Novice Multilingual Writers Learning to Write and Publish: An Intercultural Perspective

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Abstract This chapter brings to the fore the common intercultural complexities and challenges facing novice multilingual scholars in the high-stakes genre of writing for scholarly publication in English. Framed within the concept of intercultural competence, the chapter draws on relevant autoethnographic and empirical data to foreground the intercultural issues and complexities in navigating interactions inherent to the process of writing for scholarly publication. The thrust of the chapter is to demonstrate the importance of intercultural competence and literacy in writing for scholarly publication. Findings overall highlight the need for support and training of novice scholars in terms of intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to deal with the complexities of the power-infused intercultural interactions with gatekeepers of publication (i.e., editors and anonymous peer reviewers). Key areas of difficulty which emerged from the study include the challenge of handling the socio-pragmatic and interpretive aspects of peer review. The chapter concludes by offering pedagogical suggestions as to how intercultural competence and awareness can be cultivated amongst novice multilingual scholars in graduate education and writing-for-publication training.

Keywords Multilingualism · Novice scholars · Writing for publication · Intercultural competence · Academic communication

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1   Introduction

The pervasiveness of the pressure to publish in the current neoliberal academia has extended beyond faculty to include graduate, especially doctoral, students. As apprentices in academia (Belcher, 1994; Hyland, 2009), graduate students are increasingly expected or compelled to engage with writing for scholarly publication early on to enhance their chances of employment in today's increasingly competitive job market (Aitchison et al., 2010; Casanave, 2014; Kwan, 2010; see Habibie & Hyland, 2019 for a detailed discussion).

However, getting published is arguably no easy task even for experienced academics, let alone for those new to the fraught and complex terrain of academic publication. While writing for scholarly publication can be challenging for all novice academic writers, including those speaking English as their first language (L1), it can conceivably be even more challenging for those using English as a second language (L2) (e.g., Curry & Lillis, 2017, 2019; Flowerdew, 2015, among others). Attempting to achieve academic publication can be particularly challenging and burdensome during graduate studies, while dealing with graduate coursework and thesis writing.

Learning how to publish academically in English involves not only knowing how to rhetorically compose a scholarly text, but also – equally if not more importantly – learning how to manage the intricate intercultural interactions with gatekeepers of scholarly publication (i.e., editors and peer reviewers), which can be particularly daunting and challenging for novice L2 scholars.

This chapter aims to bring to the fore the intercultural issues and challenges facing multilingual graduate students, as novice scholars, in the process of scholarly publication in English. The chapter begins by providing an overview of the relevant literature and the conceptual framework used to analyse and interpret the findings. It will then describe the study and present the findings and discussion. The chapter will conclude by offering pedagogical suggestions as to the possible ways in which intercultural competence can be cultivated amongst novice multilingual scholars in graduate education and writing-for-publication training.

2   Background to the Study

In response to the widespread pressure on scholars the world over to publish in English-medium scholarly venues, a considerable body of research in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has investigated issues and challenges facing multilingual scholars in writing for publication. Burgeoning research and scholarship in this area – now categorised under English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) as an emerging sub-field of EAP (Cargill & Burgess, 2008) – has highlighted several major discursive challenges, an important one being deviation from the standard (i.e., Anglophone) rhetorical and stylistic conventions of English, as the *de facto*

language of academic publication (e.g., Connor, 2011; Englander, 2006; Mur-Dueñas, 2011). Research in this area has been mainly influenced by Intercultural Rhetoric – formerly called Contrastive Analysis – which is conceptualized as "the study of written discourse between and among individuals with different cultural backgrounds" (Connor, 2011, p.1).

Research in this vein tends to use the methodology of Corpus Linguistics to compare academic texts written by non-Anglophone writers with similar texts written by Anglophone writers, with a view to illuminating discursive and rhetorical challenges in academic writing for non-Anglophone scholars from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, or linguacultures (Risager, 2006).

This strand of corpus-based contrastive research has made cross-comparisons between Anglophone and non-Anglophone writing conventions and rhetorical features of academic genres (especially research articles and research article abstracts). These studies have, for example, analysed the rhetorical and discursive features of published research articles in Chinese versus English (e.g., Loi, 2010; Loi & Evans, 2010); Spanish versus English (e.g., Burgess, 2002; Moreno, 2004; Mur-Dueñas, 2007, 2011), among many other comparative studies (see Mur-Dueñas & Šinkūnienė, 2018, for a full review).

These studies have shown that texts written by non-Anglophone writers may, for example, lack the necessary rhetorical moves (e.g., Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2016; Hu & Wang, 2014) or critical stance (e.g., Martín-Martín & Burgess, 2004; Salager-Meyer et al., 2003), which are typical features of research articles written by Anglophone authors. These cross-cultural, text-based studies have served to shed valuable light on the issues and challenges facing non-Anglophone scholars when writing for publication in English. Importantly, they have provided useful insights into "potential transfer of differing rhetorical and discursive conventions" from first language (L1) to English texts written by non-Anglophone scholars for international publication (Mur-Dueñas, 2018, p. 278). The findings of such contrastive studies have in turn informed pedagogical interventions in ERPP. Nonetheless, the main caveat with this contrastive approach (intercultural rhetorical), according to Hyland (2018), is that it "runs the risk of static and reductive over-generalisations about cultures, disciplines or genres" (p. ix).

Another limitation with these contrastive, text-based studies is their predominant focus on the analysis of published texts. Often neglected in this line of research is the process leading up to the production and eventual publication of texts. In the often-lengthy process of academic publication, texts are more often than not subject to revision and modification to one degree or another by different mediators – called "literacy brokers" (Lillis & Curry, 2006) or "shapers" (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003) – involved in the process of the production of the final text. Very often it is the case that "literacy brokers" (Lillis & Curry, 2006) suggest changes so that texts approximate the expected prevailing Anglophone rhetorical norms or standards.

Overall, there appear to be multiple gaps in intercultural research on writing for scholarly publication. In terms of theoretical lens, the extant research in this area has been heavily influenced by (contrastive) intercultural rhetoric, which – while not without value – has been amply and extensively researched. In the past few

decades, several informative and noteworthy theoretical models and perspectives have emerged, especially in the field of intercultural communication, which can be taken up and explored by research in this area. Furthermore, only few studies (e.g., Mur-Dueñas, 2012, 2013) have attended to the process of getting academically published from an intercultural perspective. There is also a clear paucity of process-oriented research that seeks to understand the intercultural challenges facing multilingual, especially novice, scholars (including early-career academics and doctoral students) in steering the process of writing to publish academically. Particularly useful would be research on the complex communicative interactions and negotiations with editors and reviewers, from an intercultural perspective.

Given these gaps in interculturally-oriented research on academic publication, the study reported in this chapter aims to explore and discuss the intercultural issues and challenges facing novice multilingual scholars in the process of scholarly publication in English.

3   Conceptual Framework

In this chapter Deardorff's (2006) model of intercultural competence will be utilised, as a conceptual lens, to better understand and interpret the intercultural experiences and challenges of the multilingual graduate students, as novice scholars, in the study. Before proceeding to discuss the conceptual model, a brief explanation of the concept of culture is warranted. The notion of culture was traditionally conceived as being fixed, discrete and often equated with national or ethnic entities, largely influenced by anthropological perspectives. However, over time, and in light of postmodern and post structural influences, culture as a concept has evolved from an essentialist view (culture as nationality) to a more dynamic and complex view, which includes shared values, practices and interests of social groupings "within and across national boundaries" (Kramsch, 2002, p. 276).

Of relevance here is Holliday's (1999) oft-cited distinction between 'large culture' and 'small culture', which has been influential in intercultural research. Holliday proposed the term 'small culture' in contrast to the more traditional 'large culture' – national, ethnic, geographical and other entities. Small culture, as conceived by Holliday (1999), characterizes "small social groupings or activities wherever there is cohesive behaviour" (p. 237). Small cultures are grounded in routinized activities, discourses and practices associated with social groups. Such small cultures could be a wide variety of social groupings ranging from academic (e.g., classroom culture) to professional (e.g., workplace), to other social and community-based groups (e.g., youth culture). Viewed within this lens, "the discourse community is a small culture" (p. 252). Holliday (1999) argues that a large-culture approach cannot account for complexities of intercultural interactions in an increasingly global context. From his perspective, the small culture approach "is most appropriate for a world which is increasingly multi-cultural at every level." (p. 260) The shifting

conceptualisations of the notion of culture have clearly had important implications for intercultural research and scholarship.

In what follows, the notion of intercultural competence and Deardorff's (2006) model of intercultural competence development will be laid out.

3.1 Intercultural Competence

Since its inception a few decades ago, the term 'intercultural competence' has been subject to different interpretations and evolving definitions, reflecting the paradigm shift from essentialist to constructivist and critical perspectives, due in large part to the shifting views of the concept of culture (See Rings & Rasinger, 2020 for a detailed discussion).

Various definitions have been proposed in the literature to delineate the concept of intercultural competence (e.g., Deardorff, 2006, 2009; Fantini, 2009; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, among others). Intercultural competence has been broadly defined as "complex abilities that are required to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (Fantini, 2009, p. 458). Intercultural competence has also been defined as "the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who … represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioural orientations to the world" (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 7).

Two key aspects highlighted in the oft-cited definitions of intercultural competence are effectiveness – being able to achieve one's communicative purpose in a given interactional exchange – and appropriateness – interacting successfully in a manner that is mutually acceptable to the involved parties (Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017).

Intercultural competence as conceptualised by Deardorff (2006) refers to "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 247). Importantly, Deardorff (2006) notes that, "just as culture is ever changing, scholars' opinions on intercultural competence change with time" (p. 258), which premises a fluid and dynamic view of culture.

3.2 The Process Model of Intercultural Competence

Deardorff's (2006) model has been arguably one of the most influential models in research on intercultural competence development in recent years. Based on the consensus of leading intercultural experts, Deardorff (2006) proposed a dynamic model of intercultural competence development that identifies the fundamental attributes (attitudes, knowledge, and skills) which can be conducive to desired internal and external outcomes in intercultural situations. The components and

sub-components comprising the composite construct of intercultural competence in this model (Deardorff, 2006, pp. 247–248) are as follows:

- *Attitudes*
- Fundamental to the model are the intercultural attitudes, which include respect (toward other cultures), openness (to intercultural learning and cultural differences), as well as curiosity (tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity).
- *Knowledge*
- Intercultural knowledge refers to cultural self-awareness, culture-specific knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness needed for communication across cultural boundaries.
- *Skills*
- Intercultural skills include listening, observation and interpretation of cultural differences, and analysis, evaluation and relation to culturally different others. The two components of knowledge and skills in Deardorff's (2006) model interact and are interrelated in the sense that they influence, reinforce, and supplement each other.
- *Internal outcome*
- Desired internal outcome refers to shift in one's frame of reference, which includes empathy, adaptability (to different behaviours and communication styles), flexibility (flexible selection and use of appropriate communication styles and behaviours; cognitive flexibility). In essence, the internal outcome is the ability to adapt to various cultural contexts and to flexibly use appropriate communication styles to treat culturally different others' worldviews and values with equal empathy to their own.
- *External outcome*
- The desired external outcome would be behaving and communicating effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations. The model posits that the extent to which individuals can communicate appropriately and effectively in intercultural environments is predicated on how far they have acquired the underlying elements (attitudes, knowledge, skills). In Deardorff's (2006) model, intercultural competence progressively advances from an individual plane (i.e., attitudes, knowledge, and skills) to an interactive plane of external outcome.

For Deardorff (2006, 2009), intercultural competence development is a lifelong and ongoing process; it is not a one-off act of acquisition or achievement but rather a continuous journey and trajectory of 'becoming' and 'being' across time and cultural space. Moreover, and crucially, Deardorff (2009) notes that intercultural experience per se does not necessarily lead to the development of intercultural competence. Rather, intercultural competence needs to be cultivated deliberately "through adequate preparation, substantive intercultural interactions, and relationship building" (p. xiii).

In this chapter, I extend Deardorff's (2006) model of intercultural competence to the realm of scholarly publication to explore intercultural issues and challenges experienced by a group of multilingual graduate students, as novice academics, in

the process of writing for scholarly publication. I should note that I also reflectively analyse my own relevant experiences with academic publishing when doing my doctorate. It is important to note that, given the limitations of the available data, I only focus on the three foundational components (knowledge, skills and attitudes) of intercultural competence as laid out in Deardorff's (2006) intercultural competence framework.

4   The Study

The research question guiding this chapter is: What intercultural issues and challenges do multilingual graduate students, as novice scholars, encounter in the process of getting published in English-medium scholarly venues? This research question has been adapted and modified from a larger qualitative, 16-month, multiple case study which explored the writing for publication practices and experiences of graduate students – both multilingual and Anglophone – in language and literacy education at a Canadian research-intensive university.

The inclusion criteria, in the larger study, required the participants to (a) be enrolled as full-time graduate students in a Canadian university, (b) have had prior (successful or otherwise) experience with writing for scholarly publication in English (journal articles, book chapters, books, book reviews), and (c) intend to write for publication within the time span of the study—16 months from the commencement of the study. The larger project recruited four Anglophone, two bilingual, and nine EAL doctoral students as well as three EAL Master's students, all of whom met the inclusion criteria. Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis, and informed consent, in accordance with the institutional ethics policy, was sought prior to data collection. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I draw on data and relevant examples from four multilingual – two doctoral and two Master's – graduate students in the study to address the aforementioned research question.

To preserve confidentiality, the participants' countries of origin have not been specified; instead, the broader geographical regions where their countries are located have been indicated. In addition, other potential identifiers including the participants' year of study in the program and age – have also been excluded to help protect the participants' identities. All the names used in this study are pseudonyms.

It is worth noting that, as graduate students in language and literacy education, all participants had a decent command of English language skills and proficiency, and had served as language teachers in their home countries. Thus, the participants in this study comprised a somewhat unique sample. Also, all participants had some experience with academic publication in English, prior to their participation in the study. Before proceeding further, and in order to better interpret the findings and salient themes, a brief description of the selected participants is warranted.

4.1   Participants

The selected doctoral students were Sam (Male from Latin America) and Yelena (Female from East Europe), and the Master's students in the study were Mohammad (Male from the Middle East) and Cho (Female from East Asia). I should note that henceforth the letters "M" (male) and "F" (female) will be used after the participants' names to specify gender. As earlier noted, all participants had published academically in English prior to the study. Sam (M) had previously co-authored three journal articles, a book chapter, and two conference proceedings. Yelena (F) had published a conference proceeding paper prior to study. Mohammad (M) had co-authored an educational book on English for academic purposes in his home country, prior to starting his Master's program, and Cho (F) had published a co-authored journal article in her first language, prior to the commencement of her Master's studies.

As noted earlier, where relevant, I will also refer to my own first-hand experiences and observations in scholarly publishing, particularly during my doctoral studies. I should note that I am a naturalized citizen of Canada, originally from Iran (born and raised), and I speak Persian (Farsi) as my first language and English as an additional language.

4.2   Data Collection and Analysis

In this 16-month, qualitative, multiple case study, data were collected through questionnaires, multiple semi-structured interviews, submission trajectories, emails and communications with journal editors and reviewers. The data used here, though, are mainly from the interviews conducted with the selected participants in the study. Over the course of the study (16 months), multiple one-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant – Yelena and Cho (three interviews each) and Sam and Mohammad (four and five interviews respectively). Duration of the interviews ranged from 20 to 60 minutes; the first and final interviews with each participant were longer. The collected data were then subject to iterative thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2014) to identify salient themes and patterns relevant to the research question.

5   Findings and Discussion

In what follows, drawing on the process model of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006), the participants' intercultural experiences and challenges in writing for publication are presented and discussed under respective sub-headings

corresponding to the intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills, as the foundational elements of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006).

5.1   Intercultural Attitudes

Based upon Deardorff's (2006) theoretical framework, attitudes constitute a fundamental part of intercultural competence; this in practice means being respectful, open-minded, and unbiased toward other cultural and linguistic groups. The findings indicated that while all participants expressed positive attitudes towards other cultures, they showed a biased preference for native-speakerism and its associated cultural capital, as illustrated in the quote by Mohammad (M), who said, "they [native speakers] have not just the language but … they also have the upper hand culturally, I mean." The presumed superiority of the cultural and linguistic capital of the native speakers can also be seen in the quote below by Cho (F), who had experienced co-authoring a journal article with her Anglophone peer; she remarked:

> native speakers have a huge advantage ... throughout the publication journey, pre-submission and post-submission. Pre-submission in the sense that first language writers know better about the conventions, about the academic writing in their own language and in the post-submission area in the negotiation stage, L1 writers they have more cultural capital to negotiate with people from their own culture.

Encapsulated in the quote above is the presumed superiority of "the cultural capital" of the native speaker. Moreover, and surprisingly, the findings suggested that this presupposition was not just confined to the novice multilingual scholars in the study. "Non-English evident" was the verbatim phrase in a peer review report that Sam (M), a doctoral student in the study, received after having submitted his first sole-authored manuscript to a reputable journal in the field. The above-mentioned comment quite clearly indicates the peer reviewer's subscription to "the ideology of native-speakerism" (Holliday, 2015, p. 12).

My contention is that the uncritical presumption of the superiority of "the embodied linguistic/cultural capital of the native speaker" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 154) is counterproductive and antithetical to the ethos and spirit of interculturalism (Short, 2009), which advocates for inclusivity and diversity. Rather than uncritically valorise the cultural and linguistic capital of the native speaker, it would be productive to adopt the more apt notion of competent "intercultural speaker" (Byram, 1997, 2008, 2021), which was proposed as a viable alternative to the almost unattainable native speaker ideal (Boye & Byram, 2017; Wilkinson, 2012). A competent intercultural speaker transcends the specific cultural and linguistic boundaries and is able to "navigate and negotiate the space between languages and cultures that opens whenever communication takes place between speakers of different linguistic and/or cultural backgrounds" (Wilkinson, 2020, p. 286). Such a perspective, I would argue, is more compatible with and conducive to interculturalism and the development of intercultural competence.

Reflecting on my own experiences of publishing during the doctorate, much like the participants in the study, I too initially considered myself to be at a linguistic disadvantage vis-à-vis my so called 'native speaker' peers, but over time, as I progressed further in my doctoral studies, I revisited and revised my initial uncritical acceptance of the linguistic "disadvantage orthodoxy" (Hyland, 2019, p. 27), which I have discussed elsewhere in more detail (Fazel, 2021).

5.2   Intercultural Knowledge

The knowledge component of the intercultural competence model by Deardorff (2006) includes a deep understanding of one's own culture and beliefs and those of others as well as sociolinguistic awareness of communication etiquettes (including unwritten norms and conventions) in different cultures including theirs, which is particularly pertinent to communications and intercultural interactions between novice writers and journal editors and peer reviewers in the process of writing for publication.

The findings indicated an understanding among the participants that language and culture are inextricably linked, and that translation is not always the way to convey the meaning of a word or phrase, as illustrated in the quote below by one of the participants (Sam):

> I cannot translate like I mean it would be really easy if I could just translate … my native language to English but that's not the way it works. I mean there are many nuances and things that have to do with culture, things like that … for example literacy. We don't have a word for literacy, we just don't … in … [his first language] … the idea of literacy as a social practice is really hard to grasp because we don't have a word for that term.

The quote above represents an awareness that some concepts may exist in one language but not in another, and that language is bound up with and embedded in culture in a complex way. As noted earlier, intercultural knowledge also implies an awareness of the sociolinguistic aspects of communication in different cultures. In this regard, the participants were overall aware of the importance and influence of sociocultural factors in communication in general and in scholarly communication in particular; nevertheless, they were not confident in their grasp of the socio-pragmatic aspects of communications and negotiations in the process of academic publishing. On a relevant note, Sam (M), despite being proficient in English, enlisted the help of Anglophone "literacy brokers" (Lillis & Curry, 2006), professional paid editors, both in the pre- and the post-submission phases of writing for publication. When asked why he would seek help from Anglophone copy editors even in response to peer review reports, he remarked:

> It's not just the language, grammar or vocabulary, … what I may see as polite disagreement may be seen as disrespect by them [reviewers], so I am not sure. I do not wanna step on their toes unintentionally, you know what I mean?

In the quote above, Sam (M) is concerned about miscommunication in responding to the peer reviewers. He is in particular unsure as to the socio-pragmatic nuances of expressing disagreement with peer reviewers in English, which is understandable given that "pragmatic norms vary across languages and cultures or even within a single language, language variety, or culture" (Ishihara & Cohen, 2022, p. 2).

Thinking back to my own experiences with publication endeavours during doctoral years, I can attest to the challenge of responding to reviewers, especially where it involved objection or rebuttal of an argument. Quite clearly, arguing against or disagreeing with peer review comments, which decide the fate of the publication, is no easy task, especially for a novice multilingual writer. Part of the challenge, as noted above, lies in the pragmatic complexities of communication, which can be "even more challenging in intercultural communication, where all interactants may not rely on the same cultural literacy" (Ishihara & Cohen, 2022, p. 1).

Effective intercultural communication, in part, necessitates a pragmatic awareness of the socially and culturally preferred language (Bardovi-Harlig, 2019, 2020). Attaining the pragmatic knowledge in an additional language is of paramount importance in that it is key to intercultural interactions, particularly when it comes to writing for publication, which inherently and consequentially involves engagement with gatekeepers of scholarly publication.

5.3   Intercultural Skills

The intercultural skills noted by Deardorff (2006) include the prowess and ability to listen, observe, interpret, analyse, evaluate, and relate to intercultural communicative events and experiences. An interculturally competent individual needs to possess and apply these interpretive, analytical and evaluative skills so as to successfully grapple with intercultural interactions and encounters. These skills are directly essential to writing for publication, particularly when it comes to the interpretation of comments and feedback in peer review reports, an "occluded genre" (Swales, 1990, 1996), which is generally hidden from public view, yet crucially important in academic publication.

A salient theme indicated by the findings was the differential perceptions of peer review feedback on the part of the participants. Interestingly, there appeared to be differences among the participants in terms of their perception of the harshness and directness in the peer review feedback. For example, Cho (F), a participant coming from an East Asian country, was demonstrably shocked and offended to have received harsh and critical feedback on her submitted article, which had received a revise-and-resubmit verdict. Sharing her perception of the feedback she had received, and while trying to control her emotions, she remarked, "it is so impersonal, just like 'hello, correct this and that', … so abrupt, direct and inconsiderate, you know…, even rude where I come from." Interestingly, a somewhat similar scenario happened to Yelena (F), another participant in the study from an East European country; that is, she too received impersonal and critical feedback on a submitted

(conference proceedings) paper, which similarly received a revise-and-resubmit decision. Strikingly, however, Yelena (F) had a notably different perception and reaction to the critical and impersonal feedback. Commenting on the feedback received, she said:

> the response was so impersonal and abrupt, yes. I guess for me it's cultural in a way, … I was not really offended by the impersonal, how impersonal and direct it was you know ... I think like in my country people don't sugar up things. They say 'wonderful, your grammar is wrong and nothing that you just said made sense please try again' … More frank and quite often I do the same just because I am socialized into this way of thinking and talking, … like we never start our feedback with I like the way you did this and I like the way you did that because if you like somebody or something you don't comment on it. If it's not good, why should you say that it's good? So, we only focus on the bad, something that can be improved.

The quotes above show the different perceptions between the participants regarding harshness and directness of feedback. It is worth acknowledging that Yelena's reaction to the peer review feedback seems to be culturally determined, likely influenced by the prevailing zeitgeist of socialism in her country. Cho's response, on the other hand, might be somewhat personal in nature rather than being necessarily determined by her sociocultural background.

On a relevant note, another source of confusion for the participants in the study was interpretation of feedback comments by peer reviewers, as shown in the following anecdote that happened to Mohammad (M). He had written a review of an influential book as an assignment in one of his graduate courses, and he had received an A for the assignment. Encouraged by his supervisor's positive feedback, he had decided to send his review to a reputable journal in the field for publication. This was in fact his first attempt at publishing in a scholarly journal. Based on his supervisor's glowing feedback, he expected an easy road to publication. Contrary to his expectations, though, the feedback he received from the editor and peer reviewers was unexpectedly harsh, critical, and confusing to him. He had been particularly critiqued for his use of "flowery language" and lack of critical engagement with the book he had reviewed, which he found both demoralising and rather confusing. When I asked him in the interview about his perception of the feedback he had received, he commented:

> I do not understand what they mean. This is how I write. I wanted to write beautifully and elegantly. There is nothing grammatically wrong or in terms of words. I like to write beautifully. What is wrong with that? I have written this way before, and my profs did not say anything against it… I am a huge fan of literature, both in …. [his first language] ... and in English. I studied literature before [in his bachelor's program]. Also, where I come from writing in a literary style is considered elegant. What's wrong with that? I do not understand.

Regarding his lack of critical stance in the book review, he remarked: "the authors of the book are authorities, big wigs in the field ... I know how to criticise, but I am generally not used to challenging or criticising authority…that's part of my upbringing you know". As illustrated in the above quotes, Mohammad (M) found it hard to challenge and critique the authority figures in the field due to his "upbringing" and his socio-cultural background.

It is also interesting to note that he attributes his style of writing to his interest in literature both in his first language and in English. The journal editor and peer reviewers though seemed to prefer a more conventional style of writing for publication. It is worth pointing out that Mohammad's initial decision was not to pursue the publication any longer; however, after having consulted his more experienced peers in the department who had already published book reviews, he changed his mind. Eventually, after revising and resubmitting the book review based on the feedback from peer reviewers, and after another round of minor revisions, he got published. Salient here is the supportive role of Mohammad's peers in the department. Turning again to my own experiences of publishing during the doctoral years, I can attest to the key role of peer learning and support, which helped me deal with the critical engagements in peer review (Fazel, 2021).

It is worth noting that, notwithstanding the challenges in the process, all participants managed to publish academically during the study period. Within the study period, Sam (M) managed to publish two sole-authored journal articles and a co-authored conference proceedings volume with his supervisor. Yelena (F) published a book review and co-authored two journal articles with an Anglophone peer of hers in the department. Mohammad (M) successfully published two sole-authored book reviews in scholarly journals, and Cho (F) managed to co-author a conference proceedings paper and a journal article in collaboration with her Anglophone peer who was also doing her Master's degree in the department.

6   Conclusion

The overarching aim of this study was to explore the intercultural challenges facing multilingual graduate students, as novice academics, in the process of writing for scholarly publication. Deardorff's (2006) model of intercultural competence was used as a conceptual lens to interpret the participants' intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills – affective and cognitive domains – in the process of writing for academic publication. Developing these foundational affective and cognitive attributes, according to Deardorff (2006), is a key precursor to the attainment of the desired (internal and external) behavioural outcomes in intercultural communication with other culturally different interactants – which, as mentioned earlier, lies beyond the scope of the present study.

By and large, the findings indicated challenges mainly stemming from the domains of intercultural knowledge and skills. More specifically, the findings showed that the participants struggled to one degree or another with the intercultural interactions in the high-stakes peer review process. Two specific challenges underlying this struggle were identified to be difficulty in interpreting and unpacking the peer review feedback as well as the sociopragmatic aspect of engaging with and responding to peer reviewers.

Quite clearly, successful navigation of the process of academic publishing demands, among other things, the sensibility of knowing how to skilfully

communicate and negotiate with the publication gatekeepers – i.e., journal editors and reviewers – and, where possible and apropos, disagree with or argue against their comments and positions in peer review reports – which requires one to know how to interpret peer review reports as well as manifest an adept awareness of socio-pragmatic nuances and complexities inherent in any power-infused negotiation.

Particularly of note is that the participants all received some sort of support in the process of scholarly publication, particularly when faced with intercultural challenges. Cho (F) and Yelena (F) managed to publish in collaboration with their Anglophone peers. It is worth remembering that Mohammad (M) also received support and guidance from his departmental peers in his publication endeavour, and Sam (M) enlisted the help of professional editors – literacy brokers (Lillis & Curry, 2006) – in his publication attempts. The findings highlight the importance of the mediating role of literacy brokers (Lillis & Curry, 2006) and academic mentors in supporting the participants in their publication endeavours – which has implications for ERPP pedagogy and graduate student education.

The burgeoning global spread of English and emergence of varieties of English in diverse settings has led to increasing calls in the scholarly community (e.g., Hynninen & Kuteeva, 2017; Kuteeva & Mauranen, 2014) for more tolerance and variation in English scholarly communication and publication. The fact remains though that the so-called "standard" English continues to be the default frame of reference in scholarly journals (Flowerdew & Habibie, 2022). In fact, research on the role played by academic mediators and literacy brokers in scholarly publication has revealed "a strong incentive" on the part of brokers and even authors to "follow Standard English correctness norms" (Hynninen, 2020, p. 20).

The findings also point to the need for further support and scaffolding in intercultural competence training of novice scholars, including graduate (especially doctoral) students and early-career scholars. I would argue that such training needs to be discipline-specific and tailored to meet the varying needs of novice authors within discourse communities. Experts in ERPP and intercultural rhetoric can help identify the common conventions of disciplinary discourse communities and also their members' tolerance for variation from the 'standard' English. Understandably, it is not easy for novices to know how much leeway from the norms (including standard English) is allowed in a given disciplinary discourse community. It is immensely and consequentially important for novice scholars to learn how to skilfully yet appropriately communicate – and, where necessary, negotiate or disagree – in their intercultural communications with the publication gatekeepers (i.e., journal editors and reviewers).

It is crucial to note though that intercultural experience per se, as rightly noted by Deardorff (2009), does not necessarily or automatically lead to the development of intercultural competence. Rather, intercultural competence needs to be cultivated deliberately "through adequate preparation, substantive intercultural interactions, and relationship building" (p. xiii).

Given the key role of intercultural competence (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) in handling intercultural communication in the process of writing for publication, ERPP initiatives and pedagogical programs need to embed intercultural competence

training as an integral part of their curriculum. Equipped with these sensibilities, novices would be better poised and prepared to handle the intercultural exchanges and encounters inherent in the process of scholarly publication and communication. I would argue that intercultural competence training should also be embedded into the graduate, especially doctoral, education curriculum, given the burgeoning importance of intercultural competence not only in scholarly publication but also in navigating communications in today's increasingly connected world, where there are endless opportunities for scholars to interact in a variety of modes and milieus.

On a different level, I would argue that journals too need to consider offering intercultural training aimed at peer reviewers with a focus on intercultural dimensions of peer review reports, such that they would be more mindful of intercultural considerations in their feedback provision. These intercultural exchanges, if used appropriately and mindfully, can serve as opportunities for intercultural training of novices, both multilingual and Anglophone writers wishing to enter their academic discourse communities.

The limited scope of the data available for the purposes of this chapter did not allow for an analysis of the internal and external outcomes of intercultural communication, as conceptualised in Deardorff's (2006) framework. A proper assessment of these interactional and relational aspects (internal and external intercultural outcomes) would require extensive and in-depth relevant data on the intricate intercultural interactions and exchanges taking place between the key interactants (i.e., journal editors, peer reviewers, academic mentors, etc.) involved in the process of scholarly publication, which future research in this vein should investigate.

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