

The Duality of Communicative Purposes in the Textbook for Construction Engineering and Architecture: A Corpus-based Study of Blurbs

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Although the textbook has traditionally been assigned a peripheral status in the repertoire of academic genres, in tertiary education settings it plays an essential role as a source of both content and generic literacy, hence acculturating novices into the epistemology of the discipline. However, the role of the textbook in the professional context has been to date relatively underexplored. The aim of this paper is to define the textbook as a textual product linking the academic and the professional. Corpus-based results of a study of the online blurbs which accompany construction engineering and architecture textbooks show an intricate merging of descriptive and promotional features which provides a valuable source for understanding the way authors and target audience interact and the way authors and audiences conceive the textbook genre. The analysis of the blurb moves shows a duality of communicative purposes, translated into a multifaceted discourse meant to accommodate the linguistic and rhetorical needs of a duality of audiences, both learners and professional peers. Corpus findings call for a reconceptualization of the textbook genre, as a genre addressing both an educational and a professional audience, and whose purpose is thus only partially educational.

Keywords: textbook; blurb; construction; duality; audience; reconceptualization

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La dualidad del propósito comunicativo de los libros de texto de la Ingeniería de la construcción y la Arquitectura: el estudio de un corpus de solapas (*blurbs*)

A pesar del rol marginal tradicionalmente asignado al libro de texto entre los géneros académicos, en el contexto de la educación superior juega un papel esencial como fuente de aculturación de los no expertos, tanto en los contenidos y géneros de la disciplina como en la epistemología de la disciplina. Sin embargo, su papel en el contexto profesional no ha sido hasta el momento suficientemente investigado. El objetivo de este artículo es definir el libro de texto

como un texto que une el mundo académico y el mundo profesional. Los resultados de este análisis de un corpus de solapas (*blurbs*) electrónicas muestran una intrincada fusión de rasgos descriptivos y promocionales, una valiosa fuente para entender el modo en que interactúan el escritor y su público y el modo en que ambos conciben el género. El análisis de las solapas muestra una dualidad de propósitos comunicativos traducidos en un discurso con múltiples facetas, destinado a acomodar las necesidades lingüísticas y retóricas de un doble público lector, aprendices y profesionales. El estudio del corpus sugiere la necesidad de reconceptualizar el género de los libros de texto como un género a la vez educativo y profesional, cuya finalidad es solo parcialmente educativa.

Palabras clave: libro de texto; solapa; construcción; dualidad; público lector, reconceptualización

1. INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTUALIZING THE TEXTBOOK GENRE

Under the umbrella term of ‘textbook’, considered one of the “instructional registers” (Biber and Barbieri 2007) or “class genres” (Hyon 2001), the concept of textbook has often been associated with a pedagogical profile, a textbook designed to be used by learners in the classroom, both in secondary (Young and Nguyen 2002; Dimopoulous et al. 2003; Bezemer and Kress 2008, 2009) and tertiary education (Tadros 1989, 1994; Love 1991, 1993; Myers 1992; Swales 1995; Ward 2001; Biber et al. 2002; Parkinson and Adendorff 2004; Richardson 2004; Biber 2006; Jackson et al. 2006; Biber and Barbieri 2007).

A key component of the system of university genres, the textbook is viewed as providing an epistemological map of disciplinary knowledge by summarizing confirmed knowledge and accepted and established views. Different definitions of textbooks have been proposed in the literature in this respect: “embodiments of the knowledge of their discipline” (Hyland 1999: 4); “repositories of codified facts and disciplinary orthodoxy, the place where we find the tamed and accepted theories of a discipline” (Hyland 2005: 101); “summaries of received knowledge, regarded by writer and (ideally) by reader, as fact” (Parkinson and Adendorff 2004: 382-83); “facts already accepted by the discourse community” (Jackson et al. 2006: 270). The textbook summarizes the ideas of the established members of a given disciplinary community and the author, “speaking for it” (Parkinson and Adendorff 2004: 389), appears as the only source of information, which internalizes the voice of individual members of the community and makes it an objective timeless truth so that the new claims of disciplinary research are transformed into accredited facts in textbooks. In this way, the author reduces the “cacophony of past texts to a single voice of authority” (Hyland 2005: 101).

Because of the formative character of the genre (Kuhn 1963; Love 1991, 1993; Myers 1992; Hyland 1999, 2002, 2005; Moore 2002; Young and Nguyen 2002; Parkinson and Adendorff 2004; Klerides 2010), the textbook has been defined as a “canonical text” (Richardson 2004: 505) which acculturates learners into disciplinary knowledge, as well as into disciplinary culture. As such, it becomes a key literacy tool for students as a source for the acquisition not only of scientific and technological literacy but also of rhetorical and generic literacy. By introducing students into the contents, beliefs, values and methodology of the discipline, the textbook plays a “social action” (Miller 1984) and represents an example of “situated cognition” (Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995), since learners are exposed to a dual knowledge —subject knowledge and knowledge of the rhetorical, generic and linguistic conventions established by the discipline for this particular genre typology. The mentioned studies agree that by providing a multidimensional disciplinary knowledge that comprises rhetorical knowledge, knowledge of the subject-matter itself, procedural knowledge and formal knowledge, the textbook genre helps learners and readers in the discipline to develop a professional identity and expertise, which, in the case of neophytes, will facilitate the transition from academic training into the workplace.

In this paper I align myself with this integrative view of the formative character of the textbook. However, I also have to acknowledge that, despite their key acculturating role,

textbooks have been assigned a marginal, peripheral and, certainly, controversial status in the literature, which favors more prestigious genres such as research articles, “in terms of the improbability and implausibility of it [the textbook] contributing to our communal research enterprise”, as Swales (1995: 3) also remarks. Research genres, particularly the article, constitute a very specialized type of specialist-to-specialist communication through which members of a community legitimate new disciplinary knowledge, whereas “reading physics textbooks does not make you a physicist, and if you are a physicist, writing physics textbooks will not get you promoted” (Myers 1992: 3). Also frequently questioned is the contribution of textbook authoring to scholarship and promotion, justified in the argument that the textbook seems to be addressed to students rather than to teacher-scholars (Alred and Thelen 1993; Gebhardt 1993; Swales 1995).

The reason for the lesser consideration of the textbook is, in my view, the fact that research into the genre has focused on the pedagogical purpose of the textbook, neglecting for its large part its connection with the profession. From the literature the image of the ‘textbook’ emerges as a very general one, referring to any kind of ‘book’, of a more or less academic nature, an image which would define any kind of pedagogical book designed to be used in the classroom, at any educational level. However, a preliminary analysis of the textbooks written and read by the architecture and construction engineering community reflects an unquestionably more complex picture (Orna-Montesinos 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2011). Thus the initial hypothesis of this paper is that the vast majority of textbooks written in this context only partially have use in the classroom as their single purpose. My claim, therefore, is that textbooks also have a professional readership which, to my knowledge, is underexplored in the literature. Although some authors do refer to a dual audience of students and peers (Alred and Thelen 1993; Hyland 2002, Swales 1995), the professional readership of the textbook seems to be considered as an indirect audience, restricted to reviewers or material evaluators —“directly addressed to the student audience”, but “constructed for the professional audience” (Alred and Thelen 1993: 469). In sum, the textbook has a complex nature as a pedagogical and disciplinary genre reflecting, as claimed by Hyland (2002), a duality of audiences and as a consequence a duality of discourses to accommodate the needs of both audiences.

Departing from Swales’ (1995) view of textbooks as “‘hybrid’ in their efforts to cope with a complex audience configuration, to represent a broad area of available knowledge, to offer a ‘vision’, and to incorporate new findings emerging as a result of the exigencies of textbook writing” (15), this paper claims that the textbook genre has an all-encompassing pedagogical purpose, but with other perhaps not so obvious, underlying intentions behind that umbrella motivation. Hypothesizing about the multi-purpose character of the textbook genre and in line with Askehave and Swales’ (2001) work, my aim in this paper is to explore the communicative purposes of the genre, a key criterion for generic identification and ascription. Thus, in the theoretical background of this conceptualization of the generic integrity of the genre are the postulates of genre theory (Miller 1984; Swales, 1990; Bhatia 1993, 2004; Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995; Hyon 1996; Johns

1997), which, with a socio-constructionist perspective, has traditionally emphasized an awareness of what, how and why texts are produced, their context, audience and purpose. However, I agree with Askehave and Swales that this purpose might be “more evasive, multiple, layered, and complex than originally envisaged” (2001: 197).

2. CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY

The analysis presented in this paper is rooted in previous research on the discourse of architecture and construction engineering textbooks (Orna-Montesinos 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2011) which has drawn attention to the complexity of the architecture and construction engineering textbook as an interplay of individuals, communities and institutions linked to a hybridity of communicative purposes. Based on that, the purpose of this paper is to explore a corpus of textbook blurbs in order to provide evidence of the hybrid character of the textbook genre. Focusing on one particular discipline, the construction discipline, my goal is to explore who, for whom and for what purposes these textbooks are written, thus contributing to the larger more ambitious body of research on the many approaches to textbook analysis.

For the present work I used a self-compiled corpus of the online blurbs of 234 textbooks published between 1996 and 2011 by Elsevier Publishing under two imprints, Butterworth-Heinemann and Architectural Press,¹ with a total 82,497 words, an average of 352.55 words per blurb (blurbs range between 105 and 1,225 words). A wide range of textbooks compose the corpus, among them textbooks devoted to the review of the work of an architect, or of an architectural period, treaties on the history of architecture, essays on the psychological or philosophical nature of the discipline, expert manuals on brickwork or timber construction, complete studies of particular aspects of construction such as light or stairs in buildings, detailed compilations of building regulations, or innovative presentations of new views, for instance, on sustainability or digital imaging.

The choice of samples was based upon availability, since, with some rare exceptions, the publisher offered online blurbs for the above mentioned time-span. Although acknowledging that older titles are frequently mentioned as the basic bibliographical references of most disciplines, considered as classical or seminal contributions to the foundations of disciplinary knowledge, we cannot deny the fact that more recent publications undoubtedly allow their readers to access the most updated disciplinary knowledge. Considering the clear connection of the construction profession with technology and design, and particularly with the advances and most recent views in these areas, I find the corpus a significantly relevant repertoire of disciplinary texts. However, among the limitations of the corpus selection I should mention issues such as the possible longitudinal variation involved in this wide time span, or the specific generic constraints of the electronic blurb genre (as opposed to the traditional written blurb genre).

¹ On 17 May, 2011 Elsevier's UK Local booklist was sold to Taylor & Francis (<<http://www.routledge.com>>).

I should also mention the disciplinary relevance of the textbooks published by Elsevier Publishing, which are among the most frequently cited texts in both academic and professional contexts. Also supporting the adequateness of corpus materials selected is the fact that, unlike other publishers, Elsevier online blurbs offered more complete information about the textbook author and about its intended readership. Elsevier blurbs followed a common pattern of sections, which include:

- General information about the book: picture of the cover, title, name of the author, number of pages, size, year of publication, price and ISBN (232 samples, 99.15%).
- Key features: a summary, in bullet format, of the most relevant features of the textbook (224 samples, 95.73%).
- Description of the textbook (231 samples, 98.72%).
- Readership (230 samples, 98.29%).
- Contents (233 samples, 99.57%).
- Author information: professional adscription, qualifications, location, etc. (229 samples, 97.86%).
- A quotes section (95 samples, 40.60%).

The blurb thus became an invaluable source of information about the textbook, their author and their target audience; frequently the only one available. An ethnographic analysis complementary to the corpus analysis would have been a desirable source of first-hand insight into target readership, into textbook writing motivation or into communicative purposes. This, however, proved particularly challenging, since contact information about the authors was not provided by the publishers. Personal contact with some textbook authors, including those in the architecture and construction engineering discipline, as well as with authors from other disciplines, brought to the fore first of all the motivations and intentions mentioned in blurbs but also, surprisingly, the elusiveness of these authors about their purposes (one of them even claimed that he did not write 'textbooks').

For the analysis of blurbs I will draw upon studies of the functional profile of blurbs. Combining genre theory (Swales 1990; Bhatia 1997, 2004) and studies of evaluation (Hunston and Thompson 2000; Martin and White 2005), these works have focused on the promotional intention of the genre (Bhatia 1997; Kathpalia 1997; Basturkman 1999; Gea-Valor 2005, 2006; Gesuato 2007; Gea-Valor and Íñigo-Ros 2009). As mentioned above, the connection of the blurb genre with the textbook, its target readership, and the author's motivation for writing the textbook, which this paper specifically focuses on, has been, to my knowledge, under-researched. However, I must acknowledge the limited scope of this paper. A cross-generic analysis of blurbs with other genres sharing similar purposes, such as adverts, other book covers or other textbook presentations, or with other didactic and professional genres would certainly broaden the understanding of the textbook genre.

3. MOVES IN ENGINEERING TEXTBOOK BLURBS

With the aim of better understanding the purposes and motivations of textbook authoring, in my study I focused on exploring who writes the textbook, how the addressee of the textbook is profiled and how the textbook is described and presented to the reader. Inspired by Swales' (1990) moves and steps model of genre analysis, the exploration of the blurbs accompanying engineering textbooks showed that they are arranged according to four big moves: authorship, readership, presenting the textbook, and promoting the textbook. The four are present in the majority of the blurbs studied:

MOVES OF THE BLURB		# textbooks	%
AUTHORSHIP		229	97.86
READERSHIP		230	98.29
PRESENTING THE TEXTBOOK	contents	233	99.57
	general presentation	223	95.30
	defining approach	284	87.65
	facilitating comprehension	295	70.51
	outlining purpose	195	60.19
PROMOTING THE TEXTBOOK	claiming value	181	77.35
	showing credentials	150	64.10
	responding to the profession	145	61.97

Table 1. Summary of moves of the blurb

3.1. Textbook authoring and reading

The analysis of the 'authorship' move of the blurb yielded the following results about the professional adscription of the corpus textbook authors:

AUTHORSHIP		
SCHOLARS	110	47.01%
ARCHITECTS	31	13.25%
MIXED CO-AUTHORSHIP	31	13.25%
CONSULTANCY	22	9.40%
BUSINESS	9	3.85%
OTHER	26	11.11%
N/A	5	2.14%
	234	

Table 2. The 'authorship' move

Of the 234 textbook blurbs analyzed, only 110 of them (47.01%) are authored, or co-authored, by scholars from different universities worldwide. Another group of textbooks is written by architects (13.25%), or by professionals working in different areas, such as consultancy (9.40%), business practice (3.85%), or a varied group of other specialized areas (11.11%) (local government, journalism, conservation, landscaping, surveying, law, planning, etc.). Interestingly, a number of textbooks (13.25%) are authored by writers who

claim a dual adscription as both academics and professionals, or co-authored by academics and professionals. The professional insight into the profession or the double academic and professional perspective do not only provide the reader with a more complete and realistic picture of the two facets of the discipline, but also challenges *a priori* expectations about the traditional educational adscription of textbook authors, thus pointing to the duality of the textbook as an educational and professional genre.

When analyzing the ‘readership’ move of the textbooks discussed, I found that only 11.11% of them are targeted to an exclusively educational audience (students —graduate and undergraduate— and/or academics —lecturers, historians, libraries, etc.), as Table 3 shows. The majority of them (74.79%) are addressed to a mixed audience of both students and professionals, and 12.39% are written to cater for the needs of a professional audience, including a large range of professionals in all fields and sectors of the construction profession or of related fields (architects, engineers, designers, lectures, facility managers, planners, surveyors, contractors, manufacturers, institutions, etc.).

READERSHIP		
MIXED READERSHIP	175	74.79%
PROFESSIONALS	29	12.39%
STUDENTS	26	11.11%
N/A	4	1.71%
	234	

Table 3. The ‘readership’ move

Arguing flexibility, textbook authors seem to be addressing a variety of readers (*everyone in the construction industry*, one of them claims; *whether just starting out or as seasoned campaigners and practitioners* says another) and therefore make a conscious effort to try to reach as wide an audience as possible, thus responding to the promotional character of the blurb genre:

- (1) Architects and building designers—professionals, students (senior undergraduates and postgraduates), and academics, researchers, all parties interested in sustainable developments, home owners, environmentalists, those involved in policy and management issues. [149]

In an attempt to attract a wider readership, the move becomes a vehicle to provide the careful detail in an attempt to include any potential reader or to offer very specific data about the potential reader’s profile. Very few of the textbooks in the corpus do mention a specific reader (12 blurbs), and this they mainly do when the textbook is also devoted to a very specific topic. Rather, authors tend to move from the most specific audience to the most general (103), gradually opening their specificity focus to include *all parties interested in, everyone involved in or those in related areas*:

- (2) Undergraduate and postgraduate students taking courses on vernacular architecture worldwide. Professionals involved in the provision of emergency housing or reconstruction work. Architectural historians, building conservators, anthropologists. [163]

Some authors make an explicit reference to a primary and a secondary readership or market (22). However, most often this distinction is made implicitly:

- (3) Students learning estimating and tendering as part of building surveying, construction management, quantity surveying and civil engineering courses. May be of interest to professional estimators beginning in industry. [83]

Although not the primary target, the promotional effort of the textbook writer also reaches the layman (15): *self-builders*, *techie self-builders*, *DIY enthusiasts* or *eco-enthusiasts* with limited, if any, knowledge of the discipline. With the purpose of widening the focus to include people who might be interested in the particular topic of the book, a textbook on the architecture of London, for example, includes visitors to London and architectural tourists among its readership. More metaphorically, a textbook on architecture as a healing art is considered of interest to *a mind, body and spirit audience*.

The readership move is in sum an informative move which intends to define the profile of the intended audience, but which, at the same time, tries to 'sell' the textbook to the widest possible audience of both professionals and even outsiders to the discipline.

3.2. Audiences constructed: the aims of textbook authoring

Disperse throughout the sections of the blurb, textbook authors merge two different moves; the presentation of the textbook (of its contents, purpose or approach, both from the point of view of disciplinary knowledge and format, and justifying the textbook in the territory or the niche the textbook is aimed at occupying), and the promotion of the textbook (also the self-promotion of the author). See Table 4.

An essential purpose of the corpus blurbs is, as expected, to introduce the textbook to the readers. Most of the blurbs analyzed refer to the contents of the textbook (233 textbooks). Another common feature in the corpus is the general description of the book (223), which serves as an introduction, followed by more in-depth considerations about the purpose of the textbook (195): providing guidance, understanding, reference, introduction or insight into any particular topic.

Adapting to the purposes mentioned, the blurbs analyzed refer to different approaches taken by textbooks (284): to become introductory, the approach might require, for example, presenting the basics; to achieve understanding, providing a global overview of the topic or bringing a range of information together. Together with the transfer of knowledge, and very frequently at the same time, the blurbs refer to the practically-oriented purpose of the textbook, which are meant to be practical or to put theory into practice. Textbooks seem to be oriented to providing advice, models which can serve as

inspiration, or solutions for the readers' own practice. Also very often the aim is to offer all the knowledge the reader might need to respond to their demands or deficiencies, whether in design or in any other field.

PRESENTING THE TEXTBOOK			
		# cases	# textbooks
CONTENTS		233	99.57%
GENERAL PRESENTATION		223	95.30%
DEFINING APPROACH		284	87.65%
	practical	52	
	design advice	48	
	global overview	48	
	theory put to practice	40	
	info together	25	
	all knowledge needed	22	
	the basics	20	
	inspiration	16	
	advice / solution	13	
FACILITATING COMPREHENSION		295	91.05%
	visual style	66	
	case studies	64	
	examples	61	
	easiness	60	
	pedagogical approach	44	
OUTLINING PURPOSE		195	60.19%
	guidance	65	
	understanding	34	
	reference	28	
	introduction	21	
	insight	19	
	discussion	13	
	thought-provoking	10	
	refresher	5	

Table 4. The 'presenting the textbook' move

Merging the readership and the purpose moves, guiding seems to be oriented to both the professional and the student (e.g., *to provide an easy point of reference for today's designers and students and all those interested in the architectural history of London*). For its learner audience (26 textbooks are specifically targeted at students, and 175 of them address a mixed professional and learner audience) this means helping them to achieve academic or educational goals (e.g., *a comprehensive guide to all that an architecture student might need to know about undertaking the dissertation*), whilst at the same time assisting them in their transition to professional life (e.g., *a practical guide to planning a career in architecture*).

However, the textbooks in the corpus also target the professional readership (29 textbooks exclusively address an audience of architects or professionals) when they are presented as providing *design strategies, how-to guides* or *recipes*, labels which were frequently associated with the textbooks which seek to help the reader to achieve success (e.g., *strategies for success in this fast growing, constantly changing and highly competitive marketplace*) both by offering technical information or information about requirements, specifications or codes to comply with, and by providing design inspiration or supporting the designer to develop a design identity.

As findings show (see Table 4), the textbook also seems to be a tool for provoking discussion or for stimulating reflection, particularly for more innovative or challenging topics or approaches (e.g., *have a grasp of where the debate on urban design stands today, and where it may be going in the future*), or even for questioning the current state of affairs (e.g., *with a very serious aim: to radically change the way the urban realm is both experienced and designed*), and thus for conceiving the textbook as a way of sharing new knowledge and, as a consequence, as an instrument for moving the field forward.

The purpose of the blurb is not only to present the textbook. Intertwined with the description of the textbook is the blurb's promotional purpose. The aim seems to be to show concepts in a practical context, but is also *to enable you to develop and improve your design skills*, to connect theory and practice *to outline the future for successful design for critical care settings*, or to offer design solutions *to guarantee the safe, efficient and cost-effective running of any facilities function*. By helping the reader to achieve academic or professional success, the corpus blurbs are contributing to claim value for the textbook.

The ambitious aim of the textbook cannot be separated from the way knowledge is presented to readers (295 textbooks). The analysis of the blurbs shows that the authors of the corpus textbooks try to facilitate comprehension of the knowledge or approaches presented, for which many authors choose to use a case-study format and the introduction of examples. The frequent use of a visual style (illustrations, detailed drawings, 3D images, sketches, full color photographs) addresses both the learner audience (e.g., *with over 100 sketches included, the book inspires student's design ideas*) and the more professional readership (e.g., *by emphasizing design and discussing key concepts with accompanying visual material, architects are given the background knowledge and practical tools needed*).

As would be the case with textbooks in most disciplines, the direct or indirect pedagogical purpose of the construction engineering and architecture textbook (made clearly explicit in 44 blurbs) would justify the large number of the blurbs (295) that focus on features of the textbook which seek to facilitate comprehension (appendices, flow charts, tables, glossaries, diagrams, figures, calculations) or to assist in the learning progress (checklists, end of chapter exercises, tests). In order to aid understanding, and aware of the difficulties faced by readers to grasp the language of the trade, the blurbs describe their textbooks as being *jargon-free* or using *simple English*. The search for easiness (60), for an *informal, easy to follow, user-friendly style, with unambiguous explanations, accessible*

narrative, logical progression or a step-by-step approach makes it clear that the purpose of the textbook is to help the reader *through the maze of the construction industry*, whilst providing *an essential and easy-to-use reference guide to this complex subject for the building industry professional*.

It is again another instance of merging of moves in which the presentation of contents combines with the presentation of value. The move is clearly a descriptive move on the textual and formal features of the textbook, but used with a promotional purpose. The introduction of facilitation techniques, the search for easiness and the use of examples and case studies is primarily a way of helping readers in the textbook; at the same time they are promoting resources in the blurb.

3.3. The blurb: promoting the textbook

Promoting the textbook is not only implied in the discourse of the blurbs when they claim to respond to professional needs (145). It is also unambiguously expressed in a move in which the authors overtly claim value for their texts (203), or when the blurb establishes the authors' credentials as experts in their discipline, or the credentials of textbook itself (153):

PROMOTING THE TEXTBOOK		# cases	# textbooks
CLAIMING VALUE			203 86.75%
	importance / relevance / value	125	
	uniqueness / novelty / difference	74	
	disciplinary value	73	
	updated edition	59	
	benefit for the reader	50	
	added value	16	
SHOWING CREDENTIALS			153 65.38%
	quotes	99	
	author(s)' experience / expertise	36	
	bio	26	
	author(s)' reputation	24	
	previous editions	24	
	author(s)' previous work	8	
RESPONDING TO THE PROFESSION			145 61.97%
	problem-solving	107	
	disciplinary value	73	

Table 5. The 'promoting the textbook' move

As I have already mentioned, the textbook is meant to serve as a reference, a guide, or an introduction; but, by means of a highly, and explicitly evaluative discourse, the corpus blurbs present the textbook as an *ideal, useful, indispensable, invaluable, vital or crucial* resource for the reader's professional or academic purposes. It is *an essential one-stop shop, a must-have purchase, essential reading, which you simply can't afford to be without*, which

truly belongs on every design office desk. Its uniqueness and novelty, or the difference with other similar textbooks, are frequent value-creation arguments. Value also lies in the benefit the textbook can provide to the reader, whether in their success as professionals or as students (e.g. *the reader will acquire a vocabulary covering the entire range of structure types and learn a new approach to understanding the development of design*). Even the size, the format or the price of the textbook bring added value to the textbook.

The presence of the textbook author in the blurb is clearly felt in their effort to show their credentials (153), professional, educational or personal. Value is established by referring the reader to the authors' experience (36) or reputation (24). The blurb depicts authors as experienced practitioners (*the authors have worked together in the area of engineering, professional and business ethics for many years*), educators (*uses his experience as a lecturer to present the material in a logical and accessible manner*) or as conjugating both (*an author team of academics and professional surveyors*). Their participation in well-known projects (*to draw on the experience of the design firm that delivered the 1999 Cardiff Millennium stadium*), their involvement in an area directly related with the textbook topic (*a member of the BSI sub-committee involved in the development of Eurocode 9*), or the authors' own personal experience (*his experience of living in a solar house*) also provide evidence of authorial expertise. Together with their experience, the reputation of the author as an expert, constructed with the help of highly evaluative adjectives such as *leading, acknowledged, well established, foremost, unrivalled, unparalleled, recognized or well-known*, also contributes to proving their credentials. In addition, the reputation of the author's previous texts (8) (*from the bestselling author of 'Ecohouse'*), or of previous editions of the textbook (24) (*a bible for practising architects around the world*) speak for the value of the textbook. In other blurbs the purpose of establishing the author's credentials is more openly and explicitly achieved by including a short bio (26) claiming the author's knowledge, professional expertise, awards, achievements or reputation:

Clive Beggs is Professor of Medical Technology at the University of Bradford. He is both a mechanical engineer and a biomedical scientist, who for many years has had an interest in ways in which energy is utilized and consumed. He is an expert in the fields of energy management and low energy building design, with many years' experience of the design and installation of mechanical services within the construction industry. He is a well-known international speaker and is author of many scientific papers on low energy and environmentally friendly building design. He is a holder of the CIBSE Carter Bronze Medal for his work on desiccant cooling.

But the most frequently used resource to build the reputation and value of the textbook is the use of quotes (99) taken from the reviews or comments from customers, famous architects, academics, newspapers, professional journals, institutions, etc.:

This book, while offering a primer for the understanding of materials, focusing particularly on contemporary materials, also promotes a revision of our thinking as design professionals . . .

the authors carefully construct their discussion around specific materials that do or could have architectural applications. By focusing on material behavior, rather than appearances, the book argues for a new way of thinking about architectural production. *Journal of Architectural Education*

As the two previous examples have shown, at the same time that they promote the textbook, the use of quotes becomes the final step in building the reputation of the author. Thus, the promotional move merges with the self-promotion of the author.

However, it is not only evaluative language that helps the blurb create value for their textbooks, but also the more subtle link to disciplinary value, with ethical, social or cultural considerations about sustainability, the environment or the protection of the architectural or archeological heritage, together with its contribution to developing adequate architect-client relations, or with disciplinary principles such as the future of the profession, innovation, safety, quality or best practice. The search for innovation, or for updating the reader on the latest developments and techniques, is the argument mentioned in the case of new editions of previously published, frequently successful, textbooks.

Claiming value is not only connected with the author's reputation but also with the aims in writing the textbook. When claiming to respond to perceived needs or lacks (e.g., *demands faced by architects in their training and education; offers the missing interface between the different disciplines, identify important, but often unrecognised, principles*), the move becomes a 'fill-in-the-niche' move in which writers at the same time create their niche as textbook authors.

Corpus findings thus support studies about the promotional character of the blurb genre (Bhatia 1997; Kathpalia 1997; Basturkman 1999; Gea-Valor 2005, 2006; Gesuato 2007; Gea-Valor and Íñigo-Ros 2009). To 'sell' the textbook, as claimed by Bhatia (1997), has required the manipulation of the generic conventions of this introductory genre, the blurb, to make it what Gea-Valor (2005: 42) calls "factual marketing strategies", with the clearly persuasive function of advertising and recommending the book to potential buyers.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This corpus analysis of the online blurbs accompanying construction engineering and architecture textbooks has shown a very skillfully crafted merging of two purposes, as discussed in Bhatia (1997): the presentation of the textbook with its promotion. Because, as this study has illustrated, when describing the purpose of the textbook, its approach, format or target readership, the corpus blurbs rarely take a neutral position, but rather a clearly evaluative one. The value of the textbook is associated with the comprehension facilitation move, in which authors, showing awareness of the difficulties posed by "increasingly antidemocratic" (Halliday 1993: 21) techno-scientific discourse, make the effort to make the textbook accessible and comprehensible by means of a wealth of what Bhatia (2002) calls "easification" resources. Also used to promote the textbook are its

visual features, whose goal is, as claimed in the literature (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996; Bezemer and Kress 2008, 2009; Myers 1997), to aid comprehension of more challenging material, both for the novice and the experienced reader, thus responding to the highly visual learning style of the profession (see Úbeda and Escribano 2002). At the same time the use of case studies, of examples or photographs of famous buildings is a value creation tool conveying an implied positive comparison with prestigious buildings, the accepted models of disciplinary value. It is precisely the disciplinary relevance of visual features, ratified by the high frequency of use of visual resources, that should lead to a multimodal analysis of the textbooks comprising the corpus, like that proposed by Bezemer and Kress (2008, 2009). This could complement and ratify the claims made in the blurbs about their role in the illustration or the comprehension of the text. Also of interest for the purpose of understanding the blurb genre would be the exploration of the crucial role played by the visual/textual relation of the publisher website itself, as suggested by Gea-Valor's work (2006). The absence of either of these is one of the limitations of this paper and as an option for future research.

However, creating value is not only achieved by means of overtly evaluative discourse. By bringing information together, and therefore by making knowledge available, the purpose of the blurb seems not only to describe the textbook but also to help the reader. Adapting the textbook approach to its target audience and to the intended purpose of the textbook, the authors of the blurbs in the corpus choose to stress the aspect of the textbook which best suits their aims. Providing a practical approach, bridging the gap between theory or research and practice, or offering design advice or solutions, all appear in the corpus as clear disciplinary assets. The projection of the author onto their texts as responsible for responding to demands, needs or deficiencies, or for contributing solutions to the discipline's problems, evidences the problem-solving applied nature of the construction engineering discipline. The reference to the author's and the book's credentials are at the same time a more subtle way of praising and justifying the textbook authoring.

The undeniable effort shown in the corpus blurbs to interact with the reader by constructing the image of the textbook as a helpful, while at the same time reliable, resource shows the author's awareness of the perspective of the reader. The reception of the text, as the postulates of reception theory put forward by Bakhtin and the members of the Russian Formalist School suggest, is as decisive as its production. The voice of the author needs to reach the reader. The successful interaction of the writer and the audience of the textbook requires the understanding of how the writer creates the textbook but also of how the audience will read, interpret and evaluate it, depending on the reader's own assumptions, beliefs, values and expectations (Matsuda and Tardy 2007; Swales and Leeder 2011).

The analysis of the corpus blurbs has provided a better understanding of the profile of the construction engineering and architecture textbook, and of the profile of both authors and potential readers. Supporting my initial hypothesis, my findings show that although a large percentage of the blurbs studied are written by university scholars, a high

proportion of them are written by architects or professionals from related disciplines. More importantly, a significant number of textbooks are co-written by academics and professionals. Mirroring the profile of the authors, the profile of the target readership of the textbook also reflects a multi-faceted picture: the largest group of textbooks addresses a mixed readership of professionals and students, professionals only, or even the layman. Contrary to expectations about the ascription of the textbook to an exclusively pedagogical context, the analysis of the corpus has shown that these textbooks have a dual orientation, a double-fold communicative purpose associated with two clear-cut target audiences: a pedagogical audience on the one hand, and the specialized audience on the other. Although students could be considered the primary addressees of the textbook, a more professional audience, the scholar and professional spheres of the discipline, is also addressed.

This view of the textbook genre as a hybrid academic and professional construct, a view shared by authors such as Alred and Thelen (1993), Hyland (2002) or Swales (1995), means a duality of audiences and, associated with it, a complex discourse which has to be accommodated to cater for the needs of their pedagogic addressee, novices to the discipline, while more or less indirectly addressing specialized peers of the discipline. For the textbook to fulfill its purpose of successfully reaching both new and expert members of the community, the author must meet the contrasting needs of both the pedagogical and the professional audiences. The corpus authors seem to have defined their communicative purposes, addressing both, facilitating access to the material on the one hand, while establishing their credentials and displaying their authoritative voice on the other. Although the blurb's promotional character, and therefore its commercial aim, certainly conditions and justifies the effort to try to reach the widest possible audience for the textbook, the duality of audience also suggests the specificity of the textbook published in the academic and professional context of the construction discipline, which is meant to transmit disciplinary knowledge but is not restricted to any particular pedagogical setting; in other words, is meant to educate, but not strictly in the classroom.

The benefit of this duality also applies to the corpus itself, and thus the corpus textbooks become a valuable repertoire of scholarly and professional contributions. This integration of perspectives in the textbook certainly provides the reader with a unique insight into the reality of the engineering and architecture discipline, a hard applied science that is characterized both by its purposive and pragmatic character, and by its aim to transfer the abstract knowledge of scientific discourse into products and techniques, and into commonsense knowledge (see for example Becher and Trowler 2001). It is this link between the academic and the professional worlds of this discipline that, in my view, takes the textbook beyond the definition provided in the literature of a summary of received disciplinary knowledge legitimized by the expert voice of the author (Love 1991; Parkinson and Adendorff 2004; Richardson 2004; Hyland 2005). Rather, the textbook becomes a vehicle to disseminate disciplinary knowledge therefore fulfilling the social action of acculturating the reader into the epistemology of the discipline, and

conversely transmitting how the authors conceive the scope of the profession. In addition to this, there is the perhaps more indirect search for the academic or professional prestige and visibility of the author in the disciplinary community, and even, as Swales (1995) suggests, the academic pressure to publish, or the obvious commercial reasons behind the publication of textbooks.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study of the online blurbs of construction engineering and architecture textbooks described above has shed light primarily on the moves of the blurb —authorship, readership, description and promotion— and through their analysis has helped to reach a wider understanding of the nature of the textbook and of the motivations for writing it.

The analysis has attempted to present evidence of the duality of communicative purposes of the textbook in the construction discipline. In the light of this, I argue for the repurposing of the textbook as a hybrid academic and professional genre. In my view, this multiplicity of communicative purposes would justify the reconceptualization of the textbook genre in this particular discipline that I advocate for in this paper, and would entail devising a broader label to designate a genre whose communicative purposes are only partially educational, or whose pedagogical task is achieved indirectly. A new label, ‘specialized book’, might better reflect the reality of this genre which Swales calls “a miscegenation of scholarly fish and commercial fowl” (1995: 5).

Construction engineering and architecture textbook authoring appears to be a compromising task requiring the author to address both novice and experienced readers, accommodating the textbook discourse to both, adopting a position of stability and authority to acculturate the reader into the content and generic literacies of the discipline, and being responsible for the transmission of disciplinary knowledge. Writing the textbook blurb is equally compromising since the purpose of the textbook runs parallel with the need to prove undisputed credentials, with the search for visibility and prestige and, above all, with certain underlying purposes: the commercial purpose of the textbook, the promotion of the textbook, and the self-promotion of the author. The interweaving of purposes in the blurbs analyzed in this study has brought to the fore the lack of generic integrity of the blurb genre. Mixing descriptive and promotional features, this introductory genre is exploited to convey the underlying intention of advertising the textbook (Bhatia 2004).

The aim of this paper has been to explore a genre, the textbook blurb, in one particular discipline, construction engineering and architecture. Although restricted to these highly specialized disciplines, the results of the analysis of the dual professional and pedagogical character of the textbook suggest their applicability to other disciplines, as well as to possible disciplinary variation, which a cross-disciplinary analysis of textbook blurbs in other disciplines might reveal. The study presented in this paper has explored the textbook genre through the information provided by another genre, the textbook blurb,

which has helped to clarify the target readership of the textbook, as well as the motivation behind textbook authoring. The limited amount of information provided by the genre is undoubtedly restricted, and even biased, by the promotional character of the blurb genre. If a more complete analysis of the specialized textbook genre is to be achieved, a broad cross-generic analysis should be carried out.

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