

Editorial

Introduction to the Special Issue: English for Research Publication Purposes

English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) can be thought of as a branch of EAP addressing the concerns of professional researchers and post-graduate students who need to publish in peer-reviewed international journals. It is now almost a truism to say that the vast majority of these journals are published in English, and that this presents considerable challenges to users of English as an Additional Language (EAL), regardless of the field in which they work. While EAP programs in universities can address some of these needs in a general way, the real-life, specific issues for academics whose first language is not English wishing to publish in English are often broader and more complex.

The papers in this special issue were initially presented at a conference held to bring together a wider than usual range of stakeholders in ERPP. Those who gathered in January 2007 at the University of La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain for the first conference on *Publishing and Presenting Research Internationally: Issues for speakers of English as an Additional Language* (PRISEAL) included journal publishers, editors and referees, authors' editors and translators, ERPP teachers, materials writers and course designers, and applied linguists working in fields such as genre analysis and intercultural rhetoric.

A strong theme throughout the three days of papers and workshops at PRISEAL was the notion of peripherality — how it should be defined and what its impacts might be on research publication. The papers in this volume represent the range of the specific issues addressed, including how peripherality is manifested on the surface of the text, how outcomes of research into these features can inform ERPP materials design, the social and geopolitical impacts of peripherality, attitudes to the status of current norms around English language use in publication contexts, and the role of other languages in research communication.

The first paper, by John Flowerdew, takes Goffman's (1959, 1968) notion of 'stigma' and uses it as a lens through which to view the situation of EAL researchers seeking to publish their work internationally. In order to resist stigma, Flowerdew ultimately calls on journal editors and peer reviewers to exercise tolerance for the stigmatised forms these writers may employ, thus placing the responsibility for equitable treatment in the hands of the members of Kachru's (1985) 'inner circle'. Rather than measuring acceptability from the L1 English speaker's perspective, Flowerdew suggests that analysis of EAL-authored texts might allow us to distinguish between features that impact on intelligibility and those that show variation from native speaker preferences without putting intelligibility at risk. We have sought to operate with just such a distinction in mind while editing this issue of JEAP.

Sudan, a major player in the field of research into tropical and preventative medicine, is the context examined by Abdullahi ElMalik and Hilary Nesi. Noting that with the arabicisation of the education system there is now a need for training in the English language skills required for international publication, they observe that the advice given to novice researchers by the medical research community in terms of how to present their results is sometimes at odds with actual discourse practices. ElMalik and Nesi's comparison of macro structural and discourse realisations in published research papers shows that Sudanese researchers differ from their British counterparts in the use of hedging and nominalizations in the discussion section. They suggest that differences such as these might be relevant to the self-presentation requirements of publication, and that raising awareness of them might enhance the range of options available to Sudanese researchers to highlight the novelty and significance of their research.

Davide Giannoni also deals with medical research in examining Italian journal editorials. He observes that Italian as a language of medical research publication has largely been displaced by English even in locally produced journals. The editorials in these journals exhibit a number of features that distinguish them from those written by native

speakers of English who write editorials, among them the relationship between titles and opening sentences and the choice of referent in first person markers. For Giannoni these features may signal a greater degree of insecurity and a sense of peripherality in relation to the international community of practice.

Another ‘small’ European language that one might expect to have been overtaken by English is Polish. Anna Duszak and Jo Lewkowicz surveyed Polish academics in three disciplines (Applied Linguistics, Foreign Language Studies and Medicine) to elicit their attitudes to Polish and English as languages of research publication. While choice of language varied across disciplines, the researchers’ level of experience and language expertise, issues of cultural identity and linguistic loyalty also played an important role. Unlike their Italian counterparts, many Polish academics still make a point of publishing in Polish in Poland, though the majority also publish in English.

The final paper, by Françoise Salager-Meyer, proposes strategies that could contribute to addressing both concerns raised in the earlier papers, and those she raises herself. Her paper focuses squarely on the publication of scientific research, reflecting her own extensive experience with medical texts, and presents a passionate appeal for a new way forward for researchers in peripheral locations striving to overcome the many extra challenges they face, both discursive and non-discursive. We hope that the wide range of ideas proposed in this paper will be taken up by JEAP readers for consideration, discussion and action — not least at the follow-up conference planned for June 2011 at Penn State University, USA. Details will be posted on the PRISEAL website (<http://webpages.ull.es/users/ppriseal/index.htm>) as they become available — we invite you to watch this space!

The idea of the PRISEAL community, in all its diversity, taking action in response to issues of peripherality actually arose spontaneously at the 2007 Conference, during the final panel session entitled ‘From here to the future: a research and development agenda?’. The final sentence of the abstract for this interactive session read as follows: “It is envisaged that the session could lead to collaborative projects, grant applications or publication outcomes — or other outcomes not yet envisaged!” Notable among the not-previously-envisaged outcomes was a group decision to draft and promulgate a statement which would record the responses of the attendees to the issues we had discussed, and the sorts of actions we would aim to take as we returned to our various contexts throughout the world. The text of the Tenerife Statement has been through several drafts, and can now be accessed in its final form on the PRISEAL website. We invite you to seek it out and use it in ways that suit your own situation.

One of the aspects focussed on in the Statement is the role of the reviewer, a crucial and often under-recognised one in academic publishing. We would like to thank those who reviewed so professionally papers submitted for this issue. They are Umul Ahmad, Kate Cadman, Belinda Crawford Camiciottoli, Claire Furneaux, Dacia Dressen Hammouda, Martin Hewings, Tim Moore, Janne Morton, Shirley Ostler, Sue Starfield and Paul Thompson.

References

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