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The Diachronic Influences on the Production of Scholarly Texts in English

Abstract: One area of social behaviour is communication; how members of a social grouping communicate their ideas and beliefs to one another. Language is one way of doing this and for Kecskes a native-like knowledge of language is “knowing preferred ways of saying things and preferred ways of organising thoughts”. For him these ‘preferred ways’ are “culture and language specific” (Kecskes, 2015, p. 113). And as the things we say reflect how the speech community we belong to thinks about the world and the environment this poses a difficulty for non-native speakers of hoping to learn and function in that language. Although there has been a lot of research and debate into defining the nature, importance and place of culture in second language teaching and learning (see for example; Kramsch, 1998; Risager, 2007), little focus has been given to the difficulties English as an additional language (EAL) scholars face when writing in English and publishing in international journals (see for example, Flowerdew, & Li, 2007; Luo, & Hyland, 2019). This paper aims to present an argument against the seemingly unstoppable monopoly of English language scholarly publications, by adopting a different perspective on some previous research into academic writing.

Key words: scholarly writing, EAL, academic publications in English, writer identity, the culture language nexus

Introduction

One area of social behaviour is communication; how members of a social grouping communicate their ideas and beliefs to one another. Language is one way of doing this and for Kecskes a native-like knowledge of language is “knowing preferred ways of saying things and preferred ways of organising thoughts”. For him these ‘preferred ways’ are “culture and language specific” (Kecskes, 2015, p. 113). And as the things we say reflect how the speech community we belong to thinks about the world and the environment this poses a difficulty for non-native speakers of hoping to learn and function in that language. Although there has been a lot of research and debate into defining the nature, importance and place of culture in second language teaching and learning (see for example; Kramsch, 1998; Risager, 2007), little focus has been given to the difficulties English as an additional language (EAL) scholars face when writing in English and publishing in international journals (see for example, Flowerdew, & Li, 2007; Luo, & Hylands, 2019).

Academics have always been under pressure to publish, as a means for diffusing their ideas, expanding existing research, contesting accepted notions, as part of their institutional responsibilities, as a means of professional advancement and for many other valid reasons. Today the pressure is still there, but it is accentuated by the obligation to publish those journals which have a high international impact factor, essential for academics in the pursuit and maintenance of academic tenure and advancement. This professional pressure is not new, but what is new is the effect that factors such as globalisation and digitalisation have had on the publishing industry and subsequently on scientific output. Recent research looked at all scientific articles published in the Web of Science database between 1973 and 2013, and found that five publishing corporations controlled 50 percent of all the journal articles

that are published; Reed-Elsevier, Taylor & Francis, Wiley-Blackwell, Springer and Sage (Larivière, et al., 2015). Some fields were found to be more independent, in areas such as; biomedical research, physics, and the arts and humanities, but the researchers found that almost 70 percent of published articles in chemistry, psychology and social sciences were in journals owned by these 5 companies (Larivière, et al., 2015). The Dutch company Elsevier claims to publish 25% of all scientific papers produced in the world (The Guardian). This oligopoly of academic publishing, facilitated by digitalisation is not likely to disappear any time soon and academics who need to publish in high impact journals in order to, for example, obtain or maintain university tenure, will have to submit their articles to journals owned by these companies.

On top of this, within this oligopoly there exists a virtual prerequisite; the articles submitted need to be written in English. For example, SCOPUS, the world's largest database for peer-reviewed journals with 53 million records, 21,915 titles from 5,000 publishers, has a publishing policy that a journal published in a language other than English must at the very least include English abstracts (Anderson, 2019). Van Weijen found that roughly 80% of all the journals indexed in Scopus are published in English (van Weijen, 2012). But as Luo and Hyland point out, "many [scholars] are confronted with serious language barriers during the process" (Luo, & Hyland, 2019, p. 37). What this paper aims to do is to consider the linguistic and cultural factors involved in what Lillis and Curry called "the real-life text production practices" of scholars for whom English is an additional language (EAL) (Lillis, & Curry, 2006, p. 26) and to present an argument against the seemingly unstoppable monopoly of English language scholarly publications.

Some notions on culture

Culture is viewed as socially constructed knowledge and belief systems that form a reference source for members of a given group. It is a system of shared beliefs, values, behaviours and artefacts which are employed to cope with the world and with other members of the group. However, these values, beliefs and behaviours are not uniformly shared among the group members and what is more, the group's culture will have "both a priori and emergent features" (Kecskes, 2015, p. 114).

It is germane to this paper to briefly visit some dominant views on the nature of culture which I believe are relevant to how it is perceived in inter-cultural communication. Holliday (1999) conceives of culture as being 'large' and 'small'. Put simply, large culture encompasses aspects such as ethnicity and nation and small culture relates to the activities and artefacts of any cohesive social grouping (see Holliday, 1999, p. 237). What is particularly relevant to this paper about Holliday's conceptualisation of small and large culture paradigms is that large culture "imposes a picture of the social world [...] the focus of a large culture approach is what makes cultures, which everyone acknowledges as existing, essentially different to each other. In contrast, a small culture approach is more concerned with social processes as they emerge" (Holliday, 1999, p. 240). The large culture paradigm, is for Holliday vulnerable to cultural reductionism and stereotyping. Small cultures are less ingrained, and involve emergent behaviour in any social grouping. Large cultures are therefore perceived from a diachronic perspective, whereas small cultures from a pragmatic, synchronic perspective. Holliday's notion of large culture is echoed in an aspect of Kramsch's notion of culture in which she proposes the idea of 'big C' culture as being synonymous with a general knowledge of literature and the arts, it is the hallmark of the cultivated middle-class and is promoted by a nation's institutions

(e.g., schools and universities) as a national patrimony. As Kramersch points out as “national cultures are always bound up with notions of the ‘good’ and ‘proper’ way of life [...] they elicit pride and loyalty” (Kramersch, 2013, p. 65). Both Holliday and Kramersch argue that it is the large, big ‘C’ cultures that are often invoked in English language teaching approaches and materials as the “*large culture* paradigms by nature vulnerable to a culturist reduction of ‘foreign’ students, teachers and their educational contexts” (Holliday, 1999, p. 237, italics his).

Writing, culture and identity

Writing is a means of communication and recent studies have emphasised how writing is a socially situated practice; as Ivanič writes “Literacy [...] is not a technology made up of a set of transferable cognitive skills, but a constellation of practices which differ from one social setting to another” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 65). These literacy practices are not universal but differ from one social context and social group to another, and “social groups differ from each other in which practices they will employ in the same context” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 65). But as Street points out there is not a simple, one-to-one relationship between literacy practices and culture as values, beliefs and power relations are in a constant process of evolution and as cultures interact with other cultures these values and beliefs are once again redefined in relation to others (Street, 1984).

Studies have focused on writing as a multi-layered construct, (see Fairclough, 1989; Ivanič, 1998), where the text is embedded and inseparable from cognitive and social aspects. Ivanič proposes a 4-level model which places text at the centre with the cognitive processes involved in text production surrounding the text. Surrounding these 2 is the ‘event’, the immediate social context in which the text is being produced. The outer

layer is the sociocultural situation in which the text is produced and this provides the “socioculturally available resources for communication: [...] the discourses and genres which are supported by the cultural context within which language use is taking place, and the patterns of privileging and relations of power among them” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 224). Therefore, the ability to use a written language, is “not a technology made up of a set of transferable cognitive skills, but a constellation of practices which differ from one social setting to another” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 65).

Most research and studies into language and culture have highlighted the contingent and situationally-dependent, changeable nature of intercultural communication (e.g. Blommaert, 2005), which often occurs in “multiple, real or imagined, multidimensional, and dynamic communities based on common interests or practices” (Kramsch, 2013, p. 68). These common interests and practices have led to a dominantly pragmatic view of inter-cultural communication. But the situationally determining factors are not the only influences on an individual’s writing, most cultural contexts, as we have seen above, are restrained by the perceived dominant, social values and beliefs and therefore some discourses are judged more ‘appropriate’ than others (Wertsch, 1998). Many researchers argue that in engaging in these literacy practices writers reinforce and reproduce the dominant values, beliefs and structures of a culture (see Ivanič, 1998, p. 66). What is more, Ivanič suggests that by aligning themselves with the dominant beliefs and values of a culture through the participation in its literacy practices, writers are also constructing their individual identities as writers. Therefore, participating in a culture’s literacy practices involves “ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities” (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996, p. 127). What is important here is that the notion of literacy practices is inextricably linked to the concept of writer identity (see Ivanič, 1998, p. 67).

Writer identity

Writing is not a purely social phenomenon, but is also a private, idiosyncratic act and while specific socio-cultural and institutional contexts can and do constitute limitations and boundaries as to what can be written, writers also bring their own life histories and sense of self to their texts. Two notions which significantly contribute to the understanding of this mediation between the social and the individual are writer identity and writer voice.

Benwell & Stokoe identify two basic conceptualisations of identity; one which is “essential”, involving the cognitive and psychological aspects of an individual which govern her/his actions and the second is what they call the “public phenomenon”, a “performance [...] interpreted by other people. This construction takes place in discourse and other social and embedded conduct” (Benwell, & Stokoe, 2006, pp. 3-4). The debate as to what extent individuals have agency over their writer identity and to what extent their identity is controlled by external contextual forces has been the centre of great debate on writer identity (see Flowerdew, & Wang, 2015). Many researchers view the issue of identity in less dichotomous ways. Hyland views writer identity as being constructed through discourse practices within specific communities of practice. Writers assume social positions in their interactions with other members of the community and adopt the communication rules and conventions, while maintaining their agency in the individual choices they exercise from their available repertoire. Gee points to the multiplicity of discourse functions, “[d]iscourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing [...]. They are ‘ways of being in the world.’ They are ‘forms of life.’ They are socially situated identities” (Gee, 1990 p. 3). For Lehman “writers are both free to construct their identity [...] but they are also

made by the discourses and social practices in which they participate to occupy particular subject positions (an individual is a 'subject' or is 'positioned' in a particular discourse)" (Lehman, 2015, p. 184).

Writer voice

A writer creates her/his identity through the voice they create in their literacy outputs. Narayan defined voice as "the sense of communicating an individual presence behind written [...] words" (Narayan, 2012, p. 85). Current research recognises that writers may employ a multiplicity of voices as a manifestation of writers' discursive and relational identities (cf. Ivanič, 1998; 2004). However, writer's voice is not only in the language employed in the text; a writer's voice is inferred by the reader from the linguistic choices the writer makes; voice is not realized until perceived by a reader. Tardy and Matsuda (2009) described voice as a writer-reader negotiation 'motivated' by the text. Therefore in considering the reader in the creation of textual voice she/he needs to take into account the reader's perceived knowledge and expectations as, "effectively controlling interpersonal features becomes central to building a convincing argument and creating an effective text" (Hyland, 2000, p. 364).

Authorial voice is therefore dialogic in that both writer and reader participate in the process of finding the appropriate voice for the most effective means of communicating meaning. Hyland stressed this multifaceted aspect to voice when he suggested that the linguistic choices made by the writer need to establish "relationships between people, and between people and ideas" (Hyland, 2008, p. 7). Voice for Hyland is both a manifestation of the writer's position to the content of the text and a recognition of the readers' presence and inclusion as an active discourse participant through the use of reader-oriented textual features. (see Hyland, 2008). Importantly, for the purpose of the focus

of this paper Flowerdew & Wang point out that at the social level “voice is a means for people to articulate social identities prescribed through social labels such as doctors, lawyers, and teachers” (Flowerdew, & Wang, 2015, p. 85) and Hyland in a later work states that “taking on a voice associated with a particular field of study involves aligning oneself with its knowledge-making practices: the topics it believes worth talking about and how it talks about them” (Hyland, 2012, p. 15). It is the extent to which this alignment may hinder the ‘articulation of social identity’ which is at the centre of this discussion.

What is an academic text?

Academic texts are no longer seen as the communication of a discipline’s ideas and beliefs in a homogeneous, discipline-specific rhetorical style, but as a means of communicating those ideas and beliefs in a flexible, fluid and negotiable way (see Pavlenko, & Blackledge, 2004; Gotti, 2012). Specific disciplinary discourses may favour particular generic conventions, but they also allow individual writer flexibility and genres themselves are dynamic and closely related to their social contexts (Swales, 2004). Despite the fact that typically academic writing can involve a high level of formalization with regard to grammar, lexis and textual organization, it employs a variety of genres and text types which can exhibit strong differences in both form and content across disciplines, discourse communities and cultures. The traditional reasoning behind the standardization of the rhetorical features of academic writing was that it needed to fulfill the main purpose of scientific writing, that is to ensure objectivity in the presentation of its knowledge claims. As Bizzell writes; “traditional academic community create discourses that embody a typical world view [that] speaks through an academic persona who is objective, trying to prevent emotions or prejudices from influencing

the ideas in the writing” (Bizzell, 2002, p. 2). Some of the text features which are traditionally considered necessary for the creation of an academic voice are that it; is expository, uses formal register, is objective, is highly structured typically including an abstract, formal citations and a bibliography, with a clear beginning, a middle and an end and it requires credible, scholarly research to support the ideas and theories.

However, as said above, numerous studies have shown that there is great variety displayed in these disciplinary genres (see for example Kuo, 1999; Hyland, 2000; 2008; Rowley, & Carter-Thomas, 2005), one reason for which Hyland suggests is “based on the fact that academic genres represent writers’ attempts to anticipate possible negative reactions to their views and establish their claims. To do this they must display familiarity with the practices of their disciplines – encoding ideas, employing warrants, and framing arguments in ways that their audience will find most convincing” (Hyland, 2008, p. 549).

This notion of published academic output being scrutinised by the outside world, by peers, journals’ editorial boards, fellow academics and researchers, allocates the reader with “an active and constitutive role in how writers construct their arguments” (Hyland, 2005, p. 176). Reader response is therefore seen as a crucial consideration in the academic writer’s construction of their argumentation and how they position themselves towards the belief and knowledge claims they aim to communicate. Hyland identifies two principal rhetorical strategies which academic writers employ to manage this interaction; firstly ‘stance’, in which the writer assumes a “a textual ‘voice’ or community recognized personality [...] This can be seen as an attitudinal dimension and includes features which refer to the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgements, opinions, and commitments. It is the ways that writers intrude to stamp their personal authority onto their arguments or step back and disguise their involvement” (Hyland, 2005,

p. 176). The second rhetorical strategy is 'engagement', the way writers relate to their readers with respect to the textual content, it is how writers "acknowledge and connect to others, recognizing the presence of their readers, pulling them along with their argument, focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties, including them as discourse participants, and guiding them to interpretations" (Hyland, 2005, p. 176). Therefore, the writer's awareness of the presence of the reader is another factor in the situational fluidity of academic texts and the need to modify their rhetorical style in order to meet the expectations of the reader is "now widely acknowledged" (Hyland, 2005, p. 363).

Writing in English as an additional language

Contrastive rhetoric (CR) studies began over 50 years ago spurred on by Kaplan's (1966) study into different rhetorical patterns of written language, from which he argued that each culture and language has unique rhetorical patterns. The focus of his and much of the work that came later focussed on the second language teaching benefits of such an approach. There have been numerous contrastive rhetoric (CR) studies into the differences in academic discourses between two cultures, producing, put simply, two opposing positions, one stressing the universality of academic discourse (see Widdowson, 1979) and the other postulating the culture-specificity of textual structures (e.g. Kaplan, 1966; Clyne, 1981; Galtung, 1985). The universalist approach has largely been undermined primarily as it is seen as viewing science as "a 'secondary cultural system' which is detached from the primary lingua cultures" (Siepmann, 2006, p. 132).

Galtung (1985) collated thinking on culture and intellectual and writing styles in four broad academic communities: the 'Saxon', the 'Teutonic (which includes Polish)', the 'Gallic' and the 'Nipponic'. Siepmann

gives an explanation of what such a broad term might mean in practice; “The Saxonian intellectual style, which can be further subdivided into a US and a UK style, is characterized by avid collection and organisation of data [...]. Accordingly, it is strong on hypothesis generation, but weak on theory formation. Moreover, Saxonian academics actively engage in dialogue with their peers, seek to smooth out divergences of opinion and are generally more tolerant of diversity” (Siepmann, 2006, p. 133). Numerous studies have been carried out to exemplify the diversity of writing styles and text features among different languages; such as the relationship between writer and reader (Mauranen, 1993), overall text coherence (Blumenthal, 1997), text structure (Schröder, 1991), metalanguage (Hutz, 1997; Mauranen, 1993), and paragraph structure (e.g. Trumpp, 1998). Many of these have given rise to taxonomies similar to the abridged version below:

Table 1. Summary of stylistic differences

	English	French	German
Relationship between Writer and Reader (Mauranen, 1993; Schröder, 1988)	writer responsibility: the reader is assumed to have less subject knowledge than the writer; he needs to be told why the text is worth reading and what is important	writer responsibility: the reader is assumed to have less subject knowledge; the author takes him through the text, adjacent parts of which are clearly linked by (e.g.) causal or pars pro toto relations operating at the same hierarchical level	reader responsibility: the reader is assumed to share the writer's subject knowledge; frequent switching of hierarchical levels

Text structures (Schröder, 1988)	'point-early', linear structure: the main point is usually made at the outset of the argument	'point-early' or 'pointlate' (the latter mainly in classical dissertations, newspaper comments, essays)	'point-late', spiral-like structure: theoretical exposition prepares for the main point to be made at the end of the argument
Paragraph Structure (e.g. Trumpp, 1998)	topic sentence tends to control paragraph structure	bridge sentence identifies position in line of argument; topic sentences only moderately common	no unified model of paragraph structure; topic sentences comparatively rare academic writing and culture
Authorial self-reference (Hutz, 1997; Trumpp, 1998)	more authorial statements (I/we); cooperative writing style	frequent use of the majestic plural	fewer 'personal' statements; more impersonal constructions (e.g. man); higher use of inclusive we (here we have a ...); author-centred writing style

Source: Adapted from Siepmann (2006, p. 142).

From her studies Duszak (1997) states that Teutonic intellectual traditions "are believed to indulge in more acts of creative thinking" (Duszak, 1997, p. 13), however she later concedes that "communication realities, however defy any broad generalisations" (Duszak, 1997, p. 14). Therefore, an academic text is viewed as more than a repetition of culturally imprinted intellectual traditions, but also "reflects the social self image of the writer and his/her perception of the readership" (Duszak, 1997, p. 13). This recognition of the interpersonal aspect of academic writing leads her to pose some interesting questions which are salient to this paper, "how do people behave in transmitting scholarly matters, and why? What are the sources and areas of variation in academic behavior patterns? What creates bonds, and what sets barriers to communication among academics?" (Duszak, 1997, p. 15). CR was not

without its critics, mainly for its seemingly ethnocentric (Western/English) views and its lack of sensitivity to cultural differences (see Zamel, 1997). Canagarajah in a critique pointed out some aspects which are pertinent for this discussion; “Though difference is always going to be there in writing, and though much of it may derive from culture, the ways in which this influence takes place can be positive or a negative, enabling as well as limiting” (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 68).

Concluding comments

In conclusion, I would like to pose some arguments that may litigate against the perceived hegemony of a homogeneous rhetorical style in academic English and perhaps offer solace to academic writers of EAL.

Though recent laws in Poland have brought to the fore the need for academics to write and publish in English, the issue of scholars from non-English speaking countries feeling this pressure is not new. Already in 1997, Čmejrková and Duszak were posing the main problems that such a monopolistic situation would create. And clearly one affect that such a situation may have is on the professional self-image of the academics who experience this as an attack on their identity; as Pynsent wrote, “Problems of identity are particularly keenly felt by individuals or groups who find themselves left outside what is considered the norm in those parts of society or the world which appear to be the bearers of culture” (Pynsent, 1994, p. vii). Without doubt writing and publishing for scholars for who English is an additional language (EAL), presents problems and creates demands on the author as, although she may not be asked to go ‘native’ she/he will be expected to make changes to her writer identity which is “constructed and constituted by the national culture and society, as well as by the native scientific community conventions” (Vassileva, 2005, p. 42).

The gradual emergence, accelerated over the last twenty years, of English as the global lingua franca, has also seen the rise of localised (geographically and virtually) Englishes. English is no longer located geographically, it is all around us, thanks to the internet and social media. We argue that this has led to the diminished importance of the role 'big C' culture plays in interactions where English is used as an additional language (EAL), placing even greater emphasis on the emergent socially situated aspects of language use, but also allowing more space for the a priori elements from the participants' existing cultural background.

As we have seen, the view that socially-situated rhetorical norms are somehow static and predictive has been undermined by countless cross and intra-disciplinary studies. This has led once more to the focus on language use as emergent and fluid. We argue, couldn't this fluidity also expand to contain aspects of the writer's first language and culture (L1/C1)? Smakman and Duda-Osiewacz point out that when writing in English "non-native speakers inevitably apply a written style which incorporates their own cultural habits" (Smakman, & Duda-Osiewacz, 2014, p. 29). And what definition of culture are we using, when we discuss the link between language production and culture? Pennycook (1994) views cultures as being more than what might be contained within a national or regional boundary and expands the term to include any social group which is linked in some way, in line with Holliday's (1999) concept of small cultures. This much more encompassing use of the word culture would, for example, include members of a disciplinary community. For Kramsch, such a conceptualisation envisages the possible tension "between social convention and individual creativity that characterizes both language use and cultural context" (Kramsch, 2013 p. 64), once again, creating space for a greater accommodation of the influence of L1/C1 influence on second language use.

As Smakman and Duda-Osiewacz point out, “with such a richness in variety of rhetorical style between and within disciplines is there an “actual need for an internationally accepted style?”. They go on to point to the fact that this ‘non-nativeness’ is not and has not been proved as an element of inferior quality in academic research and output (Smakman, & Duda-Osiewacz, 2014, p. 45). Jenkins (2003) agrees citing differences between Englishes as generally not being seen as a hindrance to communication and so why shouldn’t this group of authors be entitled to add their own style to this international academic language? A number of CR studies have found that a writer’s L1 will have an influencing effect on her/his L2 output, but no studies have found this to be determining in any way. However, what has rarely been foregrounded, other than as an aspect of interference in an appropriate production of English in social situations, is the influence of the writer’s L1/C1. There is an abundance of studies researching situationally contexted, pragmatic linguistic events, but little recognition of to what extent the “prestige features of large culture remain” (Kramsch, 2013, p. 66). Kecskes also points out that not enough focus has been given to the presence of the writer’s perceived prestige of her/his national culture and also the socially constructed knowledge structures to which “individuals turn to as relevant situations permit, enable, and usually encourage” (Kecskes, 2015, p. 114).

This paper argues that the features of the writer’s native culture, relating to ethnic and national aspects and the notion that diachronic cultural factors can and do involve change and evolution, have had little focus and that the ability of L1/C1 to impose ethnic or cultural characteristics onto the communicative behaviour needs to be viewed more positively in order to combat the hegemony of English in academic writing, production and diffusion.

This is by no means a new idea; if one looks at any studies in intercultural rhetoric (IR), writer identity, writer voice, academic

writing, one will find tucked away in the aspects to be considered, 'individual factors'. Surely under this sub-title we have to include the writer's preferred ways of organising her/his thoughts? And these preferred ways are "culture and language specific" (Keckes, 2015, p. 113). This is not to argue for a static or essentialist view of academic writing but to recognise that in socially situated contexts intercultural writing is co-constructed from the situationally determined factors, i.e. the writing task, the academic discipline, the context etc., but also from the writer's existing cultural background. As Leki points out "cultures evolve writing styles appropriate to their histories and the needs of their societies" (Leki, 1992, p. 90).

The disciplinary communities to which non-native speaker scholars belong have as their main driver the shared endeavours of pursuing academic excellence and furthering research and "only secondarily through ties rooted in shared culture, race, class, gender, or ability. These latter ties – as well as other forms of diversity – are not seen as dividers but are *"leveraged as differential resources for the whole group in carrying out its common endeavours and practices"* (Gee, 2008, p. 93 – my italics).

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