WRITING ARTICLES FOR SCHOLARLY JOURNALS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM EXPERIENCED AUTHORS

ARTICLE

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This article is submitted to be presented at the periodic academic-forum organized by Lembaga Penjaminan Mutu IAIN Jember

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INTRODUCTION

A. Rationale

Science has developed dynamically, diversely, and fast in the last few years as described in the manuscripts published by scientific journals. The World Bank Data (2018) shows that the number of scientific and technical journal articles that have been published and indexed by the Science Citation Index (SCI) and the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) reached 2,554,373,362 worldwide in 2018. Quoted from the same source, the circulation of journal article publications in Indonesia, either written by Indonesian authors or written collaboratively with other authors from different countries, has reached 26,948 articles. Meanwhile, the SINTA (science and technology index) database shows that more than 40,000 documents have been published in the Scopus indexing database (from Q1 to Q4) in 2019 (SINTA, 2020). A large number of publications in the world and Indonesia show that such rapid scientific development can have an impact on increasing the need for academics to make efforts to renew their competence and research capacity following their scientific discipline. It will also encourage them to contribute to the development of science and research both at the national and global levels.

One way that academics contributing to scientific and research development is through increasing the productivity of research outputs in the form of publications in reputable journals. Dissemination of research results and community service provides opportunities for academics to be written in the form of scientific articles and then published in international scholarly journals. However, novice authors or novice writers who have no experience in writing for reputable international journals need to build literacy-related international publications because many myths spread widely about Scopus indexed article publications. Handoyo Puji Widodo (2020, personal communication) underlines these four myths, they are 1) some international journals were labeled "international" or "Scopus" but the contributors are still mostly local, 2) This is an academic myth if the more expensive the international journal is collecting

article processing charge (APC) to potential contributors, the better the quality of the journal is, 3) Correspondence with the editor is only at the beginning of submission and at the time of publication, and 4) All Scopus indexed journals are good. In addition, Krishna Bista, Editor in Chief at the Journal of International Students, (2020, personal communication) reminded future authors about predatory journals through the following identifications, 1) bragging about the quality of the journal by claiming the journal metrics, 2) promising short publication, 3) promising a review process easy and paid ones, 4) disguising the journal title with that of a legitimate journal, and 5) claiming to be based in big cities such as London or New York. Furthermore, the Board of Editors of TEFLIN Journal (2012) in an interview with Willy A Renandya, a writer of articles and books and journal editor, conveyed the importance of avoiding paid journals because their quality is still in doubt.

Although writing in reputable journals is not easy, it does not mean that it is possible to write and publish articles with the quality expected by external reviewers and editors in the intended journal. Therefore, this paper presents some strategic steps, especially for novice writers, to write and publish good quality articles based on the writer's reflection and experience.

B. Writing foci

The foci of this article are formulated using the following questions:

1. What knowledge should a novice writer build to succeed in writing article for a reputable journal?
2. What strategies can a novice writer employ to publish in a reputable journal or Scopus-indexed journal reflecting from experienced authors?

C. Writing objectives

From the questions formulated, this article writing aims to:

1. Present thoughts and ideas related to article writing submitted to scholarly journals
2. Help novice authors develop strategies to publish in Scopus-indexed journals

DISCUSSION

Writing for Scopus indexed journals has become a new trend for academics in this decade. Apart from being a professional development requirement, success in publishing articles in Scopus indexed journals is also considered a worldwide recognition of their work. Azizah and Budiman (2017) found that publication in reputable journals is important for authors, universities, and countries. Even though there have been many seminars, workshops, and YouTube broadcasts that have shared tips and tricks on how to publish in reputable Scopus indexed journals, this paper presents thoughts and ideas that can be considered by novice writers to be able to publish their papers in reputable journals based on the reflections of experienced authors.

1. *Constructing issue in a research report*

   First, novice writers need to understand the issues that are currently popular in a particular field of study. Interrogating popular Issues can be done by observing phenomena and reviewing theoretical and conceptual framework that are being discussed in the academic space, and gaps showed in previous research that can be developed through different perspectives/approaches. Through this identification and analysis, a writer can develop his/her research by providing new knowledge in a particular field of science and study. Providing new knowledge presented by writers to meet the expectations of editors and external reviewers is sometimes still beyond the reach of novice writers (Luo & Hyland, 2017). In addition to knowing these popular issues, a writer needs to be aware of global research trends. The global research trend is chosen because the target readers of the article will be academics and world researchers. This research trend can be understood through self-enrichment activities by reading journal articles published internationally. From these two things, the issues and trends of world research, the writer can draw the global perspectives into the local space according to the context, needs, and

objectives of the research so that the research report written can provide new insights for international readers as well as strong in theoretical, conceptual, and empirical lens.

2. *Navigating scholarly articles and journals*

The next step that needs to be prepared by future author is navigating journals published by reputable publishers. Some trusted online pages/ databases and reputable publishers that can be used as reference, for examples:

- https://www.scimagojr.com/,
- https://www.library.unisa.edu.au/
- https://www.tandfonline.com/,
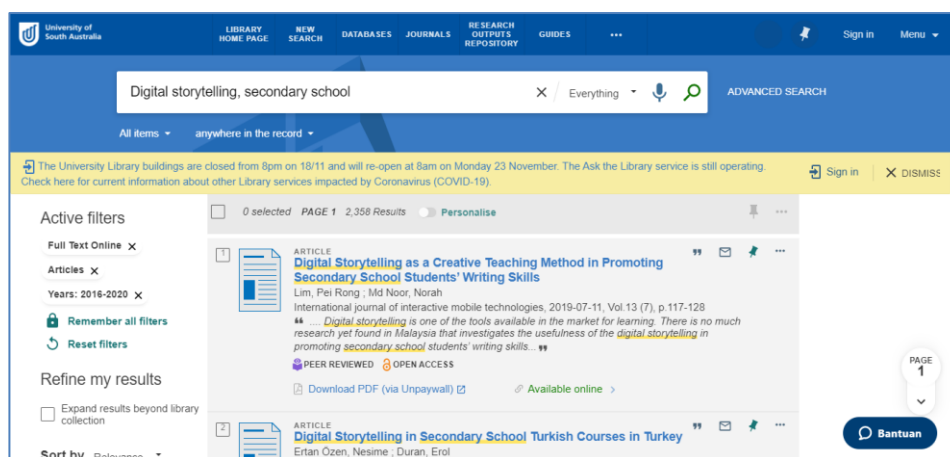- https://www.emerald.com/insight/,
- https://link.springer.com/

Figure 1. Using online library database to help understand global issue

These pages can also be used to plan targeted journals as well as explore phenomena, understand trends, and strengthen theoretical/conceptual/ empirical foundations related to the academic interest of the authors so that they can have strong arguments in their research reports (see figure 1). It is strongly advised that an author cites at least 80% of journal articles for his manuscript and the rest can be cited from books or non-journal articles.

The database above can also be used as a platform to avoid predatory and paid journals because reputable journal publishers clearly never charge authors a penny. One of the ways paid journals find their prey is through invitations sent via email or conference. Therefore, invitations to write articles by email need to be considered or even ignored because Scopus as the world's indexing machine also periodically discontinue journals that have showed low quality published articles.

3. *Understanding the scope and writing style of the journal*

   After the target journal that we choose based on the second guideline is determined, the writer needs to study the scope, style and writing system applied by the journal (Ferdiansyah, 2020). This is important to help the editor with the initial article screening. Many articles have received desk rejection because the author was negligent in understanding the scope of the journal, the style and writing system required. Furthermore, the writer can determine what type of article interests him.

Figure 2. Understanding the journal scope and format

Some journals offer several article formats, such as original research articles, short research reports, essays, or book reviews (see figure 2). All of these types of articles have different characteristics, such as different length of article/word count. This type of article literacy is important because it will help the writer determine which one suits his interests, goals, writing capacity, and time. Finally, the author needs to pay attention to the citation system applied to the journal. For example, in social science most journals will apply the use of the American Psychological Association (APA).

4. *Developing the first draft*

As a genre of academic writing, a writer needs to pay attention to a straightforward-generated ideas and academic writing style and to maintain the flow of his writing so that it has coherence and cohesion of ideas as well as sentences. Kennedy (2017) suggests that before manuscripts are sent, writers need to ensure that the topic is interesting, the ideas are clear, and that different perspectives are showcased. By paying attention to this, the writer will avoid jumping ideas. Another important thing in developing written drafts is paying attention to the logic of thinking and avoiding logical fallacies. Many writings were found to contain logical fallacies, for example in sentences, the effect of using picture to improve critical thinking. Logically, the sentence contains logical fallacy because pictures cannot improve a person's ability to think critically. The last part of how a writer can develop the writing is commonly known as the ATM technique (amati, tiru, modifikasi). It is a very effective technique for helping novice writers, in particular, imitates published text models.

5. *Strengthening the language*

Articles submitted to international journals are written in English. This becomes a challenge for writers whose first language is not English. Luo

and Hyland (2017) consider this as the reason for the number of writers fails to make the articles published in reputable international journals. However, this does not mean that it is an obstacle for writers to write because currently there are many digital tools such as Google translate or Grammarly.com (see Figure 3) that can be used to help translate articles that are written.
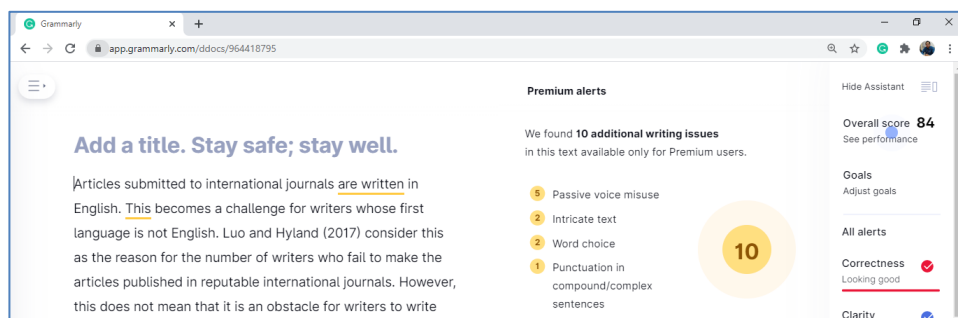

Figure 3. Using a free proofreading tool

Recently, Google translate becomes an important tool that can be used to translate papers because the accuracy of the translation results is getting better and better. In addition to utilizing digital tools, writers can use professional translator services that are widely available at relatively affordable costs. The next suggestion is to ask to correct the translated text to a professional proofreader who will help authors polish the language. This is necessarily done to avoid editor's desk rejection due to severe language errors at the beginning of article submission. A writer also needs to learn how to do paraphrase correctly and accurately so that the writing is free from plagiarism.

6. *Submitting article through open journal system and communicating with journal editor*

A novice writer needs to understand the long process of publication, starting from submitting articles, initial screening by editors, submitting articles to external peer partners (can be two or three different peer reviewers), revising process based on peer feedback, editor's decision (

accepted or rejected), the copy-editing process, and ending with the publishing process. The process of appointing external peer reviewers usually takes two weeks and they will be given time to review the article for four weeks. Some journals may assign either single or double-blind peer review. In general, the process can take three to six months or even two years at the most from submission, review, to the publication process. For a novice writer, submitting articles for the first time to an international journal will usually be challenging due to language issue because the journal system that uses English as a medium of instruction. Therefore, the author needs to be careful in understanding every instruction given in the journal system. Another important thing that the writer needs to pay attention to is to be responsive to communicate with the editor whenever the associate editor/assistant editor makes an update on the status of the article sent (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Communicating with editor

Authors need to respond quickly and ask questions if they do not understand the process because editors are very happy to help contributors whose articles are being considered for publication.

7. *Understanding co-authorship and ethics*

The last part of the strategy to write in reputable international journals is to invite experienced writers whose area of specialization is similar to novice authors (Ge, 2015). This will help a novice writer in many ways, such as writing an initial draft, strengthening arguments, submitting articles, to

revising if the article is accepted. Ferdiansyah (2020) suggests that collaboration needs to be built to develop enthusiasm in writing for scholarly journals. However, several things need to be considered when writing a collaborative article. For example, each author has a real contribution to make (Kennedy, 2017). In other words, there are no free riders/ ghost authors in the article written. This is important because each journal will ask each contributor to make the authors' declaration that the article does not have a conflict of interest that will occur in the future if the article is published. Therefore, in the early days of writing articles, each writer needs to build commitment, work collaboratively, and play a fair role.

CONCLUSION

Writing for an international journal is a long process, full of challenges, and tiring. Man experienced writers, although they have published many research articles in reputable journals, still get a rejection from other journals. This of course also applies to novice writers when they submit articles for the first time are likely to get rejection by the editor. However, the important thing to remember is not to give up easily and to continue to build motivation for contributing to science and research development that is internationally recognized. This paper does not contain the successful keys to publish articles in a scholarly journal in one day. This paper invites novice writers to understand the process of writing articles well and the process of publishing in reputable journals based on reflections and experiences of experienced authors. Of course, the strategy to publish papers in reputable international journals presented is still incomplete so that other suggestions from readers can strengthen novice authors' motivation who are passionate about contributing globally.

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