

**THE CONTOURS OF ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA
IN SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING**

ANGLIČTINA AKO LINGUA FRANCA VEDECKÝCH PUBLIKÁCIÍ

*MAGDALÉNA BILÁ, ALENA KAČMÁROVÁ, INGRID VAŇKOVÁ***Abstract**

We consider writing styles culture-specific in terms of thought patterns and organizational principles; they reflect a cognitive style and evidence a linguistic tradition. The present research aims to identify preferences in academic writing of non-native speakers of English. The research plan is firstly to define the standards of Anglo-American writing style with regard to the verbalization of the methodology in a research paper; secondly to analyze corpus-based data with regard to how much the authors deviate from these standards. The research examines data taken from scholarly papers written by authors of different nationalities, and thus contributes discussion on what contours ELF takes in scholarly publishing.

Keywords: writing style, cognitive style, linguistic tradition, Anglo-American writing style, scholarly publishing, research methodology.

Abstrakt

Štýl písania považujeme za kultúrne špecifický v zmysle vzorcov myslenia a princípov organizácie textu; takto odráža kognitívny štýl a svedčí o lingvistickej tradícii. Cieľom prezentovaného výskumu je identifikovať preferencie v akademickom písaní nerodených používateľov anglického jazyka. Našou úlohou je v prvom rade definovať normy angloamerického štýlu písania s ohľadom na spôsob verbalizácie metodológie v štúdiu; po druhé, zistiť, do akej miery sa autori od týchto noriem odchyľia. Výskum analyzuje štúdie autorov rôznych národností a prispieva tak k diskusi o tom, aké kontúry má ELF v publikovaní vedeckých štúdií.

Kľúčové slová: štýl písania, kognitívny štýl, lingvistická tradícia, anglo-americký štýl písania, publikovanie vedeckých štúdií, metodológia výskumu.

Introduction

In the recent years, more often than before, scholarly publishing has expanded in volume. Whatever the reason, whether IT advancement or an increase in scholarly interest in sharing research, an academic paper is becoming an established genre in the English culture. Further, English has become the primary language used for the exchange of thoughts, the lingua franca of science. The tricky part of communicating a message is the culture-specific principle governing the selection and organization of ideas in the text. An academic paper may as well reflect the author's cognitive style and evidence their linguistic tradition. It is usually the linguistic tradition that sets the standards based on which authors approach writing tasks.

The typology of writing cultures typically includes four writing styles (cf 5, 1981). The to-date studies (2, 1994; Stroebe, 1976 cit. in 21994; 1, 2007; 4, 2004) indicate a conceptual dichotomy: Saxonian vs other than Saxonian (hereinafter OTS) writing styles. This involves a clash regarding the type of information (theoretical vs empirical), the layout of the text (research-problem-based vs literature-overview-based), the organization of ideas (introducing the purpose up front vs delaying the purpose), the nature of discourse (preciseness vs vagueness), reader-friendly nature of the text (required, thus strictly observed, vs. avoided, as it is considered

unreliable). Consequently, a non-native user of English writing in English may well need to make a decision about what approach to take. The to-date studies (ibid) specify that the basic difference between Saxonian and OTS styles is their orientation to form and content respectively. In addition to other features, the orientation to form prioritizes formulating a research problem or a hypothesis; the orientation to content prioritizes information of theoretical nature and paradigm formation. In basic terms, the Saxonian style is of dialogic nature, other than Saxonian styles are of monologic nature.

The Saxonian writing style poses certain obligations that native speakers of English do not even consider obligations; they routinely follow the principles that have guided them since their school age. The present situation with English being a number one language of international scholarly journals makes us believe that the Saxonian writing style is the norm required by publishers. The contributions from both native and non-native speakers of English thus should conform to that pattern. A question arises how much freedom the authors are given. Our aim is to find out the level of adherence to the Saxonian writing style by non-native users of English contributing their scholarly papers.

Research Methodology

The Saxonian orientation to form and prioritizing the research-based nature of the text can be supported by the C.A.R.S. model (Creating a research space), outlined by Swales (7, 1990). This model suggests three steps: establishing a territory (the situation), establishing a niche (the problem), and occupying the niche (the solution). In other words, this presupposes stating a research problem and exploring it, asking a question ‘why do I want to do/know this’ rather than ‘what do I want to do/know’. Thus, our focal point is the contrary approach of Saxonian and other than Saxonian writing styles to the type of information to be included in the text, see Figure 1 below.

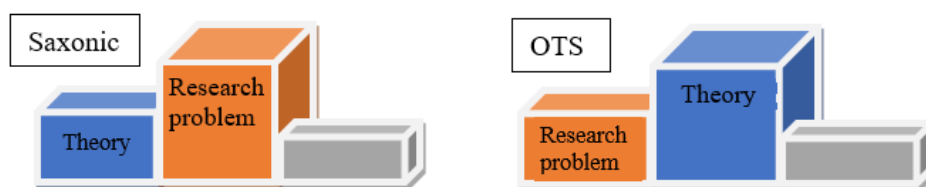


Figure 1 Contrary priorities in Saxonian and OTS Writing Styles

OTS styles may not need to follow this model, thus interfere with the expectations that the English language of the text causes. The following research question arises: Does the author use the English language merely as a code and (subconsciously) stay faithful to lingua-cultural conventions of their mother tongue or does s/he apply also the tenets of the lingua-culture associated with the language used? The research procedure included the following steps: 1/ selecting a scholarly journal, 2/ selecting themed papers – our area of interest is general and applied linguistics, 3/ examining papers with regard to the explicit verbalization of a research problem, research aim, research question or hypothesis, methods, and 4/ interpreting the results quantitatively.

For authors to stay anonymous, we do not provide the title of the journal or the title of the papers. The journal in question publishes papers from a variety of sciences. Each volume represents a selection of papers from a particular conference. The volume editor is typically a representative of a scientific board of the respective conference. In line with our expertise, we opted for a volume containing applied linguistics papers. The randomly selected volume contained thirty papers. Out of these, one paper was written by a native speaker of English, so we

excluded it from the analysis. The corpus compiled for the present purpose was studied to identify the authors' preferences in the writing style. In each text, we searched for four items: a research problem, a research aim, a research question or a hypothesis, and the methods used.

We understand a research problem as a statement worth exploring so the existing knowledge of the issue can be expanded. We consider a research aim to be the verbalization of why the research is conducted. Drawing on our personal experience, many authors mistake an aim for a method, and statements like 'the aim is to analyze...' appear in abundance. In our treatment, such statements are mere representations of a method or a research plan. We undertake a view that a research question and a hypothesis need not necessarily be used in tandem; the former is typically associated with qualitative research, the latter with quantitative research. We uphold a view that research methods do not need to be explicitly named; yet they should be at least hinted at through the research procedure or plan.

Findings and Discussion

Twenty-nine papers were written by non-native users of English from 13 countries, see Fig. 2.

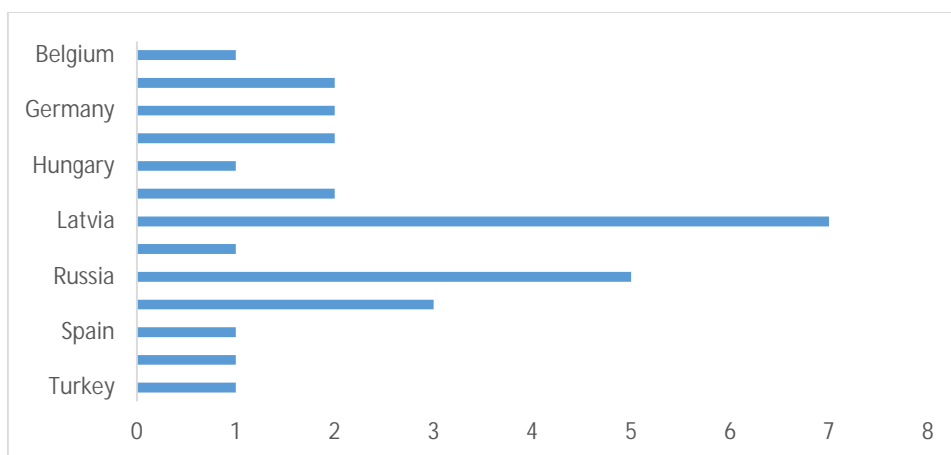


Fig. 2 The countries of non-native users of English in the analyzed sample

The paper written by the native speaker of English supplied all four pieces of information, including the appropriately written aim: *This study uses to determine ...* This statement does not explicitly mention aim or goal; however, it is implied in the statement and the question 'why' is answered.

Regarding the presence of the research aim statement in the compiled corpus of papers written by non-native users of English, the value of successful research aim statements is very low. In 17% of papers, the research aims were missing altogether. Only 28% of papers contained properly stated research aims. The examples include:

I demonstrate how ... are a shortcoming for ...

... to see if pictures have significant impact on ...

The aim is to demonstrate how ... can be used ... to

The goal of the article is to show that ...

The paper offers arguments in defense of ... and proves that

This paper aims at demonstrating how ... may serve as a way to ...

The study is aimed at learning ways of ...

The paper aims to promote ...

It aims to address the challenges in ...

In 55% of papers, research aims were stated either improperly, or were only implicit, or were mentioned only in abstract but not in the text. They do not provide answers to the question 'why'; or they offer the information on a method rather than aim. The examples include:

We report on a study of ...

The paper aims to analyze...

The aim of the paper is to explore ...

The report will focus on ...

The present article deals with

The paper's goal is to explore

This paper focuses on...

The aim is to analyze ...

The general aim was to examine values and ...

The author aims at investigating the instances of ...

The paper deals with ... focuses on ... also considers

The main objective is to explore one particular way in which ...

The research aims to investigate ... it also explores ...

The studied corpus (29 papers) offers the following results (Table 1) with regard to the presence of the four items, including the success rate of the country (the last column). These results are by no means meant to represent a nationwide inclination. They merely provide a springboard for further studies. By the success rate we imply a Saxonian-style-oriented approach. It is calculated as follows; each item has the value of 25%, e.g. Belgium:

Criterion 1: research problem – implicit, i.e. 50% of 25% = 12.5%

Criterion 2: research aim – yes but improper, i.e. 0% of 25% = 0%

Criterion 3: research question/hypothesis – yes, i.e. 100% of 25% = 25%

Criterion 4: methods – yes, i.e. 100% of 25% = 25%

In total, 62.5%

If there are more papers representing one country, the mean value is calculated.

Table 1 The results of the corpus analysis

	<i>Research problem</i>	<i>Research aim</i>	<i>Research Q /hypothesis</i>	<i>Methods</i>	<i>Success rate</i>
Belgium (1)	implicit	Yes, but improper	Yes (1)	Yes (1)	62.5%
France (2)	implicit (2)	Yes (1) No (1)	No (1) Yes (1), only in abstract	Yes (1)	62.5%
Germany (2)	Implicit (2)	Yes (1) No (1)	No (1) Yes (1)	No (1) Yes (1)	47.5%
Hong Kong (2)	Implicit (2)	Yes, only in abstract (1) Yes, but improper (1)	Yes (2)	Yes (2)	62.5%

Hungary (1)	Implicit (1)	Yes, but only implied	Yes (1)	Yes (1)	75%
Kazakhstan (2)	Implicit (2)	Yes, but improper (1) No (1)	No (2)	No (2)	12.5%
Latvia (7)	Implicit (7)	No (2) Yes (1) Yes, but improper (4)	No (7)	No (4) Yes (2) Yes, but only implied(1)	25%
Lithuania (1)	Implicit (1)	Yes	No (1)	No (1)	37.5%
Russia (5)	Implicit (4) No (1)	Yes (3) Yes, but improper (2)	No (1) Yes (1) Yes, but improper (3)	Yes (3) No (2)	45%
Slovakia (3*)	Implicit (3)	Yes (1) Yes, but improper (2)	Yes (2) Yes, but implicit (1)	Yes (3)	62.5%
Spain (1)	Implicit (1)	Yes, but improper	Yes (1)	Yes (1)	62.5%
Thailand (1)	Implicit (1)	Yes, but improper	Yes (1)	Yes (1)	62.5%
Turkey (1)	Implicit (1)	Yes, but implicit	No(1)	No(1)	25%

*Disclaimer: The studied texts are not written by the present authors

We also calculated the mastery of separate items of analysis (Table 2). The presence of the item was weighed as 100, the absence as 0, the improper or implied verbalization as 50. The mean value was calculated.

Table 2 The calculation of mastery of the studied items

	<i>Research problem</i>	<i>Research aim</i>	<i>Research question /hypothesis</i>	<i>Methods</i>
Their mastery	48%	55%	43%	60%

The results point at two important facts. First, the author's style meets the objectives of the Saxonian style in 51% (the average value of Tab. 2). Second, the publisher concerned tolerated the interference of the native lingua-culture, the possible justification of which may be the view that in the humanities, as opposed to hard sciences, the observance of the Saxonian style is not so strictly insisted on (6, 2006).

Conclusion

Many languages are not explicitly involved in the above 4-member typology, yet might be thought to represent a Teutonic style: “[w]hen Johan Galtung (1981, 1985) compares Saxonian, Teutonic, Gallic, and Nipponic intellectual styles, he notices that Eastern Europe, including the former Soviet Union, found itself under the influence of the Teutonic intellectual style due to a long historical tradition” (3, 1996, 140; lower-case letters are the original author’s preference). In the present study, we offered a dichotomy of Saxonian and other than Saxonian writing styles and examined papers of 29 authors from 13 countries. The results show that they use English as a lingua franca in the sense of the code. The English tradition identified as CARS by Swales (7, 1990) has not fully penetrated into the thinking of the international scholars. Their native lingua-culture is mapped on the English vocabulary and structures they use. However, these are the results based on examining just one journal; the state of the affairs may as well be different with a different journal. The present research serves merely as a trigger of a more complex study.

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Kontakt:

Prof. PaedDr. Alena Kačmárová, PhD.

Prešovská univerzita

Filozofická fakulta

Inštitút anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Ul. 17. novembra 1, Prešov 08001

Slovenská republika

Email: alena.kacmarova@unipo.sk

Prof. PhDr. Magdaléna Bilá, PhD.
Prešovská univerzita
Filozofická fakulta
Inštitút anglistiky a amerikanistiky
Ul. 17. novembra 1, Prešov 08001
Slovenská republika
Email: magduska.bila@yahoo.com

Mgr. Ingrida Vaňková, PhD.
Prešovská univerzita
Filozofická fakulta
Inštitút anglistiky a amerikanistiky
Ul. 17. novembra 1, Prešov 08001
Slovenská republika
Email: ingrida.vankova@unipo.sk