

BOOK REVIEW



DIVERSE WRITING CONTEXTS AND RESEARCH METHODS FOR INVESTIGATING ACADEMIC LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

**Laura-Mihaela Muresan and
Concepción Orna-Montesinos (Eds.).**

ACADEMIC LITERACY DEVELOPMENT.
PERSPECTIVES ON MULTILINGUAL
SCHOLARS' APPROACHES TO WRITING
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Academic literacies development is commonly defined as the process of writers' growing understanding of and engagement with academic writing practices and social contexts of writing within a specific discipline (Bazerman & Prior, 2004). As numerous studies (Canagarajah, 2002; Englander, 2009; Lillis et al., 2015) of academic literacies development have revealed, this is a complex, socially situated process involving multiple interacting dimensions. This edited collection adds to this existing body of knowledge with the richness it provides in regard to three particular aspects. Firstly, it covers a wide range of international contexts, where the authors as well as the participants come from various backgrounds. Secondly, it investigates several writing genres and uses various research methods, such as surveys, interviews, observations or text histories, which add to the uniqueness of this edited volume. Lastly, it focuses on different stages of academic literacies development, where the participants are undergraduates, Master students, PhD students, early career researchers (ECRs), and *mature* writers.

The book starts with a foreword, followed by an introduction. The rest of the book is organized thematically into four parts together with an additional section on academic literacy development during the COVID19 pandemic. Parts I to IV cover interrelated themes on academic literacies development in relation to language

policies, various types of literacies, agency and identity, and individual trajectories of academic literacies development. The book closes with a coda.

In the foreword, Carmen Pérez-Llantada opens up the book by drawing a picture of the complexity of academic literacies development, which is an essential part of the academic socialization process of novice writers and ECRs. Pérez-Llantada lists some critical theoretical and methodological enquiries that this book aims to respond to, and highlights the aspects that make it appealing to a wide range of researchers and practitioners in the field of Applied Linguistics.

The introduction, provided by the book editors Laura-Mihaela Muresan and Concepción Orna-Montesinos, defines academic literacy development by first drawing on the definition of literacy, which some readers might find irrelevant to the issue of academic literacy development. The book editors then provide a guided discussion on how texts come into being by highlighting the importance of purpose, intended audience, familiarity with writing conventions and genres, and *interculturality* when literacy norms differ across academic cultures. This introduction provides an excellent orientation to the book.

To help us understand the behind-the-scenes of writing norms, Part I *Language Policies and Academic Literacy* provides insights into language policies by introducing research on writing guidelines, thesis language requirements, and academic language norms in different linguistic systems. In Chapter 2, Niina Hynninen draws on Blommaert's concept of *polycentricity* to indicate how writing guidelines are polycentric. Hynninen analyzed a text history of a successful research paper co-authored by six multilingual scholars; the rich textual and interview data make this chapter particularly interesting and enlightening. The author highlights how different authorities on a text might have conflicting views on the appropriateness of a specific practice and how these confictions can be resolved. ECRs might be specifically interested in this chapter as it enlightens our views on how and when negotiations are/should be made. Practitioners involved in ECRs' academic literacies development might also appreciate its insightfulness.

In Chapter 3, Davide Simone Giannoni offers a critical overview of the language requirements and opportunities for thesis submission in languages other than English at UK universities. The implications of vague linguistic policies for academic literacy development are discussed in the light of recent research on multilingualism in higher education. The author reviews policy guidelines in relation to thesis writing in a language other than English, namely Welsh, and lists some positive aspects and considerations as well as the practical obstacles universities might face. Policy makers at universities can benefit from the critical analysis in this chapter.

Part I ends with a thought-provoking chapter in which Laura McCambridge asks *What constitutes 'good' academic writing for multilingual students in EMI programs?* to reflect on a larger project dealing with English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). McCambridge discusses the interplay of different academic writing norms and underlines the importance of supporting students' academic literacy development. She reflects on the importance of helping students

understand and negotiate the meaning of the different types and norms of literacy practices they might encounter. She concludes with insights on the importance of equipping students with the knowledge to navigate through the disciplinary discourse requirements, which is part and parcel of their academic literacies development. Additionally, the author encourages content teachers to get involved in teaching disciplinary discourse. This chapter is of interest not only to policy makers but also to supervisors of students at different writing levels.

Part II looks into *Developing and Linking Literacies: Academic, Professional Literacy and Genre-Related Literacy* along four chapters. In Chapter 5 Dacia Dressen-Hammouda links work-based literacy development to constructing a professional identity and developing professional genres thanks to the protocol-assisted modeling (PAM) approach that increases Master students' reader awareness and helps them cope with the various and shifting professional expectations. English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) teachers might be interested in this chapter, specifically since the author provides a clear example of the PAM approach.

By using interviews and two questionnaires with a group of Spanish doctoral students, Ignacio Guillén-Galve and Miguel A. Vela-Tafalla investigate in Chapter 6 the difficulties and challenges faced by these multilingual students. Developing academic literacies here is discussed in relation to developing coping strategies, such as the use of translanguaging and knowing at which stage during the writing process it seems to be more convenient or advisable to write in English or Spanish. This chapter might be of interest to supervisors of multilingual PhD students as well as to writing centers that offer support to PhD students.

In this same vein, Chapter 7 reports on developing skills and coping strategies that foster autonomy in academic writing via an intervention EMI program together with the use of pre- and post-surveys to gather information on students' self-regulation and self-efficacy strategies. Patrizia Prinz and Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir introduce incremental development (i.e. one writing skill at a time) by focusing on distinctive shared characteristics across different writing genres (i.e. four essay types) with students of varying language proficiency levels. This chapter will be valuable for EAP teachers involved in similar intricate teaching contexts.

Chapter 8 starts with an interesting debate on writing in different genres, namely writing for a specialist versus non-specialist audience. Ryan McCarty found that the shifting disciplinary identities impacted the writers' academic literacies development and, accordingly, he reports on an ethnographic study with novice researchers. This chapter is significantly related to the next part of the book, with its focus on agency, identity, and self-representation in academic literacy development.

Part III, titled *Agency, Identity and Self-representation in Literacy Development*, contains three chapters. It opens up with two pioneering researchers on authorial voice, Janne Morton and Neomy Storch, who first present the fuzziness around the definition of *authorial voice*. They then provide an excellent evaluation of thesis writing guidebooks and online resources to show how students are usually poorly guided to develop their authorial voice. This Chapter 9 concludes with solid advice

for supervisors on how to approach their students to accommodate for the lack of teaching of authorial voice in PhD guidance resources.

Drawing on Ivanič's (1998) discursal self, Chapter 10 discusses *voice* in relation to how writers perceive the writing journey. Mira Bekar and Tatyana Yakhontova report on how writers from various backgrounds experienced the Master thesis writing process. The authors created a typology of self-perceptions (anxious, supported, independent, and triumphant writer) to discuss how these writers' emotions fluctuated during their writing journeys. This chapter can be a pedagogical resource for both EAP teachers and thesis supervisors.

Chapter 11 reports an ethnographic study also investigating identity negotiation of graduate students writing their theses. Interestingly, this chapter explores how reflexivity itself can be a tool for academic literacies development. Its author, Naoko Mochizuki, provides a deep reflection on how writing research is also a way of doing research and developing the author's own academic literacy. This chapter is a great resource for those involved in ERPP practices and teaching.

Part IV deals with *Individual Trajectories in Academic Literacy Development* and contains four chapters, all of which focus on the impact of academic networking and collaborating with others in addition to the challenges faced while publishing in English as an additional language (EAL). As an ECR myself, I found all the chapters in this part enlightening in relation to learning how to navigate my way in a new academic community.

In Chapter 12, Pejman Habibie provides ethnographic insights on the journey of a female novice scholar, with a focus on some discursive and non-discursive challenges, her coping strategies, and the resources she drew on to develop her academic literacies. Similarly to the previous chapter, writing here is also viewed as an opportunity to grow and advance within the academic community, rather than a mere chore. In Chapter 13, Rosana Villares discusses the challenges and coping strategies multilingual academics face in a context different from that of Habibie's participant. In this case, academic literacies development was mainly done via collaborative writing with literacy brokers (a strategy Habibie's participant did not have access to) and via self-developed strategies.

In the next chapter, Karen Gravett uses concept map-mediated interviews with three academics to explore how the collaborative nature of peer reviewing can at times entail asymmetrical power relations. The author focuses on developing feedback literacies as part of academic literacies development. Lastly, Chapter 15 focuses on the importance of networking and literacy brokers in writing for publication. Gerriet Janssen and Kelley Crites report here on interviews with two plurilingual novice researchers and the importance of their networks in their academic literacies development.

The final unnumbered part of the book is titled *Academic Literacy Development After the Spring of 2020: Quo Vadis?* and contains a chapter plus a *coda*. In Chapter 16 Tanya Tercero reports on a small-scale study that investigated the challenges of teaching writing using surveys with students and teachers during the COVID19

pandemic, and suggests a framework for online writing courses, which is crucial during these unprecedented times. As this chapter also looks into writing challenges and coping strategies it might have well fitted the preceding chapter group. This last part and the whole book end with an excellent, well-developed and thorough *coda* chapter written by Karen Englander and James N. Corcoran. Here the strengths of the book, especially those regarding the richness of research backgrounds and methods, are highlighted.

In general, this book draws on a wide range of, mainly ethnographic, methods (e.g. surveys, interviews, text histories, discourse analysis), which goes in line with the recent ethnographic perspectives on writing (Guillén-Galve & Bocanegra-Valle, 2021). This edited volume also draws on a diversity of international contexts (e.g. UK, Macedonia, France, Korea) to give the reader a picture of how academic literacies develop in various writing genres (e.g. writing assignments, writing MA/PhD thesis, writing for publication). However, the book has minor limitations. For example, writing for publication occupies a large number of chapters in this book creating a feeling of imbalance. Additionally, the organization of the book does not make it easy for the reader to spot the stages of academic literacies development and does not necessarily correspond to the title in the best manner. Despite these limitations, this is a very valuable, extremely rich book that can be of help to a diverse audience: policy makers, ERPP and EAP teachers, content and academic writing supervisors, and novice researchers.

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