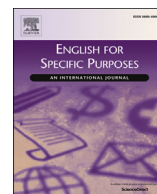




ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

## English for Specific Purposes

journal homepage: <http://ees.elsevier.com/esp/default.asp>

## Publishing research in the international context: An analysis of Spanish scholars' academic writing needs in the social sciences



Maria-Lluïsa Gea-Valor <sup>a,\*</sup>, Jesús Rey-Rocha <sup>b</sup>, Ana I. Moreno <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of English Studies, Universitat Jaume I, Campus Riu Sec, 12071 Castelló, Spain

<sup>b</sup> Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, Spanish Council for Scientific Research (CSIC), Madrid, Spain

<sup>c</sup> Department of Modern Philology, Universidad de León, Campus de Vegazana, 24071 León, Spain

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Available online 24 June 2014

#### Keywords:

Academic writing  
ERPP needs  
Social sciences  
Intercultural rhetoric

### ABSTRACT

In the last decades, publishing research in the international arena has become an imperative among scholars in Spain. However, many researchers experience difficulties in publishing their work in English-medium international journals. The present paper is part of a wider research project which aims at identifying, analysing and catering for the needs of Spanish researchers in English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP). The first stage of our project involved a large-scale online survey administered to researchers at five universities and research institutions in Spain. This paper reports on the responses provided by informants from the social fields of Education, Psychology and Sociology. Taking a Spanish–English intercultural perspective, our objective is twofold: firstly, to explore the difficulties experienced by Spanish scholars in these disciplines, along with the strategies they use when publishing in English; and secondly, to identify their ERPP needs, with the prospect of developing materials and courses which will help them produce effective academic writing and publish their research internationally. The results point at a generalised need for training in specific areas of academic writing, such as the rhetorical sections of the RA and the most common problems and difficulties encountered by Spanish authors when writing their papers in English.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

In the last few decades, publishing research in the international arena has become an ever-pressing need among Spanish scholars. The current Spanish research system, established in 1989, requires its members to produce a substantial number of high-quality scientific papers, which must be submitted and published in indexed mainstream journals in order to reach a wider research community and achieve worldwide visibility among peers (Cargill & O'Connor, 2006; Kindelan, 2009; St John, 1987). As Kindelan (2009, p. 95) points out: “[W]e cannot escape the fact that to disseminate new knowledge at first hand today means channelling information through prestigious scientific publications. For this purpose, it is necessary to internationalise science in Spain. This can be achieved by pushing investigators to publish in international journals.”

The research evaluation system in Spain, designed “to improve the quality of Spanish science and its visibility in journals” (Jiménez-Contreras, Delgado López-Cózar, Ruiz-Pérez, & Fernández, 2002, p. 898), awards tenured professors and researchers

\* Corresponding author. Department d'Estudis Anglesos, Facultat de Ciències Humanes i Socials, Universitat Jaume I, Campus Riu Sec, 12071 Castelló, Spain. Tel.: +34 964 729627; fax: +34 964 729261.

E-mail addresses: [gea@ang.uji.es](mailto:gea@ang.uji.es) (M.-L. Gea-Valor), [jesus.rey@cchs.csic.es](mailto:jesus.rey@cchs.csic.es) (J. Rey-Rocha), [ana.moreno@unileon.es](mailto:ana.moreno@unileon.es) (A.I. Moreno).

with career promotion and salary increments, the so-called *sexenios*. In order to obtain a *sexenio*, the National Commission for the Evaluation of Research Activity assesses five research contributions published in a six-year period. A special premium is placed on publications in English in journals with a high-impact factor (Jiménez-Contreras, de Moya Anegón, & Delgado López-Cózar, 2003; Lillis & Curry, 2010). This drive towards internationalisation exerts increasing pressure on researchers and scholars across all disciplines, as Lillis and Curry (2010, p. 59) state: “[T]he imperative to publish in English places demands on periphery scholars that many Anglophone-centred scholars may not contend with.”

The current dominance of English as the international language of scientific communication is beyond dispute. Important issues such as equal access to the international academy as well as participation in knowledge production and dissemination are at stake, especially in non-Anglophone countries where English is used as a foreign language (Curry & Lillis, 2004; Lillis & Curry, 2006, 2010; Tardy, 2004). In such an environment, many studies have explored the academic writing difficulties faced by multilingual scholars trying to publish their research in internationally refereed English-medium journals. Of special relevance is the work on Hong Kong Chinese academics (Flowerdew, 1999a, 1999b, 2000), Portuguese researchers (Bennett, 2010a, 2010b), scholars from Spain, Portugal, Hungary and Slovakia (Lillis & Curry, 2006, 2010), researchers in Poland (Duszak & Lewkowicz, 2008), Mexican scholars (Hanauer & Englander, 2011) and Spanish academics (Ferguson, Pérez-Llantada, & Pló, 2011; Fernández Polo & Cal Varela, 2009), to name but a few.

Focussing our attention on Spanish scholars, it has been established that many experience difficulties in publishing their work in English in international journals in part because of a lack of familiarity with international discourse practices arising from insufficient training in successful academic writing (Burgess & Martín-Martín, 2008; Moreno, 2010). Recent cross-cultural studies on academic writing have also revealed the existence of significant differences in the rhetorical, stylistic and discourse features used by Spanish authors and those used by their native English-speaking counterparts (Burgess & Fagan, 2006; Kindelan, 2009; Moreno & Suárez, 2008; Mur-Dueñas, 2007; Valero-Garcés, 1996). An additional problem are the low levels of proficiency in English, which in many cases contribute to feelings of inadequacy on the part of Spanish scholars especially when comparing themselves to first language users of English (Ferguson et al., 2011; Fernández Polo & Cal Varela, 2009).

One result of this situation is a growing demand among Spanish scholars for EAP courses or, more precisely, for courses on ERPP (English for Research Publication Purposes). These courses “can be thought of as a branch of EAP addressing the concerns of professional researchers and post-graduate students who need to publish in peer-reviewed international journals” (Cargill & Burgess, 2008, p. 75). The objective of ERPP courses is to attend to the needs of scholars and researchers by providing specific training in those skills relevant to writing and publishing research in English.

The present study is part of a wider research project currently conducted by ENEIDA (Spanish Team for Intercultural Studies of Academic Discourse), which encompasses researchers from five universities and research institutions in Spain, namely CSIC, Universidad de León, Universidad de Zaragoza, Universidad de La Laguna in Tenerife and Universitat Jaume I in Castelló. The project seeks to arrive at a better understanding of the reasons why Spanish scholars choose to write their research in Spanish or English and to publish this research in either national or international journals. At the same time, it sets out to identify the disciplinary fields in which most difficulty is experienced and in which training needs are most acute, while also isolating those academic genres and rhetorical practices which pose more of a challenge to Spanish researchers when they write in English. A final and particularly crucial aim of the project is to inform the design of materials and training courses tailored to the previously identified needs of these scholars in terms of writing for publication purposes.

One of the main innovative aspects of the project is precisely the intercultural approach it takes. Intercultural rhetoric, as “a research field that seeks to identify and explain some of the rhetorical and stylistic accommodations that multilingual writers need to make in order to achieve their communication goals interculturally” (Moreno, 2013; see also Connor, 2004), provides us with the most suitable framework to explore the possible causes for the difficulties experienced by Spanish writers who need to publish in English internationally, such as a potential transfer of rhetorical and stylistic features between two different writing cultures, that is to say, from Spanish into English academic writing. By offering insights into the attitudes, motivations, demands and needs of Spanish researchers with regard to reporting their research in English as opposed to doing so in Spanish, we believe we will be able to design useful rhetorical solutions to facilitate the international dissemination of Spanish research.

The first stage of the project consisted in a large-scale online questionnaire survey in which 37 questions were posed to researchers with doctorates at the aforementioned universities and research institutions in Spain (see Moreno, Rey-Rocha, Burgess, López-Navarro, & Sachdev, 2012). In the context of this project, the present paper draws on the responses to the whole survey – which make up the ENEIDA database – provided by informants from three fields within the social sciences (following the UNESCO classification), namely Education, Psychology and Sociology. Research in these disciplines has experienced a gradual but steady growth in Spain in the last few decades. According to a recent study (García Delgado, Alonso, & Jiménez, 2013, p. 41), the social sciences “have a significant presence in the Spanish system of science and technology, incorporating more than one third of researchers in the public sphere” (our translation).

Traditionally, English has been the dominant language of communication in the natural sciences given its hegemony in this disciplinary area. Ferguson et al. (2011, p. 57) claim that “English is generally more dominant in academic publication in the natural than in the social sciences, and that life/physical scientists have longer experience with this dominance.” Lillis and Curry (2010, p. 9) also indicate that “more than 90% of indexed natural science journals” are written in English. The social sciences, on the other hand, have recently undergone a change in this respect and started to accept English as the main publication medium. As Lillis and Curry (2006, p. 4) point out: “More than 90% of the social science articles in journals tracked

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/355337>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/355337>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)