

ASIA-PACIFIC SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

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The *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review* (APSSR) is an internationally refereed journal published four times in a year—March (online edition), June (online and print editions), September (online), and December (online and print) by De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines. It aims to be a leading venue for authors seeking to share their data and perspectives on compelling and emerging topics in the social sciences with, and to create an impact on, the region's communities of academics, researchers, students, civil society, policymakers, and development specialists, among others. Topics related to or with implications for the region that are pursued employing sound methodologies and comparative, and inter, multi, and transdisciplinary approaches are of particular interest. Overall, the APSSR seeks to glocalize knowledge towards developing a body of regional perspectives on key global issues. The APSSR is listed in the Elsevier's Scopus, the ASEAN Citation Index, and EBSCO and is a Category A journal based on the Philippines' Commission on Higher Education list. The APSSR has both printed and online (<https://apssr.com/>) editions, and a Facebook Page, at <https://www.facebook.com/DLSUAPSSR/>. The journal's online submission platform, ScholarOne, is at <https://mc04.manuscriptcentral.com/apssr>.

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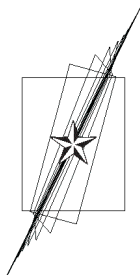
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From the Editor

Scientific Writing—An Academic Imperative for Us Social Scientists

When we are conferred our earned degrees in the social sciences, it is only the beginning of our hard work towards becoming full-fledged social scientists at our higher education institutions (HEI). We know that the proven pathways, along with the accompanying demands, are replete with complexities, but the good thing is, we likewise know—if we want to evolve into being accomplished social scientists in our time—that we are expected to gain a mastery of the key skills of the discipline, namely, teaching, researching, scientific writing, and publishing. Of the four, scientific writing is the least discussed as an imperative in many HEI across the region, on the pretext that all of us social scientists are already equipped with the said skill, given that we are scientists. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Many of us—both sexes; young, middle-aged, and old alike; and from across all the sub-areas of the discipline—are struggling with the rudiments, let alone the nuances of scientific writing, even to the point that we are being weighed down by this stark difficulty from taking the first step to acquiring the strategic skill.

We are grappling because we do not go out of our way to earnestly learn how to write. Although each year we attend some writing and publishing seminars or read a few journal articles, these are mostly our token, superficial moves. We lack any systematic learning plan for ourselves, that is, if we ever plan at all. In the main, we only wait for learning opportunities to emanate from external groups, such as our HEI, government agencies, colleagues, professional associations, networks, publishers, and funding agencies. We are not generally keen on scientific writing because it is neither an integral part of our prior learning nor a lived facet of our current professional and organizational mission at our HEI. However, as social scientists, it behooves us to embrace scientific writing as an imperative. Having the skill would mean that we will be: true to the ethos of the discipline, benchmarking with the best in the world, and leveraging to collaborate with other social scientists for resource sharing. Scientific writing will also help us form attributes that will further benefit our professional development. Most importantly, scientific writing is not an impossible skill. Like teaching, research, and publishing, scientific writing can be learned (so long as we aspire for it). In addition, all of the input resources for learning it (e.g., guidelines and sample writing products) are also widely available to us in their physical, digital, and online forms. We need first to understand, though, the foundational requirements of the craft before we can make it our way of life.

Scientific writing has three non-negotiable but very doable demands. One, it calls for a great deal of critical reading of the published research literature as well as of critical listening to conference and seminar paper presentations on the substantive and technical developments in the discipline. Two, it requires razor-sharp expression, where clarity and precision are exercised to ensure that the message is correctly understood by the audience. Three, it entails a robust organization, where the message is discussed logically and coherently while following the prescribed format, structure, and style of presentation. We have to develop a game plan as to how we start, maintain, and sustain these three-fold demands. There is no hard-and-fast rule, but we must discover effective strategies for ourselves while noting that our movement towards fulfilling the demands will not necessarily trek a straight line. There would likely be several instances where we would be meandering in the process of learning; this, though, is an attendant complexity of learning (and should not deter us from continuing to gain momentum).

If we persevere through the years (the process will enable us to internalize the ethos, logos, and pathos of scientific writing as well as adjust to attendant learning challenges), we will be amply rewarded afterward. As a result, our specialist knowledge and our communication and organizational skills will be improved. As we elevate our mastery of the what, the why, and the how of scientific writing, we will consequently increase the probability that we will not just be writing but also that we will be writing more regularly.

What would we turn into if we write regularly—and progressively? We will be thinking actively, our brain cells will be at work incessantly, in that we would be continually tapping into our own knowledge base, including those offered by many other sources of systematic information. Our regular scrutiny of our contextualized thinking is likely to help us enhance the breadth and the depth, including the sophistication, of our analyses, thereby invariably raising the quality of our knowledge. With quality knowledge at our fingertips, which will be aided by the expression and organizational skills we similarly form from writing, we are likely to become agile and competitive; that is, we will be perpetually ready, able, and unafraid to take on the challenges and the opportunities that come our way. Having active thinking, quality analyses, quality knowledge, agility, and competitiveness will benefit our teaching, research, and publishing skills. For instance, in publishing our research-based manuscripts alone, amidst the high rejection rates in the indexed journals, we can use these professional resources to submit high-quality knowledge products. More crucially, these resources will eventually make us feel that we have already acquired enough tools (and positive power) at our disposal to work on a broader mission, such as on the general goal of the social sciences of transforming the social world into a better place. It will be through these resources as well as their nexus with our change-the-world goal that will enable us—if we just allow ourselves to flow with the current—to reinforce our authentic understanding and appreciation of and our authentic attachment with the age-old value of scientific writing. When we have these cognitive and subjective attributes, then our voices will already be the voices of us, as fully-fledged social scientists, who would not hold any iota of doubt as to why scientific writing is an academic imperative in industrialized regions and why it should also be so in ours.

Definitely, our HEIs have a significant role to play in ensuring that scientific writing is transformed into an imperative function among us social scientists in this part of the world (particularly those among us who need an external motivation). There is no magic formula as to how our HEI can help achieve this suggested goal. The pathways will likely require them to integrate scientific writing into their institutional structure (i.e., vision, mission, and goals); and to introduce a system of incentives (e.g., both financial and non-financial rewards) and a system of work plans for us (e.g., related to teaching load). These courses of action will surely provide us with an enabling institutional environment, but their execution must be steadfast, reliable, and unbreakable even in the midst of top leadership changes at HEI. It will be urgent for our HEI to earmark financial resources for this goal, for which appropriate national government agencies should be able to pitch in their share, as the indicators of scientific writing (i.e., educational performance and impact) are included in the ranking of countries in the annual global surveys. With their spheres of critical influence, the national, local, and HEI-based associations and communities of social scientists will be very instrumental, for instance, in calling for sustained engagement in this specialist area. Finally, effective one-to-one mentoring between top-tiered and middle-level scientists will be critical to reinforce the learning of the advanced facets, including the nuances, of writing.

The foregoing call for independent learning and institutional support for scientific writing may not induce a massive response from us, social scientists, in the short and long term. Surely, some of us will act positively by writing because of strong internal or external motivation, but many will plainly not. Learning would seem difficult for some of us at our ages (we are around 30 to 60 years old) for attitudinal reasons. We simply cannot imagine ourselves—or our mind is plainly burdened about thinking of—toiling through and undertaking all of the minutiae of writing, like the incomprehensible intricacies of the English language. We also tend to see writing as way past our age and our learning curve, inconsequential given our tenure and our indifference towards any career mobility prospects, and foreign, given our wafer thin-like attachment with it. At best, our HEI, even after years of campaigning, could only produce a pyramid-like result, where a handful of us will be placed at the apex for being consistent writers, and a moderate number will be in the middle for being seasonal writers, while the largest number of us, at the base, will remain unperturbed, as non-writers. Our HEI would just have to contend with this mixed bag as a social fact.

However, if our HEI would truly seek scientific writing as an embodied skill among generations of social scientists, they would have to collaborate with their own national governments to carry out a large-scale systemic strategy. One such strategy is envisioned to call for the learning of scientific writing beginning at young ages and for this learning to be continually refined and strengthened at and through the subsequent school-going ages. In particular, students enrolled in the social sciences courses and programs at the elementary up to the university level shall be made to enlist in and pass a progressive series of scientific writing subjects as a curricular requirement. Through all these subjects, students will acquire a mastery of critical reading and listening sharp expression, and strong organization, which, as mentioned, are the foundation of scientific writing. Towards the conclusion of their university education, students are expected to demonstrate a functional command of the skill.

The authenticity of the suggested broad strategy—and their likely social acceptance—can be cultivated by magnifying the scientific character of the social sciences in the curricula. At present, the scientificness of the discipline is only feebly taught and learned (the current practice in the discipline in general mainly involves the verbal communication of grand and subjective change-the-world ideas). The scientificness has to be well concretized and made palpable so that students can intertwine it with the tangible writing skill requirement, or vice versa. The repeated two-way process of this intertwining will help promote the organic contextualization and growth of scientific writing as an imperative among students. Furthermore, the learning of scientific writing could be made more enticing to students if the skill is marketed and promoted as a potential career and an income booster for those deciding to be full-fledged social scientists in the future. There is available evidence to demonstrate that having excellent professional resources, such as the skill of writing, is materially significant to one's career mobility movement and financial security. The good life that could come from being a highly-performing social scientist should be included in the current pitch to attract enrollees in the social sciences programs.

The vast numbers of students to be reached by the proposed large-scale strategy would mean that our HEI would be seeing a future where there would be a dramatic, sustained as well as cross-generational expansion of communities of social scientists with scientific writing know-how. Our HEI will be celebrating by then, knowing that more social scientists would be writing knowledge products (thus increasing the chances for these products to be successfully published). If our region had these critical masses of scientific writers, we would be known the world over as a region of writers of and for science, which would speak volumes about our mindset, identity, and our social position on the global stage. We are now in the 21st century, and it is more than high time for our HEI in the region to tread the scientific track in that, given the critical challenges of our times, science is the only way to go.

I thank a number of you who are consistently writing and submitting social sciences manuscripts to APSSR. The number of submissions to our journal has been continually increasing, and as a result, we now feature more manuscripts in every edition. I very well recognize the need to promptly share our knowledge products with the rest of the communities, and rest assured that we will respond right away to any significant changes.

I also thank the reviewers from all corners of the world who spend a part of their precious time to help us assess the substantive and technical soundness of submitted manuscripts. We draw our reviewers from our tested networks of academics and researchers as well as from Publons whose online database provides us an extensive list of reviewers and their area/s of specialization and published articles. Register as a reviewer at Publons (<https://publons.com>) and have each of your reviews counted.

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Romeo B. Lee

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2. Manuscripts are categorized into two—Research Articles (RA) and Research Briefs (RB). Compared to RB, RA have more compelling data and perspectives and are generally longer (i.e., $\geq 5,000$ words). Systematic reviews, either as RA or RB, are particularly welcome.
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