

BOOK REVIEW



SUPPORTING EMERGING SCHOLARS' RESEARCH WRITING

Pejman Habibie and Ken Hyland (Eds.). NOVICE WRITERS AND SCHOLARLY PUBLICATION. AUTHORS, MENTORS, GATEKEEPERS (2019), New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 297 pp., ISBN-978-1-319-95332-8 (HBK), ISBN-978-3-030-07016-8 (PBK), ISBN-978-3-319-95333-5 (EBK).

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the neoliberal knowledge economy, there is an increased burden on scholars across disciplines to publish their commodified “products” (e.g. research articles) in indexed journals, i.e. those included in indexes such as the Web of Science (formerly Thomson Reuters, now curated by Clarivate Analytics) or Scopus. Though robust publication occurs in other languages, more than 90% of the journals included in these indexes are published in English. Particular populations of scholars are more adversely affected by the current domination of English in global publishing, namely those who use English as an additional language, whom I refer to as plurilingual EALs. This additional “burden” is amplified when plurilingual EALs are working in peripheral or semi-peripheral global locales (Bennett, 2015; Corcoran, 2019). As a result, over the past decade, a new subfield of English for Specific Purposes called English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) has emerged, with investigations into global scholars’ experiences with scholarly writing for publication alongside a description of pedagogical interventions aimed at improving scholars’ research writing outcomes.

Pejman Habibie, co-editor (with Sue Starfield) of the newly-launched *Journal of English for Research Publication Purposes* and instructor at Western University in Canada, and Ken Hyland, eminent applied linguist and professor at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom, are co-editors of this volume that adds to the burgeoning field of ERPP. In this book, the editors mindfully seek to shift our gaze from solely plurilingual EALs working in “peripheral” regions to scholars writing for scholarly publication from across a range of geographical locales, including “centre” ones, something the editors argue – rightly I may add – is sorely missing from the field of ERPP. In their introductory chapter, Habibie and Hyland make crystal clear that one of their objectives with this volume is to challenge the “supposedly (sic) linguistic advantage of Anglophone scholars as a reductionist explanation for the complexities of scholarly publication” (p. 4), suggesting the “novice” vs. “experienced”¹ categorization is a much better way of framing the challenges faced by global scholars looking to publish their work in academic journals. Following the introductory chapter, where they elucidate the specific arguments underpinning this volume – i.e. advanced scholarly writing is difficult for all scholars; English language proficiency is too often conflated with advanced research writing literacies; ERPP should focus more on Anglophone, centre scholars’ experiences and challenges; focusing on plurilingual EAL scholars’ disadvantages is doing a disservice to these scholars and the field – the remainder of the book is divided into four main sections connected to novice scholars’ writing for publication. Overall, this 15-chapter volume is chock full of interesting and engaging theoretical and empirical work that will be of acute interest to those engaged in scholarly writing for publication, its research, pedagogical support, and/or adjudication. In this review, I summarize contributions from each of the four sections, and discuss some of the more salient themes encountered throughout the volume.

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2. PART I: PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOLARLY PUBLICATION

In Part I, the most controversial of the volume, Hyland, Habibie, and Tribble take on the notion of native speaker privilege. In Chapter 2, Hyland argues persuasively that the problematic dichotomy of native (NS) vs. non-native (NNS) speakers of English is a flawed lens through which to conceptualize the complex endeavor of advanced academic literacy. He goes on to suggest that the “disadvantage orthodoxy” position – whereby plurilingual EAL scholars are considered disadvantaged in the world of academic knowledge production due to their first language (L1) – is based on unexamined assumptions, and does a disservice to both NS and NNS scholars. In Chapter 3, Habibie continues in the same vein,

¹ Though dichotomies are inherently problematic, I prefer the terms “emerging” and “established”, and will be using them for the rest of this review.

suggesting that an overemphasis on the challenges faced by plurilingual EAL scholars working in the peripheries marginalizes Anglophone scholars working in centre locales. In Chapter 4, there is a slight shift from ERPP to EAP, as Tribble defends genre-based EAP pedagogies against claims that such approaches promote conformity to dominant native-speaker language, discourse, and epistemology.

3. PART II: AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES

Part II of this volume considers the perspectives of scholars – both emerging and established – on their experiences with scholarly publishing. In Chapter 5, Fazel reports on the writing for publication experiences of two Anglophone doctoral students at a Canadian research-intensive university, highlighting both discursive and non-discursive challenges these centre-based emerging scholars face. In Chapter 6, Mur Dueñas provides a fascinating autoethnographic account of her plurilingual journey from emerging to established scholar in the field of applied linguistics. In Chapter 7, Xu contrasts two pedagogical approaches to supporting scholarly writing for publication, considering the potential and limitations of what she terms “genre” vs. “linguistic” approaches. Finally, in Chapter 8, Casanave delivers a self-reflective piece on her longer-term scholarly trajectory, challenging the notion that research writing gets easier over time, noting that writing for publication success depends on much more than simply English language proficiency.

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4. PART III: MENTOR PERSPECTIVES

In Part III, the editors look to experienced scholars for perspectives on supporting and collaborating with emerging scholars. In Chapter 9, Shvidko and Atkinson discuss the idiosyncratic nature of research writing journeys, highlighting the need to attend to individual differences when supporting/mentoring doctoral students, and suggesting that the NS vs. NNS dichotomy is of limited use in understanding the highly complex, multidimensional phenomenon of academic writing. In Chapter 10, Darwin and Norton discuss the great potential of collaborative writing between an experienced (Norton) and emerging (Darvin) scholar, highlighting how “investment” in such collaborative research writing is housed at the intersection of identity and ideology. In Chapter 11, drawing on her vast experience as a scholarly research writing pedagogue, Cargill outlines the benefits of ERPP workshops for plurilingual EAL scholars (e.g. increased confidence with scholarly writing), and highlights some inherent qualities of effective interventions (flexible, locally-responsive, multiple knowledge bases of instructors, etc.). In Chapter 12, Ferris provides a number of effective supervisory strategies that can positively impact emerging scholars’ becoming “successful” research writers. In Chapter 13, Li closes

the section with an overview of her qualitative case studies, pointing to the complex relationship between mentors and mentees in writing for publication, and calling for more ethnographic research aimed at understanding these power-imbued social interactions.

5. PART IV: GATEKEEPER PERSPECTIVES

Part IV contains only two chapters, which is unfortunate given the quality of the contributions and paucity of published editorial perspectives on scholarly adjudication. In Chapter 14, Starfield and Paltridge elucidate the complex, mediating role journal editors play when facilitating interactions and relationships between authors, reviewers, and the disciplinary community. Drawing on their extensive editorial experience, they provide suggestions for emerging scholars for how to effectively navigate the submission and review process. Tardy rounds out the volume with an entertaining contribution that points to the key role reviewers play in the publishing process, attempting to “demystify” the reviewer role for emerging scholars looking to better understand the process. Drawing on her personal experiences as a reviewer and editor, she highlights some common issues emerging scholars face when looking to publish their work, and how they might be overcome.

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6. DISCUSSION

In their edited volume, Habibie and Hyland have achieved their stated editorial objective of providing an alternative focus for the burgeoning field of ERPP. The diversity of authorial, mentor, and editorial perspectives within the book will be of interest to a wide audience of stakeholders connected to academic publishing, none more so than novice (emerging) scholars.

For emerging scholars looking to get their research published in academic journals, this volume provides interesting reflections from experienced scholars (including journal editors), as well as emerging-experienced co-author teams. Mur Dueñas, for example, provides an excellent account of her multilingual journey of academic socialization in the field of applied linguistics, while Casanave describes the constant toil of research writing for even established academics. More such (auto)ethnographic accounts from scholars across disciplines are welcome and needed as we develop more nuanced understandings of the complex development of advanced academic literacies. Given the book’s title focus on *Novice Scholars*, it is surprising that more sole-authored contributions did not come from this demographic; inclusion of more autoethnographic perspectives from emerging scholars could have provided an interesting contrast to those of more experienced ones. This minor critique notwithstanding, a great strength of this volume are the

multiple chapters (Darvin & Norton; Shvidko & Atkinson) that highlight the potential risks and rewards for emerging scholars of engaging in partnerships with more experienced scholars. As an emerging scholar myself, the rewards of these types of academic writing relationships ring particularly true. My collaboration with more experienced academics (Karen Englander, in particular) has resulted in greater discipline-specific genre awareness and dexterity (e.g. crafting occluded genres such as a book proposal) as well as improved social writing practices (e.g. negotiating my author “voice” during manuscript production and revision). Though negotiating power can be challenging for both parties in such partnerships, emerging scholars in particular can especially benefit from access to broader networks and opportunities these partnerships afford, something even more important for plurilingual EALs working from peripheral locales.

Continuing with the theme of successfully navigating academia, this volume offers emerging scholars a glimpse of the occluded world of editorial/peer review. Renowned past editors of *Journal of Second Language Writing* (Tardy) and *English for Specific Purposes* (Starfield & Paltridge) provide guidance with a humanist slant that makes the work highly accessible for those of us looking to publish in high impact journals. Of note, these editors stress the importance of developing the social practices of research writing, something that many have argued should form part of the mentoring and pedagogical practices of those tasked with such support (Curry & Lillis, 2013; Englander & Corcoran, 2019; Paltridge & Starfield, 2016).

For pedagogues and supervisors, the volume provides contributions that may be useful for those teaching and supporting research writing across global contexts. The editors make clear that explicit support for emerging scholars’ research writing is beneficial regardless of L1 or geographical location. Cargill’s chapter, for instance, specifically addresses plurilingual EALs working from across global locales, i.e. scholars who often desperately seek interventions aimed at improving research writing outcomes. Her tips for ERPP interventions – flexible, locally-responsive, diverse teaching team – are worth noting for those looking to design or deliver this type of support. More research into ERPP pedagogy is needed and this volume adds to a recent uptick in the frequency of reporting on these interventions (see also Li & Flowerdew, 2020).

Overall, the perspectives provided in this volume raise valid arguments that challenge problematic dichotomies (the NS-NNS distinction) and ideologies (e.g. language proficiency is the most important consideration in advanced research writing) that pervade the field (see Curry & Lillis, 2019 for more on this). Among the editors’ arguments, perhaps the most valuable is the need for greater investigation of centre-located, Anglophone scholars’ experiences with scholarly writing for publication. Not because Anglophone scholars are marginalized, mind you, but because there is a need for greater understanding of the shared and distinct challenges that face scholars working at different career stages (e.g. emerging vs. established), and from different geolinguistic locales. As Swales (2019) has noted elsewhere, even the periphery vs. centre dichotomy is a bit

problematic given that scholars at universities in the United States receive vastly different access to research and writing support. Nevertheless, this leads me to a concern I have with the editors' positioning in this volume. There is ample evidence that research writing in an additional language is more challenging, particularly when done from the global peripheries (e.g. Hanauer, Sheridan, & Englander, 2019). Further, there are compelling testimonials from plurilingual EAL scientists about their perceived inequality in relation to their Anglophone counterparts (e.g. Clavero, 2011; Fregonese, 2017). This is not to say that L1 birthright automatically bestows advanced literacy prowess on those of us fortunate enough to be born with English. It does not. However, when the editors question the validity of the additional challenges plurilingual EAL scholars working from peripheral locales face in a decidedly unequal world of academic knowledge production, I wonder if it may not come across as a bit tone deaf to the *ESP Today* readership.

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