

Academic Writing in Czech and English

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Problems of identity are particularly keenly felt by individuals or groups who find themselves left outside what is considered the norm in those parts of society or the world which appear to be the bearers of culture. (Pynsent 1993: vii)

Abstract

Recently, Czech academic discourse has been influenced by the growing expansion of English academic norms. What has been their reception in the Czech academic setting? The article is an attempt to approach the question from the linguistic point of view as well as from the point of view of a Czech academic writer, particularly in social sciences and humanities.

The distinctions between the Czech and English writing norms originate from different approaches to the phenomenon of writing in the development of (1) theoretical linguistics, (2) applied linguistics and pedagogical disciplines, (3) in the treatment of academic writing against the background of other types of writing or styles in language, (4) in historical circumstances of the development of the so called intellectual styles, and generally, (5) in cultural aptitudes and inclinations manifested in the writing patterns.

Contrastive rhetoric, as any new discipline, tends to stress its achievements: to focus on differences in writing cultures, not on their similarities. It is a linguist's task to find distinctive features and to contrast the established rhetoric principles. However, the differences are bridged by the language users themselves, due to their desire to make themselves understood. The scientific

community is governed by the wish to share, to have common knowledge and to contribute to it. The article follows this process in the Czech setting.

1. Introduction

The scientific community is governed by the wish to share, to have common knowledge, to contribute to it and to cultivate it. This is the starting point for those academic writing theoreticians who attempt to investigate the mechanisms that cement the academic writers' community together, to describe the processes of mutual interaction among its members and to promote the processes of the acquisition of its norms (Ventola 1992). There is no doubt that English has become the world's predominant language of research and scholarship, and the predominance of English is currently growing at the expense of the major European and non-European languages. The forms of transmitting knowledge vary across languages and cultures and consequently an increasing number of scholars are confronted with the question: what should the non-native English writer adopt and what should he/she abandon in order to make himself/herself understood, to join the English writing scientific community and how to meet the community's expectations?

2. Speech community and discourse community

Contrastive studies of different English and non-English patterns of discourse processing in academic settings seem to follow two paths that coincide only partially: one of them leads to surpassing barriers and to the exchange of the discourse of the scholarship more directly, successfully promoting an acquisition of the existing norms of native English speakers, the other one makes detours examining corners with locally specific species, aiming at the maintenance of their diversity.

The problem of academic language norms and its variation across languages may be illuminated by exploring the sociorhetorical concept of discourse community (see Swales 1990: 67ff) and investigating its complex relation to the concept of speech community. Even though Swales is rather cautious in answering the question of whether an academic setting constitutes a discourse community that meets the defining criteria that he has proposed (i.e. common goals, participatory mechanisms, information exchange, community specific genres, a highly specialized terminology and a high general level of expertise) (Swales 1990: 24-32), the question itself is very stimulating. A

discourse community assumption undoubtedly offers a useful frame in which many aspects of everyday scientific activities may be examined.

Swales's notion of discourse community is thoroughly elaborated and explicitly formulated, and even those (including me) who were not for many reasons accustomed to thinking over their discourse processing activities in sociorhetorical terms like those suggested by Swales, his predecessors as well as his followers, can feel initiated (to use one of the sociolinguistic terms marking the field of discourse community).

This is due to the fact that the discourse community theory develops within structuralist and functionalist approaches to language and social phenomena. Following the line of the exposition of discourse community and the definition of its constitutive features, we observe that it focuses on analogous issues, as structuralist theories did including the Prague School theory, when trying to establish the structural and functional framework of the language community concept. In Prague School terminology, we address the phenomena of the structure and function of a system, its horizontal and vertical relations and hierarchical patterning, its centre and periphery, its homogeneity and heterogeneity, its normativity and variation, the principles of balancing and violating the balance, the processes of automation and deautomation, and consequently, its static and dynamic character, etc. (cf. Daneš 1987).

Though I am not sure whether all these aspects apply to the discourse community concept, I suppose that at least some of them may offer further insights into the concept of discourse community and its differentiation from speech community. Swales (1990: 24ff) mentions several reasons for separating the two concepts: speech communities are centripetal (they tend to absorb people into the general fabric), whereas discourse communities are centrifugal (they tend to separate people into occupational or speciality-interest groups). A speech community typically inherits its membership by birth, accident or adoption; a discourse community recruits its members by persuasion, training or relevant qualifications. A discourse community consists of a group of people who link up in order to pursue objectives that are prior to those of socialization and solidarity, which are characteristic of a speech community.

3. Discourse community and the language-and-culture problem

Patricia Bizzell points out in her article "What is a discourse community" (forthcoming) that 'discourse community' borrows not only from the sociolinguistic concept of 'speech community', but also from the literary-critical concept of 'interpretive community', thus relating the issues of linguistic and

stylistic conventions to those of interpreting experience and regulating the world-views of group members (see the discussion in Swales: 1990: 29ff).

Moreover, a hypothesis that states that differences in languages are linked to differences in cultures, ways of life and thought underlies the philosophical assumptions on an ontological unity of language and life, nation, civilization and spirit (cf. Humboldt's intuitive treatment of the question of the spirit of language and the discussion of the issue in Prague structuralist theory of language and language comparison, particularly in connection with Mathesius's (1929: 135, 138) postulate of the linguistic characterology of the language). Although the hypothesis of language-and-culture interdependence is often treated as intuitive and even non-scientific, it appears again and again (e.g. Sapir's and Whorf's hypothesis about the cultural consequences of linguistic distinctions). Contemporary linguistics, with its anthropological and ethnographic orientation, seems to come closer to grasping systemic relations between differences in languages and ways of thought.

Before, whenever linguistics had tried to discover the link between the formal and spiritual features of language, the argumentation did not sound very convincing (Chalupný 1932). Those efforts had been made through the exploration of various low-level linguistic phenomena, such as phonemes, morphemes and words. Contemporary linguistics, however, does not use phonemes, morphemes or lexemes to build its picture of the 'spirit of language'. Rather, it investigates higher level phenomena, such as the rules of text processing and interpretation strategies which may differ between speech communities and their cultures (Kaplan 1966, 1987; Connor 1987).

4. Reception of norms of a discourse community

The discourse community concept may also be questioned from the point of view of an individual: What entails participating in a discourse community? I will attempt to approach the question from the point of view of a Czech academic writer.

When Johan Galtung (1981, 1985) compares saxonic, teutonic, gallic and nipponic intellectual styles, he notices that Eastern Europe, including the former Soviet Union, found itself under the influence of the teutonic intellectual style due to a long historical tradition. This influence, mediated and transformed via the Russian intellectual tradition, hit the Czech academic thought. Czech scholarship has also developed through direct contact with German thinking, and the Czech academic register inherited a lot from the German intellectual style, its syntax and terminology as well as from its general ideas on the purpose of academic discourse (I will discuss this in Section 5). Thus, due to its Slavonic

origin, Czech is ready to form similar terminology and sentential and textual patterns with those that are inherent to Russian. However, Czech is also typologically disposed to tolerate analogous word-formation, and sentential and textual patterns of expression that are characteristic of German. Recently, Czech academic discourse has been influenced in a massive way by the growing escalation of English academic norms, and exposed to the requirements of discourse communities that are governed by these norms. What has been their reception in the Czech academic setting?

Each language builds a picture of a foreign language, and each culture builds a picture of a foreign culture. As Bakhtin (1986: 507-508) states in one of his contemplations on the cross-cultural problem: there exists a widespread idea that one can enter into the spirit of another language and find one's footing in it, the idea of assuming a foreign language's and culture's optics. This is undoubtedly a very important moment in the understanding of a foreign language and a foreign culture. It is even a necessary condition in the acquisition of a language and culture, if we are supposed to become the bearers of this language and culture. This, however, results in a mere doubling which brings about nothing new. On the other hand, it is a great advantage to be outside, in time, space, and culture. Any culture reveals itself fully only in the eyes of another culture. There appears a dialogue, surpassing the one-sidedness and closeness of cultures. We ask the other culture questions which this culture would not have asked itself, and in the other culture we look for answers to our own questions.

I will allow myself to express several hypotheses concerning the reception of the English writing culture stemming from my observations on English writing norms as they appear against the background of my footing in the Czech writing culture.

5. Czech and English writing cultures

The distinctions between the Czech and English writing norms originate from different approaches to the phenomenon of writing in the development of (1) theoretical linguistics, (2) applied linguistics and pedagogical disciplines, (3) in the treatment of academic writing against the background of other types of writing or styles in language, (4) in historical circumstances of the development of the so called intellectual styles, and generally, (5) in cultural aptitudes and inclinations manifested in the writing patterns.

5.1. *Writing in theoretical linguistics*

Linguistic theories of text processing have developed from different roots and have been shaped through unequal motivations. Anglo-Saxon linguistics, due to its philosophical tradition of a pragmatic approach to language, naturally aimed at handling the phenomena of text composing in terms of interaction, and even transaction from sender to receptor, building up (a) the theory of writing which has comprised the achievements of the theory of communication and discourse and (b) its pedagogical application. In contrast, the Czech text linguistic activity appears as an organic continuation and development of 'classical' ideas and attempts of the Prague functional-structural school. According to Daneš (1993a), the following two conceptual domains seem to be highly relevant to text studies, among the Praguian research resources, assumptions and attempts: Firstly, functional stylistics (including Mukařovský's poetics and aesthetics), and, secondly, the conceptual cluster of the functional sentence perspective (in Mathesius's, Firbas's and Daneš's treatment), leading to the theory of thematic progressions. Although the FSP and TP approach to text processing investigates the mechanisms that cement sentences into text and discourse taking the text producer's estimation of the previous knowledge of the receptor as a point of departure for the choice of discourse strategies, the textlinguistic studies developed in a theoretico-descriptive framework, showing a variety of potential choices, rather than formulating suggestions for applied linguistics, including language teaching. The results of the theory of composition, text and discourse have been presented rather as theoretical constructs than as instruction.

5.2. *Applied linguistics and pedagogical disciplines*

Acquisition of text and discourse processing in the Czech and English curricula in the secondary schools differ in many respects. Whereas in the Anglo-Saxon tradition writing is considered a skill that can be taught, acquired, tested and qualified, in the Czech stylistic tradition the creation of texts is viewed rather as a result of an individual gift or talent. It is taken for granted in the Czech school curriculum that if the writer knows the basic grammatical and orthographical rules, he/she will be able to compose higher units, paragraphs and whole texts. Instead of writing, the Czech students take lessons in stylistics during which they are taught to be aware of stylistic variation in language. They are mainly trained not to repeat the same words but to vary them, not to use banal words but to employ a rich and colourful vocabulary, in short, to be sensitive towards their mother tongue, to be aware of the semantic potential of a word, its connotations and its expressive power.

The Czech students of stylistics are nearly free in their decisions about the structure of the text they are writing. They process it spontaneously, and it is up to them to find their own ways. Even though the Czech school is highly prescriptive regarding grammar and orthography, it is purely descriptive in the area of stylistics. The idea of systematic cultivation of writing skills can be found in Mathesius's (1942) approach to language and discourse, obviously due to his anglicist orientation. However, it has not been embodied in a teaching programme.

Paragraph writing, which seems to be essential to English and American writing instructions, has no parallel in Czech stylistics. The phenomenon of paragraph is usually outlined only very briefly, the stylists' attention being attracted more to paragraphs in literature, due to their unpredictability and impressiveness. One of the chapters of Mathesius's (1942) book bears the title 'The art of paragraph writing', but this study has remained an isolated theoretical attempt to describe the paragraph structure until recent times when Daneš (1993b), elaborating an unpublished analysis of 1966) took up the topic and applied the principles of thematic progressions to the analysis of paragraphs in scientific text.

5.3. *Academic writing against the background of stylistics*

Whereas the Anglo-Saxon tradition treats writing academic texts against the background of the general theory of writing with its strong emphasis on an interactive nature of any writing process, the Czech structuralist stylistics treats the so called scientific (scholarly, or, in another terminology, expository) functional style in its opposition to the other four language styles, ascribing the following constituent features to it: as regards the parameters of spokenness vs. writtenness, it is conceived as primarily written, and as regards the distinction between monologue and dialogue it is attributed the features of monologue. Scientific style is shaped under the pressure of typical features of the written manifestation of language, and profiles through typical monological parameters.

The author's text strategy towards the reader is approached mainly through metatextual comments accompanying the exposition, whereas the macrostructure of a scientific exposition is considered to follow from the internal needs of the theme development, i.e. not from external factors, such as situation or reader, etc. Scientific style is defined as belonging to public styles, and opposed to those which have a close or well-known addressee. Public design should not be understood as a comprehensive intelligibility of a scientific text, as scholarly discourse due to its exacting and demanding nature (including conceptualization which is another constituent feature of scientific style) is not intended to address everybody. Being aimed at an unknown and distant addressee, the public design is to be understood as a formal design.

What seems to be most important is that scientific style is opposed to journalistic style from the point of view of persuasiveness, which is only ascribed to the latter, not to the former. This is, in short, the summary of classical treatments of the expository discourse in Czech textbooks of stylistics, qualifying this style as the most demanding and exacting.

5.4. *Historical circumstances*

The Czech scholarly register has developed in historical contact with German thought, being shaped both by the terminology and the syntax of German scholarly discourse. Due to numerous historical coincidences, the Czech academic register is marked by similar features as are postulated by Clyne (1987) for German texts: syntactic complexity, a large number of nominalizations, overloaded phrases, impersonal constructions, agentless passives, and various modal expressions, which all in all create quite a demanding task for the reader. The syntactic complexity of a Czech sentence follows from a high degree of inflective character of Czech, and especially from the rich valency of the Czech verb. Expository discourse is considered an especially appropriate milieu to explore the potentialities of syntactic elaborateness of Czech.

Moreover, Clyne (1987) in his comparison of German and English formulates two completely different conceptions of academic writing which correspond to our assumptions about the different design of Czech and English academic texts. Texts written by Germans, Clyne (1987: 238) argues, are less designed to be easy to read. Their emphasis is on providing readers with knowledge, theory, and stimulus to thought. In English speaking countries, most of the onus falls on writers to make their texts readable. English academic texts are said to be closer to non-academic ones. In German-speaking countries, it is the readers who have to make an extra effort so that they can understand the texts. This presupposition that it is the reader's responsibility to understand rather than the writer's responsibility to write it understandably also seems to be deeply rooted in the Czech stylistic tradition. Using Hinds's (1987) classification we may conclude that Czech belongs to reader-responsible languages, whereas English belongs to those that are writer-responsible. This feature of Czech academic writing has more than one source (see the following section).

5.5. *Cultural inclinations*

We approach the features which do not mark the Czech academic writing exclusively, but seem to dwell in the intellectual and emotional background of Czech cultural considerations.

5.5.1. *Reader's responsibility*

This feature has various sociocultural motivations in Czech: Czech readers have been trained to read between the lines and to infer the sense that is text immanent. The distinction between a text's explicit meanings, overtly expressed, and its implicit, covert sense that is to be inferred, is applicable mainly to the analysis of literary texts. Nevertheless, texts even in the social sciences and humanities, such as philosophy, aesthetics, literary theory and the theory of language may be influenced by the idea that the sense of the text is something that should be sought for and not explicitly formulated in a text (cf. Jafab 1993).

5.5.2. *The delayed purpose*

The Czech convention tolerates not only vagueness, but also delay in the articulation of the main purpose of the text whereas the English convention calls for the main thesis to be presented early and to be articulated explicitly and clearly. The strategy of delayed introduction of purpose (Hinds 1990: 98) marks not only academic texts, but other types of Czech texts as well. The American editor of the Prague Post newspaper characterizes Czech journalism in contrast to American habits:

We in first two or three paragraphs answer the questions who, what, where, how and why. The Czech journalist do not write like that. What they give in the last paragraph I would start with. And your journalists are very baroque. (Levy 1993: 1)

5.5.3. *Baroqueness, associativeness, multiplicity of standpoints*

The Czech writer does not write simply, plainly, precisely, or in a straightforward manner. These qualities do not seem to hold a prominent position in the Czech stylistic tradition. On the other hand, they seem to occupy a very important place in the English tradition of writing and the teaching of writing. A Czech writer has no restrictions placed upon him or her with respect to adding more and more new information, to making digressions or to providing the reader with as much information and as many standpoints as possible. Associativeness, parallelism and the interplay of meanings thus obtained seem to be culture-specific characteristic of a Czech discourse. No wonder that an English text written by a Czech and read by the native English speaker often seems to be obscure and complicated. The native English speaker finds the text confusing and complains that it does not keep to the subject, jumping from one thing to another.

5.5.4. Purpose-oriented writing vs. free writing

Essay writing which seems to be central to the English curriculum implies a system of parameters that are to be learned and assessed to master the argumentative type of text, the notion itself emphasizing the role of the addressee and including the main function of such a text, persuasion. An essay in the Czech cultural tradition does not necessarily have such a purpose. We refer here to Mistrík's book on stylistics, which defines an essay among genres of an expository style in following way:

An essay is a short reflection on a scientific topic or current social problem. It is witty, vivid, and spirited. It is a contemplation that shows the author's original attitude. The essay does not intend to do anything either in the sphere of science or in the sphere of art. It has childish charm, it is spontaneous, nonsystematic, humorous and free. It is an attempt at a free expression of one's self. Its structure is mosaic-like, fragmentary, incohesive, not compact. The vocabulary of an essay is large, variegated and colourful. It combines expressions belonging to the opposite registers: monosemantic and exact expressions on the one hand and polysemantic and ambiguous or even metaphorical expressions on the other. This genre is full of surprises and unpredictable turns. The emphasis dwells on synsemantic and modal expressions which modify the basic meaning, supplying it with genuine, but highly significant connotations. (Mistrík 1974: 132ff)

It is obvious that Czech concepts marking the discipline of writing differ from English ones in many respects and so do the habits and norms in this field. The Czech writers should be aware when they endeavour to write in English that they step outside the norms of the Czech academic style and are on the fringe of a gap that they are supposed to bridge. The writer is either forced to 'forget' his or her culture-specific choices and to adopt the English rules, or, if he or she decides to take the Czech norms 'with him' into the English world then he or she is in danger of being accused of writing in a 'non-English' way.

I am reluctant to say that the Czech academic discourse community is norm-developed. Rather, it is norm-developing. The awareness of English writing norms seems to be much higher in the hard sciences which work in more direct contact with English academic production than in the humanities, such as linguistics, literary theory, aesthetics, philosophy, etc. These disciplines show a greater deal of what is called 'memory of science', and the cultural milieu which surrounds these disciplines seems to show a stronger resistance. However, the Czech situation changes day by day...

6. English research articles written by Czech scholars

Though Czech scholars are aware of the possibility of starting a research article with an abstract, a habit which turns out to be a norm in some international journals written in English such as *Language in Society*, this possibility has remained as yet unnoticed, judging from the Czech journals in the humanities (*Náš řeč*, *Slovo a slovesnost*, *Časopis pro moderní filologii*, *Český jazyk a literatura*, *Svět literatury*, *Estetika*, *Filosofický časopis*, etc.).

Let us examine several English articles written by Czech linguists and focus on their introductory parts. When Swales (1990: 137ff) examines introductory sections of research articles in English, he postulates a CARS model as their underlying structure. According to his analysis, based on the patterning of introductory sections of research articles in the hard sciences, the writer attempts (1) to establish in the eyes of the discourse community the significance of the research field itself (MOVE 1: Establishing a territory), (2) to 'situate' the actual research in terms of that significance (MOVE 2: Establishing a niche), and (3) to show how this niche will be occupied and defended (MOVE 3: Occupying the niche).

In English research articles written by Czech scholars (my corpus includes 30 texts in linguistics, literary theory and aesthetics) I found a number of variations of MOVE 1: declarations making topic generalizations, claiming the centrality of the topic and reviewing the items that the author finds relevant for the exposition to come.

Language is, of course, the principle means of human communication, and it plays a key role in human thinking. However, human thinking does not simply involve "linguistic" thinking. Similarly, human communication does not just consist of linguistic means. There is a large range of means between those that are very distant to the language (e.g., gestures, illustrations) and those closely connected with the language (e.g., intonation, punctuation). This applies to both spoken and written communication.

We no longer live in a period when the spoken word disappears irreversibly after its utterance only to be preserved in our minds, nor do we live in a period in which a permanent record can only be achieved by means of the written or the printed word.

In recent decades, the computer science terminology has belonged to those terminologies that have been enriched by hundreds of terms every year, and a great number of other terms have ceased to be used.

Research articles written by Czech linguists also manifest numerous variations on Move 2, i.e. strategies of indicating a gap, posing a question, or continuing a tradition.

Most new computer science concepts take their origin in the Anglo-Saxon world. If a native English speaker comes across words that are familiar to him, he may think that the subject area, in which these terms are used, is one that is easy to master. In the Czech context, the situation in computer science terminology appears to be different.

In various books on phonology, phonetics and grammar it is claimed that in the Czech language the first syllable is stressed, but... In this sentence one thing is often or even always added, namely the words "usually," or "as a rule" ...

But what is usually not mentioned is the fact that this is not primarily the question of lexemes.

Research articles written by Czech linguists appear to be very low on MOVE 3, which in Swales's CARS model outlines the purposes of a research article or announces the present research. Only in one of the 30 articles that I investigated did I find a formulation resembling that given in the CARS model: *This paper reports on..., The aim of the present article is to give ..., This study was designed to evaluate ...* etc. It sounds:

The investigation of spoken communication in East Slovakia is a broader project a partial problem of which is represented in the context of our contribution. The contribution describes the results of the first, more systematic soundings of the form of spoken communication in Prešov.

The author is a slovakicist, and also a former specialist in the Russian language, who gradually acquired a knowledge of English writing norms.

There is a question as to why the Czech linguists (and not only linguists, as I reassured myself reading a number of articles written in Czech journals in the humanities) are so reluctant to commit themselves early on to an announcement of the purposes of the studies, and why they prefer indirect declarations, if any, or, rhetorical questions: *it is difficult to say..., yet the questions are raised again and again..., it is evident that any definite pronouncement in favour of this or that has to be conditional and linked to a particular viewpoint..., any solution of this question always depends upon the particular viewpoint..., there was always*

something to be explained, no matter what the solution was..., is it possible to account for these differences by the two channels only, the two substances?:

It is difficult to say which of the two competing modes of la parole, i.e. speech and writing, is used more, should the decision of the primacy of the former or latter depend on its function and place in communication only. Fortunately it doesn't. Yet the questions are raised again and again (notably by Vachek), though it is evident that any definite pronouncement in favour of this or that has to be conditional and linked to a particular point of view.

It is not necessary to recall the different views of the mutual relationship between spoken and written languages nor the disputes over whether spoken and written languages or two forms (i.e. two modes of existence) of one and the same language. Any solution of this question always depends upon the particular viewpoint one holds on the notion of language. There was always something to be explained, no matter what the solution was.

On the assumption that written and spoken texts are not the texts of two independent languages but the texts of one and the same language in its two forms (i.e. the texts of one language mediated by two channels – the aural and the visual) we would have to try to explain the differences between these texts. Is it possible to account for these differences by the two channels only, the two substances?

One article on the topic of spoken and written language is comprised of 23 questions against a background of 64 statements. Generally, all the articles I investigated demonstrate the inclination to pose questions, to weigh alternatives and to condition statements through numerous *ifs...* and *thens...* and *it depends, whether ...* etc.

That is why when I asked the Czech linguists why they are so reluctant to formulate the purpose of their study or even the results of their study in the beginning of their research articles, I got answers like: *"I do not feel like stating at the beginning what I want to reach in the end."* *"The article should read like a detective story, it has analogous principles. I wish my reader to follow the course of my thought".* *"If I were to formulate the purpose of my article, I would have to repeat my exposition word by word".*

7. A digression

Because the macrostructure of a scientific exposition is considered to follow from 'the internal needs of the theme development' rather than from external factors, such as the reader's easy decoding of the text, Czech scholars are less likely than English academic writers to show the reader the formal structure of the text, dividing it into sections and entitling them: introduction, purpose, material, method, results, discussion, conclusion, remaining issues, etc.

A similar type of patterning was in the Czech context associated with a genre called 'autoreferát', i.e. self-report on a dissertation. The writer of this genre was even obliged to keep to the following issues: the present-day state of the research in the selected territory, the main purpose, methods (however, only one methodological approach was acceptable), the results achieved, their possible application and exploration in social practice. The requirement to follow the pattern, however, was considered tough and rigid among the scientists. Why? Preserving a writing norm may lead to its automation and even petrification. The writing norm should be viewed as something flexible, dynamic, elastic and changing, at least in social sciences and humanities. The processes of automation should be balanced by those of deautomation which allow an individual not only to be initiated to the existing norms but to estrange them as well.

8. Conclusion

The norm-developing of academic writing within a discourse community may move along intricate paths and take unpredictable turns, influenced by extraordinary motivations. One of these undoubtedly lies in a certain tension between the structuralist and poststructuralist approaches to language and social phenomena that the Central and Eastern European countries are now experiencing. This tension cultivates sensitivity towards differences and strengthens the disposition to tolerate inconsistencies. The challenge of the poststructuralist ideas consists in the revealing and the free manifestation of disparities inherently present in language, culture and society. As Swales (1990: 31) states, discourse communities will vary in the extent to which they are norm-developed, or have their set and settled ways. Some, at a particular moment in time, will be highly conservative, while others may be norm-developing and in a state of flux. The Czech scholars seem to be constantly developing their discourse interaction norms, due to their cross-road position in Central Europe, and due to their wish 'to enter Europe' and to participate in its discourse communities.

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Packing and Unpacking of Information in Academic Texts

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Abstract

Academic texts are often considered complex in nature. Complexity is often a result of such linguistic phenomena as high lexical density and heavy nominalizations in which verbal processes are coded in nominal structures. Such texts are no longer dynamic in nature, but static. The language used has become grammatically greatly metaphorized. The effects of these processes on the readability of an academic text are obvious: the texts become cumbersome and difficult to decode. This paper looks at the linguistic processes of packing information into clausal structures and unpacking it in non-native academic writing in English. The aim of the paper is to shed some light into these complex processes and to enable writers to control the ways they pack and unpack information in the texts they write through explicit knowledge of these linguistic processes.

1. Introduction

"Translating thoughts into words must be hard work, especially when you have to do it in another language, not in your own". This is a likely comment that a lay person might make to a non-native scientist about his/her work of writing academic articles for research journals. Linguists and language teachers do not necessarily have to share these lay persons' views on how texts are created. But they should share the laypersons' concern for non-native writers and their hard