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The design and implementation of an English for Research Publication Purposes course: A corpus-based genre-analytic pedagogical intervention

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ABSTRACT

The pressure on scholars who use English as an Additional Language (EAL) to publish their research in English-medium journals has recently been extended to those postgraduate students who seek to complete their PhD programmes. However, in higher education institutions worldwide, few training courses on English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) are being offered in order to provide students with effective rhetorical strategies which could facilitate the integration in their disciplinary communities. In this paper we report on the design and implementation of an ERPP training course for doctoral students in the fields of Arts and Humanities, which is based on the prior compilation of a corpus of research articles selected by the participants, a genre-analysis of the texts and a critical-pragmatic approach to the teaching of the socio-cultural features that underpin the whole process of publishing one's research. On the basis of the analysis of the responses to a post-course evaluation questionnaire we also aim to examine the participants' perceptions of the pedagogical intervention. The results indicate that, through their active participation in the course, the students acknowledge having gained a better understanding of the socio-pragmatic context involved in the publishing process, including awareness of the predominant rhetorical structures of research articles and abstracts, the prevalent academic practices in both national and international settings, and of potential variation in communicative strategies in their specific disciplinary areas.

Keywords: ERPP training course, genre analysis, corpus-driven pedagogy, critical-pragmatic approach

RESUMEN

La presión sobre los académicos que usan el inglés como segunda lengua para que publiquen sus investigaciones en revistas en inglés se ha extendido recientemente a los estudiantes de posgrado inscritos en programas de doctorado. Sin embargo, en las instituciones de educación superior de todo el mundo, se ofrecen pocos cursos de formación en *English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP)* con el objetivo de proporcionar a los estudiantes estrategias retóricas efectivas que podrían facilitarles la integración en sus comunidades disciplinarias. En este artículo presentamos el diseño e implementación de un curso de formación en *ERPP*, dirigido a estudiantes de doctorado en Artes y Humanidades, que se basa en la recopilación previa de un corpus de artículos de investigación seleccionados por los mismos participantes, un análisis de género de los textos y un enfoque crítico-pragmático para la enseñanza de las características socioculturales que sustentan todo el proceso de publicación de la propia investigación. Basándonos en el análisis de las respuestas a un cuestionario de evaluación del curso, también pretendemos indagar en las percepciones de los participantes en relación con la intervención pedagógica. Los resultados indican que, mediante la participación activa en el curso, los estudiantes reconocen haber adquirido una mayor comprensión del contexto socio-pragmático

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relacionado con el proceso de publicación, incluyendo un mayor entendimiento de las estructuras retóricas predominantes en los artículos de investigación y resúmenes, de las prácticas académicas prevalentes a nivel nacional e internacional, y de la potencial variación de estrategias comunicativas en sus áreas disciplinarias específicas.

Palabras clave: curso de formación en ERPP, análisis de género, pedagogía basada en corpus, enfoque crítico-pragmático.

1. Introduction

Publishing one's research is a complex socio-pragmatic process which involves a negotiation between authors and editors/reviewers. In order to get their research papers accepted for publication in national or international journals, scholars have to show that they are competent writers who are acquainted with the established rhetorical practices that are favoured by a specific disciplinary community.

The demands for producing high-quality papers have increased considerably over the last few years, not only on those scholars that seek professional advancement and recognition (Lillis & Curry, 2010; Moreno et al., 2012) but also on those postgraduate students seeking to complete doctoral programmes (Li & Flowerdew, 2020). The writing up of a research paper represents, however, an arduous task, especially for those novice scholars and postgraduate students who have not received any formal instruction on writing for research publication purposes (Jiang & Hyland, 2020). The fact that evaluation agencies worldwide tend to consider as an indication of the quality of a paper its publication in a high-impact English-medium journal constitutes an additional element of pressure on inexperienced writers who are users of English as an Additional Language (EAL).

From a critical position, these negative effects have been contested by a number of authors (e.g. Belcher, 2007; Ferguson, 2007; Ammon, 2012) who have called for a greater tolerance on the part of editors and reviewers of international journals for accepting rhetorical practices which may be considered 'anomalies' for the international scientific community. Other proposals include a shift to English as an International Language (EIL) as a lingua franca variety for participating in a growing global community (Lee McKay, 2002), a modification of evaluation policies which should give more credit to publications in national journals or fostering the proliferation of multilingual journals (Salager-Meyer, 2008). From a pragmatic perspective, much effort has been made on the part of applied linguists to contribute to providing EAL users with an understanding of academic genres by examining the rhetorical features which are prevalent in academic texts across disciplines and the social contexts in which they occur (e.g. Swales, 1990, 2004). This genre-based approach has also been extended to intercultural studies that have compared the rhetorical organization and stylistic features of English academic texts with those of different languages, such as Chinese (Loi, 2010), Swedish (Fredrickson & Swales, 1994), Indonesian (Adnan, 2008) or Spanish (Burgess, 2002; Martín, 2005; Sheldon, 2018).

From a more practical language teaching stance, an increasing number of courses and workshops on English academic writing are being implemented worldwide in higher education institutions to offer resources and training to multilingual students and inexperienced scholars. Most of these pedagogical initiatives have been developed by English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) teachers in different geographical contexts, mainly in Asia/Australia (e.g. Cargill & O'Connor, 2013; Flowerdew & Wang, 2017; Cargill et al., 2018; Paltridge, 2018), in Latin America (Corcoran & Englander, 2016; Janssen & Restrepo, 2019), and in the United States (e.g. Feak & Swales, 2010; Douglas, 2015). However, with the exception of a few recent pedagogical proposals (e.g. Burgess & Cargill, 2013; León-Pérez & Martín, 2016; Burgess et al., 2019), courses in European countries such as Spain are still scarce and many of them have been designed as general academic writing workshops that have not considered the rhetorical specificities of particular subdisciplines and have been mostly

content with accepting that the language of publication should inevitably be English, if participants seek to obtain eventual international recognition, work promotion or salary increments (Lillis & Curry, 2010).

The doctoral programme in Arts and Humanities at the University of La Laguna (Spain) requires its students to have presented a paper in English or Spanish in at least one international or national conference before their PhD thesis can be formally examined. They also have the option of presenting their thesis by publication. This involves a compendium of at least three publications in journals that are ranked in the Journal Citations Report. However, no specific courses on ERPP are offered at this institution with the exception of the one we report here. Considering the existence of rhetorical variation inherent to disciplinary areas, the course is mainly based on the prior compilation of a corpus of research articles from specific subdisciplines, selected by the participants in the course themselves (Burgess & Cargill, 2013), and on the analysis of the functional elements prevalent in the selected texts, drawing on a genre-analysis framework (Swales, 1990, 2004) which focuses on the examination of communicative intentions in specific socio-cultural contexts.

In this paper we report the design and implementation of an ERPP practical course, addressed to doctoral students of Arts and Humanities, in which critical and pragmatic approaches are combined (Harwood & Hadley, 2004; Corcoran & Englander, 2016). The appropriateness of this pedagogical approach is also discussed mainly on the basis of the analysis of the responses to a post-course questionnaire administered to the participants in the four editions that have been implemented so far.

2. Participants and procedures

The participants in the courses that we have implemented over the last four academic years (from 2015-2016 to 2018-2019) at the University of La Laguna constituted a total of 34 students enrolled in the Arts and Humanities doctoral programme. Their research areas ranged across the following subdisciplines: North-American, British and Irish cultural studies and literature, English linguistics, film studies, photography, Spanish literature, cultural studies and philology, cultural studies of business French, scientific illustration and technology, conservation and restoration of cultural heritage, and landscape architecture. The participants' level of competence in English ranged from B1+ to C1+ according to the Common European Framework of Reference. This allowed them all to follow the course in English but they were free to participate orally using the language they preferred (English or Spanish). The majority of those taking the course were L1 users of Spanish but there were also Russian, Romanian and Brazilian participants.

Since rhetorical variation across subdisciplines has been widely attested (e.g. Samraj, 2002; Ozturk, 2007; Martín & León-Pérez, 2017), as a preliminary stage, we started by contacting the participants via e-mail to ask them to send us a sample research paper in their specific areas of research so that we could compile a corpus to analyse throughout the course in order to identify the prevalent rhetorical features of specific subdisciplinary texts. This corpus-driven approach is of utmost relevance when seeking to adapt course materials and content as much as possible to the participants' real training needs. For a more complete account of the approach see Burgess and Cargill (2013).

A first stage involved a critical approach (Benesch, 2001) that consisted in an initial face-to-face discussion with students on their preference for the language of instruction, grounded in the assumption that both English and Spanish are currently among the most relevant languages of scientific dissemination and that neither should be regarded a priori as more or less important. This also included a debate on Spanish scholars' attitudes to and

motivations for publishing their research in English or in Spanish (see Ferguson et al. 2011; Burgess et al., 2014; Martín et al., 2014).

This initial critical approach was combined with a pragmatic focus (Harwood & Hadley, 2004; Corcoran & Englander, 2016) throughout the course and a genre analysis pedagogy (Swales, 1990, 2004) to the teaching of the key communicative functions in the most complex sections of a research article (RA), mainly the Introduction and the Discussion sections of the texts selected by the participants. In the same vein, an examination of the generic structure of conference abstracts and the RA abstracts from the corpus compiled by the students was also carried out. This was followed by a discussion on relevant socio-pragmatic aspects such as the use of cautious language in academic writing and the option to choose impersonality or authorial presence as the best way to represent themselves in the texts. A final part of the course was devoted to discussing the main aspects involved in the preparation of a manuscript and the peer review process. A series of tasks related to the implemented contents were assigned to the students throughout the course as a means of putting into practice their acquired skills and of assessing the proper use of the suggested rhetorical strategies. The students were also provided with useful on-line resources that could facilitate the preparation of the assigned written tasks.

Drawing on qualitative research (e.g. Lillis & Curry, 2010), as a post-procedural stage, a questionnaire to be filled in anonymously was administered to the students (see Appendix) in order to elicit comments and suggestions from the participants that could help us improve our pedagogical intervention in the following years.

3. The socio-pragmatic analytical approach of the pedagogical intervention

The course has been designed to be implemented as a methodological workshop in three four-hour sessions to Ph.D. students in the first year of the doctoral programme. The general objective of the course is to provide students with practical strategies for research paper publication. This involves familiarising students with the socio-cultural context in which academic genres occur and with the international conventions of English academic writing in order to develop their writing skills with the aim of facilitating the integration in their disciplinary communities. In order to achieve the stated aims the course has been structured and developed around the three blocks of contents described as follows:

3.1. Block 1- The RA in English across disciplines in Arts and Humanities

Our multivariable teaching approach was based on an initial discussion with the students on the socio-cultural context in which a particular research genre occurs. This process of discovery of the circumstances that surround a specific genre in the broad field of Arts and Humanities across different academic settings was intended to help them understand the genre's communicative purpose more readily in order to meet the expectations of the potential national and international audiences. This was followed by a critical reading and the explicit teaching of the communicative functions and language patterns (see subsection 3.1.3) prevalent in the compiled corpus of selected texts.

3.1.1. Attitudes and motivations for publishing one's research in English/Spanish

We started by identifying the key research genres that they were likely to write at some point in their doctoral studies. Although the RA was recognised as being the key academic genre for disseminating their research, they also showed an interest in other genres such as the book review, the conference poster/paper presentation, and, of course, the thesis or dissertation. We then discussed, from a critical-pragmatic perspective, their attitudes and motivations for the choices of language publication.

Drawing on the findings obtained in intercultural studies (e.g. Burgess, 2002; Martín, 2005; Mur-Dueñas, 2014; Sheldon, 2018), at this point we highlighted the importance of becoming familiar with the rhetorical differences between the national and the international disciplinary communities (i.e. the different needs to justify research by indicating a gap in the existing literature or by criticising previous work, the use of promotional elements which enhance the contribution of the study) so that they might successfully accommodate to the preferred rhetorical practices in both the Spanish and the English-speaking international contexts. They would thus be able to avoid the undesirable effects of the transfer of mother tongue writing features which may seem inappropriate to an international audience. This complementary discussion of cross-cultural rhetorical and stylistic variation was developed throughout the course wherever it was considered relevant.

3.1.2. The macrostructure of the RA across disciplines

Drawing on Burgess & Cargill (2013), we used an hourglass diagramme (see Fig. 1) to visually represent the predominant macrostructure of experimental research articles: Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion (AIMRaD), and of Humanities papers: Abstract, Introduction, Body and Conclusion (AIBaC).

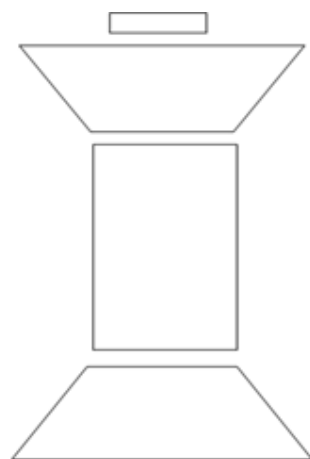


Figure 1. Representation of the macrostructure sections of a RA (adapted from Burgess & Cargill, 2013: 61).

This diagramme shows that a RA starts with an Abstract, which typically reflects, in a condensed form, the macrostructural components of the associated paper. This is followed by the Introduction, which begins with a broad focus by setting the research context and attracting the interest of the reader. This focus narrows down with a gap creation to justify research and finally ends with a statement of the purpose or description of the work presented. The following section continues, with a focus parallel to the end of the Introduction, with a Methods section, and a Results section (in the case of experimental papers) or with a Body section (in the case of Humanities papers) which is divided into subsections related to the content. The last Discussion and/or

Conclusion section starts with the same breadth of focus as the Results or Body section, and it is widening by addressing the broader issues that were raised in the Introduction and by mentioning the implications of the research.

At this point, we discussed the idea that the whole structure is governed by the Results/Body, the crucial section, and this is why we suggested that the paper should start with the writing up of this section, in those cases in which the students were in the process of completing their research. In the cases in which the students were in the preliminary stages of conducting research, our recommendation was to begin by identifying a key controversy issue in their field with the help of their supervisors or by reviewing the literature found in sources such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, specialized blogs, etc.

Proposed tasks:

- Task 1 (in class) - Analyse the rhetorical structure of the sample papers that you sent us and identify the type of macrostructure to which they adhere.
- Task 2 (homework) - Write a paragraph describing a key controversy in your field that would be worth addressing in further research.

3.1.3. Key rhetorical moves and steps in the Introduction and Discussion sections

We considered particularly relevant to study in detail the two sections which are more rhetorically complex, i.e. the Introduction and the Discussion and/or Conclusion sections. To this purpose, we used a genre-analytic approach drawing on Swales' (1990, 2004) notion of "move" to refer to those communicative functions, as viewed in relation to the rhetorical goal of a text. Moves occur in typical sequences and these can be realised by either one or a combination of sub-moves or "steps", as seen in Figure 2.

Move 1- Establishing the research context

via

Step 1 Claiming importance of the research topic

and/or

Step 2 Reviewing previous literature (citations required)

and/or

Step 3 Providing background information (with or without citations)

Move 2 - Creating a research space

via

Step 1 Criticising previous studies

and/or

Step 2 Reporting contradictory findings

and/or

Step 3 Indicating a gap in existing literature

and/or

Step 4 Adding to what is known

Move 3 - Presenting the present work

via

- Step 1 Announcing present research descriptively and/or purposively
- Step 2* (optional) Presenting research questions or hypotheses
- Step 3* (optional) Definitional clarifications
- Step 4* (optional) Summarizing methods
- Sep 5 (PISF**) Announcing principal outcomes
- Step 6 (PISF**) Stating the value of the present research
- Step 7 (PISF**) Outlining the structure of the paper

* Steps 3.2-3.4 are less fixed in their order of occurrence than the others.

** PISF: Probable in some fields, but unlikely in others.

Figure 2. Adapted version of the revised Move 3 structure (Swales, 2004: 232) for the analysis of RA Introductions.

We pointed out that previous intercultural research (Burgess, 2002; Martín, 2005) has reported a tendency to omit Move 2 in Spanish RA Introductions and abstracts since it seems that due to the higher level of competition in the international arena, the need to justify research is stronger in the international than in national contexts, and this is one relevant aspect that students should consider when opting for writing in English or in Spanish. Another point that we highlighted was the fact that in Martín & León-Pérez (2014) the authors revealed that those promotional steps associated to Move 3, which allow writers to emphasise the contribution of their research by anticipating the principal findings (Step 5) and enhancing the value of the research (Step 6), were more prevalent in the Introductions written in English than in those written in Spanish since, once again, in order to increase the chances of getting one's papers published, the rhetorical effort to convince peers of the relevance of their work is more patent when texts are addressed to the international English-speaking community. We also argued that, as deduced from the analysis of the compiled corpus, a frequently used pattern in Humanities, and more specifically in Literary Studies, is the following:

Move 1 – Generalising about concrete patterns in the work.

Move 2 – Characterising past critical interpretations (often criticising them as deficient).

Move 3 – Introducing the topic.

Move 4 – Specifying the argument the researcher makes about their topic and the
method he/she will use to do so.

In order to illustrate our students with examples of linguistic exponents and generic sentence frames which are available to authors to realise the functions of moves and steps, we provided them with two useful resources that we strongly recommended to consult as a way of facilitating their autonomous writing, i.e., Morley's (2019) Manchester Academic Phrasebank, and the REF-N-WRITE Phrasebank for research paper writing.

Proposed tasks:

- Task 3 (in class) – Read two Introductions from the texts that you sent us and decide if all the moves are present and where each one begins and ends. Note that it is possible that moves may be repeated and/or come in a different order to the one presented above.
- Task 4 (homework) - Write a short Introduction for your research topic including the three or four moves and some of the steps presented above. Note that if you are at an early stage of your research you will have to invent the information!

For the genre-analytic approach to the study of the Discussion (and/or Conclusion) section, we started by highlighting the interconnection between this section and the Introduction section. We particularly took into consideration the fact that this section typically mirrors the Introduction section in a reversed order, that is, writers start by referring to the presented study and the issues or research questions addressed in the Introduction (Presenting the present work). Then they progressively widen the scope to establish a relationship between the findings obtained and the niche created in the Introduction by, for example, explaining or comparing the results with those obtained in previous studies (Creating a research space). Finally, they end with more general statements by commenting on the implications of the study or making recommendations for future research (Broadening the research context).

Drawing from previous work (Moreno & Swales, 2018) on the analysis of the Discussion (and/or Conclusion) section, we presented and exemplified a model with the key functional elements prevalent in this section:

Move 1- Contextualising the study

- Step 1- Re-stating key features of the current study
- Step 2 – Reporting background information

Move 2 – Discussing findings

- Step 1 – Presenting (un)expected finding
- Step 2 – Highlighting a finding
- Step 3 – Comparing with previous studies
- Step 4 – Explaining or interpreting findings

Move 3 – Evaluating current research

- Step 1 –Stating limitations of the study
- Step 2 – Commenting on the implications or contribution of the research
- Step 3 – Making recommendations for future research

Figure 3. Adapted version of Moreno & Swales' (2018: 52) model for the analysis of the Discussion and/or Conclusion section of RAs.

Mainly due to constraints of time, we did not pay much attention to the study of the Methods and the Results sections, but we referred our students to some studies which have extensively explored these two sections from a genre-analytic approach, i.e. Bruce (2008) and Basturkmen (2009).

3.2. Block 2- Developing skills in abstract writing

Since the abstract is closely associated with the accompanying article, students needed to understand the most relevant features which characterize this genre. In this session we sought to develop our students' skills in abstract writing by making them aware of the main differences between a conference abstract and a RA abstract in terms of their main rhetorical functions and generic structure. We also discussed other socio-pragmatic aspects, such as the importance of using cautious language and the available choice to represent themselves explicitly in the texts by means of first person pronouns.

3.2.1. The rhetorical structure of RA abstracts

Drawing on previous work on abstract writing (Swales & Feak, 2000; Martín, 2005) we proposed the following five-move rhetorical structure for the analysis of the communicative functions which are typically present in IMRaD paper abstracts:

1A. Introduction

1A.1. Claiming importance of the research topic, and/or

1A.2. Description of the context (background information), and/or

1A.3. Indication of a gap in existing knowledge

1B. Purpose (description of the aim of the study)

2. Methods (brief description of materials, the study design, subjects, or procedures)

3. Results (a report of main findings)

4. Evaluation/Discussion (interpretation of main findings), and/or

5. Conclusion (implications, recommendations for future research)

We also provided them with some examples of linguistic realizations associated to each of the presented moves taken from Morley's (2019) Manchester Academic Phrasebank.

Proposed task:

- Task 5 (in class) – Read the abstracts from the research papers that you selected and decide if all the moves are present and where each one begins and ends.

3.2.2. The use of cautious language in academic writing

Intercultural research on the topic of hedging (see, for example, Martín, 2005; Sheldon, 2018) has revealed that English-speaking scholars tend to be more cautious than their Spanish colleagues when making their scientific claims, arguably due to the fact that being exposed to the wide international community potentially arises a greater deal of criticism from peers. We therefore made students aware of the fact that when addressing the international audience in particular they should be careful not to sound too categorical or assertive, since the making of a claim threatens the other members of the scientific community, as it implies a restriction on what they can do from that moment onwards (Myers, 1996). To eschew criticism from the members of their disciplinary area, a useful linguistic device which can be used to avoid expressing absolute certainty is hedging. This term refers to those expressions in language which make messages indeterminate, that is, they mitigate or reduce the epistemological strength of the assertions that speakers or writers make (Martín, 2005).

As seen in the sample abstracts analysed in the course, it is in the Discussion/Conclusion section where writers make their final claims about the importance of their research by discussing the implications drawn from the results obtained or giving possible explanations. This section thus represents the most persuasive part of the research paper in which the strongest claims are made. And it is in this the section in which writers have to be specially careful about how to state their claims. We, therefore, informed our students of the most frequent hedging strategies which writers have at their disposal to diminish the strength of their arguments, mainly epistemic modality, agentless passive and impersonal constructions, and impersonal active constructions in

which the personal subject is replaced by some non-human entity as in the following examples: “The findings suggest/ reveal..., these data indicate...”.

3.2.3. The use of impersonality vs personal voice

An issue that typically aroused great controversy was the best way to represent themselves in their texts. Therefore, on the basis of the analysis of the sample abstracts drawn from the papers that they had previously selected, we discussed the use of impersonality versus personal voice in academic writing. We could confirm that in many of their subdisciplines the use of first person pronouns is a rhetorical strategy which is increasingly used by the international English-speaking community, mainly to show self-confidence, a more direct involvement in the research and as a way to strengthen arguments (Swales & Feak, 2000; Sheldon, 2018). These functions may vary depending on the section in which first person pronouns are used. This is why we considered relevant to illustrate and inform students of the main socio-pragmatic functions of first person pronouns, as described in Martín (2005).

As a conclusion, we pointed out that the use of authorial I is a valuable rhetorical strategy which can help construct a credible image for writers by presenting an authorial self firmly established in the norms of the discipline and reflecting an appropriate degree of confidence and authority, but that they should be careful not to overuse it: The goal should be to strike a balance between demonstrating a personal investment in one’s research while maintaining a sense of objectivity and academic rigor.

Most of the students, however, perceived the use of authorial I as a rhetorical strategy that shows arrogance and lack of humbleness, as this is the way in which it is generally perceived in Spanish academic writing. The preferred convention in the Spanish academia is the use of impersonality or the reduction of personal attribution by using the “editorial we” in single-authored texts instead of I. This decision arguably indicates an intention to reduce personal attribution although, as Hyland (2000) argues, there seems to be an instant claiming of authority and communality in the use of we. Using this strategy, writers can thus simultaneously reduce their personal intrusion and yet emphasise the importance that should be given to their claims. Our final recommendation was that they should adapt to the prevalent conventions in the particular contexts (e.g. international vs national preferences), but if they did not feel comfortable displaying their authorial presence using “I”, they had the other available option of using the “editorial we”. It was also at this point that we discussed from a critical perspective that it was in fact the role of international editors and reviewers to be more tolerant with the diversity of discourse features that may seem alien to them.

Proposed task:

- Task 6 (homework) – Look for the announcement of an interesting conference related to your field of research to be held over the next months and prepare a conference abstract based on your current research.

3.3. Block 3- The manuscript preparation and the peer review process

Following Cargill & O’Connor (2013), the last part of the workshop was devoted to the development of our students’ planning skills to facilitate the task of preparing their manuscripts for publication. This block also

included the discussion of the role of literacy brokers (Lillis & Curry, 2010) as an important part involved in the publishing process.

3.3.1. The selection of target audience and journal

Before starting with the actual writing of a paper, the process of planning becomes a crucial strategy. We suggested our students that they should start by identifying the key journals in their research fields and by making a small corpus of papers, published in the particular journal they select, which could be analysed in terms of the prevalent conventional practices, such as rhetorical structure or evaluation criteria for peer reviewers. As Martín & León-Pérez (2017) have recently reported, we can find rhetorical variation across journals of the same subdiscipline as conditioned by journal audience issues, mainly depending on whether the journal is narrow or broader in scope. Apart from the primary audience that the paper aims to reach, authors have also to consider that their papers will have to meet first the requirements of editors and peer reviewers. Therefore, it is important to examine the author guidelines which frequently differ across journals of even the same subdiscipline. Other preliminary aspects that the students should consider are the journal's reputation, the impact factor, whether it has open access, the estimated time to publication or if the journal requires payment. We also put emphasis on the fact that they should be alert to discern whether a journal is predatory.

3.3.2. The drafting of the paper

The planning of writing also includes the decision on the sections of the paper to write up first. This may vary depending on the stage of the research in which students are. In preliminary stages we recommended to start with the literature review and the drafting of the Methods section. In a more advanced stage, we recommended to start with the Results section since this is a pivotal section which governs the content and structure of whole paper (Cargill & O'Connor, 2013: 21) and that eventually generates the rest of the research article. They could then continue with the Methods, followed by the most rhetorically complex sections, i.e. the Introduction and the Discussion/Conclusion sections. The last section that should be written is the abstract since, as we have mentioned earlier, this typically reflects all the macro-structural components of the associated RA in a condensed form.

The drafting of the paper also involves a careful editing procedure, including a focus on the potential grammar, spelling and punctuation errors that students most frequently make, and the editing of other discourse features such as topic sentences, the flow of information in paragraphs, the appropriate use of link words, and the use of a simple, clear and direct (reader-oriented) rhetorical style when writing in English as opposed to a more writer-oriented style which characterizes the Spanish rhetoric. Additional aspects that should be considered in this process are the checking of the appropriate use of citations in order to avoid plagiarism and of a consistent referencing system (e.g. APA or MLA) both as in-text citations and in the final list of references. We also discussed the quality of available language editing and translation resources that students can use to assist them in their writing task.

3.3.3. The submission of the manuscript

The understanding of the peer review process which implies a negotiation between writers and readers (reviewers/editors) increases the chances to get a paper accepted for publication. This is the reason why we decided to discuss the role of journal editors and reviewers in both the national and international contexts. To this purpose, we provided students with a sample evaluation form with the typical questions to which reviewers are frequently asked to respond, and with real examples of reviewers' reports recommending changes to improve the manuscript. At this point, we considered it important to make students aware of the fact that, due to a series of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons the rejection rate is very high, especially in international journals. Swales (1990) has claimed that the figure in Arts and Humanities is at 80-95%. This indicates that rejection does not actually mean that one's research is not sufficiently worthy for publication.

3.3.4. Writing the cover letter

The contributor's covering letter has a main persuasive function as it seeks to influence the decision of the editor to send the manuscript for peer review. This is why we recommended our students to write carefully these types of letters or e-mail messages including the following functional components:

- Submission statement.
- Commentary on paper (i.e. it is new and original).
- Relevance and significance of the paper
- Offer to send more information.
- Request to respond.

These elements were identified and discussed in the basis of a sample cover letter with which we provided our students, paying special attention to language templates.

3.3.5. Dealing with editors' and reviewers' comments

As regards how to deal with editors' and reviewers' critical comments, we offered our students some useful recommendations as to how to proceed in the three most plausible situations, i.e. manuscript rejection, accepted with major revisions and accepted with minor revisions. This involved an analysis and interpretation of the main types of comments from reviewers and editors which, following Cargill & O'Connor (2013: 82), fall into seven main categories:

- The aims of the study are not clear.
- The theoretical premise on which the work is based is challenged.
- The experimental design or analysis methods are challenged.
- You are asked to supply additional information that would improve the paper.
- You are asked to remove information or discussion.
- The conclusions are considered incorrect, weak, or too strong.

- The reviewer has unspecific negative comments, e.g. “poorly written”.

As a complementary part of this content block, we provided students with a sample letter accompanying the revised manuscript in which the author responds effectively to the editor and reviewers’ comments.

4. Evaluation of the pedagogical intervention

In order to elicit some comments and suggestions from the participants with the purpose of improving subsequent editions of the course, as a follow-up activity we administered a questionnaire to the 34 students (see Appendix). The analysis of the answers to this questionnaire revealed that they all had a clear idea of the content of the course on the basis of the programme that we had sent them in advance, with the exception of one participant who was expecting that the course covered other aspects such as strategies to help him understand the literary language of the 16th century (metaphors, metonymy, etc.), an aspect that was beyond the scope of our course. They all also found the course well-structured and fit for purpose, and reported a high level of satisfaction with the preparedness of the course instructors, with the tasks set and the feedback received.

Turning to the participants’ attitude towards the English language, in accordance with the findings reported in previous research (Ferguson et al. 2011; Burgess et al., 2014; Martín et al., 2014), we perceived a general positive acceptance of the need to publish in English at some point, but they were also critical about the negative effects. As one of the participants pointed out:

Tengo mis pros y mis contras en cuanto a usar el inglés: Es una herramienta que nos ayuda a poner ideas conjuntas a nivel global, y me parece genial, pero a nivel de la valorización del inglés desde un punto de vista sociológico está haciendo mucho daño a otras lenguas.

[I have my pros and cons when it comes to using English: It is a tool that helps us put together ideas at a global level, and it seems great to me, but at the level of the appreciation of English from a sociological point of view it is doing a lot of damage to other languages]

All the participants acknowledged that although they are not required to write compulsory in English, they are conscious of the fact that it is the language of international scientific communication and of the advantages of writing in this language (more credits, international visibility), but mainly due to language limitations they feel in general more comfortable presenting their research and writing their thesis in their first language.

All informants pointed out the usefulness of the course to facilitate the development of their research skills. As one of the participants stated: “el curso me ha abierto otras perspectivas a la hora de redactar” [the course has opened other perspectives for me when writing]. Nevertheless, a further analysis of their learning outcomes and task achievements would be necessary to assess the real impact of the pedagogical intervention. Other major benefits they mentioned are the provision of online resources, such as the Manchester Academic Phrasebank, that could help them foster their autonomous learning, consciousness raising about the organization of academic texts and a better understanding of the socio-pragmatic contexts involved in the publishing process. As a further evidence that supports the usefulness of our training course is the fact that some students contacted us to inform us that they had actually sent the abstract they had prepared for our final task to the chosen conference and that they had received a positive answer from the reviewing committee. One of the participants also explicitly reported that the course boosted her self-confidence to start disseminating the results of her research:

Hasta este momento no me había atrevido a enviar propuestas en inglés para congresos, ya ni siquiera publicar artículos, y el curso me ha dado ese impulso que me faltaba, esa confianza para comenzar a hacerlo y decir “pues yo también puedo”.

[Up to this moment I had not dared to send proposals in English for conferences, and not even publish articles, and the course has given me that impetus that I lacked, that confidence to start doing it and say “well, I can too”]

As a critical comment, the students reported the need of additional sessions to deal with the contents more extensively. We should also mention our limitations in providing appropriate content feedback to the participants of some of the subdisciplines related to the broad field of Arts and Humanities, since our major background is Applied Linguistics, drawing on our own experiences as ERPP researchers and manuscript reviewers. At this point, we should highlight the advantage that represents a close collaboration of content specialists and ERPP teachers in the instructional process.

5. Final remarks

In this paper we have discussed the teaching components of a corpus based, genre-driven pedagogical intervention which can help EAL doctoral students in the Arts and Humanities fields understand more easily the communicative purpose of the abstract, the research article and the functions and language structures of its various sections, with a particular focus on intercultural variation. A complementary component includes a focus on the most salient rhetorical strategies favoured by the members of their disciplinary communities, and on the issues of planning, editing and how to interpret and respond to reviewers' comments. This holistic understanding of the publishing process may clearly increase the chances to get a paper accepted for publication.

We believe that a focus on a critical-pragmatic approach is also of particular importance for students of these disciplines in which the acceptance of English as the only mode of research dissemination has not been completed as compared with those disciplines in the natural and social sciences. A critical reflection on the advantages and disadvantages of publishing in English may help them decide more appropriately whether they want to contest to this situation of inequality by publishing in languages other than English or whether they choose to subvert to the mainstream current prevalence in the natural and social sciences.

We also sought to make students aware of the fact that academic genres are constructed within social communities and that the rhetorical practices prevalent in both national and international contexts have an impact in the configuration of academic texts across cultures (Sheldon, 2018). Awareness of intercultural rhetorical preferences can thus help them make informed choices about whether and when to conform to the expectations of the target audience by choosing the appropriate rhetorical options depending on the context and type of audience they are addressing.

Despite the limitation of the time available for implementing the course, the overall outcomes have revealed that our teaching approach was perceived as very successful, in the light of the analysis of the responses to the survey reported by the 34 participants enrolled in the course over the last four academic years. Moreover, their comments have brought to the fore a main challenge that these participants face mainly in relation to language disadvantage. Academic institutions should, therefore, put more effort to alleviate this additional difficulty that most of these students experience by providing them with more language support to carry out their research, such as in-house editing and translating services. It is also essential a greater flexibility on the part of editors/reviewers in accepting discourse patterns that may be considered as divergencies (i.e. L1 transfer

features) from the discourse norms typically privileged by the members of the Anglophone academic community. We hope that with this paper we have contributed to raise the call for more purposefully designed training programmes in ERPP to facilitate postgraduate students the integration in their specific disciplinary areas.

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Appendix – Course evaluation questionnaire

Evaluate the following statements in terms of how true they are for you. (5 = strong agreement with the statement and 1 = strong disagreement.) Add a comment in English OR SPANISH if you wish.

1. I had a clear idea of what the course would involve before we began the classes.

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

2. I do not currently need to write (or speak) about my research in English and do not anticipate having to do so in the future.

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

3. I do not want to write (or speak) about my research in English.

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

4. The course was useful.

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

5. The course was well structured and the content was appropriate.

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

6. Tasks set in class or as homework were relevant to the course content and allowed me to further develop my research writing skills in English.

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

7. The course instructors were responsive to my needs, well prepared and had sufficient knowledge of research writing and presentation in my field.

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

8. The duration of the course was just right.

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Any other comments or suggestions on how we could improve the course?