

Introduction: Exploring academic writing from cross- cultural perspectives

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This volume is the result of the mutual respect and fruitful cooperation of several researchers. As interest in academic discourse has been growing in Slovenia, as well as in the wider region, and shared research paradigms that take into consideration cross-cultural encounters in academic contexts are emerging, it seems important to create opportunities for interaction among scholars juxtaposing different lingua-cultures. With this edited volume, we wished to provide such an opportunity by bringing together researchers examining different language combinations, including those contrasting English as an academic *lingua franca* and L1 discourse, as well as experts investigating other languages and cultures. A central and recurring theme of the volume is the focus on the dynamic evolution of academic discourse conventions through language contact predominantly in Slovene, but also, in the context of the region, in Croatian and Serbian.

We believe that shifts in discourse conventions can be best observed by examining the emerging phenomena in semi-peripheral and peripheral languages (in the sense of Heilbron 2000). Because of the cultural capital of English in the scientific and technical fields, as well as its position as the hypercentral language of the academic world, English is often treated as a *sine qua non*, and the fact that academic discourse is also published in languages other than English can easily escape one's notice.¹ The reasons for publishing in languages other than English vary: they may reflect divergent audiences and disciplinary practices, or reveal strong cultural traditions and a desire to develop or maintain national academic languages (cf. Swales 1997 for a discussion of the role of academic languages other than English). While the position of English in academia and higher education may seem unchallenged and even untouchable, a closer look at the past and present reveals a complex multilingual world where the relationships between various *lingua francas* and (semi-)peripheral languages is continuously re-negotiated.

The impact of the dominant Anglo-American model of academic writing on the discourse conventions of other languages is often highlighted. However, it is important to acknowledge that English as an academic *lingua franca* is also shaped by multilingual scholars, whose cultural background in academic writing is diverse, and may be characterized by somewhat different stylistic and rhetorical preferences. It is, in fact, style and rhetoric that are at the heart of the debate. In her exploration of the development of the dominant Anglo-American model of academic writing, Bennett (2011) underlines the links between the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century, Enlightenment values and the emergence of logical argumentation, pointing out that the Catholic cultures of Continental

1 Lillis and Curry (2010, 9) report that according to Ulrich's Periodicals Directory "67% of the 66,166 academic periodicals included are published using some or all English", which conversely means that some 33% of the periodicals indexed by Ulrich use a language other than English. Non-periodic publications, such as books and edited volumes, are, of course, not indexed by Ulrich.

Europe long resisted this paradigm “for identity and political reasons” (Bennett 2011, 192), cultivating a less explicit writing style.

Building on previous research into divergent cultural traditions, this volume focuses on contrastive rhetoric, in other words, contrastive issues beyond the sentence level, including variation across lingua-cultures in terms of text organization, genre conventions, discourse functions and pragmatic elements. The particular combinations of languages examined in this volume present an opportunity to juxtapose their rhetorical conventions, re-examining our understanding of the discourse and pragmatic functions of academic communication. We therefore believe that this collection may serve as an initial step towards an in-depth examination of academic practices in the regional context, as well as a solid reference for future research on the topic.

Applied linguistics research focusing on academic writing (see, for instance, Swales 1990; Hyland 1998, 2009; Harwood and Hadley 2004; Lillis and Curry 2006; Pérez-Llantada et al. 2011; Flowerdew 2014; Charles and Pecorari 2015, to name just a few) emerged in the context of English for academic purposes. This means that many of the studies were motivated by a desire to gain an insight into the potential issues faced by non-native English speaking higher education students and multilingual scholars working in English. However, these studies have also contributed to unveiling divergences in rhetorical traditions among various lingua-cultures, and the implications that these divergences have for developing academic writing skills in a second or foreign language. One such divergence has been identified by Hinds (1987): in his seminal study, he outlined the differences between what he labelled reader vs. writer responsible languages. Cross-linguistic differences have been identified between English and a wide range of languages, including German (Clyne 1987), Finnish (Mauranen 1993), Czech (Čmejrková and Daneš 1997), Spanish (Moreno 1997), Bulgarian (Vassileva 2001), Russian and Ukrainian (Yakhontova 2001), Norwegian and French (Fløttum et al. 2006), Italian (Molino 2010), Chinese (Hu and Cao 2011), to name just a few.

This volume attempts to expand the discussion. It begins with a focus on academic writing in Slovene, a language with just over two million speakers; the scope is then broadened to include Croatian and Serbian, important regional languages, not only directly comparable to Slovene in terms of their linguistic structure, but also particularly interesting for the present volume because of their (partly) shared history with Slovene. Academic communication has received previous research attention in all three languages: this means that the papers published in this volume are informed by previous studies on Slovene, Croatian and Serbian academic discourse.

Studies of Slovene academic writing have focused on issues such as terminology development (Kalin Golob and Logar Berginc 2008; Vidovič Muha 1986), register and genre (Sajovic 1986), linguistic identity (Kalin Golob et al. 2017), corpus linguistics (Erjavec et al. 2016), discourse phenomena (Gorjanc 1998) and language for specific purposes (Logar 2017). The development of scientific writing and terminology in Slovene is systematically examined from a historical perspective by Žigon, Almasy and Lovšin (2017).

Moreover, contrastive studies of Slovene and other languages for academic purposes have revealed interesting details about text organization and cohesion in Slovene academic writing; see for instance the comparison of research articles in Slovene and English (Pisanski Peterlin 2005) or the contrastive analysis of student academic writing in Slovene and Croatian (Balažic Bulc and Gorjanc 2015). Building on the findings of contrastive research, studies examining Slovene-English translations of academic discourse also yielded potentially relevant details about Slovene academic discourse conventions, above all those relating to metadiscourse use. Thus, Zajc (2014) focused on the translation of research grant proposals, and Pisanski Peterlin (2008, 2016) on the translation of research articles. Other studies have examined L2 production of Slovene writers, most notably L2 academic writing in Spanish (Heredero Zorzo, Pihler Ciglič and Santiago Alonso 2017) and English (Grad 2010).

Croatian academic discourse studies have been approached from several angles: narrative in a range of discourse types, including academic discourse (Ilić 2014) and national identity in Croatian academic discourse (Franks, Chidambaram and Joseph 2009). A number of contrastive studies have focused on comparing Croatian and English academic discourse, most notably Varga (2016) examining epistemic modality, Bašić (2017) exploring reporting verbs as evidentiality carriers, and Bašić and Veselica Majhut (2017) focusing on explicit author reference.

A range of studies have been dedicated to contrasting Serbian and English academic discourse, including Blagojević (2009, 2012), exploring the expressions of attitude and explicit reflexivity parameters, Blagojević and Mišić Ilić (2012) and Mišić Ilić (2012) investigating the use of interrogatives, and Mirović and Bogdanović (2017) and Bogdanović and Mirović (2018) examining metadiscourse use among students, and professional academics in L1 and L2. A comprehensive perspective is offered in the volume edited by Lakić, Žiković and Vuković (2015), dealing with a number of different academic genres.

The work encompasses nine chapters, each addressing a different issue, from a contrastive, translation-oriented, educational or historical perspective. The selection of the topics was guided by two main principles. The first was to incorporate different research approaches, while the second was to cover the most

relevant language combinations. For Slovene, the initial focus of this volume, this includes comparisons with German, Croatian and Italian as the neighbouring languages with important historical connections, French and Spanish because of their special status in academic communication, above all in the humanities, and, last but not least, English as the academic *lingua franca*. For Croatian and Serbian, the analysis is limited to English.

The opening chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the birth of Slovene academic discourse in the 19th century. Tanja Žigon and Karin Almasy address the interaction between Slovene and German academic writing from a historical perspective. Their specific focus is on the role of translation of mathematics and natural science textbooks from German into Slovene, a systematic activity undertaken in the 19th century to establish disciplinary terminology in Slovene. The results of the archival research reveal that in the Habsburg monarchy the impulse for multilingualism did not necessarily always come “from below”, highlighting the pivotal role of the translators of textbooks in the emergence of scientific Slovene terminology, as well as their rather contemporary approach to translation of field-specific terms, one reminiscent of crowdsourcing.

The chapters that follow focus on synchronic cross-linguistic comparison. There is considerable variation in the type and intensity of cultural contact between Slovene and the other languages contrasted with it. Two of the chapters contrast Slovene with the neighbouring languages, Croatian and Italian. Tatjana Balazič Bulc challenges the perceptions of the impersonal and neutral nature of academic discourse by examining interactional metadiscourse in the form of self-mentions in Slovene and Croatian academic texts. Her findings reveal that self-mentions are considerably more frequent in the Slovene academic texts under analysis than in the Croatian texts: this difference is especially remarkable given the systemic similarities between the two languages, as well as the close interactions among Slovene and Croatian researchers working in various disciplines.

Tamara Mikolič Južnič investigates the role of nominalization in Slovene and Italian academic prose. Since the use of nominalization in academic discourse developed through the Italian writings of Galileo Galilei, the comparison of contemporary academic texts in Italian and Slovene offers an important insight into the conditions under which this discourse strategy, so closely associated with academic writing, is employed in the two languages. While nominalizations generally seems to play a more prominent role in Italian academic writing than in Slovene, the relationship between source texts and translations is far more complex, being influenced by other pragmatic and discourse factors.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore the cultural contact beyond the immediate borders of Slovenia, focusing on Spanish and French. This research perspective seems

particularly valuable as it is adopted relatively infrequently, although research publication in languages other than English may be a relevant option for scholars in the humanities. The comparison between Slovene and Spanish involves three sets of texts: David Heredero Zorzo and Gemma Santiago Alonso juxtapose L1 Spanish and Slovene academic writing and L2 Spanish academic writing by Slovene researchers, undertaking a systematic genre analysis of research papers with a focus on the conclusion section. Their results show that the conclusion sections in L2 Spanish have fewer rhetorical elements typical of conclusions than either L1 Spanish or Slovene conclusion sections, underscoring the need to give more prominence to rhetorical conventions and genre analysis in academic writing instruction.

Mojca Schlamberger Brezar's article focuses on the Francophone community, one of the strongholds of academic writing in languages other than English. In the context of this under-researched domain, Schlamberger Brezar addresses the topic of French academic discourse conventions, reviewing guidelines on this issue. Her focus is specifically on the macrostructure and on selected microstructural elements. Where possible, Schlamberger Brezar attempts to draw parallels with Slovene or English writing conventions, highlighting the characteristics of the French model that researchers who aim at publishing in Francophone journals need to adhere to.

The last two chapters involving Slovene contrast it with English, the *lingua franca* of academia. Martina Paradiž examines the genre of research grant proposals (RGPs) from a Slovene-English contrastive perspective, as well as from the perspective of translation. As RGPs are typically difficult to access, our understanding of the cross-linguistic issues arising in their translation is very limited. Yet since RGPs play a crucial role in obtaining research funding, Paradiž's study presents a rare insight into this genre, underlining some of the crucial differences between Slovene and English. The investigation is based on a corpus analysis of lexical bundles in a multidisciplinary corpus of Slovene RGPs, their English translations and comparable British RGPs.

Using the example of Slovene as a peripheral language and English as the *lingua franca*, Agnes Pisanski Peterlin investigates how translation direction is reflected in translation from and into the *lingua franca*, by examining reformulation, a discourse strategy used to enhance the comprehensibility of the text. Her analysis is based on a small, bidirectional corpus of research articles, composed to ensure maximum comparability. Pisanski Peterlin's comparison of source and target texts identifies a range of modifications involving reformulation; moreover, her results suggest that translation direction plays a substantial role in the type of reformulation used in the translated academic texts.

The last two chapters in the edited volume expand the topic to Croatian and Serbian. Ivana Bašić explores the function of verbs of visual perception in English and Croatian research articles, arguing that these verbs may be considered evidential strategies reflecting the authors' epistemological stance. Using an impressive corpus of 165 research articles in English and Croatian from nine disciplines, Bašić provides a comprehensive analysis of the syntactic, discourse and reporting functions of verbs of visual perception in both languages, identifying relevant cross-linguistic differences and similarities. She argues that the role of the verbs of visual perception as a rhetorical strategy in academic discourse is to facilitate the acceptance of a claim.

In the concluding chapter, Vesna Bogdanović and Vesna Bulatović address the increasingly important issue of emerging academic genres in the context of educational technology. With its multimodal, asynchronous and interactive potential, digital communication in the classroom is quite distinct from traditional academic writing. Bogdanović and Bulatović address the difference between L1 (Serbian) and L2 (English) writing posted by Serbian students in discussion forums used in the context of e-learning. Specifically, they examine the use of boosters and attitude markers. Among other things, their results reveal that L1 posts were less formal and more direct than L2 posts, while L2 posts displayed a more prominent use of boosters and attitude markers.

The papers collected in this volume bring together different methodological approaches, demonstrating how by synergizing their strengths, we gain new insights into the changing conventions of academic writing. Moreover, highlighting a range of cultural traditions allows us to reimagine the role of academic writing in the peripheral languages. We therefore hope that this volume can be used as a step towards future collaborations among scholars whose work focuses on cross-cultural encounters in academic contexts involving central, semi-peripheral and peripheral languages.

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