The vexed issue of writing support is increasingly relevant in the current university context of growing diversity and shrinking budgets. This review examines two books, each of which offers an approach to academic writing instruction. In *Genre-based automated writing evaluation for L2 research writing: From design to evaluation and enhancement*, Elena Cotos details two corpus-based, genre-specific feedback programs she designed specifically for L2 graduate student writers at Iowa State University. Ursula Wingate’s *Academic literacy and student diversity: The case for inclusive practice* considers writing support at an institutional level across a variety of English-speaking university contexts. Drawing on a remarkably similar fusion of theories, methods, and approaches, both researchers recognize that socialization into academic discourse is a long and complex process. They both interrogate the current state of writing instruction and reimagine a more pedagogically sound version of academic literacy support. However,
beyond this initial concordance, their paths abruptly diverge to arrive at markedly different conclusions about how institutions should support student writing.

Wingate

Situated in a context of English for Academic Purposes at Anglophone universities, Ursula Wingate of King’s College, UK, overviews academic literacy, a concept she defines as ‘The ability to communicate competently in an academic discourse community’ (p. 6). She believes that literacy experts should play a critical role in collaboration with discipline experts and in their administrative power over literacy representation in higher education. Drawing from an array of Anglophone contexts from around the globe, Wingate shows that most models fail to adequately support the diversity present in higher education. She challenges readers to transform academic literacy instruction by embedding inclusive support into the curriculum.

Chapter 1: ‘Academic Literacy and Student Diversity: What is the Problem?’ opens with an indictment of the current university context, pointing out that the diversification of the student body has not paralleled a greater understanding of how to support diverse literacy needs. Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1994) assertion that nobody is a native speaker of academic language is repeated by Wingate, who contends that all students, regardless of questions of diversity, are novices in their disciplines. Since developing competence in a specific academic discourse requires understanding the particularities of epistemologies, socio-cultural contexts, and discourse conventions, Wingate argues that the best place for this socialization is within the discourse communities themselves. Grounded in sociocultural, linguistic, and rhetorical theories, her model emphasizes broadening academic literacy support beyond writing support for select groups.

In Chapters 2 and 3: ‘Approaches to Academic Literacy Instruction’ and ‘Current Practices in Academic Literacy Instruction,’ Wingate draws attention to the fact that in academia the written word is the ‘main mode of knowledge construction and communication’ (p. 15) and the principal mode through which students and faculty are evaluated. For these reasons, one might place the focus of academic literacy instruction on writing, but Wingate argues that privileging writing over other aspects of academic literacy is problematic since a written text represents only the final product of a lengthy, complex, and somewhat mysterious process. Chapter Two offers a review of five prominent approaches that Wingate classifies as concerned primarily with both content and methods of writing pedagogy or ideological concerns. She then turns her attention to genre approaches
that highlight the social factors of literacy development. Drawing specifically on her analysis of 33 British university webpages, she argues in Chapter Three that the culture of generalist literacy support is a direct result of budget constraints coupled with elitist institutional policies that maintain the perception of writing support as a measure of remediation for underprepared students.

Chapter 4: ‘Discipline-specific Approaches to Academic Literacy Instruction’ explores ways of incorporating literacy instruction into the disciplines through greater collaboration. To Wingate, these discipline-specific approaches increase student motivation, remove the stigma from writing support services, and ensure that instruction is fully inclusive. She argues that while subject specialists must take on greater responsibility, this practice will not result in new obligations for overburdened lecturers since her model ensures an equal distribution of responsibilities. Ideally, instruction would be delivered through team teaching, and academic literacy development would become ‘part of a credit-bearing module within the degree programme’ (p. 59).

In Chapter 5: ‘Reading and Writing’, Wingate posits that while successful academic writing is inextricable from successful reading, teachers and researchers frequently assume that students’ reading abilities are sufficient for their academic tasks. Wingate’s solution, a reading-to-write pedagogical model, includes teaching literacy skills holistically, exploring authentic texts, and making the requirements credit-bearing and time-tabled. Wingate believes that inclusive literacy support is currently best realized in Australia, home of Systemic Functional Linguistics. The reading-to-write model has not been broadly embraced elsewhere; even in Australia, she finds only three examples.

In Chapter 6: ‘Academic Literacy Development and the Student Experience’, Wingate uses a theoretical frame that focuses on identity and power to highlight student perspectives. She argues that Anglophone universities do a poor job of integrating students and require them to assimilate to rigid disciplinary conventions and mismatched identity positions. Wingate also uses this chapter to report on her 2012 study, which monitored home students’ first experiences writing in an undergraduate Applied Linguistics program. Findings highlight the gap between what students actually know and what lecturers expect students to know.

In the first part of Chapter 7: ‘Towards an Inclusive Model of Academic Literacy Instruction’, Wingate shows how the ideas presented in chapters 1–6 interlock to simultaneously build and support her own methodology. In the second part of this chapter, she provides examples of discipline-specific teaching content she and colleague Chris Tribble developed in an intervention study. Focusing on the content and methods of her model, Wingate
cautions that implementing academic literacy instructions requires a new understanding of what counts as literacy.

In Chapter 8: ‘Towards the Implementation of an Inclusive Model of Academic Literacy Instruction,’ Wingate argues that scholars must advocate for change by convincing university administrators that students are not prepared for the academic literacy tasks expected of them. All students should receive academic literacy instruction. This instruction should be integrated into discipline-specific content in collaboration between discipline and writing experts. She ends with a detailed, practical look at institutional and pedagogical issues related to program implementation.

**Cotos**

Coming from the context of a graduate-level L2 writing course at Iowa State University and funded by both the university and Educational Testing Service, Elena Cotos proposes a model for corpus and genre-based Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE). Her programs read student drafts, compare them with a corpus of discipline-specific publications, judge the draft’s value, and help move the student forward. Part One offers a theoretical and operational foundation for genre-based AWE in L2 research writing. Each framework contributes to the design and evaluation of Cotos’s Intelligent Academic Discourse Evaluation (IADE) system. Part Two describes the context and method for a genre-specific AWE called the Research Writing Tutor (RWT), a formative assessment tool she designed to provide individualized, discipline-specific feedback.

Chapter 1: ‘Learning and Teaching Challenges of Research Writing’ combines the linguistic perspectives of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) with Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and non-linguistic, rhetorical views of the North American New Rhetoric with New Literacy and Academic Literacy approaches to research writing. To Cotos, research writing is ‘a process that involves intense cognitive activity to create comprehensive outcomes of various forms of academic inquiry’ (p. 10). Drawing on Hyland and Swales, Cotos argues that corpora offer a powerful tool for understanding disciplinary writing patterns and ‘equipping students with the necessary means to learn about and apply the genre conventions established in disciplinary practice’ (p. 30).

Chapter 2: ‘Automated Writing Evaluation’ overviews the current state of AWEs including historical development, potential and critiques of AWEs, validity issues, and a call for research. AWEs originated from the automated essay scoring systems used by testing companies. Informed by educational measurement, computer science, linguistics, cognitive science, and pedagogy, this technology is relatively new, and research on AWE’s
effectiveness has produced mixed results. However, Cotos touts AWEs as a source of ‘immediate and reliable computer-based scoring’ (p. 45) with the potential to reduce personnel and expense.

Chapter 3: ‘Conceptualizing Genre-Based AWE for L2 Research Writing’ begins with an overview of the three theoretical frameworks Cotos uses to build her model: Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the Interactionist Approach to Second Language Acquisition (SLA), and Skill Acquisition theory (SAT). She argues that areas of these theories can be ‘strengthened by genre-based AWE’ (p. 65) and aims to improve student learning and motivation through designing formative feedback that is genre specific and involves goal orientation, cognitive involvement, complexity, specificity, and time considerations. Cotos claims that AWE feedback is superior to teacher feedback on a number of points, namely consistency, objectivity, individualization, and promptness.

In Chapters 4 and 5: ‘Prototyping Genre-Based AWE for L2 Research Writing: The Intelligent Academic Discourse Evaluator’ and ‘Exploring the IADE Genre-Based AWE for L2 Research Writing’ respectively, Cotos applies her conceptual design model to her AWE program, the IADE, and describes the research setting in an L2 graduate-level writing course at Iowa State University. IADE analyzes article introductions and generates color-coded feedback that correlates 73% of the time with human raters who have received 18 hours of training in Swales’s classification of typical rhetorical moves in written academic discourse. Her mixed methods study measured the learning gains of 105 L2 graduate students following exposure to IADE. Data collection instruments involved pre- and post-tests, survey questions, the IADE database, think-aloud protocols, screen capture, observations, and interviews. Data analysis examined language learning potential, meaning focus, learner fit, and impact.

In Chapter 6: ‘Evaluating the IADE Genre-Based Prototype’, Cotos offers empirical evidence that automated feedback can lead to learning gains and improvement in rhetorical quality. She also found a causative relationship between meaning focus, IADE feedback, and learners’ abilities to think about meaning. The overall impact of the program on students was reported to be positive, and students expressed an interest in using an expanded version of the IADE program.

Chapter 7: ‘From Prototyping to Principled Practical Realization’ introduces the Research Writing Tutor (RWT), the automated writing evaluation program Cotos created as an extension of IADE. Cotos calls RWT a ‘full-fledged corpus-based AWE program for L2 research writing pedagogy’ (p. 214). Color-coding, pie charts, and glossed annotated texts identify problematic areas by aligning a paper’s rhetorical structure with published papers in a particular discipline to help the writer step out of the
‘writer-artifact circle into the world of the target audience’ and reinforce ‘the social dimension at the cognitive diagnosis stage’ (p. 232). To this end, the RWT’s feedback is designed to imitate human dialogue and ‘create the sense of an existing interlocutor’ (p. 234).

**Our Professional Reflection**

As writing consultants engaged in research on doctoral student writing, we grapple with the tensions inherent in institutionalized writing support and recognize the critical gap between research and practice. As doctoral students ourselves, we know firsthand that schooling does not prepare us for the kinds of writing we are expected to produce at the graduate level. We are constantly searching for ways to support novice scholars like ourselves and believe that, however limited, constrained, or politically-charged they might be, the pressures of academia do give us choices for response. By juxtaposing Wingate’s and Cotos’s texts, we can arrive at a fuller understanding of the current terrain, the role we might play, and what this might mean in terms of how universities support writers.

Wingate’s solution asks us to support an inclusive literacy that embeds writing experts throughout the disciplines. Cotos provides us with automated, genre-specific rhetorical feedback available from a computer that is ready to ‘detect and diagnose problematic rhetorical patterns’ (p. 220) at all hours. Wingate asks us to transform the conversation, but she knows that her solution will require a major shift in academic culture. Cotos’s model, more cost-effective and quantifiable, plays by the rules of the current system and could be instantly implemented to provide a partial solution for students who need increased ‘formative’ feedback.

As the contrast between these two models illustrates, literacy is an issue studied by a variety of disciplines. Wingate and Cotos, from their respective disciplines of English Education and Applied Linguistics and Technology, point out that scholars tend to live in disciplinary silos. This insulation results in what Wingate refers to as limited ‘cross-fertilization between models and segregation of target groups for literacy instruction’ (p. 12). While this silo effect can produce misplaced competition between proponents of different schools of thought. While this collaboration across scholarly communities could enable literacy professionals to have a greater voice at the level of university administration and produce more robust pedagogical models for academic literacy instruction.

As researchers and practitioners in the field of academic writing, we wonder whether the culture shift required by Wingate’s intervention is attainable. Until academic institutions are willing to fund additional positions, a solution like Cotos’s could potentially fill that gap, but we
must be vigilant that this does not translate into the tacit acceptance and reinforcement of a system that both authors agree should change.

Not only is there room for both models in academic writing instruction; they can work in tandem. Read together, these books offer valuable exposure to a range of contemporary epistemologies literacy researchers use to approach writing pedagogy. Wingate’s book would be particularly helpful for anybody involved in literacy support, such as instructors, tutors, administrators, and researchers, especially those concerned with making systemic changes. Cotos’s book is aimed toward a specific audience of L2 writing teachers in graduate or EAP programs, Computer Assisted Language Learning researchers, and administrators looking for ways to compensate a lack of human support.

About the authors

Carrie Aldrich is a third year PhD student in the Language, Literacy, and Culture program at the University of Iowa. She has an MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Alaska Fairbanks and Bachelor’s degrees in Secondary English Education and Sociology from Indiana University. After six years studying and teaching in Fairbanks, Alaska, where she and her husband shared a one-room cabin with no running water, they traveled across 12 time zones to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where they spent four years teaching English and crisscrossing the Middle East in a 4×4. Her favorite thing to do is go camping with her husband, Ben, and two year old son, Jack.

Amanda Gallogly is in the Language, Literacy, and Culture program at the University of Iowa. She has an MSW and a BA in Spanish and English literature, and her research interests include collaborative writing, critical pedagogy, and the sociocultural features of academic discourses. Upon completion of her undergraduate studies, she spent ten years in Santiago, Chile, where she provided translation, interpreting, and English instruction for adult language learners. In her free time, she enjoys perusing cookbooks – the fact that she never cooks notwithstanding – and dabbles in picking up new languages together with her son.

Reference
