English in the Information Society

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Texts and Strategies
Is scholarly English different?

Especially in the 1980s scientists noticed striking differences between the text types termpaper and Seminararbeit.

Galtung (1983) and Clyne (1987) were often referred to in this context.

Clyne claimed that the German text type contains
• textual asymmetry (cf. p. 226),
• a lack of linearity due to frequent excurses (225) and
• the transfer of responsibility in communication from the writer to the reader (reader-responsibility) (238).

(Kalensky 2009)
“It is suggested that the differences between the English and German texts may be promoted by the educational systems and by varying intellectual styles and attitudes to knowledge and content” (Clyne 1987: 211).

The German academic register helps “to confirm the status of the writer” (Hartung in Clyne: 213). This also distinguishes quality newspaper such as the FAZ from mass-circulation newspapers (213).

Generally: Rules of writing termpapers are very rigid in Britain and Australia; less rigid in Germany.

Emphasis (in GB and Aus) is on (a) linearity and (b) relevance (212).

The principle in English is oriented according to discourse pattern; in German according to level of abstraction (214).

“If ... academic register signals group solidarity, it can be counterproductive across cultures, with the same register causing some people to ‘switch off’. Internationalization and academic emigration have, however, led to some alleviation of differences with adaptation towards Anglo-Saxon patterns (in natural sciences) or German-type ‘in-group’ registers (in some social sciences).” Plus a warning not to over-generalize (215)
English (but not German):
• termpaper is essential in upper secondary schools (lower tertiary in US)
• its aim can be deduced from the topic or question, which is defined at the beginning (in German-speaking countries: more general)
• relevance is primary (in German: more digression is allowed)
• one paragraph leads to the next, which starts with a topic sentence
• repetition is undesirable (in German digression makes reiteration necessary) (Clyne: 212)

German style is characterized by
• agentless passives, impersonal and reflexive constructions
• hedged performatives (*kann, muss, darf*; passive infinitives)
• high number of nominalizations and compound nouns
• syntactic complexity
“In English-speaking countries, most of the onus falls on writers to make their texts readable, whereas it is the readers who have to make the extra effort in German-speaking countries so that they can understand the texts, especially if the author is an academic.” (Clyne: 238)

“In view of the importance of international communication between scholars, it is vital for scholars to understand the cultural basis of many discourse patterns. ... for mastery of discourse conventions appears to be one of the prerequisites to power on the international academic scene.” (239)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linearity</th>
<th>English-speaking</th>
<th>German-speaking authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>linear</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slightly digressive</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very digressive</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Slightly digressive: some propositions are not dependent on the overarching proposition (macroproposition) of the text (or section); or some of them do not follow the macroproposition on which they depend; or some text segments are inserted inside another topic. The persistence of all these pattern counts as “very digressive” (Clyne: 225).
Symmetry

Asymmetrical is when “some sections of the paper are much longer than others”; propositional asymmetry is “if there is an imbalance in the length of the related propositions branching from the same macroproposition.”

Examples:
Textual: In one paper on German trade unions in 1914 four structural dimensions are given, but bureaucratization takes 266% of the space for the other three.
Propositional: relevance of sociolinguistics for business and commerce takes 8 lines while medicine takes 30 (Clyne: 226).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>textual</th>
<th>propositional</th>
<th>textual</th>
<th>propositional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rather symm.</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slightly symm.</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very asymm.</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Hierarchy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Relation</th>
<th>English-speaking</th>
<th>German-speaking Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mainly subord.</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mainly coordin.</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>both</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Clyne: 227)

### Functions of Digression

Functions of digression (in German): to provide theory, ideology, qualification, additional information, or polemic (227). In English: chiefly because of bad planning (228).

### Examples:

In an article on Basque nationalism there is a historical interlude on the nature of Spanish liberalism.

In the middle of an article on white-collar trade unions there comes a retort against another scholar and covering areas beyond the scope of the article. (227)

### Discontinuity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Discontinuity</th>
<th>English-speaking</th>
<th>German-speaking Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not at all</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slight</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marked</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(228)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English-speaking</th>
<th>German-speaking authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advanced organizers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at or near beginning</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>later</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>immediately</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>later</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not at all</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples:
In one German text the word *status* was used 44 times before being defined.
In another *handlungsorientiert* comes 20 times before the definitive definition (superseding an intermediate ones which is not adequate) (Clyne: 229)
Bridge sentences refer to the previous paragraph or an even earlier one.

Integration is the case when data (examples, statistics, quotations) are embedded in the text and non-integrated when they appear as a proposition or in tables without appearing in the main body of the paper (Clyne: 232).
**Intellectual styles** (Galtung (1979, 1981))

**Teutonic:**
- empirical reality exists only in relation to a (theoretical) system
- strong in paradigm analysis as well as theory
- monolog-oriented

**Gallic:**
- strong in paradigm analysis as well as theory

**Saxonic:**
- promotes dialog and debate leading rapprochement between viewpoints
- description based on data analysis

**Nipponic:**
- description based on data analysis (Clyne: 237)
Kalensky’s study sees

• Clyne’s view as being culturally imprinted, one-sided and judgmental;
• German scientific communication is as participant-orientated as English is said to be;
• it as a premise that cultural imprinting is always part of text production;
• change over the last years and an approach to the English essay format.

Reasons:

• internationalization and globalization
• tendencies towards English as the new lingua franca
What is supposedly different?

The Anglo-Saxon tradition focuses on the readability of the text and therefore on linear thematic progression.

The Teutonic (German) tradition aims at treating a topic from every possible side and point of view and is not concerned with readability.

Consequence: expectations of readers raised within the Anglo-Saxon tradition will differ from the expectations of their colleagues used to the Teutonic style, concerning, among other things, the degree of explicitness/implicitness. (Doleschal)
TEXTS and TEXTUALITY (connectivity, connexity, or continuity)

(1) Cohesion and (2) coherence.

Textual unity manifests itself at different levels. Writers link text sentences above all using grammatical and lexical means (sometimes termed the cotext, Werlich 1983: 80) which prompt readers to interpret them as belonging together. This is called grammatical and lexical cohesion.

A deeper, semantic level is involved in coherence, which refers to the continuity of subject matter.
Larger text patterns
Certain vocabulary items have the function of linking larger segments of text. Examples are *problem, issue, approach, solution, difficulty, drawback* and *question*. The function of these **procedural lexical items** is to organize and structure a text, to indicate the “...larger text-patterns the author has chosen, and build up expectations concerning the shape of the whole discourse” (McCarthy 1991: 76).
(3) Intentionality and (4) acceptability
These relate to the attitudes of writer and reader. Writers intend to produce cohesive and coherent texts, and readers accept them as such, showing a certain tolerance towards texts where writers' intentions may be less than perfectly realized. Both writer intention and reader acceptance are not based solely on knowledge of the language system but also on the ability of the sides to bring their knowledge of the world to bear on text production and reception. Of particular interest is the way addressees fill in gaps or breaks in the surface continuity of texts in order to make them cohesive and coherent.
(5) Informativity
This is reader-centred and refers to the degree to which the text produced is expected or unexpected, and whether it repeats what is known already or provides new information. No text provides only old or only new information, but the ratio of the two can vary considerably and depends on the writer's intentions and assessment of the reader.
Texts about well-known things are easy to produce and understand, but can also easily bore the reader. Texts that give a lot of new information, on the other hand, are more difficult to understand, though they are likely to be of greater interest to readers. There is, then, an inverse correlation between minimum writer and reader effort (efficiency) and maximum impact of the message (effectiveness).
(6) **Situationality**
concerns factors of appropriateness and relevance. This includes such aspects as using informal vocabulary and short sentences in informal situations. It also has to do with discourse **strategies**, for example the selection and sequencing of text units in such a way as to achieve the writer's goal.

(7) **Intertextuality**
stresses the fact that the production and reception of texts and text units often depend upon both the writer’s and the reader’s knowledge of other texts or text forms and their patterns or ways of expression.
Text types
Five major text types are often recognized:

• descriptive
• narrative
• directive (also called instructive)
• expository and
• argumentative

The five types are examples of different realizations of the register category of functional tenor or purpose.
The five may be sorted into four basic categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>concrete</th>
<th>cognitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>real</td>
<td>narrative (time)</td>
<td>expository</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>descriptive (space)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potential</td>
<td>directive</td>
<td>argumentative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The real dimension is centred on entities, events and states located in the ‘real world’, be it the time-space continuum around us (= concrete) or a part of our mental reality (= cognitive) which we describe, narrate or explain. The potential dimension has to do with something which is not regarded as established, but which can be accomplished (directive; concrete) or which can become a part of the addressee’s cognitive reality.
Narrative texts have to do with real-world events in time. It is immaterial whether a narrative is

fictional (as in a fairy tale or novel)

or

non-fictional (as in a newspaper report).

What is characteristic is the sequencing of events in which dynamic verbs occur in the simple form and in which sequencing adverbials such as and then or first, second, third etc. provide the basic narrative structure, e.g. First we packed our bags and then we called a taxi. After that we... etc.
**Descriptive texts** are concerned with the location of persons and things in space. They will tell what lies to the right or left, in the background or foreground, or they will provide background information which, perhaps, sets the stage for narration. Once again it is immaterial whether a description is more
- technical-objective
  or
- more impressionistic-subjective.

State or positional verbs plus the appropriate adverbial expressions of location are employed in descriptions (*the operation panel is located on the right-hand side at the rear; New Orleans lies on the Mississippi*). Perfect and progressive forms typically give background information (*he was peacefully dreaming when the fire broke out; as the cabinet has agreed on the principles, an interministerial committee will work out the details*).
Directive texts are concerned with concrete future activity. Central to such texts are

- imperatives (*Hand me the paper*) or forms which substitute for them such as polite questions (*Would you hand me the paper?*)
  or
- suggestive remarks (*I wonder what the paper says about the weather*).

Stage directions, though phrased in the simple form like narrative texts, are normative statements and, for this reason, have the effect of directives (*The maid enters, opens the door and admits a visitor*). Assembly and operation instructions use sequences of imperatives (*Disconnect the 15-pin D-shell connector... and secure the signal cable firmly...; Shake well before using. Do not ingest with alcohol*).
Each of the three types just discussed are centred around concrete events and things, whether realized or potential.

In contrast, expository and argumentative texts are cognitively oriented. This is the case because they are concerned with the mental processes of explanation and persuasion although the former may include a considerable amount of description and the latter may have consequences in future action.
Expository texts identify and characterize phenomena. As such they include text forms such as definitions, explications, summaries, and many types of essay. They may be
• subjective (essay)
  or
• objective (summary, explication, definition).
They may also be
• analytical, starting from a concept and then characterizing its parts, as in definitions
  or
• proceed in the opposite, synthetic direction as well, recounting characteristics and ending with an appropriate concept or conclusion, as in summaries
Typical syntactic patterns are identifying statements with state verbs (*Pop music has a strong rhythmic beat*) or epistemic modals (*Texts may consist of one or more sentences*) or with verbs indicating characteristic activities or qualities (*Fruit flies feed on yeast; Most geraniums are red*).
Argumentative texts start from the assumption that the reader's beliefs must be changed.

A writer might therefore begin with the negation of a statement which attributes a quality or characteristic activity to something.

Even when a scholarly text provides positive support for a particular hypothesis there is almost always at least implicit negation of previous assumptions.

Advertising texts, often at the extreme opposite pole of academic texts in terms of style, also try to persuade their readers that a particular product is somehow better than others, at least implicitly.
Strategies and structure

On the level of strategy, writers have to make decisions on how to present their message in a way that is most likely to achieve their goal. Writers must not only be clear about their intentions (cf. functional tenor, text types) and take into account other situational factors (field, medium, personal tenor), but must also ensure that the addressee can process the message easily. The relative easiness or difficulty of a text depends, among other things, on the number of participants mentioned in a text (i.e. the fewer people involved, the easier the text); on whether the features that distinguish between characters in, say, a story are memorable; on the simplicity and symmetry of spatial structures; on the simplicity and sequencing of temporal structures; and on whether writers give explicit hints for the interpretation.
Strategies and structure
A high-level strategic decision relates to what means writers employ in the pursuit of their intentions.
• the step-by-step exposition is found in many expository texts
• similar strategies have long been established in classical rhetoric
• in narration, events are presented in sequence linked by time proximity and causality (basic to the structure of chronicles, histories and much narrative fiction.
• descriptive texts are centered on objects and situations and how they relate to each other from a particular point of view or vantage point; guidebooks are spatially oriented.
Biographies, for example, are agent-dominated texts, but are also temporally structured.
Texts, in other words, can contain one or more strategies simultaneously. It also follows that the mix of strategies can vary considerably.
Text models

EST texts are also relatively strongly formalized: it is possible to reckon with a number of rather highly conventionalized text models. Journal articles normally have the following five divisions:

1 an introduction, in which the purpose pursued/hypothesis investigated is presented
2 a review section, in which previous work is summarized or evaluated
3 a methods part, in which procedural sequences, criteria etc. are evaluated
4 a results section, in which the findings are presented
5 a discussion part, in which the findings are evaluated in the framework of the initial hypothesis.
Text models

Longer texts such as textbooks and dissertations will be cyclically organized repetitions or partial repetitions of such sequences, e.g. $1 - 2 - 3 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5$

Although the order of the five divisions is fixed, not all texts will necessarily contain all five steps.

Swales 1981 investigates article introductions, which, regardless of the discipline involved, fall into a structure containing a series of four moves: establishing the field, summarizing previous research, preparing for the present research (motivation), and introducing present research.
References


Reading for next week:


