

# Reseñas/Book Reviews

---

## English as an Additional Language in Research Publication and Communication

**Sally Burgess, Pedro Martín-Martín (eds).**

Bern: Peter Lang, 2008. 259 pages. ISBN 978-3-03911-462-7.

Professional advancement and quality assurance at Spanish universities are increasingly dependent on the number of existing publications. The recognition of what is known as a “sexenio”, six years of valuable research work, requires five publications. Access to a tenured position is now also closely dependent on having publications. Even for doctoral students, obtaining the PhD degree requires not only completing the dissertation, but having published its results in prestigious journals. The well-known expression “publish or perish” used for describing academic competition at American Universities in the seventies has turned into “publish in English if you want to succeed” for the Spanish context. In addition, courses taught in English act as a decoy for new students and a sign of innovation and prestige at university, even though academic staff has not been prepared for this new situation. It is in this context that *English as an Additional Language in Research Publication and Communication* brings together the contributions of several researchers concerned with the problems of publishing or communicating in English.

*English as an Additional Language in Research Publication and Communication* is the result of a conference held at the University of La Laguna in January 2007. This conference, PRISEAL (“Publishing and Presenting Research Internationally: Issues for Speakers of English as an Additional Language”), was attended by experts from several universities all over the world, thus providing a good insight into current research in the field of English for Academic Purposes. Apart from Spanish researchers, there were experts from Germany, Poland, UK and Indonesia confirming that the predominance of English as the language of research is acknowledged worldwide. In fact, the book cleverly uses the acronym EAL (English as an Additional Language). For many, this would be the desired status of the

English language in the research world: a language you can use besides your own to communicate your research to larger audiences. Unfortunately this is not so in some fields of research. In domains such as telecommunications engineering or computer science, English is almost exclusively the language used for communicating research and new knowledge. Efficiency accounts for the fact that Spanish is only used for communicating information orally. Certainly the research fields covered in the volume here reviewed, such as biology, business management, dentistry, linguistics or medicine do not use English in such an exclusive way. However, as BURGESS and MARTÍN-MARTÍN state in the introduction to the book, the fields here covered are now feeling the pressure to publish in English that was previously felt by those researching in what are known as the hard sciences.

The book is organised into three sections according to the nature of the research being dealt with. In the first section, which is the lengthiest one with seven papers, we find those studies that deal with various academic genres from a rhetorical perspective. The second section includes four papers dealing with contrastive studies comparing English with Spanish, Polish and Greek. The final section contains just one paper on the evaluation of courses and materials. This, together with LYDA and WARCHAL's paper, is the only one devoted to spoken academic English. The contributions are preceded by a well-rounded introduction by the editors, SALLY BURGESS and PEDRO MARTÍN-MARTÍN. Apart from the nature of the topics covered, the number of contributions in each section and the organization of the book clearly illustrate the concerns of researchers in the field of English for academic purposes. The predominance of papers devoted to analysing the features of the different varieties of written Academic English reveals that the actual nature of the academic genre is still not well-known, or more precisely, as it is proper of a living entity, its nature is varied and dynamic and, therefore, always presenting new facets and changing according to the needs and uses of the scientific community.

Common to all the contributions in the book is the predominance of evidence-based research. The corpora used have been compiled by the researchers themselves; only two publicly available corpora have been used: the academic subcomponent of the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE). This once again accounts for the fact that researchers in academic language pay attention to very specific issues. The genres dealt with in the papers also confirm the close relationship between research and teaching needs and provide the

authors with the opportunity to apply new approaches to the study of those well-known features of academic prose such as an impersonal style, the presence of nominalisation or the organizational structure of the genre. FORTANET GÓMEZ focuses on the Research Article Referee Report, a relatively understudied genre, but of the utmost importance when success for Spanish doctorates is dependent on their publishing in English. The referee report is analysed focussing on two of the most recent trends in research related to natural language: the language of evaluation and the discovery of patterns. ADNAN concentrates on just one section of the research article: the introduction, but he stresses the idea that its features are closely related to culture and content changing over time as if it were a living entity. LAFUENTE MILLÁN focuses on the devices that provide epistemic meaning studying them across four different disciplines. LYDA and WARCHAL also explore modality. They apply Mann and Thompson's Rhetorical Structure Theory to the spoken language and use the MICASE corpus to analyse how the concessive relation is realised. LORÉS SANZ deals with the explicit presence of the writer in the text focusing on the relationship between the abstract and the research article as a whole. Interestingly, she explicitly mentions the problem of using the exclusive "we" by a single author, a common procedure when writing in Spanish, but which is perceived differently by English-speaking readers. KERZ provides a new perspective on nominalizations, approaching this lexico-grammatical problem from a cognitive and pragmatic angle which views the preference for nominalization as a consequence of the writer's impersonalization and the informativeness of the text. LEÓN and DIVASSON analyse nominal phrases taking into account the different sections of the research article, thus establishing a connection between the features of the noun phrase and the informative purpose of each section. BIELSKI and BIELSKA deal with the abstract within a specific subdomain of medical English, gastroenterology, and their aim is to discover if the translations into English of Polish authors differ from the abstracts written by native speakers of English. VLADIMIROU also compares texts written by native speakers and non-native speakers, in this case Greek writers, and her aim is to analyse the values of the personal pronoun. The presence of the reader in the text is also the topic of the next paper. MUR DUEÑAS researches into the ways authors interact with readers in academic texts. Also from a contrastive point of view, she studies business management research articles and concludes that the use of engagement markers is mediated both by disciplinary and cultural conventions. PABÓN BERBESÍ and DOMÍNGUEZ carry out a quantitative analysis of noun phrases

in English and Spanish. They work on a corpus of dentistry texts, but domain knowledge seems not to be relevant for them and their interest is mainly in comparing informative continuity and definiteness. MORELL MOLL focuses on oral presentations. The content of this last paper is very revealing of the present needs of academic speakers, the need to be good communicators both in speech and writing. This paper also discloses the real nature of most language teaching situations in postgraduate education; present and future users of English as an Additional Language (EAL) in academic learning situations are so time-compressed that practitioners are usually compelled to design and evaluate their own courses.

This book will interest those working in the field of academic English and especially researchers who are looking for an overview of the research being undertaken in universities. Notwithstanding the absence of papers on the hard sciences, engineering or computing, the book provides a good view of the issues researchers in the field of academic English are concerned with.

[Review received January 2010]

Reviewed by **Inmaculada Álvarez de Mon Rego**  
Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (Spain)  
ialvarez@euitt.upm.es