

# 11 A Reflective Post-Script of Academic Writing in Times of Internationalization, Interdisciplinarity and Multilingualism

Emma Dafouz

COMPLUTENSE UNIVERSITY OF MADRID

As a researcher working in the field of English applied linguistics for nearly thirty years now, academic writing has accompanied me throughout all my professional life. First, as a novice writer learning to accommodate my ideas to the conventions of the academic register, and, later as a lecturer, teaching students how to do the same effectively. However, in the space of time that separates my current students from myself, academic writing practices, pedagogies and research have changed noticeably in order to adjust to the global times. Luckily, such a change is faithfully reflected in this volume, where the different contributions weave a multifaceted landscape of academic writing—a landscape which, as the book accurately shows, is probably more international, interdisciplinary and multilingual than ever before. Against this background, the following lines intend to be a brief and personal reflection of four inter-related challenges that, in my view as a keynote speaker at the 2019 EATAW Conference and as a non-Anglophone scholar, lie ahead academic writing research and pedagogy, two decades into the twenty-first century.

A first challenge, indeed addressed in this timely edited book, concerns the unfolding of teaching and learning paradigms related to “social participation, identity and learner experience” (Hyland, 2012, p. 30). From such a socio-constructivist perspective, the importance of language in the building of knowledge and of disciplinary identity is foregrounded as is too attention to students’ subject knowledge, interests and perceptions. In this light, further research which adopts an ethnographic, participant-oriented and longitudinal approach to the practices surrounding student academic writing, both in class and extramurally, is always welcome. This emic viewpoint will help to unveil the super-diversified profile of our learners, enable us to draw on their theoretical frameworks and their system of beliefs, and ultimately, round our

understanding of such participants, as well as of the texts they produce and the communities they belong to.

A second challenge, closely connected to the first, refers to the growing presence of students in internationalized higher education institutions where English is largely used as the medium of instruction (EMI). In these settings, learners are expected to produce their academic texts in English (usually as a foreign language) but are often not supported in the writing processes. This discrepancy between what is demanded from students and supplied by (content) lecturers is an area that, as I pointed out in my keynote, should be investigated more broadly. Lecturers need to realize that academic writing in EMI is not simply about mastering disciplinary English but also, and perhaps most importantly, about co-constructing disciplinary literacies. In other words, the difficulty, as content-experts largely believe, does not lie exclusively in the native vs. non-native (English) distinction, but also in the novice vs. experienced writer variable. Thus, the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge involves an encounter with a new and dominant literacy which, for the student—but the content lecturer as well—entails a true shift in the epistemological perspectives and literacy practices followed. In this regard, an interdisciplinary view of academic writing in EMI that envisages the close collaboration of content and language experts and, concurrently, provides systemic institutional support needs to be actively fostered. Such cooperation, moreover, has shown to develop more disciplinary-sensitive and self-aware writers who are better able to construct not only appropriate texts but also more robust authorial selves (Wingate, 2015).

The third challenge stems directly from the second above, as it addresses how to counterbalance the increasing presence of EMI programs in (higher) education with the use and value of other natural languages. While in the oral mode a shift to acknowledging a more multilingual approach to teaching and learning has gradually gained space with the construct of translanguaging (see García & Wei, 2014) and with the view of translanguaging practices as episodes for pedagogical scaffolding and learning (see Paulsrud et al., 2021), in the case of academic writing the orthodoxy seems to be mainly monolingual (i.e., English-only). There are, however, recent moves that view languages in a much more dynamic and multilingual fashion, whereby the mixing of multilingual repertoires in academic settings is envisaged as an opportunity to broaden or deepen knowledge rather than as a source of interference (see for e.g., Palfreyman & van Der Walt, 2017). In this sense, a challenging task for researchers and practitioners will be to examine how multilingual written practices, ranging from informal student use of different languages, to pedagogical, institutional or disciplinary strategies leveraging multilingual

resources, can be used to support learners and lecturers in the construction of their respective pluriliteracies (see Meyer et al., 2018). In doing so, a fourth challenge will be to explore which extant rhetorical models will be prioritized, discarded, or perhaps which new models will emerge as a result of academic writing in English taking place increasingly beyond non-Anglophone settings. Thus, research, into the intersecting or blended academic norms that learners have been found to produce in EMI and multilingual scenarios, and which combine national rhetorical models with Anglo-Saxon or Western patterns (see Brown, 2017) will be another interesting source of inquiry.

To close this short reflection, and as stated at the beginning of this piece, research, practice and pedagogies in academic writing have indeed come a long way to adjust to this new globally connected and growing digitalized world. In this setting, Gustafsson's and Eriksson's topical edited volume is the living proof that truly exciting and innovative studies—which address how international, interdisciplinary and multilingual experiences impact academic writing—are conducted across the four corners of the world. I am confident that the diverse cases portrayed in this book will inspire further research and engage participants from different disciplinary areas in unearthing other uncharted areas of academic writing.

## References

- Brown, H. (2017). Cooperation and collaboration in undergraduate EMI: Adapting EAP to the emergence of blended academic norms and practices in a Japanese university. In J. Valcke & R. Wilkinson (Eds.), *Integrating content and language in higher education: Perspectives on professional practice* (pp. 151-166). Peter Lang.
- García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging*. Palgrave Macmillan UK. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137385765>
- Hyland, K. (2012). “The past is the future with the lights on”: Reflections on AELFE's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. *Ibérica*, 24, 29-42.
- Meyer, O., Imhof, M., Coyle, D., & Banerjee, M. (2018). Positive learning and pluriliteracies. In O. Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia, G. Wittum, & A. Dengel (Eds.), *Positive learning in the age of information* (pp. 235-265). Springer.
- Palfreyman, D., & Van der Walt, C. (Eds.). (2017). *Academic biliteracies: Multilingual repertoires in higher education*. Multilingual Matters.
- Paulsrud, B., Tian, Z., & Toth, J. (Eds.). (2021). *English-medium instruction and translanguaging*. Multilingual Matters.
- Wingate, U. (2015). *Academic literacy and student diversity*. Multilingual Matters.