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How Textual Production Processes Shape English Language Teaching Research Discourse

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Abstract

This paper discusses the importance of researching textual production processes in writing for academic publication in language teaching research by outlining how two papers were shaped by the journal submission and review process. Using a critical discourse analysis lens and text history analysis, the authors' difficulties in interpreting reviewer comments are illustrated along with how their manuscripts were transformed from initially pedagogy-focused texts to more research-focused at publication. The implications of this analysis for understanding authors' publishing practices and the persistent, problematic teaching-research divide in the language teaching field are discussed. Further, the research methods used demonstrate the importance of examining the processes underlying textual production.

Keywords: Text histories, writing for publication, teaching-research divide, critical discourse analysis (CDA), text history analysis

1. Introduction

This investigation explores how a perennial issue in the second language teaching field, the problematic divide between teaching and research (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014; Vodopija-Krstanović & Marinac, 2019), is perpetuated by examining how two English language teaching research manuscripts are transformed in their trajectories toward publication. While investigations into writing for academic publication have tended to analyze sets of texts to describe their common rhetorical patterns (Moreno & Swales, 2018; Swales, 2000), here I demonstrate how such analysis obscures the production processes that shape them before publication. I argue for the value of insights gained through "text histories" (Lillis & Curry, 2006, p. 9) analysis, which examines multiple versions of manuscripts and their correspondence before publication (Curry & Lillis, 2019). By analyzing the processes behind how texts are produced, the ways that different competing ideologies are integrated into published texts can be explored, perspectives that are otherwise invisible (Lillis & Curry, 2010). In this case, how teachers' voices and interests are suppressed in preference to research-oriented texts can be better understood through exploring these processes of textual production, thereby casting light on how the teaching-research divide is perpetuated in the second language teaching field. Specifically, the research question addressed is: What does examining the correspondence of writing for academic publication reveal about the ideologies embedded in manuscripts published in the second language teaching field?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Teaching-Research Gap in Language Teaching

The potential benefits of language teachers investigating and reporting on their classroom practice, often framed as “action research” (Burns, 2010, p. 2), have been lauded for some time (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Such studies have explored curriculum innovations such as the implementation of “blended synchronous teaching and learning” (Li et al., 2022, p. 211). These investigations have been characterized as having been published in “periphery journals” (Cárdenas & Rainey, 2017, p. 158) seeking to disseminate teacher classroom research. However, penetration of teacher research into international indexed journals has been described as inadequate, with the “problematic gap between theory/research on the one hand and classroom practice on the other” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014, p. xi) in English language teaching and learning generally persisting and perhaps widening (Garton & Richards, 2015). However, referring to this gap as a problematic characteristic of the discourse of the profession may mask how the processes of textual production that constitute it shape what is and can be published. Thus, it is important to explore the field’s textual production processes to better understand what ideologies these may be perpetuating (Curry & Lillis, 2019; Lillis & Curry, 2010).

2.2 Investigations of the Features of Published Texts

As the examination of publication trajectories has its roots in research analyzing published texts, it is first necessary to review such investigations, particularly genre analysis (Swales, 1990). Genre analysis research largely derives from Swales’ (1990) seminal work, which analyzes texts’ common discursive features for patterns “for pedagogical purposes” (Moreno & Swales, 2018, p. 40). It has been used to examine the structural characteristics of different genres within writing for academic publication, such as research articles (Gledhill, 2000; Lim, 2010; Swales, 1987) and to interrogate the functions of personal pronoun use in academic research articles (Harwood, 2005a, 2005b). Additionally, differences between “research paradigms” (Kwan et al., 2012, p. 188), between different languages (Loi, 2010; Martín, 2003; Martín & León Pérez, 2014; Soler, 2011), and between author language backgrounds (Jaroongkhongdach et al., 2012; Qanbari et al., 2014) have been studied. In addition to research articles, Swales (1993) notes that the “cycles of inquiry, submission, review, revision, editing and so forth” (p. 693) are also of interest. Thus, investigators have also examined the discourse of authors’ letters to editors (Swales, 1996), editors’ letters to authors (Flowerdew & Dudley-Evans, 2002), and reviewers’ evaluations of manuscripts (Fortanet, 2008; Kourilova, 1998).

While genre analysis describes textual features, such as the proportions of criticisms and compliments in reviews (Kourilova, 1998), research questions have been raised that genre analysis methods are not equipped to answer. Specifically, questions concerning the co-constructed nature of published academic texts and the negotiated brokering behind such co-construction require analytical tools beyond what genre analysis offers. Analyzing the discourse of manuscript evaluation and review has shown that in many fields, it is rare to accept manuscripts following review without revision (Belcher, 2007). Thus, there is interest in how published texts are shaped by the review and revision process, which is not feasible to investigate through analyzing sets of texts alone. This is partly because genre analysis tends to decouple reviewer evaluations from the manuscripts they evaluate, yet reviews are presumably written to effect specific changes to specific

manuscripts. Thus, understanding how reviews and other correspondence instigate changes to manuscripts requires analyzing how they change during the publication process, literature that is reviewed next.

2.3 Research into Processes of Writing for Academic Publication

Investigations into processes underlying textual production are less prolific than genre analysis studies. One such investigation is Lillis and Curry's (2006, 2010, 2015) exploration of the writing for academic publication practices of 50 European scholars. They explore drafting and revising texts toward (or away from) publication, focusing on how they change, including author responses to changes and comments on "rhetorical/knowledge significance" (Lillis & Curry, 2010, p. 89). They critique how global knowledge production is shaped, revealing how sociocultural processes transform published texts.

Other studies, such as Canagarajah and Lee (2014), explore individual manuscript trajectories. They describe an ultimately unsuccessful "non-conventional research" (p. 67) manuscript's review process from the perspectives of a novice postgraduate author (Lee) and the Editor of *TESOL Quarterly* at the time (Canagarajah). They consider the author, editor, and reviewers' competing priorities, including whether to publish the manuscript in the "Forum section" where "articles don't get institutional credit" (Lee's preference) or as a "full-length" (p. 74) article (Canagarajah's preference). Following two rounds of review and revision, Canagarajah decides to "accept pending changes" (p. 84). Lee, after receiving a reviewer's marked-up version of the manuscript, observes, "*I've just been asked to revise one third of my paper*" (italics in original), which the reviewer refers to as, "relatively minor changes" (p. 85). Lee concludes that the reviewer wants her to "take the submission in a direction that was contrary to why I had chosen to write it in the first place" (p. 86). Canagarajah and Lee discuss how the author and brokers' competing priorities ultimately lead to the manuscript not being published.

The insights garnered through such investigations into processes of textual production are not made available through examining published texts alone. This research shows that authors have difficulty understanding manuscript evaluations and that the revision process includes negotiation of which changes are mandatory and which are not (Canagarajah & Lee, 2014; Lillis & Curry, 2010). However, the interpersonal, interactional nature of writing for publication correspondence remains a topic of debate. Specifically, Hyland (2016) suggests that the difficulties scholars from outside the global center face when writing in English are not distinct from the difficulties center scholars face, referring to a "myth of linguistic injustice" (p. 58). Politzer-Ahleset et al. (2016), responding to Hyland, argue that Hyland's view "underestimates the role that linguistic privilege (and its converse, linguistic disadvantage or linguistic injustice) plays in academia" (p. 4). That this issue remains a topic of debate suggests more empirical evidence concerning the difficulties authors face (or, from Hyland's perspective, do not uniquely face) is necessary. Thus, this investigation contributes to understanding production processes underlying writing for academic publication by (1) elucidating the changes individual manuscripts go through in their trajectories toward publication and (2) the implications of these changes for knowledge production within the field of English language education.

3. Methods of Investigation: Examining How Manuscripts Change and their Correspondence

The investigation reported here draws on a larger study into the writing for academic publication practices of 23 Japan-based authors (Muller, 2018), which received Open University Human Research Ethics Committee approval. As ensuring author anonymity is important to conducting ethical research, here identifying information has been removed, and pseudonyms are used. As the investigation explored early career authors' experiences of writing for publication, authors were solicited who self-described as new to writing for academic publication. Authors' language backgrounds included education within and outside Japan, in anglophone and non-anglophone countries. Manuscripts were chosen for analysis according to the completeness of their different versions and correspondence, coverage of the authors' different types of publication, and what writing the authors signaled as important.

Two manuscripts' trajectories provide the core of data discussed here, both written in English. One was an outside-Japan-indexed journal article co-authored by Jason and Alan, who are foreign residents of Japan (MS28). The other was a Japan-based journal article authored by Junpei, who is Japanese (MS1). Jason, Alan, and Junpei all signaled that publication in an "indexed" (Salager-Meyer, 2014, p. 2) "international – outside Japan" (Alan Interview 1) journal was important. Junpei tried to publish his manuscript in an English-indexed journal following rejection by a Japan-based English language journal, ultimately publishing it in a different Japan-based journal. Thus, the data discussed here involves one manuscript successfully submitted to and published in an outside-Japan-indexed journal and one unsuccessfully submitted to such a journal and then published in Japan. As some of the data analyzed is Japanese, I have provided English translations in addition to the original Japanese when discussed here.

How author-broker interaction shaped the texts was examined using critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), which facilitates commentary on the social contexts of textual production by scrutinizing how unequal distribution of power in society shapes what is said. The analysis focused on author and broker perspectives, including social contexts acting on textual production. Sets of correspondence were analyzed to make visible topics of discussion using "close textual analysis" and "social analysis of organizational routines for producing and consuming texts" through examining "discoursal processes [...] of production and consumption" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 9). This facilitated "analyzing sets or clusters of reviews relating to each paper and the consequences of these clusters in uptake" (Lillis & Curry, 2015, p. 130) to examine the "exchange structure" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 153) of the correspondence. This was done through a "text histories" (Lillis & Curry, 2015, p. 132) analysis, which involves tracking different versions of a manuscript and its associated correspondence, such as reviewer reports and correspondence between editors and authors. Text history analysis further involves literacy history (Casanave, 1998) interviews with authors that interrogate their experiences of academic writing, in addition to their orientations toward the texts they are producing and the correspondence they receive from brokers concerning their manuscripts.

Interviews were counted separately from the manuscript correspondence provided for analysis and are referenced as follows: "Author pseudonym Interview #." For example, "Jason Interview 2" indicates that the data referred to comes from the second interview held with Jason. Manuscript correspondence is labeled according to which manuscript version it was associated with and the

medium of interaction, as follows: "Author pseudonym MS# V#Medium." For example, "Junpei MS1 V1Letter" indicates the data referred to comes from a letter associated with the first version of Junpei's manuscript 1, or the first manuscript provided for analysis for this investigation. Similarly, when manuscripts' texts are referred to, they use the following labeling: "Author pseudonym MS# V#" For example, "Junpei MS1 V1" refers to the first version of Junpei's manuscript 1.

4. Findings and Discussion: Examining Text Histories for Processes of Production

Discussion now turns to answering the research question: What does examining the correspondence of writing for academic publication reveal about the ideologies embedded in manuscripts published in the second language teaching field? The prominent "exchange structure" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 153) in the correspondence was author manuscript submission followed by iterations of broker feedback, which initiated (further) author manuscript revision and submission for (further) evaluation. Here, two major findings are shared: authors' difficulties understanding and enacting evaluative feedback as well as the disconnect between authors' pedagogical and journal "broker" (Lillis & Curry, 2006, p. 4) research orientations.

4.1 Author Difficulty Implementing Requested Changes

Authors faced difficulty interpreting what changes were required based on official broker communication. For example, following Jason and Alan's manuscript's first round of review, one reviewer stated, "There are serious issues with the methodology and data analyses that make this paper difficult to recommend for publication," which the editor reiterates in a "note" at the bottom of the response letter (Jason & Alan MS28 V3Letter).

Related to these comments, in the first version of their manuscript submitted to the journal, they wrote, "Recordings [...] were then analyzed to roughly gauge progress over the course of the academic year" (Jason & Alan MS28 V3) regarding the efficacy of their English teaching intervention. One reviewer commented, "'Roughly gauge progress': Why not use test results?" (Jason & Alan MS28 V3Letter). This comment became part of a larger question Jason and Alan had about the negative assessment of their manuscript's "research methodology" (Jason & Alan MS28 V3Letter). As they were uncertain about how to address these criticisms, following the review they consulted an unofficial broker, Jason's colleague. This broker noted that the methodology criticism appeared to indicate that their manuscript did not evidence the changes in student production they claimed and suggested that addressing this required measuring student production using instruments from second language acquisition literature. The broker also provided some references to help them determine what measurements to use, leading Jason to reanalyze their data. In their revised manuscript, a table was added detailing four aspects of their students' language production, the results of which inform their discussion of their teaching intervention. Jason noted that the review and revision process was instrumental to analyzing their data this way, as he only committed to the "work" (Jason Interview 2) of doing the analysis after being convinced it was necessary. Of importance to the discussion here is that, while the reviewer's comment ultimately led to their reanalyzing their data to address the methodology criticism raised, that comment as written did not lead directly to that conclusion. Rather, the unofficial broker's interpretation was instrumental to shaping these revisions.

However, Junpei did not have an unofficial broker to help interpret official broker evaluations when writing and revising his paper. Perhaps because of this, his manuscript's text history shows an ongoing struggle to accommodate reviewers. Further, Junpei appears to have not adequately addressed all (or enough) of the concerns the reviewers raised, as the manuscript was not accepted as a Research Article, which it was originally submitted as, but rather as a Research Note. One example of Junpei's struggle to accommodate reviewer feedback comes from a table with test score information about his participants, along with the following claim in the original version:

Following this statistical data, in this study, differences between these groups are considered as very minimal. (Junpei MS1 V1)

One reviewer challenged this claim, noting a difference in the standard deviation for one of the three groups' standardized test scores and pointing out that Junpei did not account for this, "There was no test for the difference [...] Moreover, the standard deviation of the Control Group appears to be much lower" (Junpei MS1 V1Letter). Junpei tries to address this concern in the manuscript's next version by explaining the difference as 'obvious'; "Although standard deviation of the control group is obviously small [...]" (Junpei MS1 V2). The new reviewer responds, "Why does the author say that 'Although standard deviation of the control group is obviously small [...]'? Why is it so obvious?" (Junpei MS1 V2Letter). After Junpei removes the added sentence, the issue is raised again in the evaluation of this new manuscript version by new reviewers. One reviewer suggests the solution Junpei ultimately implements, using a statistical test to demonstrate the difference in test scores between the different groups, was "not statistically significant" (Junpei MS1 V4):

Reviewer A: [Standardized test] scores are shown [...] However, statistical tests were not conducted [...] The standard deviation of the control group is clearly different. (Junpei MS1 V3Letter)

Junpei adds the sentence, "A one-way ANOVA also showed that the differences of the scores of each group were not statistically significant" (Junpei MS1 V4), which carries through to the final version and appears to resolve this issue. This specific example of struggle suggests Junpei did not understand the initial reviewer's implied suggestion that it was necessary to statistically *test* for *significant* differences until the later reviewer explicitly requested a *statistical* test. Thus, understanding how to action reviewer comments presented difficulty for Junpei, particularly when an explicit request was absent. This suggests that when authors are assessed as having not adequately revised manuscripts, this may indicate that they have misunderstood or misinterpreted feedback rather than reflecting an unwillingness to accommodate broker demands. These findings reflect the findings of Lillis and Curry (2010), who also noted Europe-based authors' difficulties in responding to reviewer evaluations of their manuscripts.

4.2 Author Pedagogical Orientations in Tension with Broker Research Orientations

One of the tensions identified across the sets of correspondence concerns authors writing from a pedagogical orientation while brokers took a research orientation. Specifically, the authors tended to see their writing for publication as a way to improve their teaching practice. As researchers within second or foreign English language teaching and learning have raised this teaching-research disconnect as a prominent issue (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014; Vodopija-Krstanović & Marinac, 2019), exploring how tensions arising from this gap manifested in the manuscripts'

correspondence can illuminate how academic publishing production processes help to perpetuate it.

The authors generally saw their writing for publication as interlinked with their teaching, with Jason and Alan explicitly referring to action research. However, revisions to manuscripts tended to remove classroom teaching-oriented guidance and discussion of classroom activities. In their place, technical detail, definitions of terms, and explanations of analytical instruments and concepts tended to be added. For example, Junpei's Methods section more than doubled in word count, from 761 to 1,640 words. This included an added explanation of the data collection and analysis methods used along with quotations and citations to the literature upon which they were based. Throughout the manuscript's trajectory, reviewers criticized how Junpei conducted the research and reported the investigation. This generally took the form of identifying inadequate or missing explanations, as in one reviewer noting that the explanation of the instructions given to research participants was inadequate:

[...] the instructions given before the first reading and underlining were not clearly explained. (Junpei MS1 V3Letter)

This comment appears to have initiated adding 212 words across three paragraphs describing the task used to collect data, including 103 words of direct quotations and five citations. These changes add to the overall complexity and density of Junpei's Methods section, expanding on technical detail, adding citations, and adding definitions.

Further changes to Junpei's methods section included changes to the vocabulary used to reference his research participants. This changed from an orientation toward their role in the task they completed: "speakers" and "hearer" (Junpei MS1 V1) to their role in the research: "participant" (Junpei MS1 V5). The brokers also evaluated the task's research efficacy; a concern was that it involved interaction between two participants. This meant, "They listen not only to the output but also the partner's English" [アウトプットだけでなく、相手の英語も聞いている], with the consequence that "there is no control of output and input" [アウトプットとインプットの点で統制がとれていない] (V3 Reviewer C). Here the reviewers evaluated the task as a research instrument rather than a learning activity, identifying the use of student pairs as a weakness resulting in insufficient control of language input. Further, these shortcomings are cited by the reviewer, who recommends accepting the manuscript as a Research Note rather than a Research Article. Concerning Jason and Alan's manuscript, what they characterized rather loosely as action research in earlier versions ended up outlining three explicit action research "cycles" (V7) in its final version. The third cycle was exclusively research-oriented because the course had ended, and neither author was teaching at that institution anymore.

The text histories reported here show that the stances brokers take toward authors' texts influence how their work is represented in publication, with initially practice-oriented work shifted through review and revision toward more research-oriented work. This suggests that the issue of teacher research failing to penetrate internationally indexed journals is not only a consequence of teachers' decisions about what and where to publish but also emerges through how manuscripts are shaped in their publication trajectories. Thus, broker stances, and the changes they result in, appear to exacerbate the gap in the field between theory/research and teaching practice identified by Lantolf and Poehner (2014). This could be because teachers may become disenchanted with

writing for publication when faced with official brokers' requirements to focus on research rather than pedagogy. In this instance, through requests to expand on investigative methods (as in Junpei's MS1) or to explain issues of methodology (Jason and Alan's MS28). Authors more interested in research may find themselves more attracted to publishing, so their writing may shift from an initial classroom focus to the research focus expected of published work. What the analysis reported here contributes is a picture of how this gap influenced the authors' writing, offering some insights as to its nature and how it is perpetuated through writing "in disciplines" (Bazerman, 1980, p. 657), in this case, the discipline of English language teaching research. While how these authors' manuscripts were changed differs from previous research, the ideological influence of reviewers on authors' texts was also observed by Lillis and Curry (2010), who described how brokers did not permit the European scholars they investigated to propose new theories but rather only to test theories previously proposed by scholars based in anglophone contexts.

4.2 Author Pedagogical Orientations in Tension with Broker Research Orientations

The issues identified here, detailing the struggles the authors in both text histories faced in understanding and interpreting evaluator comments, point to the importance of examining processes of textual production. Doing this can illustrate how authors successfully navigate such strategies, as in Jason and Alan's case of consulting an unofficial broker about the review feedback they received. Also, the authors' difficulty understanding what changes are necessary to their manuscript, as in Junpei's difficulty understanding that a statistical test was necessary, can be elucidated. This can better meet authors' needs in assisting with writing for academic publication, whether through postgraduate education programs or through the feedback provided to authors by journal brokers. Specifically, postgraduate writing education may need to explicitly focus on strategies for understanding and responding to evaluative writing feedback in professional academic writing. With the increasing metrification of higher education evaluation (Khaltova & Muller, 2022) and the concomitant pressure to publish that comes with it, explicitly helping future authors to understand the processes underlying writing for publication would help to better prepare them for careers in higher education.

Further, this investigation demonstrates how "nondiscursive" (Canagarajah, 1996, p. 436) practices are important to textual production and how language background can play a significant role in how authors navigate these. In Jason and Alan's case, they had easy access to an unofficial broker colleague who was more familiar than them with issues of methodology in research to help them interpret the reviewer feedback they received. According to Jason, this feedback was instrumental in successfully revising their manuscript for publication. On the other hand, Junpei had only limited access to unofficial brokers who could interpret reviewer feedback for him, which meant that even though some of the feedback was in Japanese, his first language, he struggled to make the requested changes. While such a finding is not new, as Curry and Lillis (2010) illustrate how broker networks facilitated publishing among European multilingual scholars, this investigation helps to provide further evidence of its importance to publishing in Jason and Alan's case and the potential consequences of not having access to such support in Junpei's case. Thus, postgraduate education may better support students by emphasizing the importance of such networks and helping students to better understand how to consciously cultivate them.

Finally, how the manuscripts were shaped shows a clear preference for the presentation of research over the discussion of pedagogy in published academic literature, a preference driven by the broker evaluations of the authors' manuscripts. Thus, if language teaching as a field hopes to address the issue of the disconnect between research and practice lamented in its literature (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014; Vodopija-Krstanović & Marinac, 2019), this may require a critical re-examination of its processes of textual production.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest.

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