Linguistic-rhetorical investigation of concession structures in a confrontational academic context

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KEYWORDS:
concession;
academic writing;
conflict article;
genre analysis.

ABSTRACT: Drawing from genre analysis, this article assumes a fundamental connection between the form of the texts that constitute a certain genre and their communicative purpose. Concession structures are prevalent in academic papers of all kinds, since they offer an excellent opportunity to allow the voice of others to be heard and confronted in the text. However, while in less confrontational papers concession structures act inside the limitations of politeness or the conventions of the genre, at the more confrontational pole, their conflictual potential is manifest.
In this search for the linguistic manifestation of confrontation, a high-resolution microanalysis of concession structures was carried out. Findings show that this syntactic or textual form may contain various linguistic elements that serve to bolster the differences in opinions and make a criticism more direct and more personal, including pronouns, personal names, unspecific terms of reference, passive voice, hedging, intensifiers, direct negation and direct evaluation of self- and other's arguments.
The substantial distribution of concession structures with their evident confrontational potential in all kinds of academic papers may provide further indication of the argumentative and persuasive nature of this genre.

1. INTRODUCTION

The scientific community may be seen as a community of people that share a set of common public goals, namely "the steady extension of the scope and precision of scientific knowledge" (Kuhn 1962: 52). Each discipline shares mechanisms of intercommunication among its members, such as professional journals and scientific conferences. The community's members have an in-depth familiarity with the types of texts that are unique to that community (Swales 1990: 24-25). The mastery of these genres is acquired over years of specialization and is intimately connected to the struggle waged by each new member to become a full-fledged member of the community.

Swales argues that the academic paper is in many respects the most important genre, or at least the genre, mastery of which is most important to the professional success of the researcher. Within its discourse community, this genre is a communicative tool that strives to attain social aims, and the form, structure and formulations it employs reflect the structure, norms and conventions of the specific disciplinary community.

This genre is repeatedly defined as a form of persuasive writing. Discourse analysts, sociologist of science and philosophers agree that its primary objective is not simply to present new claims, but to ensure that those claims are accepted and ratified as new knowledge by the disciplinary community (Hyland 1998: 25). Its final rhetorical aim is to create an effect that convinces the readers to such a degree that the article becomes an integral part of the shared knowledge of the discourse community (FlØttum et al. 2006, see also: Bazerman 1988, Beller 1999, Berge 2003, Huckin 1993, Knorr-Cetina 1981, Latour & Woolgar 1979, Lindeberg 2004, Myers 1985, Pera 1994, Shapin 1984, among others). Several specific aims that the author must attain may be identified: convincing the reader that the subject of the research is important, justifying the choice of the theoretical or conceptual framework or of the research methodology, convincing the reader that the conclusions are valid and that the results make sense and represent an innovation, etc.

For some academic genres, the confrontational potential is inherent. For instance, review genres, which include reviews of books, articles and literature, can be highly fraught, threatening and potentially offensive to the reviewed author (Diani 2004, Hyland & Diani 2009). These genres are evaluative by definition and can therefore be expected to involve a higher degree of personal conflict.

In contrast, research articles can be expected to be much less confrontational, although it is widely agreed that they too belong to the persuasive genres. Assuming that their main persuasive goal is to ensure that the discourse community accepts the new knowledge as valuable, a considerable rhetorical effort is likely to underlie and motivate the final visible linguistic form of the text.[1]

One can assume that in order to achieve this goal, the author cannot completely avoid entering into some kind of confrontation with other researchers. In other words, academic writing can be viewed as a context of competition. The author should focus on his or her own contribution and innovation, on the background of the existing research and often at the expense of the work of others. This self-promoting activity (Lindeberg 2004) may involve rejection of the scientific achievements of other scholars. Thus, this kind of confrontation is an expected consequence of academic competition, and is normally construed within the constraints of the conventions of research articles, including the principles of politeness (Myers 1989).

On the other hand, some types of articles do not obey these conventions. Hunston (2005) distinguished between 'regular articles' and 'conflict articles.' In the latter, the author declares that his or her purpose is to specifically counter opinions expressed by others. In this case, the critical and confrontational aspect of the text is more dominant. Articles of this kind engage in an argument that is more overt and personal than that typically found in research articles, and their critical tone often stems not from a simple academic competition but from a significant scientific dispute, one that may often be multi-layered and multi-sided, that the other members of the disciplinary community may recognize as the background for a certain article.

1. For a detailed discussion of the persuasive goals of research articles, see Livnat 2012, pp. 28-34.

In fact, to state that there is a dichotomy between 'regular articles' and 'conflict articles' may be somewhat misleading. On the more confrontational pole, there are articles with the title "A response to…" in which the author specifically refers to a paper written by another author. Sometimes the first author responds directly to the response, creating a threefold exchange. In other words, these articles are defined by their authors as confrontational. Some of them do not necessarily confront a particular author of a particular article, but may in fact be relating to the ideas of a school of researchers and a large number of publications. Example (1) is part of the last sentence of the introduction, from a paper entitled "The contribution of the Amarna letters to the debate on Jerusalem's Political Position in the Tenth Century BCE." After reviewing some literature by scholars whom he calls "revisionists," the author explicitly states his goal:

> (1) I will try to show that these scholars' evaluation of the excavations in Jerusalem is inadequate and leads to erroneous conclusions […] (Na'aman 1996: 18).

In this example, the criticism is manifest through the adjectives 'inadequate' and 'erroneous' that negatively evaluate other researchers' acts of interpreting and drawing conclusions. The presence of evaluative elements of this kind was found by Hunston (2005) to be the main linguistic difference between 'conflict' and 'regular' articles.

Other articles of a confrontational nature do not necessarily declare their intentions in advanced although their contentious aim may become clear upon reading them. In many cases, the context of such an exchange is a broader academic dispute, to which each article contributes only one piece of the argument and may be difficult to understand without taking the whole background into account. (For an analysis of articles of this kind in their context, see: Livnat 2014.) Thus, assuming that each article carries with it a potential confrontation that stems from its argumentative context, I suggest describing it as a continuum (Livnat 2015). This potential confrontation can realize its potential through the use of various structural and linguistic elements. The challenge for a discourse analyst might be to trace the linguistic realization of conflict and provide a description of how these structural and linguistic choices shape the relative confrontational value of the text.

Looking at the confrontational nature of a text in terms of a scale requires a research tool that enables an isolation of linguistic elements and 'calculation' of the confrontational value of each of them in context. In the present paper I will use the framework proposed by Martín--Martín (2005: 86-88), i.e. a taxonomy of strategies to convey academic conflict having three dimensions on which criticism in a paper can be expressed:

a) *Personal* and *impersonal*. In the former strategy for expressing criticism, the name of the researcher who is the target of the criticism is explicitly mentioned, whereas in the latter, the criticism is directed towards a particular position or at the discourse community as a whole.

b) *Direct* and *indirect*. In the former, there is a categorical criticism, whereas in the latter the criticism is mitigated by means of hedges.

c) *Writer-mediated, non-mediated* or *reported*. In the former, the writer is explicitly present in the critical speech act through the use of the first-person pronoun. At the opposite end of the continuum, the author merely reports criticism leveled by another author.

The criticism expressed in a paper can range along any of these dimensions. In general terms, the more personal, direct and writer-mediated the criticism, the more confrontational the paper will be. Thus, what we have is a continuum of degrees of confrontation on which every paper can be located.

The present study chooses one textual structure – concession – which is assumed to be argumentative in nature, and examines it from two connected points of view: the rhetorical level and the linguistic level. In Chapter 2, the contribution and significance of concession to the achievement of various rhetorical aims of authors of academic papers will be demonstrated. In Chapter 3, the linguistic choices inside the concession structure will be examined, in order to describe the way these choices design various degrees of confrontation. The analysis is based on 50 academic articles in the Social Sciences and Humanities in Hebrew and English, in which about 400 instances of concession were found. Hebrew examples were translated into English for the purpose of this study.[2]

2. The list of papers from which the examples are taken is provided in the appendix.

2. CONCESSION AS RHETORICAL TOOL IN ACADEMIC WRITING

Concession is both a grammatical and functional-argumentative relationship, in which the two parts of the utterance are not equal in argumentative intensity. Mann & Thompson (1986, 1988) term these two parts nucleus and *satellite*: The nucleus is the part that transmits the main content of the utterance, and the satellite is the secondary part, whose content is seemingly inconsistent with the content of the nucleus.

The concession occurs when the speaker seeks to enhance the positive attitude of the recipient towards the content of the nucleus by means of the satellite. The value of the concession as an argumentative relationship stems from the fact that one of the parts of the utterance always infers the stronger and final conclusion, and in doing so, overrides the other part, giving the entire utterance a particular argumentative direction. This makes the concession a useful persuasive device.[3]

3. A concise review of the literature on concession is beyond the scope of the present paper. See for example Frumuselu (2007).

The vast majority of the concessional structures in the corpus are of the type that Azar calls (1997) 'indirect-rejection concessivity'. This type is defined by Azar as one in which "the two portions of the text express two different arguments leading to two opposite conclusions, which are not explicitly stated and must be inferred" (Azar 1997: 301). According to Azar, this type of concession is argumentative in nature and thus it serves as a strong type of argumentation. The concessive structures that will be analyzed in the present paper are fundamentally connected to the author's position and his or her effort to move the discourse in the argumentative direction he or she wants it to take. Their various functions in academic papers are demonstrated below.

First, concession contributes to the design of a 'research space,' as defined by Swales (1990). Swales' CARS (=Create A Research Space) model reflects "the need to re-establish in the eyes of the discourse community the significance of the research field itself; the need to 'situate' the actual research in terms of that significance; and the need to show how this niche in the wider ecosystem will be occupied and defended" (Swales 1990: 142). According to Swales, when creating a research space, the author should mark out the territory within which the study will be

carried out, with a considerable emphasis given to the centrality of this territory, and a description of the niche in which the current study will be able to present its new argument. However, in order to establish the significance of the actual research, the author should argue that this niche is neither too minor nor too marginal.

These claims, in favor of both the importance of the subject and the existence of a niche, are somewhat competitive: In order to persuade the reader as to the centrality of the subject, it is necessary to survey what has already been written about it. However, a survey of the relevant literature may give the impression that the subject has already been exhausted and that there is nothing to be gained by further research.

On the other hand, if attention is focused on what was ignored by other scholars, it could create the impression that it is simply unimportant. The built-in tension between these two goals invites a special persuasive effort in two different directions, which is given natural expression in concession structures. It should consequently come as no surprise that Swales (1990: 154) found that the design of a research space invites the appearance of adversatives such as *however, nevertheless*, yet, and but. Concession, as a structure having two parts that pull in opposite directions, may reflect the tension that exists between the author's two opposing aims. As such, it is particularly suitable for the design of a research space.

In the context of creating a research space, the concession expresses a contrast between the two aims in a way that can be described schematically like this:

> (2) Although the subject has been the target of research in general, there still remain aspects that have not yet been explored, or a new perspective from which it can be explored.

If we add to this description the implicit conclusion that arises from the satellite and is rejected in the nucleus, we receive the following complete picture:

> (3)The subject has already been the target of research [which is why new research is not important], but there still remain certain aspects that have not yet been explored [which is why the new research is important].

This then is a clearly argumentative format through which the importance of the research can be justified and highlighted. We can see this in practice in the following example:

> (4) *Although* the last wave of immigration from the CIS has been the subject of intensive research (Leshem & Shor, 1997), only a few individual studies have examined the adjustment of teenage immigrants from the CIS in dormitories. This study will report on the connection between cultural identity and psychological and social adjustment in the special context of dormitory life (Ben-Shalom and Horenczyk 2000: 200).

The research that has been carried out until now is presented in the satellite position in general terms: "has been the subject of intensive research." On the other hand, the niche in which the current study will present new arguments is designed by means of specific components that are included in the nucleus: "teenage" and "dormitories."

The niche within which the study will make new claims can also be described in terms of observation of a similar object of research, but from a different perspective (example 5) or by raising new research questions, which were not asked in previous studies (example 6):

> (5) On this background, it can be understood why the leaving rate served – and still serves – as the central index for the measure of solidarity [...]. This study also places the "test of leaving" at the center, *but* from a critical perspective (Lomsky-Feder and Rapaport 2000: 573).
>
> (6) In England, Cooper & Kelly [...] discovered five factors [...]. *Nevertheless*, no attempt was made in their study to look for the connection between these stress factors and manager burnout (Friedman 2000: 222).

However, the existence of a niche that has not yet been explored is not enough to make its study valuable. A further potential claim that the researcher must contend with is that the niche has not been studied because it is insignificant. Example (7) demonstrates one way of contenting with this implicit claim:

> (7) The article focuses on a short episode in the history of sex education, a story that has not yet been told. *Nevertheless*, it represents more than a mere curiosity; it is a link in a dynamic continuum in the history of sex education [...] in Israel (Cavaglion 2000: 533).

The fact that the story "has not yet been told" and that it is a "short episode," may lead one to conclude that this niche is extremely minor and is therefore one that is not worth researching. This argument, if raised, poses a real threat to it being accepted as a valuable piece of research. In order to refute this claim, the author mobilizes the concession structure. He presents the claim in the satellite and rejects it in the nucleus by saying: "It is more than a mere curiosity; it is a link in a dynamic continuum."

The importance of the study can be based on a different argumentative path: It can be claimed that the previous studies together filled a number of niches, but that no complete picture yet exists. Here is an example of the creation of a research space in this way:

> (8) An examination of the professional literature shows that there is no one single comprehensive and thorough study on grief in Israeli society. *While* much has been written on certain aspects of grief, including [references omitted] and *despite* the valuable contribution made by these studies to the understanding of part of the mosaic of grief in Israeli society, none has yet presented a complete picture of the mosaic (Florian et al. 2000: 281).

By using the concession structure, the authors present a contrast between the partial picture presented by previous studies and the complete picture that they plan to present in the current one. The importance of the study is emphasized here by means of the complete picture that it seeks to present.

Concession can be used to justify the theoretical framework that was selected. In the social sciences and the humanities, the selection of a theoretical framework requires an argumentative effort to justify it, and the justification may be presented in a concession structure, as in example (9):

> (9) *While* the structural theory explains the circumstances in which one of the children in a family takes a parental role upon himself, it does not make clear what the effects of this role are. [...] In order to better understand the personality and emotional structure of the parent-child, we have used attachment theory […] (Herer and Mayseless 2000: 416).

The use of the concession structure enables rejection of the theory that was not chosen. Within the concession structure itself, the advantages of that theory are brought to the surface (by saying that it can provide an explanation). However, its disadvantages are mentioned immediately afterwards. The disadvantages receive priority because they are presented in the nucleus, and the result is a rejection of this theoretical framework as unsuitable. Further on, the reader is told about the other theoretical framework, the one that was chosen.

In example (10), the concession structure serves not to reject a competing theoretical framework, but rather to reject possible claims against the approach that was in fact selected:

> (10) *Even* if the conditions that Jameson offers still need to be bolstered empirically, and even if the connection between the psychological facts that he notes for collective activity are not necessarily a causal relationship, their very existence is important […] (Tsfati 1999: 10).

The following example illustrates the status of a definition as part of the theoretical framework. In case there are a number of definitions for the same matter, the choice of the right definition for the purpose of a specific study often requires justification too. The concession structure is appropriate for the logical structure of rejecting a definition while considering its advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages are highlighted and take on a preferred status if positioned in the nucleus. This is exemplified in (11):

> (11)A definition of this kind offers a framework and direction that should be chosen when seeking to identify groups within a social unit; *however*, it does not yet define an unambiguous process that enables the identification of groups (Freshtman 2000: 687).

Presenting the disadvantages of the definition in the nucleus leads to its rejection, which, of course, enables the acceptance of a different definition.

An examination of the concession structure in the corpus showed that in many cases, they are related to questions of methodology, as in (12):

> (12) This finding, despite the relatively small sample (which invites further confirmation), supports the interpretation that a real change in the perceptions of the immigrants has occurred […] (Menachem and Gejst 1999: 142).

This utterance refers to a study based on surveys. The phrase "despite the relatively small sample" contains an explicit qualification regarding the size of the sample chosen for the surveys. The claim that the sample is small (or too small) may pose a genuine threat to the reliability of the study's findings and their significance. The authors could have ignored this point, but instead, they chose to bring it to the surface and insert it into a concession structure, in the satellite position. By doing so, they manage, on the one hand, to show that they are aware of the problem but, on the other, to reject the claim and not allow it to weaken their position.

Many papers explicitly note the weaknesses of the study's methodologies, and these explicit statements can be transmitted in the concession satellite. The content in the nucleus position shows that the researchers are aware of these disadvantages and have resolved them in one way or another. This is exemplified in (13):

> (13) Methodologically speaking, it would be better if we could relate to all the elements of the same individual profile. *But* because we do not have data from each interviewee on all the details that were explored, we had no choice but to compose a type profile from various interviewees […] (Rubin and Peer 1999: 116).

The choice of statistical analysis might also be justified by the author. One way of doing this is by presenting it as valuable. The presentation of quantitative findings in a paper is always accompanied by a verbal explanation of those findings. The figures do not "speak for themselves," and the researcher must "speak" on their behalf. In this context, he or she must choose which data to emphasize, and how to present them in order to make them meaningful. Example (14) is taken from a paper on the representation of women and men in television commercials:

> (14) The use of voyeurism [...] is also seven times more frequent for women than for men, *although* the overall rate of such scenes in absolute terms is low (Weimann 2000: 479).

Two different findings are presented in this sentence:

1. The use of voyeurism is seven times more frequent for women than for men.

2. The overall rate of such scenes in absolute terms is low.

The formulation that the author chose positions the first finding in the nucleus, and the second in the satellite. Since the nucleus position enjoys a preferred status, the first finding will be given greater weight. This is evident if we switch the positions of the findings within the concession structure, as in (15).

(15)*Although* the use of voyeurism is seven times more frequent for women than for men, the overall rate of such scenes in absolute terms is low.

This wording, which presents in the preferred nucleus position not the difference in frequency but rather the fact that the absolute numbers are low, creates a different reading of the exact same data. Thus, the verbal description of the findings not only lends meaning to the data; the choice of a particular wording is a conscious one that makes it possible to use the data argumentatively, namely to give them an argumentative direction that supports the researcher's claims. Among other things, this choice can highlight particular findings so as to demonstrate that the researcher's choice of a certain type of statistical analysis was justified and led to valuable findings.

The author's next move is to interpret the findings and to justify this interpretation. In qualitative studies, the findings themselves are often the result of interpretation. In example (16), the authors provide a detailed description of the certificate that the Israeli army awards to those leaving the army. They describe the type of paper, the font used, its color, etc. and propose a symbolic meaning for each of these details. Their analysis concludes with the following words:

(16)This interpretation is not the IDF's official interpretation, *but* it appears to us that the designers of the symbols were working in accordance with these codes, even if they did so unconsciously (Rubin and Peer 1999: 109).

The concession structure places in the satellite position a reservation that could come up in relation to this interpretation, thus weakening its strength. A further reservation is placed in the nucleus position by means of the hedging phrase "it appears to us." Especially notable is the phrase "even if they did so unconsciously," which has considerable argumentative value: The claim that something was done based on an unconscious intent is a claim that although difficult to prove, is no less difficult to refute.

The next move for the author is drawing conclusions from the findings. Drawing conclusions is a "leap" into a new area in which the "objective" ground is far less solid. There is good reason why we find numerous hedging expressions and those conveying caution in the conclusions section (Lewin et al. 2001). The greater the leap, the greater the argumentative effort that is needed. Example (17) demonstrates the effort to justify conclusions despite a deficiency of sufficient quantitative findings to support them. In this case, the leap is large and the conclusion will be worded cautiously.

(17) *Although* causality cannot be unequivocally concluded from the current analysis, it appears that mastery of the language is a relatively good channel for the immigrants' assimilation into Israeli society [...] (Menachem and Gejst 1999: 140).

The conclusion is positioned in the nucleus, whereas the reservation is placed in the satellite position. The reservation raised in the satellite is weakened by means of the adverb "unequivocally" which implies that even if the findings do not support the conclusion, they do not rule it out either. The adverb "relatively" and the hedge "it appears" serve to design the conclusion cautiously in order to enable its acceptance by the reader.

Towards the end of the paper, a persuasive effort to present new claims is evident. The author's claims must be presented as valuable claims that contain an innovation. Let us look at some examples of the use of concession in this context. In (18), the concession structure emphasizes the innovation as being related to the rejection of a particular theory, because the findings are incompatible with the theory's projections.

(18) Theoretically, according to the human capital theory, academic achievements can contribute to occupational opportunities at the beginning of one's career. *However*, we found no support for this claim in our study (Rachman-Moore and Danziger 2000: 276).

In example (19), the concession structure emphasizes the innovation by pointing out that a particular phenomenon is more important than it is conventionally thought to be.

(19) *While* the "resource availability" pressure factor can be found in the literature [...], it is mentioned in only a few isolated studies (Friedman 2000: 239).

All the examples I have shown so far are indicative of the effort made by the researcher to present the new knowledge as deserving of being accepted as part of the shared disciplinary knowledge base. The concession structure is then an important argumentative structure, which supports a wide range of persuasive goals that are typical of the academic paper. As mentioned above, this argumentative effort often, although not necessarily, involves opposing other scholars' claims, conclusions, findings, assumptions or predictions; in other words, it carries the confrontational potential of rejecting the scientific achievements of others.

In the next chapter, I will provide a linguistic analysis of some concession structures, in order to follow the specific linguistic choices made by authors who design the degree of confrontation embodied in these structures in their context.

3. MICRO-ANALYSIS: LINGUISTIC MANIFESTATIONS OF CONFRONTATION

In order to analyze examples of concession from a linguistic point of view, a range of linguistic elements might be considered as being involved in determining the degree of confrontation of a given utterance. While doing so, it is important to bear in mind that forms often incorporate more than one function and it is not always possible to distinguish the functions of each of them based on purely linguistic or textual criteria (Hyland 1998: 254). Thus, each form should

be carefully examined in its context, including its interweaving with other linguistic forms. In the analysis below I will consider the contribution of the following devices:

a) Reference to the author: First-person pronouns, singular and plural

Assumingly, the use of the first-person pronouns makes the writer explicitly present in the critical speech act. It designs a 'writer-mediated' criticism, which according to Martín-Martín (2005) is more confrontational than a non-mediated one. This assumption is bolstered by the way that other scholars describe the function of first-person pronouns in academic writing. Hyland (2001: 217) believes that the first person helps authors to establish their personal standing and to set their own work apart from that of others. Myers (1992) argues that the presence of the first-person pronoun in the structure "In this paper *we* report…" helps the reader to identify the main claim of the paper and its innovation. Hyland (2002) found that writers choose to announce their presence where they make a knowledge claim. "At these points, they are best able to explicitly foreground their distinctive contribution and commitment to a position" (Hyland 2002: 1103). First person pronouns help writers create a sense of newsworthiness and novelty about their work, showing how they are plugging disciplinary knowledge gaps (Harwood 2005).

On the other hand, the plural form ('we') can express the author's modesty and self-effacement in that it minimizes the presence of the writer in the text (Myers 1989: 14). However, as Hyland (2001) suggests, "Use of the plural is only partly explained by patterns of authorship […]. Pennycook (1994: 176) for example, observes that "there is an instant claiming of authority and communality in the use of we." Examples from single-authored papers "suggest how writers can simultaneously reduce their personal intrusion [by the use of 'we'] and yet emphasize the importance that should be given to their unique procedural choices or views" (Hyland 2001: 217).

b) Reference to the opponent: Personal names versus unspecific terms of reference and passive voice

My assumption is that the opponent's personal name positions him or her as the direct target of the criticism, while impersonal agency is more polite in a context of academic competition (Myers 1989: 17). Unspecific terms ('one,' 'some,' 'scholars') and passive verbs are ways to avoid direct confrontation. Pragmatically, passive formulations serve to blur the agent and distance him or her to the background, while foregrounding and highlighting the act itself. Passive uses are widespread in "objective" genres, since they enable the expression of ideas and description of processes without giving this expression a personal nature (Riley 1991). According to Myers (1989: 18), the passive voice serves as a politeness device, and as such should be viewed as a means to diminish the confrontation with cited scholars and make the criticism less personal.

c) Hedging versus direct negation and intensifiers

Categorical criticism is assumed to be direct and thus more confrontational than hedged criticism (Martín-Martín 2005). Since hedging is a complex concept whose various functions in academic discourse have been discussed at length (Hyland 1998), it is possible to expect that hedging the nucleus makes the text more polite, thus reducing the confrontation, while hedging the satellite might diminish its power, thus strengthening the author's claim. On the other hand, direct negation of the position of another author, using explicit 'no,' is categorical, i.e. confrontational in nature and less polite. FlØttum et al (2006: 244-245) consider explicit negative expressions to have polemic value. For Hyland (2009: 38), negation is a forceful means of engaging with the views of others and disputing alternatives, a resource for introducing an alternative position into the dialogue in order to reject it. Intensifiers in the nucleus also have the potential to reinforce the criticism and make it more direct.

d) Positive and negative evaluation

For the purpose of the present paper, I use Hunston's (1993) approach to evaluation in texts, in which this concept is defined as "anything which indicates the writer's attitude to the value of an entity in the text." Within this framework, the type of evaluation that operates along a 'good--bad' scale and bestows quality is called 'evaluation of value'. The use of this value system by the author, i.e. evaluating the acts and positions of other people as 'good-bad' or 'right-wrong' can be viewed as face-threatening, thus inherently confrontational. Linguistically, such evaluation is often manifested through adjectives and adverbs (see, for example, the adjectives 'inadequate' and 'erroneous' in example (1) above.) They might make the criticism and more pointed and more direct, but at the same time they are linked to Martín-Martín's third dimension, namely the question of author-mediation: since evaluation is provided by its nature from a certain point of view, the author is 'present' in the text through his or her evaluation even when his or her presence is implicit.

This list of linguistic devices enables me to analyze various wordings in both parts of concession structures and to 'calculate,' as it were, the degree of confrontation they carry. All the examples in this chapter are taken from papers that can be easily defined as confrontational by their title, their declared goal, their structure or their content, which reference a background scientific dispute that is known to the readers.

Starting with first-person pronouns, some of the most confrontational examples in the corpus demonstrate the effect of the use of singular forms:

> (20) Mazar is right in his statement that the Low Chronology will force me to change many of my views on the archaeology of proto-Israel, a fact which I acknowledged in my 1996 Levant article. His assertion (1997, 161) that a 300-year time span is too long for the Iron I phenomenon in the hill country is less convincing (Finkelstein 1998: 171).

In this example, the author's claims are directed at a specific rival who is mentioned by name ('Mazar') or by a third-person pronoun ('his assertion'). In addition, the author explicitly refers to himself with pronouns ('I,' 'me,' 'my'). Due to this focus on the human participants rather than on their arguments, the academic discussion becomes more personal. Two of Martín-Martín's dimensions are relevant to this example: Using his terms, the criticism here is personal (the name of the opponent is mentioned) and is author-mediated as well (the author is explicitly present in the utterance).

This example also demonstrates the fact that the agreement expressed in the concession satellite does not weaken the claim, because the argumentative direction of the claim as a whole is determined by the nucleus. Here, the claim in the satellite is presented as lacking any argumentative value even more explicitly by the fact that the author states that this is actually his own argument.

Personal and author-mediated criticism are present in example (21) as well.

> (21)Thus, *in spite* of the difficulties pointed out by Finkelstein, I see no reason to push the beginning of the Philistine settlement […] (Mazar 1997: 159).

Besides the use of the personal name and first-person singular, which are relevant to the personal and author-mediated dimensions, we also find in this example a direct negation ('no reason') in the nucleus. This makes the criticism categorical and not hedged. In other words, it is relevant to the second dimension, which has to do with the degree of the criticism's directness.

In contrast, one way of avoiding a reference to the participants is the use of passive voice. As mentioned above, passive forms reduce agency and thus might diminish the conflictual tone. In example (22), the claim that the datum should be used with reservation implicitly blames some agent of not using the datum with the necessary caution. Due to its passive formulation, the criticism is not direct.

> (22) Two pieces of information possibly indicate the date of the lower part of the 'Stepped Stone Mantle'. […] *However*, as the connection of these structures to the 'Stepped Stone Mantle' is not firmly established, this datum should be used with reservation (Finkelstein et al. 2007: 151).

However, this function usually attributed to passive forms is not always found when examining certain occurrences in context. In example (23), in spite of the use of the passive voice ('was not properly interpreted and dated'), the reader knows very well who the agent of these actions is: the rival, Eilat Mazar, who is mentioned by her full name in the satellite.

> (23) Eilat Mazar's excavations in the City of David add several points of information to what we know about the history of this problematic site. Yet, the main find – the 'Large Stone Structure' – was not properly interpreted and dated (Finkelstein et al. 2007: 155).

The satellite mentions Mazar's contribution to the shared scientific project, with the use of the first-person pronoun 'we' that refers to all those who seek the truth. However, the importance of this contribution is diminished in the nucleus by stating that the main finding was misinterpreted. The critical nature of this statement is strengthened by the use of direct negation ('not'). Thus, the concession structure serves to confront the rival, even though the authors formulate their attack in a so-called moderate way through the use of 'we' and of passive forms.

Example (24) was found in the same paper. Although the general tone of this paper was found to be extremely conflictual and even offensive, in this specific point the authors follow the restrictions of academic writing politeness conventions by using passive voice in both the nucleus and the satellite.

> (24) Each of these problems can be explained away individually […]; as a set of difficulties, however, they cannot be easily dismissed (Finkelstein et al. 2007: 155).

It seems that the passive is used here in order to avoid attributing the cognitive acts ('explain,' 'dismiss') directly to the authors. Thus, it can be explained as an effort to strengthen the argument by presenting these acts, which reflect the search for the truth, as a shared goal of the disciplinary discourse community.

Direct negation is evident in example (25) too, although in this case it is not directed explicitly to a certain person's position. The quotation marks in the word 'proof' are also of interest. They might be interpreted as indicating irony, which is a critical tool that usually has a victim. Thus, it is yet another tool for implicit confrontation.

> (25) It has been long known that the name 'Jerusalem' (*Rushalimmu*) was inscribed on broken pottery sherds discovered in Egypt […].
>
> *However*, the use of this name by itself cannot provide 'proof' that Jerusalem was an important city at that time (Steiner 1998: 148).

The function of hedging in the nucleus to reduce direct criticism is exemplified in (16) and (17) above ('it appears' – Hebrew *nir'e she-*). On the other hand, hedging in the satellite might serve to strengthen the author's position:

> (26) The latter two claims [of the opponent] are to a certain extent true, yet both can be satisfactorily explained without a wholesale lowering of the Iron Age chronology of Israel (Mazar 1997: 160).

The concession structure enables a certain acceptance of the claims in the satellite, while in the nucleus the implied conclusion is rejected. The confrontational power of this example stems from the combination of a hedge in the satellite ('to a certain extent') and an intensifier in the nucleus ('wholesale').

Example (27) demonstrates how hedging combines with other elements to design a conflictual tone. The author mentions the opponent's personal name (Finkelstein) and cites his categorical (not hedged) position (the first paragraph), expressing a direct confrontation. In the nucleus (the second paragraph) she begins the rejection of the rival's position in a direct fashion by using a direct negation ('cannot'), but in the next sentence, alongside occurrences of negation ('no architectural remains and no pottery'), there is hedging that has the potential of considerably weakening the author's position ('as far as is known…'). This is "strategic hedging," in Hyland's terms (1998: 104), which involves admission to a lack of knowledge.

Whether it actually weakens the author's position or if she is referring to disciplinary agreements without a genuine intention of expressing doubt is a question for an expert in the discipline, although to the best of my knowledge the latter is the right interpretation. One way or another, the criticism in this example seems quite direct and personal due to the use of a personal name and direct negation.

> (27) Finkelstein sketches a dichotomy between 'city-states' in the lowlands and 'polymorphous chiefdoms' in the hill country. In MB IIC, a development to larger political entities would have taken place in the hill country, with Shechem and Jerusalem at the centre of a larger unit […]. According to the archaeological remains, *however*, Jerusalem cannot have played this role. As far as is known – all the evidence has not yet been published – no architectural remains and no pottery from the second half of the Middle Bronze Age were found in any of the excavations […] (Steiner 1998: 148).

The next example demonstrates, alongside other means, the use of evaluative adjectives and adverbs.

> (28) *Even if* my arguments for lowering the dates […] might be considered, by some, "flimsy" (Mazar 1997, 158), they are far more solid than the shaky foundations of the prevailing chronology, which Mazar vigorously defends (Finkelstein 1998: 172).

This concession structure is designed by means of an interesting competition between evaluative adjectives: 'flimsy,' which is said to be attributed to the author's argument by his opponent, 'solid,' which is attributed by the author to his own arguments, and 'shaky,' which is used by the author to refer to his opponent's view. The use of these antonyms on both sides of the concession structure bolsters the distance between the two stances, thus heightening the criticism.

It should be noted that the use of evaluative adjectives is not unique to conflictual contexts (Hunston 2005). In example (29), taken from a paper that would be categorized as a 'regular article,' evaluative adjectives are used to emphasize the importance of the research, within the effort to create a research space:

> (29) The fascinating encounter between army service, as an experience that has a powerful effect on the lives of people […] has not yet been the subject of a study as it deserves. In Israel too, *despite* the fact that service in the Israel Defense Forces is so central to the lives of so many young people, very few studies have explored it […] (Dar and Kimhi 2000: 594).

Here the adjectives 'fascinating,' 'powerful' and 'central' serve to present the importance of the subject. As discussed above, it is explained on the background of the general context of academic competition, but there is no apparent conflict that this utterance reflects. Negative evaluation is also present in less confrontational papers, but in these cases, it is usually attributed not to the opponent's stance or to his or her main conclusions. In contrast, in example (28) above, the negative evaluation ('shaky foundation') is directly attributed to the opponent's main argument. Finally, the adverb 'vigorously' adds an ironic or at least mocking tone directed at the opponent.

The confrontational tone of (28) is further strengthened by the use of the opponent's name ('Mazar'), the self-reference pronoun ('my') and an intensifier ('far more'), which accompany a positive evaluation of the author's arguments. There are also two interesting ways to diminish the power of the satellite: the modal 'might' and the unspecific term 'some' gives the impression that the opponent's claim (that the author's arguments are flimsy) is a hypothetical one, in spite of the quotation marks and the reference in brackets. All these elements place this example at the confrontational pole of the continuum.

4. FROM THE MACRO- TO THE MICRO-LEVEL AND BACK

The macro-level of the analysis proposed in this paper is positioned in the field of genre analysis. One acceptable assumption in the field is based on Swales's (1990) claim for the fundamental connection between the **form** of the texts that constitute a certain genre and their **communicative purpose**. For Swales, "it is communicative purpose that is the prototypical criterion for genre identity" (Swales 1990: 10) i.e. a genre is defined by the communicative purpose

it intends to achieve in the discourse community. Thus, a rhetorical analysis should connect these two properties of a text: its goal and its language. From a genre-analysis perspective, the rhetorical point of departure for analyzing a text is the identification of its goals. Then, the analysis requires examination of the language that serves these goals in order to describe the ways in which specific linguistic details – lexical, syntactical and textual – are involved in this task. Thus, the analysis proceeds from the aims to the devices to achieve the author's goals, on the background of the discourse community's demands.

In the context of academic competition, although a whole range of linguistic structures may be relevant to the discussion, the present paper focuses on one – concession. A review of relatively confrontational papers showed that concession structures are used frequently in this context with an eye to achieving various rhetorical purposes. However, they were found to be useful in less confrontational papers as well, since they offer an excellent opportunity to allow the voice of others to be heard and confronted in the text. Nevertheless, while at the less confrontational pole of the continuum, concession structures act inside the limitations of politeness or the conventions of the genre, at the more confrontational pole, their conflictual potential is manifest. Thus, the confrontational potential always exists, and the question is in what circumstances and by what means this potential is realized.

This last point leads us to a high-resolution microanalysis in search of the linguistic manifestation of confrontation. The structure as a syntactic or textual form may contain various linguistic elements that serve to bolster the differences in opinions and make the criticism more direct and more personal, including pronouns, personal names, unspecific terms of reference, passive voice, hedging, intensifiers, direct negation and direct evaluation of self- and other's arguments.

Going back to the macro-level genre analysis of academic papers, it can be argued that the substantial distribution of concession structures with their evident confrontational potential in all kinds of academic papers provides further indication of the argumentative and persuasive nature of this genre.

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APPENDIX:

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