



## Text Shapers in Scholarly Publishing Industry: An Overview of Their Practices and Services

Farzane Deliery Moghadam<sup>1</sup> and Javad Gholami<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *PhD Candidate in TEFL, Urmia University, Urmia, Iran  
ORCID: 0009-0001-3098-7550; Email: f.deliery.m@gmail.com*

<sup>2</sup> *Corresponding Author: Professor of Applied Linguistics, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Urmia University, Urmia, Iran, ORCID: 0000-0002-4970-1110  
Email: gholamij@gmail.com*

### Abstract

Publishing research in English poses linguistic challenges for non-native English speaker scholars (NNSS). To prepare their manuscripts for submission, peer review, and post-acceptance stages, they may receive linguistic assistance and editing from different individuals, such as field specialists or EFL / ESL teachers, collectively called *text-shapers*. To the best of our knowledge, there is no recent comprehensive portrayal of text-shaping practices in the literature on English for research publication purposes (ERPP). This overview introduces the text-shaping community's practices by reviewing the most significant and relevant studies on this realm in the leading journals on ESP / EAP and ERPP. We used the Web of Science database to make the review as inclusive as possible. Several search terms were used to compile the mainstream literature on the topic, including *text shaper*, *literacy broker*, *language editor*, *author's editor*, *convenience editor*, *editor*, and *copy editor*. In this thematic review, we describe text-shapers' editing practices and strategies, outline their characteristics and techniques in providing linguistic services to NNES authors, and highlight the benefits and challenges text-shapers experience in the scholarly publishing industry. Moreover, text-shaping services in Asia, with mounting demand for publication in English, were examined explicitly along with other contexts to comprehensively depict its status quo geographically. As EFL teachers are one of the most active agents in delivering text-shaping services to the NNES authors, especially in contexts like Iran, this review could help the EFL community in Iran and similar contexts to get familiar with the bigger picture of text shaping and its dimensions.

**Keywords:** English for research publication purposes, non-native English speaker authors, revision, scholarly publishing, text-shapers

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## **Introduction**

English has emerged as the prominent lingua franca that enables the dissemination of ideas in recent decades (Curry & Lillis, 2018). While this is a positive view, the dominance of the English language as the main medium of communicating scientific findings has posed various challenges for non-native English speaker (NNES) authors. Curry and Lillis (2018) speak of a bias in the peer-review process against multilingual scholars who might use "non-native" or "non-standard" English in their manuscripts (p. 9). Thus, as Van Parijs (2007) also metaphorically puts it, native English speaker (NES) authors have the privilege of a "free ride" compared to their NNES peers when they write and publish their work. This might lead the NNES authors to shun publishing their findings; therefore, the rest of the world might lose access to them (Mauranen, 2011).

On the other hand, researchers worldwide, including NNES authors, are more willing to publish in English journals. As Flowerdew (1999, 2015) puts it, the globalization of academic research is one influential factor in this craze. In today's competitive world, the principle of "publish or perish" is more pronounced than ever before, making NNES authors face a double challenge compared to their NES colleagues.

The challenge of publishing RAs in English for NNES researchers in many countries is a widely acknowledged phenomenon (Duszak & Lewkowicz, 2008; Flowerdew, 1999; Uzuner, 2008). Being part of a broader discourse community is a prerequisite for publishing in such a journal, which involves a high degree of proficiency in the field, the pursuit of common objectives, and the communication of information using a specific genre and specialized terminology (Swales, 1990). A fairly established style is expected in the case of RAs in the English language. This varies according to the academic discipline and may be further specified by the style guide of individual journals.

Writing up and publishing an RA is a cyclic process. The manuscript can be considered fit for publication after several revisions and editing rounds. After an RA is submitted to a journal, it is read and scrutinized by the journal editor, reviewers, copyeditors, and, in some cases, correctors (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003), who aid the NNES authors in making their RA more reader-friendly and error-free. All through this process, the authors of RAs receive feedback, helping them improve their work to meet the journal's standards (Paltridge, 2019).

NNES researchers often face difficulties meeting these requirements due to linguistic, cultural, disciplinary, and institutional barriers (Flowerdew & Li, 2009; Lillis & Curry, 2010). NNES authors may also face some "hidden challenges" that are concerned with presenting their arguments forcefully and persuasively through their voice (Arnbjörnsdóttir & Ingvarsdóttir, 2018, p. 73). This obstacle is discursive and pertains to how NNES scientists wish to develop their voices in English along with their new identity as researchers.

To overcome these barriers, NNES researchers often seek help from various sources of support, such as colleagues, mentors, reviewers, editors, publishers,

translators, proofreaders, language teachers, and consultants. Regarding linguistic assistance, NNES authors with different English proficiency levels may need additional amounts and types of help in preparing their manuscripts. According to Paltridge and Starfield (2007), junior researchers with a narrow English proficiency need more help writing up research than their peers with a broad English proficiency. As mentioned before, article publishing is mostly cyclic, so researchers may need help repeatedly until and even after their article has been accepted for publication in a journal.

As stated above, English has become the dominant medium for research publication in various disciplines, enabling unprecedented levels of communication and collaboration across conventional boundaries. However, this “standard tool for research communication” (McDowell & Liardét, 2020, p. 10) still poses challenges for multilingual scholars who aim to achieve the high levels of precision required in scholarly writing. In scholarly publishing, the quality of English used in manuscripts holds great importance. A lack of proficiency in English can lead to immediate rejection (Flowerdew & Habibie, 2022), particularly if it hinders the clarity of the text or if the significance of the findings is not evident. However, editors of international journals anticipate RAs to be written concisely, without unnecessary redundancies, enabling expert readers to scan and extract essential information swiftly. Straying from this expected style can present an additional obstacle to publication (Farley, 2018). NNES authors of RA do not have to tackle such challenges single-handedly. In the cyclic process of preparing their manuscript for publication, help and scaffolding are conferred to them by several agents. The nature of the help and the people who provide this help to NNES authors are areas which have not received considerable attention in the literature. No one denies the need for empowering NNES authors and providing them with means to meet their discursive needs, but shedding light on the practices and services provided by the helpers who work behind the scenes of scholarly publishing would benefit several parties including NNES authors, language professionals, journal editors and scholarly publishing community in general. Whilst there are several studies on more general subjects revolving around English for Research Publication Purposes, to the best of our knowledge, the only study highlighting text shapers in a general and thorough way is Burrough-Boenisch (2003), which was a pioneering work on the subject. In an attempt to give a status qua of the nature of text shaping practices, we reviewed the most relevant and significant studies conducted on this subject.

### **The Members and the Terminology in the “Helpers” Community**

Naturally, authors of an RA are the first people to have a linguistically critical look at their work. However, in the case of NNES authors, the RA might need to be revised by someone who knows the structural framework required of a paper and has linguistic and technical knowledge of editing and revising.

As Burrough-Boenisch (2003) explains, when an RA sets out on its journey from an author's screen to a scientific journal, it goes through a winding route of being revised and polished until it is declared fit for publication. Interestingly, Burrough-Boenisch (2003, p. 3) explained that an RA's final audience also affects the article.

Some people who intervene before an RA gets published directly edit the text on the screen. Others edit indirectly; they convey their feedback or revisions to the author on paper or by other means, and the author then decides how much to adjust the text. All these readers who intervene before publication act as proxies for the final reader, ensuring that he (or she) receives an effective and valuable text. Thus, in that sense, the intended reader influences all those who contribute to the published text (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003). The author's feedback from various agents in the peer-review process could have inherent differences. Other than the authors themselves, journal editors, reviewers, author's editor, and journal copy editor influence the RA's final shape. The peer-review process begins with the journal editor or another member of the editorial board who is the first in line to decide whether to send out the article for review or reject it there and then. However, if the editor decides that other experts in the field must review the article, it is sent to be read and commented on by them. Paltridge (2019) explains the steps that an article goes through:

If the article goes out for review, the reviewers will be asked to recommend publishing it as is, accepting the article with minor amendments, accepting it with major amendments, revise and resubmit the article and be reviewed again, or reject. (p. 23)

Paltridge (2015, 2017, 2019) has delved into the reports that reviewers give to the authors in a series of articles, books, and book chapters. However, "reviewers" reports more often refer to the subject matter, methodology, research design, presentation, and analysis of findings, while language and style do not attract much criticism at this stage. Furthermore, NES authors, as well as NNES authors, receive all sorts of feedback in this stage. Of course, there is evidence of language-related notes in the "reviewers" comments. For instance, Benfield and Howard (2000) found many reviewers' comments about "language" and "writing quality" in the articles written by NNES. The comments covered grammar, word choice, unsuitable register or style, and proposed revisions. However, the best part of the reviews an NNES author receives in this stage are related to the content and methodology rather than language and style (Luo & Hyland, 2016). Thus, reviewers in the peer-review process are excluded from this article.

Previous studies have referred to the people who help NNES researchers communicate their research findings in journals that are published in English with various titles, the most general of which is "text-shapers" (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003; Gholami & Zeinolabedini, 2017). According to Burrough-Boenisch (2003, p. 225), other labels they have been referred to include "correctors, local editors, language professionals, language service providers, and 'authors' editors." Convenience editors, text mediators, and literacy brokers are also other terms to describe them (e.g., Lillis & Curry, 2006; Willey & Tanimoto, 2012, 2015; Gholami & Zeinolabedini, 2017; Zeinolabedini & Gholami, 2016). The most commonly used terms are discussed in more detail below.

Text shapers shape the text of NNES researchers in terms of language, style, structure, content, and argumentation. They may include translators, editors, proofreaders, advisers, negotiators, mediators, representatives, and ambassadors

(Lillis & Curry, 2006). Text shapers may intervene in different stages and degrees of RA production and publication, depending on the needs and preferences of NNES researchers and their target journals. Text shapers may also have different backgrounds, qualifications, skills, and relationships with NNES researchers and their texts. Text shapers may influence the quality and impact of RAs in various ways, such as enhancing clarity, coherence, accuracy, persuasiveness, originality, and relevance. However, text shapers may face multiple challenges and dilemmas, such as ethical issues, power relations, recognition issues, and quality issues (Farley, 2018; Heron et al., 2023; Lillis & Curry, 2006).

Lillis and Curry (2006) coined the term "literacy brokers" to describe the people who mediate between NNES researchers and their target discourse communities. They can be thesis supervisors, editors, reviewers, translators, or peers (Lillis & Curry, 2010; Martinez & Graf, 2016; Williams & Severino, 2004). Literacy brokers are involved in various aspects of RA production and publication, such as translation, editing, proofreading, advising, negotiating, mediating, representing, and promoting.

Convenience editors edit the text of NNES researchers as a favor or a service. They may include Native-English-speaking English teachers at universities in EFL contexts who are often asked to edit scientific manuscripts written by NNES colleagues (Willey & Tanimoto, 2013). Convenience editors may have little or no familiarity with the subject matter or the genre of the RAs they edit, and they may rely on their general language proficiency and intuition to improve the text. Convenience editors may use various techniques to edit the text, such as translation, editing, proofreading, advising, negotiating, and mediating. Convenience editors may enjoy various benefits from their work, such as satisfaction, learning, and networking. However, convenience editors may also face various challenges in their work, such as quality, ethics, recognition, and workload issues (Willey & Tanimoto, 2013). Gholami and Zeinolabedini (2017) broadened this definition by including "authors" colleagues or similar figures with "alike or even native command of English, but who may have no formal editing training" (p. 87).

All the helpers mentioned above assist the NNES authors before their RA is submitted, perhaps while it is being reviewed. However, assisting may not stop there. Some journals may employ professional editors who polish the papers linguistically after they have been accepted. These professionals are usually called "copyeditors" (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003) but are also labeled as "subeditor, manuscript editor, and technical editor" as well (O'Connor, 1978, p. 41 as cited in Burrough-Boenisch, 2003). Following (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003), these professionals will be referred to as copyeditors throughout this article. Copyeditors are last in line to intervene in the manuscript and edit texts written by NNES authors and NES authors to make their articles compatible with the journal's house style (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003). Burrough-Boenisch (2003) also goes on to explain that American journals require that all the articles comply with the norms and standards of American style and "NNES authors (and non-American NS authors) acquire an American accent" (p. 238). Butcher et al. (2006) explain that a copyeditor edits in a sense that involves "looking at each sentence, the author's choice of words, the punctuation, the use of

abbreviations, comparing the data in tables with the relevant text, checking text against the illustrations and their captions, and so on" (p. 2). A copyeditor also checks for consistency which includes checking the mechanical aspects of the text such as spelling and punctuation plus "checking the numbering of illustrations, tables, and notes, and any cross-references to them, and also the consistency of bibliographical references" (Butcher et al., 2006, p. 2). Finally, a copyeditor makes sure that the material is ready for typesetting. This includes "checking the grade of each subheading, which pieces of text, such as long quotations, should be distinguished typographically from the main text, and where tables and illustrations should be placed" (Butcher et al., 2006, p. 2).

Following Burrough-Boenisch (2003), the term "text shaper" is used as an umbrella term to describe all these helpers. Text shaping is a complex and dynamic process that involves multiple actors, texts, languages, cultures, disciplines, genres, and contexts. It also involves various ethical issues and challenges that affect the quality and impact of RAs. Therefore, it is important to understand who text shapers are, what they do, and how they feel about their profession and role in academic publishing. This article aims to provide an overview of these questions by reviewing studies on text shaping from different disciplines and contexts.

### **Review Scope**

In this review, we focused on studies that cover topics related to the linguistic scaffolding offered to NNES authors of RAs. We used the Web of Science database to make the review as inclusive as possible and locate high-quality journal articles on this topic. Several search terms and their related words, including *text shaper*, *literacy broker*, *language editor*, *author's editor*, *convenience editor*, *editor*, and *copy editor*, were used as search terms to identify and compile the key studies on text shaping. After screening the compiled papers, some were improper for inclusion in this study. We excluded papers from the Emerging Sources Citation Index to ensure that only vigorously peer-reviewed studies were included. We scrutinized the suitability of the remaining studies and excluded some more for the following reasons. Some studies highlighted the revisions made only by the peer-review process and, thus, did not focus on linguistic revisions, and some focused on editing jobs done on manuscript types other than academic publications, such as literary works and other fiction and non-fiction texts such as books.

The identified studies on text shapers were diverse in scope and focus, adhered to different research paradigms, enjoyed different methodologies, and aimed at uncovering different aspects of this subject. We aimed at highlighting the most relevant, significant, and illuminating research in a manageable way.

In this thematic review, we describe the review findings regarding text-shapers' editing practices and strategies, outline their characteristics and techniques in providing linguistic services to NNES authors, and highlight the benefits and challenges members of this community experience in the scholarly publishing industry. Moreover, text-shaping services in Asia, with mounting demand for publication in English, were examined explicitly along with other contexts to

comprehensively depict its status quo geographically. As the most populated continent, Asia hosts the most NNES researchers in dire need of linguistic scaffolding to communicate their research to the rest of the academic world. Text shaping practices are specifically diverse and essential in Asia, so we especially aimed to highlight the situation here.

### **Text Shapers in the Literature**

Doing research is pointless if the findings are not to be written and published. However, "scholarly writing and publishing demand elite discipline-specific epistemological, socio-rhetorical, and generic literacies" (Habibie, 2019, p. 44). No researcher can aspire to have a successful academic career without venturing into the turbulent waters of publication. Text shapers enter these turbulent waters with the authors and help them reach the safe shores. The linguistic assistance offered to NNES authors is highlighted in the following section. The studies done in an Asian context have been distinguished for the increasing demand for publication in English in Asia (Li & Flowerdew, 2020) and the fact that Asia is home to a large population of NNES academics who aspire to get published in the academic Lingua-Franca, English. Also, the various text-shaping practices done in other corners of the world are brought under the spotlight to present a more comprehensive picture of such practices.

### **Text Shapers in Asian Contexts**

One of the contexts where text shapers are often needed is Asia, where many NNES authors struggle to publish their research in English-medium journals. The role of text shapers has become even more prominent in the Asian context when we consider the importance and the high number of publications in English. Several studies have examined the role of text shapers in Asian countries, such as China, Japan, Korea, and Iran.

In China, Li and Flowerdew (2007) examined the role of different agents who shape manuscripts in a Chinese context. They identified three major shapers, namely supervisors, other peers, and English language instructors. The role of an English instructor working on the same campus as the author of an RA was emphasized as being facilitative. However, they found that an English teacher also faced several challenges when correcting a manuscript. One specific challenge was for the English instructor to work alone and try to figure out what the author intended to convey. This was mainly because of the English teacher's unfamiliarity with the discipline for which the RA was written. While Li and Flowerdew's (2007) work underscored the role of text shapers, it is essential to note that receiving linguistic assistance from native speaker editors is a big challenge in China. Creating partnerships with people who provide language services outside China or empowering and enabling Chinese scientists by creating partnerships between different departments in academia and language service providers would seem to be a more viable option. As the conditions for the availability of a native English speaker editor are almost the same in Asia, it would be more practical to train local language editors.

In another study, Flowerdew and Wang (2016) looked into the textual revisions made to the manuscripts of Chinese NNES researchers by employing a

double-entry coding system. In the first level of analysis, they examined the revision and categorized them into five sets of addition, substitution, deletion, rearrangement, and correction strategies. In the second stage, they examined the revisions based on the four syntactic groups of morpheme, word, group, and clause. Their results indicated that except for the surface editing strategy of correction, the rest of the strategies altered the texts profoundly semantically.

Luo and Hyland (2016) referred to English teachers who edit Chinese scholar's papers as "text mediators" (p. 44) and attempted to uncover the nature of the relationships between those English teachers and RA authors, the challenges the English teachers faced, how effective this editing job was and the influencing issues on the collaboration between English teachers. By conducting semi-structured interviews with text mediators and the authors, Luo and Hyland (2016) found that English teachers have "agentive power" (p. 51) and are valuable resources for Chinese scientists who wish to publish in English. In addition, the fact that the English teachers and the scientists share the same L1 (namely Chinese) made it possible for them to interact and resolve problems effectively.

Cargill et al. (2012) reported on a project to help Chinese scientists improve their English writing skills and publish their research in international journals. The project involved a series of workshops that combined science and technology education (STE) and English language teaching (ELT) approaches and focused on the genre of research articles (RAs). The workshops were based on the principles of genre analysis, rhetorical moves, and linguistic features, and used authentic RAs from the participants' disciplines as models and examples. The workshops also included peer review, feedback, and revision activities, as well as guidance on the publication process and the expectations of journal editors and reviewers. The authors concluded that the project was successful in enhancing the participants' awareness, confidence, and competence in writing RAs in English, and that the collaboration between STE and ELT experts was valuable and productive.

In Japan, Willey and Tanimoto conducted a series of studies on convenience editing, which is defined as "the practice whereby NNES researchers ask native speakers who are not professional editors or proofreaders to edit their manuscripts" (Willey & Tanimoto, 2012, p. 1). In their 2010 study, Willey and Tanimoto explored the obstacles five English instructors faced when editing papers written by Japanese authors in the nursing field. Willey and Tanimoto (2010) asked those English teachers to edit a part of an RA on nursing authored by a Japanese scholar. Then, they conducted semi-structured interviews with them about their editing job. Two major problems stated by the English instructors were their unfamiliarity with nursing terminology and nursing publications. The participants also mentioned that they edited both the language and the overall organization of the manuscripts. The English teachers also saw it essential to interact with the writers and were eager to help them develop their English. They also wished their editing work to be acknowledged. Like Luo and Hyland's (2016) study, English teachers here, too, were influential in rendering the manuscript publishable and had agentive power. In contexts where professional editing services are not available or are too expensive, English teachers



have proved to be excellent assets for scientists. If there are training programs for English teachers to enable them to edit professionally, they might offer invaluable services to the academic society.

In another study, Willey and Tanimoto (2012) compared the strategies employed by two groups of convenience editors: NES English instructors and NES professionals in the field of medicine. They found a great need for the authors and editors to collaborate in editing a manuscript to get the best outcome. Their results also revealed that experience in editing and knowledge about medicine did not affect strategies used by those two groups of convenience editors. However, it seems evident that having content knowledge facilitates editing and proofreading. Although this study only investigated manuscripts in medicine, the collaboration between all three parties (English teachers, subject matter experts, and authors) needed to be encouraged and promoted in similar contexts.

On the other hand, in another study, Willey and Tanimoto (2013) attempted to investigate the attitudes of English instructors as convenience editors toward the editing job they did for medical professionals. The participants stated that the writing style and medical terminology (medical jargon) were the two main problems. In line with the findings of their 2012 study, Willey and Tanimoto (2013) highlighted the need for close cooperation and interaction between the convenience editors and authors.

The last study, authored by Willey and Tanimoto (2015), tried to probe into the strategies and difficulties faced by English instructors who did editing jobs for peers in other fields. They used the think-aloud protocol to record the thought train of English teachers when editing the manuscripts. Follow-up interviews were conducted to dig deeper into the perspectives held by English instructors towards the editing job. The most frequently mentioned concern was using non-technical terms, while issues related to meaning and technical terminology were the second and the third most frequently mentioned problems, respectively. English teachers do not normally receive instruction in editing. In order to enhance the conditions for both the authors and the English teachers as convenience editors and to make the most use of their editing services, the least that can be done is to have supportive training programs that might lead to more professional revisions as well as help English teachers continue providing this valuable service while keeping a positive mindset about it.

Farley (2018) investigated how research articles in English as a lingua franca give insight to literacy brokers and instructors of English for research publication. The author analyzed the rhetorical style of introductions written by NNES Indonesian authors and found that they deviated from the conventional Creating a Research Space (CARS) model. The author suggested that literacy brokers and instructors should be aware of the diversity and variation in NNES writing and avoid imposing a rigid model of genre expectations. The significance of this study lies in its emphasis on the cooperation between the author and the literacy broker and on what literacy brokers' main concern should be in a NNES environment. The literacy broker's main concern should be to make the RA clear, relevant, explanatory, and concise instead of emphasizing niche creation, significance claims, or grammatical and stylistic details.

While these findings are valuable, they should be interpreted in light of the context of the study and its limitations. The study was done only on manuscripts from one discipline and with NNES authors from one country, namely Indonesia.

Gholami and Zeinolabedini conducted several studies on convenience editing in medical sciences in Iran. In one study, Gholami and Zenolabedini (2015) tried to find out the type and frequency of the language errors made by the authors and corrected by their peers. They compared the first draft and the printed versions of articles in medical science ( $n = 60$ ) to detect errors in the manuscript's discourse level, grammar, terminology, and mechanics. They found that discursal revisions were the most frequent while the mechanical ones were the least.

In another study, Zeinolabedini and Gholami (2016) looked into the revision strategies employed by convenience editors (more experienced medical experts) when editing RAs written by authors in the field of medicine. Their findings indicated that the revisions could be categorized into two major classes: Micro strategies and macro strategies. Three identified micro-strategies of "substitution, addition, and mechanical alteration" (p. 4) were used the most often. They also found that the abstract, introduction, and discussion sections were the most highly revised.

Gholami and Zeinolabedini (2017) conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 convenience editors to study the attitudes of Iranian convenience editors. These editors were medical experts who assisted their peers in publishing RAs in English medium journals. The main emergent themes extracted from the interviews were "language, the editing task, occupational and technological issues, publication in English, and co-convenience editing" (Gholami & Zeinolabedini 2017, p. 86). Their results also highlighted the much-needed collaboration between EFL teachers and medical experts.

Later, in another paper, Gholami and Zeinolabedini (2018) probed into English teachers' comments as convenience editors made on research articles in medical sciences. They analyzed the comments of five English instructors working as language editors to do that. The corpus of the study consisted of thirty manuscripts and the comments made on the erroneous parts. The analysis revealed that the areas needing more attention included "redundancy reduction, informativeness, rechecking, citation, maintaining the author's intention, consistency, relevance; orderliness, disambiguation, and structural issues" (Gholami & Zeinolabedini, 2018, p. 226). It was concluded that identifying these areas can pave the way for better writing courses and, consequently, more proficient authors.

As is evident from the studies in Iran, there is a general lack of professional English editors in academia. Scientists (although only researchers in the medical fields were examined) need assistance in shaping their RAs, and mostly, their more experienced peers or English teachers are the only available editors. This situation in Iran calls for a systematic collaboration between English language professionals and departments of other fields of science that need language services more. The extent of publishing in English among Iranian scholars might improve if English departments offer editing courses to English teachers or field specialists.

### **Text Shapers in Other Contexts and Disciplines**

Text shapers are not only needed in Asian contexts or medical disciplines. They can also play an important role in other settings and fields where authors face challenges in writing for publication.

In Brazil, Martinez and Graf (2016) explored the role of thesis supervisors as literacy brokers. They collected questionnaire and interview data from students and supervisors at a Brazilian university. They found that both parties recognized the need and value of specialized writing guidance but did not explicitly assign the role of literacy broker to the thesis supervisor. They also found that students relied on various sources of support, such as peers, colleagues, editors, and translators, to improve their writing.

Exploring the role of literacy brokers in academic contexts, Mihut (2014) argued that literacy brokers provide not only linguistic and rhetorical assistance but also emotional support and guidance to their clients, who are often international students or scholars. The author drew on her experience as a literacy broker and an ethnographic study of four other literacy brokers to illustrate how they engage in what she calls "literacy as affinity" a form of emotional work involving empathy, trust, care, and solidarity. The author also discussed the challenges and benefits of literacy brokering and the implications for literacy and composition studies.

Zakaria (2022) analyzed how online services edit manuscripts written by authors who speak multiple languages. This study identified 16 online editing organizations offering different editing services, such as improving language, arranging manuscripts, creating figures, and translating. The author also compared the services provided by editing companies and commercial publishers and discovered that *Emerald Publishing Services*, *Enago*, *ManuscriptEdit*, *Editage*, and *Sirius Interactive* were the most notable among them. Although this study did not delve into the details of editing practices, its significance is in taking a commercial and business perspective. This study was conducted considering the situation in Egypt as a NNES country. When local language editors are not available, an opportunity will be created for big publishing companies to expand their services to NNES countries and play a role in communicating science to a broader audience.

Roth (2019) studied copyediting in peer-reviewed RAs and found that reviewer comments often included copyediting-related terms or phrases. It was also found that negative copyediting terminology was associated with rejection, while positive copyediting terminology was associated with acceptance. A paper with fewer copyediting issues saves reviewers' time and energy by reducing the need for corrections, which benefits all parties in the review process. Of course, we need to interpret these findings cautiously because the data comprised only computer science papers and might not be generalizable to papers from other disciplines.

Wates and Campbell (2007) compared articles' author and publisher versions and followed and documented the changes between the first and final versions. They discovered that copyediting improved the quality of the articles by reducing errors,

enhancing clarity, and ensuring consistency. They interviewed 15 copyeditors who worked for different publishers and asked them about their roles, identities, skills, and challenges. Considering the new developments in technology and several Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools that might do the same job as a copy editor, there are still important aspects of copy editing that, as Wates and Campbell's (2007) study suggest, might be of value. They emphasized the copy editors' role in correcting the grammar, keeping with the journal's house style, and ensuring that all references and tagging are correct. The drawback, however, is that their study dates back to 17 years ago, and to have a current picture of copyediting practices, a fresh look into the matter is warranted.

Hughes et al. (2020) explored how copyeditors negotiate the author's voice and identity in academic writing. They interviewed 12 copyeditors who worked for different journals and disciplines and analyzed their editing practices and comments. They found that copyeditors used various strategies to maintain or enhance the author's voice and identity, such as asking questions, making suggestions, explaining changes, and praising strengths.

Shaw (2022) reported on two case studies of revisions done on RAs authored by two Spanish researchers, their uptake of the editing job, and how they reacted to it. With a focus on the RA's text histories, Shaw depicts how a text is shaped through rounds of revision, feedback, and editing until it is fit for publication. He highlighted the collaboration between himself (as the language editor) and the authors. His role as a language editor goes beyond simple linguistic editing. It moves toward research scaffolding when he walks the authors through the proper genre-specific moves of RA writing based on Swales's (1990) framework: Creating a Research Space (CARS) schema. Shaw's study is illuminating in that it is one of the first and can pave the way for further similar research, which may clarify the language editor, the authors, and other agents' roles in shaping an RA. Nevertheless, similar to other case studies, the findings of this study enjoy limited generalizability. Larger-scale studies done in various contexts and on different text types might elucidate the role of language editors and the nature of the relationship between them and the NNES authors.

In the following sections, different aspects of text shaping are discussed in light of the literature and some more relevant studies.

### **Characteristics of Text Shapers**

Text shapers are diverse people with different backgrounds, qualifications, skills, and roles in academic publishing. Based on some studies on literacy brokering from different disciplines and contexts, common characteristics of them are:

**Language proficiency:** Text shapers should have a high level of proficiency in both the original language and English, as well as knowledge of the linguistic and cultural differences between them (Farley, 2018).

**Subject expertise:** Text shapers should have a good understanding of the subject matter and the genre of the article, as well as the expectations and conventions of the target audience and journal (Farley, 2018; Heron et al., 2023).

**Editing skills:** Text shapers should have the ability to check and correct the grammar, spelling, punctuation, word choice, and terminology of the article, as well as to suggest revisions to improve the clarity, coherence, and flow of the text (Flowerdew & Wang 2016).

**Advising skills:** Text shapers should have the ability to provide guidance and feedback to the author on various aspects of the article, such as the structure, organization, presentation, argumentation, and citation of the research (Farley, 2018; Heron et al., 2023) .

**Ethical awareness:** Text shapers should be aware of the ethical issues and challenges involved in literacy brokering, such as plagiarism, authorship, confidentiality, and power relations (Farley, 2018; Heron et al., 2023).

These characteristics may vary depending on the specific context and purpose of Text shaping. For example, some text shapers may specialize in a particular discipline or genre, while others may work across different fields and formats. Some text shapers may have formal qualifications or training in translation, editing, or teaching, while others may rely on their experience or intuition. Some may have a close relationship with the author or the journal, while others may work as freelancers or contractors. Some may focus on one aspect of RA production or publication, while others may offer an RA a range of services and support.

### **Support Type**

Text shapers can enhance a text by providing various types of support to the author, such as:

*Linguistic support:* correcting errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, and style; improving clarity, coherence, conciseness, and consistency; ensuring adherence to the conventions and standards of the target language and genre (Lillis & Curry, 2006; Willey & Tanimoto, 2012).

*Rhetorical support:* helping the author structure and organize the text; developing and presenting the arguments; using appropriate tone, voice, and register; engaging the audience and meeting their expectations; following the norms and expectations of the target discourse community and journal (Flowerdew & Wang, 2016; Swales & Feak, 2012).

*Conceptual support:* clarifying the purpose and scope of the text; identifying and filling gaps in the content; providing feedback on the quality and relevance of the information; suggesting sources or references to support or expand the claims; avoiding plagiarism or misrepresentation of sources (Cargill et al., 2012; Lee & Casal, 2014).

*Procedural support:* helping the author select a suitable journal or publisher; following the submission guidelines and requirements; formatting the text and figures according to the journal or publisher's style; responding to peer review comments and revising the text; accordingly, negotiating with editors or publishers on behalf of the author (Martinez & Graf, 2016; Wates & Campbell, 2007).

*Emotional support:* encouraging and motivating the author, building confidence and trust, acknowledging strengths and achievements, providing constructive criticism and praise, respecting the author's voice and identity, and maintaining a professional and ethical relationship (Mihut, 2014). Emotional support can help the author cope with the challenges and stress of writing and publishing, such as dealing with rejection, feedback, deadlines, and expectations. Emotional support can also enhance the author's satisfaction, self-efficacy, and motivation to write and revise (Zeinolabedini & Gholami, 2016).

### **Techniques of Text Shapers**

Text shapers use various techniques to improve RAs based on their actions and interventions. Based on some studies on text shaping from different disciplines and contexts, some common techniques of text shaping while preserving the meaning and style of the author (Farley, 2018).

*Editing:* This involves checking and correcting the grammar, spelling, punctuation, word choice, and terminology of the article (Willey & Tanimoto, 2015). An editor may suggest revisions to improve the text's clarity, coherence, and flow. Alley (2000) defined editing as "the process of making changes throughout the writing of a draft, changes that work to make the draft congruent with a writer's changing intentions" (p. 1). Alley (2000) goes on to explain that editing focuses on improving the content, organization, clarity, and accuracy of the text while proofreading focuses on checking for errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and citation styles. Another definition of editing texts is the one given by Barzun (1986), who defined editing as "the process of making a text conform to the rules of grammar, punctuation, and spelling, and to the conventions of style and usage" (p. 3). Willey and Tanimoto (2012) explain that convenience editors - as a group of text shapers - use strategies including "addition, deletion, substitution, mechanical alteration, rewriting, recombining, reordering" (p. 259). Zeinolabedini and Gholami (2016) divided editing strategies into micro and macro strategies. Micro-strategies are editing practices that deal with small language units, such as words, while macro-strategies are editing practices that deal with larger language units, such as sentences or paragraphs. They further classified the micro-strategy of mechanical alteration into five sub-types: hyphenating, spacing by comma, case lettering, spacing, and spelling. Micro-strategies of addition, deletion, and substitution were also divided into two sub-categories: single micro-strategy and extended micro-strategy. For instance, deletion might be for one word in some cases but for a sentence or a whole paragraph in others (Zeinolabedini & Gholami, 2016).

*Proofreading:* It involves checking the article's formatting, labeling, and typographical errors. As a proofreader, a text shaper may also ensure that the article follows the style and layout guidelines of the journal or conference. Proofreading also involves fixing mistakes during the final stages of preparing the document, such as typesetting, formatting, or file conversion, improving poor page design, and spotting any major errors that escaped the copyediting process (Einsohn & Schwartz, 2019).

*Advising:* This involves providing guidance and feedback to the author on various aspects of the article, such as the structure, organization, presentation, argumentation, and research citation. An adviser may also help the author identify and address the expectations and conventions of the target audience and journal (Farley, 2018; Heron et al., 2023). As an adviser, text shapers may also collaborate with the author to improve the clarity, coherence, and accuracy of the language and content of the article. They may also suggest revisions or additions to enhance the quality and impact of the research. Furthermore, they might assist the author in responding to the journal editors' and reviewers' feedback and comments (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003; Luo & Hyland, 2016).

*Negotiating:* This involves facilitating communication and collaboration between the author and other stakeholders, such as reviewers, editors, publishers, and readers. As a negotiator, text shapers may help resolve conflicts and misunderstandings during publication (Lillis & Curry, 2006). A text shaper may also mediate and advocate for NNES authors or when authors belong to a marginalized or underrepresented group. A text shaper may also help to bridge the gap between different academic cultures and expectations and to promote mutual respect and understanding among the stakeholders (Flowerdew & Wang, 2016; Willey & Tanimoto, 2013).

*Mediating:* This involves bridging the gap between different languages, cultures, disciplines, and genres that may affect the publication process. As a mediator, text shapers may also help to balance the interests and goals of different parties involved in academic publishing (Lillis & Curry, 2006). They may also help to adapt the text to the specific requirements and conventions of the target journal and audience while preserving the author's voice and identity. In addition, they may also help to enhance the readability and accessibility of the text for a broader and more diverse readership (Matarese, 2016; Mur-Dueñas, 2017).

*Representing:* This involves representing and advocating for the interests and goals of the author in the publication process. As a representative, text shapers may also help to promote and enhance the visibility and impact of the author's research in the international academic community (Lillis & Curry, 2006). They may also help to protect and acknowledge the author's intellectual property and contribution to the publication process. They may also help the author develop their academic writing skills and confidence (Flowerdew & Wang, 2016; Willey & Tanimoto, 2013).

These techniques may vary depending on the specific context and purpose of text shaping. For example, some text shapers may use more direct or indirect techniques depending on their relationship with the author or their degree of intervention in the text. Some text shapers may use more standard or creative techniques depending on their adherence to or deviation from the norms and conventions of academic writing. Some may use more collaborative or independent techniques depending on their level of involvement or autonomy in academic publishing.

## **Benefits and Challenges of Text Shapers**

Text shapers experience various benefits and challenges based on their attitudes and perceptions. Based on the current knowledge on text shaping, the following benefits and challenges can be cited:

**Benefits:** Text shapers enjoy various benefits from their profession and role in academic publishing. Some possible benefits are:

**Satisfaction:** Text shapers feel satisfied when they help NNES researchers communicate their research in English and publish their articles in international journals. They also feel satisfied when they see their work recognized and appreciated by their clients or colleagues (Farley, 2018; Lillis & Curry, 2006).

**Learning:** Text shapers learn new knowledge and skills from their work as they encounter different texts, languages, cultures, disciplines, genres, and contexts. They also learn from their interactions with other people involved in academic publishing (Farley, 2018; Lillis & Curry, 2006).

**Networking:** Text shapers build professional and personal networks with people involved in academic publishing, such as authors, reviewers, editors, publishers, and readers. They also access different resources and opportunities that may benefit their career.

**Challenges:** Text shapers face various challenges in their profession and their role in academic publishing. Some possible challenges are:

**Quality:** Text shapers have to ensure the quality of their work as they deal with different texts, languages, cultures, disciplines, genres, and contexts. They also have to meet the standards and expectations of different stakeholders involved in academic publishing, such as authors, reviewers, editors, publishers, and readers (Farley, 2018; Lillis & Curry, 2006).

**Ethics:** Text shapers have to deal with ethical issues and dilemmas that may arise in their work, such as plagiarism, authorship, confidentiality, and power relations. They also have to balance their interests and goals with those of their clients or colleagues (Farley, 2018; Heron et al., 2023). Text shapers must be aware of the ethical guidelines and expectations of the journals and disciplines they work with and respect the intellectual property and integrity of the authors they assist (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003; Luo & Hyland, 2016). Text shapers also need to communicate clearly and effectively with their clients or colleagues and to establish a mutual understanding and trust regarding the scope, purpose, and limits of their intervention in the text (Matarese, 2016; Mur-Dueñas, 2017).

**Recognition:** Text shapers often receive little or no recognition or reward for their work as they are invisible or marginalized in the academic publishing process. They also face competition or conflict with other literacy brokers or stakeholders involved in scholarly publishing (Lillis & Curry, 2006; McKenny & Bennett, 2011). Text shapers may also experience frustration or disappointment when their suggestions are ignored or rejected by the authors or when their contributions are not



acknowledged or rewarded by the journals or institutions (Flowerdew & Wang, 2016; Willey & Tanimoto, 2013).

Furthermore, text shapers might encounter other constraints, such as the text shaper's level of English proficiency and familiarity with the conventions of the target genre and discipline, the context of the collaboration, such as the purpose, deadline, and mode of communication, the type, and quality of the original text, such as its clarity, coherence, and accuracy. Therefore, text shapers need to develop strategies and skills to overcome these difficulties and enhance their professional development and recognition in academic writing (Matarese, 2016; Mur-Dueñas, 2017).

### **Conclusion**

Text shapers are people who help NNES researchers to communicate their research in English and to publish their articles in international journals. This article has provided an overview of who they are, what they do, and how they feel about their profession and role in academic publishing. Based on a review of some studies on text shaping from different disciplines and contexts, the article has identified some common characteristics, techniques, benefits, and challenges of text shaping. It is a complex and dynamic process that involves multiple actors, texts, languages, cultures, disciplines, genres, and contexts. Therefore, text shaping needs to be flexible and adaptable to different situations and needs. As it is a collaborative and interactive process, it involves communication and cooperation between different stakeholders involved in academic publishing. Therefore, text shapers need to be respectful and responsive to different perspectives and expectations. Text shaping is a creative and critical process involving innovation and evaluating different texts and techniques. Thus, text shapers need to be aware and reflective of their practices and choices. Consequently, by incorporating the language professionals and showing how they contribute to the pre-publication process of the text, we aimed to bring recognition to those whose mostly hidden services are less taken into consideration, if not at all. It is essential for English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) researchers to recognize the role of these professionals and understand how they complement the other manuscript readers who belong to the discourse community. Only by comprehending the actions, reactions, and interactions of all the pre-publication readers can we estimate how much the author's voice is reflected in the published research article (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003). By acknowledging the role of language professionals, we can see the published text as a product of the publishing industry aimed at a certain discourse community.

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### Authors' Biographies

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**Farzane Deliry Moghadam** received her B. A. in English Language and Literature from Azad University and her M. A. in TEFL from Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University. Currently, she is a PhD candidate of TEFL at Urmia University. She is a lecturer at the University of Mohaghegh Ardabili and Farhangian University (Teacher Training University). She is also an English teacher at the Ministry of Education and a senior teacher and supervisor at the Iran Language Institute. Her main interests are Discourse Analysis, English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and sustainability studies.



**Javad Gholami** is a Professor of Applied Linguistics / TESOL in the Department of English Language and Literature at Urmia University, Urmia, Iran. His main publications have been on incidental Focus on Form, Task-Based Language Teaching, Teacher Education, English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP), and Convenience Editing (of research articles). He is also interested in the professional development of Iranian EFL teachers through conducting teacher training courses and theme-based workshops.