

Editorial

This spring issue contains more articles than ever despite having been assembled under most difficult circumstances, the COVID-19 pandemic. It also starts a new period with the adoption of English as the only language for publication.

The contributions presented here belong to four major research strands: Academic Writing, Corpus Linguistics, legal discourse, and the lingua franca for specific purposes. Our guest article, by KEN HYLAND and FENG (KEVIN) JIANG, attests to diachronic changes in academic prose over the past fifty years and questions some of the prescriptions and recommendations from style manuals, namely those referring to demonstrative ‘this’, existential ‘there’ and first-person pronouns. Their multidisciplinary corpus-driven analysis shows that the advice found in style manuals and writing guides does not reflect current academic writing practices and that corpus evidence should inform the work of language and communication instructors.

In this regard, articles 5-11, four of which support their claims with corpus data, seem to corroborate the need for specificity in the teaching and appraisal of Academic Writing, that is, to promote awareness of and adjustments to different disciplines, genres, and even national cultures. In her contrastive study on the presence of informal features in research articles written by L1 English and L1 Chinese scholars across four disciplines, GAO XIA (article 5) reports notable differences between cultures and fields: Chinese researchers tend to write more formally than their English colleagues and to use fewer first-person pronouns and pronominal anaphora, but more imperatives and sentence-initial adverbials. As for disciplinary variation, the highest use of informality features is detected in Physics, and the lowest in Applied Linguistics.

Advancing into the cultural variable through qualitative methods, the next two articles may suggest valuable pedagogical implications. YONGYAN LI and XIAOHAO MA (article 6) delve into the current contextualised practices of emerging EAP teachers to help graduate students develop the capabilities necessary to engage in international academic communication. The responses of twenty participants from eighteen Chinese universities, located in eleven cities all over the country, reveal the important role played by

factors as diverse as institutional leadership, goal orientation according to the educational level (master's versus doctorate, the latter more oriented towards publication), or the use of corpora and EAP textbooks. This focus on variability in Academic Writing is narrowed down in WEI WANG's exploration (Article 7) into what really constitutes 'disciplinary specificity' and what the relationship between writing-for-the-disciplines and general academic writing is. She adopts a learner-centred perspective and an in-depth qualitative approach that enable her to document three learning trajectories of a business-specific genre, the case analysis, in an academic English for business course at a Chinese university, and to examine how general academic writing interferes with such learning.

Within this disciplinary approach and also carrying considerable pedagogical potential, the following two studies trace authorial imprint in research articles from four disciplines. JIHUA DONG and LOUISA BUCKINGHAM (article 8) apply the Systemic Functional Linguistics framework and a corpus-driven approach in order to investigate the stance phrases preferred by agricultural science and economics scholars to define their identity and exercise their expert authority in academic discourse. In addition to refining and enriching existing stance taxonomies, the authors find a more frequent use of cognitive, attitude and hedging phrases among agricultural scholars, whereas evidentiality phrases concentrate significantly in the economics corpus. Similarly, but under a corpus-based perspective, YIN LING CHEUNG and LOUWENA LAU (article 9) look into the use of first-person pronouns as voice markers and argument enhancers by English literature and computer science scholars. Their results do not bear out the initial hypothesis that, in the absence of objective fact, literature writers build stronger authorial roles by means of first-person pronouns, so as to gain credibility and persuasiveness. Rather, the findings appear to dissolve the traditional divide between hard and soft sciences in this respect.

With a yet more specialised gaze on the research article genre, THI NGOC PHUONG LE AND MINH MAN PHAM (article 10) tackle prototypicality and intra-disciplinary variation of organisational patterns in Mechanical Engineering, a field so far under-researched. They scrutinise the Results-Discussion section in a small-sized corpus of articles that employ different research methods (experimental, theoretical and mixed) and conclude that rhetorical complexity is affected by those three different disciplinary contexts. A last research genre, the academic blog, is investigated by HANG (JOANNA) ZOU and KEN HYLAND, who collect academics' perceptions of the

challenge posed by the genre to engage with readers (in other words, to raise their interest and persuade them) and find out about common rhetorical practices. Drawing on more than twenty interviews with scholars from a range of disciplines and with varying degrees of familiarity and experience with blogs, the authors compare their informants' impressions and blog-writing routines with those held and conducted when writing research articles. The conclusion is that the rhetorical practices in blogs exhibit a mixture of academic and disciplinary conventions.

A reflection on the comparability of corpora, supported with empirical data and written by BELÉN LÓPEZ ARROYO (article 2), is followed by a pair of articles offering corpus-based and corpus-driven characterisations of outreach and professional discourses (articles 4 and 5, respectively). While literature on the topic establishes similarity as the main requisite for corpus comparability, this being broken down into the criteria of proportion, genre, domain and time, previous studies by LÓPEZ ARROYO demonstrate that these do not suffice in some fields. In her view, the purpose of use, together with aspects such as content, format and genre style, should be taken into account, as evinced by her corpus of 150 expert tasting notes from Spain and the USA in English and Spanish and published in the same decades.

Following this reflection, the corpus-based characterisation of medical cancer terms provided by ANTONIO JESÚS LÁINEZ RAMOS-BOSSINI and MARIBEL TERCEDOR SÁNCHEZ (article 3) discloses a generalised use of specialised medical terms by patients sharing their concerns in online cancer forums. The authors' scrutiny of a 60-million-word corpus with a three-step method points to the fields of Anatomy, Treatment, Hospital and Symptoms as the chief vocabulary sources and to a remarkable incidence of dictionary-defined medical terms. Next, ROSANA DOLÓN HERRERO (article 4) offers insights as to how high-end hotel websites craft a sense of belonging and entitlement for their 4/5-star guests; that is to say, they create an in-group similarity allowing them to embrace cultural otherness, which epitomizes the tourist experience. With a corpus-driven approach and a blended framework merging Critical Discourse Analysis (Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* and Fairclough's sociocultural approach) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday's account of the transitivity system), the author addresses the words 'different' and 'distinct' as markers of otherness and privilege.

Two articles represent legal discourse in this issue. The first, by JASMINA ĐORĐEVIĆ (article 12), describes a classroom experiment for determining the

impact of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) on the understanding of modal verbs in Legal English and for assessing the level of student motivation in an ESP course. Through a mixed method joining quantitative and qualitative error analysis, questionnaires and group discussion, the author confirms the hypothesis that CALL improves modal verb understanding and motivation when chosen over conventional face-to-face classroom learning environments. The second paper dealing with legal discourse, by KRISDA CHAEMSAITHONG and YOONJEONG KIM (article 13), integrates van Leeuwen's social actor representation method into Halliday's transitivity analysis to peruse the polarised discursive practices of the prosecution and the defense in capital trials. It argues that aggravating and mitigating factors are morally and normatively constructed in real time by the interactants, whose reference and transitivity choices may incline verdicts towards the death penalty.

The status of two vehicular languages for specific purposes, English and Arabic, is the object of research of the last pair of contributions. YAO YAO and BERTHA DU-BABCOCK (article 14) highlight the increasingly important role of English in the workplace across Mainland China, especially in multinational companies. Using online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with Chinese business professionals from state-owned, privately-owned and multinational companies, they discovered that, although communication in English has become a convention in the latter, the extent of its use depends upon various contextual factors, among which are the type of duty and the level of linguistic proficiency. Lack of cultural sensitivity, moreover, may disrupt communication and lower promotion chances inside the company. Analogously, the recent expansion of Arabic for Specific Purposes (ASP) drove MARCO GOLFETTO (article 15) to probe into the motivations, professional orientations, needs and language learning histories of more than 200 Arabic majors enrolled in BA and MA degree courses in Language and Cultural Mediation in Italy. Quantitatively and qualitatively discussed, the findings of his survey show that students' interests are primarily instrumental and target very specific areas, such as politics, diplomacy, administration, and the media. The study, in sum, paves the way for future needs analyses of ASP teaching and learning.

The book reviews that complete the issue evaluate the volumes *Comunicar en la Universidad y en la Vida Profesional* (by Ricardo-María Jiménez-Yáñez, 2020), and *Temas Actuales de Terminología y Estudios sobre el Léxico* (co-edited by Miguel Ángel Candel-Mora and Chelo Vargas-Sierra, 2017). Although both books

are written in Spanish, they can reach a wide specialist audience and their reviews in English clearly and accurately signal their strengths and weaker points. From Jiménez-Yáñez's work, INÉS JORDÁN MARQUÉS underlines its progressively built organisation and its useful combination of guidelines, activities and theoretical input. Candel and Vargas' work stands out, in MIGUEL AYERBE LINARES' judgement, for its ample diversity of disciplinary languages, and for its detailed description of methodologies and challenges in specialised translation.

As ever, I will end this editorial by thanking all the external reviewers who have so generously lent us their time and expertise. The scholars mentioned below in alphabetical order collaborated with the journal from July to December, 2019:

Francisco J. Alonso Almeida (Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain)
 Isabel Balteiro Fernández (Universidad de Alicante, Spain)
 Marina Bondi (Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia, Italy)
 Carla Botella Tejera (Universidad de Alicante, Spain)
 Jiemin Bu (Foreign Language School, Zhejiang Guangsha College of Applied Construction, China)
 Louisa Buckingham (The University of Auckland, New Zealand)
 Carole Chaski (The Institute for Linguistic Evidence, Delaware, USA)
 Viviana Cortés (Georgia State University, USA)
 María Belén Díez Bedmar (Universidad de Jaén, Spain)
 Jihua Dong (The University of Auckland, New Zealand)
 Tatjana Đurović (University of Belgrade, Serbia)
 Inmaculada Fortanet Gómez (Universitat Jaume I, Spain)
 Rosa Giménez Moreno (Universitat de València, Spain)
 Sarali Gintsburg (Universidad de Navarra, Spain)
 Victoria Guillén Nieto (Universidad de Alicante, Spain)
 Michael Hammond (University of Warwick, UK)
 Janet Ho (Lingnan University, Hong Kong, China)
 Francisco Miguel Ivorra Pérez (Universitat de València, Spain)
 Mirella Marotta Peramos (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain)
 Lisa McGrath (Sheffield Hallam University, UK)
 Eva María Mestre i Mestre (Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain)
 Nicolás Montalbán Martínez (Universidad de Murcia, Spain)
 Adil Moustau Sghir (Universidad de Navarra, Spain)
 Noelia Navarro-Gil (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain)

Maria-Ionela Neagu (University of Ploiesti, Romania)
Concepción Orna Montesinos (Universidad de Zaragoza, Spain)
Carmen Pérez-Llantada Auría (Universidad de Zaragoza, Spain)
Xuyan Qiu (The Open University of Hong Kong, China)
Mercedes Querol Julián (Universidad Internacional de La Rioja, Spain)
Ana María Roldán Riejos (Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Spain)
Michele Sala (Università degli Studi di Bergamo, Italy)
Julián Sancha Vázquez (Universidad de Cádiz, Spain)
Francisca Suau-Jiménez (Universitat de València, Spain)
Judith Turnbull (Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia, Italy)
Julia Valeiras-Jurado (Universiteit Gent, Belgium)
Rosana Villares Maldonado (Universidad de Zaragoza, Spain)

On behalf of *Ibérica's* staff, I also want to welcome two new members of the Editorial Board: ELISABET ARNÓ I MACIÀ (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya), formerly President of AELFE, and GUZMÁN MANCHO BARÉS (Universitat de Lleida), whose experience as researchers will be a priceless asset to the journal. We all hope that this issue will enrich the panorama of Languages for Specific Purposes by awakening new academic interests and stimulating interconnections between our varied methodological approaches and areas of research. It is also our wish that the knowledge we disseminate should foster reflection on communication strategies and contribute to their improvement, especially during the present healthcare and social crisis and its aftermath.

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