



Multilingual Writers' Voices of Publishing in English

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ABSTRACT

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Over the last few decades, an increasing number of multilingual writers have been exposed to publications. They are eager to publish their work in English-medium journals. However, many multilingual writers and researchers have encountered challenges in producing and publishing legitimate research articles to meet expectations from the international disciplinary and discourse communities. This study investigated reasons influencing multilingual writers from Asian countries to publish their articles in international English-medium journals. A survey questionnaire was sent to 67 Chinese and Indonesian scholars to explore their voices of publishing in English. This study explained why there were a low number of academic research publications in English by scholars with Asian backgrounds and explored multilingual writers' perceptions of publications in English, challenges they encountered in the pursuit of research publications, and their tactics in coping with those challenges. Results showed multilingual writers considered that publishing in international journals would be beneficial to their academic careers. However, they perceived that the process of publication in high-status Anglophone journals was challenging. In particular, a lack of applicability of research methods might impede multilingual writers from producing and publishing their studies in target international journals.

I. INTRODUCTION

In response to the scope of social, economic, and political factors, English maintains its status as a global and/or international language in communication and as the primary medium of academic research publications worldwide (Curry & Lillis, 2019). As a result, multilingual writers, who can use several languages particularly in Asian countries, have concerns and need to publish their research papers in English-medium journals to gain international recognition from a wider audience. However, they face difficulties and challenges of writing academic research papers in English in the mainstream journals (Flowerdew, 2008). Uzuner (2008) maintains that

such hardship may be associated with insufficient command of the English language, non-linguistic hindrance, and the limited participation in global scholarship. Writing for publication in English-medium journals is a challenging task for multilingual writers not only because of the language impediments but also because of the socio-economic and social aspects with which multilingual writers struggle and negotiate in the periphery countries (Kachru, 1992). According to Canagarajah (1996), third world scholars must struggle with the publishing conventions that are "deeply implicated in the politics of knowledge production and the intellectual hegemony of the developed nations" (p. 438). Besides the linguistic and discursive barrier, Canagarajah (1996) stresses on

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non-discursive requirements that impede multilingual writers publishing in the mainstream journals.

For the past two decades, researchers have investigated how multilingual writers approach publishing in English-medium journals (Belcher, 2007; Curry & Lillis, 2019; Flowerdew & Li, 2009; Lillis & Curry, 2010; Min, 2014). Researchers examined linguistic, discursive and non-discursive factors (Canagarajah, 1996), the impact of local and transnational network (Curry & Lillis, 2019) and educational policy in the home country (Flowerdew & Li, 2009). However, little research focuses on the multilingual writers' successful stories of publications (Bocanegra-Valle, 2014). Therefore, this study aims at investigating the challenges multilingual writers encounter and the strategies they adopt when attempting to publish in international English-medium journals, the choice of research methodology, and their overall perceptions towards international publication.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Academic Literacy as Social Practice

This study draws upon social practice of academic literacy and writing (Bang, 2020; Curry & Lillis, 2004, 2019; Gee, 2001). Writing is considered as knowledge construction (Prior, 1998), is embedded in power relations (Canagarajah, 2001), and is involved in identity issues (Gee, 2001; Ivanič, 1998). Along with complex social and cultural contexts for writing, written texts are created and developed within discourse communities, emphasizing discourse of texts and genres for particular purposes. A discourse community enables writers to learn the rules governing both texts and practices and get accepted as its member (Flowerdew, 2000; Prior, 1998).

2. Multilingual Writers' Challenges of International Journal Publication

Multilingual writers may face several problems and challenges, which marginalize and exclude them from the academic publishing process: 1) language, 2) cultural bias, and 3) limited material conditions. First, the English language itself is the major challenge that hinders multilingual writers from publishing their articles internationally. Based on the experiences of a group of applied linguists in Taiwan, Min (2014) identified that English is a major stumbling block to publishing their research papers. Multilingual writers perceive that publishing in English is much more challenging than publishing in their first language due to insecurity and a lack of confidence in English academic writing. In a similar vein, Canagarajah (1996) pointed out that multilingual speakers have a lack of writing the introductory part and the authoritative knowledge on convention, style, or content in English. Furthermore, the English rhetorical style of most international journals is often ethnocentrically considered as the universal academic. Curry and Lillis (2019) also argued

that multilingual writers still have numerous challenges to the presumed global hegemony of English in academic publishing. In order to publish their writing in those English-medium journals, multilingual writers often need to adhere to the standards set by their native counterparts. Because there is no such guidance, multilingual writers have to "learn citation styles, research methods and scholarly writing through modeling and painstaking trial-and-error methods" as described in Braine (1999, p. 21).

The second challenge is cultural bias revealed in Braine's (1999) argument that Western culture dominates academic publishing and that most audiences of mainstream academic journals have little interest in what happens in other language-based contexts. When scholars from outside the West attempt to publish in Western English-medium journals with a high rejection rate, they face an additional obstacle in the form of editors and reviewers who may find the research of little interest to their readership. Similar results are evidenced in Min's (2014) study that participants often found finding new and relevant ideas to the international readership extremely challenging. Liu (2001) also recognized that "there was no sharing for my writing. Peer reviews are hard to find as I felt uncomfortable asking my colleagues to read my papers since I was afraid of losing face" (p. 127). In Asian culture, revealing one's mistakes to those whom the person works with is indeed an embarrassment. As a result, this sense of self-protection embedded in Asian culture might have a negative impact on publishing in English-medium journals.

Third, multilingual writers' publishing challenges are attributed to the limited material conditions of the Third World scholars and a lack of facilities, such as fully equipped libraries, professional journals, conferences, and workshops (Canagarajah, 2001; Curry & Lillis, 2019; Min, 2014). These academic materials and facilities are readily available and often taken for granted in inner circle countries; whereas, they are still lacking in most peripheral countries (Kachru, 1992). Furthermore, it is difficult to keep up with what is happening in the field due to insufficient information and involvement. In particular, there is little support to attend international conferences from the local government in peripheral countries. As a result, the research or publication records of the individuals may not be as substantial or impressive as those born in English-speaking countries.

3. Multilingual Writers' Strategies for International Journal Publication

While many studies focus on the challenges and difficulties multilingual writers face in writing for publication in English-medium refereed journals, relatively few researchers investigate what strategies multilingual writers adopt to tackle their difficulties. Fazel (2013) indicated that the process of writing for journal publication is a complex and lengthy process. The process starts early before putting it into words on paper. During the process of actual writing,

multilingual writers need to overcome the language barriers faced and adopt writing conventions in English-medium refereed journals. Furthermore, the submission of the article does not spell the end to the process, even if it is rejected outright. Up to this point, multilingual writers still need to go through the revisions and interact with the editor and reviewers. Even after the rejection is notified, they should look for another journal and start the process all over again. Therefore, this section reviews multilingual writers' publication strategies in the following stages: 1) before writing, 2) during writing, and 3) after submission.

1) Before Writing

Multilingual writers may often not know well about the current trend in their research fields due to a lack of access to international conferences. In addition, the disparity between interest on local and global issues keeps multilingual writers from publishing in English-medium international journals. Several directions would help multilingual writers to better understand the requirements of journal publication and the strategies to find publishable topics. First, multilingual writers tend to get help from "textual mentorship" (Li, 2007, p. 67). For example, multilingual writers tend to select their familiar areas of study and analyze the readings on relevant topics or target journals to learn the conventions, language use, and the organization to make use of the patterns and phrases in their own articles (Buckingham, 2014; Cheung, 2010). Second, multilingual writers develop their topic selection strategy by utilizing their local knowledge and understandings of the target field. Li and Flowerdew (2009) indicated that multilingual scholars in Hong Kong believed that they should focus either on topics related to Hong Kong or relative theories for framing and enriching their research articles.

2) During Writing

While some multilingual writers adopt different strategies to cope with language barriers and try to get meaning across, others keep using their first language to focus on meaning. Gosden (1996) reported that Japanese multilingual writers tend to write in Japanese first and then translate the article into English, paying special attention to expressions and idioms in the article. Similarly, Li (2007) showed that multilingual scholars in Hong Kong also used their first language to sharpen meaning for journal publication. Some other multilingual writers get help from literacy brokers for proofreading and rhetorical suggestions (Lillis & Curry, 2010), including writing centers in the university context, peer reviews, and commercial editing services (Buckingham, 2014; Cho, 2004; Li, 2007). Some multilingual writers tend to recycle phrases or language use from published articles during the writing process. The practice is closely connected to Li's (2007) notion of textual mentorship. On the other hand, Curry and Lillis (2019) argue that linguistic and rhetorical competence are not sufficient for English publication. The findings showed that scholars' participation and inter-

action in academic research networks are a key resource for journal publication in both English and local languages. All the findings from the prior literature resonate with the urge to enhance and strengthen the collaboration between multilingual writers and the needs for resources.

3) After Submission

Once the manuscript is submitted, it goes into a review process involved with three scenarios: 1) accepted, 2) revision before accepting, and 3) rejected. Cho (2004) found that Korean doctoral students in the U.S. managed to raise questions about reviewers' feedback. They negotiated with editors and reviewers and even persuaded them to reconsider certain points in their feedback. When being rejected, one needs to find another journal and resubmit their articles (Fazel, 2013) with authorial persistence as the key to journal publication (Belcher, 2007). In other words, multilingual writers need to continue revising and resubmitting even if they face extensive critical commentaries from reviewers and editors.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

The aim of the study was to examine multilingual writers' challenges, strategies, and perceptions in light of submission of academic research articles in English-medium journals. Thus, this study employed a survey research method. Creswell (2002) describes a survey design as a research procedure in which researchers administer a survey to the subjects or to the entire target population to describe their opinions, behaviors, or characteristics.

2. Participants

The survey research targeted multilingual writers from China and Indonesia. Sixty-seven multilingual writers (22 males and 45 females), who were graduate students and scholars, participated in this study, as shown in Table 1. The range of age was 20-40 with the average of 28. In particular, the Chinese participants were from five different colleges and universities in a southern province in China. Their fields of study varied. Forty-six participants (68.7%) majored in English language-related fields (i.e., Applied Linguistics, Business English Education, English Literature, Foreign Language Education, Sociolinguistics, Teacher Education, and Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language).

TABLE 1
Demographic Backgrounds of the Participants

Categories	Gender			Nationality		
	Male	Female	Total	China	Indonesia	Total
<i>n</i>	22	45	67	45	22	67
Percent	33%	67%	100%	67%	33%	100%

3. Data Collection and Procedures

A structured questionnaire was initially developed by the researcher. The purpose of the survey was to examine what influences multilingual writers' perceptions about publishing articles in English-medium international journals. After the survey questionnaire was designed, it was first sent to a survey expert for validation. With several modifications and adjustments to the question items, the questionnaire was then considered ready for dissemination. The survey questions were disseminated through electronic mail. Finally, survey responses were returned within a week.

The survey questionnaire was structured in such a way as to include the following contents: the writers' demographic and academic backgrounds, perceptions of submission, and difficulties of writing and submitting their articles. The first section of the questionnaire contained questions which asked for demographic and academic background information. The next section covered the specification of submission and publication issues. The final section comprised the questions on difficulties, strategies for publication in international journals, and preferences for research methods. The survey consisted of multiple-choice, open-ended, and yes/no questions.

In terms of validity and reliability issues, survey items were reviewed and revised by the survey expert several times for high content validity. Reliability of the surveyed data was estimated with Cronbach's alpha indicating the degree of internal consistency for the survey questionnaire. The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.78 for the survey items, denoting a reasonable level of internal consistency.

4. Data Analysis

The responses to the survey questionnaires were quantitatively analyzed on the Excel spreadsheet. The information for the quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, to summarize the overall results.

IV. RESULTS

The survey questionnaire mainly contained the subsequent areas: the participants' trials of submissions, the reasons for submitting or not submitting their papers, the factors of inhibition from publication, the differences of the submission standards, the improvements of both international journals and multilingual writers, and their preferences for research methods.

When participants were asked if they had ever tried to submit articles to international journals, thirty-eight participants responded to "No" (57%) and twenty-nine answered "Yes" (43%) as seen in Figure 1. However, when the survey question asked if they had ever successfully published any articles in international journals, only twelve (18%) of them had done the publication.

Twenty-nine participants who tried submitting to international journals were directed to answer the subsequent question asked to check all the reasons for their submissions to international journals, as shown in Table 2. They could check all that applies to the question. Among the reasons, "It is beneficial to my career" has the highest frequency (31.5%), followed by "It helps me be in tune with topics that are currently of world's concerns" (19.2%), "It

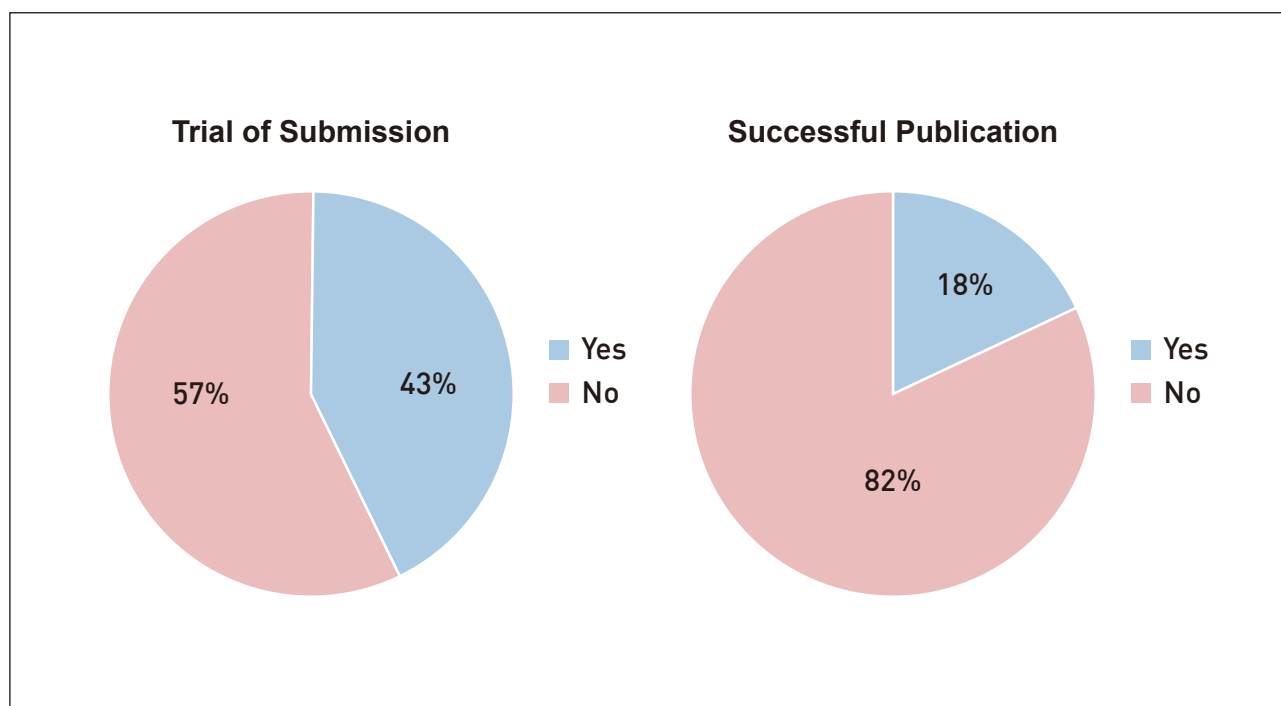


FIGURE 1 The Pie Charts of Trial of Submission and Successful Publication

improves my English academic writing ability” (16.4%), and “It elevates my skill to conduct research” (16.4%). Eleven participants (15.3%) selected the development of critical thinking. The results indicate that journal publication can help the participants’ career development.

TABLE 2
The Reasons for Submitting Articles

Reasons for submitting articles to international journals	Frequency	Percent
It is beneficial for my career.	23	31.9%
It helps me in tune with current topics of world’s concerns.	14	19.4%
It improves my English academic writing ability.	12	16.7%
It elevates my skills to conduct research.	12	16.7%
It betters my critical thinking.	11	15.3%
Total	72	100 %

For those who did not successfully publish articles in international journals, the survey asked the reasons for not submitting articles to international journals as shown in Table 3. The reasons were relatively dispersed com-

pared to the previous question. Approximately one fourth of the responses were “It is easier to submit nationally than internationally” (24.5%), followed by “It is usually more time-consuming in terms of process, which my current situation does not allow” (23.6%). From these responses, multilingual writers perceived that the submission and publication processes to international journals were challenging and intimidating compared to the submission processes to domestic journals. Three participants wrote down their ongoing writing process towards submissions to international journals. Two expressed their future goal of submission to international journals. These freely written opinions showed the potential to submit their articles if the participants were ready with their completed papers.

In Table 4, when asked about the factors that inhibit multilingual writers to publish articles to English-medium journals, “Difficulty in meeting the criteria of relevance and rigor” was ranked the most frequently checked answer (31.3%), followed by “Difficulty in academic writing in English” (23.1%). These responses indicate that multilingual writers need publication training and practice in academic writing. It is intriguing that some were concerned about research topics (19.4%) and research methodology issues (14.2%).

TABLE 3
The Reasons for Not Submitting Articles

Reasons for not submitting articles to international journals	Frequency	Percent
It is easier to submit nationally than internationally.	26	24.5%
It is usually more time-consuming in terms of process, which my current situation does not allow.	25	23.6%
My articles did not meet some of the standards unique in international journals.	15	14.2%
It is not essential to my career at the moment.	15	14.2%
I have trouble in language translation in my articles.	14	13.2%
My research topic does not appeal to the interest of the journals.	6	5.6%
Others ¹	5	4.7%
Total	106	100%

Note. ¹ Responses of Others include: I still prepare my research; I will submit it in the future; I keep trying up to now; I do not have any special benefit for my teaching activities in my class; my writing is not finished yet)

TABLE 4
The Factors of Inhibition from Publication

Factors of inhibiting from publication	Frequency	Percent
Difficulty in meeting the criteria of relevance and rigor	42	31.3%
Difficulty in academic writing in English	31	23.1%
Research topics that do not appeal to the journals	26	19.4%
Research methods that do not appeal to the journals	19	14.2%
Difficulty in finding good proofreaders	14	10.5%
Others (acceptance rate; IRB)	2	1.5%
Total	134	100%

One of the survey questions asked about the differences in submission standards between domestic and international journals as shown in Table 5. Many participants (41.1%) perceived that submission standards to international journals were linguistically challenging in terms of writing format, grammar, and rhetoric. The second most frequent response hit “Complexity of submission standards for international journals” (38.9%). They felt that the processes of submitting, reviewing, and revising were complicated. Interestingly, some participants considered there was no difference in submission standards between domestic and international journals (16.8%).

TABLE 5
Differences of the Submission Standards between Domestic and International Journals

Differences between the submission standards	Frequency	Percent
Linguistically challenging submission standards	39	41.1%
Complexity of submission standards for international journals	37	38.9%
No difference between domestic and international journals	16	16.8%
Others (less competition of domestic journals; acceptance rate; IRB)	3	3.2%
Total	95	100%

Table 6 shows the survey question about what improvements should be made to mitigate about the difficulty in publishing on English-medium international journals for multilingual writers. The participants thought the editors and reviewers from mainstream English-medium journals can “Be more open to local rhetorical conventions and nonnative linguistic standards” (34.5%). They also agreed on the necessary improvement of two options: “Include more research methods and topics that are popular in periphery countries” (31.1%) and “Encourage more writers from periphery countries to join the editorial board in international journals” (31.1%). One suggestion was journal editors’ “special appreciation for writers who submit [manuscripts] to international journals” as a way of decreasing multilingual writers’ challenges and anxiety in terms of journal submission.

TABLE 6
The Necessary Improvements/Amendments of International Journals

Necessary improvements of international journals	Frequency	Percent
Be more open to local rhetorical conventions and nonnative linguistic standards.	42	34.5%
Include more research methods and topics that are popular in periphery countries.	38	31.1%
Encourage more writers from periphery countries to join the editorial board in international journals.	38	31.1%
Others (provide editing services; special appreciation for writers who submit to international journals; IRB)	4	3.3%
Total	122	100%

In Table 7, regarding how multilingual writers can do to publish more to international journals, the participants believed that “Actively [engaging] in international conferences/forums” (38.4%) can be the most effective way to achieving such goal. They also thought of “working with writers with diverse backgrounds” (30.1%) and “applying up-to-date research methodologies to their studies” (29.4%) as necessary strategic improvements for multilingual writers. One of the other responses was to improve the author’s academic writing skills, which would be the priority for multilingual writers.

TABLE 7
The Necessary Improvements of Multilingual Writers

Necessary improvements of multilingual writers	Frequency	Percent
Actively engage in international academic conferences/forums.	56	38.4%
Work with writers with diverse backgrounds.	44	30.1%
Apply up-to-date research methodologies to their studies.	43	29.4%
Others (ask someone having a high rate of publication in scholarly journals to be the co-author; improve academic writing skills, find ways to deal with consent/IRB procedures)	3	2.1%
Total	146	100%

The last survey question asked multilingual writers’ preferences for research methods. The responses were intriguing in that those thirty-nine participants selected a mixed methods design of combining both quantitative and qualitative methods as their preferable research method (58%). Twenty of them preferred a qualitative research design (30%). Unexpectedly, only four participants chose a quantitative research design as their research preference (6%) as shown in Table 8.

TABLE 8
The Multilingual Writers’ Preferences for Research Methods

	Research methods				Total
	Quantitative design	Qualitative design	Mixed methods	Development and others	
Frequency	4	20	39	4	67
Percent	6%	30%	58%	6%	100%

V. DISCUSSION

Survey results regarding multilingual writers’ perceptions of factors that inhibit them from publishing in international journals correlated with prior literature about the difficulties multilingual writers from expanding-circle countries face in this issue. The results revealed that language and cultural bias are the most frequently checked reasons, which are supported by Min (2014), Braine (1999), and Canagarajah (1996) that professionals from peripheral

countries not only experience language barrier induced by different cultures, contexts, conventions, and rhetoric but also face challenges from mainstream English-medium journal editors' and reviewers' limited interest in local data and research issues. Since the survey in this study did not ask direct questions regarding the participants' attitudes toward publishing in international journals, the results showed a relatively limited picture of what the issue looks like in different Asian academic contexts. However, the results showed reasons for submitting articles to international journals corresponding to prior literature.

In addition, it is clear that participants saw publishing in international journals as beneficial to their academic career, which supports the instrumental motivation multilingual writers have towards international journal publication. Despite the fact that they were motivated to submit and publish their articles in international English-medium journals, difficulties posed to the multilingual writers have also led them to publishing their papers in domestic journals instead, which was seen both easy and beneficial to the participants in this study. The major source of anxiety for international journal publications came from the English language. The multilingual writers in this study also petitioned that submission to international journals be linguistically demanding and challenging. This frustration was invariably expressed by several studies (Curry & Lillis, 2004; Huang, 2010; Min, 2014). The multilingual writers in those studies received unfavorable comments on their language proficiency by international journal editors and reviewers, which triggered their insecurity of multilingual identities in terms of English writing (Huang, 2010). Mixed interpretations of editors' expectations complicate the question of what the native English standard should look like in light of mainstream journal publishing (Min, 2014).

Multilingual writers from peripheral or expanding-circle countries see publishing in English in high-status Anglophone journals as both an opportunity and a challenge. On the one hand, these journals have wider circulation and readership, which serves as an advantage to these writers in drawing attention to their research, whether it being local or international. Moreover, a great number of publications in English may serve as an important criterion in assessing one's academic competency, which motivates them to publish more in English. However, what comes along is the overwhelming investment in time and effort to seek alignment with the targeted international journal's expectations on research topics and to refine language use, which puts a huge burden on multilingual writers as they try to balance their role in both local and international discourse communities (S. Cho, 2004; Flowerdew, 2000). The discrepancy of research interest between multilingual writers in the expanding circle and English-medium journals in the inner circle creates tension and discouragement in those writers (Curry & Lillis, 2004). As reported also by Min (2014) reported that multilingual writers' attempt to publish their papers to English-medium journals "posed a great challenge...because how to transform a topic or a

study developed in this local context and link it to the international literature or discourse takes a lot of time, reading and practice" (p. 193).

In terms of methodology issues, Hsu (2005) points out that every journal has preferable research methods based on its aim and scope of research. Multilingual writers may be likely to follow the journal preferences so that they can publish their articles in English-medium journals. Research methodology is closely related to research topics and purposes. When it comes to publication, however, multilingual writers may have hassles with choices of research methodology. Regarding this, Y. Bang (2020) maintains that research topics and methodology have been expanded and diversified in Korean domestic journals. If some multilingual writers are eager to publish in top-tier English-medium journals, however, they may have to deviate from their originality of research and chase the preference for the target journals. Hsu's (2005) study surveyed articles published by three distinguished journals (i.e., *the American Educational Research Journal*, *the Journal of Experimental Education*, and *the Journal of Educational Research*). The results showed that those journals had preferences for research methods.

In order to facilitate multilingual writers' successful journal publication, they may need to follow recommendations regarding connections between methodology and publication suggested by experienced multilingual scholars (e.g., Hsu, 2005). First, multilingual writers should acknowledge editorial board members' scholarly backgrounds in the target journals. Hsu (2005) argues that to focus on the statements of research purpose or guidelines is one way to figure out the up-to-date research directions. Second, it is essential for multilingual writers to appreciate knowledge and information about research methods and analyses for the likelihood of journal publication. A lack of applicability of research methods may impede multilingual writers from producing and publishing their studies to the target international journals. Multilingual writers should also be able to properly interpret technical concepts related to the methods and analyses before conducting their own research. Lastly, it is necessary for multilingual writers to continuously face discrepancies between the local and global context and minimize their incongruities so that their published articles can inspire more multilingual writers in a variety of contexts to knock on the door of international journal publication.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study explored multilingual writers' perceptions of international journal publication through survey research. The results revealed that the English language and cultural bias are major issues for multilingual writers. Despite the difficulties and challenges, multilingual writers perceived publishing to international journals as a benefit to their academic careers. This aspect may be connected to their preference for research methodology. Multilingual writers

should keep alert about the trend of mainstream journals in order to publish their articles.

This study includes several limitations and needs more investigations to make it corroborative. First, the results are not likely generalizable to the entire population because a convenience sampling design was used for the survey research. Second, this study employed a relatively simple analysis with descriptive statistics. Future research regarding multilingual writers' journal publication should be conducted with advanced statistical tools depending on its purpose. Third, we still argue that there are only a small number of studies written by Asian authors published in international journals, but it was beyond the author's ability to identify the concrete number of them in this paper. Lastly, the participants consisted of mainly students from China and Indonesia with little information about their demographic information and publishing experiences. We should have added more questions to show the representativeness of the population. However, the results might be transferred to the Korean context because Korea also belongs to peripherally expanding-circle Asian countries, which Kachru refers to the expanding circle countries.

This research may raise some fundamental questions regarding multilingual writers' journal publication. There should be some outlets and opportunities for multilingual writers to participate in global discourse communities so that they can share their concerns and apprehensions with other scholars. They should also develop an independent and critical position in their communicative and knowledge-construction practices. It is hoped that the enterprise of international journals can reduce the complexity of scholarly publishing endeavors so that multilingual writers can actively engage in academic publication.

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