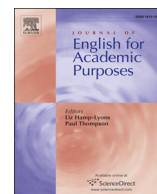


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# Affordances and constraints on research publication: A comparative study of the language choices of Spanish historians and psychologists

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## A B S T R A C T

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Research publication in the international arena, is crucial for multilingual scholars in most disciplinary areas. For many, among them Spanish scholars, it still represents a considerable hurdle. The findings we report here are part of a wider research project involving a large online [survey](#) of scholars at five universities and research institutions in Spain. We aimed to identify the needs of Spanish researchers in terms of research publishing skills in both English and Spanish, learn about their attitudes, motivations and experiences of research publication and of writing training. The present paper compares the results for scholars in History and Psychology. Through analysis of quantitative and comment data, we show how the motivations of these scholars with regard to research publication in the two languages work together with the strategies and resources available to them to determine language selection. We also review their experience of training in research writing and their willingness to pursue further training. Although the two groups of scholars differ in terms of attitudes to publication in English, they share a willingness to negotiate the challenges presented by institutional constraints, making strategic decisions about the choice of language in which to publish and their own language development.

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## 1. Introduction

The dominant position of English as the medium of academic and scientific communication has been regularly documented since the early 1980s ([Baldauf, 2001](#)). Equally well-documented is the impact of this situation on the academic practices of multilingual scholars working in settings outside [Kachru's \(1985\)](#) 'inner circle' of English (see [Ferguson, 2007](#)). These scholars typically face a number of additional hurdles to publication that first language users of English do not confront with the same frequency or to the same degree. Applied linguists have provided accounts of the research publication processes and experiences of these individuals, noting that they find themselves at a disadvantage in relation to their Anglophone counterparts when publishing their research findings in English ([Curry & Lillis, 2004](#); [Ferguson, Pérez-Llantada, & Plo, 2011](#); [Flowerdew, 2000](#); [Kindelan, 2009](#); [Lillis & Curry, 2010](#); [Tonkin, 2008](#)). At the same time, to meet tenure and promotion requirements, to obtain research funding and to achieve full recognition for their research contribution, these scholars are

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under increasing pressure to publish in ISI journals. As is also well known, the majority of these journals are English-medium (Lillis & Curry, 2010: 14–16).

Spanish scholars also confront these hurdles. Studies conducted over the last three decades by researchers specialising in analysis of academic discourse (Fortanet, Posteguillo, Palmer, & Coll, 1998; Salager-Meyer, Alcaraz-Ariza, & Zambrano, 2003), intercultural rhetoric (Moreno, 1998) and sociology of science (Rey-Rocha & Martín-Sempere, 1999) bear testimony to the interest and concern the situation of Spanish academics has provoked. Commitment to researching their publishing practices arises at least in part from the fact that the outcomes of this research may offer insights applicable to other contexts in Europe and beyond and reveal where they might be positioned on the core-periphery continuum in much the same way as Bennett (2011) has done for Portuguese. For example, a recent study of language choices for research publication shows that Spanish scholars did not increase their output in English between 2000 and 2011 (van Weijen, 2012), although their research productivity rose dramatically over the same period, possibly suggesting resistance to the dominance of core Anglo-American scholarship. Evidence like this of the relative resilience of research publication languages other than English is beginning to emerge but comparative sociolinguistic and bibliometric work of this kind should be extended to encompass other European and non-European languages, particularly those that normally receive scant attention.

Even though Spanish may be relatively resilient, many Spanish scholars do in fact choose to publish in English. A number of studies have sought to identify the difficulties they encounter when doing this (Burgess, Fumero Pérez, & Díaz Galán, 2006; Kerans, 2001) as well as exploring the differences and similarities between academic writing in English and in Spanish (Burgess, 2002; Martín-Martín, 2003; Moreno & Suárez, 2008; Mur-Dueñas, 2007). Others have revealed the need for Spanish academics to receive academic writing support and, more specifically, English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) training (Ferguson et al., 2011; Fernández Polo & Cal Varela, 2009; Pérez-Llantada, Plo, Ferguson, & Gibson, 2010).

In this paper we focus on Spanish scholars working in the fields of Psychology and History, disciplines which Ammon (2008a) suggests may be regarded as ‘niche subjects’ in which writing and reading in an L1 other than English is still at least partially sustained. While Spanish psychologists have received a good deal of attention, most notably in the studies carried out by Curry and Lillis (2004, 2010; Lillis & Curry, 2006a, 2006b, 2010), Spanish historians have not been the focus of survey-based studies of the kind we report here. Psychology and History were among the best-represented social sciences and humanities disciplines in our survey data in terms of the number of responses received. By making comparisons between the two groups of scholars, and between these scholars and those in other disciplines, we consider that important variations in terms of language selection are revealed.

We examine motivations and attitudes towards publishing research in Spanish and English, experiences of and difficulties with publication in the two languages, preferred strategies when preparing a paper for publication and views on training in research writing. The results obtained will ultimately inform the design of training courses aimed at supporting Spanish researchers seeking to publish in English-medium international publications. They also serve to provide answers to questions on the relative status of the two languages as vehicles for research publication, particularly the robustness of Spanish.

Flowerdew and Li (2009), in their study of language choices by Chinese Social Sciences and Humanities scholars, draw on Jernudd and Baldauf’s Model of Language Selection in Scientific Communication (Baldauf, 2001: 141). The model posits a series of ‘ecological variables’ operating at three levels: macrolinguistic (the sociolinguistic context, community expectations and institutional constraints), microlinguistic (language management and resources, time and setting, role relationships and domains of discourse) and individual (skills, feelings, ideologies and beliefs). These ecological variables act in concert to lead scholars to choose one research publication language over another. In his adaptation and application of the model, Swales (1990:104–105), recasts ‘sociolinguistic context’ as the main academic languages used in a particular country or region. The status of these academic languages is then enhanced or limited by institutional constraints, including policies in which publication in one language or another is privileged or undervalued. Academics’ connections with local, national and international communities also make a contribution, especially in determining the kinds of resources available to them. These might include collaborative authorship, advice and mentoring, training and access to funding. At the individual level Swales (1990:105) includes variations in the strength of national or regional linguistic loyalties. In addition to these variables, which establish a general orientation towards research publication languages, there are also circumstantial variables that affect individual instances of research publication writing and language choice.

Through our examinations of informants’ responses to an online survey, we show how these ecological variables function in the Spanish context in these two disciplines. We examine both the quantitative data obtained and, where applicable, draw on comments made by individual researchers to particular questionnaire items. In the first part of the paper we provide a description of the survey and the surveyed population. The second section examines the results, looking first at personal, professional and linguistic profiles of the informants from the two disciplines. We then turn to questions on motivations and attitudes, publication experiences and strategies, past training experience and future training needs. In the final section of the paper we summarise the key findings and offer some suggestions as to how first language users of English might lessen the burden on multilingual scholars and support the use of languages other than English as media of research publication.

## 2. The ENEIDA (Spanish team for Intercultural Studies on Academic Discourse) survey

The data we present are drawn from a larger study initiated by the ENEIDA (Spanish team for Intercultural Studies on Academic Discourse) research team in late 2010. Spanish scholars with doctorates who had received most of their secondary and pre-doctoral education in Spain and in Castilian Spanish, and who were working at either a research-only institution (the

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