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CERLIS Series Volume 1

Stefania M. Maci & Michele Sala (eds)

Genre Variation in Academic Communication Emerging Disciplinary Trends

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CERLIS SERIES Vol. 1

CERLIS

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GENRE VARIATION IN ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION. EMERGING DISCIPLINARY TRENDS

Editors: Stefania M. Maci, Michele Sala

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Research Genres and Hybridisation: A Case Study from Research Articles in the Field of Cultural Heritage Studies

1. Introduction

My study aims at defining the field of Cultural Heritage Studies (CHSs) within the mainstream of academic genres and domains through the analysis of research articles (RAs) written in English. I will seek to determine whether this field – still quite underestimated in the linguistic study of academic disciplines as, at present, there are no contributions which can be mentioned – can be included in the so-called 'soft' sciences, the 'hard' sciences or, possibly, whether it should be considered in an intermediate position along the discipline continuum such as a further and innovative characterisation of specialised discourse.

The choice for this particular academic field comes from my experience in teaching English to undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD students in a Faculty of Cultural Heritage Studies (CHSs) in Italy. At a certain point of their curriculum, students had to approach a number of relevant subjects in English (mostly through the study of RAs) and, as their teacher, I had to instruct them how to read and understand this material and also how to produce some academic texts (in the form of abstracts and short reports). For this reason, and since students needed precise and comprehensive instructions, I became interested in the manifold styles used in the general discipline and became curious about how to collocate the whole discipline or its different 'identities' in the broader category of academic genres.

In Italy, the Faculties of CHSs and related research are considered as belonging to the humanities but no information is

available in the case of RAs and the discipline at a general, international level. The present contribution, then, will seek to place CHSs along the discipline continuum by investigating a corpus of RAs published internationally for this area of study.

2. The field of CHSs as academic genre

First of all, it would be useful to introduce the discipline via an official definition of Cultural Heritage (CH) and CHSs, which is also accepted by the members of the scientific community itself, and can be found in the UNESCO Draft Medium Term Plan 1990-1995. UNESCO is – by its own definition - a specialised agency of the United Nations system, whose main objective "is to contribute to peace and security in the world by promoting collaboration among nations through education. science. culture and communication" (http://www.unesco.org/). Its Medium Term Plan is an official document issued after consultation with the Member States and the international scientific and intellectual community in order to focus on the right projects, ideas and actions that are necessary to preserve human knowledge and cultural and intellectual heritage.

The definition of CH is, then, important in the structure of the UNESCO's document in order to include as many sites and monuments, human artefacts and natural landscapes as possible which need preservation and protection from damage or decay. Hence, the field of CH can be defined as

the entire corpus of material signs – either artistic or symbolic – handed on by the past to each culture and, therefore, to the whole of humankind. [...] The idea of the heritage has now been broadened to include both the human and the natural environment, both architectural complexes and archaeological sites, not only the rural heritage and the countryside but also the urban, technical or industrial heritage, industrial design and street furniture. (UNESCO, 25 C/4, 1989: 57 in Jokilehto 2005: 4-5)

The above definition implies that the field of CHSs can be considered an interdisciplinary academic field that takes a critical look at the way heritage is preserved, presented and participated in by scholars and 'consumers' (cf. Stig Sørensen / Carman 2009). The above quotation will also serve as a starting point and reference definition for my research, as it provides a background on which a linguistic and discursive description might be drawn.

At a preliminary level of investigation, observation of the topics covered in the RAs immediately reveals that this is a composite academic genre, since it includes contributions dealing with History, the Arts (History and Criticism), Archaeology and the most technical aspects of preservation and restoration of monuments, artefacts, manuscripts, sites and so forth.

Due to this variety of aspects and approaches, RAs in the area of CHSs often adopt methodologies and theories belonging to the 'soft' as well as to the 'hard' sciences. Analysing RAs in this field might, then, be highly fascinating from a linguistic perspective in consideration of the fact that only few contributions have yet attempted to consider its different sub-disciplines in order to indicate exactly on which point of the continuum between the soft and the hard sciences they should be collocated (see Hyland 2009). In this regard, and to the best of my knowledge, only a few studies have endeavoured to make such a description and only for the two sub-fields of Art History and Archaeology; in particular, for the sub-field of Art History we can name Kemal / Gaskell (1991) and Tucker (2003, 2004). It must be pointed out, however, that these studies do not seek to insert the discipline in a particular academic genre but describe its intrinsic characteristics per se.

Kemal / Gaskell (1991) considers the relationship between Art History and the language used to express its contents as well as how the most technical and theoretical aspects of this field can be made accessible to readers in all the humanities, discussing the use of figurative language along with visual conventions. Tucker (2003, 2004) attempts at describing Art History as academic discipline. In particular, Tucker (2003) considers the differences in terms of evaluative language and knowledge construction between Art History and Criticism and other academic fields. Tucker (2004) investigates

art-historical discourse with the aim of identifying typical strategies used in this field to express evaluation.

As far as Archaeology is concerned, Joyce (2002) can be mentioned but this is meant as an introduction to the stylistic conventions of the discipline related to semiotics rather than a linguistic analysis of its features in the academic and specialised context.

3. Corpus structure and composition

The data obtained through a corpus search for the purposes of the present investigation showed an interesting level of complexity. For this reason, I decided to keep the present analysis at a quantitative level in order to have a preliminary categorisation of the RAs investigated. Indeed, a thorough categorisation of the discipline will involve a whole series of studies at different levels of analysis and will probably require a long-term research project.

First of all, I selected a group of RAs published in international journals for each of the sub-disciplines which appear to compose CHSs, i.e. Archaeology (A), Art History and Criticism (AHC), Cultural Heritage Preservation and Restoration (CH Pres/Rest). These three sub-fields were chosen because, according to the generally-agreed definition of cultural heritage provided in Section 2 and the academic disciplines available in international research, they seem to represent the totality of CHSs. In addition, other academic fields considered for inclusion can be ultimately considered as belonging to either field or the other of the three used in the present study.

The RAs were collected from the most relevant and important journals for each field; the journals' relevance was assessed on the basis of their rating according to the European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH, whose ratings are publicly available online). The journals were selected from those rated 'A' and that were assigned the INT1 sub-category for international journals which includes "international publications with high visibility and influence among

researchers in the various research domains in different countries, regularly cited all over the world" (ERIH 2012: online).

The journals selected are quarterly peer-reviewed journals (whose complete details are indicated in the bulleted list below) distributed by international publishers; occasionally they have special monothematic issues which increase the frequency of issues published per year. In order to have a fairly homogeneous sample for each journal (as, indeed, not all of them had a fourth issue already published when I collected my samples), I considered only the first three issues of each journal among those published in 2010. The total number of articles thus collected were 118. This total number of articles was gathered by considering only the RAs included in these issues while reviews and editorial comments were excluded.

The final group of RAs was, then, divided into three corpora (as many as the three sub-fields which compose the main field of CHSs) and were combined as follows:

- A: 41 articles from two journals (International Journal of Historical Archaeology, Springer, henceforth IJHA; Oxford Journal of Archaeology, Blackwell, OJA);
- AHC: 30 articles from two journals (Art History, Wiley-Blackwell, AH; Journal of Art History and Theory, University of Essex, JAHT);
- CH Pres/Rest: 46 articles from one journal (*Journal of Cultural Heritage*, Elsevier, JCH).

The total size of the corpus includes 894,785 words distributed in the three corpora as the following list shows:

- A: 345,118 words;
- AHC: 299,690 words;
- CH Pres/Rest: 249,977 words.

Despite the relatively homogeneous number of articles for each subdiscipline, this first difference in the size of the corpora can be explained by the fact that although A, AHC and CH Pres/Rest contain a high number of pictures, graphs and reproductions of sites which lowered the overall number of words the articles in the A corpus has the highest number of words in the corpus probably because pictures

and graphical elements are explained and described more extensively in this field than in the other two, even though the total number of articles in A collocates between AHC and CH Pres/Rest.

Considering the difference in the size of the three sub-corpora, the number of occurrences of hedges (Hs) and boosters (Bs) will be presented both in raw figures and normalised to 10,000 words in order to have a more accurate picture of the frequencies in the data to be analysed in the present study.

3.1. Methodology of analysis

The analysis of my corpus of RAs was conducted according to research procedures followed by studies investigating academic genres across disciplines. In particular, Swales (2004), Biber (2006), and Hyland / Bondi (2006) provided some useful methodological insights since they consider a general, theoretical approach to the study of academic genres and discourse, paving the way to similar analyses in academic disciplines in general.

In addition, the approach considered in other contributions was relevant for my analysis as they contributed to the choice of the actual methodology and of the devices to be analysed in the present article; namely, they are Del Lungo / Tognini Bonelli (2004) which was considered for its discussion on how academic disciplines present the attitudinal assessment of content and how they use argumentative strategies to interact with audiences at different levels of expertise (from expert scholars to novices); Flowerdew (2000) was useful for its use of interdisciplinary approaches to the study of academic discourse; Fløttum et al. (2006) investigates different ways through which 'academic voices' express their commitment to the different aspects of research; Giannoni's (2010) volume represented a useful means to the understanding of "what values are most prominent in English disciplinary discourse and what linguistic resources are most likely to be used to signal such values" (Giannoni 2010: 13). Finally, Hirsh (2010) provided useful insights in academic vocabulary and how it performs "a specialised role in academic writing, occupying a place in the lexicon alongside general service words and technical words" (Hirsh 2010: 13), thus providing a valuable help in approaching the RAs also from the point of view of the terminology provided, even though this aspect is not the focus of the present contribution.

Particularly relevant to my analysis, and the main basis of my methodological approach, was the work by Hyland (1998, 2008, 2009) since he examines typical patterns and significant features of academic writing and investigates linguistic and discursive features in different academic fields, searching for specificity in both the humanities and the sciences.

In consideration of the fact that a description of CHSs has hardly ever been attempted before, and that this field is relatively new to linguistic enquiries, the number of features and the variety of approaches at a linguist's disposal are certainly vast. In this respect, then, I decided to select two types of linguistic features which clearly show different uses in RAs in the humanities and the sciences, using the computer program for corpus analysis *Wordsmith Tools 5.0* (Scott 2008) for the examination of my data.

As already mentioned, the features considered were Hs and Bs selected from the list provided by Hyland (2009: 376) and which the author asserts to represent those Hs and Bs most frequently used in academic writing, providing a precise definition of these devices as they are used in academic writing which seems to summarise well the nature and functions of Hs and Bs. According to Hyland (2009: 349-50), Hs and Bs are "communicative strategies for increasing [boosters] or reducing [hedges] the force of statements". In academic writing they are essential to the authors' rhetoric and to interact with the readers, since "they not only carry the writer's degree of confidence in the truth of a proposition, but also an attitude to the audience" (2009: 349). Moreover, "boosters allow writers to express conviction and assert a proposition with confidence, representing a strong claim about a state of affairs" (2009: 350), whereas "hedges represent a weakening of a claim through an explicit qualification of the writer's commitment" (2009: 349).

Other scholars found that, in academic writing, Hs and Bs are also indicative of the discourse practices and choices typical of a certain discipline (cf. Falahati 2007) as they tend to reflect the scientific procedures of each discipline and the researchers' processes

of reasoning in each field. In this respect, they prove to be an essential tool for scholars who seek to gain collective adherence to their claims from the discourse community and to improve the force of persuasion of their own statements (cf. Salager-Meyer 1994).

The list of 186 Hs and Bs searched in the corpora and adapted from Hyland (1998) is contained in Table 1. I have added all the possible suffixes (indicated with the wildcard asterisk) which might occur in the corpus and which seemed to have been excluded in Hyland's list, as there was no reference to this kind of search.

Hedges

about, almost, apparent, apparently, appear*, approximately, argue*, around, assume*, assumption, basically, can, certain+extent, conceivably, conclude*, conjecture*, consistent+with, contention, could, could not, of+course, deduce*, discern*, doubt, doubt*, doubtless, essentially, establish*, estimate*, expect*, the+fact+that, find, found, formally, frequently, general, generally, given+that, guess*, however, hypothesize*, hypothetically, ideally, implication*, imply, improbable, indeed, indicate*, inevitable, infer*, interpret, we+know, it+is+known, largely, least, likely, mainly, manifest*, may, maybe, might, more+or+less, most, not+necessarily, never, no+doubt, beyond+doubt, normally, occasionally, often, ostensibly, partially, partly, patently, perceive*, perhaps, plausible, possibility, possible, possibly, postulate*, precisely, predict*, prediction, predominantly, presumably, presume*, probability, probable, probably, propose*, prove*, provided+that, open+to+question, questionable, quite, rare, rarely, rather, relatively, reportedly, reputedly, seem*, seems, seemingly, can+be+seen, seldom, general+sense, should, show, sometimes, somewhat, speculate*, suggest*, superficially, suppose*, surmise, suspect*, technically, tend*, tendency, theoretically, I+think, we+think, typically, uncertain, unclear, unlikely, unsure, usually, virtually, will, will+not, won't, would, would not.

Boosters

actually, admittedly, always, assuredly, certainly, certainty, claim*, certain+that, is+clear, are+clear, to+be+clear, clearly, confirm*, convincingly, believe*, my+belief, our+belief, I+believe, we+believe, conclusive, decidedly, definitely, demonstrate*, determine*, is+essential, evidence, evident, evidently, impossible, incontrovertible, inconceivable, manifestly, must, necessarily, obvious, obviously, sure, surely, true, unambiguously, unarguably, undeniably, undoubtedly, unequivocal, unmistakably, unquestionably, well-known, wrong, wrongly.

Table 1. List of Hs and Bs searched in the three corpora.

Starting with the presentation of the quantitative results from search through the corpora, Table 2 displays the total occurrence of the two types of devices along with the values of their frequency normalised

to 10,000 words (as explained in Section 3 above). I allowed a minimum occurrence of twenty times for each item to be considered as significant in the three corpora.

	Raw frequencies		Per 10,000 words	
	Hedges	Boosters	Hedges	Boosters
A	4.448	1,381	128.8	40.0
AHC	3,003	789	100.2	26.3
CH Pres/Rest	1,999	596	79.9	23.8

Table 2. Hs and Bs: raw frequencies and frequencies normalised per 10,000 words.

According to the figures in Table 2, we can see that Hs outnumber Bs considerably. The difference is especially marked in the A (examples 1 and 2) and AHC fields (examples 3 and 4). The examples provided below show the use of Hs and Bs (indicated in italics), respectively, in the two fields. These figures actually confirm a tendency already noticed by other scholars working on inter-disciplinary specificity – such as Hyland (2009), Salager-Meyer (1994) and Falahati (2007) –, that in academic writing Hs are generally far more frequent than Bs because they reflect scholars' preference for mitigation rather than emphasis. In addition, Hyland (2009) claims that the humanities make a greater use of hedges than the sciences.

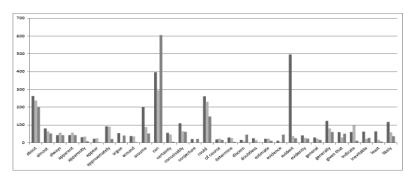
- (1) They were *apparently* built in a single phase and *might* cover one or more cremations (BRADLEY_FRASER_OJA_2010_29_1⁷)
- (2) Early Christian basilicas are clearly associated with Byzantine buildings (CARAHER_IJHA_2010_2)

The sources of the examples provided in this study are indicated through a codification method which includes in this order: NAME(S) OF THE AUTHOR(S)_ACRONYM OF THE JOURNAL_year of publication_ (volume_)issue. When the information EtAL is added to the citation, it means that the article is by more than two authors who are indicated in the References. In all cases, full bibliographical details are given in the 'Primary Sources' section at the end of the article.

(3) Whilst it might be tempting to ascribe the anti-photographers as approaching photography (GRANT_JAHT_2010_3)

(4) Titles, literary associations and allusions may be incidental; however, the presence of one individual in the print is unquestionably intentional (CLINGER_AH_2010_33_3).

The abundance of Hs over Bs in the three fields allows a first categorisation for the three sub-disciplines: indeed, following Hyland's division, we might attempt a first categorisation and say that A and AHC can be included in the humanities because of their considerable use of Hs, whereas the low preference of CH Pres/Rest for both Hs and Bs might collocate this sub-discipline among the sciences. However, this interpretation can be considered only tentative. As mentioned earlier, the difference in the size of the three corpora is due to a different textual structure in which CH Pres/Rest contains a high number of graphic items (tables and graphs). For this reason, a more detailed investigation would be required, taking into consideration the distribution of Hs and Bs in the different sections of RAs for each sub-fields. This could give more precise insights into the use of Hs and Bs in CHSs in general as compared with the use in the sciences and the humanities in the same sections and allow for a more precise categorisation of the disciplines and its sub-fields. This chapter, indeed, is the first attempt at an investigation of CHSs as an academic discipline rather than at providing its definitive description.



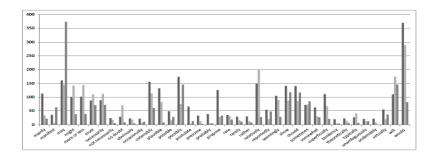


Figure 1. Distribution of Hs and Bs in the three corpora.

The graphs in Figure 1 show the overall distribution of entries (in alphabetical order) with more than twenty occurrences. The darkest grey columns in the top graph indicate data from A, the light grey columns show frequency in AHC and the normal dark grey columns in the bottom graph indicate data from CH Pres/Rest. The occurrence of the various entries is not evenly distributed, not only for the single words in each discipline but also among the disciplines themselves. It is interesting to note that peaks of occurrence in the graphs are related to the use of the hedges ABOUT (example 5, all emphases added), POSSIBLY (example 6), RELATIVELY (example 7) and to the epistemic verb ASSUME (example 8) and the booster EVIDENT (example 9) in A. Other peaks are in the use of modals mainly with the function of hedges such as COULD (example 10), MAY (example 11), SHOULD (example 12) and WOULD (example 13). CAN is also highly frequent (examples 14-16).

- (5) Only about 15% of the graves with dates between 1950 and 2004 are well maintained (TZORTZOPOULOU-GREGORY_IJHA_2010_2)
- (6) Possibly because of poor lines of sight, both armies outflanked one another (POLLARD_BANKS_IJHA_2010_3)
- (7) The relatively extensively excavated settlements of the Mirabello Bay region of east of east Crete provide a good case study for such an enquiry (HAYSOM_OJA_2010_29_1)

(8) Moreover, we can assume that tombs, particularly in the nave, represent a phase of use (CARAHER_IJHA_2010_2)

- (9) Nonetheless, in Australasia their influence has been *evident* in the persisting concern with hegemony (LYDON_ASH_IJHA_2010_1)
- (10) While a private collection could serve variously as a 'theatre of the mind' (HELLER_AH_2010_33_2)
- (11) Different geological processes that *may* affect cave conservation will condition the potential risks (IRIARTE_EtAL_JCH_2010_11_3)
- (12) At the same time, treatments *should* satisfy safety rules for operators and environment (GIACHI_EtAL_JCH_2010_11_1)
- (13) If the piece were cast as history this *would* perhaps be beyond the pale (ELSNER_AH_2010_33_1)
- (14) The mounds *can* also be dated by comparison with a scheme recently published by Garwood (2007) (BRADLEY_FRASER_OJA_2010_29_1)
- (15) Parallels *can* be found in contemporary images of the emperor (VOUT_AH_2010_33_3)
- (16) As advection is generally more rapid than diffusion, desalination treatments based on advection *can* be much faster (PEL_EtAL_JCH_2010_11_1)

List of words	A	AHC	CH Pres/Rest
about	262/7.59	237/7.91	200/8.00
assume	200/5.80	87/2.90	52/2.08
can	396/11.47	294/9.81	605/24.10
conceivably	109/3.16	63/2.10	61/2.44
could	261/7.56	230/7.67	147/5.88
evident	496/14.37	37/1.23	25/1.00
generally	122/3.25	80/2.67	60/2.40
likely	116/3.36	58/1.94	36/1.44
mainly	113/3.27	34/1.13	22/0.88
may	374/10.84	161/5.37	144/5.76

might	101/2.93	142/4.74	38/1.52
more or less	102/2.96	144/4.80	39/1.56
must	88/2.55	110/3.67	71/2.84
necessarily	89/2.58	112/3.74	72/2.88
ostensibly	156/4.52	113/3.77	61/2.44
plausible	132/3.82	82/2.74	8/0.32
possibly	174/5.04	75/2.50	146/5.84
propose	126/3.65	28/0.93	33/1.32
relatively	149/4.20	199/6.64	28/1.12
seemingly	105/3.04	90/3.00	28/1.12
should	140/4.06	86/2.87	117/4.68
show	141/4.09	87/2.90	118/4.72
superficially	111/3.22	67/2.24	21/0.84
will	110/3.19	175/5.84	146/5.84
would	370/10.72	289/9.64	82/3.28

Table 3. More detailed figures from Graph 1 (the figures are listed as raw frequency/figures normalised per 10,000).

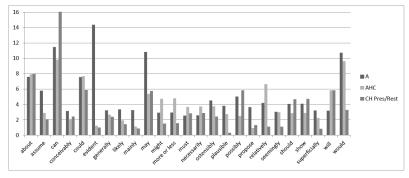


Figure 2. Graphic representation of normalised figures in Table 3.

A closer look (see Table 3 above) at the data illustrated in the preceding graphs and, in particular, at the normalised figures for the

most frequent devices (see Figure 2) shows that the field of A seems to prefer a booster such as EVIDENT (probably used for inferences which cannot have an ambiguous interpretation), followed by the modals CAN and MAY (in the function of hedge), and WOULD. Other hedges most frequently used in this field are ABOUT (see example 5), POSSIBLY (see example 6), GENERALLY (example 17), LIKELY (example 18), MAY (example 19), MAINLY (example 20), MORE OR LESS (example 21), PLAUSIBLE (example 22), and RELATIVELY (see example 7), whereas ASSUME (see example 8), SHOW (example 23) and WILL (example 24) pertain to the category of boosters.

- (17) They are generally located on headlands adjacent to, or within sight of, the sea (ASH_EtAL_IJHA_2010_1)
- (18) However, it is *likely* they were interested in promoting their common cultural and social values (GRIFFIN IJHA 2010 1)
- (19) The centre of the site *may* contain the remains of a circular mound (JONES_OJA_2010_29_2)
- (20) This is *mainly* because of the multi-period nature of the assemblage (SCHULTING_EtAL_OJA_2010_29_2)
- (21) The enclosure would be *more or less* contemporary with the cairns inside it (JONES_OJA_2010_29_2)
- (22) Thick-walled round building without it is not a *plausible* broch prototype (MACKIE_OJA_2010_29_1)
- (23) The medial aspect of the shaft rather than its anterior aspect, but it does *show* that injury to the overlying soft tissues can lead to periostitis of the femoral shaft (GARVIE-LOK_IJHA_2010_2)
- (24) A critical reading of the textual and archaeological evidence the textual and archaeological evidence will challenge the strict adherence to rigid divisions between periods and will demonstrate how more subtle evidence for continuity sheds valuable light on the processes of social, cultural, and religious change (CARAHER_IJHA_2010_2)

The distribution of these preferences in the field of A seems to be quite complex to interpret. The fact that the most recurrent word of

those searched is a booster does not invalidate the general tendency of preferring Hs over Bs because the total number of hedges used in this field outnumbers the total number of boosters.

The preferred hedges are devices such as ABOUT, GENERALLY, MORE OR LESS, RELATIVELY (as in examples 5, 17, 21 and 7, respectively), which Hyland (2009: 363) defines as attribute hedges and which "refer to the relationship between propositional elements rather than the relationship between a proposition and a writer" (363). These devices are believed to be used preferably in the sciences (cf. Hyland 2009).

On the other hand, A makes also a consistent use of devices modifying statements such as the epistemic verb ASSUME and the boosters SHOW and WILL (see examples 8, 23 and 24, respectively) which, in this case, reflect a tendency typical of the humanities.

As for the modals, SHOULD (examples 25 and 26) is quite frequent as well and is used whenever the author introduces a new interpretation with the purpose of lessening the force of imposition of the statement itself.

- (25) It does mean that this Scottish perspective *should* not be defined in terms of essential national or "ethnic" character, action, or contribution (DALGLISH DRISCOLL IJHA_2010_3)
- (26) all these events and ideas widened and made more flexible the concept of what should be considered art (PALACIO-PÉREZ_OJA_2010_29_1)

CAN is highly frequent and occurs in clusters such as 'can be seen', 'can be considered' (epistemic modality, see examples 27 and 28) or 'can+main verb' ('can serve', 'can inform us', expressing deontic modality as in examples 29-31).

- (27) This process can also be seen at Poonindie (GRIFFIN_IJHA_2010_1)
- (28) These and many other examples have suggested to authors such as Hinton (2005) that some ancestor artefacts passed down through the family can be considered heirlooms (CAPLE_OJA_2010_29_3)

(29) a short distance between sites and the proximity to the producing centres can be considered an influential factor that *can serve* to explain some patterns (BRUGHMANS_OJA_2010_29_3)

- (30) It merely explores to what extent the archaeological data itself *can inform us* of the continually evolving actions that led to its distribution (BRUGHMANS_OJA_2010_29_3)
- (31) From this basis we can *reassess* the cartographic evidence (MACGREGOR_IJHA_2010_3).

Therefore, CAN is very functional in conveying different meanings. An interpretation for the preference for this verb might be that – according to the examples provided above – CAN is used with a neutral function and it communicates different degrees of possibility or different degrees of the writers' certainty about the interpretation of data. Writers in A, then, seem to show the tendency of adding a more impersonal but also a less cautious force to their statements.

The field of AHC shows a preference for attribute hedges – in particular ABOUT (example 32), COULD (see example 10) and WOULD (see example 13), MAYBE (example 33), MORE OR LESS (example 34), RELATIVELY (example 35). Again, the modal CAN is used consistently in its epistemic function ('can be seen', 'can be found', as in examples 36 and 37).

- (32) For instance, if we look at a set of pendants painted *about* 1640 we see a couple standing in a shallow, neutral space (GROOTENBOER_AH_2010_33_2)
- (33) How can I go beyond that and create something else that is *maybe* another kind of pose, but is, at least, not the same one you always get? (BURBRIDGE JAHT_2010_5)
- (34) an approximation *more or less* excellent is given, but the characteristic expression ... of the man is withheld (ELLENBOGEN_AH_2010_33_3)
- (35) But while the painting of 1925 presents its sitter in a *relatively* naturalistic outdoor setting, the later image of Garcilaso locates him in a more complex and indeterminate pictorial field (SCHREFFLER_WELTON_AH_2010_33_1)
- (36) This *can be seen* clearly in Recumbent Man and Prostitute with a Whip, in which... (SMITH_AH_2010_33_3)

(37) A concrete case can be found in Van der Goes' Adoration of the Shepherds which art historians... (BUSSELS_AH_2010_33_2)

The most frequent boosters are WILL and MUST (examples 38 and 39, respectively).

- (38) ...Accompanied by a text which tells the viewer that the following ten images will provide "ten minutes or so in which you won't be bored" (CLINGER_AH_2010_33_3)
- (39) Holst scholar Browne indicates, however, the importance such works must already have had on the artist (SMITH_AH_2010_33_3).

In this case MUST has the highest frequency, indicating the insertion of a stronger force of persuasion in the writers' statements. The use of the modals WILL and MUST as boosters shows a peculiar tendency of the writers to convey a degree of certainty and emphasis rarely found in academic writing in general. Generally speaking, however, the preferred use of Hs over Bs, however, might collocate this discipline in the field of the humanities rather than the sciences following the characteristic of the former to rely more on the argumentative presentation of their reasoning. This interpretation directly follows Hyland's (1998: 13) explanation of the more frequent use of Hs in the soft sciences, according to which:

writers in the soft fields can generally take less for granted and, while a paper must carry conviction, it must also appeal more to the reader's willingness to follow the writer's reasoning. Research cannot be reported with the same confidence of shared assumptions and so has to be expressed more cautiously, using more hedges. Writers must rely far more on focusing readers on the claim-making negotiations of the discourse community, the arguments themselves, rather than the relatively unmediated real-world phenomena.

As regards the discipline of CH Pres/Rest, we see again a preference for CAN (in this case far more frequent than in the other two fields, examples 40-42) and ABOUT (used as in example 43).

(40) Based on this idea, the Pe number at the substrate/poultice interface can be used to estimate the efficiency, since this is proportional to the ratio (PEL_EtAL_JCH_11_1)

- (41) They can also be obstructed with the present heavy grey internal curtains to guarantee... (BALOCCO_FRANGIONI_JCH_2010_11_1)
- (42) These results reveal that the chromophore environment, depending on the complexing agent, *can originate* small but relevant differences (CLARO_EtAL_JCH_2010_11_1)
- (43) Maximum intrusion pressure was about 800 kPa (CRISCI_JCH_2010_11_3).

The most frequent hedges are COULD (example 44), MAY (see example 11), SHOULD (see example 12), MAYBE (example 45), and POSSIBLY (example 46). Preferred boosters are MUST (though much less frequent than in the other two disciplines, example 47), SHOW (example 48), and WILL (example 49).

- (44) These results *could* be attributed, for diluted suspensions, to... (DANIELE_TAGLIERI_JCH_2010_11_1)
- (45) The volume is undated and unsigned, *maybe* because the date and copyist's name were mentioned in the first volume (ESPEJO_EtAL_JCH_2010_11_1)
- (46) filled with a proteinaceous binding medium and particles of calcium carbonate, gypsum, silicate minerals and barite, *possibly* used to decrease the porosity and to increase the stiffness of the cellulosic material (FAVARO_EtAL_JCH_2010_11_3)
- (47) On the other hand, it *must* be taken into account that some human activities... (IRIARTE_EtAL_JCH_2010_11_3)
- (48) Simulation results show a great decrease in the illuminance values in the ambient (BALOCCO_FRANGIONI_JCH_2010_11_1)
- (49) The report *will* be useful for the preservation of damaged seriously architectural glazed (ZHAO_EtAL_JCH_2010_11_3)

CAN, so frequent in this field, is used in its epistemic function and appears in clusters such as 'can be used', 'can be seen', 'can be concluded that', 'can be applied', which are useful for writers in CH

Pres/Rest to describe experimental procedures (along with the use of ABOUT, see Hyland 2009), collocating this discipline more in the realm of the sciences than the humanities. In the sciences researchers try "to portray their evaluation impersonally, constructing a context in which claims appeared to arise from the research itself" (Hyland 2009: 373).

On the other hand, the consistent use of hedges such as MAY, MAYBE and POSSIBLY comes closer to a tendency found in the humanities. This can be considered only a general statement as the use of this kind of hedges can be found in scientific RAs: the difference might lie in the sections in which these two hedges are used and consider whether they occur throughout the paper (even in the analysis of figures, as might occur in the humanities RAs where the writer has to lead the reader through his/her reasoning) or only in argumentative parts such as the discussion section (as in the sciences where interpretation of sensible data is provided, thus allowing a more cautious approach. This, however, is certainly valid for all the other Hs and Bs considered in this study, as, before including the three subfields into one category or the other, we should consider whether the sections in which Hs and Bs are preferably used coincide with either the sciences or the humanities and whether the three sub-fields (A, AHC and CH Pres/Rest) confirm the collocation already indicated in this study.

At the same time, we should also mention the use in equal proportions of the hedge SHOULD (117 occurrences, 4.68 in normalised figures) and the booster SHOW (118 occurrences, normalised to 4.72) which does not allow a precise collocation of this field along the discipline continuum.

3. Future research

The data presented in this contribution constitute only the tip of an iceberg, whose 'real body' is still largely unknown. In order to investigate other and more detailed aspects of the nature of the three

disciplines here presented, a number of approaches and theories is available; however, corpus linguistics will be essential in the quantitative as well as in the qualitative analysis of corpus data.

A diachronic analysis of RAs from the field of A and conducted on the use of Hs and Bs during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Cesiri 2011) has already proved to be able to integrate data on this field provided by the present study. Indeed, in this recent study on the early days of the discipline as a modern science, data from a corpus search revealed that during the period considered, A was still a scientific discipline in formation.

However, it already showed characteristics of both the sciences and the humanities. This confirmed that the tendency to genre hybridisation which emerged in the present-day data might be considered an intrinsic feature of the discipline once it was transformed into a modern science. This might also be explained by the nature of the discipline itself, composed of empirical investigations typical of the hard sciences and historical, artistic and socio-cultural interpretations of the reasons and background behind the creation and use of sites, artefacts and other remains of the past. Nevertheless, a number of other features might be considered, in addition to Hs and Bs, such as the use of attitude markers, selfmention and reference techniques and readers pronoun directives. These might be studied in order to collocate as precisely as possible the three sub-disciplines of CHSs along the discipline continuum. Moreover, we might investigate which of the features considered in the present investigation (or those characterising specific genres) are the most frequent and in which section of the RAs in order to see the disciplines' preference for one section or the other.

To summarise, a great amount of research still needs to be done on the disciplines composing CHSs, not only to draw a thorough description of their respective linguistic and discursive features as also to enable a comparison with other disciplines which have been more thoroughly investigated and which have already been placed either among the humanities or among the sciences.

4. Conclusive remarks

The present quantitative analysis helped to attempt a preliminary categorisation of the sub-disciplines composing CHSs as academic genre. In the case of AHC my data on its use of Hs and Bs show that it seems to be closer to the humanities or soft disciplines because of its preference for devices which tend to "emphasise the writer's commitment to a proposition" (Hyland 2009: 370). On the other hand, the fields of A and CH Pres/Rest show a greater degree of genre hybridisation. Indeed, these disciplines present features typical of both the humanities and the sciences at the same time; as a consequence their categorisation seems quite difficult.

My proposal for classification is that they could be placed in the middle of the continuum between the hard and the soft sciences. Indeed, they are characterised both by the presentation of evidence from field research and experimental work but they also consider the human element in the sites and artefacts studied or in the impact on society that the restoration of a certain item might produce.

These two disciplines, then, could be classified as a hybrid genre or 'technical disciplines', a term which gives emphasis to the field practices originating the work of research – based, evidently, on strict methodological and theoretical assumptions and leading to equally strict methodological, theoretically-based conclusions.

This preliminary classification of the three disciplines certainly mirrors the different academic souls which compose the hybrid genre (already defined as such by its very scholars) of CHSs. Despite the fact that they are included in the broader category of CHSs, and in order to account for such different results, my further proposal is to consider each branch as a separate, autonomous discipline from the linguistic viewpoint.

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