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**CHANGES IN TRADITIONS OF ACADEMIC DISCOURSE
CONSTRUCTION: A TEN-YEAR PERIOD ANALYSIS**

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Abstract

Changes in how academic discourse is constructed signal transformations in academia and in society in general. The aim of this research is to see how the requirements of written academic discourse construction in Russian have changed within the period of 10 years. For this purpose, the research corpus including 10 academic articles published in 2011 and 10 academic articles published in 2021 in the same peer reviewed journal was compiled. During the research the methods of interpretation, classification, statistical analysis, and discourse analysis were used. The discourse analysis was carried out with a special attention paid to such dimensions as form / content orientation and reader / writer orientation. The research shows that within 10 years Russian tradition of academic writing switched from being content and writer oriented to predominantly form and reader oriented. Certainly these changes are caused by the influence of international English-language publication requirements but they also signify transformations that happened in the academic community and in Russian contemporary society.

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1. Introduction

Academic discourse, according to Ken Hyland (2009), “refers to ways of thinking and using language which exists in the academy” (p. 1). It means that all kinds of activities in academic sphere are represented in academic discourse which is constructed in numerous academic settings. Thus, as Hyland continues to describe the role of academic discourse in society, it “constructs social roles and relationships which create academics and students” (p. 1) and it embodies all kinds of communication practices that are typical for the academic sphere as well as for society. Communication practices are represented in research topics which are considered important at the moment of publication, in what methods are applied by academics, how they present their arguments and how they connect with their audiences.

During the last decade, the studies devoted to academic discourse have increased immensely. This might be due, as Heller and Morek (2015) point out, to increasing multilingualism in modern educational institutions. They perceive academic discourse as “a situated discourse practice” (Heller, Morek, 2015, p. 174) strongly affected by its contextual realization, institutional regulations as well as community and identity aspects. This means that in global times studies of cross-cultural specifics of academic discourse construction are very important as they provide a better understanding of how culture affects academic discourse and how it might influence academic discourse construction in international settings. Cross-cultural research of academic discourse is devoted to uncovering rhetorical differences in Chinese and American written academic discourse (Shea, 2011; Yang & Cahill, 2008); rhetorical problems faced by Arab students when writing in English (Hamadouche, 2013), cultural transfer experienced by Indonesian authors when writing in English (Kuntjara, 2004); challenges experienced by Spanish-speaking authors when writing academic articles in English (Moreno et al., 2012), etc.

All of these studies bring to light the idea that for scholars it is necessary to realize what kind of differences there are between academic discourse, oral or written, constructed in their native language and in English. The study of these cross-cultural dissimilarities might focus on multiple aspects or examine one aspect viewing it from a contrastive perspective, for instance, concentrating on such discursive categories as cohesion and coherence (Kuo, 1995), reader engagement (Luan & Zhang, 2018), dialogicity construction (Fryer, 2013), use of storytelling (Khoutyz, 2020).

Speaking about specifics of academic discourse construction, it is essential to have certain so-called tools (dimensions) that would allow scholars to measure these cross-cultural varieties and adapt their academic discourse, if necessary, to international publishing requirements. In this respect, Suresh Canagarajah’s book “A Geopolitics of Academic Writing” (2002a) should be mentioned. In this book, the author contextualizes academic writing, describes the conventions of knowledge construction and material constraints that might affect publishing activities within a certain community, and systematizes literacy practices in academic cultures. Canagarajah compares the structure of academic articles in English and Tamil, his native language, at the same time identifying both linguistic tools of discourse construction and such culturally-specific phenomena as the understanding of the role of knowledge in society, as well as the ownership of knowledge and plagiarism, establishing authority, reader / writer responsibility. The last feature, the reader / writer responsibility (or writer / reader orientation), is important for this particular study as it allows to understand who is responsible for deciphering

information presented in the article – a reader or a writer. Depending on this feature, the discourse of the article can be either reader oriented (the writer is responsible for making information clear) or the writer oriented (the reader is expected to make an effort to decipher the information).

Another dimension used in this analysis is the form / content orientation or form / content “approach” (Canagarajah, 2002b), which stresses the importance of structuring the research according to a form accepted by the academic community. The form-focused orientation is described as normative as it accepts a certain structure as a correct form of research presentation (Canagarajah, 2002b). The content orientation (content-focused approach) more vividly reflects conventions of academic writing of a certain community as there is no predetermined structure that it should follow and it depends on the author’s vision about how information should be presented. By using these dimensions this research attempts to uncover how the tradition of academic writing in Russian has been transformed within the last 10 years.

2. Problem Statement

As it has been mentioned above, scholars in their study of academic discourse often focus on its cultural differences. As most high profile international journals are published in English, this cross-cultural research is mostly devoted to identifying differences between academic discourse in English and other languages. However, as Hyland and Jiang (2019) point out, there is a gap in diachronic studies of academic discourse which focus on the historical processes that “have shaped” (p. xiii) academic discourse over time and caused various changes in its construction. By placing these changes in sociocultural contexts, we can find explanations why they happened and gain a better understanding of discursive practices within different social settings. This study addresses this gap in terms of finding out how academic writing in Russian has changed during the last 10 years. To uncover these changes, it is essential to:

- Carry out a contrastive analysis of academic articles published by Russian linguists in the same peer reviewed scientific journal with a 10-year gap;
- Identify the differences in academic writing that occurred in contemporary Russian society within the last 10 years;
- Present qualitative and quantitative results of the analysis illustrating the main differences that happened in the academic writing traditions in Russian within the last 10 years;
- Provide possible explanations for the changes in academic writing traditions by placing the activity of academic writing within the context of academic community and society in general.

3. Research Questions

The main research question addressed in this paper is how academic writing has changed in modern Russian society within the last 10 years under the influence of changing publishing requirements. At the same time, this paper ventures to provide an explanation about possible reasons for these changes in how written academic discourse is constructed in current Russian academic community.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the differences in academic writing traditions that occurred in Russian society during the last 10 years. For this purpose, a comparative analysis of 10 articles published in 2011 and 10 articles published in 2021 is carried out. The uncovered differences are placed within the cultural context looking for the explanations for these transformations. At the same time an attempt is made to attract the attention of those interested in the study of academic discourse to the fact that a diachronic study of academic discourse constructed in the same society and in the same language can provide the researcher with a deeper understanding of processes happening within both academic community and society.

5. Research Methods

The methodology includes methods of discourse analysis, interpretation, classification and statistical analysis.

To identify the differences in Russian academic writing traditions the research corpus was compiled. It consists of 10 academic articles published in 2011 and 10 academic articles published in 2021. The academic articles were chosen for the study based on their importance for academic community in sharing information about the latest research results and thus being “the quintessential academic form of communication” (Canagarajah, 2002b) and a means with the help of which authors’ often compete for “a research niche and audience” (Hyland, 2009, p. 86).

The articles are written by linguists and are devoted to different issues of language study. All the academic articles were taken from the same journal “**Terra Linguistica**” published by Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University. This journal was chosen for the analysis because it publishes “high-quality theoretically grounded and methodologically rigorous empirical research in the humanities and social sciences” (Terra Linguistica) and represents the main academic trends existing in the society at the time of the journal publication. It seems essential that all the articles selected for the analysis are from the same journal: it allows us to see the transformations in academic discourse of an academic article. As the “**Terra Linguistica**” journal was founded in 2010 (it had a different title then), it makes it possible to select for the study the academic articles published with a 10-year gap and observe the transformations in academic discourse construction.

As it was mentioned above, the articles chosen for the analysis belong to the same disciplinary field. By means of discourse analysis these articles were scrutinized paying attention to two dimensions. The form / content orientation, the first dimension, studied a structural organization of information presented in the papers selected for the analysis. If the text of the article is segmented into the visually obvious parts with titles and subtitles, the discourse is form oriented. If there are no visual structural components in the article, the discourse is content oriented.

To study the discourse of these articles in terms of the reader / writer orientation, a number of discursive aspects was paid attention to, namely the focus was on whether the author mentions the aim of the research, methods of the research, how the research corpus was compiled; and whether the author uses data visualization means to summarize the findings (tables, charts, etc.). The main purpose of these

features is to make the information easier for the reader to understand. If these discursive features are present in the article, its discourse is reader oriented. If some or most of these components are missing, for instance, there is no conclusion and/or there is no mention of methods used by the author during the research, its discourse is author oriented. It means that the author of the article decides what information to include in the article.

After the articles were analyzed in terms whether they are reader / writer oriented and form / content oriented, the results were statistically processed. The information then was further interpreted and classified. This allowed to draw conclusions about the changes in academic writing traditions that happened in Russia in a 10-year period.

6. Findings

As it has been mentioned above, the discourse of the papers chosen for the analysis was scrutinized with a special attention paid to two dimensions that characterize academic discourse construction. The first dimension is the form / content orientation. It shows whether the authors are expected to adapt the information about their research into the structure that is accepted in academic community (hence the form orientation). The form orientation feature is typical for international English-language journals which rely on the IMRD structure. John Swales (1990) came up with this abbreviation to describe the main components of a typical academic article: introduction, methodology, results, and discussion. The publication requirements might allow the author to have more sections and/or give titles to sections and subsections.

The content orientation doesn't expect any structural organization of the academic text. Authors are free to decide how they want to arrange the information: they can omit the introduction or conclusion; sections of the academic paper are not visible and expressed implicatively.

The second dimension – the reader / writer orientation – identifies who is responsible for the information to be clear. If academic writing is reader oriented, it means that the author is responsible for making all the information clear for the reader. In such a case, the author tries to foresee all the possible questions that a reader might ask about the research. The author carefully dwells on the methods of the research, on how the corpus was compiled and analysed; the author is expected to make an overview of the previous studies connected with the topic of the presented research to outline his /her personal investment into the research topic, summarize and explain the research results. International English-language journals are typically reader oriented. Following this orientation, academic discourse will change depending on whom the author is trying to address as it focuses greatly on the external context (Canagarajah, 2002b).

If academic writing is writer oriented, it means that the reader is supposed to make an effort to understand the information presented in the research. Therefore, if the information is not clear for the reader, for instance, the author doesn't include the information about methods or how the corpus was compiled, it is the reader's responsibility to reconstruct the information, to fill in the blanks. The writer-focused approach to academic discourse construction has been described as "writing with power", "expressive", and as "an internal monologue" (Canagarajah, 2002b). At the same time it pays less

attention to the external context of communication and doesn't address institutional or other pressures to comply with.

Form / content orientation

The comparative analysis of the academic articles published with a 10-year gap shows that in 2011 academic writing was content oriented. For instance, in one of the articles there is no introduction: the author starts the academic paper describing his research (the main part of the article). The conclusion is practically absent and in 90% of cases is presented with one short paragraph starting with the words *Таким образом* (Therefore). None of the articles published in 2011 is structured into sections.

However, the texts of all the articles published in 2021 have visible sections with titles. Typically the articles consist of introduction, problem statement, methodology, results and conclusion sections. But there are some articles whose authors very carefully segment the discussion section into smaller parts with titles and subtitles. For instance, Gadomski in his article about religious discourse has the following sections: Introduction; Problem statement and methodology; Language of religion as a means of communication; Speaking about genres of religious language; Religion online and online religion; Online prayer as a genre of religious discourse; Conclusion (Gadomski, 2021). It is possible to say that academic articles published in 2021 are form oriented.

Reader / writer orientation

The articles published in 2011 can be described as writer oriented. Only half of the articles included in the research corpus stipulate the aim of the research and methods. Even fewer (20%) of the articles provide explanations about how the corpus was compiled. None of the articles includes visual means (tables, charts, etc.) that summarize the results of the research and make it easier for the reader to understand what the authors have achieved with their study. Thus, this approach to academic discourse construction can be also described as reader responsible.

The articles published in 2021 are obviously reader oriented. 100% of the articles state the aim of the research, describe the methods used by the author, and explain how the research corpus was compiled. More than half of the articles include tables and charts. Their number might vary from one article to another, for example, one of the articles about terminology used by the EU includes 10 tables (Hatsuk, 2021); Zianko's (2021) article about branding terminology includes one table. In any case, when authors try to visualize the results of their research, they demonstrate an attempt to "please" their readers and simplify their understanding of the research findings. This reader focused approach to academic discourse construction can be also described as writer responsible.

The results of the comparative analysis of the academic articles published in the same journal with a 10-year gap are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of the academic articles published in 2011 and 2021

Components of dimensions	Articles published in 2011	Articles published in 2021
Visible structure of the text	0	100%
Aim of the research is mentioned	50%	100%
Methods are described	50%	100%
Corpus is explained	20%	100%
Data visualization means are used (tables, charts, graphs, etc.)	0	60%
Dialogicity means	50%	80%

As we can see from the information presented in Table 1, the tradition of academic writing has changed during the last 10 years: it has switched from being content and writer oriented to being form and reader oriented which is typical of academic writing expected in international English-language journals.

A few words should be said about dialogicity which stems from Bakhtin's works (1981) and, as Hyland (2009) observes, "stresses that all communication, whether written or spoken, reveals the influence of, refers to, or takes up, what has been said or written before while at the same time anticipates the potential or actual responses to others" (p. 47). As a textual category, dialogicity is represented by various discursive means that help to construct a feeling of a dialogue between the reader and the author and make discourse interactive. In academic discourse dialogicity means include inclusive pronouns, directive verbs, rhetorical questions, references to shared knowledge, and asides (Hyland, 2009). Active use of various means of dialogicity shows that the author really cares about the reader, strives to involve him / her into the discussion, and wants to hold his/her interest. This is a feature of the reader oriented tradition that perceives the reader as integral to the writing process (Canagarajah, 2002b) and constructs discourse around the reader's interests. Recent research shows that at the global level there is a current tendency with academic discourse becoming "interactive and dialogic as writers anticipate and take into account readers' likely objections, background knowledge, rhetorical expectations and processing needs" (Hyland & Jiang, 2020, p. 137) .

As the use of dialogicity tools by Russian authors becomes more frequent, it confirms that indeed contemporary academic writing tradition in Russia adapts changes to accommodate the requirements of international publication requirements into academic discourse.

7. Conclusion

The comparative analysis of 10 academic articles published in 2011 and 10 academic articles published in 2021 shows that Russian academic writing has switched from being content and author oriented to form and reader oriented. The discursive analysis of the articles published in the same scientific journal shows that 100% of the articles are now carefully structured just like the articles published in international English-language journals. When presenting the information about their research, the authors are striving to foresee all the possible questions that the reader might have about the research. Therefore, they carefully include the information about the previous studies devoted to the topic of their research, point out the aim of the research and the methods used to achieve the aim; the authors explain how they compiled their research corpus and analyse the examples in detail. More than half of the

articles published in 2021 include data visualization means to make the findings of the research clearer for the reader. The fact that most of the authors are using dialogicity means signifies the attempt to interest their readers in their research and establish a dialogue with them which, in its turn, is a feature of a reader oriented tradition.

These changes in academic discourse construction in Russian can be explained by the influence of international, usually English-language, publication requirements and an overall tendency to transform local scientific discourse into “glocal discourses (with unique rhetorical traits) that are hybridizing the Western notions of scientific rhetoric” (Pérez-Llantada, 2012, p. 7). Moreover, recent study by Hyland and Jiang (2020) shows that there is a considerable increase in academic discourse being reader oriented. As Russian authors try to increase their citation index and become more competitive, they want to publish their research in international peer-reviewed journals and more often incorporate dialogicity tools and other features into their academic discourse.

We can also suppose, taking into consideration the information above, that the changes in Russian academic discourse reflect new developments in how the role of academics (scientists) is perceived in modern society and how their input into present-day science can be articulated and measured.

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