Author's editor revisions to manuscripts published in international journals

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

English as Additional Language (EAL) scholarly writers have to overcome numerous obstacles to meet the expectations of editors and peer reviewers before they can publish their research articles in international journals published in English. A number of shapers (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003) are often involved in revising such articles before their eventual publication. This study focuses on the revision changes made by an author's editor to a corpus of such articles leading up to their eventual publication. Based on textual analysis of the early drafts and published manuscripts of 15 SCI-indexed journal articles by Chinese doctoral students, a double-entry coding scheme was developed to describe 5160 revision changes made to the manuscripts, in terms of five types of revision, i.e., substitution, correction, addition, deletion, and rearrangement, and four different lexico-grammatical levels, i.e., morpheme, word, group and clause/clause complex. With the exception of correction, a category which applies to surface-level errors (which do not affect meaning), and is the second most frequent category of changes, all of the other categories represent changes which often substantially alter the meanings of the texts and which involve negotiation between the editor and the writer. The theoretical and pedagogical implications of the findings are discussed with reference to previous studies focusing on revision changes and to debates concerning English as a Lingua Franca franca and World Englishes.

1. Introduction

With English having established itself as the dominant language for international scholarly communication, English as an Additional Language (EAL) scholars are under enormous pressure to have their research articles published in SCI/SSCI-indexed international journals, the great majority of which are published in English. In order to meet the degree requirement, doctoral students studying science and engineering in major research universities in China (and increasingly in other jurisdictions), for example, are expected to publish at least one research article in an SCI-indexed journal (Li, 2005). It has been widely acknowledged that EAL scholars have to overcome considerable difficulties in order to publish their research in international journals (Canagarajah, 1996; Cho, 2004; Flowerdew, 1999; Salager-Meyer, 2008). Among other things, they may experience linguistic problems such as "less facility of expression," "less rich vocabulary," and "intervention from their first language" (Flowerdew, 1999). Furthermore, it has been argued that such writers may have to negotiate with journal

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editors and peer reviewers with "authorial persistence",[1] i.e. making continuous efforts to revise and resubmit their manuscripts, if they want to eventually have their research articles published (Belcher, 2007), a process which is likely to be more difficult for an EAL writer.

Contributions from EAL scholars working in the developing world are crucial for the global development of scientific research (Canagarajah, 1996; Van Dijk, 1994). Based on interviews with a dozen journal editors, Flowerdew (2001) also reported on the importance of EAL scholarly work, as EAL scholars often have access to research sites and data that are not reachable by researchers in the developed world. In response to the needs of EAL academic writers, the editors of an international research journal on comparative education have developed a mentoring program to help EAL authors to improve their manuscripts (Lillis, Magyar, & Robinson-Pant, 2010). In addition to this writing for publication program, efforts have been made to help EAL scholars to improve their academic writing and publication skills through courses and workshops (Cargill & O'Connor, 2006). Furthermore, there is a flourishing industry of scholarly editorial services.

For most EAL scholars who lack access to such programs or cannot afford the editing services, their manuscripts are often shaped by a number of literacy brokers before achieving publication (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003; Li & Flowerdew, 2007; Lillis & Curry, 2006). Based on "text histories" they conducted, Lillis & Curry (2010, p. 93) recognized two types of literacy brokers: academic brokers, focusing on the content of research articles, and language brokers, more concerned with linguistic presentation. The line between academic brokers and language brokers is not always clear cut, however. EAL authors are often asked by journal editors and reviewers to seek help from native-speakers of English with expertise in their field to edit their manuscripts (e.g., Willey & Tanimoto, 2013). As it is not easy to access such native-speakers who are familiar with their subject matter, EAL scholars often seek help from "convenience editors," non-content specialists with a good command of English, who are often language teachers in the author's universities (Willey & Tanimoto, 2012, 2013).

Despite the research attention paid to the shapers of manuscripts and the literacy brokers involved in the editing of manuscripts, except for a small number of studies, little is known about the actual editing or revision changes that are made to help EAL authors achieve publication. Burrough-Boenisch (2003, p. 224) has referred to editors who do such work as being able to "give insightful 'from the coalface' perspectives on the handling of NNS texts" and has called for more research attention to be paid to these "intuitive and experienced language experts," because such people "could contribute to training people for this emerging profession." The present study seeks to occupy this research gap by analyzing a set of data "from the coalface," that is to say, the revision changes made to manuscripts that were initially deemed unacceptable for publication by journal editors and reviewers but which, following editing, were eventually published.[2] While all of the manuscripts analyzed in this article were edited by one author's editor, and so this is a single case, it is hoped that this study of how these manuscripts were edited may begin to further our knowledge of this important issue in the field of English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP).

2. Literature review and theoretical issues addressed in the study

2.1. The roles of author's editors and the reasons behind revision changes

The important roles of author's editors in shaping the manuscripts of EAL scholars have long been recognized by previous scholars (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003; Lillis & Curry, 2010; Shashok, 2001). These editing roles have been given a number of different labels, including "language professional" (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003), "convenience editor" (Willey & Tanimoto, 2013), "author's editor" (Shashok, 2001), and "literacy broker" (Lillis & Curry, 2010). In this article, we use the term "author's editor," as this is the preferred term by organizations such as the Mediterranean Editors and Translators (e.g., "Roles of the author's editor in an increasingly competitive knowledge industry," n.d.).

However, as already indicated, revision changes have been the focus of only a small number of studies in second language writing for publication. Burrough-Boenisch (2005) simulated a set of peer review sessions by soliciting comments on three research article drafts from 45 experts from eight countries in a given field, focusing on the changes made by the reviewers with particular regard to hedging strategies. In a subsequent paper, by adopting various strategies (including interacting with authors, checking expert corpora, and following recommendations from more powerful gatekeepers such as journal editors and peer reviewers), Burrough-Boenisch (2006) focused on how an author's editor edited EAL manuscripts. Concerned with authors' identity transformation, Englander (2009) proposed a social constructionist model of revision and identified six factors that construct the author's "changing autobiographical identities" during revision. One factor that is particularly relevant to the present study is "language resourcefulness" (p. 44), which refers to the strategies adopted by the L2 authors to deal with criticisms of the English language used in their manuscripts. In another study, Willey & Tanimoto (2012) compared editors from disciplinary and language backgrounds, with a specific focus on their editing strategies, including points at which the editors would like to consult the authors, their revision of definite articles, and their attitudes towards the editing process. By analyzing a corpus of working papers peer-reviewed for content but not for language, Anderson (2010) offered an

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[1] Authorial persistence is probably also necessary for native speaker scholars, but the Belcher study was conducted in the context of EAL scholars.

[2] It is important to note that we are not claiming that the articles in this study were accepted only due to the corrections that were made during the editing process. Changes to content are also likely to have been made and writers may have received additional help with their manuscripts. Nevertheless, after editing, the language was deemed to have been acceptable by the journal editors.