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**The Making of the “Impact Agenda”**  
*A Study in Discourse  
and Governmentality*

**by**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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## ***Acronyms used in thesis***

REF	Research Excellence Framework
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
HEFCE	Higher Education Council for England
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IA	Impact Agenda
CS, CSs	(Impact) Case Study, (Impact) Case Studies
NPM	New Public Management
UoA	Unit of Assessment
RSA	Research Subject Area
STS	Science and Technology Studies
SSH	Social Sciences and Humanities
DA	Discourse Analysis
ELT	English Language Teaching
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
IR	Interviewer
IE	Interviewee

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I wish to dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my dear Grandma,  
Dr Wera Mandrosz, whom I lost in 2016.  
She was a true champion for education  
and a personification of the Latin saying  
*per aspera, ad astra.*

## ***Declaration***

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

Marta Natalia Wróblewska

## **Abstract**

The introduction of the ‘impact’ component constitutes a major change in the evaluation of academic work. While various systems of impact evaluation exist, the most articulated one implemented to date is the British REF2014 with its Impact Agenda. This thesis investigates the discursive aspects of the introduction of the Agenda and its consequences for academic identities. Drawing from linguistic pragmatics and Foucauldian discourse analysis I look at shifts related to the Agenda on three stages, in chronological order: 1) the emergence of the notion of ‘impact’ in policy and its appropriation on a local level within universities, 2) the consolidation of a new genre of writing – impact case study, 3) academics’ self-positioning towards the assessment after REF 2014.

I start by arguing that as a notion ‘impact’ was co-constructed by many subjects who played various roles in a polyphonic discussion. I later describe how procedures and practices emerged around the notion within departments, contributing to the creation of an ‘apparatus’. I then focus on its crucial element – a new genre of academic writing. I suggest that learning to write impact case studies was key in acquiring a new ‘professional vision’. Finally, on the basis of interviews with authors of case studies, I investigate the influence of the Agenda on academics’ perception of their own role as academics.

My thesis describes the introduction of impact assessment in British academia as a process of ‘problematization’ of a previously non-regulated area and as a trigger of new practices of ‘subjectivation’ of the academic self. The study aims to open new pathways in combining post-structuralist and interactionist approaches to discourse and in applying them to the study of academic settings.

Keywords: REF 2014, Research Excellence Framework, Impact Agenda, research impact, research evaluation, discourse, governmentality, genre

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Overview

This dissertation looks at the evaluation of research impact in Higher Education institutions, and in particular at the Impact Agenda – a component of the Research Excellence Framework introduced in Great Britain in 2014. ‘Impact’ is a new area of evaluation and therefore it still remains scarcely studied, although – given the importance of this evaluation element in the UK academic context and its adoption in several foreign contexts – the topic has been receiving increasing amounts of attention from scholars in the areas of Higher Education Studies and Sociology. This study addresses a gap in the existing scholarship which regards the *linguistic* aspect of the introduction of the new evaluation policy. In particular, it looks at the process of instilling a discourse of ‘impact’: at how ‘impact’ became a new element of academic reality and a new academic value.

In approaching this problem, I examine two datasets: a corpus of impact case studies submitted to REF 2014 and a corpus of interviews with their authors supplemented by interviews with other actors involved in the evaluation process. Drawing from linguistic pragmatics and Foucauldian discourse analysis I look at shifts related to the Agenda on three stages, in chronological order: 1) the emergence of policy around impact and the subsequent appropriation of the notion of ‘impact’ on a local level within universities, including teaching and learning a new genre of writing – impact case study, 2) the consolidation of this new genre and 3) academics’ self-positioning towards the assessment after REF 2014.

In this introductory chapter, I provide some background on the introduction of the REF and the Impact Agenda in the UK and briefly discuss existing

research on the topic. I then present my research questions and the analytical framework adopted and give an overview of the thesis.

## **1.2. Background**

The introduction of ‘impact’ as an element of assessment in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) constituted a significant change in the way academic research is evaluated. With the launch of the Impact Agenda (IA) in REF2014, academic units would be assessed not only on the basis of traditional elements of academic recognition such as the quality of scientific publications and of graduate teaching but also based on an element of work which had never occupied a central role in academic evaluation – namely, the reception and uptake of research by non-academics.

The system which preceded REF in Britain – the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), was run in an approximately five-year cycle since 1986. As in its twenty years of existence the RAE evaluation – a time-consuming peer-review-based exercise – had become increasingly burdensome for the assessed units, the government decided that after the 2008 edition RAE would be replaced with a new, more efficient system. At the time when this new evaluation system was being developed, there were two main ‘novelties’ in the world of research assessment. One of them, the most discussed, was the implementation of bibliometrics, which enables a faster, quantitative processing of research quality data. It was expected and indeed announced that the new British research assessment system would be metrics-informed. However, due to methodological difficulties and a lack of support for the metrics-driven approach in the academic community, the organizer of the assessment backed out of this proposal. Instead, the second influential new trend in research assessment – the evaluation of ‘research impact’ – was taken on. It was decided that ‘impact’ would be assessed on a qualitative basis, in a process of expert review of impact case studies (CSs) submitted by academic units.

RAE was one of the first-established and most articulated performance-based evaluation systems world-wide and was intensely studied by evaluation specialists and higher education (HE) experts. This was due not only to its importance in the UK academic system as a basis for the distribution of funding and prestige, but also because of the role it played beyond Britain. As a prominent, complex and well-documented evaluation system, it constituted in many respects a point of reference for policymakers and evaluators overseas. The introduction of the impact component in REF once again put the British system of research assessment in the centre of attention of evaluation scholars, as the newly introduced procedure of assessing impact gave rise to numerous questions of practical, methodological and theoretical nature. The implementation of the impact component in REF2014 provided material for empirical study of the effects and consequences of this new exercise.

Existing studies on the question of impact evaluation look at the issue from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including organisation or management studies (Chikoore, 2016), policy (Gunn & Mintrom, 2016; Hill, 2016), education (Chubb, 2017; Laing, Mazzoli Smith, & Todd, 2018), sociology of workplaces (Gozlan, 2015), accounting (Power, 2015), and broadly understood Higher Education Studies (Chubb, Watermeyer, & Wakeling, 2016; Watermeyer, 2012, 2014, 2016). However, *language* has remained a largely overlooked aspect of developments around impact. And yet language is a crucial element in the context of developments that affect large professional and social groups. This is because policy changes 1) are negotiated and introduced via linguistic practices, such as defining particular notions and developing a shared understanding of them; 2) affect the discourse of a community on the level of vocabulary, style and rhetoric; 3) are appropriated and made sense of by a discourse community through language (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999a). With the present thesis, I aim to address an existing research gap, in focusing on the discursive aspects of the introduction of the IA and in particular, the influence of the genre of impact case study on academic discourse.

### **1.3. Research questions and analytical framework**

The research question I ask with this thesis is: how did the discourse of impact become embedded within British academia? I will break this broad question into three sub-questions, each of which will be addressed in a separate analysis chapter. In Chapter 7, I look at the emergence of policy around impact and the appropriation of the notion within institutions, asking about the role of procedures and processes in establishing a new genre of impact case study. In this chapter I put forward the notion of ‘impact infrastructure’. In Chapter 8, I examine the genre of impact case study asking about its main features and how they make evident the pragmatic functions of the genre. In Chapter 9, I ask how the engagement in submitting a case study to REF 2014 has affected academics’ positioning towards the notion of ‘impact’. Generally speaking, the analysis moves from the ‘macro’ level of national research policy and its implementation in institutions, through the meso level of emergence of common responses to the policy, such as a genre of academic writing, on to the micro level of individual responses of academics to the policy.

I have chosen to investigate the above questions related to the discursive aspects of the IA based on the example of a specific professional group: British linguists. Linguistics is an intriguing discipline to investigate due to its inherent diversity – it includes research ranging from pure to applied and straddles the humanities and social sciences, with ramifications also into the natural sciences and engineering. Hence, studying practices of linguists allows an insight into the larger population while working on a limited sample (I discuss this choice of research setting in more detail in section 4.1). The two datasets that I work on in this study are 1) a corpus of impact CSs submitted by British linguists to REF2014, and 2) interviews (n=25, about 30 hours of audio recordings) with the authors and co-authors of the above documents as well as professionals involved in creating the evaluation policy.

My methodological approach is a qualitative, bottom-up, data-driven combination of discourse analytical methods hailing from two different traditions – the post-structuralist and the pragmatic one. I combined insights and concepts from pragmatics and post-structuralist governmentality theory to account for the establishment – via linguistic practices – of a new element of academic evaluation and of the effects of this development on the self-presentation of individual academics in text and talk. Generally speaking, post-structuralist discourse theory and concepts associated with governmentality theory (such as ‘emergence’, ‘apparatus’, ‘subjectivation’ and ‘problematization’) allows for a bird’s-eye view of the broad institutional changes taking place in the context of the introduction of new policies and values, while pragmatic methods (genre analysis) and concepts (‘footing’, ‘stage’) enable fine-grained descriptions of how individual social actors or groups of actors engage with the new realities. Hence, I make use of post-structuralist governmentality theory particularly when addressing the question of how ‘impact’ became embedded in institutions, while pragmatics is used when discussing case studies produced in the framework of the new policy and when analysing the positioning which was enacted in the interviews with the documents’ authors. To supplement my analysis, at times I also make reference to concepts which do not originally hail from linguistics nor discourse research but have been productively used by scholars of language before me and which I found useful for explicating particularly the ‘meso’ level of my analysis, i.e. the intersection between the macro and the micro levels. These concepts include Bourdieu’s notions of ‘regularisation’ and ‘officialisation’, which allow me to describe how the pragmatic function of the genre of impact CS is realized in the context of the new policy. Finally, the coding carried out on the two corpora was informed by constructivist grounded theory.

#### **1.4. Structure of the thesis**

The structure of this work is as follows. In the literature review (chapter 2), I present an overview of the relevant debates in the subject-fields in which I situate my work. This includes, firstly (section 2.1), core works related to the study of science and scientists, especially from the field of Science and Technology Studies and Higher Education Studies. I focus on themes which are particularly pertinent for an understanding of the role of ‘impact’, namely: academic identity (section 2.2) and the relationship between academia and society (section 2.3). Later, (section 2.4), I look at current problems in academic evaluation, and I discuss the relevant literature (section 2.5). Against this background, I introduce existing work on the topic of the Impact Agenda (section 2.6).

Chapter 3 and 4 constitute an introduction to the topic and problem studied in this thesis: the Research Excellence Framework. In Chapter 3, REF is placed in the broader context of structural changes in HEIs (section 3.1 and 3.2) and in 3.3 the question of the relationship between REF and academic identity is sketched out. Chapter 4 focuses on the details of research evaluation in REF, against the aspects of academic evaluation introduced in section 2.5. I talk about the history of the evaluation system, presenting an ‘impact timeline’ which includes the clue moments of the introduction of the new evaluation system (4.1). I present its main tenants (4.2), particularly regarding impact evaluation (4.3) and I discuss the specificity of the REF and the Impact Agenda as objects of study (4.4).

In the following chapter, chapter 5, I describe the method of the present work. I start by offering (in 5.1) a brief introduction into the field of discourse analysis and its internal divisions, particularly the tension between pragmatic (Anglo-Saxon) methods and post-structuralist (Continental) theory. In 5.2 I discuss the existing applications of discourse analysis (DA) in HE contexts. Section 5.3. elaborates the use of DA in this thesis which consists in a combination of two strands: 1) Foucauldian

discourse analysis and governmentality theory (rooted in poststructuralism) and 2) linguistic pragmatics. I explain how these two quite different discourse analytic approaches, the first focusing on the macro level of analysis, the latter on the micro aspects, can be productively combined in the context of my research question. The next chapter, chapter 6, is devoted to methodology and research procedures connected to my two corpora: data collection, coding, anonymization, ethics. I dedicate a separate (6.2.4) section to a brief overview of my approach to interview data, conceptualising it as co-construction and as performance.

What follows is the core part of my study – the analysis, divided into three chapters. As argued before, the analysis moves from the macro level of impact policy to the micro level of its consequences for individuals and individual practice. In chapter 7, which is the first chapter dedicated to analysis I describe the circumstances of the emergence of the term ‘impact’ and the reception of IA on the level of departments. I describe the processes which led to the submission of impact CSs to REF 2014 step by step, showing the process of learning and teaching which took place in the academic community. I investigate the role of different actors in the process of defining impact as an area of academic activity which up to then remained unregulated. Here I make use of the Foucauldian notions of ‘problematization’ and ‘infrastructure’.

The concept of ‘problematization’ describes a complex, multi-levelled process of defining and classifying a previously non-described area of human activity, the effects of which can be often identified only when it is complete. However, once the process is complete, the problematization of a particular area – with a set of given terms and assigned procedures – often becomes neutralized, to the point that these terms and procedures seem obvious to those concerned. I will argue that such a process of problematization took place in the context of research impact with the introduction of the Impact Agenda. Infrastructure (or apparatus), in Foucault’s framework, is a ‘formation’ composed of discursive and material elements with a strategic function in organising the activities of

the community which it involves, by regulating its behaviour in a subtle, non-violent way. I will argue that around impact assessment there emerged an ‘impact infrastructure’ – a heterogeneous framework, the aim of which was to guide the behaviour of academics.

In chapter 8, I focus on an element which I see as crucial for this infrastructure, namely a new genre of academic writing – impact case study. I start by describing (in 8.1.) the main pragmatic features of the genre in terms of structure, narrative patterns, grammar and lexis. I argue that CS is a hybrid genre, incorporating as it does features of academic, managerial and journalistic style. In 8.2. I focus on the pragmatic function of the genre. I take an interactionist approach in which genre is seen as a means of strategic action in the face of a surrounding power structure. I describe this strategic behaviour on the side of CS authors using Bourdieu’s notions of ‘regularisation’ and ‘officialisation’, as adopted in the context of genre by Hanks (1987). I describe the acquiring of a new genre as working on one’s ‘professional vision’ – a pragmatic concept introduced by Charles Goodwin. Finally, in section 8.3., I argue that while realizing the strategic goals of the authors, their rhetorical, stylistic and narrative choices convey a vision in which research is linear and its value is easily evaluated and quantified – a vision which is at odds with observations on the messiness and contingency inherent to academic work from the field of Science and Technology Studies (Latour, 1987; Latour & Woolgar, 1986). I reflect on the dangers of this approach – for the academic community which generates this pattern and for the public perception of science in an era of post-truth.

In chapter 9, I explore the degree to which the emergence of the IA, together with its ‘impact infrastructure’ affected academics’ presentation of their own role. In analysing interviews with authors of CSs, I draw attention to the tensions visible in their positioning towards the concept of ‘impact’. These are visible in the different meanings given to the notion of ‘impact’, in the ‘distancing’ of actors towards the CS they have authored and in the careful management of one’s own position in terms of ‘footing’.

I demonstrate how the existence of the ‘impact infrastructure’ leads even indifferent or unwilling academic subjects to bend the narrative of their research to the requirements of the policy and I reflect on the effect this development has on the ‘academic self’ (or on processes of academic ‘subjectivation’).

Subjectivation is another concept rooted in Foucauldian governmentality theory. It refers to how an individual establishes themselves in relation to the grid of power/knowledge in which they function, or how an individual come to the truth about their subjectivity by positioning themselves in relation to a particular set of already existing codes about values, norms of behaviour, rules, rituals etc. (Castellani, 1999, p. 257; Foucault, 1990, p. 27). By returning to a concept rooted in post-structuralism I make a fool loop in terms of methodology, as the concept of ‘subjectivation’ allows for linking the micro level of individual positionings to the macro level of the broad context of policy.

In the conclusions chapter, chapter 10, I revisit the impact timeline presented earlier in section 4.1. I add another, theoretical level to it, showing how my study contributes to an understanding of the complexity and contingency of the processes related to impact, in answering the research question on how the discourse of impact was established in British academia. I conclude by summarising my contribution to knowledge in terms of empirical findings as well as methodology and pointing to future directions for studies in the field. At the end, I offer a personal reflection on processes of ‘subjectivation’ in HE setting.

## **2. Literature review**

This study focuses on the role of discourse in the establishment and implementation of the Impact Agenda on both institutional and individual levels. The issue of impact assessment can be related to several bodies of literature which explore higher education contexts. I will first introduce the main strands of research on science and scientists, to later discuss questions which can be seen as an immediate backdrop of the introduction of REF2014 and the IA: current structural transformations in HE, academic identity, the relationship between academia and the non-academic world and finally problems of academic evaluation, including the rise of performance-based evaluative systems. Against this background of research on HE, academics and academic evaluation I will review the body of work produced on the IA so far.

### ***2.1. Research on science, scientists and the production of knowledge***

The oldest tradition looking at science, scientists and the production of knowledge is probably Philosophy of Science, a field of inquiry into the methods of reasoning and ways of drawing plausible conclusions which can be dated back to ancient times and the “Prior Analytics” and “Posterior Analytics” of Aristotle (Detel, 2012). Philosophy of Science experienced its most fertile periods in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (when the scientific revolution occurred and thinkers such as Bacon, Hume and Descartes lay the foundations of the scientific method) and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, first with the debates around the possibility of verifying scientific statements (associated with logical positivism and the names of Russell, Carnap and Popper), and later when the established positivist method was challenged from post-positivist positions.

Specialised fields focusing on the study of science started emerging already in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to gain prominence and recognition in the second half. Between 1910-1920 the field of ‘naukoznawstwo’ (science of science) was developed in Poland by members of the Lvov-Warsaw school of philosophy (Kokowski, 2016). In 1923 Florian Znaniecki (1982) argued that a new field of enquiry on a ‘general theory of knowledge’ as a separate branch of human culture was emerging out of hitherto chaotic observations on the nature of scientific inquiry. In 1936 Stanisław Ossowski and Maria Ossowska (1964, p. 73) presented an outline of a programme of Science of Science which would include two branches, an epistemological and anthropological one, and in 1935 Ludwik Fleck argued that the social environment shapes researchers’ thinking and highlighted the collective roots of all scientific facts, putting forward the term ‘thought collective’ (Fleck, 1979). Various names have been proposed for the fields which emerged out of these early advances in the course of the 20th century, including the early proposal of logology or Science of Knowledge (Walentynowicz, 1982) later replaced with Science of Science, which in turn could be broken down into specialised fields of Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (*Sociologie des Wissens*), Sociology of Science (Bloor, 1976), Psychology of Science, Anthropology of Science, etc.

A ground-breaking work which drew considerable attention to processes of scientific research was Kuhn’s “Structure of Scientific Revolutions” (1962). It questioned wide-spread assumptions about the linear development of science, putting forward the idea of ‘paradigm shifts’. Kuhn’s work directly inspired the emergence of a new, empirically-driven field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) (Sismondo, 2011). Fieldwork in scientific laboratories, such as studies conducted by Latour (1987) and Woolgar (Latour & Woolgar, 1986) has greatly contributed to dispelling the myth of ‘objectivity’ of the hard sciences and provided valuable observations on the intersection of the social/cultural and the technical. However, the focus of STS research on hard and natural sciences left a gap in terms of exploring the conditions of knowledge production in

the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH). In order to address possible consequences of such a gap (e.g. extrapolating findings from ‘hard’ sciences into ‘soft’ disciplines, inadequate policy-giving, bias in assessment etc.) researchers have begun to converge around new notions such as Sociology of Social Sciences and Humanities or Social Sciences and Humanities Studies, which however it would be too early to define as separate fields.

Other disciplines have taken interest in academia as a *setting*, or as a *context*, where theories or concepts from other areas could be applied or tested. We can quote here Pierre Bourdieu’s influential work on relations of power between academic actors (1988) and class-related differences in access to HE and academic careers (2008) or Becher and Trowler’s (2001) anthropological take on the academic world as composed of distinctive ‘tribes’ and ‘cultures’. Academic institutions – as any other complex organisations – can also be studied from a managerial perspective with focus on issues such as processes of resource allocation, knowledge management, organisation, policy-making etc. These areas are sometimes gathered under the common name of Higher Education Studies (Musselin, 2014, pp. 1376-1378). Alongside the knowledge production taking place in universities (explored by STS, Sociology of Knowledge), and administrative realities (studied by Higher Education Studies and disciplines related to management) universities are obviously a site of learning and teaching, which is explored from pedagogic disciplines with a stress on questions related to the shape of the curriculum (Krishnan, 2009, pp. 36-40). Structural changes affecting HEIs worldwide (discussed in section 2.2) have been studied by scholars belonging to each of the above-mentioned traditions, fields and strands, inspiring numerous critical works. These – in the view of some – have already begun to converge around a new sub-field of Critical Higher Education Studies (Szadkowski, 2015, pp. 299-303) or Critical University Studies (Petrina & Ross, 2014).

The topic of ‘research impact’ and its evaluation cuts across several of the above-mentioned areas, which warrants drawing from various strands of

reflection on HE contexts in this study. The IA has consequences for academic cultures, academic identities, the boundaries between disciplines and the way research and knowledge are conceived of – issues explored by STS, Science Studies, Sociology of Science, Sociology of Higher Education. The Agenda was introduced in a wider context of structural transformations of higher education systems which renders the body of literature on (Critical) Higher Education Studies relevant. Finally, looking at a broader perspective, the mission of science in society and its underlying principles are explored by philosophers of science, hence the importance of the reflection on questions of epistemology and axiology. Eventually, my work draws from all of the above fields, where they overlap to offer a reflection on the relationship between individuals, institutions and the broader society, particularly from a discursive perspective.

## ***2.2. Academic identity***

The topic of academic identity can be situated in two bodies of literature – on the one hand as a sub-section of a growing area of research on professional identities (Marra & Angouri, 2011), and on the other hand, as part of a similarly rich vein of research on academia and academics. In the context of this thesis, research on professional identities strand has been particularly useful in providing interactionist and constructivist approaches to identity, which build on the premise that both the institutional structures of professional life and individual identities are discursively mediated and constantly negotiated (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999a, pp. 1-5). The strand which focuses on academic identities has supplemented my analysis by offering observations on the particularities of academic settings.

Many of the questions tackled by the literature on academic identities in the last decades focus on power. These comprise the problem of inequalities in academia, including the way they become objectified as ‘labels’ (Bourdieu,

1988) and the influence of disciplinary boundaries and differences in ‘epistemic status’ of different research fields on questions of status and career advancement (Pereira, 2017; Vuolanto, 2013). In this context, already Bourdieu (1988, pp. 43-57) brought up the issue of language in the construction of academic identities, presenting it as a means of signaling distinction within a linguistic market and an instrument of maintaining a privileged social position by members of a social class or of an intellectual formation. The intersection between questions of discourse, power and academic identity has been later explored in research on the processes of positioning in academic and intellectual life (Angermuller, 2013b; Baert, 2012), studies on the role of narratives in identity construction (N. Gross, 2002) as well as the function of writing in the construction of one’s academic identity (Ivanic, 1998).

This broad range of takes on academic identity construction reflects the different, cross-sectional orders which contribute to the shaping of academic selves: membership in the broad academic community, institutional and disciplinary affiliation, position in systems of hierarchy etc. All of these, in an interactionist approach inspired by Goffman (1969) can be seen as resources which are creatively drawn on when constructing one’s own identity in processes of positioning oneself towards other members of the community, in building narratives of self, in writing. The aim of my thesis is to show, using the example of the IA, how elements of an institutional order are used, in creative, non-linear, and non-obvious ways as ‘building blocks’ in constructing one’s ‘self’. This process of construction does not occur simply ‘within’ a person, but always in dialogue with the surrounding community. Mary Henkel, author of many studies on academic identity, argues:

*[academic] identities are, first and foremost, shaped and reinforced in and by stable communities and the social processes generated within them (...). Through such conversations individuals learn not only a language but a way of understanding the world, through the ideas,*

*cognitive structures and experience expressed in that language. (...) [Individual and collective identities are] a synthesis of (internal) self definition and the (external) definitions of oneself offered by others. (Henkel, 2005, pp. 156-157)*

I will return to the topic of academic identity in section 3.3. where I discuss the effects of structural transformations of HEIs, and the REF in particular on academics' identities.

### ***2.3. The relationship between academia and the non-academic world***

The debate on the role of science in society is a long-standing one. Higher education institutions have always been embedded in their local contexts – the economy, agriculture, culture, trade – through numerous links to surrounding structures of power (monarchy, aristocracy, clergy, bourgeoisie) and through their role in educating important social actors (civil servants, lawyers, medics etc.). Through history HEIs played a role also in broader societal developments: wars, revolutions, uprisings etc. Therefore, it might seem that the idea of the 'impact' of academic research on society is hardly a new one – on the contrary, in a sense, it is inherent to the idea of the university from its inception. While this might be the case, the concrete terms and notions used to discuss the issue changed throughout the ages.

In modern reflection, the issue of the universities' embeddedness in society can be traced to Immanuel Kant's classical work "The conflict of the faculties", where the philosopher distinguishes between the Higher Faculties and the Lower Faculty. While the first – Theology, Law, Medicine – rely on authority, build on empirical experience and are of direct importance for the government, the latter – Philosophy – follows the rule of pure reason instead of laws of government and its primary function is to protect the interests of science. Though Philosophy is the *lower*

faculty, its function is to control the three higher ones, “since truth (the essential and first condition of learning in general) is the main thing, whereas the utility the higher faculties promise the government is of secondary importance” (Kant, 1979, p. 45). Importantly, for Kant the role of Philosophy was to critique the practical disciplines in their *reasoning*, not in their application (this realm would be entirely dependent on government). Today, we can think of the two Kantian faculties as two extremes on a scale of academic engagement with society and with current economic and political affairs. The university can respond to demands from national states or political formations in providing specialised knowledge and expertise – such would be the function of the Higher Faculties. It can also be a space of unconstrained, critical reflection on the rational foundation of theories which, ultimately, underlie policies and legal decisions, fulfilling the function of the Lower Faculty.

Historically, a breakthrough in thinking about the role of academia in society was to occur in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – World War II brought a disappointment with the passive attitude of scientists towards the rise of authoritarian regimes. While before WWII academics’ engagement with government was limited and primarily took the form of providing support for various undertakings, be it technical or ideological (for instance see: Ringer, 1990, on the position of German academics in social and political processes), after the war there arose a public request for a more socially embedded science (Hamann & Gengnagel, 2014). The following decades saw an increase in the political engagement of particular scientists or entire strands of research, with scientists often taking a critical stance versus the government. Such was for instance the explicit aim of Critical Theory which stressed that knowledge is constructed and legitimised in society. Therefore, theorists of the Frankfurt School put before themselves the task of a systematic critique of the scientific project, one which would carry with it emancipatory aims (Horkheimer, 2002, pp. 188-243). So, while for Kant the prerogative of philosophy was to critique the foundations of other, more “applied” disciplines, the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought with it the emergence of a new prototypical figure of the

engaged scholar who offered a critique of the situated use of knowledge in society.

A particular moment in history when the shift in academics' engagement in the course of public affairs became clearly visible was May '68 with its revolts in Paris and their aftermath in other European and American cities which saw university campuses becoming the site of protests, sit-ins, debates. Academics and intellectuals engaged with the developments, some in commenting on the theoretical underpinnings of the various movements and some even appearing physically on the sites of protest, like Jean-Paul Sartre who spoke to the protesters at the occupied Sorbonne. It is in this context that the notion of 'engaged academic' and 'committed intellectual' gained in prominence (Baert, 2015). The events of 1968 brought about many changes in mentality and organisation of society but they did not lead to the expected fundamental changes in the social fabric (including the condition of the working class). This failure of the project of May '68 has been partly attributed to the intellectuals' incapacity to truly connect to issues of groups with a different social background, coupled with their often patronising attitude (Pawling, 2013, p. 46). At the same time, Marxist humanism – the intellectual strand represented by Sartre and many of the “engaged” intellectuals of May '68 – was under attack on the level of theory from positions of post-structuralism (Foucault) and deconstructionism (Derrida). Critics claimed that:

*'anthropological' Marxism reproduced the dominant Western narrative of the intellectual as a centre and master of knowledge production, bringing wisdom from outside to those 'in ignorance', be they the working-class, women, blacks or the peoples of the Third World. Hence, this transcendent, universalizing notion of the committed intellectual had to be replaced by a more 'local' concept of engagement. (Pawling, 2013, pp. 50-51)*

It is in the context of disillusionment with the role of intellectuals in May '68 and a theoretical turn against the humanist stance that a new figure of engaged intellectual emerged. Michel Foucault denominated this new position of the 'specific intellectual', contrasting it with the 'universal intellectual' of the past (Foucault, 1984a, pp. 67-75). While the 'universal intellectual' cast himself as a 'spokesman of the universal' or the 'consciousness/conscience of us all' and believed to be reflectively representing a universality which the proletariat expressed unconsciously, the modern engaged intellectual would choose much more local and limited aims. The new intellectuals would no longer be 'great writers' but rather scientists, researchers working in specific narrow fields, "advisors and experts for technocratic decision-makers" (Angermuller, 2015, p. 67). Foucault gives the example of Oppenheimer and nuclear physics, but also his own work in helping to establish the Prison Information Group (GIP) can be seen as such an intervention. Thus, a new 'intellectual generation' emerged, one of scholars who wanted not just to critique political developments from 'a fortress of thought', as critical theorists allegedly did (Jeffries, 2016, p. 19) or to lecture and enlighten the less educated classes (a position attributed to Sartre), but who strived to employ their knowledge of the workings of society in an almost technical way.

We might be tempted to see the 'universal intellectual' as the counterpart of the Kantian philosopher of the Lower Faculty, while the 'specific intellectual' of the French post-68 intellectual generation would be a representative of the 'Higher Faculty', or, presently, the controversial figure of 'expert' (a scientist ready to advise governmental and corporate clients on technocratic issues). This would however be an oversimplification. Foucault does see an important space for political engagement of contemporary 'specific' intellectuals. They occupy a strategic position in the core of economic relations but also have a privileged role in the production of discursive regimes. It is precisely there – "in ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth" – that lay their potential for political struggle (Foucault, 1984c, p. 75).

While the foundations of the continental academic tradition can be traced to Kantian critical philosophy and Humboldtian ideas of necessity of basic research and academic autonomy from external pressure (Humboldt, 1993), the foundational ideas of British HE are different. The conceptualization of the role of scientific inquiry offered in John Henry Newman's seminal "The idea of a University" (1854/ 1982) is very different to what Kant proposed a hundred years earlier – instead of being an end in itself research is to serve societal needs. Even 'blue skies research' has a practical role, namely, preparing the mind for practical occupations. This approach is very much in line with the British tradition of utilitarianism.

In recent years, in the context of the transformations in the HE industry, the relationship between academia and the surrounding environment (business, civil society, culture etc.) has been targeted by policymakers and university managers. There has been an observable increase in the symbolic importance of applied scientific disciplines and collaborations of scholars with their social and economic environment (E3M, 2012; European Commission, 2003). This focus on tangible outcomes of research activity can of course be linked to the previously-mentioned concept of knowledge-based economy. Numerous initiatives aimed at linking universities with external partners have been launched. These have focused on two areas: firstly, enhancing individual academics' autonomy and the responsibility in conducting entrepreneurial activities (for analysis of this process in the British context see: McGettigan, 2013) and secondly, valorising the growing role of universities as business undertakings contributing to the national economy as well as instruments in national policy agendas (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2007).

The issue of embeddedness of academia and academics in society, the purpose of the existence of basic research and the relationship between the different faculties (or, as we would say today – disciplines) are questions which have been asked and discussed as long as universities as institutions have existed. Universities, and particular disciplines within them have long had to perform 'balancing acts' between 'pure' autonomy and 'impure'

social relevance (Hamann & Gengnagel, 2014). Today such balancing acts are performed by HE as a sector, by particular institutions and by individual academics against an ever-changing horizon of societal needs, political expectations, economic requirements and policy programmes targeting the position of universities in society (Bacevic, 2017). While the above-discussed literature theorises the role of academia and academics in societies, the current thesis enriches the picture by presenting in detail a particular historical ‘problematization’ of the area of academics’ engagement with society and by showing how the question of social embeddedness of academic research is played out in constructions of academic self in text and talk.

#### ***2.4. Problems of academic evaluation***

Evaluation practices have always played an important role in scholarly activity, as they are a source of recognition on both an individual level and an institutional level, signalling inclusion or exclusion of particular ideas, researchers or even disciplines into the field of scholarly work (Gieryn, 1983; Hamann, 2017, p. 1; Lamont & Molar, 2002). Academics evaluate when they decide what constitutes valuable knowledge, which scholars should be regarded as legitimate and influential, which institutions should be considered as the most prestigious, which research ideas should be pursued and which ones abandoned, etc.

Academic evaluation – which for centuries remained largely informal and often based on non-explicit or hard-to-pin-down factors (such as reputation) that could differ significantly depending on the field (Hamann & Beljean, 2017) has in recent decades become more institutionalised, explicit and uniform and it has also been linked to funding (Hamann, 2017). While traditionally it was academics who were considered authorities in the evaluation of scientific work (indeed this is the guiding principle of peer review), nowadays crucial decisions related to value-making in HE increasingly depend on policymakers as well as funding and

managerial bodies within institutions (Power, 1997, pp. 99-101). This development can be linked to the importance of the global flow of knowledge (for instance in the case of world university rankings), the growing technical possibilities of handling large-scale data (such as bibliometric methods) and the general turn to NPM, with its demands of accountability and free-market competition (Neave, 2012).

In the following sections I look at two main methods of assessing academic work – peer review and bibliometrics and I introduce the notion of performance-based research funding systems. This is the background against which I will later situate REF and the IA. I also discuss the existing literature on academic evaluation and on the IA specifically.

While currently many countries have developed incredibly complex systems of evaluation, they are usually built on one of the two principle methods – peer review and bibliometrics – or a mixture of the two. Understanding their nature, the differences between them, and the historical shift in assessment methods helps grasp the specific context of emergence of particular performance-based research funding systems.

#### **2.4.1. Peer review and bibliometrics**

Peer review is the longer-standing method of assessment. Procedures reminiscent of peer review can be found as early as the 10<sup>th</sup> century, in the form of professional notes kept by medics in the Arabic world (Kelly, Sadeghieh, & Adeli, 2014) and later as book reviews commissioned in the period of Reformation for the purpose of censorship (Lipscombe, 2016). The first recognized scientific review can be traced back to 1752 when it was adapted by “Philosophical Transactions”, a journal founded by the Royal Society of London for the purpose of establishing precedence in scientific discoveries (Spier, 2002).

According to the principle of peer review in publishing, each piece of scientific writing would need to first be inspected by a group of qualified colleagues, whose task it is to ensure the satisfactory quality of papers published. Peer review is based on the assumption that the value of scientific work can be assessed primarily by other members of the scientific community, due to their unique knowledge and insight into the field. With the increase in the volume and complexity of research this initially simple procedure developed into a more complex, formalized approach with strict criteria, regulations regarding the appointment of external reviewers, anonymity, ethics, data processing (e.g. recently – forms of open access reviewing). In its developed form, peer review has become the “gold standard” in assessing the quality of academic work (Shema, 2014). It is used in decisions regarding publication, promotion proceedings and in the allocation of funding in the form of research grants. Incidentally, the peer review process applied in allocating funding was developed independently of journal peer review (Burnham, 1990). It was first used in the late 19th century in the USA, rapidly gaining momentum in the first decades of the 20th century (Guston, 2001) in connection to its wide employment by the National Science Foundation.

There is a wealth of research on peer-review, particularly in the context of publication proceedings (Overbeke & Wager, 2003) but also on grant committees (Lamont, 2009). Researchers have focused primarily on the fairness and predictability of such procedures, touching upon issues such as the role of chance (S. Cole, Cole, & Simon, 1981), the reproduction of existing hierarchies within the academic community (Hamann, 2016b), possible gender-bias (Mutz, Bornmann, & Hans-Dieter, 2012) etc. There are a number of criticisms of peer review: it is cumbersome, time- and resource- consuming and it delays the publication of research results. In recent years, the shortcomings of peer review were highlighted by several hoaxes in which nonsensical, clearly erroneous or plagiarised papers were published despite supposedly having undergone a review process (Kelly et al., 2014). The last decade has seen an advent of so-called “predatory journals”, which claim to be peer-reviewed, but in fact perform only

limited editorial work or employ unqualified individuals (Sorokowski, Kulczycki, Sorokowska, & Pisanski, 2017). Additionally, detractors of peer review have pointed to the fact that principles of competence and impartiality are not always adhered to, that reviewers can be biased or err, and that the process itself tends to favour mainstream theories and concepts (Gillies, 2010). It is not surprising that in view of these shortcomings of peer review, and with the development of databases and computational methods, computer-assisted methods of evaluation started gaining in influence (Wilsdon, 2015).

The underlying idea of bibliometrics – measuring the frequency of quotations – was first put forward by two researchers in the field of Sociology of Science, Jonathan and Stephen Cole (1973). Though the proposal to evaluate the impact of a field, a group of researchers, a journal or a particular paper based on the number of quotations, was initially received with some reluctance, it has since become widely adopted (Weingart, 2005). Currently, two main types of metrics are used: publication- or citation-based. In the publication-based model what is evaluated is the number and quality of publications (assessed on the basis of lists of journals, based either on their impact-factor or dawn up centrally by commissions); in the case of citation-based bibliometrics the number of times a paper was cited is crucial. Finally, recent years have seen an advent of altmetrics, i.e. alternative metrics which calculate citations on websites, in social media, the number of readers in citation-manager programmes etc. (Priem, Taraborelli, & Cameron, 2010).

In contrast to peer review, bibliometrics focuses on the *reach* and not necessarily the *quality* of research. This method can only be used as a technique of academic assessment on the assumption that reach is equivalent to quality, or is a good proxy for it (an often-quoted counterexample would be a paper extensively cited as being *wrong*). The principle of bibliometrics is to compare quotation numbers only within one discipline, as each discipline has its own citation patterns – but how does one draw boundaries between disciplines in today's interdisciplinary world

of research? The incomparability of fields is another problematic aspect highlighted by the opponents of bibliometrics-based assessment. Furthermore – the obtained bibliometric results will be only as reliable as the databases used – and currently their coverage of many fields of research (especially in SSH) is far from perfect (Falagas, Pitsouni, Malietzis, & Pappas, 2008).

The trend to use different numeric indicators (such as bibliometrics, but also rankings, league tables, funding figures etc.) to assess the quality of research has been constantly strengthening in academia over the last decade, prompting the metaphor of the rising ‘metric tide’ (Wilsdon, 2015). While metrics and indicators were eagerly implemented by the administration of many universities, grant distributors and governments, they are also widely contested by researchers in the field of HE and evaluation (Münch, 2014; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Szadkowski, 2015) and academic communities worldwide (see for instance the DORA declaration: American Society for Cell Biology, 2012).

#### **2.4.2. Performance-based research funding systems**

Performance-based research funding systems are complex systems of distributing funding on a national scale, based on the assessment of research quality. The RAE was the first system of this sort, and due to its primacy, robustness, the comparative transparency of the policy-making and evaluation procedures as well as the amount of research carried out thereon (including many policy reports commissioned by the organizer), it has remained an important point of reference for policymakers also beyond the boundaries of the UK.

Diana Hicks (2012) divides performance-based research funding systems into categories according to the unit of analysis, frequency and census period, and method of measurement. The unit of analysis can be a single researcher (as in Spain and New Zealand), a research group or cluster (in

Hong Kong), a field-in-a-university (Poland, UK, Australia), or an entire university (e.g. Germany, Portugal, Italy, Slovakia, Norway, Denmark). The census period varies from country to country: from a yearly exercise in Norway (though a different set of disciplines is assessed every year), through every four years in Poland and Portugal, or every five-six years in the UK (Kulczycki, 2017). The two main methods of measurement are peer review and bibliometric indicators – these can also be combined. In chapter 5 I will describe REF as a performance-based funding system and relate the IA to similar initiatives in other countries.

The above-described methods of academic assessment are in constant dialogue with each other and constitute a backdrop against which new evaluation procedures – such as the assessment of impact – emerge. REF is primarily an expert-review based exercise, so it is the literature on peer-review which will be most relevant. However, the discussion of metrics in the paragraphs above was also necessary, as IA was established in a sense in opposition to metrics, or as a counterbalance to them (see section 5.1). The advent of ‘research impact’ introduced a new aspect of evaluation, raised questions as to the possible methods of its assessment, and created a new ground on which ‘classical’ themes of evaluation research could be tested.

## ***2.5 Research on academic evaluation***

Research on evaluation processes in academia has traditionally been conducted within the field of Sociology of Science (Merton, 1973); however, with the emergence of centrally-organised performance-based research funding systems there have been numerous interventions from the field of management and policy-making. Research on academic evaluation has often focused on verifying if particular normative standards (impartiality, objectivity, lack of bias) are maintained. The majority of the existing studies are quantitative and often attempt offering solutions to concrete problems related to policy-making in the area of research

assessment. As such, research in this area often lacks a more reflexive dimension which could be provided by including qualitative perspectives. It has been argued that in research on peer review there “remains a huge gap between an unpredictable jumble of anecdotal insider knowledge and conspiracy theories (...) on the one hand, and superficial knowledge based on statistical indicators, on the other” (Hirschauer, 2010, pp. 73-74). However, there exist notable examples of studies which offer pragmatic, interactionist, constructivist and qualitative approaches to academic practices in which evaluation is seen as a situated practice linked to concrete contexts and interactions between individuals (Knorr Cetina, 1981; Lamont, 2009; Myers, 1985b).

The notion of evaluation can be broadened to include non-official evaluative situations including all everyday interactions in which value is attributed to particular objects, areas of activity, social subjects – such as making choices between two activities, purchases, proposals. It is this broadening of the concept of evaluation that led to the emergence of a new field of Sociology of Evaluation and Valuation which investigates the creation of hierarchies of worth in the process of production, diffusion, assessment and institutionalization of value, as well as phenomena related to meritocracy and inequality (Lamont, 2012). Value-making is also linked with identity issues – for instance the construction of class identity is connected to personal values (Lamont, 1992, 2000). Sociology of Evaluation and Valuation adopts a constructivist position, according to which values, including ‘academic excellence’ and ‘originality’, would not be considered as objectively existing in the external world and waiting to be assessed, but rather as historically contingent and co-constructed by those who assess, not only in formal evaluations, but also in mundane practices of valuation and positioning (Angermuller, 2013b; Baert, 2012).

This thesis draws from the field of Sociology of Valuation and Evaluation in conceptualizing impact assessment in REF as a situated practice which occurs in interactions between individuals who actively construct values (the criteria of evaluation) through discourse. I believe my work will

contribute to existing research on evaluation practices in offering a qualitative, reflexive perspective where usually quantitative or normative approaches prevail. Rather than focusing on the results of the assessment, it aims to shed light on the process; rather than zooming in on the panellists, it highlights the position of those who are assessed. Finally, where many studies approach existing systems of evaluation as a given, I try to problematize its inception, showing that the emergence of the IA is linked to the co-occurrence of several larger tendencies in academia and an effect of a contingent, situated debate.

## **2.6. *Body of research on ‘impact’ in REF***

Research impact as an element of evaluation has appeared relatively recently so the literature on this practice and its consequences is still limited. However, due to the fact that REF is such an important element of the academic order in Britain, and also a point of reference for policymakers abroad, there has been considerable interest in the issue and new publications appear regularly.

The most important and probably most influential studies on REF2014 and the IA are ones carried out internally by the organizer of the exercise (eg. HEFCE, 2015; HEFCE et al., 2015), or outsourced to external companies or institutes (Farla & Simmonds, 2015; Schäfer, 2016), as well as a report commissioned by the government – the “Stern Review” (Stern, 2016). Given their status as research commissioned by the policymakers these studies have a twofold importance for this thesis – first of all they constitute a rich source of information on the REF processes and the results of the evaluation; secondly, they themselves contribute to putting forward or consolidating certain views or attitudes to impact as an element of evaluation. While some of the independently-conducted studies also offer opinions or propose solutions, the reach and influence of the commissioned work is by far greater.

In the context of this thesis, the most important among the commissioned studies are the extensive reports on the aspect of ‘impact’ carried out by King’s (King’s College London and Digital Science, 2015) and two qualitative studies conducted by RAND Europe. These focus on the aspect of preparing impact submissions, investigating the primary benefits and burdens for the institutions (Manville et al., 2014), and on the stage of impact assessment, identifying the challenges in this new practice (Manville et al., 2015). The first one of the RAND reports offers insights into institutional cultures and individuals’ reactions to the assessment via qualitative analysis. While the report focuses predominantly on responses to minute aspects the REF regulations – which are not of immediate importance to this thesis – it contains also interesting reflections on processes accompanying the introduction of the IA. Most importantly, the authors point to the occurrence of ‘culture shift’ in HE institutions in connection to the introduction of the Agenda (Manville et al., 2014, p. 69). This shift would consist in the appearance of new institutional strategies, processes and procedures. The authors of the report caution the policymaker that “[t]he divergence in the views and attitudes presented here [in the report] suggests that there is a risk that if the HE funding councils do not deal with the issues at the faculty level the culture shift and change in behaviour ... will not be sustained” (Ibid.). The above-cited reflection is precious for my analysis, as it describes exactly the locus of the operation of the IA in which I am interested – i.e. the way in which policy actively acts on the individual. My analysis aims to develop in more depth how this cultural shift occurs on the level of the institution and of the individual subjects which populate it.

The second one of RAND’s reports contains a section on the calibration exercise that preceded the actual evaluation which is particularly important for the present thesis. The authors of the study report that the panellists “commented positively on calibration as ‘creating a shared understanding of impact’” (Manville et al., 2015, p. xii). This was necessary as initially “the sub-panels had different interpretations of impact and that these discussions [during the calibration exercise] allowed them to

agree what was and what was not impact and to ‘find a view of impact that both the academic and user members could sign up to’” (Ibid., p. 25). In chapter 6 I will argue that similar processes of debate, explanation and adjustment of understanding, both on individual and group level, occurred in the introductory phase of the Agenda’s existence, where ‘a view of impact’ to which both policymakers and academics ‘could sign up to’ was sought.

Lord Stern’s review of REF was a very high-profile document, which summed up the entire REF experience and made recommendations for future exercises. It firmly endorsed the introduction of impact and consolidated its role by stating that “[i]mpact is clearly one of the success stories of REF2014” (Stern, 2016, p. 21). The report presented impact creation as one of the core academic activities, alongside the traditional two areas of teaching and research (e.g. “It is right that they [HEIs] should have different strategies in respect of their focus on teaching, research and impact”). The report reiterated statements of the previous studies on the influence of the IA on values and attitudes: “the new impact element of the REF has contributed to an evolving culture of wider engagement” (Ibid., p 22); “[the exercise] has driven an increased awareness across all research communities of issues of impact” (p.10). The suggestions made by Stern regarding the future of impact include: further “widening and deepening” the notion of impact to give more recognition to “impact on public engagement and understanding, on cultural life” (p.36) as well as “the impact of research on innovation in teaching theory and practice” (p.28). Hence, Stern’s review provides grounding for two of the arguments I will make in this thesis. Firstly, that the notion of ‘impact’ is constructed in the course of a polyphonic debate, which includes numerous voices (including the one of Lord Stern) and which takes place over time (rather than being fixed in a particular moment, already with a final meaning); and secondly, that the introduction of ‘impact’ has affected academic communities influencing their *awareness*, but also their behaviour and self-presentation, leading to an emergence of a new ‘culture of wider engagement’.

A final report which ought to be mentioned is one produced by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) (2014). Although it was not as rigorous as the previously-mentioned RAND and King's studies and not as influential as Stern's report, its importance lies in its focus on the 'impact' element. It is based on survey and focus-group data collected during a workshop with individuals involved in the impact submissions for REF2014. It focused on the articulation between the notion (and practice) of public engagement (the focus of the workshop's organizer's activity) and impact (as well as a few similar notions, such as 'knowledge transfer'). The document is important for this study as it captures attitudes towards impact immediately following the exercise. These suggest confusion around the assessment criteria, exhaustion with the process and sometimes tensions within institutions, often expressed in quite emotional terms (pp. 8,17). The element of confusion in the early phases of the existence of impact as well as the role of emotion in the reception of the agenda is also visible in my research – something I will return to in section 7.1. Furthermore, like Stern, the authors of the NCCPE report remark on the broader changes in academic life sparked by the IA, they note that the sector recognises impact as an influential reality, one which has already started to affect practices and attitudes: “[the Impact Agenda] has encouraged a view of PE [public engagement] as core business not just ‘good intentions’; it has given PE a ‘harder edge’ in terms of its financial and strategic value to the institution; PE is now regarded as an essential part of research” (p.2). Importantly however, the authors of the report see this change as continuous (rather than a flash-shift) and recognise the agency on the side of academics. For instance, one of the take-away points of the workshop was to “[r]ecognise that we are still at the beginning of the ‘journey’ to embed impact, and that much work is still to be done to effect a lasting culture change” (p.4); authors commented also on “the memorable phrase ‘impact literacy’ [which] was coined to describe the ongoing challenge of developing shared understandings and intelligent, critical engagement with impact” (p.5). The notions of ‘embedding impact’ and creating ‘impact literacy’ in order to create a ‘culture change’, mentioned in the report in a passing way, fall in with the analysis presented in the present study, which suggests that

procedures around ‘literacy’, understood literally as teaching how to write (in a new genre), were crucial to the ‘emergence’ and consolidation of impact.

The remaining publications on impact and the IA can be broadly divided according to the themes they pursue and the methods they employ. One large body of texts is composed of theoretical reflections on the place of the Agenda in broader socio-economic trends and its potential influence on academia (Franzen, Weingart, & Rödder, 2012; Hill, 2016; Watermeyer, 2012). This strand includes a large group of texts which present a critique of the policy, exposing the potential dangers it carries: endangering blue-skies research, academic autonomy as well as discouraging critical studies, increasing the associated administrative burden, the impossibility of predicting future impact, the need to avoid a narrow view of *economic* impact and a possible negative effect of the agenda on the academic community (Brewer, 2011; Gunn & Mintrom, 2016; Inglis, 2012, pp. 252-253; Knowles & Roger, 2014; Martin, 2011; Watermeyer, 2016). Another sizable group of texts focuses on the responses of academics to the introduction of the IA. These are usually based on interviews conducted with academics (Smith & Stewart, 2017; Watermeyer, 2014), sometimes supplemented by an analysis of a corpus of the impact CSs (Smith & Stewart, 2017), surveys (Chikoore, 2016) or a mix of approaches (Meagher & Martin, 2017). Alongside reiterating the above-mentioned points in a more situated context (Watermeyer, 2014) these studies also look into questions of emotion, identity and integrity (Chubb et al., 2016). Some attempt to problematize reactions of academics depending on their discipline (Chikoore, 2016; Chubb, 2017), or zoom into the changing role of impact in particular disciplinary communities, both those associated with ‘engaged’ research, like social policy (Smith & Stewart, 2017) or education (Laing et al., 2018) and those considered ‘pure’, like maths (Meagher & Martin, 2017) and philosophy (Frodeman, 2017). Few are purely quantitative approaches on the IA, like the corpus-based study looking at the association between keywords in CSs and their ‘rating’ (Van Noorden, 2015) in order to compile a list of ‘power words’.

In terms of method, my approach differs from the above, in that I focus much more closely on the linguistic form of the text and talk produced by academics in the context of the Agenda. While in the above studies CSs were only used as a source of ‘content’ (such as keywords, topics), I closely examine the *genre*, arguing that it is a core component of impact as a policy. My corpus of interviews is less extensive than many of the ones used in the above studies, but it has the advantage of including interviewees who were involved in the inception and implementation of the policy in different roles: from policymakers, through university managers, impact officers to CS authors. My data is also quite coherent, focusing on one interdisciplinary field of linguistics, which offers an insight into the reaction of a particular academic community to institutional change. I have approached the collected data in a different way than other researchers interested in impact. Unlike many of the above studies, my thesis does not try to *reify* positions of academics by claiming that there exist particular polarised attitudes towards impact (for instance rejection of ‘impact’ as an oppressive exercise versus its praise as a reflexive practise) (Watermeyer, 2014, p. 274), or ‘groups’ of academics who will hold particular views depending on their discipline, emotional disposition, or the alignment or misalignment of the policy with their own research goals (Chubb & Watermeyer, 2017, pp. 560-566). I look at academics’ responses to interview questions the same way as I look at their CSs: as a linguistic performance, which not only ‘represents’ a reality, but also (and perhaps more importantly), interprets and *creates* it. I try to show through the data, that ‘impact’ can be *both* oppressive and liberatory, and that one and the same person might dismiss or despise impact *and* be on a certain level seduced by it. Instead of showing what impact *is* I try to analyse what it *does*, how it *operates*. Instead of pointing to particular attitudes as if they had an independent existence, I try to show how procedures, practices and linguistic devices are put into place in order to conduct behaviour and, ultimately, also to affect attitudes.

There exist studies of the IA which resonate with the understanding of ‘impact’ I propose. Derrick, together with Samuel (2017; 2016), and on her own (2018a, 2018b) elaborate on a unique empirical study of REF panellists’ understandings of impact. Based on qualitative interviews conducted before and after the assessment, the authors examine the question of panel members’ baseline assumptions and values, look at the ‘groupthink’ which took place in panel groups and argue that tensions around the understanding of certain terms (particularly ‘impact’ itself) as well as the perceived expertise and power distribution among panellists affect the results of the evaluation in important ways. Derrick and Samuel’s studies are an important precedent to my own, as they present the emergence of a common understanding of impact as a process which occurs within an ad-hoc community and which is influenced by the evaluators’ own positioning and sense of self. It also supplements my thesis by offering a unique insight into the practices of a group which I found difficult to access – panellists. The juxtaposition of Derrick and Samuel’s studies with my own would allow drawing conclusions on conceptualisations of impact in different disciplines, as they chose those related to health and medical research (panel A) and I focus on linguistics (panel C/D). While Derrick and Samuel mainly focus on the *content* of the participants’ statements, tracking the most salient attitudes and observations, I see the interview as a performance and a site of meaning-making. For this reason, I usually also cite my data more extensively, aiming to show not just snippets containing key expressions, but also the broader context of the utterance, which often suggests tension or hesitation which accompany meaning-making. In my study, I show that negotiation of views on impact does not only occur in the context of explicit deliberation (in evaluation contexts) but also in the process of adapting oneself to new practices and even in the course of explicating one’s views in the course of the interview (see sections 4.2.4 and 9.5).

The second study which is of paramount importance to my own is Michael Power’s article “How accounting begins: Object formation and the accretion of infrastructure” (2015) which casts the IA as an accounting

process. The assessment of impact in REF is an interesting practice to study, first of all because of its novelty (and, as the author states: “opportunities to study the creation of ‘new’ accounting systems are rare” – p. 43), and secondly because of the non-metric nature of the exercise (p.50). Power argues that the introduction of a new accounting procedure proceeds in four steps: policy ‘object formation’, ‘object elaboration’, ‘activity orchestration’ and ‘practice stabilization’ in infrastructure (p.44). The first two, focused on giving shape to the initially vague notion (in this case ‘impact’) take place on field level, where large actors like the UK Treasury and the UK Funding Councils operate, while the next two, focused on developing practices around the notion, take place in organizations. Power convincingly argues that impact as an accounting practice has multiple sources of beginning and that as a notion it has the character of a ‘boundary object’ (Star Leigh, 2010) – one which is flexible in its interpretation but must be made specific on a local level in order to be operational. He then draws attention to the CS as an instrument of giving shape to understandings of impact (p.44), finally concluding that it is the infrastructure which ‘embodies’ initially vague objects. The understanding of impact put forward in Power’s paper is very much in line with concepts that emerged out of my own study. There are two main differences between our approaches: while Power looks at the IA from the point of view of accounting, my study is grounded in the field of linguistics. Power does mention “the performance discourse of impact” which has become established as effect of the Agenda (p.43) but he does not problematize this idea, link it to linguistic concepts or provide concrete examples of this discourse and its operation. His study is based on “deep participant observation” in a university-level committee which proceeded the exercise, reading policy documents, observing and participating (as CS author) in their implementation. In contrast, my own analysis draws on a diverse set of empirical data collected by an independent researcher who was not involved in the evaluation exercise. Hence, while I generally agree with the thrust of Power’s analysis, I base my arguments on a closer reading of a larger set of empirical data, to offer a complex description of what *the*

*discourse of impact* is and what role it plays in the subjectivation of academics.

My study aims to take the type of analysis that Power and Derrick & Samul offer one step further in describing the entire process of emergence of the IA – from the inception of the policy, through its implementation in institutions, up to the final effects on verbal self-presentation after the exercise. Apart from its broad scope in terms of chronology, what distinguishes my study is its' focus on the role of language and the use of discourse analytical methodology, which I explain in detail in the following chapter.

### **3. REF and Impact Agenda – Context and Background**

#### ***3.1. Structural transformations of Higher Education Institutions***

While the area this thesis explores – the British HE system and in particular the REF with its Impact Agenda – has its distinctive characteristics, shaped by local historical developments, it is also subject to international trends and tendencies. Key economic phenomena which have influenced changes in the shape of academia have taken place since the 1980s and include: 1) the implementation of the post-Fordist model of production, associated with a drive to increase the level of productivity, speed of operation and flexibility (Vostal, 2016, pp. 44-49), 2) forms of neo-liberal government which subsume social welfare to the dictate of free-market economy (Szadkowski, 2015, pp. 45-50) and 3) the rise of New Public Management (NPM), a policy aimed at improving the services of the public sector, by subjecting its institutions to market rules, such as accountability, rationalisation and ‘value for money’ (Keenoy, 2005, pp. 303-304). At the same time, general processes of globalisation of the HE system (Becher & Trowler, 2001, pp. 2-4) lead to increased levels of student and staff mobility and growing competitiveness between HEIs (Zajda & Rust, 2016). All of these factors arguably contribute to the weakening of the humanistic model of education – often associated with the influence of the legacy of Humboldt and with the policies of UNESCO – in favour of ‘the economic and techno-determinist paradigm’ propelled by international policy organizations (Zajda, 2010, p. xvi).

These trends, jointly, have led to a host of significant effects within HE: the establishment of complex auditing practices (Power, 1997), which, according to some, have developed around themselves an entire ‘audit culture’ (Strathern, 2000); the growing importance of rankings and league tables (Marginson, 2007), resulting in a stratification of universities on

national and international levels (Münch, 2014); increasing inequalities in power, prestige and remuneration between academics (Angermuller, 2017; T. Miller, 2011; Paye, 2013); a ‘commercialisation’ of research, i.e. a focus on commercial return from investment in science, and the adoption of quasi-market approaches (Bendixen & Jacobsen, 2017, pp. 21-23); the primacy of quantitative factors over qualitative ones, sometimes labelled as ‘numerocracy’ (Angermuller, 2013a; Angermuller & Maeße, 2015). These phenomena, and their collateral effects have been gathered under umbrella-terms such as ‘entrepreneurial university’ (Clark, 1998), ‘knowledge factory’ (The Edu-factory Collective, 2009) or ‘academic capitalism’ (Münch, 2014; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Britain has been at the forefront of the above-described changes. In fact, Margaret Thatcher’s ascension to prime minister in the UK (1979) – together with Ronald Reagan’s election as president a year later – is considered “a symbolic inauguration of neoliberalism” (Szadkowski, 2015, pp. 46-47). The introduction of RAE in 1986 together with other measures regarding HE management introduced by Thatcher’s government, and later consolidated in the Further and Higher Education Act (1992) are often cited as exemplary cases of implementing robust accountability measures in the public sector (Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007). Currently, three decades after the initial introduction of RAE, economic realities have changed and new terms have been proposed to describe the driving concepts of policy-making in the field of science and education. Among them are ‘Global Knowledge Society’ (Meyer, Ramirez, Frank, & Schofer, 2007, pp. 204-207) and ‘Knowledge Based Economy’ (Jessop, Fairclough, & Wodak, 2008). This last notion has become prominent in policy-making, appearing notably in EU’s Lisbon Strategy which heralded a shift “to a competitive, dynamic ... digital, knowledge-based economy” (European Parliament, 2000) and in several related EU documents (e.g. European Commission, 2005). In this approach, the basis for the development of modern societies is ‘knowledge’, but understood in a rather narrow sense of innovation and technology: scientific enquiry is valued and promoted, but particularly in the form of research and development leading to the production of value in

the marketplace (rather than critical thought, knowledge for knowledge's sake etc.) (Jessop, 2008). EU documents also stress the crucial role of knowledge transfer between universities and industry and the need for 'governance', which can be understood as a synonym for 'accountability' (Robertson, 2008).

### **The REF as part of structural changes affecting academia**

The REF's Impact Agenda was created against the background of the processes described in this section. The tendencies which can be seen as particularly influential are: 1) the increase of importance of applied scientific disciplines and collaborations of scholars which their social and economic environment in the context of the turn towards a knowledge-based economy (as introduced in 2.3), 2) the rise of audit procedures (including 'the metric tide' and 'numerocracy') in the public sector in general and in HE more specifically (see section 2.4.1), and 3) the structural changes affecting HEIs, collectively described as the advent of the 'performative university' or 'academic capitalism' (see section 3.1). While these three tendencies operate on quite different levels – the economy in general, management procedures in public entities, the governance of HEIs respectively – the launch of the IA provides an answer to many of the issues which they give rise to. Used skilfully, the IA can become a tool in handling questions related to establishing the key directions of economic development, in distributing public funding and shaping the hierarchies between and within HEIs. I will argue further on that the IA was accepted and implemented because the 'problematization' of the area of 'impact' seemed a promising answer to many urgent, if not yet completely formulated, issues and needs. The introduction of this new element into the scientific field changed the balance of power also in new and unexpected ways.

### **3.2. REF and academic identity**

It does not come as a surprise that the structural changes to HEIs, affecting as they have all areas of organisation in academia – finances, management, teaching, research – have had an influence on the broadly understood conditions of academic labour. Work in academia has become more akin to employment in market-oriented sectors in its increasingly fast pace (Vostal, 2016), growing dependence on the *demand* on the side of students and research funding bodies, and a focus on ‘measurable’ effects which can be demonstrated via research income, or results of audits or rankings (Espeland & Sauder, 2007). An increase in flexible, non-tenured forms of employment (such as zero-hour contracts in the UK and adjunct faculty contracts in the USA) has led to a precarisation of academic careers – particularly in the social sciences and humanities (Armano & Murgia, 2012; Halsey, 1992; Mattoni, 2015; T. Miller, 2012). Finally, there is a perception of increasing surveillance in the academy – all aspects of an individual’s work are being closely monitored by management (Lorenz, 2012) and are subject to assessments guided by the ‘performativity principle’ (Lyotard, 1984, pp. 42-53). These shifts in the workplace environment have had effects on mental wellbeing of academics, contributing to high anxiety levels among academic subjects (Berg, Huijbens, & Larsen, 2016; Pereira, 2017). Both external factors such as changes in work organisation and employment prospects and internal ones like stress and anxiety might trigger shifts in individuals’ understanding of their professional identity, including the values they cherish and the way they make sense of their role as academics and researchers (Harris, 2005).

The influence of new, market-oriented forms of management on academic identities had been studied as early as 1997, by Henkel who diagnosed:

*[academics] are struggling to hold onto the values and modes of working that belonged to an elite system: modes of specialisation, divisions of labour and institutional*

*governance that stem from the dominance of the discipline in concepts of academic identity and professionalism (...) They hope that if their institutions are sufficiently successful, these apparent essentials will not have to change (pp. 142-143).*

The above fragment points to a sort of double-bind present in the academics' conceptions of their professional role in a changing environment. Academics cling to the traditional academic values of "equality and community among academics" as well as "individual autonomy" (Henkel, 1997, p. 142), in the belief that they will continue to enjoy these freedoms if their institutions prove their mettle in the many competitions of the capitalist marketplace. In a bid to maintain the status quo, academics make concessions to a management system which, in the long term, undermines traditional academic modes of work. The effect of compliance with managerial procedures on academic identity has been studied also in the case of RAE. A qualitative study which involved the participants of 2001 edition of the exercise (Harley, 2002) found that academics who benefited from the exercise were nevertheless often opposed to it in principle. Harley explains this phenomenon pointing to the contradiction between the values promoted by the exercise and those important to academic identity:

*[A]cademics are losing their sense of identity and purpose in their submission to the RAE (...). Conscious of the violence done to traditional academic values, they judged themselves, either individually or collectively, to be at least in part responsible and, for that reason, felt all the more frustrated, somewhat compromised and just a little bit ashamed. (Harley, 2002, pp. 200-201)*

The reconciling of compliance with traditional academic standards will be one of the questions I take up in this study in the context of the IA. The answer I offer does not focus on the apparent contradiction of such behaviour, but on the complexity of (academic) identity which allows a

conscious ‘management’ of different, even apparently contradictory values and attitudes.

The role of *values* in the previously-mentioned ‘double bind’ between an idealised vision of the academic profession and the less attractive reality which however must be accepted in order to maintain the ‘myth’ was explored by Rosalind Gill (2009). She starts her analysis by drawing a parallel between neoliberal realities of academic work and employment in the creative sector, as analysed by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005). The labour conditions of academics and artists share many characteristics, such as frequently ‘bulimic’ patterns of occupation associated with project-work, erasure of boundaries between work and play, high levels of mobility, equally high levels of insecurity and anxiety. More importantly, both for artists and academics success only comes after a huge investment of time and effort, one which may seem futile if rewards in the form of recognition and a stable financial condition do not materialise. Yet, even when this pessimistic scenario comes true, academics (like artists) are reluctant to abandon their careers for other industries, due to a passionate attachment to their work posts (or ‘projects’), deep identification with the profession, a feeling of vocation which renders working in any other sector almost inconceivable and induces the subjects to endure all the downsides of their condition. Finally, Gill argues that academics as a group are characterised by individualism and ambition, which leads them to see the solution to problems (lack of recognition, poor pay) in more work (or more efficient work) rather than institutional change. This, in Gill’s view, is an example of *governmental* rule – the management conducted through responsabilising the subject, who will self-monitor and self-regulate him or herself through ‘technologies of the self’ (Foucault, 1988b).

Gill’s observations on the nature of academic work in times of neo-liberalism will be pertinent for this study – in particular her representation of academic identity as being forged in between two major forces: on the one hand the potent powers of the market and government which shape the contemporary workplace, and on the other hand the equally potent internal

desires and passions which shape individuals' values and aims. The harnessing of the internal by the external is precisely the site where governmentality happens. In this thesis, I will follow the general line of Gill's reasoning, but rather than describing an entire system, I will zoom in on one historic example, the REF and the Impact Agenda, which I will analyse systematically.

## **4. REF and Impact Agenda – history of the exercise and regulations**

### ***4.1. History of RAE and REF***

The Research Excellence Framework is a performance-based evaluation system used to assess the quality of academic research in the UK since 2014. It is the successor of the Research Assessment Exercise – a method of academic evaluation first introduced in the United Kingdom in 1986. There have been six editions of RAE: 1986, 1989, 1992, 1996, 2001, 2008. While RAE was first conceived as a light-touch way of assessing the quality of research conducted at British universities, with time it developed into a complex and cumbersome practice, much critiqued by academics and academic managers.

The reform of RAE can be traced back to two policy reports – one conducted by Sir Gareth Roberts (2003) for the UK funding bodies and another carried out by the Science and Technology Select Committee's for the House of Commons (2004) – both recommended fundamental changes to the existing evaluation system. In effect, the 2006 UK budget announced that after the 2008 edition of RAE the assessment would be replaced with a cheaper, less labour-intensive and more modern system, partly based on metrics (Shepherd, 2007). An animated debate between policymakers, vice-chancellors and other representatives of academia followed (for an overview see: HEFCE, 2015, pp. 2-16). The higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) conducted a vigorous inquiry on the possibility of introducing a metrics-based assessment (Centre for Science and Technology Studies, 2007). In 2008 an initial project, including a large metrics-based component, was presented and subsequently piloted in 2008-09. However, the final report concluded that “bibliometrics are not sufficiently robust at this stage to be used formulaically or to replace expert review in the REF” (HEFCE, 2009, p. 3). Such a verdict was motivated by

several challenges related to the use of metrics, made evident in the pilot and related research. These included differences in citation patterns between disciplines, the incompleteness of databases, the fact that citation patterns reproduce inequalities in the academic world without necessarily reflecting the ‘quality of research’ etc. (for an overview of arguments on metrics see: HEFCE, 2011a; Wilsdon, 2015). Additionally – partly for the reasons mentioned above – the proposal of a metrics-based assessment was received critically by academics (Sayer, 2015, pp. 22-24).

In the same period a new proposal, namely a component which would account for “the value of public investment in research” (HEFCE, 2015, p. 9), appeared on the agenda. Assessment of user significance was already a minor element of evaluation in the engineering panels in RAE. Around 2008 the question arose if ‘impact’ could be given more significance. An initial interdisciplinary workshop on the question was held in late 2008. In January 2009, the Secretary of State’s annual letter to HEFCE indicated the two priorities of the new research policy: reducing the burden of the exercise to institutions and “take[ing] better account of the impact research makes on the economy and society” (HEFCE, 2015, p. 10). In 2009 HEFCE conducted work aimed at gauging the ground for the introduction of an impact assessment exercise – this included consultations with Expert Advisory Groups, group discussions with a variety of stakeholders and commissioning a review of international practice in impact assessment (Grant, Brutscher, Kirk, Butler, & Wooding, 2009). The model of impact assessment which was deemed most appropriate for the British system was a case study system based on qualitative assessment by expert panels.

### RQF

A case study system of impact evaluation had been developed in Australia, in the framework of a nation-wide assessment called Research Quality Framework (RQF) elaborated from 2004 to 2007 by working groups established by the Ministry for Science, Education, and Training, among them the Technical Working Group on Research Impact.

One of the respondents of this study (Interviewee 23) had been involved in the process of policy-making around the RQF. According to them, when the RQF's research impact evaluation policy was being forged, around 2004, ten years before the first REF, 'research impact' was only a vague concept. Since it was a novelty, initially there was confusion as to where to look for the necessary expertise to build up a policy around this indefinite notion. In addition, the concept itself was considered, in the words of my interviewee, "very political". This conviction was connected not only with the evaluation of impact being an initiative triggered by politicians but also in the intervention it made into the existing fragile academic balance – namely the relationship between different disciplines, perhaps most notably the friction between STEM and SSH. The interviewee explained that the introduction of 'impact' was perceived by many as a threat to the humanities which have been operating in a somewhat hostile environment. There was a longer-standing social debate about the role of SSH disciplines in which they were cast by their critics as 'elite activity' which is not relevant to the 'everyday Australian'. Finally, there was also a conflict between supporters and detractors of a metrics-based approach to evaluation.

Therefore, already at its inception as part of the Australian RQF, the launch of impact evaluation policy can be seen as an intervention into a broader social debate which includes many more stake-holders than just the evaluated academics and the policymakers (also representatives of the disciplines, influential members of the scientific community, politicians, taxpayers). Hence, we can see the concept of impact as appearing against a background of debates and conflicts which regard broad social issues related to class, local expressions of the tension between STEM and SSH as well as differences of opinion between different social and political groups.

The final proposal put forward by the Technical Working Group on Research Impact advocated a broad, holistic approach, as opposed to a more mechanistic metrics-based attitude (Donovan, 2008). It suggested that the assessment of impact should draw on a qualitative methodology, based

on peer review of evidence-based ‘impact statements’, which would include up to four ‘case studies’ per research group. The focus in the assessment would be on end-user interaction and public benefit but with particular importance given to commercial and industrial concerns. ‘Impact’ was to include social, economic, environmental and cultural effects or benefits – which constituted a broad definition. The definition itself was sourced in a bottom-up process from the academic community and learned societies, in order “to make sure that they weren’t being excluded from how impact was being constructed” (Interview 23). The scoring model of the RQF impact component in turn drew from the existing Payback framework – a system developed in Great Britain for the evaluation of the impact or ‘payback’ of health services (see: Donovan & Hanney, 2011). This process of cross-fertilization, sourcing and borrowing of concepts confirms that concepts and ideas rarely appear in a vacuum, but rather that they tend to draw on existing solutions and frameworks, often rooted in different contexts.

RQF is considered the first ever national research assessment exercise to include a comprehensive and methodologically diverse impact audit (Donovan, 2008, p. 49). Its elaboration constituted a breakthrough in terms of advancing a broad understanding of impact (engagement with culture, society, economy beyond academia – rather than just commercial return) and suggesting a qualitative/contextual (rather than quantitative) methodology. However, the RQF, with its robust impact component, never came to fruition in the proposed shape, beyond a pilot exercise. In 2007 the conservative government, which had initialized the works on RQF, was replaced by a labour one which soon announced that RQF would not proceed. In its place, a different, more metrics-driven assessment exercise was introduced (Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA – Australian Research Council, 2017). However, RQF was to become an important point of reference in developing the British Impact Agenda (Jump, 2012).

## REF

In 2010 HEFCE ran a pilot of the impact case study method, deemed the most adequate for the aims of the evaluation. The pilot was followed by a report which concluded that “the case study method would be workable” (Technopolis Group, 2010). In 2011 the guidelines regulating the new assessment were published by HEFCE (2011b) and the deadline for submissions was set for November 2013 (see figure 1 below for a timeline of the core dates in the establishment of an impact assessment in REF).

Like in Australia, also in the UK the new evaluation policy emerged against a backdrop of different longer-standing frictions: between metrics and peer review, between STEM disciplines and SSH and a growing demand from the government, particularly the Treasury, to account for the investment in science. These constraints are reported both in the literature around the Impact Agenda (e.g. Sayer, 2015; Warner, 2015) and in the accounts of my respondents who were engaged in the policy-making process. One of my respondents, a representative of HEFCE who was closely involved in the development of the impact component in REF from its inception (Interviewee 20), presented the IA as the effect of a compromise which enabled satisfying the government’s request to incentivise the impact of research without creating excessive animosity on the side of the research community or polarizing SSH and STEM researchers, as the ‘metrics’ solution no doubt did. One commentator has referred to this accord between the government and academia, whereby the government backed out of the proposed metrics-based exercise, allowing academics to ‘do it their way’ i.e. (through peer review), while academics accepted the introduction of a new evaluation policy as a ‘Faustian bargain’ (Sayer, 2015, pp. 28-29). Without advancing such a value-laden judgement I want to draw attention to the contingent origin of the idea of impact assessment: both in Australia and in the UK ‘impact’ emerged as a possible solution to a problem related to science governance and went on to be accepted due to the current balance of power and interests in the field.

Another aspect which comes to the fore in the narrative of the British policy-maker (Interview 20) is the vagueness of the idea of impact assessment when it first enters into policymaker's field of attention and into discourse. According to the respondent, at this initial stage 'impact' was but a hazy concept without a clear definition: 'a short code for universities ensuring that the research they do gets the best chance of making a difference to society'. The account of the respondent suggests a mixture of hard and soft attitudes on the side of the government: while the introduction of a new element of assessment which would account for the real-world influence of research was non-negotiable, the concrete regulations to be implemented seem to have been of secondary importance ("do impact, but we don't care how you do it" – Interview 20). The involvement of several entities – HEFCE, the separate research councils, external advisors – contributed to this hazy idea developing into a fully-fledged exercise with a set of rules, concepts and definitions.

The history of impact evaluation goes to show that concepts and ideas can have a life of their own. The idea of impact developed in the RQF was not implemented in Australia but through the related research and publications, it found its way to the UK, and eventually influenced the shape of a different system of assessment – the REF. Interestingly, Australia is currently implementing a supplementary assessment of research impact – the EI Engagement and Impact assessment – which is modelled... on the British REF case study model (Chubb, 2017; Gunn & Mintrom, 2018, p. 39).

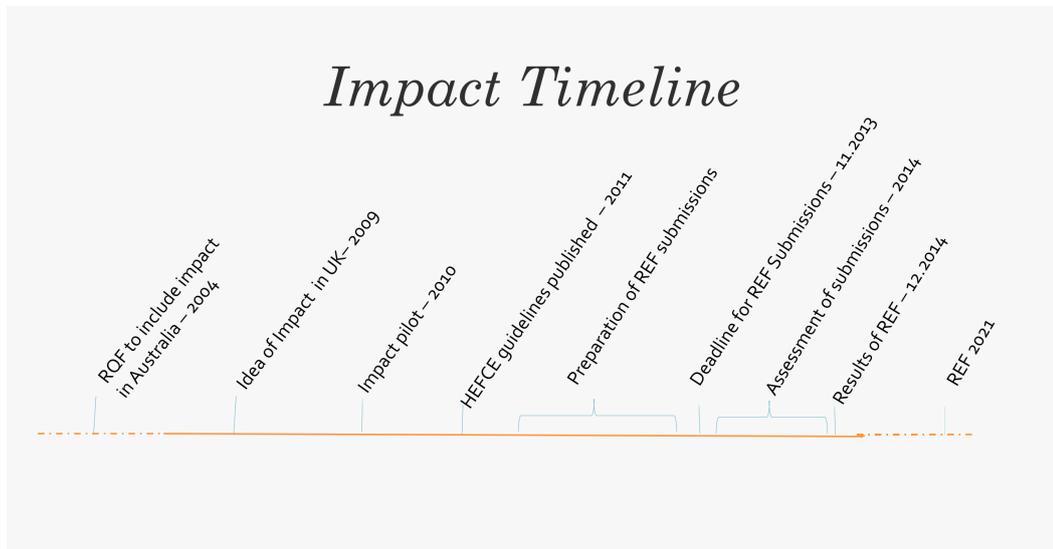
This section has highlighted the contingent origins of 'impact', showing how the idea to systematically assess research impact emerged against a background of broad social, economic and political problems, in the context of debates on academic assessment and the role of disciplines. Looking at the history of research impact assessment systems, we will see how the notions, definitions and procedures put forward were not

straightforward answers to given problems, but rather the effect of a multi-levelled, and at some points unpredictable debate.

I pointed to the role of numerous actors in instigating the idea of impact assessment (Australian government, British government, British Treasury), in negotiating the concrete meaning of the notion (Technical Working Group on Impact in Australia, the Australian learned societies, members of the British academia) and the way it would be assessed (employees of HEFCE, UK research councils). So, in section 2.3. I argued that through history different notions were used to conceptualise the relationship between academia and broader society – such as the Kantian lower and higher faculties already in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, ‘engaged academics’, ‘public intellectuals’ of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the ‘third mission’, ‘social engagement’, ‘knowledge transfer and dissemination’ of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – this section attended to the redefinition (or as we will later call it – the problematization) of this area in the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Considering the complex and intense process which led to the introduction of the new British performance-based research funding system, the final proposal which was put forward in early 2011 under the name of REF (HEFCE, 2015, p. 16), was surprisingly similar to the previously-existing RAE. While up to late 2009 REF was developed towards a metrics-based model (HEFCE, 2015, p. 11), in the final proposal the scope of metrics’ use was very limited. Metrics were only allowed as an additional means of informing peer-review judgments, and were mainly to be used in borderline cases, when there was divergence among the panellists (Wilsdon, 2015). The scope of metrics’ use was strictly limited (e.g. only data supplied by the organiser could be used) – in effect, only 11 expert panels decided to make use of metrics during REF2014 (these will not be the object of this investigation). Other changes in the assessment model included reducing the number of panels and developing the equality and diversity element in the assessment of units. As for the ‘profiles’ (or elements of performance) assessed, two remained unchanged – ‘environment’ and ‘output’ while the ‘esteem’ element was replaced by ‘research impact’. Hence, the

introduction of ‘impact’ assessment was the only major novelty of REF, and, as the organiser of the exercise admits, one which would have ‘potentially (...) much wider consequences beyond the assessment itself’ (HEFCE, 2015, p. 13).



**Figure 1 – Impact Timeline**

Core dates in the policy-making and assessment process. For a more detailed timeline covering also the policy-making process in Australia see: Chubb, 2017, p. 20.

## ***4.2. Evaluation in REF – main points***

The “Assessment framework and guidance on submissions” released by HEFCE (2012a) describes the following characteristics of REF. It is an ex-post evaluation system – evaluation takes place after the research was conducted (as opposed to ex-ante evaluation where evaluation precedes the research). The assessment is organized by the research councils of the member countries of the UK: HEFCE, Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland (DEL). HEFCE and the REF Steering Group created jointly by the research councils in 2010 had a key role in running the exercise (for the sake of simplicity, in this thesis I refer to HEFCE as the organiser). The results of REF are the basis for distribution of core funding in the period which follows the evaluation, up to the next assessment (in the case of REF 2014 it would be 2015-2021). For instance, in the 2016-2017 cycle HEFCE distributed 1,6 billion pounds (HEFCE, 2016). The explicit goal of REF is to provide accountability for public investment in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment as well as to provide benchmarking information and establish reputational yardsticks, for use within the higher education (HE) sector and for public information (HEFCE, 2011b, p. p. 4). REF is a process of ‘expert review’ – this represents a change in terminology compared to RAE, where the documents referred to ‘peer review’. This is connected to the introduction of the impact component which is assessed also by ‘expert users’ from outside of academia.

In REF assessment is conducted within 36 disciplinary units of assessment (UoAs), divided into four main panels: panel “A” covering medical and biological studies, “B” focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) disciplines, “C” on social sciences, and “D” on humanities and arts (my descriptions). On the surface, the unit of analysis in REF is a field within a university e.g. Mathematics, Theology,

Biology etc. However, in practice, it is usually a department (institute, research centre etc.) which submits to a given UoA. Hence the submission of a department working on a given field will be filed with a particular UoA (for instance a department of philosophy would most likely submit to UoA 32-philosophy, within the D main panel). Usually the results of REF are also used by departments, for instance in promotional materials stating e.g. “our department was rated 80% 4\* in the outputs profile”. However, due to the interdisciplinary nature of research conducted in many units, departments do not always submit to UoAs which would nominally seem to be the closest to their field (a problem mentioned already in 4.2.2, to which I will return in 7.2 and 7.3). Sometimes, two smaller departments drew up a joint submission; a researcher could also be included in a submission different to most of his colleagues, due to the closeness of his or her research to another discipline.

A submission from a research unit included the following elements; 1) information about research active staff (not all employees had to be included in the assessment, for instance teaching-only staff was usually excluded); 2) information on outputs of the research staff – up to 4 best publications per person from the census period (2008-2013); 3) information on research impact – an ‘impact template’ detailing the impact environment in the unit and an appropriate number of CSs; 4) information on doctorates awarded in the unit and research income; 5) information on the research environment in the unit. The submission was assessed by expert panels on the level of UoAs, while the role of the main panels was to oversee the process and make sure the criteria were applied consistently (for instance through calibration exercises). The over 1000 members of the panels were appointed by the steering group from among the academics nominated by “academic associations and other bodies with an interest in research” (HEFCE, 2010b, p. 6). In the first edition of REF 154 institutions took part in the assessment, sending in total 1911 submissions which included 191 148 outputs and 6975 CSs (Herbert, 2014).

Submissions were rated in the following way. Members of panels developed a sub-profile for every element of assessment – outputs, impact and environment. Outputs are assessed in terms of ‘originality, significance and rigour’ on a 1- to 4-star scale. Four stars signify quality which is “world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour”, three star – quality that is “internationally excellent but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence”, two-star – quality that is “recognised internationally”, one star – quality that is “recognised nationally” and finally unclassified papers are assessed by panel members as falling below the standard of nationally recognised work (HEFCE, 2011b, p. 43). The outputs element stands for 65% of the final profile. The next element in terms of importance is impact which accounted for 20% in REF 2014 (in the next exercise, in 2021, its value would be increased to 25%, at the expense of ‘outputs’: HEFCE, 2017, p. 2). The remaining 15% depends on the environment element which is assessed in terms of ‘vitality and sustainability’ – what is taken into consideration here are active research groups, recognitions and awards, organised research events, interdisciplinarity, equality and diversity measures etc. Impact and environment are also assessed on a 4-star scale. The final effect of assessment is a ‘quality profile’ of the given submission which includes the percentage of documents (outputs, CSs, templates) that received a given number of stars, which can be further broken down into the three assessed elements. The profiles of units of assessment at given institutions can be easily juxtaposed using the browser on the organizer’s website. Importantly, individual scores of outputs or CSs were not disclosed – only the aggregated scores.

### ***4.3. Evaluation of research impact***

In the context of this thesis the most important element of assessment is ‘research impact’. The term itself is defined in the REF ‘as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia’

(HEFCE, 2011b, p. 26). The document later explains that impact ‘includes, but is not limited to, an effect on, change or benefit to the activity, attitude, awareness, behaviour, capacity, opportunity, performance, policy, practice, process or understanding of an audience, beneficiary, community, constituency, organisation or individuals in any geographic location whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally’. What is excluded from impact assessment is influence on research or teaching within the HE sector. In short, ‘impact’ in the context of REF can be understood as the influence of research outside of academia. The criteria of impact assessment are *reach* and *significance*, where reach is understood not necessarily in the geographical sense but rather as the percentage of potential beneficiaries who have been influenced.

The claimed research impact had to occur in the period between 2008-2013 and to be based on research carried out in the submitting unit in between 1993-2013. Importantly, the research papers referenced in the documents (and submitted alongside the impact-related documentation) had to be of at least 2-star quality. Impact was assessed on the basis of two types of documents 1) a single impact template which detailed the conditions of achieving research impact in a given unit 2) case studies – in the number of about 1 per 10 researchers submitted to the exercise (but a CS can be based on the work of several researchers, a research team etc.). Twenty percent of the assessment in the impact sub-profile depended on the impact template and 80% on the assessment of CSs. The same guidelines on assessment were applied to all research fields alike – from applied to pure.

#### ***4.4. The specificity of REF and the Impact Agenda***

An interest in the evaluation of research impact has been observable worldwide (Wróblewska, 2017a). In the UK, it has been a factor in the distribution of funds by the research councils, by the Department of Health (under the name of ‘Payback’ system), the Arthritis Research Council as

well as by the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (limited to economic impacts). Furthermore, impact is used in assessment in the following national and inter-national contexts: USA – in the PART federal programme, and by the US Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP); in Canada – the Canadian Institute of Health and Research (which uses the Payback system), and in EU Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development (Gunn & Mintrom, 2016, pp. 248-249; Smith & Stewart, 2017). Also, Australia which, as we have seen, had developed and then abandoned the first performance-based evaluation system in the form of RQF, has recently taken up impact assessment in the form of an exercise under the name of Engagement and Impact (EI) Assessment (Gunn & Mintrom, 2018, p. 13).

While these assessment systems focus mainly on medicine and technology, research impact beyond these fields (e.g. including SSH) is featured in the research assessment systems of several countries: Netherlands (in two approaches: the SEP–Standard Evaluation Protocol and the newly-introduced ERIC–Evaluating Research in Context) (Gunn & Mintrom, 2016, pp. 249-250; VSNU – Association of Universities in the Netherlands, 2016, p. 25), Sweden – Swedish government agency for research and development (VINNOVA), Japan – Japanese National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation, USA in (ex ante) peer reviews of National Science Foundation grant applications (Holbrook & Frodeman, 2011). An impact assessment component very closely modelled on the REF was introduced in Norway (in a model not tied to funding) (Research Council of Norway, 2017, pp. 36-37) as well as in Hong Kong where it is part of the RAE assessment with a weighting of 15% (University Grants Committee, 2018). The trend of assessing societal impact (under different names) seems to be on the rise – new systems of assessment are constantly blooming. There exist several overviews of international practice and their respective challenges (European Science Foundation, 2012; Godin & Doré, 2004; Grant et al., 2009; Merckx, van der Weijden, Oostveen, Besselaar, & Spaapen, 2007; Penfield, Baker, Scoble, & Wykes, 2014), including one focusing on impact assessment in SSH

(Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, 2017). Noteworthy are also studies which put forward new proposals for impact assessment (ERiC, 2010; Jaffe, 2015; Miettinen, Tuunainen, & Esko, 2015; Spaapen, Dijkstra, & Wamelink, 2007), including a comprehensive approach to impact assessment in SSH (Benneworth, Gulbrandsen, & Hazelkorn, 2016). Notwithstanding all of these undertakings, REF remains the largest performance-based research system to have included impact among the evaluation criteria in all the disciplines.

## **5. Method – Combining two strands of DA**

Discourse analysis (DA) – an approach which focuses on the construction of meaning through social practices (Angermüller, Maingueneau, & Wodak, 2014a, p. 3) – is a natural methodological choice for an investigation on the establishment, via linguistic practices, of a new criterion of evaluation and on the effects thereof on the self-presentation of a professional group in text and talk. Although recent decades have seen a steady increase in interest in the applications of DA in many disciplines, there is little agreement among scholars as to the exact meaning of the term ‘discourse’. In the following section, I attempt a brief historical introduction to the origins of DA, focusing on the two currents of thought which are most relevant for this study – pragmatics and (post)structuralism. Eliciting the differences and cleavages between the two strands will enable me to situate the field of DA on a broader disciplinary map and to articulate the concrete methods of analysis and theoretical concepts used in this study.

### ***5.1. Pragmatics, post-structuralism and the origins of discourse analysis***

Since the so-called linguistic turn in the social sciences – which started in the 1960s (Rorty, 1967) and gained momentum in the 1970s – there has been a growing interest in the investigation of language in context among scholars from various disciplines – sociology, psychology, philosophy, the newly-emerged field of applied linguistics. Hence, the field of language study grew in complexity, developing several strands, each of which claims a different heritage and tends, generally speaking, to particular topics and methods.

The field of pragmatics has its roots in the developments in the field of philosophy of language, associated with the ground-breaking works of Wittgenstein (1953), Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and Grice (1975). In contrast to earlier formal approaches to language which focused on theoretical grammar and semantics, the work of the above-mentioned scholars drew attention to language in its use, highlighting the social aspects of cognition and meaning making (e.g. language games), the causative power of linguistic acts (illocution and perlocution, speech acts, performativity) and the influence of the knowledge of context of enunciation on the understanding of utterances (conversational implicature). These initially theoretical ideas were developed in empirical contexts by sociologists (particularly ethnomethodologists) and linguists. While ideas of pragmatics are used in various fields, such as philosophy, psychology, neurology or clinical practice, they have found a particularly fertile ground in linguistics, especially in the study of issues such as politeness, management of ‘face’ or identity construction. These issues are often studied in a comparative manner – in intercultural contexts (cultural and cross-cultural pragmatics) or in different institutional settings (e.g. professional interaction) (Huang, 2017). There is a range of specialised fields and approaches which have drawn inspiration from pragmatics: conversation analysis, qualitative sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, social psychology (Angermuller et al., 2014a, p. 19). What they all have in common is a focus on *interaction* between social actors and the social, political and material context in which they perform everyday practices. Hence, in these approaches context is perceived as a “dynamic framework” against which utterances must be interpreted, and which needs to be creatively negotiated by the uttering actors (Ibid., 189–193).

If pragmatics was one major philosophical movement which revolutionised the concepts of language in 20<sup>th</sup> century research, another one is structuralism and later post-structuralism (Angermuller et al., 2014a, p. 17). Structuralism as a current of thought was initiated by Ferdinand de Saussure’s innovative linguistic theory. It was based on two premises: firstly, the differentiation between *langue* and *parole*, where *langue* would

be a set of systematic rules and conventions of a signifying system, and *parole* would encompass concrete instances of language use (Saussure, 1966, pp. 9-13). The second premise was that linguistic systems were based on series of differences, without positive terms (Saussure, 1966, p. 120) – hence the importance of the entire linguistic structure for understanding a particular sign. These ideas proved to be influential among social, cultural and literary theorists, notably Althusser, Derrida, Lacan, Baudrillard and Kristeva, sparking a new type of structuralism which applied concepts derived from Saussurean theory to the analysis of non-linguistic objects (Angermuller et al., 2014a, p. 72). The above-mentioned authors were not linguists, and their work does not deal with classical linguistic analysis, however it is usually characterised by an appreciation of the role played by language in establishing the studied social, literary and cultural phenomena.

Hence, around the 60s the notion of language was broadened significantly, to include also questions of ideology, power, society which hitherto were treated separately – notable exceptions including the thought of Antonio Gramsci (1975) and Bronisław Malinowski (2013). This cross-fertilisation of linguistic and social-political thought gave rise to new currents of reflection on discourse: French discourse analysis (associated with the name of Pêcheux) (Diaz-Bone et al., 2007, §16) and post-structuralist discourse theory (with representatives such as Derrida, Barthes, Greimas, and, in a second generation, Spivak, Žižek, Said, Hall) (Angermuller et al., 2014a, p. 8). French DA is a more linguistic strand with a strong presence of quantitative, computational methods, while post-structuralist discourse theory draws more from philosophy, literary critique, philology. What the two strands have in common, and what distinguishes them from pragmatic approaches, is an anti-humanist understanding of the role of the subject. While pragmaticians describe the subject as creatively making use of the existing linguistic resources in negotiating different social contexts, discourse analysts working in the (post)structuralist tradition would question the agency of subjects, highlighting that rather than just *generating* discourse to realise their goals, subjects themselves – together with their goals and aims – are effects of discourse. Without falling into a

simplistic determinism, (post)structuralists highlight the role played by “subject positions” or “subject roles” which contribute to the constitution of social actors who occupy them (Marttila, 2015, §12).

Michel Foucault’s work was influential both in French discourse analysis and post-structuralist theory. It additionally gave rise to a new strand of reflection on *governmentality* which can be seen as overlapping and mutually complementary with DA (Angermüller & Van Dyk, 2010), but with ramifications which go way beyond linguistics, into the field of political theory, philosophy and sociology. Although the concept of ‘discourse’ is very frequently associated with Foucault’s name, in order to understand his input into the different strands of DA and reflection on government one would need to take stock of the different phases of his work and the place of ‘discourse’ in them. It is helpful to think about Foucault’s legacy in terms of two phases: archaeological and genealogical (Kendall & Wickham, 1998, pp. 24-31; Scheurich & McKenzie, 2005).

In the earlier phase – marked by the publication of the “Order of Things” (1963) and “Archaeology of Knowledge” (1969) – Foucault was interested in how systems of thought and knowledge (epistemes) are produced discursively, according to given sets or rules. The purpose of DA in this approach would be to analyse “according to what logic is the terminology constructed (...) who authorized it and (...) which strategic goals are being pursued in the discourse” (Diaz-Bone et al., 2007, §5). It is this work on the regularities and differences of discursive structures – inspired by a structuralist legacy – which affected French DA as well as literary and philosophical inquiries in the poststructuralist strand and which continuities to inspire studies on a methodological level.

If the work from the first, archaeological, phase of Foucault’s work stemmed from his historical interest in the past, the later, genealogical phase – marked by the publication of “Discipline and Punish” (1975), the lectures at College de France and several interviews – was focused on the “origins of the present”, or on the “history of the present” (Kendall &

Wickham, 1998, p. 29). In this phase of his work Foucault was interested in modern, liberal forms of exercising power, which rely not on brutal acts of control and constraint, but on creating subjects which are easily lead and governed. Government would consist in Führung – “the conduct of conduct”, or structuring the field of possible action of subjects. Government in this sense links technologies of domination with technologies of the self, thus connecting the formation of the state with the constitution of the subject (Lemke, 2002). Hence, the genealogical phase re-introduced the subject into a previously structure-oriented picture, focused primarily on impersonal regularities of discourse. The aim of the researcher who takes this approach is to reflect on how certain aspects of our thought have been shaped by particular contingent historical developments (May, 2014, p. 420). The objects that genealogy deals with have an objective, physical existence, but they are also social constructs: the dominant way they are thought and talked about, presented and used is an effect of discursive procedures of classifying, naming and managing. What is more, the dominant ways of thinking about such objects become so established as to seem inevitable and unavoidable (Hacking, 1999, pp. 1-13). The task of genealogy is to attend to “submerged problems” which can be “found below the surfaces of our lives”, and which so often remain invisible. And yet, as Koopman argues, “these problems are also right at the surface insofar as they condition us in our every action, our every quality, our every thought, our every sadness and smile” (Koopman, 2013, p. 1).

Foucault initially understood discourse as a super-individual reality and as practice located in social areas or fields – a formation which belongs to collectives rather than individuals. His later work, as well as adaptations of his ideas in the works of, amongst others, Judith Butler, have pointed out that discourses are crucial also for the discursive constitution and construction of individual subjectivities (Diaz-Bone et al., 2007, §3). Foucault’s influence on discourse studies can be seen as twofold: if the archaeological phase of Foucault’s work was influential particularly in the area of *method* and *methodology* of DA, the genealogical phase in turn

provided *theoretical* concepts which influenced the field of discourse theory as well as several budding ‘Studies’ fields, such as Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, Governmentality Studies (Diaz-Bone et al., 2007, §49).

I described the pragmatic and Foucauldian strands of DA, contrasting them with each other – indeed they hail from different traditions, and have at some points been antagonistic. Where post-structuralists build on developments in Continental philosophy, pragmaticians are indebted with Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy. Research in the pragmatic strand often focuses on interactions in a micro-scale, offering fine-grained analysis of linguistic and non-linguistic (e.g. proxemics) resources used by actors from a particular group. Work in the post-structuralist tradition on the other hand has a penchant to macro-scale analysis which encompasses broad tendencies in entire societies. Furthermore, as explained above, the two strands attribute different levels of agency to social subjects. That said, the mutual relationship between pragmatics and post-structuralism is complicated, particularly given that since their inception in the 60s-70s, these strands have developed and grown in complexity, giving rise to related, but more and more independent fields, such as sociolinguistics and DA.

Discourse analysis can be seen as an umbrella-term which encompasses multiple methods – many of which draw from pragmatics and interactional approaches that stemmed from a pragmatic root. It also has a theoretical component, which is indebted equally with pragmatic ideas and with (post)structuralist theory. In fact, some authors differentiate between the more applied area of ‘discourse analysis’ and the more theory-driven ‘discourse theory’, which together would form the field of ‘discourse studies’ (Angermüller, Maingueneau, & Wodak, 2014b).

Generally speaking, scholars who draw from poststructuralism, and who might claim the label of ‘discourse theorists’, usually adopt an understanding of discourse inspired by Michel Foucault (in the Foucauldian strand), Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (in the Essex School of DA or

post-foundational strand – Marttila, 2015) or, in other currents, thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Judith Butler... In these approaches discourse is understood as “a structured space of meanings and knowledges” produced through texts circulating among large communities and populations. Research often focuses on the construction of objects of thought (for instance via patterns of classification), the acquirement of status of truths by intellectual constructs and on authorities which have the power to control these processes. Hence, the focus in the poststructuralist strand is usually on the macro level (looking at national or even global contexts) while texts tend to be heavy on theory, often focusing on the sociological and philosophical dimension of the described phenomena, rather than the linguistic one. Researchers closer to the pragmatic tradition, on the other hand, like to make use of the linguistic toolbox: conversational analysis, narrative analysis, computational methods. The understanding of discourse in this strand would be closer to ‘situated social practice or interactional order which emerges in social situations’ (Angermüller, 2001 cited in Diaz-Bone et al., 2007, §2). Researchers working in this strand often focus on the micro-scale in investigating discursive aspects of communication within particular groups or environments (rather than entire societies). This type of research often tends to be ‘applied’ in that it aims to offer solutions to concrete problems, such as challenges in communication between different discourse communities (see e.g. Angouri & Harwood, 2008).

Pragmatically-oriented DA (drawn to the micro-scale and to applied research projects) and post-structuralist discourse theory (interested in philosophical and sociological analysis of macro phenomena) are two useful points of reference marking the extremes of a wide panorama of research on discourse (Angermüller et al., 2014b). However, researchers who engage with discourse studies might oppose being labelled as exponents of a particular type of discourse analysis (pragmatic, post-structuralist, Foucauldian...) or having to choose between discourse theory and DA as their area. In practice, DA as a field is hugely diverse and interdisciplinary. Rather than a fixed set of methods or ideas, it can be

understood as a ‘broader research enterprise’ formed of different strands and schools of research united by the common principle of ‘exploring language use relative to social, political and cultural formations’, where language is understood as not only reflecting social order but also shaping it as well as individuals’ interaction with society (Jaworski & Coupland, 2006, pp. xi-xii). Therefore macro (often structuralist) and micro (often pragmatic) approaches to discourse should not be seen as remaining in strict opposition – both conceive discourse in terms of practices mobilising semiotic and non-semiotic resources to achieve social goals and to negotiate the social, political or cultural order. Particular environments, research projects and individual scholars tend to situate themselves on the spectrum of discourse research, usually taking a position closer either to continental or Anglo-Saxon DA. This affiliation, rather than being always explicit, is visible in the references to canonical texts in given traditions, in the scope of the conducted research, its theoretical or applied focus, micro or macro orientation and even in the style of writing.

Efforts have been made to combine the two approaches (e.g. Angermuller, 2014) and in the field of critical discourse analysis (CDA) it is almost customary to draw both from the methods of pragmatics and the critical impetus of Foucauldian thought, alongside Marxism and Critical Theory (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 251). It seems that the way forward in DA is to build bridges between the different schools and traditions, in order to make the fullest use of what their methods and theories have to offer. I aim to do this in my thesis – I explain in more detail how I combine elements of post-structuralist and pragmatic/interactional discourse analysis in section 3.3.

## ***5.2. Studying discourse in Higher Education contexts***

The linguistic turn in SSH brought about also a shift in the study of HE contexts, where language started to be perceived as a significant element of academic reality. If we distinguish three areas of academic activity: 1) production of scientific knowledge, 2) the dynamics of institutional power,

3) learning and teaching, this new interest in language took different forms in each of the above realms (Wróblewska & Angermuller, 2017).

The area of production of scientific knowledge has been the object of interest of researchers working in the discipline of sociology, as well as STS scholars. These studies attend to the role of language and discourse in processes such as: the construction of the boundaries of disciplines and of science as such (Kinsella, 1999; Star Leigh, 2010; Star Leigh & Griesemer, 1989; Vuolanto, 2013), the negotiation of ‘knowledge claims’ (Ashmore, 1989; Latour & Woolgar, 1986; Myers, 1985b), the contextual construction of scientific statements and their translation into an objectivist language of science (Knorr Cetina, 1981), as well as the language-dependent nature of practices related to recognition, such as citing (Budd, 1999; Hicks & Potter, 1991). A landmark publication in the study the role of language in knowledge production is Gilbert & Mulkey’s “Opening Pandora’s Box. A sociological analysis of scientists’ discourse” (1984). The book is relevant for the present study as it explicitly presents discourse as a core element of constructing and representing scientific action and belief. It approaches academic discourse from a novel, especially at the time, methodological perspective, namely treating discourse as a topic instead of a resource. In their account of advances in the field of biochemistry Gilbert and Mulkey show how scientists, depending on the context, drew on different cultural repertoires to construct divergent versions of the ‘story’ of a scientific discovery. The present study aims to show the forms of talk (‘stories’) which emerged in the context of the Impact Agenda and it attempts a general interpretation of these developments expressed in terms of power and *subjectivation*. In this approach, the production of text and talk are understood as forms of governing others and of governing oneself.

The second area in which academic discourse has been object of growing interest is dynamics of institutional power, a field developed particularly by sociologists, like Pierre Bourdieu (1988). The importance of Bourdieu’s theory for my thesis lies in presenting academic discourse as an arena and reflection of power struggle. Power in academia has been investigated also

from different perspectives which include a linguistic angle. We can quote for instance certain approaches to positioning theory which focus on the way subjects make use of discursive resources to build their positions in different realms of academic life (Angermuller, 2013b; Baert, 2012; Hamann, 2016a) or Bernstein's sociolinguistic take on the ideologies which are encoded in academic discourse (Bernstein, 2000, 2003).

Discourse in the area of teaching and learning has been explored perhaps most vigorously by linguists. Much research has been conducted on academic discourse in the specialised fields of English Language Teaching (ELT), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). These studies often focus on differences in learning patterns among international students, successful teaching strategies, development of teaching materials and classroom discourse (e.g. Coulthard, 1992; Garton & Richards, 2008; Hyland & Shaw, 2016; Lemke, 1992; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1981). The notion of 'genre' has been prominent in many of these studies and academic genres have been extensively studied. While most research on academic discourse in pedagogic contexts has as its more or less explicit aim the improvement of the efficiency of teaching, there is also a smaller strand of investigation of learning and teaching practices which focuses on the role of class, ideology and broader political context (Gee, 2015; Popow, 2016). Such studies bridge the field of language and teaching and power production in academia.

In terms of the three above-described areas in which work on academic discourse has been conducted, my study situates itself predominantly in the area of 'dynamics of institutional power', in that it casts the IA as an intervention into the academic status quo, which enables a reshuffle of positions, both of individual academics, and of disciplines and fields. My work also draws from the strands focusing on 'production of academic knowledge' when accounting for the constructed nature of 'impact' and the narratives built around it, and from the 'teaching and learning' strand, particularly in terms of conceptualizations of genre.

### ***5.3. The use of discourse analysis in this thesis***

The research question I ask with this thesis is: how did the discourse of impact become embedded within British academia? I will break this broad question into three sub-questions about the establishment of the policy and structures enabling its reception, about the creation of the genre of CS and its function in this infrastructure, and finally about individuals' reactions to the policy. Each of these questions will be addressed in a separate analysis chapter. The research questions and the relative chapters move from the most generic, macro level of national research policy and its implementation in institutions through a meso level of the emergence of common responses to the policy (in particular, the genre of impact case study), and down to the micro level of individuals' reactions and positionings towards the policy.

In Chapter 7 – the first chapter of analysis – I look at the emergence of the concept of 'impact' as part of science policy and its appropriation within institutions, asking about the role of procedures and processes in neutralizing the notion of impact. In Chapter 8 I go on to examine a core, binding element of the impact infrastructure, namely the genre of impact case study. I ask about its main features and how they make evident the pragmatic functions of the genre. In Chapter 9, I ask how the engagement in submitting a case study to REF 2014 has affected academics' stances towards the notion of 'impact' and the perceived role of impact as part of an academic career.

Each of the research questions asked by this thesis demand a slightly different analytical focus, which I aim to satisfy by applying discourse analytical approaches from the two strands introduced in 5.1. My methodological approach is a bottom-up, data-driven combination of discourse analytical methods hailing from different traditions – the post-structuralist and the pragmatic one. While this is not a main-stream approach to discourse analysis, important forays have been made into combining post-structuralism and pragmatics both from the perspective of

theory (Butler, 1997; Deleuze & Guattari, 2005) and of practical analytical applications (Angermuller, 2014; Zienkowski, 2016).

I build on the understanding that subjects move in a space defined by the social structures, including hierarchies related to power and maintained by ideologies, but also that they actively and constantly participate in constructing and maintaining them – the two are indivisible and thus must be studied together in a way which would avoid simplistic top-down vs. bottom-up dichotomies. It can also be reconciled with the Foucauldian framework of discourse, taken as a whole, in that it touches on the super-individual nature of discourse (in its archaeological phase) and the influence of discourse on the construction of individual subjectivities (in the genealogical phase). Although pragmatics and governmentality theory occupy different positions in the complex panorama of DA, they are all compatible with a social constructivist approach to institutional order and identity and they mutually complement each-other in terms of including a dimension of reflexivity (interactionism), an attention to linguistic detail and language use in context (linguistic pragmatics) and a deep consideration of problems of power (post-structuralism) (Callero, 2003). I aim to show that used together, these approaches allow a productive synergy in analysing micro, meso and macro contexts. In what follows, I introduce the core ideas which I draw from governmentality theory and linguistic pragmatics (including genre analysis).

Concepts of governmentality theory will support the analysis in the first analytical chapter, as they enable a broad take at macro level contexts. In particular, in chapter 7, I draw on Foucauldian concepts of emergence, problematization and I put forward the notion of ‘impact infrastructure’, drawing on Foucault’s concept of ‘apparatus’. Governmentality theory enables applying a broad approach to issues related to policy-making, while recognizing the crucial role of discourse in the described processes. However, governmentality theory does not provide concrete tools to analyse specific datasets, a shortcoming which is referred to as the ‘methodological deficit’ of post-structuralism (Marttila, 2015, §1). In order

to overcome this deficit of governmentality theory, in analysing concrete instances of text and talk I draw on pragmatically-oriented discourse theories.

Linguistic pragmatics will be particularly useful when analysing in more detail the processes and procedures which were put in place in institutions to support the implementation of the concept of impact, including the new genre of ‘impact case study’. In the second analytical chapter (chapter 8) I will draw on traditional genre analysis (inspired by Swales) to describe the features of this new academic genre, and on more sociological take on genre (drawing on Hanks’) to describe how these features constitute a pragmatic response to the new institutional reality. In this context, I also will employ the notion of ‘professional vision’ (borrowed from the work of Goodwin) to argue that learning a new genre contributes to highlighting new areas of activity as part of a person’s professional craft. In the final chapter of my analysis, I continue to use sociologically-informed notions of linguistic pragmatics (particularly Goffman’s concepts of footing and stage) to zoom in on how academics strategically use language to position themselves towards the concept of impact. Finally, in the last part of this chapter I take up the Foucauldian notion of ‘subjectivation’ to place these individual strategies in a broader political context – thereby linking the micro level back to the macro. I present my methodological framework in the table below.

Level of analysis	Question(s)	Phase of Impact Agenda	Methodological framework	Concepts	Chapter	Data used	Reference texts
(meta) Policy	<p>What was the role of discourse in the process of appropriation of the notion of 'impact' within institutions?</p> <p>How did procedures, processes and roles contribute to establishing a framework in which impact would become a neutralized concept?</p>	<p>1. Establishment of the policy</p> <p>2. Creation of procedures around it in institutions</p>	Governmentality theory / Foucauldian discourse analysis	<p>Emergence</p> <p>Problematization</p> <p>Apparatus/dispositif</p>	Analysis 1: (The emergence of ref) + impact infrastructure	Interviews	(Dean, 1999; Foucault, 1988a; Rose, 1999)
(meso) Interaction of institutional policy frameworks and individual agency/practice	<p>1. How does a new value become engrained in academic discourse (as part of a genre)</p> <p>1.1. What are the main linguistic features of the genre of impact case study?</p> <p>1.2. How do the main linguistic features of the genre make evident its pragmatic functions in the context of the new evaluation policy?</p> <p>2. How does the new genre +</p>	Creation of the genre of impact case study	Linguistic pragmatics, including genre analysis	<p>Genre</p> <p>Regularisation</p> <p>Officialisation</p>	Analysis 2	Impact case studies	(Hanks, 1987; Swales, 1990, 1998)

	procedures around it shape academics' perception of what is salient and important in academic production?	Impact becoming part of academic professional practice		Professional vision		Interviews	(Goodwin, 1994)
Individual (micro) (linking back to how the macro affects micro and vice versa)	How do academics position themselves vis-à-vis the new element of academic reality which is impact?	Academics' positioning versus impact (after the exercise)	Pragmatics  Governmentality	Positioning theory: footing, stage  Governmentality theory: Subjectivation	Analysis 3	Interviews	(Goffman, 1969)  (Foucault, 1990)

**Table 1 – Methodological framework**

### **5.3.1. Concepts of governmentality**

Governmentality theory, introduced already in the previous section, is a strand of reflection on the modern governance which focuses on the relationship between government and the subject. It builds on Foucault's observation that in order to analyse the genealogy of the subject in Western societies one needs to look jointly at techniques of domination and techniques of the self, and study the interaction between the two. This is because technologies of domination have recourse to individuals' acting upon themselves and conversely techniques of the self are rooted in structures of coercion and domination. Precisely this nodus can be referred to as 'government' (Foucault, 1993, pp. 203-204). Both subjectivity and truth can be seen in this framework not as givens but as consequences emerging from power/knowledge relationship and how it plays out in a given era, in a given society (Castellani, 1999, p. 250). Through his life Foucault examined different examples of interplay between knowledge and power in organizing practices of discipline, surveillance, punishment, confession, medical examination as well as daily 'practices of self' such building one's relationship with their sexuality. Governmentality theory has been productively applied to the analysis of governance in various modern institutional settings – amongst them HE, particularly in the context of the structural changes affecting the sector (T. Miller, 2009; Peters, Besley, Olssen, Maurer, & Weber, 2009; The Edu-factory Collective, 2009) and the governance of self in academia in view of changing conditions of academic labour (Gill, 2009; Lorey, 2006).

In this thesis, I do not attempt an 'orthodox' Foucauldian analysis which – given the notoriously cryptic nature of his writings – would require a lengthy discussion of different aspects of theory which would be beyond the scope of this work. Rather, I borrow particular concepts from Foucauldian theory which are useful for my reasoning, particularly as explained and applied in institutional contexts by Nicolas Rose (1999) and

Mitchel Dean (1999). The core notions for my argument are: problematization, subjectivation and apparatus.

‘Problematization’<sup>1</sup> can be understood as “the emergence of problems in relation to particular moral, political, economic, military, geopolitical or juridical concerns” (Rose, 1999, p. ix) or the defining of phenomena as (educational, legal, religious, political...) problems, often through dividing practices (“sickness from health; madness from criminality; normality from pathology”... – Ibid.). In other words, the term describes the process in which particular spaces, areas of activity, persons or practices become targeted by the government, delimited from other spaces, areas, persons or practices, and cast as ‘problems’ to be addressed with a set of techniques and regulation. On the notion Foucault wrote:

*Problematization doesn't mean the representation of a pre-existent object nor the creation by discourse of an object that doesn't exist. It is the totality of discursive and non-discursive practices that make something enter into the play of true and false and constitute it as an object of thought (whether in the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political analysis, etc.).*  
(Foucault, 1988a, p. 257)

The creation of a problematization (of an object, practice, area of activity) is a response to particular desires or problems, which constitute an instigation, but do not determine the shape of the problematization. As Foucault argues “to one single set of difficulties, several responses can be made” (Foucault, 2003, p. 24). A problematization remains in a sort of dialectical relationship to the question, as it is giving the answer which enables fully explaining the question. A famous Foucauldian example of

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<sup>1</sup> Note that Foucault and Foucauldian scholars use the term ‘problematization’ also in a different meaning to the one defined above, namely to describe the aim of genealogical research in terms of ‘problematizing the present’, i.e. changing our relation to it, so we no longer take it for granted as natural and inevitable (Koopman, 2013, pp. 98-103; May, 2014, pp. 420-421).

problematization refers to the emergence of the concept of madness in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. While mental issues certainly existed before this time, it was only a specific contingent set of historical tendencies which brought it to the attention of government and professional groups (medics) as an area to be regulated, contained and controlled.

A concept linked to that of ‘problematization’ is ‘emergence’. The term, borrowed from Nietzsche, refers in Foucault’s theory to defining or shaping a part of the world which falls under a new domination. He applied this concept to the analysis of the surfacing of discursive concepts (including particular values, practices, objects, Foucault’s own example being ‘population’) in the interplay between the discursive and extra-discursive realms (Foucault, 2007; Hardy, 2011, p. 36). Emergence is always produced through a particular struggle of forces, it is an effect of often violent conflict between conflicting ideas – “it is their eruption, the leap from the wings to centre stage” (Foucault, 1984, p. 84). The shape of the emergent idea is an effect of the clashes of these forces and it does not fully depend on any of the parties participating in the struggle. Importantly, emergence is just “the entry of forces” (p. 84), and “not the final term of historical development” (p. 83). A concept, in its inception, is essentially an empty word, which addresses, in often unobvious ways, the needs of a field which is being problematized and of the powers which are targeting it. Thus, it is only at the next phase that the word will be filled with meaning – linking concepts with actions. In Foucault’s words:

*Rules are empty in themselves, violent and unfinalized; they are impersonal and can be bent to any purpose. The successes of history belong to those who are capable of seizing these rules... (p. 85-86)*

‘Apparatus’ in turn was defined by Foucault as representing a system of relations established between discourse and non-discursive elements as diverse as ‘institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and

philanthropic propositions' (Foucault, 1980, p. 194). Hence, 'apparatus'<sup>2</sup> in Foucauldian theory is the larger 'order of things' created by different organizing practices (rituals, mechanisms, technologies) which in turn emerge as a result of the interaction between knowledge and power (Castellani, 1999, pp. 252-253). An apparatus would include that what is said, but also the unsaid – certain assumptions, expectations and values which in many instances remain implicit. In this sense, the notion cuts through the two great themes of Foucault's philosophy: power and knowledge, and allows a joint analysis of discursive and non-discursive elements which are considered here as interwoven together in one structure (Diaz-Bone et al., 2007, p. §7). Apparatus is a formation with a particular strategic function – responding to an urgent need which arises in a given time in history, such as regulating the behaviour of a population. Again, the example of mental institutions – with their procedures, their knowledges, their architecture etc. – comes to mind as a case in point – an apparatus designed to contain a floating population (Foucault, 1980, p. 195). I would see the apparatus as a structure which is necessary for problematization to take place and to persist in particular institutional contexts.

Finally, the notions of 'subjectivation'<sup>3</sup> describes "the way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice" (Foucault, 1990, p. 27), or in other words the action of self on the self – i.e. the actions subjects take on their performance, competences, attitudes, self-esteem, desires in order to improve, regulate or reform themselves (Dean, 1999, p. 20; Lemke, 2002; Rose, 1999, p. xii). So, Foucault's idea of 'self' has less to do with the inherent 'psyche' of subjects than with the 'relationship of the self with the self, and the forming of oneself as a subject' (Foucault, 1990, p. 6). This is achieved through various 'technologies of the self' – intellectual, linguistic

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<sup>2</sup> 'Apparatus' is one of the existing translations of the French 'dispositif', another one is 'historical construct' (Sembou, 2015, p. 38) or 'grid of intelligibility' (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 121). Also the French original is sometimes used in English texts.

<sup>3</sup> Although the term is fairly popular in Foucauldian research, it remains somewhat vague due terminological difficulties. The French 'assujettissement' and 'subjectivation' are translated into English as 'subjectivation' or 'subjectification' (Harrer, 2005).

and practical activities and instruments through which we craft ourselves as humans (think of therapy, exercise, diet, punishment...) (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, pp. xix-xxii).

My understanding of 'identity' and 'self' in this thesis draws on the Foucauldian concept of 'subjectivation'. Subjectivity is constructed in a never-ending, iterative process which takes place against the grid of power/knowledge, and particularly of power relations and modes of organizing practice conditioned by the broader surrounding apparatus (the state apparatus, the organizational apparatus, the family apparatus etc.) (Foucault, 1980, p. 95). So, individuals come to the 'truth' about their subjectivity by actively positioning themselves towards a pre-existent set of codes, or patterns suggested by one's culture, or social group (Castellani, 1999, pp. 257-258; Foucault, 1988b, p. 11). In the third chapter of my analysis (chapter 9), I will focus on how academics actively refashion their academic 'selves' through pragmatically positioning themselves towards the apparatus of the 'impact infrastructure'. In particular, I will examine how particular linguistic resources are mobilised by the speakers to enact, evoke or index identities – the exact mechanics of this process will be described using Goffman's concepts of footing and stage (see section 5.3.3.).

In contrast to most studies on governmentality which tend to focus on theory or explore historical data and policy documents, my analysis is based on interview data. This allows me to account not only for the emergent structure of knowledge/power, but also to attend to the active and often creative role played by subjects in the process of the establishment and consolidation of the apparatus in question. By analysing interviews, I aim to show how certain notions are collectively forged and, again collectively, received and appropriated in local contexts. This is why, rather than offering just tokens of data from my corpus, I quote larger fragments, including repetitions, hesitations and self-repairs which allow to see precisely the moments when objects and processes are being given names and sense is being made of a new reality.

### 5.3.2. Genre analysis

The study of genre is an old art – some researchers claim that, under different names, genres have been studied for no less than 2000 years (Allen, 1989, p. 44). While for many centuries the focus was predominantly on literature, and more precisely – creating taxonomies of literary oeuvres (poetry, prose, drama...), with time, and with the emergence of new forms of art, scholars started analysing also different genres of music, art, and perhaps most notably, film.

The study of academic genres has been conducted within a few different traditions. Many prominent works have been written in the strand of English for Specific Purposes, which focused on the analysis of various academic genres created usually for mainly pedagogic aims, i.e. allowing newcomers to the field access to the non-explicit rules of a particular genre (Flowerdew, 1993; Hyland, 1990; Swales, 1990). The most-studied genre is research article (Myers, 1989; Swales, 1990, pp. 110-176; 2011) but work exists also on student essays (Nesi & Gardner, 2012), grant proposals (Myers, 1985a), patents (Myers, 1995) and more lately also spoken and mixed genres like academic presentations (Reershemius, 2012), viva examinations (Maingueneau, 2002) and some others (Swales, 1990, pp. 177-201).

Thinking back to the three areas of research on HE contexts, presented in 3.2., genre analysis in the ESP tradition can be situated in the ‘teaching and learning’ area of research on academic discourse. ‘Production of scientific knowledge’ is the main interest of genre analysts from the new rhetorical approach (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969), associated with the ‘rhetorical turn’ in SSH (Gaonkar, 1993). In the context of this new interest in real-life argumentation and with a notable influence from STS (Keith & Rehg, 2009, p. 211) – there emerged the field of rhetoric of science. Core works in the field, written by scholars such as Charles Bazerman (1988)

and Alan Gross (1990; 2002) showed, on the basis of large corpora of academic writing, how genres emerge in the context of social and political developments and argued that the choice of arguments, and the right time to use them, can influence or even determine the reception of scientific theory.

A shift towards a more social-interactionist perspective on genre started with the publication of Miller's (1984) article on 'genre' as *social action*. Drawing on Wittgenstein's idea of language games and forms of life, as well as speech act theory, Miller argued that genre analysis must encompass, alongside form and substance of the studied text or talk, also the local context and the illocutionary force of the genre. Genre analyses must thus take into account the complex motivations – of an individual and social nature – which shape texts, in recognizing that certain “recurring situations seem to invite discourse of a particular type” (p. 162). In this interactionist approach genre can be understood as “a rhetorical means for mediating private intentions and social exigence (...) by connecting the private with the public, the singular with the recurrent” (p. 163).

The growing appreciation of the contextually-shaped nature of genres led to a recognition of a potentially *political* and *ideological* nature of genres, and their possible effect on the conduct and of individual social actors (Freedman & Medway, 1994). In this context, Bazerman (1997) argued that “genres are forms of life, ways of being, frames for social action” and drew attention to possible structuralist approaches to genre, in which they would be seen as both shaped by and contributing to “larger patterns of social regularities”. In this vein, Coe (1994) presented genres as entangled in power structures and potentially oppressive. He asked: “What sorts of communication does the genre encourage, what sorts does it constrain against? Does it empower some people while silencing others? Are its effects dysfunctional beyond their immediate context?” (p. 186) In exploring questions related to genre in the broader political, social and ideological context, researchers expanded their data collection to include

not just instances of text, but also ethnographic observations (Swales, 1998).

While drawing on some observations on the features of academic genres advanced within the ELT strand (particularly narrative patterns – Hoey, 1994, 2001), my work remains especially indebted to interactionist approaches to genre. I present the genre of impact CS as shaped in response to particular historical events and ideological frameworks and I conceptualise the rhetorical features of the documents as a strategic response to institutional conditions. Building on Miller’s understanding of genre as social action, embedded in a situation and inspired by a motive (C. R. Miller, 1984, p. 152), I turn my attention to the motives animating the genre of impact case study – in other words, I ask “what functions does the genre of impact CS fulfil? What vision of research does it aim to convey?”

A study of genre which particularly important in shaping my approach is Hanks’ article “Discourse genres in a theory of practice” (1987). Working from an ethnological perspective, Hanks made an important attempt of marrying linguistic approaches to genre (Bakhtin’s theory of discourse) and social theory (Bourdieu’s concept of linguistic habitus), advancing a ‘practice theory of genre’ (p. 677). His study is based on a corpus of 16<sup>th</sup> century Maya documents, written by colonised local elites to be sent to the Spanish crown. Hanks moves beyond a purely formal description of the used genres, presenting a sociolinguistic analysis informed by interactionism, to demonstrate that genres play an important role in the processes of adaptation of an oppressed society to a new reality and in the organisation of collective habitus more generally. He argues that:

*by their capacity to unify and impose different perspectives on events, official genres have the inherent potential to transform the world as represented. Genres familiarize and naturalize reality, and different ones entail different views. (p. 676)*

Hanks shows that genres are created through practice, in historically specific acts and they themselves are among the constituting dimensions which define the terms in which action is possible (p. 671). Social groups can also use genres strategically to reach particular political goals – as it seems to have been the case with Maya letters to the Spanish crown.

On the surface, there is no clear parallel between the 16<sup>th</sup> century Maya letters and the REF submissions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century British universities. However, in the analysis presented in chapter 8 I hope to show that in both contexts genres are used creatively for the same purpose, namely ‘regularization’ and ‘officialization’ of produced text (and particular subject positions which the text suggests and builds) in the context of dominant power structures (Hanks 1987, p. 678). I will also show that impact CS – like many new genres, including the Maya documents described by Hanks – is a hybrid genre embodying elements from two areas or institutional cultures.

I hope this thesis will be a next step in opening genre analysis to the field of social theory, in the vein of Hanks (1987), Paré (2002) and the later works of Swales (1998). I aim to show that the genre as a concept can be productively incorporated into a theory of governmentality, which is a novel approach (with the exception of Porter, 1992). I also hope to signal the importance of genre to HE and evaluation scholars, by showing how it can constitute a binding element of an evaluation policy.

### **5.3.3. Other pragmatic notions**

I supplement my research framework, which draws predominantly on Foucauldian discourse analysis and governmentality theory and on pragmatics, with a few concepts which were originally put forward in the discipline of sociology, but have since been productively applied by linguists, and adapted to the pragmatic framework (on Goffman's input into pragmatics see: Archer, Wichmann, & Aijmer, 2013, p. 84).

In 5.3.1., when I discussed my approach to the concept of ‘identity’, I mentioned that while my understanding of the notion itself is rooted in Foucauldian governmentality theory, the exact enactment of ‘identity’ in text and talk will be analysed in this thesis building on concepts of ‘positioning’ (particularly ‘stage’ and ‘footing’) borrowed from Erving Goffman. ‘Stage’ is a concept which refers to the ‘region’ in which communication takes place. The three regions Goffman distinguished were ‘frontstage’, ‘backstage’ and ‘offstage’. The differences between the three are easily grasped in the case of discrepancies in communicative patterns (level of formality, vocabulary, use of humour) of the same person in different spheres of life: official professional communication (‘front stage’), corridor-talk with colleagues (‘back stage’), talk in family environment (‘off-stage’) (Goffman, 1969, pp. 92-122).

‘Footing’ refers to “an alignment, or set, or stance, or posture, or projected self (...) held across a strip of behaviour” (Goffman, 1981, p. 128). Footing can change dynamically in interaction, and can be visible in the speakers’ changes in alignment in terms of roles, social positions etc. Shifts of footing are often signalled through linguistic means, such as code-switching, use of pronouns, emphasis, use of direct or reported speech. The concept of ‘footing’ has later been elaborated by scholars who suggested replacing it with a more precise notion of ‘positionings’ or ‘positions’ understood as “what is created in and through talk as the speakers and hearers take themselves up as persons” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 62). This notion allows an admission of discontinuities in the production of self and of the fact that multiple and contradictory discursive positions can be signalled by the parties engaging in conversation. In my conceptualization of the positions brought up by academics in the context of the IA, I draw on existing analysis of ‘change in footing’ in interviews contexts (Garton & Copland, 2010; Sarangi, 2004). I will use this concept in explaining why the respondents’ attitudes towards the Agenda may seem to change throughout the interview, sometimes appearing even contradictory.

In describing the process of learning and teaching new procedures around impact I use Charles Goodwin's (1994) notion of 'professional vision'. In his analysis of categorisation practices in different professional groups Goodwin argued that members of a profession shape events in the domains of their professional scrutiny through discursive practices. He showed – using the example of an adept of archaeology learning to notice particular formations in dirt and a police expert explaining procedures used by officers to a court jury – how elements of reality can be *highlighted* so as to seem noticeable, salient and important, and later *coded* – i.e. given particular labels and names, and finally *represented* through graphs, schemata and other visual aids. He argued that this “shaping process creates the objects of knowledge that become the insignia of the professions craft: theories, artefacts, bodies of expertise that distinguish it from other professions” (p. 606).

## **6. Methodology, data and analytic procedures**

In approaching questions related to the emergence of a new discourse of/on impact I draw on two corpora. The first consists of impact CSs submitted to REF 2014 in the field of linguistics, and the second consists of interviews with social actors who were involved in the process of evaluation in different capacities (authors of CSs, impact specialists, policymakers).

### ***6.1. Choice of linguistics as discipline to be studied***

Empirical work on HE settings often tends to focus on natural and hard sciences – this has certainly been the case in the field of STS. While numerous research paths remain to be pursued in the study of impact in the hard sciences, I decided to focus my study on SSH disciplines because they are repeatedly quoted as being ‘problematic’ in terms of impact assessment. Indeed, many pursuits of the humanities seem disconnected from immediate real-world application – this is the case for many classical philosophical problems or social theory. At the same time, as mentioned in section 2.4, scholars in SSH have been extremely active and vocal in the last decades in addressing important social and political issues. So, my choice of SSH as an area of investigation will allow an insight into the shaping of the notion of ‘research impact’ in a field which can be perceived both as particularly ‘impactful’ and as ‘disconnected’ from applied contexts.

Rather than collecting a corpus of all disciplines in the SSH, or their “typical exponents” (perhaps sociology and philosophy) – a mammoth task – I selected one discipline, which cuts across research in both social sciences and humanities. Linguistics is a field whose roots (at least in the European strand) lie in philology (the historical study of languages, including classics), but which today has a range of different branches, some of which reach into other disciplines, such as: education (in the form of

ELT), sociology and psychology (as in the case of DA), cognitive science (in forms of psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics), engineering – in the form of computational linguistics and artificial intelligence (Trask & Stockwell, 2007, pp. 156-158). Thus, linguistics straddles the social sciences and humanities (and to a degree also the natural sciences in areas like phonetics, speech disorders, aphasia, medical discourse etc.) and combines both applied and non-applied research. Researchers working in the field of linguistics find employment in departments, centres and schools of applied and theoretical linguistics (this is the main disciplinary divide in the UK) but also in departments of Hellenic, German, Slavic Studies etc., as well as departments for philosophy, anthropology, psychology and language sciences (DISCONEX, 2015). Additionally, academics working in the field of computational linguistics could be employed by schools of engineering and IT. This variety of interests and institutional affiliations among linguists offers the possibility of including in this study representatives of different academic schools or academic cultures (Becher & Trowler, 2001) – from those tending more towards the humanities to those with a strong standing in social sciences, as well as the occasional individuals with a ‘hard sciences’ background.

One of the reasons why linguistics is an intriguing field to research is the range of its possible research ‘impact’. The direct application of some work conducted in the field may be hard to grasp – this might be the case in theoretical linguistics, philosophy of language or studies on extinct languages. Other branches of linguistics seem intuitively closer to everyday experience – for example studies on language acquisition might be used in pedagogy or speech therapy, work in sociolinguistics can contribute to facilitating professional communication etc. (on the impact of linguistics see: Lawson & Sayers, 2016; McIntyre & Price, 2018). Linn (2011) goes so far as to argue that applied linguistics as a field emerged precisely from the productive friction between academia and the external world. He claims that the discipline is able to influence the outside world because “the desire to make a difference is built into the research from the outset and (...) the boundary between university research and the world is experienced as a

thin and porous one” (p. 27). Similarly, Greg Myers argues: “it is hard to think of any ‘real-world’ problems – from global warming, to refugees to genetic counselling to outsourced call centres to AIDS/HIV to military intelligence – that do not have a crucial component of language use” (Myers, 2005, p. 527).

Do modern linguists of different strands perceive *the desire to make a difference* as an underlying motivation of their work? Is the boundary between research and the ‘outside world’ constructed as porous or – maybe on the contrary – as firm and isolating? Finally, is it the case (as one might guess intuitively) that in areas connected to technology and applied usage (such as corpus or computational linguistics) impact is easier to find and prove? Would attitudes towards the assessment practice be more positive in such an environment? All these are questions which I will ask of my corpus.

## **6.2. Data**

### **6.2.1. Corpus of impact case studies**

#### Construction of the corpus

My aim in constructing the corpus was to account for impact CSs submitted to REF2014 in the discipline of linguistics. Since this was the only impact assessment so far, I was able to include in my corpus *all* of the existing, published examples of this genre in the field. The submissions were made to disciplinary Units of Assessment (UoAs) and in the online database CSs are sorted according to their discipline. While on the surface it might seem that this system enables easy retrieval of all CSs from a given discipline, in the case of linguistics, the task was somewhat more complicated. As a result of merging previously existing smaller panels for linguistics and different groups of languages e.g. German, French, Italian etc. in REF2014 there was a joint unit of assessment for ‘Modern

Languages and Linguistics’ (UoA28). From this collection of 190 CSs I wanted to select only those which fell under the discipline of linguistics.

I decided to include in my corpus of CSs those documents in which the underpinning research featured studies in theoretical, historical and applied linguistics covering the topics of: semantics, syntax, phonetics, phonology, morphology, pragmatics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, language acquisition (including speech/communication disorders) and language teaching (including ELT), computational approaches to language (including corpus linguistics) and history of language(s) (including place names and personal names) (criteria drawn up on the basis of definitions of the field of ‘linguistics’ in Brown & Miller, 2013; Lyons, 1981; Trask & Stockwell, 2007). I decided also to include research on language policy, language planning and legislation, translation and interpretation (especially translator training, translation quality control – but not just production or divulgation of translations or new editions), dialectology, research on endangered languages and sign language, intercultural communication and projects related to building linguistic archives, repositories, databases and dictionaries. These would only be included, however, if the research involved methods other than just those of literary, cultural and historical studies.

In most instances, these criteria enabled me to easily delimit CSs from the field of linguistics (as understood in this study) from those falling under other fields (mainly modern languages). The following are examples of titles of CSs from UoA28 which were *excluded* from the corpus: CS931 – “Peruvian Political History and Its Importance for the Present”, CS933 – “Creative Dialogues: Literature and the Visual Arts in France, 1900–1950”, CS6415 – “Influencing the cultural understanding and professional practice of performance across China and the West”<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Note that when quoting CSs in this dissertation I always give their number, accompanied by acronym ‘CS’ – these are the same numbers that were used in the REF database.

Not all cases are so clear-cut as the above ones and I faced some difficulties in deciding whether some CSs should be assigned to ‘linguistics’. In order to build a uniform corpus, I scrutinized all the 190 CSs from UoA28 twice, with a two-month break in between, to verify my choices. In consequence, one CS was added to the corpus. Additionally, six ‘boundary’ cases were presented to a group of ‘experts’ (PhD candidates in the field) who were to apply the above criteria and assess whether the CSs pertain to ‘linguistics’ or not. In Appendix 2 I present examples of “problematic” CSs to show where the difficulties in classification lay and how they were addressed.

In compiling my corpus, I realized early on that many researchers who identify themselves as linguists, or even entire departments of linguistics, submitted – often for administrative reasons – to panels different than “Modern Language and Linguistics” (see also section 7.2). In order to account for this pool of CSs I decided to widen my corpus, by including in it documents which meet the above-described criteria but which were submitted to UoAs different to UoA28. These CSs were found by scrutinizing submissions of linguistics departments to REF2014. Given the dispersion of the discipline of linguistics, and in consideration of manageability of the corpus, I decided to include just a sample of this group of CSs – 7 documents submitted to 5 UoAs other than UoA28 constituting ~10% of the final corpus.

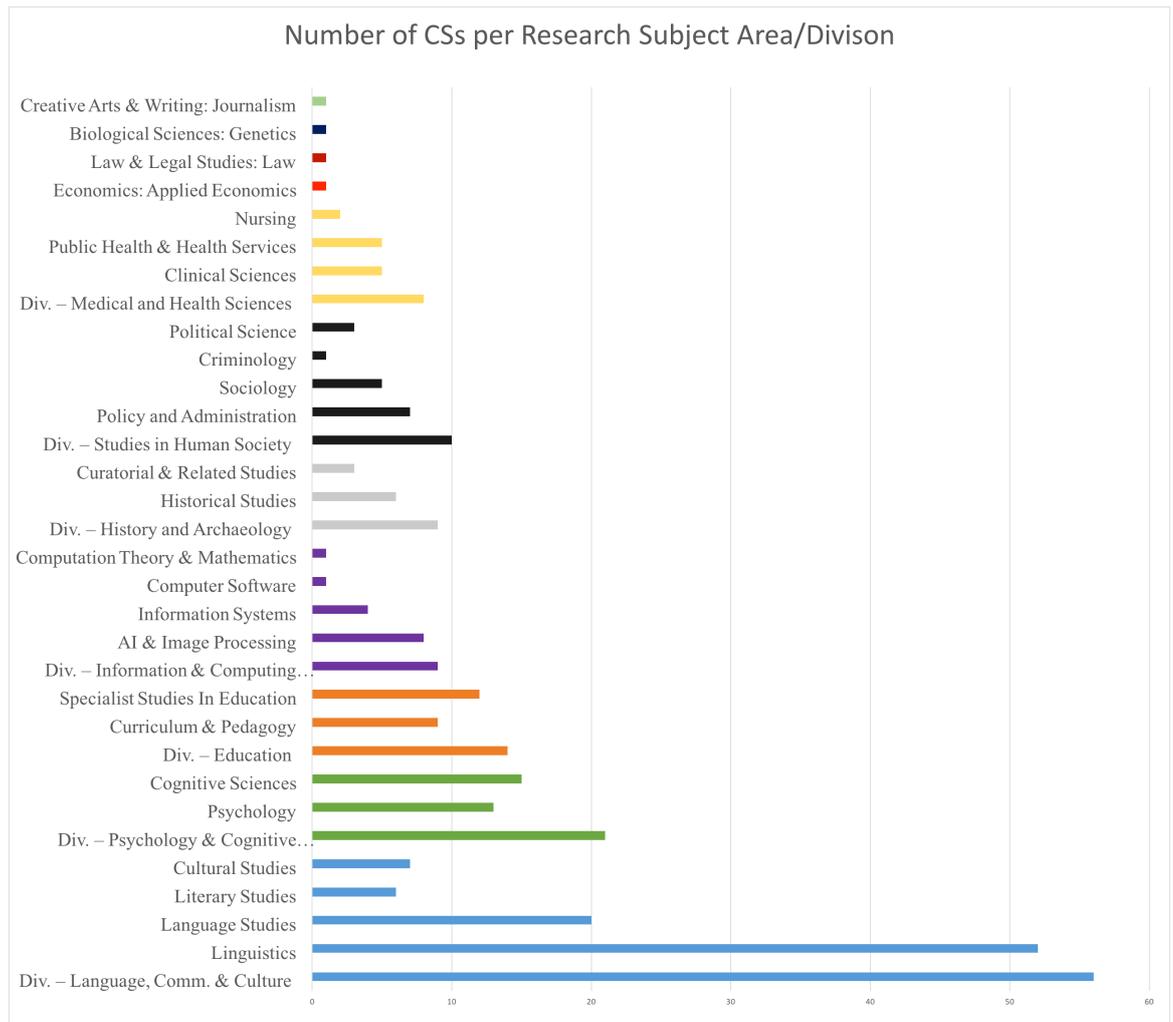
While a few CSs included in the corpus remain “fuzzy” ones in terms of discipline, this is representative of the field of linguistics which is characterised by blurred disciplinary boundaries, as explained above.

### Properties of the corpus

In effect, the corpus of CSs investigated in this thesis includes 78 documents, each about 4 pages (2400 words) long, giving a total of 173 474 words. The bulk of the studied documents – 71 CSs – have been submitted to the UoA28 (Linguistics and Modern Languages), 3 of them

were submitted to UoA25 (English Language and Literature), one to UoA21 (Education), one to UoA11 (Computer Science and Informatics), one to UoA36 (Communication, Cultural and Media Studies) and one to UoA31 (Classics). A list of all the CSs included in the corpus, along with submitting institution and UoA, can be found in Appendix 1.

In the online database of CSs (<http://impact.ref.ac.uk/CaseStudies/>) the documents were classed also according to 'Research Subject Areas' (RSAs). They were assigned automatically to each CS based on the text in the underpinning research section. RSAs in turn are collected into larger 'divisions'. Though RSAs were not chosen by the authors of CSs, and occasionally can be erroneous or misleading, they are for the most part indicative of the field of study of the researcher, if not his or her method. Out of the 78 CSs in the studied corpus 56 were assigned to the 'Language, Communication and Culture' division, 52 of which to the 'Linguistics' RSA. The second biggest division was 'Psychology and Cognitive Sciences', with 21 CSs, and the following was 'Education' with 15 (see figure 2 below for details).

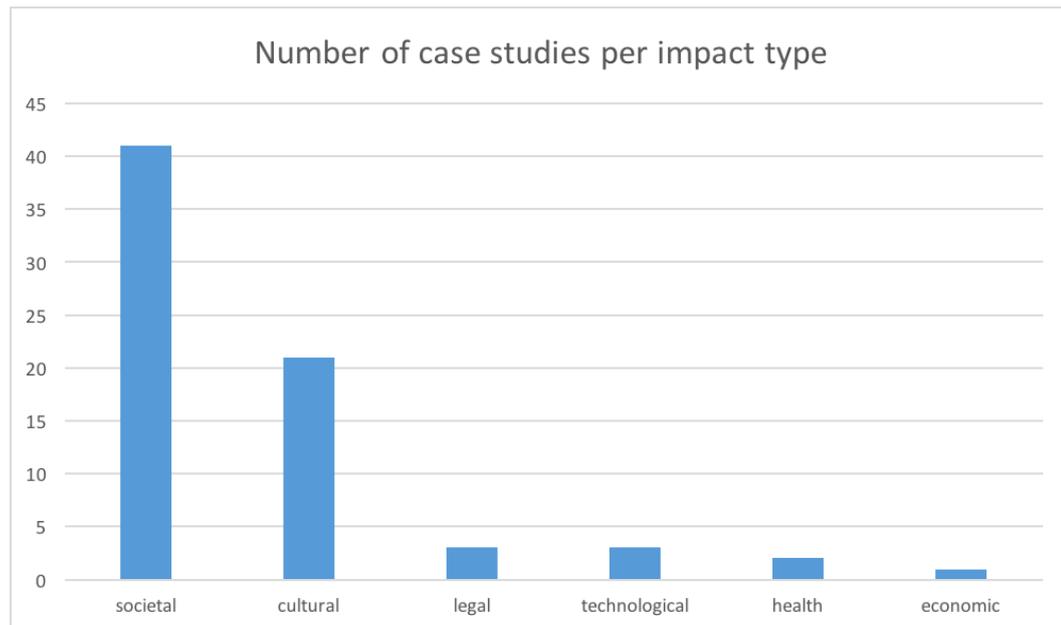


**Figure 2 – Composition of corpus of CSs – number of CSs per RSA**

Case studies are divided by RSA, while the different colours represent divisions (higher level of classification). Note that each CS can be assigned up to 3 RSAs, from any of the divisions. The bottom bar in each colour represents the division (Div.), the four bars at the top represent RSAs together with their division – as only 1 CS from the corpus was assigned to these 4 divisions.

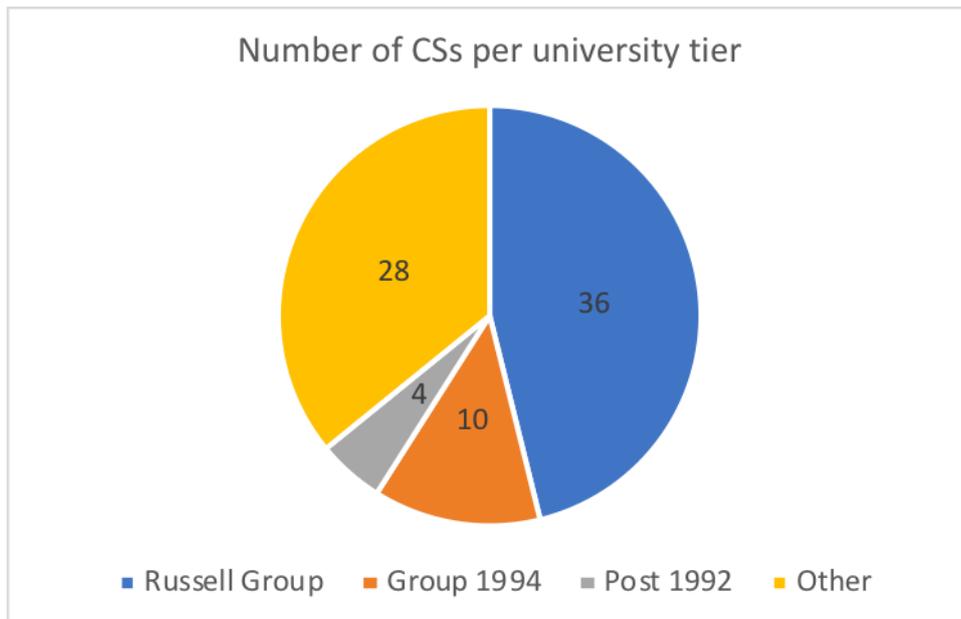
In the REF database CSs from the corpus were assigned to 25 RSAs under 11 divisions belonging mainly to SSH, but occasionally also to hard and life sciences – this variety testifies to the richness of the corpus. The interdisciplinary character of much work conducted in linguistics is confirmed by the fact that out of 78 CSs in the corpus, 46 were assigned to 2 different divisions, and six of them to as many as 3 divisions.

Another criterion according to which CSs were classed in the REF process was ‘impact type’ – also assigned to the documents in the REF process. In terms of the impact type the majority of the CSs from the corpus had a ‘societal’ impact (n=46), followed by ‘cultural’ (21), ‘legal’, ‘technological’ (3 of each), ‘economic’ (2), political (2) and related to ‘health’ (2) – see figure no 3 below.



**Figure 3 – Number of CSs from corpus per impact type**

Almost half of the CSs (n=38) come from institutions belonging to the Russell Group, another important section was submitted by the institutions which formerly belonged to the 1994 Group (n=10) (a coalition of smaller research-intense universities dissolved in 2013), a minority came from Post-1992 Universities (former polytechnics) (n=4) while the remnant can be assigned to other, usually rather high-ranking and research-intense universities (26) (see figure 4). The number of CSs from Russell Group universities and other research-intense institutions is disproportionately high in the studied corpus. This can be explained by the fact that research in the field of linguistics generally tends to concentrate at such institutions (DISCONEX, 2015).



**Figure 4 – Number of CSs from corpus per university tier**

### **6.2.2. Corpus of interviews**

In order to give a fuller, more nuanced account of the academic reality of impact assessment, I decided to supplement my corpus of CSs by collecting interviews with their authors. As the documents themselves do not contain a section indicating the author, in the recruitment process I assumed that the researcher whose work is the most cited in the ‘references’ section of the CS is the most likely author. Most of the academics who answered my message confirmed that they were indeed the authors of the documents, but occasionally they pointed to someone else (e.g. an academic who was less quoted in the document, a colleague, an administrative employee) as the actual author. Additionally, they often mentioned the involvement of other individuals than just the primary researcher in the process of drafting the documents. Therefore, I widened the scope of recruitment, including among my potential interviewees also academic administrators such as heads of departments, directors of research and dedicated ‘impact professionals’ such as impact officers, managers etc. who played a role in the impact submission. In order to better understand the emergence of the notion of ‘impact’ in its contemporary sense, I also talked to experts who

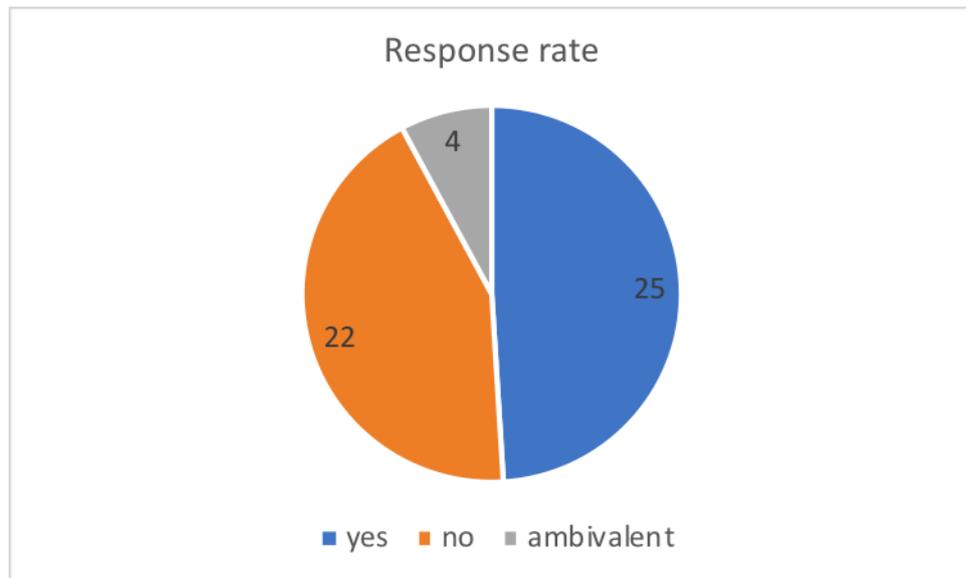
were involved in the inception of the policy, negotiating it and putting it into place.

### Recruitment

I started the recruitment of participants in December 2015 by contacting via email particular academics who I assumed were authors of CSs submitted to REF2014. I sent each of them an email explaining the purpose of my project and attached a consent form and information sheet (see appendix 3). Additionally, I usually asked my respondents, either in the email exchange or during the interview, to point me to other people who might have had an input into ‘their’ CS. I normally sent interview invitations to all those who were involved in the submission from a given academic unit aiming to get a full overview of the institutional culture around impact evaluation. Due to the small size of submissions and the response rate, I was not always able to interview all those involved in a particular submission.

### Response rate

Overall, I sent 51 requests for an interview, receiving 25 positive answers (where the interview was conducted), 22 negative answers (or lack of response) and 4 ‘ambivalent’ answers – where the response was positive but the interview did not take place, for instance because it was impossible to find a suitable date or because contact ceased on the part of the interviewee (see figure 5). The negative responses were usually justified with lack of time, concerns about confidentiality or the fact that the respondent had retired and/or had moved to a different country. In some cases, those rejecting the interview pointed me to colleagues who might be interested in the study, or indeed shared their reflections on the IA in a “private” manner.

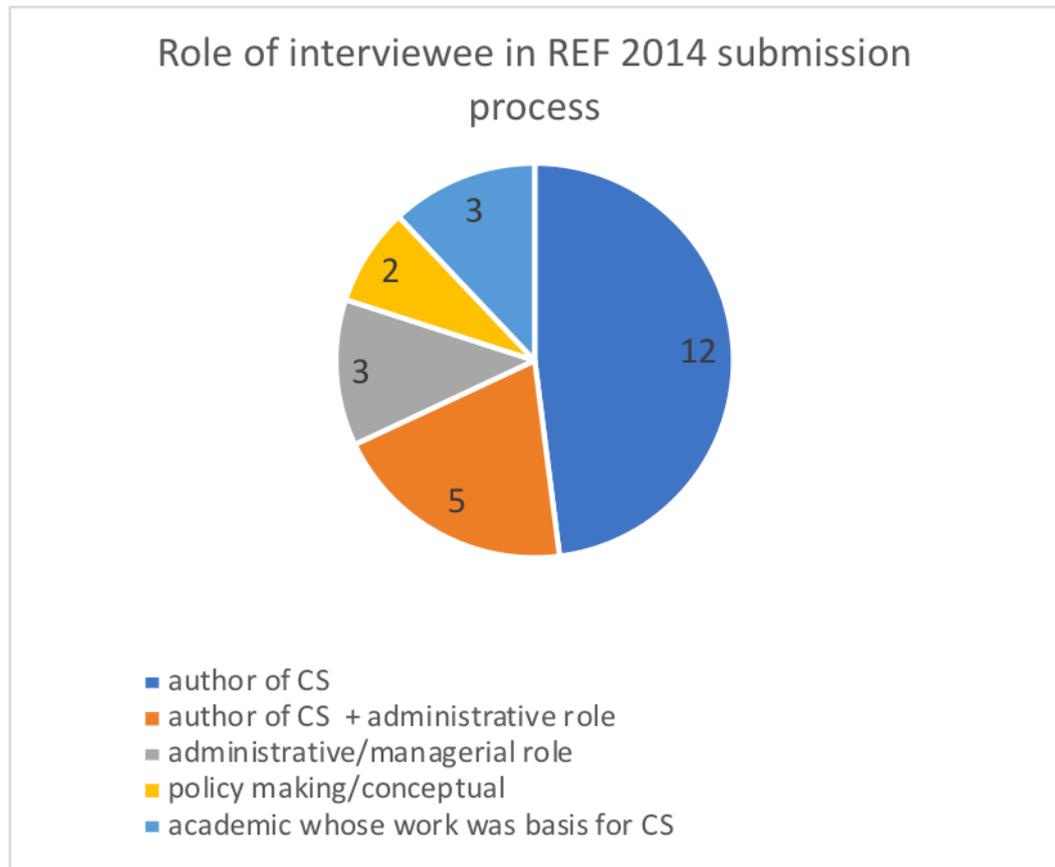


**Figure 5 – Response rate in the study.**

### Interview corpus – shape and limitations

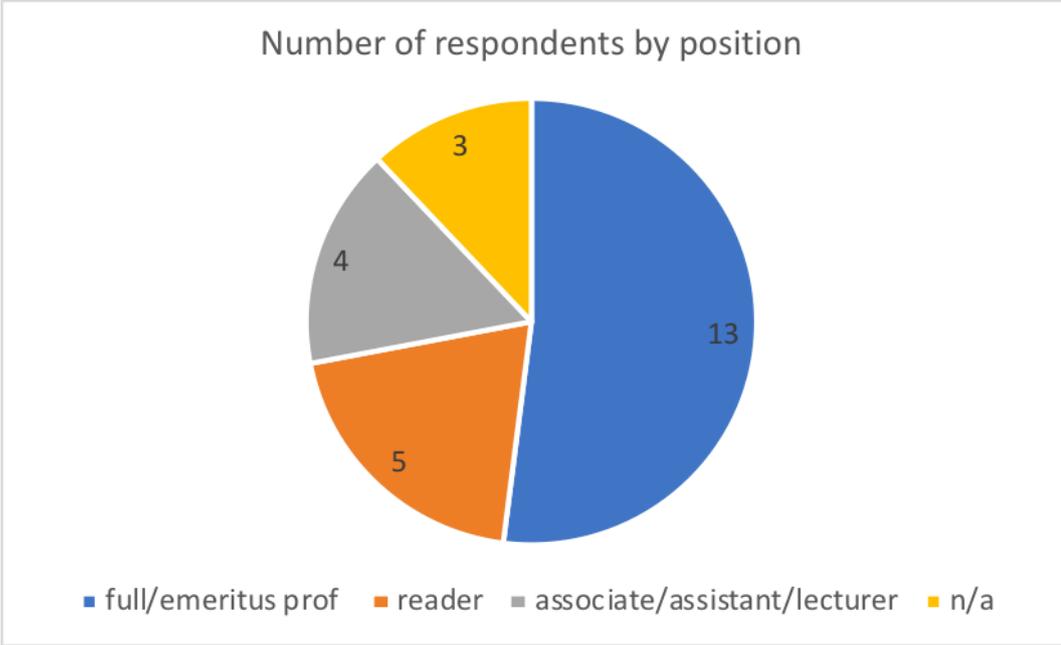
Of the final respondents 12 were male and 13 were female. Seventeen were authors of CSs, five of which additionally held an administrative/managerial role in overseeing the REF submission. Three respondents had only an administrative/managerial role in their institution in REF2014 (two of these were impact officers and one an academic with a senior managerial role). Three of the interviewed academics were authors of research which became the basis of CS which however they did not write themselves. Finally, two respondents had a role in the process of creating the policy around impact – one held a senior position in a research council and one had an advisory role at a conceptual stage of policy-making (see figure 6 below). The boundaries between the categories of respondents are not always clear e.g. ‘authors’ were not all engaged in the process of authorship to the same degree, as explained above; similarly, the two persons with a ‘policy-making/conceptual’ role were engaged at two different stages and in different faculties. Furthermore, some of my other respondents reported that they took part in the negotiation and implementation of REF policy, for instance as members of lobby groups. Since impact pervades academic reality on many levels it is difficult to use

just one label for the complexity of one’s engagement with it (including ‘ad-hoc’ advisory roles or taking part in debates within learned societies, professional associations etc.). I will mention these additional factors, where appropriate, when quoting the interviews.



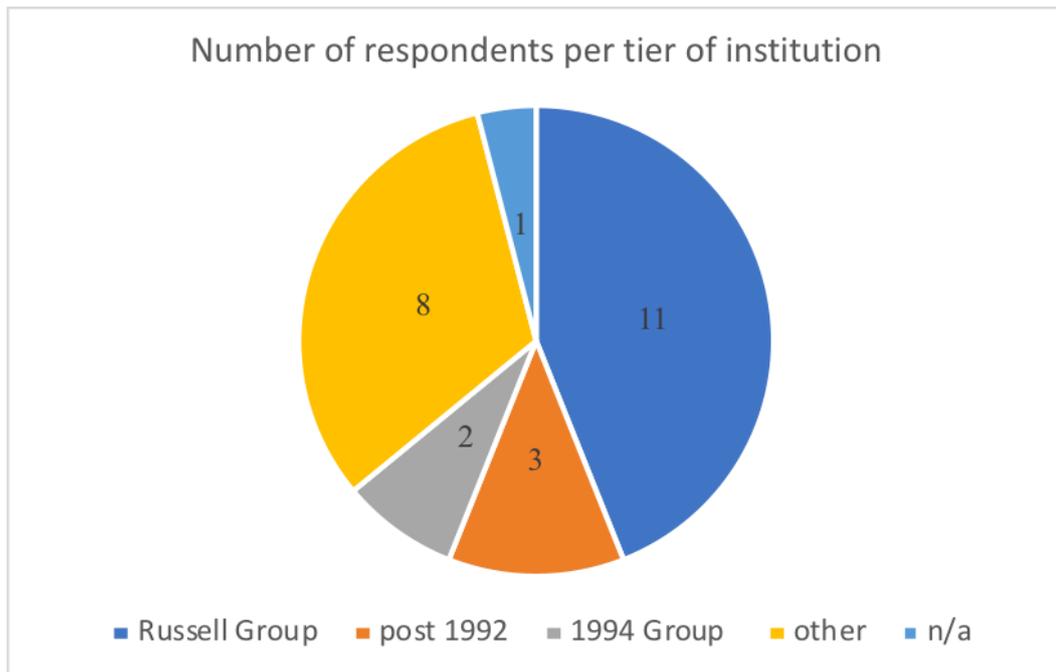
**Figure 6 – Role of interviewee in REF2014 submission process.**

As for their position in the academic hierarchy, thirteen of the respondents (54%) were full or emeriti professors, five held the position of reader, four had lower academic positions (assistant/associate professor, lecturer...) and in three cases they did not hold a position in the academic hierarchy – this is the case for the impact ‘professionals’ and policymakers – see figure 7 for a break-down.



**Figure 7 – Number of respondents per position**

Respondents were affiliated at twelve universities and one research policy institution. I had between two and four respondents in each institution, apart from four universities and the policy institution where there was just one. In terms of the tier of the institution, eleven respondents were affiliated at Russel Group universities, four at former Group 1994 institutions, two at post-1992 universities (former polytechnics), while the remaining eleven academics were based at other, usually rather high-ranking universities (see figure 8).



**Figure 8 – Number of respondents per tier of institution**

Universities belonging to the Russell group are research-intensive and are often labelled ‘elite’, while ex-polytechnics are traditionally more practice-oriented, and generally considered less prestigious (Halsey, 1992; Paye, 2013). While I initially planned to investigate the differences in impact culture in institutions of different tiers, I found this research question to be not practical. First of all, a minority of submissions in linguistics came from post-1992 universities, which is also reflected in a smaller number of respondents from these institutions. Secondly, I found that the position of the university in rankings has, at least in my sample, little to do with the position of the academic in the field – I interviewed many scholars who are very established and highly respected but who are not based in Russell group universities. Similarly, I found that the job title of the academic (full, assistant, associate professor...) was often not indicative of the actual stance of the academic in the community – for instance some of my respondents who were not full professors nevertheless had a high standing in the field. This is in line with research showing that positions in academia are not easily pinned down and composed of different layers or spheres – teaching, research, administration... (Angermuller, 2013b). Hence, in this study I usually do not provide information on the tier of the respondent’s

university or their position – I only point to their role in the impact evaluation process (author of CS, research manager etc. – see figure 6 and appendix 4). This also allows a higher level of anonymity.

The final corpus consists of 25 interviews, each of which is around 60 minutes long (ranging from 33 to 97 minutes) adding up to around 25 hours of recordings. About seventy percent of these have been transcribed in full, the rest were summarised. The transcripts and summaries were introduced into MaxQda software and coded both for content and for interpretative patterns in an iterative process informed by constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2015, see appendix 7 for samples of coding). In this thesis, I usually quote fragments word for word, but I usually do not transcribe fillers (see appendix 5 for transcription standards).

The analytical chapters are organised thematically and chronologically – I use interview data when analysing all three stages of the implementation of the agenda. Rather than grouping interview fragments by type of interviewee (academic, policy-maker, impact professional) I often contrast accounts from different social actors in order to give a fuller and more nuanced view of a given problem. This approach is also in line with a post-structuralist approach to analysing discursive data (Hook, 2007), which does not seek to impose an artificial order on what is found in the discourse, but attends also to the variations and contradictions. It also places the meanings emergent in the discourse ahead of the speaking subject, which is in a sense only established as a subject by the discourse. Hence, the meanings which come to the fore in the interview are seen as a co-construction of the interviewee and interviewer (see 6.2.4), but also of the entire community involved in the studied organisational change.

The choice of interviewees described above is not without limitations. Perhaps the most important one is that the selected informants were involved in the REF process, which indicates that they were comparatively successful, regardless of the score obtained by their submission. By contrast, there are many academics whose work was ruled out as basis of a

CS, or who were excluded from the entire submission. Considering the sample it uses, this study might, not without reason, be accused of a common fault of research on HE – i.e., ‘taking the winner’s perspective’ (Jiang, 2008, p. 352). While I am mindful of this bias, I find that in the case of a new and little-researched practice such as impact assessment the most practical and pressing task is to explore the visible side of the phenomenon. An inquiry into attitudes and practices of those who find themselves excluded, or willingly exclude themselves, from the emerging field of ‘impactful research’ is a promising area to be investigated in future studies.

### **6.2.3. Ethics and citing data**

A project which deals with a new practice in a community and describes the emergent patterns of behaviour and moral standpoints will necessarily have ethical implications. As an adept in the field which I am studying – linguistics – I often had the impression of being involved in the process in two roles – as a researcher, but also as a member of the studied field, someone who will eventually be affected by the observed changes. While this position enabled me to have privileged access to my respondents and a deep insight into the field (in alignment with reflections on overcoming the analyst’s paradox discussed by Sarangi 2007), it also gave rise to a complex process of work *on myself* as a researcher – I return to this question in the closing section of this thesis.

It was never my intention to reveal the ‘secret’ aspects of academic life (gossip, power games etc.); instead I aimed to offer a convincing interpretation of what is already in plain sight and has become part of everyday experience to the point of becoming natural or invisible. Nevertheless, since REF is a high-stakes evaluation process, many of my respondents were concerned about anonymity (in fact, some of the negative responses were connected to anxiety about being recognised by readers). All interviews are cited in an anonymous manner (numbered 1-25) – I also decided not to give information about the tier of the university. This is

consistent with my observations on lack of simple correlation between academics' position or affiliation and their actual stance in the community.

A challenge presented itself in the points where I cite fragments of CSs alongside interviews with their authors. Given that the documents are publicly accessible and searchable, quoting fragments from a case study word for word would enable the reader to localise the document in question and to identify, with a high level of probability, their author and therefore the interviewee. In such cases, in order to protect my respondent's identity, I selectively altered words in the cited fragments of CSs, replacing them with synonyms (e.g. "people" instead of "persons", "collected" instead of "gathered" etc.). These changes however should not affect the reception of the text on the side of the reader.

Some of my respondents required their pre-approval before fragments of their interviews are made public, and I deemed it fair to treat all respondents equally. Hence, after submitting the thesis, I sent a draft to all of my participants, giving each one the number of their interview, so they could verify if their words are cited in a way that they find acceptable.

#### **6.2.4. Interview process**

The interviews usually took place in locations selected by the participant – mostly in their offices on campus, more rarely in cafés, and in some cases over internet connection. Written consent was taken before the interview, and in the case of non-face-to-face interviews forms were sent via email and oral consent was taken. The semi-structured interview consisted of two parts of different length, depending on the interviewee and the context. I started with questions on the interviewee's biography, on the basis of their academic CV, which I had requested beforehand. We talked about the respondent's position in their field, about how they reached their current position and often discussed a piece of their academic writing (an article, a chapter), usually selected by the respondent. The informants were usually

keen to reflect on their academic career. This first part of the interview served several purposes: it helped to break the ice, gave me an idea about the respondent's motivations in entering academia, their position in the department and institution as well as in their field.

The second part of the interview focused on the REF. I would usually open with a general question "how was REF2014 for you?", or "do you remember when you first learned about the Impact Agenda?". I asked to be talked through the submission process in the interviewee's department. If the respondent was also author of a CS, particular stylistic and rhetorical choices were discussed on the basis of the document itself. Questions would include: why a given piece of information was included/excluded, what changed during the process of drafting, who was involved in writing and reviewing the document. I also asked about the burdens and rewards related to the exercise. Finally, reflections of a general nature were encouraged, and the interviewee was asked about the place of 'research impact' in their own career and in the judgements that they make on the work of colleagues. At this point, the conversation would often return to the first topic addressed – the biography of the participant. This was often an occasion to place 'research impact' in the context of an academic's entire life trajectory. A set of exemplary questions which I asked during my interviews can be found in Appendix 6 – but these are just indicative guidelines, and I never produced this list during the interview itself.

In many cases there was some overlap between the two interview sections, as respondents frequently brought up points connected to broad issues of impact *before* any question on the IA was asked. This would confirm my impression that respondents were generally willing to make time for this interview in their busy schedules precisely because they *wanted to* discuss the topic of impact assessment. Initial responses of academics to my research findings seem to confirm that reflection on the concept of impact is currently a pressing topic. The interview setting provides an arena to voice one's views, not only for the benefit of the interlocutor but also one's own. To repeat a remark which came from a member of audience after a

presentation on my research: “telling stories on impact to ourselves is a way to live with ourselves”, particularly in the context of the often-alienating administrative procedures. This is a point I develop in more detail in chapter 9.

The motivations of my interviewees in taking part in the research, hinted at during the interviews or outside its framework, were of a different nature. Apart from creating a site for ‘thinking aloud’ about the issues related to evaluation or expressing a critique in an anonymous non-evaluative environment, these seemed to include helping an early career colleague with their research and contributing to a project which was perceived as important (including voicing opinions which the respondent perceived as marginalized). A question that suggests itself in view of these different motivations of my respondents – and which I have been repeatedly asked – is “to what degree can my respondents’ answers be considered honest?”. Perhaps the informants are not telling me everything, or maybe they are *performing* for my benefit? Can one analyse these interviews, clearly animated by different intentions, in the same way?

My answer to the above question would be positive. This response is enabled by moving away from a traditional content-oriented approach to one which is informed by modern iterative and constructivist approaches to interviewing. In this framework, the meanings which emerge out of the interviews are considered a co-construction and negotiation between the interviewer and the interviewees (Charmaz, 2015; Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). In line with post-structuralist approaches to empirical data analysis, interviews, rather than offering “immediate access” to social subjects own conscious conceptions and understanding of the motives of their “actions and routines” give insights into the structural organization of the discourse effectuated and sustained by these practices’ (Marttila, 2015, §50). So, rather than looking for “true” or “authentic” thoughts and convictions of my participants, I am interested in the process of discursively building concepts, stances and identities both in the CS documents and in the interview. In line with interactionist approaches to communication, I

consider both my corpora – CSs which are publicly-available and subject to evaluation and the interviews which are anonymous and not-evaluative – as a sort of linguistic performance, through which academic subjects fashion their ‘selves’ on different stages. Rather than a site of simply transferring information, presenting accounts of events and voicing existing emotions and views, I see the interview as a site where meanings are negotiated, reflected upon and actively shaped – by both participants.

The interviews were also characterised by interesting dynamics given the unique relationship between interviewer and interviewee – a junior researcher in the field and more experienced, senior member of the academic community respectively. While usually the interviewer is considered as the side which has more power, as he or she is the one who establishes the framework of the exchanges, who asks questions and who later interprets the collected data (Oakley, 2016, p. 197), I often observed instances where this tendency was reversed and where the respondent capably took the dominating position, for instance by questioning me on my research questions, methods, technical issues related to the recording etc., thereby evoking the situation of a professor examining a student, which triggered a change in both of our footings (Garton & Copland, 2010). During the data collection, I strived to make the most of the complexities of identity (both mine and the respondents) to elicit possibly rich material. For instance, my growing expertise on the REF was probably an incentive for respondents to grant an interview, while being a relative outsider to the British academic system (a foreigner, a junior adept of a discipline) I was able to probe into peculiarities of academic administrative procedures.

In my analysis, I use the interviews on three levels: 1) as a source of information on the ‘facts’ related to impact (dates, names, formal requirements – particularly in chapter 6), 2) as accounts of interactions and meaning negotiation which took place in the context of the Agenda, and 3) the interview itself as a site of negotiation and identity construction.

## **7. Analysis I – Science policy and impact infrastructure**

This chapter looks at the initial phases of the Impact Agenda's existence: the creation of the evaluation policy and institutional responses to it. The question I try to answer is how can we conceptualise the establishment of the policy and of the structures enabling its reception, and in particular what was the role of discourse in this process? In approaching this question, I draw on interview data, including interviews with all three types of social actors: policy-makers, academics and impact officers. My analysis in this chapter draws on Foucauldian governmentality theory and in particular, three concepts: emergence, problematization and apparatus.

### ***7.1. “There was no master blue print!” The Impact Agenda takes shape***

In this section I aim to show how an area of activity which has always existed – the collaboration of academics with the non-academic world – was targeted during the preparations to REF2014: how it was described using new notions, delimited and subjected to new procedures. I will focus on the *emergence* (in the Foucauldian sense, as explained in 5.3.1.) of the concept of ‘impact’. I aim to show how a relatively abstract idea becomes a reality, a ‘problem’, triggering the development of new institutions, functions and objects, and eventually shaping the way subjects conceive of their world and of themselves.

The initial proposals for impact evaluation, developed on the government's recommendation, and inspired by the Australian RQF framework, as described in 4.1, were later subject to debate with the major stakeholder – the academic community. While much of the existing literature portrays the Impact Agenda as a ‘given’ and proceeds to analyze its’ consequences, the starting point of my is the establishment of the notion of ‘impact’. I argue

that rather than a policy single-handedly elaborated by the policy-maker, it consisted much more in a co-creation of various actors. In the final shape of the regulations we find the legacy of the voices of the Australian policymakers, the employees of HEFCE, academics and academic associations. In the fragment below, a policymaker from HEFCE gives their account of the process of ‘defining’ impact in the British case, which is presented as long, laborious and, notably, involving a crucial discursive aspect (“talking”, “listening”):

There was no master blue print! There were some ideas, which indeed did largely come to pass... but in order to understand where we might be doing things that were unhelpful and might have adverse outcomes we had to listen. I was in... way over one hundred meetings! And talked to thousands of people. (...) [The Impact Agenda] is something that we are doing to universities. Actually, what we wanted to say is ‘we are doing it with you, you’ve got to own it’.

#### Interview 20 – fragment 1

The purpose of the dialogue with the academic community described in the above-cited fragment was twofold: on the one hand the aim was to clarify and reiterate certain rules of the new system and, on the other hand, to engage the academics and affirm their active their role in the policy-making process. Hence, from a concept which came from the outside of the British academic community, and was to a degree imposed on it (“it is something that we are doing to universities”) the IA was to become an accepted, embedded element of the academic life (“you’ve got to own it”). The first part of this process – the shaping of a common understanding of impact – can be conceptualised using the Foucauldian notion of ‘problematization’, while the second – appropriation of the notion by scholars – can be cast as ‘subjectivation’ (a notion I will focus on in more detail in Chapter 9). Together, these initial, dynamic phases of the introduction of impact to British academia can, in terms of Foucauldian theory, be understood as representing the phase of ‘emergence’.

The initially open, undefined quality of the notion of ‘impact’ (hinted at in fragment 1 with the expression “there was no master blue-print”) is something that comes to the fore also in accounts of academics, who participated in the many rounds of meetings and consultations which took place at universities. For instance, one of the respondents, a senior academic and research manager recounted, in an amused voice, how the presenter at one of these meetings (who was supposedly aiming to explain the concept of impact to attending academics) was himself unable to answer precisely questions about impact coming from the public from. See the below fragment:

At that time, they [organizers of the evaluation] had not yet come up with this definition [of impact], not yet pinned it down, but they were trying to give an idea of what it was, to get feedback, to get a grip on it. (...) And we realised then... they didn't have any more of an idea of this than we did! It was almost like a fishing expedition. (...) So, I got a sense very early on of, you know, groping.

#### Interview 1 – fragment 2

Many elements of the consultation process mentioned by the speaker in the fragment 2 resonate with the previously-cited account of the HEFCE senior employee in fragment 1. Both speakers mention numerous meetings and consultations taking place with great intensity and use a series of colloquial or metaphorical expressions to render the fuzzy nature of the concept of impact: “no master blue print”, the Agenda not being “not yet pinned down”, [the policymakers] trying to “get a grip on it”, and [a sense of] “groping”, “a fishing expedition”. There were two consequences of this common effort to define ‘impact’ – the elaboration of a notion which could be shared by the policymaker and the academic community and, contemporaneously, the decrease of negative approaches and the development of a feeling of acceptance and ownership on the side of the scholars. In the following fragment, another senior academic talks about the change in attitudes following the initial period of consultations:

Interviewee: I think the resentment died down relatively quickly... There was still some resistance. And that was partly academics recognising that they had to [take part in the exercise], they couldn't ignore it. Partly, the government and the research council has been willing to kind of tweak, and amend and qualify the initial very, very kind of hard-edged guidelines and adapt them for the humanities. So, it was two-way process, a dialogue.

### Interview 16 – fragment 3

What is important in the above-cited fragment 3 is the idea of the concept of impact entering an already existing and well-defined academic reality, characterized by a strong friction between STEM and SSH disciplines (as mentioned in section 4.1 in the context of the Australian exercise and in line with literature about the role of divisions in the academic realm – see section 2.1). The respondent's view is that “hard-edged guidelines”, supposedly prepared with STEM disciplines in mind, were adapted “for the humanities”. In parallel and in reaction to this process of “tweaking, amending and qualifying”, also the attitudes of academics progressively changed.

Together, the three above-cited interviews – with a HEFCE representative and two senior academics (fragments 1, 2 and 3) – paint a picture of the establishment of the notion of research impact as a long, time- and energy-consuming exercise which was however yielded important effects in terms of affecting both policy and attitudes. By engaging the academic community, this process of deliberation created the impression that academics had an important input into the policy. In this sense, the laboriousness of the process, both for the policy institutions' employees and the academics involved, was the necessary price to be paid for the feeling of there being a dialogue between the policy-makers and the academic community. If the announcement of the final regulations regarding REF2014 (through the publication of documents such as HEFCE, 2011b) was a critical moment for the establishment of the Agenda, the above-cited accounts and their analysis illustrates that the process of

making ‘impact’ into a thinkable and manageable entity was set into motion long before. It is through this time- and energy-consuming process, and not just at the point of the final launch of the policy via official documents that ‘impact’ became constituted as an object of thought, and the contingent process of problematization of this area of academic activity started.

In this section, I aimed to show, on the basis of my data, how the Agenda emerged out of a polyphonic debate: how it was “talked into being” in hundreds of meetings, through a dialogue, during conversations happening in different places. I argue that the shape of the Agenda was a *contingent* effect of a process which involved inquiry (“almost a fishing expedition”), listening, consultation, adaptation (“tweaking, changing, amending hard-edged guidelines”), and exchange (“listening, a dialogue, a two-way process, conversations happening in different places”). It also allowed a new opening for certain groups of academics or individuals who could distinguish themselves with their engagement and experience.

In terms of theory, this section was about the *emergence* of the *problematization* of ‘impact’, the moment in which ‘impact’ entered the field of meaning (Foucault, 1984b, pp. 84-86). I charted the ‘entry of forces’ which brought about the *emergence* of the notion of impact, which triggered the problematization of this area. I showed how multiple voices, on different stages, contributed to the shaping of the concept of impact. I argue that the rules which were introduced with the publishing of the REF guidelines (HEFCE, 2011b) were still “empty and unfinalized”. It was up to those who were subject to the rules to fill them with meaning, and to give them sense by linking them to concrete practices. In the following section I look at how this was done within institutions.

## ***7.2. The problematization of impact in HE institutions***

Once the guidelines on REF 2014 were in place (HEFCE, 2011b), in the institutions there began an intense period of preparing the submissions for the exercise. This involved several, often overlapping steps: from reading and re-reading the policy documents to get an understanding of the criteria of assessment, through the dissemination of this knowledge among staff, choosing the panel to submit to, selecting the researchers whose work would become the basis of CSs, drafting CSs (often in many versions), gathering feedback on them and making required amendments to, finally, putting together entire submissions. This complex process had to be carried out over a relatively short period of time (the closing date for submissions was 29 November 2013). The linguistic component of these developments was crucial – much of the work consisted in reading, making sense of new concepts, sharing knowledge, attempting to write in a new genre, critiquing documents in this genre authored by colleagues... These different actions seem to be dispersed across different academic spaces and levels of hierarchy: meetings of senior managers, workshops for employees, drop-in sessions with administrative staff, solitary hours of writing, one-to-one feedback, thousands of exchanged emails... In this chapter I will try to draw all of these dispersed discursive interventions together, arguing that diverse as they are, they are all connected in a complex web of practices, rules and objects which are necessary for the stability of the notion of ‘impact’.

The procedures around the IA differed significantly from institution to institution, involving a range of bodies specific to the university (such as University Steering Group, Vice Chancellor’s REF Panel), research managers (Director of Research, Head of Department), casual ‘helpers’ (e.g. colleagues from department giving ad-hoc reviews of CSs) and in many cases also designated ‘impact’ specialists based at the university (impact officers, research support officers) and experts sourced from

beyond the institution (hired consultants). The accounts on the run-up to REF 2014 in my interviews show that in no two universities studied was the process of preparing an impact submission identical. In some, it would seem, it was extremely bureaucratic and managed in a top-down manner, in others it was more of a bottom-up and perhaps slightly more relaxed procedure. A majority of informants reported finding the process difficult – issues arose on every of the above-mentioned steps of the process, and very frequently they had to do with questions of discourse: classification, rhetoric, genre, authorship. If this process was perceived by many as a struggle, it is because its object was not just the production of CSs for the upcoming REF exercise but indeed changing the habits of academics and the patterns of collaboration in academia in the long term.

Fragments of interviews cited in the previous section focused on the initial stages of the development of the Agenda, when first policymakers and then senior academics struggled to “get a handle” on impact, that is – to understand it, or perhaps rather to construct it in a way which would be understandable (“it was almost like a fishing expedition!”). Soon the task of “pinning down” the notion of impact, and, more importantly, using this notion in practice, would become relevant to all heads of departments. Many of my interviewees confirmed that if the previous RAE exercises were a certain burden, the advent of REF brought about a completely new challenge. See the exchange below with a senior academic and research manager:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about what changed with the introduction of REF?

Interviewee: Impact! Getting our head around impact was probably the most difficult issue.

Interview 3 – fragment 4

One of the challenges, it emerges from the interviews, was to gauge the thin line between dissemination (for instance media presence) and impact (where there would be a demonstrable change in behaviour, attitudes etc.).

In the fragment below another academic and member of department management talks about his struggle with the concept:

So the tendency, and I guess I also fell victim to this, was to start collecting lists of talks given to the public, any form of engagement with non-academic communities and presenting that as impact. And it took a sort... quite some mental effort to understand that the research has to come and there has to be a clear, linear trajectory and you have to be careful and convincing in the way that you trace that trajectory from the research, through the dissemination to the events, reports and so on, and then the impact such as it was. So that was... that was quite a... that was quite, as I say, a mental effort to grasp.

#### Interview 16 – fragment 5

The above is an account of a process of overcoming a common-sense understanding of ‘impact’ and acquiring a new ‘correct’ understanding – one which is in line with the way impact was being problematized. The speaker repeats twice that it took “some mental effort” to grasp this new concept. And understandably so – for the process of sense-making was embedded in various dispersed practices of reading, writing, consulting, reporting etc. It was also connected to work which one had to carry out *on* oneself – that is undertaking an effort to think about one’s work not in the traditional terms of ‘academic excellence’, or even investment in dissemination, but through a completely new ‘problematization’.

Another interviewee, a senior academic and author of a CS tells about the beginnings of impact at their institution.

Interviewer: So, I wanted to ask you how was this entire experience [of REF2014] for you in general. Was it very new or...?

Interviewee: Uh, it took me two years [chuckles].

IR: How much?

IE: Nearly two years.

IR: TWO years?!

IR: Because you started out with saying “we need impact case studies” and pretty much everybody was encouraged “well, think of the work that you have done, is there anything in terms of impact?”. (...) You had several workshops or several meetings where somebody would come and tell you something about what... what is an impact case study, what impact means and how it is... But it was quite difficult at the beginning to understand that – what it is. And then you feel “with my research whether it’s... “?

*[The researcher pulls out a slip of paper with the HEFCE definition of impact on it as a prompt]*

IE: We had long discussions in our small sections about this definition (...). It seems to [have] this focus on the economy where you say (...) that there was ten million more turnover or something. (...) Our research in language I suppose [does] not really have this immediate effect... So that we tried to understand it then, say, with cultural development and cultural awareness... So what... what... what does it mean? You know? We had long discussions where we said “well, this doesn't apply to us”.

#### Interview 6 – fragment 6

If in the first phase of the existence of impact, described in the previous section, social actors were involved in constructing or refining the definition of the concept on the macro level, in this next phase situated within institutions, the focus is on re-constructing “one’s own work” so as to meet that definition on a micro scale. This mental work is a collaborative process, a group practice. Since CSs would constitute part of a group submission, influencing the score of the entire assessed unit, the entire department is engaged in the common undertaking of tracking down impact in the work conducted within the unit. In most departments several group

sessions (“workshops, meetings, long discussions in small sections”) take place – these sessions focus on explaining the new policy, concepts and genre (as mentioned in interview 6 above) but the ultimate aim is to apply the new concepts to one’s own work (“think of the work that you have done, is there anything in terms of impact?”). It is a task which at first creates unease (“and then you feel ‘with my research whether it’s...?’”).

This tension, in the case of the speaker from fragment 6, but also many other respondents, was connected to their disciplinary membership. ‘Impact’ was seen as not immediately compatible with SSH disciplines. The tension between STEM and SSH disciplines which accompanied the emergence of the Agenda (as mentioned in 7.1) was still present at this stage of its local reception. This is visible in the above fragment 6 in the academics’ unease with the notion of ‘impact’ understood as immediate, economic effects, which are not among the traditional aims of SSH research.

Disciplinary membership is for scientists both a strong element of individual identity and of group coherence (Becher & Trowler, 2001) therefore situating impact in the context of traditional requirements of one’s field is a crucial moment of both revisiting ones ‘academic self’ and of shaping group attitudes towards the policy. Fragment 6 recounts how a group of language specialists developed a common understanding of ‘impact’, going through an initial phase of rejection (“well, this doesn’t apply to us”) or doubtful hesitation (“our research in language I suppose does not really have this immediate effect”) to later approaching the task in a more flexible and creative manner (“we tried to understand it than, say, with cultural development and cultural awareness”). The fact that my interviewee, despite the initial hesitation, in the end authored a CS confirms that a certain understanding of ‘impact’ in the department had been reached. However, it was the affect of a long and, judging from the speaker’s tone of voice, tiresome process.

Although the three participants quoted above (fragments 4,5,6) were based at different institutions (of different tiers) the developments related to the introduction of the notion of impact which they describe are very similar. The main issue was “getting one’s head around impact”. There is a clear sense of uncertainty and challenge as to the meaning of the notion of ‘impact’ (“what... what... what does it mean?”), particularly doubt about whether SSH lends itself to interpretation in its terms (“well, this doesn’t apply to us”). An understanding of these elements had to be achieved through a collaborative process (“several workshops or several meetings”) which took a long time to unravel (“it took me two years”) as well as requiring an intellectual investment (“it took quite some mental effort”).

It is at this stage that the conceptual work of *problematizing* an area of human activity started to overlap with the work of consciously reflecting on how the Agenda would be implemented in particular institutional contexts: how particular disciplines would position themselves towards the notion of ‘impact’, how alliances could be formed within academic units and, finally, how individual academics would reinterpret their own role.

This section illustrated how the problematization of the notion of ‘impact’ began to take place within departments, through collective teaching and learning of the new framework and careful self-examination against this model. Compared to the phase described in the previous chapter (problematization of ‘impact’ on the central, policy level) this process had a larger “receptive” component – the Agenda had already been put into place, now it was a question of finding the best response to it. From the point of view of interactional sociolinguistics this effort can be conceptualised in terms of institutional practice of self-reflection (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999a, p. 3). Through reflecting on rules and procedures proper to the institution, bringing to scrutiny the boundaries of institutional knowledge and re-directing group thinking towards particular categories proper of the institutional order, existing categories and practices can be reinforced and reified or, on the contrary – renewed. It is through such collective meta-reflection on the terms and categories used by a discourse community that

concepts become institutionalised. On the other hand, also the legitimacy of the institution hinges on a “proper” appropriation and use of certain terms, if these are broadly associated with legitimate activity in a field. In the case of REF2014, senior university managers were clearly led by a belief that taking stock of impact was a requirement for any academic department which could claim scientific “excellence”.

### ***7.3. Choosing panels***

‘Excellence’ or ‘high-quality research’ will mean something different in every academic discipline; similarly, ‘impact’ would be articulated differently depending on the field. In REF, submitting departments had to choose just one unit of assessment in which they wanted to be assessed. If in the age of interdisciplinary research the selection of a UoA can pose a problem for many academic departments and individuals, this task was perhaps particularly difficult in the area of linguistics, which, as I have explained in 4.1 spans the social sciences and humanities incorporating varied types of research. The task of delimiting the remit of linguistics was further complicated in REF as the number of UoAs was reduced from RAE2008 to REF2014 (see section 4.2.1). If this was a theoretical puzzle for my inquiry, it was a very practical problem in academic units which employ linguists, where decisions needed to be made as to which UoA a particular department would submit to. While this decision seems like a very down-to-earth one, I argue that it is precisely through such mundane choices that boundaries of disciplines are reified or created anew. These boundaries will later influence the narrative of the submission (in which the department will situate itself within a field) as well as the fate of individual academics – some might not fit into the disciplinary profile and thus be excluded from the submission or entered into a different UoA.

A respondent (Interview 24, see section 6.3 for longer fragment) mentioned that in the consultation process which preceded the introduction of the Agenda “[linguists] were active in (...) raising awareness that applied

linguistics feeds into different research assessment panels”. In the course of the preparations to the assessment, in many departments the decision was made to enter a UoA different to Linguistics and Modern Languages (UoA28). What were the decisive factors behind the choice of a given UoA in particular departments: the alignment of the remit of the panel with work conducted in the department, the actual area of expertise of the academics sitting on the panel or perhaps some other aspect? Who had influence over the decision – all academic staff, senior staff in the department, senior management from the university? These issues came up in many of my interviews, particularly with senior academics who were overseeing the entire submission. The interviewee cited below explains why their department submitted to a panel different than UoA28.

Interviewer: Were there any discussions about which unit of assessment to go into?

Interviewee: We had some internal discussions. (...) I went to see a senior person [managing the submission to UoA28], who told me “no, we wouldn't want you”. (...) At that early stage, around 2010, we were trying to work out... some [colleagues] were comfortable with [UoA1<sup>5</sup>], some were less comfortable. I think it was clear for different political reasons [name of UoA2] would not be an option. We looked at the panels [lists other possible panels]. (...) Every department wants to get a maximum score. If they [people leading the submission] thought that bringing other people in would lower their score, they would say “no”. (...) Closer to 2012... The linguistics panel members were very formal linguists which is not the type of linguistics that we do, and our kind of linguistics would not be looked upon favourably. So, the answer was “no”. Very early on I had to go with [colleague's name] to senior management, and they made it very clear “we're not discussing the unit of assessment. You just have to accept it, it's a political thing”. Before they started [the conference], they said “don't ask that question, we're not willing to discuss it”.

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<sup>5</sup> In this fragment and the following ones, I do not give full names of UoAs in consideration of anonymity issues.

IR: [Name] told me that [that academic unit] was undergoing some structural changes at that time. Did this influence in any way the submission?

IE: Yeah, of course. At the [unit] there was a big restructure, you couldn't really plan much, because you wouldn't know which staff would be here, so how can you write the narrative? I didn't know if they wouldn't turn around and tell us "you're not doing a REF submission".

#### Interview 2 – fragment 7

In the above-described case, choosing a UoA was not easy, and this was not just due to the complex nature of much linguistic work. One of the possible UoAs for this department was ruled out because those leading the submission were not willing to include the linguists, perhaps fearing they could lower their score. This fear was justified by the fact that the scholars on the linguistics panel, as it became evident at some point, were representatives of a different subfield to the one practised in the submitting unit. Other UoAs were considered, and one was finally selected. However, it was not an ideal choice, as the main academic unit submitting to this panel was undergoing restructure, which created uncertainty. To a large degree the final decision was not taken in the submitting unit, but on the level of senior management, and it was not up to debate. The decision to enter this UoA can be seen as an outcome of a complex set of conflicting interests – those of each submitting group and of university management. When the choice had been made, there remained a difficulty as to “how to write a narrative” if the elements to be included in the story (members of staff, research outputs, presumably research groups) were in flux? Fragment 7 shows how in the context of REF decisions of a presumably scholarly nature (choosing a disciplinary panel which would offer an expert review of work conducted in a field, writing up a narrative on academic achievement) are shaped by administrative realities (possible scores, restructuring within departments, senior managers' opinions), all of which the above-cited speaker describes as “political reasons”. This example

suggests that narratives created for the submission would ultimately have to negotiate two realities – the academic one and the administrative one.

Another senior academic lists the reasons for joining a UoA different to linguistics, drawing attention particularly to the composition of the panels:

Interviewee: When you see [the UoA of] linguistics, then your judgment is on who is sitting in the panel that might be close to what you're doing and understand it. (...) We'd already looked at linguistics in the previous panels [in previous years] ... you get a sense, it's very clear that linguistics is very much linguistic in the traditional sense (...) We looked at what we did. (...) We felt that element would not go down so well in linguistics, as it would in [UoA1]. (...) So, on balance we felt that [UoA1] was a safe option. We debated, but we were all pretty much clear on that. I think next time it will be much more difficult, there's a lot more applied linguistics about it now. The balance has shifted. So, once you're in [UoA1], you're working with people there. And your impact is thought of in those terms.

#### Interview 1 – fragment 8

From this fragment, we see the choice of UoA is informed by experience and tacit knowledge about preferences of scholars from a particular strand of research. Again, what comes to the fore is strategic thinking about the result of the assessment, based on careful consideration of the composition of the panel. The classification of a particular department as belonging to a field is fluid – the speaker from fragment 8 mentions that since the assessment took place in 2014 the composition of his department had changed – hence, certain alliances between departments and groups of scholars who do not always work together on an everyday basis are created for the purpose of the assessment – in the above-described case the department joined the submission of a larger unit.

An academic from another university who was engaged in REF 2014 both as an author of a CS and senior academic manager overseeing the submission, thus answered the question regarding the grounds on which their department was submitted to a particular panel:

Purely strategic. There was actually a problem with me. There was nowhere to put me. (...) The first obvious choice was to go to [UoA1], except we have a group in [field] who are absolutely bloody fantastic. They are the best UoA that this university is likely to have. Their score is stellar. (...). I argued that we shouldn't have a [UoA1] submission so as not to dilute the [field] group result. So, then you have about ten individuals and you start thinking where to put them. The obvious place for me and a number of people was linguistics. That created a new headache. (...) You have two groups of people who have nothing to do with each other. Hard core quantitative research and very soft stuff (...). Can you present a group of linguists? Very quickly we decided that in order to give semblance to some kind of coherence we should have one case study from them and one from [us]. Purely strategic decision.

### Interview 3 – fragment 9

In the above fragment, we find a similar picture to the one previously presented in interview 1 (fragment 8). In the department in question there was a dilemma regarding the UoA to enter. One UoA (anonymised here as UoA1) was a good choice academically, but not 'politically' (it could "dilute the group result"). In (Modern Languages and) Linguistics in turn the submission would not be coherent. Compared to the previous account, the question of the choice of panel presented here has an additional level to it – not only is it an academic and administrative issue, but also, we may presume, a personal one ("there was a problem with me; there was nowhere to put me"). Issues related to classification, including disciplinary membership are crucial for one's perception of self, and struggling to find one's place in the system can be both an administrative and a personal challenge. On the same note, another interviewee says:

Interviewee: [My] panel was never linguistics, languages or whatever, it was [UoA1].

Interviewer: That's surprising because spontaneously, looking at your work, I wouldn't place you in [UoA1]. I thought [UoA2] could be more appropriate or [UoA3]? But I suppose it's...

IE: Yeah, it wasn't my choice. (...) I will go to [UoA3] now.

IR: You will do, yeah? So why the shift?

IR: Because I've changed departments. (...) So, it's from one misplacement to another but [laughs] let's see how that one goes...

IR: So actually you would fit into linguistics [and modern languages] but instead you went from [UoA 1] to [UoA 2]...

IE: Because (...) linguistics is always part of something else.

#### Interview 21 – fragment 10

As with the previous interviewee, there is a sense of mismatch between the individual's research and their UoA ("it's from one misplacement to another"), as well as a sense of resignation ("yeah, it wasn't my choice; let's see how that one goes..."). The academic's department often determines the UoA to which they will be submitted. In the interviewee's words "linguistics is always part of something else" (i.e. a larger department or school) – hence, instead of submitting to the linguistics panel, the interviewee has moved from one less likely UoA to another.

Judging from how often such comments come up in my interviews, the feeling of *misplacement* in REF2014 was common in the field of linguistics both on the level of departments as individual researchers. This is no doubt due to the interdisciplinary character of the field and the fact that linguists

are often based in non-linguistic departments, or in smaller units which need to group with others for the submission. Such difficulties justify applied linguists' anxiety in the run-up to the REF, and account for the need of lobbying when it comes to the shape of panels (compare Interview 24, fragment 42 cited in 9.1).

Concerns over the expertise of the panellists in a given area were also voiced by some of my interviewees – see for instance interview 2 fragment 7, where there is mention of formal linguists dominating the linguistics panel. Some of my respondents were even more vocal about the lack of expertise on particular areas among panellists in UoAs:

[Y]ou can say this publicly, there was not a single specialist in [name of field] in this panel. So, in a way we were disadvantaged. (...) [*However*] If we had gone into another UoA it would be probably less... less promising [explains that the other UoA was likely to get a lower score in the area of research]. So, this is why we went there, we didn't have a better Unit of Assessment. This is a problem. The last configuration of UoAs was not good enough. It did not address the areas in a specialised way.

#### Interview 5 – fragment 11

In addition to sharing frustration in the disappointing composition of the panels which did not allow a specialised assessment of particular fields (an issue raised also in the critical literature on REF: Sayer, 2015, pp. 38-47), this fragment exemplifies once again how decisions regarding entering into panels are often a balancing act between academic priorities (the expertise of panellists) and administrative ones (such as the expected score of the unit). The above-cited speaker concluded that he did not appreciate the shape of the submission of which he was part:

But we did it because that's what the university wanted. Next time around I'll have to be a bit stronger in resisting this if they want to do it again.

#### Interview 5 – fragment 12

So, like in fragment 7 cited before, it was “the university”, supposedly in the form of higher management, that had the final word on the panels to which particular departments would submit, while the collective or individual consent of scholars was of less consequence. This speaker however states that he plans to resist this tendency in the next edition of REF. Such a resolute stance is unusual among my respondents who mostly seem to be resigned in this respect to the decisions made by senior management (see for instance Interview 21, fragment 10 quoted before – “it wasn't my choice; let's see how that one goes”). While the two above fragments came from scholars self-identifying as linguists, the extract below is from an interview with a senior academic with expertise primarily in philology. I asked about his attitude to the fact that his discipline was no longer assessed in a separate UoA but in a joint Modern Languages and Linguistics panel.

Interviewer: So how did you feel about that change?

Interviewee: Bad.

IR: Bad?

IE: Yeah, yeah (...) It was very difficult to... to put forward submissions again because there weren't... You know, there was only one subject specialist for German, one subject specialist of French... (...) There was a lot of suspicion that... say, linguistics would be rated more highly than modern languages, literary studies and things like that. So, I think there was a feeling that it would become... the assessment panel had become watered-down in terms of subject specialism and the kind of expertise that people involved could bring. (...) When we had the [language] panel [in RAE2008] [they] made it

quite clear that everything would be read twice. Now it was impossible to do that kind of thing.

#### Interview 14 – fragment 13

Speakers from the interviews cited above all shared a suspicion, more or less bluntly expressed, that the different fields which fall under the broad label of language studies would not be equally assessed under the new panels. The academic cited above in fragment 13 suspected unequal treatment of modern languages and linguistics within panel UoA28, academics from interview 1 (fragment 8) and 2 (fragment 7) drew attention to the cleavage between applied and theoretical linguistics, while the speaker from interview 5 (fragment 12) was concerned about the lack of experts in his specialised, interdisciplinary area on the panel. These observations of experienced academics from the broad area of language studies are in line also with the stance released by the British Association of Applied Linguistics which drew attention to the fact that the discipline of applied linguistics was not accurately represented across the different panels to which specialists in this area returned their submissions (Fitzpatrick, 2016). Alongside the previously-discussed disciplinary tension between STEM disciplines and SSH, the interview data points also to important tensions between different fields and strands *within* SSH. Again, we see how the introduction of a new element of the ‘academic game’ renewed old divisions and frictions and created an opportunity for a change in the fragile balance between different academic disciplines and fields.

#### ***7.4. Selecting REF panels as boundary work and as disciplining***

The fragments analysed in the previous section show that there are several factors which influenced the choice of the UoA in REF2014. Firstly, the company in which one would be submitting – the fellow submitting academics cannot be “stellar” as their score would be too valuable to be

“diluted”, but neither can they be too weak (one respondent explained he did not want to enter the submission with a seemingly suitable department as “they had very poor research”). Secondly – there is the question of discipline – does the panel as such deal with the area of a given department? Finally, the panel would ideally be composed of “specialists in the field” which one is researching – this was a challenge in the UoA of Linguistics and Modern Languages, especially given the feeling that the panels became “watered-down in terms of subject specialism”.

These dilemmas related to the choice of UoA are interesting from the point of view of the construction of boundaries between disciplines as well as individual academics’ construction of identity. As recognised by much literature on HE contexts, disciplines define the academic world inhabited by scholars by influencing the structure of knowledge in a given field as well as defining in- and out- groups and giving rise to broad alliances – for instance, historically a professor’s primary allegiance was to a discipline, not to an institution (Del Favero, 2018). Disciplines can be thought of as enabling – they “demarcate areas of academic territory, allocate the privileges and responsibilities of expertise, and structure claims on resources” (Kohler, 1982) – but also as constraining, as they constitute “a system of control in the production of discourse” (Foucault, 1972, p. 224). Disciplinary membership is often a point of reference in one’s presentation of self, particularly in the context of university life – when asked who they are both students and professors will often make recourse to labels connected to disciplines (“a linguist, a student of modern languages” etc.), which often coincide with the departmental structure (Pinch, 1990, p. 299). Research on disciplines conducted in anthropology highlighted the fact that disciplines delimit particular groups of people from others, contributing to the formation of (often conflicted) ‘tribes’ with their distinctive cultures and languages (Becher & Trowler, 2001). This view has become influential as it accounts for peculiarities of knowledge production and identity construction in the different disciplines. It also enables conceptualizing the competition between disciplines which in this view can be understood as wars between tribes (a war in which the exact sciences have usually been

victorious – Gieryn, 1983, pp. 783-784; Shumway & Messer-Davidow, 1991, p. 209)

In the context of defining disciplinary differences or indeed tracing the line between two disciplines which remain close to one another or which claim the same expertise, one of the core notions is *boundary work* – i.e. rhetorical work aimed at highlighting the discrepancies between disciplines, in order to strengthen the autonomy of individual fields, as well as defining borders between in- and out-groups, oftentimes discrediting those who are not members of the in-group as impostors (Gieryn, 1983, p. 792; Lamont & Molar, 2002; Pereira, 2017). Disciplines are subject to “internal” pressures – from other scientific disciplines which try to claim the same territory, from changes in the organization of knowledge – and ‘external’ ones, related to social arrangements (Fuller, 1991, p. 302)

Recent studies have highlighted that due to increasing currency of interdisciplinarity in science (Krishnan, 2009, pp. 4-7) as well as progressive fragmentation of disciplines, academics now tend to display more reflexive and often ‘fluid’ disciplinary identities visible for instance in the fact of situating one’s area *in between* different fields (Brew, 2008, pp. 436-437). If Becher and Trowler stressed disciplinarity as an element of rather stable academic identities (indeed crossing over to a different *tribe* could be considered as disloyalty to the primary one and may have adverse consequences), Pinch (1990) in contrast highlighted that evoking disciplinary labels is a rhetorical practice, one which is conducted to a large degree strategically. Pinch’s analysis refers explicitly to early RAE exercises in the UK, pointing to the fact that disciplines are grouped according to teaching subject areas rather than research areas (e.g. staff of sociology department is likely to be assessed under sociology, even when they conduct work on language, medicine, social policy, education etc.).

My data shows that such misalignments are still very common in REF. In drawing attention to the fact that the same scholar, in different contexts may claim different labels, Pinch does not say that disciplinary labels are

meaningless or arbitrary, but rather he highlights the flexibility which is inherent to disciplines and the fact that strategic use “the rhetoric of disciplinary talk” is one of the elements of academic life or “part of the shared habitus of science” (p. 302). My observations regarding the submissions of linguists to different UoAs in REF2014 can give rise to several reflections in the context of existing theorizations of academic disciplines. They confirm Pinch’s perception of academic disciplines as “flexible resources which can be used for a variety of argumentative purposes by scientists” (p. 302) – the choice of UoAs in REF 2014 is an excellent case in point. However, my data shows also that feelings of disciplinary identity remain strong, and that using a label which one does not identify with causes unease.

In many cases the choice of UoA left submitting academics feeling “bad”. There could be several reasons for this: being in a position of not-belonging (“there was nowhere to put me”), rejection by the selected UoA, often expressed in harsh terms (“no, we wouldn’t want you”), decreased levels of agency in terms of claiming disciplinary labels (“you just have to accept it; it wasn’t my choice”), lack of identification with the label of the UoA to which one is assigned (“it’s from one misplacement to another; some were more comfortable, some were less comfortable”) and finally doubt in the expertise of panellists (“there was not a single specialist in [name of specialist field] in this panel”). These widely-reported feelings of dissatisfaction with the REF panels show that while research is becoming more and more interdisciplinary, academics still like to self-identify as specialists in particular disciplines (many of my respondents spontaneously self-identified as linguists). Being assigned a different label for administrative purposes can be perceived as symbolically violent, discrediting or simply *untrue*. In such cases, the academics in question feel that labels used in the assessment do not reflect academic realities as it is perceived by the insiders. For some of my respondents this experience of *misplacement* went beyond just the REF exercise, as their departmental affiliation did not represent their interdisciplinary area of research and their professional identity as they perceive it. This was partly due to the nature of

their research, which touched upon different fields (as linguistic research very often does) and partly to the relatively subjugated status of linguistics as a field in many institutions (“linguistics is always part of something else”).

The division into UoAs in REF plays a complex and ambivalent role in the shaping of disciplines in the UK. Boundaries between disciplines seem to become blurred or erased every five or six years and drawn up again in often artificial ways. On the one hand, the existence of the structure of UoAs strengthens the idea of disciplinarity, as each academic *has* to submit to just one disciplinary panel<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, the structuring of REF panels undermines the vision of disciplines as stable entities by showing in practice how porous and flexible borders of disciplines are: after all, academics and academic departments routinely move from one UoA to another, frequently for purely “strategic” or “political” reasons. This seems to be the reality of the REF. Meanwhile, in every-day academic life rhetorical boundary work between groups of individuals continues, following patterns reminiscent of those attributed to disciplinary ‘tribes’ – for instance one of my respondents confidentially commented on colleagues with whom he was constrained to submit to the same UoA: “I wouldn’t say they are linguists”.

In light of my data I would argue that the composition of REF panels plays a role in *disciplining* academics. It forces scientists, including those working in hybrid, inter- or trans-disciplinary fields, to self-identify as specialists in a particular field and to submit to an adequate panel. At the same time, strategic managerial thinking often forces groups of academics to submit to panels which, on the surface, do not cover the area of the submitted research. This leads to a discrepancy between academics’ spontaneous self-identification and the ‘official’ label they are given in the

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<sup>6</sup> Note that there were procedures in place to ensure fair assessment of interdisciplinary outputs (which could be marked as such by the submitting institution), such as additional assessors on panels, the possibility to cross-refer to a different panel for advice (HEFCE, 2011b, p. 15). Stern’s report highlighted better assessment of interdisciplinary research as one of the areas for improvement (Stern, 2016, pp. 15, 22).

assessment (at least for a period of time). This complex state of affairs gives rise to reflexive approaches towards disciplinarily, visible in my data in long stretches of respondents' deliberations on their self-classification. The various constraints academics had to deal with in choosing disciplinary panels in REF can be seen as confirming the concept of disciplines as conditioned by internal factors (such as the methods and objects constructed as belonging to a particular field) and external ones – the institutional order which needs to be satisfied (Fuller, 1991).

The practices of periodic strategic choice of UoAs seems to give rise to parallel disciplinary realities: one which is “official” (a researcher's submission to a particular panel will feature on an academic's CV, it might be taken into account in appointment procedures, etc.) and yet widely perceived as being at odds with the experience of every-day academic work. In the studied discipline of linguistics this cleavage seemed particularly salient. Choosing disciplinary membership is the first element of the REF exercise in which we might diagnose a discrepancy between presentation of self in official contexts and in everyday academic collaboration, or – in Goffman's terms – between the front- and back stage. I will return to the point about the assessment creating parallel realities, in which different notions and values come to the fore in chapter 9 when discussing the role of ‘impact’ in academics' concepts of their professional role.

Beyond constituting a key stage of the impact submission – one particularly challenging for linguists – the question of selecting UoAs is significant for one more reason, this time connected to questions of genre. In genre research the addressee of a particular text is considered an important factor influencing the shape of a text. Particularly approaches which attend to the persuasive dimension of genres (Amossy, 2014; Benveniste, 2014, p. 143; Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969) stress that the speaker has to adapt the register of their discourse as well as stylistic choices to the addressee. In Perelman's view the audience is always a construction of the speaker, so the they would actually be adapting their speech to the *image* they have of

the addressee. In the context of REF2014 the audience is the speaker's (writer's) construction in a double sense – not only do authors adapt their linguistic choices to the idea they have of the audience they will speak to (panellists), but they actively *choose* the audience, when selecting the panel to submit to. We have seen that an important factor which often determines the selection of UoA is whether the panellists are likely to appreciate the work conducted by the submitting scholars (“you get to know who is on the panel and that's when you finally make your decision”). Once this decision is made, the text will be shaped so as to maximise its persuasive effect on a particular audience (“your impact is thought of in those terms”).

### ***7.5. Becoming an ‘author’ of an impact case study***

Scrutinizing the research conducted in a department in search of work which would qualify as impactful and recruiting authors of CSs is a step of preparations to REF2014 which took place between 2011 and 2012. It followed (sometimes overlapping with) the previously discussed phase of academics “getting their (collective) head around” the notion of impact and considering possible UoAs to submit to. In some cases, interviewed academics report that at this stage there were obvious candidates for authorship of CSs. See for instance the following exchange with a senior academic:

Interviewer: So, do you remember from that period, for instance, were there more candidates for case studies than eventually... [were selected]?

Interviewee: One of the obvious people was a colleague in linguistics [whose work was] very much within the social problems of... [area]. He has a big project together with [public entity] and it was very obvious then...

IR: So, you already knew: okay it will be him, for sure.

IE: I knew.

IR: Everyone knew, yeah?

IE: Yes, absolutely.

#### Interview 14 – fragment 14

The fact that in this department it was “very obvious” from the beginning who would be the author of a CS shows that an understanding of the term ‘impact’ had already been shaped. In addition, luckily for the department, there was a researcher whose work seemed to fulfil the REF requirements. This respondent is an exception in describing such an easy-going process of selecting authors of CSs – in most departments this phase was fraught with difficulty – both from the point of view of academic managers making the decisions, and academics considered as potential CS authors. See for example the following fragment of an interview with an author of a CS:

Interviewer: How come your work was chosen as the basis of a case study?

Interviewee: Oh, mad panic! Total, total panic. Because none of us had thought about impact. We didn’t know what it was. We didn’t know how to measure it, we didn’t know how to write about it. We didn’t know... anything about impact. But we had to write this impact statement. So, mad panic, totally. I was chosen because I was doing stuff outside the university. I think I was an obvious choice. (...) So I was asked straight away about that. And I reluctantly agreed.

#### Interview 11 – fragment 15

The above fragment 15 echoes some of the themes discussed in the previous section: a (collective) confusion about “what [impact] was, how to measure it”, “how to write about it”. While, according to the participant, there was a state of “(total/mad) panic” at the institution after the introduction of ‘impact’, the respondent’s candidacy for authorship of a CS seems to have emerged naturally – he was “an obvious choice”, simply by virtue of his “doing stuff outside the university”. The above fragments

(Interview 11 and 14) are exceptional in pointing to cases of “obvious” impact – it is as if “everyone knew” who would be the candidate from the department. In contrast, most of the accounts from authors and research managers in my corpus describe a clear moment of designating someone as a (potential) CS author. This nomination was not always a welcome development for the academics in question (as in the case of the speaker in fragment 15, cited before, who “reluctantly agreed”). The following speaker’s reluctance to take part in the exercise takes an even stronger form:

Interviewer: How did it come about that it was your case study that would be submitted, do you remember?

Interviewee: Oh, nothing to do with me! I never had even an inkling! (...) When they first said to me, you know, “we think there’s some things *in* [your research] that we can work up as impact”. I’m sorry, (...) I kind of laughed out loud. I said: “no”.

#### Interview 21 – fragment 16

The speaker from the above-cited interview was surprised with her being chosen as a potential CS author (“I never had even an inkling”), in fact, she found this suggestion surprising or perhaps embarrassing (“I kind of laughed out loud”) and at first, she firmly refused it. Strikingly, the speaker highlights her lack of agency in becoming an author of a CS: “nothing to do with me!”

The frequently flagged-up feelings of irritation at being selected as a CS author can be attributed to many reasons. For instance, interviewee 11, when asked about his reluctance to author a CS explained that it was because “they (management or perhaps panellists?) wanted it quantified”. Hence, the CS required writing about the academic’s research and its impact in a way with which the speaker did not agree with. Other reasons for reluctance to authoring a CS included a lack of confidence in one’s impact (as in Interview 21, fragment 16), the workload involved and the

uncertainty whether the CS, once written up, would eventually be submitted. In fact, many interviewees recall that colleagues who had written CSs eventually found their work rejected – either because the number of documents required had changed, or because more than the necessary amount were requested, so that management would have a number to choose from. This was the case in the department in which the informant quoted below was employed:

Interviewee: Basically, we were asked... There were lots of discussions on what impact actually meant, what it was, what we were going to do about it. And basically, anybody who thought they might have an impact case study was asked to write it up. We were given that form [REF CS template] right from the start. We had about six [CSs] in our school initially (...). Because nobody knew really... In parallel, senior members were trying to find out what impact actually was, which [case studies] were therefore most likely to be successful. So, we were all asked to keep going, keep drawing them up. (...) It was a lot of work. I don't know how many iterations that went through but it must have been six or seven. At the time it was very difficult, and very exasperating, partly because you didn't know what would happen. You know, all this work could've been for nothing in the end.

Interviewer: How long did it take?

IE: It was months, it was months... before they actually made the decision. (...) Nobody of course knew really what was going on. Everybody was feeling around in the dark at the time. I think we are a bit more savvy now, I think we know a bit more. Because we got a good result, we must have done something right! But at the time it was hard, because it was A LOT of extra work, which potentially was for nothing. And which in the case of some colleagues was for nothing. But obviously we got the gratification that ours was one of the ones that was chosen, so...

Interview 10 – fragment 17

We see here how the candidanship for author of CS emerges against a background of collective processes of understanding the notion of impact (“trying to find out what impact actually was”) and exhaustion connected to the lengthiness of the process (“it was months, it was months”). We see that the process of “figuring out impact” (the focus of section 7.3.) and the process of drafting CSs took place in parallel – so authors had to work on initial drafts without always knowing what meaning and criteria of ‘impact’ would finally crystalize. This work was “exasperating” as it was time-consuming, yet did not guarantee any final gratification. The speaker’s statement “I think we are a bit more savvy now” confirms the idea that a process of collective, institutional learning of rules of ‘impact’ took place in universities.

Most of my interviewees presented their participation in the impact assessment as a duty forced on them by supervisors, where their own agency was limited (“we were asked”; “we were told”; “we were given”; “I reluctantly agreed”). While attitudes towards the assessment after the exercise were nuanced and not without positive undertones (like the feeling of “gratification”, mentioned by the speaker in interview 10, fragment 17) the very moment of being nominated as a potential author of a CS often engendered negative feelings connected to the expected volume of additional work, the lengthiness of the process or a feeling of pointlessness of the exercise. However, in my data there is one interesting exception to this rule. The respondent cited below spontaneously volunteered to author a CS, despite being retired at the time of the recruitment in 2011. The interview is interesting precisely from the point of view of personal gratification:

Interviewee: I happened to find out, or realized through a meeting (...) that retired colleagues were eligible to present impact cases. And I went to the colleague who was looking at impact cases at the school with something that had to do with my (...) project. (...). I asked to speak to him.

Interviewer: Can I ask you why you wanted to submit a case study?

IE: Oh, basically because I thought it was difficult for colleagues in the humanities to find cases. I felt it would be helpful for the profile of modern languages in the university to have something. I had forty good years in the trade and I feel very committed to the subject. If there was a way I could help modern languages at (my) university, I wanted to do that.

IR: But you were already retired? So, the reason was more... it was more to help the field or to help colleagues than to help your own career?

IE: Oh, absolutely! My career is now beyond help.

#### Interview 14 – fragment 18

Apart from the endearing closing remark, this fragment is remarkable in that it presents the perspective of an academic who is retired, but entered the REF impact evaluation on his own accord. In contrast to the other authors, some of who presented the process of becoming an author of a CS as a largely passive experience, this retired interviewee emerges as the most agentic: “I realized retired colleagues were eligible”; “I went to the colleague who was looking at impact cases”; “I asked to speak to him”. This account once again points to the role of ‘impact’ in disturbing the balance between disciplines. The speaker’s effort was aimed at maintaining the existing status of his field, which he saw as being in peril. This fragment can inspire reflection on the different conditions that lead academics to take part in a burdensome exercise like REF: while for most of the previously-cited speakers the motivation came in the form of an external constraint (the management’s ‘request’), for the above-cited interviewee it seems to have been an internal imperative of fulfilling one’s duty not towards the institution as an employer, but towards a more or less abstract concept – *the subject* (this is in line with research on the crucial role of disciplines in academic identity construction – see 7.5). The

comparison of accounts on becoming an author of a CS can inspire an observation that the same action – writing a document for REF – can be given different meanings by different agents. Indeed, academics explain their attitude towards the element of research impact by pointing to different areas of life (e.g. obligations connected to work in an institution vs. professional vocation) and different values. The way academics construct ‘impact’ as an element of their own professional ‘self’ will be the main topic of chapter 9.

### Becoming author of a CS – conclusions

This section presented the moment of academic subjects becoming, for the first time in history, authors of impact case studies. This development took place in a confusing time, when the meaning of the term ‘impact’ was still unclear. For some academics, their nomination as CS authors came as a surprise, and in many cases an unwelcome one, as it carried with it the burden of additional work and the probability of failure. This made the experience “difficult, even exasperating”. In most interviews, becoming an author of a CS is not presented as an effect of individual agency. Rather, agency in selecting the potential authors seems to be distributed among members of the community: certain choices are considered “obvious”, certain requests are made in a general, yet probably non-negotiable, fashion (“we were asked to keep going”), certain scholars seem to have been almost manoeuvred into the role of authors (“they said to me ‘there’s some things that we can work up as impact’”).

The previous sections showed how the coining of the notion of impact, its definition and principle rules were the work of an entire host of subjects. This section in turn argued that becoming an author of a CS was not the effect of individual agency and free will – the categories which we usually apply, when thinking about authorship – but of a web of relations: the way one’s work is perceived by colleagues, the strategy of senior management in a given institution, one’s relationship to the scientific field, one’s (in)ability to say “no” (“I reluctantly agreed”) or indeed to say “yes” in

coming forward with their own initiative (“I asked to speak to [the person managing the submission]”).

It would be a mistake to perceive the discursive space in which decisions were made about the engagement of individuals in REF2014 as a level playing field. While my respondents mostly reported an initial lack of potential CSs, rather than an-oversupply of them, it appears that the opposite was the case in the specific group of applied linguists – a statement released by the British Association of Applied Linguistics mentions that members of the association were unhappy about “the fierce competition for which case studies would be used”, resulting from the fixed number of CSs per submission (Fitzpatrick, 2016). This will remind us of the account about authors whose CSs were in the end excluded from the submission, mentioned in interview 10, fragment 17. The theme of “exclusion”, in one form or another, is a salient experience in the context of REF. Exclusion was the experience of those who found themselves removed from the entire submission (for instance because of reservations as to the quality of their research or its alignment with the submission) – of those who wished to showcase their impactful work, but did not get the chance to do so, or those who dedicated their time to prepare case studies which in the end were not submitted.

Audit exercises in general have the potential to increase the workload of those assessed, without necessarily distributing evenly rewards, even the psychological ones such as the feeling of gratification. The impact component was reported to be a particularly significant burden within REF2014 (Manville et al., 2014, pp. xiv-xv), so it is possible that numerous academics did not feel rewarded for the work put toward this goal. This moment of exclusion – certain academics not being selected as authors of CS or not being included in the REF submission at all – is also significant from the point of view of the newly-emergent discourse of/on impact. If objects are constituted in discourse – as this chapter is attempting to show, using the example of ‘impact’ – also legitimate subjects are created discursively.

For Foucault rules of exclusion were among the key principles which govern the production of discourse as “we are not free to say just anything, that we cannot simply speak of anything, when we like or where we like; not just anyone, finally, may speak of just anything” (Foucault, 1972, p. 216). One of the Foucauldian rules of exclusion in discourse consists in prohibition – i.e. barring certain individuals from talking about a particular subject (Ibid). While the exclusion from the REF exercise is of course not an absolute one (a formally excluded academic might continue to speak about impact with colleagues, on a blog, in articles etc.) not all contexts, platforms or genres are equally consequential. There can be no doubt that production of “official” (submitted) documents in the genre created for communication about impact was the work of a select few, who were deemed by their supervisors and peers as *eligible* to speak (write) on the topic. The next section will look precisely at how authority to speak about the new topic of ‘impact’ was claimed and justified, in the process of learning and teaching to write CSs.

### ***7.6. Emergence of ‘expertise’ on impact***

Once collective reflection had taken place on the notion of impact (as described in section 7.1 and 7.2), the members of the department had decided which panel to submit to (7.3 and 7.4), and potential authors of CSs had been selected (7.5) there came the stage of drafting the document. The process of writing CSs differed from the one which takes place in the case of many academic genres, that tend to rely the scholar’s solitary, individual work. In contrast, drafting CSs is presented by all of my interviewees as a collective endeavour, influenced by different parties. The account below describes a typical process of drafting a CS:

So, we got lots of feedback [on the CSs] from different people. Initially with your own colleagues, in your small section, in the school. Then the university had organised some kind of university level group to look at it. So, you have your impact case study read by people who are not in [your field], and then they had also some external consultants, a company.

#### Interview 6 – fragment 19

Genres usually develop over long periods of time, during which particular stylistic features are reproduced in a conservative manner by different authors in consistency with already existing and recognized exemplars of a genre (Chandler, 1997, p. 4). The creation of the genre of impact CS is a unique example of how a collaborative effort of an entire community can expedite this process and contract it into a very short period of time. That said, it is important to remark that not all actors had an equal role in this collaborative process – very fast some individuals or groups of individuals began to claim a special expertise on this new subject. These supposed ‘experts’ became points of reference for others who felt they were still “feeling in the dark”, when it came to impact. We might ask how these new experts – for instance the consultants who advised universities on the process, mentioned in fragment 19 – acquire the necessary knowledge if a similar exercise was never held before? And – secondly – how come other social actors recognized their claims to expertise? See the below exchange:

Interviewee: [there was] a person, you know, a male professor who built up the case for impact, and who knew the genre, <with emphasis> the genre.

Interviewer: the genre of case study or...?

IE: Of impact, of impact.

IR: The genre of impact?

IE: The genre of impact – he seemed to know it inside-out.

IR: Oh! It's a new genre, how come he knew it inside-out?

IE: Uh, because he'd been on REF panels or whatever. I think, I think. I don't know.

IR: But there's never been a REF panel for impact before...

IE: Yeah, or maybe he told me he knew it and I believed him, you know. I'm being very naïve now, but he said it...

#### Interview 21 – fragment 20

In describing the collective teaching and learning which took place at this stage of the preparation to REF2014 respondents mention different parties which provided feedback on the CS drafts (“your own colleagues, in your small section, in the school... university level group, external consultants, a company”). In the extract cited above the speaker talks about the figure of a senior colleague who seemed authoritative when it came to impact and who was responsible for the submission (“who built up the case for impact”). When I tentatively questioned the source of his expertise, the interviewee hypothesised that it was based on earlier experiences on assessment panels (presumably RAE). However, at my pointing out that impact was not part of assessment in RAE, the respondent seemed to lose confidence in the grounding of this colleague's expertise – “he told me he knew it and I believed him”.

It seems that at this initial stage of the development of the IA building one's position as ‘expert’ consisted not just in reading the documentation and participating in the various meetings and workshops but also in drawing on previous analogous experiences and, perhaps most importantly, in creating the impression of knowing the rules of the assessment *inside-out*. In this context, we might recall the anecdote told by the respondent from Interview 1 (fragment 2) cited in section 7.1, which had the supposed

‘expert’ exposed by the audience as being confused himself about the rules of the exercise. And yet a demand for expertise on impact no doubt encouraged (or forced) many to claim such knowledge: senior academics in their role as managers, administrative staff such as impact officers and external consultants. While this expertise was still relatively shaky during the preparations to REF2014, it seems that academics were not unwilling to recognize such ‘expert figures’, probably in order to have some sort of knowledge to lean on.

In fragment 20, the speaker in Interview 21 uses, unprompted, the term ‘genre’. While many of my interviewees, being linguists, referred to the documents they had produced in professional terms, those of stylistics, rhetoric or persuasion, in the above-cited fragment of Interview 21 the speaker refers to the “genre of impact”, as if it extended beyond just the CS documents. Indeed, while the genre of CS was no doubt a core element of the assessment (as I will argue in the following chapter), several secondary practices emerged around REF – collecting data about one’s impact, discussing the shape of the entire submission, planning impact-related activities, etc. All of these will have been conducted using a specific vocabulary – which could be argued to constitute a broader formation – the ‘genre of impact’, or, as I will call it later – ‘impact infrastructure’.

Another academic, whom I asked about the sources of information which he drew on in the process of learning the new genre of CS, pointed to the ones already brought up by my previous interviewees – “advice from the university, reading and carefully rereading the REF [documentation]”. After some elicitation, he also mentioned another source of information, one which was not equally accessible to everyone:

Interviewee: So, it was a combination of that and some insider knowledge from elsewhere in the university, and advice, and comments...

Interviewer: By insider knowledge you mean...?

IE: Well you know, people who'd...

IR: ...who'd been on committees?

IE: Well, yeah, exactly. [My university] is quite lucky in that quite a lot of academics had served on REF committees...

IR: That said, it was new, right, the impact component?

IE: Impact was new, but at the same time we were grappling with it, the REF panels were also grappling. So, to be privy to their deliberations... (...)

IR: So... the people who were already appointed to the upcoming REF they will have had some kind of training...

IE: Yes, of course, because it was new to them as well. Obviously, they had to be very careful about what they revealed and disclosed, so much of the information was generic.

IR: Which is interesting [chuckles] because in theory one should know what they're expected to provide instead of trying to figure out from some tips, secret tips...

IE: Yeah, well... I'm afraid that is the way it was.

Interview 16 – fragment 21

In the above extract, we see once again how the process of “grappling with” the rules of the Agenda seemed to take place in parallel among those who would be assessed and those conducting the assessment. The speaker admits that academic staff from his university was privileged to have access to some “insider knowledge”, through colleagues who were undergoing training to become REF panellists. Although he goes on to explain that what panellists could share with colleagues was mostly “generic information”, still it remains the case that knowledge on the

newly-created academic object – impact – did not circulate among all the participants of the exercise equally (or perhaps it was *perceived* as not being equally distributed). Some had access to information directly from the source (as was no doubt the case of panellists), to some it was communicated by senior management in their institutions, and some had to rely on their own research skills and intuition. Even if this “insider knowledge” was unlikely to determine the course of the exercise, having or not having access to it could affect levels of confidence of those submitting to the exercise. This, once again, confirms that while ‘impact’ as a concept, or a problematization, was collectively constructed by a broad community, not everyone in this community had the same level of agency, the same access to knowledge and the same perceived level of expertise.

Up to this point in analysing the processes of learning and teaching to write CSs, I have mainly focused on the role of academics: authors of documents, their supervisors and colleagues, academic committees at various levels, *insiders* who had been on the panels or were currently appointed to one. But many of my interviewees have also mentioned the role of another group of individuals, namely specialists appointed within the university (impact officers, managers, leads). Some (like Interviewee 6 in fragment 19) also mentioned external consultants hired by the university. Interestingly, *all* of my informants seemed quite sceptical about the abilities of the external experts in advising about impact, or authoring convincing CSs. See for instance this fragment from an experienced impact officer, who herself moved from an academic career to one in research management:

You can also tell when the university has employed a journalist [to write up CSs]. Because they become like puff pieces, they become advocacy documents, (...) the “millions of” phrase, right, that’s [because] they employed a journalist who is used to writing journalese.

Interview 7 – fragment 22

The interviewee quotes the phrase “millions of”, discussed in a previous exchange as an example of a salient tendency of showcasing large numbers in CSs (see also section 8.1.2.4.). According to the speaker boasting about vague numbers is a characteristic feature found in CSs written by journalists hired by the university to support the submission. Being used to writing in journalistic style, or “journalese”, these authors produce “advocacy documents” or “puff pieces”. The fact that external consultants who are not familiar with the subtleties of academic writing were involved in the exercise can be seen as contributing to the hybridity of the genre (e.g. the inclusion of features of “journalese”) and provoking a motion of distancing on the side of the academic authors of the documents (see section 9.4).

In terms of the previously-mentioned phenomenon of boundary work (section 7.4.), we could describe the fluency in particular registers or genres of writing as a feature which allows members of an in-group to self-identify as well as to recognize ‘impostors’ who try to claim the territory of the in-group members. The genre of CS is special in this aspect, as, being a new genre, situated between academic and administrative practice it could in principle be ‘claimed’ by specialists from both areas. At the same time, there is a sense of constructing the genre according to the norms of the different groups – managers tend to give the documents managerial traits, journalists – journalistic ones while academics would like the documents to follow academic patterns while avoiding falling into schemes associated with lack of professionalism (e.g. boasting) or with the professional standards of a different group (e.g. exaggerated claims). There existed some positive models for what the genre is to be (e.g. CSs produced during the pilot exercise), also negative descriptions emerged – what the documents should avoid doing, what they should *not* be (“advocacy documents; puff pieces”). The role of ‘impact professionals’ was often to balance these different and at points contradictory pulls of managerial requirements and professional patterns and norms.

Struggles regarding the shape of this new genre, and its status as an administrative or academic text, occurred not only in the case of the linguistic layer of the documents, but also in the case of the content of the documents, including the data supporting the claim to impact. Another interviewee tells, in a sarcastic tone, about the shortcomings of an external company in collecting this information:

Interviewee: Unfortunately, there was a consultancy company that... was a bit of a disaster. Because they did everything quite badly.

Interviewer: Who decided that you would be using this company?

IE: It was the director of research. They didn't know how to write this sort of case studies, so they paid a lot of money to a consultant to help with it. (...)

IR: Who wrote the document itself? The company or yourself?

IE: Oh no, I wrote it. They helped. <sarcastically> "Helped". In the sense of producing a questionnaire. But they wrote a very bad questionnaire, terrible one. So, I re-wrote the questionnaire. And then they "helped" by sending the questionnaire out, except I had to provide the list of people they were going to send it to. And then their mail mode thing didn't work anyway, so then they just sent it CC'd to everyone. Basically, every step of the way I had to change what they were doing. And it ended up more work than if we hadn't hired them in the first place.

#### Interview 11 – fragment 23

The confusion around the new genre of writing resulted in the university hiring an external company to support the submission. However, this cooperation ended in frustration for the academic recounting his experience, as the consultants did not follow professional academic standards. To a degree, the miscommunication which seems to have characterized the above-described process might be connected to the fact

that the individuals who were to cooperate were representatives of different professional groups, which have their own codes of professional practice – and these often remain tacit (Gascoigne & Thornton, 2013, pp. 1-12; Polanyi, 2009; Sarangi, 2007, p. 570; Schön, 1991, pp. 52-54). This collaboration took place in the context of the production of a new genre, and a new area of practice – which was unknown ground for all those involved. Hence, the creation of new modes of working and writing resembled ‘bricolage’, in that subjects tried to draw knowledge and patterns of behaviour from different accessible sources.

That said, since REF2014 universities have invested into creating in-house teams of ‘impact’ specialists, which specialise uniquely in the impact and engagement of academic research, and are more likely to appreciate the specificity of academic writing than external companies. On the other hand, also academics have been learning to adopt certain non-academic stylistic features, borrowed from managerial and administrative genres. It is through these sorts of tensions between individuals who possess authority and expertise in different relevant fields (editing, journalistic writing, project management, academic research etc.) that a *new* form of expertise is shaped, and eventually claimed by those who wish to become experts on the area or issue at hand (in this case – impact).

The skill of the newly-emerged group of (presumed) ‘impact experts’ lay primarily in their ability to identify potential for an impact CS where even the author of the research itself did not see it – let’s recall for instance a fragment from the previously cited Interview 21 (fragment 16): “when they first [singled me out as author of CS] I laughed out loud. I said: ‘no’”. Similarly, the author cited below initially approached management with a proposal of a CS based on a particular project but was persuaded to write instead about the impact of a different strand of his research. The scholar stated that his fitting into the REF requirements was “accidental”. When questioned about the term, he explained:

Oh yeah, accidental – to the extent that when I first went to see [person managing submission] I had a completely different idea and it was only [as] we just talked, as he was talking, that he... came to the idea that something else I was doing might actually fit into the... into the straitjacket that the university has been presented with.

#### Interview 14 – fragment 24

Once again, in this fragment, the person who has a bit more knowledge about the Agenda plays the role of a ‘midwife’ assisting the actual author in the creative process. The means of instruction is dialogue – the final idea emerges out of an exchange between the researcher and the person who has acquired the skill of ‘identifying’ impact (“as he was talking, he came to the idea that [there was] something else”). I will attend in more detail to this newly-emerging ‘expertise’ consisting in identifying ‘impact’ in section 8.2.3 of the following chapter, where I will interpret it in terms of theory as the ‘shaping of a new professional vision’ and I will point to the crucial role of genre in this process.

### ***7.7. Writing an impact case study***

The collaborative nature of the process of writing CSs, which involved various groups of people reading, commentating on and amending the drafts, may raise questions on the authorship of the documents. Among my interviewees there is a full diversity of stances on the issue – on one end of the spectrum are those who decidedly felt they were the authors of the document (like the speaker in interview 11, fragment 23, cited in the previous section), on the other hand – those who admitted to not having even *seen* the CS based on their work, or indeed being unaware of its existence. My observation was that it was especially large, research-intense institutions which offered their employees extensive assistance in drafting the documents, while in smaller, teaching-oriented institutions the task was predominantly the researcher’s responsibility. The drafting of the document

was a time-consuming process – in the different rounds of consultations, elements were added to the documents and others were taken away, often changing the shape of the text completely. In the fragment below a researcher talks about the process in which the CS based on her work was altered by a supervising colleague:

The first thing that I gave him for [my case study], he thought it was complete rubbish in terms of, you know, "where is the impact here?". But then he really worked... he had a meeting with me and he worked on it A LOT.

#### Interview 21 – fragment 25

The impact tentatively put forward by the researcher is considered not eligible (“complete rubbish”) by a senior colleague who had already acquired the skill of identifying impact. However, thanks to this very skill, he is able to spot potentially more promising instances of impact in the work of the researcher (similarly to the case of Interviewee 17 cited in 7.5 who described his fitting into the Agenda as “accidental”). Note how in this account most agency in the laborious process of shaping a CS narrative seems to be attributed to the supervising academic (“he thought it was rubbish; he had a meeting with me; he worked on it; he really worked... he worked on it A LOT”). While many of my respondents reported having significant help from other academics and administrative staff in editing the documents, most researchers who were to some degree involved in the drafting of the document drawing on their work still considered themselves authors. In contrast, the above-cited speaker opposed to my referring to her as the author. When, in a later part of the interviewee, I asked the scholar about a particular “thing she said” in the CS, she interrupted me to explain:

Interviewee: It's not / who says most of these things, although I still...

Interviewer: Who is the author, it's not you? Or it's you in conjunction with your colleague?

IE: Oh, no, mainly it's him.

IR: Oh! Mainly him?

IE: Yeah.

IR: I understand. So, it's you who wrote a certain outline or gave some ideas and he worked with it?

IE: Yeah, yeah, yeah, we had couple of meetings.

#### Interview 21 – fragment 26

Due to the above-described division of work between the two academics we could probably speak of co-authorship. And yet, interestingly, the interviewee opposes the association with the narrator of the text: “it's not I who says most of these things”. This motion of distancing from a document which, after all, recounts the story of one's research can be explained by reference to the imposed nature of the exercise and the hybrid nature of the genre, merging as it does academic and managerial registers. In many cases, based on my knowledge of academic writing styles and of the new genre of CS, I was able to identify words or fragments in the text that did not “feel right” – for instance ones which had traits of “journalese” style or seemed excessively boastful. In many cases the authors confirmed that these fragments or words were additions made by someone else. See for instance this reaction from an academic who had written her CS with a co-researcher. I questioned her about a word which had struck me as odd due to its emotional load:

I don't remember where that came from, actually! I don't think that is either of our words, come to think of it. It's certainly not a word of mine. I've the feeling someone might have... put that in for us.

#### Interview 10 – fragment 27

The same interviewee talked also about other changes to the document recommended by external editors, including the title of the CS:

I think we gave it the original title of the project. But they wanted the word 'influencing' in because it sounds like it's impact. And they wanted the [word] 'worldwide' (...) – to give it the idea it has big reach, big impact.

#### Interview 10 – fragment 28

Like the previously-cited speaker, also this interviewee distanced herself from a particular fragment of the CS she authored (“it's certainly not a word of mine!”). She explains that the title had been changed by those overseeing the submission to sound more confident and almost boastful. In section 8.1.2.4, where I focus on the features of the genre of impact CS, I explain that both the use of gerunds and ‘positive words’ are salient features of the genre. The above-cited fragment shows that these features can be explained by the fact that CSs are frequently co-authored by different groups of individuals who follow different standards (researchers and senior managers, administrative staff, impact specialists). The process of adapting initial drafts, usually ‘academic’ in their style, to managerial expectations frequently created tension, as evident in the below fragment:

Interviewee: So, it's... so you get it [CS] back and [they] say “Oh! change it! make this! make this! make this! make this! and this!”

Interviewer: What kind of changes?

IE: A lot, lots... (...) The title, the title changed, I think, five to six times.

IR: Oh really?

IE: Yeah, so [they] say you need to get some buzz words in... like “transforming” I think. And then also, say, well “make clear right from the beginning, right from the first sentence what it is about”. Because initially you will write something as if you were

writing your academic paper (...). You always assume the others know what you're talking about. But this is not the case. (...) And some people came and (said) "say what do you mean by this and what do you see here, make it clear, think about the others".

#### Interview 6 – fragment 29

This fragment again contains reference to several salient features of the genre of CS – the presence of ‘impactful’ gerunds (“transforming, influencing”), the inclusion of ‘buzz words’, a relative simplicity of the narrative (such as the inclusion of introductory sentences which are superfluous in specialised writing) – and points to their origin in advice from ‘impact experts’. The account also draws attention to the fact that in many instances the process of drawing up CSs did not consist simply in experts’ altering the shape of texts written by academics but also in inviting academics to actively *reflect* on the way they write (“what do you mean by this and what do you see here... think about the others”) and to *change* the texts on their own accordingly (“change it! make this... and this!... make it clear”). The process of writing the CS emerges thus as having a twofold purpose: the first was to produce the necessary documents for the assessment exercise and the second – to teach and train academics how to perform to the new requirements – to recognise impact, to write in the new genre – even when external guidance will disappear.

Naturally, this process of learning new rules, procedures and genres and applying them in the context of one’s own work, often having to overcome initial reluctance or attachment to well-known principles of academic writing, was not easy. Preparing CSs was for most an exhausting exercise and a very tense period: “he worked A LOT; it was very difficult, and very exasperating; it took me two years; it was months, months”. The strain connected to the volume of work put into these 4-page documents, into writing and re-writing them, is something that all of my interviewees mention. The feeling of exhaustion often evoked by academics in the context of the exercise shows that the learning which took place in the

context of the IA was an *embodied* process. After all, it is not just minds which create texts – minds need to be supported by bodies which go to meetings, workshops, training sessions, backs which hunch over the computer, eyes that squint at the screen, hands that type e-mails, requests, reports and, ultimately, case studies.

That said, I would attribute the strain connected to drafting case studies for REF2014 not only to the sheer amount of time and work necessary for the preparations but also, or maybe above anything else, to the “mental effort” connected to grasping the idea of impact, the energy necessary to *work on the self*, often overcoming internal inhibitions and reservations and finally – the creativity required to *conform* to given rules.

### ***7.9. Preparing submissions – a view from the expert’s chair***

Throughout this study I often schematically divide those involved in the submission into two groups – academics (usually in their role as CS ‘authors’), and those who oversaw the process (the management, ‘impact’ experts). In reality, these two groups were intertwined. For instance, some of the academic managers were also themselves authors of CSs, be it based on their own work, or that of their colleagues (as in the case described in Interview 21, fragment 26). So far, I have focused on the mental strain connected to writing a CS, but the role of those overseeing the quality of the submission was certainly not easier. In the fragments cited below, two academics who also had managerial roles in REF-related committees describe their experience of supervising a submission from their unit:

We would get the entire caboodle; we would read everything. The unit of assessment [in the university] would prepare the submission and we would read a number of iterations of that, last time, preparing for the REF. It was three iterations, which was hellish.

Interview 3 – fragment 30

I was asked to have a look [at CSs] in the last minute... [There was] really basic stuff that couldn't be in there, and things that were supposed to be in there weren't. I was horrified! So, I did a lot of work over several weekends. (...) At university level I was on a committee where we commented on the impact case studies etc. (...) The weaker ones had a problem with evidence – the comment was “how are you able to verify that? If you don't have quantitative [evidence] in what kind of qualitative way could that happen?”

#### Interview 23 – fragment 31

In the above fragments, we see the cycle of revisions of the CS, described already by the previous interviewees, this time from the perspective of the ‘experts’ or ‘managers’. Both speakers stress that the reviewing of CSs was time-consuming (“I did a lot of work over several weekends; [it] was hellish”). The second respondent comments on the fact that many of the documents seemed to be seriously wanting (“[There was] really basic stuff that couldn't be in there, and things that were supposed to be in there weren't”). Questions which seemed obvious to the reviewer were clearly not so for the authors, which provokes an emotional response (“I was horrified!”) – this can be associated with a gap in skills or knowledge on the topic of impact between the reviewer who had already familiarised themselves with the rules governing impact evaluation and the authors of the documents, who were still learning it on their own mistakes.

While this above-cited respondents' role consisted in reading academics' submissions and possibly giving feedback on them, the task of impact officers – delegated specifically to support the preparation to impact assessment in REF2014 – often included actively *persuading* academics to produce CSs or to produce them in a particular register and style – in the words of Interviewee 6, fragment 29, cited in 7.6: “[they] say “Oh! change it! make this! make this!””. Below is an account of an impact officer who

had a particularly difficult experience in convincing academics to participate in the assessment:

Everybody was saying 'I don't want to do this, why am I doing this? This is bogus. I don't have any impact'. All the excuses were coming up, and I found myself fighting with people! And saying 'but you have to do it! [laughs] we don't have a choice'. I had academics who wouldn't speak to me, and the ones who did who were rude. (...) And it wasn't simple, and it wasn't four-page documents, it was someone's one-hundred-thousand-word thesis condensed into four pages, which contained impact. Which was new, and which nobody understood. (...) I actually had an academic in a meeting with me, I genuinely thought he was going to hit me. You know, he was so incensed by what I was saying. "You're telling me to do impact!" and I answered him, "I'm not telling you to do impact, the government is telling you to do impact." (...) I was the only person [dealing with impact] there [in the school], nobody understood what I was talking about.

#### Interview 7 – fragment 32

This fragment is precious for my analysis because it shows the reverse of the story told by academics. We find in it the familiar topics of lack of understanding of the notion of impact ("impact, which was new, and which nobody understood"), the academics' initial reluctance to search for the impact of their own work ("I don't have any impact"), a vision of the REF as a sort of parallel reality ("this is bogus"), and the birth of a new hybrid genre ("one-hundred-thousand-word thesis condensed into four pages") which required writing about one's research in a new, simple and accessible style, a style which was initially strongly rejected by academics (one of the arguments cited by my respondent was "you're asking me to dumb down my research"). What this fragment brings to the analysis are emotions, much stronger than the ones expressed by the interviewed academics. This might be because emotions were running higher in some

institutions than others, or because academics may be unwilling to recount their feelings of anger, alongside the feelings of reluctance or exasperation. These negative emotions towards the policy were directed, as it would seem from the above account, at the impact officer, who had the impression of having to “fight people” to persuade them to “do impact”. The aggressive response of academics to the impact officer’s efforts aimed at stimulating the production of CSs, as presented in the fragment above, again testifies to the strong tension produced in institutions by the introduction of the Agenda. The level of emotion on the side of scholars asked to produce CSs (“I genuinely thought he was going to hit me...”) would be difficult to justify if at stake there were just a four-page document. However, these violent reactions seem to confirm the presence of a conviction – perhaps implicit – that the Agenda was not just about eliciting particular documents once every five or six years, but about actually *doing impact*. While the exact scope of this change was still unknown, there was a recognition that *doing impact* would involve not just producing a few pages of text for the sake of the exercise, but also altering the way one thought about the nature of academic work and, in consequence, about one’s role as an academic.

The interviewed impact officer, in a later part of the conversation, explained that she does not encounter such attitudes anymore, after REF2014, in the institution in which she currently works as an impact officer. Some academics are now happy to collaborate with an impact specialist, others remain reserved, but there is no sign of aggression or strong resentment. Also, most of my academic respondents seemed reconciled with the idea that impact has become an element of academic evaluation and reality. Some actually seemed glad to have an opportunity to showcase their engagement (see section 9.5). And some, invited to reflect on the shift in the dominant attitude to ‘impact’ in their environment, seem almost surprised at how little time it took for the change to take place.

In the following section I will argue that this shift in attitudes is not to be attributed to fully conscious decisions of particular academics, but rather to

a whole set of new institutions, procedures, positions and systems which had been put into place in order to support scholars in creating and reporting on impact and if need be – to constrain them to do it. I will call this system the ‘impact infrastructure’.

### ***7.10. Aftermath of REF 2014 and consolidation of impact infrastructure***

The new element of the exercise created confusion, but also opened new opportunities. These included new jobs – e.g. positions of impact officers and managers – for those who had acquired a set of competencies required to implement ‘impact’ in institutions (Donovan, 2017, §3). This newly-emerged group of impact experts, comprising not only administrative staff, but also academics with an interest in impact, soon started developing networks and resources to support their emergent field. The previously-cited impact officer (Interview 7) who had a difficult experience dealing with uncooperative academics during the preparations to REF2014 told about the relief in finding like-minded professionals:

I went to an impact special interest group event. There was about twenty people there, they were all impact officers or managers, everyone there had been through REF and it was like: “This is my tribe (...) we’re all speaking the same language.”

Interview 7 – fragment 33

The two metaphors which are particularly meaningful in this fragment are ‘tribe’ and ‘speaking the same language’. This first notion was already mentioned in the context of an already classical description of different disciplinary groups inhabiting the university. This metaphor can indeed be extended so as to include administrative staff and research managers, a professional group within academia which has grown enormously in the UK, since Becher and Trowler’s original research (Jump, 2015). While I would not argue that this group represents a *discipline*, it does inhabit a

specific territory, produce its own knowledge and a unique professional culture, which includes a ‘language’. In discourse analytical terms, this community could be referred to as a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 98–100) or a new budding academic identity (Henkel, 2000).

For this new profession of impact specialists, the time around REF2014 was a crucial moment, where the ‘language’ of the group was taking shape and collaborations were being formed by scattered individuals or small groups of professionals. At the same time, the remit of these experts’ work was being delimited within particular universities and departments. Expectations of impact professionals were diverse in different institutions, as was the support they received. For instance, the speaker in Interview 7, fragment 32 suggested that the task of convincing academics to produce impact CSs rested on the shoulders of the impact officer, which resulted in an atmosphere of conflict between academics and administrative staff. Another specialist, an impact manager, talked about the tense working atmosphere in his institution after REF2014. Management was not happy with the exercise’s results and was putting much pressure on the departments to produce data about ‘new’ impact – as early as five to six years before the next assessment in 2021:

Senior management within the university at PVC [pro-vice chancellor] level were very, very fixated on the next REF. There was an enormous pressure on us [impact professionals] and on academic departments to produce the next batch of case studies very quickly. (...) [The departments] were more concerned with doing the research. Doing the impact generation and the reports would follow. So, there was a clash there. A missing of agendas. And the impact officers were caught in the middle of that. On the record, that’s probably why I’m here at [name of different institution].

Interview 17 – fragment 34

This fragment shows the shaping of the role of the impact specialist in the described institution, in the context of a particular, tense and demanding, atmosphere created around the impact assessment. The impact professionals were to play the role of a ‘buffer’ between senior management and academics, balancing the clashing priorities of the two groups. While on the surface it might seem that administrative staff, such as impact officers or managers, mainly supports the execution of tasks established by senior management or academics, my interaction with impact professionals suggests that these professionals are keenly aware of the processes governing the university, and of the novel and crucial role of impact within them. What is more, they often seemed very agentic in their approach to shaping this new element of academic reality. For instance, the previously-cited impact manager referred to the shaping the impact culture in his institution as “his legacy”. He explained:

I set out this vision where my job was two parts – looking forward to the machinery, to the next REF (...) and preparing for the impact generation side of things.

#### Interview 17 – fragment 35

The impact officers at the institution in question wanted to contribute not just to the upcoming REF (“looking forward to the machinery, to the next REF”) but also to create a framework which would maintain the creation of impact in the institution in the long-term (“the impact generation side of things”). The interviewee states that the short-sightedness of the management which did not allow the realization of a more ambitious approach to impact at the university pushed him to move to a different institution which was keen to invest in impact in the long run, rather than just for instrumental purposes. He thus tells about his new role:

In my brain, I split my role into two big components – one was reporting on impact, gathering all of the evidential material, looking at what systems we could use to house that material. The repository for evidence for instances [of impact], and developing

some management metrics around impact, so that a PVC or head of department wanted to know how many CSs have we got potentially, what stages are they at, what disciplines are they, what part of the discipline are they, who are the stakeholders – industry, policy, whatever. We were trying to create this infrastructure, with a view towards REF but also just maintaining some data on impact. The other part of the role was to support activities to generate impact. Part of that is skills development.

#### Interview 17 – fragment 36

So, the first part of the impact manager’s job included building an ‘infrastructure’ which would support the upcoming submission (including data collection, housing and information flow) while the second was more generic, and had to do with developing academics’ skills in the area of ‘impact generation’. Also, academic staff was often given additional impact-related secondments in this field. As the same specialist explains:

The departments would have someone who is an impact champion – an academic who provides the academic leadership within the department... After 2014, the departments decided it was important enough that they wanted someone to champion it internally in the departments. To support, mentor, to nag and cajole to participate in the Impact Agenda, given that it is important.

#### Interview 17 – fragment 37

The above-cited fragments, containing stretches of talk from a seasoned impact specialist, are striking, particularly if we compare them to the previously showcased fragments and analyses. We see how from not being a recognised notion at all up to around 2011, through the middle phases of “feeling in the dark” in 2012-2013 (“we didn’t know anything about impact”) the field of impact developed already in 2016 (year of the interview) its own specialised expertise, a professional jargon (“the generation of impact; to champion impact; impact stakeholders”), methods of representing and counting (“managerial metrics”), systems of

classification and storage (“repository for evidence for instances [of impact]”), positions (“impact manager, impact officer, impact champion”). This change, both in the procedures and in attitudes, has been heralded also in the professional literature and described as ‘a cultural shift’ (Manville & Grant, 2015).

### ***7.11. The impact infrastructure as apparatus***

The words ‘infrastructure’ or ‘machinery’, used in interview 17 (fragment 37) are striking metaphors describing procedures that have been put in place in institutions in the context of impact. We can directly translate them into a theoretical vocabulary, by bringing up the notion of ‘apparatus’. To recall, this term refers to a “heterogenous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid...” (Foucault, 1980, p. 194). I argue here that the establishment of positions aimed at controlling impact (impact officer, manager, champion), fixed practices (reporting on impact), procedures (the periodic monitoring of impact), frames (such as schedules and timescales), data systems, a specialised vocabulary and expertise all contribute to the construction of an intricate, heterogenous apparatus around the notion of impact. New elements are constantly being added to the apparatus: my respondents reported that special computer programmes are being engineered and put into place to enable (or constrain) academics to systematically log data on their impact, or that impact activities are now included in the periodic reviews of an academic’s work. Other elements which I observed in the course of my research, but also my own formation as a scholar, include the proliferation of courses and workshops on developing the impact of one’s research, online portals on impact (including ones with the specific aim of showcasing impact, such as Impact Story), creation of educational materials which guide academics through the process of securing impact and finally also scientific projects on the practices around impact.

The aim of the dispositif is to maintain the newly established problematization of impact. It does so by operating on many levels: first of all, and most visibly, the existing procedures enable a timely and organised submission to the upcoming REF. Secondly, they guide the behaviour of social actors not only through directive methods (“to support, mentor, to nag and cajole to participate in the Impact Agenda”) but also by nurturing attitudes and dispositions which are necessary for the notion of impact to continue to take root in academia. This is crucial given that, as visible from many of the interviews cited to this point, attitudes towards impact in academia remain polarised. Finally, the purpose of the dispositif is to obscure the origins of the notion of impact and the related practices, giving a guise of necessity to a reality which in fact is contingent.

There is a level of recognition as to this aspect of the discourse of impact also amongst actors involved in establishing and implementing the policy. For instance, an interviewed impact officer believes her post will eventually disappear, once the message about impact is embedded:

My feeling is that ultimately my post should not exist. In ten or fifteen years’ time, Impact Officers should have embedded the message firmly enough that they don’t need us anymore.

Interview 7 – fragment 38

Compare also this fragment of an interview with a HEFCE policymaker who I asked if the notion of ‘impact’ had already become embedded in academic institutions.

Interviewee: I hope [after REF2021] we will be able to say that it has become embedded. I think the question then will be “have we done enough in terms of case studies? Do we need something very much lighter-touch?” “Do we need anything at all” – that’s a question.

IR: So by “do we need anything at all” do you mean at some point the Impact Agenda will be redundant?

IE: Well, if it is embedded you don't need to talk about it...

#### Interview 20 – fragment 39

The interviewee seems to confirm that the Agenda is by no means an aim in itself. The ultimate purpose of its introduction is to produce a change in academic culture whereby institutions and individual researchers would be more mindful of the societal impacts of the research that they produce – and willing to submit to an evaluation of it. Once this change is complete, when impact, or the message regarding it becomes “embedded” in academic culture – the above-cited interviewee suggests – it might be possible to relax the rules of the exercise (introducing “something very much lighter-touch”), or indeed to scrap the entire evaluation.

It is the existence of an impact infrastructure – a system of practices, positions and tools created to support the generation of impact – which guides the behaviour of academic subjects. While this machinery emerged within institutions in response to a short-term purpose – the creation of case studies for REF2014 – it now operates, in an enhanced shape, with a twofold aim: gathering data with the next REF in mind on the one hand, and supporting the impact culture, that is, ensuring that subjects will consider the question of ‘impact’ even outside of the framework of REF. A ‘culture shift’ is to occur *in the subjects* – it is *in them* that the notion of ‘impact’ has to become *embedded*.

The next chapter looks at what I see as the core binding element of the impact infrastructure – the genre of impact case study.

## 8. Analysis II – Case Study – a new hybrid genre

In the previous chapter I pointed to the genre of impact case study as the core component of the impact infrastructure. Indeed, all the remaining elements of this formation are mutually connected by a common aim – the generation of CSs. In this chapter I turn to the genre itself in asking two questions: 1) what are the features of the genre (or what is it like?) and 2) what are the functions of the genre (or what does it do?). Crucially, the aim of this chapter is not to explain what a ‘good’, ‘correct’ or ‘successful’ impact case study is, but rather to build on the descriptive side of my analysis to present a *critique* of this genre – to position it within the ‘impact infrastructure’ and explain the role it may come to play in the future in shaping academic values and norms.

My observations are based on the analysis of the corpus of 78 CSs in linguistics (see 4.2.1 for a description of the corpus). I draw on genre analysis (in the first, descriptive part of the chapter – 8.1) and on selected ideas from linguistic pragmatics: the concepts of regularisation and officialisation and the notion of professional vision (in the critical part of the chapter – 8.2). In section 8.2.3 which focuses on this last concept, I draw on selected interview data to enrich the picture of the genre’s emergence and its importance in shaping academic life.

I start by describing the main characteristics of the genre, showing which linguistic resources have been used in the documents and drawing attention to rhetorical tendencies in the texts. My main claim in this part of the chapter is that CS is a new academic genre which displays hybrid features in satisfying requirements of academic *and* managerial written communication.

On the basis of this analysis, I move on to investigate the genre of CS from a broader perspective of social theory, asking about the pragmatic aim

fulfilled by the genre. I argue that it realizes two strategic functions – regularization and officialization. In view of these two functions, the texts pertaining to the genre can be read in two different frameworks. This ‘double pragmatic function’ of the genre in terms of positioning the authors’ accounts also for the hybrid features of the texts on the level of language. I later move on to consider features which are rare or missing in the studied corpus. While the mere existence of a particular pattern of writing often suffices to normalize it as the correct, or the only possible one, the insights in section 8.2.2 will allow a reflection on how the genre could be different and what this says about its current form. In the closing section of the chapter I reflect on the vision of research and impact conveyed by the genre and I draw attention to the possible dangers connected to the consolidation of the genre in its current form.

## ***8.1. Features of the genre***

### **8.1.1. Impact case study – a new genre**

Delimiting genres is one of the primary problems of genre analysis – it dates back to the taxonomy of literary genres – poetry, prose, drama – developed in the classical era. With the growing complexity of written genres and the rise of new mixed (e.g. audio-visual) ones the task of assigning a particular piece of work to a genre or delimiting the boundaries of genres became more and more complicated, while existing typologies of genres were often contested and disputed (Chandler, 1997, pp. 1-2).

The genre of CS stands out from many currently used genres, including academic ones, in that it does in fact have clear boundaries. It did not emerge organically, but it was established at a precise moment in history by a particular entity (HEFCE), which also explicitly laid out the basic rules of writing this sort of document. Hence, from the three ways of defining genres – by definition, by group resemblance and by prototype (Chandler,

1997, pp. 2-3) – the first can confidently be selected as an approach to delimiting this genre. ‘Impact CS’ can be thus defined as a text submitted to the REF (or possibly a draft of such a document used for training purposes) which builds on the form prepared by the organizer. Since the REF exercise has only had one edition, the present study has the advantage of being based on the analysis of *all* examples of CSs in the discipline of linguistics ever made public.

A frequent aim of genre studies is tracking the traces of different genres in a set of texts. This is an aim which also this piece of research sets before itself, as I will be interested in investigating which existing genres the new genre of impact CS drew on. When drafting the very first impact CSs, their authors would have felt in some aspects constrained in their writing, while in other areas they could feel free. To be sure, they wouldn’t have been confronted with a blank file, but with a template created by the organizer (annex G in: HEFCE, 2011b), which listed the details that the organizer expected to find in each section. Apart from this, each of the four main panels also specified its own guidelines on the content of the impact submission, explaining the meaning of ‘impact’ in a given discipline, pointing to possible areas where it might appear in a given research field, and giving guidance on data which enables its assessment (HEFCE, 2012c). Some authors might have also consulted the impact CSs assessed in the pilot exercise. These recommendations and points of reference remained generic, particularly given that the pilot did not cover the discipline of linguistics, and the closest field covered was English (HEFCE, 2010a). This is the information which underpins the ‘hard’ guidelines of writing CSs. In drawing up the documents, authors were also likely to creatively draw on their own personal, disciplinary or departmental styles. If the ‘hard’ rules account for the similarities in all the documents, the ‘soft’ individual or local tendencies are responsible for the noticeable differences in style, which some genre theorists argue can be equally crucial to the analysis of the genre (Neale, 1980, pp. 49–50)

What immediately strikes any reader wishing to acquaint him or herself with impact CSs is the fact that they are all the same length (3-4 pages long) divided into identical eight template sections (3 unnumbered and 5 numbered). The three unnumbered sections are: name of institution, Unit of Assessment and title of CS. The numbered sections are: 1) summary of impact, 2) underpinning research, 3) references to the research, 4) details of impact 5) sources to corroborate impact. The summary is a short overview of the content of the document, sections 2 and 3 contain an account of the conducted research, often in the vein of a journal article with its bibliography, while sections four and five are the core ones which focus on impact – section 4 contains an impact narrative, while section 5 can be understood as a sort of ‘bibliography’ of the previous section.

### **8.1.2. Impact case study – summary of main features**

The insights below are the effect of a systematic analysis of the corpus of 78 CSs in the studied corpus. I have analysed these documents section by section, looking firstly at the elements which appear regularly in particular parts of the document. For reasons of conciseness, I do not include a description of all the features of the genre here, focusing instead on the elements of the CSs which I see as salient for CS as a new academic genre, as an element of the ‘impact infrastructure’ and as documents which put forward a particular vision of research.

#### **8.1.2.1. Creative use of structure**

Despite the fact that CSs are relatively short documents which follow strict formatting requirements (including guidelines on the length of each section), an overview of the studied corpus suggests that authors have nevertheless used the provided rigid template in a variety of creative ways. Already in the unnumbered sections, which seem to offer no freedom whatsoever, certain differences can be spotted. For instance, under Unit of Assessment (second unnumbered section) some authors took the opportunity to flag up which of the two disciplines assessed in the unit (modern languages or linguistics) the described research pertains to – in CS24042 we find “28B Linguistics”, in CS24009 – “28A Modern Languages”. Sometimes authors even signal the concrete field – in CS24571 we read: D28B – “Modern Languages and Linguistics: Celtic Studies” and in CS41287: “31 Classics / Centre for Hellenic studies”. Similarly, the CS titles may include an additional symbol which shows the place of the CS in the entire submission, for instance the title of CS11822 includes the number CS3, standing for ‘case study 3’ (of those submitted by a department). This might point to an interpretation of the genre as a composite one, the basic unit of which would be an entire impact submission (containing several CSs and an impact template) rather than a

separate document. Some CSs include in the title the name of the researcher or research project, e.g. “Documenting, Preserving and Sharing Global Linguistic Heritage (ELAR)” (CS42791). This is a way of bypassing the restrictions of the form (which does not have a separate space for the author’s name). The inclusion of the author’s name in the header, despite the lack of a dedicated space for it might point to the influence of academic genres in which the name of the author/researcher always features prominently.

In the body of the documents differences appear on the level of formatting (bold, underlined, italicised, capitalized text), use of justification, headers, bullet points, special symbols, charts, tables and graphs, various proportions between narrative content and lists and points (e.g. CS21132 is written almost entirely in bullet points) and use of ‘meta’ content (DOIs, URLs). A notable feature which testifies to the authors’ creativity in approaching this new genre is the development of different systems of referencing: no less than 39 types of referencing – mixing numbers, special symbols, traditional academic referencing styles – have been identified in the corpus consisting of 78 documents! (collected in table in appendix 8). The purpose of these references was to link the separate sections of the document, thereby presenting a coherent and convincing narrative. Usually the references in section 2 (underpinning research) will relate to section 3 (references to the research) while references in section 4 (details of impact) will relate to section 5 (sources to corroborate), but in some CSs (e.g. CS41287) section 4 will contain references both to sections 3 and 5. This suggests an effort on the side of the authors to highlight the connection between the research and impact, rather than presenting them as two separate areas, as the form itself would suggest. See figures 9 below for examples of different approaches to the CS form.

## 2. Underpinning research

The impact derives from research conducted in Manchester (2003-2012); the first major publication was in 2009. The key researchers were Professor Stephen Hutchings (2006-date) and Professor Vera Tolz (2004-date).

### Focus of Research

The research focused on the relationship between television and power in Russia, accounting for the globalised media environment in which Russian television operates. Its main areas of concern were: (i) the role of broadcasting in the post-Soviet nation building project [3.1, 3.2]; (ii) the effectiveness of television as a tool of political consensus management; and (iii) the mediation of multicultural values in the context of the growth of radical Islam within Russia's Southern periphery, and of inter-ethnic tensions in its heartlands, and in comparison with other European broadcasters [3.3]. The time period covered was 2003-2013. Most attention was paid to the main state broadcasters (Channel 1, Rossiya, and NTV). For 2006-09, BBC1 and France 2 broadcasts were also recorded and analysed.

### Methods

These included the establishment of a corpus of recordings, digitised, annotated and catalogued according to a typology of news categories, enabling the team to generate datasets analysing volumes of coverage, salience, running orders and changing news agendas. These underpinned detailed discourse analyses centring on the role of post-Soviet television genre formats in 'localising' global meanings, ideological gate-keeping strategies; the framing and representation of voices; lexical choice; narrative structures; the sequencing of images.

### Key Findings

Established accounts of the changing status of the broadcast media in Russia since 1991 tell of a slow descent into authoritarian state control, including the brutal suppression of facts relating to the crushing of separatist movements in the Islamic North Caucasus. They contribute to the emergence of new cold war tensions between Russia and the West, even as both parties inscribe themselves into the global War on Terror in the context of shared notions of a crisis in multiculturalism, and the growing securitisation of public discourse. The research underpinning this case study challenges these accounts in a number of ways:

1. Far from the top-down 'management' associated with state-controlled media, Russian national television serves as the site of a complex circulation of a plurality of discourses, official, sub-official and unofficial, in which each modifies the other.
2. Project findings enabled the researchers to produce a subtly differentiated 'mapping' of Russian media space revealing that state broadcasters varied their output depending on their position in relation to shifting populist discourses of 'left' and 'right'.
3. This, together with the ability to trace the legacy of Soviet practices, produced further insights into how voices at the extremes of the Russian public sphere (nationalist and liberal) are 'mainstreamed' within/excluded from broadcasting agendas.
4. The team identified parallels linking Russian television representations of Muslims, and those of the BBC and France 2, as well as sharp divergences, including a repression of the Islamic dimension to domestic terrorism.

## 2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The Macedonian project was based on studies of Input Processing and Processing Instruction. Professor Benati was one of a small international team who started the theoretical framework on this field of Second Language Acquisition in the mid-1990s. Input Processing argues that second language learners will process information available to them from the language's surface structure more effectively if their attention can be drawn to those items of the language which carry grammatical significance. The normal tendency of learners is to pay attention to lexical items as they carry most meaning but in order to learn the syntax, ways must be found of making the grammatical items more salient for them. Learners can be taught to note the grammar, often without resorting to conscious knowledge; input processing studies demonstrate how. Processing Instruction looks at ways in which materials can be presented to learners so that Input Processing happens in the most successful way possible through input enhancement.

The key research underpinning Professor Benati's understanding of Input Processing and Processing Instruction was carried out between 2001 to 2007, during which time he investigated the effects of Processing Instruction under a variety of conditions, teasing out variables and testing the relative effects of this psycholinguistic approach to grammar instruction [3.1]. The main variables were the taught language: English, Japanese, Italian etc; different forms like gender and tense, and syntactic structures like word order; and then the different learners and their mother tongues. Of particular interest to the Macedonian project was how technology could best be utilised within this learning and teaching methodology. This was the focus of Professor Benati's 2007 book *Delivering Processing Instruction in Classroom and Virtual Contexts*. It examines empirically the differential effects of delivering Processing Instruction by instructors in classrooms compared with students working individually with computers.

The period 2008-2013 examined further aspects of Processing Instruction. The 2008 monograph [3.2.2] demonstrated how training on one particular grammatical feature impacts on the acquisition of other features affected by a similar processing problem. The 2010 book [3.3.2] examined the impact of learning through discourse or conversation as opposed to closed sentences, again on the basis of a number of classroom-based empirical studies. The 2013 book [3.3.3] examines the interplay between individual differences such as age, working memory and aptitude, and Processing Instruction. Other monographs relate research findings to their classroom applications in different contexts eg *Japanese Language Teaching (2009)* [3.3.1]. Overall, this research indicated the importance of manipulating input to provide a focus on grammatical features. Grammar tasks should be designed to ensure that learners process input correctly and efficiently by noticing and processing forms in the input, eventually making correct connections between a grammatical form and its meaning.

Professor Benati has also undertaken research to make theory and research accessible to non-specialists, and to identify the links between theory and practice in second language learning and teaching, and links between research findings and their classroom implications and applications. He has published a further three monographs to address these issues for the benefit of teachers and practitioners.

Figure 9 – Extracts of CS28114 & CS2734 – structure of document

In the first of the documents above, the content is divided into sections and points – highlighted in blue and yellow, while in CS2734 it is written entirely in continuous text. I have highlighted the references to the following section no 3 (in red) and a classic academic reference (in yellow). Note also the fact that the authors of CS2734 left the instructions for authors in the heading (highlighted in green) while the authors of CS28114 removed it – this shows differences in approaching the standard form.

Some of the discrepancies between the CSs are purely individual – for instance authors of CS1697 (see figure 10 below) present their data in a chart form, which constitutes one of the few occurrences of charts in the corpus. Some choices however are consistent within entire submitting units (e.g. departments) – for example all the CSs submitted to UoA28 by the University of St. Andrews are adorned with a coat of arms and often an illustration – both have a purely decorative function. This observation can point to emerging sub-styles in the discourse community, or to the fact that at this early stage of development of the genre certain elements are actively being forged by the authors.

Impact case study (REF3b)

Training Unit (PTU) was a standalone product aimed at therapy use, of which around 30 were sold in the UK and Ireland from its launch in 1998 till 2003. These sales covered basic costs and were handled from Reading University, then QMU.

Articulate Instruments took over in 2003. From 2003-2008 there were 126 customers, 46 (37%) in the UK. Thirty of these were non-academic: 21 in the UK, 9 in Europe and Canada. Turnover was approximately £130k per year. Initially, most customers were buying EPG systems but from 2008 onwards UTI (Ultrasound Tongue Imaging) products have been added and sales have increased. An increased level of sales was seen when Articulate Instruments Ltd. was formed. This enhanced level of impact has been sustained over the census period with further new products added.

Some products, mainly the new EPG "Articulate" palate (see below), were designed by WRENCH alone. EPG palates exist in tandem with EPG analysis systems. We will note EPG palate sales separately below, which are largely of value to other companies. The new palate sales are an impact of underpinning QMU research into EPG systems and of WRENCH's palate research.

3. Number and Distribution of Sales, Turnover, and Profitability 2008-2013

Figures are from audited accounts and internal financial returns of the company. Average turnover was ~£109k in the census period. The company is profitable and sustainable and is supported through sales of goods and services. There have been 98 new customers – mostly universities – across 21 countries in addition to the UK (Fig 1) since January 1, 2008. There have been 27 non-academic customers – mostly hospitals – either from the UK (14) or Europe (13). The products are not licensed for clinical use in the USA at this time for reasons of cost of the licensing process.

Year end (July 31st)	Turnover (£)
2008 (ie from 01.08.07)	125,856
2009	126,729
2010	55,863
2011	77,885
2012	105,491
2013 (unaudited)	160,381
<b>total</b>	<b>652,205</b>

Table 1. Financial summary of turnover

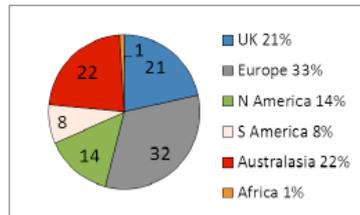


Figure 1. Number (and %) of UK customers and overseas customers by continent (n=98)

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of St Andrews



Unit of Assessment: 28 - Modern Languages and Linguistics

Title of case study: *Santa Anna of Mexico* and Mexico's changing perception of six-times president Antonio López de Santa Anna, 1794-1876

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Prof. Fowler's biography, *Santa Anna of Mexico*, has influenced current public discourse which has led Mexicans to revise their "official history" of six-times president Antonio López de Santa Anna, 1794-1876, by illuminating and challenging cultural values and social assumptions in the public domain. The work, which was translated into Spanish and published in Mexico as *Santa Anna* (2010; re-issued 2011), alongside other key outputs, including a TV programme, about Santa Anna and other Mexican presidents, was at the centre of several state-government-sponsored events in the build-up to, and as part of, the Bicentenary of the War of Independence in 2010. It has succeeded in improving the quality of evidence employed to enhance public understandings of Mexico's complex past.



Enhanced understanding has led to a revised interpretation of Santa Anna in Mexico's 'official history'.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

*Santa Anna of Mexico* (2007; 501pp)<sup>1</sup>, the key text in this case study, was published in the United States and Britain by the University of Nebraska Press (hbk) and by Bison Books (pbk), and in Mexico (in Spanish) by the Universidad Veracruzana. At the same time, in Mexico City, the Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, and the leading trade publishing house Fondo de Cultura Económica, published Fowler's *Presidentes mexicanos* (2004)<sup>2</sup>, 2 vols, and *Gobernantes mexicanos* (2008)<sup>3</sup>, 2 vols, respectively. Other contemporaneous publications included articles in prestigious academic journals on different aspects of Santa Anna's political career<sup>4-6</sup>.

Figure 10 – Extracts of CS1697 & CS35299 – use of charts  
Note that CS35299 was excluded from the final corpus.

Certain differences might have to do with the author's noticing (or not) windows of opportunity offered by the seemingly strict document. This is particularly visible in the approach to sections 3 (references) and 5 (sources to corroborate). While in some documents these sections contain just a list of publications or contacts, amounting to only a few lines, in other cases, authors use this space to provide extensive data on the quality of the outputs or the content of the corroborative materials, sometimes spanning an entire page. See the below figure 11 for an example.

**3. References to the research**

**Publications:**

- 1) Serge Sharoff, Bogdan Babych, and Anthony Hartley (2006). "Using comparable corpora to solve problems difficult for human translators." In *Proc. of International Conference on Computational Linguistics and Association of Computational Linguistics, COLING-ACL 2006*, pp. 739-746, Sydney. ACL is the most prestigious international conference in the area of computational linguistics. The ASSIST project was rated by EPSRC reviewers as "tending to internationally leading" in terms of scientific and social impact. (16 citations) †
- 2) Serge Sharoff, (2006) "Open-source corpora: using the net to fish for linguistic data." In *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 11(4), pp. 435-462. (54 citations) †
- 3) Serge Sharoff (2007). "Classifying Web corpora into domain and genre using automatic feature identification." In *Proc. of the 3rd Web as Corpus Workshop*, pp. 83-94. (23 citations)
- 4) Serge Sharoff (2010). "In the garden and in the jungle: Comparing genres in the BNC and Internet." In Alexander Mehler, Serge Sharoff, and Marina Santini, eds, *Genres on the Web: Computational Models and Empirical Studies*, Springer, Berlin/New York. (22 citations) ‡
- 5) Babych, B. & Hartley (2009), A. "Automated error analysis for multiword expressions: using BLEU-type scores for automatic discovery of potential translation errors." *Linguistica Antverpiensia: Journal of translation and interpreting studies. Special Issue on Evaluation of Translation Technology*, 8, pp. 81-104. ‡
- 6) Babych, B. & Hartley, A. (2004). "Extending the BLEU MT evaluation method with frequency weightings". *Proc. of ACL 2004*, Barcelona. (62 citations) †

**Evidence of quality:**

In the rapidly developing field of computational linguistics, publications at leading international conferences are rated at the same level as journal publications.  
 The citation counts are provided by Google Scholar.  
 † Submitted to RAE 2008 and available on request.  
 ‡ Submission to REF2014.

**Grants:**

i) ASSIST: Automatic semantic assistance for translators (EPSRC, PI: Hartley, Col: Sharoff, 2005-2007, 30 months, £240,000 for Leeds)

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

- [3.1] Crystal, David (2005). *The Stories of English*. London: Penguin. Submitted as part of Bangor's RAE2008 submission. A copy of this output is available on request.
- [3.2] Crystal, David (2006). *The Fight for English: How language pundits ate, shot, and left*. Oxford University Press. A copy of this output is available on request.
- [3.3] Crystal, David (2000). *Language Death*. Cambridge University Press. Submitted as part of Bangor's RAE2001 submission. A copy of this output is available on request.
- [3.4] Crystal, David (2006). *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge University Press, 2nd edn. Submitted as part of Bangor's RAE2008 submission. A copy of this output is available on request.
- [3.5] Crystal, David (2008). 'Who pays the piper calls the tune: changing linguistic goals in the service of industry. A case study'. In D Prys and B Williams (eds), *Global Understanding in Multilingual, Multimodal and Multimedia Contexts* (Bangor: Language Technologies Unit) pp. 39-46. A copy of this output is available on request.
- [3.6] Crystal, David (2010). Semantic targeting: past, present, and future. *Aslib Proceedings*, Vol. 62 Iss: 4/5, pp.355 – 365. DOI: 10.1108/00012531011074627. This is the first systematic application of linguistics to provide a solution to the problem of inappropriate ad placement online.

**Figure 11 - Extracts of CS6375 & CS26214 – approach to references section**  
 Note how the authors of the top document, CS6375, provide citation data, information related to the quality of the outputs and additional information in separate sections, also making use of special characters († and ‡). In

contrast, the authors of CS26214 give very little data beyond the listed references.

It is enough to survey the structure of the CSs in the corpus, without familiarising oneself with their content to suspect some of the issues which authors dealt with in drafting the documents. These had to do with understanding the nature of the genre (e.g. are CSs mainly stand-alone documents or units of a larger genre of ‘impact submission’), compensating for the deficits of the template (lack of space to indicate which of the two sub-disciplines the submission belongs to or to sign the authors), defining details of the document’s shape (referencing, use of visuals) and making the most of the spaces provided (such as citing output quality data in the references section). The differences in approaching these issues show how at an early stage of the existence of the genre problems were dealt with in a number of creative ways, rather than relying on an existing pattern. The fact that similar solutions to the above problems can often be found in CSs from the same submitting institution or department suggest the emergence of local patterns – at the level of universities, schools, and departments.

#### **8.1.2.2. Narrative patterns**

One of the classical tasks of genre analysis is uncovering patterns of organization in the narrative presented in text (Hoey, 2001, p. 141) – famous examples include Propp’s description of sequences in Russian folk fairy tales (Propp, 1968) and, in academic discourse, Swale’s ‘Create a Research Niche’ model (Swales, 1990, p. 141). The elements of the patterns can be seen as answers to hypothetical questions that the reader poses to the writer. Interestingly, these questions (who? when? what?), and therefore also the type of answers which are given are repetitive, which accounts for the fact that the same patterns of textual organization can be detected in large bodies of texts, including ones which come from different cultures and contexts. A narrative about a study’s influence on the world is obviously also a sort of story. And indeed, I observed that the main scheme

which appears over and over again in the documents from my corpus matches a well-researched generic pattern of story-telling, namely the Situation-Problem-Response-Evaluation (SPRE) structure (also called the Problem-Solution pattern), described by Hoey (1994, 2001). The elements of the pattern include: (1) an optional previous Situation, which provides a context for the pattern (2) the Problem or aspect of a situation requiring a response, (3) the Response to the problem and (4) a Positive Result or Evaluation (Hoey, 2001, pp. 123-124). This structure is often found for instance in myths and legends – think for instance of a mountain ruled by a dragon (‘situation’) which threatens the neighbouring town (‘problem’) which is then sieged by a group of heroes (‘response’), to lead to a happy end or a new adventure (‘evaluation’).

In CSs the ‘situation’ element of the SPRE narrative structure would describe the general background and context of the research and impact. The ‘problem’ element points to an issue within this context. The ‘response’ describes the way the researchers addressed this issue, both in terms of research and impact. The ‘evaluation’ element points to the outcome of the researchers’ action. Below is an example of the SPRE pattern in a sample impact narrative from the studied corpus.

Mosetén is an endangered language spoken by approximately 800 indigenous people (...) (*SITUATION*). Many Mosetén children only learn the majority language, Spanish (*PROBLEM*). Research at UWE Bristol has resulted in the development of language materials for the Mosetenes, bilingual educators and other stakeholders. It has enabled bilingual education programmes, and inspired a new generation of Mosetén speakers (*RESPONSE*). It has therefore had a direct influence in avoiding linguistic and cultural loss, and has helped the Mosetenes to preserve the intrinsic value of their language and culture, also raising the group’s profile in Bolivia and beyond (*EVALUATION*).

CS40828

The ‘situation’ element describes a certain background – the existence of an endangered language – which provides the context for the account which follows. The ‘problem’ element points to the issue which needs addressing (the lack of language competence among young users). The ‘response’ element elaborates on the concrete intervention – development of language materials – carried out by the researcher in tackling the problem. The ‘evaluation’ element lists the positive consequences of this intervention – how it affected the initial problem in the described context (helping preserve the language in raising the communities’ profile). The above example relates to impact, but the SPRE structure can be spotted also in narratives focusing on research, for instance in section 2 of a CS, like in the example below:

Output a (...) explores how language documentation materials can be better described, discovered, and interpreted (SITUATION). Metadata records (...) are insufficient to provide the level of contextualisation, understanding and access control needed for complex and diverse materials (PROBLEM). [Researchers] propose a broader approach to metadata, enabling enhanced articulation of knowledge about the creation, context and content of resources (...) (RESPONSE). As a result, ELAR supports a flexible, nuanced approach to metadata (EVALUATION). Output f extends this argumentation to apply to “metadocumentation” of the language documentation process itself.

CS42791

Note that the last sentence of the above example introduces a new *problem* – and hence can be a beginning of a new pattern structure – SPRE structures are thus ‘stacked’ and used as building blocks of a larger narrative, in line with Hoey’s observations on the use of such patterns (Hoey, 2001, pp. 130-133). SPRE patterns often appear one after the other in section four, for instance describing the intervention and impact that followed in different areas, often under separate headings (e.g. CS24045). The exact SPRE structure was identified in over 30 CSs from the corpus,

but it was present in many more in a less organized form, for instance where all the elements were present but were quoted in a different order (usually starting from the evaluation). Furthermore, the ‘problem’ element appears to be often underrepresented – this can be explained in terms of the function of the genre which has less to do with building an exciting narrative (as in stories, myths) and more with presenting the authors as authoritative (see section 8.2.2).

When analysing the repetitive patterns in the corpus, I realized a curious variation in the ‘evaluation’ element of the SPRE structures. In CSs this element is much more elaborate than in fiction narratives, where the ‘evaluation’ element provides just closure and relief after the tension often built up by the ‘problem’ and ‘response’ elements. Given the persuasive aim of the genre of CSs it is not surprising that much attention is given to the evaluation step, where most of the evidence for the existence of ‘impact’ is provided. Rather than quoting just one piece of evidence, authors often back it up with further corroborative material (testimonials, figures). I have found that there are two typical patterns of providing such additional information. The first one consists of strengthening the initial claim, adding to the impression of significance and prestige by providing additional information, which makes the claim more difficult to refute or disregard. Taking up the idea of elements of patterns as answers to implicit questions which the reader might ask, this element, which I refer to as ‘further corroboration’, would answer the question “how do we know this piece of information is important / valid”? See the example below:

(T)he book has been used on the PGDipEd course  
(FURTHER CORROBORATION) rated outstanding  
by Ofsted, at the University [Name].

CS36979

Also mentioning the high social standing of the individual providing the corroboration can be seen as ‘further corroboration’. The examples

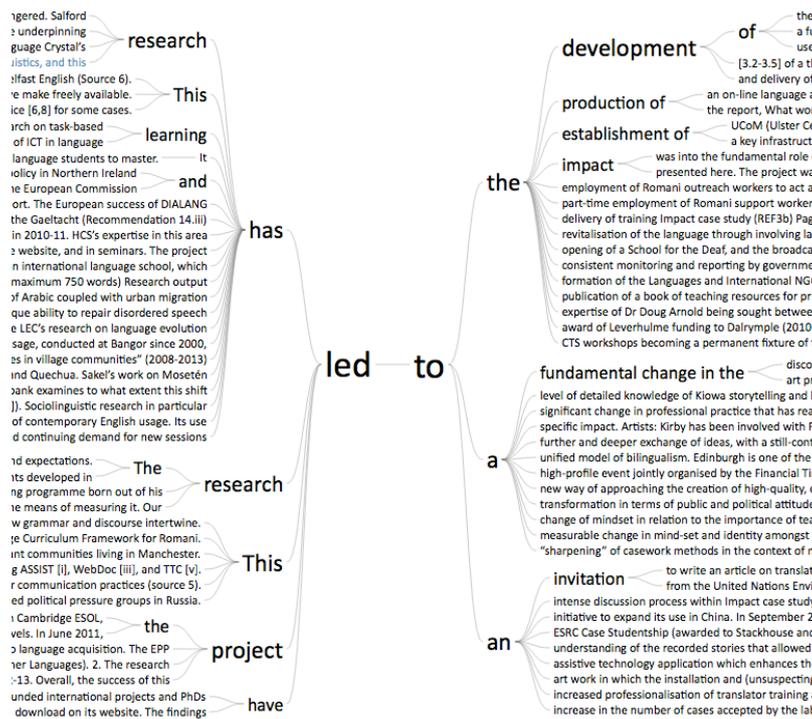
included in the corpus, as well as accounts from interviews, suggest that testimonials from individuals occupying exposed public positions, rather than ordinary professionals or members of the public, were preferred. The sources of corroboration mentioned in my corpus include e.g. “Former Chief Constable”, “former president of the FBI National Academy Associates” (CS25828), “celebrated lyricist Aidan Moffat” – CS24042 and “Noam Chomsky” [famous linguist] (CS28113).

Another pattern of strengthening one’s claims of impact has to do with presenting the effect of an intervention not as an isolated event, but rather as a first element of a whole series of collaborations which followed. This element – which I refer to as ‘further impact’ – can be seen as an answer to the implicit question ‘is that all?’ or ‘what happened after that?’, e.g.

The research was published in an accessible form in conservationist publication ECOS and in Scottish National Heritage’s in-house newsletter in 2012, receiving praise from practitioners ‘on the ground’ (...) (FURTHER IMPACT). This led to an invitation from the United Nations Environment Programme for [researcher].

CS22177

Patterns of ‘further impact’ are often built around linking words, such as: “X led to” (n=78), “as a result” (n in the corpus =31), “leading to” (n=24), “resulting in” (n=13), “followed” (“X followed Y” – n=14). Figure 12 below shows a ‘word tree’ for a frequent linking structure “led to”:



**Figure 12 – Word tree with string ‘led to’**

This tree (prepared with MaxQDA software) neatly shows a frequent structure in the CSs which highlights how the “research/project led to” an impact (“fundamental change/ development/ establishment/ production of...”) or how the impact itself “led to” further impact (e.g. “an invitation to write.../ from the United Nations”).

The salience of certain narrative patterns that showcase coherent narratives (SPRE patterns) and offer evidence for research and impact quality which are difficult to refute (‘further impact’ and ‘further corroboration’ structures) testifies to the above-all persuasive purpose of the genre.

### 8.1.2.3. Grammatical features

Recurrent grammatical patterns in the studied corpus include the frequent use of gerunds in titles and headings. Out of the 78 CSs in the corpus, the titles of 48 documents contained a verb in gerund form – e.g. “Highlighting and preserving the Mosestén language and culture” (CS40828), “Documenting, Preserving and Sharing Global Linguistic Heritage” (CS42791). In general, the titles of the documents can be said to be formulaic – they are often verbless sentences (“Discourse analysis in

medical settings” – CS42280) (n=33) or include a colon (“SOILLSE: Building an infrastructure for Gaelic” – CS43364) (n=19). The prevalence of titles in this shape might be explained by the authors’ following patterns typical of journal articles in the field – a recent corpus-based study of article titles in the discipline of applied linguistics pointed to the salience of compound (or ‘colonic’) titles and nominal ones (without a verb), while ‘V-ing’ titles (containing a gerund) featured less frequently but still constituted a recognisable pattern (Cheng W., Kuo, & Kuo, 2012). Perhaps gerund forms were used more extensively in CSs than is the norm for journal articles in order to highlight the active, dynamic aspect of the research. This hypothesis would be confirmed by the fact that the verbs in question often described change and influence e.g. “Changing... Teaching” (CS36979), “Widening opportunities...” (CS13840) – also interviewed academics explained that this motivation was present in the process of selecting CS titles (see interview 10, cited in section 7.6). Some titles achieve the same purpose by using verbs describing activity in present tense (n=3) – “Place-name research supports local investment and community initiative” (CS24571) or, rarely, other forms, such as the infinitive – “Electropalatography (EPG) to Support Speech Pathology Assessment, Diagnosis and Intervention” (CS1698).

The second feature regarding verbs is a prevalence of passive forms (e.g. “worldwide impact on language learners (...) has been generated” (CS43541); “key advice was provided to the Scottish Government; research contracts were undertaken” (CS43364); “a new corpus was compiled” (CS21719). An avoidance of personal pronouns (“I, we”) is also noticeable – in consequence, the authors of the research are presented in the third person (e.g. “Kelly as PI convened the workshops” – CS24573; “MacLeod and MacLeod’s work on Gaelic language (...) has helped inform policy” – CS43364) or mention of the authors is avoided altogether (“Electropalatography to Support Speech Pathology Assessment” – CS1698).

The adjectives used in the CSs appear very frequently in superlative form,

or with modifiers which intensify them: “Professor Li Wei undertook a major ESRC funded project” (CS18131); “[the database] now hosts one of the world’s largest and richest collections (...) of corpora’ (CS6375); “work which meets the highest standards of international lexicographical practice” (CS44021); “this experience (...) is extremely empowering for local communities” (CS24571), “the outputs of the research are excellent tools for the teaching” (CS25828); “a huge number of learners worldwide have benefited”; “Reach: Worldwide and huge” (both CS43541).

On a syntactic level, case studies are rich in parallel constructions of enumeration, for instance: “(t)ranslators, lawyers, schools, colleges and the wider public of Welsh speakers are among the (...) users [of research]” (CS37244); “it has benefited a broad, international user base including endangered language speakers and community members, language activists, poets and others” (CS42791); [the users of the research come] “from various countries including India, Turkey, China, South Korea, Venezuela, Uzbekistan, and Japan” (CS2811). Listing, alongside providing figures, is one of the standard ways of signalling the breadth and significance of impact.

Lists and superlatives support the persuasive function of the genre – their salience suggests parallels with genres which have a performative aim – in the academic realm these include biographical documents, such as CVs, bio-notes and even obituaries as well as funding applications (Fairclough, 1993; Hamann, 2016a; Tseng, 2011). The structures present in the CSs titles replicate those of journal articles. This shows how, on the level of grammar, authors drew on existing forms of written expression in academia.

#### **8.1.2.4. Lexical features**

The two features which are salient in the area of vocabulary are: use of ‘positive words’, including large numbers, and the development of ‘impact

speak’ – a fixed set of expressions which has established itself around the new genre.

### Positive words

Positive words appear often in the main narrative on research and impact, and even more frequently in testimonials. Research is described in the CSs in terms of being new, unique and important with the use of words such as “innovative” (n=29), “influential” (no=16), “outstanding” (no=12), “novel” (no=10), “excellent” (no=8), “ground-breaking” (n=7), “tremendous” (n=4), “path-breaking” (no=2), etc. Apart from being expressed through the use of adjectives, these qualities are also rendered descriptively, with the use of words that can be qualified as boosters e.g. “[the research] has enabled a complete rethink of the relationship between [areas]” (CS44021); “vitaly important [research]” (CS28114); “academic interest in [topic], once disregarded as being of little importance, has boomed, and is gaining a wider audience as communication through digital social media has become a general interest and concern of governments, educationalists and the media and public” (CS41287) (note also enumeration in the last example). By the same token, also the word “global”, pointing to the reach of the research (with the exclusion of use in titles etc.) was salient in the corpus (n=27).

The use of ‘positive words’ can be seen as part of the same phenomenon as the proliferation of superlatives (“huge, excellent, the largest” etc.), described above. In addition, in making the point on the breadth and significance of the impact authors frequently showcase numbers, usually high ones. While these appear in all sections of the document, including the title (e.g. “Research on natural language processing leading to improved language tests and dictionaries for millions of language learners” – CS43541), they are truly ubiquitous in section 4, where they are cited as evidence for the breadth of involvement or income generated, e.g.:

Reach: Since it became available in 2011, *[product]* has generated subscription sales of more than £10,000.

CS43541

An (...) interview (...) was broadcast at peak time (7.50 am), extending its reach to 6 million listeners, as was an appearance on BBC Breakfast (8.10 am) (...) with ratings of approximately 1.5 million viewers.

CS28114

The programme was aimed at the production of material suitable for the needs of *[group]* which has grown considerably in the last fifteen years (almost 2,000 secondary schools *[in region with]* some 25,000 pupils).

CS41287

Authors do not shy away from quoting data which in the academic context is often considered trivial, such as social media popularity – tweets, likes, downloads etc.:

there have been 197,394 searches of the on-line Terriadur *[Welsh dictionary]* deriving from 33,883 visits. The Terriadur has also been downloaded to 13,486 mobile devices, a statistic comparable with at least 1,500,000 downloads in an UK-English context.

CS28025

Other claims of social media popularity mentioned in CSs include for instance: *GPC* *[historical dictionary]* “has nearly 800 ‘friends’ on Facebook” (CS37244), *Cybraphon* *[art installation]* “had over 4000 Facebook friends by July 2013” (CS24043). The fact that reach on social media was cited in the context of an academic evaluation might point to changing attitudes to social media in the dissemination of research. It can also suggest that academic genres, particularly new ones like CS, are

influenced by tendencies present in other, neighbouring realms, such as business and marketing which increasingly showcase social media data (He, Wang, & Akula, 2017).

“First” is a word which in itself does not have a positive or negative value, but which clearly has a very big charge in the academic world where primacy of discovery is cherished. “The first” appears as a string in the corpus 120 times, 70 of which are connected to the supposed value of the research (excluding phrases such as “the first workshop took place...”). Authors frequently boast about having for the first time produced a type of research (“this was the first handbook of discourse studies written”... – CS41287), studied a particular area (“This is the first text-oriented discourse analytic study”... – CS42280), compiled a type of data “[We] provid[ed] for the first time reliable nationwide data”; “[the] project created the first on-line database of...” – both CS4893), or proven a thesis: “this research was the first to show that”... – CS21715). Sometimes the adjective “first” is further modified, most frequently with the booster “ever” (“the first ever large-scale sociolinguistic survey of”... – CS18020), but also others: [text] “presents the first serious study of Belfast English” – CS1028; “This database (...) is one of the first, not just for a lesser studied Austronesian language, but for **any** lesser studied language” (CS4893 – note the author’s use of bold); “The monograph... has been praised as... “not only the first but probably the ultimate” publication on [topic]” (CS20470). It is rarer for the word “first” to be hedged instead of boosted e.g. “This study is among the first to explore the role of...” (CS38704), “The first detailed investigation of speech-language” (CS21715). Authors also often mention the primacy of their actions in the area of impact: “sectoral workshops brought together for the first time professional mediators and translators” (CS39940). A table containing the string ‘the first’ as a key word in context can be found in appendix 8. Adjectives which are in the context of research near-synonyms to “first” were also frequent in the corpus – “innovative” (n=29), “unique” (n=44, in phrases related to research, excluding expressions such as “unique visitors” etc.), present for instance in the phrases: “This is an ambitious and innovative

study” (CS21714) or [the work is] “a unique, impartial, authoritative and ready source of knowledge” (CS37244).

The above-described features of the CSs – the proliferation of ‘positive words’, including superlatives, boosters and the adjective “first” share the aim of contributing to a specific, extremely positive presentation of the research in question as *innovative*, *influential* and successful in reaching and engaging (for instance via social media) a broad audience. Boasting can of course take other forms than just using particular adjectives – for instance the author of CS28114 quotes a report stating that their research “might be thought to provide a model of ‘impact’”. The wide-spread use of positive vocabulary is a feature which distinguishes CSs from many other academic genres which traditionally required scholars to speak about the results of their work and its importance with “honesty, modesty and proper caution” (Swales, 1990, p. 175), leaving the evaluation to the reader. While, for the above-mentioned reason, hedges have been more frequent in academic writing than boosters (Hyland, 1994, 1998), recent corpus-based research shows that the frequency of positive words, especially “robust”, “novel”, “innovative”, and “unprecedented” has seen a sharp increase in the genre of scientific article (Vinkers, Tjiddink, & Otte, 2015). Even considering the effect of this trend which valorises ‘positive vocabulary’ and rhetorical moves aimed at boasting, the genre of CS in which scientists are expected to openly praise their own work might still remain odd both for an unaccustomed reader and for the first-time writer (as indeed confirmed by my interviewees in many exchanges). I believe academics have nevertheless found a convenient solution which enables them to reconcile standards of academic humility with requirements of managerial performativity, namely the introduction in the narrative of ‘other voices’, such as testimonials – I return to this issue in section 8.2.1.

### Impact speak

A second striking set of lexical features of the CSs is the presence of fixed expressions which seem to have become the norm in presenting research impact in the UK. I refer to these as ‘impact speak’.

The first term which strikes the reader as omnipresent, and often appearing in previously rare collocations, is, not surprisingly, “impact” itself. The word “impact” sometimes appeared already in the title section (n=5), e.g. “Corpus Research: Its Impact on Industry” – CS43541). The most frequent collocation in the corpus was “impact on” (n=103) followed by the ‘type’ of impact achieved (e.g. “impact on knowledge” – CS2579, “Impact on Policy” – CS28115), area/topic (e.g. “impact on curricula” – CS22117) or group (“Impact on Professional Interpreters: – CS36241). Figure 13 below shows a word tree with *impact of* as root, illustrating frequent collocations, including the most popular string in the corpus “X has had an impact on (speech)”. The noun “impact” appeared also in plural form (no=32) e.g. “Some highlights selected from the primary impacts are as follows”... – CS43541). It was frequently modified with adjectives such as “significant” and “wide” e.g. “this research has had significant and wide-reaching impact for a relatively small amount of research funding” – CS36979; “[The academic's research] (...) has had significant and far reaching impacts in the field of multilingual education” – CS18131, “The reach and significance of the impact lies in”... – CS21719. The choice of such adjectives can be attributed to the influence of the vocabulary used in the documents, which pointed to ‘reach’ and ‘significance’ as criteria for impact (HEFCE, 2011b, p. 6). Other modified of the word “impact” include qualifiers (“primary”, “secondary” – CS43541, “broader” – CS18132, “key” – CS25829, “financial” – CS1697). The phrase “research/work has/had a significant impact on” stands out as a frequent one. Another common collocation is “impact on” followed by a noun – in the studied corpus it is often “(speech and) language”, but also “policy”, “education” and “public... awareness, policy, discourse” – see word tree in figure 13 below.

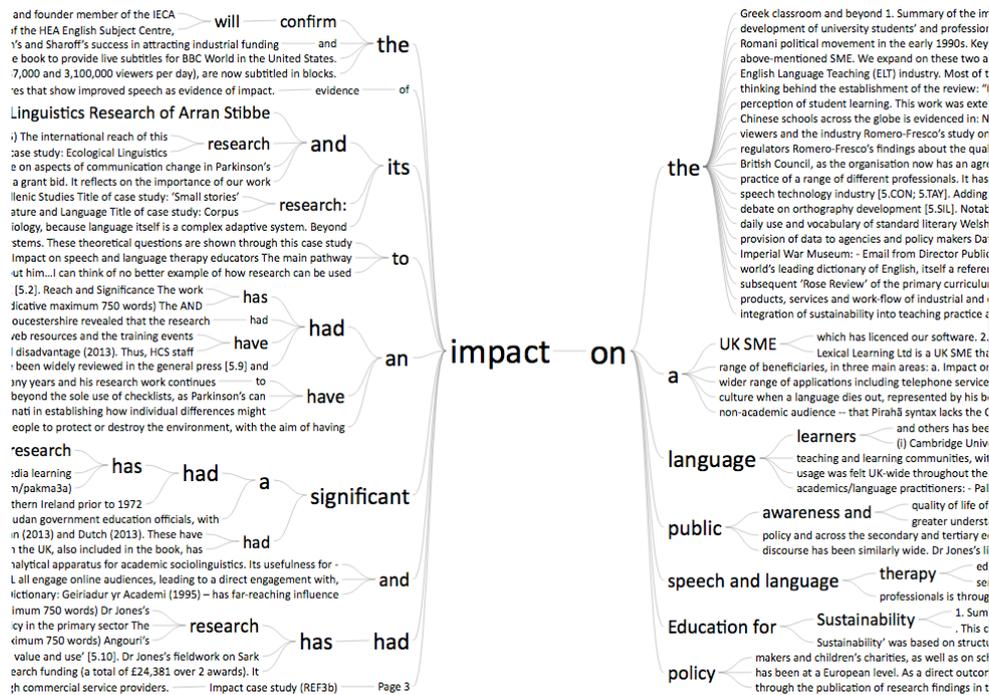


Figure 13 – Word tree with *impact of* as root  
Prepared with MaxQDA software

The most interesting qualifiers used with ‘impact’ are boosters (“great” – CS28114, “positive” – CS21132, “notable” – CS43561, “substantial” – CS28117, “worldwide, very wide” – CS43541, “major” – CS1026, “fundamental” – CS18131, “immense” – CS22177). This is not surprising in the context of the above-presented findings regarding ‘positive words’. Other modifiers, neutral in themselves, testify to the claimed reach of the influence – impact: “on a range of beneficiaries” – CS2579, “current and future” – CS21714, “broad range of [publication’s] impact beyond” [field] – CS37244). Another modifier frequently accompanying ‘impact’ is ‘direct’ (‘directly’) e.g. “We are thus making a direct and measurable impact on the world’s leading dictionary” – CS44021 (note also the expression “world's leading dictionary”, which can be considered ‘further corroboration’, pointing to the prestige of the undertaking). The use of these adjectives testifies to the authors’ focus on demonstrating the importance of the impact (“major, immense”), its breadth (“broader, current and future”), and its connection to the research (hence “direct impact”), as well as other features, such as measurability (“measurable impact”).

The word “impact” was also used as a verb – 22 occurrences of forms “impacted” and “impacting”, across 17 documents – e.g. “Linguistics at Ulster has (...) impacted on public values and discourse” (CS1028). This is interesting, as according to the authors of Oxford Dictionary (2010), formations of verbs from nouns are generally considered stylistically “inferior”, and are usually associated with business and commercial writing. The fact that the word “impact” is present in the CSs in its verbal form exemplifies how initiatives such as the IA can alter academic discourse and again points to the fact that the genre of CS combines elements of academic writing style with managerial genres.

“Pathways to impact” is another fixed expression encountered in the documents. It is used to describe channels of interacting with the public and has made its way to the genre of CS, appearing 14 times in the studied corpus e.g. “The pathways to impact have been primarily via consultancy and via licencing of software” (CS43541). The expression is occasionally shortened to just “pathways”, e.g. “Following on from the initial Pathways”... – CS28116. Due to its relative frequency, we could hypothesise that the expression ‘pathways to impact’ is borrowed directly from the REF policy documents, similarly to the expression “reach and significance of impact”. However, the term “pathways” does not appear in the main document laying out the REF guidelines (HEFCE, 2011b) and is mentioned only once in the “Panel criteria and working methods” (HEFCE, 2012b, p. 93). Most likely the term was borrowed from policy documents of the Research Councils UK ‘Pathways to Impact’ programme which was introduced in parallel to the IA (in 2009) and realizes the same impact-oriented policy (Research Councils UK, 2010). In fact, one of the CSs from the corpus makes reference to this policy: “[w]ith the advent of the ‘Pathways to Impact’ element within AHRC grants, the project is committed to developing its impact-generating activities over the period 2012-2016” (CS44021; note also the expression “impact-generating activities” which can also be seen as the element of ‘impact speak’). Today, the expression “pathways to impact” is applied quite universally in the

context of REF, as exemplified for instance by its extensive use in the report on REF 2014 by King's College (2015).

The expressions related to “impact” found in the corpus are predominantly connected to three areas. The first one is achieving influence: research “led to” an impact, “to maximise” impact, “to deliver” impact, “to impact (on)” and the impersonal “impact arose”. The second area where expressions related to impact are emerging is proving the existence and quality of influence (“to claim” impact, “to corroborate” impact, “to vouch for” impact, “to confirm” impact, to “give evidence” for impact). Finally, there is a set of expressions related to what impact – a new academic entity – itself *does* or *has*. Namely, it “is underpinned by research” (CS28114), it can “be felt” by particular groups (“the impact of the training was felt by all stakeholders” – CS13840) and it is sustained by “an infrastructure” (“the insight and the infrastructure of impact generation” – CS25828).

The expressions used to describe impact are coherent across the corpus – even a small change in vocabulary constitutes a striking difference to the other CSs. For instance, the authors of CS1697 wrote about “routes to impact”, rather than the standard “pathways” and the authors of CS13839 discussed impact using the adjectives “vertical” and “horizontal” (rather than in terms of “reach” and “significance” as in most CSs). While the analysis of the vocabulary used to present impact in the studied corpus points to the existence of an already consolidated jargon in the area, these small discrepancies might show that it is not taking root at all institutions at an equal pace. This might be connected to the influence of impact professionals, who contribute to a dissemination of impact jargon in institutions in which they are employed.

### **8.1.3. Impact case study – a hybrid genre**

The above analysis of the corpus of CSs in the field of linguistics gives a glimpse of this new genre in an early stage of its existence. On first

inspection, the CSs seem strikingly uniform. This is partly due to the constraints of the form, but also to the autonomous choices made by authors regarding formatting (division into sections and sub-sections, use of bullet-points), stylistics (formulaic titles, use of lists, superlatives and positive words), narrative (patterns such as SPRE, ‘further corroboration’, ‘further impact’), vocabulary (‘impact speak’). While on the one hand I drew attention to the similarities which link all of the examples of this new genre, I also highlighted the fact that authors manage to approach this seemingly rigid genre in a creative manner – by including information which is not required by the organizers, making use of visuals, and creating original systems of referencing between the sections.

While the documents remain quite similar to one another, they are curiously diversified on an *internal* level, in that most documents seem to incorporate features of different genres. The hybridity of the genre of CS can be linked to the fact that it bridges two areas: scientific research and managerial reporting, and hence it draws on the existing genres of these two realms. The indebtedness of CSs to academic genres is visible particularly in sections two and three which resemble a shortened and simplified academic article. Also, the presence of titles which follow the patterns of journal article titles and the extensive use of passive forms can be seen as traces of academic genres. Among the elements which seem at odds with traditional academic writing are the use of boosters rather than hedges, ubiquitous ‘positive’ words, impressive figures, the inclusion of enthusiastic user testimonials and social media data. The presence of these elements in the CSs can be associated to the influence of marketing, managerial and journalistic genres.

The reader will recall accounts of authors of CSs, cited in the previous chapter, which give a glimpse at how these different and often contradictory traits of academic and non-academic genres penetrated into the documents and merged together. Interviewee 6 (fragment 29, cited in 7.7) talked about how initially one sets off to write a case study as if it were another “academic paper”, i.e. “assuming the others know what you’re

talking about”. It is usually the advice of non-academic readers, the new ‘experts’ in the ‘genre of impact, which induces the authors to consider changes to the vocabulary used, the structure of the narrative etc. These experts, be it internal ‘impact officers’ and ‘managers’ or external ‘consultants’ bring into the documents traits of the genres characteristic for their professions: be it ‘journalese’ (compare fragment 22 from Interview 7, cited in 7.6), or aspects of managerial or administrative genres (compare the specialised vocabulary used by Interviewee 17 in fragments 34-37). Hence, the hybridity of the genre of impact case study starts already with its hybrid authorship.

Bakhtin (1987a, p. 95) argued that “each speech genre in each area of speech communication has its own typical conception of the addressee, and this defines it as a genre”. Interestingly, the ‘ideal reader’ which the documents from the studied corpus seem to be addressing remains rather ambiguous. This is visible for instance in the level of specialised knowledge on the side of the postulated reader. Some authors seem to assume a highly specialised reader, an expert in a particular field of linguistics – as visible in the presence in the narratives of professional jargon such as “infinitive”, “antiveridicality”, “negative polarity item”, “before-construction” (CS17641) or “diffusion patterns of phonological constraints”, “acoustic phonetic methods”, “phonological variable” (CS43408). This specialised reader would often also seem to be endowed with a sophisticated general education necessary to understand extracts provided in foreign languages (such as the reviews of a publication in French, German and Italian cited only in the original by authors of CS44021).

In contrast, other authors of CSs do not assume a deep knowledge in the field of linguistics on the side of the reader – this is visible in the inclusion of explanations of certain concepts which linguists would normally be familiar with, e.g. “corpora” (CS36979), “TESOL” (CS36979). Also the extensive use of high figures representing funding, broadcasting data, downloads figures, citation and sales data often presented as a proxy for

research quality can suggest that the documents were drafted for the consideration of managers who are used to assessing on the basis of qualitative indicators (in line with tendency to ‘numerocracy’ in science governance), in contrast to scholars who are still likely to see the issue of research quality as complex and not easily reducible to quantitative measures.

These examples show that the figure of the ideal reader of the genre of CS is not yet concretized – it oscillates between a specialised, highly-educated scholar and a proficient manager, accustomed to delivering judgments on the basis of quantitative data. Indeed, given the composition of the panels, and their reduced number, we know that the readers of CSs could not all be specialists in the narrow areas usually described in the documents. Panels included specialists from different fields of broadly-understood disciplines but also expert users. Additionally, the fact that CSs would be made available in an online database and that they could be recycled as promotional materials of universities and departments meant that the documents were likely to reach a much broader public than just the original ‘ideal reader’ – the panellists. The awareness of this mixed readership amongst authors of CSs accounts for many of the ‘hybrid’ features of the genre. The differences in the postulated figure of ‘ideal reader’ of CSs point to the friction in a genre which tries to negotiate the realities of two realms.

## ***8.2. The pragmatic function of the genre***

So far in this analysis, I have focused on the features of the studied documents themselves, without going deeper into the authors’ strategies in using this genre. In what follows, I will draw on the above-given description of the genre of CS to take my analysis beyond the linguistic features of the documents. In doing so, I will offer an insight into the genre from the perspective of sociologically-informed linguistic pragmatics, as described in section 5.3. If up to this point in the chapter I have focused on

*what the genre is like*, here I will concentrate on *what the genre does*. I advance the thesis that in pragmatic terms, the genre's function can be understood in terms of 'officialization' and 'regularization' – two strategies aimed at dealing with a new academic reality. I will also dedicate a section to what the genre fails to do, or in other words, what seems to be missing from the documents and therefore also from the experience of reading them. Finally, in the concluding section of this chapter, I will reflect on the vision of research presented in the genre of CS and on the influence it might have on the social perception of science.

### **8.2.1. Case studies as means of regularisation and officialisation**

In this section, I propose to think of the genre of CS as action. In doing so, I build on interactionist approaches to genre and particularly on Hanks' seminal article "Discourse Genres in a Theory of Practice" (1987). In analysing documents produced in the 16th century by the colonized Maya, Hanks was interested in investigating how new genres emerged in a changing, colonial society. He understood genres as new forms of language use but also new types of strategic action towards the colonizer as well as the indigenous inhabitants. Hence, genres would be ways of actively orienting oneself to an ideological horizon, against which acts (or texts) become intelligible.

Hanks drew attention to the 'hybridity' visible in the texts produced by the colonized Maya. In his approach hybrid texts are understood as discourse productions built up of two or more distinct texts which correspond to different readings. Hence such texts can be interpreted according to two or more different 'frames' (sets of conventions, ideologies). For instance, letters written by the Maya elites to the Spanish crown are partly governed by the conventions of Spanish official and religious discourse, and partly by those of Maya discourse. Depending on the frame of reference we choose, the message encoded in the text will be quite different.

Throughout section 8.1 I drew attention to the diversity of the linguistic features of the genre of CS and I suggested that they can be explained through the notion of ‘hybrid genre’ which encompasses elements of different writing styles. However, I have not yet attended to the pragmatic aim which this feature of hybridity reflects and realizes. I want to argue here that on an abstract level one can find many similarities between colonized Maya of the 16th century and modern-day academics confronted with a new assessment exercise. Both the colonized Maya and British academics had to learn how to communicate in new ways which would satisfy the expectations of an external powerful group. In doing so they created new genres which constituted a means of acting in and on these new situations. Both communities did so in creative ways, merging existing genres that embodied qualities and values of their communities with elements imposed by the more powerful side in the communicative process. The hybridity of the genres produced by the Maya is visible in the mixing of elements characteristic of Maya literary production (such as verse structuring, ritual language) into the genre of official letter to the Crown, while in the case of CSs it can be spotted in the merging of characteristics of academic genre with marketing, managerial and journalistic genres. These ‘hybrid genres’, beyond serving an immediate practical purpose, also document the struggles over the organization of core practices in a society which is undergoing change.

Hanks argued that features of genres are shaped by the authors’ modes of orienting toward dominant values and institutions. Drawing on Bourdieu (1977), he introduced the notions of ‘regularization’ and ‘officialization’ to describe the ways in which actors use discourse to achieve certain strategic goals related to power. Both regularization and officialization would be “pragmatic processes which link individual works to dominant power structures” (Hanks, 1987, p. 678). Officialization has to do with the production of “official language”, or the way in which “normal” language is “authorized” and “invested with authority”. Officialization would thus include all the linguistic procedures through which a representation of a group is “inscribed in objectivity” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 22). This is done for

instance by paying tribute to core concepts which organize the social relations within the group. In Hanks' corpus, officialisation took the form of pointing to witness testimonies and signatures from 'respectable' officials, references to publicly verifiable facts and invocation of Maya and Spanish powers as means of establishing the 'official' character of the documents as "a bona fide, witnessed documents authored by specific entitled actors" (p. 678). 'Regularization' in turn is a means of strategically showing adherence to particular moral and ethical values, often those of a group different to one's own. In Bourdieu's words:

*the agent who "regularizes" his situation or puts himself in the right is simply beating the group at its own game; in abiding by the rules, falling into line with good form, he wins the group over to his side by ostentatiously honouring the values the group honours*

*(Bourdieu, 1977, p. 22)*

In the example analysed by Hanks the Maya authors made an effort to display evidence of their conversion, condemning their previous 'idolatry', expressing a desire to be saved in the Christian sense etc. Hanks argues that in doing so, they were 'regularizing' themselves in terms of what they took to be the desires and expectations of the Spanish crown. He concluded that the format, style and thematic context of the studied Maya documents maximize the appearance of their authors as honourable (officialization) and as honouring the values of their conquerors (regularization).

Traces of the same strategies can be found in the genre of CS. Officialization techniques can be spotted in elements which contribute to consolidating the authority of authors as academics: formal presentation as members of an academic institution, the description of their work written in an academic style – often riddled with specialised vocabulary – as well as extensive evidence on the quality of their scholarly work, including prizes, citation numbers, reviews. Regularisation, in the form of eager alignment with the goals of the assessment, is visible in the presentation of linear,

easily traceable impact narratives, the citing of publicly verifiable numbers to support the statements, as well as providing testimonials, often from ‘respectable’ witnesses (persons of high social status). Mentioning the question of ‘impact’ already in the section dedicated to the underpinning research (CS44021), presenting ‘impact’ as an inherent element of the research design (CS44021, CS1698, CS36241, CS44021, CS18131) or giving accounts of how it has become an important driver over time (CS41287) can all be described as ‘regularizing’ the presentation of self of academics in the terms imposed by the exercise’s organizers.

Typically, section two of a CS (‘Underpinning research’) would be strategically oriented towards presenting a strong image of the authors as respectable academics in terms developed within the academic community, or ‘officialising’ the position of authors. Section four in turn (‘Details of the impact’) would ‘regularize’ their position as aligning themselves with the goals and values of the assessment. Sections three (‘References to the research’) and five (‘Sources to corroborate impact’) have an interesting metalinguistic function – they refer to the discourse contained in the sections which preceded them to confirm with emphasis: “this is true”. There is an analogy here with closing statements of Maya documents described by Hanks, which reaffirmed the truthfulness of the document’s content and asserted their authenticity. Table no 1 below presents the types of strategic action present in CSs.

Type of strategic action	Aim	Elements in CS which realize the strategic action	Section of document
Officialization	The representation of a group is <i>inscribed in objectivity</i> , the group is	Formal presentation as members of an academic institution, description of their	2 – ‘Underpinning research’

	presented as respectable, trustworthy, following local conventions	work written in academic style, extensive evidence on the quality of scholarly work, (prizes, citation numbers, reviews)	
Regularisation	Strategic adherence to moral and ethical values, often those of a different group	Presentation of linear, easily traceable impact narratives, citing publicly verifiable numbers supporting the statements, providing testimonials from ‘respectable’ witnesses	4 – ‘Details of the impact’
Reaffirmation of truthfulness	Confirmation: “this is true”	Providing extensive data to support the quality of research and existence of impact (often including patterns of ‘further corroboration’)	3 – ‘References to the research’ 5 – ‘Sources to corroborate impact’

**Table 2 – Types of strategic action in CSs**

In his analysis Hanks attended to the fact that Maya documents often include reported speech. He stressed that not only does reported speech organize linguistic variables (i.e. showcasing both written and spoken varieties) but also that it “brings with it the authority of its original utterance, and so works to officialize the discourse in which it is

embedded” (p.680). In CSs reported speech is used frequently in citing testimonials supporting claims of impact. In this sense, particularly as they come from trustworthy, authoritative sources, fragments in reported speech contribute to the officialising of the narrative presented in the documents. Reported speech plays a crucial role also in the organization of the genre of CS as a ‘hybrid’ or ‘boundary’ genre. As mentioned before, including boastful statements about one’s research and impact might create a feeling of unease among researchers (authors and academic panellists) socialized into a traditional academic culture of objectivity and modesty. The device of reported speech, however, introduces ‘other voices’ than that of the (objective, scholarly, modest) narrator – for instance testimonials. This offers a way of presenting accounts which can be interpreted in two different frames of reference – they ardently fulfil the requirement to document the ‘reach’ and ‘significance’ of the impact, while at the same time allowing the narrator to retain traces of a traditional academic ethos. Therefore, the inclusion of ‘other voices’ in the CS enables the author to assume a double alignment – both with the standards of the ‘indigenous’ academic frame of reference, as well as with the powerful new managerial frame which can be seen as colonizing academic discourse (Fairclough, 1993, p. 141). The use of reported speech, or introduction of ‘other voices’ allows a balancing of ‘officializing’ and ‘regularizing’ function of the genre.

The metaphor of ‘colonization’ – which describes the introduction of new values and new forms of linguistic alignment – enables us to bring the question of power into a field of genre production which is all too often presented as a depoliticized one. It allows thinking of the CS authors as acting strategically in the face of new, possibly threatening procedures of evaluation, in order to assert themselves as legitimate authorities in their area (via officialization) but also as willing collaborators in a new enterprise of linking academic research more closely to societal/economic needs (via regularization). Though the idea of ‘colonization’ seems to ascribe agency to the colonizing force (policymakers, managerial strata...) and a passive role to those who are colonized (academics), it would be a

gross over-simplification to see the latter as simply ‘reactive’. Let’s recall Bourdieu’s words: “the agent who “regularizes” his situation ... is simply beating the [dominant] group at its own game”. In other words, the ‘indigenous’ group which learns how to communicate its position in new terms, via new genres, is acting in creative, strategic ways, giving rise to hybrid forms of writing, as well as hybrid ways of reading. After all, a scholar who is serving on a REF panel would be able to read an impact CS both from its ‘academic’ frame as well as the ‘managerial’ one. The conscious strategic positioning of academics towards the IA and its genre is a topic which I develop in more depth in chapter 9.

### **8.2.2. What is missing from the genre**

It is all too easy to accept the existing form of the genre as the ‘normal’, or even only possible one, but considering what is missing from the texts which pertain to a genre, or accounting for elements of the dataset which contradict the prevailing tendencies enables a reflection on the deficits of the genre and their possible consequences (Neale, 1980, p. 50). Attending to the elements which are conspicuously absent from the genre allows us to see more clearly what sort of pragmatic and ideological aims it pursues, and which ones it carefully avoids. Considering alternative approaches to the existing template opens up questions on how this genre could operate differently to how it presently does and how it might then fit into trends on the presentation of the role of science.

My observations on the elements which are missing from the genre of CS were sparked by a realization which, I believe, is shared by all those who have studied these texts extensively – namely that they are *boring*. I believe this quality can be explained by the lack of three elements which often render texts interesting, namely: obstacles (particularly encountered in the ‘response’ phase), emotion and humour. I came to the conclusion on the lack of these elements by analysing the documents from my corpus, or their

sections, which struck me as different to the rest, particularly arresting and convincing.

The absence of the above-listed elements – emotion, humour, obstacles – can be explained by the performative nature of the genre, which is geared towards achieving just two pragmatic goals – regularisation and officialisation. As such it seems to induce authors to avoid any elements which do not contribute to these two goals. Since officialization consists in asserting the speaker’s authority (as ‘respected’ members of a community), we assume that the researchers were not interested in weakening their position by offering accounts of challenge or failure, even if this would make the narrative more realistic. While humour and emotion have obtained some recognition in recent years as important elements of academic discourse (Reershemius, 2012; Widdowfield, 2000) they are nevertheless not ones explicitly requested by the exercise’s organizers and could be perceived, in line with traditional writing paradigms, as unscientific and superfluous – hence they are not efficient in terms of ‘regularization’. The focus of the authors on fulfilling the two pragmatic goals in writing in this high-stages genre is understandable. However, the non-inclusion of elements which do not directly contribute to officialization and regularization – emotion, humour, accounts of problems – renders the genre an extremely formulaic and predictable one.

In this context, it is worth thinking back to structuralist theory of genre, in which the ideal reader and the ideal author are presented as each-other’s counterparts, or mirror-images (Bakhtin, 1987b, p. 165; Schmid, 2009, p. 303). In this approach, we can see the author as *replicating* the requirements set before them by the reader, without adding any ‘surplus’ which would give the narrative a quality of ‘otherness’. This, unfortunately, comes at the price of monotony – a feature which results from the authors’ making only safe stylistic and rhetorical choices – replicating assumptions, responding to a request, without taking risks or offering surprises.

This lack is perhaps most visible in the case of the non-inclusion of accounts of problems, obstacles, challenges or failures in conducting the research or securing the impact. If we look at this tendency through the lens of the SPRE narrative pattern introduced in section 8.1.2.2, it will be noticeable that the ‘problem’ element (the issue that the researchers are addressing) is significantly underplayed. See for instance the below narrative presented in the summary of CS13201 focusing on phonetics in forensic linguistics:

Increasingly in court cases the recorded voice of a perpetrator has to be compared with that of a suspect (SITUATION). Research on speaker characteristics carried out by [Name] has directly contributed to the work of those offering forensic speech services commercially or developing relevant speech processing software (RESPONSE). (It) has directly enabled: [list of advantages] (EVALUATION).

#### CS13201

Note how the authors of the above excerpt, after a brief introduction of the context in which they intervened (‘situation’), passed immediately to the description of their work (‘response’) and the positive results thereof (‘evaluation’), without presenting the issues that would be solved by their intervention, i.e. the ‘problem’ that the stakeholders were dealing with, its negative consequences etc. This is typical of many CSs which implicate the existence of problems which required solving rather than describing them explicitly. While omitting a discussion of the ‘problem’ element saves space in the template, it also makes for a rather dull narrative.

In this respect, the application of the SPRE pattern in CSs differs from its use in literary works (fairy tales, novels, epic poems...) where the existence of an obstacle or problem (e.g. the threat of dragon attacks) is precisely the key element which grips the reader’s attention and gives rise to emotion (fear, anticipation, empathy...). If it weren’t for the detailed description of the problem and its ramifications, the reaction of the protagonist

(confronting the problem) and the happy end which usually follows (evaluation) would not be so satisfying. In longer literary works the SPRE pattern tends to be recycled over and over again: the protagonist confronts a problem, achieves momentary relief, only to be soon confronted with another problem, often in a different situation. Academics will no doubt notice that the reality of conducting research is reminiscent of this latter pattern rather than the linear problem-free path described in most CSs which, it has been remarked, “resemble fairy tales of researcher-heroes... but with no dragons to be slain” (Selby, 2016). In terms of Hoey’s concepts around SPRE patterns we could say that the problem element in the narrative is *undersignalled* rendering it difficult to identify by the reader (Hoey, 2001, p. 168). If authors wanted to address this lack, they could do so by explicitly lexically signalling the introduction of this element, for instance using trigger-expressions such as “this raises a serious issue”, “there was a danger that...”, “this was a threat to...”, etc.

If one issue is the undersignalling of the ‘problem’ element of the SPRE structure in the CSs, another one is the underrepresentation of obstacles and challenges in carrying out the research or securing the impact. Most narratives tend to present linear narratives devoid of accounts of possible draw-backs encountered by the researchers, which makes for a monotonous and unrealistic picture, one which is at odds with empirical descriptions of scientific work offered by the field of STS that present knowledge production as contingent, serendipitous, often following meandering pathways and fraught with obstacles, challenges and failure (Hackett, Amsterdamska, Lynch, & Wajcman, 2007; Latour & Woolgar, 1986, pp. 4-5).

There are rare examples in the studied corpus of narratives which nevertheless *do* include mention of obstacles in conducting the research and securing impact. For instance, CS28112 focusing on the “Modernisation of teaching German a foreign language” includes an account of a challenge in realizing the expected ‘impact’. The study describes the researcher’s efforts

in convincing publishers to include in their language textbooks every-day German rather than just the standardized and formal *Hochdeutsch*.

The views put forward in these papers (...) were initially rejected by the conservative teaching establishment within Germany, which held to the opinion that it was the duty of teachers only to impart 'correct' German to non-native learners. (...). However, the conclusions were broadly welcomed by secondary and tertiary level teachers of GFL in other European countries and have proven to play a central role in the development of curricula.

CS28112

This CS stands out from the corpus in presenting the road to impact as fraught with difficulty – this makes not only for a more compelling narrative, but also a more convincing one. The same can be said for CSs which include elements of emotion. If mentions of emotion in the main narrative are rare and veiled, they *do* appear in the testimonials cited, particularly in the ones which come from non-professionals, i.e. members of the public. For instance, in CS4893 – which talks about developing an orthography for an endangered language – an intervention which empowered the community which speaks it – we find the two following testimonials:

I felt so grateful that, finally, you made our dream come true. Seeing our language documented online and is freely available for all Biak speakers is a real blessing.”

The fear that our language will disappear is now replaced with happiness that there is a hope for its survival...

CS4893

Similarly, a CS which explores the development of a workbook for English teachers showcases the following personal and emotional comment on the project's relevance sent via email:

It means a lot to me, because I know that all the activities in the book are offered by real teachers from real classes just like me; the book that helps me and my colleagues to have fun in the classes and better results with the children at school.

CS36979

Earlier I showed how the use of reported speech allows for the organisation of the elements of the texts which are to be interpreted in different frames (those of officialisation and regularisation). Also, in the above case, introducing 'other voices' to complement the one of the narrator enables the inclusion of elements which are different in their style and register to the main narrative. Testimonials allow the authors to include accounts of emotion, while maintaining their own position as emotionless and detached. Accounts of end-users (particularly members of the public) can be casual, clumsy or even include linguistic errors (e.g. "you made our dream comes true" – CS4893). In contrast to the main narrative they also tend to contain personal pronouns in the first person, e.g. "(n)ow, our children and our children's children can hear and read our language online" – CS4893, "real classes just like me; the book that helps me and my colleagues" – CS36979). Such accounts not only include explicit reference to the speaker's emotions, but also, due to their personal character and quality of 'authenticity', they are more likely to give rise to emotion on the side of the reader.

Like emotion, also humour often appears as part of testimonials ('other voices'). It often comes in the form of 'small stories' (Georgakopoulou, 2006) which show the beneficiaries as real, multidimensional people, rather than just members of an affected population. Thereby testimonials which feature emotion and humour contribute to 'humanizing' the usually technical and dry accounts of impact and help create a more memorable

narrative. See the examples below of CS1697 and CS1698, which come from the same institution and focus on treatment of speech disorders:

Parent B said: “I was initially sceptical – especially when I saw the helmet! His confidence has increased and he is now able to communicate clearly, without anxiety.”

#### CS1697

D (aged 8) was selected to meet H.M. the Queen when she opened QMU’s new campus in 2008. (...) She reminisced: “The Queen watched me doing speech therapy. She was in a room next door, looking through a window. I was using an electronic palate, which showed different patterns on the screen when I made different sounds. I met the Queen afterwards. I was excited, because she’s a character in one of my favourite books - The BFG by Roald Dahl. I told my mum I would say ‘Hello, your Majister’, like the BFG, but my mum said I shouldn’t. So I just said, ‘Hello, Your Majesty’.

#### CS1698

The above extracts featuring stories told by ‘other voices’ – ones imbued with humour and emotion, similarly to the previously-cited narratives on research projects which had to overcome challenges, leave the reader with a very different feeling than the prevalent factual type of accounts on impact. While they constitute a form of evidence for the existence and relevance of ‘impact’ they are not easily operationable in measuring the ‘reach’ and ‘significance’ of the impact. However, they grip the reader, remain in their memory, and allow them to think about the impact in relation to concrete affected people, rather than groups and numbers. The cited examples show how some authors managed to include into the formulaic genre non-standard elements which do not directly contribute to the strategic aims of regularization and officialisation, but which render the narrative more diverse, more personal, more gripping. The use of reported speech allowed the organization of the presented discourse, so as to include these different,

valuable perspectives, without undermining the position of the researchers as detached, emotionless and objective, in line with the traditional scientific ethos which postulates, among other things, “detached scrutiny of beliefs in terms of empirical and logical criteria” (or ‘organized scepticism’ – Merton, 1942).

What is however even more interesting is that some CSs seem to use elements like humour and accounts of problems *in service* of the strategic goals of the genre. It is worth considering for instance the two cases from my corpus which make humorous references to the REF:

Over the years LTU has made seminal contributions in the area of Welsh terminology, especially to meet to the needs of bilingual secondary and higher education in Wales. What is the Welsh for memory-stick, tablet, and fibre optic broadband? Indeed, what is the Welsh for impact CS and Research Excellence Framework? It is the responsibility of BU’s LTU to answer such questions.

CS28025

Cybraphon’s [*interactive robotic installation which responds to internet mentions about itself*] emotional state is driven by an obsession with its own online celebrity and online fans (it is perhaps the only artwork likely to be emotionally affected by its citation in the REF).

CS24043

The humour in these examples lies of course in the playful meta-level reflection on the consequences of the REF exercise in terms of introducing new vocabulary (‘impact speak’) and new practices (citing in REF documents) into academic reality. Their presence in the impact narratives can be understood as showing a certainly reflexive, but perhaps slightly subversive, attitude of those submitting to the exercise. Importantly however, these playful remarks can only be grasped by a particular audience – those acquainted with the genre, such as the authors of CSs and

REF panellists. This sort of ‘inside jokes’ intended for members of particular in-groups are characteristic of workplace discourse, as humour is part of linguistic repertoires shared by discourse communities (Schnurr, 2009, p. 14). So, the presence of impact-related puns in CSs can well be seen as a non-obvious way of aligning oneself with the exercise’s aims and values and further ‘officialising’ the presented discourse. It is as if the authors were saying “we speak the same language as you, the panellist, the ‘ideal reader’ – we understand the same notions, to the degree that we all understand when we are using them playfully”.

Another telling example is CS1698 which stands out from the rest of my corpus in that it contains a reflection on the ethical challenges related to conducting ‘impactful’ research. The document focuses on an experimental treatment of speech disorders through the use of an electronic palate. The authors explain that the research group receives many enquiries about the possibility of taking part in such experimental treatment – more than they are able to accommodate. They do not encourage such submissions, not wishing to disappoint the applicants who will have to be turned away. However – in line with the previously presented observations on the role of high numbers in impact narratives – a bigger number of applications could contribute to a stronger case in REF. So, in order to be able to claim a wider reach of their engagement, the researchers would in fact need to behave in a way which they consider morally dubious. The authors conclude:

[T]he amount of pent-up demand revealed by spontaneous enquiries demonstrates impact in a way that also illustrates some of the ethical difficulties in aiming for impact in the first place.

#### CS1698

This short sentence testifies to a real reflection on the ethical consequences of impact-related activities – one which the CS template doesn’t seem to offer space for and which is absent from the bulk of other CSs in the

corpus. Pointing to the ethical challenges related to collecting impact-related data can be seen as stepping out of the regularization mode, by refusing to simply react to requests made by those assessing one's work. On the other hand, highlighting the reflexive work behind the researchers' decisions on public engagement asserts their position as experts in their field, contributing to an officialization of the discourse. So, the inclusion of a potentially subversive remark on the nature of the impact exercise and its ethical implications can be seen as an attempt on the side of the authors to claim expertise not just in the area of research but also in that of impact. In other words, it can be understood as an attempt to officialize the position of authors as authorities not only on research (which most authors do), but also in the area of impact.

The examples discussed in this section show that the genre which I have so far presented as strict and formulaic nevertheless offers windows of possibility for creativity. These creative interventions go beyond the simple amendments of the template, reaching through layers of rhetoric and stylistics to the underlying ideological base. Seemingly small changes to the presented narrative, such as the inclusion of humour, emotion or accounts of problems, challenges and failures can contribute to questioning, undermining and subverting the presentation of research which the CS form seems to encourage.

### **8.2.3. The genre of impact case study and academic 'professional vision'**

A concept which helps describe the role that impact case studies came to play in British academic reality is 'professional vision'. According to Charles Goodwin "the insignia of a profession's craft" (including "theories, artifacts, bodies of expertise) are shaped in a discursive processes of 'highlighting', 'coding' and 'representing' (Goodwin, 1994). I want to argue that the processes orchestrated around the submission of impact case studies for REF2014 had the function of reshaping academics' professional vision in the area of collaborations and exchanges between academia and

the non-academic world. The ‘highlighting’ step, in the case of impact, consisted of drawing the attention of academics to the areas which have always been present, but were not always recognised under any specific term. This was addressed by ‘coding’ – consistently applying the term ‘impact’ to this area, and generating an entire vocabulary connected to it (‘pathways to impact’, ‘impact generation and others mentioned in the section on ‘impact speak’ in section 8.1.2.4), thereby producing new objects of knowledge in a profession’s discourse. Finally, a wealth of graphs and charts which represent the patterns of securing impact, often playing the role of visual aids supporting the understanding of impact were produced. These can be well seen as another step of shaping academic’s ‘professional vision’, namely “producing and articulating material representations thereof” (Goodwin, 1994, p. 606). In a sense, the notions of highlighting, coding and representing describe a similar phenomenon to that of ‘problematization’ which was the focus of the previous chapter. However, Goodwin zooms in on the pragmatic aspect of the process, noting the role of discourse, and the consequences of this process for individuals, professionals of a given field – it is in them that ‘professional vision’ finds its locus.

An important role in expediting the processes of spreading the new professional vision amongst academics was played by ‘impact professionals’ – a newly-emerged group of specialists who claimed knowledge on the subject (impact managers, officers, champions but also research directors and other academic managers). It was their role to instruct and assist academics in spotting and nurturing potential for impact. Their work consisted also in training academics and enabling them to acquire the same professional vision as they, as specialists, already had, in teaching academics how to recognise impact, how to recognize it in the *correct place* (we will recall that some interviewees initially wanted to submit CSs on areas different to the ones which finally became highlighted – compare Interview 14 – fragment 24, cited in chapter 7).

While numerous workshops, trainings and consultations were organized, I would argue that crucial for acquiring the new ‘professional vision’ in the area of impact, was the very process of writing. It was through the act of writing the narrative of one’s work in a new genre, while learning the new ‘codes’ that one looked at their career through a new lens. Accounts of interviewed academics confirm this effect of the process of writing a CS. A telling fragment in this respect comes from my interview with an impact specialist who had earlier pursued scholarly work. I asked the respondent about the potential impact of her own work, which she initially described as not having “a single practical application”. In response, she told how recently, while re-writing the abstract of a scholarly work of hers, she had an ‘epiphany’ as to its potential impact.

In the process of re-writing my work for the abstract I suddenly realized what the application of my research was. [elaborates]. Oh my God! Why didn’t I see it before? This is so obvious! But I think that this only came about through my *YEARS* of having to say to academics “no, your theoretical research is not useless, I’m seeing this little strand here... and I think you could apply it over there”. It was only when I took *THAT EYE* onto my own research, that I saw it.

#### Interview 7 – fragment 40

It was many years of identifying impact in other researchers’ work that enabled the speaker to finally to spot potential impact in her *own* academic writing. Suddenly it seemed “obvious”, while before she was certain that there was not “a single practical application”. There is a striking alignment between the interviewees’ use of the term ‘that eye’ and Goffman’s the theoretical term of ‘professional vision’, which draws attention to the fact that social actors involved in the process of change in the area of impact have a keen awareness of its importance for their perception of their own work.

This process of acquiring a new professional vision was not always easy, indeed, the reader might remember that CS authors reported feeling tired, exhausted, exasperated (see for instance Interview 3, fragment 30 or Interview 10, fragment 17 both cited in chapter 7). The fact that learning could have painful effects has long been known. This observation finds its reflection for instance in the French saying “c’est le métier qui rentre” – translatable as “it’s the trade which is entering (the body)” – used when someone hurts themselves, or gets very tired while learning a new skill (compare: Dillard, 2007, p. 45). Similarly, the tiredness and frequent irritation of academics learning the strings of the new academic genre, the new professional vision can be metaphorically attributed to the new element of the academic trade – the ability to recognise and describe research impact – which was entering their *eyes* and their bodies.

As already flagged up previously (in section 7.7. on ‘Writing an impact case study’), I argue the process of writing CSs has a twofold purpose: firstly, to produce the necessary documents for the assessment exercise and the secondly, perhaps more importantly, to establish a new ‘professional vision’, in the area of impact, that is train academics to perform to the new requirements even when external guidance will disappear. This resonates with the conviction expressed by an interviewed policy-maker that once the culture of ‘impact’ will become ‘embedded’ a rigorous assessment might not be necessary (see Interview 20, fragment 39) as well as with the opinion expressed by one of the interviewed impact officers on the final aim of this job:

My feeling is that ultimately my post should not exist. In ten or fifteen years’ time, Impact Officers should have embedded the message firmly enough that they don’t need us anymore.

Interview 7 – fragment 41

#### **8.2.4. Impact case studies – normalizing impact?**

During the course of my doctoral work I have given several talks on my findings related to the genre of CS. I suspect some UK-based academics attended them to learn more about this new way of writing, for purely practical reasons. Those based in other countries might have come out of curiosity about this new element of the British system of evaluation. In some cases, the presentation of my findings on the features of the genre seemed to stir up *anger* – not directed at me, but at the system of evaluation which is seen by many as part of an oppressive neoliberal agenda. This reaction did not surprise me, as it seemed aligned with the spirit animating much of the first publications on the IA (see literature review section 2.6). What did surprise me however was that some academics reacted to my findings on the genre of CS with amused laughter. This was not due to the humorous content of the presented documents – elements of humour are in fact rare, as explained in the previous section – nor to particular efforts towards achieving a comic effect on my side. The elements which stirred up the most amusement were boosters expressing the author’s confidence in the excellence of their research and high numbers associated with the research and significance of the impact. Ken Hyland (1998, p. 350) notes that rhetorical devices such as boosters “do not only carry the writer’s degree of confidence in the truth of a proposition, but also an attitude to the audience”, such as acceptance of common principles and values. Perhaps academics responded to a presentation of the features of the genre of CS with amusement because of the *attitude* the documents convey for the benefit of a particular audience (panellists). It is an attitude of boastful self-assurance and of celebration of particular values, such as the vision of linear, impactful and transparent research combined with the spirit of numerocracy.

I often had the impression that the reaction of the audiences was connected to the *contrast* between the classical ethos of the academic – independent, critical, humble – which is still celebrated in many academic environments, and the image of the eagerly self-praising author which the genre of the CS

seemed to invite. And yet, the crowd's amusement, I often noticed, was not a malicious laughter at someone else's shortcomings, but rather an embarrassed giggle. After all, many of the academics in the audience have authored or co-authored CSs or perhaps other documents which have the same performative pragmatic functions. Perhaps those in the audience were embarrassed as they recognised in the features of the genre which I presented also traces of documents they have written, while overblowing claims of excellence and underplaying the possible challenges.

An important difference between other performative academic genres (such as, to a different degree, grant applications, cover letters, letters of recommendation) and CSs is that the latter are public. This means that they can be taken out of their original context – that of the assessment – and presented to readers who are not their 'ideal readers'. In the context of the evaluation, the CSs are seen as what they are – a strategic response to specific requirements of the evaluators, organized around a provided form. Indeed, assessors on impact panels reported that they frequently found the claims made by the authors of CS exaggerated (Derrick, 2018a, pp. 73-75). Perhaps a certain exaggeration was even considered one of the tacit rules assumed, but not voiced both by authors and panellists. However, presented in the context of an academic conference, the vision of research which CSs seemed to affirm clashed with the one which still lingers in scholarly gatherings. A certain distance seems to persist between the presentation of self which academics reserve for contexts of assessment and the one they make use of in less evaluative contexts. It was the dramatic shortening of this distance which occurred during my presentations on the genre of CS which caused embarrassed amusement.

The above-described experience led me also to reflect on other possible consequences of taking the genre of CS outside of its original context. I wondered what were the implications of presenting science in a way which the genre of CS seemed to encourage: as goal-oriented and impactful (impact is often presented as part of the research design from the beginning), linear and devoid of challenges and obstacles (the researchers'

interventions seem to lead directly to an pre-established aim), depersonalized (accounts are usually in the passive form – “research was conducted”...), divorced from emotion (it is never presented as a driver for the researcher, and rarely has a role in the evaluation of the effects of research), and finally – always excellent (the quality of research is transparent and easily assessable on the basis of particular metrics, citations, indicators etc.). In the context of the goal of the Agenda, i.e. promoting the embeddedness of science in society, I wondered what kind of vision of science does this new genre of writing about research offer to a broader public which is less accustomed to detecting exaggeration and compliance than the ‘ideal readers’ – panellists, and academics more generally.

One danger which the genre of CS carries with it is that of establishing an idealized and polished vision of research as the norm. Much like documents produced by the colonized Maya, CSs assume a certain set of standards, or a hierarchy of values, and contribute to reinforcing and re-affirming it. By readily performing to the rules set by an external group, the authors of the documents (CSs and Maya letters to the crown alike) aim to sustain their position, but at the same time they legitimize the genre, together with its norms of performance. This development is perhaps less problematic for those taking part in the assessment, who understand the specific constraints of the genre, than it might be for ‘outsiders’ – as the documents ‘make history’ and become a point of reference for future generations. Already in the next assessment exercise the following cohorts of academics will need to learn to self-present in the terms which have been established by the authors of the CSs submitted to REF2014. The same goes for junior academics who might regard the academic perfection and excellence celebrated in the genre of CS and in similar genres as a standard which they cannot fall below if they are to maintain their identity as legitimate researchers.

One last danger of the normalization of the vision of research presented in the CS is a political one. In terms of epistemology, recent years have

passed under the sign of the rise of the concept of post-truth (Angermuller, 2018; Higgins, 2016). Some argue that science has been losing ground as a source of knowledge and truth, substituted by pseudo-scientific movements, ideologies and conspiracy theories. It might seem that in this hostile climate scientists should be assertive about their research designs and the relevance of their findings, in order to reinforce the position of science as the only legitimate source of truth. However, Anika Makri (2017) argues convincingly that it is precisely the celebration of a vision of authoritative, deterministic science that contributes to undermining another form of knowledge, namely incremental science, i.e. science which proceeds through the accumulation of evidence about complex systems with numerous variables and fuzzy social parameters. The broader public, accustomed to the authoritative version of science is disappointed when scientists change their conclusions, admit to having been wrong, shift their research into a different paradigm – which, as we know, is all part and parcel of the development of science (Kuhn, 1970, pp. 10-42). Makri argues that presenting to the broader public science which is “inconclusive, ambivalent, incremental and even political”, while risky and difficult, would prepare the public to deal with cases when scientists don’t have an answer, fail or are wrong. She thus suggests building up a vision of science as a critical toolbox for examining reality, rather than a set of ready answers. In its current shape, the genre of impact CS, with its vision of excellent, linear and always impactful science seems to do the opposite.

It might be argued that not only CSs, but also many other academic texts – for instance journal articles, funding applications, research manuals – offer polished and perfected accounts of research projects, without attending to failures, dead-ends and obstacles. True as this might be, I would still argue that there are reasons for questioning this feature of the genre of CS, rather than accepting it as a replication of the norm. Firstly, many voices – both from qualitative research circles and experimental sciences which have been touched by the so-called reproducibility crisis (Baker, 2016) – have raised this problem, arguing that science publishing should offer more space to results which are ‘negative’ (i.e. which disprove a claim, rather

than confirming it) as well as accounts of failed or inconclusive research (Dickersin, 1990; Zaringhalam, 2016). While this has been an ongoing debate, particularly in the context of the standards set by the ‘performative university’, changes are slow to take root. Nevertheless, a new academic genre, such as CS, could counter the existing ‘perfectionist’ tendencies, rather than reproducing them. This is particularly relevant in light of the fact, that – as argued above – narratives from CSs can and do reach broader audiences than those contained in most research papers.

Meanwhile, alongside setting new almost un-achievable standards of perfection for future generations of evaluated academics, the reinforcing of the vision of ‘normal’ (deterministic, linear) science is yet another ironic consequence of the emergence of the new academic genre of CS, especially when we consider that the primary aim of the IA was to reinforce the ties between academia and society.

## **9. Analysis III – Impact Agenda & ‘academic self’**

In this chapter I zoom onto the academic subjects who underwent the REF 2014 assessment, focusing on their positioning – understood as performance-based claims to identity and subjectivity (Angermuller, 2013b; Bamberg, 2010; Georgakopoulou, 2006; Hamann, 2016a, see also section 3.3.3). The question I attempt to answer here is “what was the effect of academics’ engagement in submitting a case study to REF 2014 on stances towards the notion of ‘impact’ and the perceived role of impact as part of an academic career?”. In addressing this question, I draw on the corpus of interviews conducted with actors involved in REF 2014, especially authors of impact CSs (see section 4.2.2. for details of the corpus construction). The analytical concepts I use in this chapter include linguistic pragmatic notions rooted in Erving Goffman’s positioning theory and Foucauldian governmentality theory, particularly the notion of subjectivation.

In analysing interview data in the previous chapters I was not so much interested in the individual subjects, as in the role played by them in their different positions (as policymakers, senior management, academics etc.) in the polyphonic, multi-levelled debate which structured the new policy and related practices. In contrast, in the present chapter I will examine how individual academics discursively position themselves towards the concept of ‘research impact’: presenting it as a part of academic ethos (Amossy, 2010), distancing themselves from it, or expressing more complex, nuanced positions.

Academics’ reactions to the IA have already been the object of examination, both in commissioned reports which followed the exercise (Farla & Simmonds, 2015) and in studies conducted by independent researchers (Chubb et al., 2016; Watermeyer, 2014). Existing studies make general observations on attitudes towards impact within the entire academic

community or point to the differences in stance which occur on the individual level depending the respondent's disciplinary background (Chubb, 2017; Chubb & Watermeyer, 2017) or as effect of alignment of personal, moral and disciplinary identity (Chubb et al., 2016). My own research does not seek to find 'general' models which explain attitudes of scientists towards impact as a function of their discipline (e.g. pure vs. applied) or any ideological formation they adhere to (such as particular 'academic tribes' – Becher & Trowler, 2001). Rather, it argues that if certain differences in attitude towards 'impact' can be noticed between groups of scholars and between individual researchers, they occur also *within* a subject. What I intend to demonstrate in what follows is that in the different positions which they occupy at the same time – as researchers, administrators but also individuals with their own life stories, ethical convictions and personal aims – academics judge 'impact' in various, sometimes contradictory ways.

In examining the complexity of individual attitudes towards impact I will firstly focus on the way the term 'impact' was brought up and defined in the course of the interviews, showing that different meanings can be ascribed to the term even during one conversation, depending on the changing dynamic of the exchange. Secondly, I will examine why and how disciplinary identities were evoked in the context of impact, gauging which disciplines are seen as 'inherently impactful' and which ones are presented as potentially 'non-impactful'. Thirdly, I will investigate the question of academics' positions towards impact, looking at techniques of distancing and endorsement and changes in footing. Overall, this chapter elaborates on the question around which my exchanges with respondents were built – even though it was never uttered explicitly – namely: 'what is impact for you as a linguist?'. The following sections break this question down into three separate aspects: "what does 'impact' mean?", "what is the place of impact in linguistics?" and "who am I – the academic subject?".

### ***9.1. 'It's not about trickling down!' – reception of the Agenda in departments***

In the first analytical chapter (chapter 7), I presented the initial stage of existence of the Impact Agenda from the point of view of the shaping of a policy, or the *emergence* of a new *problematization*, a new concept, which was to organize around itself a host of processes. I argued that rather than being established as a fixed element of academic reality, which scholars could accept or protest, the concept emerged in a much more organic way and in its initial phase of existence, was open, almost empty, waiting to be filled with meaning by the different actors it concerned (in accordance with Foucault's theory of problematization – Foucault, 1984b, pp. 84-86). If in chapter 7 I took a macro perspective on the changes affecting academic institutions which I analysed using the concepts of Foucauldian governmentality and discourse theory, here I take a micro approach to look at specific responses of social actors who had to engage with the concept and make sense of it for themselves.

Many of my respondents had difficulties pointing to the exact moment when they first became acquainted with the IA – an effect which can be associated with the processual nature of the development of the policy (as described in chapter 7). This was the case for one of my interviewees who had followed the news on the developments around impact from the very beginning, via different professional bodies of which she is part: science councils and learned societies. One of the angles of this engagement had to do specifically with disciplinary membership as the respondent's community – applied linguists – was concerned with the effect the Agenda would have on their specific professional activity. In short, the picture which emerges out of this account is nothing but passive reception of a governmental policy. The interviewee's portrayal of themselves and their professional group as actively engaged in the developments is particularly visible in their opposing the interviewers take on the situation as mere reception:

Interviewee: Things were changing and the Impact Agenda was very much discussed in a whole range of fora. So, it wasn't something that all of a sudden mushroomed out of nowhere, right? And because I was very much part of all those kind of different contexts... as any other active researcher... you kind of knew, and you were involved.

Interviewer: Okay and then that kind of trickled down to your [department]?

IE: It's not about trickling down! You get notifications, you get newsletters, you get pieces, there are kind of discussions as to when the results of the excellence framework come out. There are people who have been involved in the research excellence [framework] who are senior and they are within your department and they actually [organise] meetings with you as a team. They say: 'well you know things have changed, or are changing, this is where we're going, there's consultation'. People are invited to feed into different sort of consultations and documents. There has been a lot of lobbying around the Impact Agenda and applied linguists were very active, so in a sense it's not something that happened [suddenly]...

#### Interview 24 – fragment 42

The idea rendered in this fragment is that of an academic community very actively taking part in debating and shaping the Agenda. Scholars followed the policy-making process through different channels and participated 'in a whole range of fora' (councils, learned societies, department meetings, consultations etc.). The interviewee's account presents the scholars as actively engaged in the shaping of the policy, a vision which is in contrast to the interviewer's initial passive metaphor of 'trickling down'. I asked the respondent for more details as to the engagement of applied linguists in the process of elaborating the idea of impact:

IE: They were active in actually kind of raising awareness that applied linguistics feeds into different research assessment panels and what that means and how the impact can be best... Because

there was a lot of sciences-driven understanding of impact, right? And applied linguists were very active in actually saying...

IR: ...promoting this kind of impact that could be obtained within [the field]...

IE: ...all that, and the academic impact... So, it wasn't a matter of trickling AT ALL. It was a matter of... basically conversations happening in different contexts. So, in a sense, you know, everybody was very much aware. (...) And researchers were very much involved – depending on how much part of the community people were. So, it was much more horizontal than that.

#### Interview 24 – fragment 43

In this narrative, we encounter the issue of a certain clash between the disciplines, which is reminiscent of cleavages introduced in the literature review (2.1) and mentioned in the previously-cited interviews in the context of the position of different disciplines towards 'impact' (see interview 16, fragment 3 cited in 7.1). If initially a 'sciences-driven understanding of impact' dominated, members of SSH disciplines, like applied linguists, were active in promoting a broader understanding of impact which included the specific influence of these disciplines. We know that these ideas indeed were taken into account, as the definition of impact implemented in REF2014 was a broad one; additionally, Lord Stern's review of the exercise advocated its further broadening and deepening (Stern, 2016, p. 23).

Apart from confirming that the notion of impact was shaped by multiple voices which fed in on different levels, and that some of these voices represented the specific interests of disciplinary groups, the above-cited interview also suggests that engagement in these deliberations was to a degree a sign of an academic's standing in the community. Senior employees in the departments organised meetings with more junior staff to inform them about the changes taking place. Academics had the

opportunity ‘to feed into different sort on consultations and documents’, some were engaged in lobbying through councils and learned societies. The degree of engagement in the process was, in the eyes of the respondent, a function of how much one is invested in the academic community (“I was very much part of all those kind of different contexts... as any other active researcher”) or indeed part of it (“researchers were very much involved – depending on how much part of the community people were”).

If the IA emerged against an existing map of tensions between disciplinary groups, the introduction of a new element of academic reality contributed also to a reshuffle in the roles played by different actors. Some groups of academic actors thus found that the IA offers a sort of *new opening*, allowing to create and occupy new positions, form new alliances, redefine oneself, assert one’s value. A shift in the existing balance, brought about by the adding of a new entity – impact – to the mix, served as an opportunity for those who wished to be ‘involved’, ‘active’, ‘on the ball’, to show that they are aware of the developments, ‘part of the community’, to prove their involvement. The developments linked to the establishment of a new evaluation policy create a context in which senior colleagues can share their expertise and junior ones may distinguish themselves with their engagement. Some institutions might be faster than others in claiming their knowledge on the new topic (for instance the respondent from Interview 1 pointed to the business school of their university as being keen to be seen as a cradle of expertise on the topic). Hence, the process of shaping the notion of impact was not only about creating a ‘problematization’, or establishing and describing new an object of thought but also about *claiming the roles* of those who can legitimately speak about the subject.

This introduction of ‘impact’ could also affect the balance between different disciplines or fields of enquiry. The above-cited interviewee mentioned that initial definition of ‘impact’ was sciences-driven and much of the lobbying which took place was about broadening the definition to include the impact of SSH. Even if we take into account the adjustments and accommodations which were made in acknowledging the specific

nature of engagement and impact in the various disciplines, the final shape of the regulations regarding impact assessment was eventually bound to be more in line with some types of inquiry than others. The above-cited respondent, in a further fragment commented on the influence of the introduction of the IA on her own discipline of linguistics:

The Impact Agenda was (...) very much in line (...) with a whole range of applied sociopragmatic [research], particularly with linguists, because problem-based inquiry has been so essential [in these fields]. You know, at least in terms of the way it [the IA] was talked it to being, right?

#### Interview 24 – fragment 44

While causing new frictions or exacerbating existing ones in the field in which it intervened, the Agenda also filled some gaps and addressed areas which were lacking in attention or recognition. For instance, the above-cited fragment suggests that the Agenda was in line with a problem-based inquiry programme which has been prominent in sociopragmatic research. I will present other examples of frequently unforeseen consequences of the IA on particular disciplines in section 9.3. As a ‘problematization’ of a previously existing, but not yet regulated area of the universities’ and academics’ collaboration with a broader social environment the Agenda can be seen as a response to unformulated questions and as an intervention into existing struggles (for instance between different disciplines), one capable of shifting the fragile academic balance on many levels. At the same time, it provided an opportunity for a concretization of issues which were up to then vague, perhaps unexpressed, yet in need of some recognition, valorisation or simply change. We find an example of this in the strand of problem-based inquiry in the social sciences (mentioned in fragment 44 above) – the recognition of this area was certainly not the aim of the IA at its inception – rather, it was an unexpected, contingent, but welcome effect. The above analysis shows that the importance and influence of the concept of ‘impact’ goes way beyond just the core preparations to the evaluation and the assessment itself, affecting the

definition of valuable research as such and in the different disciplinary areas and how individual researchers position themselves in this context.

## **9.2. “That’s impact for me” – meanings of ‘impact’**

When discussing the process of collecting interviews in section 4.2.4, I mentioned that the word ‘impact’ and the phrase ‘Impact Agenda’ was often brought up by my interviewees before I had the chance to mention the topic of REF2014 myself. To a certain degree this can be explained by the ‘framing’ of the interview (Goffman, 1974; Sarangi, 2004) set already in the email invitation which explained that my research concerned the evaluation of impact. At the same time, I often had the impression that the interviews constituted for my respondents not just a way of supporting a junior linguist in their doctoral research or contributing to a potentially interesting project, but also – and perhaps more importantly – an opportunity to think out loud, to express an already existing judgment, or to develop their own stance in conversation. Some of my interviewees confirmed this impression after the interview, or sometimes in its course – for instance one respondent stated at some point:

[the interview] is talking and realizing something about yourself, isn't it?

Interview 21 – fragment 45

I often found that even in the initial, biographical phase of the interview, ‘impact’ would be brought up as a point of reference or that respondents would rush to the second, impact-related, part of the exchange, sometimes voicing their reflections on impact without being prompted by me. For instance, the below-cited interviewee brought up ‘impact’ herself quite suddenly, after having discussed her intellectual interlocutors:

In its inception [my research] came out as little bit of an attempt to critique some of the outrageously decontextualized things that [scholar’s name] said

about [issue]. Um... but... but impact, OK? (...) But impact, you know, impact... Really, I see.... I don't even like the word! Literally, don't like the word because it also sounds [like] a very aggressive word, you know, impact, IMPACT, I don't want to impACT! (( gesture of hitting the palm of her hand with her fist )). What you want, and what has happened with [topic of my research] really uh is... is more of a dialogue.

#### Interview 21 – fragment 46

In this extract, the speaker brings up the word 'impact' herself, and repeats it several times across just a few sentences, as a noun and as a verb, with different intonations, at first with a laughing undertone, later with a questioning intonation, finally with emphasis, highlighting the supposedly aggressive sound of the word by stressing the last syllable, and making a gesture which usually symbolises violence. The impression I had was of the speaker 'testing the word out', trying to put into words the feelings that the word has been stirring up in her ("literally, [I] don't like the word") and to explain them in the context of her approach to conducting research. The speaker states that she is not interested in an "aggressive" sort of impact (impacting on someone, presumably without their agency), but rather in a "dialogue" with those who could be influenced. Two things are noteworthy here – firstly, the sort of 'discursive work' (Fenwick, 2004, p. 184) which involves defining the notion of impact – not as it is used in the assessment, but in the context of one's own academic career. That said, and this is the second point of interest, the reflection on the definition and role of impact in one's profession does not take place on an empty stage, even when one is reasoning alone. In the extract above, the speaker uses the pronoun 'you', in referring, presumably, to academics in general – "what you [as an academic] want is"... Hence, the speaker is defining what impact means for her, but also what it could or should mean for other academics in the field. So, while on the surface the interview might appear to be an exchange between the interviewer and the interviewee, it is also a way of "talking to oneself" and "talking to the field". It is a way to reflect on one's

professional identity and engage in a debate with one's community without taking a public stance. This would explain why 'impact' was brought up by the speaker immediately after discussing her intellectual influences. It is the stance that one takes towards such points of reference – famous theories, 'big' names but also concepts that describe the profession in academic terms – that build up one's 'academic self' (Henkel, 2005).

In a later part of the conversation – again, showing how an academic identity is shaped through reference to others – the same speaker goes on to talk about other CSs that she is aware of in her academic environment. She explains that while many 'impactful' research projects in her department are designed with a particular impact on a narrow group of beneficiaries in mind, the impact of her own work was not an effect of such strategic planning:

I think with [my work] it's been more, kind of... I don't want to say chaotic, but only in a creative way, you know, the theory of chaos (( laughing )) and the little butterfly (( laughing )) that may have repercussions somewhere else. But it hasn't been that I woke up one morning, then and there, and I said "RIGHT! let me now build impact on [topic of research]". It has been more that I have been inspired by some of, you know, the work... what I call creative, creative kind of not even applications... I'm still looking for the word, um... that has been done with [topic of work].

#### Interview 21 – fragment 47

It is interesting to compare the metaphors the speaker uses to contrast 'her' type of CS or impact related-activity to her colleagues': while theirs is described in an earlier part of the interview as a "one-way street" based on "narrow definitions of who is going to benefit", her own can be understood through the notions of "theory of chaos". She stresses that her engagement in applied fields was not a strategic decision which she took at a particular point ("right! let me now build impact!"), in fact it was not an effect of a

decision at all, but occurred in a more passive way – by being inspired by the creative use others have made of her work.

Different ‘typologies of impact’ or ‘pathways to impact’ have been described by researchers in the field of impact (Muhonen, Benneworth, & Peñuela, 2018) and these findings will probably affect the developing vocabulary around the creation of impact, thereby giving scholars the words to describe different types of experience of conducting impactful work. The fragment above shows that at this early stage and in an institution in which the mainstream, effect-oriented vision of impact has been dominant, some scholars can feel that their type of engagement is not necessarily accurately described by the generic term ‘impact’. The above-cited interviewee visibly struggles to find a term (“you know, the work... what I call creative, creative kind of not even applications... I’m still looking for the word”) to replace ‘impact’ which the speaker is not at ease with (“it’s a very aggressive word”), and which she does not identify with.

While some scholars try to find alternative words to define the nature of their work’s relation to broader societal issues, it seems like the term ‘impact’ is slowly but steadily taking over the role of other nouns which describe such activity, like ‘public engagement’, ‘third mission’, ‘outreach’, ‘public science’ (see section 2.3). With the expansion of the word ‘impact’ as an almost universal point of reference in academia and a ‘building block’ of a broader approach to conceiving of academic reality (the ‘impact infrastructure’), it would seem that many academics find themselves using the term ‘impact’ despite themselves. See for instance the following fragment, in which an academic explains why she chose to work in Britain rather than in a different country to develop her academic career post-PhD:

Working from a British university you have more possibility of having an imp... An impact! (( laughs )) (... ) and I don’t mean in the REF sense, I mean (... ) more generally.

When I asked her to explain what she means by “impact more generally”, she answered:

‘Cuz in the REF sense it’s very specific, you’ve got to demonstrate this change. As far as I’m concerned, even if I just manage to make people think a bit [differently] (...) Now, I can’t prove impact, I can’t prove that any of them are going to go away and change what they do, but I can see those... light bulbs going on. So to me... that’s impact too, even if it isn’t for the REF.

#### Interview 10 – fragment 48

In the first of the above-cited fragments, one can observe again how the term *impact* pops up in the conversation, in a context which is not connected to REF – perhaps to the embarrassment of the speaker. She uses the word as if instinctively and then quickly explains that she did not use it “in the REF sense” but “more generally”. In this context, we will recall that the term ‘*impact*’ existed of course before the introduction of the IA in its generic sense (influence, effect) as well as in the specific sense it was given in the context of the rise of bibliometrics (‘*journal impact factor*’ etc.). When prompted, the speaker explains that the type of *impact* which she has, and which she cherishes (it is the reason for her choosing a career in the UK academic system) is connected to a change in thinking, which she describes using the metaphor of “seeing light bulbs going on”. The cited researcher concludes that this sort of influence on the audience is for her “*impact too, even if it isn’t for the REF*” (where evidence of change would need to be provided). Like in the previously analysed fragment 47, I would see in this exchange a feeling of struggling with the term ‘*impact*’. The notion is currently so prominent in academic discourse as to almost impose its presence in the conversation. At the same time, it clearly does not fully describe the academics’ experience in the area of engagement (“*that’s impact too, even if it isn’t for the REF*”), or perhaps is too tinted with academic managerialism to be used in the context of an endeavour which is personal and part of one’s lifeworld experience (Sarangi, 2004, pp. 76-79).

If in Interview 21 the speaker was searching for an adequate word (not ‘impact’) to describe her engagement with broader societal issues, the speaker in Interview 10 distinguishes between two different uses of the notion – “in the REF sense” and “to me”. A similar distinction was made by another respondent, who talked about the effect his work has had on an area of professional communication. While, as he explained, this development has been a source of personal satisfaction for him, during the interview he actively opposed talking about his work in terms of ‘impact’. In particular, he stressed that the sort of influence that he aims for does not always lend itself to producing a CS (or in the contemporary jargon, is not ‘REF-able’):

That’s not impact in the way this government wants it! Cause I have no evidence. I just changed someone’s view. Is that impact? Yes, for me it is. But it is not impact as understood by the bloody REF. (...) Maybe my book on [topic] in 10 years’ time, someone will discover it and think “that’s the best thing since sliced bread” and will change all the procedures in [field]. But I didn’t set out to do it. And then another philosophical question: if I don’t set out to have impact, do I have impact? Is it MY impact? Is it my research’s impact?

#### Interview 3 – fragment 49

Similarly to the two previously quoted speakers, the interviewee suggests that he would use for the term ‘impact’ in a sense different to the one arising from the REF documentation. While REF favours the sort of influence which is planned for and calculated, the interviewed academic would recognize also a serendipitous effect, including triggering a change “in someone’s views”.

Another interviewee raised the question of the burden and risk associated with carrying out ‘impactful’ work. She explains that she consciously declined opportunities which would bring more exposure to her work, because of concern about the consequences that publicity might have on the vulnerable communities she worked with. In consequence, she lowered her

chances of building a strong case for impact (in the REF sense) in order to maintain high ethical standards – this is similar to the ethical dilemma described in CS1698 in 8.2.2. See the fragment below on balancing ethical standards and managerial demands of REF:

And it's a very draining thing, very draining thing. Because you can imagine just having your research circulating around the globe – certain colleagues are getting pissed off, you don't know how it reverberates back to the [informants involved] in what sort of form or shape. I mean it's a very complex kind of situation and that is not easy. That's not easy. So, when you manage to kind of go through that and navigate successfully and keep producing research, to be honest, that's impact for me.

#### Interview 9 – fragment 50

The speakers from interview 10 and 3 broadened the definition of impact to include changes in thinking, as well as impact which was not planned for, or which occurs over a longer period of time. In turn, the scholar quoted above highlights the ethical dimension of impact: “when you manage to go through that [the draining politics of managing ethically delicate work] and navigate successfully and keep producing research (...) that's impact for me”. She therefore stresses that what is crucial for her in achieving ‘impact’ is not necessarily the measurable effect or the collected evidence (key for the CS narrative) but above all conducting research in a way which can be held up to the highest moral standards. Also noteworthy is the use of the expression “to be honest”, which accompanies the speaker's description of meaningful impact. I would interpret this expression as introducing a view which is not the mainstream, widely accepted one and stressing the back-stage character of the exchange. This observation might suggest that academics can give different meanings to the notion of ‘impact’ depending on whether they are speaking/writing officially, on the public forum or in a more relaxed, non-evaluative setting. I will return to this issue in section 9.3, when discussing the difference between backstage and front-stage exchange, conceptualized in the Goffmanian sense (for a discussion of the

notions of front- and backstage in discourse see also: Sarangi & Roberts, 1999a, pp. 19-24).

If in chapter 7 I focused on how the notion of ‘impact’ and its definition was collectively constructed by a community, in this section I wanted to demonstrate the reverse of the process – how the existing, established notion is being actively built into individual academics’ constructions of ‘self’ and their career narratives through a process of defining and describing. This argument is in line with Jonathan Potter’s understanding of a double role of descriptions in discourse. Descriptions are both constructions and constructive (Potter, 1996, p. 99), so while they themselves are effects of discourse, they can also become ‘building blocks’ for ideas, identities, attitudes etc. Descriptions of notions can often be a field of discursive struggles, whereby different actors try to rework, damage or reframe the existing ones – Potter defines this process as ‘offensive rhetoric’ or ‘ironizing’, as opposed to ‘reifying’ which would describe a process in which an existing description is put into action and reinforced (p. 107). In this sense, writing CSs could be seen as ‘reifying’ the existing, official definition by enacting it (see also section 8.2.1. on regularisation), while the fragments cited above would exemplify strategies of ‘ironizing’, or undermining the adequacy of the description.

To conclude, while the notion of ‘impact’ has become relatively consolidated, or reified on the ‘front stage’ of official academic performance, replacing other possible meanings given to the term (simply ‘effect’ as in general English or ‘impact’ in the bibliometric sense) the data analysed in this section sheds light on the struggles which still accompany the incorporation of the term into a personal academic narrative on the ‘back stage’. These struggles are often played out on the level of the individually developed descriptions of the notion of ‘impact’. Such descriptions can be an extension of the ‘official’ definition, they can overlap with it, but sometimes they also break with it and subvert it. In this context, it is perhaps worth thinking back to the influential idea of ‘keywords’ – significant, binding words in particular activities and in

certain forms of thought of a given era – a concept put forward by Raymond Williams (1983, p. 15). While scholars usually reflect on the ‘official’ history of such keywords (e.g. Parker, 2017) – i.e. their appearance in dictionaries, documents, publications, media talk – what is often overlooked is the way in which the notions are appropriated on a local, individual level and how they become points of reference in framing individual life histories.

### ***9.3. Impact of linguistics***

The previous section showcased how, while discursively positioning themselves towards ‘impact’, academics often invoke other understandings of the term than the one defined in REF. We saw that in doing so, respondents pointed to personal attitudes to ‘impact’, often grounded in individual perception of what is valuable in a research career (e.g. influencing the audience’s worldviews and professional practice, maintaining an honest relationship with a researched community etc.). But linguists’ positioning towards ‘impact’ depends also on their perception of the role of this element for their entire discipline. Some of the existing research on attitudes to impact builds on the division applied vs. pure sciences and seeks to show differences in individuals’ attitudes in function of their discipline (Chikoore, 2016; Chubb, 2017). The point that impact is achieved more easily in some fields than others was raised many times in the debate which preceded the introduction of the Agenda (e.g. Warner, 2015). When this argument is put forward, particular disciplines are often brought up as examples of the ‘pure’ inquiry which is supposedly disadvantaged when seeking impact, and the applied disciplines which are often described as having an ‘inherent’ connection to application – if philosophy could be given as an example of the first group, computer science or medical engineering would be situated in the latter.

The discipline of linguistics, as we have seen, is not easily classified in terms of the above labels (see section 4.1). The issue of situating linguistics

on the axis of applied-pure research and articulating the role of impact in linguistic research often came up in my interviews. The issue was usually mentioned by respondents when they explained the importance they give to impact while making reference to the general attitude in the field. Interestingly however, there is quite some divergence in how linguists perceive the impact of their field. For instance, one interviewee vehemently argued against the necessity of proving impact, presenting linguistics as a field which is traditionally not ‘impactful’:

I don’t want to have impact. I mean, who wants to have impact if they do linguistics?

#### Interview 3 – fragment 51

In the above fragment the speaker is not only expressing his own stance on the topic (“I don’t want to have impact”), but with the rhetorical question “who wants to have impact if they do linguistics?” also suggests that, in general, it is odd for a linguist to strive for impact. Like in the case of many previously cited extracts, also here we might observe that the interview is not just a site of expressing one’s own views and positioning oneself towards certain fields or issues, but also of positioning one’s colleagues and entire fields (like linguistics). In this case, one can read the question as a challenge towards colleagues who might see this issue differently. Indeed, in a later part of the interview the same speaker states:

I am yet to meet a social scientist who actually thinks the Impact Agenda for SSH makes any sense.

#### Interview 3 – fragment 52

However, many of my respondents, also linguists, presented a very different stance on the question of the necessity or redundancy of impact in linguistics. In the fragment below, the speaker, an applied linguist, interrupts her own account of the details of the REF2014 submission to

spontaneously (unprompted by the interviewer) give her view on the role of impact more generally:

Interviewee: ...but I think! I think it... my personal opinion is... the Impact Agenda is a good thing. I think it is good for researchers to think about the effects their research have beyond purely academia. I do think it is difficult for some... I don't think it is any even playing field. It's very difficult for some fields. You know, I wonder what Germanic philology manages to come up with.

Interviewer: What's the big difference between Germanic philology and linguistics?

IE: Well, I don't do linguistics, I do Applied Linguistics and ELT. Theoretical linguistics would also be... Applied Linguistics by definition is applied.

#### Interview 10 – fragment 53

While expressing a broadly positive attitude towards the IA, the speaker suggests that there is a spectrum of research areas – on one end are those in which achieving impact is easier, and on the other are fields where it is difficult – the example of the latter given by the interviewee is Germanic philology. Despite the fact that philology as a discipline is not very distant from linguistics (in fact both philologists and linguists would submit to the same UoA in REF2014), the speaker thinks that there is a notable difference between the two in terms of achieving and proving impact. The academic explains that she situates her own work in the field of *applied* linguistics and ELT – these two areas would belong in the applied realm, unlike theoretical linguistics and Germanic philology.

This vision of a discipline – represented by a UoA – as split down the middle, dividing fields which are “by definition applied”, and those which might have trouble in achieving impact testifies once again to the heterogeneity of the discipline. If we think back to the idea of

‘problematization’ introduced in section 5.3.1, we will recall that Foucault thought of it as the emergence of answers to questions which are looming, but have not yet been concretely posed (Koopman, 2013, pp. 98-103). Here, we see how the answer constituted by ‘impact’ contributes to the reshaping of the field in which it intervenes – some areas are redefined along new lines (impactful – non-impactful) whereas old divisions (linguistics vs. philology) resurface and are given new meanings. It would seem that the introduction of ‘impact’ gave a new prominence, or a new sort of ‘dignity’ to particular fields, which were not always considered as strong, established or important, while weakening others. For instance, formal linguistics and philology (particularly classics) are old disciplines which for centuries have constituted core teaching at universities, whereas applied linguistics has long had to struggle for its independence from philology and its status in academia (Chang, 2015; Pollock, 2009). The introduction of ‘impact’ changed the balance in the field, tilting it in favour of applied disciplines, including applied linguistics and teaching-related areas like ELT. It also contributed to the strengthening of the *narrative* about the applied goals of research in some disciplines, such as applied linguistics. Think for instance of fragment 44, interview 24, cited in section 9.1. where the speaker argues that the IA was in line with a problem-based agenda in the social sciences and contributed to reinforcing its case. Another academic, a senior applied linguist, talks about the way in which her field has been ‘valorised’ by the IA:

We've always had that impact-orientation. But we haven't been able to say “our impact has been this, this and this”. So, it's helpful in getting us to try and conceptualise and verbalise what was a kind of intuitive process.

Interview 2 – fragment 54

While engagement, impact and practical application have always been important aspects of conducting work in applied linguistics (“applied linguistics by definition is applied”) it was the establishment of the IA that

enabled explaining this area of activity ('problematizing' it) in a new framework. Therefore, the rise of impact not only disturbed the status quo between disciplines (such as modern languages, philology, linguistics) but also prompted a process of redefinition within the disciplines.

In many interviews, the speakers seemed to construct the impactfulness (or not) of the field of 'linguistics' by contrasting it with *other* disciplines, which are deemed inherently impactful or non-impactful. Among the fields spontaneously brought up by my respondents as examples of research which lends itself to impact are chemistry, biology (cancer research), medicine, experimental physics, TESOL and social sciences in general. Among those quoted by my respondents as non-impactful are Germanic philology, medieval studies, classics, philosophy, descriptive linguistics, sociolinguistics, political science, pure maths, humanities in general. While in this study I am primarily interested in the position of 'impact' within the discipline of linguistics, it soon became apparent that this issue cannot be investigated in isolation from the entire new 'mapping' of disciplines in function of a new element emerging in academics' minds and in academic discourse. While the above two lists seem quite coherent, and with a bit more research one could probably produce a Pasteur's-quadrant-style classification of fields considered as leaning towards 'fundamental understanding' or 'considerations of use' (compare also diagram presented in: Chubb, 2017, p. 241; Stokes, 2011), what I found more interesting were the disciplines and fields which seemed controversial. Linguistics itself was one of them – placed by some linguists on the non-impactful side ("who wants to have impact if they do linguistics?"), and by some, especially in the area of applied or computational linguistics, on the side of impactful disciplines ("applied linguistics by definition is applied; we've always had that impact-orientation").

Apart from showing how internal divisions in language studies became crystallised in the context of the IA, my data shows also how the model of division into UoAs adopted by HEFCE has influenced the way of thinking about impact of most interviewees. After all, research on performance-

based funding systems reminds us that there can be various units of evaluation – from individual researchers to entire universities (Hicks, 2012). There is no reason why impact could not be assessed for instance on the level of entire disciplines (e.g. impact of linguistics as a field in general, rather than particular studies in a given department). Indeed, one of the recommendations made by Stern’s report regarded the introduction of “‘institutional’ level case studies” (Stern, 2016, p. 22), which however, it now seems, will not be implemented in REF 2021 (HEFCE, 2017, pp. 8-9). In any event, at the time of conducting the interviews, the model of assessing impact within UoAs selected by HEFCE (and having its roots already in the Australian RQF) was a fundamental part of the ‘impact infrastructure’. I argue that the persuasive force of the existing managerial-administrative reality influenced the realm of thought and concepts – in this case contributing to the perception of a ‘disciplinary impact’ model as self-evident. Only one speaker approached this division critically, raising the point that most studies, including in medical sciences, are ultimately too narrow to make an impact by themselves:

We’re all working on a very, very small area. On its own this thing doesn’t make any sort of impact, it’s always in conjunction with something else.

Interview 9 – fragment 55

The current setup of the REF assessment, and the way it seems to pitch disciplines against each other to compete against the same standards is in many ways problematic for the discipline of linguistics. There seems to be little recognition, on policy-making and management level, that different sorts of impact, and different types of evidence could be expected of research in various fields. For instance, one of my respondents, a researcher working on ELT said she had trouble convincing management to recognise the impact of her study, as it focused on behavioural change, rather than more linear policy change, which was the dominant type of impact in the CSs put forward in the submission. This again shows how a particular type

of impact is ‘normalized’ through the procedures which accompany REF on the central level and within universities, and how such prevailing ideas can come to shape the horizon of understanding of communities of practice (in my respondent’s words – “people couldn’t think of any impact other than policy” – Interview 2).

The problem of the place of ‘impact’ in the discipline of linguistics is played out on various levels, including the boundary work between disciplines/fields considered as impactful and non-impactful and the (lack of) recognition of the different types of impact that various strands of research are likely to achieve. Thinking about the way individual linguists position themselves towards the notion of ‘impact’ and the IA we therefore need to be mindful that they are doing so against a broader background of disciplinary struggles that the problematization of impact has brought to the fore.

#### ***9.4. Distancing***

When conducting an interview with a respondent, at some point I would usually produce a print-out of the CS authored by them with highlighted features which I found typical of the genre (much like the elements discussed in 8.1) or others which I found unique and interesting (like the elements described in 8.2.2). The documents were thought of as a prop which would allow the exploration of the writing process and particular rhetorical choices. Something I did not foresee was the degree to which many interviewees distanced themselves, in one way or another, from the content of the documents. For instance, one respondent insisted that she did not self-identify as the author of the CS which described her work:

Interviewer: ...and in fact you say here, there’s this line [in the CS] where you say that...

Interviewee: “You” in quotation marks, okay? When you say “you say”... I have made it kind of clear – and I hope this is not going to get me into trouble ((chuckles)) – it’s not I who says most of these things.

#### Interview 21 – fragment 56

The reader might remember, from the earlier analysis of the same interview (section 7.5) that the CS in question was written by a senior colleague of the interviewee, who herself provided just an outline of the narrative. This fragment ties in with the earlier-discussed issue of authorship but it may also inspire a reflection on the degree to which academics identify with the narrative of their impact presented in ‘their’ CSs. “Having your name on a case study has come to be a positive thing” – stated my interviewee from HEFCE (Interview 20) when commenting on the effects that the IA has had on academia. And yet, it is clear from the fragments of Interview 21 cited here and earlier, that this particular respondent is not particularly keen to be associated with the document. While distancing herself from it (“‘You’ in quotation marks, okay?”; “it’s not I who says most of these things”) she does however make a playful remark: “I hope this is not going to get me into trouble”. So, on the one hand we have a gesture of distancing, and on the other – a slight preoccupation with the possible consequences of this distancing. This would suggest a complex relationship between the conscious presentation of academic self in the interview setting, and in the impact CS documents. If *having* a CS written about one’s work has indeed “come to be a positive thing” in the context of one’s career (in fact some of my interviewees showcased involvement in REF, including authorship of CSs, in their CVs), in the context of an interview, the academic’s whole-hearted endorsement of the document is not always a given.

Other interviewees signalled particular fragments in the CSs, often ones which are somehow in contrast with traditional academic style, explaining that they were not written by them, or were suggested by someone else, for instance by managerial staff – recall for instance fragment 27, Interview 10,

cited in 7.7, where the interviewee commented on a slightly awkward phrase in a CS she co-authored: “It’s certainly not a word of mine. I’ve the feeling someone might have... put that in for us”.

One way of expressing one’s distance to the document, visible in the fragments above, consists in drawing attention to issues related to authorship, as if by saying “I did not author the text, or not entirely”. Additionally, some academics distanced themselves from the exercise through use of irony. For instance, speaking about the general tendencies in writing persuasive academic texts, a researcher commented ironically on the overblown claims researchers tend to make in CSs:

And they are like “and we changed the world!”,  
yeah...

#### Interview 8 – fragment 57

Yet another way of distancing would have to do with highlighting a specific *mode* in which the content of the document was written by drawing attention to the performative nature of the genre, which shaped the content of the document and the claims it contained. In the extract below, a senior academic talks about the early stages of preparing a CS, focusing on the act of scrutinizing the impact of one’s work:

Interviewer: So, in terms of the progress, can you tell me when you first learned about the Impact Agenda, and when people started looking at their own work and looking for impact? Perhaps you can talk about yourself?

Interviewee: It’s creative stuff. Given that this is anonymous I can say that that’s just creative fiction. I mean, you look at your stuff and you think “can I claim some kind of impact?”. (...) To be completely honest... (...) the REF with the impact reminds me of centralist [communist country] probably most. I think we live in a socialist system, where... I

wouldn't say we lie, because we don't, but we kind of... we spin... We try to show a reality which, by some stretch of imagination... yes, it is there. It's like... in my application forms I tend to say that my external funding is about X million pounds which is A truth. A truth. I'm not lying. Can it be shown in different ways? Yes, it can, and then it would be possibly less. But I choose, for obvious reasons, to say that my external funding is X million, which is a truth. I'm not lying. (...) It's all true what I said [in the case study], but in a particular way.

### Interview 3 – fragment 58

With minimal prompting from the interviewer, the respondent presents his vision of impact in REF as something akin to performance reviews in communist countries, which were notorious for presenting a skewed vision of reality for the benefit of the authorities. In view of this image of the assessment, the question suggests itself whether one could say that the authors of the CS *lie* in the document? Without being asked by the interviewer, the speaker answers this question, but in a non-obvious way: “I wouldn't say we lie, because we don't, but... we spin”. While the interviewer invited the speaker “to talk about himself”, we will notice the plural pronoun he uses (“we”), suggesting that the interviewer is speaking not only of his own practice, and his own CS, but of general trends in the academic community. This is in line with previous observations on the nature of the interview setting as inviting not just positioning of oneself, but also of entire fields and indirectly entering into conversation with one's community. Also noteworthy is that the speaker, like the respondent from Interview 9 cited before, uses the expression “to be (completely) honest” in the introduction of his account. We might take this expression as a marker of the confidential character of what is being said (also highlighted by the proviso “given that this is anonymous”). In Goffman's terms the CS would be a front-stage performance, while in the markedly back-stage (anonymous, non-evaluative) exchange the speaker distances himself to certain claims contained in the document. He does so not by problematizing the authorship of the document, like the previously-cited speakers, but by

drawing attention to the performative character of the exercise, which accounts for the fact that the content of the CS in question “is true, but in a particular way”. The same speaker expressed this view even more explicitly in a different fragment:

We are not talking about reality, we are talking about satisfying a system. I am asked to be persuasive, so I am being persuasive.

#### Interview 3 – fragment 59

This remark suggests that there is a silent agreement between the authors of CSs and the policymakers/panellists whereby the claims made by academics may be more or less exaggerated (indeed this is confirmed by research on impact panel deliberations – Derrick, 2018a, pp. 73-75). In this approach, the CSs and indeed the entire impact assessment would be somehow disconnected from the ‘real’ experience of the academics, constituting “creative fiction”. And yet the presented narratives are not untrue, and it would be a mistake to say that academics, including the speaker, *lie* in their CSs. The CSs deal with “a truth” of academic reality, but one which is based on the principle of performing to requirements (“I am asked to be persuasive, so I am being persuasive”), reminiscent of the structuralist vision of authors as mirror-images of the readers which I proposed in section 8.2.2. We will notice that this is a vision academics are not eager to identify with in non-performative settings. Many other academics made similar remarks on the ‘realness’ or ‘seriousness’ of the exercise. For instance, another interviewee, when enquired about his approach to the REF, stated:

To be perfectly honest, I view the REF and all of this sort of regulatory mechanisms as something of a game that everybody has to play.

#### Interview 4 – fragment 59

Similarly, in describing the reasons for his taking part in the IA, another academic stated:

And the motivation was really, if they are going to make us jump through that hoop, we are clever enough to jump through any hoops that any politician can set.

#### Interview 14 – fragment 59

The metaphor of “a game” and “jumping through hoops” once more suggests a vision of REF as a performance. It is not a game one enters voluntarily (“everybody has to play” it), but, once in, one can use their intelligence to outsmart those who set the rules. In my data, there are also examples of very conscious and reflexive *balancing* between the requirements of the assessment, which favour a polished version of the academic self and one’s personal perception of academic ethos. A senior academic who also performs a managerial role related to impact in his department told about the philosophy which underpins his engagement with the Agenda. He formulated it as “more than just compliance”, where compliance would stand for the myriad REF-related administrative activities. He elaborated:

When I say more than just compliance, I think that there is another societal or moral role. We have an opportunity here. And we can use this (...) to actually really, make a difference not just to be seen as being making a difference, but to actually make a real difference. (...) To be able to do that as part of the mainstream and also to benefit from the additional resources that are put there in order to comply within the Impact Agenda.

#### Interview 15 – fragment 60

There is a clear recognition in this fragment of the performative element of IA, which is rendered here with the word ‘compliance’. But the interviewee explains that he sees his role as an impact support manager not just in supporting the REF exercise, but above all in facilitating the change that the IA sets out to make, namely enabling research to “make a real difference”. In other words, the IA, and all the resources which are released by institutions to support impact-related activities can be harnessed to

achieve certain “societal or moral” values – something that has been important for the speaker in his role as a researcher and as an advocate for certain social groups.

Another example of conscious, reflexive balancing between the requirements of the Agenda and the moral standards of the speaker – this time connected to standards of academic honesty and modesty – can be found in the below fragment in which an academic talks about the ‘persuasive’ fragments of his CS:

This was just my way of showing some indicators of quality. Cuz they [panellists] also like evidence-based things. I should say that when writing this... everything is completely honest. It's very easy to miss out things and to exaggerate things, but everything in here... I made a real effort to make sure that I didn't exaggerate anything.

#### Interview 11 – fragment 61

This fragment is telling particularly in light of the findings on the genre of CS from chapter 8, which presented it as inviting a particular tone, one of boastful assurance and eager compliance. Clearly, in the face of the coercive force of the impact infrastructure one needs to make “a real effort” in order not to comply and not to “exaggerate”.

Throughout this section, I argued that, drawing on Goffman's framework, we can understand the REF assessment as a front-stage performance and the interviews as a back-stage conversation. The back-stage character of an exchange is often pragmatically signalled by the conversational style, back-stage markers such as |to be (completely) honest”, reminders of confidentiality (“I hope this won't get me into trouble”; “given that this is anonymous...”), occasional use of colloquial language (“colleagues are getting pissed off”) and laughter. Speaking from the back-stage academics often discursively mark their distance towards the ‘front stage performance’. They do this by undermining their authorship (“‘You’ ‘in

quotation marks, okay?”), using irony (“we change the world, yeah”), presenting the CSs as utterances which need to be understood in a specific context – namely, as part of a performance (“jumping through hoops”), in which academics were required to present a particular ‘edited’ version of the reality (“it is a truth”). All my respondents stressed that the data and claims contained in the CSs were factual – but presented in a particularly becoming light (“we spin”).

While there is nothing inherently “wrong” or “immoral” in representing oneself in slightly different terms in different social settings (indeed Goffman describes this as a normal societal phenomenon), I would like to draw attention to the tension engendered by the growing distance between these two presentations of academic self – in evaluative and non-evaluative settings. This tension is visible in the academic’s eagerness to discuss the position of impact in the context of their life narratives, in the fact that, in doing so, they sometimes seem to be vehemently responding to accusations which I did not formulate (“I wouldn’t say we lie; I am not lying”), in the preoccupation with the management of the front-stage and the back-stage self (“I hope this won’t get me into trouble”) and in the laughter which often reduces the tension. Finally, we have seen that some academics very consciously balance their front-stage and back-stage roles by striving not to infringe any moral rules while ‘performing’ in their front-end persona (“I made a REAL effort to make sure that I didn’t exaggerate anything”) or by creating interpretations which allow reconciling the demands of the front-stage with the values cherished in the privacy of the back-stage (“not just compliance”).

We might be reminded here of Bourdieu’s idea of ‘regularization’ (discussed in section 8.2.1), i.e. the mechanism through which a less powerful group or individual consciously, and often excessively, mimics the rules of a different group to win acceptance and approval. Crucially, the aim of this behaviour is not, as it might look on the surface of it, just to buy the favour of the other, more powerful group, but actually “to beat the group at its own game” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 22). This is achieved by

fulfilling, or more than fulfilling the requirements, while maintaining one's distances from it: "I am asked to be persuasive, so I am being persuasive"; "we are clever enough to jump through any hoops that any politician can set". If, at least to a degree, the REF is perceived by academics as a 'game', in which the academics must strive "to be persuasive"; "to be seen as being making a difference", we may pause here to think about the rule-maker in this game. Some of my interviewees pointed to "politicians" and "the government" as rule-maker, but some seemed to think in this context of a more depersonalized reality, which is not necessarily regulated by any particular entity or social group. For the speaker from interview 3 it was "a system", that has to be satisfied, for interviewee 4 – "a regulatory mechanism". I would suggest that these spontaneous expressions contain an important insight into the nature of the rule-making in the processes which takes place around the IA. I argue that if REF is to be perceived as a game (see also: Derrick, 2018a, pp. 8-10) we should in fact consider *all* of the participants as contributing to the emergence and consolidation of the rules that govern it, and supporting the operation of the 'impact infrastructure'. This anonymous 'apparatus' built up of different dispersed components regulates minor elements of academic and in effect creates among subjects a *conviction* that there is a set of rules to be fulfilled, thresholds to be met etc.

The admission that the impact infrastructure is created not just by policymakers and managerial strata but also by the assessed academics themselves further complicates the vision I am setting out of the IA as a 'front stage performance' of academic life. In this approach the regulator, at least to a degree, is an 'emanation' or 'postulate' of academics and managers involved in the exercise, a sort of 'social consensus'. Even if the impetus towards the creation of the IA indeed did come, as we have seen, from political circles and the government, the execution of the policy and its implications for every-day academic life hugely depend in the local operation of the apparatus of the 'impact infrastructure'. A similar realisation on the motivations behind emergent REF-related practices

seems to accompany a reflection of an interviewee from HEFCE, who spoke about the numerous ‘dry-runs’ and ‘mock-REFs’:

It is over-engineered in most universities because they panic about it.

#### Interview 20 – fragment 62

The above observation points in a candid manner to the unforeseen consequences engendered by the introduction of the Agenda, which cannot be attributed directly to any HEFCE guidelines, but rather to the local expressions of the ‘impact infrastructure’, which by now has become a device with a mind of its own.

### **9.5. “As a linguist...” – changes in footing**

Angermuller (2013b) argued that an academic career is a ‘multileveled positioning practice’, in the sense that it requires establishing oneself in different discursive realms – most importantly on the scientific one (as a researcher) and on the institutional one (as an administrator, research manager). The requirements of the two orders can be in competition or even in conflict, but both need to be somehow discursively managed. Drawing on this idea of a ‘segmented self’ which is often hinted at in everyday speech, for instance when we say that ‘academics wear many hats’, I will argue that academics’ stance towards impact will depend on whether they position themselves towards the Agenda *as researchers* (i.e. members of the research community), *as administrators* (i.e. representatives of an institution, employees, managers), or *as individuals* (with their personal goals, trajectories, worlds-views and convictions of a moral and religious character based on their lifeworld experience). In most of my interviews, it was primarily one of these positions which came to the fore, mobilized in the discussion by the use of linguistic markers, such as

pronouns. See for instance the following fragment, where an academic expresses her view on the IA:

If having some sort of impact component [in REF] (...) is about creating some sort of social awareness that we should not be wasting public money with research that is not good value, then I think, as a kind of a tool of creating or consolidating this kind of awareness, I think it's... useful. We should always be very mindful about any public money being spent for this kind of research.

#### Interview 9 – fragment 63

By using the pronoun “we” the interviewee is presumably referring to a broader community (researchers, scientists) to which she belongs, and in particular to the ‘social mission’ of this group or the values that it holds dear. So, when the speaker uses the pronoun “I” when expressing her own position on the Agenda, we can infer that she is giving her stance as a member of this community. Her own view of the Agenda (“I think it’s... useful”) is presented as being in function of the standards that the speaker would set before her own community (“we should not be wasting public money”; “We should always be very mindful”...). I would therefore argue, that the above-cited snippet is an example of an academic speaking from her footing *as a researcher*. Compare this fragment in which a linguist, who is also a research manager, explains his reaction to the introduction of the IA:

I was displeased with the way in which it [the Agenda] was introduced, both the timing and also the kind of shifting definitions. But I never really had a major problem with the concept, or with the notion, that we are spending taxpayer’s money and it’s right and proper that we should, wherever possible, demonstrate the broader value of our research beyond the academic community.

#### Interview 16 – fragment 64

Like the previously-cited speaker, also this interviewee alternately uses

pronouns “I” and “we”. He starts by saying “I was displeased with the way in which it was introduced”. Knowing that this respondent followed the developments around impact from an early stage in his professional role as research manager (a topic discussed in an earlier part of the interview) we might infer that in the above fragment the interviewee is speaking from the footing of an academic administrator. Later however, the speaker uses the pronoun “we” in referring to the “academic community”, saying that “we” (presumably – researchers) “are spending taxpayer’s money and we should (...) demonstrate the broader value of our research”. I would argue that in the above fragment, when expressing his attitude towards impact, the speaker shifts between two footings: if initially he is speaking from his position as an administrator, later – in his position as a researcher – he approves of the policy itself as it is aligned with the goals and values he attributes to the academic profession.

In the extract cited below another interviewee, an academic and author of a CS, elaborates on her vision of applied linguistics and TESOL as *per se* applied fields (see section 9.3. for fragment 53 of the same interview, where the speaker describes the field of applied linguistics as “by definition applied”).

Because if you are not working for teachers who are you working for? It might be more difficult in sociolinguistics. But even there I think it makes people think “how can this be useful and how can it be used by people outside academia” and I don’t think it is a bad thing, personally.

#### Interview 10 – fragment 65

The use of pronouns in this extract seems to evoke particular frames. In the opening rhetorical question “if you are not working for teachers who are you working for?” the pronoun “you” refers to other researchers working in applied linguistic fields. Sociolinguistics seems to be excluded from this area or considered a sort of ‘borderline’ discipline – this will remind us of the role of issues of disciplinarity in articulating one’s stance towards

impact. While the frame evoked here is that of the research field with its goals and values, suggesting that the interviewee is speaking from her professional footing as an applied linguist, there is a visible change in the closing phrase of the paragraph. If the speaker started by expressing a strong, almost prescriptive attitude to impact in her area of research, she closes with a phrase which softens the tone of the entire fragment, and, I would argue, shifts the footing. Not only does the phrase “I don’t think it is a bad thing, personally” change the positioning of the speaker – rather than speaking on behalf and to the community, she is speaking for herself, and, it would seem – *against* a view (‘the Impact Agenda is a bad thing’) (on the discursive role of negation see: Ducrot, 2014). If we recall that the prevailing, or most salient attitudes towards the assessment of ‘impact’ were quite negative at the time of conducting the interview, this fragment can be interpreted as a polemic – first quite strong, and later on hedged – with these mainstream views. Once again, the interview reveals itself here not as a conversation between two people – the interviewer and the interviewee – but a more complex polyphonic debate in which borders of fields are discursively re-worked and actors who are not in the room are nevertheless spoken to and argued with.

A similar altering between different positions evoked by the use of “we” and “I” can be found in a different interview, where the speaker expresses a strong defence of knowledge for knowledge’s sake:

I defend the right to be completely, completely useless in terms of the society. I defend the right to study an obscure Armenian manuscript that no one wants to know, because I think it’s important that we do.

#### Interview 3 – fragment 66

Here the pronoun “I” is repeated several times, and from the expression “I defend the right to”... it is clear that the speaker is positioning himself in opposition to a trend perceived as dominant – the one of expecting applicable results from research. Like the speakers from Interview 9

(fragment 63), 16 (fragment 64) and 10 (fragment 65) cited before the interviewee is constructing his position by referring to the frame of ‘the role of research in society’. The use of the pronoun “we” (“it’s important that we do”) suggests that the footing in the fragment is that of a researcher, speaking on behalf of a community (or at least a part of it). In a later fragment of the exchange there seems however to occur a shift in the respondent’s footing. In further explaining his stance on impact, the interviewee told an anecdote about a New Year’s Eve party spent with friends, many of whom are in the medical professions. This event, he explained, lead him to reflect on his own career and the influence of his work on the ‘outside world’.

And I thought I would like to be a bit useful to the world, so someone could say I’ve cured him, like the guy in the hospital. [Talks about the influence his work has eventually had on professionals]. I’m really pleased that I could have been useful. Quite a number of people (...) told me that thy read my work and they became better [professionals]. (...) So yes, I would like to make the world a better place, if you like. But I am not certain that the Impact Agenda actually has anything to do with it. I think it is a political initiative to show that we will crack the whip at the chattering classless.

#### Interview 3 – fragment 67

Many elements suggest that the interviewee is speaking here from a personal footing, rather than as a member of the research community, as in the earlier fragment. These include: the prominence of the pronoun “I”, the general frame of reference of the account – the private setting of New Year’s Eve party, the content of the account – reflecting on one’s life aims (“I would like to be a bit useful to the world; I would like to make the world a better place”) in a life-or-death context (“so someone could say I’ve cured him”), as well as the emotional load of the expressions used (“I’m really pleased”). While expressing his keenness “to make the world a better place” with his research, the speaker nevertheless later rearticulates

his generally negative attitude towards the Agenda. In doing so, he seems to be mobilizing once again his professional footing, as an academic, and hence a member of the “chattering classless”, which the politicians (“a political initiative”), in his eyes, aims to discipline. Hence in the two above-cited fragments of Interview 3, I would see the speaker as changing footing from an ‘academic’ to a ‘personal’ and back to the ‘academic’ (or ‘class’) frame. So, in this complex interplay of positions and meanings, ‘impact’ would have very different connotations depending on the footing the academic is speaking from (although, note that when discussing his ‘usefulness’ of his research to professionals, the speaker carefully avoids the term ‘impact’).

In the last fragment which I cite in this context the shifts of footing on the part of the interviewee are quite explicitly signalled. When asked whether ‘impact’ enters into play when he assesses other academics, the interviewee, a professor of linguistics, explained:

Well, when I look at their work as a linguist, I don't worry about that stuff. I want to find out if they are doing things that I find interesting and useful and helpful for me. As an administrator, when I look at other people's work, I think that linguistics like many sciences has neglected the public. (...) At some point, when we were talking about promotion (...) I would want to take a look at the impact of their work. But I would look in two forms, you know, what is the impact in academics – what is the impact on their field. And then I would also look, what is the impact for the general public. And that would come into my thinking in different times...

Interview 13 – fragment 68

The changes in footing are visible in the markers used by the speaker to indicate his different roles: “as a linguist”, “as an administrator”. The speaker explains that when he assesses academic work “as a linguist”, he doesn't pay attention to impact, but to the qualities of the research itself.

However, when he evaluates it “as an administrator” he would be interested in impact “in two forms”. Here again a double meaning is given to ‘impact’, one of which is “impact for the general public”. So, this linguist’s approach to impact will depend on which of his professional roles he is performing at the moment – “it comes into his thinking in different times”.

My aim in this section was to show that in discussing the role of ‘impact’ in their research, academics express very complex views, which at first might seem on the verge of internal contradiction. I argued that these complexities can be often explained by accounting for the shifts of footing in talk. The judgment on the Impact Agenda will depend on the role which the academic is speaking from, namely if they are talking “as a linguist” (a researcher, an academic – in brief, a member of the academic community, a particular field thereof or even a social class), as an administrator or as an individual person with values and aspirations shaped by their unique life stories. In the next and final section I will pick up a phrase uttered by the previously-cited speaker who said that [impact] “comes into his thinking in different times” (fragment 68). I propose considering this expression as a metaphor of a real process which took place in the context of the Agenda. I will reflect on what it means for impact “to come into thinking” and how this *entrance* affects academic concepts of self.

### ***9.6. The influence of the Impact Agenda on the academic self***

The previous chapter, no 8, examined the shape of a new genre – including fixed vocabulary, grammatical features, narrative constructions and pragmatic functions. The constraints of this genre eventually shape the way in which research impact is presented in text. In this section, I ask the question if the existence of an impact infrastructure which puts pressure on academics to document and prove their impact influences also the way in which research is presented in talk, in less official, non-evaluative settings (or, in Goffman’s terms, on the back stage). While this is not a diachronic

study and I will not be able to systematically show a change, which might have occurred in respondents' attitudes and their patterns of talk, I will document the struggles and hesitations of academics in a particular time, soon after REF2014 assessment, to zoom into a particular moment – the instant when impact “comes into their thinking”.

Despite the fact that academics often distance themselves in one way or another from the assessment exercise (see section 9.4), I often had the impression that nevertheless, the fact of having taken part in the assessment, together with all the related procedures and processes was not without influence on the way they present their research, also in non-official, non-evaluative contexts, such as the research interview. One level on which this influence is visible concerns vocabulary choices – interviewees routinely spoke about pathways to impact, impact generation activities, REF-readiness, REF-able research their impact officers etc. The ‘impact speak’ which we have examined in the chapter on genre has made its way into every-day, casual academic conversations.

But the question suggests itself if the mere fact of being in contact with the impact infrastructure – together with ‘impact speak’, the genre of impact CS, particular administrative procedures – will have an influence on an academics' perception of their own work and their presentation of ‘academic self’. Does the existence of the REF on the horizon, even when one does not actively engage with the policy, create a pressure to reframe one's research in the context of the policy and in its terms? In approaching this question, I will start by looking at interview fragments from three exchanges with academics who were not closely involved in the drafting of impact CSs for REF2014.

The first one comes from an interview with a senior academic, who was engaged in the REF submission of his unit on the side of research management. The respondent was aware that the interview would focus on REF, the IA and possibly on the impact CSs submitted by his unit. He was one of the interviewees who brought up the topic of impact themselves and

he spontaneously expressed a moderately positive opinion on the Agenda as “potentially valuable”. What the respondent perhaps did not expect is that I would ask him about the impact of *his own* work. This could have been a surprising question as the respondent was not an author of a CS for REF 2014 and, indeed, he was nearing retirement when the Agenda was put into place. In the fragment below the academic responds to my unexpected question:

Interviewer: What particularly struck me is that both of these fields [in your research] seem invested in professional areas. I was wondering how you would see the impact your research has on these areas, or other areas outside of academia?

Interviewee: Well, that’s a, yeah, mhm, that’s, that’s an interesting question because I don’t see any direct impact... In the sense that my work... Oh no, that’s not true! (...) [One strand of my research] will feed indirectly into the Impact Agenda. And that’s what I mean by saying my impact is indirect. But my history is of working with people in industry, and consultancy, with direct impact. I can give you examples if you want...

Interview 1– fragment 69

We can see how the speaker starts with a filler (“well... that’s an interesting question”), as if trying to ‘buy time’ when answering an uncomfortable interrogation (after all, he had already expressed a positive view on the Agenda). He then states, hesitantly, that he doesn’t see any “direct impact” of his research, to quickly rectify in a gesture of self-repair “oh no, that’s not true”! He later proceeds to argue that a strand of his work “feeds indirectly into the Impact Agenda”, and finally concludes that another part of his research will have “direct impact” (note that the speaker differentiates between various meanings of ‘impact’ – in this case “direct” and “indirect impact”). Interestingly, he quickly mentions the IA, while in my question I did not specify that I was referring to impact ‘in the REF sense’. Following the unfolding of this argument we see that over just a few

sentences the speaker went from claiming he didn't see any direct impact in his work, through arguing that his research had "indirect" impact to finally stating that indeed it had also "direct" impact and that it feeds into the Impact Agenda. He also promptly volunteered to offer examples of such work. I would argue that this fragment shows a regulation of one's own talk in order to align with the requirements of a policy. It is amazing that just the mention of the word 'impact', in a non-evaluative and relaxed backstage setting (a junior academic interviewing a much senior colleague) can produce such a powerful effect on the framing of one's life narrative, also in the case of an academic who would never actually be required to present an impact CS.

The following extract comes from an interview with a younger academic who took a very different stance towards impact. Throughout the interview, the speaker explained his critical attitude on the IA, arguing that the real importance of his professional role – in his view – lies in fostering critical thought among students, not in influencing professional practice, government policy etc. While he was marginally involved in a CS submission in REF2014, he spoke negatively of the experience and expressed no will to be involved in future impact assessments or other related activities. To my surprise, towards the end of the interview he brought up an event in which, nevertheless, he did put forward the impact of his research. In the following extract the interviewee talks about the role which impact had come to play in academics' careers in his institution:

It's part of your annual review, part of my annual review now. What we have to do is we have to talk about impact. I wrote... This is going to sound like I'm being really hypocritical. And in a way I am. Maybe it's just laziness! [speaker goes on to describe his research project which eventually lead to change in policy]. And I wrote this in my annual review because I desperately wanted to be evaluated as very good or excellent... Because I thought I did quite well last year...

Interview 25 – fragment 70

Even though at many points in time the speaker refrained from activities involved in impact assessment, or indeed explicitly expressed his will not to be involved in them, at some point he found himself in a situation where he gave in, as if surrendering to the system. In order to be assessed well, which the speaker thought he deserved, he needed to play according to the rules of the managerial evaluation. The result however was disappointing:

I desperately wanted to be evaluated as very good or excellent (...) But I wasn't. And I was criticised because despite apparently this research doing quite well, I don't want it to be an impact case study.

#### Interview 25 – fragment 71

Mentioning potentially 'impactful' or 'REF-able' research in an annual review set off an institutional machinery which saw the interviewee repeatedly contacted, in the months that followed, by university managers who encouraged him to "work up" his work into a CS. His name was also "put on a list" and added to an impact-related newsletter. Despite the fact that he reiterated with management his lack of interest in authoring a CS, his name was not taken off the list and, in his own words, he is constantly "badgered" about the issue:

IE: I get criticised for being uncollegiate for not wanting to do it and for not enthusiastically supporting management. (...)

IR: But you don't want to do it just because you're not fond of the Impact Agenda or...?

IE: Yes, and the time that it takes to do it. (...) And there's the googling myself that I imagine it would take (...) I don't think it's right. I think it breeds egotism and hierarchy, status, kind of wish fulfilment. I don't like any of that in academia really.

#### Interview 25 – fragment 72

The impression one gets from this fragment is that of an oppressive machinery (the impact infrastructure) which it is very difficult to escape or oppose, no matter how consolidated one's attitude. The disappointing result of the evaluation, and the response which followed my respondent's withdrawal from impact-related activities would suggest that it is not enough to just play one round of the game. One would need to be engaged in playing it long-term, something the interviewee was not happy to do. This experience left a bitter taste for the respondent, not only in terms of the frustration with a lower than expected assessment. The speaker expresses also a harsh judgement of himself in view of having complied, albeit briefly, with a policy which he disapproves of: "this is going to sound like I'm being really hypocritical...and in a way I am. Maybe it's just laziness?" This moment of self-reflection again shows how the interview setting allows a thinking out loud which sometimes results in unexpected moments of vulnerability.

Also, the below-cited interviewee from the beginning of the interview seemed rather detached and, if anything, critical of the IA. Therefore, when towards the end of the interview I asked her explicitly if submitting a CS had any sort of influence on how she thinks about her research, I expected a negative answer. The response was a surprising one, perhaps equally to me as for the speaker. See the fragment below:

Interviewer: [The fact that] you participated in this in this exercise, you submitted this... or this case study was submitted for you... did that have any sort of influence on how you perceive your work in context?

Interviewee: Do you know what? It did, it did, it did. Almost a kind of a massive influence it had. And maybe this is the answer that you didn't see coming ((laughing)).

Interviewer: It didn't sound like that, no, no, no.

Interviewee: What it did for me though... it did [have an influence] but maybe from a different route as to people who were signed up for this [the REF submission] from the outset. Because when I actually saw quite a bit of that written up in kind of version one... Because I'd been saying all along that "really? I really don't think that my study should be part of [the] impact [submission]" (...) So when I saw this being shaped up and actually people [who gave testimonies] I kind of thought: goodness me, you know, is this...? You know... and there were other moving things.

#### Interview 21 – fragment 73

The interviewee went on to explain that through the preparation of the CS, and particularly through familiarizing herself with the collected testimonials she gained greater awareness of an area of practice which has been influenced by her research. Incidentally, this particular area is of great personal and emotional importance to her. She concluded, in a somewhat trembling voice:

That's literally a really moving thing for me to say that, to be honest. I'm getting emotional now...

#### Interview 21 – fragment 74

If we look back at previously-cited fragments of the same interview (see fragment 16 cited in 7.5, or fragment 56 cited in 9.4), we will see that this interviewee's approach underwent a significant change. She went from being not only reluctant to take part in the exercise but also strongly sceptical of the existence of any impact of her research ("I never had an inkling... I laughed out loud") to being strongly emotionally affected by the reframing of her work in the impact CS ("almost a kind of a massive influence it had") – perhaps to her own surprise. The interviewee's attitude changed not only in the course of the exercise itself, but – as if mirroring this process – also during the interview. In both cases, elements which were up to that moment implicit (accounts of end-users of her research, the researcher's own emotional response to the exercise) are made explicit.

Once again, this shows how difficult it is to oppose the overwhelming force of the impact infrastructure, particularly in view of the rewards that it offers, which do not always come in the expected form.

On the basis of the above-cited interviews I would argue that presenting one's research impact in a CS, participating in the submission or sometimes just being aware of the impact infrastructure built around Agenda has effects on academic's self-presentation that go way beyond just the exercise itself. The account in Interview 1 was an example of willing reframing of one's work in terms of the Agenda in the case of an academic who did not have 'formal' reasons to comply with the policy. The example of interviewee 25 showed that even the most reluctant of academic subjects can, in certain situations, be persuaded to take part in the *game*, while the narrative of interviewee 21 exemplified the extent to which the reframing of one's research in a different context can influence the perception of one's academic role even in the case of an initially distanced and critical researcher.

It is at this stage that the conceptual work of 'problematizing' an area of human activity started to overlap with the work of consciously reflecting on one's own research in terms of the new Agenda. This process of re-working oneself, shaping one's goals and everyday practices through the use of discourse (writing CSs, recounting one's life narrative in view of impact) can be understood in terms of Foucauldian 'subjectivation'. The words 'shaping' and 're-working' can be taken here quite explicitly. Describing the process of writing a CS, or performing to the impact-related requirements in general, respondents used expressions such as "fitting into a straitjacket that the university was presented with" (interview 14, fragment 24, cited in 7.6.) or "feeling like a square peg forced into a round hole" (interviewee 25, in communication after interview). These metaphors seem to describe the state of being 'moulded' by an external, yet unspecified force. We can perceive the 'impact infrastructure' as a source of this force but we will remember that the infrastructure operates through subjects' willing participation. And hence this 'reshaping' is *work* that one

willingly conducts on oneself. This reality, once again, seems to be alluded to in the metaphors used by respondents, who spoke for instance about “the mental effort” required to “grasp” the rules governing the Agenda (compare Interview 16, fragment 5 in 7.2).

Many of my respondents found taking part in the REF submission – including the reshaping and work on oneself that had to be done – a daunting experience. In some cases, however, the process of reshaping one’s academic identity triggered by the Agenda was a welcome development. For instance, a few interviewees explained that the impact assessment valorised their extra-academic involvement which before the introduction of the Agenda went unnoticed at the workplace. One of these respondents stated:

At last, I can take my academic identity and my activist identity and roll them up into one.

Interviewee 11 (in communication outside of interview), fragment 75

In this chapter I often contrasted two types of academic presentation of self: the frontstage, exemplified by the official, formal and evaluative exercise of impact assessment in REF2014 and the backstage embodied in the non-evaluative, anonymous and casual setting of the interview. This is of course a simplification, as in any interaction “participants constantly move between the two” (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999b, p. 67). Throughout this section I drew attention to the fact that the exchange which takes place during an interview rarely concerns just the two people in the room. Rather, it is entire fields and disciplines which are evoked while the views that the speakers struggle with and argue against are not always ones which were expressed in the conversation. By recalling and recounting the story of the impact assessment and by reframing one’s work in the context of an administrative machinery with a set of values and principles of its own, affects are awakened – often difficult ones of unease, embarrassment, emotion or guilt. In engaging in positioning practices, in dealing with these

affects and explaining to oneself (and, incidentally also me, the interviewer) the place of impact in one's career and life, academics contribute to the discursive construction of impact to the same degree as they do through writing and submitting CSs. Hence, both the process of constructing one's research impact in a CS, and (re)constructing one's career story in view of impact during an interview can be understood in terms of Bourdieu's concept of officialisation, to recall, "the process through which the group teaches itself and conceals from itself its own truth" (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 21-22).

"Does the Impact Agenda, together with its impact infrastructure, influence linguists' presentation of self?" was the opening question of this chapter. In the above sections I picked it apart and examined its different aspects – the definition of impact, the question of discipline, back-stage and front-stage management and the footing the respondents speak from. I tried to do justice to the richness and texture of the data which reveals myriad influences and struggles which shape the academic self in the context of the rise of the concept of research impact. But in doing so, I have perhaps also obscured the answer to the principle question. And in closing this chapter, *en lieu* of an answer of my own, I will leave the reader with yet another extract from my data. To the question if participating in REF2014 had an influence on her perception of academic work, one of my respondents answered:

I suppose there are complicated answers to it but there is also kind of a simple 'yes' answer. I kind of dare anyone to actually say: 'no, it has not affected me at all'.

Interview 21 – fragment 76

## **10. Conclusions**

At the time of submitting this thesis (2018/2019), it is clear that in across the academic sector much energy is invested in preparation to the next editions of REF and the impact-side of research is not a small element of this work. The daily efforts aimed at securing and documenting impact, the constant discussions on the minutiae of the assessment and of the prepared submissions seem already to have rendered the term ‘impact’ neutral and natural. This focus on the practicalities of impact assessment, forced on the academics by the regimes of the performative university, seem to obscure the fact that ‘impact’ is not only a young, still relatively hazy concept, but also a contingent one. In this thesis, I aimed to unpick the timeline presented in section 4.1. as Figure 1, and to look very closely at each stage, paying particular attention to the level of discourse.

### ***10.1. Findings on the discourse of/on impact***

Researchers in the field of impact evaluation have remarked that “the practice of assessing broader impacts has raced far ahead of its theory” (Donovan, 2017, p. 1). The present inquiry – an exploration of the discursive aspect of the introduction of a new aspect of academic evaluation – is an effort to address this gap, in that it provides a robust theoretical framework which describes the different phases of the emergence of ‘impact’. My work complements, and at some points challenges, existing research by highlighting the role of language in the process of constructing the idea of ‘impact’ and individuals’ conceptualisations thereof. In analysing the stages which lead to the formation and implementation of the IA, I applied a theoretical framework of Foucauldian governmentality combined with elements of linguistic pragmatics. I was not just interested in describing particular practices

which take place in the context of REF – such as selection of eligible impactful research, drafting CSs, positioning oneself towards the exercise – but also in advancing *a theory* of this practice.

The research questions flagged up in the introduction were addressed in the three analysis chapters. In chapter 7, which focused on the institutional aspect of the implementation of the Impact Agenda, I showed how a heterogeneous impact infrastructure composed of procedures, positions, document forms, computer systems and other elements was constructed around the notion of impact to support its implementation. I conceptualised this ensemble of realities of a different sort and order as an apparatus (or *dispositif*) in the Foucauldian meaning.

In chapter 8, I argued that the new hybrid genre of impact case study is a core, binding part of this infrastructure. I listed the linguistic features of the genre (in 8.1), drawing attention (in 8.2) to how they contribute to realizing the pragmatic aims of the genre. I argued that the genre of impact CS had two strategic functions, through which academics asserted their position in the face of power. The first one was ‘officialising’ – presenting one’s recognizable position as an academic and the second strategic was that of ‘regularizing’ – showing one’s alignment with the new policy. I argued that the genre of impact CS can be seen as a site of balancing acts in which academics present themselves as *respectable* but also as *respecting* the new regulations and the ideological structure which stands behind it. In section 8.2.3 I proposed looking at the processes of learning and teaching the new genre of impact case study as an instance of acquiring new ‘professional vision’.

In chapter 9, I conceptualized the genre of impact CS as a form of academics’ presentation of self on the ‘front stage’ and I looked at how it is different from their presentation on the ‘back stage’ – a non-evaluative interaction within the interview setting. I drew attention to my respondents’ distancing from their accounts in the documents, achieved through irony, undermining their own status as authors or presenting the assessment as a

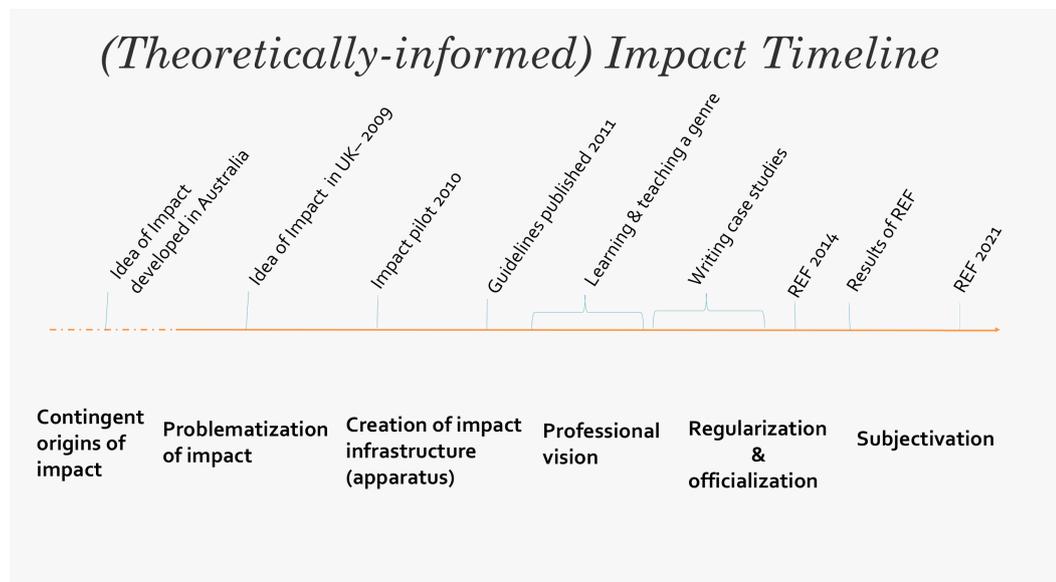
‘performance’ – “a game everybody has to play” (section 9.3). The positions expressed by researchers towards the concept of impact assessment in the context of the interview are themselves complex, multileveled and sometimes on the verge of contradiction. I explain these discrepancies within the subject using the notion of changes in respondents’ footing (section 9.4). These occur throughout the interview, and remain in function of the different roles the respondents take on in their lives. So, while an academic might approve of the idea of research “changing the world for the better” when speaking from an individual footing, they may nevertheless strongly oppose the practice of assessing impact when speaking from their footing as a member of an academic community. I drew attention to the fact that the interview is a site of negotiation of these internal discrepancies and of explaining not only to the interviewer but also *to oneself* the position of impact in linguistics, and the position of linguist(ic)s towards impact.

Finally, (in section 9.5), I looked at examples which show a particularly strong friction, struggle or change of stance in an academic’s positioning towards impact – in the process of preparation to the impact assessment and during the interview. I showed how the existence of the impact infrastructure constitutes a horizon of thought and of discourse which guides the behaviour of academic subjects even when they are in principle indifferent or unwilling to yield to its force. This relationship between the institutional reality (the existence of a policy of impact assessment) and the way in which my respondents understand and present their role as researchers in the field of linguistics can be described in terms of ‘subjectivation’.

Language had a crucial role in all of the stages of the introduction of ‘impact’ – in the polyphonic debate which preceded its introduction, in the work of shaping a new ‘professional vision’, a new vocabulary (‘impact speak’), a new genre, and in negotiating individual positions towards ‘impact’. My analysis showed how the discourse of impact became

established in British academia on the level of policy, institutions and finally – individuals.

As mentioned above, my entire thesis was an effort to re-visit the process represented by the timeline in Figure 1, investigating it through the lens of theory in order to explain the new practices and positions which emerged in the context of the exercise. Figure 14 below presents the different theoretical notions used in this thesis, matching them with particular moments in the history of impact assessment. Naturally, this linear representation is simplified, as the processes in question are ongoing, often overlapping with others and difficult to pin down in terms of chronology.



**Figure 14 – (Theoretically-informed) Impact Timeline**

This graph revisits the one presented in figure 1 and proposes a set of theoretical notions which explain the stages of the establishment of ‘impact’ as an element of academic reality.

Hence, as shown in figure 14, in this work I proposed to look at the emergence of the term ‘impact’ from the point of view of its contingent origins (the influence of tendencies such as knowledge-based economy, the rise of the third mission of universities, as well as class issues and tensions between academic disciplines). I described the creation of the IA in terms of ‘problematization’ – a charting of a new field to be regulated under the label ‘impact’. I attended to the creation of an ‘impact infrastructure’ – an

apparatus composed of positions, procedures, forms etc. which subtly guides the conduct of academics. I demonstrated how the existence of this apparatus shapes academics 'professional vision' so as to make 'impact' a salient element of academic activity. In attending to the REF case studies, I showed how they realize, through specific linguistic devices, the pragmatic aims of regularization and officialization. Finally, I showed how academics struggle with the task of subjectivation – incorporating 'impact' into their presentation of 'self', while arguing that the existence of the 'impact infrastructure' is key factor in this process.

### ***10.2. Contribution to knowledge and future directions of research***

The three different areas to which I hope to add with my thesis are: 1) Higher Education Studies (and particularly research on impact evaluation), 2) Valuation and Evaluation Studies, 3) methodology of Discourse Analysis.

In the area of Higher Education Studies (and other strands within sociology, organization studies, information science, pedagogy etc. which investigate practices in academia), my work adds to the rapidly-growing, but still rather limited, body of literature focusing on research impact evaluation. It addresses a lack of empirical studies on practices related to the evaluation of impact and offers a comment on the effects of the first edition of REF. It is also original in terms of the discipline in which it is situated – while some authors of studies on the IA touch upon linguistic issues related to the assessment, there is a gap in terms of systematic studies of discursive practices around impact evaluation. Finally, where many existing studies on impact seem to portray the policy in almost mechanistic terms, with my work I aim to add a layer of reflexivity and to offer a more fine-grained analysis of emergent practices and attitudes. This qualitative approach is significant as it allows attending to tendencies and potential conflicts which could be overlooked by quantitative studies – an

important input both for the academics involved and the policymakers. For instance, my study shows how the introduction of a new administrative procedure contributes to a re-structuring of perceived boundaries between disciplines, professional attitudes and patterns of communication.

My thesis, focusing as it does on the interdisciplinary field of linguistics, may also be of importance for the emergent field of Social Sciences and Humanities Studies, which can be situated within the area of Higher Education Studies, or on its fringes. For instance, it can be a point of reference for future studies looking into boundary work between disciplines (e.g. applied vs. non-applied) or the role of ‘research impact’ in SSH. Finally, the part of this thesis which deals with academics’ own positioning towards impact assessment will be of interest for researchers working on professional and academic identity, and particularly the way in which it is affected by modes of performativity and evaluation practices.

The broadening of an evaluation system to include a new element is a development interesting not only to those who are affected by the assessment or who conduct it, but also for those who study evaluation practices as such. Since my study presents how a new ‘value’ is constructed, negotiated, defined and adapted on a local level it will also be of interest to scholars who look at the social/discursive construction of values, their dependence on local contexts, practices of accepting, rejecting and subverting values. Hence, this work might be relevant in the field of Evaluation and Valuation Studies, Sociology of Valuation and Evaluation and other fields which deal with issues of (e)valuation.

I explained in section 5.1 how the rapidly-growing field of discourse studies is segmented into strands hailing from different traditions, the two broadest of which are pragmatics and post-structuralism. While researchers working in the first strand often focus on micro practices which they study using a variety of linguistic methods, scholars from the second one frequently prefer to look at the macro level while drawing heavily on philosophy and sociology. My study is an attempt (surely not the first, but

by no means canonical) of bridging these two orientations. By working closely on extracts of data and pointing to concrete structures in text and talk I hope to have done justice to the linguistic traditions of pragmatics (including genre analysis). I was also inspired by many pragmaticians and symbolic interactionists – Goffman, Goodwin, Hanks – in explaining the practices which take place in the context of research impact evaluation as instances of *action*. In turn, when explaining these practices in relation to broader institutional and societal phenomena, as well as in the context of the problem of ‘identity’ or ‘self’, I used Foucauldian notions, such as ‘apparatus’, ‘problematization’ and ‘subjectivation’. This study demonstrates that linking pragmatic methods with post-structuralist theory can allow a complex description of social and discursive phenomena, which avoids the shortcomings of both approaches: an undertheoretisation recognizable in some pragmatic studies, and the ‘methodological deficit’ of much poststructuralist research on discourse.

The limitations of this work also point to the future directions in which further work on research impact evaluation can be conducted. In view of the upcoming next REF (in 2021) it would be an exciting endeavour to conduct a diachronical investigation of the practices, positions and self-presentation of academics in the context of the already established impact assessment and to contrast it with the phase of ‘emergence’ described in this work. An ethnographic approach might allow an even more fine-grained analysis of every-day struggles and positioning practices, while a broad mixed-method approach (for instance a corpus-driven study focusing on the genre of impact CS) would allow drawing more general conclusions on the influence of REF on writing practice in academia. One of the limitations of my own approach, which I drew attention to in 4.2.2, is the fact that it looks at the relatively ‘successful’ participants of the impact assessment exercise (as it builds on a corpus of CSs which have been selected and submitted to the REF and interviews with the authors of these documents). The following edition of REF could offer an opportunity of conducting a broader inquiry, one which would provide more granularity in looking at different positions occupied by academics in the context of the

exercise – including potentially excluded academics, fields or institutions. Additionally, future studies could draw on the data collected for this study while looking into the differences in the reception of the IA between different affected groups (scholars, managers, policy-makers), where my study consciously focused on the structural aspects of change in academic discourse in general.

Questions related to research evaluation in the UK are often considered pertinent also outside Great Britain as the RAE/REF remains an important point of reference for research evaluation bodies also in other countries. Exercises similar to or even very closely modelled on the impact assessment in REF are being currently introduced for instance in Australia (Australian Research Council, 2018) and in Norway (Research Council of Norway, 2017). This offers a fascinating opportunity of conducting comparative studies which could explore the differences in regulations, the influence of the local academic cultures and their effects on genre and the reactions of concerned academics. Many other governments and national research councils are also looking for methods to assess impact (Wróblewska, 2017b), hence observing the way in which the area of impact will become problematized in different contexts, in response to different struggles and problems in academia and beyond – possibly in ways quite different to the IA – will give rise to another set of intriguing questions.

Many times throughout my doctoral study I have been confronted with the tricky question about the impact of *my* work. Given the theoretical slant of my approach, it was not straightforward to find an element of my work which could be immediately applied in practice. However, I have come to believe that my observations on the genre of impact CS, including the explanation of its features in terms of particular pragmatic aims, can be of use of future impact CS authors and editors. I believe also my remarks on the elements which are usually missing from the genre (humour, emotion, accounts of problems), and on how they can nevertheless be inserted into the documents, may serve as an inspiration for authors wishing to write more realistic and complex accounts of impact. Should my study reach the

policymakers, I would argue that it would be advisable to recognize also narratives which are not as perfect, linear, and indeed, not as successful, as the bulk of the ones I studied for this thesis.

That said, a far more important foreseeable impact of my study lies elsewhere. In view of the opinions expressed by my academic respondents, as well as many interlocutors who have commented on my work in its making, I have come to realize that ‘impact’ is still a highly problematic element of academic reality, which academics struggle to incorporate into their construction of professional ‘self’. I would like to think that my analysis of academics’ positioning towards the notion of impact can serve as a lens through which academics can look at the effects that the modern performative academia has on disciplines, academic practices and on academic identities. The theoretical framework I have developed can help in systematically thinking through one’s own stance towards impact, spotting the contradictions engendered by the operation of the impact infrastructure and finally coming to terms with them... or challenging, in an informed manner, elements of the system. Not enough for an impact case study, I’m afraid. But still I believe this *too* constitutes impact.

### ***10.3. Final reflection***

Since I have commented critically on the tendency of impact CSs to obscure problems and offer polished, linear and often unrealistic narratives, it would be unfair if I did not comment on the problems I encountered in writing this thesis. These were not only of a theoretical or analytical nature. They also had to do with the practical aspects of engaging with academic discourse in writing a scholarly thesis and with the management of my own emerging ‘academic self’.

While during my time as a PhD student I enjoyed the intellectual challenge of conducting doctoral research and was greatly inspired by my supervisors and colleagues, I often felt out of my depth. Doing research was

challenging and at times exhausting – it was a strain on the brain and on the body. In interviewing senior scholars, in presenting my work to the public, in sharing my work in a written form, I often had to push myself beyond my comfort zone. And apart from the ‘core’ academic duties expected of every doctoral candidate, there was also the additional labour of teaching, networking, creating and curating a social media presence, updating my CV with new lines...

Now that I have completed the task, I realize that on a certain level the theory I present in my thesis describes also the struggles I have been experiencing during my period as a PhD candidate. My work is an exploration of technologies of the self in academia, and the IA is only one of the myriad contexts in which they are performed. While I have never personally ‘submitted’ to the REF, I believe that also drafting and redrafting a thesis, attending supervision meetings, preparing for a viva defence, charting one’s future career, applying for jobs constitutes a form of subjectivation – one aimed at shaping oneself (one’s self) as an academic.

I only now realize that a lot of the exhaustion I was dealing with (despite spending entire days at a desk with limited physical activity) came not only from the actual work on my research, but also from the work I was performing *on myself* – in order to become who I am. I move in the same space as my interviewees – the modern competitive academia. I am at the beginning of my path and they are established academics and professionals, often very successful ones. And yet it is difficult to say who is under more pressure to perform these tasks of regularization, officialization and subjectivation.

These tasks, as I have argued in the thesis, come with certain strains and challenges but also with their own rewards, pleasures and promises, often of a discursive nature – as they regard one’s role and potential for further action and development. And it is from this position – shaped by the struggles of building an academic self and animated by the hope of new goals which this new role will allow me to peruse – that I conclude this dissertation.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix 1. Impact Case Studies Included in the Corpus*

Ref. No:	CS no	Title of CS	University	UoA
1	43557	Language Testing: Assessing Proficiency and Improving Education	University of Lancaster	29: English Language and Literature
2	43561	Corpus Research: Its Impact on Industry	University of Lancaster	29
3	22177	Ecological Linguistics Research and its impact on Education for Sustainability	University of Gloucestershire	29
4	2579	Developing “Global Skills”	University of Warwick	21: Education
5	41287	‘Small stories’ research: its impact on the Greek classroom and beyond	King’s College London	31: Classics
6	43541	Research on natural language processing leading to improved language tests and dictionaries for millions of language learners	University of Lancaster	11: Computer Science and Informatics
7	20943	Improving the impartiality of the BBC's coverage of the Middle East and North Africa	Loughborough University	36 : Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management
8	1026	Language Policy and Planning in Northern Ireland	University of Ulster	28 Modern Languages and Linguistics
9	1028	From local dialects to global languages: supporting	University of Ulster	28

		multilingualism in Northern Ireland		
10	1029	Embedding computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in Modern Foreign Languages curricula, in industry and in the community	University of Ulster	28
11	1697	Articulate Instruments – visualising speech	Queen Margaret University	28
12	1698	Electropalatography (EPG) to Support Speech Pathology Assessment, Diagnosis and Intervention	Queen Margaret University	28
13	2734	Language learning and teaching in Macedonia: policy and delivery	University of Greenwich	28
14	2810	Working with vulnerable deaf communities to support the vitality of endangered rural sign languages	University of Central Lancashire	28
15	2811	Championing linguistic rights and educational opportunities for sign language users around the world through Sign Language Typology research	University of Central Lancashire	28
16	3471	Devolution and the Creation of a New Language Law Regime in Wales	Cardiff University	28
17	3899	Bringing the benefits of grammar knowledge closer to L2 practitioners	Cardiff University	28
18	4893	Preserving a linguistic heritage: Biak, an endangered Austronesian	Oxford University	28

		language		
19	4896	Public dissemination of the British National Corpus	Oxford University	28
20	6375	Innovative computational linguistic technologies for language service providers	Leeds University	28
21	11822	Shaping European Policy on the Training of Translators	Durham University	28
22	13200	The Norman French Dialects of the Channel Islands	Cambridge University	28
23	13201	Phonetics applied to Forensic Speaker Comparison	Cambridge University	28
24	12839	Children's speech and literacy difficulties: influencing professional practice	Sheffield University	28
25	13840	Widening opportunities for socially disadvantaged children through language and literacy support	Sheffield University	28
26	17641	ROMEYKA	Cambridge University	28
27	17642	The English Profile Programme and EF Research Unit	Cambridge University	28
28	18018	Helping to Preserve the Endangered Language and Culture of the Kiowa Tribe	Queen Mary University of London (QMUL)	28
29	18020	Linguistics research for English Language teachers	Queen Mary University of London (QMUL)	28
30	18028	Language policy: informing policy debate, public understanding, and education	Queen Mary University of London (QMUL)	28

31	18131	Policy and practice of complementary schools for multilingual, transnational, and minority ethnic children	Birkbeck University	28
32	18132	Developing intercultural communicative competence amongst young people	Birkbeck University	28
33	20470	Media for All: Live Subtitling for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People Around the World	Roehampton University	28
34	20471	Changing the English Language Testing Landscape	Roehampton University	28
35	21107	The languages and culture of southern Arabia	University of Salford	28
36	21132	Relationships of trust: Public service interpreting and translation (PSIT) in the community and in statutory and non-statutory welfare services	University of Salford	28
37	21714	Transforming clinical practice in aphasia: The Comprehensive Aphasia Test (CAT)	Newcastle University	28
38	21715	The importance of communication change over time: Influencing practice in the management of people with Parkinson's disease	Newcastle University	28
39	21716	Trouble talking: changing policy and practice for the language delayed child	Newcastle University	28
40	21719	The Talk of the Toon: Enhancing the Linguistic Cultural	Newcastle University	28

		Heritage of North East England		
41	24009	Gaelic Language Policy in Scotland: Revitalising and Sustaining the Gaelic Language	University of Edinburgh	28
42	24042	Commercial and clinical impact of speech synthesis	University of Edinburgh	28
43	24043	Cultural evolution research inspires art	University of Edinburgh	28
44	24044	Bilingualism Matters	University of Edinburgh	28
45	24043	Literacy and language support in South Sudan	University of Edinburgh	28
46	24571	Place-name research supports local investment and community initiatives	University of Gasgow	28
47	24573	Museums and Galleries and the International Visitor Experience (MGIVE)	University of Westminster	28
48	25828	Promoting Equal Access to Justice in Multilingual Societies.	Heriot-Watt University	28
49	25829	Ensuring Greater Equality for Sign Language Users	Heriot-Watt University	28
50	2621	Language policy, diversity and usage	Bangor University	28
51	26758	Informing and influencing the creation of language policies and strategies at local and national government levels to promote the use of Welsh amongst young people	Swansea University	28
52	28025	Welsh Lexicography and Terminology	Bangor university	28

53	28112	Modernisation of teaching German as a foreign language	Manchester University	28
54	28113	Number and recursion: the popular understanding of language	Manchester University	28
55	28115	Promoting recognition and status of the Romani language	Manchester University	28
56	28116	Supporting multilingualism and community language needs	Manchester University	28
57	36241	Languages in war and conflict	Reading University	28
58	36979	Changing English Language Teaching in the Global Primary Sector	Aston University	28
59	36980	Transforming EU policy and practice in translator training by defining translation competence	Aston University	28
60	36981	Forensic linguistics: improving the delivery of justice	Aston University	28
61	37244	Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru / A Dictionary of the Welsh Language	University of Wales	28
62	38145	Shared Spaces and Names of Places: The Northern Ireland Place-Name Project (NIPNP)	Queen's University Belfast	28
63	38704	Linguistics research in Modern Languages and its impact in the community	University of Exeter	28
64	39940	Improved mediation outcomes through an enhanced understanding of the cultural aspects of translation and	University of Nottingham	28

		interpretation.		
65	40823	Creating effective teamwork in obstetric emergencies	University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol	28
66	40828	Highlighting and preserving the Mosestén language and culture	University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol	28
67	42280	Discourse analysis in medical settings	University of Wolverhampton	28
68	42281	Post-editing effort indicators for estimation of translation quality and productivity	University of Wolverhampton	28
69	42775	Informing Approaches to Endangered Language Protection and Revitalisation in the Channel Islands	SOAS	28
70	42791	Documenting, Preserving and Sharing Global Linguistic Heritage (ELAR)	SOAS	28
71	43364	SOILLSE: Building an Infrastructure for Gaelic	University of Aberdeen	28
72	43408	Linguistic analysis of asylum seekers' claims to origin	University of Essex	28
73	43477	Forensic speaker comparison	University of York	28
74	43490	Developing prototypes for natural-language interfaces in collaboration with BAE Systems	University of Essex	28
75	44021	Anglo-Norman Dictionary	Aberystwyth University	28
76	44186	28-03 Promoting Foreign Languages in Primary Schools	University of Southampton	28
77	28117	Improving the lives of Romani migrants	Manchester University	28

		in Western Europe		
78	28114	Informing Government Policy and Public Debate on European Media	Manchester University	28

*Appendix 2. Exemplary problematic case studies*

Number and title of CS	Description of CS	Decision regarding inclusion or exclusion from corpus and justification
CS 1027 – “The Irish Language in an Urban Environment”	The research deals with the history of language. The researchers mainly used methods pertaining to cultural, literary studies and history.	Experts felt that this sort of research pertains to language studies but not to linguistics and so the case study should be <b>excluded</b> from the corpus.
CS 21718 – “Medieval Heritage in the Convents of Northern Germany: Rediscovery, Preservation and Presentation”	The authors mention having conducted a ‘literary and linguistic’ analysis of medieval manuscripts, but it seems that the methods used were closer to philology than linguistics and were rather marginal for the entire project.	It was felt that the CS pertains to the field of Religious or Medieval Studies, hence it was decided that the case study would be <b>excluded</b> from the corpus.
CS24043 – “Cultural evolution research inspires art”	Most of the document focuses on the artistic implications of the project, but section 2 states that the impact was based on the research of ‘Language Evolution and Computation research group’.	The underlying work of the research group would clearly fall under ‘linguistics’ and thus the case study was <b>included</b> in the corpus.
CS 38684 – “Karl Gutzkow: Electronic Publishing and Public Engagement”	In section 1 “summary of impact” a bolded section states that the results of the project	Though the impact could perhaps be localized in the field of linguistics, it is not

	<p>“have been requested by an interdisciplinary linguistic digitalization project and will be integrated into an open access linguistic database”.</p>	<p>directly connected to the research conducted (an external organization requested the data to integrate it in a database) and hence the study was <b>excluded</b> from the corpus.</p>
<p>CS34804 – “Internationalising Dutch Studies”</p>	<p>Study on language policy regarding Dutch.</p>	<p>The case study does not rely on linguistic methods and hence it was <b>excluded from</b> the corpus.</p>

### *Appendix 3. Consent form and information sheet*



Participant identification number where applicable

#### CONSENT FORM

**Project Title:** “Research impact” and “academic ethos”. An investigation of discursive positioning practices in the context of a new element of evaluation.

**Name of Researcher:** Marta Natalia Wróblewska

**I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated 15.06.** (to be completed by participant)

**For the above project which I may keep for my records and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have**

**I agree to take part in the above study and am willing to be interviewed.**

**I understand that my information will be held and processed for the following purposes: research performed by the leading investigator or members of the DISCONEX research project (including quoting in papers, dissertations and other publications in an anonymous manner).**

**I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Participant**                      **Date**                                      **Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of person taking consent if different from Researcher**                      **Date**                                      **Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Researcher**                                      **Date**                                      **Signature**

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**Information Sheet**



Regarding:

**Project Title:** "Research impact" and "academic ethos". An investigation of discursive positioning practices in the context of a new element of evaluation.

**Name of Researcher:** Marta Natalia Wróblewska

1. The above-mentioned project will be carried out in years 2014-2018 as part of doctoral training at the Centre for Applied Linguistics at University of Warwick (UK) and in the framework of the ERC-funded DISCONEX project. The research is supervised by prof. Johannes Angermüller and dr. Malcolm MacDonald.
2. The aim of the research is to offer insights on the introduction and current use of the notion of 'impact' in assessment practices performed within the Research Excellence Framework (REF).
3. The participants were chosen in connection to their experience with the REF process of assessment, their insights into which were deemed important for the study.
4. All participants who will be interviewed for the purpose of this study will do so on an entirely voluntary basis. They may withdraw at any time. Withdrawal will not affect future treatment or have any negative consequences.
5. Participants may benefit from the research carried out by accessing its results (on demand) once the study has been completed.
6. Participation in the research will usually consist of conceding an interview (the length of which should not normally exceed one hour), which will be audio-recorded. The researcher might subsequently contact the participant in a form convenient for him or her asking for further clarifications, should the need arise.
7. The interview will remain anonymous – the identity of the participant will be known only to the researcher (or other members of the research team). The content of the interview will be always quoted in an anonymised way, rendering the identification of the participant impossible. The level of anonymity (eg. concealing profession, position occupied, age etc.) can be discussed with the researcher and agreed upon before or following interview.
8. The recording of the interview and any other material related to the research, which the participant might provide will be stored on a safe disk to which only the researcher or other members of the research team have access for at least 10 years after the completion of the study. After this period of time the data may be destroyed on the participant's request.
9. The material resulting from the interview will be used for the purpose of research exclusively.
10. The participant can request access to research findings resulting from the study in which he/she volunteered upon the completion of the project.
11. Queries or complaints concerning the study can be addressed to the researcher directly: Marta Natalia Wróblewska, m.n.wroblewska@warwick.ac.uk, Centre for Applied Linguistics, room 0.35 Warwick University, Coventry CV4 7AL

***Appendix 4. List of interviews with respondents' role or position***

Interview no	Role/ position
1	Research manager (academic)
2	Research manager (academic), author of CS
3	Research manager (academic), author of CS
4	Academic, author of CS
5	Academic, author of CS
6	Academic, author of CS
7	Research manager (professional)
8	Academic, whose work is basis for CS
9	Academic, author of CS
10	Academic, author of CS
11	Academic, author of CS
12	Academic, author of CS
13	Academic whose work is basis for CS
14	Academic, author of CS
15	Research manager (academic), author of CS
16	Research manager (academic), author of CS
17	Research manager (professional)
18	Academic, author of CS
19	Research manager (academic), author of CS
20	Research manager (professional) – policy making/ conceptual role
21	Academic, author of CS
22	Academic, author of CS
23	Research manager (professional) – policy making/ conceptual role
24	Academic, author of CS
25	Academic whose work is basis for CS

## ***Appendix 5. Presentation of data and transcription standards***

[...]	fragment omitted from the transcript
((chuckles))	laughter, gestures, other proxemics
I think with [my work]	Explanation of terms used (such as ‘they’), or term substituting the one used by the speaker, to guarantee anonymity
Is it MY impact? / it’s not I who says	emphasis
IR, IE	Interviewer, interviewee

The first time I cite fragments from an interview, I provide its number and sometimes contextual data about the speaker (senior academic, academic manager, author of CS etc.). A table containing the position of the academic is provided in appendix 4, though the information I give is intentionally scarce for privacy reasons – see section 4.2.3. When I analyse the data, I often do not attribute particular snippets to interviewees, rather focusing on the content and particularly on the themes which appear *across* the interviews. This is in line with post-structuralist approaches to discourse which undermine the position of the author, seeing it as secondary to meaning (Foucault, 1977).

## ***Appendix 6. Examples of questions asked during interviews***

### Part 1 – Biographical interview

1. Who are you?
  - a. How come you became a professor?
  - b. What were the decisive moments of your career?
  - c. What do you see as your field of expertise/ your discipline?
  - d. What do you think others see you as?
2. Could you talk me through a typical day/week/ month of work?
  - a. How much time do you devote to research/teaching/administration?
  - b. Has this changed in the course of your career? How so and why?
3. Questions related to the piece of writing shared by the participant
  - a. Why did you choose to share this paper?
  - b. Could you talk me through the references? Who do you cite and why?
  - c. Do you remember any changes to the subsequent drafts? Were there any changes suggested by the editor/reviewer?

### Part 2. Impact Case Study and the Impact Agenda

1. How was REF 2014 for you?
2. Could you talk me through the process of submitting the CS?

- a. What were the constraints and rewards related to the exercise?
  - b. Who were the main actors in the process?
3. This is the definition of 'impact' used by HEFCE (slip of paper with definition is presented). Could you reflect on it?
4. Questions connected to the concrete CS
  - a. How long did preparing the document take?
  - b. Who was involved in writing and reviewing the document?
  - c. Can you comment on this fragment (e.g. fragments containing boasting, quoting large numbers, construing the prior ethos etc.)? Why was it included?
5. How do you see impact and impact-related activities in the context of your career?
  - a. Do you think your work has 'impact'?
  - b. Is potential for 'impact' important for your planning current of future work?
  - c. How do you recognise 'impactful' work when you see it?

## *Appendix 7 – Samples of coding*

### **1. Code system**

Codes used for impact case studies and interviews – screenshot from Max Qda

▼ ● Code System	1,261
▼ ● impact	1
● impact	326
● 'impact speak' (interview)	4
▼ ● emergence of impact	14
● mental	7
● co-construction of notion of impact	10
▼ ● impact in academic culture	0
● change in perspective after REF	6
● emotion in speaking about impact	3
● impact used in management	2
● difference between unis	4
● impact infrastructure	26
● resistance to impact	13
● impact and role of university	5
● problematisation	0
● governmentality	10
● differences between disciplines	24
● change in impact culture	20
● impact in CV	2
● clashing opinions on impact agenda	2
▼ ● impact as game	8
● distancing	1
● staging	3
● impact as institutional requirement	5
● impact as part of 'academic excell...	10
● impact as personal motivation?	14
● impact as personal motivation?	14
▼ ● impact-risk, problem, challenge	7
● framing of impact agenda	6
● planning for impact	3
● trying to understand impact	11
▼ ● impact CS	1
● meaning of impact - for exercises	3
● getting the evidence	5
● choosing impact CS	13
● choosing panel	9
● quality of CS	2
● preparation for REF- meetings gro...	8
▼ ● work on drafts	20
● change in topic	2
● adjusting to ref purposes	10
● emerging of impact CS as genre	4
● difference to academic writing	3
● drawing on other texts/genres	4
● co-authorship	23
● difficult process	8
● serendipity	3
● good quote	14
● impact admin role	22
▼ ● opinion on impact	12
● meaning of 'impact'	11
● positive reaction to impact	5
● roundup for ref 2020	7

● 🍷 unusual		3
● 😜 winking		3
▼ ● 📌 Impact CS - genre		0
● 🗨️ dispute, disagreement, argument	■	3
▼ ● 📌 SPRE		0
● 📌 SPRE		1
● 📌 E - effect/ evaluation		22
● 📌 R - reaction		20
● 📌 P - Problem		20
● 📌 S - situation		12
● 🗨️ how boring		1
● 🗨️ additional elements	■	3
● 📌 VIP		1
● 🗨️ impact as inherent in the project	■	3
▼ ● 📌 testimonials	■	1
● 🗨️ testimonial non-prof		1
● 🗨️ testimonial professional	■	20
▼ ● 📌 structure	■	0
● 📌 visual	■	1
● 📌 meta	■	9
● 📌 Quality of paper in 3	■	17
● 📌 sections		10
● 📌 link		4
● 🗨️ no additional data on quality in 3		2
● 🗨️ separate section on funding		9
● 🗨️ CC (further corroboration, impact ...)	■	14
● 🗨️ section 5 - content of reference g...		4
● 🗨️ formatting	■	14
● 🗨️ no content of StC given	■	4
● 🗨️ Bio	■	11
● 🗨️ impact speak		36
● 🗨️ emotion?		3
▼ ● 📌 grammatical forms		0
● 🗨️ personal form	■	1
● 🗨️ gerund in title		5
● 🗨️ superlatives	■	20
● 🗨️ passive form	■	9
● 🗨️ active forms	■	3
▼ ● 📌 references in text	■	1
● 🗨️ traditional reference		5
● 🗨️ reference to 3		15
● 🗨️ references to 5		6
● 🗨️ "first, only, innovative"	■	15
● 🗨️ non-technical language		5
● 🗨️ technical language		2
▶ ● 📌 numbers		41
▶ ● 📌 other interesting elements of interview		51
▶ ● 📌 colours		53
▶ ● 📌 structure	■	27

## 2. Sample of coding (software-assisted)

- ..gerund in title 
- ..impact speak 
- ..non-technical language 
- ..formatting 
- ..passive form 
- ..Bio 
- ..S – situation 
- ..P - Problem 
- ..R – reaction 
- ..enumeration countries 
- ..enumeration methods 
- ..reference to 3 
- ..reference to 3 
- ..reference to 3 



<b>Impact case study (REF3b)</b>
<b>Institution:</b> Aston University
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 28 Modern Languages and Linguistics
<b>Title of case study:</b> Changing English Language Teaching in the Global Primary Sector
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words) Research in Aston University on developing effective practices in teaching English to young learners (TEYL) has achieved the following key impacts: 1. Findings from the research have informed international policy discussions on TEYL. For example, the TESOL-Italy mission statement on TEYL includes recommendations derived from the findings (TESOL = Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). 2. The research project led to the publication of a book of teaching resources for primary school teachers distributed globally by the British Council. This book is used by both primary school teachers around the world and teacher educators in the UK.
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words) The underpinning research was generated from a British Council ELT (English Language Teaching) Research Awards Scheme project, entitled: <i>Investigating Global Practices in Teaching English to Young Learners</i> . The award was for £19,802 and the project ran from January 1 <sup>st</sup> to December 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2010 at Aston University. It was carried out at Aston by Dr Sue Garton (PI and Lecturer in English, joined Aston March 2000), Dr Fiona Copland (CI and Lecturer in English, joined Aston September 2007) and Professor Anne Burns (CI and Professor of Language Education, joined Aston in June 2010). In many countries around the world English is now compulsory in primary education, affecting millions of children and teachers. However, knowledge and understanding of policy, practice and challenges in areas such as training, materials, and classroom conditions is at best sketchy. This project, focusing on young learners aged 7-11, therefore aimed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discover what policy/syllabus documents inform TEYL practices around the world;</li> <li>• investigate and map the major pedagogies that teachers use;</li> <li>• better understand teachers' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities, including the challenges they face;</li> <li>• identify how local solutions to pedagogical issues can be effective and how these may resonate globally;</li> <li>• develop an innovative research tool for transnational research with limited funding.</li> </ul> Two research methods were used. A survey, using opportunity sampling, resulted in 4,446 responses from primary school teachers in over 140 countries with responses from all continents. Five case studies, comprising interviews with teachers and classroom observations, were carried out in Colombia, Italy, Korea, Tanzania and the UAE. Data were analysed using a number of tools including a predictive analysis to identify key variables that influence classroom practice (survey closed questions), corpus analysis to classify the range of challenges teachers face (survey open questions) and coding (interviews) to identify cross-contextual themes. <b>Major findings</b> (linked to publications in S3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The predictive analyses revealed a complex picture in which a number of significant factors influencing practice were identified. These were geographical location, age of learners, and teachers' level of English proficiency.</li> <li>• Classroom practices are influenced less by pedagogical theories underpinning government policies and more by the materials and resources available (S3.1).</li> <li>• While teachers' practices are framed within government or institutional policy documents and many are aware of them, the most influential documents reported to underpin practices are the coursebook and teachers' own lesson plans (S3.1).</li> </ul>

### 3. Sample of coding (manual)

\* research Q in 3 - great! \* a lot of ground + impact speak  
 \* bold & points \* overlap between research & impact

**REF2014**  
Research Excellence Framework

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

**Institution:** Heriot-Watt University \* innovative, firsts \* not so simple language

**Unit of Assessment:** 28 Modern Languages and Linguistics \* info on researchers in field \* lots of info on publications in (3)

**Title of case study:** Promoting Equal Access to Justice in Multilingual Societies. \* some additional info but not on all points in (5)

**1. Summary of the impact** (indicative maximum 100 words)  
 Research in CTISS (Centre for Translation and Interpreting Studies in Scotland) by Böser, Mason, Perez, Wilson on face-to-face interpreting has facilitated equal access to justice for speakers of foreign languages in police investigative processes at national and international level. Three mature strands of impact can be identified:

- Informing and guiding changes to police practice and training for working with interpreters at national and international level, and influencing legal professionals and policy makers in the area of communication support in investigative processes.
- Providing the foundation for evidence-based policy-making in multilingual communication support.
- Intervening in a vicious circle of under-professionalization by focusing on the development of professional training, quality assurance and professional accreditation.

Since 2009 the focus and driver for this impact has been the transposition of European milestone legislation on language rights in criminal proceedings (EU Directive 2010/64).

**2. Underpinning research** (indicative maximum 500 words)  
 The principal research themes underpinning the impact are:

- **Analysing linguistic requirements to inform evidence based policy-making.**  
 Perez and Wilson explored the need for Translation, Interpreting and Communication Support (TICS) in public services in Scotland in a government commissioned report (2006, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/01/25141550/0>) and furnished evidence of an acute and previously uncharted demand. The primary and innovative objective of the project was to study TICS from the perspective of providers and public sector bodies. The recommendations of the report to the Scottish Minister for Communities and Social Justice informed policy regarding future TICS provision and associated training requirements. The report by the European Language Council's Special Interest Group on Translation and Interpreting for Public Services (Perez et al 2011 [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/scic/news/2011\\_sigtips\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/scic/news/2011_sigtips_en.htm)) analyses the situation concerning translation and interpreting for public services in Europe. The ImPLI report (Böser, Wilson et al, 2012, [http://www.isit-paris.fr/documents/ImPLI/Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.isit-paris.fr/documents/ImPLI/Final_Report.pdf)) surveys police interpreting practices in six jurisdictions. It provides the first overview of its kind on associated issues and provides a set of related recommendations.
- **Conceptualising the role of the interpreter in face-to-face investigative communication to support best practice.**  
 Police interviews are the central interactional resource in the investigative process. Little research has been carried out on the role of interpreters in such interactions. Research in CTISS has built on Mason's pioneering conceptualisation of the interpreter's role (2000, 2001, 2006, 2009). Applying critical discourse analysis and pragmatics to socially-situated, mediated face-to-face interaction this research identifies a clash between users' perceptions of interpreters as mere "conduits" and the active role which interpreters play in the construction of mediated discourse. This process involves complex triadic negotiations of meaning and of the boundaries of the interpreter's role in a context of frequently conflicting expectations by institutional and non-institutional users. CTISS researchers have drawn on this work in their exploration of face-to-face interpreting in the context of the pre-trial stage of legal proceedings. Böser (2013) shows the impact which specific modes of interpreting have on the realisation of the institutional goals which shape forensic formats of police interviews.
- **Research based interventions in the advancement of professionalization of Public Service Interpreting (PSI).**  
 The TICS report (2006) highlights the preponderance of conditions (e.g. use of unqualified interpreters) and processes (e.g. modalities of procurement) which jeopardise the provision of a

Handwritten notes on the page include: "impact speak", "link impact", "re", "research & impact", "repetition", "innovative", "innovative", "SC", "publications in (3)", "in (5)", "repetition", "innovative", "innovative".

### ***Appendix 8. Table of referencing styles used in CSs***

The table presents different styles of referencing between sections of a CS, used in the corpus. In the section on genre, I discuss how the variety of referencing styles confirms the status of CS as emerging genre.

no	Reference to Outputs Section	Reference to Sources... Section	No of CS using style	Number of CS
1	No reference in text	No reference in text	13	43490, 43364, 38415, 37244, 36241, 24573, 24571, 21132, 18020, 18018, 2811, 2810, 1697
2	[3.1]	[5.1]	7	44186, 44021, 39940, 28116, 28115, 28112, 26214
3	(1)	IMP1	4	21719, 21716, 21715, 21714
4	APA style reference	5 + acronym for organization (eg. 5.BBC)	4	24045, 24044, 24043, 24042
5	APA style reference	No reference in text	3	21107, 20471, 20470
6	APA style reference	(Section 5, Source 2,); (Source 1)	3	25828, 1029, 1028
7	[1]	No reference in text	3	43541, 42281, 42280
8	No reference in text	[1]	2	43408,

				17642
9	[R1]	[G1]	2	43561, 43557
10	(3.1)	(5.1)	2	280025, 24009
11	S3.5	S5.2	2	36980, 36979
12	(Ref 5).	(Sources 1 & 2)	2	18132, 18131
13	[R1]	[S.1]	2	13840, 13839
14	a.	1	2	42791, 42775
15	[1].	(i)	1	43541
16	[1]	[i]	1	2579
17	3.1., 3.i.	5.1.	1	38704
18	3.1., 3.1.1. – for outputs, with division in levels; 31 – for grants	No reference in text	1	2734
19	3:1	5:1	1	36981
20	S3.1	S5/8	1	36979
21	3a	5a	1	17641
22	[1]	(9)	1	43477
23	(R1)	(C1)	1	26758
24	[1]	(section 5, [1]).	1	18028
25				
26	(Grant i, Section 3)	(Source 1)	1	25829
27	[1] –for output, [i] – for grant	[A]	1	6375
28	[Reference 1]	[\§5i]	1	4896
29	[1]	[1] – (written in upper index) for testimonial evidence  [i] – (written in upper index) for other sources of corroboration	1	4893
30	3.1. (written in upper index)	5.1 (written in upper index)	1	3471
31	[output 1].	[source 1]	1	11822
32	APA + [3.1]	[5.1]	1	13201
33				
34	APA style reference	(see Sources to	1	1026

		corroborate + description of source or number)		
35	[1]	[1]	1	40828
36	No reference in text	[5.1]	1	13200
37	No reference in text	CS1.	1	40823
38	No reference in text	Client A	1	1698
39	[1.1]	No reference in text	1	3899

**Appendix 8. Table – ‘key word in context’ (the first)**

Key word in context search results for string ‘the first’ – only expressions relating to quality of research (excluding uses like ‘the first part of the project’ etc).

Case study number	Context	Keyword	Context
41287	has been invited to write	<b>the first</b>	handbook chapter on narrative and
41287	on Language and Digital Communication –	<b>the first</b>	of its kind – in the
41287	the present day. This was	<b>the first</b>	handbook of discourse studies written
43541	performance. CLAWS4 is one of	<b>the first</b>	taggers to use a hybrid
CS1028	In particular, Henry (1995) presents	<b>the first</b>	serious study of Belfast English
CS11822	is to ensure that, for	<b>the first</b>	time, the training of translators
CS11822	preparations led in 2009 to	<b>the first</b>	call for applications for membership
CS11822	on spelling [R2]. In Sheffield,	<b>the first</b>	important research effort has been
CS11822	hypothesis by undertaking one of	<b>the first</b>	longitudinal studies of its kind
CS11822	the following attests: “This is	<b>the first</b>	course I have attended for
CS18020	change in London English, in	<b>the first</b>	ever large-scale sociolinguistic survey
CS18131	China. The textbooks will, for	<b>the first</b>	time, use examples from Chinese
CS20470	through Speech Recognition: Respeaking (2011),	<b>the first</b>	book ever written on the
CS20470	Training Curricula” (2012) also outlined	<b>the first</b>	theoretical and practical training programme
CS20470	his 2011 book also presented	<b>the first</b>	reception study ever made on
CS20470	in the UK applied, for	<b>the first</b>	time ever, eye-tracking technology
CS20470	Fresco’s 2011 book introduces	<b>the first</b>	model with metrics to
CS20470	pioneering work” and “not	<b>the first</b>	but probably the ultimate”

	only		publication
CS20470	training methodology to provide, for	<b>the first</b>	time ever, live subtitles through
CS20470	25 January 20112 . This was	<b>the first</b>	news item about respeaking ever
CS20470	Stagetext piloted in March 2009	<b>the first</b>	experience of respoken subtitles for
CS20471	socio-cognitive framework. This is	<b>the first</b>	time the British Council has
CS21714	the CAT) was one of	<b>the first</b>	objective measures of the wider
CS21714	have made it one of	<b>the first</b>	choices for research studies about
CS21715	impact The underpinning research delivered	<b>the first</b>	concrete and specific insights into
CS21715	1-6). The research was	<b>the first</b>	to show that, even in
CS21715	quantitative studies were complemented by	<b>the first</b>	ever large-scale in-depth
CS21715	1, 2). The studies delivered	<b>the first</b>	tangible and specific insights into
CS21715	and engagement. The research was	<b>the first</b>	to chart longitudinal evolution of
CS21715	impact The underpinning research delivered	<b>the first</b>	concrete and specific insights into
CS21716	1). This project was among	<b>the first</b>	to confirm the long term
CS24045	the world music scene for	<b>the first</b>	time. Thus, in addition to
CS25828	in six jurisdictions. It provides	<b>the first</b>	overview of its kind on
CS26214	10.1108/00012531011074627. This is	<b>the first</b>	systematic application of linguistics to
CS26214	one language, many voices, was	<b>the first</b>	time the Library had presented
CS26758	transmission of language. This was	<b>the first</b>	time that research into the
CS26758	as ‘a historic milestone’. For	<b>the first</b>	time ever, the Welsh government
CS2734	to apply his research for	<b>the first</b>	time on a project of
CS2810	led a large consortium conducting	<b>the first</b>	-ever substantial comparative study on
CS2810	in 2009-2013, working on	<b>the first</b>	major comparative study of this
CS2810	scheme (EuroBABEL strand). This is	<b>the first</b>	study of its kind, and
CS2810	at Ankara University; this was	<b>the first</b>	time that the MarSL community
CS2810	education for deaf children for	<b>the first</b>	time within Alipur. The village
CS28115	Matras was responsible for establishing	<b>the first</b>	-ever online multi- dialectal dictionary
CS28115	electronic texts. The project created	<b>the first</b>	-ever online multi-dialectal dictionary
CS28115	the many Romani dialects for	<b>the first</b>	time and allows people to
CS2811	language research in Africa for	<b>the first</b>	time at WOCAL. The WOCAL
CS36981	study (REF3b) Page 4 delivered	<b>the first</b>	iIRG MasterClass for an international
CS38415	The work of NIPNP represents	<b>the first</b>	systematic attempt to document and
CS38415	names have been analysed for	<b>the first</b>	time there. In addition, seminal
CS38415	added a cultural dimension (for	<b>the first</b>	time) to the work of
CS38704	backgrounds. This study is	<b>the first</b>	to explore the role of

	among		
CS39940	sectoral workshops brought together for	<b>the first</b>	time professional mediators and translators
CS40828	this study. Sakel worked for	<b>the first</b>	time on a combined grammar
CS42280	Sque & Galasinski, 2013). This is	<b>the first</b>	text-orientated discourse analytic study
CS42791	many archived recordings. ELAR was	<b>the first</b>	archive to research the needs
CS43477	formal voice quality analysis for	<b>the first</b>	time. It has since been
CS43477	in New Zealand legal history, “	<b>the first</b>	time that such detailed linguistic
CS44186	primary curriculum in which for	<b>the first</b>	time languages had an important
CS4893	s ESRC-supported project created	<b>the first</b>	on-line database of digital
CS4893	transcriptions and translations (one of	<b>the first</b>	ever for an endangered language
CS4893	University of Oxford, resulted in	<b>the first</b>	web-accessible repository of transcribed
CS4893	Negeri Papua, is one of	<b>the first</b>	, not just for a lesser
CS4893	The dictionaries are, for me,	<b>the first</b>	comprehensive dictionaries because they contain
CS4896	as it really is. For	<b>the first</b>	time, real spoken language has
CS13839	have appeared in other languages.	<b>The first</b>	comprehensive test battery of phonological
CS20470	audio input from the lecturers.	<b>The first</b>	experiments proved extremely successful and
CS21715	the wider research programme: (i)	<b>The first</b>	ever detailed large scale community
CS21715	neglected areas (3, 4); (ii)	<b>The first</b>	detailed investigation of speech-language