



Novice Writers and Scholarly Publication: Authors, Mentors, Gatekeepers.

Pejman Habibie & Ken Hyland (eds.)

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. 297 pages. ISBN: 978-3-319-95332-8.

Publication in quality journals is considered an essential qualification to most academics. However, it places tremendous demands on apprentice scholars, particularly doctoral students and newly initiated academics. This book, *Novice Writers and Scholarly Publication*, sets out to provide valuable experiences, opinions and suggestions to both Anglophone scholars and English-as-an-additional-language (EAL) scholars. The subtitle *Authors, Mentors, Gatekeepers* hints at the divergent range of perspectives of senior writers, mentors, journal editors and reviewers, providing individual views and empirical research on the practices and challenges in writing for publication.

This volume is structured into four parts with 15 chapters, including an introduction. Each part centres around perspectives on publication from one particular group. In the introductory chapter, Habibie and Hyland provide an overview of this volume and a succinct summary of each chapter. Part one (Ch. 2-4) “Perspectives on Scholarly Publication” is opened by Ken Hyland. Drawing on literature upon linguistic injustice in paper publication, Hyland acknowledges the publication challenges encountered by non-English writers, but claims that simply framing publication difficulties in terms of the ‘linguistically advantaged native English speakers vs disadvantaged EAL writers’ polarization both demoralises EAL writers and underestimates difficulties experienced by apprentice English-speaking academics. More holistic and balanced views of publication are expected, as academic writing is not just about grammatical accuracy but entails a complex discursive practice involving “rhetorical knowledge, persistence, and an awareness of an authorial self” (page 28).

Habibie echoes Hyland’s claim in Chapter 3, highlighting the dearth of investigations into writing for publication practices of novice Anglophone scholars. He presents a critical view on a misrepresented assumption, namely

“The Lucky Anglophone Scholar” orthodoxy, which suggests that the geolinguistic advantages of native English speakers may guarantee their academic publications. On the contrary, reviewing existing literature, Habibie discusses how novice Anglophone writers, particularly doctoral students, unlike their EAL peers, are less likely to be exposed to academic discursive and rhetorical training that could scaffold their scholarly publication practice. This chapter, then, is a call for more explicit, practical support in Anglophone student academic literary development.

Tribble, in Chapter 4, critiques the new paradigm to EAP, that is, ELFA (English as a Lingua Franca for Academic Purposes), which contends that EAP programmes are designed on the premise of native models. He rebuts that misassumption with discursal, lexico-grammatical and disciplinary evidence from a self-compiled corpus of quality journals from four disciplines, claiming that academic writing is shaped by disciplinary epistemology rather than by simply following the native norms. Thus, he suggests, more academic literacy programmes should be introduced to apprentice writers to enhance genre awareness, regardless of their native language backgrounds.

Part II, “Perspectives of Authors” (Ch. 5-8), presents case studies and personal reflections on the process of paper writing. Drawing on Tardy’s (2009) classification of “genre knowledge” and recording two Anglophone doctoral students’ interviews in a longitudinal study, Fazel reports that both Anglophone and EAL writers encounter discursive and non-discursive challenges in paper writing. This study thus provides evidential support to the claims proposed in part I, suggesting that more investigations should be conducted on novice Anglophone writers’ issues and challenges in paper writing. However, Fazel does not elaborate on subject-matter domain, which is a key part of Tardy’s classification. With this elaboration and a larger sample size, Fazel’s arguments could be more solid and convincing.

In the following chapter, Mur-Dueñas looks back on her research trajectory and paper publication histories as an EAL writer in self-reflective auto-ethnographic narrative. She highlights the point that participation in national or international conferences is an essential way to construct academic research networks. She claims that intercultural skills and genre knowledge, especially rhetorical and formal knowledge in paper writing, are particularly challenging. She also admits in the narrative that international publication may require more efforts and cost for non-Anglophone writers.

Xu, in Chapter 7, presents a critical review of two approaches in writing for publication, which she refers to as “the linguistic approach” and “the genre approach”. She suggests that the complementation of the two approaches may inform the dual nature of language as being analytical and holistic. Drawing on a case study of a Chinese linguist, Xu demonstrates how the memorization strategy bridges between linguistic and genre knowledge in scholarly writing.

In Chapter 8, Casanave addresses the difficulties in writing for publication. As a native speaker of English, she argues that publication even gets more difficult for her. Invisible factors, such as expertise, patience for publication, facing overwhelming research information and finding new ways to existing theories all pose challenges. However, instead of discouraging novice writers, she inspires young scholars to face those challenges and push beyond their current limits.

Part III “Perspectives of Mentors” (Ch. 9-13) features empirical studies and shared experiences in mentoring scholarly writing. Each chapter presents an individual yet somewhat repetitive opinion: co-authoring could benefit both students and supervisors. Shvidko and Atkinson present this argument from early-career scholars’ perspectives. They explore the difficulties, challenges and reflections in the publication experience shared by six novice writers via interview on five related themes. The study indicates that seeking support from senior writers, institutional culture, motivation for publication and persistence in the face of rejection all contribute to successful paper publication. Less important in scholarly writing is the native/non-native line, according to the informants. In chapter 9, Darvin and Norton share their experience of collaborative writing between students and supervisors, claiming that the full participation of a student in a given academic context with the help of a supervisor not only involves rhetorical endeavor but also non-discursive factors, such as the negotiation of identity, ideology and capital.

Cargill, in Chapter 11, goes on to explore the value of writing for publication workshops (wfpws) in helping novice writers develop scholarly writing skills. She suggests that the participants in those workshops gained significant confidence in both writing papers and dealing with the publication process. In Chapter 12, Ferris discusses the challenges faced by graduate students and provides “four-stage cycle” strategies (page 221) for mentoring them. In the following chapter, Li explores the features of co-authoring interaction

between junior scientists and senior writers. She takes the existing literature as a starting point and suggests further research focused on the publication experience of science doctoral students, which would be necessary to overcome the barriers existing between “academic tribes” (Becher & Trowler, 2001).

Part IV “Perspectives of Accessors” (Ch. 14-15) shifts to gatekeepers’ perspectives on writing for publication. Both chapters provide detailed information on the reviewing process and personal suggestions for new academics. Starfield and Paltridge perceive the role of editor more as a custodian than as a gatekeeper, as he/she serves to enhance the journal’s reputation and supports the production of worthy knowledge. Drawing on the responsibilities of authors and their own experiences as journal editors, these authors offer applicable suggestions to novice writers to better understand the publication process. Closing the chapter, Starfield and Paltridge highlight the importance of holding a positive attitude towards rejections from journals, as there is still a lot to be learnt in the reviewing process.

In the last chapter, Tardy seeks to unpack the myth of peer review. She unveils the roles peer reviewers play, outlines the perspectives they hold in the publication and review processes and comments on her own experience as a reviewer and editor. Acknowledging the challenges encountered by new academics in working with peer reviewers, she claims that harsh criticism or even rejection is a part of publication. She further offers suggestions to novice writers for negotiating review comments, and contends that the nameless reviewers are playing quite valuable and effective roles in knowledge production.

This book offers its readers, especially newly initiated scholars, the opportunity to get insights into publishing in quality journals by providing divergent perceptions. Despite the informed suggestions of the book, however, the authors might consider including more shared experience or personal stories about the transition period from novice writer to widely-published experts, particularly the strategies applied to tackle both discursive and non-discursive challenges in writing for publication and appropriately responding to reviewer’s feedbacks.

To recapitulate, as an EAL novice writer, I should state that it is very encouraging to learn from published writers’ perspectives, their paper-writing trajectories, and the constructive suggestions from journal reviewers

and editors. In short, I would add that it is a very welcome publication because it unpacks the myth of writing for publication and explores the misassumption of the native/non-native divide in scholarly writing. Thus, it will be of interest to doctoral students, newly initiated scholars, and teachers or instructors of academic English writing.

Received 22 January 2019

Accepted 9 April 2019

Reviewed by **Jingjing Wang**
Hubei University (China)
cewangjingjing@163.com

References

Becher, T. & P.R. Trowler (2001). *Academic Tribes and Territories*. Buckingham: Open University Press.