

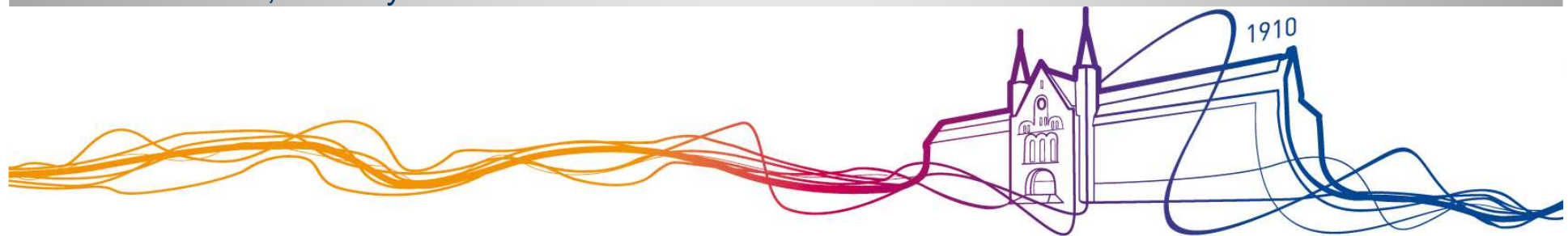
# How to deal with the challenges of writing in a foreign language

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What can I as a scientific writing teacher do to help students deal with the challenges?

# Why are there challenges?

The demand to publish in English

Locally (Norway/Scandinavia)

Global (international)

The reward systems - impact factor

# What are the challenges?

Writing in a language that is not your own.

Writing in a discipline/discourse that is not your own.

# What are the real challenges?

Getting past the gatekeepers

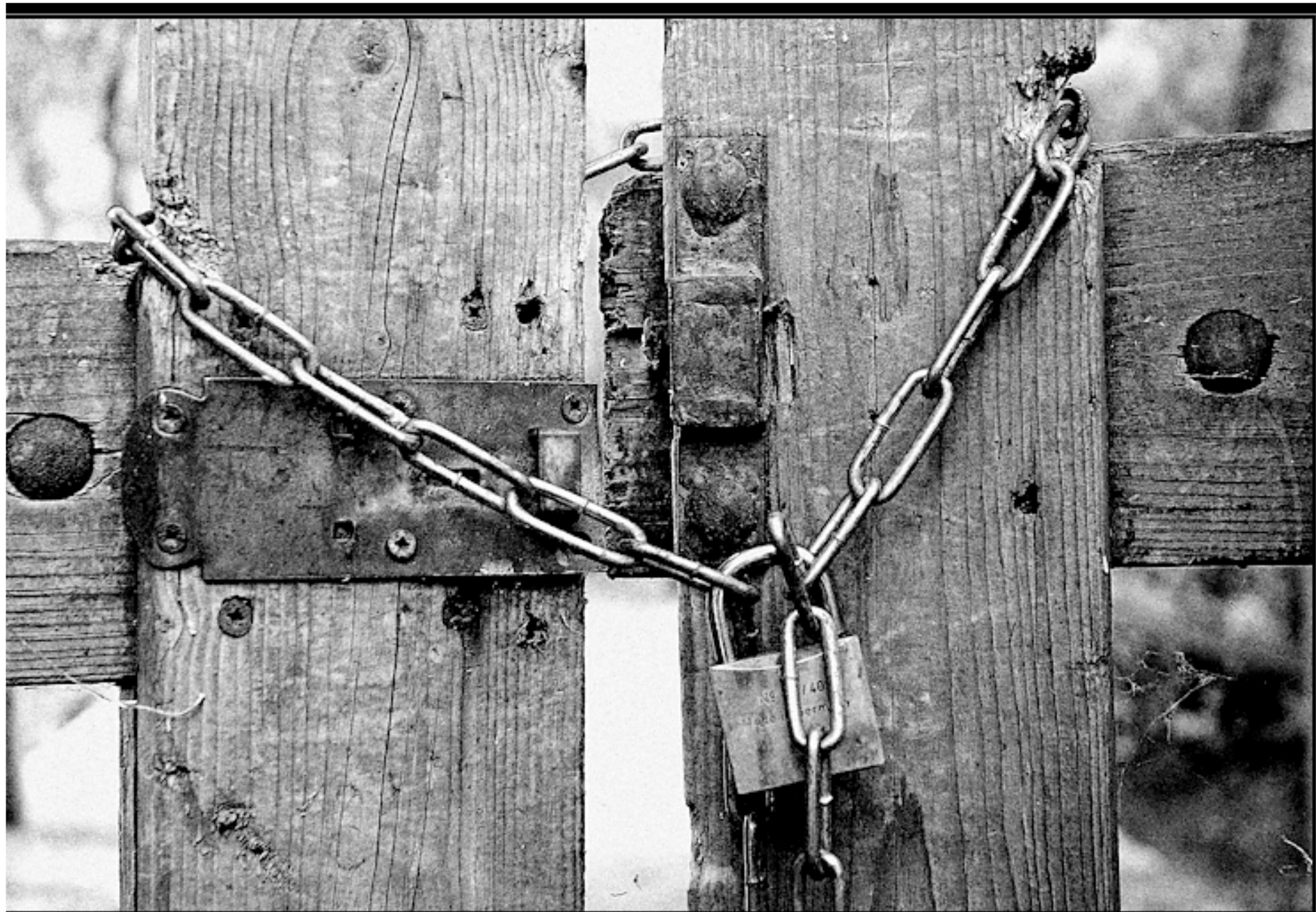
Learning the genres

Taking part as a member of a discourse  
community

Through networks

Through reflection





*Old Wooden Gate*

# Challenges from gatekeepers

Your work won't get published if your English is not good.

THEREFORE: If you improve your English your work will get published. ("fix-it" logic)

HOWEVER: "The English language need checking of a native speaker" (Referee 1)

# Challenges for the gatekeepers

Getting beyond the surface approach to language, grammar, spelling, punctuation

"fix it" approach

(fikx itt)

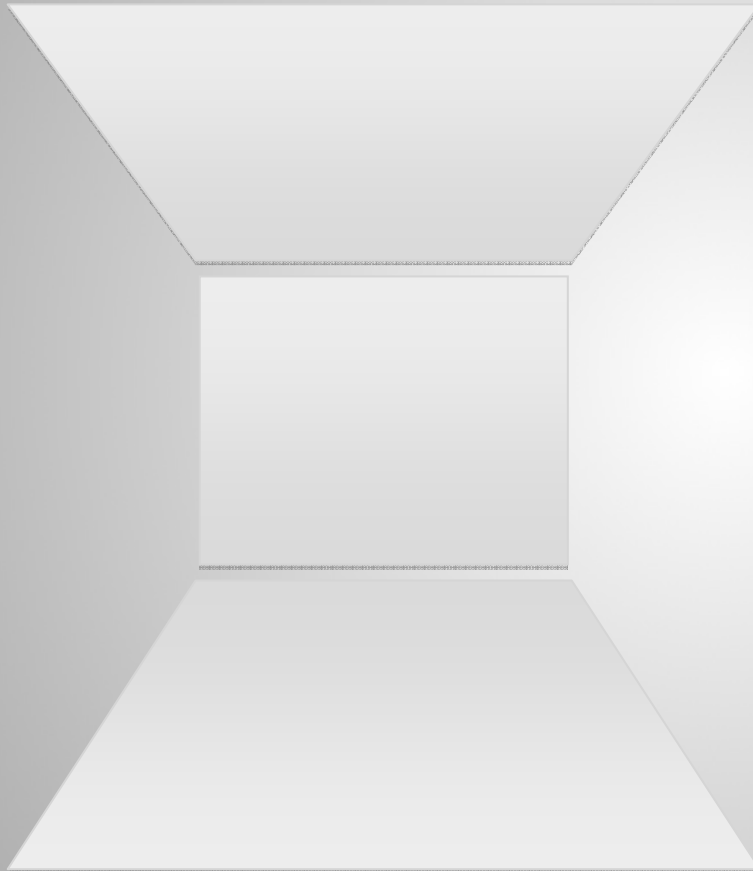
(students doesn't write well anymore)



# Challenges from the gatekeepers

*The text of observational and experimental articles is usually (but not necessarily) divided into sections with the headings Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion. This so-called "IMRAD" structure is not simply an arbitrary publication format, but rather a direct reflection of the process of scientific discovery. (ICMJE, p. 24 )*

# Dealing with the challenge - IMRaD



Introduction

Material and method

Results  
and

Discussion

(Swales 1990)

# Genres from the discourse - real articles

Search process

Publishing process

Contents

Structure

sections

paragraphs

Format

Language

pronouns (I, you, we)

tense

voice

sentence patterns

# Writing to take part in a discourse community





# Writing through networks

*It's quite difficult [to publish in English-medium journals], not especially because of language, but because of the special scientific culture....it is mainly not a matter of language, it's a matter of scientific culture, a scientific community; a scientific network. (Gyula)*

(Lillis & Curry, 2010)



# Networking

*...success in English-medium publishing seems to depend largely on the extent to which scholars can mobilize relevant resources via networked activity.*

(Lillis & Curry, 2010)

# Networking

- *Contacts (connections to other scholars)*
- *Information (conferences, grants, publishing)*
- *Academic materials (sharing articles)*
- *Rhetorical resources (writing expertise/assistance)*
- *Collaboration on writing*
- *Collaboration on research*
- *Brokering*

(Lillis & Curry, 2010)

## Brokers

*Brokers [have] enough distance to bring a different perspective, but also enough legitimacy to be listened to.*

(Wenger, 1998)

## Literacy brokers

Translators, editors, colleagues, family, friends - whoever helps improve the text.

(Lillis & Curry, 2010)

# Writing to take part as a member of a discourse community - reflection

*I've come to see every act of academic writing as...the writer's struggle to create a discorsal self which resolves the tension between their autobiographical self and the possibilities for selfhood available in the academic community.*

(Ivanic, 1998)

# Front Stage and Back Stage

Metaphors for how we present ourselves.

front stage

- where we act out the role of a "character"

back stage

- where we can be our "real" selves  
("performers")

(Goffman 1959/1971)



# Front stage “character”

Pleasing the gatekeepers

Playing the role of an academic writer

Using the language of the discipline

Using the conventions of the discipline

Making a good impression

# Back Stage “performer”

playing

practicing new roles

letting off steam

asking questions without “losing face”

criticizing self and others

developing disciplinary identity

# Back stage writing

One e-mail each week (minimum 8) during semester

Freewrite about project

Write for 10 minutes

Don't worry about mistakes

Expect reply from teacher

# Back stage reflection

*This man, being more of an entrepreneur than a researcher...*

*There's something distinctly fishy here...*

# Back stage reflection

*I am in the fortunate position that in principle I can choose to work with or get ideas from several clever people working within my field. This might, however, be a disadvantage when writing papers, due to the fact that clever and ambitious people like to have their names on papers. I think my supervisor is a little bit worried about this, since I already have started cooperation with another professor.*

(Gordon)



# Back stage reflection

*I feel a professional risk in labeling myself as industrial ecologist while the definition of industrial ecology is still remain fluid. I stead of labeling, I should get a professional grounding in the conventional discipline of my choice - applied thermodynamics. This will be provide me with a clearly recognized professional identity, one that my employers and colleagues can readily recognize.*

(Maria)

# "Results" of reflection

PhD students who wrote e-logs:

received A's

83% (vs. 65% in no-log group)

wrote better introductions

(blind evaluation)

completed degree within 5 years

96% (vs. 70% in no-log group)

# How to deal with the challenges of writing in a foreign language?

Teach the gatekeepers' genres

Facilitate students' development as writers in their discourse community through knowledge of, and experience in, networking and reflection



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