Academic Writing in Europe: a Survey of Approaches and Problems

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Abstract

This survey sketches the new understanding of academic writing that has developed over the last two decades, from a text-based to a writer- and reader-oriented perspective, from a prescriptive to an empirical discipline. It sets academic writing in a wider context (like English for Specific Purposes and English as a *lingua franca*) and clarifies the main concepts. From a constructionist perspective, a discourse community develops through common practice, using expected schemata for instance in genres like research articles. They can be analysed empirically in corpus- and text-linguistic approaches, where at least five dimensions can be compared in empirical research: genre, academic discipline, national culture, language tradition, and language features. The problems discussed range from fundamental ones (whether a *lingua franca* like English makes non-native users of English in Europe lose national traditions) to practical ones (to what extent the data available are compatible). Despite the problems, new opportunities arise for English departments in Europe when they include an empirical discourse- and genre-based approach in their research and teaching.

1. Introduction: Understanding academic writing

Academic writing has established itself almost as an independent discipline in applied linguistics, or at least as a research-led sub-discipline in English for Academic Purposes (EAP). There is much more to it than what was taught 20 years ago: Old essay-writing focussed on language-specific student errors or creative styles; old English for Specific Purposes (ESP) focussed on discipline-specific vocabulary. The understanding of academic writing has changed fundamentally from a formal text-based perspective to a functional perspective that concentrates on the writer and the writing process and, even more, on the reader and the cognitive construction of discourse in a community (cf. Hyland 2010a, Schmied 2008, Thompson 2001). This paradigm shift applies to teaching as well as to research: Text-oriented research would, for instance, measure syntactic complexity by number of words or clauses per T-unit, or the specificity of lexemes in ontological systems. Writer-oriented research has tried “think aloud protocols” or task observations including keystroke recordings. Reader-oriented research has emphasized the mediation between writers/institutions/cultures, and conventions “describing the stages which help writers to set out their thoughts in ways readers can easily follow and identifying salient features of texts which allow them to engage effectively with their readers” (Hyland 2010b: 194).

2. Key concepts of academic writing

2.1. Definitions of EAP and related terms

In this survey, I see academic writing as an important, if not the most important, part of academic language behaviour in a discourse community. This discourse community uses English for Academic Purposes in research and teaching/learning, not only in universities in native-speaker cultures but also in universities where English is used as an international language or *lingua franca* at levels of international cooperation, where researchers as well as teachers and students are non-native speakers of English.

Traditionally, discussions of language use have been seen as part of ELT (English Language Teaching), or TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language). Today these concepts are often seen as a wide field of related terms and acronyms like EAL (English as an Additional Language), EIL (English as an International Language), ELF (English as a Lingua Franca), ESP (English for Special Purposes, or English for Specific Purposes), etc., where overlapping notions are only a matter of perspective. EAP can be seen as the "higher end" of ELF (which, in contrast to "Tourist English", requires at least B2 in the European Framework of Reference for Languages, EFRL). EAP emphasises the common ground of specialised languages in terms of discourse or pragmatics, whereas ESP tends to emphasise the differences in terms of lexicon and idiomaticity. EAP also adds a theoretical framework to practical "writing classes", which have spread to universities in native as well as non-native countries, and which can be seen as part of professional writing in the academic world, just like professional writing in the domains of law (e.g. legal correspondence), journalism (e.g. reportage), engineering (e.g. technical reports), marketing (e.g. advertisements), entertainment (e.g. film scripts), and literature (e.g. "creative writing" of novels).

Within this wide field of EAP, at least three levels of communities can be distinguished, and thus three types of EAP defined:

- Student English: The academic 'novice' may come from an Anglophone background where English is used for a variety of intra-national functions including teaching at secondary schools. Still, academic writing requires additional training, for it necessitates the independent search for appropriate information, its critical evaluation and media-specific presentation. The traditional genre at this level is the academic essay of 2,000 to 5,000 words (occasionally also a corresponding media-supported oral presentation).
- Doctoral English: In contrast to student writing with its focus on digesting research by others, doctoral students have to develop their own ideas, to pursue their own research agenda and to write up everything in a major contribution, which is the result of some sophisticated innovative Ph.D. project that the writer takes a long time to accomplish.

- (International) Research English: Although the written exchange of research results has a long tradition (in Britain at least since the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* in the 17th century), the importance of international scholarly articles has increased enormously over the last decades, partly due to the increasing competition among universities and researchers and partly due to the new electronic media. This has led to the standardization of peer-review procedures and the corresponding discussion of subject- and genre-specific conventions.

In contrast to student English, the latter two categories, doctoral and research English, are more specialized in the sense that they (have to) follow more subject-specific conventions. This applies to individual research journals as well as whole research communities, e.g. in literary or social-science academic cultures (with their MLA and the ASA/APA conventions, respectively). Such conventions – together with the specialised terminology and argumentation procedures – have made (even sub-discipline-specific) "specialised" academic writing increasingly an in-group phenomenon. To balance this trend, a new EAP category has gained more and more importance: non-specialised writing for a general academic readership, which can be called "popular" academic writing or Popular Academic English. This has political implications, since societies demand increasingly to be informed about public investment in universities and other research institutions.

2.2. Academic writing in the discourse community

Since I emphasize that the key concepts of academic writing have to be made accessible to students, I will adopt a student perspective in this section. I will use entries in Wikipedia (just like many students do) as a starting point and scrutinize them from a perspective of knowledge transfer to see whether there are any major discrepancies between the popular academic representations of these concepts and my more specific academic conceptualisations. The Wikipedia entry for discourse community is quite specific and very suitable for our purposes – not surprisingly since it is based explicitly on Swales (1990):

A discourse community:
1. has a broadly agreed set of common public goals.
2. has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members.
3. uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback.
4. utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims.
5. in addition to owning genres, it has acquired some specific lexis.
6. has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discoursal expertise.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discourse_community (27/03/11)

The advantage of this entry is that it is very broad, but it also fits our concept of academic community very well, especially the emphasis on genres and lexis. The levels I have defined according to practice and expertise as student, doctoral, and research English above, each with specific genres and lexical complexity. The level-specific genres are constructed through university conventions and this construction is in line with current thinking on wider academic perspectives.

Over the last two decades, academic writing theory has been closely associated with social constructionism, and again we can use a well-founded Wikipedia entry as a starting point:

> A major focus of social constructionism is to uncover the ways in which individuals and groups participate in the creation of their perceived social reality. It involves looking at the ways social phenomena are created, institutionalized, and made into tradition by humans. Socially constructed reality is seen as an ongoing, dynamic process; reality is reproduced by people acting on their interpretations and their knowledge of it.
> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_constructionism (29/03/11)

The two concepts discourse community and social constructionism in higher education can be combined in the concept of an academic community of practice:

> A **community of practice** (**CoP**) is, according to cognitive anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, a group of people who share an interest, a craft, and/or a profession. The group can evolve naturally because of the members' common interest in a particular domain or area, or it can be created specifically with the goal of gaining knowledge related to their field. It is through the process of sharing information and experiences with the group that the members learn from each other, and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally (Lave & Wenger 1991). CoPs can exist online, such as within discussion boards and newsgroups, or in real life, such as in a lunch room at work, in a field setting, on a factory floor, or elsewhere in the environment.
> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_practise (29/03/11)

Again, this Wikipedia entry is useful since our academic community is constructed through "sharing information and experiences", like (sub-)discipline-specific conferences. Nowadays, the "written discussion" in scientific disciplines takes mainly place in academic journals or even on pre-publication servers, since the international academic discourse is accelerated enormously.

Although conference papers and journals are the central spoken and written genres in academic communities today, there are many others. The Wikipedia entry for genre gives a crisp summary:

> A text's genre may be determined by its:
> 1. Linguistic function.
> 2. Formal traits.
> 3. Textual organization.

4. Relation of communicative situation to formal and organizational traits of the text (Charaudeau & Maingueneau, 2002: 278-280).

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genre (27/03/11)

This is a good introduction, but for our purposes not explicit and detailed enough, especially since research over the last 20 years has provided us with so many insights into this central concept.

This exercise has shown that Wikipedia can be used as a resource in general (popular) academic discourse to introduce novices to the basic concepts of a field. Of course, this is not the case for all concepts we need for a scholarly discussion of academic writing. The Wikipedia entry for "Academic Writing" itself is little more than a number of lists of genres or key terms that does not really help the novice in the field.

2.3. Genres as expected schemata in communities of practice

Although genres are recognised subcategories of research discourse (Swales 2004), developing an awareness of their conventions is often difficult for students, since genres are abstractions of real texts, and students need to gain experience through repeated exposure. From a cognitive perspective, genres are schemata that help us engage actively in text comprehension as we develop a feeling for relating new information to existing knowledge and previous community discourse. We recognise prototypical genres as unmarked – and some novices' texts as unintentionally marked in community discourse, which may distract the reader from the intended message of the writer. Thus genres link users to their discourse community and they link texts to each other since real academic discourse is a constant development of intertextuality. For students, this means that they have to learn to select texts for their argumentation from the existing literature, digest them by integrating them into their own writing and continue the academic discourse by "spinning on the yarn".

But genres also activate situational contexts in academic discourse and help create the role of individual community members in the discourse. The students' task is then to be aware of the conventions involved in a project proposal or a BA thesis in their specialisation. Genres constitute the discipline as they form a network with "neighbouring" genres. This community of practice forms a network of members, who move "up" from novices to experts in their discipline through producing the expected situated texts in the different types of genres.

There is no conclusive and comprehensive list of academic genres and there is considerable overlap between the subgenres of academic books: introductory, textbook, research monograph, (research) article collection, handbook, encyclopaedia, etc. And even spoken and written subgenres may be related: a conference paper and the related article collection, the key-note (lecture) and the related handbook article, etc.

Thus genres are fuzzy concepts, but they are useful for empirical analyses of stratified data-bases and related interpretations as well as for teaching. The

advantages of genre-based instruction have been described persuasively by Hyland (2004: 10f):

> The main advantages can be summarized as follows. Genre teaching is:
>
> **Explicit.** Makes clear what is to be learned to facilitate the acquisition of writing skills
> **Systematic.** Provides a coherent framework for focusing on both language and contexts
> **Needs-based.** Ensures that course objectives and content are derived from student needs
> **Supportive.** Gives teachers a central role in scaffolding student learning and creativity
> **Empowering.** Provides access to the patterns and possibilities of variation in valued texts
> **Critical.** Provides the resources for students to understand and challenge valued discourses
> **Consciousness raising.** Increases teacher awareness of texts to confidently advise students on their writing.

These features make the concept of genre accessible to students and useful, since it allows them to meet the expectations of teachers, editors, and gatekeepers of all types in the academic community. Although it is not a formal checklist, it provides students and teachers with a frame they can use for self-study and for teaching.

3. Approaches to academic writing

3.1. Corpus- and text-linguistic approaches

Students and researchers who intend to study academic writing can choose from a wide range of approaches. Basically, I would like to distinguish between approaches that focus on central formal or functional features across texts, usually in stratified collections of academic texts (that is why I call them corpus-linguistic), and approaches that focus on the special or prototypical interplay of features in texts or text-types (that is why I call them text-linguistic). Of course, ideally both approaches overlap and a combination will provide us with the best insights into this complex phenomenon.

Corpus-linguistic approaches are the standard approach in this volume. This is partly due to the research networks in which this collection has been put together. However it also seems to be the prominent approach of our time, since more corpus collections and tools like AntConc give every researcher quickly a key-word-in-context and statistical survey as a starting point for thought and discussion. Even academic novices at BA level for instance achieve a satisfactory scholarly result. More difficult is the development of a simple formal and functional feature analysis into a factor analysis of multiple dimensions (often called Biber-type, since it has been used extensively by Biber, from Biber 1988 through Biber 2006 to Biber & Conrad 2009).

Examples of text-linguistic approaches can be found throughout the history of the analysis of academic writing. Halliday (1997/2004), for instance, uses different text types ranging from a *Microbiology* textbook to a *New Scientist* article to illustrate answers to the big question “how does the language of science

reconstrue human experience?" (ibid: 49). This may be too difficult for a student discussion and we rather illustrate the text-linguistic approach by discussing examples of student writing from the ChemCorpus (s. below).

The best top-down approaches in text-linguistics would be to use a text-processing system to show the systematic parallel structure of headlines or to devise a hyper-text system to allow the reader to follow the links (cf. Schmied 2005). For our purposes two small case studies may suffice to illustrate the holistic approach.

The first text-linguistic example is a distribution diagram of *may* in some (short) exam texts from the ChemCorpus (Figure 1).

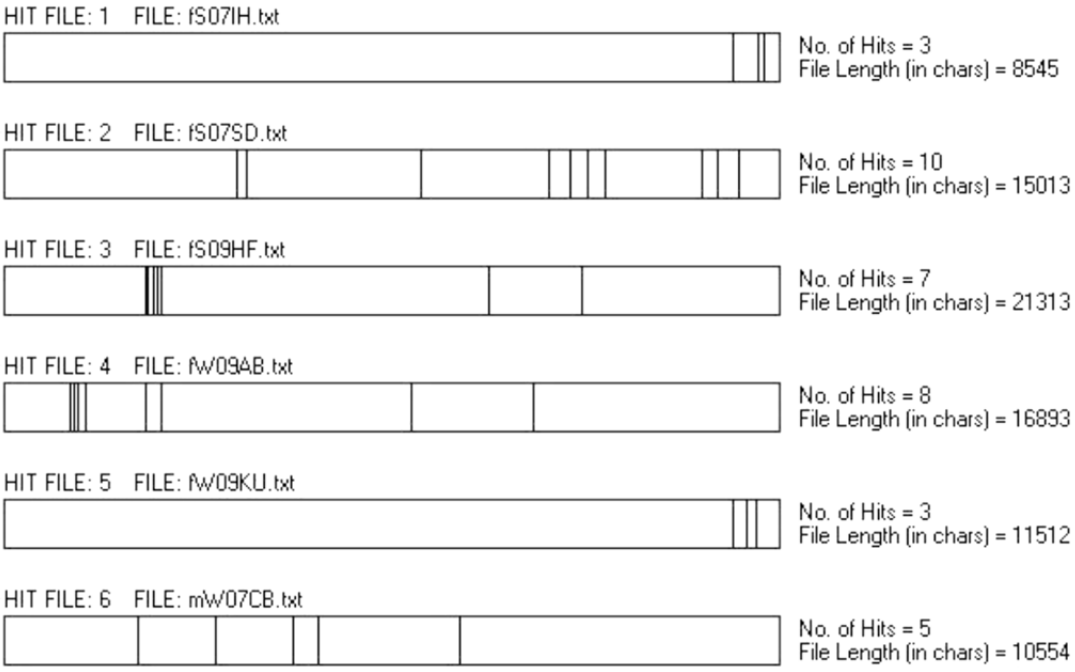

Figure 1: Distribution of *may* in selected ChemCorpus exam texts

The AntConc diagram clearly shows that modal auxiliaries like *may* cluster in specific parts of the text, they can be expected mainly in the second and the last sections, when the secondary literature is discussed critically and when research results are evaluated tentatively.

When we read through the *may* usages in the following examples in context, it is clear that they are all used in epistemic function:

(1) This ***may*** lead to temporary or even permanent language attrition (fS07IH)
(2) These additions ***may*** take several forms (fS09HF)
(3) Firstly, they ***may*** be words that are completely new to English, words that (fS09HF)
(4) Secondly, they ***may*** be words new to the BrE variety, but (fS09HF)
(5) Thirdly, they ***may*** be words that have currency in BrE, but, in Australia (fS09HF)

(6) Finally, they ***may*** also be words that might be unfamiliar to speakers of Standard English (fS09HF)
(7) For some people it ***may*** seem that the Australian language travels from its roots, but (fS09HF)
(8) Many Australian[s] ***may*** be able to give a few examples, including (fS09HF)
(9) In return, children ***may*** also address and refer to their parents differently (fW09AB)
(10) At home, a child ***may*** say “mum”, “mom” or “mummy” (fW09AB)
(11) On the phone with a friend listening you ***may*** address your mother by saying “mother” (fW09AB)
(12) When you are at home, talking to another family member and your mother is not present you ***may*** refer to her as “our mom” or “the old lady” (fW09AB)
(13) He ***may*** have coursed [caused] offence talking this way (fW09AB)
(14) In a meeting, for instance, where first names are generally used, the director ***may*** say (fW09AB)
(15) In everyday interactions, speech differences ***may*** also be reflected in people's social networks (fW090AB)
(16) To British ears a New Zealander’s “bad” ***may*** sound like “bed” (fW09AB)
(17) the striking usage of ‘be’ which ***may*** support the creole hypothesis (fW09KU)
(18) Therefore, a middle way between these hypothesises ***may*** be advisable (fW09KU)
(19) I would conclude that AAVE ***may*** be an africanized language, which means (fW09KU)
(20) On the other hand it ***may*** be assumed that the text producer has a supertheme in mind (mW07CB)
(21) They ***may*** also be seen as linguistic principles (mW07CB)
(22) Cohesion ***may*** well be viewed as a phenomenon of surface structure, i.e. (mW07CB)
(23) This ***may*** be done via anaphora or cataphora (mW07CB)
(24) A specific seme ***may*** occur throughout the text (mW07CB)

All *mays* in this list are used to indicate tentative expressions, but even within this semantic space of cautious meta-discourse, we recognise a few patterns:

- *may* is serialised to list possibilities (*Firstly* to *Finally* in (3) – (6) in fS09HF),
- *may* collocates with verbs of thinking/seeing (*assumed/seen/viewed* in mW07CB),
- *may* is used with primary auxiliaries, especially *be* to express passive,
- *may* often precedes *also* (four times by three different students), which could be an advanced learner habit.

The second text-linguistic example is the introductory paragraph of a final exam essay (on a language variation project) to illustrate how inherent lexical structures could be made more explicit. First, we discuss the original text, then we construct a new text version that is explicit and systematic according to our principles:

Language never stands still. It varies over time and is in a constant process of change, even though these processes might not be obvious. In many cases, linguistic variation is a result of internal linguistic factors. However, since the middle of the 20th century, many studies on language change have acknowledged that extralinguistic factors might have a considerable impact on the innovation and spread of new linguistic variants. Although these so-called sociolinguistic studies focused in the beginning predominantly on the category of social class, the awareness grew that it might in fact be the correlation of a variety of extralinguistic factors, such as age, ethnicity, and gender, that served best to explain the mechanism of linguistic variation and change. The subsequent chapters will focus in particular on the category of gender, as according to Labov (1990), the findings concerning the linguistic differentiation between men and women belong to the clearest and most consistent results of sociolinguistic research in the speech community. The first chapter will consider a number of methods and approaches that are commonly used to carry out sociolinguistic studies and obtain reliable results. As the argumentation will specifically deal with Great Britain, the correlation of social class and gender will need to be considered in particular. The second chapter will then discuss several generalizations that were made concerning gender-specific differences. The last part will finally present a number of phonological and grammatical variables that might be included in the study to analyse and reveal gender-based differences in linguistic variation. (fS10SK)

Apart from a "philosophical-essayistic" beginning, the text (fS10SK) consists of two parts: first, a discussion contrasting two approaches to language variation and change, and then a list of the sections that sketch the outline of this exam paper. The first part contrasts (through *however*) the traditional 19th century diachronic approach to language change with the modern sociolinguistic one since the mid-20th century. A further contrast is established between the old intra-linguistic and the new extra-linguistic factors, the latter expanding from social class to other variables like age, ethnicity, and gender. These contrasts can be made much more explicit in the re-written version (S10SK2) through the different type of contrasts: *intra-* vs. *extra-linguistic*, *19th* vs. *20th century*, *however* and *although* and the implicit *initially* vs. *grew*, as marked in the text below. Such lexical patterns in texts can be supplemented by grammatical patterns (like the *will* constructions above).

The second paragraph of the re-written text below is more clearly structured through lexical repetition of *section* and the near-synonym *part*. However, the contrast of the topics in the three sections (*methods and approaches*, *generalisations*, and *variables*) is not as clear as it could be. Most other changes in this introduction are simply structural simplifications that help the reader process the text more easily (*concerning* as a preposition). The reduction of tentativeness (i.e. auxiliaries, esp. *might*, the most "careful") may also be a point that has to be considered systematically at this advanced level of academic writing, since novice writers have to learn to develop their own stance. Such key concepts or guidelines can be deduced from this text example by the students themselves, so that (hopefully) they will be able to transfer their knowledge to similar texts later.

Language variation and change have been studied as a result of *intra-linguistic* factors since the *19th century*. Since the middle of the *20th century*, **however**, studies on language change have shown that *extra-linguistic* factors can have considerable impact on the innovation and spread of new linguistic variants. **Although** these sociolinguistic studies focused initially on the category of social class, the awareness grew that a combination of extra-linguistic factors, such as age, ethnicity and gender, may explain best the mechanism of language variation and change.
The subsequent *sections* focus in particular on the category of gender, as according to Labov (1990), the difference between men and women belongs to the clearest and most consistent results of sociolinguistic research in the speech community. The *first section* considers methods and approaches commonly used in sociolinguistic studies. As the project is situated in Great Britain, the correlation of social class and gender is focussed on first. The *second section* then discusses several generalizations on gender-specific differences. The *last part* presents phonological and grammatical variables that might be included in the study of gender-based differences in linguistic variation. (S10KS2)

The explicit use of cohesive devices is certainly a feature of advanced writers of English. This is partly teaching-induced, since students are told explicitly to pay attention to cohesive devices in their texts in today's writing classes, and this may thus change when students have learnt how to use less explicit devices at a more advanced level (approaching native-speaker level C2 in the EFRL). Of course, linguistics students who have worked through Halliday/Hasan's cohesive devices are more aware of the options and may thus tend to use them more often for a period of time in their writing.

The comparison of selected concessive and contrastive markers by Wagner (this volume) is an interesting case study that tests the usefulness of different types of data-bases for comparative research, including the ChemCorpus database.

3.2. Dimensions of linguistic analysis

When comparing databases for analyses of academic writing, we can distinguish at least five dimensions of factors (cf. Yakhontova 2006):

- Genre seems to be the dominant dimension in modern comparative research, and research articles the master genre (cf. Bondi 1999 and Hyland 2010a: 117).
- Academic discipline is the most hotly debated "cultural" component, because the different "cultures" of "humanities" and "sciences" have been discussed (e.g. Hyland & Bondi eds. 2006) since C.P. Snow's catch phrase of the "two cultures" (1959).
- National culture seems to be less prominent in the discussions now than during the contrastive period of linguistics, when English vs. German vs. Spanish texts were analysed. However, with English as a *lingua franca*, the issue is now whether German and other academic cultures can be expressed in English for several reader perspectives, the native German and the native English, and maybe others.

- Contrastive language cultures are less prominent today, but still important at least at the lowest levels of academic writing, when the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) provides a database of argumentative essays – irrespective of whether an "essay" is a realistic natural genre of academic writing.
- The language phenomena analysed have tended towards metalanguage in the last few years, focusing on interpersonal devices of proximity (cf. 4.2. below) from pronouns to modal adverbs.

The contributions to this volume (in alphabetical order in Table 1) are fairly representative of the current research focus in these five dimensions:

The dominant genre is clearly the research article. It is however interesting to see rare genres (like conference posters and course descriptions for students) analysed, since these are relatively new and thus allow us to see the establishment of formal conventions on the basis of functional needs.

The academic disciplines chosen for analysis show the usual contrasts between "hard" and "soft", with natural sciences usually assumed to be more standardised already. But it is by no means clear whether all disciplines will follow the same trends, since the diversity and artistic creativity in humanities may also be less suitable for standardisation and thus follow the trends less rigorously.

	genre	academic discipline	national "culture"	language phenomenon
D'Angelo	conference posters	physics, law	———	textual/ metadiscourse, semiotics
Diani	university lectures	linguistics, psychology, economics	English vs. Italian	person markers
Gesuato	course descriptions	biology, geography, history, journalism. law, literature, music, physics, psychology, statistics,	———	modality, tenses, lexicon, etc.
Haase	research articles	physics	———	modal adverbs/ auxiliaries
Hůlková	research articles	management, politics, sociology, adult education, psychology	———	conjunctive adverbs
Maláskova	research articles	humanities vs. social sciences	———	hedges
Provenzano	textbooks	finance	Western vs. Islamic	lexical, semantic
Wagner	student papers/theses	linguistics vs. methodology/cultural studies/literature	German vs. Czech	concessives/ contrastives

Table 1: Dimensions of linguistic analysis in the contributions in this volume

Similarly debated is the assumption that all national cultures will follow the Anglo-American model (cf. 4.1), so that even a comparison of "national" cultures of writing may be difficult, if it is not strictly tied to language properties, like etymological or typological contrasts between Germanic and Romance languages (thus the dimensions of national culture and languages are collapsed in Table 1).

The hotly-debated native-speaker issue is noticeably absent from this volume, probably because all contributions are written by non-native speakers and because it is difficult to find a suitably broad data-base that covers this aspect in addition to the discipline and level (but Wagner indicates the direction).

Finally, the language phenomena discussed seem to focus on those features that English traditionally has used for safe-guarding a good writer – reader interaction, whereas the analyses of argumentative structures are not easily comparable. The focus on metadiscourse is obvious in most contributions in this volume, but it is viewed from very different perspectives: from a functional perspective metadiscourse includes hedges (as in Maláskova), from a formal perspective modal/conjunctive adverbs (as in Haase and Hůlková) and modal auxiliaries (as in Haase and Gesuato); from a writer – reader discourse perspective it includes personal markers, like *I* and *we* (as in Diani), and of course, the "rare genres" studied by D'Angelo and Gesuato require specific variables, whereas the former concentrates on semiotics and multimodality (the text and image interface) the latter also covers grammatical (tenses) and lexical aspects (e.g. preferred key words from the academic word list). The culture-specific lexicon is the special focus in Provenzano's contribution. Thus the language features analysed in this volume give at least an impression of the many aspects that are still worth exploring systematically in this "dimension".

4. Problems of comparative research in academic writing

Despite the wide choice of approaches, some even easily accessible to novices, comparative research in academic writing has its problems. These challenges can however also be seen as opportunities that allow researchers to work on specific issues in this wide field.

4.1. Culture-specific traditions

Several authors have pointed out the "cultural baggage" of English (Wierzbicka 2006) in its lexicon (like *reasonable* or *fair*) and grammar (in causatives and epistemic adverbs), which makes English questionable as a neutral *lingua franca* for non-native speakers. It has also been argued (Thielmann 2009) that academic culture is linked closely to academic language and provocatively even that "one cannot do science in a pidgin". Detailed case studies can help clarify typological and pragmatic differences between English and, for instance, German, so that we can scrutinise academic argumentation styles (ibid.) on various levels of discourse:

Can we generalise that German style is more argumentative whereas English style is more persuasive? Can we prove that *weil* is used to focus on the writer's decisive argument that convinces the writer and, hopefully, the reader, whereas English *because* often refers to the argumentation by other writers? Is this "persuasive" reader orientation in English always positive or can it also be seen as negative, since this subjectification distracts from the force of the argument? Or should we distinguish between a preference for authority- and a preference for discourse-orientation in academic communities? Can we say that English has more lexical diversity that allows the writer to argue more subtly when using *because*, *since*, *as* instead of a simple *weil* or is this beyond the non-native writer already?

On top of all these multilingual/-cultural aspects, writers have to be aware of intercultural implications. The whole field of contrastive rhetoric and culture needs much more empirical research and rigorous conceptualisation (cf. Atkinson 2004).

Of course, the level of English in non-native academic writing and in non-native writing courses needs to be discussed. Unfortunately, many EAP classes still deal with prepositions and their use in idiomatic expressions and tense/aspect "rules" instead of concentrating on the specific features of academic language and academic English. Thus they never manage to address the following real issues:

Can we really criticize complex cognitive concepts like hedging and cohesion or argumentation structure below a proficiency level of C1 (in the EFRL)? Can we really write according to German academic traditions in English? Or is German academic style also becoming more reader-oriented due to American influence or due to changes in the staff-student relationship? Can a 'dual publication' be a compromise, as suggested by Hamp-Lyons (2011: 2) "that researchers who publish their work in languages other than English should be free to re-publish the same work in English translation, with full attribution to the original publication"?

Since academic knowledge creation is set in a specific learning situation, it also requires socio-cultural knowledge of the discourse community (like interpersonal conventions between writers and readers in terms of power-relationships and associated roles of formality, authority, intimacy, and others). Thus the conventions of English and American, German and French academic circles have developed differently in the national academic cultures.

Only in a comparative perspective can we decide whether current trends perceived by writers like Hyland (2005: 173f) in the Anglo-American tradition are universal.

> Over the past decade or so, academic writing has gradually lost its traditional tag as an objective, faceless and impersonal form of discourse and come to be seen as a persuasive endeavour involving interaction between writers and readers. This view sees academics as not simply producing texts that plausibly represent an external reality, but also as using language to acknowledge, construct and negotiate social relations. Writers seek to offer a credible representation of themselves and their work by claiming solidarity with readers, evaluating their material and acknowledging alternative views, so that controlling the level of personality in a text becomes central to building a convincing argument. Put succinctly, every successful academic text displays the writer's awareness of both its readers and its consequences.

If there is such a universal trend in academic writing, non-native writers may follow this trend in their mother-tongue or only in their English. More specifically, the interesting question here is whether academic texts by German or Italian students of English approximate the British and American models from their native German or Italian traditions or whether the non-native writings are closer to each other than to the source- and target-culture conventions. This idea is visualised in Figure 2, where the *lingua franca* Englishes are seen like inter-languages closer together than the source texts (German and Italian, for example). The arrows indicate that non-native speakers approximate Anglo-American standards, that there is considerable overlap and that the variation between source- and target-language is increasing, although the two-dimensional nature of the diagram may be misleading (it does not suggest that German writers approximate towards British and Italian towards American models). In fact, it could be argued that the distinction between British and American English is overemphasised in view of the increasing Americanisation world-wide and the growing acceptability of other target models from Australia, Canada, etc. The adaptation in other complex cultural writing spaces is a completely different discourse (see Nkemleke fc. on Cameroon).

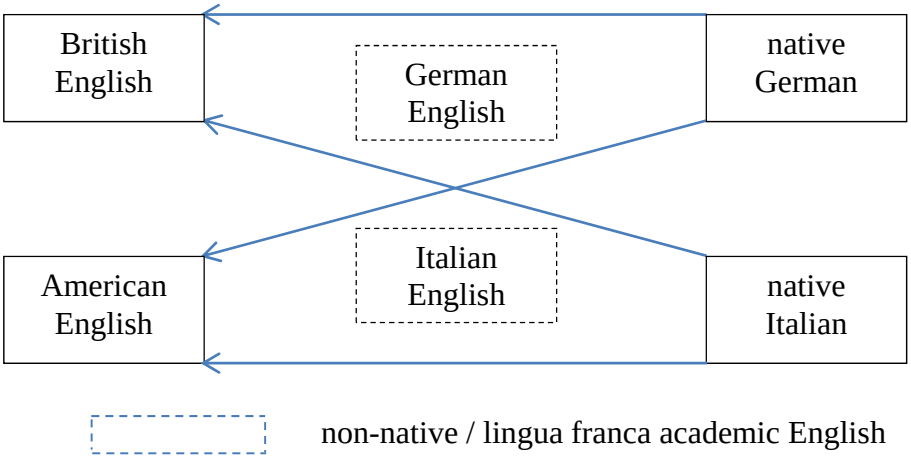

Figure 2: Approximation model for German and Italian academic writing styles towards native-speaker models

The main distinction in this approximation model is between native German, Italian, French, Czech, Chinese styles and the Anglo-American model. This does not imply that complete approximation is necessary or that a "neutral" *lingua franca* style cannot be accepted by non-native as well as native speakers of English.

Of course, the cultural influence of Anglo-American universities and Anglo-American publishing houses is dominant, but it does not mean that European publishes (like Elsevier, Benjamins or Mouton de Gruyter) or European editors as gate-keepers are not possible. If we take the concept of a (neutral, explicit, systematic) academic *lingua franca* seriously, this may even mean some training for native speakers of English, since this non-natural academic writing is more conscious and controlled, more reader- and culture-specific than usual, and it is at a high level, i.e. it does not violate basic grammar rules but rather tolerates less

stereotypical usages in lexicon, idiomaticity, metaphor, argumentation structure and other formal and functional conventions.

Since it is difficult to distinguish between Anglo-American and general style trends from the text- through the writer- to the reader perspective (see above), it may be worth summarizing explicit guidelines in current style guides or accepted university textbooks. Thus it has been argued (Swales & Feak 2000: 16) that "national" or cultural features of Anglo-American writing are:

1. be more explicit about its structure and purposes
2. be less tolerant of asides or digressions
3. use fairly short sentences with less complicated grammar
4. have stricter conventions for subsections and their titles
5. be more loaded with citations
6. rely more on recent citations
7. have longer paragraphs in terms of number of words
8. point more explicitly to "gaps" or "weaknesses" in the previous research
9. use more sentence connectors (words like *however*)
10. place the responsibility for clarity and understanding on the writer rather than on the reader

The empirical analysis of academic writing as exemplified in this collection will give us a good database for discussing acceptable usage practices by different academic communities in future.

4.2. Proximity as a reader-related text concept

A concept that has emerged as central in reader-oriented academic writing during the past few years is proximity (or approximation, when transferred from media studies). A very wide definition has been suggested recently by Hyland (2010a: 117):

> I use the term proximity here to refer to a writer's control of rhetorical features which display both authority as an expert and a personal position towards issues in an unfolding text. It involves responding to the context of the text, particularly the readers who form part of that context, textually constructing both the writer and the reader as people with similar understandings and goals. While it embraces the notion of interpersonality, proximity is a slightly wider idea as it not only includes how writers manage themselves and their interactions with others, but also the ways ideational material, what the text is 'about', is presented for a particular audience. It is concerned with how writers represent not only themselves and their readers, but also their material, in ways which are most likely to meet their readers' expectations.
>
> So proximity captures 2 key aspects of acting interpersonally. The first refers to what might be called the proximity of membership: How academic writers demonstrate their authority to colleagues through use of disciplinary conventions. What does the writer do to position him or herself as a disciplinary expert and competent colleague? The second concerns the proximity of commitment, or how the writer takes a personal position towards issues in an unfolding text. That is, what does the writer do to locate him or herself in relation to the material presented? One points to how we position ourselves in relation to our communities, and the other to how we position ourselves in relation to our text.

This covers almost all aspects of metadiscourse. If this is considered too wide, it could be restricted to "recipient-design", i.e. "an orientation and sensitivity to the particular others who are our co-participants through lexical choice, topic selection, conventions, of argument, and so on" (ibid.).

This concept is particularly useful in comparing specialised to popular academic writing, which is useful for EAP in journalistic writing:

> Science journalism illustrates the ways proximity (and interpersonality) work as writers set out material for different purposes and readers. Popularizations represent a discourse which establishes the uniqueness, relevance and immediacy of topics which might not seem to warrant lay attention by making information concrete, novel and accessible. Findings are therefore invested with a factual status, related to real life concerns, and presented as germane to readers with little detailed interest in the ways that they were arrived at or in the controversies surrounding them.
>
> Readers, in fact, experience the academic world and its discourses as a succession of discoveries in the relentless advance of inductive science. In sum, science journalism works as journalism rather than science. It is written in ways which make the research accessible and allow non-specialists to recover the interpretive voice of the scientist. (ibid: 126)

The popularisation of science has been a debated issue in English-speaking cultures for a long time. There have been many small studies to compare specialised and popular texts on the same topic, but it is not easy to ensure compatibility. The most common way is to trace back the origins of newspaper articles or science journals like *New Scientist* or *Scientific American* to the original publication in research articles or even on pre-publication servers (cf. Schmied 2009a,b,c). Haase (this volume) is a good example that illustrates the qualitative and quantitative options of research in this thrilling area. In a broader perspective, even films can be included in a multimedia-corpus of science texts and analysed, which may make it particularly attractive for students, but what can reasonably be compared is a real issue.

4.3. Compatibility of data

A major problem of comparative research in academic writing has been the availability of a compatible database. This can again be seen on three levels (cf. the case study by Wagner in this volume):

Academic writing on the web, as in Google Scholar, may be useful for finding usage patterns involving rare linguistic forms but the reliability of the-web-as-corpus in limited. Googlelabs currently includes 5.2 million books published in English between 1800 and 2000, approximately 361 billion words. The usefulness of this tool for historical comparisons (even of rare collocates) is demonstrated by Haase (this volume).

Taking the academic sections of national standard reference corpora, like the British National Corpus (BNC) or the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), is the better option, which has also been demonstrated by Mark Davies (n.d.) and by Wagner (this volume). The academic component is about 83 million words in COCA and 15 million in the BNC.

The third and most suitable and complex option are, of course, purpose-made corpora that are compiled for a specific piece of research and may be usable for another. Although the tradition of 'disposable corpora' has been very successful in translation studies, the small collections of academic writing that students and teachers have on their personal computers rarely add up to a coherent compilation. However, their advantage, that they are personal, should not be underestimated. If students really manage to develop a "detached" perspective from their own work, the combination of practical and theoretical work would be ideal, since they can learn from their own work (and maybe lecturer's corrections) to improve their future writing, esp. in their final theses. For, revising this decisive "masterpiece" of their studies is often most difficult because students are tempted to submit a first draft as a final version, since they are not used to revising a piece of writing thoroughly enough.

From a more scholarly perspective, all the more or less stratified collections of student work may not be ideal in many ways: in many English Departments male students are hard to find, the balance between linguistic, literature, cultural studies and methodology specialists is difficult, and the level of English generally very uneven. However, for some high-frequency language phenomena this may well be enough for a sophisticated analysis (as is shown by Wagner in this volume).

Krishnamurthy & Kosem (2007: 370f) have discussed the usefulness of existing corpora (up to the recently compiled British Academic Written/Spoken English Corpus, BAWE/BASE) for EAP pedagogy and they come to the following conclusion:

> The one thing that EAP seems to lack is a corpus that includes all levels of data—from pre-sessional students' writing and speech to academic lectures, Ph.D. theses, and published research articles and books. Such a corpus would need to include as many disciplines as possible, with sufficient detailed categorisation to enable the users (teachers or students) to select a customised set of corpus texts appropriate for their needs. If new corpora are created to agreed common designs, they could be accessed together, forming a richer and more extensive resource. The resulting corpus would need a user-friendly interface that is specifically designed for pedagogical use rather than for research.

The solution to all these problems is, of course, to compile our own corpus. However, corpus compilation is time-consuming and more resource-consuming than commonly assumed and funding options are limited. The BAWE corpus is the result of one of the few corpus compilation projects funded by a research agency (ESRC). A systematic set-up of a corpus (Table 2) would ideally comprise of enough texts written by male vs. female, linguistic vs. non-linguistic (cultural studies/literature) students, thus it would have 5 texts per category. Again ideally, the compilation would "accompany" students during their studies in regular developmental steps from the entrance examination to their BA and MA thesis, maybe with intermediate steps in texts from term papers in the 2nd year of their BA and again after the first year of their MA programme. If the number of words is also increased systematically, we would end up with a substantial corpus of more than 10 million words, which is not that far from the

15 million academic English in the BNC. This size would make our corpus comparable with the major native-speaker EAL corpora, the Corpus of British Academic Written English (BAWE) and its American model, the Michigan Corpus of Upper Student Papers (MICUSP), although they are far from ideally stratified and compatible either.

ChemCorpus	files	minimum words/text
entrance examination	20	1,000
BA2Year term paper	20	5,000
BA thesis	20	15,000
MA1Year term paper	20	8,000
MA thesis	20	25,000
total	**100**	**10,800,000**

Table 2: The ideal ChemCorpus of academic writing

Of course, such a collection would allow us to compare the students' developmental stages through specific writing classes and also before and after their year abroad (which is compulsory in the BA programme in the fifth semester at Chemnitz). Over the years, we could even take texts by the same students (from their "European Language *Portfolio*" in the CEFRL). Related research hypotheses to pursue would be, for instance, that advanced students of English move from overuse to appropriate use for specifically English features (in the case of continuous forms), from more explicit to more implicit marking (in the case of cohesion markers), from more extreme to more tentative forms (in the case of modal auxiliaries). If similar EAP corpora could be complied at other universities and even international partners (like Chemnitz and Brno), an interesting comparison would be possible. A major problem is, of course, that the study programmes are not compatible enough (despite "Bologna").

4.4. Applications in teaching

The advantages of genre-based academic writing can be directly derived from the definition: If academic writing constructs the discursive reality of a discipline, effective learning is also a social activity, it is a constant battle to meet (or challenge) expected outcomes in conventional genres.

Of course, effective learning must be needs-oriented, i.e. the first step is to identify students' needs in their academic life and afterwards, which may be partly different target situations (when an argumentative essay is the target in academic life and a presentation of a scientific problem to a general academic public is the target in a job afterwards). Obviously, determining students' needs is a continuous and changing process. Here the teacher is the facilitator who helps the students to achieve their own goals, and learning to write is a social

activity that helps in a social activity (of academic discourse) through the effective use of the tool language.

The following model for a teaching-learning cycle has been proposed (Feez 1998):

- *Setting the context* – revealing genre purposes and the settings in which a genre is commonly used
- *Modeling* – analyzing the genre to reveal its stages and key features
- *Joint construction* guided, teacher-supported practice in the genre
- *Independent construction* – independent writing monitored by the teacher
- *Comparing* – relating what has been learned to other genres and contexts

This cycle can be seen as a scaffold (according to Vygotsky 1978) that empowers students and raises their consciousness to learn cooperatively and independently in increasingly complex ways. So they can move from collecting to comparing texts, from investigating variation within genres and disciplines to differences between them, from discovering formal differences to explaining them through specific functional requirements.

The following checklist of good academic writing has been quoted frequently (e.g. by Hyland 2006: 221), because it seems to be general enough to appeal to teachers and exemplary enough to apply to students:

Texts are explicit, with clear discussion of data and results.

Texts follow an inductive "top-down" pattern, with topic sentences and an introduction to help readers see where the text will lead.

Texts contain metadiscourse, such as *to summarize*, *in conclusion*, *firstly*, *secondly*, etc., to help guide readers through the argument.

Texts are emotionally neutral and strive to appear objective.

Texts contain hedges like *probably* and *might* to avoid sounding too confident.

Texts are intertextual, drawing on other texts for their structure, form, and patterns of argument.

Texts adopt the right tone to show appropriate confidence and modesty.

Texts acknowledge prior work and avoid plagiarism.

Texts comply with the genre requirements of the community or classroom.

Figure 5.8. Feature of "academic writing" (Johns 1997)

Academic writing is gradually establishing itself as a central element in the new BA and MA degree programmes in European universities. The combination of empirical findings, their discussion and their contextualisation in personal and university experience with the help of appropriate teaching and learning models characterises the way forward towards a unified and effective European education space that may make learning and writing more effective for students and young researchers alike.

5. Conclusion

This survey has tried to provide a scholarly foundation for academic writing at European universities. It is based on a new understanding of writing, and academic language in general, as interaction between writer and reader through a text. Non-native academics have always had the problem of finding native speakers to "edit" their texts. This may become less important in the future if non-native standards become acceptable in Europe. The differences to native speakers may be less prominent in discourse pragmatics than in idiomaticity and usage variation and this may be less noticeable than, for examples, Asian discourse cultures. The conscious teaching of genre variation may allow non-native scholars to choose style features consciously and maybe make even native speakers aware of cultural preferences.

Detailed quantitative corpus-linguistic analyses of native speaker vs. non-native speaker writing may show "more than meets the eye". Such a data-based sensibility for writing conventions would make it possible particularly for non-native writers to increase their awareness of academic usages and thus be recognised as serious, committed and still careful researchers by the specialised discourse community.

Similarly, popular academic discourse also needs trained language specialists, for this new and conscious style of academic writing in all its 'translations' from specialised to journalistic discourse.

The specialisation in academic writing may be of particular relevance in countries like Germany where English specialists often do not find a job in state schools, because few teachers are needed due to population (and student) decline in the last few years. Thus language services of the future do not only offer teaching English generally or for specific purposes and translating different types of texts, but also for editing and web-publishing of academic texts. A scientist can write a first draft but it takes a real language specialist to improve it according to the conventions of the discourse community, including an analysis of the sub-discipline or even the specific journal. This consultancy on web publications for the different academic communities outlined here would be a new challenge but also a new opportunity.

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