and Bloor 1986) – centred on the hypothesis of a common core for academic English, and aimed at defining its distinctive patterns and features (in terms of register, lexical density, nominalised style, impersonality, formality, precision, etc.) – has been gradually supplanted by comparative studies (Mauranen 1993; Crammond 1998) which have demonstrated how varied and articulated academic discourse is, and not only in terms of content and terminology. In recent times the focus has shifted from the description of a few identifying features of scholarly discourse to the discussion of its many variables, approached not as a cohesive or monolithic unit, but as a result of the interplay between institutional meanings and values, and between practices, strategies and conventions, all of which are expressions of specific academic communities.

The papers by applied linguists and EAP practitioners gathered in this volume reflect such trends and analytical perspectives and discuss cross-disciplinary variation in written and spoken scholarly discourse in terms of rhetorical choices, authorial stance, engagement, and argumentative strategies, drawing on corpora to illustrate concepts and notions, to test hypotheses and to explore methodologies. They are organized in three main sections, assessing the issue of disciplinary differentiation from different angles: first variation in written argumentation and reasoning; secondly aspects of written interactions in academic texts; and thirdly language variation in spoken discourse.

The collection opens with a chapter by Ken Hyland which serves as a useful introduction to the volume, providing an overview of recent research on disciplinary variation. It describes how such key concepts as *discipline* or *discourse community* have evolved over time and discusses the main types of differentiation

(argument form, rhetorical structure, authorial stance and engagement). It also explores the role of disciplinary conventions, shared assumptions, socially determined beliefs and values through which the disciplinary voice is achieved and defined.

An interesting contribution by Marina Bondi opens the section devoted to variation in written argumentation. The author analyses narrative models – both in epistemological and methodological terms – as tools for exploring differences between the related disciplines of Business and Economics. The study shows how Business Studies, which are based on factual reasoning and empirical research, privilege narration as a model-developing tool – using narrative segments in illustrations, examples, or case studies – whereas Economics, hinging on demonstrative logic and a theoretical approach, exploits narrative inserts, scenarios and simulations for model-testing purposes.

Marc Silver investigates variation across academic disciplines from a text-pragmatic perspective, focussing on the relation between meta-disciplinary categorizations and argumentational structures. The author discusses how different objects of knowledge affect argumentational aspects of knowledge construction, and, more specifically, how verbs indicating logical reasoning, forms referring to 'the world of reference' and metadiscoursal devices (or "projected discourse", p. 93) are used to establish and support a thesis by authors in the hard sciences (Unified Physics, Molecular Biology) and soft sciences (Economics, Business Management). This study highlights unexpected discrepancies in argumentation between similar disciplines or affinities between disciplines from different domains.

Philip Shaw looks at mathematical metalanguage as a parameter for the analysis of variation in Engineering, Physics and Pure Mathematics. He investigates how mathematical sequences and expressions are integrated into text, considering both the same genre across disciplines and different genres (research articles and educational genres, e.g. textbooks) within the same discipline.

The last paper in the first section, by Hilkka Stotesbury, analyses negative evaluation in research article abstracts. After defining five different typologies of critical speech acts (i.e. cognitive gaps, criticism of previous research, criticism of a previous theory/model/method, criticism in the discussion/conclusions, and innovation in the field), she applies this analytical framework to texts from the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, stressing qualitative and quantitative differences in criticism, in both functional and terminological terms.

The second section deals with the ways in which writers manifest their position and identity, and with how they build up interaction with the reader. Davide Simone Giannoni's paper deals with disciplinary variants in academic book acknowledgements. After selecting texts from six disciplines (Mathematics, Medicine, Biology, Applied Linguistics, Economics and Social Sciences), he analyses them from a quantitative (length, wording, distribution) and qualitative

perspective (use of hyperbole, irony, emotivity), highlighting how acknowledgements in the hard sciences tend to be more compact, devoid of hyperbolic or emotive language, with a higher number of acknowledgees than the soft sciences. Evidence gathered in the analysis warrants the conclusion that acknowledgements are "*apparently private acts* used to achieve public intentions" (p. 166).

Polly Tse and Ken Hyland examine variation in academic book reviews from three different disciplines (Philosophy, Biology and Sociology) in terms of gender. The essay investigates the interplay between gender-influenced features and disciplinary preferences or conventions by focussing on the use of metadiscursive resources (both interactive resources – transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials and code glosses – and interactional resources – hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers and self mention), and claims that gender, if not a "major variable in writers' interactive choices" (p. 178), has an important influence on disciplinary variation.

The paper by Kjersti Fløttum, Torodd Kinn and Trine Dahl discusses differences in the authorial role (as researcher, writer, arguer, and evaluator) in research articles in Linguistics, Economics and Medicine. By analysing the use of the first person pronoun, of verbs collocating with the pronoun, of metatextual expressions and of *let us*-imperative forms, they maintain that the author's role and the level of his/her interaction with the reader are variables closely related to the discipline. This study is part of the KIAP project (Cultural Identity in Academic Prose), whose main aim is the investigation of cultural identity traits as manifested by voices in scholarly discourse.

The last study in this section, by Eva Thue Vold, highlights differences in the choice and use of epistemic modality markers and hedging strategies in Linguistics and Medical Research articles. The criterion for investigating disciplinary variation is the frequency, distribution, type and function of modality markers, which the author divides into subjective markers (those presupposing an agent, e.g. *assume, seem, appear*) and markers of root possibility (stating eventuality without presupposing a modalizing agent, e.g. *could, may, might*). The evidence collected reveals that disciplinary differentiation depends not on the frequency but rather on the type of marker: root possibility markers are most commonly used in medical discourse, while subjective markers are more frequent in linguistic research articles.

The paper by Paul Thompson opens the section on spoken discourse. It deals with lexis in academic lectures and relies on a corpus of Economics and Agricultural Economics texts taken from the BASE lecture corpus (British Academic English Corpus), compiled at the Universities of Reading and Warwick; the focus is on such data as word frequency, keyness and word clusters. After describing an Academic Lecture Word List, containing 230 word families accounting for the most frequently used terminology in the genre, the author discusses linguistic variation by comparing the lexis of Economics with that of

academic spoken discourse in general, and then, more specifically, the lexis of lectures in Economics and in Philosophy.

Anna Mauranen describes how spoken language use varies in the discourse practices of different disciplines, when English is used as a *lingua franca*. She selects speech-act verbs with a general meaning (*say*, *talk*, and *discuss*) and explores how they relate to specific ideologies of argumentation. The results provide a basis for a discussion of how far disciplinary practices influence linguistic choices which are independent of the speakers' native language: "the ways of using linguistic items show tendencies towards differentiated usage across broad disciplinary domains" but also "serve to identify an individual discipline" (p. 292).

A paper by Rita G. Simpson-Vlachon on the role of formulaic expressions as stylistic features of academic discourse closes the third section. The author analyses the use of keywords and key phrases with different functions (hedges, fillers, deictics, discourse markers, etc.) in the four disciplinary subdivisions of MICASE (Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English): Humanities and Arts, Social Sciences and Education, Biology and Health Sciences, Physical Sciences and Engineering. Cross-disciplinary variation is identified in the use of content-driven items (i.e., hedges) and non content-specific lexico-phraseological items (fillers, discourse markers), the latter being closely related to modes of interaction, discourse styles and instructional methods which are typical of academic speech in certain disciplinary areas.

The different strands of research represented in this volume form a cohesive collection indicative of recent developments in the investigation of scholarly discourse and reflect a growing interest in cross-disciplinary variation in both written and spoken English. The book is a useful source of reference and an important starting point for further research thanks to its combination of new theoretical frameworks, methodologies and analytical perspectives. It targets a wide range of linguistic conventions and practices, providing a sound theoretical account of the complex interplay between content, ideology, epistemology, argumentative strategies and discourse styles in different disciplinary fields.

[Michele Sala]

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