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## From Contrastive to Intercultural Rhetoric: Exploring Research Genres in Spanish and English

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### Abstract / Resumen

Intercultural Rhetoric (IR) explores differences and similarities in writing across cultures, addressing challenges faced by second language writers. A key area within IR, languages for research publication purposes (LRPP), intersects with research traditions like genre analysis, discourse analysis, pragmatics, corpus linguistics, and ethnography. This chapter engages in a reflective dialogue, focusing on key issues and debates from the perspective of an experienced scholar, deeply involved in the transition from Contrastive Rhetoric (CR) to IR. It reflects on the risk of attributing writing behaviours to national, cultural, or even disciplinary traditions, emphasising the importance of rigorous research design and a balanced use of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The discussion encourages a shift from focusing solely on scholarly writing by “native” English speakers to embracing English as a lingua franca. This approach deepens our understanding of academic writing for international publication and helps shape effective teaching strategies in an evolving academic landscape.

La Retórica Intercultural (RI) explora las diferencias y similitudes en la escritura entre distintas culturas, abordando los desafíos que enfrentan los escritores en una segunda lengua. Un área clave en este campo, lenguas para fines de publicación académica (LFPA), comparte tradiciones de investigación como el análisis de géneros, el análisis del discurso, la pragmática, la lingüística de corpus y los métodos etnográficos. Este capítulo presenta un diálogo reflexivo, centrándose en

temas clave y debates desde la perspectiva de una académica experimentada involucrada en la transición desde la Retórica Contrastiva (RC) hasta la RI. Reflexiona sobre el riesgo de atribuir los rasgos de la escritura a tradiciones nacionales, culturales o incluso disciplinas académicas, enfatizando la importancia de diseños rigurosos de investigación y del uso equilibrado de aproximaciones cuantitativas y cualitativas. La discusión propone cambiar el foco desde la escritura académica producida por hablantes «nativos» hacia la producida en inglés como lengua franca. Este enfoque profundiza nuestra comprensión de esta con vistas a la publicación internacional y contribuye a diseñar estrategias efectivas de enseñanza en un panorama académico en evolución.

This book chapter presents one of two invited research conversations held at the PRISEAL V conference, providing a platform for established researchers like Ana I. Moreno to engage in a discussion of their work. Ana's long and distinguished research career has focused on examining the variations in rhetorical and stylistic tendencies among academics when writing for publication in English and Spanish. She was the Principal Investigator of the Spanish Team for Intercultural Studies of Academic Discourse (ENE-IDA) Project (Moreno, 2014, revised 2024), in which she participated with her co-author of this dialogue chapter, Sally Burgess, from 2010 to 2014. Ana and Sally's discussion here reflects on Ana's illustrative research trajectory, a journey mirroring a paradigm shift in the study of research genres across languages and cultures. Initially, when the authors began work in the study of research genres in the 1990s, such studies were categorised under contrastive rhetoric (CR). Today, with the recognition of a plurality of research practices and other developments, most scholars in this field describe their work as intercultural. The aim of this scholarly conversation is to encourage others to explore other languages from an intercultural rhetoric (IR) perspective.

## Discussion

**Sally:** As you are aware, our intent is to reflect on key issues and specific academic conversations that you've engaged with in your research. This will involve delving into the theoretical, methodological, ideological, and pedagogical dimensions of your work, elucidating the significance of these conversations for the field. So, Ana, could you start by clarifying what is understood by CR vs. IR, in general, and in languages for research publication purposes (LRPP), in particular?

**Ana:** Certainly. CR is a field of research in second language acquisition that focuses on how “patterns of text and discourse in different languages...vary in structural and in cultural background” (Enkvist, 1997, p. 188). In the context of LRPP, CR investigates these differences by examining how discourse-level writing conventions differ across academic cultures.

However, several developments led to the shift from CR to IR. First, research approaches evolved, incorporating theoretical and methodological frameworks like genre analysis, (critical) discourse analysis, pragmatics, corpus linguistics, and ethnography. Second, a more nuanced notion of writing culture emerged, acknowledging the complex influence of different cultural levels on writing. Third, scholars began to recognise the need to go beyond simple cross-cultural comparisons and focus on intercultural interactions, which are increasingly common in academic writing.

In response, Ulla Connor (2004) introduced the term IR to better capture this broader perspective. IR refers to “the study of written discourse between and among individuals with different cultural backgrounds” (Connor, 2013, p. 2). Unlike CR, which primarily focuses on comparing writing practices across different cultures, IR encompasses both these comparisons and the study of accommodations that occur in intercultural writing interactions.

The branch of IR that I am developing within LRPP aims to identify and explain rhetorical and stylistic accommodations multilingual academic writers must make to achieve their communication goals *interculturally*. For example, a common goal for multilingual writers is to convince editors and reviewers of English-medium journals of the value of their research. IR operates on the premise that multilingual writers may transfer into their English texts features from the writing culture in which they were socialised. Awareness of these differences is crucial, as non-standard choices may lead to rhetorical and interpersonal inefficiencies, resulting in practical challenges, such as a greater need to revise their texts. This often involves adapting rhetorical strategies from their first language (Moreno, 2013).

**Sally:** Could we look more closely at the theoretical aspects of this evolving field? Which key concepts have you encountered?

## Theoretical Issues

**Ana:** Well, I’ve encountered several, but perhaps we could focus on these four: the research focus, the languages involved in the comparison, confounding factors, and the concept of culture. These concepts have indeed played a central role in shaping my own perspective and approach within this field.

### *The Research Focus in IR*

**Sally:** So, let's begin with the first concept: the research focus in IR as opposed to other types of contrastive analysis.

**Ana:** Yes, I remember having discussions about this fundamental aspect with Ulla Connor. The research focus of CR and IR is basically the same, rhetorical and stylistic features. As you're aware, before the 1990s, contrastive analysis primarily centred on identifying grammatical, lexical or pronunciation errors made by "non-native" English speakers/writers when communicating in English. However, it became evident that the writing challenges faced by academic authors when publishing in English were more intricate than mere word choice or tense errors. There was a deeper, more elusive issue at play—one concerning how authors structured arguments, conveyed ideas, and engaged readers. These concerns were beyond sentence boundaries and communicated pragmatic meaning; they had more to do with rhetoric and style and were interconnected with their cultural backgrounds. This realisation led me to change my focus.

**Sally:** How did this realisation shape your research trajectory?

**Ana:** Well, it led me to explore stylistic and rhetorical features of Spanish that could pose communication obstacles for Spanish academic authors seeking to get published in English, highlighting the role of cultural conventions in shaping academic written communication.

**Sally:** Could you give us some examples?

**Ana:** Sure. Let me start with stylistic features. For instance, based on previous ideas that Spanish authors exhibited greater certainty when making claims than their English counterparts, in one of my early studies (Moreno, 1998), I compared how writers of empirical research articles (RA) in business and economics explicitly signalled their points, or claims. What is interesting about this study is that, due to new developments in discourse analysis, I didn't just focus on the usual conjuncts like "Thus" or "Therefore," which typically present claims, but I also examined alternative phrases like "These results would appear to suggest..." This is a phrase that allows authors not only to hedge their point, introducing an element of caution, but also make the premises behind their claim explicit. Both strategies—showing their level of confidence or making their thoughts easy to follow—have pragmatic implications or refer to meanings that extend beyond the sentence boundaries, distinguishing my study from previous contrastive analyses.

Let me now give you an example of a rhetorical feature that comes from a recent English/Spanish cross-cultural analysis comparing the local rhetoric

of Limitation statements within the discussion or closing (DC) sections of empirical RAs in the social sciences (Moreno, 2022). There, I suggest that expressing study limitations serves as a subtle form of self-promotion because it allows authors to present their work as acceptable despite potential weaknesses. However, acknowledging the limitations of their studies poses challenges for Spanish social scientists, first, due to differences in their understanding of the role of limitations, and how they typically frame them within their text both in terms of content and order. So, my study compared the communicative functions employed around Limitation statements within the same rhetorical routine, which is a sequence of functions aiming to make one point, and the order in which these functions occurred. Focusing on these two rhetorical features, which convey pragmatic meaning and transcend sentence boundaries, also distinguishes this study from previous contrastive analysis.

**Sally:** It seems clear that the focus of IR isn't just about improving academic language skills but also fostering better intercultural communication skills. Right?

**Ana:** Indeed. This is why IR findings could play a significant role in advancing ERPP.

**Sally:** You also mentioned that the selection of the languages in a comparison was another theoretical challenge you dealt with. Can you explain why?

### *The Choice of Languages in a Cross-cultural Comparison*

**Ana:** Certainly. When I started researching academic discourse from a cross-cultural perspective, I noticed something intriguing. Most of the existing studies focused primarily on texts written in English, either by “native” speakers or “non-native” speakers, often involving student writers. However, writing in Spanish, particularly by expert writers, received considerably less attention. This struck me as a significant gap in our understanding of the difficulties. How could we fully understand the challenges faced by Spanish-speaking scholars in English academic writing without knowing the conventions of the writing culture they were accustomed to, namely, Spanish academic writing? That's why I centred my research on comparing relevant stylistic and rhetorical features in academic texts composed by expert writers in both English and Spanish.

**Sally:** That approach, I believe, is a way of helping us understand the fundamental reasons behind some of the intercultural communication challenges encountered by Spanish-speaking scholars writing for English-language publications. However, Ana, I think you'll agree that attributing cross-cultural differences in writing solely to variation in writing culture is a complex

endeavour. Many factors influencing writing may intertwine, isn't that the case? I know that this is another theoretical issue you've considered carefully. Could you tell us more?

### *The Difficulty of Controlling Relevant Confounding Factors*

**Ana:** Yes, I wrote on this specific issue in 2008 (Moreno, 2008). My central argument was that to accurately evaluate the impact of the “writing culture” i.e., the independent variable (e.g., English/Spanish), on the use of any stylistic/rhetorical feature, i.e., the dependent variable in an IR study, we need to design our studies very carefully due to the many factors that can affect how writers structure their arguments and employ a language.

**Sally:** Yes, but how can researchers overcome this theoretical problem?

**Ana:** Well, as in other social sciences, we need to take into account—rather than “control,” as is typically done in experimental sciences—as many relevant confounding factors as possible. These will form the so-called “*tertia comparationis*”. Of course, determining what constitutes a relevant factor and what does not is also challenging. This is one of the reasons why we need to do a comprehensive literature review, to help us identify which factors can be considered as “*tertia comparationis*”.

**Sally:** OK. As this is sometimes easier said than done, can you give us some examples of confounding factors that you took into account in the design of one of your own IR studies?

**Ana:** Sure. For instance, in my recent comparison of research promotion in RAs between English-medium and Spanish-medium journals (Moreno, 2021), I considered factors that previous studies had shown or suggested could affect the promotional nature of authors. For instance, the type of study (i.e., empirical as opposed to theoretical, methodological or review); the RA section (i.e., DC sections, as opposed to Introduction or Literature Review sections), the knowledge area (i.e., social sciences as opposed to other natural sciences, engineering or the humanities), the period of publication (the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as opposed to the late 80s-90s), the language variety (e.g., Castilian Spanish as opposed to other Spanish varieties), and other factors like the general topic (e.g., climate change/gender violence).

Because it is necessary to compare like with like, the members of each pair of comparable RAs were matched based on those confounding variables. This allowed me to conclude with greater confidence that, overall, social scientists writing in Spanish were less directly promotional of their own research in RA DC sections than those writing similar sections in English. Additionally, the two groups of authors had different preferences for promoting their work

directly. If I hadn't ensured the comparability of my samples, I wouldn't have been as confident that they were not the cause of the differences I found. Nonetheless, there is always potential for alternative explanations that can be explored through future research. This is how science advances: step by step.

**Sally:** Well, the more we delve into these issues the more fascinating it gets. What other theoretical issues have you come across in your contrastive explorations?

### *The Notion of Culture*

**Ana:** Another is the notion of culture, one of the most challenging concepts to grapple with in IR, not only in terms of its definition but also in determining how it influences rhetorical-linguistic behaviour (Atkinson, 2012, 2014). Only a more nuanced definition of this notion will help us understand how culture connects with writing or how to teach this connection. One of the problems is that there are many levels of culture (national, disciplinary, institutional, educational, family, gender, age, and so on) that may be relevant to the shaping of a particular writing feature. So, one of the most demanding aspects of our research is to determine which level of culture contributes to a difference in a rhetorical or stylistic feature. For instance, the patterns of differences that I observed in my 2021 study of research promotion in RA DC sections could be attributed to intricate interactions at different levels of culture.

**Sally:** What do you mean? Can you give us some examples? I feel that this is an aspect of IR research that is often overlooked.

**Ana:** Okay, so, for instance, the finding that social scientists in English made many more positive statements about their own research than authors in Spanish, regardless of the social science knowledge area, was attributed to a greater observance of the communication principle of "academic modesty" in Spanish than in English. Similarly, but in the opposite direction, the fact that the number of statements of contribution was significantly higher in Spanish than in English was explained by the process of socialisation the Spanish social scientists had undergone, encouraging their use of contributions statements. Thus, the differences in these two rhetorical conventions seemed to be the product of culture at a national level, but we don't know whether these differences also apply in other knowledge areas. My hypothesis is that they don't equally apply, but this would need to be explored by future research.

On the other hand, the conventions for fulfilling other functions seemed to be influenced by disciplinary conventions, which are situated at more specific levels of writing culture. For instance, statements about the applicability of social scientists' research outcomes were overall more frequent in English

than in Spanish. But, when I looked at them more closely, I observed that most of these statements occurred in psychology, sociology, and pedagogy in English, whereas they were very scant in business and economics, both in English and in Spanish. This revealed a clear interaction between two levels of culture: the national culture and the disciplinary culture, as all authors reported that their research was applied to a similar degree.

**Sally:** Yes, a similar type of interaction has been observed in other studies (e.g., Pedro Martín's (2003) research on abstracts). So, we must avoid essentialising writing behaviours by exclusively referring to national, cultural, or even knowledge area writing traditions.

**Ana:** Exactly, and we also need to account for the evolving nature of culture and how some rhetorical features can also be seen as the result of researchers' responses to new communication needs. For example, the lower frequency of statements about the applicability of research in the Spanish business and economics DC sections was probably associated with the lack of a national science assessment policy emphasising impact in the past. However, recent calls for research funding, like the "Retos Investigación" [Research Challenges] scheme by the National Plan for Research, Development and innovation of the Ministry of Science and Innovation (2013), which started to give special emphasis to the transfer of results to society, may have contributed to changing this writing trend. This is a hypothesis that could be tested in future research.

**Sally:** Then, a clear conclusion is that by looking at different levels of culture, IR not only emphasises the importance of considering context in our understanding of style and rhetoric across different cultures but also contributes to offering better explanations.

**Ana:** Exactly. That is another way in which IR helps us bridge the gap between different cultures and languages in the global academic community. Simply identifying differences is not enough. We must also strive to understand why these differences exist in relation to various levels of writing culture in each context.

**Sally:** Right, I think, we've covered enough theoretical problems. Shall we now move on to the methodological aspects that you've encountered when exploring IR topics?

## Methodological Issues

**Ana:** Sure. There's a long list to consider, from using discourse/genre analysis and corpus linguistics to deciding on the number of texts to compare, selecting comparable samples, and defining appropriate units of comparison. Other

key aspects include validating the coding scheme, ensuring reliable results, and incorporating both statistical tests and qualitative approaches.

Sally: Let's see if we can discuss the fundamental ones.

### *The Use of Discourse/Genre Analysis and Corpus Linguistics*

Ana: Well, in IR as understood today, we've used multiple methodological approaches, involving both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. For instance, one approach we've incorporated to identify differences combines discourse analysis methods, which are typically qualitative as they involve in-depth examination and interpretation of texts, focusing on context, meaning, and social implications of language use, with genre analysis and corpus linguistics, which enable the quantitative identification of recurring patterns in representative samples of genres and part-genres. For example, in Moreno (2021, 2022, 2024), I worked with the part-genre of research article discussion sections as textual data, analysing them for one type of rhetorical feature, the communicative purpose of meaningful segments (such as re-stating results, explaining them, stating contributions and positive study features, announcing study limitations and acknowledging them). Here, I was combining the general pragmatics notion of communicative function with the general genre analysis principle of interpreting texts from the specific views of members of the relevant discourse community, gathered through consultation with the authors of the texts themselves. Thus, discourse analysis guided the interpretation of these functions in the specific context of an empirical research article discussion and/or closing section.

To supplement the discourse analysis approach, which typically examines one text, I used genre analysis and corpus linguistics techniques to compile a representative sample of the part-genre in focus. Annotating each segment for its communicative function in a larger number of texts allowed me to identify recurring patterns across languages, and sometimes disciplines, that are not evident in small samples, and to answer each study's research questions. These combined techniques enabled me to draw more generalisable conclusions about writing conventions, a typical aim of genre analysis, since individual writer idiosyncrasies were diluted. In the studies just mentioned, I did so across two contexts, English versus Spanish-medium scientific journals, and various social science disciplines, revealing how writers in different cultural and disciplinary contexts prioritise rhetorical functions differently depending on their academic acculturation and envisaged audience. For example, the patterns of differences that I observed in my 2021 study of research promotion in RA DC sections illustrate this point (see above).

However, this combined approach also has limitations: for instance, identifying rhetorical or stylistic features often requires manual analysis, which in practice restricts the number of texts that can be studied in depth.

**Sally:** And a common question among researchers is how many texts of the same type we need to compare for a sample to be sufficiently representative of a given genre or part-genre. Right?

### *The Number of Texts to Be Compared*

**Ana:** Yes, that's a very complex issue, since the number needed depends on many factors: the aim of the research, the (part-)genre focused on, its degree of conventionality, the length of the texts, and the frequency of the rhetorical feature under investigation, among other factors. But, to offer some clarity, in my study with John Swales (Moreno & Swales, 2018) on strengthening move analysis methodology, we found that regarding RA DC sections across various sciences, no new communicative functions emerged after analysing 12 texts through a combination of qualitative interpretation and quantitative counts. Thus, we concluded that a sample of 12-15 was enough to determine the rhetorical structure of these sections in English and Spanish, and to establish the status of each communicative function in the part-genre, i.e., whether it was obligatory (if it occurred at least once in 90-100 % of the texts), conventional (60-89%), optional (30-59%), or non-salient (<30%).

**Sally:** And when comparing stylistic features, any specific recommendations?

**Ana:** Well, my recommendation is to always carry out a pilot study because the frequency of cases of a given feature found in a pilot sample helps estimate how many texts will be needed in the final study to obtain enough cases. Many statisticians recommend comparing at least 30 cases, so the number of texts required will depend on how frequent the cases found of each feature are in the pilot sample.

**Sally:** Good, now, given the need to take into account relevant confounding factors in an IR study, how can researchers select comparable samples that allow them to assess the effect of the writing context, e.g., English-medium vs. Spanish-medium journals?

### *The Need for Comparable Samples*

**Ana:** Well, this is probably one of the most challenging methodological issues in any IR study design. Initial comparisons of RAs would typically choose texts at random among comparable journals with as high an impact factor as possible across the languages compared, something which is sometimes

difficult to achieve in the case of Spanish journals, if they still exist. In any case, this approach didn't guarantee selecting comparable corpora, as it did not take into account relevant confounding variables like the ones I mentioned before.

**Sally:** So, how can researchers compile more comparable samples?

**Ana:** A better approach, in my view, would be to use random stratified sampling as far as possible to “control” for factors statistically. Basically, this consists in balancing out two samples so that they consist of the same number of texts meeting the same criteria, such as knowledge area, discipline, field, and study type. This type of sampling allowed us to control for variables which could otherwise obscure rhetorical and stylistic patterns attributable to language or culture. Once compiled, the stratified corpora were then used for both functional interpretation and frequency counts of similar text segments across languages.

**Sally:** Okay, but isn't it difficult for non-experts to choose comparable pairs of RAs in terms of their study type and topic? How can this be achieved?

**Ana:** Well, one methodological approach that the ENEIDA Team used was the involvement of expert informants in the collection of our comparable specialised corpora. A problem with this approach was the difficulty with guaranteeing that the expert informants were using a random approach to select the comparable pairs. So that was a limitation of our studies.

**Sally:** Now that you mention the ENEIDA project, in which I participated, I remember having many discussions around the units of the comparison before we started our contrastive analysis of the generic structure of an empirical RA.

### *The Need for Better Definitions of the Units of Comparison*

**Ana:** Oh, yes. I remember. Defining the units of comparison at textual levels of analysis was really challenging, but it was crucial for ensuring our research was rigorous and our findings were meaningful.

**Sally:** Can you illustrate this with one example from one of the studies?

**Ana:** Okay. In my most recent study (2024), I compared the functions on which authors exerted the most or least rhetorical effort in DC sections, and I measured this in terms of the number of meaningful segments employed across comparable samples. To do this, I broke down the DC sections into smaller, comparable units of analysis, which weren't necessarily orthographic sentences, nor specific words or phrases. Instead, they were text fragments that contained at least one meaningful proposition, interpreted through the

lens of the coding scheme for DC sections. This process combined qualitative judgement with the consistent application of rhetorical functions previously validated by expert members of the corresponding discourse communities.

**Sally:** Yes, I remember that this decision was a bit of a breakthrough, as most CR studies were using the sentence as the unit of analysis, weren't they?

**Ana:** Yes, and our approach to segmentation was also risky because it would yield results that weren't immediately comparable to those from studies adopting different units of analysis. For instance, in view of a sentence like "The attempted femicides were an independent sample, giving important validation for the revised DA [questionnaire].", most researchers would have considered it as one unit because it's a sentence. But, in my study, I segmented it into two units because I interpreted the first clause as describing a key feature of the study (one of the possible steps in the coding scheme) and the second clause as highlighting a positive feature of the study (another distinctive step). So, these segments represented two different functions in our coding scheme.

**Sally:** And what about the coding scheme? Isn't the design of a valid coding scheme another problematic issue?

### *The Need for Validating the Coding Scheme*

**Ana:** Indeed. To propose a valid coding scheme, we need to understand academic genres as insiders. For instance, in my recent study with John Swales, we used a sample of the authors of the texts we compared to validate the coding scheme for the communicative functions in RA DC sections (Moreno & Swales, 2018). Here, the procedure was qualitative, involving expert consultation and feedback on my preliminary annotations of their texts. This validation helped ensure that the functions identified reflected both the communicative intentions and rhetorical conventions recognised by members of their own academic communities. Basically, our goal was to ensure the coding scheme captured how authors expressed what they did with their words to achieve the purposes they aimed for through the various meaningful segments in their texts.

In relation to this coding scheme, I'd like to highlight two important features that made it more suitable for cross-cultural comparisons than coding schemes meant only for English: First, it differentiated those segments advancing relevant propositional meaning (i.e., the moves-steps proper) from those segments with supporting roles, such as announcements (like "There are various limitations to this study") and elaborations (i.e., clarifications, exemplifications and justifications). Second, it encouraged interpretation of

the various meaningful segments at the more specific level of the step before classifying them at the more general level of the move.

**Sally:** Yes, I remember having initial concerns with adopting such an approach.

**Ana:** I know. Our segmentation method was novel. My major concern was that our truly functional approach would yield results not immediately comparable to those from studies adopting a formal unit of analysis like the sentence. However, this is what happens with breakthroughs, and the risk was worth taking because it solved the long-standing problem of comparing what was often not comparable cross-culturally, I mean, the orthographical sentence. So, it allowed us to make more valid comparisons across different cultures and languages and improved the reliability of our results.

### *The Need for Reliable Results*

**Sally:** Right, but isn't it more difficult to reliably segment texts into meaningful propositions, which may be shorter than a sentence, than into orthographic sentences, usually signalled by punctuation markers?

**Ana:** I completely agree with you. The sentence is an orthographic unit even a machine can identify, whereas identifying a meaningful proposition involves interpretation, which can be more subjective. That is why the segmentation work still needs to be done manually, but it needs to be reliable.

**Sally:** And aren't results less reliable when the segments are labelled for steps rather than for moves?

**Ana:** Here, I disagree. In fact, if we consider the coding schemes proposed for DC sections in the literature, there is much less consensus on the labels used by different researchers for similar types of segments when the communicative functions are formulated at the move level than at the step level. Why? Because interpretation of moves, which are more general communicative functions, has been more open to a variety of conceptualisations than interpretation of steps. The reason is that steps are specific realisations of moves which are more connected to the actual words used, making it easier for researchers to conceptualise their functions more similarly.

**Sally:** And which solutions are there to solve the problem of possible subjectivity in the segmentation and interpretation of segments?

**Ana:** Well, the best practice in IR research nowadays is to involve at least one independent analyst, as you did in your 2002 study (Burgess, 2002). However, I've found that just testing the reliability of the labelling procedures isn't good enough to guarantee replicability. To do so, we need to test the reliability of both the labelling and segmentation procedures used across the analysts

involved, ideally through inter-rater agreement checks. In my latest studies, I involved the authors of the RAs themselves, using their interpretations as a gold standard to refine the coding scheme accordingly. This made the segmentation and labelling in those studies almost 100% reliable. Of course, the same kind of tests can be performed with trained independent analysts. And my recommendation is to do so, after obtaining high levels of intra-rater reliability, that is, agreement with oneself.

**Sally:** Okay. Now, when differences are reliably identified, how can IR researchers determine whether these are significant or not?

### *The Use of Statistical Tests*

**Ana:** That's another important methodological improvement. To discuss the cross-cultural differences obtained in some feature, many previous CR studies drew conclusions based on comparing relative frequencies of occurrence across the two languages. However, that approach was often inaccurate. So, more recent IR research studies have drawn on statistical tests to discern whether the differences obtained were statistically significant. For example, in Moreno (2021, 2022, 2024), chi-square tests were used to examine whether the observed differences in frequency distributions across languages could be attributed to chance or reflected systematic cross-cultural variation. Furthermore, when calculating relative frequencies, calculations were made in relation to the unit of comparison, that is, the meaningful proposition, rather than in relation to the number of words, as is sometimes found in the literature.

**Sally:** Another development you mentioned was the use of qualitative approaches in IR. What are these and when are they typically used?

### *The Use of Qualitative Approaches*

**Ana:** Well, qualitative approaches are employed at various stages in an IR study: notably when examining the content of texts to identify and categorise specific elements (meaningful segments or stylistic features) within them. At that stage, the method is qualitative because it is subjective, interpretive, and descriptive, focusing on understanding pragmatic meanings in context. Once statistically significant differences are obtained in the patterns observed across two languages through quantitative methods, such as numerical counts and statistical techniques, the next logical step in the IR framework is to explain the differences. This is another stage where qualitative methods such as questionnaires, interviews, observations, focus groups, talk around texts, case studies, and so on, come into play. These methods assist researchers in uncovering the cultural aspects (values, norms, learning

processes, among other factors) that may have influenced the use of the rhetorical or stylistic features under comparison. In doing so, they complement the quantitative phase by helping to explain not just whether rhetorical differences exist, but why they may occur and how writers understand their own choices. Adding this explanatory component was key in the transition from CR to IR.

**Sally:** Having covered such a wide range of methodological problems, can we now move on to the ideological issues?

## Ideological Issues

### *The Shift to ELF as Opposed to English as L1*

**Ana:** Absolutely. One of the most significant ideological shifts influencing my transition from CR to IR is the recognition of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in ERPP. This shift acknowledges that English is used globally as a common language of scientific communication among researchers from diverse cultural backgrounds. And it's ideological because it challenges the conventional "native" speaker norm as the sole "correct" one and recognizes the legitimacy of different Englishes in research publication contexts. So, IR research has moved from studying "native" English academic writing to examining how English is used as a lingua franca, in English-medium journals.

**Sally:** Finally, what are your main insights about the pedagogical implications of IR results?

## Pedagogical Issues

**Ana:** Well, IR researchers indeed assume that the contrastive results obtained by their studies may carry significant pedagogical implications.

One implication is the relevance of raising awareness of these differences among scientific authors for whom English isn't their L1. Given the necessity of getting a substantial amount of their research published in English-medium publications and that most gatekeepers still expect manuscripts to follow Anglo-American academic writing conventions, another implication would be the convenience of accommodating to international writing practices to have better chances of publication success. This implication is obviously drawn from a pragmatic standpoint. However, from a socio-critical perspective, it could entail devaluing the rhetorical practices of "non-Anglo-American" scientists in favour of dominant conventions.

Hence, in my opinion, a critical-pragmatic approach (Harwood & Hadley, 2004) to teaching English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) could present a balanced pedagogical solution for these scholars because it would not only address difference but also access. This approach could involve raising their awareness of relevant cross-cultural variation in academic writing, improving their understanding of the reasons underlying these differences, and revealing the potential impact of an inappropriate transfer of certain rhetorical and stylistic features typical of their L1 writing to writing in English for a global audience. This approach would empower them with knowledge and tools that may help them make more informed choices and be more flexible writers, able to adapt to their audiences' expectations better, both in English and in their L1. For Spanish social scientists, this is especially relevant as they still publish in both languages.

In other words, incorporating results on cross-cultural variation in rhetorical and stylistic features that pose difficulties for Spanish authors can, in my view, enhance the effectiveness of teaching. I have started testing this approach in my own institutional context and the results are promising. However, we need to do more research to identify relevant writing challenges at these levels and to investigate them through comparative analysis.

## Conclusion

This research conversation charted the transition from contrastive rhetoric to intercultural rhetoric research in writing for research publication purposes, prompted by the insightful questions and debates raised throughout the discussion. The exploration covered theoretical, methodological, ideological, and pedagogical dimensions, emphasising the importance of more nuanced understandings of culture, meticulous research design, the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and a shift from a focus on “native” English-speaker writing to embracing English as a lingua franca. Additionally, it highlighted a critical-pragmatic approach to teaching ERPP, addressing both difference and access.

Intercultural studies of writing for research publication purposes offer the researcher many rewards. They have the potential to enhance our grasp of academic writing and to shape our teaching strategies. Those considering research avenues in applied linguistics are invited to join this research tradition, to build upon existing work and to contribute their distinct perspectives. This will help advance our understanding of IR and foster better communication within our global academic community.

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