

# Publishing in academic journals: Issues and challenges for student writers

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Growing pressures worldwide for students to publish early and often

Pressures growing as the diminishing number of tenure track faculty positions exacerbates competition for jobs

Important for students studying in countries where publication is a requirement for the award of their degree

Important for applying for scholarships for doctoral studies and the winning of research grants

Research students are often told that their academic future is dependent on peer-reviewed publications



Many first-time writers are confused, discouraged or even shocked by the negative reviews they receive and the substantial revisions requested ... Some never attempt to revise and resubmit their work that reviewers see as having potential for publication (Kwan 2010, p. 213).



If you looked at professional doctorates in areas such as education, business/management, engineering you would probably find analogous tensions to those you describe.

I'd be a bit more cautious in talking about the history of doctorates in the performing arts, unless you have thoroughly checked the sources.

Did the students experience identity struggles? What is learnt from their experiences?



# The discourse of peer review

## Data collection

Fifty-seven reviewers

Ninety-seven reviewers' reports

Forty-five questionnaires

Follow up email interviews



# Reading reviewers' reports

## Directions

*Reanalyze your data* (direct speech act)

*Research question 1 has not been dealt with in the paper*  
(indirect speech act)

## Suggestions

*Below are some references to intercultural communication I suggest you familiarize yourself with* (direct speech act)

*It would be worth citing a more recent volume* (indirect speech act)



## Reading reviewers' reports

### Clarification requests

*Clarify what is meant by "business discourse"* (direct speech act)

*Are you saying that bilinguals are naturally more creative than monolinguals?* (indirect speech act)

### Recommendations

*I recommend a thorough rewrite of the paper before submission*  
(direct speech act)



## Reading reviewers' reports

Making suggestions about what to change in a paper is common. **These are not suggestions** [bold in the original]. The reviewer is basically saying “Do this. And if I get this paper back for re-review and you haven’t done it you’d better have a pretty good explanation for why not” (Thomson, 2017)





# Other examples of politeness strategies in reviewers' reports

## Good news/bad news frames

I applaud the authors' effort to address reviewers' comments but I'm afraid this manuscript is still not appropriate for publication

## Praise/criticism pairs

While the author of this paper has to be lauded for taking on the large and impossible topic of culture, the manner in which the issues relating to it get dealt with are problematic

## Hedging

Perhaps the author could state more explicitly that it is the addressing of this first question that forms the focus of the paper.

## Taking personal responsibility for a comment

In the view of this reviewer, more revisions should be made



## Other examples of politeness strategies in reviewers' reports

### Intensifying interest

This is an excellent piece of work in all respects

### Expressing approval

I enjoyed this paper for a number of reasons

### Avoiding disagreement

I am not sure if I have understood what the author wants to say

### Asserting common ground

As I am sure the author will agree...



# Stance and reviewers' reports

Stance (Hyland 2005) and reviewers' reports

## Attitude markers

The manuscript is *well documented*, *well structured* and *relevant* to genre-based ESP/EAP teaching settings.

## Self mentions

*I* am satisfied that the authors have addressed my concerns with their earlier draft.

## Hedging

*Perhaps* rephrase the first sentence



# Interpreting reviewers' reports

What is meant by what is said in the reviews as opposed to what is literally said.

Positive and negative evaluations

The extent to which negative evaluations need to be addressed in order for an article to get published



## Responding to reviewers' reports

It is important to bear in mind that a rejection from one journal doesn't mean your paper is unpublishable. . . . Rejection is common, it is normal, it is frequent, and by no means means that the paper won't find a home somewhere else (BAAL, 1993, p. 10–11).

Even if you receive a rejection letter from the editor, you can still learn a lot from the publication process and can polish your manuscripts in response to reviewers' comments (Iida, 2016, p. 47)

For the uninitiated, the first rejection is terrible, but the second (sometimes the third) can immobilize you. You'll be tempted to slip the manuscript into a drawer and forget about it. Don't. (Gaillet & Guglielmo, 2014, p. 53)



# Implications for student writers

Writing is the chief mechanism by which [students] are recognised as members of disciplinary communities (Curry, 2016, p. 80)

... a means of developing and displaying an identity as a scholar, researcher, or other professional (Curry, 2016, p. 80)

... how scholars contribute to the academy by sharing research findings, theories, or knowledge with others in a specific discipline (Iida, 2016, p. 46)

Scholarly writing enables you to understand the meaning of learning in academia and reflect on how, as a researcher, you situate yourself and what contributions you can make in your specific disciplinary community (Iida, 2016, p. 48)



## Implications for student writers

It doesn't matter whether the author is a native or non-native speaker or if they are a tenured faculty member or a graduate student (Iida, 2016, p. 46)

It's challenging even for experienced researchers to get their work published in a peer-reviewed journal (Iida, 2016, p. 47)



# Implications for student writers

Write, write, write! (Li, 2012, p.161)





# References

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