

The University of Southern Queensland

**SECOND LANGUAGE POSTGRADUATE WRITERS
IN THEIR ACADEMIC COMMUNITY: LINKS
BETWEEN DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE AND
WRITING SKILLS**

A dissertation submitted by

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ABSTRACT

Academic standards in higher education require that all students, including L2 students, are able to write fluently, accurately, clearly, and logically. At postgraduate level, students' competence in written communication depends on appropriate knowledge and use of the discipline-specific genre, plus awareness of the convention-specific phrasing in the discipline. In addition, students need to develop critical thinking and conceptual abilities to satisfy the faculty demands. This research aims to articulate the strong interdependence between disciplinary knowledge and writing skills at postgraduate level. Specifically, this study provides a more explicit description of the role of discourse knowledge and writing skills in academic writing in the business sector. It also provides insights into the skills and challenges of L2 postgraduate writers and their inclusion in their academic community through their writing practice.

The two main methods of data collection were: (i) in-depth interviews with students and their course lecturer, and (ii) text analysis of electronic corpora of two written assignments. These methods were chosen (a) to explore students' perceptions of the writing process and composing strategies in their academic writing production, and (2) to identify key rhetorical components recognising the complexity of the interaction among literacy and disciplinary elements in post-graduate writing.

Exploration of the students' and lecturer's perceptions about the students' writing practices as second language writers indicated students' experiences, difficulties, worries, weaknesses, strengths and learning processes. Their perceptions clarified the relationship between disciplinary knowledge about Management and Organisational Behaviour and successful writing skills.

Findings of this study led researcher to propose two new models: one is based on theoretical principles of academic writing in a discipline and the second addresses

specific applications in second language learning and teaching. The first, “*A model for L2 postgraduate writing process: A metadiscourse perspective*” identifies the factors involved in the writing process including the metadiscourse of academic writing (Hyland, 1998, 1999a, 2001a, 2004b; Hyland & Tse, 2004a). The second is “*A model of learning academic writing: the second language writing process at post-graduate level*”. This second model involves the stages of knowledge development for a writer in the discipline to be accepted in the academic community. The latter model illustrates the functions, context, the role and relevance of writing within the discourse practices of an academic community.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analysis, and conclusions reported in this thesis are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signature of Candidate

Date

ENDORSEMENT

Signature of Principal Supervisor

Date

Signature of Associate Supervisor

Date

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