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Review of *What is Good Academic Writing? Insights into Discipline-Specific Student Writing*

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This edited volume was the first in the Bloomsbury series New Perspectives in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and it presents a collection of small-scale research projects conducted by practitioners within the context of the redesign of EAP provision at one UK university. It is situated within the current consensus that English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) is to be preferred to English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) provision, and with reference to the institutional support that enabled the work of EAP practitioners (PEAPs) to be embedded in academic departments at this university. The editors note that this reorganisation has allowed some PEAPs to escape the predicament of precarious employment through their redeployment to providing year-round in-sessional writing support. The project has also created opportunities for PEAPs to engage in practitioner-led scholarship which enables them to "work to their potential" (p. 1) and to build a research profile. The editors express the hope that this might serve as a model for how PEAPs can be supported to engage in scholarship.

Each of the research projects documented in the collection was required to look at student-written texts and to take account of evaluations of student writing by lecturers in the disciplines. The editors see the mission of EAP as being to provide "what students understandably want: the ability to produce good, or better yet, 'excellent' academic writing" (p. 19). Their introduction and opening chapter acknowledge the possibility that academic genres may be flexible and evolving; they mention the Academic Literacies view of language as social practice within the power/authority dynamics of institutions and disciplines; and they refer briefly to Tardy's work on genre-bending and how it is received. However, the overriding message is that "good academic writing" is to be achieved by training students to write in conformity with genre norms and with their lecturers' expectations. As Webster (Ch. 2) puts it, citing Hyland: "student academic writing will be most successful when it adheres to the conventions accepted by the academic community" (p. 32). This begs the question: what is meant by "good" or "successful"? A conception of "successful" as meaning only "gets a high grade" is a very impoverished one, especially in the context of (higher) education. Many other interpretations of "successful" student writing are possible: when students articulate new understanding, or move into their zone of proximal development, or discover through the work of writing what it is they want to say, or when they learn something in the process.

Deference is shown throughout these studies to subject lecturers' assessment of student writing. This reflects the differing status of PEAPs and lecturers in the disciplines within the academic hierarchy, neatly captured in Raimes' well-known phrase "butler stance". Maxwell

(Ch. 3) explores the validity of this assessment though a thoughtful and detailed analysis of "clarity", a word that features prominently both in assessment criteria and in tutor feedback. What emerges, unsurprisingly, is that tutors cannot always articulate clearly what they mean by "clarity". Drawing on Turner's discussion of the normative framing of language as "invisible" or "transparent" in academic writing, Maxwell concludes that "clarity" is a multi-faceted concept, and one which blurs the boundary between language and content.

The stance taken on writing in this volume is also revealed in the editors' choice of the words "produce … writing" (p. 19). A conception of writing as being primarily about the finished text/product is limited. It excludes, for example: agents (teachers, learners, other stakeholders and literacy brokers) and how they may be transformed through the labour of writing; the cognitive tasks and activities that constitute the writing process; the modalities and physical contexts of learning and an understanding of writing as material labour (see Tusting et al., 2019). This emphasis on disembodied textual inputs and outputs mirrors a wider tendency in the field of EAP to privilege the study of discourse (as seen, for example, in the typed of studies typically published in the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*). An exclusive focus on finished texts is also enabled by the paradigms that have become dominant in the field of EAP: Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and the Sydney School of Genre Analysis. These same paradigms were explicitly used to frame the research projects in this volume (p. 18), with Bowman's analysis of Academic Reflective Writing in Dentistry (Ch. 5) being the most thorough and rigorous application of genre theory tools.

The tacit assumptions in this model of writing are questionable: how stable are genres, how consistent are they across disciplines, and how able are learners to identify the genre of a text? Contributors to this volume acknowledge that the stability of genres may vary widely from discipline to discipline: much scientific writing does conform to the familiar IMRD pattern for reporting empirical research; writing in the creative disciplines is often characterised by generic fluidity, ambiguity and a tolerance of uncertainty. It is notable that many of the chapters focus on disciplines that are un- or under-represented in the literature on disciplinary writing, some of which could be considered to be emergent newcomers to academia: Digital Media Studies (Ch. 2); Design (Ch. 3); Musicology (Ch. 4); Fine Art (Ch. 6).

Nelson and Brunetto's discussion of writing in Linguistics (Ch. 7) suggests that the genres favoured by a discipline may represent how the disciplinary community wishes to situate itself in the academy – in this case, to align Pure/Theoretical Linguistics with the "hard" sciences. However, little attention is given here to studies that explore ongoing processes of genre evolution, including digital and multi-modal texts. By contrast, for example, Solli and Muir's (2021) reflection on supporting doctoral writers is situated against the background of genre-shifts in the conventions for theses, in particular theses by publication. Other recent work on the transformation of conventions in doctoral writing is reported in Badenhorst et al. (2021).

Another important perspective which is not leveraged in this volume is that of Critical (EAP) Pedagogy. Is the only valid goal of EAP writing instruction the pragmatic one of enabling learners to conform to and reproduce genre norms, or should academic conventions be, as Ferreira suggests (citing Canagajarah, 2002), "resources for [students'] agency… for strategic resistance using non-canonical forms of discourse" (Ferreira, 2021: 77)? Burland et al.'s investigation of the features most valued by Musicology lecturers (Ch. 4) suggests that, in this field at least, originality and creativity are prized, together with the usual hard-to-pin-down suspects: criticality, argumentation and voice. Likewise, Montgomery's discussion of Fine Art dissertations (Ch. 6) finds that subject tutors value novelty, creativity, and originality

("refreshing" is a word of high praise) and may also be open to student experimentation with genre conventions.

Strangely lacking too from this collection is any detailed attention to agency or to what happens to and in writers as they labour to "produce" writing and find their voice within their academic community of practice. Bowman's preamble to her study (Ch. 5) of Academic Reflective Writing in Dentistry gives some attention to the power dynamics that operate as students develop their professional identity through writing. However, this is presented as background rather than as central to the writing process. This is surprising, given the strong tradition within the study of professional training in healthcare of Ann Wilcock's model of doing, being, becoming and belonging. By contrast, Solli and Muir (2021) argue that identity shift is almost unavoidable in the process of writing a PhD thesis. They draw on Bakhtin's concept of "addressivity" to argue that becoming rhetorical involves developing the capacity to imagine the intended scholarly audience and, in a sense, to become that audience. This draws attention to the nature of writing as a social, dialogic process, which may involve multiple agents. As part of their research into writers' identity change, Solli and Muir (2021) invited doctoral writers to create a "communities plot": a graphic representation of the networks of importance to them during the writing process.

The chapters in this book, however, confine themselves to a duo of agents: the lone student writer and subject lecturer/assessor. The voice of the latter is most frequently heard. The focus on the end product of students' writing occludes the ways in which the writing process may involve multiple agents. In the often anxious process of trying to make their writing conform to linguistic and genre norms, student writers, particularly international students, resort frequently to literacy brokers. Literacy brokering is defined as "third party intervention in students' creation of academic texts" by friends, family or fee-charging services such as proof-readers, ghost writers or essay mills" (Conrad, 2021, pp. 28-30). Literacy brokering has the goal of making the student's writing more "native-speaker-like" and, as Turner (2018) would argue, more transparent or invisible. However, some scholars now question the need for this conformity, and advocate greater acceptance of academic writing that reflects the linguistic and cultural background of the writer (see, for example, Broido & Rubin, 2020).

Bruce's afterword to this collection of chapters argues that the researchers have taken an "emic" (insider) approach. While these research projects have resulted in insights into how subject lecturers assess student writing in various disciplines, they have offered few insights into the student writers' experience, practices or identity. Consequently, this book has little to say about pedagogies for academic writing. The knowledge toolkit of the PEAP is envisaged as expanding to include only ever more refined ways of analysing texts, rather than ways to foster student writers' development, their shifting identities and their emergent voices.

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