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*Raising Awareness of Culture in Academic Communication:
A Workshop Concept*

ABSTRACT:

This paper presents a workshop concept to raise students' and researchers' awareness of cultural aspects in academic contexts, including ELF interactions. First results from a student workshop indicate that cultural awareness activities can trigger processes of self-reflection on the role of culture in academic knowledge production. It is argued that greater sensitivity towards cultural factors may ultimately facilitate intercultural and interdisciplinary research communication.

Introduction

With the continuous advancement of English in academic and research settings, especially in research writing, users of English often face particular challenges when communicating in today's *academic lingua franca* (e.g. Björkman, 2013; Mauranen, Pérez-Llantada and Swales, 2010). Efficient knowledge transfer may not only be hampered by linguistic challenges, but also due to different culturally-coined concepts of conducting research and communicating knowledge.

The need for cultural awareness (CA) in academic settings in addition to academic language proficiency and language awareness (LA) should therefore seem obvious. Even though the research findings and developments of the past decades clearly call for suitable methodologies (see e.g. Flowerdew, 2013: 316), an LA and CA perspective on academic discourse obviously has not been thoroughly considered so far. For instance, in a recent paper on multilingual publishing and the dominance of English in academia, Kuteeva and Mauranen (2014: 3) point to the potential avenues a language awareness approach might open: «Raising language awareness among [...] academics may eventually influence language choices and reinforce the use of languages other than English». This

does not only refer to consciousness-raising about 'non-standard' uses of English in academic publishing and the marginalization of other academic languages besides English, but also about cultural aspects, e.g. in the form of different «rhetorical traditions» (*ibid.*; cf. Swales, 1997: 381).

Crucially, these different traditions and textual practices can become apparent when a shared language is used. While in general, ELF is accepted as a diverse or 'multicultural language' (Honna, 2012: 191), academia somehow seems to be the exception, with a strong orientation towards native speaker norms especially in written academic discourse (cf. Mauranen *et al.*, 2010: 638; see also Koutsantoni, 2007: 210; Mauranen, 2012: 68). Thus, regarding language use, there is a widespread assumption that 'good writing' equals 'good English' (Mauranen *et al.*, 2010: 638) and that 'good English', in turn, «equals that of the educated native speaker, in other words Standard English» (Mauranen, 2012: 68). Evidence from contrastive rhetoric, however, shows that communicative practices vary across cultures, i.e. «there is no universal standard of 'good writing'» (Mauranen *et al.*, 2010: 638). In other words, «Anglo-American rhetoric is not necessarily the most effective, comprehensible, or 'natural' choice for structuring academic texts even if we use English. It goes without saying that it is not more 'scientific'» (Mauranen, 2012: 242).

It should therefore be obvious that raising awareness of English as a diverse and multi-faceted language that partially reflects the linguacultural backgrounds of the people using it¹ and the hybrid discourses that result from it is an important endeavor (cf. Honna, 2012: 191; House, 2012: 173; Mauranen *et al.*, 2010: 644). Yet, surprisingly few approaches exist that try to put these ideas into pedagogic practice within the academic domain. In the paper at hand, this topic will be approached from a theoretical perspective first and then addressed practically in the framework of a CA workshop (see Schluer, 2013, for an initial project presentation). The awareness-raising approach combines reflection, exploration and analysis with a discussion of strategies and engagement opportunities (cf. e.g. Svalberg, 2007: 292 with reference to Borg, 1994), and may ultimately enhance interdisciplinary and international research communication.

In the subsequent paragraphs, the motivation for the current research will first be expounded, followed by a discussion of relevant terminology (section 2). The proposed workshop concept will be detailed in section 3, before first data from a student workshop will be presented in section 4. Finally, the general discussion in section 5 will summarize the findings and give an outlook on future studies.

1. Motivation and terminology

While the need for cultural awareness-raising has been recognized throughout the business domain, intercultural trainings are still very rare within the academic profession (cf. Thomas, 2010) or insufficiently tailored to the academics' specific needs. Even though the research findings and developments of the past decades (e.g. Clyne, 1987; Connor, 1996; Mur Dueñas, 2012) demonstrate the relevance of culture in research, pedagogical solutions are still scarce (cf. Thomas, 2010: 5; see also Hyland, 2008, cited in Flowerdew, 2013: 316).

The reasons for this are manifold: On the one hand, it is often believed that research follows universal rules and therefore is somehow 'culture-free' – or at least independent of the cultures of the individual scientists² (cf. Thomas, 2010: 5; see also Widdowson, 1979: 23). As Widdowson (1979: 51) maintains, «the concepts and procedures of scientific inquiry constitute a secondary cultural system», which is somehow separate from people's personal «primary» sociocultural background. On the other hand, it is conceivable that Anglo-American values, views, methods and standards in academia have superseded those of other research traditions (cf. Thomas, 2010: 5). The supremacy of Anglo-American models might have led researchers to take them as the baseline not just for 'proper' English (Owen, 2011; i.e. conforming to the native speaker norms of British or American English) but also for 'proper' research; and it could have evoked the impression that other traditions are not as appropriate or efficient to meet today's research 'standards' as the 'mainstream' Anglo-American way (see e.g. Mauranen et al., 2010: 639). In this regard, Koutsantoni (2007: 180) has pointed out that

«[r]hetorical conventions of the English speaking scientific world and its preferred ways of organisation, [...] dominate the international scientific scene, and it is expected that students and researchers worldwide, who read materials written in English, cite them and become influenced by their ideas, while they cannot help but become influenced by their rhetoric, their ways of accounting facts, of reviewing the literature, of narrating methodological procedure, and of making claims».

In addition, the fact that English has become today's most widely used language for international knowledge transfer within academia might dilute the importance of culture in research communication («the culture-free status of ELF», as criticized by Fiedler, 2012: 42). Yet, «language can never

be culturally neutral» (Baker, 2009: 588), i.e. interaction (ELF included) is always affected by the unique linguacultural profiles of the participants.

Thus, not only science but also ELF have at times been considered «culture-free», which may reinforce the belief that scientific communication through the use of ELF must be «culture-free», too (cf. Widdowson, 1979: 24). In the meantime, however, research has shown that different culture-specific conventions can lead to misunderstandings or conflicts even in the academic domain. Thomas (2003) is explicit about various potential areas of conflict, which range from different culturally coined conceptions of what research is to diverse methods of conducting and communicating research (see e.g. Bantz, 1993, and Sarapata, 1985, cited in Thomas, 2003: 301). Consequently, cultural factors can influence the research process on almost all levels of scientific endeavor: on the conceptual level, on the methodological level, and on the interpersonal level. Culture should therefore be regarded as a factor which *could* become relevant in each phase of conducting and communicating research (Schluer, 2013; see [Figure 1](#)).

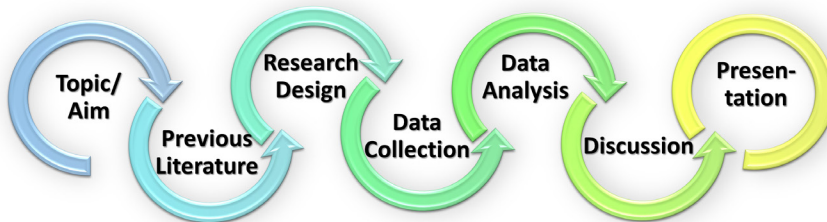


Fig. 1 – Simplified schematic illustration of the research process

Potential discrepancies can become visible in interpersonal (direct) interaction or mediated through products of communication, such as for instance research papers. As Duszak (1997: 3) aptly summarizes:

«Ignorance of, or misconceptions about, the communication styles of others can hinder understanding among academics and ultimately obstruct cooperation and advancement of scholarship. Clearly, therefore, cross-cultural education in matters of academic style plays an important role in making people aware of their own discourse patterns, as well as in enriching their knowledge of other academic cultures».

For this reason, the present paper proposes a workshop concept that can heighten scholars' awareness of the potential effects that culture can have on the processes of academic knowledge production and dissemination. To clarify the basic notions used in this respect, the following subsections will briefly define the terms *academic cultures* and *cultural awareness*, as they are used in the paper at hand.

1.1 Academic cultures

Thomas (2003: 299-300) posits that there are several cultures in academia, such as national, general-academic, and discipline-specific cultures. In the present paper, the terms *sociocultural context*, *aspects* or *factors* are preferred over *national culture*, for *nations* are political units with artificial boundaries that should not be equated with *communities*, *cultures* or *societies* (cf. Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005: 18). Furthermore, the term *national culture* cannot reflect the multiplicity and multifacetedness of each individual's cultural background. The current research therefore adopts a culture perspective that is more comprehensive. It starts from the assumption that *culture* refers to a shared set of knowledge, values, views, beliefs and behavior among its members (cf. e.g. Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005: 3), and comprises

- academic culture in general, i.e. a kind of professional culture that is different from other professional cultures in terms of the values and views it holds as well as a particular kind of expected behavior and its resultant products. In this respect, dominant ideologies, trends and standards may more or less strongly affect the norms, beliefs and behavior of subordinate academic cultures and individual scholars;
- academic communities of various sizes, such as disciplines, fields of research, schools of thought, research groups, institutions, research networks etc. (cf. also Mauranen, 2012: 55 on academic discourse communities, and Mauranen *et al.*, 2010: 636, on «the differing methodological, research and rhetorical traditions of different disciplines»). They may favor certain values and hold certain expectations towards their members. It should be stressed, however, that the internal ties of these groups can be more or less strong. The communities do not need to be permanent, but there can be temporary formations as well, which highlights their dynamic character. Their cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects may change over time, with visible products maybe being most susceptible to change (e.g. the use of new communication and knowledge distribution channels as a response to technological developments);

- the individual sociocultural and linguacultural profiles of academics. They consist of various facets that have been shaped during people's lifetime (*before* and *during* their academic life) and are relevant to the values, beliefs and attitudes they hold and the actions they perform as agents in academia.

Of course, there is a certain degree of overlap between the three main layers³, not least due to their interaction and mutual influence (cf. e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1979, in Oerter, 2008: 88, on ecological systems): Top-down changes (set by prestigious institutions, authorities or journals, for instance) can affect the standards, desired goals and actions of smaller academic communities and the aspirations, beliefs and behavior of the individual scientists. On the other hand, this conceptualization of academic cultures offers the possibility of change over time from a bottom-up perspective, i.e. if a sufficiently large number of scholars demonstrates 'non-standard' behavior, e.g. as regards the typical format of a research article or in terms of other kinds of innovations, this may eventually affect superordinate layers. For instance, editors or publishers might show a greater openness towards 'non-standard' varieties of English and adapt their style sheets accordingly (cf. Mauranen, 2012: 68, on today's «standard practice in publishers' style sheets to require non-native writers to have their text checked by a native speaker of English prior to publication»; for examples see Koutsantoni, 2007: 210; for exceptions see Jenkins, 2011: 932-933, who cites editions with a deliberate ELF policy, i.e. in which no 'traditional' linguistic correction procedures have been applied).

In view of this multi-layered construct of academic cultures, the current research takes the individual researcher as the starting point for analysis and reflection, as he or she is affected by higher-order levels of academic cultures, which may nevertheless exert influence on his or her cognitions, emotions, and actions. Naturally, such an approach captures only a snapshot of the entire complexity, but this micro-perspective (see also Schluer, 2014: 3) might be highly illustrative, especially for applied and pedagogical purposes such as the present one.

1.2 Cultural awareness

Tomalin and Stempleski (1993: 5) define cultural awareness (CA) as «sensitivity to the impact of culturally-induced behaviour on language use and communication.» This does not only entail an awareness of one's *own* culture and culturally influenced behavior, but also an awareness of the influence of culture on the behavior of *others* (*ibid.*). In other words,

«know thyself and understand others» (Schmidt, 1999) can be taken as a central paradigm to promote cultural understanding.

Raising cultural awareness consequently means making people more conscious of cultural facets that may operate during interaction. In this regard, CA clearly needs to go beyond surface-level features (e.g. overt behavior) by promoting people's understanding of how their perceptions, values, beliefs, norms and attitudes could differ and clash during interaction (cf. the iceberg model of culture according to Weaver, 1993: 159-160). These different layers can be addressed by adopting a reflexive stance both towards self and other(s) (cf. e.g. Deardorff, 2006a: 247). One key aspect of CA therefore is reflexivity (Risager, 2013: 182), with the help of which a more culture-relative standpoint can be achieved.

1.3 Cultural awareness in academia

The CA approach suggested here proceeds on the assumption that awareness of academic cultures and their features is central to foster communication and cooperation in academia. Given the diverse cultural influences that scholars have internalized during their academic enculturation, it is crucial to first raise scholars' awareness of their own cultural imprint and of the fact that other academics are likely to have a differently configured cultural profile. This way, it could be avoided that encounters of 'otherness' during research-related activities (see the phases of the research process in [Figure 1](#)) might adversely affect academic communication and cooperation processes.

Further, it is assumed that despite communication in a shared language, for instance ELF, cultural factors can become important. As Smith (1987: 3) pointed out almost three decades ago, «English already represents many cultures and it can be used by anyone as a means to express any cultural heritage and any value system» (cf. Honna, 2012: 195, on «English as a multicultural language»).

2. Workshop concept

The workshop concept takes into account the central principles of an awareness-raising pedagogy, which are reflection, analysis and action (cf. e.g. Svalberg, 2007: 292, with reference to Borg, 1994, on characteristic features of an LA methodology; and Byram, 1989: 142, in Byram, 1997: 51, on the LA-CA analogy; cf. also Liddicoat, 2008: 282). These three steps

are reflected in the three-fold workshop structure, which will be presented below. In the following sections, also parallels to Baker's (2011) three-level model of intercultural awareness in ELF communication will be drawn, as they partly intersect with the ideas presented within the current framework.

2.1 Aims

The workshop aims to sensitize academics to the significance of cultural factors in research contexts and thus to help them prepare for real-life intercultural communication situations, e.g. in international research projects, at conferences, or when reading and reporting research. It should ultimately assist them in exploring and respecting cultural diversity and in challenging the idea that there is only one type of 'correct' English (i.e. conforming to the native speaker norms of British or American English; cf. e.g. Seidlhofer, 2004, in Jenkins, 2011: 932; Owen, 2011), 'efficient' communication, 'good' presentation style or 'convincing' argumentation (e.g. in terms of Anglo-American patterns of text organization; cf. Mauranen *et al.*, 2010: 639; Mauranen, 2012: 242; see also House, 2003: 574).

2.2 Target group

This workshop is primarily designed for junior researchers (doctoral students, postdocs) who need to communicate for international purposes, e.g. in international teams, research groups, on international conferences or for the publication of research articles in international journals. However, it is also open to senior academics and may even include students as participants (see section 4 below), since a broad expertise spectrum can yield new perspectives from both ends of the continuum of academic experience. Likewise, researchers from a wide range of disciplines are welcome, as the comparison of different disciplines complies with the aim of fostering interdisciplinary cooperation, in the sense of disciplines being one subtype of academic cultures (see section 2.1).

In line with the presumption that cultural facets can be influential despite the use of a shared language (see sections 1 and 2), researchers with diverse first languages are encouraged to participate. To facilitate communication, the recommended level of English language proficiency is approximately B2-C1 (CEFR; see also Schluer, 2014, on potential discrepancies between general and academic language proficiency). Further communication scenarios, such as receptive multilingualism (see Schluer, 2014: 8, 10-11), are of course possible⁴.

2.3 Methods and materials

The CA activities have been developed on the basis of established methods and materials in intercultural education and have specifically been adapted to suit academic contexts (see the task descriptions below and the overview in [Table 1](#)). For instance, authentic scenarios of intercultural interactions among scholars, e.g. in the form of critical incidents, case studies, anecdotes, will be analyzed and discussed (see 3.4.2 below). Such samples of real-life interactions together with reflective activities (see 3.4.1) are also meant to encourage the participants to share their own experience and observations of intercultural communication situations in the research arena.

The workshop setting itself can become an intercultural scenario, when people with different sociocultural backgrounds and professional specializations meet and interact. Moreover, it is likely that the diversity of linguistic repertoires of the participants will result in ELF communication or alternative modes of communication (e.g. receptive multilingualism) during the workshop. In terms of methods, a mixture of individual work and group work will conform to diverse learning styles and preferences.

2.4 Structure and time frame

As sketched in Schluer (2013) and in line with the above-mentioned awareness-raising pedagogy, the workshop consists of three main phases, which are:

Phase 1: (Self-) Reflection

Phase 2: Exploration and analysis

Phase 3: Presentation and discussion, including suggestions for action.

The schedule in [Figure 2](#) is explicit about the contents and aims of each major workshop phase.

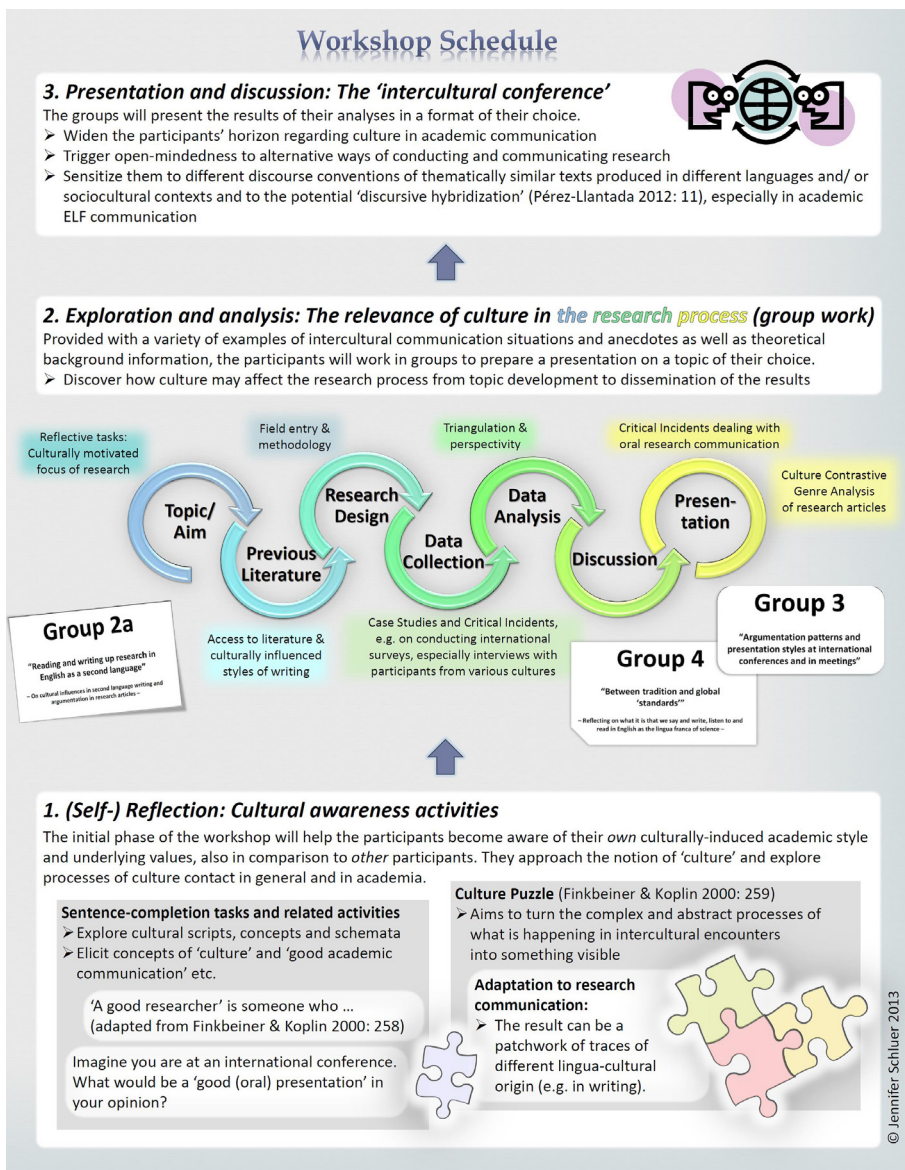


Fig. 2 – Original workshop concept as presented by Schluer (2013) on The Sixth International Conference of English as Lingua Franca in Rome

The following sub-sections will detail the contents of the three main phases and suggest optional and alternative activities which may be chosen depending on considerations of time and target group (e.g. advanced learners or academic novices; international group of scholars or rather homogenous group with respect to their cultural background). The average time frame needed to conduct the workshop will vary accordingly. In its original form (Schluer, 2013), the workshop lasts two days. As section 4 will show, it can however also be split into several consecutive sessions, e.g. 5-6 sessions of 3 hours in a weekly manner.

2.4.1 Phase 1: (self-)reflection: culture in academia

During the first phase, the training participants will be sensitized to the concept of culture in general and to the role it might play in academic and research contexts in particular. This aim will be achieved through (a) some self-reflection activities and (b) an interactive simulation game called «the textual culture puzzle».

Part (a) of phase 1 consists of a series of short questions and activities to promote self-reflection. Through open-response questions, self-assessments, sentence-completion tasks, and associations, the participants have the opportunity to reflect on their own linguacultural and academic background, as well as their attitudes and beliefs towards central research-related concepts. Thus, aspects from diverse layers of culture in academia (see section 2.1) will be considered.

To explore cultural scripts, concepts and schemata, free associations and sentence completion tasks can be utilized (cf. Finkbeiner and Koplin, 2000: 257-258). Sample items include:

- Please write down the first four words which you associate with 'research'.
- Please write down the first four words which you associate with 'English' in the context of your academic work.
- A 'good researcher' is someone who...

Associative activities give insight into people's mental networks and might reveal which aspects of the concept in question are considered most important by an individual. When comparing the associations with each other, the participants will have the opportunity to discover similarities and differences of these research-related concepts.

The specific concepts may be selected and adapted depending on the targets of the training and the characteristics of the group. For instance, in a workshop focusing on research writing, open-response questions such as the following can be chosen:

- What would you consider central features of a ‘good research paper’?
- What is a ‘convincing argumentation’ in your point of view?

Part (b) of the first workshop stage is an interactive CA activity, which can be culture-general (as in the original by Finkbeiner and Koplin, 2000) or specifically tailored to research writing (as in the adapted version suggested below; see also Schluer, 2013). In the latter case, it is called the *Textual Culture Puzzle* and constitutes an adaptation of Finkbeiner and Koplin’s (2000) *Culture Puzzle* («Kulturpuzzle» in the German original). According to these two authors, the culture puzzle is an activity which relates to the experience of culture contact. It aims to turn the complex and abstract processes that are happening in intercultural encounters into something visible (Finkbeiner and Koplin, 2000: 259).

In its adapted form, the textual culture puzzle focusses on one specific domain of culture contact: cultural influences on writing and the handling of different writing styles in communication. Instead of geometrical shapes as the central pieces of the puzzle, letters from different languages and scripts are used in the adapted version (Schluer, 2013). The result of the ‘puzzling’⁵ process can, for instance, be a patchwork of traces of different linguacultural origin, as it is presumed by proponents of discursive hybridity and theorized by researchers in contrastive/ intercultural rhetoric (cf. e.g. the overview by Pérez-Llantada, 2012: Chap. 1). Thus, e.g. L1 traces may surface in L2 texts and/ or L2 traces in L1 texts, and/ or new discursive forms might be created. It thus helps to illustrate the potential hybridity and ongoing negotiation of what is acceptable and what is not in academic writing, as well as the different strategies that can be adopted (e.g. ‘make it fit’ or be open to creative diversity etc.). This activity thereby appeals to the affective, cognitive and behavioral components of intercultural sensitivity.

In sum, the initial phase of the workshop will help the participants become aware of their *own* culturally-induced academic style and underlying values, also in comparison to *other* participants, which may again lead to further self-insights (cf. level 1, «basic cultural awareness», in the model proposed by Baker, 2011: 204). Besides, they approach the notion of ‘culture’ and explore processes of culture contact in general and in academia in particular (Schluer, 2013). Phase 2 will deepen their understanding of potential cultural aspects in academic communication and cooperation, as will be explicated below (3.4.2).

2.4.2 Phase 2: exploration and analysis: the relevance of culture in the research process

The second phase is devoted to the exploration and analysis of cultural factors during the research process by the trainees themselves. They work together in groups on a topic of their choice, which they select from a wider pool of materials dealing with distinct phases of the research process (see [Figure 2](#)). For each phase, a variety of materials (excerpts from the literature, empirical data, tasks and suggested activities) have been prepared prior to the workshop. [Table 1](#) gives an overview of selected activities and their aims:

Table 1 – Overview of sample activities for phase 2 of the workshop, arranged according to the steps in a research process

#	Phase	Sample Activities	Main aims
1	Topic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective tasks on how one's own research topic came about (based on some guiding questions) • Experience reports and observations (bolstered by published literature) 	Discover the sociocultural situatedness of one's research and the potential cultural influences on topic development (culturally motivated focus of research)
2	Literature Synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective tasks on access to literature, language of previous literature, selection processes etc. • Read literature written in an unfamiliar style 	Develop sensitivity towards the selective and always partial nature of literature search due to cultural, linguistic or institutional constraints; become aware of diverse rhetorical styles
3	Development of Research Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze examples of 'Western' vs. 'non-Western' approaches and methods 	Find out about the influence on one's research design by particular schools of thoughts and research traditions
4	Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies • Critical incidents (e.g. on communicative style in cross-cultural interviews) 	Discover challenges in cross-cultural research projects, e.g. when conducting interviews with participants who have a different cultural background
5	Data Analysis & Discussion of Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of samples from one's own research and others' projects 	Develop sensitivity in data analysis and interpretation, e.g. with respect to varying meanings of concepts across cultures and the influence of theoretical and methodological frameworks
6	Research Dissemination (oral and written)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical incidents • Culture-contrastive genre analysis 	Prepare the participants for potential cross-cultural challenges when communicating research on international conferences or via international publications, e.g. when co-authoring a paper

While it would be too space-consuming to go into detail about each activity that can be employed, only two basic notions which might need to be clarified will be explicated at this point: critical incidents and culture-contrastive genre analysis. The first term refers to «a narrative that illustrates a misunderstanding between two or more people from different cultural backgrounds» (Jackson, 2003). It describes a situation in which something unusual or unexpected has happened. The conflict, non- or misunderstanding may be due to cultural factors, contextual variables or individual characteristics which clash in that specific situation.

The second notion has been used by Schluer (2014: 10-11) to mean a genre-based approach (cf. e.g. Swales and Feak, 2004) that includes a comparison of disciplinary discourse from at least two different linguistic communities (see also Pérez-Llantada, 2012: 184-189, on a contrastive approach to scientific rhetoric). In this regard, findings from culture-contrastive studies (see Connor, 2004, on intercultural rhetoric) provide a useful basis for identifying typical textual and culture-related elements of publications (cf. e.g. Clyne, 1987). Such an approach aims to sensitize scholars to different discursive features of thematically similar texts produced in different languages and/ or sociocultural contexts, which may even surface in academic ELF communication.

The analysis of specific examples and the provision of relevant background knowledge lays the foundation for attaining a higher level of cultural awareness by refining the participants' understanding of cultural factors in concrete interaction scenarios (cf. level 2, «advanced cultural awareness», in Baker, 2011: 204-205).

2.4.3 Phase 3: presentation and discussion: the 'intercultural conference'

In the third and final phase, the single groups will present the results of the collaborative phase 2 to the other participants. The format of this presentation can be chosen autonomously by the group members, though it should fit the contents they are tackling, suit their own abilities and the characteristics of the audience, if possible. This final phase is called «the intercultural conference» and, as the name suggests, it has a real-life relationship to the professional world of the participants, i.e. conferences. At the same time, it also expands on the everyday experience of the trainees by proposing alternative ways of conducting a 'typical' conference.

In addition, the final phase of the workshop includes a «suggestions for action» and «critical reflection» section, which will elaborate on and complement the contents of the group presentations. This final reflective phase aims to trigger the participants' open-mindedness towards further

culturally influenced areas in academia and to encourage a more culturally sensitive stance in their real academic life. This way, the basis for «negotiat[ing] and mediat[ing] between different emergent culturally and contextually grounded [...] frames of reference» (Baker, 2011: 203) might be created (i.e. Baker's level 3, «intercultural awareness»). In total, then, and in line with the idea of an 'intercultural learning spiral' (Deardorff, 2006b), the workshop will lay the foundation for the participants to continuously widen their (cultural) horizon and negotiate supposed 'standards' of academic communication (cf. e.g. Pennycook, 2009: 195, cited in Jenkins, 2011: 931, stating that «English is always under negotiation»).

3. Implementation: insights from a student workshop on academic writing

At the time of writing, the workshop concept presented above is being piloted with university students. It aims at fostering cultural awareness in the high-stake domain of academic writing and publishing from an early stage of the academic socialization process onwards (as was demanded by Schluer, 2014: 10, with respect to multilingual academic enculturation).

3.1 Setting, time frame and participants

In summer 2014, a course on academic writing was offered by the researcher for students of English (undergraduates and graduates) at a German university. It stretched over the length of a semester and formed part of the cultural studies module of the students' degree program. Written consent was obtained from 21 participants to use their data for research purposes.

3.2 Methods and materials

The methods and materials from the original workshop (Schluer, 2013) were used, but they were slightly modified to make them more relevant and accessible to the students. For instance, the notion of *academic writing* was consistently employed instead of *writing for publication*, and the discussion of the products of academic writing included student term papers and essays in addition to research reports. The following sections will concentrate on part (a) of phase 1, since the subsequent phases have not yet been fully completed at the time of writing.

3.2.1 *Questionnaire on academic writing*

Before course started, a questionnaire was distributed to the students, which included several of the items mentioned in section 3.4.1 (see also 4.3.1 below).

3.2.2 *Academic writing autobiographies*

Academic writing autobiographies were introduced as a new workshop component during the student seminar. They represent an adapted form of the self-reflective activities of phase 1. It was assumed that the written construction of their experiences might yield more detailed insights into the students' views on and concepts of academic writing than the mere elicitation via sentence-completion tasks or free associations (as in the questionnaire, see 4.2.1). While such an activity is surely also recommendable for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers (cf. Gentil and Séror, 2014), it was considered too time-consuming for inclusion in the original workshop concept⁶.

The students were provided with a list of recommended literature to help them recall and reflect on their academic writing experiences (Garrett and Cots, 2013; Risager, 2013; Finkbeiner, 2012; Clark and Ivanič, 1991; Gentil and Séror, 2014). Their task was to reflect on their academic writing experiences and narrate them in a so-called «academic writing autobiography». A special emphasis was given to the «factors that have already influenced [their] academic writing and might influence [their] future academic writing» (task description). It was stressed that their personal view is asked for and not one that is stated in the literature.

3.3 *Analysis and findings*

The data were treated in an entirely anonymous and confidential way. An arbitrarily chosen student number will serve as a reference in the ensuing presentation of results, preceded by the shorthand «S» for «student».

Excel was used for simple statistical analyses and *MAXQDA 11* (2014) for the qualitative content analyses of the open questions in the questionnaire as well as the autobiographic accounts of the participants. In the presentation of results below, the focus will be set on the students' concepts of «academic writing» and «good academic papers».

3.3.1 *Initial questionnaire on academic writing*

Altogether, 19 students filled in the questionnaire. 13 of them were female and 6 male. 16 of them originally came from Germany, 1 from

Cameroon, 1 from the Ukraine, and 1 from Russia. Almost all of them have spent most of their university education in Germany (n = 18), with only 1 student having studied most of the time at a Polish university. On average, the students were in their third year of studies. German was the L1 of 14 participants; the other students indicated Ukrainian (1) or Russian (1) as their mother tongues, or that they have been raised bilingually (1 English-French bilingual; 1 German-Norwegian bilingual) or even multilingually (French, Swedish, Spanish, German; n = 1).

«Academic writing» is described as a subtype of writing by the students (S01, S02) and refers both to the process of writing as well as to its various products (text types) (7 mentions). It is part of the research process (2) and a product of research work (5). It serves the dissemination of research results (2 mentions) and usually deals with one specific topic (6 mentions). Researchers display their academic knowledge (3 mentions), intellect (1) and stances (1) in their papers. In general, academic writing is characterized as a «difficult» task (S09), especially since certain academic values and rules have to be obeyed (6 mentions): A paper has to be focused (5 mentions), clearly structured (3), and transparent (2). Writers need to adhere to «strict rules» (S09; 2 mentions), integrate many and appropriate sources in a correct manner (7 mentions), and need to sound professional (1) and well-articulated (2) at the same time. Despite the hard work, they perceived the relevance of academic writing: for oneself (S16), for teaching (S15), and for academia (S16).

After a general question on central features of a «good academic paper», the students were asked whether they think that there might be «[...] differences of 'good academic papers' across *languages*». Only five students responded with a «yes», whereas 14 students denied any differences. By contrast, 10 respondents said «yes», while 9 replied with a «no» to the question «Would you say that there are differences of 'good academic papers' across the *departments or subject fields*?» It was found that the responses obviously depended on the experience the individual students had with academic writing so far. So, once they had written a paper in more than one subject field, they noticed differences. This does not necessarily have to be a distant field (as compared to English) like philosophy, politics or biology, but could likewise refer to papers written in English literature as opposed to English linguistics or English pedagogy.

3.3.2 *Students' autobiographies on academic writing*

In total, 11 students provided a reflective text on their personal academic writing experiences and views.

Language awareness and cultural awareness emerged as dominant themes, which was certainly also triggered by the literature that was provided to the students (see 4.2.2). In line with the basic paradigm «know thyself and understand others» (see Schmidt, 1999, in 2.2 above), the text excerpts of the 8 students who addressed cultural awareness in their autobiographies were coded according to «self-awareness» on the one hand and «other-awareness» on the other hand (4 mentions each).

One facet of self-awareness relates to the students' family and cultural background, which may be said to be part of the personal sociocultural background layer proposed in section 2.1:

«[...] I must confess that my parents' education, which shaped my cultural background a lot, was essential in influencing my academic writing because when I was a child most of my characteristics developed and shaped my character of today essentially». (S08)

Another student demonstrated self- and other-awareness on the layer of departmental or subject field culture:

«A thing that is interesting about philosophical texts in German and English is that I sometimes found the English texts I read in the original easier to understand than the German texts (that were written by German authors). Although I have not read anything about this matter, I think that there are different traditions of writing that (classical) German and English philosophers come from. The texts by [A]nglophone philosophers tend to present their thoughts more overtly and in a clearly structured manner, while German philosophers often used to write in a rather obscure way. However, this seems to have changed over the time. Today's German [p]hilosophers mostly have adopted a more overt style, as well». (S06)

This student also shows awareness of change over time, which may be due to mutual influences of style, and reflects the dynamic nature of academic culture, as was claimed in section 2.1.

In terms of the contextual factors which exert influence on the students' academic writing, it was found that the respondents mentioned the influence of their 'home' university in the first place (9 students), the experiences gained at a university abroad (3 students), and the effects of their prior schooling, i.e. before they entered university (2 students). Besides these institutional influences, friends (mentioned by 4 students) and family members (3 students) play a role in their writing processes.

While the comments by the students point to the processes of self-reflection that are taking place in their minds in an often indirect manner, some students also explicitly mentioned the increased self-reflection that has been triggered through writing the autobiography:

«Reflecting on my own academic writing career in this way has been a new experience, since I have never thought about [it] in this way before [...]. I feel like I have taken away some valuable new insights, which might help me in the rest of my academic writing career». (S18)

This kind of self-reflection triggered their interest to consider language and cultural issues more profoundly in the future – not only as part of their studies, but also more generally as part of their life:

«[...] I have never thought about the actual power writing has in reality as well. Sometimes denoted solely as work of art and expression few people think about the influence it has on our daily life». (S21)

In this regard, they realized, for instance, that the use of a particular language is often more valued than another: «Instead of being aware of the advantages people tend to have a negative attitude towards people communicating in a language other than their own» (S20). These kinds of reflections may eventually lead to more linguistic and cultural diversity in academia, as was posited in the introduction (cf. Kuteeva and Mauranen, 2014: 3).

3.3.3 Summary of findings

In total, the data gained from the autobiographies seem to complement the findings from the student questionnaire, as they provide more detailed insights into the students' thoughts about academic writing. While the respondents seem to concentrate on surface-level features and products of writing in the questionnaire, the autobiographic task appears to trigger deeper kinds of reflection, also about 'invisible' aspects of academic culture, such as power issues, processes of language choice and various cultural facets, which are usually hidden behind the written end-product, e.g. a term paper or research article. Awareness-raising activities of the autobiographic type might thus help students «develop a critical awareness of their own life-histories» (Ivanič, 1998: 339) with specific reference to the academic domain (see also Gentil and Séror, 2014).

4. Conclusions

The review of the previous literature has revealed that different cultural styles exist in academic and research settings, which can cause misunderstandings at various points in the research process. For instance, there are different overall conceptions of conducting research, different preferences concerning concrete approaches and methodologies, different styles as to how research should be presented and disseminated (cf. e.g. Fiedler, 2012: 47-48). While different perspectives and approaches can lead to new and fruitful insights (cf. Fiedler, 2012: 40, 47), raising awareness of cultural aspects in academic communication is still an under-researched topic (see e.g. Thomas, 2003: 292). This paper has presented a workshop concept to raise cultural awareness that is specifically tailored to academic contexts. It is originally targeted at postgraduates, but can be modified to suit students' needs.

First results from a student workshop indicate that cultural awareness activities can trigger students' self-reflection on the processes and products of academic knowledge production. As some findings seemed to indicate that their research-related concepts, such as their views on and perceived differences between academic papers, appeared to vary with the experience they have already gained in the academic domain, it would be sensible to collect more data from a wider range of students and academics and to compare their responses. Finally, it should be highlighted that so far only findings from the *initial* pilot phase of a workshop *adaptation* of Schluer's (2013) original workshop concept could be presented. It is therefore planned to

1. analyze the data from later phases of the student workshop;
2. conduct more workshops, both for students and for postgraduates; and to
3. implement workshops in a variety of settings and with diverse target populations.

It is assumed that later workshop phases might heighten the participants' LA and CA even further (cf. the gradual development in the framework proposed by Baker, 2011). Therefore, with respect to suggestion (1), a pre-post questionnaire design on central aspects of academic discourse and ELF communication might provide complementary insights to the qualitative data gained from the various suggested workshop activities. Additionally, the data from steps (2) and (3) could help refine our understanding of variation along the dimensions of academic *experience* (from academic novice to established scholar), *context* (discipline, setting, culture) as well as *individual* (linguacultural and academic profiles).

With research beginning to acknowledge the importance of LA and CA as well as of accommodation and negotiation skills in ELF interactions (cf. the overview provided by Baker, 2009: 588), academia should no longer be treated as an exception (see e.g. Mauranen, 2012: 238-239). Consequently, instead of simply socializing students and academics into one particular type of ‘proper’ academic (linguistic and research) practice, critical LA and CA approaches are needed (Ivanič, 1998: 75, 337). They may help scholars recognize that there are various valid styles of conducting and communicating research and that academic ELF interaction may mirror diverse cultural⁷ practices (cf. Baker, 2011: 205). In this regard, awareness-raising activities can be a useful starting point for critical reflection and mutual understanding (cf. Schmidt, 1999).

It is therefore hoped that pedagogic practice, such as through the workshop proposed in the present paper, will encourage academics to more consciously attend to the role that culture plays in their academic life and may ultimately facilitate intercultural and interdisciplinary research projects through dialogue on the processes and products of academic knowledge production. Yet, further work in this area clearly needs to be done.

¹ Here, the extended definition of ELF is adopted based on the work by Jenkins (2006, 2007) and Seidlhofer (2004), as summarized by Baker (2009: 569, 2011: 197). It is conceived of as English-medium communication between people who possess different linguacultures.

² Please note that in this paper, the terms *scientist*, *scholar*, *academic* and *researcher* will be used interchangeably, unless otherwise indicated. This alternating use is grounded in the assumption that not only the knowledge-making practices of the natural sciences but also of the social sciences and humanities follow certain ‘research’ standards and are ‘scientific’ in nature (see Salager-Meyer, 2014: 78). Furthermore, *academic* is employed in a very general sense, not only referring to the practices of established authorities and researchers, but also of students in higher education (cf. Russell and Cortes, 2012: 3).

³ Cf. Ivanič (1998: 42) who states that one context (here: layer) is embedded in another.

⁴ For example, participants may choose to do some of the self-reflective tasks in the local language or the L1, as this language might be activated more rapidly and naturally in such contexts.

⁵ In the sense of ‘doing a puzzle’ and having many ‘puzzling’ intercultural encounters during the game.

⁶ Writing a piece of text of several pages is very time-consuming and time is regarded as a precious resource among researchers.

⁷ In the wide sense expounded above, i.e. individual (lingua-)cultural backgrounds and academic cultures of various sizes.

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