Cross-Linguistic and Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Academic Discourse

EDITED BY

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Introduction

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1. Introductory remarks

The goal of this volume is to examine academic discourse from a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspective. This book is the second volume in our series of publications on Academic Discourse (cf. Suomela-Salmi & Dervin 2007) and consists, on the one hand, of selected papers from the conference which was organized at the Department of French Studies at the University of Turku (Finland) and whose focus was on cross-linguistic and cross-cultural aspects of Academic Discourse (2005), on the other hand, the volume contains invited papers from researchers in the field of Academic Discourse. The adjective *Cross-cultural* in the title of the book is not just limited to national contexts but includes also a cross-disciplinary perspective. In the following pages this is perhaps most clearly manifested by the difference between what could be called the established "Anglophone" research methodology in Academic Discourse (AD hereafter) and the more marginal, qualitative or theoretical approaches represented for example by Bulgarian or French contributions to this volume.

Whereas the latest publications on AD have concentrated either on specific aspects of academic discourse such as evaluation (Del Lungo Camiciotti & Tognini Bonelli 2004), cultural identities as displayed by the "voices" of academic authors (Fløttum, Dahl & Kinn 2006), metatextual features (cf. e.g. Hyland 1998, 2000), AD in general (cf. e.g. Fløttum & Rastier 2003; Hyland & Bondi 2006), or university genres in a wider sense (cf. Biber 2006), we believe that our book adds to these publications by taking under-explored cross-linguistic and cross-cultural lenses.

This book differs from the others in several respects. Firstly, one of the unique aspects of the book is the inclusion of a variety of foreign languages (8 in total: English (as a lingua franca), Spanish, French, Swedish, Russian, German, Italian, and Norwegian). Secondly, while most previous publications on AD have largely concentrated on written corpora, the studies presented in the book also introduce oral academic discourse. What is more, in several of the articles dealing with oral

AD, comparisons and parallels are also established with written AD. The research methodologies used in the studies are varied (corpus linguistics, polyphony, rhetorics, argumentation, semantics, discourse analysis, to name but a few) and they offer an overview of the diversity and richness of approaches to AD. Some contributions adopt a bottom-up approach and start from a linguistic device and study its discourse functions, while others adopt a top-down approach exploring discourse strategies and their realizations in different contexts / cultures. Finally, twelve scientific fields are under scrutiny in the articles (history, education, philosophy, linguistics, sociology, etc.).

All in all, it is hoped that the book appeals to young researchers (e.g. in search of an introduction to research methodologies on AD) but also to confirmed scholars interested in the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural aspects of AD presented in the book. The book will also be of interest to language teachers or teachers who are involved with e.g. international students and academic mobility.

2.   What is academic discourse?

Like most scholars in our "contemporary accelerated globalization" (Pieterse 2004), we have had to produce academic discourse, nationally but also inter-nationally, in our own first language(s), in foreign languages or in lingua francas. Generating AD has meant writing articles, books, abstracts, etc. but also discussing orally, presenting our research, etc. We have also had to adapt our AD to a variety of norms, to peer reviewing and proofreading, and negotiate it with colleagues in the case of co-writing, co-editing etc. We have also had to "dialogue" with various voices (other researchers, thinkers, research participants, conference attendees...) when building up argumentation, theorizing, presenting results...

AD is the main tool of our trade, our everyday companion (and sometimes enemy), which is manifold, complex, changing... and sometimes a "stranger" to us. Globalization – which, unlike what the doxa tends to think, is not a new phenomenon – has a lot to do with being able to have access to international/global AD. What is new in this globalization are the speeds at which it is taking place, the bulkier amount of materials (products) moved, and the infinite possibilities of encounters with very different people that it allows (Clark 1997). These have a massive impact on our profession.

Previous globalizations (ancient population movements across and between continents, the Middle-Ages, the Enlightenment...) also involved the sharing of ideas, arguments, knowledge... and that also through the use of foreign languages and lingua francas and *cross-culturally*. It would therefore be fallacious to assert that it is only our contemporary globalised world that has made AD global. Yet, what

seems to be taking place today is an unprecedented *Global mélange* (Pieterse 2004) in the ways AD is conceived of, which often goes beyond national boundaries.

After the Second World War – a period that was marked by an attempt at world peace through facilitating cross-cultural and intercultural communication – there has been a rapidly growing interest in international AD in research worlds but also in teaching. Increased and accelerated academic mobility as well as the spread of English as a world language has/had a large role to play in this conscious-ness-building process. One of the aims seems to have been to grasp other/different ways of writing, speaking, listening and reading in foreign languages and, as a consequence, to be able to apply the gained knowledge to be a good writer, a pro-ficient speaker, listener, etc. within different academic discourse communities. Another ambitious objective in research on international AD is to facilitate the dissemination of science and thus reach, at least partly, the ultimate goal of sci-ence: to explain the world. We will discuss both of these orientations in what fol-lows relating the discussion to various time-bounded definitions of the concept of AD. We will also briefly discuss the frontiers between AD and popularised and professional discourses – two concepts which are often related to AD.

2.1   Different perspectives on academic discourse

Even if AD is what we are using daily and has been around for centuries, the defi-nition of AD remains problematic. It is sometimes referred to as *scientific discourse* and *the language of science*, for example in France in the 70's and 80's (cf. the spe-cial issue of *Langages* 42 June 1976 dealing with argumentation in scientific dis-course; Loffler-Laurian 1983) and in the Anglo-Saxon world in the 80's (cf. e.g. Shinn & Whitley 1985; Myers 1991). Since the term scientific discourse is too lim-itative as it refers to the so-called hard sciences (medicine included), the term *aca-demic discourse* seems to have replaced it in English. This term allows us to tackle different disciplines including the so-called soft sciences which have been looked at from a variety of perspectives (cf. supra). At the heart of the studies on AD lies its prototypical instance, the research article or parts of it such as abstracts or in-troductions (cf. e.g. in this volume Dahl, Lores-Sanchez, Bondi).

The term AD is, however, challenging. For example in French *discours académique* is interpreted as referring mostly to the highly valued institutions of *Académie Française* and *Collège de France*, a very elitist and austere conception of *academia.* As an alternative, the concept of university discourse *(discourse univer-sitaire)* has been proposed (cf. Biber 2006). At the same time the academic world has changed through the *Global/Glocal Mélange* mentioned earlier: university dis-course now comes to include pedagogical or educational genres, so-called

institutional genres (Fortanet 2005) such as academic year opening lectures by the Rector of the university, commencement addresses, prize acceptation speeches etc. but also genres borrowed from other social contexts have been introduced in university discourses, such as discourses dealing with the Bologna process or the European Research Area (ERA) thus hybridizing or mixing academic genres.

Since the research on AD is firmly rooted in Applied Linguistics and Cross-Cultural Rhetoric (cf. e.g. Kaplan 1966; Mauranen 1993; Connor 1996) nowadays rather called intercultural rhetoric (Ventola & Mauranen 1996; Connor et al. 2008) the inclusion of pedagogical genres is nothing new. In fact, looking back at the early publications on AD, it is fairly easy to notice that considerable emphasis has been laid on how to teach non-native students to write or to speak like native speakers in academic contexts (cf. e.g. Dudley-Evans & Johns 1981; Weir 1982; McKenna 1987). In this conception of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural AD, the discourse of non-natives used to be considered as impoverished discourse (Davies 2003). Now of course with the increase of studies on English as a *lingua franca* (cf. e.g. Mauranen in this volume; Knapp & Meierkord 2002; Jenkins 2007), the perspective has radically changed – for English at least.

Beside the pedagogical aims of teaching non-native speakers to communicate effectively and "*comme il faut*" in academic and semi-academic (classrooms, seminars, student presentations) contexts, a different line of reasoning has animated research on AD, that is the ways of disseminating and transferring knowledge in different disciplines. Whereas pedagogically oriented work on AD has been much linguistically and rhetorically oriented, the communicatively and sociologically oriented research has moved away from an interest in just words and focused on AD as a communicative act that is contextually anchored in a societal sphere. The last twenty years or so have seen a proliferation of studies on disciplinary discourse, using a range of more or less linguistic tools such as genre analysis, discourse analysis in its many and varied forms, socio-cultural theory, social semiotics and ethnography of communication, among others. Such studies have engaged in the discursive construction of knowledge in a range of disciplines, such as history, literary studies, economics, linguistics, medicine and education to name but a few. Particularly genre studies have been extremely abundant and influential within this line of thought following in the footsteps of the work of Swales (1990, 2004) – despite the difficulties of defining genre in an unequivocal way. The same applies of course to the notion of discipline, since disciplines are not homogeneous entities but constituted of sub-categories which sometimes differ considerably.

A third influential orientation within AD has been popularized "scientific" discourse. It has interested linguists and sociologists in the Anglophone world ever since the mid-eighties (cf. e.g. Shinn & Whitley 1985; Hilgartner 1990; Myers 1991 and more recently Calsamiglia 2003; Myers 2003; Calsamiglia & van Dijk

2004). Popularization has also been extensively studied in France especially since the early 80's (cf. the special issue of *Langue française* no 53 edited by Mortureux in 1982; Mortureux 1983; Jacobi 1984, 1987, 1999; Jeanneret 1994; Lauffler-Lorient 1983 and 1984) and more recently (especially Moirand 1997, 1999, 2003, 2007; but also Beacco 1999; Beacco et al. 2002; Reboul-Touré 2004). According to Myers (2003: 265), linguists started to study scientific popularization for multiple reasons: improving the teaching of Languages for Academic/Special Purposes, relating this specific type of scientific discourse to other discourses, examining media discourses and science etc. Popularization has sometimes been considered a degraded form of AD where information becomes "simplified, distorted, hyped up, and dumped down" (Myers 2003: 266) and hence it is not always considered as a (proper) genre of AD. But as Myers argues, scientific discourse involves a range of genres and practices and popularization is an important part of this range (Myers 2003: 270).

If AD is defined as discourse used for a specific purpose, that of transferring knowledge, be it of linguistic, pedagogic or disciplinary nature it can also be equated with professional discourse, as does Gunnarsson (2009) who defines professional discourse (in which she includes AD) as: "[...] professional discourse includes written texts produced by professionals and intended for other professionals with the same or different expertise, for semi-professionals, i.e. learners, or for non-professionals, i.e. lay people. It also means talk involving at least one professional" (ibid: 5). In fact this definition encompasses all the aspects discussed so far.

One aspect we have only treated in passing is the role of research on oral AD. It has become a commonplace to argue that AD has mainly focused on written text. If we look at research on AD in quantitative terms, this is of course true. Nevertheless, if we go back some twenty years or so, it is easy to notice that several articles dealing with spoken academic discourse – especially its pedagogical aspects – have been published. Most of the studies in the 1980's and 1990's concentrated on lectures (cf. e.g. Chaudron & Richards 1986; DeCarrigo & Nattinger 1988; Dudley-Evans 1994; Young 1994). The purpose of these studies was to help non-native speakers to understand academic speech. However, occasional papers on seminar discussions and seminar skills as well as those discussing the pedagogy of spoken AD (in English) existed already in the 1980's and early 1990's (cf. e.g. James 1983, 1984; Lynes & Woods 1984; Furneaux et al. 1991; Lynch & Anderson 1992). However, more recently, roughly within the last ten years, the research on spoken oral discourse in university contexts has been extended to the analysis of study groups, tutorials, small group discussions and university classroom discourse (cf. e.g. Guthrie 1997; Tonus 1999; Stokoe 2000; Farr 2002; Csomay 2006; Schleef in this volume). A very extensively studied field of oral AD today is the language of conferencing (cf. Ventola 1998, 1999; Vassileva 2002 in Ventola et

al. 2002 and in this volume). Even multimodal aspects of conference presenting have been occasionally taken into account.

2.2   Defining academic discourse

After this somewhat diachronic overview of AD, we shall now try to define AD the way it is understood in this book. But before that, one last issue concerning AD and its evolution must be addressed. Objectivity was (for a significant time) considered one of the key features of academic discourse. Yet, the idea has been rejected by newly adopted approaches to AD (for example critical discourse analysis in Martin & Wodak 2003). Such a view on AD resulted in the idea that there is uniformity of academic styles (writing and speaking) but this was an illusion (cf. Duzak 1997), the *subject* is present in academic discourse with all his subjectivity, plurality and different voices (cf. e.g. the results of the KIAP project; Suomela-Salmi & Dervin in this volume). This subjectivisation needs to be taken into account when dealing with AD.

In this book, AD is understood as acts of communication and/or interaction, written or spoken, mediated or not, which take place within the Academia and around it (as is the case of popularization). AD does not exist without the presence of an *I* (writer, speaker, discussant...) and an Other (his/her imagined, real or ideal interlocutor, i.e. a community). AD is thus often based on the co-construction of theory, argumentation, interpretation, synthesis, but also dissemination and popularization. Its audience can be composed of the following groups: Specialists <> specialists; Specialists <> novices, young researchers; Specialists > general public; Specialists > the media. As can be seen in this definition, our understanding of the notion of AD is much broader than in many other volumes dealing with AD. On the other hand, it overlaps to a great extent with that proposed by Gunnarsson (2009) for professional discourse.

Based on this, there are many different types of research carried out in the field which could perhaps be grouped in the following way – representing to some extent preferential tendencies in AD:

1. Research which focuses on linguistic and/ or pragmatic features of texts based on large digitalized corpora. As examples one can mention: the KIAP project in Norway which endeavours to explore the identities of authors' in terms of cultural cultural differences / similarities (cf. Fløttum in this volume); Anna Mauranen's studies based on both the MICASE corpus on American spoken academic discourse and the ELFA corpus collected by Mauranen et al. in Finland (cf. this volume) or Hyland's vast corpus from a number of disciplines (including both soft and hard sciences) examining the role of metatextual features as interactive devices available to the author of a scientific article. The

class-room sub-corpus of TOEFL 2000 academic corpus is used by various scholars for various types of research, for example to study the variation across class session (Csomay 2002, 2006). Finally, the *Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English* (Project director: Barbara Seidlhofer), a project on English as a Lingua Franca, contains different speech event types related to AD such as panel, question-answer session, seminar discussion, working group discussion, workshop discussion... Since the corpora are quantitatively important, it is possible to provide statistically reliable important results and find similarities and differences in the variables under scrutiny.

2. Studies concentrating on the discursive construction of knowledge in different disciplines and across (sub-)disciplines (cf. e.g. Bondi 1998, in this volume). Such studies are often both quantitative and qualitative in nature and concentrate for example on genre issues (between genres but also across different genres or modes of presentation, cf. e.g. Bondi 2005; Mauranen in this volume and the dichotomy of written-oral modes of presentation). Other questions include the construction of researchers' social identities in/through their writing and affiliation within scientific groups. Such studies also often shift beyond linguistic forms towards the conceptual essence of the discipline. The aims of such studies are often to find generic human mechanisms and to investigate the dichotomy of homogeneity versus heterogeneity.

3. Purely theoretical research is scarce in the field of AD. But there are exceptions of course, for example the KIAP project since it uses also the Scandinavian theory of polyphony (*ScaPoLine*), one of its developers being Kjersti Fløttum. Galatanu's article in this volume is also an exception studying an institutional genre of AD within a theoretical framework called the theory of argumentative possiblities (*SAP*). The same applies for qualitative studies examining for example argumentative and rhetorical strategies from cross-disciplinary or cross-cultural perspectives (cf. Vassileva, Suomela-Salmi and Dervin, and partly Mauranen in this volume). Even if not offering statistically relevant data, such fine-graded analyses can offer valid quantitative insight to the phenomena examined. The drawback of such studies is that generalizations are difficult to make since such studies are not necessarily replicable as such.

3.   Why cross-cultural academic discourse?

The humanities and social sciences (and the so-called hard sciences alike) are increasingly putting into question the scientific values of notions such as *identity* and *culture* (Bensa 2008). Though the former is indirectly dealt with in this book, it is essential that we spend some time carefully delineating the notion of *culture*

– as it is central in *cross-culturality* – and then exploring the meaning of *cross* in the adjective *cross-cultural*.

Culture is a very problematic concept, which is very rarely defined by those who use it. Emanating from anthropology, its canonical – but increasingly rejected – definition provided by Tylor (1871) positions *knowledge, belief, art, morals law, customs* and *"general habits"* as components of a culture, which, if described and learnt can help members of other cultures to learn how to behave *with* and/or *like* the Other. Confirming some criticisms of this definition, Martine Abdallah-Pretceille (1996: 16) suggests that "[...] culture only exists when it is expressed and enunciated in social and discursive behaviours". She also proposes that culture is an ever-changing process and that the way a culture is described and talked about corresponds more to the construction of the observer than an objective description of some cultural reality (ibid.: 18). This has transformed the usually "cozy blanket" of culture (Eriksen 2001) into a rather destabilizing and complex concept to work with.

Two major conceptions of culture seem to be available in the field of AD. The first one seems to consider culture as a solid entity, which is used to explain *everything* – and which should be learnt to write, speak, communicate like the Other (i.e. an ideal representative of the target language/culture). Usually based on national cultures (or native languages), this conception is problematic as it leaves space neither for the individual (and the Subject, cf. supra) nor for the vital ingredient for discourse and interaction, the Other (Holliday et al. 2004). Besides, this culturalist/differentialist approach tends to concentrate solely on differences, limits discourse characteristics to national boundaries (as in *she's Finnish so she writes her essays/articles/abstracts in a Finnish way*) and neglects glocalism or the fact that every individual is influenced by various discourses, attitudes and beliefs that originate well beyond national/cultural boundaries. Contextual and (inter-)individual aspects are also often ignored by this approach.

The second approach, which is close to Martine Abdallah-Pretceille's ideas supra, regards culture as a changing phenomenon, which is often restricted by/composed of regularities, learnt and applied by the individual, especially in institutional contexts (rites, traditions, written norms, laws etc.). This doesn't mean that people are "cultural robots" but that in some contexts, they have to abide by the rules. These contexts do not have to be intercultural, i.e. encounters between members of different national cultures, but they can be located in any context of interaction (intra-culturally) (Holliday 1999). As AD takes place within the academia which sets up rules and norms, one of its characteristics should be stability. Yet, rules are not always as stable and predictable as one would expect, especially in a scientific world of interconnections and hypermobility of ideas, concepts, people, disciplines. Let us consider the case of a scholar who was born in Germany, who

studied in England and works in Japan, are we able to say what is German, English or Japanese about his/her way of lecturing, writing, researching? Or is it a *mélange*, which should also take into account further influences? Besides, is it possible to tell if (and which of) the languages that this person speaks influence his/her AD? The question of boundaries is thus a crucial one when dealing with cross-cultural AD. When analyzing data, one should therefore pay extreme attention to the fuzzy boundaries that surround an individual's discourse, be it in terms of nationality, language, (sub-) disciplines, etc. and refrain from "nationalizing" his/her productions, behaviours, attitudes...

So what do we mean by *cross-cultural* in this book? The main aim of the book is to compare situations of academic encounters and the resulting discourse – thus to cross boundaries. Even if some of the contributions approach their corpora either by comparing representatives of different (national) cultures or by trying to specify a cultural group's characteristics, they demonstrate some degree of diversity within these groups. In other articles, *cross-cultural* extends the boundaries of AD and takes into account variations among (sub-)disciplines, genres, rhetorical preferences, types of texts and audiences. Finally, our use of the term *cross-cultural* also suggests that any type of academic discourse is cross-cultural as scholars always have to cross more or less different boundaries in their work, and play the "chameleon" to adapt to rules, contexts, interlocutors, types of publications, etc.

4.   Contributions to the book

The book is divided into four sections, even if this division is to some extent arbitrary. This is due to the fact that several of the articles deal for example with argumentation and rhetorics, referencing either as a discipline-bound convention or in order to introduce different voices to support academic argumentation and the emergence of different voices in scientific argumentation and stance-taking – all of these aspects constituting crucial components of Academic Discourse. Our choice has been mainly motivated by the theoretical orientations underlying the contributions in this book.

The first section, which is devoted to **discursive characteristics of AD**, focuses on the use of certainty and commitment, markers of evidentiality, structural markers and question tags. In the first chapter, **Christina Janik** contrasts the use of evidential markers in Russian and German. Her corpus is taken from the field of history. Her results show that these markers are less present in Russian articles than in German ones. This leads the author to, on the one hand, further comparisons with previous studies on other languages, and on the other hand, to a stimulating discussion on epistemological questions related to the specific field of his-

tory. In "Certainty and commitment in the construction of academic knowledge on the humanities", **Rebecca Beke** and **Adriana Bolívar** examine modality and modal commitment in two different genres of academic discourse; research articles and academic essays in the fields of education, linguistics, philosophy and psychology. The contrastive methodology used demonstrates that these phenomena are found across disciplines but that there are some variations in e.g. genres, subject matter of the texts and references to knowledge. Variation in the use of citation is the focus of the next article, written by **Pilar Mur Dueñas.** Starting from the hypothesis that the insertion of citation in research articles is language-, context- and discipline-dependent, the author contrasts articles written in English and Spanish and confirms that differences do occur and that these elements should be taken more into consideration. Yet, Mur Dueñas also affirms from her results that rhetorical similarities appear to be more discipline-driven. The following chapter is based on a comparison of the use of question tags and discourse markers in German and English academic speeches. Using various methods of analysis, **Erik Schleef** looks at lectures and interactive classroom sessions that he has recorded in both languages in interactional classes within the humanities and the natural sciences. Like the previous authors, Schleef found both similarities and differences in the use of these devices, which depend on the conversational mode, conversational roles and academic discipline. Gender differences do not affect the use of the variables in Schleef's study.

The second section tackles the issue of **voices in AD** and presents papers on polyphony, authors' identities and the presence of authors outside the text (in e.g. endnotes and footnotes).

Marina Bondi opens up the section with a comparison between, on the one hand, openings in historical articles in English and Italian and on the other, openings in economics research articles. Her focus is on authors' multiple identities and the interaction between their own voices and the inclusion of active voices (historical characters, amongst others) in their writing. Her results confirm that disciplinary variation is very important (history, economy) but she also draws attention to the differences in local academic cultures and rhetorical traditions as exemplified by the openings of historical articles written in English and Italian. In her contribution, "Academic voices in the research article", **Kjersti Fløttum** discusses also the different voices in research articles in light of the results from the KIAP project (Cultural identity in academic prose, University of Bergen, Norway). The main issue is similar to that introduced by Bondi: authors' presence and stance in research articles. The dimensions of SELF and OTHER are examined through the different roles adopted by the researcher, the use of citations and the use of the connective *but* and negation constructions examined in the light of the Scandinavian theory of polyphony, *ScaPoLine* Also deriving her corpus from the KIAP