



Received: 31.05.2019
Received in revised form: 13.09.2019
Accepted: 23.09.2019

Bercuci, L. Chitez M. (2019). A corpus analysis of argumentative structures in ESP writing. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, 6(4). 733-747
<http://iojet.org/index.php/IOJET/article/view/655>

A CORPUS ANALYSIS OF ARGUMENTATIVE STRUCTURES IN ESP WRITING

Research Article

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Abstract

One of the challenges in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classrooms is teaching writing genres, especially to students who come from fields that are taught in L1. This is presumably “not only because different languages seem to have different ways of organizing ideas and structuring arguments but because students’ prior writing experiences in the home, school or elsewhere do not prepare them for the literacy expectations of their university or professional workplace” (Hyland, 2013, p. 95). In our study, we analyze 36 argumentative essays written by students of Political Science and International Relations in an English for Social Sciences (ESP-adapted) course taught at the West University of Timisoara in Romania. The essays are written in English and the students’ L1 is Romanian. The aim of the study is to find out to what extent argumentative structures in English are influenced by Romanian academic writing genre norms. For our analysis, we use corpus linguistics methods, looking at frequencies and phraseology patterns as well as prominent rhetoric features related to argumentation. We argue that translations of Romanian structures feature prominently when descriptive moves (description, definition, enumeration) are employed.

Keywords: ESP, corpus linguistics, argumentation, English for Social Sciences, Academic Writing in Romania

1. Introduction

ESP classes within higher education have the purpose of equipping students with English skills necessary for their future careers. As such, they tend to focus more on teaching specialized lexis and rhetorical moves to be used in discipline-specific oral communication and functional writing, and less on academic writing. The students themselves are less motivated to focus on academic writing because they often misjudge which skills will be useful in their career. In reality, many of them go on to pursue graduate courses, often in English, and have trouble adapting Romanian academic writing genre norms to the Anglo-American style. This

paper stems from our desire to bridge the gap between these two writing cultures by discussing which moves to differ and will need to be adapted by students accordingly.

In the first part of this paper, we discuss academic writing cultures in Eastern Europe in general, with special focus on Romania so to offer a context for our research and the assumptions underpinning it in lieu of a tentative literature review. In the second part of the study, we analyze our students' essays, focusing on interlanguage Romanian-English translation, argumentative structures, and rhetorical patterns related to authorial responsibility. We argue that translations of Romanian phrases feature prominently when certain descriptive moves are employed. Finally, make some practical recommendations to be implemented in ESP class.

2. Literature review

2.1 Academic Writing in Eastern Europe

Writing, as a part of university curricula, and connected subjects such as composition or rhetoric, is a tradition associated with the United States, and later with the United Kingdom. Research in the field of academic writing in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as writing support for students and faculty, however, has only recently become a point of interest. The reasons for this are varied and have as much to do with the historical development of higher education institutions in the region as with contemporary European and international politics.

What we refer to here as Eastern Europe are the countries that not only belong to the geographical region eastwards of Germany and Austria, but that share common historical, social and economic traits. Generally, these countries are understood in opposition to Western Europe and are ones that were part of the Soviet sphere of influence during the Cold War. As far back as the 18th Century, Eastern Europe was seen as the so-called "oriental" part of Europe, "left behind" by the industrialized West (Armour as cited in Chitez et. All, 2018, p. 3). This perception of the region continued up until the fall of communist regimes in the area, aided in part by the economic failures of those centralized economies and partly by soft power strategies of the actors of the post-World War II political scene.

Since the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the discussion has centered on bridging the gap between the West and the East, not the least through the inclusion of Eastern European countries into the European Union, which brought about economic, legislative and socio-political reforms. As such, Eastern European countries share a number of features, such as the diversity that comes from always being at the meeting point of several political power blocks, and that can be seen in the organization of their relatively young modern institutions, which are the product of these different traditions, struggling to adapt to the pressure of changes

that are often imposed top-down. While they do share these general characteristics, Eastern European countries have each pursued and achieved institutional modernization at their own pace, with Romania often lagging behind.

Universities, from this perspective, are no different from other institutions in Eastern Europe. The oldest universities in the region, with some notable exceptions, were established in the nineteenth century following the Humboldtian model in its Austro-Hungarian version and adapting it to local needs (cf. Charle, 2004). After 1945, most Eastern European universities underwent a process of Sovietization, which subordinated tertiary educational institutions to the state and the needs of the economy. According to Neave (2011), this led to economy-oriented specializations, such as technical, medical, or agricultural studies, and separation between teaching and research, the latter being relegated to different institutions like academies or institutes. Most universities and research institutes in Eastern Europe were established during this period, following the Soviet model.

Academic writing practices in the region today need to be understood in the context described above. While writing is the primary means of assessing student knowledge, it is generally not taught at university and little research on academic and student writing is conducted. Since the adoption of the Bologna Process, at many European universities, including the ones in Eastern Europe, students have to write a thesis to complete each of the three university cycles (B.A., M.A., and PhD). In spite of this, according to Chitez et al., “the ability to produce written text [is] generally considered to be a matter of talent and intuitive assimilation of models rather than a skill that can be taught” (2018, p. 6). As a consequence, most students get little practice writing as a means of disseminating research before they write their, B.A. thesis, learning as they write, on their own or from their advisor’s notes, with the exception of writing courses in English departments.

Over the past decades, globalization has pushed English to become the lingua franca in the academia, which has led to the leveling of academic genre norms, mostly borrowed from research written in English in the Anglo-American tradition. Countries in Western Europe were the first to borrow methods for the study and teaching of academic writing, but Eastern European countries are also starting to follow suit. Harbord (2018) shows that the American tradition, which was born at Harvard at the end of the nineteenth century, has its roots in the Enlightenment ideal of liberal education, i.e. the educated citizen, capable of lucid argumentation. In the United Kingdom, the lucrative influx of international students into British universities in the 1980s have created the need for the establishment of the discipline English for Academic Purposes, or EAP, aimed at foreign students desiring to become

integrated into British universities (cf. Harbord, 2018). Both the American and the British model for teaching and tutoring writing were popularized in continental Europe by hegemonic endeavors to gain cultural and political influence, especially in Eastern Europe, by American university branches abroad and the work of the British Council. Universities in Eastern Europe are under the additional pressure of European integration, which here is synonymous with progress.

2.2 Academic Writing in Romania

Romanian universities have followed the same general trajectory of other Eastern European universities. Before 1945, they were organized according to the nineteenth-century German, and especially French (Napoleonian) model due to an affinity felt by Romanians towards French culture as speakers of a Romance language (cf. Charle, 2004). After World War II, Romanian universities were reorganized according to the Soviet model like many universities in the region (cf. Rüegg & Sadlak, 2011). The past 25 have been marked by numerous reforms, “as well as an increasing impact of UK and US models, due to factors such as the internationalization of higher education, the widespread use of English in scientific and professional communities, and, since 2007, EU accession and the increased mobility of academics, researchers, and students” (Borchin & Doroholschi, 2016, p. 179).

Even though Romanian higher education has adhered to the Bologna Process and by law No. 288/ 2004 students are expected to write theses to graduate from each of the three university cycles, academic writing teaching in Romania is not guided by educational policy and writing support is provided according to each university’s internal policies. As Borchin and Doroholschi (2016) report, writing centers do not have a traditional role within universities. University students in Romania are expected to have learned academic, as well as professional writing, in high school. Borchin and Doroholschi (2016) have shown that the genres learned in high school do not correlate with academic genres students are expected to produce during their tertiary studies, or as members of the research community of which they might become a part. The students’ learning curve is highly dependent on individual circumstances, such as their institution’s offer of compulsory or elective writing courses, the approach their thesis advisers take to writing, or very infrequently the presence of a writing center within their institution. According to Borchin and Doroholschi, the “small number of existing academic writing guides and textbooks usually unsystematically follow the international literature in the field (predominantly French or Anglo-Saxon), and they tend to create a hybrid between the structures and norms recommended by these sources and those traditional in Romanian academic writing” (Borchin & Doroholschi, 2016, p. 181).

Recently, several comprehensive attempts to deal with these issues have been made in the form of large-scale Europe-wide projects, such as those undertaken by the West University of Timisoara's Modern Languages and Literatures Department's two projects funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. Literacy development in the humanities: creating Competence Centres for the Enhancement of Reading and Writing Skills as Part of University Teaching / LIDHUM (2011-2014), documented in Chitez et al. (2018), is an institutional cooperation project in which faculty members of the partner universities (from Switzerland, Romania, Ukraine and the Republic of Macedonia) were involved. LIDHUM focused on current issues in the teaching of writing and the uses of writing in teaching. It has resulted in many new writing courses (both in English and the national languages) as well as some new writing centers at the participating universities. In fact, the first academic writing centre (Centrul de scriere academică și profesională / CSAP) was set up at the West University of Timisoara as a result of the project and it still functions for academic writing course provision at the university. The second project, SCOPES Valorization Grant, financed the organization of the first academic writing conference in Romania in 2013.

Another former project at the West University of Timisoara concerned with academic writing is the EU COST Action IS0703 The European Research Network on Learning to Write Effectively (2008-2012) which has led to a strengthening of European writing research (Torrance et al., 2012). The main objective of the project was to improve our understanding of how written production is mastered and how this learning process can be made more effective for each and every European citizen, especially children at school and adults in the workplace. Currently, the university is also involved in the follow-up COST Action IS1401 - Strengthening Europeans' Capabilities by Establishing the European Literacy Network (ELN) (2014-2018).

While all these projects were essential for the diagnosis of academic writing challenges faced by Romania and other European countries, it is the project *Academic genres at the crossroads of tradition and internationalization: Corpus-based interlanguage research on genre use in student writing at Romanian universities* (ROGER) that focuses specifically on Romanian higher education. The aim of the ROGER project is to develop a methodology for the analysis of academic writing genres at Romanian universities from a contrastive perspective: genres written in Romanian versus genres written in English. This will contribute to understanding what and how students write at a university level in both English and Romanian by contrasting writing in the native tongue with writing in a foreign language. One of the project's main components is a searchable corpus which will be used for ROGER and further research. The objectives in the project are the identification, analysis, measurement and

evaluation of the relevant rhetorical and linguistic features of the same genres written in either of the two languages (native Romanian, L2 English) in order to determine the degree of similarity or divergence from similar writings of native English speakers (L1 English). The preliminary results of a survey analysis conducted as part of a study confirm the lack of systematic teaching of the genre at university level which results in the conflation of several academic genres (e.g. essay and research paper) under all-encompassing terms, such as *referat*, which favor the Romanian academic writing tradition and style.

2.3 The Main Features of Romanian Student Writing

To date, three studies have focused on the university writing of Romanian students. Băniceru et al. (2012) showed that “[t]he ‘traditional’ Romanian practice of writing can be characterized as implicit, ‘author oriented’, ‘concerned with style’, lacking theoretical reflection and an appropriate methodological approach” (p. 321). Of late, the study seeks to prove, the influence of Anglo-American models has enacted subtle but undeniable changes in Romanian research writing. Analyzing the introductions of B.A. theses in English and Romanian, the authors point out that an incomplete and mechanical adoption of the Anglo-American model characterizes student writing, identifying “7 moves most typically used in the corpus of diploma paper introductions, and concluded that the “descriptive” moves and steps (introducing the topic, presenting the structure of the paper) prevailed over the more “reflective” moves (summarising previous research, indicating a gap in previous research)” (Băniceru et al., 2012, p. 320).

Linguistically, the study identifies the influence of the Romanian academic style on student writing in English in the use of personal deictics. Romanian academic writing norms advise against the use of the first person singular, and this is evident in the analysis of Băniceru et al. (2012), who note the sporadic occurrences of the forms of the first person in Romanian texts (eu (I) and noi (we) or first person verbs) and the very frequent use thereof in texts written in English. They conclude that

Romanian authors choose to “de-personalize” their voice, transferring all merits to the paper itself. This difference speaks about the two still distinct “traditions” of academic writing, since all students writing a diploma paper were free to choose between the two solutions, namely pointing to the author or pointing to the paper itself. (Băniceru et al., 2012, p. 331)

Băniceru and Tucan’s study (2018) reveals similar perceptions about academic writing from the part of students. Noting that more often than not, academic writing in Romania is not taught explicitly but by encouraging students to emulate good writing and sometimes correcting their

failure to comply with implicit writing practices, the authors seek to find out what the faculty and the students of the West University of Timisoara see as successful writing. Their statistical analysis of the questionnaire reveals that students assume that “good writing” should be defined by terminological accuracy, the use of figurative language and avoiding *I*, and less by convincing arguments and critical thinking (B). The authors explain the importance attributed to figurative language to preconceived ideas about writing and style, through which academic writing is associated with “elegant, even bombastic language, with elaborate sentences and sometimes even with high-flown style and excessive use of verbal ornamentation” (Băniceru & Tucan, 2018, p. 107). While the study does not address this issue, we assume that the important attribute to terminological accuracy might be a result of writing being used in examinations which encourage reproduction of course notes.

Chitez’ *Corpus Linguistics Meets Academic Writing: Examples and Applications in the Romanian EFL Context* (2018) provides additional insight into linguistics features of writing in English done by students whose L1 is Romanian. Chitez (2018) calculated frequency rates for part-of-speech categories such as nouns, verbs and prepositions. Data indicates that “top-ten most frequent nouns coincide with the most used nouns by native speakers” (Chitez, 2018, p. 205) whereas, in the case of verbs, the most used tokens are different in English L2 compared to Romanian. Among the nouns that tend to be overused by the Romanian L2 users are “life”, “world”, “way”, “society”, “man”, “fact”, “person”, “death”, “problem” and “child”. A number of verbs are also used more frequently by the Romanian students than by native speakers (e.g. “think”, “want”, “know” and “say”) but there are also verbs which are exclusively prominent in the L2 writing while rather unused in the native-English texts: “cause”, “choose”, “commit”, “exist”, “feel”, “forget”, “go”, “help”, “hope”, “kill”, “love”, “start”, “suffer” or “work”. Among prepositions which shape the lexical profile of the Romanian student ESP text, due to overuse, Chitez (2018) mentions “from”, “about”, “like” and “between” for simple prepositions, and “in front of”, “in spite of”, “by means of” and “except for”, from the category of complex prepositions. The study emphasizes the lexical preferences of the ESP students compared to the lexical preferences of the L1 students. A comparison with the ESP students’ L1, i.e. Romanian, which the present study investigates, offers, therefore, the missing perspective regarding the cause for overuse or underuse of certain linguistic elements, which might be related to the interference with the mother tongue.

3. Methodology

The second part of the present paper will perform a quantitative analysis of frequency and phraseology patterns in 36 argumentative essays written by undergraduate students of Political

Science and International Relations who were attending an English for Social Sciences course (ESP-adapted) as part of the compulsory curriculum, and whose L1 is Romanian. We contrast this corpus, which we have named RISEESP and which is made up of 19.225 words, to an expert corpus we compiled (RISEexpert). While RISEESP is composed of student texts written in English, RISEexpert is a corpus we created from political editorials, blog and journal articles in Romanian. RISEexpert contains 50 texts and a total of 54.119 words.

We proceed from the assumption that since they are receiving relatively little instruction in English academic writing which is not a priority in their studies, the subject being worth only 2 credits, our students resort to emulating models they come across or transfer their knowledge of Romanian academic writing into English. For the analysis, we used Words, Whelk, Ngrams tools of the programs LancsBox (Brezina, McEnery & Wattam, 2015) and WordSmith (Scott & Stroud, 2016).

3.1 Purpose of the Study

While our students were already taking an academic writing class in Romanian, they were unfamiliar with English academic writing genre norms, which are quite different. What is more, many of them still have problems with successful argumentative essay writing in general for cultural reasons. The aim of this study was, thus, to see where the academic-writing-oriented tasks in our class failed to register with our students in order to develop more focused tasks that would coordinate better with the academic writing training they are already receiving, focusing on frequencies and phraseology patterns, and prominent rhetoric features related to argumentation as well as Anglo-American academic writing genre norms.

3.2 Participants and Setting

In Romania, and consequently at the West University of Timisoara, it is mandatory for undergraduate students to take four semesters of Language for Specific Purposes, with the students being able to choose whichever language their university has on offer. Popular choices are English, Spanish, German, French, or Italian, but sometimes students choose languages that are not taught in schools in Romania, such as Portuguese, Chinese, Russian, Korean or Arabic. By the end of four semesters of study, the students are required to have reached at least level B2 in the language they choose. The majority of students choose to study English for Specific Purposes because many of them learn English in high school and already have a good command of the language. As a result, the groups are quite large (around 30 students) and heterogeneous, the participants' language level varying from A1 to C1.

In our case, the focus group is undergraduate students in their first and second year of study. They study Political Science and International Relations and, after completing a placement test,

they were assigned to the more advanced group of two in their year, their language level being B2. When they first enroll in their program of study, most of them aspire to become diplomatic or other political aides and are often more motivated to learn vocabulary related to their field and practice reading (especially legal documents, newspaper articles on current affairs) and speaking (speeches, debates on political topics). However, most students enrolled in this program eventually follow a research track, enrolling in a master's program offered by the same department and taught in English. Additionally, many of them spend one or two semesters abroad as exchange students at more research-oriented universities. Most of the students will eventually be expected to produce research papers in English.

4. Results

The basic frequency analysis shows that in the RISEexpert corpus the ten most frequently used words in Romanian in this case are: *de, si, in, a, ca, sa, la, o, nu, care* (EN: *of, and, in, to, to, to, a, no, which/that*). In the student corpus in English (RISEESP), the most frequent tokens are: *the, to, of, and, a, in, is, that, it, are*. Considering that the definite article *the* does not exist as a separate token in the Romanian language and that *a, ca, sa* are all to be translated as *to*, the same words appear in a similar number of instances, with the exception of *nu* (EN: *no/not*) and *are*. While this alone does not suggest an interference of Romanian in English student writing, it has been noted before that, when learner corpora of Romanian students writing in English are compared to native corpora, a higher frequency of the definite article *the* and of the preposition *of* is evident (cf. Bercuci & Chitez, 2019).

Figure 1 contrasts percentages of the most frequently used words in Romanian and in English. The high frequency of *de, se* and *a* suggests a tendency to use reflexive voice (with a passive meaning) rather than the active voice in Romanian. The high frequency of *este* together with *o/un* and *care* suggests a proclivity for description or definition in Romanian. The use of *si* suggests a preference for enumeration or simultaneity, while only *ca* and *sa* point to the move towards stating a purpose or explaining a cause-effect relation in Romanian.

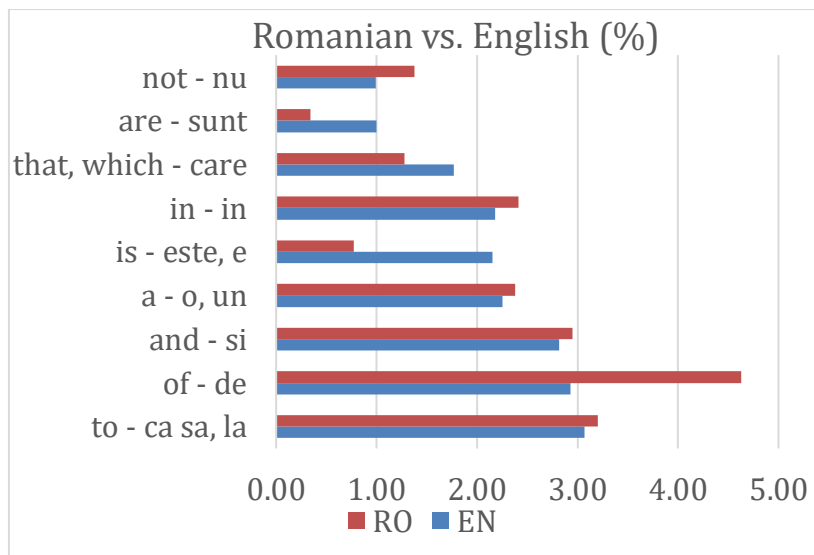


Figure 1: Comparable high-frequency words in Romanian and in English

In English, students use the verb *to be* and relative pronouns, such as *that/which*, even more than in Romanian, showing a preference for definition as well. Words that typically introduce or support arguments appear in the student texts with low frequency: *because* (0.52%), *influence* (0.23%), *example* (0.18%), *why* (0.06%), *reason* (0.03%), *effect* (0.02%).

The analysis of three-word NGrams shows some interference from the Romanian language. The Romanian expert corpus exhibits repetition and lexical simplification (*punct de vedere*), along with frequent orality markers (*pur si simplu*) and a hedging tendency (*ca ar fi, ar fi fost*). In the RISEESP corpus, the most frequent three-word NGrams are patterns of organization (*first of all, on the other hand, in conclusion, one the one hand*), argumentative patterns (*in order to*), and patterns used to express opinion similar to those in the Romanian corpus (*I believe that, point of view, in my opinion*).

Interference from the Romanian language is apparent in the use of some phrases, such as *point of view* (RO: *din punct de vedere*), *when it comes to* (RO: *in ceea ce priveste*), which are used with high frequency. A close reading of the text excerpts where these phrases occur revealed unidiomatic usage in most cases. Consider the following sentence:

Point of view: “From the point of view of politics” (RO: *din punct de vedere politic*)

The following Ngrams appear with high frequency in both corpora: *first of all, when it comes to, on the other hand, point of view*. Comparing the frequency with which these phrases appear in both corpora (Figure 2), we discovered that students tend to overuse the same phrases meant to organize a text. All are typical linkers in both Romanian and English. Their higher frequency in English shows a tendency to resort to formulaic structures taught in class, which are also

part of the marking rubric. The use of these structures, however, does not always or necessarily mean the essays in which they appear use them effectively.

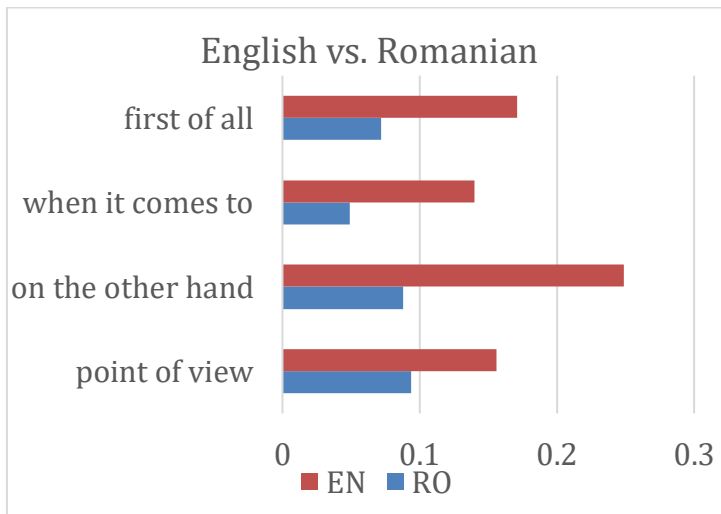


Figure 2: NGrams in English and Romanian

Next, we performed a Welk analysis of the use of *I* in the learner corpus, RISEESP, to gauge the extent to which the authors of the papers are willing to take responsibility for the positions expressed in their argumentative essays. The analysis revealed that 26 of the 36 texts take the first-person perspective, i.e. 72.2%. Figure 3 shows 15 instances in which *I* is used.

Index	File	Left	N...	Right
1	RISEESP100	press, integrity and rightness. First of all,	I	believe that press should be impartial and
2	RISEESP100	the opportunities they can find in these.	I	can't find any opposition arguments, except we
3	RISEESP100	Vietnam, Cuba or any other totalitarian states.	I	think that the world evolved that much
4	RISEESP100	will disappear one by one. In conclusion,	I	believe that everyone should vote by themselves,
5	RISEESP100	has been bought. The second reason why	I	don't trust media is because of the
6	RISEESP100	of the newsletters and political interest programs,	I	do not agree with the obstruction of
7	RISEESP100	more money to support their cause and	I	think that this is why there are
8	RISEESP100	are poor and have an instable regim.	I	think that people should be let to
9	RISEESP100	In my opinion,	I	do not think it is a good
10	RISEESP100	moral values and education. To start with	I	would like to mention that in recent
11	RISEESP100	helpful for the politicians. To sum up,	I	consider that this two important instruments of
12	RISEESP101	help the development of your country. Firstly,	I	am of the opinion that a journalists
13	RISEESP101	some parties based by the internet news.	I	believe that when it comes about media
14	RISEESP101	begins. In addition to my previous arguments	I	would like to mention that not all
15	RISEESP101	kind of twisted intentions but the opposite.	I	believe there are honest journalists that express

Figure 3. Use of I

This suggests that the point of view in Romanian does not affect use in English. There is recurrent use of personal pronouns (*we, I*): *the way we, I believe that*. The use in these pronouns in ESP writing is perceived differently as in L1. That this is so is unusual in relation to other published analyses of learner corpora of English texts written by students who have Romanian as their L1. There are two possible explanations for this.

The first reason why the students could be comfortable using the first person in their argumentative essays is that being at the beginning of their academic journey, they have not yet internalized the Romanian academic register which requires them to depersonalize their writing. Additionally, they often feel very passionately about the topics of their essays, taking very personal stances and often not being able to keep their intellectual distance for the topic at hand.

The second possibility is that the students have successfully gauged the difference between the two writing cultures and have internalized English academic writing norms related to authorial responsibility. Informal interviews with some of the students suggested the same. The second-year undergraduates, who by the time they were assigned these essays had already completed their Romanian academic writing course, were aware of some of the differences between the two writing cultures. The first-year students, however, used the first person instinctively, as they would in informal writing or in-class debates.

5. Discussion

The results of our study reinforce several conclusions to which other works on Romanian academic writing came. The writing of our focus group students showcased some of the same interference from Romanian that previous studies have noted: the overuse of *the* and *of*, the takeover of some structures typical of Romanian (*point of view*, *when it comes to*), used unidiomatically, and, most importantly structures used to signal descriptive moves.

Unlike previous studies, our students were not averse to taking authorial responsibility for their arguments. However, it was not clear if this was a result of understanding the difference between Anglo-American and Romanian writing cultures or slips in the use of formal register. Noting this limitation to our study, we would suggest that other similar studies include informal interviews with the students as well as a more careful correlation between their learning progress and the use of first-person point of view.

All in all, through the identified examples, our study primarily highlighted two avenues where further research is required: (a) consistent studies (e.g. corpus-based) in the area of Romanian-English interlanguage research, so that an inventory of lexical-grammatical features transferred from Romanian into L2 English can be drawn up and pedagogically exploited; (b) corpus-informed contrastive rhetoric studies related to the use of ESP by Romanian speakers, so that specifics can be identified and, as above, included in teaching materials.

5.1 Implications for education and teaching

In light of our results, we recommend that ESP classes approach academic writing by stressing the problem areas mentioned above: the overuse of *the* and *of*, the takeover of some

structures typical of Romanian (*point of view, when it comes to*), used unidiomatically, and, most importantly structures used to signal descriptive moves. To address these issues, we recommend corpus-consultation exercises, such as the following:

Expert Corpus as Support for Academic Writing in L2

Students can be asked to compile an expert corpus of research articles written in English in their field.

Corpora Can Facilitate Induced-Learning Writing-Related Tasks

Students can be asked to analyze corpora in L2 or to perform contrastive analyses between Romanian and English expert corpora in their field to discover salient features of academic writing in both languages.

Corpora as Control for Reference Instruments

Students can be given the task of checking their writing in terms of phraseology and vocabulary against expert corpora and adapt it according to the results of the analysis.

Corpora as Support for Academic Writing Tools

Students can be given access to a specialized corpus as part of an academic writing tool that can offer them real-time support in their writing process.

6. Conclusions

The contrastive interlanguage analysis of the self-compiled corpora (corpus of student learner Romanian ESP versus expert L1 Romanian) indicates that, as emphasized in the introductory part of the article, the Romanian academic writing norms represent a mixture of features which reflect the tendencies of the whole educational system: the shift towards internationalization. This is especially prominent when interpreting the results of the authorial responsibility argument markers, the students showing authorial responsibility by using the 1st person, fact which is not specific to the Romanian academic writing. The switch to the informal register, in some cases when students use the 1st person, demonstrates, at the same time, the confusion generated by norm mixing.

The set of argumentation-relevant constructs in RISEESP, i.e. most frequent discipline-specific tokens and Ngrams, can be divided into three two groups: (a) argumentation patterns based on similar grammatical key elements in both varieties (e.g. prepositions *in, to*); (b) overuse in ESP (e.g. definition patterns using the verbs to be or the relative pronouns *that, which*); underuse in ESP (e.g. negation or preposition *of*).

As for argumentative patterns, we have shown that the students used Romanian-influenced phrases that introduce arguments (e.g. *first of all, on the other hand*), but were rather inclined

to use typical linkers taught in class and present in the marking rubric. They were, however, sometimes used mechanically and incorrectly.

Our analysis also showed that, in terms of interference from L1, i.e. Romanian, the essays transferred by direct translation certain phrases and rhetorical patterns typical of their mother tongue into their ESP writing. For example, phrases such as *point of view* (RO: *punct de vedere*) and *when it comes to* (RO: *în ceea ce privește*) appear frequently in Romanian ESP texts and they are used unidiomatically.

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