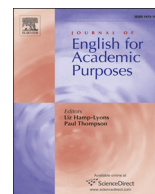




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'English is my default academic language': Voices from LSP scholars publishing in a multilingual journal[☆]



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A B S T R A C T

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This paper investigates research publication practices in the field of Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) and aims to raise awareness of the current use of English by LSP scholars (Anglophones and non-Anglophones) who need to gain visibility in international academia and recognition in their home educational contexts. This article draws on the JCR-indexed LSP journal *Ibérica* and the submissions from a group of Anglophone and non-Anglophone scholars who have contributed to the journal with English-written articles despite the fact that *Ibérica* is a multilingual journal, encourages submissions in four other languages, and assesses all manuscripts on an equal basis regardless of the submission language. In order to broach the “publish in English or perish in academia” dilemma through the eyes of this particular journal the replies from a five-item questionnaire delivered online are illustrated and discussed. Answers provided by 161 respondents support many of the statements already explored in the literature (particularly as regards threats and opportunities of English as a common language in academia) but also bring to the fore new views and concerns which are worth investigating in depth.

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1. Introduction

There is a growing body of literature that echoes the concerns of different groups of researchers with academic publishing, particularly the difficulties and challenges that non-Anglophone scholars face when writing for international publication and trying to place their work in the mainstream journals “which are invariably in English” (Flowerdew, 2008, p. 77). Such difficulties and challenges (for a detailed review, see Uzuner, 2008) may be related to: (i) the English language itself (insufficient command or inability to reach an acceptable academic style in that language); or (ii) non-linguistic impediments (such as lack of resources, obstacles for accessing information, etc.) that limit the participation of these researchers in global scholarship.

Focussing on the European context and regarding language-related difficulties and challenges, Curry and Lillis (2004) examined the publishing experiences of fifty scholars in the fields of education and psychology; Duszak and Lewkowicz (2008) looked at the experiences of Polish academics from different scientific backgrounds and their attitudes towards publishing research in English; Bennett (2010) assessed Portuguese researchers' perceptions of and attitudes towards the question of linguistic imperialism in academic writing; and, more recently, Ingvarsdóttir and Arnbjörnsdóttir (2013) have described the views of Icelandic academics from rather different disciplines about the increased pressure to academic

[☆] Preliminary results obtained from a smaller sample ($n = 95$) were presented as a part of the plenary address given at the English as a Scientific and Research Language Conference (University of Zaragoza, Spain, 1–2 December 2012).

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publishing in English. Within the Spanish context, Ferguson, Perez-Llantada, and Plo (2011), Moreno, Rey-Rocha, Burgess, López-Navarro, and Sachdev (2012) and Pérez-Llantada (2012) have surveyed the attitudes and perceived difficulties of Spanish academics from the “hard” and “soft” sciences to English as an international language of academic publication. In all cases there is a common widespread sense “that non-Anglophone scholars are linguistically disadvantaged relative to native-speaking academics when it comes to publication in English” (Ferguson et al., 2011, p. 45).

As regards non-linguistic impediments, Canagarajah (1996) identified several “non-discursive requirements” that interfere in publication and classified them into three distinctive groups: material, financial, and social. This scholar, and others like Ferguson (2007), Salager-Meyer (2008, 2009), Ammon (2001, 2012) or Carli and Ammon (2007), have been very critical towards the inequalities (that often lead to discrimination and isolation) of researchers working in the “centre” versus those working in the “periphery” or “off-network”.

This paper elaborates on the supremacy of English in the publication and global dissemination of research within the field of Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) and aims to raise awareness of the use of English by LSP scholars who need to gain visibility in international academia and recognition in their home educational contexts. More particularly, it pays a closer look to the language behaviours and attitudes of contributors to the LSP journal *Ibérica* with the principal aim of gaining an understanding of the reasons underlying the high inflow of submissions in English when the journal has a multilingual policy and accepts contributions in other four European languages.

Here, the usual opposition native English/non-native English has been avoided as much as possible so as to present LSP scholars as a distinctive academic group with common purposes, similar challenges and shared views and concerns. Also, the acronym ERPP (English for Research Publication Purposes), first introduced by Cargill and Burgess (2008), has been used to refer to “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) and as an alternative term to phrases recurrently appearing in the existing literature like “English for academic publishing”, “English for research writing” or “English for scientific research”.

In the first section of this paper I discuss the hegemony of English for scientific research and academic publishing among European scholars against the background of a multilingual Europe, and pay particular attention to ERIH, a reference index which is exclusive to the Humanities. In the second section I narrow down the focus on the context of the LSP journal *Ibérica* (ISSN 1139-7241), published in Spain and having Europeans as its most immediate audience – both readers and article writers. Last, from the replies to a five-item questionnaire I discuss the views expressed by 161 contributors to the journal towards a submission in English over other national languages, threats and opportunities posed by ERPP, attitudes towards multilingualism in academic publishing and, finally, the perceived value of research published in English.

2. The hegemony of English for scholarly publishing in multilingual Europe

This paper sets its context of study in Europe primarily, although not exclusively. As will be detailed in the following section, the target journal of this study was initially launched by a group of European scholars, it is hosted by a European Association and the surveyed contributors attest a higher presence of European languages – 148 respondents (92%) have a European language as a mother tongue versus 13 respondents (8%) with mother tongues spoken outside Europe.

There are at present 23 official languages in Europe; however, there exists concern of English becoming dominant over other languages, particularly for international communication and scholarship, and a widespread belief that “a self-reinforcing upward spiral” is operating in favour of English as the first foreign language, both in Europe and worldwide (Council of Europe, 1997, p. 52). With this backdrop, the Council of Europe has endeavoured to protect linguistic diversity across Europe and set multilingualism as a key policy goal; however, to date, no specific supranational initiatives have been launched in order to regulate the overwhelming presence of English in academia and for research purposes at a European level.

In his analysis of the key aspects of the use of English in Europe, Truchot (2002) claimed that this language is clearly predominant in scientific activity. As he portrays, English is tending to become the sole language used “for discussions in symposia, congresses and similar events” (p. 10). Moreover, its use spreads over work exchanges in laboratories with foreign researchers as well as over the organisation and dissemination of research through publications, networks programmes and institutions to the extent that scientific programmes “are managed entirely in English, from invitations to tender to completion” (p. 11). Indeed, it is in the context of an apparent resistance to the dominance of English across European scholarship, its *de facto* predominance, and the preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity through a common EU multilingual policy that the focus of the debate is located.

Outside the scope of the EU policy some steps have been taken in the light of scientific publishing to reduce the encroachment of English, to take into consideration the linguistic diversity of published research and to diminish the impact of US databases as the baseline for the collection and circulation of quality research. For the purposes of this article I shall briefly broach the issue of scientific publishing within the Humanities with the development of the European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH).

ERIH is a reference index created by European researchers under the auspices of the European Science Foundation (ESF). ESF was established in Strasbourg in 1974 as an independent, non-governmental organisation that creates a common platform for cooperation in Europe and across different domains of science. One of the objectives of ERIH is to highlight “the vast range of world-class research published by humanities researchers in the European languages” (ESF, 2011). In order to

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