Exploring Genre Acculturation of Novice Argentinean Researchers

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Abstract Genre acculturation has proved to be a useful strategy to help novice researchers improve their writing skills through feedback and negotiation with members of the discourse community they are striving to integrate. It is through acculturation that novice researchers become "legitimate peripheral" participants in such community. In the case of non-English speaking (NES) novice researchers who are struggling with a new genre as well as a foreign language, acculturation is indeed essential. When no acculturation exists, or when the process is dysfunctional in nature, NES novice researchers efforts to write for publication are likely to be useless; the lack of a genuine apprenticeship may thus be highly detrimental This study explored the novice-expert relationship of a group of Argentinian novice researchers in an attempt to gather insights concerning actual practices when writing research articles (RAs) in English for publication. Findings are in line with prior research about the isolation felt by these NES novice Argentinean researchers; they not only lack awareness about generic conventions existing for the writing and publishing of RAs but also, and most importantly, they lack genuine acculturation through hands-on involvement along the writing for publication process. These deficiencies have resulted either in rejection of their research or in the adoption of practices described in prior studies as "corruptive" in their attempts to get their research published. As reflected by the above situation, further involvement of novice researchers is needed, through gradual but hands-on acculturation in order to aid their publication process. Given the apparent inability of senior researchers to mediate in the writing process and engage their novice research group members through real participatory writing activities, implications for ESP /EAP teachers are evident. Interventions by ESP/EAP teachers in the form of course design and materials adaptation are suggested here as a form of compensatory intervention.

Keywords: genre acculturation, novice writers, research articles, discourse community

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1. Introduction

Over the last decades, there has been a growing need to improve writing skills in English among NES researchers over the globe. Such shift from writing in one's mother tongue to writing in English has been regarded as the "Anglicization of published research" [1] and has had a direct impact both for English teachers and for NES researchers alike. For the former, demands have been voiced in terms of course designs that can help NES researchers cope with writing for publication. For the latter, implications have ranged from lack of motivation or frustration for not being able to reach the expected English writing standards, to a notorious increase in rejection rates, as stated by different authors ([1,2,3]). As a direct result of publication demands in the foreign language, issues associated with an uneven distribution of publishing opportunities and with plagiarism and frauds [4] arising in an attempt to succeed in RAs publication in leading journals have come to light. Foreign researchers' inability to cope with such publication demands on their own has been explored and discussed by different authors ([5,6]).

In order to gain a real picture of how NES researchers´ attempt to tackle the above situation, it is interesting to dig into the paths those researchers follow to become actual participants of the "global web of scholars" [1]. As "Ref.[1]" puts it, "opting out of this global web of scholarship is not an option for many academics as publication has become inseparable from the process by which prestige and credibility are assessed". In other words, this implies that researchers all over the globe are to participate in their discourse communities if they want to be visible as scholars. Authors' visibility and publication success have been more closely associated with the experience researchers are able to gather rather than with the researchers' use of English as a mother tongue, or as a second or foreign language. In terms of opportunities, this might indicate that the younger and less experienced researchers are, the less the chances of publication success would be. In a similar vein, [7] mentioned in [1] argued that publication success does not result from being a native or non-native English speaker, but it is tightly linked to research experience; the

difference in publishing is "between those who know the academic ropes in their chosen specialisms and those who are learning them" [1]. Because of this, it is essential to explore NES novice writers attempts to write in English for publication on the light of current issues such as membership of a particular discourse community and the genre acculturation process.

1.1. Discourse Communities

In line with the popularity of English as the language of Science, concerns have been voiced by linguists and teachers regarding the conception of writing and its pedagogical implications; the different tenets associated with success in writing for publication and the many factors contributing to it [8] have been reconsidered. Approaches to writing teaching and research have shifted from a focus on the final product, to the mental activities involved in the process, and finally to the contextual features affecting writing. Out of such shift, attention has been drawn to the interactional or dialogic nature of writing, so the notions of audience and communicative purposes involved when writing came to be considered.

As for academic writing or writing for publication, the characteristic features of scientific articles and their acceptance for publication are now seen as relevant for the teaching and learning of writing. In agreement with this, the notions of genre and genre awareness have been highlighted, as researchers do not write texts in a vacuum but rather need to conform to their corresponding discourse communities [9] or communities of practice [10]. For NES novice researchers this is not a minor issue. Quite the contrary, it means that they do not only have to cope with linguistic difficulties associated with writing in a foreign language, but they also need to have their texts written according to the standards of the community of specialists they are striving to participate in. As [1] puts it, writers need to conform to the implicit ¨rules of the game¨ in order for their research papers to be accepted. In terms of demands, this is not an easy issue to tackle for NES novice researchers, as suggested by different authors [11] since the several aspects that need to be polished may overwhelm and even demotivate them.

1.2. Genre Acculturation

Given the above mentioned complexities, NES novice researchers make use of a wide range of strategies in their attempt to get their scientific articles published. Some of the strategies already investigated include the writers´ selection of specific study areas they are familiar with in order to focus their research, the use of previous published issues of the target journals as models or guides, and the support or writing assistance of supervisors [6]. This last strategy which involves the collaboration between inexperienced researchers and more experienced colleagues or supervisors, in the forms of comments and feedback, or any kind of negotiation among the different members of the discourse community (senior researchers, reviewers and journal editors) has been highlighted by different authors ([12,13]) and is known as genre acculturation.

To put it in Vygotskian terms [14], genre acculturation of novice researchers would result out of the interaction with their advisors, more experimented colleagues and the

like, who would act as mediators in such process and with the help of whom they would be able to advance in their zones of proximal development. In agreement with early research about the role played by mediators in the learning process, [10] describe the participatory mechanism of novice researchers into their discourse communities as "legitimate peripheral" as well as "centripetal" in nature since it starts at a marginal level at the very beginning and it gradually becomes more central with the aid of senior researchers. But for such process to take place, as [6] warns us, novice researchers need to engage in a real, hands-on form of participation when writing. As for NES novice writers who are coping with troubles associated with lack of genre awareness as well as deficiencies in the foreign language command, legitimate peripheral participation becomes paramount. Despite the evidence provided by previous research about the beneficial novice-expert researchers collaboration, such process of apprenticeship is not always possible. Numerous studies to date have assessed the drawbacks of a non-existent and/or dysfunctional acculturation process. Among some of the negative consequences mentioned, authors highlight isolation and rejection, or corruptive behaviors (Figure 1).
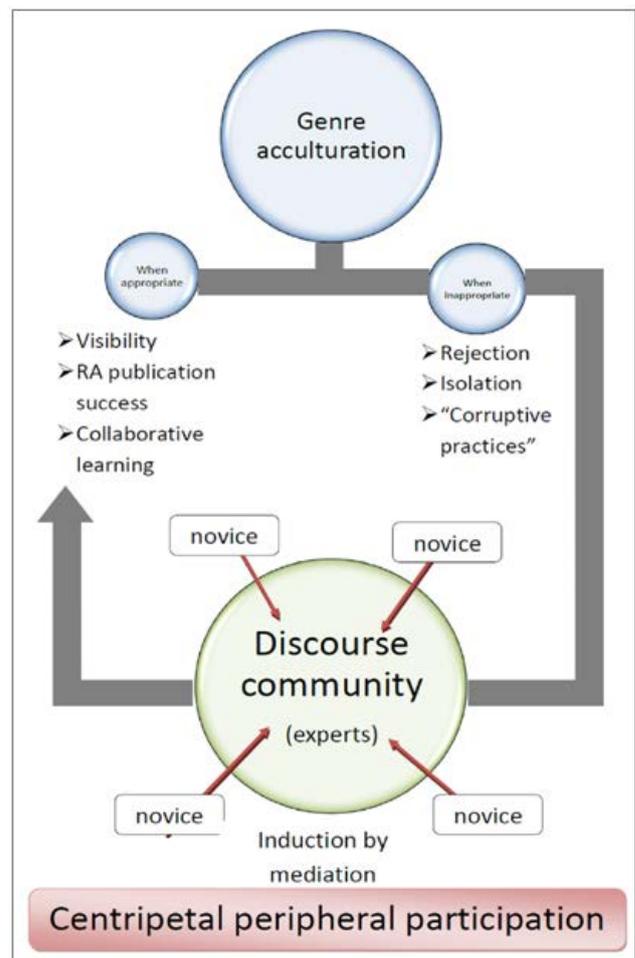

Figure 1. (Color online) Expected consequences of an appropriate or inappropriate genre acculturation process of NES novice researchers

Isolation has been identified as an important, if not the main source of difficulty for junior researchers when trying to have their research articles published ([1,8]); such isolation can be interpreted at least in two different senses which are not mutually exclusive. On the one hand, junior researchers may be isolated or segregated from the

main research areas, and they may lack contact with existing literature on their topics of interest; this, together with their inexperience, might result in the researchers trying to come up with an absolutely original study with little or no grounds on previous research findings or well-known researchers from their communities of practice. On the other hand, in terms of [2], isolation can also be seen as one that occurs due to the novice researchers' lack of consideration of their intended audiences with issues ranging from not reading the norms for authors to an overall unawareness of "the rules of the game", as suggested by [2] in [1]. Such isolation may be reverted though proper acculturation by senior researchers, or else, it may result in either rejection of the NES novice writers texts or adoption of corruptive practices [4] such as allowing authorship in exchange for language or content revision. Even when NES novice researchers do write the articles themselves, lack of acculturation may result in "language re-use to the extent of serious textual plagiarism" [5].

As illustrated above, the genre acculturation process of novice researchers has been analyzed in prior studies, addressing not only its beneficial effects but also the negative impacts that a deficient or even non-existent acculturation have. Nevertheless, none of those studies have dealt with the genre acculturation process of novice researchers in Argentina. In such a context, where resources are lacking, a solid command or expertise in English writing is not always possible, serious time constraints exist and competition among colleagues prevails, genre acculturation is worth studied if genuine peripheral participation of novice researchers is to be assured. The aim of this study is to explore the current relationship between novice and expert researches in terms of genre acculturation. Findings from this exploratory study are not aimed at generalizing data but rather at contributing to a better understanding of the context; insights are expected to form the bases for appropriate pedagogical interventions in the teaching of writing for publication.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Subjects

Subjects for this study were a group of fifteen Argentinean novice researchers taking an intensive 18-hour course on Abstract writing in English. They all belonged to one of the several research groups from the so-called Integrated Unit (College of Agricultural Sciences and National Institute of Agricultural Technology) and they were doing or else have finished postgraduate studies in the fields of Biology, Food or Agricultural Science. Their mean age was 30.26 and all of them had 1-5 year-experience in publication in English. As for the participants´ gender, 73.33% were women and 26.67% were men.

2.2. Instruments for Data Collection and Analysis

Subjects were first contacted during the above mentioned course and were then e-mailed to ask for a further participation in personal interviews. Only two researchers responded to the e-mails and agreed to be interviewed. Two instruments were used to gather data: a questionnaire and an interview.

2.2.1. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was aimed at gathering demographic information about the subjects as well as data concerning their writing experiences ; both parts were expected to complement each other, as a form of sources triangulation. There were seven sections in this instrument: 1. Personal and professional information; 2. English command and prior experiences with the foreign language; 3. Research experience; 4. Main difficulties in writing for publication (self-perceived and supervisors and journal reviewers' perceived difficulties); 5. Current approaches to the writing of scientific articles in English; 6. Self-perceived efficiency when writing in English for publication; and 7. Perception of the role of teachers and translators as aids in the writing process. Responses to the questionnaire were made using a Likert scale and they were analyzed in numerical form although elaborations on some of the answers were also taken into account and analyzed qualitatively. As this is an exploratory study whose main interest involves the understanding of the genre acculturation process of a group of novice writers, not all the information gathered through this instrument is presented or analyzed here.

2.2.2. The Interview

An interview was conducted with the subjects who agreed to participate. It was expected that the answers to such instrument would allow for dada triangulation and would contribute to gaining a deeper understanding of the novice-expert relationship in terms of genre acculturation. Subjects were asked to clarify and exemplify the ideas found in their responses to the questionnaire, or to describe their interactions with supervisors and the like in an attempt to have their research articles published in English; such descriptions were expected to account for the mediated "legitimate peripheral participation" of novice researchers in the corresponding discourse community, or else, they would pave the way for future planning of ESP/EAP writing courses addressing Argentinian novice researchers current needs.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Main difficulties in Writing for Publication

3.1.1. Self-perceived Difficulties

In an attempt to illustrate the main obstacles found by Argentinian researchers when writing for publication in English, informants´ answers to item 4 in the semi structured questionnaire were analysed. Self-perceived difficulties were categorised into A: nothing, because I do not write in English; B: tenses and conjugations; C: vocabulary; D: connectors; E: complex structures; F: expressing a Spanish idea in English; G: finding the right English structure to express my ideas; H: orthography, or I: other obstacles / difficulties. Figure 2 presents the most recurrent obstacles novice Argentinian researchers

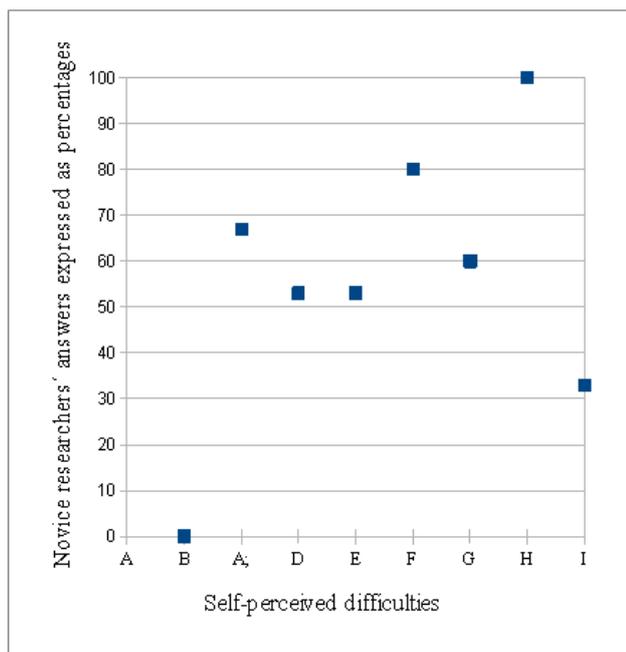identify when they write scientific articles for publication in English.

Figure 2. (Color online) Novice researchers´ self-perceived difficulties in writing RAs for publication in English

It is clear from the number of weaknesses identified (n=7), that novice researchers perceive themselves at a disadvantage in comparison to their more experienced counterparts when it comes to writing for publication. This finding is in agreement with prior research studies ([1,2,4]) carried out with Asian and European researchers aiming at disseminating their RAs in English as a foreign language, and might thus indicate that the disadvantage perceived by novice researchers might not be culture-bound, even if there might be a cultural or linguistic influence in terms of how the researchers approach their writing tasks and / or how elements from the researchers' mother tongues might transfer into their written texts in English.

When analyzing recurrence of difficulties identified by junior researchers, such discrete element of language as orthography (identified as problematic by 100% of the informants), and the difficulty of writing in English an idea already considered in Spanish (identified by 80% of the informants) are perceived as great obstacles. Although these are the most recurrent problems, they are by no means the only problematic aspects of writing RAs for publication in English for novice or junior researchers. Using different verb tenses, finding the most appropriate English structure, and being able to retrieve appropriate vocabulary and connectors are also concerns posed by these researchers (67, 60 and 53%, respectively). Finally, other obstacles mentioned by inexperienced researchers are the difficulty posed by trying to organize paragraphs from the most general to the most specific information, the need to adjust their texts to a specific variety of English (American or British), and the existing limitations over the number of characters or pages. These findings are closely related to those of [15] mentioned in [11] about the limited organization skills novice writers showed, mainly in presenting and arranging data hierarchically. They are also

in line with the isolation of junior researchers described by [2] and [1].

In an attempt to better understand the nature of the above mentioned obstacles and to gain insights regarding the role of senior supervisors as mediators in the writing process, answers to the questionnaire were complemented through the interview. An excerpt taken from one of the interviews conducted is presented here and analyzed on the light of prior research. The questions asked were i) what would you attribute your writing difficulties to?, ii) Have you received any type of advise on what / how to write RAs, or any particular section of the RA by any supervisor (senior researcher)?, and iii) how do you cope with / try to overcome such difficulties?

Researcher 4: Well, honestly, I don´t know .. I can´t explain why … I mean, I´m not good at English, I guess. I write in Spanish and it´s easy for me to find synonyms, to be more creative. In English, it´s a different thing. You have a very limited vocabulary and so it´s very hard to say what you want to say with two or three words.[…] no, normally I write in Spanish and then the head of my research group corrects or she asks me to check the data analysis with a specialist in Statistics, for instance. But she (the research group head) does not tell me how or what I should write. Of course, there are "old" papers, her own papers, or papers connected to my research that I use, but it´s not exactly the same, so sometimes it is very difficult.(translated from a Spanish version)

Once again, the above excerpt supports early research on the disadvantages novice researchers have in comparison with their senior colleagues. The need for being creative, stated in the above excerpt is a clear indicator of isolation; this researcher attributes his difficulties in writing for publication in English to his poor command of the foreign language and to his incapability for being more original in terms of language use, but he is unaware of stylistic differences between both languages and of the main conventions of the genre he is trying to produce. As far as his strategies are concerned, the use of "old papers" might indicate that there is a valid attempt to imitate the writing characteristics of senior colleagues, but there is also a serious risk that plagiarized texts might result from such practice, as [5] indicated.

3.1.2. Difficulties perceived by supervisors and editors

Reviewers and editors´ perceived difficulties were categorized into A: writing is confusing / lack of clarity; B: there are grammatical errors; C: the journal's norms for authors are not respected; D: sentences are too long, or ideas are not logically linked; E: other. A 1-5 Likert scale was used in order to score the frequency of reviewers and editors' corrections received, where 1 was the least frequent and 5 was the most frequent comment or correction. Novice researchers answers to such item are shown below (Figure 3).
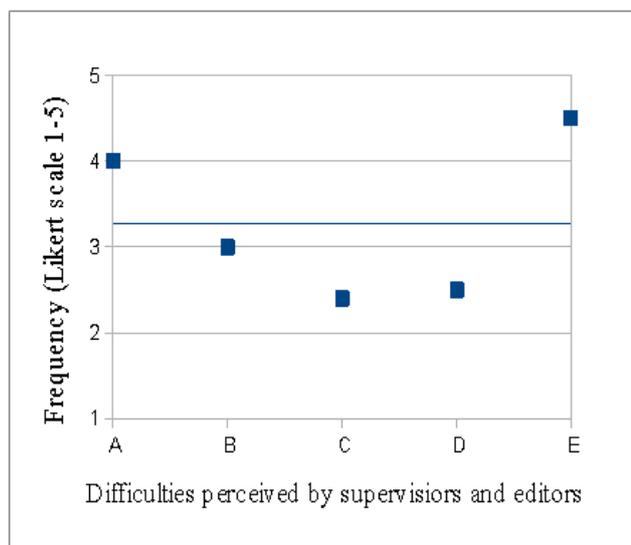
Figure 3. (Color online) Recurrence of difficulties / obstacles in novice researchers´ RAs in English, as perceived by supervisors, editors and reviewers in leading journals

As presented in Figure 3 above, on average, researchers have received corrections on all the difficulties A through E mentioned above. As suggested, the most frequent correction made from the options provided is about lack of clarity in their texts. This obstacle, together with writing sentences which are too long, may be caused by a negative transfer from their mother tongue, as already discussed in literature, and it may also be an indicator of novice researchers´ isolation. This is in agreement with issues discussed by highlighted by [2] and [1] in terms of novice writers' unfamiliarity with "the rules of the game". This might not only be connected with a lack of control over discrete elements of the target language, but rather, and perhaps more importantly, with their unawareness of rhetorical differences between the mother tongue and the FL and with little recognition of the genre and its organizational structure. Although troubles resulting out of stylistic differences between the researchers' L1 and L2 have been identified both in junior and senior researchers ([16,17]), "Ref. [16]" has stated that Spanish-speaking novice writers are more prone to reproduce artistic traditionally learned habits in their attempt to write for professional genres than their senior counterparts.

In addition to the four obstacles proposed in the questionnaires administered, novice researchers admitted having received several other corrections. Lack of repetitions and confusing field-specific concepts were two main problems highlighted by reviewers and editors about the whole texts, whereas a need to simplify and reduce in number the ideas presented were the main observations made about the RAs´ abstracts. Once again, isolation may well explain such difficulties. In addition, and in agreement with the findings by [18] in [11], current results might indicate that novice researchers are unable to handle meta-cognition concerning the scientific method as a whole, or the specific generic conventions of the community of practice they want to integrate, as they fail to present and discuss ideas through the expected shared codes in that discourse community.

When asked about the possible factors influencing the problems spotted by journal reviewers or editors, novice researchers accounted for the corrections received from journal editors, from their own perspectives:

Researcher 4: ¨the ideas are not clear enough, the statistic design is not clearly described, and I get confused when trying to write about very specific agronomic concepts¨ (translated form a Spanish version)

Researcher 8: ¨Writing in Spanish first. It is very difficult to try to translate into English what I´ve written in Spanish; I don´t have exact equivalents or I´m not sure which structure or tense I should resort to¨ (translated form a Spanish version)

Researcher 11: ¨I don´t have enough practice or experience, and if I use a dictionary or an electronic translator, for instance, I´m not sure what the right word is … you may have different words to express the same thing, and you don´t know which one you should use¨ (translated form a Spanish version)

Reflection upon the factors highlighted by researchers are likely to throw light upon the usefulness of expertise on the one hand, but also upon the need for teachers of ESP / EAP to design courses and materials that can guide novice researchers in the know how, so that better writing quality can be achieved, regardless of the years of publication experience.

In order to complement responses, the novice researchers interviewed were asked about the role played by their supervisors or research group heads in terms of promoting drafting and editing, learning by doing and learning from their mistakes. The questions asked to that aim were i) Can you describe in detail how RAs are corrected once the comments and suggestions are received?, ii) Have you been taught / guided into a drafting / editing process by any supervisor?, and iii) Would you be able to edit / correct your own work alone or collaboratively? If so, how? If not, why not?. Partial answers to such questions by one of the researchers are presented here:

Researcher 7: No, actually, it´s the group leader the one who corrects. We (novice researchers) don´t see the comments or corrections made .. I don´t know, I guess she does not want to. Once she has edited the text and it´s ready to send it again, she may ask us to read it in case we have any comment. No, erm […] she´s always very busy. I mean, if I ask her for advise or if I have a question, of course she answers, but teaching, no, not at all. She insists that we should write in English first, that we should think about what we are going to write, also in English but it´s not that easy for me. […] Well, collaboratively, I suppose. I never did, I cannot tell you for sure. I suppose I would look for help if I had to (someone with a better English command, google translator, papers from the same journal I´m trying to get my text published in, or so).

As suggested by the ideas above, the type and nature of support offered to this novice researcher notoriously differs from the one suggested by several authors ([6,10,12,13]) dealing with genre acculturation and / or mediation. This researcher appears to be deprived of the "legitimate peripheral" form of participation in his discourse community and of the feedback and learning process that would result out of a real "hands-on" involvement in writing or editing his RAs. Tight schedules on the part of the supervisor or even his unawareness of the novice researcher´s exclusion might well explain lack of acculturation or at least lack of effective acculturation of this researcher.

3.2. Researchers Approaches to the Writing of RAs in English

In a further attempt to understand how novice writers approach English writing, and to appreciate how or whether inexperience may affect genre recognition and thus, the writing process as a whole, as stated by [7] and [1], informants were asked to describe what they usually do when writing RAs in English. Subjects responded to item 5 on the questionnaire through a Likert scale (1=never to 5=always). Individual responses as well as average scores with standard deviations are presented and described below (Table 1).

Table 1. Researchers Paths to Writing in English

Subjects	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
R1	1	1	1	1	5	5	1	3	1	1	1
R2	5	3	1	1	1	3	5	1	3	4	1
R3	5	1	3	2	1	2	5	1	4	3	3
R4	1	1	1	5	4	1	5	3	1	1	1
R5	3	4	1	2	1	4	1	1	5	2	2
R6	3	2	1	3	4	1	1	2	2	4	3
R7	3	2	3	2	4	2	4	3	2	4	4
R8	2	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1
R9	5	1	1	1	1	1	5	1	1	3	1
R10	3	3	1	4	3	1	4	3	1	3	2
R11	5	1	3	1	1	1	3	2	1	4	3
R12	4	1	1	1	1	2	5	3	1	1	1
R13	5	1	1	2	1	1	5	3	1	1	1
R14	5	3	1	2	1	1	4	3	3	3	3
R15	3	1	5	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ave.	3,533	1,733	1,667	1,933	2,333	1,800	3,333	2,000	1,933	2,533	1,933
SD	1,457	1,033	1,234	1,223	1,543	1,265	1,799	0,926	1,280	1,246	1,033

On average, novice researchers claim to use Spanish as the language for writing their RAs on the first place; English versions of such texts result from their own translations (Item A: 3.533) or from the revision and edition of supervisors, whether they be more experienced colleagues or the head of their research groups (Item G: 3.333). This seems to be a clear signal of their inability to cope with writing demands on their own, and of the lack of confidence junior researchers show, already stated by [5] and [6]. As for the dependence on expert or senior researchers, it is worth mentioning that the type of collaboration or acculturation of junior researchers by their expert counterparts, as described by the former and in line with prior discussions, disagrees with the participatory mechanism described by [10] and others; senior researchers collaboration seems to be merely restricted to the supplying of literature and the reading and editing of RAs, with novice researchers being left at the margins of such processes.

3.3. Researchers Paths to Revising / Editing RAs before and after Submission for Publication

Given the relevance of the different stages along the writing process, subjects were asked about their paths when revising and / or editing RAs before and after submission for publication. All the researchers stated that they revise or edit their texts before sending them to external reviewers, whether they be senior researchers belonging to their own research groups or journal reviewers, in contrast with the lack of revision of RAs by junior researchers mentioned by [11].

As for the drafting or editing process itself, researchers stated that writing and editing were seen as a collaborative task through which senior colleagues or peers with a higher command of the foreign language are called upon to read and make suggestions about the original versions of their texts. Current findings appear to support previous research ([6,12,13]) on the writing assistance provided by supervisors, and on the apparent induction of the latter by the former in their communities of practice. Despite this apparent collaboration, insights into the exact nature of such collaboration and on the strategies used by senior researchers to promote junior researchers participation in their communities of practice seem to undermine any genuine acculturation process. Deeper analysis in the form of interviews would indicate that hands-on participation of novice researchers in the writing process is far from the one expected and suggested in literature. Excerpts already presented and analysed in this study show that poor acculturation exists and it is mainly reduced to the

translation of an article into the target language by supervisors or research group leaders or the provision of material, as already mentioned. Remedial work should be done to avoid unethical or corruptive practices, as the ones mentioned in this study, and to develop novice researchers skills in terms of writing for publication and conforming to the genre and discourse communities they are trying to belong to. Such remedial work might also aim at responding to senior researchers' pedagogical inability to cope with training demands through the design of courses and material to assist senior-apprentice relationship.

As far as the editing process is concerned, participants were also asked about how they edited or corrected their RAs in English after receiving suggestions or corrections by the journal editors or reviewers. On this issue, there seems to be a clear agreement among participants concerning notions of authority. Participants' responses to this question seem to indicate that it is clear among the members of their discourse communities and even among those whose participation in these communities of practice is merely peripheral, that most comments by journal editors should be accepted. Despite the recognition of authority and of the need to edit and revise RAs, novice researchers voiced several concerns:

Researcher 1: "The editor is always right, just in case" (translated form a Spanish version)

Researcher 3: I do not feel confident enough to make any changes related to the language. A translator corrects structures, and then the head of my research group is always there, to give advice, read, comment and the like (translated form a Spanish version)

Researcher 6: We send it to English-speaking organizations dedicated to that, so when we receive further corrections, we polish our version ... I mean, my director normally does so (translated form a Spanish version)

Researcher 9: Polishing the language, changing things out of the suggestions or comments received. The research group head or director has the final word, because he is the one who knows and has publication experience (translated form a Spanish version)

As it can been seen, researchers seem to lack autonomy as far as the editing process is concerned. Collaboration with more experienced colleagues is one of the paths they take in an attempt to edit their RAs after having received comments or corrections by journal reviewers or editors, in agreement with previous research findings [6]; but the type of socialization of novice researchers into the academic community by senior colleagues mentioned by [1] is far from being an authentic "hands-on" involvement. Comments such as "a translator corrects ...", "we send it to English-speaking organizations...", "my director normally does [polishes]" seem to be indicators of the poor acculturation in progress. Although it may be sensible to think that time and workloads constraints may prevent senior researchers from devoting the time and effort needed to induct junior researchers into their communities of practice, it is necessary that a real acculturation exists if corruptive practices, such as hiring language brokers or giving authorship in exchange for editorial work, are to be avoided, in line with [5].

Another recurrent issue arising from the excerpts above is the junior researchers' lack of confidence to act as self-editors of their texts, in agreement with prior findings by [5], [6] and [4]. Junior researchers' responses indicate that they are unable to polish their RAs without the help and guidance of expert colleagues or supervisors. In some of the excerpts provided, as already mentioned in this study, one can even get to know that the research group head or director is the only person actually in charge of editing RAs once the journal editors or reviewers' have commented on it; as it is suggested by some of the novice researchers' comments, and as it has been stated elsewhere in this study, there might be the risk that senior researchers are not properly assisting or guiding junior researchers into the process of discourse participation. This is in clear contrast with the ideas expressed by [6] about the need for junior researchers to familiarize with generic conventions, and with the discourse community they are striving to integrate, through their real "hands-on" participation.This last notion of learning by doing, not only implicitly stated by [6] in her explanation of novice researchers' participation process but also advocated by recent findings about FL learning process, might be ignored if no actual guidance is provided by supervisors or more experienced researchers to their novice colleagues. In such case, there would be a fake entrance into their discourse community resulting from the mere effort and expertise of the research group head rather than from a genuine apprenticeship process in motion.

4. Conclusions

It can be clearly seen from the evidence provided that novice Argentinean researchers face serious limitations when attempting to write RAs in English for publication; lack of genre acculturation and genuine participation in the intended communities of practice may account for such handicap. The isolation experienced by this group of novice Argentinian researchers, in line with prior findings, is detrimentally reinforced by their senior colleagues who seemingly lack the ability, or else the intention, to effectively mediate in the writing process. Although becoming an active member of a discourse community is not an easy task, it can certainly be facilitated through guidance and cooperative work; this necessarily involves "hands-on" participation of novice researchers all along the writing process so as to ensure the centripetal participatory mechanisms described by other authors. If corruptive practices like those mentioned above in this article are to be avoided, further steps need to be taken to ensure peripheral legitimate participation of researchers in their corresponding discourse communities. A clear implicit demand exists for teachers to design ESP / EAP courses and materials that can address the particular needs of NES novice researchers and aid them in the publication process.

Statement of Interest

The authors have no conflicting interests.

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