

An indexical and intercultural academic discourse analysis of French EAL scientific writing: Identifying challenges and issues

Dacia DRESSEN-HAMMOUDA

Université Blaise Pascal, Clermont 2, France

Dacia.HAMMOUDA@univ-bpclermont.fr

Considerable work has been carried out in French humanities and social sciences on the features of written scientific discourse, as produced by French L1 writers in both French and English. However, apart from a small handful of studies, little of this research is known outside of France. This can in part be attributed to institutional imperatives which impose French publications to demonstrate membership in the French scientific community, but is also very likely due to the challenges typically encountered by English as an Additional Language (EAL) researchers having to compete in ERPP contexts (Cargill & Burgess, 2008 ; Flowerdew, 2013; Lillis & Curry, 2010 ; Moreno, 2010). In this respect, there continues to be a real need in France for ERPP research and materials development using intercultural academic discourse analysis (or IADA; Moreno, 2010 : 67).

This paper reports on results from an exploratory indexical study of the features of a learner corpus of French L1 scientific writing, using methods from Dressen-Hammouda (2014). A corpus of 25 graduate student research articles from the field of information design has been analyzed: 5 of the articles are written in English, 20 in French.

Although it is common practice in ERPP to focus on the publications of experienced scientific writers, this project's focus on less experienced writers seeks to reveal the underlying generic links to school writing produced in the French educational system, and thus features which may be specific to French scientific writing. It is hypothesized that the features that index these situated educational, disciplinary or sociocultural backgrounds for French L1 scientific writers may be obstacles for them when seeking to publish in English.

This paper will first describe indexicality and IADA as research tools, and will then compare the features of standard scientific English and standard scientific French, based on published literature. These features will then be compared to the learner corpus. The results of this study will serve as the basis for a later analysis of the peer-reviewing context for French L1 writers who seek to publish in English.

References

- Cargill, M., & Burgess, S. (2008). Introduction to special issue: English for research publication purposes. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 7, 75–76.
- Dressen-Hammouda, D. (2014). Measuring the voice of disciplinarity in scientific writing: A longitudinal exploration of experienced writers in geology. *English for Specific Purposes*, 34, 14–25.
- Flowerdew, J. (2013). Some thoughts on English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) and related issues. *Language Teaching*, 1–13. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000523>
- Lillis, T., & Curry, M. J. (2010). *Academic writing in a global context: The politics and practices of publishing in English*. London: Routledge.
- Moreno, A. (2010). Researching into English for research publication purposes from an applied intercultural perspective. In M. Ruiz-Garrido, J. Palmer-Silveira, & I. Fortanet-Gómez (Eds.), *English for Professional and Academic Purposes* (pp. 57–71). Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Biodata

Dacia Dressen-Hammouda is Associate Professor of English for Specific Purposes at Blaise Pascal University in Clermont-Ferrand, France, where she directs the Bachelors' and Masters' programs in Information Design & Multilingual Technical Documentation. She teaches both undergraduate and graduate-level courses in technical, scientific and professional written discourse, intercultural communication, and user studies. Her current research interests include indexicality, genre theory, intercultural academic discourse analysis, and the discorsal construction of expertise in novice and non-native disciplinary writers. Her forthcoming book is called 'Learning the genres of geology: The role of indexicality and agency in the emergence of situated writing expertise.'