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Antony Hoyte-West

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland

antony.hoyte.west@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4410-6520

Per Ardua ad Astra? Some Early-career Reflections on Academic Writing for Publication

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Throughout the world, scholarly publications have assumed significant importance in performance and quality evaluations of higher education institutions across many national systems. Though criteria differ between countries, external and internal factors can lead to rewards but also

challenges, particularly for those newcomers to academia writing for academic publication. As I reviewed in the previous issue of this journal (Hoyte-West, 2022), the edited volume entitled *Scholarly Publication Trajectories of Early-career Scholars: Insider Perspectives* (Habibi, & Burgess, 2021) outlines several case studies written by early-career scholars from an array of different countries, providing an illuminating overview of the challenges and pitfalls faced by many new scholars in today's professional environment.

As an early-career scholar myself, my own research interests are broadly interdisciplinary, which reflects and is informed by my academic and professional background in modern languages, translation, and social sciences. I work mostly at the interface of translation studies, multilingualism, and language policy, but have also published occasionally in other fields too. To date, my scholarly output consists of a range of publications, several of which are indexed in international databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. These vary from articles in peer-reviewed journals, chapters in edited volumes, and book reviews to short pieces for professional magazines and invited guest posts for blogs.

As a native speaker of English, I am aware of the advantages this can bring for a career in contemporary global academia, given that English is the language that dominates international journals, major conferences, and applications for important grants. However, learning other languages to a professional level, as well as studying and working in other countries, has meant that I have had an insight into some of the challenges faced by colleagues working with English as their second or additional language.

With my broad and interdisciplinary research interests, finding appropriate venues for publication can take considerable time. To this end, I use the search function on indexes such as Scopus, the Clarivate Web of Science Master Journal List, or the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), with the aim of finding suitable venues. Once I have identified a journal, I look for guidelines regarding the format, length, and type of the publication. I also take into account information regarding author copyright, the estimated time for review and publication, as well as access opportunities. One additional factor in my decision-making process is the belief that each manuscript has

its own suitable venue. Sometimes, for example, this may be response to call for papers for a special issue of a journal, or perhaps an invitation from a colleague to contribute to an upcoming publication.

As for the review process, it is key to note – especially for early-career scholars, who may need these publications for applications and promotions – that time and patience are necessary, and each journal is unique in this regard. Sometimes changes may be requested, deadlines may be shifted, and sometimes the manuscript may even be rejected at various stages of the process. At times, the feedback after the review process can be very helpful; at other times, though, it can seem arbitrary or even highly critical. One thing to highlight, however, is that there may be many reasons why a manuscript is rejected or receives negative reviews, and these do not necessarily have to do with the quality of the submission. For example, a given journal – and especially ones listed in prestigious international indexes – may receive many potential submissions, or a manuscript may simply not be a good fit for that particular publication venue at that time. On several occasions, a rejected manuscript has been later accepted and published elsewhere, sometimes with only minimal changes to its content.

In terms of ‘writing differently,’ the topic of this thematic issue, there is a clear need to communicate knowledge in clear and effective ways. With so much research conducted at the interface of disciplines, there is also a need to ensure that findings remain accessible to scholars who may be approaching the topic from different thematic and disciplinary perspectives. However, in order to publish in relevant outlets, there is still a general need to adhere to relevant norms of publication style, format, and appearance. These are often espoused by leading journals in a particular field and thus remain of strong importance to all those who seek to publish there.

As exemplified by recent developments, ways of ‘writing differently’ are also starting to influence how academic writing is done and transmitted, moving beyond different formats and structures to include interactive online and even video-based publications. In addition, work is also being done in different media to make it more accessible, attractive, and cutting-edge to the wider scholarly community. Some exciting examples from linguistics and

translation studies include, for example, the recent 2021 special issue of the well-known Brazilian translation studies journal *Cadernos de Tradução*, which featured articles comprising videos in Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) with accompanying written texts in Portuguese. In addition, *Linguistic Minorities in Europe Online*, a peer-reviewed multimodal resource from the leading academic publisher De Gruyter, provides a veritable treasury of relevant multimedia on minority languages compiled and created by a range of international experts.

Indeed, as these two examples demonstrate, it is clear that over the next few years novel ways of presenting and disseminating academic research will continue to become ever more important. As researchers seeking to publish our findings, it means that we will have to adapt our writing styles and methods of communication to keep up with these technological, societal, and cultural advances. As such, not solely as scholars but also as individuals, it ensures that we will need to remain current with all the myriad ways of producing and consuming information in the modern age.

References

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