Directives in conference presentations and university lectures: A cross-generic comparison

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It has been suggested that non-native English conference speakers may experience difficulties (Swales 2004), or at least employ divergent strategies (Vassileva 2002) to create effective relationships with their audiences. Partly, this may be motivated by the presence in their talks of pedagogic discourse features. Many individuals fulfil a double role, as researchers and instructors, which, given the different configuration of power relationships in the two genres (Myers 1989, Fløttum & al 2005), may result in problematically overlapping discourse practices: while CPs presuppose a relationship between equals, the roles of teacher and students are, in principle, unequal, and this would render the presence of pedagogic discourse practices in the professional science setting potentially face-threatening for the audience.

In this paper, we explore this hypothesis by comparing the use of directives in conference presentations (CP), by English native and non-native speakers, and native English university lecturers. Our data consists of 17 conference presentations (5 by native and 12 by non-native English speakers), as well as 11 university lectures from the MICASE (5 large and 6 small highly- and mostly-monologic lectures by native American speakers), broadly comparable in terms of academic discipline (humanities and social sciences). Directives are expressions of the authority of the speaker over the audience and, most importantly for our purposes, have been shown to be sensitive to different power configurations, at least in written academic discourse (eg, Hyland 2002). To our knowledge, the use of directives across major spoken academic genres such as the CP and the university lecture has not been duly explored, so this cross-generic comparison constitutes a subsidiary objective of the present research. For this study, we shall focus our attention on the directive uses of 4 verbs frequently found in spoken academic discourse: *look*, *remember*, *see* and *think*, comparing them in the three data sets in terms of their 1) frequency of use, 2) form of realisation and 3) discourse roles.

References

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Biodata

I am a Tenured Lecturer in English at the University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain, where I teach general English and translation. My current research interests focus on English as a lingua franca of science ('English for research purposes at the University of Santiago de Compostela: a survey', JEAP, 2009) and the discourse-oriented analysis of conference presentations ('The title of my paper is': introducing the topic in conference presentations, 2012, Peter Lang; Native and non-native interpersonal skills at conferences: managing self-mentions and humour, Springer, 2014; The role of *I mean* in conference presentations by ELF speakers, ESP, 2014).