

CURRENT ISSUES IN RESEARCH  
COMMUNICATION IN ENGLISH

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## INTRODUCTION

The scholars contributing to this volume, working at universities in Australia, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Venezuela, draw and build upon research carried out in many places around the globe. They address issues in relation to research communication in English in a wide variety of disciplines *viz.*, Applied Linguistics, Astrophysics, Business Management, Chemistry, Economics, Engineering, History, Law and Social and Political Sciences, thus spanning the hard and soft disciplines and both applied and theoretical research. The contributors provide fresh insights into what remain the two major concerns of those working in our field, namely the analysis and description of research communication genres and ways of responding to the needs of non-Anglophone scholars positioned as clients for ‘professional academic literacy brokering’ (Lillis and Curry). Literacy brokering can be defined broadly to include translation and editing, the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), the training of professional scientists in English for research communication purposes (ERCP) and the mentoring of both novices and expert users of English as an additional language of research communication, all of which are professional practices discussed explicitly or implicitly in the papers in this volume.

The first four contributions can be characterized as genre-analytic. They address a range of questions and adopt varied methodologies, thus rendering them eminently representative of work in this field. While the research article (RA) remains the primary focus here, new digital genres are not neglected. On one occasion a corpus of RAs in English in a single discipline is analysed from a diachronic perspective (see Méndez, Alcaraz & Salager-Meyer’s paper) while on others the emergence of a new genre is charted and analysed (see Herrando Rodrigo). Where scholars in more than one field furnish the corpus under study, comparisons are made and contrasts drawn across disciplines (see Sancho Guinda). Variation in discursive practices across language cultures, a long-standing preoccupation of genre analysts focusing on intercultural rhetoric, is also given due attention in Lafuente Millán’s paper. Méndez, Alcaraz and Salager-Meyer also identify cross-cultural differences in the incidence of multiple authorship in papers in Astrophysics, but in this case the contrast is between the United States and Europe. In every case, methodological and theoretical concerns are confronted and innovative and insightful responses



provided. Sancho Guinda, in her careful step-by-step account of the compilation and analysis of her corpus of Applied Linguistics and Electronic, Telecommunications and Computer Engineering abridged abstracts, acknowledges the difficulty of determining move boundaries where no explicit signalling can be found in the text and exhorts us to turn to expert informants to validate our analysis. Lafuente Millán shares with Sancho Guinda a reluctance to rely exclusively on electronic analyses of his corpus of RA introductions in Business Management, preferring the more nuanced approach that manual analysis of instances of evaluative language in context affords. Herrando Rodrigo examines the question of genre assignment for the emerging genre of electronic popularisations of medical research, the focus of her recently-completed PhD thesis at the University of Zaragoza.

The contributors to this volume who focus on the situation of the non-Anglophone scholar also address a range of theoretical and methodological concerns. Bennett takes from world-systems theory the notion of peripheral and core nations and then analyses the situation of Portuguese scholars, characterizing both their position and the practices that arise from it as semi-peripheral. A readiness to adopt and mimic core discourse practices she characterizes as 'the Butler syndrome'. Price questions the wisdom of evaluating student writing – in this case on a postgraduate Law degree at an Australian university – in terms of how closely it reflects the features of professional academic writing, relying on Bakhtin's notion of speech genre and the centrality of dialogism to support his thesis. Anderson, whose contribution is the only one here devoted to a spoken genre, uses both network theory and conversation analysis to inform her account of European post-doctoral students' use of individual mention when presenting to their peers. She notes that combining the two approaches offers valuable insights with important practical implications for training and mentoring while also presenting the researcher with particular methodological challenges. Lorés, Mur Dueñas, Rey Rocha and Moreno's study of Chemistry and Business scholars presents responses to the ENEIDA (Spanish Team for Intercultural Studies on Academic Discourse) survey, in which motivations, attitudes, experiences and training needs of Spanish researchers were the focus. The eminently practical concern of determining the training needs and wants of a group is taken a step further in Cargill, O'Connor and Matthews. Drawing on their lengthy experience of research publication training courses for Chinese scientists, they arrive at a matrix of contextual factors that can be used to tailor course design to the needs and characteristics of particular groups.

I would not wish to condition the order in which a reader might approach the contributions gathered together here, though I have sought to group them according to these two main sites of research interest and to arrange them sequentially so that one paper complements the next. There are, nevertheless, many other connections that might be drawn. For example, both Price and Anderson have audience as a particular focus and share with Cargill, O'Connor and Matthews an interest in the novice researcher. Price's account could be read alongside Herrando's as the two papers involve a re-examination of the concept of genre. Anderson, Sancho Guinda and Lorés, Mur Dueñas, Rey Rocha and Moreno make comparisons across disciplines while Price and Méndez, Alcaraz and Salager-Meyer choose to concen-



trate on a single field. Some of the findings to emerge from the ENEIDA survey reported by Lorés and her colleagues are also reflected in Bennett's observations of Portuguese scholars. Training and mentoring are the starting points for the papers by Price, Anderson and Cargill, O'Connor and Matthews, all of whom are working with groups in which some or all of the participants are from cultures other than their own.

I would like to conclude with some observations on the relationship of this issue to previous issues of the *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*. Regular readers of the journal will be aware that this is not the first time we have turned our attention to research communication. In 2002 I guest-edited issue 44 entitled 'English(es) in the Academy'; some four years later María del Carmen Fumero Pérez and Ana Díaz Galán were guest editors of issue 53 on 'Writing in the Global Context'. Again in 2009 Pedro Martín Martín and Isabel Karely León Pérez entitled the guest-edited 59<sup>th</sup> issue 'Communicating Science: ESP Studies at the Outset of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'. When I compare the current collection of papers to those in the issues edited by myself and my colleagues in the first decade of this century, I am struck by the strong presence of Spanish researchers now in 2014. I was the only Spain-based contributor to issue 44, as I was to the themed section of issue 53, on both occasions providing only an interview with a major figure in the field working outside Spain. The editors of issue 59 contribute a paper themselves but are the only Spain-based authors in the volume.

In this the 69<sup>th</sup> issue, eight of the fifteen contributing authors live and work in Spain. Many have also been members of two key Spanish research teams, the InterLAE (Interpersonality in Academic Written Discourse) project team led by Ignacio Vázquez Orta at the University of Zaragoza and the ENEIDA team headed by Ana Moreno at the University of León. Rosa Lorés, Enrique Lafuente-Millán and Pilar Mur-Dueñas have in fact been members of both. Almost all the Spanish researchers contributing here took part in two events held in the first decade of this century: the PRISEAL (Publishing and Presenting Research Internationally: Issues for Speakers of English as an Additional Language) conference hosted jointly by myself and Margaret Cargill in La Laguna in January 2007<sup>1</sup> and the InterLAE conference held in Jaca (University of Zaragoza) in December, 2008. Both events attracted truly international participation, testifying to the impact of Spanish research and the respect it has garnered. The conferences allowed for the forging of new contacts and the strengthening of already established links between scholars based in the Iberian Peninsula and the Canary Islands, but also between us and those working elsewhere in Europe, in Asia, in Australasia, Latin America, the United States and Canada. Many of these contacts have resulted in fruitful research collaboration much of which continues today. It is my hope that, though this issue

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<sup>1</sup> A second PRISEAL conference was held at the University of Silesia in June 2011 and a third conference will take place in October, 2015 held in conjunction with the Mediterranean Editors' and Translators' Meeting and hosted by the University of Coimbra.



of the RCEI, new connections are established between those of us based in Spain and those abroad. Collaboration and exchange of this kind can only help to improve the quality of professional academic literacy brokering and thus facilitate full participation in the conversations of their disciplines by scholars who use English as an additional language of research communication.

## WORKS CITED

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