



Supporting Research Writing. Roles and Challenges in Multilingual Settings

Valerie Matarese (ed).

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Supporting Research Writing: Roles and Challenges in Multilingual Settings focuses on the publication practices of non-native English speaking (NNES) academics from the perspective of an often neglected group of professionals who help them in their goal. As pointed out by the editor, Valerie Materese, the unifying term “language professionals” is used in an attempt to raise the profile of those offering extremely varied types of writing support to academic authors, including among others copy editors, translators, authors’ editors, or professional writers. These language professionals do deserve greater visibility and recognition of their work and this book contributes to learn more about their practices. The book should, thus, be of interest not only to academic authors but also to journal editors and publishers, as well as to institutional and educational administrators, and, overall, to anyone taking part in the production and dissemination of academic knowledge.

The seed of the book was a panel discussion which took place at the Mediterranean Editors and Translators 2009 annual conference and brought together professionals offering language support to NNES authors across different countries. It comprises 15 chapters coherently divided into four sections. SALLY BURGESS and THERESA LILLIS’ introductory chapter opens the book and sets the scene for the remaining contributions. The authors maintain that the key to the success of working relationships is based on three important aspects: the management of expectations, the establishment of credibility and the issue of authority.

Part 1 “Teaching NNES authors to write in English” comprises four chapters on different approaches to teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) especially to academics who use English as an additional language (EAL). SALLY BURGESS and ANNE PALLANT describe four perspectives to the teaching of academic written skills and argue that there has been and will be

an increasing need for non-Anglophone academics to acquire written academic skills in English.

MARY ELLEN KERANS shows how the literature on process writing has helped her and can help language professionals in general to provide authors with support. She illustrates some research-based heuristics offered by such literature with examples from her own daily practice with authors in non-Anglophone settings.

Based on their own experience, SALLY BURGESS and MARGARET CARGILL argue that using genre analysis and corpus linguistics, and especially the use of concordances, can bring fruitful results in EAP courses as well as in one-to-one mentoring sessions with EAL writers. The authors describe the procedure followed in a publications skills course.

In the last chapter of this first part VALERIE MATARESE describes an approach used to teach research and research writing to NNES in the biomedical sciences based on strategic, critical reading. The content and structure of the seven-day course is provided as it has been designed and implemented by the author.

Part 2 “Helping NNES authors publish through translation” contains three chapters on the support needed by authors who want to publish their research results in English for an international readership but do not have enough command of the language. In the first one, KAREN BENNETT acknowledges that the hegemony of English in the academic world impinges particular rhetorical options in manuscripts to be published in that language and that, as a result, academic translators into English need to heavily domesticate the texts.

In the next chapter SUSAN M. DIGIACOMO underlines the importance of voice in the dissemination of disciplinary knowledge. Drawing on own examples from the fields of Anthropology and Biomedicine she reflects on how translators need to go beyond literalness and be aware that they also have a voice, which they need to put at the service of the source text and of the translated author.

From their first-hand experience GREG MORLEY and MARY ELLEN KERANS discuss the reasons why a bilingual publication may be chosen and the practical aspects to be considered when undertaking such task. Bilingual publications, although labor intensive and costly, seem to be in the rise.

Under Part 3 four different chapters discuss the issue of “Facilitating publication through editing and writing support” to those authors who can write in English for research publication purposes, even if it is not their native language, but need support in that endeavor. JOY BURROUGH-BOENISCH presents different types of editing: editing occurring chronologically in the process of writing and publishing a text, editing interventions across a continuum moving from superficial to substantial, and levels of edit. She maintains that texts written by NNES authors undergo a different type of editing, which in fact lies between editing and translation.

In her chapter MARIJE DE JAGER discusses the complexities that copy-editing – which is supposed to be the most superficial type of editing – entails when it takes place for a non-Anglophone English-medium journal. The role of the copy editor becomes multifaceted, and they sometimes act as “the last gatekeeper” and perform an educating role.

JOY BURROUGH-BOENISCH and VALERIE MATARESE’s chapter focuses on the work of author editors, which is usually previous to the manuscript submission to a journal. Author editing can be very varied, especially when it concerns manuscripts from NNES authors. The importance of dialoguing with authors if only through the edited text is underlined.

GREG MORLEY presents another type of research writing support, that provided by a professional – usually medical – writer, whose role is to help authors get a publishable paper taking as a starting point their ideas, data and opinions. The necessary steps to be taken and some complicating aspects that may arise in the writing process are discussed. Professional writers should be particularly aware of ethical practices, which can be achieved by constant negotiation with authors.

The last section of the book, Part 4 “Blurring the boundaries” includes three final contributions which highlight overlaps among the writing support tasks discussed separately in each of the preceding parts: teaching, translating and editing. JOY BURROUGH-BOENISCH advocates for didactic editing, as it can be beneficial both to the authors and the editors. Through a proactive approach to editing, NNES novice authors can learn skills and strategies, and language professionals can add value to their work, ensure acceptance of their revisions and can make their job easier in the long run.

VALERIE MATARESE focuses on another type of writing support, developmental editing, which may be required when the researchers have data and findings but are unable to draft their papers or when the

researchers' manuscripts have been serially rejected by publication journals. Development editors must be particularly concerned with authorship issues in order to foster researchers' engagement and avoid ghostwriting, which can be achieved combining such developmental editing with author coaching.

The authors of the last chapter, THERESA LILLIS, ANNA MAGYAR and ANNA ROBINSON-PANT, describe their collaborative experience, as journal editor, academic writing researcher and teacher translator, respectively, in designing and implementing a successful authors' mentoring programme to support the writing of NNES authors from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The authors further discuss the roles and responsibilities of Anglophone centre journals.

Finally, VALERIE MATARESE closes the book with an afterword in which, as a way of summary, reflects on the complex figure of the language professional and discusses the main recurring aspects throughout the book, namely, the need for writing support to be individualized, multifaceted, multilingual and multicultural, the role of language professionals as communicators and mediators, the necessary proactive nature of their work, and their concern with ethical issues.

As shown by the summary of the fifteen chapters, the book offers valuable insights into the increasingly important work of language professionals in the publication of academic knowledge in English-medium journals. Because of their prominent, and often undervalued, role in current publication practices, this book is a most relevant contribution. However, given the global nature of academic research publications, some further thoughts from the contributors – mostly Anglophone and/or educated at Anglophone institutions working in non-Anglophone contexts – on the current role of English as a lingua franca (ELF) and the implications for their work would have been welcome. Nonetheless, the book makes an excellent job in bringing together the voices of experienced language professionals and unveiling the process of research writing and publication, which, so far, has not attracted much scholarly attention, but which undoubtedly deserves it.

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