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Journal Report & Presentation: *Written Communication*

Link to video presentation:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1St274O3lGHvOqph0MGa46BjsRZQq26T1>

Overview

Written Communication is an international, peer-reviewed, academic journal that publishes research in the field of rhetoric, with communication theory and written language as its primary subjects. SAGE Publications releases an issue of *Written Communication* quarterly (January, April, July, and October). According to the [SAGE Publications website](#), *Written Communication* is a “leading journal for empirical research on writing as both systems of inscriptions and activities of meaning-making across multiple modes and contexts.” In other words, the journal accepts well-researched traditional articles on writing in all forms, functions, and contexts, ranging from “what writing is” to “what writing does in the world” across many fields of study. These fields include — but are not limited to — literacy studies, semiotics, anthropology, education, history, journalism, linguistics, measurement, psychology, and rhetoric. Some of recent topics of research include:

- interactions among writing systems and composing technologies
- the history of writing systems
- the social and political consequences of writing and writing instruction
- construct development and validation
- innovative classroom teaching and principled assessment of L1 and multilingual literacy practices
- genre
- transcultural and trans-scriptal writing practices
- the role of writing in the social construction of knowledge
- materialist studies of writing
- research from historically marginalized locations of writing
- the nature and uses of writing in disciplinary, professional, civic, and personal domains
- cognitive processes of text-production
- multimodality and transmodality
- relationships among gender, race, socioeconomic status, disability, neurodivergence, and writing
- studies of writing as a means of oppression, liberation, and resistance
- connections among writing, reading, speaking, and listening

SAGE emphasizes newness, writing that *Written Communication*'s issues consistently provide “new research findings, new theoretical concepts, and new ways of understanding how writing is practiced” for readers. *Any* manuscript may be submitted for publication as long as it

“engages with and contributes to ongoing conversations in and around writing studies.” Those requirements are broad, which allows room for creative research questions from diverse perspectives. Because innovation appears to be a priority for this journal, *Written Communication*’s research is not limited to specific scopes or regions; the journal publishes research on writing across careers, cultures, countries, and scopes. In fact, they are open to research from “any writer or writing system” despite being an English-medium journal.

Written Communication can be accessed on the SAGE Publications website. If not affiliated with a University, readers have to pay to access articles that are not labeled as Open Access. These restricted articles typically cost \$40 to read, and access to the entire issue costs nearly \$400. Luckily for students and academics, most universities provide access to the publication via their library databases. The databases where *Written Communication* is abstracted and indexed are listed as follows:

- Abstract Journal of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)
- Clarivate Analytics: Current Contents - Social & Behavioral Sciences
- Clarivate Analytics: Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)
- ComAbstracts
- ComIndex
- Corporate ResourceNET - Ebsco
- Current Citations Express
- EBSCO: Communication Abstracts
- ERIC Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE)
- Gale: Diversity Studies Collection
- Language Teaching
- Linguistic Bibliography/Bibliographie Linguistique
- MasterFILE - Ebsco
- OmniFile: Full Text Mega Edition (H.W. Wilson)
- Peace Research Abstracts Journal
- ProQuest: Applied Social Science Index & Abstracts (ASSIA)
- ProQuest: Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts (LLBA)
- PsycINFO
- PsycLIT
- Psychological Abstracts
- Scopus
- Social SciSearch
- Standard Periodical Directory (SPD)
- TOPICsearch - Ebsco
- Wilson Humanities Index (Online)

Editors

SAGE Publications began publishing the journal in 1984 with Stephen P. Witte and John Daly as editors. The journal boasts a 2.2. Impact Factor at a 20.3% Acceptance rate, and 92,657 Full-Text PDF/HTML downloads during the last calendar year. Currently, Dylan Dryer and Mya Poe are Coeditors-in-Chief, and over 56 people make up the Editorial Board.

Dylan Dryer is the Associate Professor of Composition Studies at the University of Maine. In 2007, he completed his Ph.D. in Composition & Rhetoric from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and presented his dissertation: “On Possibilities of Reading and Writing: Genre Uptake, Discursive Resources, and the Composition of Institutional Texts.” His primary research interest lies in Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), a theoretical framework that studies genre as ever-evolving, dynamic responses to social actions rather than as static, definable categories. Carolyn R. Miller introduced this framework in her 1984 paper “Genre as Social Action” published in Issue 70 of *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. I thought it was fascinating that *Written Communication* published its first issue that same year. Dryer also studies “corpus analysis, writing pedagogy and program administration, cognition, writing assessment and teacher-training, and the documentary society of land-use management.”

Mya Poe received her Ph.D. in English with a concentration in Composition and Rhetoric from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in 2006. She works as a Professor of English at Northeastern University focusing on writing assessment and development, particularly in terms of equity, “justice,” and “fairness.” According to [her bio](#), she “advocate[s] against assessment practices that are based on weak construct models and that result in unnecessary barriers for students.” This passion for teaching is reflected by her Teaching Excellence Award and Outstanding Teaching Award, both received in 2016. Alongside co-editing *Written Communication*, she is a co-editor of Oxford’s series *Brief Guides to Writing in the Disciplines*.

Major Movements

Summarizing *Written Communication*’s major movements and work over the past five years is difficult because the focus of the journal is so broad. From what I observed, the journal accepts any kind of methodology — case studies, qualitative and quantitative research, focus groups, analysis, etc. — as long as the research is about written communication. It’s true that they cover research from all countries and in many theoretical frameworks, but the major categories I saw among the recent research are (1) Academic Writing, and (2) International Research. Genre Analysis, and more recently, Artificial Intelligence are also represented.

Student writing and how to teach writing is the most prevalent research theme with about one article in this genre published per issue. In 2021, *Written Communication* published “The Power of Community College Students’ Writing Across Genres,” and five years later, “A Longitudinal Case Study of the Writing Process and Writing Outcomes in Nine Undergraduate

Interdisciplinary Students” continued the discourse, highlighting educational writing as a major movement.

International research is also heavily featured, particularly in terms of history and education. In the most recent issue, five of the eight published articles touch on foreign languages or countries, including Ancient Egypt, Costa Rica, China, and Hebrew. Three of these articles overlap with education or learning in some capacity. (i.e., “Ecologies of Research Writing in Chinese Universities” and “Attitudes and Self-Efficacy Beliefs About Writing in Costa Rican Students”). Compare these numbers from *one* issue in 2025 to every issue in 2021. “Exploring General Versus Academic English Proficiency as Predictors of Adolescent EFL Essay Writing” was the only published article of 2021’s four issues that even touched on international learning.

It’s clear that the editors have made global voices a larger focus over the past five years, particularly after Vol. 41, which includes a letter from the editors regarding the kinds of content they intend to publish in the future. The editors prepare readers for further inclusion of “transcultural and transscriptal writing practices,” “research from historically marginalized locations of writing,” “studies of writing as a means of oppression, liberation, and resistance,” among others. Based on the content included in the 2024 and 2025 volumes alone, they are accomplishing this goal.

I assumed that artificial intelligence and research on large-language models like ChatGPT would be a major subject for *Written Communication* reaching back to 2021. In fact, they have only published three papers on A.I. starting in October 2024. Also, these pieces are exclusively focused on student writing or “pedagogical implications”:

- “Dense and Disconnected: Analyzing the Sedimented Style of ChatGPT-Generated Text at Scale” (October 2024),
- “Does ChatGPT Write Like a Student? Engagement Markers in Argumentative Essays” (July 2025),
- and “Ownership, Accuracy, and Aesthetics: University Writers' Perceptions of GenAI Poetry” (October 2025).

Written Communication’s major movements involve education, but that’s not to say they do not publish outside of that genre. Some papers are concerned with diversity and activism, such as the July 2024 article addressing how to amplify marginalized voices in discussions on disability policy as well as the April 2025 case study on social media activism of black teenagers. Other papers hone in on specific writing modes, like the January 2023 paper on changes in research abstracts, and the April 2024 piece titled “A Direct Functional Measure of Text Quality: Did the Reader Understand?”

Overall, this journal is best suited for researchers interested in written English language communication from the perspective of teachers, students, and international scholars. In its essence, written communication is a broad genre, which can make readers of this journal overwhelmed with the wealth of information available to them. Or, readers may assume — like me — that certain topics would be more thoroughly covered (A.I.) over international written

communication topics. Readers might have to scour further back than 2021 to find research on certain topics, and perhaps visit other journals on breaking topics regarding artificial intelligence.

Article Summary

“Gateways to a Different World of Meaning: Expanding Theme Use in Primary-Aged Children’s Writing” by Frances Bodger was published in Volume 42, Issue 4 of *Written Communication* in October 2025. This study observes how 17 children from 8-10 years of age across two London schools learn to write complex sentences. Bodger compared the students’ writing at 8-9 years old to the same students’ writing one year later. The first year, students wrote on “whether Year 4 children should be allowed to write with pens,” and the second year, “whether Pokemon card trading should be allowed in school,” which Bodger claims were topics they were “emotionally invested in” (861).

Bodger measures writing development by observing how students begin their sentences and paragraphs. She refers to these beginnings as themes, and claims that the type of theme indicates how complex the rest of the argument will be (862). Students in the first year typically relied on personal pronouns and descriptive themes (“I think”). The shift during the second year from these speech-like themes (called “interactional thematization”) to using more abstract, topic-based themes (“informational thematization”) indicates the student’s progress in developing long, complex, coherent arguments (864). For example, the sentence “**I think** students should not write with pens” is indicative of a novice writer who struggles with developing their ideas past simply describing what happened or what they believe (866). If the same student later wrote “**Pokemon cards** can be bad because children fight over them,” their opener signals they are thinking more deeply about how to present their ideas and reflecting on why it matters. Leading with the *topic* and following with *reflection* is a big step for students when learning how to reason and craft more sophisticated arguments.

Students don’t magically learn how to improve their writing without instruction, and Bodger explains the best way to encourage this growth in students. Students learned best when teachers dutifully modeled how to write a variety of themes on different topics. Providing a stockpile of generic openers isn’t effective, Bodger concludes. Also, students demonstrated higher-order thinking when teachers allowed students to write about lived experiences (885). Higher-order thinking includes reflecting on what their experiences mean, what other perspectives might be considered, and how their opinions relate to others. In short, students are more likely to develop their writing skills when teachers provide specific examples and encourage them to explain why their opinions matter during personal writing exercises.