

Editing 'foreign English' academic writing

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1. Overview

- Who am I and what experiences do I bring to editing?
- What is academic writing?
- What do I mean by 'Foreign English'?
- What are common problems in ESL documents?
- The editor–client relationship – contact, process of communication
- Specific editing needs and examples
- Practical strategies and suggestions
- Getting paid

2. Broad academic and editing experience

- Registered nurse 16 yrs
- Completed health/education qualifications
- Lecturer at University of SA and Qld University of Technology
- Extensive teaching, research and publication experience
- Established Academic Editorial Services 1999
- Completed postgraduate qualifications in editing
- Accredited Editor 2008
- Website, word of mouth and personal referrals from academics
- Academic networking and snowball referrals
- Niche area that builds on past skills

3. Types of editing work

- Journal articles
- PhD and masters' theses
- Research grants/reports
- Australian Academic Press/Cambridge University Press journals
- Publications after PhD
- Supervisors' recommendation
- Writing retreats for academics
- State examination papers
- Annual reports
- Self-published authors
- Government reports

4. Clients come from:

Australia

Tonga

Kuwait

United Arab Emirates

Germany

Hong Kong

New Zealand

Turkey

Lebanon

Belgium

United Kingdom

China

Papua New Guinea

Iran

Saudi Arabia

Netherlands

Sweden

Cambodia

Indonesia
Philippines
Japan

India
Singapore

Malaysia
Taiwan

5. Issues from working online

- Email
- Rare to actually speak to the client
- Contact via enquiry form on website
- Once contact details passed on by others then email and attachments may arrive unheralded
- Potential risks to be considered – security, viruses, backup

6. Academic English:

- is more formal and structured
- requires originality
- contains statements that need to be supported with reference to other's work
- argues a point of view/thesis
- has a defined structure

7. Graphic

English doesn't borrow from other languages. English follows other languages down dark alleys, knocks them over and goes through their pockets for loose grammar.

8. Assumptions we make

If you can think clearly, you can write clearly, and what you think will be evident in how you speak about a topic.

We often assume that non-Western writers understand what we mean by organization, coherence, clarity, depth, and continuity in the same way we do, when this might not be the case at all.

9. Common problems for ESL/EFL clients

Language and cultural differences

- English is often weak
- “Weak” students
- Study difficulties
- Different ways of thinking
- Pressure to be very successful
- How to cite sources and why
- Reluctance to ask questions
- Expect to be told what to write
- May not value self-direction or independence of mind

10.

There are the obvious problems of language use and grammar, but there are also significant factors impacting on academic writing that are derived from cultural norms. Silva, T. & and Kei Matsuda, P. (Eds.) (2001). *Landmark Essays on ESL Writing*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

11. Differences

Western values – individualism

- Privacy
- Competition
- Ownership
- Innovation through creativity and originality

International values – collectivism

- Integrated community life
- Collaboration
- Shared responsibility
- Imitation through rote learning

12. How does cultural background influence approaches to academic writing?

- Issues of plagiarism, Structuring writing, Logical sequencing of content, Arguing a point of view
- Students from Confucian-heritage countries, such as China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam: value their source with the utmost authority, do not believe in citing their sources as expected in Western societies, consider using an author's own words is a form of respect. (Duff et al., 2006; Hayes & Introna, 2005; Scollon, 1999)
- This makes it difficult for them to understand Western standards on this matter. Scollon (1999)

13.

- Hayes and Introna (2005) documented the case of an Indian student who declared that in his undergraduate institution more points were awarded to students who could reproduce from class notes and textbooks than to those who paraphrased.

14.

- Students from overseas may feel they cannot improve on what has already been said (Hayes & Introna, 2005) and may have difficulty truly understanding what plagiarism is, because it may have been an expected and highly regarded cultural norm in their home country.

15.

- The way that individuals from other countries approach academic writing has been described by Kaplan's 1996 graphic model.

- While I originally wanted to share how I work with international clients, as I researched the topic I began to realise that there are many levels associated with editing academic work from clients from other countries.
- It became important to share that their problems (and our challenges) were more than those associated with grammar and sentence construction – they were underpinned by cultural differences established through the way ESL clients are taught about writing and researching. I will discuss the specific issues later but will start with a graphic model developed by Kaplan that illustrates approaches to writing on a topic.
- Kaplan, R. B. (1966), Cultural thought patterns in inter-cultural education. *Language Learning*, 16: 1–20. doi: 10.1111/j.1467–1770.1966.tb00804.x

16. Eastern/Oriental pattern Eastern (Japanese, Korean, Chinese, etc.)

- Explores around the topic while the reader is supposed to discover the writer's thesis on his or her own. Inward turning spiral, inductive, indirect, circular approaches to topic.
- Kaplan's model represents Asian students' approach in a cyclical style.
- Japanese word order is classified as subject–object–verb. Unlike many Indo-European languages, the only strict rule of word order is that the verb must be placed at the end of a sentence (possibly followed by sentence-end particles).
- Western ideas, such as originality and plagiarism are extraneous in the students' local cultures—they are used to copying the teacher's words and simply reiterating them in oral exams or written assignments. The attitude of “not daring to challenge the teacher” and copying his/her words is present in their culture.

17. Semitic (Arabic, Hebrew, etc.) Moves forward, but with constant digressions.

18. Romance: (Spanish, Italian, French) Some deviations from the main topic, but usually returns by the end.

19. Russian: Usually some serious deviation from main topic, usually returns to topic by the end.

20. In contrast: English: Linear, no deviations, consistently stays on the same topic.

- Then how do foreign writers manage getting published in English journals? Seek help from editors, of course!

21. Practical strategies for editors

These are examples of emails from past clients

The initial request:

Dear Tina,

I am [. . .]from Turkey.

Can you editing your articles? What is the coast? In addition the articles. Waiting for your reply

Dear Tina,

I request your editing my study which I want to send it to Journal of Sexual Medicine and if you check it about reviewer's comments, I will be pleased. I want to learn that how much I will pay for this editing before.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely

Dear Thornton,

I would like to ask you whether you can help me for editing my article. Could you please edit some sections of my article (manuscript, table)? I look forward to hearing your answer. If you need further information, please don't hesitate to contact to me.

Sincerely,

Dear Tina

How are you going dead? Happy Easter, I wish have a great time with lovely family. I attached 2 assignment for editing with thanks.

22. Receiving work

- Establish the relationship – consider ‘Googling’ your client /LinkedIn
- Interpret the request – level of editing
- Identify the issues
- Check out the journal guidelines to be followed
- Provide a quote indicating price *range* based on a sample edit
- Stick to the basics – how long it will take and how much it may cost, how they can pay you and when
- Ask for an alternate email address and postal address
- Use simple terms, not too much detail
- Set a reasonable timeline
- Find out who they are/crosscheck validity
- Remember not to assume things are the same as we have in Australia
- Variation in internet access
- Working at home and no phone or internet access Turkey

23. The communication sequence

Hi, Tina:

I have one revised manuscript need to be edited. Could you help for that recently?

Thanks.

Dear []

I can edit this for you, please email it to me along with any reviewer's comments if you like? When is it due for completion?

Kind regards

Dear []

Here is the edited article. There are a few areas where I was unsure of your meaning that you will need to review. I have formatted it in accordance with APA 6th and the journal guidelines.

Kind regards

Dear Tina:

Thank you for the quick and high quality service. I have submitted my paper and also completed paypal payment. Thanks again for all the help.

24. Common problems

- Writing as they speak
- Using second person ‘you’
- Using abbreviations
- Repetitious language ‘a round circle’
- Beginning sentences with conjunctions – for, nor, but, yet
- Too many quotes
- Poor choice of quotes
- Inadequate citation/plagiarism
- Using incomplete sentences
- Using contractions (don’t, shouldn’t) slang or colloquial expressions
- Punctuation absence or misuse
- Inconsistencies in tense and person
- Too much description and inadequate analysis – need to evaluate ideas, compare with other writers’ views, examine issues/views critically

25. The difference between a cat and a comma

One has claws and the end of its paws

The other is a pause at the end of a clause

26. Confusing use of tenses

- Academic writing is usually based on research that already exists, reporting on research use past tense – ‘showed’/‘have shown’
- Confusingly, in a literature review when stressing certain views that are still current then present perfect/simple tense may be suitable
- Past tense for procedures (already happened) and for results
- Present tense for discussion – ‘indicate’/‘show’

27. General language use problems

- Sometimes need to work with text translated by 3rd party
- Editor may have difficulty understanding what is being discussed – may need to restructure sentence, move beginning to the end
- Problems with subject–verb agreement
- Misuse/absence of articles both definite (the) and indefinite (a, an). For instance: ‘I went to France for holiday in 2010.’

- Need to address incorrect word choices
- Lack of transitions between sentences
- Writing may have been reviewed/rewritten by someone else with better English
- Often difficult to ‘translate’ what the author means simply because the subject and object are misplaced

28. Some examples (actual examples of editing were shown in presentation)

They were found as the conditions before and after the smoking bans and factors related to the implementation each ward’s characteristics related to the smoking bans, suggestions about pleasures as substitutes for smoking, anxiety before smoking bans and good feeling after the implementation, smokers’ objections to smoking bans in whole hospital sites, acceptance of patients and staff with resignation, after smoking bans’ conditions which were advantageous for keeping smoking bans, necessity for prevention of passive smoking in psychiatric wards, and risks after smoking bans and coping with them.

Background: Unless women apply to a medical institution within the first one month as from realization of breast cancer symptoms, the delay is in question. Many studies determined that the time between realization of first symptoms by women and application to a healthcare professional is more than one month.

Edited Background: Unless women apply to a medical institution within the first month of realizing breast cancer symptoms there is reason to question the delay. Many studies have shown that the time between women’s realization of first symptoms and seeking advice from a healthcare professional is often more than one month.

29. Editing academic writing for ESL clients

- Using track changes but keep it short and specific
- Advise what is needed, less hedging in suggestions
- Dealing with reviewer’s comments and feeding back changes you have made
- Left to right languages
- Journal types
- Commercial editing costs
- Journal guidelines
- Check proofing language
- Page setup
- Returning documents
- Using getnotify to check email received and opened
- Not the time to demonstrate the intricacies of the English language =KISS
- Be helpful, remember that what we consider as subtleties of expression may just confuse the client
- Assistance is often sought to respond to reviewer’s comments so that changes made are explained and that such changes are themselves edited – complex changes evident in text and need to ensure clarity

- Journal types and quality – some countries are so keen to have lots of research published their standards may differ
- Journal guidelines – so many variations on referencing styles, check paper size and proofing language
- Editing often limited – being published more important than quality English expression

30. Paying to be published

- \$1200 for an article in Food and Nutrition Science (reduced rates for low- and middle-income countries) Scientific Research publishers
- Expensive editing options offered via journal publishers' websites
- Japan and PhD editing expensive \$147–226 per 1000 words, 2000 Yen for 400 characters (not words) rate goes up to \$42 per character if additional research is required!!
- Elsevier charges English Language Editing
 - Word count per manuscript
 - USD
 - Up to 500* = \$115.00
 - From 501 to 1,500 = \$255.00
 - From 1,501 to 6,000 = \$285.00
 - From 6,001 to 12,000** = \$399.00

31. Working for others

- Online editing companies specialising in editing for ESL clients
- Selection process
- Rates of pay
- Methods of payment
- Good luck!
- Money matters

32. Cultural differences re:

- Timeliness
- Bargaining (China)
- Banking issues (Iran)
- Scammers

33. Electronic payments

- PayPal fees (Au 2.6% + \$0.30 per transaction, international 3.6% plus a fixed fee based on the currency received)
- Bank cheques (\$13 fee CBA)
- EFT
- Always acknowledge payments

34. Why English is hard to learn

- The bandage was wound around the wound
- When shot at the dove dove into some bushes
- The insurance was invalid for the invalid
- We must polish the Polish furniture

35.

Synonym: the word you use when you can't spell the other one

Good grammar is like personal hygiene – you can ignore it if you want, but don't be surprised when people draw their own conclusions

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