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English as a GloCalization Phenomenon  
Observations from a Linguistic Microcosm

edited by

CARMEN PÉREZ-LLANTADA, GIBSON R. FERGUSON

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To John,  
for leading us into the core of genre theory.

To Gibson,  
for initiating us in the adventure of corpus linguistics.

To both,  
for their invaluable support and generous friendship.

Carmen Pérez-Llantada  
Zaragoza, October 2005





## CONTENTS

Notes on Contributors.....	11
Preface .....	15
Editors' introduction.....	19

### PART I

#### THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF A LINGUISTIC MICROCOSM

<b>1</b> The complex dynamics of faculty-student relations in dialogic academic speech events: the research group meeting <i>Claus-Peter Neumann</i> .....	25
<b>2</b> The gender of power relations in academic speech: a cross-disciplinary approach <i>M<sup>a</sup> Teresa Escudero Alías</i> .....	45
<b>3</b> Signaling speaker's intentions: towards a phraseology of textual metadiscourse in academic lecturing <i>Carmen Pérez-Llantada Auría</i> .....	59

### PART II

#### THE SCOPE OF PRAGMATICS WITHIN A LINGUISTIC MICROCOSM

<b>4</b> Academic literacy vs academic oracy: signaling nouns as devices of intratranslation <i>Rosa Lorés Sanz</i> .....	89
<b>5</b> Developing the message: retake phenomena in scientific lectures <i>Silvia Murillo Ornat</i> .....	115
<b>6</b> A corpus-based approach to nominalization in academic lectures <i>Ignacio Vázquez Orta</i> .....	131
<b>7</b> The use of ideational grammatical metaphor in academic spoken English <i>Ignacio Guillén Galve</i> .....	153



PART III

PEDAGOGICAL INSIGHTS OF A «GLOCALIZATION» PHENOMENON

<b>8</b>	Vagueness and imprecise numbers in the hard disciplines of the MICASE <i>Ramón Plo Alastrué</i> .....	185
<b>9</b>	« <i>I think I know what you are saying</i> ». Epistemic lexical verbs as stance markers in American academic speech <i>Rosario Artiga León</i> .....	209
<b>10</b>	« <i>What we mean is actually how we mean</i> ». A contribution to the analysis of sociopragmatic aspects of MICASE discussion sections <i>Irene Aixalá Gil</i> .....	237
<b>11</b>	How to <i>arrange</i> MICASE-based pedagogical materials for the teaching/learning of EAP vocabulary <i>Luz Gabás Ariño</i> .....	257
	Acknowledgements .....	279



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## PREFACE

JOHN M. SWALES

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I have been involved in various aspects of English for Specific Purposes for four decades now. Over this lengthy period, few of these ESP-related activities have given me as much satisfaction as the development and use of the *Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English*, or MICASE. On a purely personal level, MICASE led me both to corpus linguistics and to the study of spoken academic discourse, both developments providing an important and enlivening change of direction away from pre-occupations with written genres and their analysis. More generally and usefully, I have seen increasingly widespread use of MICASE material by students and teachers around the world. Equally significant has been the growing academic and research literature on MICASE. To my knowledge, about 30 research papers have been published so far using MICASE data, and a majority of these have been written by people who are not based in Ann Arbor, but in places like Brazil, Spain, Finland and Italy. In addition, there are three completed doctoral dissertations based on MICASE: one on metaphors in University of Michigan speech (Mendis, 2004); one on discourse markers in MICASE and a corpus of classes recorded in Germany (Schleef, 2005), and one comparing native speaker and non-native speaker uses of conversational hedges (Santana-Williamson, 2004). Others, I believe, are «in the works». Finally, the number of conference presentations, using MICASE data in whole or in part, must now be approaching three figures.

To this growing database, we now have the splendid addition of this volume, wherein the reader will find that all eleven papers make use, in various ways, of the MICASE database. This is the first time that an entire collection of articles has been centrally focused on this particular corpus, and it is really surprising that all the contributors are associated with the Department of English and German Philology at the University of Zaragoza in the region of Aragón in northern Spain. «Why Zaragoza?», the reader might well ask. While I do not have a complete answer to this question, I do know that several years ago the ESP instructors in Zaragoza decided that MICASE



would provide a core source of spoken language materials for their students, mostly undergraduates taking technical and professional degrees. I also believe that enthusiastic advocacy for this strategy provided by Carmen Pérez-Llantada, one of the co-editors of this volume, was instrumental in its adoption. In consequence, an informal link between Zaragoza and Michigan's English Language Institute was established; Rita Simpson, the MICASE Project Director, and I have both been to Zaragoza to offer workshops and to participate in meetings, while as many as six members of the Zaragoza team have visited Ann Arbor for a month in the summer under the auspices of the Morley Scholarship program.

If Zaragoza, as a precise location for this enterprise, might still be something of a surprise, the fact that this major research and materials ESP project emanates from Spain can be much more anticipated. After all, in recent years, Spain has emerged on the world stage as an ESP powerhouse and, in terms of investigations currently being undertaken, it may be second to none. Today, as indeed this volume clearly shows, there are considerable strengths in genre and discourse analysis, and in applied work using a systemic functional approach. Spanish ESP practitioners are not only publishing locally, as in that excellent journal *Ibérica*, but internationally, as recent issues of *English for Specific Purposes* and the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* attest. While these practitioners are often housed in traditional-sounding departments of «filología», they go about their business, and speak and write about their business in ways that are fully and importantly representative of the «New Spain».

As the following introduction to this volume makes clear, the use of MICASE materials by the Zaragoza team is descriptive not prescriptive. As MICASE offers transcribed samples of typical speech from a distant American campus, these samples can be explored, critiqued or modified in terms of their relevance to the local situation. In particular, Zaragozaan students will find that speakers at the University of Michigan, however senior, do not in fact «talk like books», and those students will likely be heartened and encouraged by this realization. Since MICASE is not European, it is also neutrally positioned with regard to current attempts by the European Union to harmonize university education in response to increased multinational student exchanges. However, if it emerges from this increasingly mixed student population that certain genres, such as research group meetings, advising sessions, or study groups, might



now need to be conducted, at least in part, through the medium of English, then exemplars for consideration are on hand, or at least only a few mouse-clicks away. And in fact, preparatory work along these lines can already be found in a number of the papers collected together in this distinctive volume.

September 2005

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