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Tracking Language Change in Specialised and Professional Genres
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Round Table on
Language Change in Corpus Studies:
Integrating cultural variables & practices

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1. Introduction: the radical stance

corpus studies = combine
textual data (genres) + socio-cultural data

no data interpretation without socio-cultural variables
corpus-linguistic results are meaningless

if we do not have enough data on the text
producer(s)/recipient(s)

→ know your socio-cultural variables & practices of author identities
2. Key concepts

- communities of practice, e.g.
  - research circles
  - MA academic writing classes

- culture =
  - (sub-)disciplinary, e.g. ling. vs. lit.
  - national, e.g. Italian?, CLAVIERian?
3. New issues: culture

complexities of national culture:

e.g. cline of “Russianness” (partly implicational)

- Russian-born
- Russian socialisation (PhD?)
- Russian affiliation
- Russian editor
- Russian publisher

→ towards more specific socio-cultural variables

of (constructed) author identity
3. New issues: models

- replacing native-speaker models by abstract models of good practice?
  - reader-friendliness through metadiscourse: cohesive devices, author engagement/commitment, etc.
  - explicitness (explicification in editing phase, from translation studies)
  - transparency in lexicon (e.g. variation: beauty or distraction?) and grammar (e.g. parallelism of constructions)

→ more psycholinguistic reading/listening tests?
4. New data from new media

tracking usage change more immediately

- pre-publication servers for science genres
- social media networks for discourse genre (uni-, multi-nodal networks):
  - twitter, facebook, etc. as expansion of Wikis and Blogs

Constructed identities a problem or opportunity?
4. New data from teaching practices

tracking teaching-induced usage change

- more explicit teaching on BA, MA, PhD levels in Europe
- teaching through principles, models and practice: “home corpora” as a comparative basis (e.g. ChemCorpus)
- e.g. explicitness to create coherence:
  - MA level: explicit cohesive devices (like conjuncts) included by teaching
  - PhD level: more implicit (lexical) connections
5. Outlook into teaching

“uniting” teaching practices through development of
- common principles?
- common best-practice-models?
- common modules?

“uniting” data:
emphasis on socio-cultural variables in corpus compilation and data interpretation