Plurilingual Scholarly Writing for Publication: Politics, Practices, and Pedagogies

CRLCC Brown Bag Lunch Series
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James Corcoran
Assistant Professor, ESL & Applied Linguistics
York University, Canada
Agenda

• Researcher Intro
• Context
• Frame
• 2015 MM Case Study Findings
• 2019 Qualitative Case Study Initial Findings & Discussion
• Questions for Consideration
• Future Avenues
• Chat
James Corcoran

http://profiles.laps.yorku.ca/profiles/corcora2/

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/J_N_Corcoran
The ‘publish or perish’ adage has been revised to ‘publish in English or perish’ in many parts of the world. The importance of publishing in English even when that is not the researcher’s native language is seen in Asia, Latin America and Europe (Englander & Uzuner, 2013; Flowerdew, 2013; Hyland, 2015).

In this presentation, I discuss how this research publishing world...affects nations, universities and individual researchers...[and the impact of] growing efforts to mount pedagogical programs that support researchers who use English as an additional language (EAL) — whom we henceforth call plurilingual users of EAL — so that they can publish their research findings in international journals.

The multiplicity of such pedagogical efforts has created a burgeoning field called English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP).
The Case: MEX U is classified as one of the best options for higher education in the Spanish-speaking world.
Comparison between total and “visible” scientific products at MEX U

Adapted from MEX U Statistics, 2016

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Scientific Productivity</td>
<td>6741</td>
<td>7926</td>
<td>9856</td>
<td>12,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles published in indexed journals</td>
<td>2027</td>
<td>3136</td>
<td>3779</td>
<td>6755</td>
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Scholarly writing for publication course at MEX U
Three pillars of the MEX U ERPP Course

Principles of academic publishing

Academic research article style & structure

English academic grammar

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# MEX U Course Content

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstracts</td>
<td>Overview of structure</td>
<td>Parts of Speech</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethical issues</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Word Order</td>
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<tr>
<td>Readership and Audience</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>Verb tenses and aspect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citation and influence</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Sentence structures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citations</td>
<td>Results/Discussion Conclusion</td>
<td>S-V agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>References and bibliographies</td>
<td>Concision and coherence</td>
<td>Active versus Passive Voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submission cover letter</td>
<td>Figures and Tables</td>
<td>Punctuation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Summarizing, paraphrasing, synthesizing</td>
<td>Common sentence errors</td>
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Course Implementation

• Instructors are science editors, applied linguists, EAP teachers

• 3-week & 2-week intensive (40 hours per week)

• Completed manuscript PRIOR to beginning course

• Individual feedback on manuscript PRIOR to course

• During-course activities include: lecture, workshop, individual analysis of manuscript, individual consultation with instructors on manuscript

• Visit by Editor of a major journal in the discipline

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2015 Case Study Research Questions

• What are Latin American scientists’ experiences with scholarly writing for publication?

• What are these scientists’ attitudes towards English?

• What are these scientists’ challenges with achieving publication in English?

• What is the impact of an intensive ERPP course in addressing their scholarly writing challenges?
# Overview of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Post-course Survey</th>
<th>Semi-structured Interviews</th>
<th>Average # of Publications in English</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Supervisors</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Biological Sciences)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Students</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Biological Sciences)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Journal Editors</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total participants for each phase of data collection | 55 | 47 |
Findings from 2015 Case Study: Attitudes towards English
Language use in knowledge production

Spanish

- National grant applications
- Conversation re: data and analysis
- Ease, accuracy, and/or complexity of expression
- Disseminate research to national or regional audience

English

- Future remuneration from merit-pay bodies
- Academic advancement: graduation; hiring
- Recognition and status leading to potential professional fulfillment
- Connection to international audience

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Attitudes towards English

**Functional-Rational-Natural**
"English is used for writing science. We must learn how to write in English in order to be understood by other scientists and be a good scientist. It's like learning a type of computer software. We have to learn to write in English as part of the job."

**Resistance**
"It's the language of our imperial neighbours. I use it but I don't like it. We should be able to use our own language to talk about our issues."

**Bias**
“They send back a message saying check your English and re-submit...when we submit the same article with an English co-author they accept with no question...”

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Perceptions of bias against plurilingual scientists at international journals

“I am not imagining this. I have seen [reviewer comments like] ‘This is very badly written. If they cannot properly write in English how can they do an experiment?’ Who the hell do they [reviewers] think they are? Awful. I would add it's not only the language, I think there is also prejudice concerning your affiliation (institutional)...so if you are from let's say Mexican institution you are subject to doubts but if you are affiliated with UC London then it's ok.”

-José, Senior Health Scientist
## Competing perceptions of fairness in global scientific knowledge production

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Plurilingual EAL Authors</th>
<th>Anglophone L1 Editors</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prejudicial adjudication is limiting potential advancement / dissemination of scientific knowledge</td>
<td>Plurilingual scientists’ English is prejudicing their publication success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bias of Anglophone editors creates inequality</td>
<td>Systemic lack of resources creates occasional inequality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efforts are not being made to change an unequal, inequitable situation</td>
<td>Individual and group efforts are being made to change an occasionally unequal, inequitable situation</td>
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Findings from 2015 Case Study: Challenges & Impact
English Publication Challenges?

- Managing submission and review process
- Time demands and increasing publishing expectations (established)
- Lack of exposure to ERPP and limited genre knowledge (emerging)
- Managing linguistic/cultural differences
- Clarity of expression: purpose, relevance, importance
- Lack of material and physical writing support

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**Challenges?**

- Managing submission and review process
  - Somewhat effective
- Time demands and increasing publishing expectations (established)
  - Somewhat effective but insufficient
- Genre: very Effective.
  - English & ERPP: Effective but insufficient

**Managing linguistic/cultural differences**
- Very effective

**Clarity of expression: purpose, relevance, importance**
- Very effective

**Lack of material and physical writing support**
- Effective by insufficient

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**Clarification**

**English Publication**
Five years later...Going long:
Charting the progression of L2 writing support, beliefs and practices

“Lifespan Writing Research examines acts of inscribed meaning-making, the products of it, and the multiple dimensions of human activity that relate to it in order to build accounts of whether and how writers and writing may change throughout the duration and breadth of the lifespan.”

(Writing through the Lifespan Collaboration, 2019)
Research Questions

What is the longer-term impact of the ERPP course on these scientists’ research writing outcomes, practices, and beliefs?

How has the MU ERPP course changed over time?

How have scientists’ writing practices changed over time?
Critical Plurilingual Lens

Critical Orientation to Knowledge Production

Plurilingual Orientation to Knowledge Production

Latin American Scientists' Scholarly Writing Beliefs & Practices
Framework: Critical plurilingualism

A CP orientation welcomes linguistic and discursive variation and critiques normative (monolingual) epistemologies, ontologies, and ideologies that may reify particular relations of power (Atkinson, Crusan, Matsuda et al., 2015; Bennett, 2014; Canagarajah, 2016; Cummins, 2009; Curry & Lillis, 2019; Hamel, 2013; Jenkins, 2014; Lillis & Curry, 2015; Lin, 2016; Marshall & Moore, 2018; Piccardo, 2013). Such a plurilingual orientation necessarily attends to issues of (evolving, hybrid) scholarly identities among those writing research in an additional language, positioning these actors not as deficient but rather as pluri-competent users of English as a language of scholarly communication. Importantly, the notion of pluri-competence can be extended to all facets of plurilingual EAL scholars’ knowledge production, with languages seen as part of plurilingual scholars’ dynamic repertoire of communicative resources (Englander & Corcoran, 2019), thus challenging “…discourses of deficit, (in)competence, and [open[ing] spaces for a plurality of languages…” (Marshall & Moore, 2018, p. 21) in scientific knowledge production.
Design, Participants, Methods, and Analysis

• Qualitative case study, biographical (narrative), responsive

• Document analysis – MU Policy & Curriculum docs.; Participant CVs

• Two 90-minute, semi-structured interviews with 2 former curriculum designer/instructor/editors, two emerging scientists and two established scientists

• “Grounded” (constructivist) coding and analysis of initial interviews (2015) and follow-up ones (2019) with Nvivo 12
Findings & Discussion

• Pedagogical support still relatively scant across MU and need for continued offering of workshops and courses for scholars across disciplines appears as great as ever.

• Greatest long-term impact of course appears to vary across cases: increased genre awareness and writing processes (emerging); ability to navigate submission & review and support graduate students (established).

• Evidence of dynamic, plurilingual practices abounds even for those involved in a (sub) discipline with high expectations for publishing in English and these continue to shift / evolve over the trajectory of scientists’ careers.

• Some anecdotal but little “solid” evidence of long-term impact of course on scholarly writing for publication outcomes.

• Some softening of initial beliefs regarding equitable relations of power; however, suggestions of inequality and inequity endure.

• Even within a discipline, particularly one known for its interdisciplinary orientation, writing practices and expectations differ between individuals and shift over time and space.

• There is a greater need among stakeholders to pluri-conceptualize global scholarly writing – even when the final product is in English – in an era of monolingual (English language) hegemony.
Questions and Future Avenues

• How can (should?) institutions in peripheral locales (e.g. Mexico) support individual scholars’ plurilingual scholarly writing practices? What could / should this look like, particularly in light of these findings?

• Further (ethnographic?) L2 writing research needed to understand not only language choice of plurilingual scholars but also practices that accompany such choices and how these shift over time and space.

• What are the implications of this work for scholars working from ”centre” locations such as at North American universities?

• I am looking to shift my investigation on this front to plurilingual scholars writing for publication in Canada.
Recommendations for addressing inequitable relations of power in scientific knowledge production

• Increase pedagogical SWP offerings across disciplines (in Spanish and English)

• Take a more critical, plurilingual approach to pedagogy that views language as resource rather than “problem”

• Make vetted translation and editing services readily available to scholars

• Increase number of bilingual scholarly journals

• Modify institutional policies so that they explicitly value (to a greater extent) Spanish language publications
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<th>Critical Plurilingual Pedagogies: “Identify and Situate”</th>
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<td>Identify discourse community norms</td>
<td>Historically situate norms and suggest alternatives</td>
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<td>Identify structural components of a research article</td>
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<td>Analyze and promote diversity of expression</td>
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England & Corcoran, 2019
4 Key Assumptions Examined

1. English is the natural language of science, or, if not “natural,” at least the logical/only/best language of science.

2. To get published in English, the language of a manuscript must be perfect.

3. Publish or perish is the only way, or the best way, to evaluate good scholarship.

4. Reviewers and editors are never biased or discriminatory, and scientific rigour is the only criteria for acceptance.

Corcoran, 2019
Challenging Decisions and Questions

• How much genre-focus should be “sacrificed” in the name of attention to CRITICAL instruction?

• How can instructors balance the need for immediate assistance in lieu of sustained writing practices and processes?

• How can we get funding for such interventions without short-term evidence of improved English publication metrics?

• How “critical” and “plurilingual” an approach is this, really (neoliberal multiculturalism!)?

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Selected References


Publications related to this study


Re-conceptualizing critical pragmatism: Enacting critical plurilingual approaches

- Genre Awareness
- Critical Language Awareness
- Sustainable Writing Practices

Englander & Corcoran, 2019
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Englander & Corcoran, 2019
Two books now available

Englander & Corcoran, 2019