

How Do I Cook an Impact Factor Article If You Do Not Show Me What the Ingredients Are?

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Doctoral studies in the Czech Republic are highly individualized with little coursework outside the supervisor/supervisee dyad, and the PhD students are mandated to publish prior to the dissertation defense. This mandate is troublesome because writing development has been on the fringes of the Czech education culture. In addition, the publications often must be in English, and many doctoral students struggle with English. In this exploratory study, we examined how this mandate translates into practice, how doctoral students learn to meet the requirements and how university administrators/supervisors perceive doctoral writing development. To answer our questions, we interviewed 7 university administrators/dissertation supervisors and 7 doctoral students from various backgrounds and universities, looking for diverse views on the issue. Our analysis confirmed the formal status of supervisors as the key doctoral writing literacy brokers. While the supervisors acknowledged their role, they also tended to view doctoral writing as a matter of self-study and funding, thus indirectly emphasising the publication outcomes. In contrast, doctoral students called for structured support of their writing processes. We propose a systemic approach to introduce writing pedagogies into the Czech discourse. With this study we hope to contribute to research on doctoral writing for publication of EAL (English as an Additional Language) students in Central Europe.

Keywords: Academic writing, doctoral studies, publishing, supervisors, writing support

1. Introduction and Literature Review

The title of our paper builds on Bazerman's (2017) metaphor of a non-traditional student being invited to a fancy restaurant for the dinner testing her survival skills. This metaphor is very fitting for the context of Czech doctoral students' writing, where the ever-increasing pressure to publish in English in prestigious journals before students defend their dissertation contradicts the reality of virtually no formal writing support coupled with challenges connected to publication efforts of learners of English as an Additional Language (EAL).

The demands on doctoral students' publication outcomes have been increasing globally (Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016; Flowerdew, 2000; Kamler & Thomson, 2014; Lillis & Curry, 2006). However, the Czech Republic may have taken this even a step further by embedding publication requirements in its Higher Education Act (Czech Republic, 1998). Whereas some countries offer dissertations by publication as an option to the traditional dissertation (Aitchison, Kamler, & Lee, 2010; Guerin, 2016), in the Czech Republic, doctoral students have to do both: produce a dissertation and publish their research results prior to dissertation defence. Dissertation by publication is generally not an option. Several years ago, the Czech government has passed a new national research evaluation methodology called *Metodika 2017+*, favouring Impact Factor articles from journals ranked in the upper half of Web of Science (Government of the Czech Republic, 2015) as publication outcomes researchers should strive for. This evaluation methodology does not directly concern doctoral students, but it impacts their supervisors and the effect spills over to the doctoral level as well, thus further increasing the general demands on productivity and publication outcomes.

Although the interpretations of the publication requirements vary across fields and institutions' doctoral disciplinary boards, many STEM students are expected to have produced several impact factor articles, sometimes even as first authors. In many fields, the articles need to be published in English-medium journals either because there are no high-ranked local journals or because English-medium publications are awarded a higher status (Curry & Lillis, 2004; Lillis & Curry, 2006, p. 4; Smirnova, 2016).

Many researchers have pointed to the difficulties and tensions that publishing during the doctorate entails (Aitchison, Catterall, Ross, & Burgin, 2012; Aitchison, Kamler, Kamler, & Lee, 2010; Carter & Laurs, 2018; Kamler & Thomson, 2014; Alison Lee & Kamler, 2008; Anne Lee & Murray, 2015; Paré, 2011). In their discussion of the paradoxes of the doctoral students' text production, Badenhorst and Guerin (2016) talk about the invisibility of writing in academia, leading to writing being treated as an innate quality that is taken for granted. Writing is so deeply engrained in the academic practice that it goes unobserved. If noticed, it tends to be treated as a by-product or as an activity separate from research (Starke-Meyerring, 2011). Much writing knowledge in the disciplines is thus learnt tacitly (Paré, 2011), which often means that what counts as common knowledge to seasoned academics remains obscured to the newcomers (Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016, p. 11). Academic writing serves as a tool for "socialisation into the conventions, norms, and expectations" (Estrem, 2015, p. 56) of a discursive community (Lea & Street, 2006). As such, it embodies a very specific culture to which doctoral students need to be introduced (Starke-Meyerring, 2011). When the nature of writing development is not acknowledged, the culture of the specific discursive community also remains hidden. Students are then left to sink or learn to swim not just as writers but as researchers, because writing in the doctorate is inherently connected to forming one's identity as a scholar and researcher (Kamler & Thomson, 2008).

Clearly, doctoral writing is a complex process, and one typically goes through it alone. Our academic culture still favours the image of the "detached" scholar (Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016) who is objective and rational. However, writing is highly emotional, often bound with insecurities, doubts, feelings of guilt, incompetency and imposter syndrome. When the emotional aspects of writing are by-passed and not taken into consideration, doctoral students are not given the full range of opportunities to develop and strengthen their authorial voices and identities.

As if doctoral writing development were not complex enough, when we throw multilingual/EAL doctoral candidates into the equation, the plot thickens further with added challenges of language competency (Casanave, 2010; Flowerdew, 2000; Smirnova, 2016). In addition, issues of inequality in the process of knowledge production must be considered, where scholars and researchers from non-anglophone countries have more hurdles to overcome than their anglophone counterparts due to the unequal access to resources and power distribution (Canagarajah, 2002; Lillis & Curry, 2006).

The Czech Republic finds itself in Central Europe, a region that Lillis and Curry (2006) marked as the semi-periphery or peripheral to the core that Europe represents (in terms of power, resources, and, to a degree, also the status and use of English) when viewed through the lens of the world system theory (Wallerstein, 1976, 2004). Central and Southern Europe count as peripheral in that they are non-anglophone, English has had a relatively low profile in their education systems and in business compared to Northern European countries and their economic conditions are less favourable than in Western/Northern Europe (Lillis & Curry, p. 6). Lillis and Curry's article was published in 2006, and while some things have improved, many of the conditions they described still seem to ring true today. Czech scholars and researchers earn lower salaries, receive less funding and writing support is virtually non-existent.

Writing support in Czech education is uncommon also for cultural-historical reasons. The Czech education system relies mainly on oral examinations as a means of assessment, and writing is generally marginalized or taught with emphasis on grammar and orthography, much less as a means of communication in different rhetorical situations. It is not surprising then that in this context, doctoral writing for publication in English is extremely hard, and many students drop out of doctoral studies in part because they cannot meet the publication requirements. In a recent survey among doctoral students at Charles University, the largest Czech University, 65% students reported problems with meeting publications requirements and said they missed systematic education in research methodology, academic writing, languages, soft skills, and writing grant applications (National Training Fund, 2019). The Czech Republic counts among EU countries with the highest proportion of doctoral students, but it also has exceptionally poor completion rates with nearly 50% students dropping out (National Training Fund, 2019).

Czech studies, however, remain largely silent on the topic of writing development and writing pedagogies. Studies on doctoral programmes in the Czech Republic primarily scrutinize the conditions of PhD students in the country (Cidlinská, 2017; Červinková, 2010; Fárová, 2018). As for writing research, the Czech Republic has had a strong tradition in linguistics, so many studies by local researchers investigate linguistic features of academic texts, e.g. texts produced by Czech authors in English (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2013; Dontcheva-Navrátilová, 2013; Hůlková, Dontcheva-Navratilova, Jančaříková, & Schmied, 2019; Chamonikolasová & Stašková, 2005;

Povolná, 2016, 2018) or issues of style (Chamonikolasová, 2005). There are also occasional comparisons of cultural differences in Czech and English writing (Čmejrková, 1996); however, less has been written on writing development. We found one study discussing the generally poor quality of Czech academic texts produced by university students (Schneiderová, 2015). The author of this study connected the low quality of writing of Czech graduates with their lack of training in writing in prior school levels, and called for the “craft” of writing to be taught early on (Schneiderová, 2015, p. 70). Besides this study, writing development of Czech students seems to be addressed in occasional reports, conference proceedings or master/dissertation theses on specific writing interventions, e.g. interventions through an online academic writing course for undergraduate students at Masaryk University in Brno (Hublová, 2016; Neusar, 2016; Stepanek & Hradilova, 2013).

2. Aims and Research Questions

In doctoral studies, many European countries still very much rely on traditional mentoring models assuming a close working relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee with little structured coursework outside of the dyad (Bitusikova, 2009). This is also true for the Czech Republic. Doctoral studies, by law (Czech Republic, 1998), are designed as individualized studies with little prescribed coursework. Therefore, doctoral students’ writing development and learning to write for publications is, by design, fully dependent on their supervisors.

But considering that most academics have had no systematic training for the many roles they hold at universities, including the role of a supervisor (Amundsen & McAlpine, 2011) and the fact that not all are fluent in English, tensions arise as to what is realistic to expect of them, what they can deliver and what the students themselves think they need. This study aims to explore these tensions to better understand where the Czech Republic stands in terms of doctoral writing development and which direction might be reasonable to propose for its future development in the context of the knowledge of effective writing pedagogies we have from research. More specifically, in this exploratory study we seek to answer the following questions:

- 1) How do the publication requirements translate into practice?
- 2) Where and how do doctoral students learn to meet those requirements?
- 3) Where and how do university administrators/supervisors think their doctoral students can learn publication skills in English?

By capturing the tensions and complexities of doctoral writing development in the Czech context, we aim to contribute to other studies on academic writing practices of EAL learners in European higher education. For a long time, international research into the doctorate was “patchy” (David Boud & Lee, 2009). Nevertheless, in the past decade a number of interesting articles and edited books on this topic have emerged detailing various models and approaches to supervising and doctoral writing pedagogies (Aitchison & Lee, 2006; Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016; Carter, 2013; Kamler & Thomson, 2008, 2014; Alison Lee & Kamler, 2008; Anne Lee & Murray, 2015; Matarese, 2013; McAlpine & Amundsen, 2011; Wardle & Adler-Kassner, 2019). Still, much remains to be learned about graduate student writing in contexts of EAL learners in peripheral regions like the Czech Republic. This study aims to contribute to filling this gap and to propose strategies to address writing development that would be appropriate for our specific context. We aim also to offer an insight into a culture where writing has been researched little so far, but which might present an interesting site for comparison with other countries in a similar position.

3. Method

We take the view that writing is a social practice rooted in specific cultural traditions (Lea & Street, 2006; Alison Lee & Boud, 2009) that involve complex patterns of interactions and access to literacy brokering (Curry & Lillis, 2004; Lillis & Curry, 2006). The key players in the system of doctoral education, as it is set up in the Czech Republic, are the supervisors and the doctoral students, but there may be other literacy brokers and sites where students access knowledge and support as they write for publication in English. In this study, we seek to learn more about what these sites might be and what can be expected in terms of writing development from the supervisor-supervisee dyad. Boud and Lee (2005) proposed that it is important not only to examine what is provided, but also “how it is perceived and taken up” (Alison Lee & Boud, 2009, p. 16).

Within this view, we explored the perceptions of the key stakeholders of writing development at the doctoral level, asking them about what they considered important in their writing development and where they think writing development should occur.

To start answering our questions in this pilot study, we conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with doctoral students and university administrators/supervisors, each lasting between 30 and 90 minutes. Out of these, 7 were interviews with doctoral students and 7 with university administrators and professors, many of whom also serve as dissertation supervisors.

Our sample of doctoral student participants was a mix of people from various disciplinary backgrounds (medicine, arts and humanities, social science, natural science, engineering, IT) and stages of doctoral programmes at several different Czech universities. We approached students whom we encountered in writing workshops or writing courses we both teach, and we also applied snowball sampling, talking to students who did not participate in our workshops but attended the university where one of us works. We conceived this study as a pilot study, where we were aiming at talking to diverse people to collect a broad spectrum of views, which we set to categorize.

Our access to university administrators and dissertation supervisors was not as easy as to doctoral students, so we selected participants for this group slightly differently. We were looking for people who understood or co-created doctoral programme policies but who also directly worked with doctoral students. We identified assistant deans for doctoral studies, vice-rectors and professors in several universities in the Czech Republic from the institutions' websites, and contacted them via e-mail, explaining to them the purpose of our study and asking them for an interview. Similarly, to the doctoral students, the university administrators were from different fields and universities. Although we do not have an institutional review board that could approve our study, we acted in line with the general principles of ethical research with human subjects, designed the study to protect the participants' confidentiality, and obtained a written informed consent from each of the study's participants who agreed to be interviewed.

Our semi-structured interviews were guided by interview protocols developed for each group. We had slightly different questions for each group, but overall, we were exploring the same topics, i.e.

the nature of the publishing mandate as it was exercised within the participants' institution, the sites for writing support, and the participants' perceptions of writing development as they were experiencing it (or not). In both groups, we asked questions about publication policies, expectations to publish, existing support and need for help, the participants' perceptions of the adequacy of the support, and their views of and experience with writing development.

Each interview was audio-taped, transcribed and segmented into discrete units (t-units) as suggested by (Geisler & Swarts, 2019) to avoid double-coding and ensure a more systematic approach to making sense of the data: "segmenting the entire stream of language in advance of coding also helps to produce coding judgments that are more systematic and replicable" (Geisler & Swarts, 2019, p. 225)

We then ran through several cycles of coding the data, initially looking for explicit and implicit references to support or lack of support for writing, and, more specifically, where the support was located and where our interviewees noted its absence. In the subsequent coding cycles, we re-read the coded interviews and interpreted what we saw in the individual categories to identify key themes.

4. Results

The interview data provide evidence for some of the anecdotal accounts of writing development (or rather the lack of systematic writing development) we kept hearing about prior to conducting this study and draw a sharper image of the situation in writing for publication among in Czech doctoral education. Our analysis generated several themes that ran strong in our interviews as we were trying to understand where and how students learn to write for publication in English and how the situation in doctoral writing development is perceived by university administrators/dissertation supervisors and doctoral students.

4.1. Product over process: Publication as a trade of exchange

Pressures to write for publication are strong, with real consequences in terms of unfinished doctoral studies if one does not meet publication requirements. These pressures stem from the legal mandate that universities cannot ignore. As the Higher Education Act stipulates:

Doctoral studies are completed with a doctoral state examination and the defence of a doctoral thesis ... The thesis must contain original as well as published results or results accepted for publication (Czech Republic, 1998, article 47/4).

The type and number of publications expected from students in individual doctoral programmes is set by doctoral studies disciplinary boards, which translate these legal requirements into practice. However, the boards vary in how specific or vague they are in their translations and how much room they leave to doctoral supervisors for further interpretation of the requirements. These requirements then span from publications in domestic journals, to international conference proceedings, to as many as two or three journal articles in high impact, peer-reviewed journals published in English, with the student being the first author in at least one of these articles. From the interview data, we learned that the requirement for 2–3 publications in English before dissertation defence seems to be fairly standard; in some fields it was at least one, whereas in others, we found uncertainty about what the requirements were or the specific requirements were changing so frequently that people were losing track of what regulations were actually in place.

The university administrators/supervisors in our sample talked about the mandate as a driving force for publication but we also heard from them that students should publish because they “should be interested” in publishing and in sharing their results. Our data convey the underlying assumption that students at the doctoral level are driven or at least should be driven by intrinsic motivation to publish. But because this is often not the case, universities and study programmes appeal to them by offering various kinds of external rewards. One of the most frequently mentioned reward was an increased monthly stipend. But other reward mechanisms were also mentioned, e.g. additional one-time financial awards, dissertation credits for a publication, payments for extra courses (outside the university programme or the university itself) or money

for translation and proofreading. What seems common to all these support mechanisms is that they treat publication as a product where the outcome deserves a reward, but little attention and support is given to how students get there. This excessive focus on the publication outcomes may lead to publishing for the sake of publishing where the quality does not matter all that much as long as something is published somewhere. As one of our doctoral student interviewees put it:

... writing is done just to get it ticked off, and it's completely irrelevant that I write something very stupid and send it to a dubious journal because I will have a publication [which is what counts]...

Overall, there was a general sense among the doctoral students that publications are some sort of a trade of exchange. In return for a publication, the students may slightly improve their generally poor financial standing. At the time of the interviews, doctoral stipends amounted to approx. 250 EUR per month (depending on the university and the programme), and with publications, they could increase by 40-80 EUR per month (according to the accounts we heard). With publications, doctoral students might also help improve the rankings of their programme (and supervisor), which in turn may generate more money for the department, and consequently for them. Most importantly, though, the students will be allowed to defend their dissertation.

For some students, a publication in an English-medium outlet is out of their reach for various reasons: poor English being just one, but many find a way and those who do not, leave. The ones who persevere manage to get their name on a publication even when they themselves cannot produce a publishable text. As one doctoral student put it:

I think that if someone is incapable of writing an article, someone else will list him/her as a co-author. It's like a trade of exchange...a sort of collegial help.

4.2. Supervisors: The sole writing-skill brokers

Doctoral programmes in the Czech Republic typically do not have a common core curriculum, and, generally, there is little coursework for doctoral students. By law, doctoral studies are defined as individual studies where doctoral studies boards in the disciplines set umbrella requirements,

such as the mentioned number of publications, while the content of the studies is determined (and largely takes place, or not) between the supervisor and the student. The structure of doctoral studies in the Czech Republic is based on an apprenticeship model, where the supervisors guide and help students orient themselves in the field and in research, and the students learn from them. As one of the university administrators/supervisors described it:

Our dissertation supervisors spend a lot of time at the beginning talking with the student what the student might need. It's an interactive process, there is no mandating...it's based on what the student had studied before, what they themselves feel they need help with....

This approach applies to the whole scope of doctoral studies, which also entails writing development as one of the implied components. When asked where students learn about the publishing process and how they develop their writing skills, the answers we got were fairly straightforward: “they should learn it from their supervisor”, or “it is the role of the supervisor, who is indispensable in the whole process”. It is clear that supervisors are expected to be the writing brokers, but it is much less clear how they actually approach teaching writing.

The administrators/supervisors seemed to accept this apprenticeship model without questioning it and not seeing the alternatives:

...there are no mandates telling students to take a specific course because the focus [during doctoral studies] is really broad, and it's not possible to consolidate it to make everyone go through [the same] that can be done on the bachelor level; with some problems on the master level.

In describing how they support their doctoral students' writing development, some supervisors mentioned telling their students to write, or “appealing to students to write”, implying that the teaching happens through encouragement that will lead to students' text production. Some supervisors also talked about reading and revising their students' papers repeatedly, or about team writing where the supervisor asks the student to write a portion of the paper, and then rewrites and finishes the paper.

While the supervisors seemed resigned to the apprenticeship model and did not question its utility or efficiency, the students were more critical:

...if you have a good supervisor, you have a chance to learn something, but if not, you are in it all alone.

This quote did not refer just to writing but to the overall knowledge building at the doctoral level, and it summarizes what we heard throughout the interviews from other doctoral students in our sample. There was one exception where a student gave an account of a highly effective interaction between her and her supervisor, facilitating deep learning experience:

...when we write, we get feedback from our boss [supervisor]...generally, it's that the article should be structured, should have a story, and we give him our early draft. And it comes back all in red...one must then restructure or when you write it all you may find out you didn't have such a good idea in the first place...and usually there are 3-4 versions with the biggest difference between the first and the second. At that stage, he doesn't look at English.... that comes after that...

This student also added that her supervisor had spent some time in the U.S. as an Associate Professor at a university, which was to explain his uncommon approach to working with his doctoral students.

Other students in our sample talked about supervisors who “finalize”, “correct”, “add”, “react”, “pay for translations”, “find extra funding”. These words suggest a managerial rather than teaching/learning model and go along with the earlier theme of product-driven approach to writing for publications. These quotes also suggest that the supervisors are involved on some level, but we have also heard narratives about supervisors who do not interact with their students much at all (“it took 9 months before my supervisor got back to me”), or supervisors who try to be helpful but do not necessarily facilitate effective learning:

...my problem was that I was exchanging it [an article] with my supervisor and we both knew what was going on [in the research] and we took it as it made sense. But then when a third person who didn't know anything about our study read it, it turned out that it [the text] didn't really make much sense.

4.3. Learning outside the doctoral studies programme

In cases where supervisors were not effective in teaching their students the ropes of the publishing process or where supervisors were completely absent from students' narratives about writing for publication, one would expect that the students can learn from elsewhere within the university. The supervisors often talked about events such as doctoral student workshops or doctoral student conferences where students have an opportunity to present their research and receive feedback. These events were often one-time, short events spanning from a few hours to a few days. Some universities organize lecture series where invited speakers talk about aspects of research work and the publishing process, and some institutions employ native English speakers to help with research writing as proof-readers.

From the perspective of the students, what universities offer tends to be inadequate or ineffective and does not facilitate the kind of learning they need. We heard examples of writing experience at university as "assessment without feedback", lacking models on what goes into the publication process. Some students were never exposed to learning opportunities that would allow them to understand the hierarchy of research journals. Students also complained about the absence of useful courses or any courses that would help them navigate the publishing process.

...the doctoral workshop is about first year doctoral students presenting their project and other students comment... in practice, it's that you go there, you are completely stressed out, you present something that you created ad hoc without any advice from anyone, so it's usually quite awful. And there is a ton of people sitting there who don't have a clue about you or the theories you build on. They ramble something and you are thinking, oh my god, this is really "helpful"... And you will never ever use what they suggest...

In instances where there were courses on academic writing, the students did not necessarily find them useful either:

...on my own initiative I signed up for academic writing, which was offered as a university-wide course...and it was all about vocabulary...but the concept of what is expected in a journal article, what is expected in a dissertation, that was completely absent from my doctoral studies...

Students in our sample who were eager to learn ventured out of the university to get what they needed elsewhere. Some spent time abroad and were exposed to writing development there, while others stumbled upon or found alternative learning opportunities, for instance, a mentoring programme organized by the Sociological Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, connecting young researchers with seasoned researchers from fields different from the mentee. But as most of our student interviewees suggested, they had to take initiative and actively search on their own to find something that would help them. Sometimes, information about useful events came to them through the university information channels, at other times they heard from friends or fell upon a flyer at a conference they happened to go to.

What they missed was apparent from what they wished for. These needs spanned from calls for information centres with advice on the publishing process and writing, to models of good practices and courses where students would learn how to structure a paper and receive useful feedback on their work. The following quote captures the level of frustration we heard repeatedly:

Some strategies can be conveyed so that you don't have to figure it out the hard way on your own. When they tell us to write articles, it's kind of stupid that no one is telling us how to do it.

4.4. Writing development as a matter of self-study

Students were generally expected to learn by trial and error from the reviewers' comments, from reading, or from seeing the corrections their supervisors made to their texts. In contrast to the students calling for guidance and help with writing development, some of the supervisors in our study talked about writing as something that cannot be taught but must be self-learned.

...they [doctoral students] must feel the need to read lots of literature to learn the theories they need for their work...and based on that they can learn to identify on their own how to write research articles.

What can one learn in a course? Ok, you can learn some of those phrases such as “in contrast to” or “it was interesting that” - language formulas you can use in your article, but you simply need to learn [writing] through real life.

Coupled with those beliefs, the notion that writing is a talent reserved only to some provided an easy explanation for the absence of structured writing guidance.

At the same time, our interviewees acknowledged that writing is a complex process and writing a journal article is a challenging job with multiple tasks:

...on some 6-12 pages they have to explain the problem, provide some groundwork for those who are not familiar with the area of research and present their own results, so it's quite complicated to write a good article that's also reader-friendly...

However, self-learning could help doctoral students to see the full complexity of the task at hand, even when they tackled the writing as best as they could. For instance, one student described how she brought research articles from her trip to the U.S. and learned by copying useful phrases, trying to imitate the writing she saw. As hard as she tried, there were social and emotional elements of writing development that were difficult to tap into when writing development is confined to this kind of self-study.

4.5. Success conditioned by personal dispositions and luck

Against all odds, many Czech researchers have succeeded in publishing their research in international journals. This study is not investigating the aspects of their success, but our interviewees frequently implied success and indirectly attributed it to students' personal dispositions, talent and, sometimes, also luck. One supervisor complained that there are too few zealous students, implying that one needs to be zealous to be able to succeed. Another supervisor praised students for being “independent...not needing regular meetings”, and yet another said: “it's also a matter of luck on what they discover...it's easier to write an article if it's about something no one expected”.

From the conversations with the students, we got a sense that the dispositions leading to success are flexibility, persistence, independence, ambition and a pro-active approach. Students must be flexible and adapt to the requirements that may change during the course of their doctoral studies as publishing requirements in their contexts sometimes do. Persistence is necessary to get the attention of the supervisor, who may take 9 months to respond to his or her supervisee's paper as we heard earlier. Independence will carry one through the loose structure that offers little support. Pro-active approach and ambition go hand in hand as they both entail a certain level of personal drive that makes one want to search for opportunities to learn and actively participate in the research community despite the hurdles of communicating in a foreign language and no formal preparation for the challenging task:

I don't know anyone who would go through some kind of a course, or something like that...it's more about finding something because you are pro-active or were lucky to stumble upon something...but it certainly is not part of our doctoral education.

5. Discussion

The key themes that emerged from our probe into publication mandates and the perceptions of university administrators/supervisors and doctoral students about writing for publication in English pointed to tensions between assumptions and expectations in the two groups. By design, the Czech doctoral studies place the responsibility for doctoral student learning onto the supervisor/supervisee dyad. In this apprenticeship model, supervisors alone (in the absence of structured coursework) are responsible for leading their students to graduation and for guiding them into the publishing process, where publication in English may be the only option that is recognized in some fields. These requirements place unrealistic expectations on the supervisors that are nearly impossible to fulfil. We would have expected to hear voices from among the institutions' administrators and supervisors challenging the existing model, calling for support mechanisms outside of the supervisor/supervisee dyad. However, this was not necessarily the case. The existing apprenticeship model is so deeply entrenched in the Czech schooling culture that supervisors may not be able to see the alternatives, unless they had experienced or heard about other models and writing pedagogies, for instance, through their own residencies abroad, as we heard in some of the interviews. While we may consider the apprenticeship model outdated, the

structure of the system and the highly individualized nature of the doctoral studies was perceived by some as a virtue and the students' ability to find their own way to publishing a sign of their maturity and readiness for academic work.

The Czech educational system is historically meritocratic, which can explain why we heard student dispositions mentioned so frequently in connection to writing development, but uncritical focus on dispositions confines writing development to the individual level. Writing researchers have argued that dispositions – the qualities that determine how students use and adapt their knowledge and skills, including their motivation to learn and the value they ascribe to writing – are important in writing development and may affect how students transfer learning from one area to the next (Driscoll & Wells, 2012). Writing research has been critiqued for not paying sufficient attention to the learners' dispositions, focusing largely on students' external conditions in learning, namely context and curriculum (Driscoll & Wells, 2012). In the Czech case, however, the bets seem to be placed mainly on student dispositions. We do not dispute the importance of student dispositions, but in our context, we need to expand the focus to creating the external infrastructure that could help facilitate the development of doctoral writing literacies. The view allocating the responsibility to learn to write in English primarily to students plays into a deficiency model, where we blame the victim and strip away institutional responsibility for creating the learning opportunities and curricula needed to help doctoral students succeed.

Those who challenge the system are mainly the discontent doctoral students. In 2016, several doctoral students joined forces and formed the Czech Association of Doctoral Students, calling attention to the dismal conditions of education at the doctoral level. In the scope of the problems they outlined, they mainly criticized low stipends and poor status of doctoral students in the Czech Republic. Writing pedagogies as described in writing research involve practices that are not commonly known in the Czech Republic, and with the general nature of writing in academia being invisible, it is not surprising no one is explicitly calling for a change in these realms.

What remains obscured in the Czech case is the benefit of the whole publication process under the set mandate. It is debatable whether publishing during the doctorate is advisable, and researchers have warned of premature publication and anxiety that can “hamper rather than help

students”(Paré, 2010, p. 30). Positive examples include a case presented by Alison Lee (2010) of a student in Sweden where dissertation by publication was a key milestone in the student’s development as a scholar. But this particular student had access to a scaffolded infrastructure and a “rhetorical curriculum” where researching, writing and publishing were closely knit. Such a case would be rare to see in the Czech Republic. The infrastructure and know-how are not available, and writing is generally treated superficially as an after-thought – something one has to do when the research is done. While this view is not unique to the Czech Republic, it seems to run particularly strong in the Czech context, plausibly due to the cultural-historical traditions, which have not embraced the idea of writing as an instrument of learning and knowledge building, and where oral assessments still rule.

Our interviewees frequently turned conversations about writing to funding and money as the prevailing mechanisms of writing support, as if writing can happen on its own when people have funding to devote time to it or pay for a translation service. This seems to be in line with the strong focus on publication outputs, reinforced with policies, such as the new national research evaluation methodology *Metodika 2017+* (Government of the Czech Republic, 2015), which increases the publication pressure for academics/supervisors to publish in journals ranked in the upper half of the Web of Sciences, rewarding their publication success with increased funds, promotions, higher status within the academy, etc. Under many research evaluation systems, published texts are used as units of data to be evaluated, so it is no wonder they become a “form of barter” (Hagstrom, 1965, in Hyland, 2015) and function as currency serving a utilitarian purpose. Under these circumstances, it is probably not all that surprising that no one among our interviewees questioned why publications are so strictly required of doctoral students, how they fit with the goals of doctoral studies and what competencies they should develop in the students. It appears as if the Czech Republic is keeping abreast with global accountability trends for legitimacy (Meyer & Scott, 1992), but the true benefits or detriments of publishing during the doctorate are glanced over and left without the scrutiny they would deserve.

Our findings raise questions not only about writing development and publishing pedagogies in Czech doctoral studies but about the essence and structure of doctoral programmes in the Czech Republic, where student learning is too dependent on the students’ supervisor, and if the supervisor

fails, opportunities to learn outside of the supervisor/supervisee dyad are limited. We suspect that other Central and Southern European countries (peripheral European countries), drawing on similar educational traditions, may experience similar issues. Therefore, we offer our case for further comparisons.

While our study has made visible what has not been previously researched in our context, we are very much aware of our limitations. Ours is a pilot study with a small sample size and participants from different disciplinary and institutional backgrounds, so we cannot draw any sweeping conclusions. We intended this study as the first step in mapping the territory of doctoral writing in the Czech context, mainly in terms of understanding the assumptions and needs of the key players in the system. Future studies should probe deeper into specific practices of supervision and doctoral writing, focus on specific fields and generate data comparable with other European peripheries.

Many of the problems of Czech doctoral students are similar to challenges doctoral students face elsewhere, where they also struggle with low financial support, extreme workload due to other jobs, un/availability of grant support or insufficient supervision. The free form of the doctoral studies (few or no courses) in the Czech case, and vague and, at the same time, strict publication requirements alongside the dissertation writing already create significant challenges. When we combine these with the students' limited writing experience from the earlier stages of the studies, often accompanied by mediocre mastery of English, we can see that the situation is indeed quite complex. Studies from other non-anglophone contexts show similar struggles of EAL learners elsewhere (e.g. Casanave, 2010; Flowerdew, 2000), but research of contexts like ours is scant. With this study we hope to contribute to the understanding of the conditions and practices of doctoral writing in the less researched contexts and establish some groundwork for future studies of research literacies in peripheral countries, such as the Czech Republic.

6. Conclusions

In this pilot study, we asked how publication mandates in the Czech Republic translate into practice, where and how doctoral students learn to meet those requirements and how university administrators/supervisors think their students learn publication skills in English. We learned that publication mandates take various forms, but are indeed quite strict. However, the doctoral students in our sample had few options to systematically prepare to meet these requirements. Limited learning opportunities are offered outside the supervisor-supervisee dyad, and the supervisors themselves in our sample largely expressed the belief that writing is a matter of self-learning.

Because publication requirements seem to increase attrition rates (National Training Fund, 2019), proposed solutions to the problem of successful writing for publication might include relaxing the mandates (National Training Fund, 2019), but under the new policy *Metodika 2017+* (Government of the Czech Republic, 2015), this is unlikely to happen. While we believe that the publishing requirements are excessive, we also must recognize the potential for change that they create. Without the mandate and its negative consequences, writing/publishing pedagogies may not receive any attention in the Czech context. Under the given circumstances, universities cannot but start looking for ways to help their doctoral students succeed. Thus higher education institutions are beginning to talk about support for doctoral writing and strategies for its implementation. The strong Czech tradition in linguistics and the absence of fields such as rhetoric and composition studies and writing studies may, however, channel these efforts to activities emphasizing the linguistic aspects of writing in English. Such an emphasis might stand in the way of seeing the full picture of doctoral writing and miss the opportunity to use doctoral writing as an important aspect of developing research literacies and knowledge building. In other words, we see a danger that institutions will turn to quick fixes – such as one-time workshops, where writing is talked about but not practiced, or courses in academic English that focus on linguistic features of academic texts and scrape the surface of writing at the doctoral level, but the core of the problem remains unaddressed.

We deem it necessary to call for a system-wide rethinking of the traditional model of Czech doctoral education, but our findings also lead to questions about how to make writing and publishing pedagogies enter the Czech education discourse. We propose to simultaneously take a bottom-up

and top-down approaches. The bottom-up approach might involve creating a viable model of writing pedagogy for doctoral students with a supporting infrastructure. This model could be tested in one institutional setting and then scaled up to other institutions that may show interest. The top-down approach calls for talking about writing pedagogies at the level of policy makers, for instance, officers for higher education at the Ministry of Education and university rectors who can influence the design of doctoral programmes within their institutions. These talks at the policy level could be initiated through the model of writing pedagogy, which may be introduced to the relevant policy actors.

We have already started working on developing a writing development model that we believe appropriate for our conditions. Scholarly literature on academic writing is rich, with detailed descriptions of writing pedagogies spanning from one-on-one writing conferences (e.g. Harris, 1995) to structured coursework or workshops (e.g. Matarese, 2013), peer learning, writing groups (e.g. Aitchison & Guerin, 2014), writing retreats (e.g. Kempenaar & Murray, 2019; Murray, 2014), and support services such as writing centres (e.g. Harris, 1992). A sequence of courses we have been building encompasses some of these pedagogies. Our courses are based on courses one of us has co-designed in 2012 in the Centre for Academic Writing of the Czech Academy of Sciences. They are blended-learning courses on LMS Moodle platform. Besides many advantages that this format offers for teaching writing, it also turned out to be a blessing during the covid-19 pandemic, when all instruction had to move online; we only needed to make minor adjustments to the courses to make them fully digital. In content, these courses are close to Paré's conception of writing as a craft (Aitchison & Paré, 2012) and Burgess and Carghill's genre-based course (Burgess & Cargill, 2013). In our courses, we make intercultural differences in writing explicit at the onset and guide students in developing an understanding of the publishing process. Students analyse texts of others, learn about the rhetorical structures of research articles according to the Anglophone conventions, and develop an awareness of their target audience. Throughout the course, they receive scaffolded guidance in writing about their own research, which they do through repeated drafting and redrafting based on feedback they receive. They also engage in peer feedback and meet with their instructor in one-on-one or small-group writing conferences. With the support of the librarians from the Technical University of Ostrava, the courses also guide students to work with different

research databases, examine journals, use citations managers and communicate with journal gatekeepers.

If we aspire to launch a discourse on writing pedagogies, we know that one-course sequence is not enough because it would only reach the students who take the course. Our planned strategy thus also involves the supervisors. By introducing the course to them, we would introduce the notion that writing is, to some level, teachable, and writing development does not have to solely rest on their shoulders. Finally, to make our approach systemic, we are also developing a teacher training course and a teacher manual to accompany our course sequence.

Doctoral writing is a term yet to be filled with meaning in our culture, and we believe that with this kind of systemic approach taking place simultaneously on multiple levels, we can help introduce important content, promising the kind of support that Czech doctoral students currently lack and deserve.

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