

DCCD 2020**Dialogue of Cultures - Culture of Dialogue: from Conflicting to Understanding****VERBALIZATION OF CULTURAL COMMUNICATION
TRADITIONS IN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE**

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Abstract

The research focuses on differences in academic discourse construction and makes an attempt to explain them by specifics of scholars' sociocultural background. The research corpus includes two collections of scholarly articles: one in Russian published by Russian linguists and one in English written by Italian scholars. The research articles are examined contrastively with reference to three dimensions that are typically used in contrastive rhetoric studies. These are such dimensions as: content / form orientation; writer / reader responsibility; level of reader engagement. The analysis shows that the authors are guided by their cultural communicative conventions when presenting the results of their research. The Russian articles are characterized as content-oriented, reader-responsible with a few means of engagement used by the authors to involve the reader into the discussion. The English-language articles demonstrate the features of form orientation, writer responsibility and higher frequency of engagement means aimed at establishing a dialogue with their readers. The conclusion is made about socio-cultural nature of academic discourse affected by such factors as whether the culture of a scholar is low- or high-context, what is the status of science in society, and whether the academic environment is highly competitive or not.

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1. Introduction

Academic discourse is used in all kinds of academic settings and, according to Hyland (2009): “refers to the ways of thinking and using language which exists in the academy” (p. 1). As any other institutional discourse, it is represented by discursive practices which are expressed in discourse strategies. The latter are the embodiment of communicative aims of those who are involved in these settings and who share certain expectations about how the communication is usually organized and what its outcomes are going to be. Therefore, we can describe academic discourse as “socially constructed and invested with particular values as any other style of discourse” (Barajas, 2007, p. 142); as capable of featuring local traditions of discourse construction (Khoutyz, 2016); as a tool used to construct “the social roles and relationships which create academics and students and which sustain the universities, the disciplines, and the creation of knowledge itself” (Hyland, 2009, p. 1).

Numerous studies demonstrate that academic discourse is representative of shared cultural understandings about how discourses are constructed, through which communicative choices. That is why Canagarajah (2002a) in his book “A Geopolitics of Academic Writing” considers that academic literacy should be viewed “in the framework of geopolitical relationships” (p. 37), pointing out tremendous differences in academic text construction of Western and local scholars. Contrastive cross-cultural research identified various dissimilarities in how scholars with different cultural backgrounds construct their discourses. For instance, in some cultures the rounding off part at the end of the research article might be missing (in Russian and Eastern European tradition); as Arabic academic discourse is greatly influenced by the ancient Semitic oral tradition, it demonstrates numerous complicated parallel constructions which are also used in the Koran (Bowe & Martin, 2014). In Japanese academic writing Hinds discovers that the topic of an article might be repeated, however it is not explicitly expressed (Hinds, 1980). The English expectations of an academic text include a linear and explicit discourse structure (Bowe & Martin, 2014). In German academic discourse, Clyne (1995) discovers agentless passives and impersonal constructions, a large number of nominalizations, and complex syntax. He also describes digressiveness (1987) as an important feature of the German academic discourse which allows authors to add historical, ideological or any other information, not directly related to the topic of the research. Thus, unlike in Anglo-American cultures, linearity is not a key prerequisite for academic discourse construction in many cultures.

The contrastive rhetoric studies originated with Kaplan’s paper, who in 1966 explained the differences in academic writing of students from different cultures by the fact that rhetoric is not universal “but varies from culture to culture and even from time to time within a given culture” (Kaplan, 1966, p. 2). Based on the understanding that logic and, as a consequence, rhetoric is a cultural phenomenon, Kaplan (1966) described thought patterns expected in English as “dominantly linear in its development” (p. 4). Anything that might be described as digressive interferes with clarity. According to Kaplan (1966), clarity is very important because it keeps the reader interested.

However, as previous studies show, what we consider important when presenting our research is culturally predetermined. In Russia, as well as in many other cultures, science is perceived as a field that cannot be understood by everyone which allows a high level of abstraction in written and oral academic discourse (Clyne, 1987). Clyne (1987), comparing English and German academic writing traditions, notes

that digressiveness, that might be considered a violation of linearity in English, is typical in cultures where the author of a research paper is endowed with high authority and is expected to provide any background information he/she might consider useful for the research. The complexity of academic discourse can be explained by the status of knowledge in society: “Knowledge is idealized in the German tradition. Consequently, texts by Germans are less designed to be easy to read. Their emphasis is on providing readers with knowledge, theory, and stimulus to thought” (Clyne 1987, p. 238).

Thus, we can regard academic discourse as a sociocultural practice shaped by cultural values of those involved in its construction. This kind of perspective allows us to assume that by identifying differences in academic discourses created by scholars from different cultures, we can find explanations for the possible variations in cultural backgrounds and communication traditions.

2. Problem Statement

Due to academic mobility and other processes intensified by globalization, numerous practices in academic environment tend to be unified. However, because of our cultural backgrounds, there are dissimilarities in how scholars from different nations construct their discourses. It happens because we rely on communicative traditions perceived as appropriate in our societies. To integrate into international academic community, a modern scholar needs to understand possible variations in local and international oral and written academic discourses and to be able to switch from the local to international mode. Having mastered the skill of switching from being local to being international, an academic can successfully integrate into international academic environment. For this purpose, it is essential not only to uncover distinctions in how scholars from different cultures construct their discourses but to understand the reasons for these differences.

This is what this research pursues to accomplish: to explore cultural differences in how written academic discourses are constructed in Russian and in English; to look for explanations for these dissimilarities in cultural values and traditions and to come up with a set of discursive tools that would allow the scholars to switch from their local to international identities.

3. Research Questions

In order to successfully demonstrate how cultural communication traditions are reflected in academic discourse, it is essential to dwell on the following research questions:

- what are the dimensions that we may use for measuring differences in how academic discourses are constructed;
- what are the main factors that cause these differences (for instance, when writing a research paper);
- what are the techniques that scholars can apply in order to switch between the local and international modes in discourse construction.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify culturally conditioned communication patterns represented in scholarly articles – a genre of written academic discourse, described as “the quintessential academic form of communication” (Canagarajah, 2002b, location 1196). An attempt is made to explain these differences by sociocultural contexts that are materialized and verbalized in the discourse of the research articles. A research corpus comprises scholarly articles in Linguistics from two collections: one in Russian (Cognitive-Discursive Environment in Modern Knowledge Construction. Published in Krasnodar, Kuban State University, 2019. 323 pages) and one in English (ESP Across Cultures, # 14. University of Foggia, 2017. 256 p.). The research articles in English are published by Italian authors who comply with all the publishing conventions of international English-language journals.

5. Research Methods

The analysis of the research articles in English and in Russian includes the stages suggested by Connor and Moreno (2005). It consists of a three-level procedure: a) identifying texts for corpora; b) selecting textual concepts to be studied in the corpora; and c) identifying linguistic features that are to be used to realize these concepts. Thus, to achieve the purpose of the study, the texts of the research articles were analyzed and compared to uncover their cultural specifics. Then these features were classified and systematized. Finally, the results of the research were interpreted with reference to contrastive or, rather, intercultural rhetoric studies that are based on the understanding that logic is a cultural phenomenon shaped by social contexts and reflected in written discourse (Belcher & Nelson, 2013; Connor, 1994; 2004; 2011; Kaplan, 1966; Mauranen, 1993).

As a result of these contrastive studies, the following distinctions were identified to better understand the process of academic discourse construction. The first one is *a form/content distinction*. Although in every academic tradition there is a certain form that is expected of a research article, in some cultures more value is placed on following a certain form than in other cultures. In English-language journals, it is usually the IMRD structure (Swales, 1990) that the authors should use and fit their research into it. Thus, the author adapts the information to the form. In other cultures, it is the content that is of a primary importance (content-oriented tradition). The content-oriented tradition usually appears in societies with “a cultural idealization of knowledge and the authority of the academic or intellectual work” (Bowe & Martin 2014, location 2821). The linear, expected in advance structure that is used by English-language authors might be considered simplistic in content-oriented cultures, in which authors have more freedom than in form-oriented cultures in how they wish to arrange the information about their research. The form-oriented tradition favors the reader’s interests and is supposed to make the reading process easier for the addressee.

A form/content distinction causes another dimension of academic discourse– *writer/reader responsibility*. In essence, it stems from the understanding that exists in the academic culture about who – the author or the reader – is responsible for “ensuring successful communication between the writer and the reader” (Qi & Liu, 2007, p. 150). In a content-oriented academic tradition the discourse is constructed around the author’s interests. Thus: “the onus falls on the reader to make the effort to understand the text

produced by the knowledgeable, and therefore, authoritative person” (Bowe & Martin, 2014, location 2825).

The form distinction of academic discourse exists in the academic world with writer responsibility. This means that the writer sees that it is his/her responsibility to: “present the material in a well-organized and understandable way, as is the case for English-based cultures” (Bowe & Martin, 2014, location 2827). In form-oriented academic discourse, terms are clearly explained and illustrated by examples supported by detailed analysis. The aim of the research repeated throughout the text of the article; all the stages of the research – corpus compiling, methodology, even limitations, are clearly stated by the author.

As a result of the discourse being either reader- or writer-responsible, the dialogicity (engagement) level of a research article might vary (Khoutyz, 2013). The idea of dialogicity stems from Bakhtin’s works (1986) in which he asserts that the author, when presenting information and expecting its understanding by the reader, starts a dialogue. The author might enhance the dialogicity level of his/her discourse with certain discursive means (for instance, inclusive *we*), or, on the contrary, distance from the reader with impersonal and passive narrative. As a rule, reader-oriented languages, for instance English, feature an active use of dialogic means that engage the reader in a discussion. Writer-oriented languages (Chinese, Russian) use fewer dialogicity means as the author is not concerned about the reader’s involvement when presenting the results of the research.

To sum up, the present research draws on the theories developed within: 1)cross-cultural studies that claim that academic discourse reflects cultural dimensions and thus differs, for instance, in terms of the authorial presence (Shea, 2011) and other features (for example, Bowe & Martin, 2014); 2)contrastive rhetoric based on the understanding that there are cultural differences in how individuals construct their discourses while trying to be logical and persuasive (see Bradley, 2012; Connor, 1994; Kaplan 1966, etc.).

6. Findings

In the following sections below, the differences in academic discourse construction in terms of the content/form distinction, writer/reader orientation, and its dialogicity features are examined.

As it has been mentioned above, the form/ content orientation is concerned with how a certain structure (the form) is important for the discourse organization. In the English-language journals, the IMRD structure is typically used (Swales, 1990). The abbreviation stands for introduction, methodology, results and discussion sections. Having an explicit structure hasn’t been a requirement for scholarly articles published in Russian; however, more and more prestigious peer-review journals are changing their publication requirements and expecting the authors to include certain structural elements. It illustrates tremendous changes that are happening in academic environment and in cognitive make-up of those involved in the construction of academic discourse. However, peripheral journals that are not indexed by influential databases continue to use an old-fashioned implicative structure. In the Russian-language collection of articles there are 42 research articles. Obviously, there is no required structure that these articles should follow and, as a result, there are no visible sections in the articles in Russian. The discussion section, if signaled, is marked by discourse markers such as *thus, therefore* (*умак, таким образом*). The conclusion part is marked usually in a similar lexical (not structural) way: *so, therefore*,

summing up, etc. (*itak, takim obrazom, summiruja, podvodja itog*). The authors of 20 out of 42 articles (48% of the articles) use examples to support their arguments.

The English-language corpus contains 12 research articles featured in “ESP across Cultures” published by the University of Foggia, Italy. Just like the journal in Russian, the English-language journal is a university publication. However, all the articles follow a structure similar to the IMRD structure. All of the 12 articles have numbered sections: 1. Introduction; 2. Corpus and methodology; 3. Results; 3.1. *Quantitative analysis*; 3.2. *Qualitative analysis*; 4. Conclusions (Cappuzzo, 2017). Seven out of the 12 articles have subsections: each subsection features a fragment of the author’s idea. For instance: 1. Aims of the paper; 2. Neo-classical CFs and types of compounds; 3. Initial combining forms in Italian and in English: ‘divided by the same etymons’; 4. Analysis of Anglicisms with combining forms; 4.1. *Productivity*; 4.2. *Adaptation and calques*; 4.3. *From specialized discourse to everyday language*; 4.4. *Semantic profile*; 5. Discussion; 6. Concluding remarks (Pulcini & Milani, 2017).

The articles in English include numerous examples which are systematized into Tables (100% of the articles in English contain tables). In addition to the tables and examples, there are figures in five articles (42%).

Thus, the English-language journal explicitly illustrates the form-orientation approach to academic discourse organization. Although the authors are not English-language native speakers, they conform to the writing conventions typical of English-language journals.

The writer / reader responsibility is based on the understanding about who is responsible for making the information clear and establishing a successful communication between the author and the reader.

Writer-responsible languages are usually form-oriented: it is the writer’s responsibility to make sure the reader can make sense of the information presented in a research. The writer tries to foresee reader’s questions and includes all the necessary information in the research.

In the reader-responsible tradition, it is the reader who is expected to make a necessary effort to understand what the author is trying to convey. As a result, readers might need to deduce on their own the methods used in the research and why this particular research corpus is used by the author. The limitations are usually not pronounced as it is the reader’s responsibility to decode this information. Japanese academic tradition represents a reader-responsible culture in which the writer expects readers to think for themselves (Hinds, 1990). Obviously, Russian academic tradition can also be described as reader-responsible with a content-oriented approach to discourse construction. Let’s analyze the examples of writer / reader responsibility in the scholarly articles from the research corpus.

In the English-language corpus, each article explicitly states the aim of the research:

To limit the boundaries of the research, the present study aims at describing, mainly from a linguistic point of view, medical metaphors used in the domain of economics, ... The paper, which falls within the theoretical framework of the CMT discussed above, will mostly aim at exploring possible similarities and differences in patterns of metaphorical use of medical terms/expressions between the two languages. (Cappuzzo, 2017, p. 29)

The aim is highlighted with such expressions as: *the study explores*; *the study aims at*; *the aim is to identify*; *as a specific object of this study, we claim...*; *with the final aim of providing an overview*, etc.

In the Russian-language corpus, only 5 research articles stipulate the aim of the research. Even when the aim is stated by the author, it is described very briefly:

Vibor materiala issledovanija obusloven popularnostju predstavlenih zhurnalov, a takzhe ih prinadlezhnostju k nauchno-populjarnomu tipu diskursa, analiz kotorogo i javljaetsa tselju nashego issledovanija. (The choice of the research corpus is conditioned by popularity of the magazines and because they belong to the popular science discourse, the analysis of which is the purpose of the research). (Ivanova, 2019, p. 145)

However, in the majority of the research articles in Russian the reader can deduce the aim of the research correlating the information featured in the article with its title. Methods used in the research are described in 6 articles. Many authors signal the switching to the research corpus analysis by using directive constructions:

Provedem semioticheskij analiz informatsionnogo soderzhanija verbal'noj metafori... (Let's conduct a semiotic analysis of informational content of a verbal metaphor...) (Velichko & Nasonova, 2019, p. 80).

In the English-language articles, the compiling of a corpus is carefully explained. The authors use such expressions as: *the corpus used for ... investigation; a corpus consisting of...*; *The corpus of this study is divided into two subcorpora; subcorpus comprises; the corpus of texts under analysis is made up of, etc.:*

In order to explore these issues, a corpus consisting of thirty makeup tutorials uploaded on YouTube over the course of seven months (October 2014 - April 2015) has been collected. Videos were selected on the basis of their representativeness: content uploaded by some of the most popular English- and Italian-speaking 'beauty gurus' was chosen and analysed. More precisely, the 15 tutorials in English were posted on three of the most subscribed *YouTube How to & Style* channels... (Riboni, 2017, p. 234)

The methods used in the research are also described in detail with references to what the methodology helps to achieve:

Specifically, the verbal component of English and Italian makeup videos is explored in order to bring out differences and similarities across cultures and languages: particular attention is devoted to the rhetorical organization of YouTubers' monologues. (Riboni, 2017, p. 234)

Concluding remarks sum up the research and restate the aim that has been achieved:

As stated in the Introduction, this study has a mainly descriptive purpose and therefore does not aim to draw statistical results from the analysis of the corpus. ... This study also contributes to providing evidence of the translation strategies employed to cope with the 'problem' of Culture-Specific References. (Laudisio, 2017, p. 154)

In the research articles in Russian, the corpus is mentioned (not explained) only in 7 articles out of 42. In one of these articles the corpus is mentioned in the abstract.

In most cases, the reader is supposed to decode the methodology used by the author. The research results are usually summed up in the conclusion – a very important part of a scholarly article in English, in which the author restates the aim, correlates it with the results described in the article, and dwells on limitations and possible continuation of the research.

The research articles in Russian contain a very brief conclusion. When a conclusion is introduced, it is signaled by discourse markers of concluding, not by the structure. In the Russian-language corpus, 28 research articles out of 42 (67%) have a conclusion that consists of just one paragraph. It starts with the words: *takim obrazom; kak pokazivajut privedennie vishe primeri; itak; v rassmotrennom nami primere; po itogam provedennojo issledovanija (therefore; as the above mentioned examples illustrate; so; in the analyzed example; according to the results of the research)*. There are two-paragraph endings in 5 research articles (12%). 9 research articles are missing an obvious concluding part (21%).

The most widespread is the phrase *таким образом (therefore)* which is used by 15 authors who have a one-paragraph conclusion and by 4 authors who have a two-paragraph ending which means that 45 % of the authors use this phrase to signal a final summarizing part of the research.

We can conclude that there are obvious differences in academic discourse construction in English and Russian-language research articles. English is a writer-responsible language. Thus, the information is presented in a way that will make it most understandable and easy to read for the addressee. Russian is a reader-responsible language: the reader must make an effort to understand all the aspects of the information presented in the research.

Finally, reader involvement is constructed when the author uses various discursive means that create a feeling of a dialogue between the author and the reader. In form-oriented research articles with a writer responsibility, the author is interested in using numerous discursive tools aimed at establishing a dialogue with the reader. In content-oriented articles with a reader responsibility, the reader is expected to make an effort to decode all the information and thus the reader's engagement in the discourse construction is not as active as in writer-responsible languages.

Hyland identified the following means of engagement in academic discourse: inclusive pronouns; directives; personal aids; appeals to shared knowledge; questions (Hyland, 2009). Previously conducted research aimed at identifying the differences in the engagement features in Russian and English research articles revealed that Russian scholars use engagement signals “less often because of the lack of incentives to involve the reader in the discussion” (Khoutyz, 2013, p. 17). In the Russian-language research corpus, it was possible to identify 89 cases of “mi” (we) pronoun. Depending on the context, it can be reader inclusive and involve the reader in the discourse. It can also be a reader exclusive: in such a case the engagement is not constructed. Out of the 89 cases of *mi* only 26 cases (29%) represent the inclusive use of the pronoun:

Eto rabotajet, potomu chto **mi**, zritel'skaya auditorija, privichni k vosprijatiju informatsii v podobnoj forme... (This works, because **we**, the viewers, are used to perceiving the information in such a form...). (Dukhovnaya, 2019, p. 114)

In most of the cases, though, *we* is used to refer to the author(s) of the research article: in such a way by using this pronoun, the authors express their humility which is a part of rhetorical tradition in many collectivist cultures, for instance, in Italy (Gotti, 2010).

In the English research articles, 73 cases of the *we* use were discovered. 53 cases (73%) feature the reader inclusive use of *we*. The rest 20 pronouns (27%) do not include the reader. Below is the example of the reader inclusive *we* used by the author:

On the other hand, if *we* consider the huge amount of information and original, real material and texts available on the Internet... (Laudisio, 2017, p. 142)

The example below illustrates the use of the reader exclusive *we*: it refers only to the author (the article is single-authored):

As regards the Italian versions, *we* think that the interaction of discourses and genres may lead one to question the appropriateness of voice-over... (Iaia, 2017, p. 118)

The use of personal pronouns (*I, we, you, they*) in academic discourse creates the phenomenon of a polyphony that is dialogic in its nature. The pronoun *I* is not used by the Russian authors. In individualistic Western cultures “the self” is more vividly constructed in academic discourse than in collectivist societies (Canagarajah, 2002b). As a result, authors use *I* more often in their research articles in English for more active self-representation (Walková, 2018) than in other languages.

Another very effective means of engagement is the questions. They establish a dialogue with the reader marking important aspects of the research and making the reader ponder about them. In the Russian corpus there are 4 cases of the question use:

A chto delat', esli neskol'ko personazhej v kadre odnovremenno poluchajut i otpravljajut soobshchenija? (And what is to do when there are several characters simultaneously sending and receiving messages in a frame?). (Dukhovnaya, 2019, p. 115)

Interestingly, questions, that are so favoured by the authors whose native language is English, are not present in the articles written by the Italian authors. Obviously, cultural traditions of discourse construction do affect how the authors present their research in English.

The other means of engagement, such as directives, personal aids and appeals to shared knowledge can be found in some of the articles in English and in Russian.

Although these discursive means of engagement haven't been statistically processed, it is still possible to say that collective directives are the most frequent means of engagement construction used by the Russian authors (for more information see, for instance, Khoutyz, 2013). The means of engagement that are most actively used by the authors of the research articles in English is the inclusive *we*.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of the two collections of scholarly articles in the domain of Linguistics in Russian and in English shows that the articles in Russian can be described as content-oriented with reader responsibility and infrequent use of engagement means. The research articles in English demonstrate the characteristics of form-oriented discourse with writer responsibility and more frequent (as compared to the research articles in Russian) use of engagement means.

As the previous research in contrastive rhetoric demonstrates, content orientation with writer responsibility is usually featured by English-language journals. It stems from the type of the linear logic

that characterizes English-language native speakers' writing described by Kaplan (1966). Moreover, Anglo-American cultures, typically characterized as low-context (Hall, 1976), expect the information to be explicitly verbalized. Another reason for having form-oriented and writer-responsible academic tradition is of a more socioeconomic character: because of the Anglo-American academic environment being highly competitive, English-language scholars are faced with the pressure to define their personal input into the research and to “clamor” for readers' attention for professional survival (Canagarajah, 2002a, p. 115).

Moreover, the status of science in society determines how scholars present their research. For Anglo-American cultures, it is essential for the author to establish “the niche”, the input into the research in understandable terms (Canagarajah, 2002a). This explains why the authors of the English-language articles start their papers stating the purpose of their research and how they have achieved it. The authors usually construct their identity to mark their personal achievement.

Russian academic tradition is formed by high-context collectivist culture. This means that the information is often expressed implicatively. As a result, the discourse can be detached and abstract as the author is mostly free to choose how to organize and present his/her research. Just like in German academic register, Russian academic discourse is expected to feature passive constructions, nominalizations, and complex syntactic structures (Clyne, 1987). Moreover, up until recently, Russian academics have not been dealing with the necessity to publish and to draw attention to their research. Thus, they haven't been motivated to keep the readers' attention and involve them in the discussion. This explains a scarce use of engagement means applied by the Russian scholars in their research articles. The scholars publishing in English are striving for the readers' attention at the global level at the same time trying to comply with rhetorical traditions of Anglo-American cultures.

Thus, we can conclude that academic discourse reflects cultural values and communicative traditions. The fact that publishing conventions in Russian-language journals have been changing to new similar to international publishing requirements signifies differences in how the role of knowledge, science, and education is perceived in society. However, as international scholars need to publish the results of their research in well-established peer review English-language journals cited in prestigious databases, mastering Anglo-American publishing conventions has become of a paramount importance for professional success in academia.

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