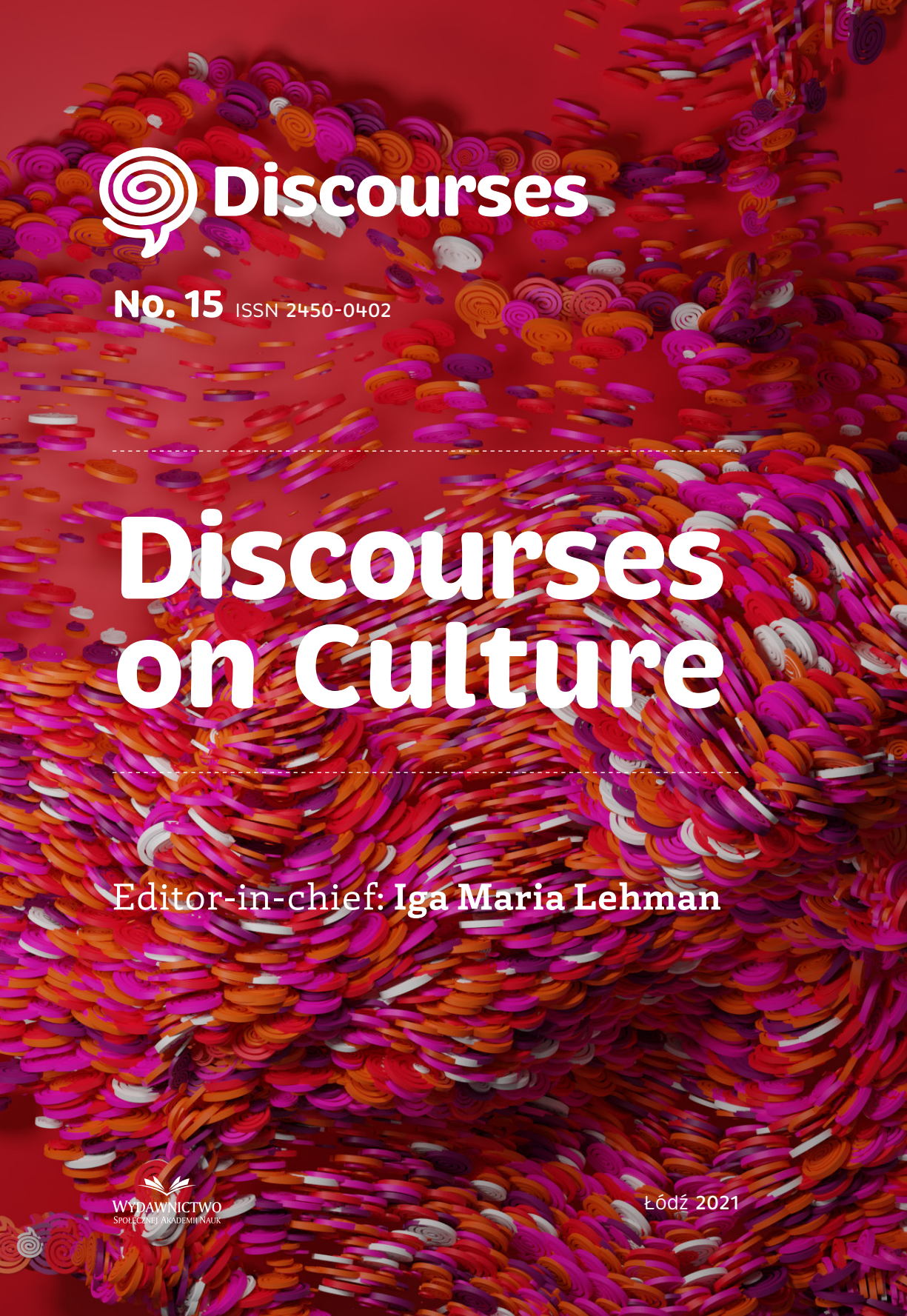
Discourses
No. 15 ISSN 2450-0402
Discourses on Culture
Editor-in-chief: Iga Maria Lehman
WYDAWNICTWO
SPOŁECZNEJ AKADEMII NAUK
Łódź 2021

Discourses

No. 15 ISSN 2450-0402

# Discourses on Culture

Editor-in-chief: **Iga Maria Lehman**

Łódź 2021

Wydawnictwo
Społecznej Akademii Nauk

The electronic version is the primary version of the journal

**http://dyskursy.san.edu.pl**

All the articles published in the journal are subject to reviews.

Editor-in-chief: **Iga Maria Lehman**

Adjustment: Małgorzata Pająk

Text design and typesetting: Marcin Szadkowski

Cover design: Marcin Szadkowski



ISSN 2450-0402

University of Social Sciences Publishing House

ul. Kilińskiego 109, 90-011 Łódź

phone: 42 67 625 29 ext. 339

e-mail: discourses@san.edu.pl

Discourses

WYDAWNICTWO
SPOŁECZNEJ AKADEMII NAUK

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DOI 10.36145/DoC2021.01

# Preface

## Academic Communication in Today's World–Knowledge Production and Dissemination through Written Texts

As highlighted by the numerous changes mandated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the modern-day academic is something of a plate-spinner, feverishly juggling research, teaching, and administration with myriad other professional and personal tasks. The forced move to online teaching, the temporary closure of institutions across the world, and the ongoing need for social distancing have affected academia considerably in a short space of time. As such, it is clear that these changing modalities will have a long-lasting impact on academic communication for years to come.

In terms of spoken communication, travel restrictions have largely forced conferences and symposia to move online, principally in the form of e-conferences, where presenters share their research findings via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or other such platforms. In terms of written

communication, however, it is important to consider how the current COVID-19 related changes are impacting – and undoubtedly will continue to impact – academia as a whole. This links directly with many controversial aspects of the contemporary academic environment, including the famous "publish or perish" dictum, as well as the increased focus on individual and department rankings, institutional demands regarding scholarly productivity, and the importance of publishing in the "right" journals. Whereas in the past academics may have chosen to focus their activities on lecturing or administration, and therefore may have published comparatively few works in numerical terms (think of de Saussure, for example), the modern scholar is subject to appraisals and bibliometric analyses, as well as to the inherent precariousness of a career in contemporary academia. In this context, the concept of 'an ivory-tower scholar', an expression conventionally associated with an isolated academic, who enjoys freedoms in conducting and disseminating their research, has become a thing of the past. We agree with Duszak that these fundamental freedoms which were once considered an absolute right of science and involved "freedom of expression, freedom to choose ontological and epistemological models, freedom to choose the subject of research, freedom of communication and cooperation, and freedom of association (…) are now perceived as a handicap" (Duszak, 2015, p. 9).

The above mentioned constrains in the production and dissemination of academic knowledge, along with the fact that English has become an academic pre-requisite, are particularly problematic for scholars working outside the Anglophone world. They are under pressure to publish in English, which for many academics may be

a second, third, or even fourth language. This development has affected how universities and governments approach their roles in the global academic world, with many countries introducing legislation to strongly direct academics to publish in English, the most recent being the introduction of the reform of the science and higher education system in Poland (2017–2019) which declared that only publications from indexed databases would be considered in the career advancements of Polish scientists.

However, framing publication problems as a crude Native vs non-Native polarization would be a considerable oversimplification as "writing as an L1 English scholar does not guarantee a successful publishing career" (Hyland, 2016, p. 66). Undoubtedly, there are two things that need to be considered here; namely, linguistic proficiency in English and (2) off-network participation in global scholarship (Hyland, 2016, p. 66) Many first language English and English as an additional language (EAL) academics are often unaware of the most important conversations within their disciplines which means that their participation and research outputs do not resonate with current conversations or debates in the global academic communities in their specific fields. This dooms them to off-network participation, which effectively means that they operate outside their international disciplinary community where "academics craft their identities, cement relationships, achieve recognition and acquire the specialised discourse competencies to participate as members" (Hyland, 2019, p. 8).

This preamble highlights the central topic of the present issue; namely, what is the changing role of written academic communication in today's world? A key point shared by both the editors and the authors is

that academic disciplines are socio-cultural constructs in that there is an inextricable relation between doing and reporting research and the social, cultural and cognitive aspects of this endeavour. It is considered within the recent and major shifts in the contexts of the conception, production and diffusion of academic research, which mainly include the internationalisation of scholarly production and the role of English in international publications.

The idea for this theme originated in growing criticism of scholarly publications as ineffective in communicating disciplinary knowledge and beliefs, (e.g., Grey, & Sinclair, 2006; Kiriakos, & Tienari, 2018; Gilmore et al., 2019; Pullen, Helin, & Harding, 2020; Tourish, 2020); thus, negatively affecting the development and spread of relevant research and practice at the global level. Discussion on the ways scholarly writers present research, ideas and argumentation has been coherently captured in Grey and Sinclair's treatise entitled "Writing differently" (2006), in which they accentuate the lack of consideration of a global readership in academic publications. The dominant discourse of the neoliberal, Western university (Holliday, 2021) and the reader-excluding rhetorical style that scholarly writers tend to employ these days seems to be "driven by desires to demonstrate one's cleverness, or to accrue publications as ends in themselves" (Grey, & Sinclair, 2006, p. 443). They identify three areas writers need to reflect on and take into account in order to create a more outward-looking, reader-aware writing style which involves considering aesthetic, ethical and political factors.

The commonality between the work of Grey and Sinclair and the premise underlying the respective papers in this issue is the recognition that the rhetorical strategies we employ to communicate our scholarly

ideas and beliefs need to be audience-sensitive. On the one hand, this premise is in contrast with the currently prevailing Centre-Western discourses of prejudice "in which we in the West imagine that we need to teach people from the rest of the world to be individualist, critical and autonomous, denying any cultural ability that they bring with them" (Holliday, p. 26 in this issue; Holliday, 2019, pp. 128–129; Holliday, & Amadasi, 2020, pp. 17–20), and "the assumption that scientific discourse is universal and language- and culture-independent" (Vassileva, p. 66 in this issue; Vassileva, 1995; 2002). But on the other hand, it is supported by novel developments in digital communication which open "new avenues of dissemination of knowledge and communication with diversified audiences in the understanding that knowledge is a public good" (Lorés, p. 54 in this issue), as well as "the momentous changes we have seen in academic practices (which will hopefully) influence the ways knowledge is constructed and disseminated in the pages of academic research articles" (Hyland, p. 42 in this issue) (insert in brackets ours).

The ability to engage the reader both intellectually and emotionally is crucial to the effective dissemination of disciplinary knowledge. As Hyland and Lehman argue in the previous issue of *Discourses on Culture*, "the reader's perspective is a dominant element of the 'rhetorical situation'; it is critical not only in the affect it has on the way writers construct meaning and present their knowledge claims, but also in the perceived assessment of the text as a contribution to the scientific landscape of their shared academic discipline" (Hyland, & Lehman, 2020, p. 9). This relational aspect of written discourse has been also emphasised by Ahonen et al., who state that writing "begins as

a relationship between people and it ends as a relationship between people" (2020, p. 459).

By recognising that academic writers are actual people who write for actual people – their readers – the contributions to this issue combat the 'dysfunction in academia' (see also Habibie, 2019), the forms of which have been listed in a tongue-in-cheek manner by Antonakis and include "a rapacious appetite for statistically significant results ("significosis"), an incessant desire for novelty ("neophilia"), a zeal for new theory ("theorrhea"), a paucity of rigor in theory generation and testing ("arigorium") and a tendency to produce lots of trite, fragmented, and disjointed work ("disjunctivitis") (Antonakis, 2017, p. 2). And last but not least, the persistence of many academic authors in failing to change the rhetorical aspects of their writing is a serious impediment to the effective dissemination of new ideas and research.

In keeping with the interdisciplinary nature of Discourses on Culture, this thematic issue brings together five eminent specialists in academic communication who each represent different research traditions and approaches. In presenting a series of research reports written in an accessible style, it is intended to provide a starting point for wider debate on the topic of written academic communication.

In his contribution, **Professor Adrian Holliday (Canterbury Christ Church University, United Kingdom)** highlights his move away from projects based on traditional interview-based data towards more holistic approaches where the researcher plays a greater role. Building on his own concepts of essentialist "blocks" and hybridised "threads", his current research involves work using (auto)ethnographic perspectives on Centre-Western peripheries, which includes the relationship between

English and culture, as well as the use of Third Space methodology to explore his own experiences in Iran in the 1970s.

In recent times, **Professor Ken Hyland (University of East Anglia, United Kingdom)** has been exploring diachronic changes in academic writing, notably through comparing the rhetoric used in academic publications in the sciences and the humanities. In addition, he has also examined how issues such as multiple authorship, access to online journals, and fragmentation and specialisation within disciplines are impacting the rhetoric of academic communication, noting that a general trend is that there is less reader engagement, and that this change has arisen in the light of given contextual circumstances.

As noted above, the current academic context in many countries reflects the growing global pressure for scholars to publish in English. This is a particular research interest of **Professor Irena Vassileva (New Bulgarian University, Bulgaria)**, who focuses on the issues non-native speakers are confronted with when submitting manuscripts to English-language journals. Indeed, her findings illustrate that not only excellent language skills are required, but also in-depth knowledge of relevant rhetorical structures and of the Anglo-American academic tradition, aspects which may cause challenges to academics with other scholarly backgrounds. In addition, another area of her recent research – pertinent in these times of pandemic – relates to academic communication in the multimedia environment, which has illustrated how scholars use digital and other relevant media in new and different ways.

Indeed, the omnipresence of digital electronic devices and platforms forms a central part of recent research conducted by **Dr Rosa Lorés (Universidad de Zaragoza, Spain)**. Notably, she uses tools from

corpus linguistics to analyse the rhetorical structures and interpersonal markers used in online conference announcements. In exploring the multimodal and interactive nature of contemporary digital communication, she has observed how academics project their scholarly identities and interact with colleagues on digital platforms such as Linguist List, increasing the visibility of their research at the global level.

The final contribution to the main topic of this issue is by **Dr Simon Williams (University of Sussex, United Kingdom)**. In his review of a chapter by Gadomska and Szwed (2020), Williams appreciates the originality of their empirical study; however, he critiques their assertion that the effectiveness of a given translation can be linked to universal notions of style and lack of current developments in their discussion related to English and Polish writing styles.

Iga Maria Lehman & Antony Hoyte-West
Warsaw, May 2020

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# Reflections on Current Research into Academic Discourse

**DOI** 10.36145/DoC2021.02

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# Looking for a Third-space Methodology for Intercultural Travel

**Key words:** Linguaculture, deCentring, third space, native-speakerism, intercultural

I currently have two book chapters and a journal special issue article in press; and I am working on a book for Routledge. These together represent a development in thinking about the intercultural, how to research it and how to write about it. I shall look at each in turn and indicate the nature of this development of ideas.

## 'Linguaculture, cultural travel, native-speakerism and small culture formation on the go' (Holliday, 2021a)

This is an invited chapter in an area in which I would not normally write, given that I do not consider myself part of the world Englishes

academic community. I requested that I should therefore do it from a semi-autoethnographic perspective based on my own experience of the relationship between English and culture. This was accepted. This was therefore also an exercise in how to write with a less reference-cluttered mode while still maintaining academic rigour. This helped me to work from direct observation up, following Stuart Hall (1991, p. 35) as a means for bypassing Centre prejudice and realising the natural state of language as hybrid (Rajagopalan, 2012; Saraceni, 2015; Schneider, 2016), thus dissolving native-speakerist boundaries and, following Risager (2020), contesting the false, Centre, essentialist notion that 'a language' represents 'a culture'. Appreciating the transient, hybrid nature of language enabled my emerging concept of small culture language formation on the go as parallel to small culture formation on the go.

## 'Recovering unrecognised deCentred experience' (Holliday, 2021b)

This is another invited chapter in which I used a reconstructed ethnographic narrative about a postgraduate student from outside the West encountering the complex of prejudice deep within the dominant discourse of the neoliberal, Western university, as well as becoming aware of some of the prejudices she brought with her. This therefore supports the theory that our best resource as intercultural travellers is the experience we bring with us. The reconstructed ethnographic narrative both derives from a constructivist, postmodern qualitative research approach and enables the representation of a wide range of informal ethnographic data about students, academics and university systems collected over a number of years. The validity of this immediate analysis of data is in how, through direct observation, the researcher is taken to unexpected places. The weakness of much interview-based research is that it can too easily

take at face value what people say, and does not sufficiently interrogate the intersubjective positionality and implicit intervention of the researcher. The deCentring in this chapter therefore applies to the researcher as well as to the implied experience of the characters in the reconstructed ethnographic account. As a researcher who has been brought up with Centre-Western discourses of prejudice, by constructing characters in the reconstructed ethnographic account that are like me, I can begin to see an uncomfortable reassessment of my own professional history. I try never, therefore, to speak for research participants, either real or reconstructed, who are labelled as coming from outside the West, but only for myself as expert in the prejudices that they meet. How it is possible for me to write is thus a long-standing concern (Holliday, 2005).

## Third-Space methodology

This is where the notion of third-space methodology comes into play. While this was not an explicit theme in this chapter, it is through its writing that I have been able to develop further how we need somehow to intervene between the powerful Centre forces that bring essentialist blocks of prejudice and our ability to find threads of hybridity that can bring us together. I have been developing the notion of blocks and threads for some years now (Amadasi, & Holliday, 2017; 2018; Holliday, 2015; 2020; Holliday, & Amadasi, 2020). I have defined third space as 'a place where normality is sufficiently disturbed to enable us to deCentre' (Holliday, & Amadasi, 2020, p. 8). This notion is different to the common idea of 'in-between two cultures' which gives a false sense of separate, bounded cultures. Instead, I wish to frame it as a normal space where 'new relations of self, other and world develop in the moments of openness' (Delanty, 2006, p. 33). It 'entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' by escaping the Centre 'fixity' of colonial discourse and 'politics of polarity' so that we can all 'emerge as

others out of selves' (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 5, 94, 56). However, its normality does not come easily. We have methodologically to do something to enable this because we are too easily seduced by Centre grand narratives.

## 'The yin-yang relationship between essentialist and non-essentialist discourses related to the participation of children of migrants, and its implication for how to research' (Amadasi, & Holliday, forthcoming)

This question of the need for methodological intervention was addressed in this invited article in a journal special issue connected with the CHILD-UP project, which is part of the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Baraldi, 2019). The project aims to research the 'hybrid integration' of children with migrant backgrounds in seven European countries, where Amadasi is a researcher and part of the Italian team and I am a scientific advisor. The article addresses what researchers should do when the exigencies of particular settings do not conform with expectation, with particular reference to restrictions created by the COVID epidemic.

The article is also inspired by the PhD thesis of one of my prior PhD students (Duan, 2007). Duan developed his research methodology around Chinese Taoist philosophy in which the yin-yang construct allows apparently conflicting realities to exist at the same time. This enabled him to make sense of apparently conflicting data regarding Chinese secondary school students. In their diaries, they wrote about how they rejected the common stereotype imposed upon them that they

were only interested in studying for examinations. When interviewed, they conformed to the dominant discourse and said the opposite to what they had said before. Looking at their diaries would not have happened if Duan had not been prevented from initial planned data collection by the SARS epidemic and had not had to think laterally in search of a more creative approach for collecting data. An important finding of his thesis is that conflicting discourses can operate within the same person at the same time.

The yin-yang construct therefore encourages the creative developing of research methods to suit particular exigencies. This is far away from what has become known as 'mixed methods' which is critiqued in another recent article (Holliday, & MacDonald, 2020) as a neoliberal attempt to find easy formulae for commodifying the false perception that qualitative methods need always to be validated by quantitative methods. The classic postmodern ethnographic approach, as insisted upon by Clifford & Marcus (1986), is instead to make decisions about methods as a result of a developing understanding of the nature of the social setting (Spradley, 1980, p. 32). This does not preclude choosing quantitative methods where necessary; but this choice is driven by ethnographic principles and disciplines – to enable thick description that allows the unexpected to emerge away from dominant discourses that might lead the researcher in prescribed directions. Indeed, this enables us in this article to argue that, because of the diverse settings in different country settings in the CHILD-UP project, it makes sense to use a macro-ethnography to determine the broad nature of each setting to inform appropriate methods for qualitative date collection.

The particular and unexpected exigency that the article focuses on is, because of COVID restrictions, an online focus group with children of migrants, where it was found that their use of the chat facility revealed agentive participation that had not previously been seen. Keeping in

mind the yin-yang construct leads the researcher to be mindful of how preferences for particular interpretations are driven by dominant discourses. This is therefore a form of third-space methodology in that it takes us researchers into an unexpected place that enables us to make sense outside the dominant discourses. In the article we describe the context for this unexpected place as a conflict between the Centre essentialist and the non-essentialist discourses that provide false and other explanations of the behaviour of the children of migrants. This enables us to map out the in-between route through which we have to navigate our third space.

The particular fault line that marks this third-space route is whether or not the children have the agency and the brought intercultural resources to exercise hybrid integration. 'Hybrid integration' has been defined, with specific reference to children of migrants in European education settings, as being able to 'exercise agency in constructing their identities and changing their social contexts' and 'negotiation' of 'hybrid identities' (Baraldi, 2019).

The false suggestion that these children might not be able to negotiate their own hybrid integration comes from one such essentialist discourse – what I have called a West as steward discourse in which we in the West imagine that we need to teach people from the rest of the world to be individualist, critical and autonomous, denying any cultural ability that they bring with them (Holliday, 2019, pp. 128–129; Holliday, & Amadasi, 2020, pp. 17–20). This essentialist discourse in turn relates to the Orientalist grand narrative which imagines the East and South are bound by tradition and group thinking (Said 1978). In language, this essentialist imagining for there foreign Other produces native-speakerism – where learning so-labelled Western languages is falsely assumed to require the first-time introduction to 'cultures' which are falsely labelled as individualist, agentive and critical (Holliday, 2018).

## A deCentred architecture of intercultural travel (Holliday, forthcoming)

This realisation of the importance of the Orientalist grand narrative, which I wrote about in some detail in my (Holliday, 2011) book, is at the core of this short monograph that I am currently working on. This looks at how I was unawaredly brought up with Orientalism throughout my childhood. Orientalism was between the lines of children's stories, education and media; and that I took this with me when I went to live in Irán in 1973 at the age of 23. Using reconstructed autoethnographic accounts plus journal entries from my time in Irán, I analyse how my appreciation that Iránian society was as individualist and hybrid as any Western society was inhibited by, but not overwhelmed by this Orientalism. I trace threads of hybridity from other aspects of my upbringing through aspects of cultural practices and artefacts in Irán and through to my personal and professional life since leaving Irán. I note how particular discourses connect media experiences in Irán, in national myth, soap opera and political satire, with those in Britain, and a Iránian cosmopolitan ownership of the world on the basis of rich, boundary-dissolving cultural flows.

Here I develop further a third-space methodology in which a critical researcher voice finds unexpected and reflexive positionality as the autoethnographic texts are separated out as data to allow an explicit thick description to emerge between them and other texts. Importantly, this also allows what Ogden refers to as 'the intersubjective analytic third' that relates to the 'unique dialectic generated' between 'the separate subjectivities of analyst and analysand' which takes on 'a life of its own' (Ogden, 2004, p. 169). He is speaking about psychoanalysis; but I think this perfectly relates to the relationship between the researcher and what is being investigated where this relationship is indisputably

intersubjective. It is also helpful when Ogden states that 'there is no such thing as an analysand apart from the relationship with the analyst' and vice versa (Ogden, 2004, p. 168). This enables me to make sense of myself as the researcher trying to make sense of myself as the cultural traveller as being the same person. What we need to do to work out how to deal with being in less familiar intercultural settings is methodologically similar to how we need to deal with the research settings everywhere. We are implicated in very similar ways. The researcher must struggle to discount essentialist prejudices about the people being researched in similar ways to how the intercultural traveller must struggle to discount essentialist prejudices about the people and practices they encounter.

A further emergent aspect of this third-space methodology is the value of direct observation of cultural life everywhere. Whether in Irán or in any other location, in the street, in taxis, in cafés and so on, watching how people pass by, present themselves to others, make sense, reject or accept, will help inform what is happening in any other location. This will however only work if we can, through the third space, clear our minds of essentialist grand narratives. This will then activate all the experience of the intercultural that we bring with us. This time to reflect is what Ogden (2004, p. 117) refers to as 'periods of reverie', which then allow 'projective identification', where 'a variety of forms of intersubjective thirdness are generated, which stand in dialectical tension' with whatever is the focus of the research. This then enables a creative reassessment of thinking-as-usual and the putting aside of essentialist narratives (Simmel, 1908/1950).

## A creative trajectory of new thinking

Writing this reflective account has helped me to think holistically about my research trajectory. This also helps further to remind me that research

is not about a series of separate studies in which countable findings about people located separately to the researcher are reported - often in the form of what this or that group think or behave with regard to this or that - but instead a holistic development of thinking. Readers may note that what has become a common fare of transcribed face-to-face interview data does not feature in any of the studies described above. While I do not wish to denigrate such studies, remembering that I have authored and co-authored several in recent years (Amadasi, & Holliday, 2017; 2018; Holliday, 2012), I wish to claim that they will mean little without the sort of intersubjective reverie and deep connection with the complexities of social life that researchers themselves bring to the event.

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**DOI** 10.36145/DoC2021.03

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# A Reflection on Some of My Recent Research

**Key words:** academic writing, diachronic change, research articles, disciplinary differences

## Introduction

The study of academic writing has grown enormously in the past 40 years (e.g. Hyland, & Jiang, 2021) and in large part this has been to better understand and address the needs of students and academics who are increasing required to write (and publish) in English. Whether you see this expansion of English a helpful lingua franca or a rampaging Tyrannosaurus Rex (Swales, 1997), the dominance of English has transformed the educational experiences and professional lives of countless students and academics across the planet. Fluency in the conventions of English academic discourses is now virtually essential as a means of gaining access to the knowledge of our disciplines and navigating our careers. It has also reshaped the ways that teaching and

research are conducted in higher education, not only creating the multi-million dollar enterprise of EAP, but leading to the recognition that native English speakers also benefit from an explicit understanding of the arcane and alien discourses of their fields.

But the field of academic writing has also expanded (and perhaps fragmented) because it offers such rich pickings for analysts interested in a diverse array of the twenty-first century's most fascinating and contentious concepts. Here, in the apparently frozen surface of scholarly texts, we find evidence of interaction, interpersonal engagement, community, identity, power and cultural variation. At the same time, these texts reveal the workings of theoretical constructs such as legitimate peripheral participation, genre, agency and the social construction of knowledge.

These are the issues that have absorbed and frustrated me for my entire academic life and continue to do so in my semi-retirement. Without the burden of administration, the demands of teaching and the relentless petty appraisals of everyday university life, I find myself with the free time to both publish more and more of what I like. In this brief essay I will sketch one of the directions my recent work has followed: looking at some of the diachronic changes which have taken place in research writing.

## Diachronic change in research articles

Perhaps at no time since the invention of the printing press have there been such major changes in research and publishing. We have seen, for example, an explosion of journals, papers, doctoral dissertations and books with the globalisation of research and the encroaching demands of publishing metrics on scholars across the planet. The latest UNESCO

statistics report 7.8 million full-time equivalent researchers in 2013, accounting for 0.1% of the global population! This represents an increase of 21% since 2007, or around 4–5% per year (UNESCO, 2017). Combined with career imperatives to publish, this creates a highly competitive environment for academics

Recent times have also witnessed the growth of collaboration and multiple authorship; the expansion of access to a massive online literature and the fragmentation and specialisation of research. Equally importantly, there has been a growing imperative in recent years to reach new audiences and sponsors. Universities themselves recognise that they cannot be ivory towers of learning and have to engage with non-academic audiences. The mantra of 'knowledge exchange' now means that many academics are also evaluated on community outreach as well as the academic impact of their work. These historical changes have consequences for rhetorical practices and the way academics write. With my colleague Kevin Jiang, I have, through a series of papers and a book (Hyland, & Jiang, 2019), tried to trace some of these consequences.

Rather than focus on the subject matter of science, we explored the form arguments take, that is, the kinds of claims authors make, how they support these, and how they relate to their readers. This involved exploring articles from the same five top-ranked SCI journals in four disciplines spaced evenly at 25-year intervals over 50 years: 1965, 1990 and 2015. Taking six papers from each journal in each period, this gave us 360 papers of 2.2 million words. The results show that academic writing is not static, fixed and uniform but dynamic, diverse and responsive to changes to the worlds which create it.

Many of the changes we observed in the language of research articles, however, are glacial. The research article is what Hundt and Mair (1999) have called an "uptight" genre: relatively resistant to rapid change. Not only do academics have a vested interest in sticking to

what seems to work for them, but also the majority of those submitting manuscripts to journals are now writing in a second language. Having invested considerable time, effort and frustration in developing the rhetorical skills needed to successfully write for publication, it is perhaps surprising that we have detected any willingness to change rhetorical practices at all. There does, however, seem to have been a shift in argument styles in academic texts over these years.

We have noted, for example, that research articles are now more informationally focused, increasingly contain present tense, provide more explicit in-text reference, and use less abstract language. Writers are giving greater attention to cohesion with both more cases of demonstrative this and with more of these structures containing an attending noun to help readers follow the thread. They are also citing massively more often and giving less prominence to those they cite, even if they are citing themselves, with more references to co-authors. We also found that academic writing is becoming more uniform and less formulaic in its use of lexical bundles as while both the range and frequency of bundles have risen, variation in their use and the proportion they comprise of total words have declined. In terms of interaction, explicit markers of stance and authorial attitude has declined although authorial self-mention has massively increased, particularly the use of exclusive we. Explicit engagement with readers has also dropped significantly, especially in the soft fields, and we could find no evidence of a significant rise in 'informality' beyond an increase in the use of authorial self-mention.

## Disciplinary differences

These general trends, however, are more marked in some fields than in others and the most momentous changes are those which distinguish the individual disciplines. In feature after feature, we find our hard knowledge disciplines, biology and electrical engineering, going in very different directions to our soft knowledge fields, sociology and applied linguistics.

Scientists are now, most surprisingly, moving away from their traditional objective, faceless styles of writing where facts are supposed to do the talking, and towards more involved, stance-laden discourses which emphasize the role of the interpreting researcher. We have found both biology and electrical engineering, for example, now employing fewer bundles which focus on reporting research and adopting more forms which carry interpersonal and evaluative meanings. There are also more stance markers, most noticeably self-mention, which clearly indicate the author's role and foreground their control of the discourse. In addition to changes which emphasise authorial stance and features which strengthen claims and ensure readers are clear about the writer's contribution, we can see an authorial repositioning in the heavy fall in references to shared knowledge. There has also been a gradual rise in engagement markers, particularly directives, and a small decline in a 'formal' interactive style. We see these changes as related to the impact of the wider audience for science in recent years and the need to address audiences beyond an immediate group of informed insiders who are less likely to be familiar with arcane understandings and allusions and require more guidance in following the ideas in a paper.

In contrast, and equally surprisingly, we find writers in the humanities and social sciences heading in the opposite direction. Applied linguistics and sociology have strengthened their informational focus, shown by the use of nouns, prepositions, attributive adjectives

and longer words. A trend we attribute to the growing preference for experimental, data-informed investigations in these fields and the growth of applied linguistics as a more sophisticated, empirically oriented discipline. There have also been changes in how writers convey a stance, claim solidarity with readers and acknowledge alternative views. There is now less authorial intrusion and a less visible stance by authors in the top applied linguistics and sociology journals compared with 1965. Writers are using far fewer hedges, boosters and attitude markers (per 10,000 words) and those in applied linguistics are also using less self-mention. These changes, of course, minimize authorial presence in a text and direct readers away from individual interpretation of results and towards data or methodological practice as a source of persuasion.

Similarly, writers in these disciplines are also engaging far less with readers than in the past. The ways that writers take the processing needs and background knowledge of their readers into account is no less important but is now being done with less explicit authorial intervention, with more attended this structures for example. It may be that with increasing specialisation, topics have become more focused and the literature more concentrated, forcing writers into more specialised niches from which to speak to their audiences.

## Language change and workplace trends

Academic publishing today is, unsurprisingly, very much part of its times, a representation of a neoliberal view of a world in which free competition sorts out those who deserve to succeed from the rest. This is a culture of constant appraisal where individual achievements are measured in terms

of publications (generally in English and in a limited number of prestigious journals) and citations to those publications (in a wider number of prestigious journals). It is the nature of competition to create winners and losers and for academics this means that, as in most other professions, the workplace is now a more stressful and exacting environment than it was in 1965. It has become a context which valorizes individualism and fetishizes publication.

The changes we have documented across or three corpora are, I believe, a rational response to the changing contexts in which we work. There are strong institutional pressures on academics these days to conduct interdisciplinary research and construct their papers to talk to external funders, commercial sponsors and other non-specialists. Furthermore, with metrics-driven assessments coming to dominate academic careers, the ability to not only ensure the comprehensibility of one's arguments but also their persuasiveness, is now a professional imperative. The use of interactive metadiscourse to both draw on common understandings and create shared associations where this is possible and to clearly signal connections, frame arguments and support interpretations when it is not, is a key aspect of this use. Similarly, with greater competition and topic specialisation it is now more vital for writers to carve out a distinctive niche and define a specific novel contribution as their own using self-citations, self-mention, evaluative that structures and by citational practices which increasingly report prior work more impersonally and with greater emphasis on its contribution to their own research.

Academic writing, then, is not the fixed and invariable form of discourse it is often thought to be. Within these texts there are real people trying to get their voices heard above the clamour of academic competition, seeking to carve out scholarly reputations and research careers. Academic discourses are no different from any other in

carrying traces of human purposes and interactions, and these change in response to contextual circumstances. It would be surprising if the momentous changes we have seen in academic practices did not influence the ways knowledge is constructed and disseminated in the pages of academic research articles.

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**DOI** 10.36145/DoC2021.04

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# From Print form to Digital Communication: the One-way Journey of Academic Research

**Key words**: digital discourse, academic genres, knowledge dissemination, e-visibility, open research

To state that a substantial amount of academic practices are nowadays making use of digital devices, platforms and media in one way or another is an obvious thing to say. The affordances that the digital technicalities offer are having an enormous impact not only on the dissemination of research output but also on the generation of knowledge itself. In this context of new ways of knowledge-creation and knowledge-dissemination, many aspects related to the way academic practices are instantiated are being revisited from the perspective of discourse analysis, applied linguistics and associated fields such as communication studies, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and, in general, linguistic disciplines with a social bias. In the

light of these approaches, the study of the impact of new technologies and the use discourse communities make of them is essential in order to assess the role that digital platforms have as elements of innovation and change in the shaping and reshaping of already existing academic practices.

Perhaps the concept of academic genre is the one more widely problematized. Genres are generally taken to be "dynamic rhetorical forms that [...] serve to stabilize experience and give it coherence and meaning" (Berkenkotter, & Huckin, 1993, p. 479). The fragile balance between stability and change which characterizes genres has given rise to two major issues in genre studies, the first one being how to reconcile stability and change, and the second, how genres are structured, controlled or determined (Miller, 2014). The impact of electronic platforms as elements of innovation and change in the (re)shaping of already existing genres is worth investigating, as it may foster the understanding of the connections between the use that different discourse communities make of new technologies and the emergence of new genres or adaptation of others. Moreover, in our academic context, as in many others, digital platforms not only act as dissemination bases for information and knowledge but they also determine the interaction among members of disciplinary communities. The way members of a disciplinary community interact nowadays has has evolved with the incorporation of new modes and the recontextualization of roles and purposes in a new scenario. Thus, a community's communicative practices and their subsequent "generic repertoire" may be changing (Sancho-Guinda, 2015), incorporating new practices and modifying others in an ever-changing research ecosystem.

Within this ecosystem, genres of high visibility and relevance such as the research article, the abstract or the book review have received a greater degree of attention by scholars investigating the use of genres for research purposes. However, not so much focus has been

placed on other genres which have a rather more instrumental role. Conference announcements or journal call for papers are instances of genres whose relevance lies in their function as enablers of other genres (e.g. conference proposals, reviews from evaluators, research papers), thus being part of a longer genre chain (Räisänen, 1999; Swales, 2004).

Conference announcements, in particular, are housed in the conference webpage which organizers design in order to give visibility to the event and make the information related to it widely available. Dissemination of the conference call is made through international academic lists, which are electronic spaces of interaction and communication among academics, that is, sites for interpersonal academic communication among members of a virtual disciplinary community (Herring, 2004). As to whether they are "Internet genres", that is, whether they are more than former paper genres distributed on electronic platforms, it may be argued that online conference announcements are adapted genres profiting from the affordances of the Internet. The shift of conference announcements to electronic platforms has opened up the possibility of linking and embedding information, of navigating through different layers of information and, in that sense, electronic platforms have enhanced the potential of conference announcements in terms of communication and interaction. In all, there is a degree of interactivity and easiness of communication that can only be achieved by means of the digital mode, which the paper format did not allow.

In the article entitled "Online conference announcements as spaces for disciplinary communication" (Lorés-Sanz, 2018) I explore the way organizers of conferences, as members of a certain disciplinary community, communicate with their peers through conference announcements distributed online. The study focuses on the type of functional roles writers assume and project onto their readers and how

this is realized linguistically. A corpus of 50 conference announcements from the discipline of linguistics posted on a well-known international discussion list, The Linguist List (http://www.linguistlist.org/), was analysed in terms of rhetorical structure and interpersonal markers. The methodology followed consisted first in the hand-tagged move-analysis of the texts (Ding, 2007) which allowed the identification of stages and sections, both formally, through textual markers such as section boundaries, subheadings and paragraph divisions, and also functionally, as each stage and section projects a differentiated communicative purpose. Connections were then established between the communicative purposes of each stage and the role adopted by the writer at that stage. Three stages were identified: i) informative, ii) evaluative, and iii) instructional.

The informative stage contained sections in which information was provided about date, place, website, linguistic field and type of audience. The function of the text stage was to provide contextual information and the function of the writer was to act as an informant. The second stage, evaluative, included the section called "meeting description", where information was given about the field state of art, the plenary speakers invited to the event and also further details about registration, fees, etc. The function identified was to attract colleagues, to identify discourse community and to present inceptives for participation. The functional role of the writer was to act as a colleague and a peer. Finally, the third stage was instructional, which included sections such as the proper call for papers, presentation modalities, how to submit the abstract and important dates. The function of this stage was to control quality (i.e. establishing conditions for submission of abstracts) and the writer acted as a gatekeeper. As regards interpersonal markers, self-mentions, engagement markers, modal verbs and passive voice were explored. These interpersonal markers were quantitatively

and qualitatively analysed. With regard to quantification, normalized frequencies per 1,000 words were carried out. No interpersonal markers were found in the first stage (informative), where information was requested in a very telegraphic way. The interpersonal markers under analysis were more frequently found in the third stage (instructional), sometimes three times as much in comparison with the second stage (evaluative).

Still, results showed that Stage 2 is highly dialogic, characterized by the use of the inclusive pronoun *we* (and its possessive form *our*). This engagement marker is used to encompass both writer and reader, revealing a collegial attitude on the part of writers, who address readers as peers with whom to share attitudes, interests and beliefs. Collegiality was also expressed in Stage 2 through the combination of epistemic modality (*will*) and a syntactic subject which refers to the event itself (*the symposium*, *the conference*, etc.), highlighting in this way an in-group attitude by members of the same academic community.

In Stage 3, the writer acts as a gatekeeper making use of various interpersonal markers such as self mentions (exclusive *we* to refer only to the writers, or nouns such as *the organizers*), which manifest a powerful position on the part of the writer. Engagement markers are also used in this final section. Readers as potential contributors are addressed in two different ways: by means of the second person pronoun *you*, especially when less imposing acts are uttered (e.g. invitation to contribute), and by means of nouns such as *authors* or *contributors*, when the acts are more imposing, as is the case when instructions are given or information about submissions and acceptance of contributions is provided. Directives are also found mainly to give instructions to potential contributors, thus manifesting the more powerful position that writers adopt in their role of gatekeepers. Still, hedging by means of polite forms such as *please* is consistently used. The use of deontic modality (*will, should,*

*must*) is another common linguistic marker of interpersonality in this final section, which shows the writer's instructional voice. However, the combination of modal verbs, impersonal subjects and passive voice acts as an effective hedging device which minimizes the imposition that instructions imply for potential readers, thus helping writers to guarantee the quality of the academic event while saving face and avoiding offending peers.

By way of conclusion it was claimed that although the affordances of digital platforms facilitate academic communication (to spread information about conferences globally through listservs and other electronic platforms has become quick and easy), this has also resulted in a challenge for organizers, as they need to make the event sufficiently interesting and attractive at an intellectual and academic level so that it attracts potential contributors' attention. At the same time, the wider readership afforded by electronic distribution also implies a higher number of potential contributors, which involves the need to apply quality filters in the form of very detailed instructions for the presentation and submission of contributions, stricter deadlines and a higher number of reviewers involved in the selection process, among other aspects.

In all, acknowledging the limitations of exploring a single distribution list, the results of this study seemed to point to the characterization of online conference announcements as strategic sites of interaction among disciplinary members, in which various communicative purposes overlap (informational, promotional, quality-control), and a variety of roles are adopted by writers.

Another relevant effect connected to the "digitalization" of academic research is the boost that academics and scientists' visibility is receiving. The use of digital platforms has had an enormous impact on the practices they are adopting to give light to their research output. By producing and sharing contents and creations, researchers dynamically

contribute to disseminate knowledge and enhance their visibility in different digital spaces such as research websites, blogs, academic fora, social media, YouTube videos, etc. This type of electronic visibility (e-visibility) has been approached in a recent study, entitled "New concepts, different approaches: Tackling e-visibility in research project websites" (Lorés-Sanz, & Herrando-Rodrigo, 2020) whose object of study has been the international research project website. Several approaches which include perspectives of identity and self-representation in writing (Ivanič, 1998), in combination with the exploration of metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005) and multimodality (Kress, & Van Leeuwen, 2001; 2006) were deemed necessary to explore what visibility may imply and how it is crafted in this type of digital discourse. A convenience corpus of 10 websites of research projects from the European Programme for Research and Innovation (Horizon 2020) was selected from another, larger, corpus previously compiled, EUROPROwebs Corpus, which includes 30 H2020 research projects[1]. These websites are compulsory for European-funded projects and are considered strategical for the exploitation and dissemination of research results.

Our first methodological step was to identify the pages that appeared in these websites. We identified a type of common basic structure, all of them including a Homepage or an About page (sometimes both), a Partners page, and a News and Events page. These three pages have in common the fact that they contain information generated for the web and are not mere repositories of information generated offline and uploaded in the web.

1. The EUROPROwebs corpus (corpus of websites of European H2020 projects) was collected as part of a research project on digital scientific discourse analysis, carried out by the research group InterGedi (www.intergedi.unizar.es). See Pascual, Mur-Dueñas, & Lorés (2020) for methodological steps and criteria of compilation.

A second methodological step involved analyzing the content of these pages by means of manual analysis combined with quantitative analysis via AntConc (Anthony, 2020). Such content, data-driven analysis revealed which entities were being made visible in these prominent pages. Three main entities were made visible on the pages under analysis: i) the project on which the researchers are working; ii) the institution, organization or company which participates in the project as a partner; and iii) the individual researchers, participating in the consortium. Moreover, various lexicogrammatical markers were identified as prominently serving the purpose of providing visibility to the entities highlighted. These linguistic markers were the following: proper nouns, common nouns and self mentions. A quantitative analysis of frequency and distribution showed that the project is the most salient entity, especially in the About page and in News and Events page. In contrast, institutions and individual researchers are only made visible in the Partners page, whereas they are almost invisible on the other pages. The grammatical patterns associated to saliency were also explored. As regards the project, it tended to appear, in any of its realizations (as proper noun, common noun and self mention), as subject in a clause followed by an active verb. The subject position in active clauses ensured a high degree of visibility, which contrasted, for instance, with the use of the passive voice. Thus, the entity of the project was ranked as highly visible, as both the parameter of frequency of appearance and the type of pattern in which it appeared pointed towards it. As regards individual researchers and institutions, they mostly appeared in Partners pages as agents in material processes, as carriers of attributions, included in lists of participants or in combination with logos and images, thus interacting with other modes as meaning-making resources.

In fact, one of the most pervasive insights we gained through the study of the three entities identified in research websites is that

visibility can only be properly understood if verbal markers are analysed in combination with other modes with which they connect (i.e. visual), along the lines suggested by multimodal analysis (Kress, & Van Leeuwen, 2001; 2006). The way in which visibility of an entity is projected is more intricate and complex than a mere adding up of lexico-grammatical and visual means. It is out of the combination of modes that meaning is made and concepts such as visibility can be explored in depth. As a result of this combination of modes we categorized e-visibility in research project websites into four types: impersonated e-visibility (the research project acts as an agent with personal attributions), collective e-visibility (projected by the partners), individual e-visibility (projected by the researchers), and a multifaceted type of e-visibility (projected by the research project in combination with visuals of researchers). In each type of e-visibility lexico-grammatical devices were combined with different multimodal devices (logos, pictures, visuals), giving way to various ways of projecting e-visibility.

To conclude, visibility revealed itself as a complex feature in the digital practices under study, in contrast with more conventional, usually offline, academic practices (i.e. research articles), where it is the authors and their research that are made visible. In research websites authors are unknown and they are usually multiple, thus problematizing features such as authorial voice, identity and visibility.

The website as a digital practice by international research groups was also the object of study in "Science on the web: The exploration of European research websites of energy-related projects as digital genres for the promotion of value" Lorés (2020). The starting point of this contribution was the impact that digital affordances are having on the communication of science to the broad public, facilitating the dialogue between scientists and civil society. In this paper I explored how research group websites, requested as part of specific institutional

communication plans (i.e. Horizon 2020), serve the purpose of accounting for the adequate investment of public expenditure. The adequacy of public investment on research is justified by institutions in various ways, one of them being the promotion of scientific research itself, of its primary objects of study and of the values associated with them, all of this linked to the premise that scientific knowledge is a public good. Thus, institutional research websites are strategically used as repositories and transmitters of the current values of scientific research.

As working frameworks, two perspectives were combined: Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) (Herring 2004; 2007; 2013; Thurlow, & Mroczek, 2011; Tannen, & Trester, 2013) which basically applies primarily linguistic methods to the properties of digital communication media, and the study of evaluation as proposed by Hunston and Thompson (2000), Hunston (2011) and Thompson and Alba-Juez (2014), which offer a rather encompassing view of what evaluative language is. The study of evaluation presented here revolved around the parameter positive–negative as this parameter is "dependent on the value-system underlying the text" (Hunston, & Thompson, 2000, p. 22), which may be the one institutions want to promote as a way of accounting for the public expenditure on research.

My aim was to explore these sites as instances of current digital scientific writing practices. A special focus was placed on the contribution of evaluative language to the characterization of the genre, in the understanding that these websites' main aim (i.e. accounting for public expenditure) may be strategically enhanced by the functional role that linguistic evaluation plays in the promotion of the EU research objectives and of their associated institutional values. For such purposes a convenient sample of 10 websites was selected of research projects related to the topic of energy funded by the European Horizon 2020 Programme. These 10 websites were part of a larger database of

100 H2020 websites (EUROPROwebs Database)[2]. The fact that all the projects dealt with the topic of energy, one of the main interests in the EU research agenda, contributed to the coherence of the wordlist retrieved and, therefore, to the relevance of the results gathered.

First, the identification of common structural features was carried out in the 10 websites. A series of webpages were found to appear systematically within the larger structure of the research website, among them, the Homepages and/or About pages (some websites in the corpus did not include the first, but only the latter; some others included both), considered to be showcasing genres which facilitate orientation into the website and state the purpose of the research undertaken. Then, evaluative markers along the parameter positive–negative (Hunston, & Thompson, 2000) were identified in Homepages and About pages.

The analysis yielded some insights with regard to the genre itself. The Homepages/About pages explored were multimodal, displaying to a greater or lesser degree some of the following modes: pictures, fixed or moving, allegorical or real, graphics, infographics, or a short video also related to their activity. Hyperlinks were also explored and two types of hyperlink were identified: internal and external. The internal hyperlink connected with other parts of the web, thus allowing to navigate in a non-linear way. External hyperlinking established connections with other sites outside the website. Here two subtypes were identified: (i) the "informative external hyperlinking", which provided information outside the web, and the "social external hyperlinking", which connected with social media such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. In all, these pages offered could be considered

2. The EUROPROwebs database was also collected as part of the research project on digital scientific discourse analysis, carried out by the research group InterGedi (www.intergedi.unizar.es).

instances of adapted genres as long as they incorporate some multimodality (in the form of pictures and videos) and a bit of hyperlinking which facilitates navigation along the web and may also lead to some interactivity through social media. However, they also revealed continuity with previous offline genres (i.e. abstracts and research application forms) in the rhetorical composition of the texts and in their function as entrance doors (along the lines of abstracts or tables of contents).

Secondly, as regards the analysis of evaluative language, a word list was retrieved from the Home/About pages under study by means of AntConc. This word list was filtered and non-content words (articles, determiners, etc.) were removed. Then, all the word types occurring at least 10 times in the corpus were kept in the list, which yielded a total of 32 types. The first two content words to appear were *project* and *energy*. Their frequency was almost three times as much as that of the third content word. A chi-square test (Preacher, 2001) was applied which revealed their significance on these websites. Their rank and frequency were then measured against a reference list. For such purposes, another wordlist was retrieved from the iWeb corpus (https://www.english-corpora.org/iweb/help/iweb_overview.pdf) (14 billion words from 22 million web pages), acting as a reference corpus. The statistical test for the words *project* and *energy* in this second list showed that none of their frequencies was significant. To explore the co-textual use of these two terms, the AntConc functions *clusters* (to identify the lexical and syntactic word types these two terms clustered with) and *concordance* (to spot the terms in the corpus and identify the use of evaluative language in their co-text) were used.

From a syntactic and semantic point of view, the word *project* frequently adopted the subject position in active voice and appeared

in combination with positive adverbs, adjectives, nouns and verbs. As a result, it was observed that this term was usually associated to positive values such as *success*, *reliability*, *consistency*, *development* and *innovation*, in line with strategic policies of environmental sustainability and energy efficiency. The term *energy* appeared in clusters such as *energy consumption* and *energy costs*, showing in some of these collocations the association between energy and negative values. However, by far the most frequent value attached to research on energy was *energy efficiency*.

The polarity of evaluation was basically positive (86.69%) in comparison with negative evaluation (13.3%). In terms of the values projected, apart from *efficiency* and *innovation*, the relatively high frequency of positive values dealing with *development*, *quality*, *responsibility*, *reliability* and *sustainability* seemed also to permeate through the discourse of these webpages. The negative value which stood out over others is that of *limitation* or *problem*, realized lexically by means of terms such as *limited*, *challenge*, *lack*, *barrier*, *problem* or *obstacle*. In all, an ideological discourse is created which permeates these websites and which basically argues that the EU-funded research is *innovative*, *efficient*, *sustainable*, *competitive*, *knowledgeable* and, therefore, of *quality* and *impact*.

Finally, evaluative markers were explored in connection with the rhetorical function they fulfill in Home/About pages. A rhetorical pattern emerged in some of these websites in which positive and negative evaluation combine in ways which go beyond the mere adding of values, serving other rhetorical, strategic purposes. Thus, positive and negative indicators are used to organise discourse along the lines of conventional offline genres, such as the research article abstract, in which positive evaluation is used to mark the centrality of the research, negative evaluation to indicate the research gap, and

positive again to highlight the contribution to the field of research. In contrast to these offline genres, however, technical language is avoided here, in an attempt to address a diversified audience. Thus, these texts may be taken to represent some kind of transition discourse between the written offline scientific text (research article abstract, project proposal), addressed to experts, and the less technical text whose aim is disseminating knowledge. In this transition, genres adapt to new communicative contexts and settings and comply with new communicative demands, thus showing processes of repurposing, with offline genres recontextualised in online contexts taking advantage of the affordances that the digital medium offers.

In all, the H2020 energy-related websites under analysis were shown to be strategical in the dissemination and communication of results obtained and in their attempt to respond to societal demands for good practice in public expenditure and investment in R&D. The exploration of evaluation in these institutional research websites as part of their generic characterization contributed to the understanding of the significant role that these digital sites play in the current and global movement towards Open Science.

To conclude, the research presented in this contribution aligns with other studies which attempt to show that modern digital communication, characterized by its hypertextuality, multimodality and affective interactivity (Petroni, 2011), has changed enormously the way scholars project their identities and interact with others, the way they make themselves and their research visible, and, in general, has affected the communicative practices of the various disciplinary communities, allowing them to strategically give shape to genres, adapting some, creating others, in order to achieve their aims. It is also opening new avenues of dissemination of knowledge and communication with

diversified audiences in the understanding that knowledge is a public good. In all, communication is taking advantage of the "flat earth" that the borderless digital world offers, allowing a global reach never seen before.

## Acknowledgements

This research has been funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness and the European Social Fund under the project "Toward greater visibility and dissemination of scientific research: A linguistic, rhetorical and pragmatic study of digital genres in English as a language of international communication" (project code FFI2017-84205-P). I also thank the support of the Government of Aragon for the research group CIRES (International Communication and Social Challenges) (group code H16_20R).

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**DOI** 10.36145/DoC2021.05

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# Rhetorical Aspects of Cross-cultural Academic Communication

**Key words:** academic discourse rhetoric; cross-cultural academic communication; author identity; plagarism

## Introduction

My interest in the field of academic discourse rhetoric stems from observations related to the problems non-native speakers of English encounter when attempting to publish in international, English-medium journals. This issue became even more prominent in the 1990s with the advance of the new technologies, on the one hand, and the onset of globalization combined with political changes, on the other, which led to the opening of a number of countries to the world, Eastern Europe and China being just the most obvious examples. As a result, scholars who had previously been confined to their own country or region, endeavored to join the Western academic community. The mandatory prerequisite,

however, was and still is, not only excellent knowledge of English but also knowledge and awareness of the expectations of the respective, subject-specific discourse community, as to the structure of an academic article or a presentation. As it turned out, it was exactly the rhetoric of knowledge representation that became the stumbling block for scholars coming from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. From a theoretical viewpoint, at that time, it was a recognized fact that rhetorical structure in general is unique for each language and is also driven by the respective culture. Scientific discourse, however, was believed to "be independent of different languages and different cultures" (Widdowson, 1979, pp. 109–110).

## Academic discourse rhetoric across cultures

In order to test the assumption that scientific discourse is universal and language- and culture-independent, I looked at the rhetorical structure of several languages (English, Russian, Bulgarian, French) from the point of view of the Speech act theory combined with the strategies for discourse production following van Dijk & Kintsch (1983), to find out that universality is observed at the higher levels of discourse organization, but when specification strategies start to operate, culture-specific features come to the fore. These are due to established norms supported by intertextuality, as well as to historical cross-cultural influences of larger languages on smaller languages (for details see Vassileva, 1995; 2002a). The diachronic study of economics journals in Bulgarian, Danish, English, and German published between 1900 and 2000 (Shaw, & Vassileva, 2009) demonstrated both similarities and differences in article structure, focus, perspective, format, among other features, in the course of the development of the discipline over that century.

Another focus of interest in my research was the phenomenon of hedging, starting with a contrastive analysis of the use of hedging devices in English and Bulgarian articles (Vassileva, 1997). This topic was further explored from a more general perspective including not only the notion of hedging (expressing detachment), but also the notion of commitment (through boosters), as it seemed that the overall expression of the author's ethos could be better elicited by looking at both ends of the cline "whose end points are complete commitment and complete detachment" (Stubbs, 1986, p. 6). Thus, based on Speech act theory, the study (Vassileva, 2001a) aimed to establish the degree to which 'commitment/detachment' is employed in English, Bulgarian and 'Bulgarian English' academic discourse in linguistics. 'Bulgarian English' was included in order to establish the possible socio-pragmatic failures which "stem from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour'" (Thomas, 1983) and resulting in deviations due exclusively to transfer of rhetorical strategies. The results showed many more differences than similarities, namely:

> To begin with, Bulgarian and especially BE show a higher degree of commitment and hence – a lower degree of deference towards the discourse community both in terms of quantity (the overall number of hedges and boosters) and in terms of quality (the degree of commitment and detachment implied in the linguistic means of expression). Secondly, some differences are observed in the means of expressing boosting in the three languages […]. Thirdly, there are also noticeable differences in the distribution of the hedges throughout the research article. As regards Bulgarian English, the evidence supplied above does not point undeniably to the presence of native language transfer but rather it seems to stand on its own in showing deviations from both the English and the Bulgarian standards. (Vassileva, 2001a, pp. 98–99)

At the turn of the century, it was observed that, in contrast to the growing number of studies on academic writing, *spoken academic communication*, unfortunately, remained insufficiently investigated despite the intensification of face-to-face interaction due to increased mobility of scientists all over the world. Therefore, I embarked on this topic, starting off with a contrastive study of the realization of speaker-audience interaction in English and 'Bulgarian English' (Vassileva 2002b). This, as well as my subsequent research was based on recordings of conferences and investigated speakers' strategies of persuasion and interaction with the audience when using English and German as conference languages (Vassileva, 2003; 2005; 2006; 2009). Conference presentations were analyzed in view of the employment of the most salient linguistic means of realization of speaker-audience interaction, namely: *'I' perspective*, *'We' perspective*, *'You'perspective*, *Rhetorical questions*, *Extratextual reference*, *Jokes*, *Story-telling elements*, *Deixis*, *Personal reference* and *Reference to other participants*. A detailed analysis is offered of the use of the 'I', 'we' and 'you' perspectives in the various types of micro-speech acts established in presentations: *Analysis/Argumentation*, *Conclusion*, *Aims/Advance Organisers*, *Terminology/Procedure*, *Personal View*, *Exemplification*, *Personal Experience*, *Reference*, *Focusing*, *Back Organisers*, *Self-reference*, *Permission*. The results were also compared to those found in research articles.

The outcomes of the investigation of conference paper presentations confirmed the hypothesis that there exist culture-specific patterns of author representation and author-audience interaction that account for considerable variations in the type and frequency of the linguistic means employed for the realisation of that interaction. To begin with, both German and Bulgarian authors use half of the number of interactive means as compared to Anglo-American

speakers. Approximately the same is observed in written German, whereas written Bulgarian comes much lower on the scale of discourse personalization. Besides, the data demonstrates that in conference language native speakers of English resort to more personalized means of argumentation, while speakers of German and Bulgarian rely more on logical argumentation.

Speaker variation is most noticeable in German English presentations, followed by German, which is close to English, while Bulgarian English demonstrates the lowest degree of speaker variation. Both German English and Bulgarian English show the typical features of highly developed interlanguages, that is, both native language transfer and target language overgeneralisation are observed, as well as deviations from both the native and the target language. The latter are, surprisingly, much more pronounced in GE than in BE despite the greater closeness between English and German as compared to English and Bulgarian, so that it could tentatively be suggested that Bulgarians using English as a conference language have, to a large extent, mastered the Anglo-American standard of interpersonal communication in academic discourse. The deviations that are observed both in GE and in BE could hardly be expected to hamper cross-cultural comprehension, but rather to fail meeting the expectations of the English-speaking discourse community.

Bulgarian linguists who use English as a means of international communication employ far fewer means of direct speaker-audience address and, despite the similar internal distribution of those means, still demonstrate a high degree of variation in their use in individual micro-speech acts. Most of the 'deviations' from native speaker standards can be traced to native-language rhetorical patterns of discourse organisation and presentation since the Bulgarian standard of academic writing seems to resist to comply with the tendencies

dictated by the Anglo-American rhetoric. This standard has formed over the years under the dominant influence of Russian, French and German, where there is a relatively stable tendency of avoidance of scientific discourse personalisation.

The study of conference presentations rhetoric was logically followed by my research on the discourse of conference discussion sessions and was based on recordings of conferences in English and German. The focus was on the ways and means of realisation of conference discussion sessions interaction in terms of argumentation strategies used by discussants, and their communicative effect. The analysis was methodologically based on classical rhetorical theory combined with more modern views on rhetoric. Since the conference discussion session usually consists of pairs of questions/statements and answers, the following types of questions/statements were identified in the corpus: *Expressions of appreciation and agreement; Requests for further information or clarification; Statements; Suggestions for ways of solving a problem; Critical questions.* The types of answers, respectively, were: *Clarification; Confirmation/agreement; Reformulation; denial; Attack; Submission; Avoidance; Questioning the question.*

The analysis showed that from the three main types of argumentation (epistemic, deontic, and ethical), it is epistemic argumentation that almost totally dominates conference discussion contributions. This is not surprising, since scientific discourse in general reflects the natural striving of science for the truth and for explanations of phenomena. Deontic argumentation is occasionally observed in suggestions where speakers usually propose alternative, allegedly better ways and means of solving a particular problem. Ethical argumentation is extremely rare, since it presupposes the categorisation of a claim on the scale of 'good – bad' and this kind of personalized evaluation clashes in principle with the universal assumption of the objectivity of science.

As to the rhetorical topoi linguists make use of in discussion sessions, the whole variety of them is presented in the corpus. The correlation between the topoi based on logical generic premises and those based on conventionalised conclusions is approximately 2:1, that is, since, contrary to natural sciences, linguistics is a 'Geisteswissenschaft' that does not always operate with strictly measurable, tangible and therefore verifiable matter, it has to rely on logic for securing successful argumentation. The very fact, however, that in yet one third of the cases topoi from the authority or from the person are brought in to support speakers' claims, contributes to the relatively high degree of subjectivism in argumentation.

Topoi from the contrast deserve special attention not only because they account for approximately one third of the corpus, but also because they can predominantly be observed in denials. In general, the predominance of question types 'requests for further information' and 'criticism' points to the natural striving of science for the truth, but is this always the only driving force behind scientific confrontation? Both explicit and implicit denials are of the "contrastive" type and belong to what Martin (1992, p. 147) calls "dismissal genre" that involves recasting another's work in one's own terms […] and then rendering it absurd with respect to one's own 'in-house' criteria." Besides, for the reasons already mentioned, in the humanities it is even easier to play down the discourse of other scholars. Especially in cases where there is a preliminary conception that there could not possibly be any common ground to be found, where the participants see themselves as worriers whose mission is to fight for the only cause, their own cause, the discussion turns into a battlefield and remains a battlefield, only to take other forms, through other media of academic communication. Thus, one could, to my mind at least, hardly speak today of the academic discourse community as one consisting of like-minded peers.

The final observations made in the studies above instigated further research in the field of confrontation in academic discourse (Vassileva, 2010; 2012; 2014a) that was based on corpora of academic book reviews in German and English with an outspoken negative character, meaning that the book is eventually not recommended to the readers. An attempt is made to explicate the argumentation strategies used by review writers within the classical Aristotelian framework and the degree to which criticism is based on objective logic or on subjective personal evaluation. The data demonstrate that the most frequent ground for criticism is theoretical deficiency or failure. Discrepancies between the aim(s) of the respective study/coursebook and their realization come next, followed closely by problematic choice of methodology and errors in analysis, and recommendations for improvements. Then comes erroneous and/or imprecise use of terminology and, finally, discrepancy between title and content. As to the rhetorical topoi linguists make use of in reviews, it should be noted here that the corpus does not represent the whole variety of them. The correlation between the topoi based on logical generic premises and those based on conventionalized conclusions is approximately 50:50, that is, topoi from the person and from the authority are brought in to support reviewers' claims, which contributes to the relatively high degree of subjectivism in argumentation as compared to the discourse of conference discussion sessions discussed above.

Another aspect of academic discourse rhetoric that has been in the centre of my research is the expression of author identity through the use of first personal singular and/or plural pronouns (Vassileva, 1998; 2000; 2001b; 2002c; 2014b). These studies are based on comparable corpora of research articles in English, German, French, Russian and Bulgarian, as well as articles written by Bulgarians in the respective foreign languages. In terms of *cross-cultural influences*,

two tendencies are observed: to a certain extent in French, but especially in German (in both cases due most probably to the impact of English), there is a gradual change from the 'we' to the 'I' perspective. However, this appears to be a subconscious rather than a conscious process, as a questionnaire distributed among native speakers shows. The Slavic languages, on the other hand, seem still to be resisting this trend, although English has become the dominant language in Eastern Europe, too. The reasons could be traced in earlier, historical cultural influences, as well as in local standards and traditions. As a result, one may expect that the 'we' perspective would sound rather self-confident and presumptuous ('everyone / the group thinks like me') to an outsider of such a culture. In other words, the supposedly self-effacing and impersonalizing effect of the collective 'we' may cause exactly the opposite reaction. On the other hand, the allegedly committal and responsible 'I' in English could seem intrusive and even condescending ('I know everything') to a speaker of a language that favours 'we' in this case.

Some explanations may also be found in Clyne's (1993, p. 14) distinction between "individualistic vs. collectivistic" oriented cultures. From this perspective, the Russian and Bulgarian discourses favour the 'collective approach' resulting in 'collective responsibility', which is not difficult to explain in view of the long-standing and powerful influence of the communist ideology. This ideology aims at suppressing the individual in favour of the community. All these considerations support Fairclough's (1992) claim that it is dominant ideologies that shape and determine modes of discourse. This observation does not apply to German, however, since no differences in this respect have been noticed between texts produced by linguists working in (former) East and West Germany (as the corpus includes both) – there the comparatively equal distribution of the 'I' vs. 'we'

perspectives points to a recent tendency towards personalization. One could assume, then, that cultural traditions can be more powerful than ideologies, especially in the case of "pluricentric languages" (Clyne, 1996) functioning in societies with different dominant ideologies. On the other hand, small and homogeneous cultures seem to be more coherent, so that 'collective thinking' tends to prevail over 'individual thinking', which is related to the striving towards preservation of cultural identity and independence.

## Academic communication in multimedia environment

The *Academic Communication in Multimedia Environment* Bulgarian-German project (see Vassileva et al., 2020; Vassileva, 2020; Vassileva, & Chankova 2020a; 2020b) focuses on the perceptions of academics of the new ways in which research can be done in the multimedia environment and how that environment influences information exploitation habits. The implications of the digital environment on knowledge production, transmission, and consumption in the social sciences, along with corollary issues such as the users' digital literacies are discussed. The users' perceptions of their use of multimedia environment are detailed. Two questionnaires with a similar structure were the method of gathering the data used for the studies, namely questionnaires that were run with students and scholars. The studies aimed at fleshing out how the new digital environment has influenced the formation of new habits in searching for, collecting, consuming, and evaluating information and whether and to what extent the learning process (for the students) and the research process (for the academics) change under that influence. The results echo a tendency of mistrust of the merits of the digital

environment on the part of the scholars and the rather slow adoption of its affordances for professional aims.

The experiments also involved practical tasks given to students, which they completed while their actions were recorded via the screen-capturing software Camtasia in order to gain insight into the students' habits in information collection and task performance for academic purposes. The results reveal that students seldom use scientific outlets of information, even for academic purposes, and they tend to copy and paste information as found, with no reference to the source, into their papers. The need to investigate further the habits fostered by the use of the multimedia environment in learning and research is heightened by various corollary issues which the experiments helped uncover: casual plagiarism, the need to educate students in the affordances of the multimedia environment, and not least, the need to reveal ways to incorporate the multimedia environment into academia.

These results provoked a study of Bulgarian scholars' attitudes towards plagiarism (Vassileva, & Chankova, 2019) whose outcomes are rather worrying: lack of knowledge of what constitutes plagiarism, reluctance to combat it, lack of regulatory mechanisms at institutional level, lack of punishment, ignorance as to the existence and implementation of digitally based plagiarism-capturing software, among others.

## Conclusion

Concerning the role of English as the international language of academic communication, the question is what to do in order to use English as a real lingua franca, that is, as a means of academic communication that would facilitate – and not hamper – such communication. Generally speaking,

there are three main positions concerning the use of English as the international language.

First, English could be used, like Latin, as a neutral, universal language devoid of any culture-specific rhetorical features. Here we clash, however, with the native speakers' claim that this would 'spoil' the language and reduce it to a computer language.

The second option is to use English so as to maintain its culture-specific rhetoric. This, however, would inevitably place non-native speakers in a disadvantageous position, as they would be forced to behave in ways alien to them, thus losing their cultural identity. Moreover, such a position is often accused of being culturally imperialistic.

And the third possibility, which I would plead for, is to use English in such a way as to maintain the cultural specificities of the producer of scientific discourse, in other words, to be tolerant to cultural variations, thus avoiding the danger of the scientific community becoming uniform. This would mean that Western members of the academic discourse community should be made aware of the existence of other, different cultures, respectively – rhetorics, and learn to be tolerant towards their specificities. Secondly, however, speakers of other languages who use English, German or French for international communication should be taught how to do it in a way acceptable for the intended audience, while at the same time preserving their cultural identity. This delicate balance may be secured by providing teaching materials for academic writing courses based on careful contrastive analyses of the respective similarities and differences.

The affordances of the internet may be expected to both alleviate and further complicate cross-cultural academic communication, depending on the extent of scholars' abilities and desire to adapt their behaviors to the new media. Last but not least, the latter issue has

been accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic which has left research and educational institutions with no choice but to go online. These developments will unquestionably call for rethinking academic discourse rhetoric both in terms of discipline specificities and cross-culturally.

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# Review

**DOI** 10.36145/DoC2021.06

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# Gadomska, A., & Szwed M. (2020). The Impact of Style on the Quality of Writing and Translation. In B. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (Ed.), Cultural Conceptualizations in Translation and Language Applications, Second language learning and teaching (pp. 169-181). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

In an interconnected world, the movement of goods, services, people, and ideas often depends on translation. The claim of Gadomska and Szwed (2020) is that translation's effectiveness is dependent on universal notions of style.

Gadomska and Szwed's chapter is one of a collection of fourteen that explore the way that culture is conceptualised in translation practice and language education. The first ten chapters in the volume, of which Gadomska and Szwed's chapter is the final one, are devoted to the way that culture is manifest in and by translation, translators and the process of translating; and the remaining four chapters, to which the authors' contribution acts as a bridge, to formal educational concerns and contexts. The readership of the first ten chapters, and Gadomska and Szwed's chapter in particular, can be assumed to be translators, teachers of translation studies, and those more generally interested in cognitive approaches to the study and practice of translation. The authors' thesis is that the tenets of good style, as outlined by Williams (1990) and Williams and Bizup (2015), possess 'intercultural universality' and that their application improves the quality of a writer's original work and that of any translation of it. The authors' understanding of good style may be summed up as 'clarity'.

The chapter comprises three sections. The first outlines and illustrates the authors' notions of clarity and its relationship to style, and presents seven of Williams' (2003) ten principles; it surveys other writers' advice on style; and it applies the same principles and advice to Polish language texts. The second explores ways that a first author's style defines the translator's version of it in spite of, or because of, measures of translation excellence and compliance. The third comprises a short report of an empirical investigation ('The experiment').

The relationship between English and Polish deserves more discussion to explain the apparent ambiguities in the authors' claims. The chapter abstract implies some affinity between the languages: 'Polish scholars point to the same aspects of text clarity as the English language researchers' (Gadomska, & Szwed, 2020. p. 175); and the ten principles could be applied to English, for which they were devised,

and Polish; yet English is 'analytic' and Polish 'synthetic' (Gadomska, & Szwed, 2020, p. 172); and a figure from Gadomska (2017), surely derived from Kaplan's work on cultural thought patterns, first published in 1966, graphically illustrates the difference in 'argumentative writing' in the two languages (Gadomska, & Szwed, 2020, p. 172). English, whose clarity and economy of expression is represented by a simple downward arrow, implicitly follows Williams' (2003) principles, which the authors claim to possess 'intercultural universality'. Next to Polish, however, it appears to be distinctive rather than universal. One explanation is that the authors are not comparing like with like. The worked example (Gadomska, & Szwed, 2020, pp. 170–171) illustrates the fallacy. A speaker of English as a first language comments on the original example from Williams and Bizup (2015) illustrating poor style that 'No one talks like that!' (Gadomska, & Szwed, 2020, p. 171) and the authors note that it would be difficult to translate the sentence orally. The same could be said of the improved version. On the other hand, both original and reworked examples would be unremarkable in certain written contexts. And depending on context, the rhetorical structure of written and spoken discourse is capable of seeming like either arrow or meander, regardless of language; but context is mentioned only once in passing ('Sometimes [the doers of the actions] can be found in the same sentence or in the context' (Gadomska, & Szwed, 2020, p. 171)), despite its treatment as an eponymous chapter in Williams (1990), a work that is cited throughout.

Gadomska and Szwed have ignored the social variation of style, and the design of texts, spoken and written, for distinct audiences, and beyond that the social relationships involved in language interaction where different notions of clarity may apply. They assume that the author of any text of interest adheres, or aspires, to the formal style conveyed by the original Williams (1990) example and its redraft. English, like Polish and other languages, has as many styles as there

are social situations, and a cline of formality to informality. Clarity and 'concision' (p. 174) are not always the hallmarks of good style, and whether these attributes are recognised and valorised will depend on the reader's purposes and interpretation. That both example sentences are more typical of written than spoken language, and specifically of rather formal written text, is a starting point for noting that the first is actually good style for a formal abstract and the second for a formal letter or similar personal communication. A paraphrase of the principles from Williams (2003) that the authors now list are: nominalise subjects, match them with accompanying transitive verbs, place familiar information first, bring the main verb forward, position complex information at the end, be concise, and avoid more than one level of subordinate clause in a sentence. The principles are simultaneously useful advice for certain contexts and at the same time idealisations that may need more nuanced adoption.

The heading of the second section, the juxtaposed 'Clarity vs translation', suggests that all translation is unclear, an interesting proposition with well-known antecedents regarding the impossibility of reproducing the source text, but the premise is not explicitly acknowledged or explored further. The authors here consider ways that a translation is influenced by the first author's style. The continued focus on author and translator is unnecessarily limiting and, in this part of Gadomska and Szwed's chapter, more attention could have been paid to readers, for readers are themselves active meaning makers, a notion introduced by the reader-response theory of Rosenblatt and Iser more than eighty years ago. Readers have their own experience of the styles of the translator and the source text author.

Gadomska and Szwed have sufficient material that, if expanded, would form the basis of three papers: a position statement, an empirical report, and a review. However, they seem to pursue none of the

possible lines in a coherent or systematic way, so that no single genre is recognisable and no argument is sustained and supported to the extent that it is convincing. The tone is polemical, and various assumptions are made or implied, e.g. by the figure, and by the use of the third person plural pronoun, whose attribution is often unclear. Much of the content is descriptive, consisting of direct quotation or summaries of the authors' or others' work: occasionally it is unclear which. Although the words 'argue' and 'argument' are used liberally, most often they refer to a concept or proposal without supporting evidence. Lack of clarity in the areas referred to results in the overall purpose of the chapter becoming unclear.

The same proposition – that good style means writing simply – is often repeated. Responsibility for the problem of poor translation is lain without substantive evidence at the door of translation teachers. The use of 'we', the choice of source text, the prescriptive message taken from it and the uncritical way that the prescription is presented appear reactionary rather than topical. Presumably, more current perspectives on translation practice exist in journals such as Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice?

The writers' own style can make the content difficult to process. As well as the overuse of distracting quotations, coherence and cohesion within and between paragraphs are often absent, forcing repeated re-reads. In effect, the authors are making the reader do their work for them – mentally unpicking and piecing together the ideas that they proffer but do not develop. For example, what is the logical relationship of the three authors in the following extract?

> Joseph Williams is not the only advocate of good style; he is also criticized, for example, by Hitchings (2014) as "superficially pleasing but misguided and restrictive" in his recommendations. However,

> Stylistic [problems] belong to those criteria of English text evaluation that leave plenty of room for interpretation and are frequently treated as synonymous to vagueness and awkwardness. It is often observed that when a teacher of English as a foreign language doesn't know how to identify the error, s/he puts the correction symbol ST next to it. Nothing more erroneous… (Gadomska, 2017).
>
> (Gadomska, & Szwed, 2020, p. 173)

Is one possible paraphrase, 'Although Hitchings (2014) criticises the stylistic recommendations of Joseph Williams, one of a number of advocates of good style, Gadomska (2017) approves their potential for countering "vagueness and awkwardness" in English texts (Gadomska, 2017, p.n.)'? Part of the confusion results from the semantic misuse of adverbial conjuncts such as 'not the only' and 'However'; the rest from the unexpected completion of the second sentence with an extended quote, whose content the reader has to paraphrase to construct a contrast with the previous sentence. It is as if a speaker were to don a mask mid-sentence and continue as another character. In addition, in the above and elsewhere, each citation related to a quote requires a page number. Working out the writer's intention in the extract, which is representative of the writing in the larger chapter, considerably slows progress and comprehension.

Of the several strands in the chapter, the most original is the empirical study. If the authors would plan and conduct a replication, confining their claims to cross-cultural (English/Polish), rather than multicultural, conceptualizations in translation, and write it up following the conventional stages of an academic report, viz. an introduction to the area of interest, identification of the problem, presentation of research questions, methodology, findings, discussion and conclusion, they would more likely make a valuable contribution to the field of translation

studies. In this way, they could fulfil the promise of the present volume and demonstrate first-hand how style impacts a reader's understanding of written texts and translations.

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Note: All citations and references are taken from Gadomska and Szwed's chapter as follows:

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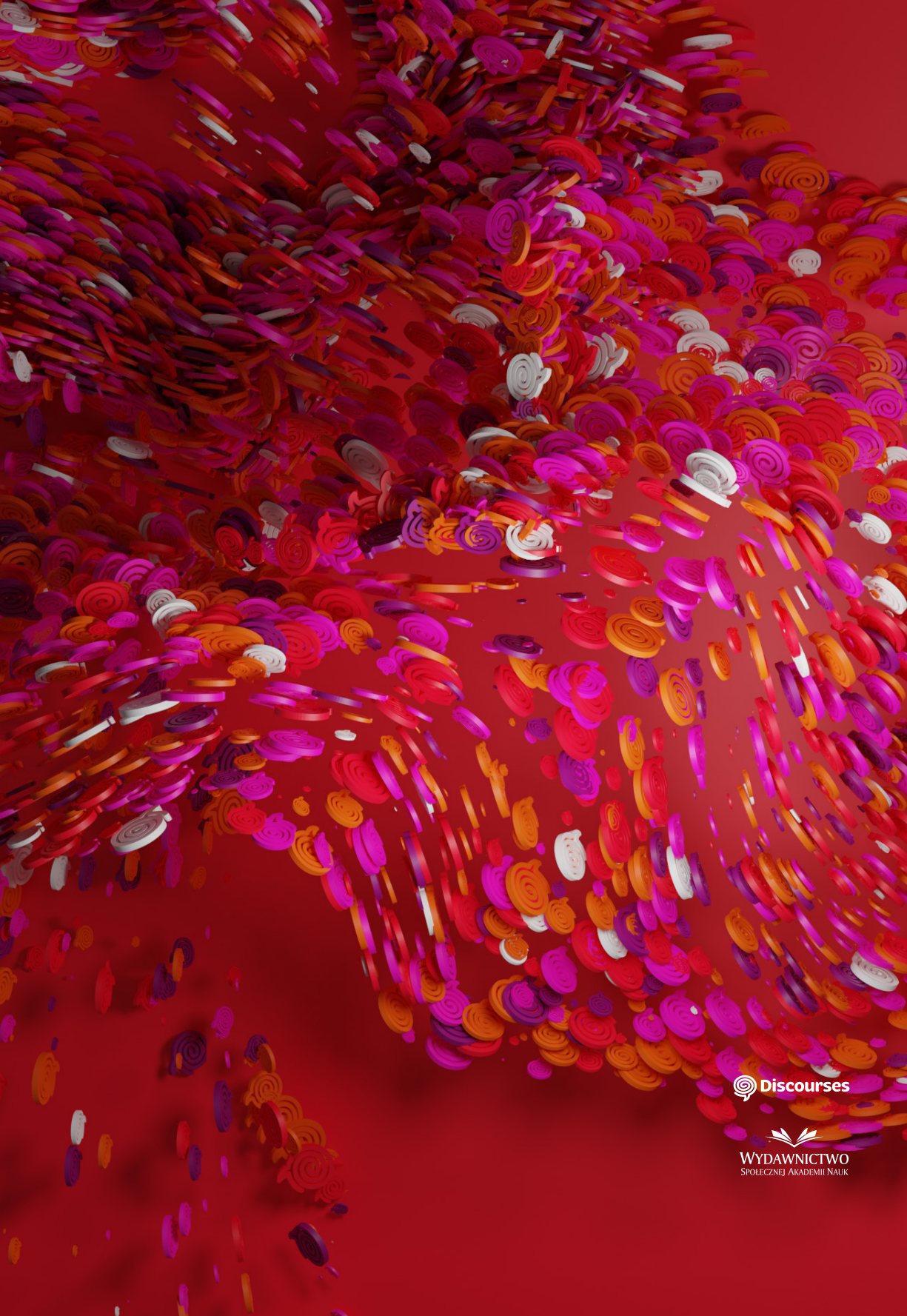
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