

Interpersonality in Legal Genres

Ruth Breeze, Maurizio Gotti & Carmen Sancho Guinda (eds).
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Interpersonality draws attention to the fact that writers do not simply produce texts but use language to offer a credible representation of themselves and their work, and to establish social relations with readers. Research on interpersonal has been mainly carried out on texts in academic, scientific and technical genres (e.g. Latour and Woolgar 1979; Hunston 2005; Hyland 2004, 2005). However, as the editors point out in the introductory chapter, the interpersonal aspect of language still remains under-researched, dispersed and limited to a narrow range of genres and a restricted notion of interpersonal in law contexts. The present volume is intended to fill this gap and is therefore a valuable contribution to the study of the interactional dimension of language across specific legal genres. Adopting a genre approach, the contributions offer a systematic analysis of language to show the realisation and distribution of interpersonal features in specific legal texts. Along the volume, the contributors brilliantly manage to offer a wide range of theoretical frameworks and combined approaches. The contributions investigate various aspects of the interpersonal, dialogic and interactive domain, applying their own ranges of taxonomies and extending existing models on dialogic interaction in different legal surroundings to various linguistic and discursive features.

When writers adopt a point of view, a kind of dialogic engagement takes place. *Monoglossic* formulations involve only the single voice of the writer and ignore the multiplicity of alternative views and voices, as opposed to *heteroglossic*, in which the communicative context in which the utterance operates is one with multiple voices and viewpoints (Martin & White 2005: 575). This dialogic perspective and the notion of heteroglossic engagement is instantiated in a number of legal genres investigated in this volume. Legal experts choose to emphasise their visible presence manifesting a level of authority in a text, which becomes central to building a convincing discourse. Alternatively, writers choose to position close to readers in non-expert circles, which contributes to their invisibility, thereby showing consideration and deference to the lay reader.

An interesting approach worth mentioning in relation to the interpersonal aspect of communication, be it oral or written, is the concept of language as dialogue (Weigand 2009, 2010), which means that language is used for communicative purposes and is always performed dialogically. In Weigand's view, dialogue is a sequence of an initiative and a reactive action (what she calls the *dialogic action game* or *mixed game*). There is an internal interdependence of the initiative and the expected reactive action in cultural surroundings, which is to be negotiated in dialogic interaction (Flowerdew 2014: ix).

The book comprises 14 chapters grouped in three sections, each offering studies centred around texts as sites of interaction on three levels: interactions among legal experts, between legal experts and mixed audiences, and between legal experts and lay people. The contributions are preceded by an introductory chapter: *Framing*

Interpersonality in Law Contexts, by the editors, Ruth Breeze, Maurizio Gotti and Carmen Sancho Guinda, who provide the reader with an illuminating overview of the topic in which they masterfully contextualise the theme and describe the interpersonal features that characterise legal discourse. This introduction facilitates to a large extent the understanding of the topic, especially to those readers who are not familiar with the genre and may find legal texts complex and a bit dry. The book is organised as follows. The first section explores four genres used in expert contexts, where the interpersonal resources of interaction may seem in some cases highly formalised, while in others experts appear to use stance and engagement devices with the aim of persuading their addressees. The first chapter by DAVIDE MAZZI investigates interpersonal resources in judicial language at crucial moments in the decision-making process in common law and non-common law contexts. In the second chapter, TARJA SALMI-TOLONEN analyses an EU directive, i.e. a prescriptive document belonging to the category of legislation used to direct the legislators of the member states to take measures that will implement their purpose. This genre presents an extensive use of interpersonal and interactive metadiscursive devices with a persuasive function on the recipients. In chapter three, MARÍA ÁNGELES ORTOS LLOPIS reports findings of a research done on charter parties, i.e. the contracts made out between ship owners and the persons who charter a vessel, and the interactions that take place between the *dramatis personae* involved in them. Drawing on a corpus of legal research articles, MICHELE SALA explores interrogative formulations as interpersonal resources that presuppose and reveal a recognisable dialogical framework between the writer and the readers. CHRISTOPH HAFNER investigates interpersonal resources in the barrister's opinion, a document intended to provide a balanced legal view on a particular case for the solicitor representing the client involved. The author compares opinions written by experienced barristers and those composed by postgraduate law students.

The genres analysed in the second section focus on how experts in the legal field interact with ordinary citizens. Such context affects the type of interpersonal strategies used to engage with heterogeneous audiences with different expectations and legal background knowledge. The first and second chapters of this section present two studies whose aim is to show how legal texts can be accessible to the general audience. In the first one, VIJAY BHATIA analyses interpersonal resources in statutory writing by offering two different versions of the text: a simplified version written for the general public and an easified version for specialist audiences. In the second chapter, CARMEN SANCHO GUINDA analyses a corpus of legal decisions on aviation accidents and incidents issued by the National Transportation Safety Board of the USA. Through the use of engagement choices, writers manage to reconcile *accessibility* and *informativeness*. The subgenre of legislative drafting guides and manuals is examined by CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS, who explores the interpersonal aspects of guides intended for people involved in drafting legislation, namely the questions of authorship and readership. The next two chapters analyse genres on intellectual property: domain name arbitration awards and patents. The first study by IGNACIO VÁZQUEZ-ORTA offers a critical discussion of the way in which arbitrators get engaged in a dialogue with the parties going for arbitration and with a wider professional community of practice. Drawing on a corpus of US patents, ISMAEL ARINAS PELLÓN focuses on how the interpersonal metafunction serves the persuasion strategies that patent drafters use to overcome the objections of two

adversarial audiences: those concerned with *validity* and those worried about *infringement*.

The third section includes four studies dealing with legal interactions between legal experts and lay people. In this context the lawyer has a double task: gaining the cooperation of lay people and involving the lay participants into the legal discourses. In the first chapter RUTH BREEZE analyses letters of advice and opinion considering the writer's stance and use of relational resources at each stage of the text. In his chapter, MAURIZIO GOTTI examines interpersonality in mediation discourse, a form of dispute resolution. The author analyses oral transcripts from mediation cases and identifies the negotiation strategies commonly adopted by mediators. PATRIZIA ANESA focuses on the delivery of instructions to jurors in US courts to observe the way experts and laypeople interact in the jury instruction phase of trials by reviewing the generic 'pattern' jury instructions widely used in US courtrooms. Rounding up this final section, ISABEL CORONA explores the genre of the press release in international arbitration cases and published in circumstances conditioned by the rhetorical need to defend and justify the company's actions. Various dialogic resources are used to argue for the legitimacy of the company's actions and reactions against the other party's (re)actions.

This volume is highly recommendable to both researchers and scholars working in the field of legal discourse and the interpersonal component of legal genres. I feel that the the suggestions and innovative perspectives of the different studies will bring awareness of how textual voices act interpersonally in law contexts.

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