

Knowledge creation through academic publishing

Ken Hyland, *Academic publishing: Issues and Challenges in the Construction of Knowledge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xiv + 239. Paperback £34.50, ISBN 9780194423953.

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Academic publishing is a global industry that dominates the lives of millions of scholars and publishers worldwide. In the face of keen competition in academia, scholars are now under mounting pressure to publish so as to demonstrate their academic talent and competence. From the perspective of maintaining research quality, publishing is an obligatory link in a whole process of research, as it is only through publication that a piece of work is subjected to public scrutiny. However, publication is a long and demanding process involving a variety of complicated factors and there are many rounds of submissions, revisions, and negotiations, which may well confuse and daunt many scholars, especially junior researchers. As an editor, prolific author, and leading figure in applied linguistics, Ken Hyland, in this new book, explores the key aspects of academic publication, successfully engaging readers in a comprehensive discussion of issues such as ‘the impacts of globalization and commercialization, the influence of networks and disciplines, the contributions of gatekeepers and literacy brokers, and the roles of journals, publishers, and reviewers’ (pp. 1–2). He maintains that publishing is not just to disseminate legitimate knowledge, but involves commercial, political, and social interaction that matters to anyone in the process of publication.

The book comprises nine chapters, each addressing an important dimension of knowledge construction through publication. Chapter 1 provides a useful introduction to the whole book where Hyland sets the scene by discussing the ‘publish or perish’ culture, exploring the reasons why academic publications prosper and what is at stake for research institutions and academics. It also analyzes the impact of the metrics-based evaluation system on academics and publishing.

The next two chapters move on to the topic of globalization, which drives publishing internationally

in English while exerting a possible negative influence on local languages and journals. Chapter 2 deals mainly with the global knowledge and local knowledge divide. Under the considerable pressure to publish, many scholars struggle to go global. This is particularly true of some Asian countries like China that are gradually becoming major players on the global stage. Drawing on previous literature and the author’s own research findings, Hyland argues that there is value in recognizing the local in global publications when he quotes Canagarajah (2005, xiv):

Making space for the local doesn’t mean merely ‘adding’ another component or subfield to the paradigms that already dominate many fields. It means radically re-examining our disciplines to re-orientate to language, identity, knowledge, and social relations from a totally different perspective . . .

Chapter 3 focuses on language choice in writing up research and publishing. English has undoubtedly become a lingua franca of research, and this linguistic dominance has pushed some countries to protect their native languages from being marginalized. Hyland



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informs us that previous research indicates that there are ‘different attitudes and demands across disciplines’ (p. 51), but English is increasingly favored by more English-as-an-additional-language (EAL) scholars. Based on previous research and comments from editors, he shows that linguistic differences or even errors in non-Anglophone writings are not so severe as to get the work rejected. The issue of native/non-native dichotomy is also examined and he rightly points out that ‘academic English is no one’s first language’ (p. 57), and it requires ‘deliberate learning’ (p. 57).

Chapter 4 looks into academic authoring in different disciplines. Drawing on an analysis of a corpus of 1.4 million words composed of 120 research articles in eight disciplines, Hyland draws readers’ attention to the different rhetorical practices and linguistic features in texts in different disciplines. Benefits and problems involved in academic collaboration are also critically examined with a proposal of a ‘contributorship model’ (Council of Science Editors, 2009) in which authors are required to state their respective contributions so as to reduce honorary authorship.

Chapter 5 is concerned with the theme of participation related to ‘community-located expertise in academic text production’ (p. 91). It examines the notion of community that regulates how authors conceive and organize data before they write up research. It then explores the relationship between expert writers and novice writers, suggesting that the way the latter learn to write is through their participation in a situated activity when they serve in a scholarly apprenticeship. It is not surprising to note that publishing a paper can be ‘a thoroughly social practice’ (p. 111), with interpersonal relationships, good communication skills, and joint efforts of various collaborators.

Genre is an important notion in writing as a frame for using language in a particular context or discourse community (Swales, 2004; Pang & Ye, 2011). Through a quasi-stable genre, writers are able to construct knowledge whereas readers are able to consume what writers intend to communicate. Chapter 6 provides a detailed account of the research article genre in addition to other genres such as books, book chapters, letters, and pre-prints. More than scratching the surface, he scrutinizes each genre in terms of its features, disciplinary preferences, and development trends. Chapter 7 takes up the issue of journals, a principal venue where knowledge is orchestrated and academics judged. It first discusses how journals are ranked, branded and commercialized. A special emphasis is then placed on the genre of journal descriptions where functional moves and linguistic realizations are delineated. It also weighs advantages and disadvantages of Open Access (OA) such as *PeerJ* and *eLife*. While providing a complementary and dynamic way to access research,

OA has brought problems and challenges to traditional knowledge dissemination and publishing.

Chapter 8 is especially interesting and useful to would-be authors as it probes into gate-keeping practices in academic publishing. Purposes of gate-keeping are outlined, which is then followed by an in-depth analysis of peer reviews in terms of practices, problems, pressures, and disciplinary preferences. Possible ways of negotiating with editors are proposed with examples from editors and authors in many disciplines. The final chapter is related to pedagogy. Hyland examines the rapidly growing field of English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) with courses addressing the needs of those who want to improve their writing so as to increase their chance of publishing. Drawing on examples, he highlights two approaches to ERPP courses: one deals with genre-based, corpus-based and consciousness-raising instruction while the other concerns itself with strategies for how to position oneself as an author, how to collaborate with colleagues and negotiate with reviewers, and where to submit work.

As the latest addition to the *Oxford Applied Linguistics* series, Ken Hyland’s book provides a panoramic analysis of academic publishing in both macro and micro contexts. On a macro level, the book offers historical, linguistic, social and political overviews of the whole process of knowledge construction, helping readers demystify the multifaceted realities of scholarly publication. On a micro level, it provides a detailed and practical guide to readers – junior scholars in particular – through carefully selected examples. Of particular value are the empirical approaches adopted in the book using data from corpora, interviews, and surveys. The other noteworthy aspect of the book is the inclusion of the analyses of many under-researched genre texts like journal descriptions, reviewers’ comments, and editorial letters, which provide fresh and fascinating insights into the mechanism of academic publishing. Pedagogical advice is also very useful for EAP and ERPP courses.

In the present English-dominant era, ‘publish or perish’ practices in academia have now become ‘publish in English or perish.’ This book offers an intellectually rich, cogently argued, and practically valuable text, written in a clear and reader-friendly manner. Given its wide-ranging and rich content, it should therefore prove to be an invaluable and authoritative resource for researchers, teachers, and students, who seek to publish and to keep themselves up to date with the latest developments in this exciting and vibrant field of applied linguistics.

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