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The sociolinguistics of writing in a global context

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ESRC End of Award Report

For awards ending on or after 1 November 2009

This End of Award Report should be completed and submitted using the **grant reference** as the email subject, to **reportsofficer@esrc.ac.uk** on or before the due date.

The final instalment of the grant will not be paid until an End of Award Report is completed in full and accepted by ESRC.

Grant holders whose End of Award Report is overdue or incomplete will not be eligible for further ESRC funding until the Report is accepted. We reserve the right to recover a sum of the expenditure incurred on the grant if the End of Award Report is overdue. (Please see Section 5 of the ESRC Research Funding Guide for details.)

Please refer to the Guidance notes when completing this End of Award Report.

Grant Reference	**RES-063-27-0263**		
Grant Title	The sociolinguistics of writing in a global context		
Grant Start Date	1/06/09	**Total Amount**	£281, 833.10
Grant End Date	25/01/2012	**Expended:**	
Grant holding Institution	**The Open University**		
Grant Holder	**Theresa Lillis**		
Grant Holder's Contact Details	**Address**		**Email**
	FELS/CREET, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA		**t.m.lillis@open.ac.uk**
			Telephone
			01908655059
Co-Investigators (as per project application):		**Institution**	
n/a			

1. Non-technical summary

Please provide below a project summary written in non-technical language. The summary may be used by us to publicise your work and should explain the aims and findings of the project.
[Max 250 words]

The goal of this programme of work was to critically review what we mean by 'writing' in the 21C, to generate an international agenda for future research and to collaborate with potential users. The programme builds on a ten year study of academic writing in four national contexts and a state of the art review of research on writing in sociolinguistics. The review is informed by work in new literacy studies, applied linguistics, semiotics and new media studies.

Key findings are that writing is on the increase globally in all spheres of social life, involving a wide range of technologies, including the continuing use of conventional tools, such as pen and paper, as well as digital technologies, where writing is increasingly produced alongside image and sound. Whilst people's practices of writing are wide ranging, both common sense and academic approaches to writing often involve rigid assumptions and expectations (for example, expecting writing to be monolingual, in a standard language, using particular design layouts and materials). Such expectations are problematic in that they limit understandings about the complex functions of writing in different domains of social life and can cloud understandings about what any particular piece of writing means. Any misunderstandings can be highly consequential in a globalised world in which writing – in all its forms- plays a key role.

Key activities of the programme have been the writing of 3 books, 11 articles and book chapters, the organisation of two international seminars and collaboration with user groups.

2. Project overview

a) Objectives

Please state the aims and objectives of your project as outlined in your proposal to the us.
[Max 200 words]

The overarching goal of this programme of work was to consolidate and extend my academic research on writing, with the following specific aims:

1. To build a comprehensive account of academic writing in a global context by drawing on a complex and diverse set of data drawn from a 10 year ethnographic study in 4 national contexts.
2. To offer a critical account of existing methodologies for researching and theorising writing from a range of disciplinary fields.
3. To build descriptive and explanatory models for characterizing the processes and practices surrounding academic writing for publication and to explore the relevance of such models to the study of writing in general.
4. To establish networks for national and international debate with both established scholars and postgraduate researchers.
5. To make available findings from the programme to relevant professional groups, including editors of international journals, professional language consultants and representatives of

> UK and European research bodies.
> 6. To develop myself as a scholar by engaging in a sustained period of research activity, writing and dissemination, being mentored by senior colleagues and by engaging in training in computer assisted data analysis software.
> 7. To continue to supervise postgraduate students (7 during this period).

b) Project Changes

Please describe any changes made to the original aims and objectives, and confirm that these were agreed with us. Please also detail any changes to the grant holder's institutional affiliation, project staffing or funding.
[Max 200 words]

> For personal reasons, a 3 month extension was requested and granted. The end of award date was extended to 25/1/12, with the final report due 25/4/2012.
>
> With regard to user impact and involvement, a decision was taken during the period of the programme to focus energies on the first three of the four target groups: a) editors of international journals; b) professional language consultants, such as proofreaders and translators who work with multilingual authors on academic texts; c) representatives of UK and European research bodies with an interest in international research writing. This decision was made on the basis of demand and interest from such groups and an attempt to actively respond to such demand.
>
> Sharing programme findings with the fourth identified target group, representatives from UK curriculum bodies specifically concerned with writing and literacy, is in process and is seen as part of a longer term goal. I am currently exploring possible sources of funding to support this goal.
>
> There have been no substantive changes to the original aims and objectives of the project.

c) Methodology

Please describe the methodology that you employed in the project. Please also note any ethical issues that arose during the course of the work, the effects of this and any action taken.
[Max 500 words]

> Two interrelated methodologies were used for carrying out the programme of work, details of which are summarised here.
>
> *A synthesis of data and analysis from a longitudinal research project using an overarching ethnographic methodology*
> The empirical dimension to the programme involved a longitudinal, ethnographic study of academic writing in 4 national contexts (Hungary, Slovakia, Spain and Portugal) with qualitative and quantitative data sets (ESRC RES-000-0098 and 222234). Data comprised: case studies of 50 multilingual scholars; 900 written academic texts; 250 literacy and text based interviews;

approximately 1000 email exchanges; 500 sets of correspondence around texts (by reviewers, editors, colleagues); observation notes/diaries/photographs drawn from a total of 18 visits to each site; substantial documentary sources, such as departmental and national policies relating to research evaluation; an additional 1 million word corpus of academic journal articles. A small amount of new data was collected during the programme, that is, documentary data and interviews with journal editors in the 4 national sites, as well as the collation of statistical data from a number of international sources.

The methodology is innovative in the following ways: a) empirically it is unparalleled in its scope and scale, involving a large number of scholars, from a range of European contexts in two disciplines (psychology and education) over a ten year period; b) methodologically, it combines text, ethnographic and corpus approaches as well as surveys of statistical data; c) theoretically, it combines understandings from social theories of global processes and flows, with close textual analysis.

A state of the art review of existing work on writing within sociolinguistics
The review focused on the ways in which writing is researched and theorised within sociolinguistics, including a critical analysis of canonical and current approaches to writing from across a number of fields including new literacy studies, applied linguistics, semiotics and new media studies. Drawing on insights generated from the longitudinal empirical study (see above) the state of the art review took account of the following: a) definitions of writing; b) the relationship between technologies – as tools and materials – and what gets construed as 'writing'; c) the impact and outcome of exploring (empirically and theoretically) any instance of language use through a mono or multimodal lens; d) the politics of inscription and codification, including ideologies of 'textualism'; e) the dynamics of written texts and relations around written texts as they move from one context (geographical, linguistic, political) to another; f) methodologies available for researching writing.

Ethical concerns were given the highest priority and dealt with in earlier phases of the empirical research project (see ESRC REF- 222234 Final Report).

The activities to implement the programme goals
I have closely followed the schedule of work outlined in the proposal, writing books, journal articles and book chapters, organising two international seminars and actively collaborating with user groups. I have collected a small amount of additional data and accepted invitations to give plenary talks at conferences and seminars. Further details are provided below.

d) Project Findings

Please summarise the findings of the project, referring where appropriate to outputs recorded on the ESRC website. Any future research plans should also be identified.
[Max 500 words]

Key findings from the programme of work are outlined below. They are reported in outputs submitted to the ROS.

The empirical project on academic writing in a global context
- Globally scholars are under pressure to publish in English, often alongside publishing in

national and other languages.

- Supranational evaluation systems privilege English and are impacting on formal and informal evaluation and reward systems in non-Anglophone contexts, at departmental, institutional and national levels.
- English functions as a 'sliding signifier', being used both alongside and independently of other criteria (such as impact factor) to signal 'high status' and 'high academic quality'.
- 'International' is another key 'sliding signifier', signaling high status and is often used alongside or instead of 'English' and vice versa.
- Resources necessary for academic publishing are differentially available at national, local, institutional and departmental levels (including English as a key resource), impacting on the nature and quality of scholars' opportunities to engage in academic production and dissemination.
- Scholars from the non-Anglophone centre often rely on centre-based brokers and networks to access publishing opportunities in high status centre journals.
- There is a routinized unidirectionality to efforts around knowledge exchange globally, with non-centre scholars working hard to contribute to knowledge within the Anglophone centre, with little indication that centre scholars are looking beyond the centre.
- Ideologies around both language and contexts of research activity, evident in peer review, often adversely affect scholars' publishing opportunities, particularly in attempts to claim 'new' contributions to knowledge.

State of the art review
- Writing is on the increase with a considerable amount and range of writing taking place across all domains of social life, using a wide range of modes, materials and technologies.
- Written 'texts' range along a continuum, from 'verbal heavy' (for example an academic article) to 'verbal light' (for example a comment on a YouTube video) and different modal aspects of writing- words, shapes, colour, size, materials- have different meanings in different contexts.
- Writing involves both strong and weak regulation, depending on the extent and ways in which specific writing is gatekeepered.
- The historical emphasis on the verbal dimension to written texts in Western applied and sociolinguistics is being challenged, with increasing attention paid to the multimodal nature of writing, in terms of its texture (for example its visual as well as verbal nature) and the contexts in which writing appears.
- Writing involves both material and symbolic acts of inscription.
- Writing is a dynamic phenomenon in terms of its production and uptake; focusing on specific instances and patterns of 'uptake' is central to reaching an understanding about what writing means and does in today's world.
- The ways in which writing is understood by researchers - what it is, what it does- is powerfully shaped by the particular theoretical frameworks used and the academic traditions followed.

Findings have been reported in academic publications and presentations, as well as forming the basis of web resources and activities aimed at user groups.

e) Contributions to wider ESRC initiatives (e.g. Research Programmes or Networks)

If your project was part of a wider ESRC initiative, please describe your contributions to the initiative's objectives and activities and note any effect on your project resulting from participation.
[Max. 200 words]

The ESRC Research Fellowship scheme which funded this programme of work no longer exists but the goals of the scheme link strongly with those of the current Researcher Development Initiative http://www.rdi.ac.uk/, particularly the goal of building research capacity. I have increased my own research expertise (including the piloting of computer assisted data analysis software), deepened my theoretical expertise of a rapidly changing area and applied for a Readership position at my current institution. The programme has enabled me to build research capacity locally, nationally and internationally; locally, in my university, by involving postgraduate students and colleagues in international seminars and subsequent research publications; nationally, by accepting an invitation to be Visiting Professor at Edge Hill University; internationally, by accepting invitations to be an external advisor on two large nationally funded research projects on writing, in Spain and France (*Estrategias retóricas para publicar en revistas científicas internacionales desde una perspectiva intercultural español-inglés* Ministerio de Economia y Competitividad FFI2009-08336 and *Les écrits à l'université : Inventaires, pratiques, modèles,* Agence Nationale de la Recherche).

3. Early and anticipated impacts

a) Summary of Impacts to date

Please summarise any impacts of the project to date, referring where appropriate to associated outputs recorded on the Research Outcomes System (ROS). This should include both scientific impacts (relevant to the academic community) and economic and societal impacts (relevant to broader society). The impact can be relevant to any organisation, community or individual.
[Max. 400 words]

All current outputs are recorded on ROS.

Academic publications and presentations to date
Books
Lillis, T. and Curry, M.J. (2010) *Academic Writing in a Global Context*. London: Routledge

Articles
Lillis, T. (2011) Legitimising dialogue as textual and ideological goal in academic writing for assessment and publication, *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education.* 10, 4: 401-432.
Lillis, T., Magyar, A. and Robinson-Pant, A. (2010) An international journal's attempts to address inequalities in academic publishing: developing a writing for publication programme. *Compare*, 40, 6: 781-800.
Curry, M.J. and Lillis, T. (2010) Academic research networks: Accessing resources for English-medium publishing. *English for Specific Purposes,* 29, 281-295.

Lillis, T. (2009) 'Étudiants déficitaires ? Le dialogisme de Bakhtine dans l'exploration des pratiques d'écriture des étudiants « non traditionnels » à l'université'. *Cahiers Théodile,* 10: 117-132.

Book chapter
Lillis, T. (2012) English medium writing for academic purposes: Foundational categories, certainty and contingency. In R. Tang ed. *Academic Writing in a Second or Foreign Language.* London: Continuum. 235-247.

Invited plenaries (6) and seminars (7) including *South African Association of Applied Linguistics*, South Africa, September, 2009; *22nd Penn State conference on Rhetoric and Composition*, US, July 2011 and *Symposium on Second Language Writing,* Taiwan, June 2011 (with M.J. Curry).

Website on academic writing for publication has been updated
http://creet.open.ac.uk/projects/paw/

Academic networks and international exchange
I organized two international seminars, the second with Carolyn McKinney, University of Cape Town. Both seminars were oversubscribed, leading us to facilitate virtual (synchronous and asynchronous) as well as face-to-face participation. The seminars involved almost 200 participants from 20 countries and 50 institutions. The seminars have led to the successful proposal of Special Issues of two journals, *Language Policy* (with M.J. Curry) and *Journal of Sociolinguistics* (with C. McKinney).

Seminar Reports- Available on ROS
Ethnographies of academic writing in a global context (2010)**.**
The sociolinguistics of writing in a global context (2011).

Economic and societal impacts
In collaboration with one journal I have developed and delivered a writers' mentoring programme, co-authored two chapters solicited for a book by (and for) translators and editors, as well as presented at professional conferences. I am completing a book (with M. J. Curry) for language professionals, multilingual academics and their teachers/trainers. A dedicated website and summary leaflets are in progress, targeting representatives of UK and European research bodies. I plan to inform the fourth target group, representatives from UK curriculum bodies as part of a longer term goal.

b) Anticipated/Potential Future Impacts

Please outline any anticipated or potential impacts (scientific or economic and societal) that you believe your project might have in future. *[Max. 200 words]*

Academic publications

Lillis, T. (December 2012) *The Sociolinguistics of Writing.* Edinburgh: EUP

Lillis, T. (June 2012) Economies of Signs in Writing for Academic Publication, *Journal of Advanced Composition.*

Co-editing Special Issue 2012, *Language Policy*, Academic Publishing in English (with M. J. Curry)

Co-editing Special Issue 2013, *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, Writing (with C. McKinney).

Lillis, T. and Curry, M. J. (forthcoming) English, academic publishing and international development in E. Erling and P. Seargeant (eds) *English and International Development,* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Publications and resources aimed at users

Curry, M.J. and Lillis, T. (January 2013) *Getting Published in a Multilingual World.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

To be published 2013, in V. Materese (ed.) *Supporting Research Writing: Roles and Challenges in Multilingual Settings.* Cambridge: Chandos Publishing.

1. Burgess, S. and Lillis, T., The contribution of language professionals to academic publication.

2. Lillis, T., Magyar, A. and Robinson-Pant, A., Putting 'wordface' work at the centre of academic text production.

A dedicated website and leaflets for policy makers, representatives of UK and European research bodies and UK curriculum bodies.

An open-access web resource on mentoring aimed at editorial boards.

You will be asked to complete an ESRC Impact Report 12 months after the end date of your award. The Impact Report will ask for details of any impacts that have arisen since the completion of the End of Award Report.

4. Declarations

Please ensure that sections A, B and C below are completed and signed by the appropriate individuals. The End of Award Report will not be accepted unless all sections are signed. Please note hard copies are **not** required; electronic signatures are accepted and should be used.

A: To be completed by Grant Holder

Please read the following statements. Tick **one** statement under ii) and iii), then sign with an electronic signature at the end of the section (this should be an image of your actual signature).

i) The Project

This Report is an accurate overview of the project, its findings and impacts. All co-investigators named in the proposal to ESRC or appointed subsequently have seen and approved the Report.	√

ii) Submissions to the Research Outcomes System (ROS)

Output and impact information has been submitted to the Research Outcomes System. Details of any future outputs and impacts will be submitted as soon as they become available. **or**	√
This grant has not yet produced any outputs or impacts. Details of any future outputs and impacts will be submitted to the Research Outcomes System as soon as they become available.	☐

iii) Submission of Datasets

Datasets arising from this grant have been offered for deposit with the Economic and Social Data Service. **or**	☒
Datasets that were anticipated in the grant proposal have not been produced and the Economic and Social Data Service has been notified. **or** No datasets were proposed or produced from this grant.	☐