

INTRODUCTION

Literacy—which entails reading, writing, speaking, and communicating through textual, audiovisual, digital, and other modes—is fundamentally a social practice (Street, 2004). In the academic context, literacy enables students and scholars to learn and think about their disciplinary field of study and to create and communicate knowledge to others, inside and outside of academia. Yet when many students arrive in graduate programs, they encounter new expectations for academic literacy, beginning with their coursework. Later—and more consequentially—students may write a master’s thesis or portfolio, doctoral comprehensive examinations, dissertation proposal, dissertation, and publications. Here we use terms that refer to common genres in the academic context of United States, where we are located. As we note in the book, some of these terms are used differently in the United Kingdom and its former colonies, as well as in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, many academic literacy practices are prevalent across national boundaries because academic histories have paralleled in many ways colonial and post-colonial histories, particularly related to the spread of English. Overall, the genres, concepts, and practices that we cover in this book characterize “Western” academia, although local variations exist. We encourage students who come from other contexts to reflect on how our discussions compare with your experiences in your home context or other contexts in which you may have studied.

At the same time, many graduate students who have not transversed international borders also may need to learn to produce new genres and develop new academic literacy practices, sometimes unexpectedly. If you are a student and this describes your experience, we hope that you will find this guide useful as you engage with academic literacy at the graduate level. Whether you grew up speaking English or learned English as an additional language (EAL), went to university in the United States or in another country, or have a mix of these experiences, you may now be asked to read new kinds of texts and to produce new kinds of writing compared with your experiences as an undergraduate or even as a master’s student. For example, you may be reading articles and books produced by researchers and scholars that are directed at each other as the audience as opposed to coursebooks or textbooks that are written for undergraduates. Some of the texts you will write may also resemble professional academic texts, in contrast to texts you may have produced as an undergraduate. You are likely to be expected to search for and select research texts (articles, book chapters, books, online materials) to build your disciplinary knowledge, and to engage with them critically.

It's also possible that your undergraduate major or university did not ask you to do a lot of academic writing. If you took tests as the main form of assessment, you might not have needed to engage in sophisticated and critical ways with analyzing research literature, creating arguments, and drawing on specific kinds of evidence. If you are a doctoral student who earned a master's degree in a practice-oriented field such as education, nursing, social work, or business, you may notice that the academic literacy practices in those programs were quite different from what's expected at the doctoral level, even in the same discipline. Although some graduate programs offer writing courses, and many universities have writing centers, even in your first semester in graduate school you may need to jump into doing demanding or simply new academic literacy tasks.

Our aim in this guide is to help you to understand how these literacy practices relate to types of texts (genres), their writing conventions, and their use of language. We hope to support you in applying this knowledge to understanding and producing the texts that circulate in your degree program. At the same time, we want to emphasize that the social practices of literacy are never static or stable, but rather constantly evolving in response to how people engage with them to communicate with others. Thus, another aim of this book is to identify the variations, debates, and tensions related to the aspects of academic literacy we cover.

Structure and Content of the Entries

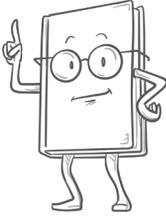
This guide includes 65 entries organized alphabetically by keyword. Each entry comprises these sections:

- **Description** of the keyword: To launch the reader's exploration of the keyword, each entry synthesizes the current research on the topic published by scholars who study academic literacy. Many books on writing and conducting research draw mainly on the author(s)' experiences as the source of the knowledge being presented. While this kind of "lore" (Curry & Lillis, 2019) often resonates with many people's experience, it can also perpetuate false beliefs, particularly given the documented variations in practices across disciplines, institutions, and geolinguistic contexts. Thus we often cite research sources even for claims that may seem (to some readers) to be general knowledge. In fact, many common understandings and beliefs about academic literacy have been identified or confirmed by research, in contrast to the lore. Our understanding of the research con-

sensus about keywords is a starting point, but it crucially acknowledges that literacy practices are dynamic and evolving in response to situations that change over time. We include examples of communication practices and genres from across academic disciplines either in the Description or the Variations and Tensions section. In general, we include as examples authentic writing by students and academics, including extracts from published articles. In addition, some of the entry keywords have multiple meanings (e.g., **case study** is both a written genre and a research methodology); in this guide we discuss them in terms of academic literacy, though we mention that other definitions and uses exist.

- **Variations and Tensions:** Also drawing on research, this section covers variations related to the keyword in terms of genres, practices, disciplines, or other differences. It also identifies the current debates and challenges to the consensus about the keyword (tensions). For example, the common belief that it is not acceptable to use the first person *I* in writing academic texts has been challenged by research that identifies variations in texts being produced across disciplines. In fact, currently in many disciplines using the first person *I* plus the active voice is not only considered to be acceptable but also to be more accurate than using the third person (*he/she/it/they*) or the passive voice, as it signals the researcher's role in producing knowledge. Academic writers need to make choices in particular situations, and there is often not one right way to accomplish your purposes for communication. We highlight these tensions and variations so that you can make decisions, including whether to learn more about specific issues and to discuss them with other people such as an advisor, other faculty members, or peers.
- **Reflection Questions:** These questions aim to help you connect the content of each entry to your past experiences and current literacy tasks and projects, (sub)discipline(s), and commitments as a writer and social actor. These questions may encourage you to reflect on texts written in your (sub)discipline to see how scholars approach a specific literacy task or to apply the points made in an entry as you develop a particular text. They may also prompt you to seek out discipline- or text-specific information from a professor or advisor; to find official guidelines from your university about a consequential genre such as a thesis or dissertation; to locate requirements for submission to a conference; or to identify author guidelines for a journal or book publisher to which you might wish to submit a manuscript. In addition to prompting reflection, we hope these questions might spark discussions informally with peers, your advisor, or in your courses.

- **Graduate Student Voice:** This section comments on the entry keyword by drawing on the personal experiences of one of the six graduate student co-authors of this book, who are advanced doctoral students (or recent graduates) in the field of language education, specifically, in various aspects of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). The authors will be introduced at the end of this Introduction. Their contributions in this section of some of the entries supplement the considerable amount of work they have done overall in co-authoring this book.



We also offer an appendix of additional resources, **For Further Reading**. As the entries in this book are short and because we see them as the jumping-off point for explorations of a topic in relation to readers' goals, each entry lists two resources that provide more information. These resources might identify, for example, some of the books dedicated to academic genres such as the abstract, literature review, and dissertation, or blog posts on specific practices or dilemmas facing graduate students. We mainly include practice-oriented texts but sometimes include references to research that illuminates the topic and its tensions. We also include some open-access multimodal sources such as academic blogs, webpages, and podcasts. Of course these are just a sliver of the available resources on academic literacy.

Within each entry, we use **boldface** font to signal cross-references to other terms included in the book as keywords. The index lists other terms that appear in the book but do not have their own entry.

What This Book Does and Does Not Do

Dozens of books exist to help graduate students and early career academics with all dimensions of academic literacy and scholarly publication, from methodological to linguistic to textual/rhetorical to emotional to practical. Many, like Swales and Feak (2012) and their other useful books, take an in-depth approach to specific aspects of academic texts, such as abstracts and introductions. Others, like Allen (2019), focus on the emotions, strategies, and habits involved in being a successful graduate student and productive writer. Still others, like Casanave (2020), aim to do some of both. This book covers what we see as the core aspects of academic literacy, including genres (e.g., texts such as a proposal or dissertation), structural aspects of texts (e.g., paragraphs, sentences, footnotes), related concepts (e.g., audience, copyright, voice), and social practices (e.g., feedback, plagiarism, revision).

In limiting its scope to these aspects of academic literacy, we do not address the experiences of being a graduate student, finding and maintaining motivation, developing productive work and writing habits, and negotiating power relationships with faculty members and/or publication gatekeepers. While we share the goal of demystifying the practices of academic literacy with other authors, we do so by staying close to these practices rather than by including the personal aspects of the graduate experience (many of which, such as motivation, discipline, and confidence, persist well beyond graduate school). This focus on the core aspects of academic literacy informed how we selected this book's entries. An initial brainstorm of keywords was made by Curry, based on her decades of teaching academic literacy to all kinds of writers in higher education. This list included terms that may seem to be more basic than graduate writers might need, such as **sentence** and **paragraph**; however, students sometimes need to understand how these textual aspects work and how they vary across disciplines and cultural contexts. This initial list was discussed by the whole team then refined as we started researching and writing the book's entries.

We then shared our emerging list of entries with the faculty and graduate student participants in a workshop at the Consortium on Graduate Communication in 2019. We took up many of their suggestions for additional entries and carefully considered their critiques of our list. After refining the list once more, we asked Kelly Sippell to weigh in; she suggested additional entries. Finally, in more than 18 months of writing the book, we continually evaluated whether to combine or split up terms and ended up with 65 entries. While any list of entries in a book such as this could be expanded, we hope that we have landed on a useful balance of practices, genres, structures, and concepts and have not omitted anything crucial. We field-tested the entries in development by posting some of them on a website to gather responses from individual readers, sharing some with faculty colleagues who used them in their courses or with advisees, and using them in our teaching. The feedback we received through this field testing was extremely valuable as we developed and revised the book.

Our Views on Language

This book is designed for graduate students from all language backgrounds, in contrast to many writing guides that address both undergraduate and graduate students. Many books make clear distinctions between “native” or “non-native” speakers of English, without acknowledging that what's new

about academic literacy for students often has more to do with the genres and social practices that are situated in specific academic disciplines than with language per se (Curry, 2016). We agree with the assertion that “academic language is no one’s mother tongue” (Bourdieu, Passeron, & de Saint Martin, 1994, p. 8). While language status—whether you speak English as a “native” language, are a bi/multilingual speaker of English and another language(s), or use English as an additional language learned later in life—may play a role in your success, it is usually not the determining factor (Curry, 2016). In fact, research has identified variations in academic literacy based on the interplay of cultural traditions and disciplinary preferences, which is why we include the Variations and Tensions section. Broad characteristics of academic literacy have emerged from different regions of the world, based in varying traditions of epistemology and communication. In recent decades, if not longer, the positivist writing conventions of Anglo-American academia have exerted a powerful influence, even affecting the styles and approaches of publications in languages other than English (Lillis & Curry, 2010).

In this book we do not advocate a monolithic and monocultural view of academic literacy, but rather encourage you to consider critically what you discover about new literacy practices. Rather than assuming that there is one “right way” to read and write academic texts and to speak about academic topics (Becker, 2007), we believe that different approaches have strengths and weaknesses, depending on the rhetorical context and an author’s purposes. And, along with other scholars, we believe that success in graduate-level literacy has much more to do with learning the social practices of a particular discipline (e.g., Casanave & Li, 2008) than in mastering specific mechanics of language and techniques.

How to Use This Book: Who Are You?

This guide is not a textbook, but rather a reference book to consult as you come across new literacy terms, genres, and practices or encounter old terms used in new ways. We consider as our primary audience individual students who need to deconstruct what the literacy practices of graduate school might require or offer as options. These requirements may not be explicitly articulated by your course instructors, who are often not trained to teach academic literacy in addition to their disciplinary content. Instructors may not explain, for example, what they mean by the names of certain assignments (e.g., “critical commentary”). In fact, instructors, advisors, and dissertation committee members may hold varying and sometimes contradictory understandings of

common terms for academic genres (e.g., the literature review) or related literacy practices (e.g., analyze, discuss, and critique).

At the same time, our characterization of a literacy topic may not resonate fully with what you encounter in a particular disciplinary context or in one professor's course. Our goal is not to be comprehensive or accurate in every case—but rather to provide the tools to enable you to discuss and think about academic literacy as both representing conventions that have evolved over time and fostering dynamism, flexibility, creativity, and individuality (Sword, 2012). Thus we take a descriptive rather than prescriptive stance. That is, the book documents, explains, and categorizes aspects of academic literacy rather than making explicit recommendations or giving instructions. Instead, we encourage you to discuss these issues with those in your academic research networks (Curry & Lillis, 2010), including in your department or institution, and to consult specialized references/writing guides to draw the conclusions that suit your context, goals, and specific tasks.

We also envision other key audiences. Advisors could use the book to provide encapsulated descriptions of common genres such as literature reviews and proposals; core practices such as making citations and footnotes; and abstract concepts such as voice and audience. Course instructors may also use the descriptions of genres (e.g., “critical commentary,” “reflection”) to clarify their expectations for assignments. Furthermore, writing consultants/tutors may find the entries helpful to discuss with student clients. They may want to use book entries to explore the genres that students have been assigned to write in courses or later in their programs or to offer suggestions on practices such as drafting and revision. We can imagine instructors, advisors, and writing consultants sharing copies of particular entries in the book with students. Overall, we hope that even if readers do not agree with our characterizations of particular genres or literacy practices, the entries can provide a starting point for clarifying what keywords might mean in particular situations.

About the Authors

Mary Jane Curry: This guide was my brainchild, based on a need I identified during 25 years of teaching academic literacy and working especially with graduate students. Since joining the Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development in 2003, every year I have taught a doctoral-level academic writing course that focuses on writing a complex literature review. Over time, the need for a resource that would compile current understandings and debates about academic literacy became apparent. Conversations

over a few years with University of Michigan Press Editor Kelly Sippell led me to consider how and when to approach undertaking this project. I knew I couldn't do it alone. When I had the good fortune to be working with a group of highly experienced, accomplished, and enthusiastic doctoral students, I believed the project could be feasible.

My research has focused on the role of academic writing in providing or hindering access to and within higher education, first in my dissertation study of the experiences of immigrant students in a community college writing course (Curry, 2003, 2007); then in a longitudinal investigation of the writing practices and experiences of multilingual scholars working in the social sciences who are located outside of English-dominant contexts (in continental Europe) with Theresa Lillis (Curry & Lillis, 2004, 2013, 2018, 2019; Lillis & Curry, 2006, 2010, 2015, 2018); and, later, in a study of the academic publishing experiences of engineers in a U.S. university (Curry, 2014). In addition, in 2004 I founded and continue to direct the Writing Support Services at the Warner School. Our Writing Support Services is somewhat unusual in being situated in a graduate school rather than charged with serving students across disciplines and units of a university or college. This situation has helped me develop understandings about both the disciplinary nature of graduate communication as well as broader academic literacy practices that cut across disciplines. My experiences as director have also upheld my conviction that students' language backgrounds matter less than their exposure to, and experience with, literacy practices in specific contexts. I also serve as a consultant on academic publishing to universities around the world. Academic literacy thus preoccupies much of my thinking and many dimensions of my professional life.

As noted, the student co-authors of this book are international students with considerable experience and research interests related to teaching English to speakers of other languages. All of them have worked as consultants in the Warner School's Writing Support Services, where they give workshops on academic literacy and individual consultations with students. All of them have taught English to EAL users; some have taught academic writing in China (He, Zhang, Zuo) or the United States (Altalouli, Ayesh, Li). Some have served as teaching assistants for other courses on language and literacy at the Warner School (Altalouli, Ayesh, Li, Zuo). Equally important, these co-authors bring the international doctoral student perspective to the project, which we incorporate in the Graduate Student Voice section. They have been involved in this project from our revisions to the book proposal in response to feedback on an early draft from colleagues; brainstorming and selecting keywords to include in the book; developing the structure and nature of the entries; responding to feedback from participants in our work-

shops and presentations as well as responses from field-testers; recruiting field-testers; and willingly engaging in multiple rounds of revision for each entry (sometimes 25!). Working in pairs to draft each entry, they built on the ideas I brainstormed by searching the research literature, culling and organizing their key findings, and then writing the content. They have responded to multiple rounds of feedback from all members of the team with diligence, professionalism, patience, and good humor. In contributing Graduate Student Voice entries and textual examples for some of the entries, they reveal their struggles and successes. They are true co-authors, and I am grateful to be working with them. In the next section, they introduce themselves.

Graduate Student Authors

- **Fangzhi He:** For about 20 years, I have taught English as a foreign language at Zhengzhou University of Light Industry in China, where I became an associate professor. However, when I was in the early stages of my PhD at the Warner Graduate School of Education, I still had trouble with English academic literacy practices. For example, the huge amount of reading and writing was more than I had ever undertaken in my undergraduate and graduate education and thus I always felt overwhelmed. Worse, I had difficulty understanding some academic terms, such as *literacy* and *discourse*, as their meanings were different from what I had learned before. I felt like I was illiterate in terms of academic literacy. I longed for a book that could serve as a dictionary on academic literacy so that whenever I was not sure about the meaning of a word, I could refer to it. Therefore, when Dr. Curry proposed this book, I was all for it, as I believed that it would benefit the large number of graduate students who have the same struggles as I did, by saving them time when searching the literature to understand a specific word relating to a concept or process. I am contributing my experience and knowledge on academic literacy, which I have acquired from taking courses, working as a writing consultant, and teaching academic writing, to help graduate students to familiarize themselves with academic literacy so that they may struggle less with their study and become emerging scholars in their disciplines.
- **Weijia Li:** Like some of my colleagues, I received a bachelor's degree in English in China, for which I did very little writing other than some five-paragraph essays and a thesis. Later on, I did not write papers regularly until I was working on my second master's degree in the United

States. The program focused on teaching Chinese as a foreign language, but the curriculum allowed us to take courses in historical and contemporary Chinese literature. So I wrote papers to analyze poems and novels and quickly got the hang of it, thanks to a professor who explicitly taught us the general structure of academic papers and had us practice making claims by writing weekly commentaries. I also did my first master's degree in the U.S., in Teaching English as a Second Language. It involved a lot of reading but very little writing. I remember when I rewrote an assignment for a third time, I asked my (American) professor how long it would take for me to write like he did, to which he replied, "maybe ten years." Now in my eighth year in the U.S., I feel much more confident about my writing. My initial interest in this book project came because my work experience has always been related to academic literacy: I taught academic reading and writing in both community college and university for a year and a half; and I have worked as a writing consultant at Warner Writing Support Services for three years. Additionally, I really like to think and reflect upon what I do—it always keeps me inspired! And co-authoring a book with a group of trusted friends and colleagues is an experience that I would never miss.

- ***Ting Zhang***: During my time as a PhD student in Teaching and Curriculum at the Warner School, I have been working as a writing consultant for graduate students in education-related fields. In my work with these writers, both native English speakers and multilinguals, I see how they strive to meet their professors' expectations. The tricky thing is that professors' expectations are not always clear to students. Once, a doctoral student who was seeking help on revising a culminating project shared with me that she wished her committee had shared a clear rubric, stipulating what she should write. As she said, the absence of such a rubric left her in the dark in terms of their expectations for her writing. The good news is that over time she figured out what they were looking for, through the process of multiple revisions. As a graduate student writer, I felt a strong resonance with her experiences, so I said "yes" when Dr. Curry invited me to join the team. I hope student readers can gain insights into the expectations and variations in writing rather than waiting until the end of their program to learn the ropes.
- ***Yanhong Zuo***: I am a professor at Xi'an International Studies University in China and a PhD student at the Warner School. I learned English writing as an English major in my undergraduate years in China and became an English teacher after I finished my master's degree. During all those years, my students' and my own experiences of English writing showed

me that we were struggling a lot, not only because English is not our native language but, more important, because we were not familiar with many genres and key concepts in English writing such as *argument*, *transition*, or *warrant*. Therefore, when I was told there was a chance to compile a book that would put these concepts together, I was excited and did not hesitate to join. It has proven to be a great learning experience for me because when I did research on these entries, discussed with my colleagues which terms and ideas should and should not be included, and made numerous revisions to the drafts, my understanding of these concepts became clearer and now help me with my own academic writing. As an English learner, a PhD student, and a teacher with experience of teaching English writing to students whose English is an additional language, I am confident that this book will be helpful to people who want to improve their English writing.

- **Mahmoud Altalouli:** I have had a passion for language learning since elementary school. Back in Palestine, in 1990 I started taking mandatory English classes, which is when my passion and interest in English language learning grew. Over time, I became fascinated with how people learn languages and hence decided to learn more languages. I took Mandarin Chinese for a year and found it difficult to learn; later I took French for a year and, again, found it difficult to pick up. Afterward, I decided to learn more English and developed a passion for language teaching. I taught English in many language institutes and centers in Palestine and the United States. As I worked toward my master's in TESOL and doctorate in Teaching and Curriculum in the United States, my interest in language learning and literacy developed; my programs allowed me to combine the study of linguistics and second language acquisition with an understanding of broader educational issues and literacy theories. During my doctoral studies, I particularly became interested in the academic literacy practices of students using English as an additional language—an interest that led to my dissertation, “The Academic Reading Experiences and Practices of Graduate International Students Using English as an Additional Language,” which I finished in spring 2020, and shaped my decision to become a co-author of this book.
- **Jihan Ayesb:** Coming from Palestine and with an Arabic-speaking background, I developed a passion for the English language and literacy at an early age, which qualified me to receive opportunities to pursue my higher education in the United States. I earned a master's degree in TESOL and am currently pursuing a doctorate in Teaching and Curriculum. I also have experience as a writing consultant to graduate students and as an instruc-

tor to English language learners inside and outside of the United States. I joined as a co-author of this book because of my passion and experience in English academic literacy. In my early experiences as a graduate student, I had to seek faculty guidance and resources to learn about the advanced concepts I encountered in my writing assignments and classes. On my own, I spent a considerable amount of time and effort applying this knowledge in my academic writing, which involved tearing up and rewriting whole drafts. Influenced by this experience, I firmly believe that learning the foundational concepts in academic literacy and practicing writing continually are central to success in graduate school. Therefore, I accepted the invitation to write this book to share my knowledge with peer graduate students and to further my learning through the process of writing the book.