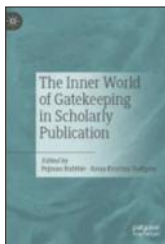# Book Reviews

The Inner World of Gatekeeping in Scholarly Publication

Pejman Habibie & Anna Kristina Hultgren (Eds.)
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Worldwide scholars are under constant pressure to publish more in prestigious English-medium journals. To achieve publication, they must be able to communicate their research through research articles (RAs) and communicate with journal reviewers or editors about RAs (Kwan, 2010). Although RAs have been widely researched, the practices of gatekeepers largely stay behind the curtain. The volume *The Inner World of Gatekeeping in Scholarly Publication*, coedited by Pejman Habibie and Anna Kristina Hultgren, sheds light on the often mysterious processes of peer reviewing and editing. It collects twelve reflective narratives of becoming and being gatekeepers in Applied Linguistics, portraying gatekeeping not only as an individual cognitive activity but also as a process of myriad interactions and social commitments. As experienced teachers of English for Specific Purposes at a research university in China, we highly recommend this book as it reveals multifaceted aspects of gatekeeping, substantializes tacit insights into research writing, offers positive implications for academic literacies development, and provides worthy research strands.

The preface, authored by Ken Hyland, maps the fundamental changes in scholarly publishing: staggering numbers of submissions and the shortage of qualified reviewers. From the beginning, readers are encouraged to consider the challenges in gatekeeping from both macro and micro levels.

In Chapter 2, the introductory chapter, the two editors discuss the discursive, humanist and political dimensions of gatekeeping, which are distinct yet interlinked. This knowledge helps readers develop a nuanced understanding of knowledge certification.

The body part of the volume comprises three sections, each containing four chapters. The first section is entitled "Identities, Positions, and Beliefs". In

Chapter 3, Pejman Habibie narrates his academic trajectory from intellectual, networking and institutional strands. Although studying and working in global North institutions have facilitated his quick development of gatekeeping literacies, his agency and resilience are decisive for his success. The lesson is that we need to take matters into our own hands and learn writing, researching, and reviewing by doing them.

In Chapter 4, Rosa M. Manchón recounts three epochs in her identity construction as a non-native user of English and a custodian of publication and research, traversing the outer circle (Spain) and the inner circle (North America). Despite the differences in working environments, language backgrounds, and academic status between her and Habibie, their professional trajectories share commonalities: gatekeeping is a self-taught becoming practice and is a process of knowledge certification and mentorship. These themes recur in several other chapters, in which idiosyncratic, personal experience conveyed through thick descriptions creates transparency and offers a source of knowledge.

In Chapter 5, Guillaume Gentil credits his development of gatekeeping literacies to his own engagement in multilingual genre learning. He revisits the issue of linguistic injustice in academic publishing, citing the disproportionately lower acceptance rates for submissions from non-Anglophone academics as evidence of their disadvantaged situations. On this topic, we agree with Politzer-Ahles et al. (2020) that compared with observatory studies, randomized control experiments provide stronger evidence for the (non)existence of linguistic injustice.

In the last chapter of this section, Peter De Costa tracks his scholarly journey from the initial publication of a book review up to his current role as a co-editor of a prominent journal. He also outlines the measures he has implemented to support emerging scholars, guided by his belief in diversity, equity, and inclusion. This chapter and other chapters give struggling scholars confidence and courage to navigate international publishing.

The second section of this book is entitled "Discourses, Norms, Values". Chapters 7 and 9 employ textual analysis to investigate the discourse of peer reviews. Chapters 8 and 10 discuss the norms and values embedded in the local and global academic communities.

Ling Shi analyzes the rhetorical structure and types of comments in her reviews in Chapter 9. Her carefully mitigated negative comments aim to guide manuscript authors toward publication. The emic perspective helps

her disclose her intentions truly and consistently, some of which may be overlooked by the recipients. Beneath the seemingly cold discourse lies kindness and dedication, manifesting the humanist aspect of gatekeeping.

Different from Shi, who primarily directs her reviews toward manuscript authors, Maria Kuteeva broadens her readership to the editor, other reviewers, journal readers, and the wider research community in Chapter 7. Through the concepts of indexical orders and polycentricity, the analysis of the stance acts in her 50 reviews exposes multiple roles of a reviewer, including evaluator, expert, advisor, peer, and (proof) reader. The shifting roles of reviewers potentially empower them to challenge the authority of the journal and overcome its internal limitations, thereby moving the research field forward. One message is that the judicious selection of analytical frameworks can enrich the interpretation of a relatively limited dataset, imbuing it with depth, persuasiveness, and creativity.

In Chapter 8, Marton Demeter presents a field-theoretic analysis of the dilemma faced by a journal editor-in-chief in Hungary. He attempted to apply international academic norms of transparency and competitiveness to Hungarian academia, where nepotism and informality were prevalent, but he failed. This chapter underscores the need for greater inclusion of Western academia, increased commitment from peripheral scholars, and more support for them to establish a fairer system of knowledge production.

Going beyond public actors, Chapter 10 by Anna Kristina Hultgren takes a critical gaze at private, profit-driven publishing companies. These companies, colluding with neoliberal evaluation regimes, create a mutually dependent and exploitative relationship with individuals, journals, institutions, and nations. The fixation on metrics and profits, she argues, undermines the well-being of scholars and exacerbates structural inequalities. This chapter expands from individual perspectives to the broader politico-economic context.

The third section of this volume, titled "Roles, Relationships, Challenges". Chapter 12 addresses the challenges involved in the role of book editors. Other chapters are about the roles of journal editors.

Exploring the authors' emotional responses to textual mediation, Chapter 12 by Sally Burgess illustrates the book editors' difficulties in handling face-threatening interventions when editors and authors have different symbolic capital. Though it discusses the use of politeness strategies in managing

power relations during book chapter editing, these skills also apply to the assessment of students' writing.

In Chapter 13, John Edwards draws on his extensive editing career to describe editorial duties, highlighting the role of the editor as a gatekeeper in review procedures. The discussion of common problems with manuscripts, especially with qualitative work, is quite intriguing. This chapter discloses the criteria editors employ to evaluate submissions, which could help authors avoid some pitfalls and improve the quality of their research work.

Moving beyond strict gatekeeping, Carmen Sancho Guinda discusses the role of editors as the decision-makers of language choice for a journal based outside the inner circle in Chapter 11. She describes her struggles brought about by the interplay of trust and risk when she replaced multilingual publishing with monolingual publishing (specifically English) to promote the journal's visibility. Her narrative exposes the dominance of metrics in shaping academic journals.

Unlike Sancho Guinda, who is concerned with journal identity, in Chapter 14, Karim Sadeghi and Farah Ghaderi grapple with political tensions between Iran and the West, national policy constraints, and email management as they develop a linguistic journal from a departmental outlet in Iran to a globally esteemed international publication. The final chapter of the volume provides valuable advice to local journals that wish to go global.

In sum, this book complements textual studies on gatekeeping and sheds light on gatekeepers. It acknowledges their service to their profession and their contribution to knowledge production while pointing out their submissiveness within the neoliberal system. Additionally, the detailed analysis of the politico-economic and ideological dynamics invites readers to identify and address the structural problems with academic publishing.

This book sparks various avenues for research into gatekeeping at personal, academic, social, and technological levels. For example, we think it would be interesting to know gatekeeping practices in disciplines other than Applied Linguistics. It would also be worthwhile to explore how artificial intelligence could transform authoring and reviewing to alleviate the entrenched inequality in global publishing.

One minor problem is the categorization of the body chapters into three interconnected parts: Identities, Values and Roles. People's beliefs often influence the values they uphold. Their values are deeply rooted in their

rights and roles. The roles they adopt to confront challenges ultimately shape their identity. There is a close link between beliefs, values, roles and identity. On the other hand, the difficulty in the classification reflects the complexity of scholarly gatekeeping and overlapping issues addressed by each chapter.

We highly recommend this book to those seeking to improve their research writing, navigate international scholarly publishing, develop gatekeeping literacies, or launch a new research project.

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