Supporting Research Writing in Non-Anglophone Contexts: Role of Language Professionals

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Project background

2009 **MET Meeting** panel on the "**spectrum**" of writing support services for academic authors:

- Teaching of academic writing (Sally Burgess)
- Academic translation (Susan DiGiacomo)
- Presubmission editing (Joy Burrough-Boenisch)
- Medical writing (Iain Patten)
- Hybrid service: education/editing/writing when manuscript far from publishable (Valerie Matarese)

Project outcome

Edited volume **Supporting Research Writing**, with contributions from panelists and colleagues

15 chapters: insight and experiences
4 recurrent themes

Theme 1. Effective writing support is individualized and multifaceted

Researchers have varied needs for help with writing that can be addressed by a variety of language services: *there is no single approach.*

Writing support is most effective when language professionals tailor the service to a researcher's individual needs, drawing as needed from the full spectrum of services. Examples:

- Authors' **editors use translation skills** to decipher interlingual errors (due to linguistic transfer).
- Editors and translators **impart good writing practices** through manuscript conferences and didactic editing.

Theme 2. Language professionals are communicators and mediators

Open communication between authors and language professional is needed to arrive at a shared understanding of roles and expected outcomes, and for the writing support to have an educational role.

Language professionals mediate between originator (author) and receiver (journal editor, reviewers, readers):

- Academic translators are **cultural mediators** who resolve differences in discourse patterns between source and target languages.
- Authors' editors and medical writers can **arbitrate conflicts** among authors.
- Editors and translators who provide **post-peer review assistance** help authors negotiate revisions to secure acceptance.

Theme 3. Language professionals are sensitive to issues of publication ethics

To serve the academic community, language professionals are guided by personal integrity and a strong ethical base for business practices:

- Respect **confidentiality** and intellectual property
- Respect boundary between writing support and **authorship** by avoiding authorial activities
- **Inform authors** about publication ethics. Examples:
  - Teachers of academic writing provide strategies to avoid copy-paste writing, and expose students to the implications of plagiarism
  - Copy editors at journals produced in non-anglophone countries keep editorial staff up to date about publication ethics and publishing standards
  - Authors' editors help authors understand ethical declarations, COI, etc.

Theme 4. Language professionals work proactively

Anticipate problems and implement strategies to avoid them. Examples:

- Authors' editor **anticipate an author's negative reaction to a change**, and annotate the change with explanations.
- Authors' editors **anticipate reviewers' criticisms** and suggest how to improve a manuscript before submission.
- Medical writers **ensure that a manuscript is adequately planned from the start** to avoid reporting errors.

Introduction

Language industry: services and products for multilingual communication, oral and written.
Language professionals: offer individualized services to support multilingual communication.
Which services? *Opinions differ:*

- **EC's DG Translation**: translation, interpreting, subtitling−dubbing, software/website globalization, international conference organization, language teaching and linguistic consultancy.

- A more up-to-date view includes **editing** for authors writing in a second/additional language.

In **research communication, the main language services are:** teaching of academic writing, translation into English, several levels of editing, and some types of writing support.

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