

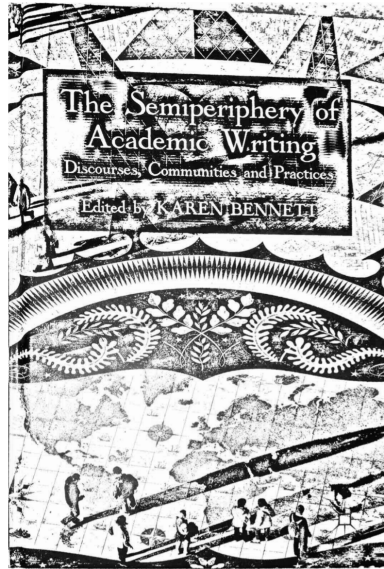
Book reviews

The Semiperiphery of Academic Writing: Discourses, Communities and Practices

Karen Bennett (Ed.), 2014, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, xiv + 282 pp. ISBN 978-1-137-35118-0

How does your scientific writing reflect normative discourses and epistemologies? How do your editing, translation and/or adjudication of scientific writing influence other scientists' writing? This comprehensive, well-written volume encourages the reader to consider such questions, and adds to the growing body of literature on academic/scientific writing, discourse, and globalisation (Alastrué & Pérez-Llantada, 2015; Hyland, 2015; Lillis & Curry, 2010; Montgomery, 2013). The case studies within describe and discuss academic writing from locations of knowledge production lying economically and geographically between the centre and the periphery (henceforth the semiperiphery). In the introduction, Bennett successfully makes the case for semiperiphery as an heuristic for conceptualising knowledge production across particular geolinguistic regions. The subsequent contributions highlight the complex and, at times, contradictory responses of semiperipheral scholars from southern and eastern Europe to the centripetal pull of Anglo-dominant discourses and practices.

The first section, *Discourses in Tension*, includes contributions that highlight the tensions between Anglophone positivist, empiricist, normative discourse practices and those from semiperipheral scholars employing non-standard rhetorics emanating from different national or disciplinary epistemological and discourse traditions. The second section, *Communities in Conflict*, describes individual scholars' responses to the pressures associated with expectations for publishing in prestigious, "international" (almost always English-language) journals at a greater and greater rate. Noteworthy in these sections are studies investigating semiperipheral scholars' experiences with English academic writing in the Czech Republic (Dontcheva-Navratilova), Poland (Gonerko-Frej) and Romania (Bardi & Muresan), where the authors recommend varying models of writing pedagogy focused more acutely on the context-specific needs of semiperiphery scholars. The idea of advocating for academic writing instruction pedagogy that takes into greater consideration the diversity of discourse practices of those using English as a lingua franca in academic settings (ELFA) is encouraging (see also Corcoran & Englander, 2016; Mauranen, Perez-Llantada & Swales, 2010; Mauranen, 2012). The application of this idea to scientific journal policy and practice may offer significant gains. Flexible editorial policy at scientific journals that welcomes and supports more diverse ELFA



discourse practices, for example, could arguably affect systemic change aimed at greater equity and diversity in scientific publishing at a higher rate than pedagogy alone.

The third and final section, *Publication Practices* — perhaps the most interesting for scientific journal editors — outlines the flow of scientific research via publication in semiperipheral spaces across eastern Europe. Two contributions stand out in this section: First, Bojana Petrić describes how and why English has been adopted as the language of publication by several Serbian medical journals. Her description of the use of English as “a translocal phenomenon” (p206) in these semiperiphery journals

is indicative of a growing global trend (see Lillis & Curry, 2010). She rightly questions whether the adoption of English is a sign of oppression or, rather, empowerment through appropriation. Next, Malgorzata Sokół describes the rise of weblogs as an “academic genre in the making...meeting the evolving needs and expectations of academics who increasingly participate in online environments” (p223). Sokół's suggestion of web-based, open access channels of academic exchange allowing for alternative discourses is exciting. However, the overwhelming pressure on (semiperipheral) scholars to publish work in more traditional journals to meet institutional expectations begs the question of whether such alternatives would be embraced and/or validated given the widespread entrenchment of particular scholarly evaluation metrics (see Burgess, this volume; Englander & Uzuner-Smith, 2013).

When considering the diminishing diversity of global academic epistemologies and discourses, Bennett at times strikes sombre tones, lamenting the minimal role individual scholars can play in defending disciplinary discourses from “academic hegemony of global proportions” (p36). One of the obvious implications of centripetal global pressures is that multilingual scholars in semiperipheral regions are increasingly dependent upon translators and editors when writing for publication. Bennett argues that such literacy brokers and gatekeepers potentially act as centripetal forces when helping semiperipheral scholars meet the discursive expectations of writing research for publication, promoting and perpetuating a normative model of English scientific discourse and epistemology (see also Hamel, 2013; Pérez-Llantada, 2012). This important point requires introspection on the part of all those involved in the construction and dissemination of scientific knowledge.

Bennett also strikes hopeful notes for those wary of the increasing hegemony and homogenisation of Anglo-dominant, centre discourses. She lauds contributions in this edited volume that eloquently demonstrate critical reflection among individuals and groups responsible for enacting policy and pedagogy in semiperiphery contexts. Whether such reflection is sufficient to stem the flow of centre-dominant discourse norms — or whether stemming this flow is even of interest to global scholars who are often focused on the challenges of simply meeting the norms of their respective disciplinary discourse communities (see Bardi & Muresan, this volume) — are open questions the reader is left to consider.

This timely, important, yet somewhat pricey book will be invaluable for many involved in the production, revision, instruction and adjudication of scientific research and writing. It should serve as a clear call for increased awareness, reflection on and explicit discussion of the global politics and practices of scientific knowledge production in an increasingly globalised world.

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Scientific Style and Format: The CSE manual for authors, editors, and publishers, 8th edition

Council of Science Editors (CSE), \$70.00, Online subscription \$50 per year for individuals; ISBN: 9780226116495; Published May 2014

Note: The 8th edition of *Scientific Style and Format* is the first to be available through an on-line subscription as well as a print edition. The fully searchable online version has additional features such as the Chicago Manual of Style Online Forum and the Chicago Style Q&A. However, this review concerns the print edition only.

Scientific Style and Format has been updated to include citation protocols for a range of online sources and new developments in copyright law such as Creative Commons. As an editor, I am delighted to have an authoritative source on these aspects to consult and cite. Technologies related to scientific research publication have also been updated, along with style aspects in a range of fields. Unfortunately, I could not find the updated discussion on fraud and plagiarism mentioned on the sleeve and in the promotional material — and it is not listed in the index or in the section headings (another argument in favour of the searchable online version).

Although not new to this edition, the unequivocal stylistic recommendations, such as those for writing SI units, are in themselves worth the price of the book. Other style manuals tend to be rather ambiguous in presenting such information. Moreover, for editors such as me who work in biomedical-related publishing, the chapters with clear protocols and abbreviations for drugs, pharmacokinetics and genetics are very clear and helpful.

One of main strengths of *Scientific Style and Format* is its broad coverage of scientific conventions. My own practice as a biomedical editor has become more specialised over the years, but, due to the increasingly multidisciplinary nature of biomedical research, I have also had to take more and more conventions into account. For instance, I work with a medical oncology group that is involved with molecular imaging using a range of spectra and scanning methods. As a result, the conventions on electromagnetics and subatomic particles have become much more relevant. This broad coverage is useful not only to editors, but also to participants in multi-disciplinary consortia or their peer reviewers.

Other strengths of this standard reference work include the concise chapters on publishing fundamentals and general scientific style conventions. These are well worth reading on their own, and not just for reference purposes. They could even provide an excellent introduction for a scientific writing course.

One quibble I have with *Scientific Style and Format* concerns its assumption of a US English environment. To be fair, this applies to other style guides as well, which are falling increasingly out of step with a world in which most readers and writers of scientific English are non-natives. *Scientific Style and Format*

does address international English in terms of grammatical and syntactical problems, but not in terms of style, at least not explicitly. This is increasingly problematic because US English style protocols on punctuation, capitalization, academic degrees and many other issues are certainly not self-evident in much of the world. This is relevant not only to writers and editors in the UK, but also those in countries in continental Europe, Asia and Africa, which are rapidly developing their own “Englishes”.

Finally, I understand that indexing has become something of a lost art in the age of electronic search engines and

so-called automatic indexing, but the index in the print edition of *Scientific Style and Format* is rather inadequate for a reference book.

All in all, whether you choose the electronic or print version, *Scientific Style and Format* is an essential reference work for all scientific copy editors.

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On a brighter Sunday morning after a delightful evening of local cuisine at Brasserie Les Haras in Strasbourg, attendees chose between sessions on managing cases of misconduct, or peer review and research integrity.

Mirjam Curno moderated the first of the split sessions, on managing cases of misconduct. Christiaan Sterken navigated the delicate art of whistleblowing, and Elizabeth Moylan discussed the navigation of ethical cases, from the role of publishers to collaboration between editors.

A session on research on peer review and research integrity highlighted some of the work being done by some of those involved in the PEERE initiative, a 4-year EU-funded research programme that aims for a deeper understanding of peer review. Flaminio Squazzoni described a simulation model of peer review that allows testing of assumptions relating to open/closed peer review and the number and status of peer reviewers. Bahar Mehmani introduced Elsevier’s reviewer recognition platform, which allows peer reviewers to collect and display activity in their own personal profile, and allows researchers to sign up to be peer reviewers. Bahar also described two pilot studies in Elsevier journals: publishing peer review reports alongside published articles, and a cross-review system that engages peer reviewers in a forum to discuss cases of conflicting recommendations. Michael Willis presented the findings of Wiley’s peer review survey. In general, satisfaction with peer review and views on its effectiveness had not changed significantly compared with previous surveys, but there is a huge desire for more training. The survey also hinted that increasing the involvement of early-career researchers and those from less well represented regions could help with the shortage of peer reviewers.



Ana Marušić, EASE President

To end the session, Ana Marušić described an ongoing systematic review of qualitative studies of peer review and motivations.

In the final session of Sunday morning, Al Weigel began by describing the positive impact that a certification programme can



Much discussion took place around the posters in the foyer

have in validating the activities of editors and promote high standards of integrity. David Moher spoke about ensuring journal editors work with a competency that is reliable, and suggested Editors be prepared to challenge and influence research practice by insisting on the highest standards. In a somewhat provocative presentation, Donald Samulack advocated for increased awareness and resources to tackle an emerging black market of science. He gave examples of emerging unethical, deceptive and predatory practices which threaten to undermine the integrity of research publishing.

Rounding off the conference, the final plenary was given by Boris Barbour, who revisited the themes of integrity and misconduct from backstage at PubPeer. Barbour gave an overview of some of the forms of misconduct apparent in science and community response and the disincentives researchers are faced with when it comes to avoiding, reporting or correcting misconduct. Barbour suggested that a less punitive culture could promote a greater willingness for self-regulation and correction.

A fantastic selection of posters was submitted for display; the winners are featured on page 65.

Bookending the conference, a number of optional workshops took place on Friday and Monday, including statistics for editors with Christopher Palmer, a COPE workshop with Mirjam Curno, and How to be a successful journal editor with Pippa Smart.

The 14th General assembly will take place in Bucharest, Romania, in 2018. We look forward to seeing you there.

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