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# Strangers in a Strange Land: Writing for Publication

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## 1. Introduction and Overview

This paper is based on a keynote presentation given in May 2024, at the *PASAA Journal* Forum at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand. The presentation was titled *Strangers in a Strange Land: Writing for Publication*, and offered advice to researchers, mostly focused on getting published in journals in our field of foreign language education, but also considering other kinds of publications, such as books and book chapters, as well as magazines and newsletter articles. The title of my talk was taken from the second book of the Bible (King James Version): "And she bare [*sic*] him a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land"(Exodus, 2, 22), and: "And her two sons; of which the name of the one was Gershom; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land" (Exodus, 18, 3). The title was chosen because of how I first felt when I had to start learning as much as I could about writing for publication (W4P) in the academic world – with little or no advice on W4P ever given to me from my professors about what to do, what to expect, or how to cope. The first part of my keynote abstract recognized the enormity of the under-taking, acknowledging that:

> Even native users of a language, for example, English, struggle to write for publication – which is not surprising as it is likely that more than 99% of native users of a language will never, in their entire lifetime, write anything for professional publication, ever. But because of the 'publish or perish' threat that has been dangled over the heads of professors, like some sort of Sword of Damocles, for nearly a century, we think that such writing is 'normal.' It is not, which is another essential fact to bear in mind.

The second part of the abstract asked a key question and summarized what was to come:

> How much more difficult, then, to do something in another language that the vast majority of the native users of that language will not

> and cannot do? In this keynote address, we will, then, look at what more than 30 years and more than 200 publications can teach us about how to be effective, efficient, and successful in this area, as well as common pitfalls and how to avoid them.

At this point, I must confess that of the 200+ publications that I have (co)authored and (co)edited over the last 30+ years, up to half of them would probably not be counted by the most prestigious international universities. Those institutions claim to want Knowledge Mobilization, in which professional academics write for a non-academic audience, but those same institutions pressure their professors to publish as much as they can as quickly as they can mainly/only in the top-tier journals, as that can lead to research-grant funding for those universities. That double-standard is discussed below, but it is worth mentioning here, at the beginning of this long paper, reflecting on more than three decades of work, as the 100+ publications that would be counted by most prestigious universities could not, in my experience, have been written without the totality of the W4P knowledge and skills that I have gained from every piece I have written. That includes the articles related to teaching and learning that I have written for our local newspaper, in Ontario, Canada (the *Kingston Whig-Standard*) which has been published continuously for nearly 100 years, with a circulation of well over 20,000 readers. What are the chances that anything we ever write and publish in an academic journal or book will be read by 20,000 people? For those of us committed to our writing being read by the largest number of people, while publishing in academic journals in our field is a non-negotiable must for professional career advancement, we should remember that there are many other ways to reach more readers.

After reviewing my notes and my slides from my *PASAA Journal* Forum keynote, I decided to attempt, for the first time, to reflect systematically and in-depth on my entire W4P career (up to this point), and to document what I have learned from all of my W4P, in the hope that that may be of use to current and

future W4P writers. Needless to say, with that many publications over that many decades, this ambitious (and possibly over-ambitious) undertaking proved to be far more challenging than writing up a keynote for publication (although that in itself is no easy task either). As a result of reflecting on so much writing, of so many different kinds, published over so many years, this paper has turned out to be a personal-professional reflective journey across space and time. That is, I believe, permissible, and perhaps should even be encouraged, as attempts to keep our personal and professional selves and lives separate usually fail, especially as teachers and learners, researchers, and writers, and the one life should be able to feed positively and productively into and come out of the other.

This paper is presented in two main parts, the first of which takes a deep dive into advice given by six journal editors to writers on how to get their work published in their respective journals, in six different fields. However, a review of that kind of literature showed that hundreds of articles giving W4P advice have been published over many decades in many different fields, with far more appearing to be in science journals, from childhood disease (Lilleyman, 1995) and computational biology journals (Bourne, 2005), to nursing (Albarran & Scholes, 2005), clinical, diagnostic research (Jha, 2014) and dentistry publications (Robinson, 2024). W4P advice has also been given in other disciplines, such as library science (Lonergan, 2013) and more general W4P advice has also been given (Schoenwolf, 2013), but far fewer W4P advice articles appear to have been published in journals in our field. Some of those articles describe “ten simple rules for getting published” (Lilleyman, 1995, p. 268) and “how to get published [in] seven easy steps” (Albarran & Scholes, 2005, p. 72). But as anyone who has ever tried to have their work published professionally knows, the process may be many things, from painful and distressing to joyful and rewarding, but it is never simple nor easy.

In addition to the hundreds of W4P advice articles, a number of full-length books have also been published giving advice, from shorter books, of 150 pages or

so (e.g., Day, 2016), to books of around 200 pages (e.g., Lussier, 2010; Thomson & Kamler, 2013) to longer 300- and 350-page volumes (e.g., Gastel & Day, 2022; Germano, 2016). With catchy titles such as *Publish Don't Perish: 100 Tips That Improve Your Ability to Get Published* (Lussier, 2010) and *Getting It Published: A Guide for Scholars and Anyone Else Serious About Serious Books* (Germano, 2016), all of them offer W4P advice. However, instead of the usual literature review of those advice publications, six are chosen which exemplify the kind of W4P advice given, and which are examined in greater detail, including the extensive use of verbatim quotations, so the exact advice given can be seen without the usual paraphrasing. The first W4P paper to be examined in detail is from the 1970s, published in the *British Journal of Psychology* (Crammer, 1978), and the second is from the 1980s (Prins, 1989), which appeared in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*. The third W4P advice piece is a chapter in a book published in the 1990s, titled *Rhythms of Academic Life: Personal Accounts of Careers in Academia* (Murphy, 1996), and the fourth is from the early 2000s, published in the *Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery* (Fried & Wechsler, 2001). The fifth and sixth W4P advice papers appeared in the *Journal of Pathology* in the early 2010s (Hall, 2011), and in 2014 in the journal *System: An International Journal of Educational Technology and Applied Linguistics* (Coleman, 2014).

The second part of this paper is divided into four sections, each covering a period of time during which I was researching, writing, and publishing, starting with my first decade (1990-2000), followed by my second (2000-2010), my third (2010-2020), and concluding with the first half of this decade (2020-2025). There is overlap between the first and last years of the decades (for example, 2000-2010 and 2010-2020), as so many publications start in one year, in terms of when the writing began, but take a year or more to finally be published, depending on the journal, the book, the editors, etc. Both of the two main parts of this paper start with a brief overview of what is to be covered in each part, and the paper finishes with a brief conclusion, looking forward at what may be to come in the future, in W4P in our field and in others.

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## 2. A Critical Review of Exemplars of W4P Advice Given

In the first main part of this paper below, advice from six editors of top-tier journals in their own fields is deconstructed and considered critically, to reveal a number of recurring themes, including the importance of clarity of writing, logical organization, and a clear structure when W4P, with the ultimate goal of making the writing as readable as possible. Another recurring theme in the papers below is the importance of writers following the submission guidelines and requirements closely, without which even well-written papers can significantly reduce their chances of being accepted. As the W4P advice papers from editors was given over a period of five decades, from the 1970s and into the 2010s, some changes in the advice given can be seen, in terms of the evolving nature of academic publishing. Another recurring theme is for writers to be honest, at least with themselves and each other, about their real reasons for wanting, needing, and having to publish, as different motivations lead to different outcomes. Targeting journals that are a good 'fit' with what is written, and understanding the review and revision process, including the fact that most journals reject most submissions, also emerge as recurring themes in the W4P advice given across different disciplines and in different decades.

Nearly 40 years ago, the editor of the *British Journal of Psychology*, Professor John Lewis Crammer (1921-2002), published a brief, two-page piece titled *How to Get Your Paper Published* (1978). In spite of the brevity of the paper, it contains advice that is still worth considering today. For example, Crammer stated that: "A paper is a communication of facts and ideas, not of feeling. It is to help the reader's intellectual functions, not to generate emotions or provide mystical insights. It is philosophy rather than literature or art," (Crammer, 1978, p. 112) adhering to the traditional distinctions between scientific subjects, such as psychology and other subjects. Crammer continued with the consequences of such distinctions: "Therefore, to do its work efficiently it [the paper] must have clarity of thought, simple expression, and a logical sequence in its presentation" (Crammer, 1978, p. 112). While some of Crammer's advice still holds true today,

for example, regarding the purpose of published papers being the effective and efficient "communication of facts and ideas," (Crammer, 1978, p. 112) some things have changed in the intervening decades.

According to Crammer (1978), the Editor views everything in three ways. He is part administrator, part reader's friend, and part poet. (I use the word in its old sense of a maker, a craftsman.) As administrator, he is concerned with costs of paper, of printing, of postage, of advertising" (p. 112). Leaving aside the use of only male pronouns that was the norm in those days (Baron, 2020; Johnson, 2021), there are probably very few (if any) journal editors today who would consider themselves to be a poet, even in the "old sense" of the word, and with the rise of online publishing, printing-postal costs are now much less of a concern. It is also possible that the emphasis on "simple expression" could be challenged, as the use of more technical and specialist language may be necessary, depending on the kind and area of research. Crammer (1978) concluded his advice with the following points:

> to increase your paper's chance of acceptance you need to make clear to yourself what your subject really is. You must choose an appropriate length and keep within it, and you must develop your account according to some logical scheme which the reader can grasp, and avoid irrelevance of data or ideas. (p. 113)

However, notions of what is appropriate and relevant in academic writing and publishing have also changed over time.

Another concise and still-useful two-page guide was published in a science journal by a professor of criminology, Herschel Prins (1928-2016), known for his work in forensic psychology. In his 1989 paper, titled *Getting Your Papers Published: Or How to Win Editors and Influence Assessors* (from the 1936 Dale Carnegie book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*), Prins explained that

over the previous three years, he had "assessed" or reviewed more than 30 papers for the *British Journal of Psychiatry* (Prins, 1989, p. 14). Based on that experience, Prins gave eight points of advice, that if followed would enhance the chances of a paper being accepted by the *Journal*, which he summarized as follows:

> (i) follow the basic instructions for contributors provided in the cover of the Journal; (ii) ensure that you really have addressed the topic with brevity and clarity; (iii) ensure that you have the readership of the Journal clearly in view at all times; (iv) always seek the advice, scrutiny, and criticisms of colleagues, friends, and/or family. (Prins, 1989, p. 15)

In spite of the fact that following a journal's "basic instructions for contributors" should be so obvious as to not need emphasizing, as reviewers and editors of many journals can confirm, it is not at all uncommon for papers submitted to journals not to conform to the journal's instructions, for example, regarding format, layout, listing of references, etc.

The 1996 book, *Rhythms of Academic Life: Personal Accounts of Careers in Academia*, edited by Peter Frost and Susan Taylor, includes a chapter on *Getting Published*, by Kevin Murphy, who is refreshingly honest when explaining the difference between theory and practice when it comes to publishing. Rather than the typically espoused reasons for publishing – "to disseminate knowledge, to help others, or to advance science" (p. 129) – Murphy confessed that he publishes because: "I want to influence others and because I want to build and maintain a reputation in the community of scholars that do similar work, and I think most of my colleagues publish for the same reasons" (pp. 129–130). Research on motivation, from extrinsic and intrinsic, to instrumental and integrative, has a long history (e.g., Collins & Montgomery, 1969), which is not necessary to go into here. However, it is likely that the more honest and more open we are – at least, with ourselves – about our real reasons for wanting, needing, and having to publish, the more productive, effective and efficient we may be. Or, as Murphy put it: "These

motivations have substantial impacts on both where I publish and what I publish" (Murphy, 1996, p. 130). An example of differential motivations in relation to publishing may be pre-tenure versus post-tenure (in higher education systems where tenure still exists). After tenure, academic writers may be able to consider a broader range of publication types and outlets for their work, beyond only or mainly targeting top-tier journals of the kind that would help them get tenure.

As noted above, entire books have been written on getting one's scholarly work published in the academic world, for example, Tim Albert's 2016 book, *Winning the Publications Game: The Smart Way to Write Your Paper and Get It Published*. However, in contrast to such 150-page texts, it is impressive how much useful advice on this topic can be squeezed into the minimum of language. For example, in the *Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery*, Pamela Fried and Andrew Wechsler published a short paper titled, *How to Get Your Paper Published* (2001), as the third example of how science journals have consistently given clear, concise advice in this area over decades. In their five-page paper, Fried and Wechsler give practical advice on writing the abstract, selecting an appropriate journal, putting together the manuscript, as well as the review and the publication processes. Under the section on the review process, Fried and Wechsler highlight, in fewer than 50 words, no less than ten areas that writers should pay particular attention to, based on the areas that reviewers of the *Journal* are asked to evaluate:

> Importance of the hypothesis; Reliability of the results; Appropriateness of the methods; Validity of the statistics used; Relevance of the discussion; Reasonableness of the conclusions; Clarity of the abstract; Length of the article; Relevance of the work in general; Priority the work should receive for publication. (Fried & Wechsler, 2001, p. 5)

Each of those ten areas is discussed briefly, while shifting the perspective from that of the writer to that of the reviewer. An editorial perspective may not be uppermost in the mind of the writer, as they are usually focused on what they are

trying to write, but at the end of the day, it is the reviewers who ultimately decided whether or not one's work ever gets to see the light of day.

Another example of advice given to science researchers writing for publication in journals in their field is the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Pathology*, Dr. Peter Hall's five-page paper, *Getting Your Paper Published: An Editor's Perspective* (Hall, 2011). Hall (2011) started by acknowledging that, "in particular for junior researchers the key steps of grant writing and paper writing can be daunting and full of frustration" (p. 72), which can also apply to seasoned researchers, but perhaps less so as time goes by, and experience is accumulated. In his paper, Hall (2011) presented ten lessons learned, beginning with:

> A key 'educational device' in the school of scientific writing is reading! Read much and widely! Read scientific papers in front rank journals and examine closely the style and approach of authors who have succeeded. Look at the structure and clarity of language. (p. 72)

That advice applies not only to "scientific writing" but to all kinds of W4P, although reading "widely" can be a challenge in the face of the pressure to specialize and become experts in a relatively narrow field. But coming to applied linguistics via a decidedly non-traditional pathway, starting in clinical medicine with a number of other careers along the way, has given me a keen interest in acquiring knowledge from a wide range of fields, many of which have little or nothing to do with applied linguistics. That approach is premised on my firm belief that all knowledge is connected, no matter how artificially compartmentalized it is, for the purposes of developing courses and curricula. Hall (2011) continued with Lesson Two:

> The key point here is 'have something to say'! Only when you have a clear message should you begin to think about the publication

> process. Your message should be clear, and it should be a significant addition to the literature. (p. 72)

However, it may be advisable for writers to start thinking about the process of publishing even before they have "a clear message," as the sooner they start thinking about publishing the sooner they can begin to target particular journals that may be a good fit with the paper they are planning to write.

Hall (2011) also drew on a one-page report from the 1960s, published in the British Medical Journal, which is a summary of a talk given by Sir Austin Bradford-Hill, in which he asked four fundamental questions: "Why did you start, what did you do, what answer did you get, and what does it mean anyway?" (Bradford-Hill, 1965, p. 870). Hall (2011) related Bradford-Hill's four questions to, "the general paradigm of Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, and Discussion (sometimes referred to as IMRAD)" (p. 73). Under Lesson 5, "How to decide where to send your paper" (p. 73), Hall (2011) accepted that although there are the "very high profile journals…that command huge respect and in whose pages are…articles of major importance," and that "publishing in such high impact journals is the pinnacle of careers," "inevitably few authors achieve this" (p. 74). Therefore, Hall (2011) advised newer writers to pay attention to the fact that: "There lie just below these [very high profile journals] a wide array of journals whose impact is only slightly less and also carry major impact articles" (p. 74). Those kinds of journals may be a more feasible and more realistic starting point for newer and less experienced writers, perhaps especially for those writing in a language that is not their first. Under Lesson 8, Hall stated that: "Understand what editors like. Editors are simple people! They like authors to follow the instructions to authors and this is a huge step in winning over an editor," (p. 75), in which his first and third points, about understanding and following instructions, are essential, although his perhaps playful claim that editors are "simple people!" has been found, in my experience, to be (much) less true.

Nonetheless, writers should bear in mind at all times that editors are also writers, and that all editors started off, at some point, as new writers, anxiously submitting their first papers, before climbing the ladder of academic success, over many years and even over decades, to reach the vaunted and rarified heights of Editor-in-Chief. Under the same lesson, Hall (2011) reiterated the point made above, regarding writers not following a journal's publication submission guidelines and requirements: "Many would be astonished by how common it is for authors to completely fail to comply with key issues in the instructions to authors" (p. 75), and he added that: "editors like manuscripts that have a good 'fit' with the journal's aims and scope and address a clear research question" (p. 75). Hall (2011) followed with the flip-side of Lesson 8, in which he advised writers to "Be aware of what editors really do not like!" including: "Papers that do not fit with the journal, that are unoriginal, that are overly long or in any other way do not comply with the instructions to authors," which Hall described as "the bane of the editor's life" (pp. 75–76). Hall concluded his paper with Lesson 10: "Do not give up and understand the peer review process. Authors need to understand that most journals only accept a fraction of the submitted material" (p. 76), and a final comment, in which he returned to Lesson 1: "it is important to read and read: by reading you will see good practice and hopefully develop your skills: and as with any skill practice leads to improvement, even if perfection is rarely achieved!" (p. 76). Although that last point, about attempting to achieve perfection, may sound like stating the obvious, it can help writers to finally let go of their paper, and submit it somewhere, instead of hanging and holding onto it, in the hope that it may one day be perfect.

As noted above, compared to the advice given by science journals, in our field of foreign language education, there appear to have been far few pieces published in journals giving advice to researchers writing for publication. One example was found in the journal *System: An International Journal of Educational Technology and Applied Linguistics*, which has for more than 50 years, since 1973, been publishing papers in those two broad areas. In 2014, professor of language

learning and teaching at The Open University in the UK, James Coleman, completed his three-year stint as the Editor-in-Chief of *System*, based on which he published an article titled, *How to Get Published in English: Advice From the Outgoing Editor-in-Chief*. Coleman (2014) explained that he had, at that time, (co)authored and (co)edited around 100 publications, and had been a reviewer for more than 20 international journals (see also Coleman & Klapper, 2004). Coleman (2014) started by stating that: "Language teachers and applied linguists in universities across the world are under increasing pressure to publish in prestigious international journals" (p. 404), and in the decade since Coleman wrote that, those pressures to publish do not appear to have declined, and if anything, they may well have increased (Curtis, 2023a).

Under a section sub-titled, *Basics*, Coleman (2014) advised writers to consider the following points and to ask the following questions:

> Select your target journal(s) carefully, and aim high. Where are the key articles in your field published? Ask your supervisors and colleagues. Access the homepage and study the Aims and Scope and the journal's requirements. Skim several issues to appreciate its approach. Does it accept both quantitative and qualitative studies, theoretical and empirical articles? (p. 405)

However, as noted above, the advice to "aim high" needs to be tempered with a chronological consideration of where the researcher and writer is in what might be referred to as their publishing lifecycle. For example, early on in the academic career of researcher and writer, it may be wiser to start lower down, in terms of submitting papers to journals that are not ranked as top-tier, and build-up from there, as writers gain more experience of receiving reviewers' feedback on their submissions, and revising their papers based on that feedback. And in relation to responding to such feedback, Coleman (2014) cautioned that:

> It is technically possible for reviewers to recommend acceptance without change, but in my three years as editor and 30 years as reviewer this has never happened: there is always something which can be improved, and revising your paper is the norm, even for the most experienced authors. (p. 407)

That last piece of advice is especially relevant to the need for writers to develop a "thick skin" and high tolerance for rejection, when coping with the challenge of accepting that the rejection of one's work is not the rejection of oneself!

## 3. More Than 30 Years of W4P Reflected on and Lessons Learned

In the second main part of this paper below, I reflect on what I have learned about W4P over the last 30+ years and 200+ publications, starting with my first decade (1990-2000), then my second (2000-2010), my third (2010-2020), and concluding with the first half of this decade (2020-2025). Although different lessons were learned with each publication, each passing year and during each decade, all of the lessons learned were accumulated, built upon, and carried forward. In my first decade, I learned how to go about making contributions that could be categorized as "original" to an existing body of knowledge, and about the need to engage in collaborative W4P, in relation to the notion of "complementing" versus "complimenting." I also learned about the value of drawing on the intersection of personal experience and research, and the value of writing articles for publications that would not necessarily be counted by universities that are considered to be prestigious. In my second decade, I learned about building an international professional network through W4P with co-authors from around the world, which also related to career development through W4P, and about some of the harsher realities of W4P, including the slow pace of top-tier journals and the high rejection rates. Those lessons led me to diversify my W4P efforts across a range of platforms, from prestigious top-tier journals to teacher-friendly

newsletters, and helped me understand the tremendous developmental benefits of mentorship and learning from senior colleagues.

Much of my third decade was spent in mentoring and coaching roles, working mostly with language teaching professionals, many of whom were new to W4P, especially in English, and who had not published a book before (in any language). Another feature of my third decade of W4P was the focus on the critical importance of context in language education, to which lip service is usually paid, but not fully acknowledged or deeply explored as a deciding factor in the success or failure of methodologies and materials. To come to the most recent years, I continue to consolidate lessons learned in the previous decades, culminating in the founding of a new area of applied linguistics, going beyond the traditional Peace Linguistics to a New Peace Linguistics, in which the words of the most powerful people in the world are subjected to in-depth, systematic language analysis, which may help move us towards a more peaceful and less war-torn world.

### 3.1 The First Decade: 1990-2000

My first publication was in a book of refereed conference proceedings (Curtis, 1992), published while I was completing my MA in Applied Linguistics & English Language Teaching at the University of York in England. In that paper, I connected some aspects of the large body of work on Autism with the large body of work on Second Language Acquisition (SLA), as I noticed some similarities between clinically “normal” students learning a second language and young adults with autism learning their first language (which was, for them, English). That paper was followed by a number of other chapters in refereed conference proceedings (e.g., Curtis, 1994, 1999a, 1999b) and shorter articles in magazines and newsletters for language educators (e.g., Curtis, 1999, 1999c, 1999d). In the second half of the 1990s, I also co-authored my first articles published in mainstream journals in our field, including the *TESOL Quarterly*, the *Journal of Second Language Writing,* and the *Asia Pacific Journal of Language in Education* (Curtis & Heron, 1998; Curtis &

Roskams, 1998; Jacobs et al., 1998) and my first book chapters (Curtis, 1996, 1999e). Reflecting back on that first decade of publications and connecting those reflections with the W4P advice literature discussed above, one of the main lessons I learned during that period was about the emphasis on publishing work which has to claim to make an original contribution to the body of knowledge in a particular field. However, with so much research being carried out and so many papers being published, making such a contribution can seem like an insurmountable task, especially for someone just starting out as an academic writer, engaged in W4P.

My 1992 paper addressed the challenge of originality by bringing together aspects of two very large bodies of well-established knowledge – clinical studies of Autism and studies in SLA – in ways that they had not been connected before. And although my line of thinking in that area did not develop much further, it was a valuable lesson in the difference between simply seeing something and looking closely. All of the published work in those two fields was available for anyone and everyone to see and to read, but by looking closely, I was able to notice connections that appeared to have gone unnoticed before. For example, a clinical behavior known as echolalia is defined as “the echoing of prior speech [and] is a typical characteristic of autism” (Xie et al., 2023, p. 1). Although echolalia was “long considered meaningless repetition to be avoided,” it was recently found that “echolalia may in fact be used functionally in autism” (Xie et al., 2023, p. 1). As all teachers and learners of foreign languages know, there can be a great deal of repetition in classrooms that employ the listen-and-repeat approach. When I noticed the same kind of repetitive oral behavior in both groups – clinically “normal” students learning a second language and young adults with autism learning their first language – I decided to explore. And although that exploration did not continue, as someone who has been diagnosed as being autistic, it is a subject I returned to 30 years after that first paper (Curtis, 2021, 2022a, 2023b).

During that first decade, I also learned how to collaborate and co-author with colleagues who are a good fit with each other. By that, I do not mean they are necessarily similar in how they work or how they write. On the contrary, it can be the differences that make for a successful partnership. For example, I have worked with some co-authors who had a great eye for detail, which was essential when it came to putting together the list of references, making sure that all of the quotations in the text were properly cited, and that all of entries in the reference list matched the citations in the text. However, although those colleagues taught me a great deal about those aspects of W4P, some of them had trouble seeing the Big Picture, in terms of the overall piece and the over-arching connections. That makes sense, as it is difficult to be both up close and at a distance at the same time. To use the camera/cellphone metaphor, if someone is good at zooming in, to see the fine detail, they are not usually the same person who is good at zooming out, to see the piece in its entirety. The key lesson learned was, then, to work with colleagues who may not compliment you, as your differences can sometimes cause some tension in the relationship, but with whom you will complement each other.

Another important point to note here is that many of my 1990 publications would not be counted by universities towards, for example, tenure and promotion, or even contract renewal, because they were not published in mainstream academic journals. That not-counting and discounting of such publications by universities reveals a double standard, if not an outright hypocrisy, as those same universities pressure their researchers to step outside the hallowed halls and the Ivory Towers of Academia and write for a more general readership (Gast, 2018; Mintzberg & Mintzberg, 2023; Zook, 2015). Therefore, my advice to newer writers, starting to establish their presence in the field, is to write not only for mainstream academic journals, with their limited audience, but also to write shorter articles for teacher magazines and newsletters, which will actually be read by classroom practitioners. As education researchers, we should feel obliged to write and publish articles that are written with classroom teachers in mind; articles that might help busy teachers do what they do, and thereby allow us to give something back in

return for all the classroom data they give us (Curtis, 2023a). Without those data, we cannot write our articles for publication in those mainstream academic journals, without which we cannot find university employment, apply for research funding, have our contracts renewed, be promoted, and ultimately gain tenure – jobs for life, in a world in which such employment can only be dreamed of by everybody who is not a tenured professor.

### 3.2 The Second Decade: 2000-2010

At the start of the new millennium, my first book was published, and in spite of it only being a 100-page handbook, titled, *Preparing to Write Your MPhil/PhD*, published by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University Department of English, I am still receiving email enquiries about that handbook more than 20 years after it was published, and copies of it are still in use. The handbook was co-authored with Dwight Atkinson, who was brought in as a consultant by the then head of department, Liz Hamp-Lyons (1946-2022). The fact that Professor Atkinson and I are still friends and colleagues illustrates another aspect of this kind of publication not usually mentioned, which is the building up of a worldwide professional network of colleagues through co-authored publications (co-authors who, if you are as lucky as I have been, eventually become lifelong friends). It is, then, no coincidence that many of my early articles in recognized journals in our field were co-authored with senior professors, such as Kathi Bailey and David Nunan (see The First Decade above). Also, as with my 1990s not-counted and discounted articles, the 2000 handbook, helped me learn and develop research, writing, editing, and publishing knowledge and skills that I still use today, decades later.

My first book to be published by a major publisher was the 2001 *Pursuing Professional Development: The Self as Source*, co-authored with Kathi and David (Bailey et al., 2001), as part of Donald Freeman's *Teacher Source* series. The book was one of the first to bring together a wide range of approaches to professional development specifically focused on language teachers. My second decade also resulted in a number of other co-authored and co-edited books and book chapters,

including *Washback in Language Testing: Research Contexts and Methods*, co-authored with Liying Cheng and Josh Watanabe (Cheng et al., 2004), *Color, Race and English Language Teaching: Shades of Meaning*, co-edited with Mary Romney (Curtis & Romney, 2006), and *English Language Assessment and the Chinese Learner*, co-edited with Liying Cheng (Cheng & Curtis, 2010). All of the co-edited books also contained single-authored chapters written by me, as well as many single-authored chapters in other books (e.g., Curtis, 2005, 2008, 2009) and many co-authored chapters in other books too (e.g., Ayala & Curtis, 2006; Curtis & Cheng, 2007; Fox & Curtis, 2010; McNaught & Curtis, 2009). Of particular note is the *Shades of Meaning* book, which came out of a 2001 panel on color, race, and ELT presented at the annual TESOL International Convention that year. Many of the contributors to that edited volume, who were early on in their careers at that time, went on to become well-known in our field, for example, Professor Suhanthie Motha, whose books include *Race, Empire, and English Language Teaching* (2014), and *Race, Racism, and Antiracism in Language Education* (2024, co-edited with Ryuko Kubota).

During my second decade, I also (co)authored a number of articles in mainstream journals in our field, including *System* (Chapple & Curtis, 2000), the *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* (Curtis & Cheng, 2001), the *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching* (Curtis, 2001a), as well as articles in TESOL International Association publications, including *TESOL Matters* (Curtis, 2001c), the *TESOL Journal* (Bailey et al., 2001), and the Association's *Essential Teacher* magazine (e.g., Curtis, 2006, 2007). One way of establishing an international presence that is rarely recommended, again perhaps of university prejudices, biases, and double-standards, is to publish in regional and national journals that have an international readership, examples of which include the *Korea TESOL Journal* (Curtis, 2000) and the *Journal of the Pan-Asian Consortium* (Curtis, 2001b). Although such journals are not widely recognized internationally, they are an effective way of establishing the kind of international presence that, in my case,

helped me to become elected as the 50th President of the TESOL International Association (from 2015 to 2016).

Needless to say, my second decade of (co)authoring and co(editing), on top of my first decade, taught me many lessons about researching and W4P, especially those related to working together, working individually, working with editors, and working with publishers. Again, in spite of the typical university rhetoric about encouraging cooperation and collaboration among colleagues, solo-authored publications in mainstream journals are still often some of the most highly-prized when it comes to finding employment, applying for research funding, contract renewal, promotion, and tenure. Therefore, as noted above, it is necessary to work on multiple fronts at the same time and consistently over long periods of time, for example, by submitting solo-authored and co-authored articles at all levels, from the most teacher-friendly, accessible, and widely read sources, such as magazines and newsletters, to the top-tier journals in the field. One reason for that kind of a multi-pronged approach is because the most prestigious and highly-ranked journals also tend to take the longest time to publish – often so long that by the time the paper is finally published it is already somewhat out-of-date, and the same goes for book publishers who take years to produce a book. Also, those same top-tier journals often also have the highest rejection rates, which some of them wear like some kind of badge of honor – “we reject 90% of the articles we receive” boast some of the more self-important journals.

My advice, then, is to stay away from those journals until later in one’s W4P career. And to make sure that, while the top-tier and mainstream journals are doing the writers the favor of reading their work and considering it for publication, it is necessary to also have a number of publications being considered by a wide range of journals, from the most humble, which usually have the quickest turn-around time and the widest readership, to the most self-aggrandizing. The lower-level publications are also the most grateful for contributions, as they usually struggle to persuade writers to submit articles to their publication, as there is so much

pressure to publish in sources that count towards career advancement in ways that lower-level publications usually do not. Indeed, some of the most rewarding publishing experiences I have ever had have been with grateful magazine and newsletter editors.

### 3.3 The Third Decade: 2010-2020

With nearly 20 years of experience under my belt by 2010, I was ready to publish my first solo-authored book, published by a mainstream publisher. That may seem late for a first solo-authored book (especially, for example, for those academics who are able to publish their doctoral thesis as a book), but I took a different route and followed a different path. I continued in my third decade to (co)edit books published by major publishers (e.g., Bailey & Curtis, 2015; Curtis & Sussex, 2018), book chapters (e.g., Curtis 2012, 2015a, 2015b) and articles in mainstream journals (Xu et al., 2015), as well as articles in teacher magazines and newsletters (e.g., Curtis, 2017a, 2019). However, my priority also shifted from W4P for my own career advancement to helping those who were new to W4P. At around the same time, I noticed that the original contexts in which language teaching methodologies were initially developed tended to be glossed over, and in spite of authors decrying the one-size-fits-all approach, some of them then went on to discuss methods with little or no reference to the context in which the teaching and learning was taking place. That tendency to at least under-estimate, if not completely overlook, the importance of the context resulted in methodologies that were successful in one part of the world failing in another part (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Holliday, 1994) including such dominant methodologies as Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Language Teaching (Aspinall, 2006). To address the inadequate attention paid to context, in 2017, I published, *Methods and Methodologies for Language Teaching: The Centrality of Context* (Curtis, 2017c).

At the same time as working on that 2017 book, I became the series editor for nine books published by the TESOL Press, published under the series title of

*ELT in Context*. The first book in the series turned out to be ahead of its time, in treating online language teaching and learning as a context in and of itself (Rose, 2015). So that by the time the COVID-19 pandemic moved so much of the world's classes online, there was already a reference book for that situation, albeit somewhat older, but still useful. That was followed by books on ELT in a non-governmental organization school in Cambodia (Takeda, 2015), colleges and universities in China (Hartse & Dong, 2015), and at the US-Mexican border (Urzúa, 2015) – a site that went on to become a major focus of 2024 US Presidential Election. The series also included books on ELT in Colombia (Corrales et al., 2015), in Saudi Arabia (Hastings, 2015), and in Brazil (Boas & Cox, 2015), as well as ELT in the US universities and colleges (Orlando, 2016; Xu & Cao, 2017), and included pedagogical as well as geographical contexts, such as English for Specific Purposes (Hastings, 2015) and Intensive English Programs (Orlando, 2016). Each of the books started with a general series editors introduction, which was the same for each book, but I also wrote a specific introduction, which was different for each book in the series. For many of the writers in that series, it was their first time to publish a book and/or to publish in English. Therefore, it was necessary for me to be a hands-on series editor, from which I learned a great deal.

During that third decade, I was also a series editor for five other books (published by Palgrave Macmillan) under the title *Applied Linguistics for the Language Classroom*, which included my methodology book. All of the books in that series were practically-oriented, up-to-date, language teacher-friendly volumes on technology (Mercado, 2017), assessment (Cheng & Fox, 2017), research methods (Avineri, 2017) and phonetics, phonology, and pronunciation (Hall & Hastings, 2017). As with the nine-book *ELT in Context* series, for each of the books in this *Applied Linguistics* series, I also wrote a standard series editor's introduction as well as a more specific introduction for each book. Somehow – although I can no longer recall just how we did that! – my own book in the series plus all four other books were all published in the same year. The series also included authors for whom it was their first time publishing a book, making it again

necessary for me to be a hands-on series editor, from which I also learned a great deal. During that third decade, being the 50th President of the TESOL International Association (2015-2016) and serving on the Association's Board of Directors for the second time (2014-2016) provided me with even more opportunities to develop my W4P knowledge and skills, while helping others to do the same. In terms of diversifying that knowledge and those skills, I also wrote a series of 20 *TESOL President Blog* postings, for the Association's website, posted between 2015 and 2017, as well as 16 other blogs for the Association's website, under the heading of *Teaching and Learning Online*, posted in 2013 and 2014, again well-ahead of the COVID-19 curve.

Being an editor of so many books, in such a relatively short time, and helping so many authors to publish what was, in many cases, their first book (and in some cases, their only book, so far) taught me many of the lessons identified in the advice given by journal editors, discussed above. Those lessons included not only the importance of but also the challenges of the effective and efficient "communication of facts and ideas" clearly and concisely (Crammer, 1978, p. 112). Other lessons for the writer from the editorial perspective included Prins (1989)'

> (i) follow the basic instructions for contributors… (ii) ensure that you really have addressed the topic… (iii) ensure that you have the readership…clearly in view at all times; (iv) always seek the advice, scrutiny, and criticisms of colleagues, friends, and/or family. (p. 15).

Writers being honest about their real reasons for wanting, needing, and having to publish (Murphy, 1996), as well as Fried and Wechsler's ten points (2001), Hall's ten lessons learned (2011), and Coleman's questions (2014), all resonated with me during my years as an editor, which informed and shaped my own W4P. For example, I learned how to move from what I refer to as "writer-centered writing" to "reader-centered writing" (Curtis, 2024b), which turns out to be much harder than it might sound, as it is normal and natural for a writer to focus

on what they are trying to say in their writing. However, when we let go of ourselves as writers, we can then focus on the reader, which can be extremely difficult as we do not know for sure who that reader will be, but the more we can be the reader than the writer, the better our writing will be.

### 3.4 The First Half of the Fourth Decade: 2020-2025

The list of life skills that I do not possess to any confident or competent degree is long! Like most of the university academics I know, because they are so good with their heads, they are relatively poor with their hands. Or, to put it another way, we may have exchanged and traded-in our hands-on skills for head-based work – in what used to be called the Knowledge-Based Economy (Harris, 2011; Godin, 2006; Stoian et al., 2024) before the widespread but erroneous belief that Artificial Intelligence (AI), especially Generative AI and Large Language Models, will soon replace us all (Akhavan & Jalali, 2024; Coyle, 2023; Ferrara, 2024). To return to my embarrassingly limited set of life skills, after 35 years of teaching and learning, researching and writing, publishing, and presenting, I believe my language skills have developed to an unusually high degree, especially when it comes to language analysis. As a consequence of those language analysis interests and abilities, instead of writing papers all about the objectivity and superiority of Western Scientific Methodologies, as all of my clinical course-mates were doing, I wrote critically about the languages of science. Consequently, I ended up leaving a prestigious medical scholarship program in UK hospitals, to become, of all things, a language teacher. Unfortunately, in the same way that the parents of the Chinese-American stand-up comedian Jimmy Yang (Yang, 2020) were horrified and scandalized, when he left a career in finance to tell jokes for a living, my poor immigrant parents felt the same way. But it is precisely that non-traditional pathway that has enabled me to bring together different and seemingly disparate disciplines and bodies of knowledge in ways that constitute originality and creativity.

My most recent book (Curtis, 2024a) started with a course taught at Brigham Young University-Hawaii (BYU-H) in 2017, and again in 2018. The course was (and as far as we know, still is) the only credit-bearing, university-level course on Peace Linguistics (PL). That experience resulted in my first published papers on PL (Curtis 2017b, 2018a, 2018b), which in turn led my first time as a guest editor for a special issue of a journal, *The TESL Reporter*. But because the *Reporter* was published by BYU-H (sadly, it is no more), it was not considered a top journal in our field, although at that time, the *Reporter* had been published continually for more than half-a-century, which is rare among TESOL journals. In addition to writing a paper for the special issue, as well as the editor's introduction and conclusion, I also helped with a couple of co-authored papers (Curtis & Gomes de Matos, 2018; Curtis & Tarawhiti, 2018). Those initial articles and the guest edited special issue led to more papers on PL in language teacher-friendly magazines and newsletter (e.g., Curtis, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c) which in turn led to co-authored chapters on PL in books published by mainstream publishers in our field (Curtis & Oxford, 2021; Oxford & Curtis, 2021).

My PL papers published during those five years (2017-2021), together with a number of invited presentations on PL, eventually led to my solo-authored 2022 book, *The New Peace Linguistics and The Role of Language in Conflict* (Curtis, 2022b). In that book, I proposed a different kind of PL, a New Peace Linguistics, which shifted the focus from language teachers and learners using "peaceful language" (Gomes de Matos, 2014; Oxford, 2013), as those parties can do relatively little to make the world a more peaceful place, especially when compared with powerful world leaders, such as presidents of the USA and others, who have at their disposal the world's weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, in *The New Peace Linguistics*, I deconstruct and dissect the speeches of, for example, past and present US presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden, and others in power, with access to enough military hardware and software to end all life on Earth. By applying in-depth, systematic language analyses to those speeches, I was able to

identify a number of language strategies used by people in power that can make peace or war more or less likely.

Finally, in the third quarter of 2024, my most controversial book was published, *Bad Language: Decoding Donald Trump*, which has so far been receiving positive reviews on a number of websites in a number of countries (for example, five-star reviews on Amazon and Goodreads in the USA, Canada, Japan, and elsewhere). Almost everyone I know was, to put it extremely mildly, deeply disappointed with the result of the 2024 US Presidential Election, and my 2024 book grew out of hearing so many people, in the USA, Canada, and around the world, over the last ten years, since 2015 (when former- and future-US President Trump started his run for the presidency the first time) ask questions such as: Why is this happening – again? How can this be happening – again? Just how deeply damaged is democracy, perhaps beyond repair? And so on, all asked with varying degrees of shock, fear, and dread. In *Bad Language*, I analyzed five major speeches given by former/future US President, Donald Trump, over a period of approximately 21 months, from November 2022, when he announced he would be running for the Republican Party nomination to run for US President again, to July 2024, when he accepted his party's nomination. According to Bailey (2024),

> Although Curtis draws extensively on the work of political analysts, investigative reporters, psychologists, and fact-checkers, he also brings a new approach to understanding Trump's surprising appeal to millions of US voters. Curtis decodes and deconstructs not just what the candidate says but how and why he says it.

The lessons learned from my PL journey so far is that it is not only possible but perhaps advisable to start our research with our teaching, in my case, teaching a new PL course, of a kind that had not been taught before. That was followed by the usual not-counted and discounted articles on PL, which led to my being invited to be a guest editor of a special issue of a journal on PL, which in turn led to a number of book chapters and eventually books on PL, and which culminated in me

being described as a “pioneer” in PL (Wright, 2022; Wright, 2024). All that in eight years, from 2017 to 2024, which is a relatively short time in the average lifespan of a typical academic, which can often span 30 to 40 years. Building on previous decades of teaching and learning, researching and writing, presenting, and publishing, my PL trajectory shows that, even in the cut-throat publish-or-perish competition of W4P that universities, journals, and publishers have carefully created over the last century or so (Curtis, 2023a), it is still possible to stay grounded, and true to our beliefs.

## 4. Concluding Thoughts

To return to the opening quote about being “strangers in a strange land,” according to a saying that purportedly comes from the Chinese languages and cultures: A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. In my case – as in almost all of our cases – our W4P journeys started with a single publication. The rare academic rising stars in some fields have big publications in big journals early on in their W4P careers, but for most of us, it is a long and winding road, with many bumps along the way. However, if we are paying attention, each of those bumps teaches us a valuable lesson, as we tend to learn more from our challenges, difficulties, and failures than we do from our successes, perhaps because the former are more likely to make us step back, take stock, and reflect on what happened. Even though I was given very little advice or guidance about W4P from my graduate studies professors and doctoral supervisors, I have been extremely fortunate to have been coached and mentored by leaders in our field, who have combined compassion and care with “reality checks” and “tough love” in equal and effective measure. None of us can know our future, so I cannot say whether or not I will continue to W4P. But what I do know is that the last 30+ years have given me so many opportunities to do a great deal of meaningful and worthwhile work with some truly inspiring people, and maybe, at the end of our W4P days, when we look back on our decades-long publication record, that is the true and lasting measure of our professional lives and of our legacy.

## 5. About the Author

Dr. Andy Curtis (Ph.D.) started his professional life as a clinical biochemist in hospitals in the UK. However, having found his real passions – teaching, learning, languages, and cultures – he moved from healthcare to science education to language education, making his a highly unusual and risky professional pathway. But such a pathway enabled him to bring together diverse fields of inquiry that had not been previously connected, and he has been recognized as the founder of the New Peace Linguistics. From 2015 to 2016, he served as the 50th President of the TESOL International Association, and in 2016, he received one of the Association's 50-at-50 Awards, when he was voted one of the 50 most influential figures in the field, over the first 50 years of the Association. Over the last 30+ years, Dr. Curtis has (co)authored and (co)edited 200+ articles, book chapters, and books, presented to 50,000 language educators in 100 countries, in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, North, South, and Central America, and his writings have been read by 100,000 language educators in 150 countries. He is currently serving as a Distinguished Guest Professor in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the City University of Macau (SAR, PRC), and he is cross-appointed to a number of universities in Mainland China. His most recent book is *Bad Language: Decoding Donald Trump* (2024).

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