Editorial

Demystifying Written Academic Discourse Through Structured Support Approaches

The *Journal of Academic Writing* endeavours to support EATAW members in their professional development and provide them with reading experiences that might inform their practice. We share with our contributors a mission to develop writing support and our conversation about it. The contributions to the JoAW Winter issue 2024 demonstrate this community effort well. The shared ground can perhaps be articulated as academic writing being a cornerstone of higher education, yet for many students, it feels like an intimidating maze of rules and expectations. While the ability to write effectively is essential for success, the conventions of academic discourse often remain hidden or unclear. So, how can we as educators help students navigate this complex terrain and find their voice within scholarly conversations?

Supporting the development of academic writing and writing in the academy requires a large toolbox and a varied set of approaches for macro-level challenges as well as working at the level of individual texts and sentences. Both at the macro-level and at the micro-level, we also constantly need to be able to adapt these tools to our respective contexts and student profiles. As practitioners, we have our strengths and weaknesses as well as our specific foci in our work. The common denominator for the contributions in the Winter issue is that they all help build the toolbox while also pointing to our need to adapt to contextual, cultural, or disciplinary contexts.

This issue brings together two articles, a teaching practice paper and a book review that explore practical, structured approaches to writing instruction, shedding light on how we can make academic writing more transparent and accessible to our students and to disciplinary faculty. One key approach to overcoming the mysteries of academic writing is fostering confidence among writers. **McLellan, Smith, Hardy, Murray, and Thow** explore this aspect of writing support as they offer us the Writing Meeting Framework (WMF) with self-efficacy development as a central component. Their article, 'Developing Early Career Researchers' Self-efficacy for Academic Writing', outlines the framework as a structured, collaborative approach that emphasizes realistic goal-setting and actionable feedback. The study investigates the impact of the WMF on developing writing self-efficacy among postgraduate researchers and early career researchers. The findings highlight the importance of self-efficacy in overcoming writing challenges and maintaining productivity, especially under the pressures of academic publishing. The study also suggests that the WMF can be integrated into various academic settings, such as doctoral training programmes and writing retreats, to support ongoing development of writing self-efficacy. Through the creation of supportive peer networks, WMF can help students, and teachers, to cultivate a sense of community and agency. This approach dismantles the mystique surrounding the writing process, making it more accessible and manageable. However, as higher education becomes increasingly diverse, the question arises: how should we adapt these frameworks to meet the needs of multilingual, first-generation, and other underserved student populations?

The WMF in McLellan *et al.* offers a macro-structural peer-organised form of writing support. The conversations between peers can take any orientation and focus. What **Hanks, Eckstein, Rawlins, Briggs, and Chun** do in their article, 'Authorial Voice in Academic Articles: A Corpus-Based Analysis of Citation Types and Citation Presentation across Disciplines', is to look at one of the more challenging areas of academic writing as discipline-specific. The study investigates how citation types (integral and non-integral) and citation presentations (direct quotes, summaries, generalisations) contribute to authorial voice in academic writing across six

disciplines: applied linguistics, biology, history, philosophy, physics, and political science. Their findings have important implications for educators and material developers and suggest that understanding and teaching discipline-specific citation practices can help students develop a more authoritative academic voice. In other words, building confidence is not only about providing structure but also about providing analyses of, or frameworks for, disciplinary discourse that students can do themselves or benefit from using. Hanks *et al.* report on a useful study of citation practices, and show, for example, that they are not just technical conventions— they are key to shaping authorial voice and establishing credibility within a field. By making citation a focus of instruction, educators can help students decode these often-unspoken disciplinary rules and participate more confidently in scholarly dialogues. While Hanks *et al.* provide a route to increased self-efficacy for a specific dimension of academic writing, we need to ask ourselves how we can collaborate with disciplinary faculty to provide consistent, coherent guidance, especially as students need to adapt these norms across various disciplines and contexts.

Perhaps we might label citation practices as a meso-level dimension of academic writing, and one that seems to be somewhat of a threshold concept for student writers. **Sherma's** teaching practice paper, 'Teaching Students How to Tame the Warrant with the Toulmin Model in EFL/ESL Settings', provides an example at the micro-level. Its focus is on another critical aspect of academic writing instruction and academic discourse: developing students' argumentation skills. Sherma discusses and exemplifies Toulmin's model of argumentation, particularly the concept of the 'warrant', and offers practical tips for teaching this concept, including the use of examples and exercises to help students grasp the idea. The teaching practice advocated provides a valuable framework for teaching students how to connect evidence to claims effectively. Sherma concludes by discussing the implications of teaching warrants, noting that it can enhance students' critical thinking, logical reasoning, and ability to structure arguments effectively. This raises an important consideration: how can educators make such abstract concepts accessible to all students without simplifying the concepts? One potential solution lies in the use of iterative, formative assessments, which can reinforce these skills over time and offer students the opportunity to refine their argumentative strategies. However, we also advise readers to go back to the Writing Meeting Framework that McLellan *et al.* present, as a focus on argumentation is indeed a powerful aspect of such peer conversations.

For multilingual learners, the complexities of academic discourse are further compounded by linguistic and cultural barriers. In their book review of *Research methods in the study of L2 writing processes* (2023), edited by Rosa M. Manchón and Julio Roca de Larios, **Mamadiyeva and Nurmukhamedov** highlight how research into L2 writing processes emphasises the value of diverse instruments and data triangulation in understanding these challenges. Such research not only illuminates the specific hurdles faced by L2 writers but also offers actionable strategies for educators to support their development. These strategies prompt a critical reflection for us all: are we fully leveraging research insights to design interventions that meet the needs of multilingual learners and are we, when we have the opportunity, designing appropriate degree projects for our students? Moreover, as the field increasingly incorporates data-driven approaches, how can writing programmes balance empirical rigour with the everyday demands of teaching?

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