A Book Review of Novice Writers and Scholarly Publication: Authors, Mentors, Gatekeepers

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Abstract

Novice Writers and Scholarly Publication: Authors, Mentors, Gatekeepers. Edited by Pejman Habibie and Ken Hyland (2019). Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-3-319-95332-8, ISBN 978-3-319-95333-5 (eBook), No. of pages 297. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95333-5

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The book consists of an introduction and four parts. The introduction focuses on the risks and rewards of scholarly publishing (Hyland, 2016a). In other words, writing for scholarly publishing involves not only merits and motivations but also risks and pressures for junior researchers as well as doctoral students. On the one hand, the merits includes engaging with the reviewers which could result in varied insights and perspectives on the doctoral work and can lead to a varied successful research. Scholarly publishing is led by motivations of the researcher. These include extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. For instance, the intention of the student to enhance his/her resume and profile and obtain a high status in the research domain as well as the wish to increase self-confidence, obtain self-satisfaction and develop ideas, shape a scholarly identity and persona are some of the intrinsic motivations.

On the other hand, students involved in scholarly publishing are exposed into the public pressure due to the high rejection rate by some journals and the time required to resubmit an article to another alternative journal with no idea of acceptance or rejection rates. Besides these pressures, doctoral students usually suffer from heavy teaching loads, personal responsibility, family obligations, long commutes, financial issues, health problems, exhaustion, limited faculty-student and student-student contact and little support and feedback. Therefore, the perspectives and experience of supervisors, reviewers, and editors are presented to highlight the practices and challenges faced by native and non-native scholars in writing for publishing. Hence, the book presents a reflection of the pressure imposed on novice writers as a consequence of the demand for academic publication in peer reviewed international journals irrespective whether they are native or non-native language speakers.

In chapter two of part one related to the Perspectives on Scholarly Publication, Ken Hyland reprises his argument regarding the myth of disadvantage in publishing suffered by those whose first language is not English (Hyland, 2016b). In other words, Hyland emphasizes that challenges face both native and non-native English speakers. Hence, Hyland argues that claiming that challenges face only L2 writers represents a deficit view of second language writers, demoralize L2 researchers, and marginalize the difficulties of novice L1 English academics. Hence, more studies are required to explore the perceptions and challenges faced by native English speakers in their publishing process.

In Chapter Three, according to Pejman Habibie, publishing in high-index international journals signifies an efficient academic performance of the scholars and the institutions. Therefore, he focuses on the question of native vs. non-native English-speaking. However, publishing impotency seems to affect academicians, specifically junior scholars and doctoral students. Like Hyland's argument, Habibie's discussion emphasizes on the idea of looking at Anglophone schools as undifferentiated mass bestowed with symbolic, social and cultural habits for scholarly publishing by virtue of their native speaker status. In other words, the dominant sense is that EAL scholars are geo-linguistically disadvantaged compared to their native speakers in terms of writing for scholarly publishing. Hence, supporting Hyland's call, Habibie calls for a balanced view of researching this aspect since writing for publishing is not addressed in the curriculum of undergraduate and postgraduate levels in several disciplines as well as research production requires high skills that go beyond generic and socio-rhetorical expertise.

In Chapter Four, Christopher Tribble also discusses the challenges faced by students and novice researchers in mastering the disciplinary terms and the register of the disciplines in the academic community. This involves the epistemology of each discipline and the cultural context of each genre in order to communicate knowledge academically and properly. In this regard, the instructors of EAP should provide these students and researchers with these conventions which are not easily acquired. Christopher Tribble argues that it is not pedagogically appropriate to encourage students to have conflicts with the institutions they elected to engage with or struggle against a chimerical native-speaker norm. Since the participants in EAP programmes have very limited time available and are confronted with high stakes academic challenges, the EAP practitioners have to help these participants in overcoming these challenges.

In this chapter, Christopher Tribble reviews some conflicting paradigms in EAPWI to identify which paradigm has the potential to offer practical solutions to support students' acquisition of relevant academic literacies. This included reviewing the major approaches to pedagogy, the theory used, and some of the apparent limitations of a new approach. His discussion also involves the claim of the proponents of English as a Lingua Franca (Academic) that genre-based EAP programs unfairly impose native models on non-native speakers of English. Consequently, he argues that the notion of native-ness is open to a serious challenge.

In part II, the discussion involves the perspectives of authors towards their experience of academic publishing. In Chapter five, Ismael Fazil reports that the majority of studies are conducted on the challenges faced by English as additional language writers including faculty members and doctoral students. On the other hand, limited studies have been focussed on the difficulties faced by native speakers except for Habibie's study. Therefore, Ismael Fazil looks

at writing for scholarly publication experiences of two Anglophone doctoral students at a Canadian Research-Intensive university. He discusses the challenges faced by junior researchers in the process of producing and disseminating scholarship in international English medium journals.

Learning how to compose a research article is not enough for publishing. Rather, the issue requires mastering the conventions, principles, and norms of the academic writing. That is, the novice writers need to master the value genre of research articles since they write for professional audience. In this regard, four aspects are highly significant for novice writers to be competent in publishing. These include formal knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, process knowledge, and subject-matter knowledge. It was found that even the native speaker writers have a difficulty in the formal knowledge of the journal article genre. In addition, the two participants expressed lack of knowledge in the process of scholarly publishing and selecting a journal that is considered an appropriate publication venue. Another challenge is lacking knowledge of the process of how reviewers comment, whereby no one shares his/her reports which could contain conflicting and mixed comments. A third challenging issue is the different genres of research articles. Another difficulty was familiarity with the generic expectations of the research genre and rhetorically preparing the article by following all the conventions of the genre. These challenges give evidence that Anglophone writers are also challenged in writing for publication and being a native speaker does not imply having no challenges in publication. The hardest section of writing was the literature review of the research article genre. Hence, when conducting studies, it is recommended to consider the issue of novice writers rather than being native or non-native speakers since both native and non-native writers have challenges in writing for publication.

In chapter six, Pilar Mur-Duenas adopts a self-reflective auto-ethnographic perspective in discussing her experience as a NNES (Spanish) academic undertaking research in English. She analyses her publication practices, challenges, and strategies. She mentioned that scholarly publication could add valuable local and transnational academic research networks. Consequently, this enhances her status as a scholar and supports her scholarly publication field. Scholarly publishing could also help her choose a topic that attracted the attention in the field of Applied Linguistics. Several motivations led her to focus on scholarly publication. These included communicating her results, having her results recognized, getting more citations, obtaining promotion, as well as developing intellectually and stimulating challenges. Writing the research in English and adjusting to the specific academic conventions of the international audience also represent a problem, whereby the introduction, discussion, and the conclusions section are the most challenging sections in writing the research articles. This was attributed to the effect of L1 background which resulted in using (too) forceful language, (too) long sentences, and a (rather) wordy style in English academic writing. Therefore, it was necessary to develop genre awareness, academic literacy skills in English as well as intercultural skills and following the conventions of academic publication which needs much time and extraordinary efforts.

However, although publishing in English offers lots of benefits for her, it entails dangers including the domain loss and an undesired homogeneization English academic discourse as well as national academic discourse styles in other languages. Further, the academic needs of academic publishing have not got much interests and the academic centres rarely exist. Hence, English should be conceived as a lingua franca in order to avoid L2 English scholars a disadvantageous position. It is worth mentioning that these challenges face native speakers

and non-native speakers of English. Consequently, a need arises to train L2 scholars and enhance their disciplinary, as well as their linguistic- and cultural-specific publication skills.

In chapter seven, Fang Xu explores two current approaches which inform multilingual novice writers understanding of writing for publication. On the one hand, the linguistic approach supports the deficit view of languages and shows that multilingual writers emphasize more on the linguistic competence, mainly vocabulary and grammar, rather than other aspects related to learning writing for publication, thus neglecting learning the syntactic complexity and grammatical accuracy. The empirical evidence in L2 writing studies supports learning the sequences through specific methods of reading and memorization. However, in WFP, the linguistic approach could result in harming the novice writers because of taking learning to write as a context-free cognitive phenomenon, and using NS proficiency as a baseline of writing development. Accordingly, the linguistic approach is problematic since it implies a wrong structuralist view of language learning.

On the other hand, the teaching genre raises the genre awareness, but it is not sufficient in writing for publication. Genre teaching may be successful in the classroom, with both Systemic Functional Linguistics and English for Academic Purposes which offer clear and well-established pedagogies. The genre approach is different from the linguistic approach in terms of emphasizing the development of genre competence in the social contexts of discourse. In addition, the genre approach contributes to the overall purpose rather than the structural orientation in the linguistic approach, which highlights the lexico-grammar. Hence, learning to write for publication requires writers to enter the discourse community and its culture, as well as develop expertise through a long period of disciplinary apprenticeship and enculturation. Therefore, Fang Xu proposes utilizing specific language acquisition methods in the genre approach. In other words, the two approaches, Linguistic Approach and Genre Approach, lead writers to see themselves as linguistically disadvantaged. In addition, both approaches consider language as both analytical and holistic. Therefore, the two approaches complement each other by incorporating the idiomatic/holistic approach of language acquisition in the genre approach.

In chapter eight, Christine Pearson Casanave argues that writing for publication is not easy for L1 native writers, thus arguing against the common wisdom stating that writing for publication does not become easier overtime, rather it becomes more difficult. This difficulty increases because successful writing for publication does not depend primarily on language proficiency since a writer's language proficiency, familiarity with the procedures, and knowledge of specialist terminology constitute only a small part of the basics for writing for publication. By means of reading and writing and learning within a particular field, the writer can gradually acquire the topic knowledge, the specialized terminology and concepts, whereby no more extra efforts are required in this aspect. Second, in the publications process, writers can recycle the existing work in a variety of venues. A third way to make publications become easier is to build relation network and collaborate with other colleagues. In other words, writing for publication involves other complex factors that affect both L1 and L2 scholars alike. These include inquiry, thinking skills, a developing expertise, and tenacity. Hence, writing becomes more challenging since it involves continuous learning and involvement in increasingly complex and interesting projects. Moreover, publishing becomes more difficult due to the constraints imposed on the writers in terms of following a conventional norm related to content, style, and topic. In other words, even writers with high expertise may not succeed in publishing something different from the conventional style.

Another difficulty concerned with reading, editing, printing and responding to the comments of reviewers might be annoying for an old writer since some reviewers have their own criteria. Hence, patience for an expert writer can diminish with time. A third difficulty lies in following the huge explosion of information, whereby the writer gets overwhelmed and cannot choose what is more appropriate and has the feeling of missing something important. Fourth, among all these publications, it is difficult to find a well-established theory or concept from other fields to utilize it in one's own field. In addition, it is difficult to read the original sources by well-known authors whose names are dropped due to the wide spread of conceptual sources that do not present enough explanation to the original theory or concept. Another difficulty lies in going beyond the boundaries of what one thinks he or she knows in the same domain. Besides, publishing an academic paper in another language that is appropriate in its style and content to the journal as well as the audience is another challenging issue. Therefore, expanding one's knowledge can be achieved by paying attention to the projects presented by the doctoral students.

The third part of this book focuses on the perspectives of mentoring, whereby Elena Shvidko and Dwight Atkinson in chapter nine trace the journey from being a student to becoming a published writer. Definitely, publishing in English peer-reviewed journals is a sign of success though it is not an easy task for all academic writers including native and non-native speakers of English. In other words, the difficulties face native and non-native speakers of English in English academic publishing are alike. The process remains a mystery because no two cases are exactly the same. Elena Shvidko and Dwight Atkinson's study included interviews with 3 non-native and 3 native English-speaking Applied Linguists who have experienced this transition.

The interviews show the diversity of the experience based on individual characteristics. Some participants are encouraged by their institutional environment as well as their intrinsic motivation to research and publish. The participants expressed the need for persistence due to the several rejections for the same article. One of the most common difficulties is dealing with the reviewers' comments emotionally and practically. These challenges also include the length of the article. It is noticed that writing for publication implied gender differences, whereby the female students considered co-authoring and/or mentoring helpful, whereas no male writers mentioned this aspect. Consequently, the native vs. non-native distinction is of limited use in understanding the highly dimensional phenomenon of academic writing. It was also demonstrated that all courses related to English for Academic Purposes, English for Specific Purposes, and the most recent one, English for Research Publication Purposes, were directed to develop the academic writing skills of non-native English Speakers. However, academic publication represents a challenge for all writers including native and non-native English speakers. Therefore, a need arises to cope with these difficulties.

In Chapter 10, Ron Darvin and Bonny Norton illustrate how collaborative writing between a student and a supervisor can be a valuable component of academic socialization. Mentors can be socialized into new practices, and the role of the students is not only to reproduce or internalize discursive practices but also to exercise agency through resistance, innovation, and self-determination. In this regard, collaborative writing can be transformative and mutually a beneficial process of academic socialization. Consequently, the relation between a student and a supervisor could result in great potential in reconfiguring the scene of power, thereby enabling new possibilities for mutual benefits for both in the academic community.

In Chapter 11, Margaret Cargill highlights the value of writing for holding publication workshops which last from 1 to 5 days in several contexts, such as the European, Asian, and Australian ones. These workshops are different from the formal university courses in terms of the content, flexibility of the presenter's choice, and the place of making them. In other words, these workshops are prepared to address the needs of the participants represented by doctoral students and novice researchers from different language backgrounds. The advantages of the workshops format are targeting specific participants' needs and taking advantage of synergies between different types of presenters. These workshops presented evidence of increasing the confidence of the participants, writing more papers in English, and identifying how to address the publication process.

In Chapter 12, for Dana R. Ferris, publishing is a distant goal that cannot be achieved. She also mentions the emotional and mental struggles experienced by postgraduate students represented by writing difficulties, lack of persistence, health and family issue, and time management problems. Another obstacle faces the postgraduate students is their relationship with their supervisors which could lead the students to leave their studies at the institution. However, this does not imply the necessity for having a warm close relation with the supervisor since a competent supervisee can succeed even without having such relationships.

On the other hand, the supervisor expects that their supervisee should demonstrate analytical and critical skills rather than merely describing. Dana Ferris offers some ideas and suggestions to help the advisees develop skills and expertise to become successful academic writers. Step one involves establishing a reader/writer relationship through observing how writing assignments are implemented in the classroom and seminars. Step two involves providing apprenticeship through co-authoring papers with the supervisees, assigning them tasks to write and enabling them to present their papers in conferences. Step three includes guiding the advisees through the culminating requirements. In other words, the role of the supervisor is to consider the expectations of the audience who will read the theses in order to provide sufficient feedback that achieves these expectations. Next, although some supervisees are usually anxious and desperate to get the approval of the supervisor, the supervisors are usually aware if the supervisee's work is enough or not in terms of following a standard procedure in order to help the supervisee become diligent and responsible for producing a high quality work. Fourth is helping the supervisees become independent researchers and get their work published.

In chapter thirteen, Yongyan Li explored the findings from a series of qualitative case studies. Her discussion highlights four dimensions: features of junior scientists' drafts of research papers, senior authors' practices of revising papers from junior scientists, junior scientists' responses to senior authors' revision, and supervisory relation and its impact on junior scientists' publication success. Accordingly, Yongyan Li demonstrates the role of co-authoring interactions between senior scientists and junior scientists in developing the skills of junior scientists in their writing for publication. Hence, ethnographic approaches are needed to understand the processes and practices of mentoring junior scientists for research publication.

The final part of the book contains two chapters which attract the attention to the hidden roles in publishing played by the editors and reviewers. In Chapter 14, Sue Starfield and Brian Paltridge argue that the role of the journal editors known as 'gatekeeper' is more complex since they engage in sometimes difficult decision making, particularly in desk rejection

whereby the article is rejected by the editor before sending it to reviewers. Another difficult situation is when one of the reviewers recommends revisions, whereas another one rejects the submission. Consequently, the role of the editor is closer to a 'custodian' than a gatekeeper. Some researchers may have a different aspect towards the editors since they are the source of power in either rejecting or accepting an article. In this regard, the editor of *Second Language Writing* reveals that their roles as editors are to safeguard the reputation of the journal by selecting the best reviewers and to support the good research article during the reviewing process. However, accepting or rejecting the submitted article is not based only on the editor's decision. Rather, other factors represented by members of the journal's editorial board, policies and traditions also have a role in this domain.

Academics get no real material rewards for their time and expertise while reviewing an article, but they do it out of a sense of obligation and commitment and this often implies honour, prestige and contribution to the academic community. This reviewing is also helpful for the reviewers in improving their own writing skills. However, the reviewing process is annoying for the reviewers who should write their comments as if their identities are known to the authors in order to avoid writing destructive feedback. In contrast, the reviewers should think and write considered feedback since the comments that focus only on grammatical errors are not sufficient. Therefore, the editor has to assign another reviewer which results in delaying the decision towards the submitted article. That is to say, there is much debate on the merits and demerits of the reviewing for the reviewers. In conclusion, it can be mentioned that the editors play the role of the mediators between the reviewers and the journal publishers.

As for the authors, their responsibility is to carefully select a journal and follow the guidelines on the website of the journal since one of the main reasons for rejecting an article is sending it to the wrong journal. Another reason for rejecting the article is lack of originality, no association to the international readership and either using old references or omitting important sources related to the topic. Also, the authors should send their articles to journals they usually read, particularly the most recent volume, paying attention to the style of the article, the content, the argument used, the authors they cite publish in such journals, how authors signals their contribution in these types of journals, how hedges are used, and the types of vocabulary used to highlight the contribution. Doctoral students should also follow a reader friendly writing style and do proofreading for their article before submission. Another significant issue is the realization that publishing needs time. Therefore, the authors should manage their plan since they cannot send a message to the editor asking him or her to speed up the publication process. One of the challenging issue that faces novice authors in academic is a difficulty in interpreting the feedback of the reviewers since these latter usually make suggestions rather than write direct comments. Another issue is that the authors should learn a lot from the rejection process rather than get frustrated.

In the final chapter, Christine M. Tardy reveals the issue of the unsung heroes of academic publishing. These anonymous gatekeeping and powerful peer reviewers are considered mysterious and intimidating figures by novice scholars due to their role in the publication process and the image of the reviewers created by the novice authors. This chapter clarifies their role by exploring submissions from the reviewers' perspectives. The reviewers enter the domain of the publication process based on the decision of the editor that a certain submitted article has the potential to be published. Therefore, an invitation is sent by the editor to the reviewers, whereby experienced reviewers receive lots of invitations. As a result, a major

issue arises represented mainly by securing the reviewers by the editors. Several factors can affect the reviewer to accept reviewing, represented by the relationship with the editor, being a member in the editorial board, the involvement in other professional or reviewing matters, a professional commitment to one's academic community, the interest in the topic, the title, the methodology or the need for evidence of peer review as a professional service. However, half of the initial submissions are exposed to desk rejection by the editor without sending them to reviewing and only 5 or 15 % are accepted for publication.

 Reviewers are usually given from 4 weeks to 3 month in order to complete the assigned task of reviewing that is difficult to be generalized based on the circumstances of each manuscript since some manuscripts can be finished within two hours. For some reviewers, they may start by reading the abstract, the list of references, and a skim of the whole paper to check the direction of the article, the goal of the author/s, and how the paper is constructed. After conducting this initial reading, another close reading is carried out at the same time or two days later concentrating mainly or rhetorical and content issues. For studies that report empirical findings, a lot of efforts are given to the design and the research methodology since reading carefully the aim, the research questions, the methodology, and the data analysis can reveal flaws in the design. In conclusion, reviewing manuscripts can include several goals represented by communicating the evaluation clearly to the author, providing sufficient instructions for future revisions, and maintaining a respectful tone.

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