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## RUSSIAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH PAPERS IN INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS: THE URGE FOR ACADEMIC WRITING

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## *Abstract*

English as the internationally accepted language of scholarly publications is used by multilingual scholars as a shared linguistic code to create knowledge. Despite the difficulties encountered by non-anglophone writers, it should be mastered by all the members of the global academic community. However, this code involves not only linguistic, but also rhetorical and publishing conventions common for all disciplines and aimed at alleviating the process of academic communication, which means that mastering them involves metalinguistic competences that can be learned via the native tongue, bypassing English. The bilingual approach to teaching writing for academic and research publication purposes can reduce the differences between the national and international rhetorical and publishing traditions. Drawing on the studies of writing in discourse analysis, social constructivism and literacy studies, the paper focuses on the problems that can be overcome by teaching writing for research publication purposes. Critical discourse analysis of Russian publications demonstrates the differences between the international (English) and Russian writing and publishing traditions. Qualitative analysis of papers in educational research demonstrates that the drawbacks of Russian papers in English result from the lack of academic literacy and awareness of international rhetorical conventions rather than poor command of English. The solution is seen in developing writing for academic and research publication purposes in a bilingual format, which can foster the development of academic literacy and raise the quality of scholarly publications both nationally and internationally.

**Keywords:** Multilingual scholars, academic writing, CDA, scholarly publications.

## 1. Introduction

The slogan publish or perish permeates multilingual academic communities, reflecting the global trends towards internationalization of research. The urge for participating in knowledge creation and sharing valuable research results with the global academic community imposes institutional pressure upon academics and researchers, who need to write their papers in English and meet the requirements of international scholarly journals.

More significant problems, however, emerge not from the traditionally low level of English (according to the Levada-Center national survey of 2015, only one of five Russian citizens with higher education can speak a foreign language, which is not necessarily English), but due to the traditionally opaque and complicated language of national Russian publications. Such faults as wordiness, excessive nominalization, overlong citations or lack of clarity, especially affect writing in humanities and social sciences, where argument is based on a variety of cognitive styles. Moreover, citation rates in these sciences is generally lower because they are more embedded in the cultural context (Bastow, Dunleavy & Tinkler, 2014; Humanities, 2017). Educational research is probably the most problematic research area in Russia because pedagogy was not only culturally, but also ideologically isolated from the global mainstream in the Soviet period, which resulted in methodological and terminological differences that impede international communication in the field.

To overcome these problems, scholars need assistance that can be provided by introducing academic writing into the Russian education. Considering the poor command of English among academics and researchers, the most efficient model of teaching is bilingual, which will sufficiently shorten the way to levelling the rhetorical and publishing conventions between Russia and the West.

## 2. Problem Statement

The problems of Russian scholars result from the differences in traditions of scholarly writing and the lack of awareness of the rhetorical and publishing conventions followed by international journals. These conventions are mostly metalinguistic, and should be considered at a higher level, which involves social and political factors. The solution therefore should be sought through discourse analysis and literacy studies, which are the basis for academic writing methodology and pedagogy.

## 3. Research Questions

The paper addresses the following questions:

What are the main differences between the Russian and international academic writing and publishing traditions?

How can teaching writing for academic and research publication purposes assist Russian scholars in meeting the requirements of international scholarly journals?

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of study is to systematize and formulate the key differences between the Russian and international (English) writing and publishing traditions, and offer a substantial solution to the problem by introducing the bilingual approach to teaching writing for academic and research publication purposes.

## 5. Research Methods

The study of academic writing, including writing for publishing, is the focus of discourse analysis (Flowerdew, 2014; Hyland, 2000; Hyland, 2011; Brizzel, 1999), social constructivism (Cresswell, 2009; McKinley, 2015) and literacy research (Green, Beavis, 2012; Goodfellow, 2004; Scarcella, 2003), the three theoretic approaches to "studying language in action, looking at texts in relation to the social contexts in which they are used" (Hyland, 2011, p.174).

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) investigates the social and political impact of writing on the modern documentary society, the study of which has become of major significance in the age of information (Smith & Schryer, 2009). As texts are the very staff of study and research (Hyland, 2011), they "mediate, shape, construct, and represent knowledge" (Canagarajah, 2002, p.59). Social constructivism, which draws from Vygotsky's theory that human development is embedded in social context and knowledge is produced in interaction (Vygotsky, 1978), helps reveal relationships between academic discourse, writer identity and critical thinking (McKinley 2015).

To become a member of an academic or disciplinary discourse community, writers need to master the rhetoric which is accepted by the community and socialize into it through communication (Flowerdew 2013; Hyland 2007). This requires not only language skills, but also research and analytical skills viewed within a more general concept of academic literacy, which 'involves higher-order thinking – decoding, conceptualizing, inferring, inventing, and testing' (Scarcella, 2003, p.10). Academic literacy therefore provides a framework for supporting academic discourse across disciplines and unified language conventions for scientists, academics and students alike, while academic discourse analysis is a powerful resource of informing methodology and pedagogy in English for academic purposes (EAP), English for specific purposes (ESP) and especially English for research publication purposes (ERPP) (Cargill, Burgess, 2017; Flowerdew, 2014; Kuteeva & Mauranen, 2014; Concoran & Englander, 2016).

## 6. Findings

English as the common core linguistic code and the challenges of multilingual scholars.

In the 21st century, written discourse takes precedence over spoken discourse, and literacy studies focus on writing rather than reading because, as Bazerman (Bazerman, 2009) puts it, "It is by writing that we inscribe our place in the literate world and all the social systems that depend on literacy" (Bazerman, 2009). Researchers agree that it is essential for multilingual scholars to "maintain visibility in the academic forum and contribute more to the core knowledge base", which otherwise will be impoverished (Uzuner, 2008, p.251), and that EAP plays a major role in assisting them in developing the skills they need to publish in English. Flowerdew (2007) admits that all members of the global academic community should be educated about the difficulties experienced by multilingual scholars, and "strategies need to be developed for helping scholars to overcome these difficulties" (Flowerdew, 2007). He considers these strategies as the basis for ERPP and concludes that researchers need to master the language of scholarly publications just as they master the language of information technology (Flowerdew, 2013).

However, the very fact that non-anglophone countries need to invest into English language learning, and that researchers need to make an additional effort in mastering the language not only in writing, but also in doing research, is considered an economic and political disadvantage. Some editors are still biased

against authors belonging to other cultural and academic discourse communities, judging their texts by the quality of the language, which they regard as unclear, requiring considerable editing, or too hard to understand. Because of this, multilingual scholars are urged to apply for specific services provided by anglophone experts to improve their papers, which most often happens under the pressure of their institutions (Canagarajah, 2002; Cargill &Burgess, 2017; Lillis & Curry, 2010; Lillis & Curry, 2015).

Cargill and Burgess (2017, p. xv) formulate two trends in supporting multilingual writers: individual services for researchers ("authors' editors") and pedagogical support for scholars and graduate students. The former includes published self-study guides, writing center tutorials, paid editing or language polishing services provided online or face-to-face; the latter includes courses and workshops provided by universities, writing centers or commercial units.

As these trends are considered economically beneficial for anglophone experts, Lillis and Curry (2010) define them as 'language brokers', 'academic brokers' and 'academic literacy brokers' according to the kind of support they provide to multilingual peers. Academic literacy brokers make significant changes across drafts (e.g. deleting, reorganizing sections of text, strengthening claims by adding modality, etc.) or apply "rhetorical machining" (Swales, 1990) by improving the structure of discourse and eventually polishing the text on the sentence-level. Exploring post-submission official brokering, Lillis and Curry (2015) conclude that "the ideology of English as a single semiotic resource is strong" (Lillis & Curry, 2015).

However, the division of brokers' roles demonstrates that it is not merely the language that multilingual scholars need to be assisted with, but argument and approaches to presenting research results, proper referencing, coherence and cohesion, academic vocabulary and syntax. This implies a wide variety of services but calls into question the necessity of anglophone brokers because most of the problems they cope with are metalinguistic and can be solved regardless of the language.

Academic writing methodology provides a solution to the problem which does not involve anglophone brokers, but proficient native teachers of academic writing, using EAP, ESP and ERPP learning materials and developing their own materials to match specific educational contexts and academic discourses (Flowerdew, 2014; Concoran & Englander, 2016). Notably, published EAP materials is the result of an immense effort made by anglophone researchers in developing methodology for teaching writing across and in disciplines, academic literacy and effective international publishing ethic requirements. It took them more than a century to establish academic writing as a discipline, overcoming institutional, disciplinary and financial barriers within their national educational systems (Bean, 2011; Lynn, 2010; Murphy & Stay, 2010).

The benefit of other countries is that they can use the theory and methodology of academic writing and writing for research publication purposes already developed by anglophone researchers and use it in developing materials for their native languages. Academic writing is mostly about communicating knowledge by clear, coherent, economic and efficacious argument supported by relevant evidence, regardless of the language that is used to deliver the argument to the reader. Viewed through the lens of academic writing, English is just the generally accepted 'clothing' for presenting various scholarly arguments to various global discourse communities, so the listed above rhetorical conventions can and should be developed in other languages.

Drawing on the well-developed methodology, the bilingual approach can help educate multilingual scholars into the international academic writing and publishing conventions much more effectively, and foster change in the national tradition of scholarly publications to meet the requirements accepted by the global academic community. Anglophone experience in assisting Russian educators (Smith 2017; Schleifer et al. 2016) shows that it leads to mutual creative engagement in developing strategies that can be used worldwide. This idea is gaining a momentum in Russia, where writing centers apply the bilingual approach (Bazanova, 2015; Squires 2016; Levchenko, et al. 2017).

The differences in rhetorical and publishing conventions between Russia and the West

Poor command of English is frustrating for Russian scholars today. Even those who are capable of writing in English and meet the requirements of the target journal, need the assistance of 'language brokers'. A social scientist showed me a message from the editor which read as follows: "The problem is the English, not the argument. You engage key analytical issues and your case study is of interest to the readers of the journal. However, incorrect syntax and mistakes in the use of articles, and other errors will distract reviewers from your argument". The editor recommended proof-reading by a native speaker, which was reasonable because the language of academic discourse ought to be clear, otherwise valuable research results will not be communicated to multilingual peers whose English is not necessarily better.

Some scholars manage to avoid paying academic literacy brokers by submitting papers to high-ranking journals and receiving reviews with recommendations which enable them to improve their papers and publish them in more accessible journals. This practice helps overcome the institutional pressure, develop better understanding of disciplinary discourses and language conventions in particular scientific communities, and develop drafting skills essential in mastering ERPP. However, this practice is good only for those who already have experience in submitting papers in English to international journals. For novices, this practice typically finishes with the editor's rejection.

To understand the reasons for rejections, the study investigates papers in educational research, which is probably the most problematic area in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet bloc, who developed their educational systems in long isolation from the global mainstream. Because of this, the differences in scholarly writing traditions are further complicated by methodological and terminological differences, which cause misunderstandings and misinterpretations and frequently lead to low citation rate of Russian publications in English. On the one hand, not many Russian educators read in English well and regularly enough to keep on with the terminology and recent trends; on the other hand, they are used to their own concepts, which are deeply embedded in the national publications and supported by the established authority of Soviet and Russian scholars. To find correspondences between the two terminologies is hard enough, but to reconsider the national system is even harder.

Examples of misunderstandings emerge in Russian publications in English, or, more commonly, in titles and abstracts. Direct translation is the most common reason for such terminological puzzles as personal competences instead of study skills, educational material instead of learning material, pedagogical process instead of teaching and learning, or valuable orientations formation instead of enhancing/evincing values. The Russian concept "образовательное пространство", which permeates today's Russian educational discourse and relates to establishing unified learning conditions and assessment standards across Russia, is directly translated as "educational space". Paradoxically, papers visible on Google Scholar

with these words in the title hardly contain any Russian publications. Other terms that seem similar in meaning to Russian educators, such as learning environment, educational environment, educational context or learning context, may cause even more confusion in Russian translations because they have distinctly different meanings in English. Unfortunately, Russian translators hardly ever check the occurrence of a term by the appropriate academic search tools.

Another problem is the translation of phrases or sentences. They are often unreadable even to Russian educators with good English, and especially destructive in titles; for example, Anthropological synthesis of the methodological bases of pedagogical activity's research, Integration of didactic units of knowledge by methods of activity approach in training of students of higher educational institutions in mathematics or To the question about the modern technologies of the construction of the 'container' model of society: on example of the existence of the religious clothes in the education institutions . When an abstract is written in such "Russian English" with key words that are either non-occurring or confusing, the paper will hardly be noticed by peers. The following one sentence belongs to an abstract: "On the basis of the conducted research it was revealed that application of the theory of integration of didactic units of knowledge and ways of activity in training of students of higher education institutions in mathematics significantly improves quality of the knowledge gained by the students as the main time is allocated for training in ability to solve mathematical problems in the context of integration of the actions corresponding to the process of the solution of these tasks".

The examples show that the problem is rooted not in poor translation, but the Russian tradition of writing texts in obscure, wordy academese. The traditional view of academic writing as "unintelligible to all but a few experts" is widely accepted not only by Russian educators, but also by many scholars in humanities and social sciences. Graff (2000) argues that texts intentionally made more incomprehensible are less frequent, more peripheral and make less impact on the fields, but some journal editors who are 'overworked and underpaid' still accept them because of which some really important ideas are made less central than others (Graff, 2000, p. 1048-1049). This is true of Russian journal editors, who accept obscurely written, wordy and disorganized papers under the pressure of the Russian academic and publishing tradition. Russian scholars would argue that their papers are important because of the ideas but not the language, and refer to their academic statuses as a proof.

The tradition of preserving the Russian academese is so strong that editors sometimes follow the patterns of the Russian discourse even when the papers are written in English by proficient or anglophone writers. An American colleague who teaches ERPP in a Russian university complained how embarrassed she was when her article was "edited" by a Russian journal, and the proof was not sent to her for final approval before publication. The "corrections" turned her native academic English into patterns which she daily fights in her students' assignments. I felt similarly embarrassed when someone translated the title and abstract of my Russian paper into English without informing me. When I do it myself, I typically write two independent texts, and titles may differ in syntax and wording.

Russians with good command of English also find it difficult to overcome the native tradition. For instance, in a paper written in co-authorship with an anglophone writer (Popova & Beavitt, 2017), the Russian co-author's voice can be recognized in sentences like "In other words, one may speak about the absence of free choice in terms of the form of presentation of results of intellectual activity" (Popova &

Beavitt, 2017, p. 57). Russian papers often contain rhetorical faults like excessive nominalization, wordiness, multiple repetition of the preposition 'of' and words from spoken English, such as speak, look or talk. Obviously, our mastering of written academic English will never compare to that of anglophone scholars, but texts written in co-authorship should be polished by the more proficient co-author. Sadly, Russian texts written by Russian co-authors often remain unpolished, and their voices do not sound consonant. The listed drawbacks should be avoided not only in English, but also in Russian, for brevity and clarity do not depend on the national language. Polishing takes an effort, but the effort is worth the result.

The CDA and the qualitative analysis of Russian publications in educational research chosen for this study as a sample (Korotkina, 2018b), provides a systematic view of the major differences between the Russian and international writing traditions. The analysis is based on the author's 15-year experience in editing and translating Russian scholarly papers and 20-year experience in teaching academic writing to graduate students and researchers.

The comparative analysis allows to formulate the following ten major differences between the English and Russian academic writing and publishing traditions:

1. Title and abstract

English: Titles and abstracts are of major importance; they contain key words and present the focus of the paper clearly and concisely; abstracts present research results and implications

Russian: Titles are often wordy, too general or ambiguous; abstracts are sometimes too short, written formally before submission and only prompt at results

2. Format and organization

English: Format requirements are strict; the length of the text and number of references depend on the subject and target audience of the journal; sections are required, each section and paragraph being explicitly organized

Russian: Format requirements are sometimes vague; papers can be too short or contain few references; texts are often unstructured; no special requirements are provided to organization of information within sections or paragraphs

3. Originality

English: All publications are original

Russian: The same papers or considerable parts of previously published research can be published in different journals

4. Purpose

English: The text is written to inform the discourse community; the purpose is to increase the quality of research

Russian: The text is often written to report a publication to the institution; the purpose is to increase the number of an author's publications

5. Focus

English: Content is focused on the topic; the argument is easy to follow

Russian: Frequent deviations from the main topic occur

6. Support

English: Each argument is supported by evidence or references; definitions are provided in the beginning of the text

Russian: Some statements remain unsupported as self-evident; definitions can be omitted or appear in the middle of the text

7. References

English: References are listed in alphabetical order without numeration; inside the text references are given with authors' names and dates of publication

Russian: References listed in numerical order according to their occurrence in the text; inside the text only numbers are given

8. Sources

English: Sources are selected according to the topic and support the argument; paraphrase helps provide critique and keep the writer's voice

Russian: Sources are sometimes excessive or irrelevant; multiple direct quotations are common; long quotations are not elicited by format (font, paragraph)

9. Style

English: The argument is presented in a consequential, clear and persuasive manner with respect to non-specialist audience and other viewpoints

Russian: Texts are often wordy and academese (overloaded with terminology and formal phrases); some statements can be subjective or emotional

10. Language

English: Language is economical and easy-to-follow; nominalization and passive structures are avoided; drafts are thoroughly polished

Russian: Language is often obscure, with excessive nominalization, ambiguous impersonal structures and complicated, sometimes erroneous syntax; polishing the language is considered insignificant.

Teaching writing for academic and research publication purposes can help overcome most of the above problems. However, in some instances it is essential to change the editing and publishing policies. This process has already started, and Russian journals, urged to be included into the international databases, follow the publishing ethics for scholarly journals (Code of Conduct). As a result, such irrelevant Russian practices as publishing the same text or part of it in different journals leads to multiple retractions of papers and affects the authors' reputations. Another example is the tradition of multiple direct citations with insufficient hedging. This problem can be overcome by teaching academic writing and writing for publishing, but it could be made more explicit by establishing the international requirement to elicit long quotations by separate paragraphs in smaller font (Sommers & Hacker 2011). The Russian tradition often allows self-plagiarism, improper referencing and other faults inacceptable in international publications.

## 7. Conclusion

The problems faced by Russian scholars in international publishing are only partially connected with poor command of English. A more significant impediment is the lack of academic writing in the Russian education, because of which researchers develop as writers by imitating the style of already published Russian texts in their discipline. This leads to strengthening the tradition and prevents writers from using

their own, clear and honest voices in national and international publications. To overcome this tradition, Russian scholars need to be educated into the rhetorical, publishing and academic conventions accepted by the global academic community and supported by EAP, ESP and ERPP methodology based on the study of academic discourse and literacy research (Concoran & Englander, 2016; Flowerdew, 2013; Flowerdew 2014). The methodology, successfully approbated in different cultural and social contexts, involves metalinguistic competences and therefore can be applied to the national language and serve as a basis for designing learning materials in both English and Russian. The bilingual approach can be effectively disseminated by university writing centers (Bazanova, 2015; Korokina, 2018a; Levchenko, et al., 2017; Squires, 2016) and contribute to raising the quality of both national and international publications by Russian scholars.

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