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English for Professional and Academic Purposes

Miguel F. Ruiz-Garrido, Juan C. Palmer-Silveira, Inmaculada Fortanet-Gómez (eds.).

Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010. 237 pages. ISBN: 978-90-420-2955-2 (paperback)/ 978-90-420-2956-9 (E-book).

As the authors acknowledge, Enrique Alcaraz was responsible for the terminological shift from ESP to EPAP (English for Professional and Academic Purposes), on the basis that – following Widdowson too – any language use has specificity. The title reflects this shift and the monograph can be considered a fitting tribute to both scholars and their philosophy of (applied) language and linguistics.

The editors, members of the GRAPEL research group with an outstanding track in EPAP research and pedagogy set up to offer a view of English as an international lingua franca as used in a wide range of geolinguistic contexts with an international scope in the depicting of research and professional practices. Approaches and topics in the research and teaching of EPAP are varied, and so are the techniques used, drawing upon genre and discourse analysis, contrastive rhetoric, corpus linguistics, rhetorical analysis and ethnographic tools. There are three sections devoted, respectively, to discourse analysis in EAP, discourse in the professions and, lastly, EPAP pedagogy.

Section I includes a group of works on academic generic and discourse practices and conventions in different fields and geolinguistic settings. Chapter 1, by DUSHYANTI MENDIS, presents a bottom-up corpus based analysis of two varieties of EAP writing, British and Sri Lankan, to detect patterns of use which might reflect underlying beliefs about the norms and conventions in writing for an international versus a local audience, with interesting caveats on gatekeeping and negotiation in a critical discourse analysis trend. CARMEN PÉREZ-LLANTADA combines bottom-up discourse analysis which is both cross-cultural and cross-linguistic with statistical methods (i.e. cluster analysis and frequency retrieval analysis) to yield qualitative and quantitative evidence showing how Spanish writers move towards English cultural conventions when writing in academic English, while they keep their commitment to their culturally bound practices when

writing in their mother tongue. Her results offer evidence for a hybrid nature of internationally published NNSs academic texts revealing a rather optimistic landscape, with culturally bound differences not posing serious problems with regards to publishing and an actual negotiation between culture-dependent uses and genre-related ones already taking place. FRANÇOISE SALAGER-MEYER, ANGELES MARI ALCARAZ ARIZA and MARYELIS PABÓN BERBESI focus on medical paper acknowledgement sections across different cultures and languages with the aim of determining possible contextual influences in this genre which is part of the scholar's rhetorical repertoire. Corpus based and ethnographic analyses cast light on the status of this genre, revealing the influence of economic and social factors not only in the rhetorical instantiation of acknowledgements, but also in the extent to which their formal conventions are fixed. These works inevitably lead to stressing the role of discourse analysis in the provision of real, context and community related input on which novice researchers should be enculturated. ANA MORENO provides strands for future research aimed at achieving this in a systematic, high scale way, including benchmark specifications and practical, specific methodological advice for obtaining a reliable corpus of intercultural and cross-cultural evidence to use as pre-course needs analysis for academic writing purposes.

Turning to Section II, on Professional English, the contributions share a sociological bias in the analysis of various contexts and community discourses, and mostly aim at detecting sociocultural patterns as reflected in language usage with implications for different target activities. PHILIP SHAW opens the section by providing an exercise of textography on two different but related discourse communities and focusing on the report genre. Basic elements of genre theory – e.g. community, systems, roles, values and hierarchies, etc. – are illustrated by showing these elements at work in both worlds, leading to the conclusion that “the members of a discourse community are not people but personae, that is, people in particular roles.” (page 84). The next two chapters focus on health-related discourse, analysed primarily as information sources aimed at patients. ULLA CONNOR, ELIZABETH GOERING, MARIANNE MATTHIAS & ROBERT MAC NEIL analyse – through surveys and interviews – diabetes patients' attitudes towards specific health information sources in order to relate information reception and processing to knowledge construction which may lead in turn to adherence to the treatment plans, which is the goal pursued by the health systems. INGER ASKEHAVE & KAREN K. ZETHSEN engage in the textual

analysis of two health promotion leaflets using Greimas actantial model to focus again on health system information sources and with the aim of checking, by analysing the linguistic constructions used, whether patient empowerment as a system target is really instantiated. Lastly, in her data-driven description of the Corporate Values Statement genre, PILAR GARCÉS-CONEJOS BLITVICH deepens into issues related to generic integrity and genre vs. discourse specificity. Her analysis of identity construction tackles the lexico-syntactic devices used for epistemic and agentive self-references providing evidence for discourse community, genre and medium (digital vs. printed) as variables affecting the way identity is constructed and represented.

Section III, on EPAP pedagogy, contains a set of contributions describing specific practices and a bundle of reflections on EPAP teaching aspects, which all help to depict it as a way of “academic live”. ANA BOCANEGRA-VALLE gives practical advice on material evaluation and related issues like topic inclusion, in-house material design, or adaption techniques for specific groups. The insights and tips are constantly contextualised, with a systematic differencing between EFL/ESL and EPAP teaching requirements. Authenticity and usefulness in relation to materials selection and design are two keywords in this approach to material management. JOHN SWALES and CHRISTINE FEAK focus on research abstracts as authentic material, offering suggestions for task design in a top-down fashion. The tasks suggested are flexible enough to be adapted to specific disciplines as they depart from the idea of students creating small but representative corpora from their own fields. Its strength lies precisely on the role assigned to situated cognition and autonomous learning, and the balance achieved through the material selection, assuring a minimum degree of representativeness for the sake of analysing and engaging in authentic generic practices.

RUTH BREEZE tests the usefulness of two approaches in essay writing, i.e. textual analysis and rhetorical analysis, including in her account both qualitative and quantitative data. The top-down, rhetorical approach seems more effective in the long run, combined with overt strategy teaching and consciousness rising, in line with New Rhetoric and Genre Theory advocacies. This chapter and the next one by JULIO GIMÉNEZ make a case for the overt tackling of academic practices as a way of acculturation from a social-constructivist angle. GIMÉNEZ explores the writing of discipline-specific genres by different discipline groups, combining statistical surveys with case studies to show the need of situated academic writing practice,

from a rather narrow angle, with discipline and content specific strategy training again deemed necessary from the data yielded.

Finally, THOMAS ORR depicts the ESE (Education for Science and Engineering) work characteristics, constraints and ideal attributes “for those interested in either developing an ESE programme (...) or pursuing ESE as a career” (abstract). The Centre for Language Research based in Japan and described thoroughly will be considered the ideal working setting for a successful EPAP teaching-learning environment by many readers who will indeed envy the conditions and facilities described.

Despite some limitations regarding the size of samples which do not permit clear-cut generalizations at times, this monograph may result very inspiring for the newly arrived into the EPAP community, and thought-provoking to those who, like myself, have already devoted many years of their life to these constantly challenging – and sometimes even rewarding – EPAP practices. This monograph will be also very valuable to gain awareness on the role current discourse analysis is having in the disentangling and unlocking of community practices and conventions, in view of a more informed, righteous and effective communication.

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