

ACADEMIC STYLE PROOFREADING AS A PRACTICE OF INTERCULTURAL TRANSLATION AND METALINGUISTIC AWARENESS

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Abstract

It is increasingly frequent for non-native academics to receive requests to revise and correct papers that have been translated and revised by a native speaker before submission. This proves that “good academic English” is changing in the international academic context, and research in ERPP (English for Research Publication Purposes) has explored the challenges and occasional injustices that non-native academics face when publishing in English, and the international academic community’s perception of their linguistic competence. To realign disciplinary EAP to such a perception, it is necessary to address a gap in ESP and EAP learning and teaching that lies in “style”, a subtle level of communication positioned between language and discourse and detected by reviewers and editors (Nørgaard *et al.* 2010). “Academic style” differs from “style” in literature and everyday discourse and may be investigated through corpus stylistics (McIntyre and Walker 2019), a methodology that is as flexible and elusive as its object of inquiry, starting from error analysis (Allen and Corder 1974; Corder 1981). It is also connected with an academic’s “mind style” (Jeffries and McIntyre 2010), which is influenced by his or her cultural background and encompasses explicit and implicit deviations from the international community’s expectations. In such a context, “academic style proofreading”, which ensures a manuscript’s suitability for submission and publication, represents a form of linguistic and stylistic translation and mediation (Doerr 2023). This study provides empirical evidence of and explanations for common errors in academic style and their related cultural interferences and transfers. It is based on a corpus of papers on management, corporate governance and sustainable development written by Italian scholars and stylistically proofread before publication in peer-reviewed business journals. The study concludes with reflections on the practical and research implications and advantages of implementing academic style proofreading to improve academic writing and raise awareness of intercultural differences in mind style and academic style.

1. Introduction: developments in ESP and intercultural interference in academic writing

Almost one century after the coining of the well-known expression “publish or perish” by Coolidge (1932), the international academic community and its discourse are affected by underlying changes in standards of English academic writing. Such changes

go beyond what has hitherto been considered “correct” writing, and are especially demanding for academics whose L1 is not English, reaching a 24% increase in difficulty (Englander and Cocoran 2019). Not only must they write highly specialized content in a foreign language, but they also need more time to do so and feel they are at a disadvantage because they must write with a limited vocabulary and simple style. Nevertheless, growing internationalization in the field of academic publishing has led to the realization that “there is increasing pressure on scholars to publish in English [...] and that English-medium publications are often accorded higher status than publications in other languages” (Lillis and Curry 2006: 4). Such challenges in academic writing are compounded with an intercultural and translanguage filter of which many remain unconscious because it emerges in subtle errors at linguistic levels that are perceived but cannot be clearly detected or explained. Such errors lie at the level of “academic style”, which often escapes the understanding of both native-speaking language professionals and of non-native academics. This is because academic language is “no one’s mother tongue” (Bourdieu *et al.* 1994), and is often acquired through expertise and practice rather than language learning (Swales 2004), to the point that “‘EAL writers may be as equally proficient in English as their Anglophone counterparts, or even better’ (Flowerdew and Habibie 2022: 18).

Publishers now also require papers to be written in a satisfactory “style”, and not just a correct form (Bennett 2009, 2014; Curry and Lillis 2013) for them to be better received by reviewers and the readership. This is demonstrated by the fact that the main reasons for the rejection of submitted papers include style and language, lack of focus, poor contextualization, non-compliance with journal submission guidelines, research design, and inappropriate content (Kapp *et al.* 2011). Among these, “style and language” are at the fore, but while the latter is understandable and trained on many levels, the former is often undefined both in academic writing classes and in journal guidelines under the assumption that proper academic style comes naturally with language competence. A further complicating factor lies in the fact that different disciplines, as well as different journals and their stylesheets, permit a different degree of tolerance of deviations in style and that, as McKinley and Rose (2018: 1) observe:

Some guidelines state a requirement of meeting an unclear standard of good English, sometimes described as American or British English. Many guidelines specifically position L2 writers as deficient of native standards, which raises ethical considerations of access to publication in top journals.

In linguistics, “style” is at the intersection between language and discourse and usually not addressed in EAP (English for Academic Purposes) except in a very superficial and vague manner (e.g. structure of arguments, impersonal voice, use of specialized terminology and signpost language, avoidance of contractions and colloquial language). Proper style is also often mentioned in journals’ author guidelines and publishers’ “house style”, yet it is not explained in the former and simply consists in a set of conventions in the latter. However, academic style is a level of academic writing where even native academics err at the beginning of their careers unless they are properly corrected. As a result, the EAP materials that are currently available and employed are not in line with today’s requirements and consist of manuals instructing English native

speakers on academic writing in general or of sections of advanced EAP manuals with a brief section dedicated to style (Sword 2012; Hayot 2014; Hopkins and Reid 2018; Tusting *et al.* 2019). Academic style thus represents a gap in academic English that may impede publication in itself (in “review language” feedback) or be combined with other criticisms to enforce a “major review” or “reject” decision.

The growing presence and importance of non-native academics has led to a gradual evolution and integration of intercultural and transcultural elements and approaches in many consolidated terms related to EAP. One of these, which has already been implemented in countries where cultural and linguistic diversity is integrated into institutional educational and academic discourse, consists in the shift from “(non) native speaker” to “(plurilingual) EAL (English as an Additional Language) writer/learner” (Holliday 2005; Luo and Hyland 2019), which will be used from this point on. This choice acknowledges the academic’s competence in at least one language, alongside their mother tongue; it avoids ordering the languages an academic is capable of using in a rigid hierarchy; it substitutes the more limited reference to “speaker” with “writer/learner”, which considers academic writing or all four language skills.

The second ongoing change is from ESP (English for Specific Purposes) to ESPP (English for Scientific and Professional Purposes), which is based on the learner’s real needs and on the collection and analysis of empirical material similar to that encountered in professional and academic contexts (Zanola 2023). This will presumably lead to experiential courses with a closer connection between the theory of language learning and the practice of a profession or academic research. Accordingly, the well-known field of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) is currently branching out into EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes) and ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes) to address the linguistic needs of the academic community in general and those of the academics operating in a specific discipline or line of research (Blue 1988). Finally, EAP is taking on an international and intercultural dimension by being increasingly accompanied by research in ERPP (English for Research Publication Purposes) (Englander and Cocoran 2019; Flowerdew and Habibie 2022), a term coined in 2008 by Cargill and Burgess and focused on the geopolitical and international knowledge exchange consequences of academic language review and evaluation.

These evolutionary trends all tend towards the inclusion of more professional specialization and intercultural diversity within an international discourse that has hitherto upheld standardized global language to promote common grounds of understanding. While it is still necessary for academics worldwide to master this “no one’s language”, accepting and enforcing one standard academic style and mind style founded on a generally accepted UK/USA-based variation of academic English without providing EAL learners with the means to understand and integrate it into their writing ultimately lead to loss of knowledge and its multifaceted discourse.

The third word in the “academic style proofreading” term adopted in this study refers both to the professional role, which is often confused with other “literacy brokers” (Lillis and Curry 2006: 4), and to a linguistic activity that must always be carried out in academic publishing. In fact, proofreading is well known and necessary but often taken for granted as a mere “routine procedure, a process of giving a final dusting down [...] before an article or chapter is published” (Scott and Turner 2008: 1). Traditional dictionaries, in defining the verb “proofread” and the activity of “proofreading”,

focus on spelling, grammar and punctuation and define proofreading as aspiring to the correctness of a text by pointing out and correcting obvious errors while maintaining the overall structure of the discourse and sentence. There is a very diverse use of the term proofreading, and it is often identified with or opposed to copyediting, which is an increasingly present practice and profession that often deals with editing style, and language editing, which is a general term that includes copyediting (language) and mechanical editing (adherence to publisher's "house style"). However, copyediting is not always separately provided in the revision process and language editing generally does not include stylistic editing. For this reason, the term "proofreading", which is well known and always executed at least once before publishing, has been adopted here. The official ENG-ITA translations of the term "proofreading" in the IATE (Interactive Terminology for Europe) terminological database confirm this by yielding results such as "correzione di bozze" and even, in one instance, of "controllo tecnico dei documenti", further restricting the activity to the search for a perfect correspondence among the terms of a specialized microlanguage. Accordingly, "proofreader" is translated as "correttore di bozze". In recent years however, high level and high-stakes linguistic contexts like academic writing increasingly require an enhanced form of proofreading that also considers subtle stylistic and specialized syntactic structures (Chovanec 2012; Hartse and Kubota 2014).

The first intent of the present contribution is therefore to shed light on the practical implications of this emerging issue by highlighting key concepts that can raise awareness on the matter itself and its possible consequences in terms of evaluation by editorial and reviewing recipients of the text. The concepts of "mind style" and "academic style" will be explored in relation to English and Italian to represent possible divergences between the writing of EAL academics and the expectations of the international academic discourse community. Therefore, the first research question dealt with in Section 2 is:

RQ1: What are "academic style" and "mind style", and what impact can intercultural interference have on an EAL academic's writing?

These reflections will then be connected to the relevance of enhancing the (self) proofreading of one's own academic style and to the potential contribution of (corpus) stylistics and error analysis in academic writing and publishing. In particular, it will explore the language of economics, whose context and academic writing requirements make interlanguage errors common but avoidable if properly taught, thus addressing the second and third research questions in Section 3:

RQ2: How can academic style proofreading be observed and studied?

RQ3: Why can academic style proofreading be important in the field of economics?

Some examples of common errors, with their treatment and related comments, drawn from a corpus composed of proofread papers written by Italian academics for a nation-based open access peer-reviewed journal in economics, will be provided in Section 4, starting from the final research question:

RQ4: What are some common areas of error in Italian EAL academics' writing and how may they be treated?

The study then concludes by connecting the findings with the practical and research implications of promoting academic style proofreading within an international context.

2. Academic style and mind style: the next level of metalinguistic awareness

From a linguistic standpoint, the international discourse community responsible for filtering and promoting the dissemination of knowledge around the world accepts academic texts whose style and register is in line with the “globally dominant Anglo-American system” (Chovanec 2012: 6). Academic style consists in (Doerr 2023: 93):

a way of communicating in an academic setting where it is necessary to thoroughly communicate complex ideas in a manner that will make them clearly understandable and less likely to be challenged on the fundamental principles and purposes at their core (although these may be commented on or expanded).

However, like “style” in general, academic style is elusive and subjective, and therefore hard to pinpoint and dependent on the learners’ culture(s) and language(s) of origin. Therefore it is often absent or quickly glossed over in EAP manuals in favour of more homogenous and assessable – and therefore “marketable” – aspects. This leaves EAL academics unaware of how their text may be interpreted by an experienced peer, and therefore unprepared for reviews requesting further linguistic revision, especially if multiple professionals (e.g. other author(s), revisor, reviser, copyeditor, and proofreader) had already intervened on the text. By the same token, reviewers – especially those who are not acquainted with linguistics or language teaching – are unable to explain why certain texts are intuitively “not well written” although they present no evident or indisputable mistakes.

Academic style therefore reflects the international academic community’s “mind style” (Jeffries and McIntyre 2010), i.e. its common values, aspirations, and associations of thought, not only in text and paragraph organization but also in underlying discursive patterns and flow. This collective mind style is communicated and upheld by conventions and standards aiming at cohesion, uniformity and appropriateness to ensure that specialized information is properly conveyed and understood. An acceptable academic style therefore expresses an academic’s ideas and knowledge (Solly 2016), based on experience and know-how, through idiosyncratic language that complies with the academic discourse community’s mind style and resulting global collective and socially determined dimension of communication (Stockwell 2006). In contrast, writing that reflects non-English sentence structures or discourse flow runs the risk of not being considered suitable for publication (Hartse and Kubota 2014; Luo and Hyland 2019) because it deviates from the collective mind style and is still anchored to the writer’s unconscious epistemological and communicative framework. A significant difference in mind styles interrupts the expressive flow at the heart of an interpretative process of knowledge exchange between writer and reader. Despite using the same language, if such a divergence in flow were to be maintained throughout the academic text, it could

result in unclear communication and potential misunderstanding resembling deviation from Grice's (1975) "Cooperative Principle". In fact, as Mauranen (1993: 263) asserts:

Breaking grammatical rules has different consequences from breaking textual or rhetorical rules originating in a national culture: by breaking grammatical and lexical rules, a writer conveys the impression of not knowing the language, which may in mild cases be forgiven and in serious cases cause breakdown of comprehension; by breaking rules of a text-linguistic type, a writer may appear incoherent or illogical; finally, by breaking cultural-specific rhetorical rules a writer may seem exotic in command and low in credibility.

The importance of mind style has emerged in studies on academic writing and cultural patterns and can explain possible misinterpretations of the author's intent. For instance, Kaplan (1980) associated English academic writing with direct and linear communication that does not go off topic, refers constantly to the main subject or topic of interest, and arranges the main statement and supporting statements in a hierarchical structure. On the contrary, "[m]uch greater freedom to digress or to introduce extraneous material is available in French, or in Spanish, than in English", but such a digression, which is also common in Italian, "really does not seem to contribute significant structural material to the basic thought of the paragraph" (*ibid.*), and is therefore deemed redundant in English. Similar reflections on contrastive rhetoric are present in Galtung's (1981) classification of four academic community style approaches, as well as in Clyne's (1993, 2002) intercultural specialized language research and contrastive discourse studies. The latter study underlines the significant presence of politeness in languages like Italian through greater hedging and a more extensive use of reflexive verbs, subjunctives and/or modal particles, which convey indirectness and elegance.

Another common divergence between English and Italian, which "translates" into academic discourse, lies in their styles of reasoning and is also at the base of learning methods, legal institutions and knowledge-sharing practices. In fact, Italy, like other Latin European cultures, falls under the "principles-first (or deductive) reasoning style", which "derives conclusions or facts from general principles or concepts" (Meyer 2014: 93). This translates into the need for solid theoretical bases and sound arguments to be explored in detail in order to present persuasive conclusions, at the expense of more practical sections such as discussions, conclusions and implications. It also allows for more material and digressions than is considered necessary or acceptable for readers or reviewers who are versed in the dominant mind style. As a result, syntactic structures in academic Italian are more articulate than their English counterpart, leaving Italian academics with the impression that the translation or transference of the content of their work into English is banal or simplistic.

In contrast, English follows an "applications-first (or inductive) reasoning" where "general conclusions are reached based on a pattern of factual observations from the real world" (Meyer 2014: 93). This attention to hands-on experience is reflected in an experiential and practical approach to knowledge and information, as well as focus on discussions and their possible developments. As a result, sentences and reasoning are more linear and concrete in academic English compared to its Italian counterpart, but they must be based on convincing applications and results rather than the theoretical background, thus promoting academic and critical thinking. For this reason, an Italian EAL academic following a principles-first mind style and reasoning/writing pattern

may receive feedback from a peer adhering to the dominant Anglophone mind style and academic style asking for clearer and more linear language and style, or for more dedication to the analysis of case studies and applications, as well as the discussion of results, limits and implications. Therefore, by being versed in the accepted mind style and discursive style, it is possible to better (self)proofread one's own papers in terms of overall academic style and prevent common errors due to the interlanguage translation and transference of thought and linguistic patterns.

3. Methodology and corpus construction

After outlining the context, it is necessary to present the methodology of the study, consisting in the combination of corpus stylistics and error analysis by starting from “stylistics”. Stylistics as an interdisciplinary (Simpson 2004, 2014; Sorlin 2014, 2018) and unruly discipline analyses style starting from “defamiliarization” (Jeffries and McIntyre 2010: 1), i.e. diverging (linguistic, rhetorical and discursive) elements. Here such defamiliarized elements are represented by the EAL author's stylistic divergences, which are perceived as strange or deficient. Stylistics' need for “rigour, objectivity, replicability, empiricism, falsifiability” (*ibid.*: 22-23) – qualities that are typical of academic research and knowledge sharing – led to corpus stylistics (Jeffries and McIntyre 2010; Nørgaard *et al.* 2010; McIntyre and Walker 2019), the linguistic study of literary “style” appropriated by corpus linguistics (Nørgaard *et al.* 2010: 10):

Corpus stylistics focuses on interpretation and on answering the question of how a text means, which is appropriated from stylistics. This will then advance corpus linguistic procedures by not only describing achieved results, but also by interpreting them and answering the question of ‘So what?’.

Interestingly, the question “so what” is typical of an Anglophone mind and academic style: to answer this, error analysis (Allen and Corder 1974; Corder 1981; Canagarajah 2015) will be applied “to document the errors that appear in learner language, determine whether those errors are systematic, and (if possible) explain what caused them. [...] Such errors tell us something about the learner's interlanguage, or underlying knowledge of the rules of the language being learned” (Corder 1981: 10). From this perspective, the divergences in style dealt with in the present paper are not “mistakes”, but rather “errors”, which consist in (Richards and Schmidt 2010: 201):

the use of a linguistic item (e.g. a word, a grammatical item, a speech act, etc.) in a way which a fluent or native speaker of the language regards as showing faulty or incomplete learning. [...] In the study of second and foreign language learning, errors have been studied to discover the processes learners make use of in learning and using a language.

For this reason, the term “error” will be used throughout the study and such occurrences will be “treated”, not “corrected”, to align the text with the stylistic expectations of the academic community. Moreover, as opposed to mistakes, these errors all fall under the “local error” category that “does not cause problems of comprehension” (*ibid.*: 247).

Academic writing and style in economics, which will be the focus of this study, is a developing discourse and part of the “social sciences”, located between the hard and soft sciences, and turns “an initial abstract construal of experience into something more technical” (Hyland 2009: 8), a line of reasoning that reflects the previously mentioned applications-first reasoning. Such a position entails a certain degree of (non)tolerance of non-English lexico-grammatical and stylistic variations and “errors” because the language of economics lacks both the urgency of the sciences and the freedom of the humanities. Moreover, papers in economics follow the IMRaD (Introduction - Method - Results - Discussion) structure that is typical of scientific writing and are constrained by a word limit that must often be divided among multiple authors and the data. This results in a perceived need to reduce one’s number of words and follow the most stringent formulas of academic writing.

The ECO corpus of academic texts used here is composed of 60 articles (and their abstracts) written in English (the vast majority are written in American English) by Italian scholars for an Italian nation-based journal in management, corporate governance and trends in sustainable development aiming at an international audience. The articles were written, submitted, and proofread by the author between January 2013 and December 2021. The articles had already been revised by peers but required proofreading of grammar accuracy and stylistic readability prior to publication. The corpus was divided into two subcorpora (hitherto referred to as “ECO with corrections” and “ECO without corrections”, the first of which is considered here). To guarantee the contents’ anonymity and better focus on the text, the authors’ names and contact information were deleted, along with the articles’ bibliography. As a result, the “ECO with corrections” subcorpus consisted of 15,640 word types and 381,645 word tokens. This resulted in a type/ token ratio of 4.10%, indicating a lack of lexical richness that is presumably due to the word limit and specialized terminology. The length of the articles ranged between 3,488 words and 10,115 words, and the average number of words amounted to 6,500.

The four common types of errors that have been singled out for the qualitative analysis and dealt with here include:

- Addition of extra text
- Deletion of redundant text
- Shifting and repositioning
- Appropriateness and register

Such an analysis has the intent of raising awareness about academic style proofreading and reducing Italian scholars’ natural transference of common Italianized linguistic forms and patterns. Doing so will increase the fluidity and readability of the text and favour the publication and dissemination of their studies.

4. Analysis and discussion

The four main common stylistic errors mentioned above will be dealt with in separate sections. Each type will be illustrated in relation to the Italian academic language and through empirical examples taken from the “ECO with corrections” subcorpus. All

sensitive information in the examples has been substituted with “X”, “Y” or “Z” and a note on what it referred to in [] brackets when necessary. The underlined sections were added by the author, while those with single strikethroughs were deleted. The (#number) indication at the end of each example corresponds to the number of the article in the subcorpus (ordered in chronological order).

4.1. *Addition of extra text*

Although the Italian language is “content-based”, and therefore tends to express ideas in great detail and completion to provide a better overview, there are situations in which information may be elided, as it is considered unnecessary or implicit. Such is the case, for instance, of specifying pronouns when the subject may be gleaned from the form of the verbal tense. In English however, which is a “form-based” language that relies on direct and explicit style where all necessary elements must be specified, eliding certain pieces of information may render the text unclear or ambiguous. Moreover, when this occurs too frequently, the reading of the paper becomes frustrating or seemingly “incomplete”, leading to the reviewer’s invitation to have the paper revised by a native speaker.

The most common case of this consists in the lack of relative clauses (either with “that” or “which/who/where/when”), here represented by examples 1 and 2. There is actually both an error and a mistake in example 1, since the verb “hit” is not used in association with earthquakes in English, as opposed to lightning or thunder strikes, while the Italian turn of phrase is, in fact, “essere colpito* da un terremoto”. The *who*-relative clause rounds the sentence and better connects the subject (“small retailers”) with the circumstantial information that follows. A similar situation occurs in example 2, where a relative clause is necessary in order to connect “small details” to its verb “to co-create” in English, otherwise it would be perceived as if something were missing.

- (1) small retailers who were affected ~~hit~~ by the “X”[geographical location] earthquake (ECO #48)
- (2) The small details that are used/employed to co-create value by driving “X”, can be realized along three main dimensions (ECO #42)

Another common stylistic change is found in example 3, where “represented by” (also found in Italian but more often in English) provides further support to what follows. This is frequent and advisable when presenting definitions and relevant case studies to emphasize them more than would be possible simply with the verb “to be”.

- (3) An example of this enhancement of products to incorporate services is represented by the way “X”[company] went from “A” copiers to “B” copiers. (ECO #37)

Examples 4-6, on the other hand, are calques (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958) of words that are often used by themselves in Italian (“i non-profit”, “calamità”, “conoscenza”), because the second part (i.e. “organizations”, “backgrounds” and “matter”) is already implied. These omissions leave native and advanced speakers with the feeling that something is missing or incomplete.

(4) Accordingly, “X”[company] has created a website that allows people to post solutions to challenges that are defined by “X” members, a mix of non-profits organizations and companies. (ECO #39)

(5) the retailers who are able to reopen in the immediate post-calamity period/phase recorded a significant increase in sales due to the presence of fewer competitors. (ECO #48)

(6) This paper contributes in advancing scientific knowledge on the matter... (ECO #44)

The last example of addition regards quantity or degree in trends: the author was presumably thinking of “l’aumento” or “un aumento”, which are generally interchangeable in Italian but have a slightly different meaning in English. “An” is more neutral and leads to the understanding that the increase will have to be a discernible, or at least detectable, one. “Any”, on the other hand, implies that even a minimum increase would be sufficient and therefore lowers the threshold for the expressed condition to be fulfilled.

(7) An/Any increase in these immaterial assets encourages the circulation of knowledge within the company and stimulates the creation of long-term value. (ECO #19)

These treatments are therefore based on aligning different requirements in terms of explicitness and semantic richness, which often remain unfulfilled by EAL academics because they have not been made aware of such differences and the effect they have on readers in practice.

4.2. Deletion of redundant text

Another opposite case in which Italian EAL academics often unconsciously allow their original linguistic and stylistic *forma mentis* to filter into their English academic writing, is the use of wordy expressions that are perceived as eloquent and formal in Italian, but translate into excessively complicated and redundant sentences from the English perspective. The extra words actually become “distracting noise” that frustrates readers who are not familiar with the Italian language and may impede the stylistic flow of the text.

This issue requires not only the proofreader’s knowledge of the English language in general, but also a certain detachment from the Italian language and acquaintance with the academic English of the discipline at hand to avoid maintaining excessive textual equivalence. In example 8, the deletion is based on the difference between the Italian “essere capace di”, which is used frequently in Italian and could also mean being in the position of or having the potential to (thus meaning both “to be able to” and “to be capable of”), and the English “to be able to”, which is only used to refer to a specific skill or ability.

(8) a need to make the most effective of these cases more organic, which involves identifying the elements that have allowed a certain qualitative level to be reached in order to ~~be able to~~ create a “package” of good practices (ECO #27)

The deletions in examples 9 and 10 are of a lexical nature and motivated by the amount of semantic information that “Facebook (page)” and “sample” possess by themselves. In fact, “Facebook” already implies that the page and related community are

online, and the presence of a “sample” proves that there had already been a selection among the firms.

(9) a single case study method [...], represented by the “X” [brand] ~~online~~ Facebook community page. (ECO #42)

(10) In addition, ~~in the selection of firms~~ we tried to build up a heterogeneous sample that could represent firms from different industries, of different sizes and in different locations in “X” [geographical location] (ECO #43)

Examples 11 and 12 are particularly important, in that they intend to provide indirect definitions. As opposed to example 3, where the verb “to be” was direct but lacked the impact in supporting an important part of the text, in example 11 the noun phrase “the policies” already refers to a specific category of policies. Therefore, the word “those”, which has the purpose of emphasizing with the Italian expression “quei xxx che”, interrupts the linear connection between the verb and its object without adding any useful information. In example 12, the eliminated expression more or less corresponds to the Italian “era inteso rispetto a/in relazione a”, found in academic and formal written Italian but brings no relevant information in English. Furthermore, “the occurrence of” is presumably a transfer of the Italian “nel/in caso di” that does not make sense in English in the presence of “response”, which already implies that there has been a case of “specific threats and/or specific impacts”.

(11) ... sometimes not acknowledging ~~those that are~~ the policies that have been decided upon in Brussels. (ECO #26)

(12) However, the concept has been gradually linked to the ability of societies to be reactive or proactive and their capacity to enhance their response ~~was intended in respect to the occurrence of~~ specific threats and/or specific impacts. (ECO #28)

In the final example, the expression “come ad esempio” is common in both written and spoken Italian, but in English one must choose between “such as/like” and “for example/instance”. This obligation is also due to stylistic preferences based on the author’s intent: “such as/like” are the best option when the author wishes to integrate the example into the rest of the sentence and not interrupt the flow, while “for example/instance” has the function of isolating and better highlighting the example because it is easily visible within a sentence or paragraph.

(13) phenomenon, like, ~~for example~~, invasive procedures, medical check-ups, dental tourism, wellness tourism, and “diasporic tourism”, as well as maternity or even death tourism. (ECO #21)

Such deletions therefore lighten the sentences and word count and enable the reader to focus on the main points and lexical content. At the same time, they allow the text to follow the linear stylistic flow of academic English writing that is expected and accepted in the international academic community.

4.3. *Shifting and repositioning*

Repositioning embedded clauses and phrases that interrupt or complicate the structure of the sentence ensures that the text is comprehensible and readable. The contrary

is widely accepted in the Italian language, where certain elements and declinations allow the reader to infer what each clause refers to, and is actually seen as a way of refining the language and thought process. On the contrary, in English, it reduces the text's conciseness and compels the readers to re-read the text.

As far as style is concerned, the priority here is to maintain the coherence and logical flow of the sentence by keeping phrases and clauses that relate to each other close, like in examples 14 and 15, where a large section of the sentence was shifted to do so. This could even mean separating a verb phrase from its subject to connect it with the defining clause, like in example 16, something that is quite uncomfortable for Italian native speakers who were taught to remain faithful to the SVO word order.

(14) In particular, they present the case of “X”, a project developed by businesses, citizen sector, for-profit venture capital and social funds that which aims at enabling online medical service providers, ~~developed by businesses, citizen sector, for-profit venture capital and social funds, which and~~ developed an integrated business model. (ECO #39)

(15) The participants' anonymity was guaranteed and ethical issues were handled by explaining ~~in advance to the respondents~~ the study's aims and scopes to the respondents in advance. (ECO #45)

(16) To achieve the research objectives, two studies ~~were planned~~ combining quantitative and qualitative research methods were planned. (ECO #49)

Maintaining the “core” of the message may also implicate moving circumstantial information (such as time and place deixes) that is often embedded in academic Italian to the margins, as may be seen in examples 17 and 18.

(17) it is important to understand how firms, ~~within their online communities~~, can exploit business-to-consumer interactions within their online communities. (ECO #42)

(18) In particular, ~~through the estimation of the measurement model~~ it was possible to assess the validity of the scales in the specific research setting through the estimation of the measurement model. (ECO #28)

This rule presents two advantages: it makes it easier for Italian EAL academics to clearly structure long sentences when it is not possible or advisable to shorten or divide them, and for the reader to concentrate on the main content and integrate it with the additional information that is provided at the beginning and/or end.

4.4. *Appropriateness and register*

The issue differs from the previous types of errors because it is caused by a developmental lack of awareness of the effect that certain acquired variations of academic expressions have. EAL academics may not be aware of the difference because there is “a tendency for non-native speakers not to think of English immediately in terms of varieties” but rather to focus “on the function of communication rather than identity” (Henshall 2018: 31). This is the aspect in which divergences in style are most strongly detected, as is demonstrated by the fact that it is the one that is most frequently defined as “style” in EAP manuals and textbooks, and the one where even non-trained natives err.

These treatments may concern different levels of linguistic and discursive choices: lexis (like in examples 19 “a lot of” and 20 “grown up in”), phrasal verbs that are used

in written and spoken English but should be substituted with an equivalent formal synonym in academic writing (examples 21 “go through” and 22 “strive at”), and even discourse markers and signpost language, which are usually memorized as fixed expressions (as in examples 23 “stick to” and 24, with an appropriate variation of “this is the reason why”).

(19) ~~A lot of~~ Many factors drive the actual growth of “X”. (ECO #21)

(20) Raised with ~~Grown up in~~ e-commerce with and great tech advances... (ECO #49)

(21) The “X” industry is particularly suitable for this research, because of the recent growth in the number of “Y” [establishments] which has stimulated older firms to ~~go through~~ undergo a process of customer engagement. (ECO #42)

(22) Drawing on the conceptual framework depicted above, this study ~~strives for~~ aims at shedding light on the relationship linking... (ECO #45)

(23) ~~Sticking to~~ In accordance with these arguments, this paper investigates the role of “X” in realizing the full potential of patient empowerment. (ECO #45)

(24) ~~For this~~ ~~This is the reason why~~ surrogate motherhood is illegal in “X” but allowed in “Y” and “Z” [geographical locations]. (ECO #21)

Here both form and context come into play and separate academic English into linguistic and discursive subfields that EAL academics should be made aware of from an intercultural perspective.

5. Concluding remarks and future research

The present study has focused on academic style proofreading and how introducing it can endow EAL academics with greater metalinguistic awareness and attention towards stylistic, as well as linguistic, appropriateness. This aligns with ongoing threads of development within ESP and their increasing focus on specialized and intercultural academic and professional diversity. This form of “proofreading” represents a special skill that has been hitherto attained through trial and error experience in light of feedback from reviewers and the analysis of acceptable writing. Academic style is both subjective and closely connected to the academic’s language and culture of origin: however, if properly researched and integrated into academic writing teaching and training, it could enable language professionals and EAL academics themselves to reduce the amount of errors in their academic writing and speed up the review and publishing processes.

The first research question (*RQ1: What are “academic style” and “mind style” and what impact can intercultural interference have on an EAL academic’s writing?*) may be answered by considering academic style as an idiosyncratic expression of knowledge that must be reconciled with the discursive form that is accepted within the international academic community. The study then underlined accepted academic style as being the conveyance of information filtered through the dominant UK/USA-based cultural mind style according to expectations and perceptions that are not explicit in terms of style and syntax and often not explained or clear to other cultures.

The second research question (*RQ2: How can academic style proofreading be observed and studied?*) introduced the methodological framework of the study, i.e. a combination of corpus stylistics and error analysis, to collect, treat and analyse examples

of common stylistic errors by Italian EAL academics. To do so, the study addressed the third question (*RQ3: Why can academic style proofreading be important in the field of economics?*) and outlined the peculiarities of academic writing in economics to anticipate possible limitations that are typical of the discipline and could constrain and lead EAL academics back to their native academic style.

The study answered the final research question (*RQ4: What are some common areas of error in Italian EAL academics' writing and how may they be treated?*) by focusing on four common types of errors, i.e. addition of extra text; deletion of redundant text; shifting and repositioning; appropriateness and register. A sample of errors explained their use by Italian EAL academics and their perception by reviewers and readers who evaluate them based on the stylistic criteria of the international academic discourse community. Such qualitative research could provide insight into and overt description of stylistic peculiarities that EAL academics should keep in mind because they could lead to the extensive (and time-consuming) revision, or even rejection, of papers. These and future findings could be embedded into culture-specific checklists and manuals used both by EAL academics and proofreaders of academic writing to improve revision and proofreading phases. Another direction for future research consists in comparing academic writing across different disciplines to detect and classify common and characterizing errors and treatment.

Finally, future research must also determine how much one could, or should, change a text when carrying out this sort of proofreading to maintain the original communicative intent and idiosyncratic traits while ensuring readability within the community. More intersectional research in corpus stylistics, error analysis and EGAP/ESAP is necessary to create a solid theoretical framework that could enrich EAP research, materials and courses, especially considering ongoing developments in academic writing and translation thanks to artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML).

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