

PAPER PROPOSAL

Disciplinary Values and Identities in English Academic Metaphors

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The dissemination and validation of research findings within the communities of practice that claim ownership of academic knowledge is a phenomenon of special interest not only to those directly involved in the process but also to the applied linguist. In this context it is essential, among other things, to understand what values are prized or, conversely, stigmatised in order to appreciate the scholarly significance of ongoing debates and conflicts (Hyland 1997; Hunston / Thompson 2000). The underlying *value system* can be identified not only by reconstructing the epistemologies and theoretical frameworks that inform academic discourse but also on the evidence of variously explicit linguistic cues contained in its textualisations: a number of studies, for example, have investigated disciplinary variation in spoken as well as written academic genres by looking at the semantics and wording of evaluative acts (cf. Del Lungo Camiciotti / Tognini Bonelli 2004; Anderson / Bamford 2005). The signalling of value, however, relies also on items which do not necessarily communicate judgement or appraisal; these notably include the use of conceptual metaphors, which evoke a source domain that indirectly add a set of connotations to their target (Richardt 2005; Low *et al.* 2006; Kermas 2006). Their impact depends both on their quantity/intensity and, when drawn from a similar semantic or experiential field, on their cumulative effect. Using a corpus of English academic discourse recently compiled at the University of Bergamo, this paper examines the distribution and quality of value-oriented metaphors in four different disciplines (medicine, legal studies, economics, applied linguistics), taken from full-length articles, book reviews, abstracts and editorials in order to minimise the influence of genre as a variable. The results highlight a range of regularities/divergences across disciplines which confirm the role of metaphoric expressions in marking disciplinary identity and allegiance to shared values (cf. Vaara *et al.* 2003; Evangelisti Allori 2005) even in such diverse, multicultural settings as those targeted by international scholarly journals.

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