Original Research

Academic writing details in critical perspective

by Olga A. Suleimanova and Tatiana A. Lykova

Olga A. Suleimanova Moscow City University, Russia souleimanovaoa@mgpu.ru

Tatiana A. Lykova Moscow City University, Russia likovata@mgpu.ru

Academic writing competence is growing into an ever more deciding factor for evaluating students' performance which in the long run affects their academic prospects as well as professional career. The objective of the study is to analyse the academic writing practices in the critical perspective, detect the potential elements which may spoil the impression from the research paper, and offer some guidelines for the researchers, especially the beginners, on how to be more convincing in presenting the research results. The research is based on the error analysis of academic discourse texts represented in bachelors' and masters' qualification papers and post graduate theses, collected by the authors over a span of over ten years' teaching master's students and postgraduates, to form a sampling of over seven hundred examples of errors in the graduation and post graduate papers. The empirical data were analysed for the grammar, lexical, spelling and stylistic errors, and the ethical component which form an inseparable, inalienable part of the academic communication. The results of the analysis revealed two basic types of errors, one related to stylistically relevant mistakes and the other referring to academic ethics. The former covers unnecessary negations, evaluation markers, some awkward syntactic constructions, principles of referring to scientists' names, etc. These elements are not language-dependent and are practically universal, as they can be found in any language. The authors treat the latter group as ethically-related, covering the issues of quoting format and authorial 'we'. Distinguishing metonymical malfunction is suggested when the elements of different cognitive levels are misrelated and co-located. The results contribute to the theory of discourse and may be used in teaching academic writing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic writing in the educational and academic space has been in the research focus for the full twenty years (Norrish, 1983; Bailey, 2011; Korotkina, 2018; Sheipak, 2020). This interest can be attributed to the steadily growing number of academic publications in different forms and genres – research articles, qualification papers on a variety of levels (theses, graduation papers, end-of-the-term research papers) which are immediately made public, and they all add to the abundant open-source information landscape. This information stream needs analysis in a variety of research vistas, and the academic community does its best to meet this requirement: scientists explore the academic genres and their specifics (Bailey, 2011; Bhatia, 2017), the speech strategies of public academic discourse, with the invariable focus on linguistic means employed (Wong, 2018; Macagno & Rapanta, 2020).

In other words, most of the relevant aspects of academic writing are covered and seem to have got exhaustive description. Still, some of them call for further investigation, especially those which refer to the lingua-specific means and strategies. We admit, though, that the academic discourse is, to a great extent, universal in the sense that scientists all over the world rely on the means and communication strategies and academic standards that are universal – they often coincide, at least because they count on multicultural and multilingual academic communication craving for distinction and seeking universal recognition. There are, though, the means that are idiosyncratic and language-dependent, e.g., Russian punctuation rules are entirely different from those of some other languages, which is also true for spelling. We admit that there are some similar punctuation rules and, accordingly, similar potential errors in a variety of languages. For example, in Russian young researchers often misapply/overuse commas between subject and predicate or, on the contrary, forget about commas at the end of the dangling participial construction. The experiment with the masters' students revealed that around 25% of them make these mistakes (Suleimanova & Kardanova-Biryukova, 2021), the mistakes being widespread among the students of all levels of education both in their term, graduation papers, draft papers which they prepare for open publications, and in their everyday writing essays practices. We shall concentrate here on more universal writing rules concerning the choice of syntactic constructions and vocabulary determined by the genre and its ethical norms. In this paper we shall focus on some linguistic means in the

Russian academic discourse which correlate with the corresponding means and principles in other languages. Eco (2015) highlights the importance of these means, focusing on what constitutes a thesis, how to choose the topic, organise a work schedule, conduct bibliographical research, organise the material, and format the thesis. The author ultimately states: *'Inevitably, this book will provide the most precise instruction on the final task in this list, even if it seems to be the least important, because it is the only one with a fairly exact set of rules'* (Eco, 2015, p. 21). This means that the correct wording and framing of the text is crucial in preparing it for publication and peer reviewing. Some of the aspects of academic text preparation remain understudied, specifically, with respect to textual representation of the research results, taking into account the typical errors the authors make. This research is meant to prevent prospective authors from making the most likely errors.

The research objective here is to critically analyse the current state of affairs in academic writing practices typical in young researchers' writing in order to finally suggest promoting academic writing standards in learning-teaching practices. In pursuing the stated objective, the authors will try to focus on the issues to follow:

– account for the typical mistakes (young) researchers make in their written texts relating to punctuation, style and choice of words;

– analyse the ethical aspects of academic communication relating to referring to previous research papers and their authors;

– relate current academic writing practices in Russia to those in other cultural traditions;

– raise the problem of academic recycling as one of the key issues on the current academic horizon and alert young researchers to potential academic recycling consequences;

– suggest tips and guidelines which can be instrumental for the researchers in complying with the international as well as national academic writing standards in their publications.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS
2.1. Research design

The research is based on the error analysis – a well-established approach in text analysis that helps understand the specifics of the genres, academic writing varieties included, and to learn to act correspondingly, i.e., error analysis is prognostically efficient (Norrish, 1983). This approach often helps see the weak spots which otherwise could have gone unnoticed. For instance, a case study by Suleimanova (2014) revealed highly frequent English-to-Russian translation mistakes which had never been noticed by translators and never featured in translation textbooks and manuals. These are the constructions of the type *She woke up to see that the sun was shining* which formally coincides with the sentences using the infinitive of purpose, but the former one contains the infinitive of subsequent action, where no purpose is implied. What follows is that this construction should be recommended to be represented in renovated textbooks on translation practices.

We begin by clarifying the fundamental terms employed in this paper, namely, the terms 'error' and 'mistake', which we use interchangeably. According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 'error' is defined as *'a mistake'* and also as *'the state or quality of being wrong or mistaken'* (LDCE, 2023). While 'error' carries a more formal connotation, 'mistake' is defined as *'something that has been done in the wrong way, or an opinion or statement that is incorrect'* (LDCE, 2023). It can be inferred from these definitions that the meanings are nearly identical, with 'error' essentially being explained in terms of a 'mistake'. The distinction lies in the level of formality, which is inconsequential to our research; hence, we use these two terms interchangeably throughout the entirety of this paper.

The empirical data and research materials have been curated over a span of over ten years, distilled from the authors' extensive experience in teaching master's students (averaging around 20 students per year) and postgraduate participants (ranging from 4 to 8 course participants annually). Throughout this paper, these groups are collectively referred to as 'students'. The data is drawn from three academic disciplines: Research Methodologies, Modern Linguistic Theories and Paradigms, as well as Principles and Methods of Linguistic Research. This collection offers abundant examples of occasionally flawed textual material, particularly at the initial stages of teaching and learning. (These instances were subsequently identified and improved upon through suggested enhancements.) In addition to the above participation observation data the authors also analysed graduation papers (62 graduation papers, bachelors'), masters' theses (49 theses), post-graduate primary texts (29 texts), and one hundred dissertation reports. The empirical data (with the threshold value of more than one hundred utterances featuring each mistake, minor mistakes were not taken into account) were analysed for the grammar, lexical, spelling and stylistic errors and the ethical component which form an inseparable, inalienable part of the academic communication. Grammar, lexical and stylistic mistakes in the texts were registered and marked in accordance with the rules governing the language usage: wrong punctuation, lexical-stylistic mistakes such as metonymy malfunction (see below); breaking ethical practices of academic writing concerning quotation references, etc. We distinguished punctuation and spelling errors, lexical misuse, the latter being the matter of questionable choice of words, using questionable syntactic constructions, and wrong cognitive choice.

The material was collected throughout the years 2018-2023 in the Moscow City University. The research shows that the error types are typical of academic discourse and are crucial for this particular discourse genre, and they can easily lead to minor or even major misunderstanding.

Besides this participant observation method, the authors generated questionnaires (see below) to test a variety of research issues, related to academic writing competences in students. Finally, scanning more than one hundred dissertation reports (thesis abstracts) yielded empirical data the authors relied on in their research.

'Academic writing in the educational and academic space has been in the research focus for the full twenty years. This interest can be attributed to the steadily growing number of academic publications in different forms and genres – research articles, qualification papers on a variety of levels (theses, graduation papers, end-of-the-term research papers) which are immediately made public, and they all add to the abundant open-source information landscape'

2.2. Research procedure

We had been retrieving incorrect samples from students' essays, drafts of papers over ten years, to form the empirical base, counting more than one hundred samplings for each mistake so that we can get sure that the mistake is typical. The errors identified included those commonly addressed in manuals and reference books, such as misrelated adverbial participial clauses. However, the majority of the identified errors were previously unnoticed. These encompassed issues like metonymy malfunctions and punctuation problems in Russian texts, numerous stylistic shortcomings in academic writing, as well as failures to meet ethical requirements, such as providing proper citations and acknowledgments of researchers' contribution.

Subsequently, a questionnaire was developed to assess punctuation proficiency among postgraduates in comparison to the evaluation of this competence among bachelors' and masters' students (Suleimanova et al., 2020).

Later on, over a hundred dissertation reports were examined, primarily focusing on ethical malpractices. The same set of reports had been previously analysed descriptions of the methods employed in dissertations. It was discovered that in most instances, researchers referenced fundamental logical operations such as description, comparison, analysis, and synthesis. These operations are commonly used in everyday routines and do not inherently define the distinctive characteristics of the dissertations. In this context, the analysis honed in on quotations and their ethical implications, rather than merely formal presentations.

Finally, the authors address the practice of academic recycling and undertake a critical analysis of it.

The analysis is structured along two dimensions. Firstly, we identify two primary categories of errors – those pertaining to the ethical aspects of academic communication, and those encompassing the stylistic specifics of the text. It is worth acknowledging, however, that these two categories frequently overlap, giving rise to complex messages. What remains significant is that in matters of ethics and style, communication strategies in academic writing appear to be largely universal.

Secondly, our research primarily focused on linguistic elements operating at both the lexical and syntactic levels (Suleimanova & Petrova, 2020) that are utilised to convey ethical and stylistic connotations. In this regard, there might be variations among national academic cultures, albeit not too significant.

For instance, principles of punctuation are influenced by language, not to mention spelling rules and, consequently, potential errors.

The list of the errors is offered below with their logic accounted for. Consequently, guidelines have been formulated to assist in mitigating the errors highlighted by the authors.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In linguistics error analysis, as a branch of applied linguistics, starting from pioneering work by Fries (1945), is mostly used in studying interference in second language acquisition. It is gaining momentum, however, in intralinguistics and turns its eye to other fields.

In the error analysis, the term 'error' is defined as a deviation from accuracy or correctness (Corder, 1981; Norrish, 1983) – an interpretation we shall adhere to.

Academic writing, an essential component of academic endeavours (Suleimanova, 2020; Suleimanova et al., 2020), has been explored across various languages (see Erjavec et al., 2020; Korotkina, 2018) and through a multilingual lens (Curry & Lillis, 2019). Furthermore, practical recommendations for incorporating corpus-based and computer technologies into academic writing instruction have been provided by scholars such as Birhan et al. (2021), as well as Shpit and Kurovsky (2020). Of special note is the new vistas in exploring academic writing practices, e.g., task evolution from information transfer to the focus on critical commentary in (Swales & Feak, 2023), which will add to the critical analysis and in this way save the researchers' time in assessing the contributions and taking decisions as to the relevance of the research results to their research.

The inherent and universal logic of academic writing is elucidated in the work by Macagno and Rapanta (2020), whereby students were instructed in employing evidence and reasoning through a critical thinking course. The research drew upon longitudinal data, comparing initial competences with those after a three-month training period, yet their focus did not extend to the linguistic tools utilised in the process.

Furthermore, the study of academic writing within specific fields, such as engineering, is explored by Bolsunovskaya and Rymanova (2020), while critical scholarly editing and writing are discussed in Sheipak's (2020) work, where traditional approaches reliant on universalism are critiqued in favour of national rhetorical-cultural traditions. This standpoint warrants further substantiation, as any researcher seeks recognition, preferably on an international scale, which is why they aim to appeal to a global audience and endeavour to connect with it. This objective can be realised through adherence to essential academic writing practices, although culture-specific norms must also be considered (Bhatia, 2017; Bailey, 2011; O'Leary & Steinkrauss, 2023).

Linguistic intricacies, including lexical nuances in different languages, are addressed in the works of Fajri et al. (2020), as well as Wong (2018). Even students' motivation in academic writing courses is given due attention in Chuikova's (2015)

'The analysis is structured along two dimensions. Firstly, we identify two primary categories of errors – those pertaining to the ethical aspects of academic communication, and those encompassing the stylistic specifics of the text. It is worth acknowledging, however, that these two categories frequently overlap, giving rise to complex messages. What remains significant is that in matters of ethics and style, communication strategies in academic writing appear to be largely universal. Secondly, our research primarily focused on linguistic elements operating at both the lexical and syntactic levels that are utilised to convey ethical and stylistic connotations'

study. However, the present research intends to explore more nuanced matters encompassing various textual aspects of academic writing, as well as the errors authors tend to make when composing written messages. Additionally, the study will confront sensitive ethical issues tied to academic writing.

4. STUDY AND RESULTS
4.1. Statistics of the empirical data

The statistics of the empirical data (see also above) runs as follows: graduation papers (62 graduation papers, bachelors'), masters' theses (49 theses), post-graduate primary texts (29 texts) and one hundred dissertation reports were analysed, in addition to the sampling obtained during teaching practice over ten years. The authors took into account only the mistakes which counted more than 100 occurrences in the papers analysed, minor faults were discarded. Experimental data were also added to the list. (Individual frequencies were not counted as the point was to limit the occurrences to one hundred.)

4.2. Stylistic mistakes

A common construction and, consequently, an error observed among certain authors is the usage of the construction *not only X... but also Y*, typical of non-native speakers' discourse. This can be substituted with expressions like *Y in addition to X* or *Y as well as X*. The rationale behind this approach is that a communication strategy commencing with a positive statement, devoid of negation, is more apt to accomplish the communication goal and instil trust within the intended audience.

Blunt negation, particularly when placed at the start of a sentence as in *But X*, tends to evoke subconscious resistance in the recipient and can detrimentally impact effective communication. Notably, the practice of beginning with negation rather than a positive statement is observed not only in dissertation reports but also in the articles of scholars published in scientific journals. Among 74 dissertation reports, the construction *not only X but also Y* was employed at least once, while in master's graduation papers, this construction appeared in 82 instances, with several cases featuring multiple occurrences. For example:

Стратегии эмпатии и дистанцирования свидетельствуют о желании женщины не только представить саму себя окружающим, но и дать оценку тем, кто находится непосредственно в поле зрения ее внимания (Strategies of empathy and distancing indicate a woman's desire not only to present herself to others but also to provide an assessment to those who are directly within the scope of her attention).

Моделирование переводческого процесса происходит не только на основе когнитивных структур, но и с учетом комплексной репрезентации эвристического процесса (The modelling of the translation process occurs not only based on cognitive structures but also with consideration of a comprehensive representation of the heuristic process).

Citing researchers' names and their contributions presents a challenge in academic discourse. The ethos of academic writing involves focusing on concepts and ideas rather than solely highlighting the researcher behind the study. This implies that instead of phrases like *'N.N. and P.P. studied the implied negation'*, it would be more effective to shift the attention towards what their findings specifically revealed. For instance, a better approach would be to write *'The study of the implied negation showed that...' [N.N., P.P., 2019]*.

This somewhat awkward practice is commonly observed in various academic products, including bachelor's, master's, and post-graduate works, as well as dissertation reports. In the methodology section, authors often list the names of researchers who have explored a particular phenomenon without specifying their actual contributions. As an example, consider this excerpt taken from a dissertation report (Ph.D. level): *'The theoretical and methodological foundation of the research was built upon the works of Russian and foreign scholars in the field of narrative theory [22 names cited in parenthesis], linguistic gender theory [13 names cited], feminist linguistics theory [15 names cited], functional linguistics theory [5 names cited], pragmatic linguistics and speech act theory [4 names cited]'.* Each list of names is followed by a vague reference to 'and others'. It remains unclear which ideas and theoretical frameworks the author used as the basis for their research.

This situation becomes perplexing, as some of the mentioned works contradict each other on crucial points while agreeing on others. As a result, readers might be left wondering which ideas the author actually aligns with. Regrettably, this undesirable practice is seeping into other academic genres as well, a trend that we believe should be curbed (for a potential solution, refer to Suleimanova et al., 2020). The overarching guideline is to clearly define the specific ideas you are incorporating into your work.

Regarding references to previous works and their authors, we'd like to highlight the choice of verbs used to introduce quotations and citations. It is common for students and young researchers to employ verbs like 'writes' or 'says' when attributing the voices of colleagues, as seen in examples such as *'L. V. Scherba wrote'*. This practice can be viewed unfavourably, and it is recommended to substitute such verbs with those that empha-

'Another contentious issue arises from the tendency of young researchers to assert that they are studying a particular term, when in fact, they are examining linguistic facts that are explained using said terms. While these facts may require definitions, they often don't necessitate extensive research. In specific fields like terminology, terms are indeed the primary subject of investigation, serving as objects of study. However, in other linguistic studies, terms, notions, or concepts serve as essential research tools, requiring clear definitions'

sise the cognitive actions of the authors instead – e.g., *'L.V. Scherba insists/claims/emphasises'*. Not only does this approach align better with the academic ethos, but it also shows greater respect for the scholars' contributions, thus promoting academic ethics.

Another contentious issue arises from the tendency of young researchers to assert that they are studying a particular term, when in fact, they are examining linguistic facts that are explained using said terms. While these facts may require definitions, they often don't necessitate extensive research. In specific fields like terminology, terms are indeed the primary subject of investigation, serving as objects of study. However, in other linguistic studies, terms, notions, or concepts serve as essential research tools, requiring clear definitions.

All of these seemingly minor details have the potential to significantly diminish the positive impact of the publication the authors are aiming to convey.

Another pressing concern within academic discourse is the matter of punctuation. While it may initially appear trivial, its significance is substantial, as it has the potential to alter the intended message of the author. The crux lies in the fact that punctuation conventions differ across cultures – a notion elucidated by Scherba (1974), who discerned three fundamental types of comma usage rules prevalent in European languages: Germanic, French, and an intermediary system. In German, punctuation adheres to strict regulations and largely corresponds to syntactic structures in both German and Russian. In contrast, French and Italian punctuation contributes to the axiology of the utterance. Scherba (1974) contends that Russian punctuation occupies an intermediary position between these two approaches. It combines stringent formal rules concerning syntactic structures with the flexibility for speakers to emphasise chosen speech fragments, thereby enhancing expression in both spoken and written communication. This ability allows speakers to accentuate virtually any concept or word in a sentence, imbuing it with emphasis and expressiveness. However, such emphasis may render the utterance more expressive, a trait that does not seamlessly align with the preferred neutral style of academic discourse.

Suleimanova et al. (2020) introduced a sentence that can accommodate several comma placements to emphasise adverbial modifiers. Alternatively, the sentence can be rendered complete-ly neutral without any commas, as exemplified by this statement where a range of accentuation possibilities exists: *В настоящем издании на странице 46 в предложении о необходимости использования в таких случаях экспериментальных методик были обозначены основные трудности в постановке эксперимента* (*In the current edition, on page 46, in the sentence discussing the necessity of using experimental techniques in such cases, the main difficulties in experiment design were outlined*).

To cultivate this punctuation competence and sensibility in students, we engage in sentence analysis exercises in class. Students are tasked with inserting commas and subsequently discussing the resulting semantic variations. Eco's (2015) notion that a serene tone on paper is ideal is held in consideration. This notion underscores that within academic writing, expressions often denoted by discretionary commas are out of place. The same observation regarding commas is pertinent when considering Russian adverbs that denote high probability, such as *очевидно* (meaning 'obviously'). This adverb can assume three different meanings, each distinguished by the presence or absence of commas. The first meaning or function is integrated into the predicate, as in 'it is evident' (Russian: *это очевидно*). The other two meanings function as determiners, albeit of distinct types.

Based on the logic of the advocated approach, one can anticipate that the version without a comma is stylistically more neutral. In this scenario, words like *очевидно* modify the word, usually an adjective or adverb, with an intensifying connotation, as in *'Это очевидно неверный подход'* ('This is obviously the wrong approach'). Conversely, the version with a comma conveys a personally and axiologically marked perspective, rendering it less stylistically neutral. Consequently, in academic discourse, where neutrality is paramount, axiological considerations must be handled judiciously.

Another punctuation issue pertains to the use of dash marks in Russian. In the Linguistic Encyclopaedic Dictionary, this is referred to as the expansion of the dash mark. In comparison to the English dash mark, which is relatively infrequent, in Russian, it often serves to signify the missing element, frequently a copula, in addition to indicating a pause between clauses. Because English sentence structure necessitates the complete presentation of subject-predicate relationships, the predicate or copula is never omitted, rendering the dash mark unnecessary.

However, it's important to recognise that any punctuation mark acts as a form of barrier. This implies that if we can circumvent its use, sentences will flow more smoothly, becoming easier to perceive and consequently comprehend, thus rendering communication more successful (Suleimanova et al., 2020, p. 161). A guideline to achieving more effective communication, dash-wise, is to incorporate (semi)copulas. For instance, a sentence like *'Описание несвободной сочетаемости слов – одна из важнейших задач создания этого словаря'* ('The description of restricted word combinations is one of the most important tasks in creating this dictionary') will read more fluidly if the dash is replaced with verbs such as *является* ('is') or *состоит в том, чтобы* ('consists in').

'Another punctuation issue pertains to the use of dash marks in Russian. In the Linguistic Encyclopaedic Dictionary, this is referred to as the expansion of the dash mark. In comparison to the English dash mark, which is relatively infrequent, in Russian, it often serves to signify the missing element, frequently a copula, in addition to indicating a pause between clauses. Because English sentence structure necessitates the complete presentation of subject–predicate relationships, the predicate or copula is never omitted, rendering the dash mark unnecessary'

The aforementioned two instances of punctuation, while not resulting in errors, do diminish the text's comprehensibility enough to undermine the overall impression. Two other cases can be classified as actual mistakes: the insertion of an unnecessary comma between the subject and predicate, and the omission of a comma where it is obligatory, specifically at the end of an attributive participial construction.

The portion of punctuation competence linked to these stringent rules was assessed among bachelor's and master's students in Suleimanova et al.'s (2020) study, where students were tasked with both inserting a missing comma at the end of an attributive participial construction and identifying and removing an extraneous comma between the subject and predicate. The experiment involved 18 fourth-year bachelor's students and 18 master's students. Surprisingly, only 7 out of 36 participants correctly placed the essential comma at the end of the attributive participial construction, and 9 bachelors and 7 masters were unable to identify an unnecessary subject-predicate comma.

A subsequent re-evaluation experiment in 2023 involving 23 postgraduate students specialising in linguistics produced remarkably similar results to those of the 2020 experiment. Namely, 11 participants failed to recognise the incorrect subject-predicate comma, and 9 students neglected to include the necessary comma at the end of attributive constructions. This persistent trend needs to be acknowledged in the training of students in academic writing.

4.3. Academic ethics in the academic writing

Academic ethics has always been a sensitive issue in the academic circles and still is. The academic publications are meant for the global academic community which is lingua-culturally different, and scientists may abide by differing traditions and customs, with different nuances, which should be taken into consideration. This is why the ethical component is crucial. We shall focus on some of ethical issues, on various language levels.

One of the key issues here is academic recycling which used to be acceptable in pre-digital time when a scholar, in order to reach out to the desired audience, had to disseminate their ideas and discoveries via a variety of publications in different sources. Now, in the global digital space there is no need to copy and recycle one's ideas, it is often enough to ring once. Recycling practices nowadays are waiting for assessment and in-depth analysis (Hall et al., 2018; Suleimanova, 2020). Academic recycling is now frowned upon by the community, which lays a variety of restrictions on the authors.

When it comes to lexical elements, particularly commonly used words for discussing the contributions of colleagues, phrases like *'N writes/says'* often arise. However, this practice can be subject to scrutiny. The rationale here is to emphasise the importance of specifying the cognitive activity involved in the statement. It is more effective to employ verbs like 'claims', 'observes', 'argues', or 'emphasises', which carry a greater illocutionary force and enhance the persuasiveness of the quoted statement. Instead of using *'F. de Saussure writes X'*, it is more advantageous to use expressions such as *'F. de Saussure observes/argues/states'*, and so forth.

Evaluative discourse markers, such as the words 'renowned', 'famous', 'interesting', 'important', or 'careful' referring to colleagues and their works, though seemingly complimentary, sound condescending in most cases, especially if employed by young researchers who mean well as they are trying to pay tribute to the previous generations of scholars and express their piety to the honoured, meritorious researchers or evaluate their scientific achievements. The problem is that the attributes, while originating from good intentions, often do come across as condescending.

Further on, pronouns pose a distinct issue in the context of academic ethics research. The longstanding tradition of employing the humble authorial 'we', which students tend to use in an attempt to convey respect, appears to be losing relevance for at least two reasons. Firstly, as research becomes more personal, authors are inclined to opt for the pronoun 'I', thereby assuming full responsibility for their work. Secondly, excessive and persistent use of the pronoun 'we' can inadvertently shift from the intended humble authorial tone to one that feels imperious, akin to the speech of emperors.

While we do believe that judicious use of this pronoun remains a commendable practice, we do object to its overuse. This overuse can often be accompanied by the possessive pronoun 'our'. The phrase *'we in our research'* appears redundant and stylistically inappropriate, both in English and its Russian equivalent.

Academic syntax presents yet another prominent concern within academic writing. Numerous syntactic constructions, frequently encountered in academic discourse, pose challenges to researchers. These constructions often pertain to citation patterns and references to the names of other researchers. (We are not delving into reference lists here, as they adhere to publisher standards and may exhibit slight variations despite compliance.) Notably, syntax carries ethical implications, specifically regarding how authors mention the names of their colleagues. The choice between using initials or not, such as *'Petrov'* vs *'I. A. Petrov'*, or between employing full names like *'Ronald Langacker'* vs *'R. Langacker'*, carries ethical significance.

'Academic writing in the educational and academic space has been in the research focus for over twenty years, with studies carried out on both the material of different national languages and in multilingual perspective. The scientific novelty of this research lies in its potential to contribute to cross-linguistic research in the area of academic writing readability assessment, as authors describe correlations between linguistic means specific to the Russian academic discourse and corresponding means and principles in other languages that can be potentially misleading in addressing international audience'

Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the logic of academic writing encourages prioritising ideas over authorship when referencing colleagues' contributions. In alignment with this approach, we propose further support for metonymic representation of research elements, such as *'The survey shows/reveals'*, or employing impersonal or indefinite (im)personal, as well as passive constructions.

Moving forward, a significant concern arises in connection with an error we term 'metonymy malfunction'. We view metonymy as a linguistic device founded on the non-random association between objects. For instance, we can refer to the contents of a vessel using the vessel's label – like saying 'I drank one glass', signifying the contents of the glass. These cases have been subjected to thorough analysis (Panther & Radden, 1999).

We address this issue because, at times, we encounter statements such as *'there is agentivity in this verb'*, suggesting that the verb's meaning incorporates the feature '+agentivity'. In essence, authors in such instances establish a connection between two objects that possess a non-coincidental linkage. However, these objects exist on different cognitive planes and cannot be combined without specific explanation. This misalignment leads to expressions like *'is devoted to modelling the concept WOMAN in the contemporary British press'* (where the concept isn't modelled within the press but rather within the minds of journalists), or *'studying pragmatics determines its link with other disciplines – philosophy, psychology'* (where studying doesn't establish the linkage but rather the word is used inaccurately). Another example involves the use of a verb for metaphorical transfer from humans to inanimate objects. However, this transfer isn't between actual physical objects, but rather between different conceptual notions. This is due to the fact that metaphor is grounded in cognitive mechanisms and cannot bridge the gap between a person and an object in real-life terms. Taking the verb 'curb' as an example, one might posit that this word represents an action directed at the complete suppression of emotions. The exclusive category of verbs capable of materialising actions is formed by performative verbs, whereas others merely describe the actions.

Another unfortunate practice linked to metonymy malfunction is asserting that research is dedicated to studying notions/terms. We contend (as discussed earlier) that notions and terms receive specialised study in the field of terminology, whereas other research areas deal with different subject matters – though term definitions remain pertinent.

The crux of the matter is that this metonymy malfunction likely manifests in other languages of academic writing, as it reflects the inclination to directly connect elements that are indirectly linked and belong to distinct yet co-located cognitive levels. Metonymy malfunction results in a lacklustre and hasty text that falls short of meeting academic standards and necessitates correction.

5. DISCUSSION

We report on current academic writing practices in Russian universities and provide error analysis of academic discourse texts presented in undergraduate and postgraduate qualification papers and theses. The outcomes of the study are significant as error analysis allows detecting potential pitfalls in the way the narrative is designed and executed, which may spoil the impression from a research paper. Another aim is to offer some guidelines for the researchers, especially the beginners, on how to be more convincing in presenting their research results to the scientific community.

Academic writing in the educational and academic space has been in the research focus for over twenty years, with studies carried out on both the material of different national languages and in multilingual perspective. The scientific novelty of this research lies in its potential to contribute to cross-linguistic research in the area of academic writing readability assessment, as authors describe correlations between linguistic means specific to the Russian academic discourse and corresponding means and principles in other languages that can be potentially misleading in addressing international audience. The results obtained are of significance as they suggest universal academic writing rules concerning the choice of syntactic constructions and vocabulary, determined by the academic research genre and its ethical norms.

We argue that compliance with the rules and regulations of academic writing contributes to mutual understanding, especially when the stylistic and ethical norms are concerned. Error analysis seems one of the powerful weapons in fighting academic 'illiteracy', or rather negligence of the author towards written texts. This analysis appears to be quite efficient in prognostic text analysis; it helps to understand the specifics of the academic genres and to act correspondingly when producing written texts. Participant observation method in the longitudinal perspective allowed the authors to spot the problems which normally pass unnoticed by the researchers. What has been done against the current practices is introducing new axes of analysis, e.g., punctuation issues that do not qualify as mistakes proper, though they constitute specifics of Russian academic discourse. Metonymy malfunction was entered into the academic focus as a new research object that calls for deeper investigation in view of professional training of bachelors-through-masters-to-post-graduate level. Attention is drawn to wrong stylistic practices which refer to quotation patterns and references to previous research work.

We raised the issue of presenting research methodology with shifting the focus on what has been done by predecessors rather than on the list of names involved in the topic. The suggested guidelines do shape the academic style and make the written text easy on the eye and easily perceptible.

Some of the issues raised open the new research vistas in elaborating training programmes which will cover the issues relating to punctuation, style, and academic recycling. Study limitations lie in insufficiency of empirical data relating to other stylistically sensitive devices and means. What issues remain intact and are under researched, being though relevant for practical and theoretical purposes is building up the typology of mistakes proper on different levels in academic writing as distinguished from the stylistic deviations which do not significantly affect the message, though they form a distinct communication barrier when communicating internationally. The latter ones are less tangible, but they must be specially taught in the learning-teaching practices.

6. CONCLUSION

Contemporary academic writing across its various genres is now accessible to the wider public. Even students' qualifying papers undergo thorough public evaluation, placing greater responsibility on them in terms of content and textual elements like stylistics, vocabulary, and syntax. Numerous aspects of the text are inherent to academic writing, irrespective of the language used, as they embody universal strategies for academic communication. Violating even minor communication norms may result in misunderstandings and potentially influence colleagues' perceptions of the author, casting doubt on the credibility of research outcomes. Particularly crucial are guidelines pertaining to text style and academic ethics.

The objective set on examination of errors within the texts of bachelor's, master's, and postgraduate students revealed common mistakes present in their essays and draft papers. Some of these errors are also made by researchers during the preparation of manuscripts for publication and in their research papers. The authors conducted an analysis of a substantial sample of masters' and bachelors' papers, as well as a hundred dissertation reports to identify stylistic shortcomings encompassing areas like punctuation, references to prior studies, approaches to citing researchers' names, linguistic axiology tools, negative syntactic structures, and negation. Furthermore, the linguistic competencies of students were assessed to uncover areas where their skills were underdeveloped.

The study has identified an overlooked mistake in academic writing that pertains to misrelating cognitive levels – a phenomenon denoted as 'metonymic malfunction'. This type of error carries a high likelihood of detracting from the paper's impact and can even engender scepticism toward the presented research findings. An illustrative example is the connection between linguistic elements and the reality they describe, where phrases like *'this verb is realising the act which affects N'* mistakenly treat the verb and the act's realisation as being on the same cognitive plane.

The study also examines the comparison between the Russian and English dash marks, investigating the frequency of their usage in Russian academic writing. Moreover, the study underscores the significance of understanding other punctuation marks and their culture-specific linguistic implications as a matter of importance for academics to consider.

The research perspective on a variety of errors, e.g., metonymy malfunction, involves looking into various types of metonymic transfers – an exploration that aims to heighten the awareness of future learners about such metonymies; on treating academic writing in translation perspective will contribute to the theory of discourse.

The practical perspective is that findings from this analysis can be harnessed to enhance training programmes for emerging researchers.

References

Bailey, S. (2011). *Academic writing: A handbook for international students.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203831656

Bolsunovskaya, L. M., & Rymanova, I. E. (2020). Academic writing: Difficulties and possible solutions for engineering students. *Higher Education in Russia, 29*(10), 77-85. https://dx.doi.org/10.31992/0869-3617-2020-29-10-77-85

Birhan, A. T., Teka, M., & Asrade, N. (2021). Effects of using corpus-based instructional mediation on EFL students' academic writing skills improvement. *Theory and Practice of Second Language Acquisition, 7*(2), 133-153. https://dx.doi.org/10.31261/TAPSLA.9993

Bhatia, V. K. (2017). Methodological issues in genre analysis. *Journal of Language and Communication in Business, 9*(16), 39-59. https://doi.org/10.7146/hjlcb.v9i16.25383

Chuikova, E. S. (2015). Ways to support student's motivation in academic writing course. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities and Social Sciences, 8*(5), 972-980. https://doi.org/10.17516/1997-1370-2015-8-5-972-980

Corder, S. P. (1981). *Error analysis and interlanguage.* Oxford University Press.

Curry, M. J., & Lillis, T. (2019). Unpacking the lore on multilingual scholars publishing in English: A discussion paper. *Publications, 7*(27), Article 27. https://dx.doi.org/10.3390/publications7020027

Eco, U. (2015). *How to write a thesis.* The MIT Press.

Fries, C. C. (1945). *Teaching and learning English as a foreign language.* University of Michigan Press.

Erjavec, T., Fišer, D., & Ljubešić, N. (2020). The KAS corpus of Slovenian academic writing. *Language Resources and Evaluation, 55*(1), 551-583. https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10579-020-09506-4

Fajri, M. S. A., Kirana, A. W., & Putri, C. I. K. (2020). Lexical bundles of L1 And L2 English professional scholars: A contrastive corpus-driven study on applied linguistics research articles. *Journal of Language and Education, 6*(4), 76-89. https://doi.org/10.17323/jle.2020.10719

Hall, S., Moskovitz, C., & Pemberton, M. A. (2018). Attitudes toward text recycling in academic writing across disciplines. *Accountability in Research, 25*(3), 142-169. https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08989621.2018.1434622

Korotkina, I. B. (2018). Russian scholarly publications in Anglophone academic discourse: The clash of tyrannosaurs. *Integration of Education, 22*(2), 311-323. https://dx.doi.org/10.15507/1991-9468.091.022.201802.311-323

LDCE. (2023). Error. *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online.* https://ldoceonline.com/dictionary/error

Macagno, F., & Rapanta, C. (2020). *The logic of academic writing.* Wessex Press Inc.

Norrish, R. G. W. (1983). *Language learners and their errors.* Macmillan Education.

O'Leary, J. A., & Steinkrauss, B. F. (2023). Syntactic and lexical complexity in L2 English academic writing: Development and competition. *Ampersand, 9,* Article 100096. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2023.101017

Panther, K.-U., & Radden, G. (1999). *Metonymy in language and thought.* John Benjamins Publications.

Scherba, L. V. (1974). *Language system and speech activity.* Nauka.

Sheipak, S. (2020). Academic writing: Critics of the traditional EAP approach. *Higher Education in Russia, 29*(2), 92-103. https://doi.org/10.31992/0869-3617-2020-29-2-92-103

Shpit, E. I., & Kurovsky, V. N. (2020). Academic writing in English in the structure of higher education in Russia. *Higher Education in Russia, 29*(2), 83-91. https://dx.doi.org/10.31992/0869-3617-2020-29-2-83-91

Suleimanova, O. A. (2014). English-to-Russian rranslation: Traduttore. Traditore (The Day of the Triffids). *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities and Social Sciences,* 2(7), 312-319.

Suleimanova, O. A. (2020). Towards synergetic combination of traditional and innovative digital teaching and research practices. *Training, Language and Culture, 4*(4), 39-50. https://doi.org/10.22363/2521-442X-2020-4-4-39-50

Suleimanova, O. A., Fomina, M. A., & Tivyaeva, I. V. (2020). *Principles and methods of linguistic research.* URSS.

Suleimanova, O. A., & Kardanova-Biryukova, K. S. (2021). Contrastive analysis of English and Russian 'peripheral' syntactic constructions in translation perspective. *Bulletin of the Moscow City Pedagogical University. Series Pedagogy and Psychology, 15,* 297-315. https://dx.doi.org/10.25688/2619-0656.2021.15.17

Suleimanova, O. A., & Petrova I. M. (2020). Using big data experiments in cognitive and linguo-cultural research in English and Russian. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities and Social Sciences, 13*(3), 385-393. https://dx.doi.org/10.17516/1997-1370-0561

Swales, J. M., & Feak, F. B. (2023) Task evolution in English for Academic Purposes writing materials: The case of 'information transfer' to 'critical commentary'. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 61,* Article 101017.

Wong, J. O. (2018). The semantics of logical connectors: Therefore, moreover and in fact. *Russian Journal of Linguistics, 22*(3), 581-604.