

The KIAP Project: Academic Voices in Harmony and Contrast

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It has been recognised for some time that academic discourse and writing tradition no longer can be considered as neutral, objective and devoid of personal traits. The presence of such traits in texts, however, varies with discipline and language. Such observations represented the point of departure for the KIAP Project (2002-2006; cf. Fløttum *et al* 2006). The project, which was financially supported by the Research Council of Norway, was headed by Professor Kjersti Fløttum, University of Bergen (UiB), with Kjersti Rongen Breivega, UiB (2002-2003), Trine Dahl, NHH (2002-2006) and Torodd Kinn, UiB (2003-2006) as project members. In addition to a number of publications by the project group, seven master's theses and two PhD theses (with one more in the pipeline) have – so far – been written with a basis in KIAP (see www.uib.no/kiap for a complete list of publications).

KIAP's main research question was whether there exist something that may be called cultural identities in academic discourse, and if so, to what degree these are linked to discipline or to national language. The aim of the project was to describe the genre of the research article with a point of departure in certain linguistic features that may point to similarities and differences between articles written in different languages and within different disciplines. The project was doubly comparative, in that 450 refereed articles (totalling some 3 million words) in three different languages (English, French and Norwegian) from three different disciplines (linguistics, economics and medicine) were studied. The investigation focused on 'academic voices', asking three specific research questions linked to person manifestation: 1) How do authors manifest themselves in the texts? 2) How are the voices of others reflected? 3) How are the authors' attitudes expressed through the presentation of their own research? The features we looked at were: first person pronouns ('I/we'), indefinite pronouns ('one'), metatextual expressions, negation ('not'), adversative/concessive constructions (with connectives such as 'but') and bibliographical references.

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were undertaken in order to get a picture of linguistic practices in relation to the two variables of discipline and language. The theoretical framework comprised rhetoric of science, genre theory, enunciative theory and the theory of linguistic polyphony.

Our main hypothesis was that discipline plays a more important role than language with regard to cultural identities. Our findings show that both discipline and language have an effect on the frequency of all the six features studied, but for most of them discipline is more important than language. This implies, e.g., that there is greater similarity of form between a medical article in Norwegian and English than between a medical article in Norwegian and a linguistics article in Norwegian.

As the role of English in today's research world is becoming more and more important, it is our hope that the findings from the KIAP Project – in addition to contributing to our understanding of knowledge building and argumentation across disciplines and languages – may be useful in teaching newcomers to the disciplines, native as well as non-native speakers of English, how to make the research article into an effective tool in the research mediation process.

References

- Fløttum, Kjersti, Dahl, Trine and Torodd Kinn. 2006. *Academic voices*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.