
Plenary Talks

From Assignments Toward Publication: Brokering Academic Writing

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This paper considers conversations of the disciplines (Bazerman, 1980) regarding disciplinary writing norms. Traditionally, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction focuses on academic skills generally relevant to the classroom. Our intention here is to bridge the academic writing classroom (EAP) with writing for publication (ESP). We realize such a perspective may provide a challenge for students and teachers unfamiliar with publishing norms, particularly field-specific norms, which include editorial expectations for the presentation of manuscripts, talk around texts such as author e-mail correspondence, and expectations regarding revision and co-construction of text following editorial review. We feel the keys to overcoming these challenges lie in linking the classroom roles of teacher-as-writer and student-as-writer with a network of supportive literacy brokers. The implications of this are both intra- and interdisciplinary in nature, calling for improved interconnection between EAP instructors and their colleagues who teach “content” courses, and a flattening of the hierarchical relationship that often exists between them. In terms of classroom practice, this linkage involves a pedagogical approach that moves beyond academic text production intended to satisfy university curriculum requirements toward preparing classroom participants to write for academic publication.

Introduction

ESP practitioners are often called on to prepare students for specialized professional practice. In the case of EAP, this can include preparing students for specific academic fields with which the teacher may be unfamiliar. One of the

results of this situation is that EAP practice often focuses on general academic skills. However, in preparing students to engage in a professional discipline, their ability to perform independently in the academy may not be an accurate predictor of their ability to do so outside the EAP classroom. Thus in this paper we emphasize the need for increased awareness among EAP teachers of the types of academic skills and knowledge that specialist disciplines may demand of students, and consider the implications for EAP classroom practice this increased awareness may have.

This paper begins with a discussion of the implications of shifting the ESP instructor's pedagogical perspective from writing as product to writing as dialogue. It then discusses the importance of taking different disciplinary norms into account in the ESP classroom, particularly in light of the reality that many ESP teachers are not necessarily familiar with the discipline-specific norms their students may be expected to meet. An examination of the importance of considering academic publishing as part of a professional community-based, networked conversation follows. Finally, some of the implications of the information shared here for ESP pedagogic practice are discussed.

ESP: From writing as product to writing as dialog

Our first proposal is that ESP/EAP practitioners look beyond genre studies alone as a means of helping students acquire academic literacy in English. The traditional focus on the written genre of a discipline in teaching students, while an essential component of this process (Bhatia, 2008), requires an extension of the "conversation" (Bazerman, 1980, p. 656) of the discipline beyond simply the writing instructor and student. For English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL) learners, this extension involves a refocusing of the dialog onto their social and academic worlds to explore the counterparts with whom they interact to produce reports, and the resources they have to access to aid the writing process (Casanave, 2003). In this sense, the conversation with teachers implies that textual construction should be a broader dialog (Lillis & Curry, 2010) which prepares students for both the demands of tertiary writing, and later at postgraduate level for publication. We argue that consultation with supervisors,

friends, classmates and writing tutors is an important part of the tertiary-level writing process and that it can be useful preparation for the world of academic publishing. There are parallels between student text construction, published text construction and the precursors to “literacy brokers” (Lillis & Curry, 2006, p. 3) and “network brokers” (Curry & Lillis, 2010, p. 283) in tertiary education, individuals who enable students to access opportunities to publish and to navigate the academic publication process (Curry & Lillis, 2010; Lillis & Curry, 2010). Next we will consider how an understanding of discipline-specific norms is important for the EAP classroom.

Understanding field-specific norms

The first step to understanding the disciplinary norms of students’ academic fields is to grasp the considerable variability of norms across their respective fields and disciplines. Table 1, which shares data extracted from Huang and Chang (2008, p. 1821), shows the variability in type of publication between six different academic fields among faculty at the University of Hong Kong between 1998 and 1999. For teachers preparing students to work in the medical field, for example, conference and working papers were not part of the medical faculty output during the period examined; thus preparing students to transform

Table 1
Distribution of publication types by academic discipline

Field	Journal articles	Books and monographs	Book chapters	Conference and working papers	Reviews, translation, other written output	Other
Physics	99	-	-	1	-	-
Medicine	90	-	2	-	5	3
Business	47	5	10	30	-	8
Education	37	8	35	20	-	-
Linguistics	13	13	9	39	26	-
English	21	3	14	56	3	3

conference presentations into publications would likely not fit this discipline's professional practices. This serves as one example of how norms in students' fields may differ from the norms EAP specialist teachers are accustomed to.

Another source of variability across different academic fields is journal review and editing standards, particularly those regarding the length of time taken to complete reviews, and acceptance and rejection rates. For example, Hargens (1990, p. 1350) describes how, among the biological sciences, represented by *Physiological Zoology*, the acceptance rate was about 50% with almost all editorial decisions (99%) made 260 days after submission. In contrast, at the *American Sociological Review*, representing a social sciences journal, the acceptance rate was under 10% at 260 days, with review and evaluation of about 10% of submitted manuscripts ongoing, and with about 80% of submitted manuscripts having been rejected (Hargens, 1990, p. 1350). Both these journals' handling of submissions is very different from *Astrophysical Journal*, representing astronomy, where 90% of submitted papers were accepted for publication (Hargens, 1990, p. 1350), illustrating the wide variability in journal publication practices across disciplines that aspiring English students and their teachers may not be aware of.

One aspect of writing norms specific to the field of English language teaching are those concerned with language use. In earlier research, we noted that reviewers for three ELT journals at which we served as editors felt that language was the "most important" or "primary factor" in evaluation a paper, and that papers submitted for review should be written in the "appropriate" "correct" "academic genre," "style" or "tone" (Adamson & Muller, 2008, p. 48). The standards being applied as 'correct' is an ongoing issue of debate (see, for example, Belcher, 2007; Lillis, Maygar, & Robinson-Pant, 2010) within ELT literature. There are also signs of "non-normative" (Nair-Venugopal, 2000, p. 207) language use becoming acceptable in the field, potentially indicating emerging EIL standards, or the acceptance of language that does not necessarily conform to center norms (Canagarajah, 1996). However, while ELT standards may be shifting, standards of evaluating language acceptable for publication in other fields appear to have changed. For example, Rozycki & Johnson (2012) examined the language used in Best Paper Award Winners in Software and Hardware Engineering, where

editors, reviewers, and authors are often all multilingual EIL scholars, and found considerable variability in language use compared to center norms, or what they termed “non-canonical grammar” (p. 157) while the editors of these publications believed “If the English is ‘good enough’ it can be published” (p. 165). This again points to the need for English teachers working with students whose academic specialties differ from their own to be sensitive to the norms those students may be expected to meet. For example, in the case of engineering students, classroom time could be more fruitfully devoted to aspects of writing outside meeting requirements for center-standard appropriate sentence level syntax.

Finally, with respect to non-native speakers seeking to publish in English, it is important for teachers to understand that the conversation in the literature on writing for publication often concerns publication in Anglophone-center journals, what Curry and Lillis (2004) refer to as the “international academic” (p. 674) community. However, this represents only one of seven communities which Curry and Lillis (2004) found their European scholar participants to be writing for; their research participants felt all seven of those communities were important to them for different reasons. For example, Curry and Lillis’ (2004) participants felt it important to address their fellow national academics in their L1 and to address the national applied community in their L1; they would also write for national level journals in English; they addressed an international community in their L1, such as a Spanish scholar writing for a Mexican Spanish language publication; they addressed an intranational academic community in English, such as writing for a European regional journal; and they also, in some cases, wrote for an academic community in a language other than their L1 or English. Teachers working with students who will be writing in English for national level journals may thus want to start by considering the language standards they will have to meet for these publications, rather than encouraging students to begin their careers writing for an elusive international audience.

Publishing as a networked conversation

Along with an understanding of field-specific norms, issues surrounding the student-as-author’s journey into publication need to be explored. The first issue

concerns the view of writing as a type of social interaction. Lea and Street (1998, p. 159) proposed that the development of literacy be seen as “social practice” which involves more than the teacher-centered dialogue characteristic of traditional writing classes. This firstly implies that distinctions between writing and speaking are artificial (Lillis, 2013), as both constitute essential interactive means to develop writing. The social aspect of writing development thus requires engagement with a community of people connected to the student (Lillis, 2013). Conceptualizing the type of community being engaged is important here, as it involves several different notions of what community represents. The analogy of a “speech” community (Hymes, 1974) brings to mind the idea of a larger, inclusive community of language users defined by their common speech characteristics; in contrast, envisaging a “discourse” community (Swales, 1990) separates language users into specific disciplinary fields based on genre norms. Alternatively, use of “communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991) focuses on the common tasks of users in a group and how they are positioned within it. A more recent conceptualization of the interconnectivity of social activity draws on the metaphor of the “social network” (Wellman & Berkowitz, 1998), which addresses the ways in which people are connected within a community.

For the development of writing for publication, this networking analogy looks to raise awareness of the potential of accessing various “brokers” (Lillis & Curry, 2010, p. 13) to aid writing students. Moving away from teacher-dependence for advice brings students into contact with “literacy brokers” (Lillis & Curry, 2010, p. 93), and “network brokers” (Curry & Lillis, 2010, p. 283), the former giving students advice on their writing, and the latter on who to contact (other brokers, journals) and what “resources” (Lillis & Curry, 2010, p. 54) to use, for example, library and internet literature, conferences to attend, and people of potential interest, with the type of brokering connections varying from long-term relationships to temporary collaborations. In brief, awareness of the importance of developing brokering connections and the skills necessary to accomplishing this task equip students-as-authors for the challenges of academic publishing.

Moving toward a publishing pedagogy in ESP

This last section concerns conceptualizing an ESP publishing pedagogy which helps prepare students for a broad range of scholarly activity. We argue that an over-emphasis on publication for high prestige international journals may set unattainable publication goals, and that emerging scholars may benefit more from engaging in a wider range of scholarly activities. Evaluating scholars by counting the number of articles they have placed in international journals is an insufficient means of understanding their overall academic activity; this needs to be challenged by other forms of evaluation; for example, “scholar factor” (Bourne & Fink, 2008) which accounts for publication in various types of journals and values academic contributions through blogs and newsletters, workshop and conference participation, collaborative writing and presentation, and creation of academic support groups. Moving from evaluation of international publications to a broader-based evaluation rubric would reward active networking skills and serve to familiarize scholars with disciplinary norms. This would provide a means of nurturing long-term academic relationships and, in turn, competences which eventually lead to development of academic literacy in the student’s field.

In brief, a publishing pedagogy embraces four factors: firstly, it encourages awareness of multiple audiences and avenues towards publishing; secondly, it encourages awareness of how the student-as-author positions himself and is positioned by other brokers, for example, editors; thirdly, it values collaborative work and departs from traditional teacher-student dependence; finally, it discusses plagiarism and alternative views which center scholarship on what Flowerdew and Li (2007) term “language re-use” (p. 441).

Conclusions

In this paper we have sought to explain how it is preferable to conceptualize writing as a social-constructive activity rather than as the product of an analysis of completed texts representative of a particular genre. In our view, writing is a social process not unlike speaking, and thus represents an act which inherently requires engaging with others. At the student level, counterparts can be fellow students, faculty, and staff, while at the professional academic level one engages

with fellow professionals in the pursuit of academic publication. Re-envisioning writing as a conversation brings with it the need to understand the differences in norms and expectations for practice within and between different fields and disciplines; for EAP instructors, this may mean becoming familiar with norms different from those to which they are accustomed. This, in turn, leads to the need to view scholarly activity more holistically, taking into account who students and scholars engage and how they do so, and to move beyond a strict adherence to evaluation of completed written manuscripts.

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