

ADVERBIAL METADISCOURSE DEVICES IN MODERN ENGLISH HISTORY TEXTS (1700-1900)

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This paper seeks to explore the uses and functions of adverbial metadiscourse devices in history scientific texts from the Modern English period (1700-1900), as compiled in The Corpus of English History Texts, a subcorpus within the Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing (University of A Coruña, Spain). There are some interesting attempts to study metadiscourse features in texts from this and earlier periods of the English language (cf. Moskowich and Crespo 2014; Alonso-Almeida and Mele-Marrero 2014; Gray, Biber and Hiltunen 2011). Following this tradition, I focus on adverbials as metadiscourse devices in the sense in Hyland (2005). The main reason to select adverbials as the target linguistic devices of our analysis is based on the fact that there seems to be widespread agreement that adverbials stand as one of the grammatical categories that most clearly contribute to the expression of interpersonal meanings (Biber and Finegan 1988). Their use by eighteenth and nineteenth century writers of history texts will be described so as to characterise them in terms of authorial presence, and to check how authors use those devices to negotiate interactional meanings with their potential readers, mostly colleagues. It will be shown that, depending on the context, they can fulfil several pragmatic functions, such as the indication of different degrees of authorial commitment or detachment towards the information presented, persuasion, and politeness, among others.

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