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'There is no clear evidence but ...' What is known about negative polarity in the organisation of scientific research articles?

Much recent research into discourse analysis has focused on the phraseology characteristic of a given genre as well as its textual distribution (Hyland 1997, Tognini-Bonelli 2001, Wray 2002, Cortes 2004, Schmitt 2004, Biber et al. 2007, Meunier & Granger 2008, Granger & Paquot 2008, Hyland 2008). An underlying assumption has been the important role of prefabricated expressions in the textual development of meaning (Gledhill 2000, Kaszubski 2000, Verdaguer *et al.* 2010, Römer and Schulze 2009, 2010). Phraseological empirical studies have also highlighted the need for further research on the phraseological conventions distinctive of specialist genres.

Scientific discourse relies heavily on formulaic constructions which need to be mastered by the members of the scientific community, so as to produce phraseologically competent research articles. A corpus-based approach to the study of phraseology brings to the forward the close relationship between discourse and lexical grammar (Tognini-Bonelli 2008). Thus, a taxonomy of recurrent multiword expressions in scientific language according to their function in the discourse will contribute to a better understanding of the organization of research articles.

This paper explores how discourse meaning is highly dependent on its lexico-grammar, analyzing a corpus of 290 research articles in biology and biochemistry. By linking discourse analysis and corpus linguistics (Charles, Hunston and Pecorari 2009), we will study how negative polarity and the scope of negation in combination with discourse connectors can bring about systematic patterns in scientific discourse. The analysis of the context, position in the clause and text distribution of some adjectives which appear in the negative in the data under analysis will reveal how different rhetorical devices, such as hedging and polarity, contribute to the rhetorical weight of the multiword expressions selected in this study.

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