Engaging with multiple audiences in research group websites: the interplay between genres and languages

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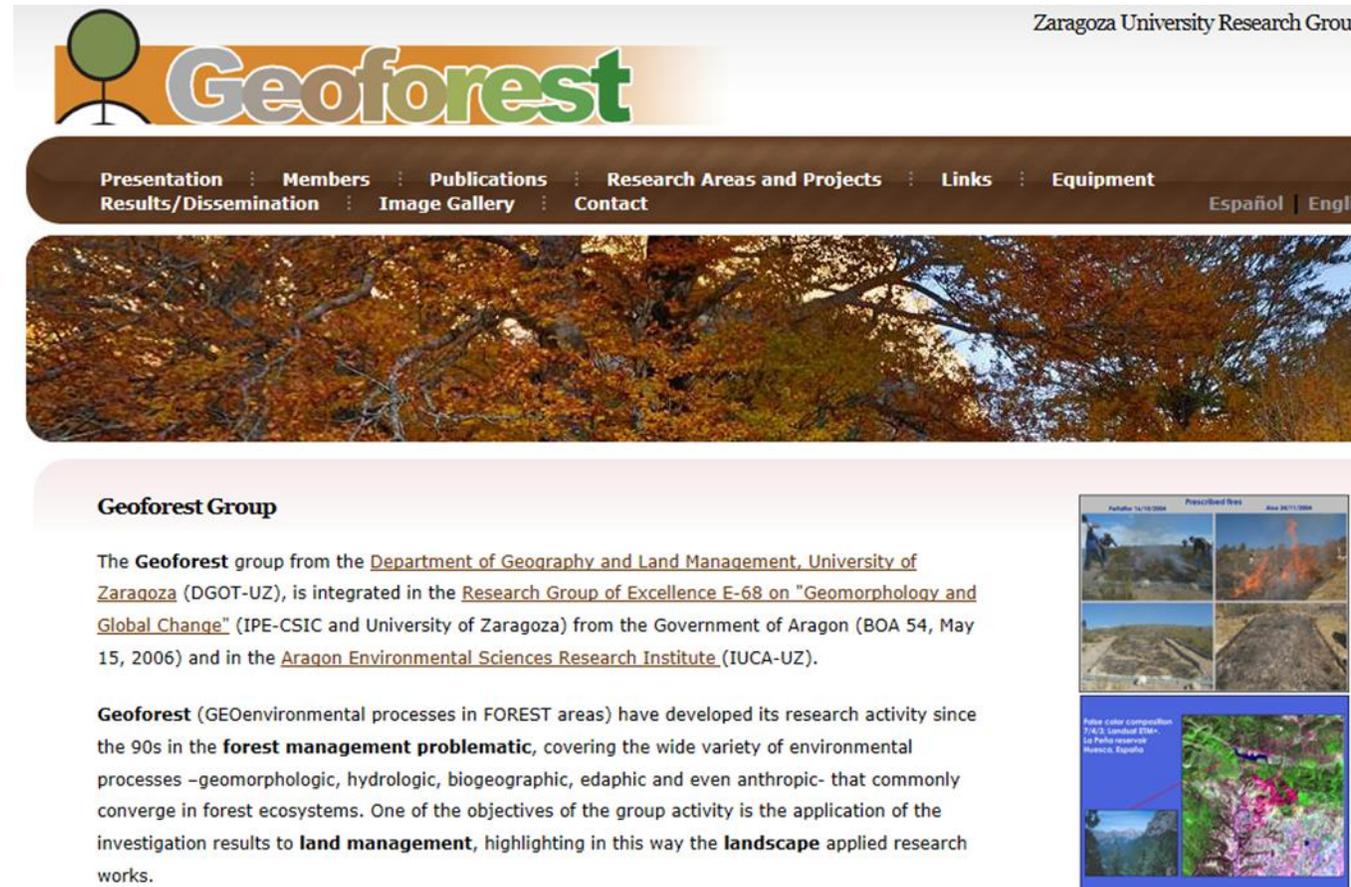Academic genres and
language ecologies

Research group websites

Research groups use their websites to:

- present themselves

- disseminate and publicise their scientific activity and results

- promote their research area

Potential benefits of a research group website (Thelwall et al., 2008) :

- increased visibility for the outcomes of research

- increased networking opportunities

- increased ability to attract members for the group

Purpose of research

➢ Content and language choice are used as **strategies for "audience design"** (Bell, 1984, 2001)

➢ Information in **different formats and languages** ➡ to connect with **multiple audiences**.

Questions:

• In which languages do RGs at UZ write their websites?

• when both English and the L1 co-exist in a single website, how do these languages interact?

• How do the social characteristics of the target audience affect the choice of language and formats to disseminate information in RG websites?

Audience design in academia

Audience design: speakers "design" their style (including language choice) in response to the social characteristics of their audience (Bell, 1984, 2001)

- English is the international language of academia (e.g., Ferguson, 2007; Petersen & Shaw, 2002).

- Local languages are used to disseminate findings to a lay-oriented audience (McGrath, 2014)

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Audience design and online discourse

English

- Lingua Franca of the Internet: the default language when the audience is unknown: likely to reach a wider public (Barton and Lee, 2013; Tagg and Seargeant, 2014).

- Language to communicate with an international audience in online communication (Barton and Lee, 2013; Franceschi, 2014; Leppänen, 2009; Vettorel, 2014).

Local language

- The desire to address a local audience promotes the use of the L1 (Durham 2003; Lee and Barton 2011; Seargeant Tagg, and Ngampramuan 2012).

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Context of study

Data analysed

- Websites of research groups at the UZ

- The websites were coded for main language: English/ Spanish/ both English and Spanish, other languages.

- More detailed analysis of 15 websites.

- **interviews with the principal investigators of the research groups**

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Interview

- 1. What is the **primary function** of your website?

- 2. What **language(s)** do you use in your website?
   a. English   b. Spanish   c. Both (versions in the two languages)

- 3. If the language is English, why have you decided to write you website in English?

- 4. If the language is Spanish, why have you decided to write you website in Spanish?

- 5. Who do you see as the **audience** for your homepage?
  - other members of your disciplinary community
  - funding agencies
  - interested public
  - students
  - other

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Results

(i) In which languages do research groups at the University of Zaragoza write their websites?

Language	Number of websites	%
Spanish	65	49.24
English	33	25
Both Spanish and English	32	24.24
Other	2	1.5
	132	

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Results

(ii) when both English and the L1 co-exist in a single website, how do these languages interact?

1. Two versions of the website, one in English and the other in the L1.

Results

(ii) when both English and the L1 co-exist in a single website, how do these languages interact?

2. Information is mostly written in Spanish, but there is a translation into English

e.g. Provesos

3. The website is mainly written in a language, with links to documents in other languages

Aragosaurus

 Cristales Líquidos y Polímeros (CLP).

Magna

Results

(iii) How do the social characteristics of the target audience affect the choice of language and formats to disseminate information in research group websites?

The websites have a variety of intended audiences:

- scholarly community: other researchers and research groups

- prospective students

- funding agencies

- other stakeholders: local practitioners, policy makers, companies

- journalists

- members of the group itself: intranet

These audiences influence content and language

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Websites written only in English

Audience:

- research community, both local and international

- prospective international students

Content: description of their research lines and their publications.

Websites written only in English

English is the language of science. Necessary to communicate internationally

- English is their "working language": the language spoken by their disciplinary community.
- the language used to write papers and to interact with colleagues (e-mails)
- language used in the laboratory (foreign students)
- it is easier to use technical English than technical Spanish

I think there are people who make an effort to translate the website into English. We would have to make an effort to translate it into Spanish. Actually, we have everything in English. Our projects are international and the description of our lines are in English. Therefore, doing it in English does not require any effort, doing it in Spanish does require an effort.

Websites written only in English

- **Economy of time and human resources.**

  Writing the website also in Spanish would involve double work.

- **Not necessary: the intended audience can understand English**

  All those who may be interested in the content on the page understand English. Understanding English is almost a requirement to work in science.

- **Making students aware that they have to use English when communicating with the disciplinary community**

  We do the seminars in English, because when we have to go to conferences, we have to use English, so it is also a way of getting them used to using only English for professional communication.

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Websites written only in Spanish

- **Audience:** lay audience; national disciplinary community
- **Content:** videos, links to disseminating websites, non-expert texts

Aragosaurus: http://www.aragosaurus.com/

Calidad y Tecnología de la Carne

We are convinced that our work has to be useful, it should help someone to fatten their calves more efficiently, mature the meat better, learn about chemical composition or find out that the composition of sheep's milk affects the composition of the meat of the lamb, for example. If we want it to be useful for a non-expert audience, it must be in Spanish and the language must be easy to understand.

- **Why only in Spanish?:** lack of resources

Websites written in English and Spanish

- The content was intended for a diversified audience, e.g.

Mediterranean diet and atherosclerosis.

- ✓ Spanish: lay audience; impact in South America.
- ✓ English: impact in China and India.

Geoforest. (GEOenvironmental processes in FOREST areas)

- ✓ Spanish: research on issues that have local and national interest. Local audience: local forest managers.
- ✓ English: innovative technologies and methods; international community.

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Conclusions

In which languages do research groups at the University of Zaragoza write their websites?

- 49.24% of the websites in English (25% only in English/ 24.24% both in English and Spanish)
- 49.24% of the websites are written only in Spanish.

When both English and the L1 co-exist in a single website, how do these languages interact?;

- Two versions: websites both in English and Spanish
- Information is mostly written in Spanish, but there is a translation into English
- The website is mainly written in a language, with links to documents in other languages

How do the social characteristics of the audience affect the choice of language and formats to disseminate information in research group websites?

- English ➡ international audience; disciplinary audience
- Spanish ➡ local audience: interested public
- Both versions ➡ diversified audience

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