

# A Text-Ethnographic Approach to Dialogue Between the Language Editor and the Scholar in Authoring English-Medium Research Articles

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The practices of translation and language editing in academia have remained relatively unexplored. These activities easily go unnoticed, perhaps due to their mundanity or because details of these processes usually remain unrecorded. Indeed, authorship of translated and edited manuscripts is assigned to the author, and the language professional's intervention is often not mentioned. This invisibility reflects instrumentalist assumptions about the nature of academic translation and language editing, i.e. the idea that the language professional is performing a merely technical, or pragmatic, operation that does not interfere with the substance of the text. However, in particular with the emergence of the strand of the sociology of translation (see e.g., Munday, 2012, pp. 234–236) within Translation Studies, as well as methodologies such as text-oriented ethnography (Lillis, 2008; Lillis & Curry, 2010)— which address translation and academic literacy as social practices—there has been a shift of focus towards recognition of the language professional's role and agency in social contexts in which academic text production takes place.

Recent research on the role of language professionals in academia has shown that translators and language editors contribute to shaping academic discourse (Bennett, 2013, 2019; Lillis & Curry, 2010; Olohan, 2018; Pienimäki, 2021; Solin & Hynninen, 2018). This reflects a recognition that language is not a transparent medium, but inextricably involved in the shaping of realities, and thus, textual practices should be viewed as “a site of situated knowledge construction” (Gourlay, 2015, p. 485). When translating or editing a text, the language professional is not working with ‘just the language’, but the work always involves complex entanglements of form and content of the text as well as interaction of various actors and contexts involved in the text production process. The shared understanding of language not as a neutral or transparent medium but as interactions embedded in social contexts necessitates dialogue between the participants involved in academic text production. This complexity makes the language professional's agency in academic text production particularly interesting but also challenging to define and study.

Against this backdrop, this study adopts a text-ethnographic lens to examine the practice of language editing<sup>1</sup> in academia through analyzing dialogue, or “talk around texts” (Lillis, 2008, pp. 359–362), between the language editor and scholars authoring English-medium research article manuscripts. More specifically, *dialogue* refers to in-text comments made to the scholar's research article manuscript by the language editor and the scholar during the language editing process, and e-mail exchanges and, to a lesser extent, informal discussions between the language

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<sup>1</sup> Here, the term *language editing* refers to English as a Second Language Editing (ESL Editing).

editor and the scholar about the language editing process. Parallel to the dialogue analysis, changes across manuscript drafts made in response to the dialogue will be tracked in the manuscripts' trajectories towards publication.

The analysis brings together two perspectives: that of the language editor and that of the scholar. The objective is to, first, outline the roles the language editor adopts in a research article manuscript's trajectory from the first round of language editing towards publication by analyzing the in-text comments made by the language editor. Second, 'talk around texts' produced by the scholars participating in this study, e.g. wishes expressed by them before and during the language editing process, as well as spontaneous feedback given by them after the language editing process, will be analyzed to outline what the scholars consider valuable in language editing of research articles. I will conclude by discussing how these two perspectives, taken together, reflect the language editor's agency in the dialogic process examined here.

This article presents two cases of individual scholars whose English-medium research article manuscripts have undergone language editing through the in-house language support services at the University of Lapland, an international, multidisciplinary science and art university in Finland. The language editing services examined here are based at the Language Centre of the university. Language support tasks (language editing and translation) are performed by two in-house language specialists working at the unit. Although available to all units in the university community, language editing at the unit is largely associated with research practices and thus profiled as a research support service. Its primary objective is to provide support for researchers in getting published in English. This study draws from my professional involvement as a language editor at the university concerned. In other words, my role in this study is that of a researcher/practitioner as a participant in academic text production together with the scholars involved in this study.

A word needs to be said about the choice of scholars participating in this study. Language editing is not institutionally regulated at the unit at which the language editing work has been conducted. This means that, unlike at some other universities (Pienimäki, 2021, pp. 88–94), no explicitly stated rules or guidelines exist that regulate language editing. At the unit where my study was conducted, working methods are selected together with the scholars on a case-by-case basis. Scholars have different preferences regarding language editing. While some expect the language editor to deliver the edited text without the scholar's own involvement—or at least they prefer having only minor involvement—some others appreciate dialogue with the language editor. This study examines academic language editing through dialogue, which means that the research participants selected are ones who have engaged in dialogue with the language editor. The manuscripts studied here are work of authors who are already advanced writers in English for Academic Purposes, which perhaps also reflects the fact that scholars working at an advanced level of academic English feel competent and willing to respond to the language editor's comments on their research texts and to reflect on alternative expressions. Analyzing the dialogue between the language editor and the scholar at this level illustrates particularly well the complexity and depth of the issues covered during language editing and also serves to illustrate that language editing has advantages even for the more advanced writers. Although my study examines texts written by rather advanced writers, the same problematic is also present in manuscripts by scholars who need more language support with their English-medium research writing. By this I mean that although scholars differ

in their need for language support, most texts undergoing language editing potentially require some degree of intervention by the language editor at all levels of the text: Language editing covers the text from sentence- and paragraph-level writing to the global level of the text as a whole.

In the next section, I will discuss the concept and theory of agency underlying and informing this study.

## Some Considerations on the Language Editor's Agency

As a site for intellectual and perspectival diversity represented by a variety of disciplines and discourses (Hyland & Bondi, 2006), academia provides a particularly rich platform for studying text production and the language editor's agency. However, so far, not much has been written about the subject, and in this section, I will first turn to the much larger body of research on the translator's agency to begin to illustrate the concept of the language editor's agency underlying and informing this study.

History of ideas about translation has long been characterized by an ethos of invisibility. In Translation Studies, Lawrence Venuti has pointed out that aspiration to transparency—the idea that a translation should *conceal* its status as a translation—has extensively informed translational thought and masked the translator's agency (Venuti, 1995). In a sense, translators, too, have embraced the ethos that has created their own invisibility, because the translator's invisibility has been thought of as proof of a job well done. The demand for invisibility, however, has mainly referred to the translator's presence as traces *in texts* as finished objects. More recently, with the sociological turn in Translation Studies (see e.g., Munday, 2012, pp. 234–236), attention has shifted from texts to social contexts in which acts of translation take place. This has marked a proliferation of research on the translator's agency, sparking discussions about and around recognizing and making visible the translator's role and interactions with other actors *in social contexts*. Similar questions of visibility and agency have relevance in the language editor's work, too.

Against the backdrop of the translator's relatively newly gained visibility, the idea that translators indeed exercise agency has been framed in rather positive terms in Translation Studies. This means that, although translators continue to be a muted group and their working conditions often significantly constrain their possibilities to exercise agency (e.g., Abdallah 2010), the recognition that translators have at least “some degree of control over their conditions” (Kinnunen & Koskinen, 2010, pp. 6–7) has nevertheless been seen in positive terms. Earlier, Kinnunen and Koskinen have defined the translator's agency as “willingness and ability to act” (Kinnunen & Koskinen, 2010, p. 6). This definition has informed much research in Translation Studies. However, although Kinnunen and Koskinen's definition also includes the idea of agency as “not only individual but also collective by nature” and as “not a static and measurable entity but a relational, fluid and constantly evolving series of acts” (Kinnunen & Koskinen, 2010, p. 7), the emphasis remains on *individual* agency in that the translator's perspective constitutes the focal point. Also, much research has focused on making translators and interpreters more visible. For, example, Ing-hillari (2014) has pointed out that Translation Studies has become more agent aware and the role of translators and interpreters as social actors has received more emphasis within the discipline.

Although the idea of relationality has figured in discussions of the translator's agency previously, the idea of agency as relational has more recently received the main emphasis in the sense that the locus of agency is not the individual language professional, but the relations between the actors involved in the text production process. For example, working with a posthuman conception of agency, which ascribes agency not only to human individuals but also to nonhuman actors and artefacts, Hanna-Mari Pienimäki sees the language professional's agency as "*distributed* across actors that take part in text production." (Pienimäki, 2021, p. 7; see also Gourlay, 2015).

The concept of agency underlying my study draws from a relational worldview which privileges relations over things (e.g., Benjamin, 2015). In the framework of relational thinking, agency is framed as relational rather than individual in that it focuses on networks of relations in which individual actors are embedded and jointly perform actions. As Solin and Hynninen (2018) have pointed out in their research on English-medium writing for publication, the professional language editor is not the sole agent of intervention into language, and language editing is not a top-down process where things are dictated from above but one that essentially involves negotiation.

In the context of academic text production, the various actors involved in the text production process have a shared object<sup>2</sup>—the text—they are working on with others. This entails recognizing that all participants in text production bring to the process resources that are intended to enhance the shared object, and each participant is required to align their own interpretations with those of the others and to respond to them in a way that further enhances the shared object. The actors involved bring their subjectivities to the text and the text production situation. The participants' actions are responses to their interpretations of the text and negotiations with the other actors involved. Although the goal is to enhance the text through joint action, for example by bringing together the perspectives of the language professional and the scholar, it is important to note that the actors may also have contradictory interpretations of the text. In addition, when conceiving of agency as relational, the agency of the individual actors is by no means clear-cut. Thus, when discussing research writing, it is not possible to clearly define where, for example, the language editor's task ends and the researcher's task begins. The collaborative writing process is characterized by fluidity of co-construction of meanings and the changing nature of the text.

The complex entanglement of agencies involved in the text production process is not unproblematic. As Lillis and Curry have pointed out, the involvement of language brokers in the production of academic texts is associated with both opportunities and difficulties (Lillis & Curry, 2010, pp. 93–114). Sometimes the language professional's involvement does not yield the expected results, which means that the language professional's agency cannot be framed—as if unproblematically—only in positive terms. In their extensive text-ethnographic study on the experiences of scholars spanning eight years, Lillis and Curry have found that "scholars are overwhelmingly dissatisfied and suspicious of using translations" of their academic work, one reason for this being that it is difficult to find translators who are sufficiently familiar with the scholar's subfield specialism (Lillis & Curry, 2010, p. 95). At the same time, Lillis and Curry have found

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<sup>2</sup> The text may also be thought of as a nonhuman actor, but in this study, the emphasis is on the dialogue between the language editor and the scholar as mediated by the text as a shared object.

that scholars tend to prefer authors' editors<sup>3</sup> to translators (Lillis & Curry, 2010, p. 96). This might be connected to the distribution of agency between the language professional and the author associated with these activities. When retaining the power of deciding what terms and expressions to use in their English-medium text, instead of handing this power over to the translator, the author exercises greater control over their own text compared to the scenario in which the translator first translates the text and only then presents the result to the author. Moreover, in light of studies by Karen Bennett (2007, 2013, 2019), which demonstrate the extent to which academic texts can change in translation, language professionals should reflect on the limits of their agency particularly carefully to be able to pay attention to ideological issues involved in the context of academic text production, while considering the constraints imposed by real-world contexts of academic text production in which they must operate. The role of context in informing the ways in which language editors can exercise their agency is also reflected in two previous studies conducted in very different contexts: The study by Pienimäki (2021) carried out in a context with a relatively high degree of institutional regulation and the study conducted by Luo and Hyland (2016) in an informal context with no explicit institutional regulation.

## Data and Methodology

Methodologically, this study draws from text-oriented ethnography (Lillis, 2008), an approach combining ethnographic data around practices and processes of text production. Here, academic text production is understood as a social practice, which means that the focus is both on what the participants in the text production process *say* about texts—i.e. how they communicate with each other about the texts during the text production process—and on what they *write*, i.e. different versions, or drafts, of the texts on their trajectories towards publication and how these drafts change in their trajectories. The analysis is based on two types of data: *text-oriented data* (in-text comments and e-mail exchanges between the language editor and the author during and about the writing process, and to a lesser extent, informal discussions) and *text data* (different versions of the research article manuscripts on their trajectories towards publication).<sup>4</sup> In addition to these datasets, the case studies of the two individual scholars are supported by presenting written case profiles describing the scholars' academic backgrounds, their relationship with research writing in English, and their practices of using language editing services in their research work, as well as the significance of such services to their research work. The scholar profiles are available in Appendix 1 and 2. The two datasets—text data and text-oriented data—analyzed here pre-exist this study, which means that they have not been collected specifically for the purposes of this study, but have emerged independently of this study over the period from 2018 to 2022 through my professional involvement as a language editor in the context described above. The scholar profiles have been produced specifically for the purpose of this study.

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<sup>3</sup> The term *authors' editor* is interchangeable with the term *language editor* used in my study.

<sup>4</sup> The direct quotes from the data presented in this study are my translations from Finnish (the original language of the datasets) into English.

I seek to maintain a reflexive approach to researcher involvement—my role as a researcher/participant—throughout the study. For the purpose of enabling reflective distance from the data studied, i.e. to facilitate my own engagement in second-order reflection on my own first-order activity as a language editor, in the analysis I have referred to myself in rather impersonal terms as “the language editor”. The expression should be thought of as a technical device of distancing used in this analysis. In addition, it is important to bear in mind that the expression “the language editor” used in the analysis refers to myself as a language editor working with the scholars of this study and should not be taken to mean language editors in general.

## Talk around texts

According to Theresa Lillis (2008), in academic writing research, attention is increasingly shifting from *text* towards *context*, which means that researchers are adopting additional methods alongside text analysis. Lillis uses the expression “talk around texts” to refer to a method that seeks to analyze instances in which participants involved in academic text production *say* something about texts and text production. A frequently used method in this context is interview conducted by the researcher with the participants, but talk around texts can also be examined through approaches such as participant observation in contexts where language professionals work and talk about academic text production (e.g., Pienimäki, 2021). The dialogue, or talk around texts, analyzed in my study has taken place in the form of written communication, and to a lesser extent, face to face, between the language editor and the scholar during the text production process. Traces of this talk exist in the form of in-text comments made by the language editor and the author in the manuscript files, as well as e-mail exchanges between the language editor and the author about and around the texts and the writing process.

Talk around texts as a method helps shift the researcher’s attention from the text towards writers’ perspectives on texts (Lillis, 2008). However, stressing the difference between ethnography as a method and ethnography as a methodology, Lillis points out that “ethnography as a methodology involving multiple data sources and sustained involvement in contexts of production, enables the researcher to explore and track the dynamic and complex situated meanings and practices that are constituted in and by academic writing.” (Lillis, 2008, p. 355). In my study, analysis of two different but directly interrelated datasets spanning a period of four years represents an attempt to bring together text and context.

However, given that the data emerged independently of, or prior to, this study, no interviews with the scholars have been conducted during the period under examination. Thus, the emphasis of this study is on the ‘text end’ of the *text—writer* continuum. This means that, although the language editor and the scholar are active participants in the text production process, their talk is about and around the actual texts that are being written and does not focus, for example, on *emic*—writer-focused, or insider—perspectives intended to convey what is significant and relevant to research participants (Lillis, 2008, pp. 359–360). Such writer-emic perspectives could include, for example, the scholars’ views of themselves as writers or their writing histories—subjects which could be covered in interviews, for example, and which could add considerable depth to a text-ethnographic study. However, the fact that the *text* and the *talk around the texts*

have emerged simultaneously during real language editing commissions for real clients, and the talk has not been produced separately from the text merely “as supplementary to written academic text data” (Lillis, 2008, p. 361) adds value to the study through providing perspectives on close entanglements of texts, contexts and participants of text production. The scholar profiles included in this study are also based on talk around texts. I have produced the scholar profile texts on the basis of written texts provided by the scholars as well as informal discussions I have had with them both face to face and via e-mail. The profiles have been created with the objective of, first, illustrating the scholars’ backgrounds and, second, providing the reader with a glimpse of the scholars’ academic writing worlds through an emic perspective in the sense meant above.

Although writer-emic talk around themes other than the text production process itself is only minimally present in the data studied, I seek to add depth to the discussion of academic text production in some other ways. While, for research ethical reasons, previous research has paid particular attention to safeguarding the anonymity of the research participants (e.g., Lillis & Curry, 2010, pp. 28–29; Pienimäki, 2021), my study is based on the research participants’ willingness to openly reveal their identities in the context of this study. The two scholars participating in the study have given their consent to use the data concerning themselves and their writing<sup>5</sup> to conduct the analysis, and they have also agreed to produce the scholar profile texts with me, to appear in the scholar profiles with their full names and have their published articles listed at the end of this article. Embracing openness makes it possible to engage with the texts and context in a detailed way, which adds richness and depth to the study. Also, it is necessary to mention that this kind of study—in which a language editor is addressing her own involvement in academic text production— would not have been possible without the scholars’ abovementioned consent. The language editor (the author of this study) is directly identifiable, which makes it extremely challenging—if not impossible—to anonymize the participating scholars’ identities, since they are researchers in the same higher education institution and thus easily identifiable through their research topics or text extracts discussed. To ensure that this article includes no elements that might negatively impact the participating scholars’ opportunities for future publication or be otherwise harmful to them (see also Lillis & Curry, 2010, p. 29), I have presented the finalized manuscript of this article to the research participants prior to publication, when they have had an opportunity to review and comment on the content. Both participants have read the finalized manuscript and have given their consent for publication.<sup>6</sup>

## Text histories

*Text history* is a key unit of data collection and analysis in text-ethnographic studies on academic text production (Lillis & Curry, 2010, p. 4). Text histories present as much information as possible on a particular instance of text production: the people involved and the different versions, or drafts, of the text, and the text’s trajectory from submission to publication. However, *text*

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<sup>5</sup> The research article manuscripts and their different versions; the recorded comments and discussions about the texts; and discussions had during the scholar profile writing sessions.

<sup>6</sup> Some minor changes to the manuscript were made based on the comments received.

*histories* are seldom complete, because it is often difficult to trace all the actors involved in the text production process, including formal and informal *literacy brokers*, who “impact directly, and in a range of ways, on academic texts towards their publication” (Lillis & Curry, 2010, p. 87). In my study, too, the text histories are in some ways incomplete. First, there have been some face-to-face meetings between the language editor and one of the scholars participating in the study during which the writing process has been discussed. However, since the data pre-exist this study, i.e. at the time the language editing commissions were conducted, there was no intention to use the data for research purposes, the discussions had during those meetings have not been recorded. This means that changes may have been made to the manuscript during, and in response to, the face-to-face discussions, but there are no traces of the conversations that have led to the changes. Second, and related to the previous point, gatekeepers of academic publishing, such as reviewers, editors and publishers’ language editors, generally contribute to academic text production throughout the writing and publishing process. In addition, it is possible that other language brokers, such as other language professionals the scholar may have used, or informal language brokers—for example, the scholar’s colleagues or family members—may have contributed to the text production process. The involvement of multiple language brokers in the text production process means that it cannot be assumed that all changes made to the manuscripts originate in the discussions between the language editor and the author of the manuscript. For the purposes of this study, I have collected as much information as possible about the history of each text from my own records. The analysis focuses on that which is traceable in this context: the recorded dialogue between the language editor and the author.

### **Textual trajectories**

Lillis and Maybin (2017, p. 409) have pointed out that, traditionally, “texts [...] have been analyzed as discrete and bounded units fixed in time and place.” To take an example from Translation Studies, this is the case with much research on translations: The focus has been on comparing the source text and the translation, often with the objective of locating *meaning shifts* between them, or differences between different translations. Such approaches, however, fail to address the processes, participants and contexts contributing to the meaning shifts and are often based on oversimplified assumptions about the text production process. The authorship of a translation is often quite unproblematically assigned to the translator, although other participants may have been involved in the text production process. Bisiada’s (2018) and Taivalkoski-Shilov’s (2013) studies on editorial involvement in translation have shown that translated manuscripts often undergo significant editorial intervention, which, however, is not explicitly mentioned. Thus, it cannot be assumed that simply comparing a source text—for example a research article manuscript written in the source language—with the published (translated) version of it would yield a reliable picture of what the translator’s actual contribution to the text production process has been. Similarly, in the case of research article manuscripts that have undergone language editing, there may be further authoring by other language brokers involved, including interventions by monolingual editors (of journals etc.). In the context of academic text production, we must also consider the fact that part of literacy brokering activities, notably communication



between the researcher and gatekeepers of journals (e.g. reviewers and editors), is generally considered private (Lillis & Curry, 2010, p. 112) and is not necessarily accessible to the language editor working on the manuscript or scholars using research article manuscripts as data in their research work. In order to shift attention from texts as fixed units towards contexts of text production, as well as the role of participants in the text production process, Lillis and Maybin (2017) have proposed a dynamic approach to text analysis that allows to trace *textual trajectories*, i.e. “to capture the changes, movements and directionalities of texts – and the relationships between these—across social time and space” (ibid.) When tracking the changes across drafts of the research article manuscript, I will make use of Lillis and Curry’s text-oriented heuristic developed for this purpose (Lillis & Curry, 2010, pp. 89–91). I am not using the heuristic as such, but have merely borrowed some categories from the column “Changes made to draft” and have tracked changes related to those categories.

The analysis in the next section is divided into two parts. In the first part, the language editor’s in-text comments will be analyzed with the objective of finding out what kinds of roles the language editor adopts in the language editing process. The second part will examine talk around texts produced by the scholars to identify aspects of language editing that the scholars find valuable. The different versions of the manuscripts analyzed here are referred to by codes. For example, in VK.P1.V3, the letters VK represent the scholar’s (in this example, Veera’s) initials, “P1” refers to “Publication 1” and “V3” refers to “Version 3”. The first version, V1, is the version before the language editor’s intervention.

## Results and Discussion

### Tracing the language editor’s role and agency through analysis of in-text comments in research article manuscripts

Analysis of in-text comments sheds some light on the kinds of changes the language editor introduces to the manuscripts, but it can also illuminate the roles adopted by the language editor in the process. All manuscripts analyzed have some general features in common, a salient one being the sheer number of *in-text comments* with which the language editor initiates dialogue with the scholar. The language editor engages the author in the editing process by presenting suggestions ranging from word- and sentence-level points, such as minor additions, deletions or other changes with the objective of, for example, adding precision, removing repetitive elements, enriching the vocabulary, introducing a greater variety of structures, and improving cohesion of the text, to more major revisions such as rewriting sentences or other small parts of the manuscript to enhance clarity, flow and readability of the text. (See Table 1 for examples).

Although Lillis and Curry’s heuristic for tracing textual trajectories of manuscripts is formed around clear-cut categories, one in-text comment made by the language editor can include multiple points that belong to different categories. For example, in one of the manuscripts by Iiris, the language editor has inserted an in-text comment (for the extract concerned, see the example in Table 1 under *Additions*) in which she makes multiple suggestions for revising the text:

Should a source be included? I consulted some parallel texts and in many of them the word ‘designed’ is used [in connection to Bentham], that is, Bentham has designed (and not only described) this kind of a building/system? Could ‘designed by’ be used here? OR even ‘designed and theorized by’?<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1**

*Some examples of the language editor’s suggestions made in the in-text comments in the manuscripts written by Iiris.*

Suggested changes to draft (type)	Draft before language editing	Language editor’s suggestion	Published version
<i>Additions</i>	In <i>Discipline and Punish</i> Foucault describes the utopia of the city that is subjugated to absolute control. The foundation for this kind of working of power is in the prison building <b>described by</b> Jeremy Bentham. (IK.P2.V1.)	In <i>Discipline and Punish</i> , Foucault describes the utopia of the city that is subjugated to absolute control. The foundation for this kind of working of power is in the prison building, <b>designed and theorized</b> by Jeremy Bentham.	In <i>Discipline and Punish</i> , Foucault describes the utopia of the city that is subjugated to absolute control ( <b>Foucault 1995, 198</b> ). The foundation for this kind of working of power is in the prison building, <b>designed and theorized</b> by Jeremy Bentham.
<i>Deletions</i>	In ‘Truth and Juridical Forms’, Foucault <b>describes the idea of panopticism, which according to him is one of</b> the characteristic traits of our society (Foucault 2000, 70). According to Foucault, panopticism is founded on [...] (IK.P2.V1)	In ‘Truth and Juridical Forms’, Foucault <b>describes the idea of panopticism as one of</b> the characteristic traits of our society (Foucault 2000, 70). According to Foucault, panopticism is founded on [...]	In ‘Truth and Juridical Forms’, Foucault <b>describes the idea of panopticism as one of</b> the characteristic traits of our society (Foucault 2000, 70). According to Foucault, panopticism is founded on [...]
<i>Lexical changes</i>	In 2017 the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled on the case <i>AP, Garçon &amp; Nicot v. France</i> which concerned the possibility for transgender persons to change <b>the entries relating to their sex as well as their forenames on their birth certificates.</b> (IK.P1.V1)	In 2017 the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled on the case <i>AP, Garçon &amp; Nicot v. France</i> which concerned the possibility for transgender persons to change <b>their gender marker on official documents</b> as well as their forenames on their birth certificates <b>to match their gender identity.</b>	In 2017 the European Court of Human Rights (later on ‘the Court’) ruled on the case <i>AP, Garçon and Nicot v. France</i> which concerned the possibility for transgender persons to change <b>their gender marker on official documents</b> as well as their forenames on their birth certificates <b>to match their gender identity</b>

<sup>7</sup> The language editor’s in-text comment on IK.P2.V1 (16 March 2021).

**Table 2**

*Some examples of the language editor’s suggestions made in the in-text comments in manuscripts written by Iris and Veera.*

Suggested changes to draft (type)	Draft before language editing	Language editor’s suggestion	Published version
<i>Reformulation</i>	The practitioner <b>learns to observe</b> the well-being of her bokashi <b>by the scent</b> of the substance. (VK.P2.V1)	The practitioner <b>learns to attend to</b> the well-being of her bokashi <b>by observing the scent</b> of the substance.	The practitioner <b>learns to attend to the well-being</b> of her bokashi <b>by observing the scent</b> of the substance.
<i>Sentence-level changes</i>	The foundation for <i>scientia sexualis</i> could be considered to reside in the two characters <b>visited in the beginning</b> : the priest and the doctor. It is through <b>these institutions, let us say church and science</b> , that truth about sex came to be produced via an act of confession that operated through the norms of scientific regularity. (IK.P1.V1)	The foundation for <i>scientia sexualis</i> could be considered to reside in the two characters <b>introduced at the beginning of this article</b> : the priest and the doctor. It is through <b>the institutions these characters represent – the Church and Science</b> – that truth about sex came to be produced via an act of confession that operated through the norms of scientific regularity.	The foundation for <i>scientia sexualis</i> could be considered to reside in the two characters <b>introduced in the beginning</b> : the priest and the doctor. It is through <b>the institutions these characters represent—the Church and Science—</b> that truth about sex came to be produced via an act of confession that operated through the norms of scientific regularity.
<i>Cohesion, coherence and consistency</i>	<b>Facts of Beck</b> <b>This becomes</b> illustrated in the case of <i>Beck, Copp and Bazeley v. the United Kingdom</i> <b>and especially</b> in the case of Mr Beck. (IK.P1.V1)	<b>Facts of Beck</b> <b>The subject’s [inner] urge to confess is</b> illustrated in the case of <i>Beck, Copp and Bazeley v. the United Kingdom</i> , <b>particularly</b> in the case of Mr Beck.	<b>Facts of Beck</b> <b>The subject’s inner urge to confess is</b> illustrated in the case of <i>Beck, Copp and Bazeley v. the United Kingdom</i> <b>and especially</b> in the case of Mr Beck.

The types of suggestions identified above are often intended as alternative ways of expressing the same thing in different words and are mainly related to improving *the quality* of the language of the manuscript. They do not usually involve direct intervention in *the content* of the manuscript, although any changes to language inevitably have some influence on how the content is mediated, because, for example, concepts such as ‘clarity’ and ‘readability’ are very loosely defined. However, where the language editor is familiar with the topic of the manuscript, some more directly content-related suggestions have been made, as illustrated by the following comment in which the language draws attention to field-specific vocabulary:

*OR: pre-reflective? Of course, this is also about the wording that has been used in research literature. In my own research (related to MP's [Merleau-Ponty] phenomenology), as I have understood it, pre-reflective (esireflektiivinen) would precisely refer to the level preceding reflection, and that is why this [the word] would be "pre-reflective" and not "pre-reflexive", but I recommend checking this, I may be wrong.<sup>8</sup>*

The wording of the comment shows that although the language editor is familiar with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, here she is reluctant to adopt the role of an expert in the field the manuscript deals with. This is evident in her reference to "research literature" as well as in the expression "but I recommend checking this, I may be wrong." The expressions indicate the language editor's unwillingness to interfere with the substance of the text, or to exceed her role as a language specialist. At the same time, the comment points towards existence of an imaginary border between language (the responsibility of the language editor) and substance (the responsibility of the scholar). This also entails the assumption that the author is ultimately responsible for developing their argument. Later in the same manuscript, the language editor has noticed that the word *pre-reflective* has been used in a direct quote from the work of Rosalyn Diprose, which is central to the author's manuscript, and has inserted the following comment: "Here, by the way, Diprose uses the word 'pre-reflective'<sup>9</sup>", which provides further support for the language editor's suggestion regarding the expression. These two interrelated comments also indicate that the language editor's task does not only involve the immediate context of an isolated sentence or a text fragment, but spans the text as a whole.

Then again, although the language editor may sometimes have useful content-related points to offer, the language editor's understanding of specialist content is inevitably limited and cannot be compared with the scholar's specialist knowledge. Specialist research topics are highly complex, and although the language editor can get an idea of the subject area of the scholar's research for example by consulting parallel texts, this kind of an activity generally does not go beyond merely scratching the surface. In this study, the differences in knowing are also reflected in the kinds of suggestions the scholars have rejected. For example, analysis of the textual trajectory of a manuscript by Iiris<sup>10</sup> shows that many of the language editor's suggestions related to the core concept *heterotopia* (which is related to the concept of *space/spatiality*) have been rejected, which is clearly indicative of the depth of the scholar's knowledge of the concept and the language editor's limited capacity to comment on it. In general, the actions the scholars of this study have taken in response to the language editor's comments demonstrate their high degree of language awareness, i.e. conscious reflection on and sensitivity to what is appropriate language use in their specialist field.

The analysis shows that the language editor also engages in frequent *metacommentary*, i.e. makes comments telling the scholar how the in-text comments should be interpreted. Many of the comments deal with lack of cohesion or coherence, i.e. identify missing links between text elements or ideas, as indicated by the frequently made comment: "What does the word 'this' refer to?"

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<sup>8</sup> The language editor's in-text comment on VK.P3.V1 (6 March 2022)

<sup>9</sup> The language editor's in-text comment on VK.P3.V1 (6 March 2022)

<sup>10</sup> IK.P2 (all versions)

In such cases, the rhetorical intentions of the author may be unclear to the language editor, and no edits can be made or suggestions presented without making the author aware of the fact that the language editor is not sure if she has interpreted the passage correctly. For example, in a manuscript by Iris, an in-text comment was made at a point where the word *this* opened a new section and it was unclear what the word referred to (see the example of ‘Cohesion, coherence, and consistency’ in Table 2). The language editor has presented a suggestion based on her interpretation of what the author has probably meant, and the suggestion is accompanied by a metacomment:

*That is, if this [the suggested reformulation] even conveys what you wanted to say! This [the suggested reformulation] is entirely my interpretation, I tried to figure out what [the word] ‘this’ refers to . . .*<sup>11</sup>

The metacomment indicates that revision is needed but the language editor cannot present a definitive solution to the problem and passes the turn to revise the text to the scholar. Such metacommentary more generally relates to at least two types of problems: the language editor may be unfamiliar with the specialist content, or unsure of the scholar’s rhetorical intentions due to unclear language. Taking turns revising the manuscript illustrates the dialogic nature of the language editing process. The language editor takes on the role of a *facilitator* in the sense that she helps the scholar identify problematic points in the manuscript but leaves the scholar with the decision.

Moreover, the analysis suggests that sometimes the language editor’s role approaches that of a *co-writer* in that the work is not only about making edits or suggesting revisions, but actually involves sharing ideas. Particularly illustrative of this role is an instance where Veera expresses her dissatisfaction with the closing sentence of her manuscript, because she finds it too ‘grandiloquent’ and thinks it should be ‘toned down’, thus inviting the language editor to suggest alternative formulations.<sup>12</sup> The language editor has suggested (see Table 3) linking the idea of “telling stories . . . with soil-stained fingers” with Diprose’s notion of “writing with blood” in a way similar to the following key passage in the Introduction of the manuscript:

*Inspired by the feminist idea of inseparability of theory and praxis, I follow Diprose’s urge to **write with blood** – or – as Hamilton and Neimanis (2019, p. 524) put it even more aptly, **with soil stained fingers**.*<sup>13</sup>

In the in-text comment<sup>14</sup> accompanying her suggestion, the language editor explains that she has tried to combine the two ideas, and recommends that the author evaluate if it works. The author has accepted the language editor’s suggestion, although in the published version, some further changes have been made. This example is illustrative of the idea of co-writing in that the

<sup>11</sup> In-text comment made by the language editor on IK.P1.V1 (30 June 2020).

<sup>12</sup> In-text comment made by Veera on VK.P3.V1 (18 February 2022).

<sup>13</sup> VK.P3.V1 (18 February 2022).

<sup>14</sup> The language editor’s in-text comment on VK.P3.V1 (6 March 2022).

original passage was not in need of any extensive revision, but the author expressly invited the language editor to think about alternative formulations with her. This way of linking ideas in the manuscript is not merely about connecting textual elements (cohesion) but about connecting ideas (coherence). However, this type of intervention is rather rare in the manuscripts analyzed.

**Table 3**

*An extract of Veera’s manuscript P3 in its textual trajectory.*

Original manuscript	Language editor’s suggestion	Published version
Thinking together with Diprose, politics of generosity in the Anthropocene begins and ends with trouble: willingness to be open to the alterity of the other, to respond to it, to be willing to tell different stories of living together in this world. With soil stained fingers.	Thinking together with Diprose, politics of generosity in the Anthropocene begins and ends with trouble: It is about willingness to be open to the alterity of the other and to respond to it; it is about writing – whether with blood or with soil-stained fingers – stories of living together in this world.	Thinking with Diprose (2002, p. 188) “politics of generosity begins with all of us, it begins and remains in trouble, and it begins with the act”. It is about willingness to be open to the alterity of the other and to respond to it; it is about writing – whether with blood or with soil-stained fingers – stories of living together in this world.

Sometimes the language editor’s work also involves discussing comments of editors or reviewers insofar as these are related to language. For example, Veera shared the publishing editor’s comments on one of her manuscripts with the language editor. In her detailed comment, the publishing editor had asked Veera to clarify her use of the word *disturbing*, and proposed the word *unsettling* as a possible alternative.<sup>15</sup> The language editor then joined the discussion by locating instances of the word *disturbing* in the manuscript and commented: “Should the word ‘unsettling’ be [used] here, too, referring to the editor’s comment on the words ‘disturbing’ / ‘unsettling’? I mean, is the word ‘disturbing’ in this text problematic in general?”<sup>16</sup> The manuscript was slightly revised, and in the published version the word *disturbing* appears twice in connection with Diprose’s theorizing, and in some other places it has been replaced by the word *unsettling*.

However, it must be noted that the language editor and the scholar can also have conflicting interpretations of the text. This is illustrated by the following discussion between the language editor and Veera about an instance where the language editor has misunderstood the scholar’s intended meaning and the scholar has criticized the suggestion. The original passage was as follows:

*Introducing different forms of speculative fabulation into our academic thinking/writing practices has provided us with means to widen our scholarly imagination by working with our feeling and moving bodies, by allowing us to ask tentative questions, and to speculate wildly without*

<sup>15</sup> Comment by one of the editors of the book *Affect in organization and management* on Veera’s manuscript (VK.P3.V1).

<sup>16</sup> The language editor’s in-text comment on VK.P3.V1, (4 March 2022).

*letting 'daylight rationality' (see Helin 2018) control our thoughts. This move has allowed us to venture into spheres that traditional social scientific methods would not easily reach.*<sup>17</sup>

The language editor has suggested<sup>18</sup> that perhaps the word *easily* could be removed, because in her interpretation, the method discussed is something entirely different from the 'traditional' methods, something that deals with areas of our experience that traditional methods cannot even reach. In her response to the comment, Veera states: "Well, it would be rather extreme to presuppose that we would not be able to reach something by using the traditional methods? And the point here is that even that which we call traditional writing is creative and embodied, but this [aspect] is not often recognized and especially not made use of."<sup>19</sup> The original formulation has been kept in the published article. Discussions such as these illustrate very well the limits of the language editor's role as a co-writer.

### **Analyzing talk around texts produced by the scholars: What do the scholars find valuable about language editing?**

Both scholars of this study have ordered language editing for several of their manuscripts from the language editor (the author of this study) and mention continuity of collaboration with the same language editor in positive terms. Veera has experience of working with many language editors, and she is aware of differences between language editors. Iris does not mention if she has worked with other language editors before, but she notes that because her first experience of working with the language editor (the author of this study) had been positive and she found the process useful, she wanted to keep using the same language professional.<sup>20</sup>

Solin and Hynninen (2018) found that receiving service at a short notice (according to one of their interviewees, as quickly as within 48 hours) is valued by some scholars, and unavailability of their in-house language specialist has led them to use external service providers. In contrast, both scholars who participated in this study have contacted the language editor often weeks in advance to ensure her availability for their project within a specific time frame, and their manuscript submission schedules have been somewhat flexible and negotiable, which perhaps suggests that they prefer continuity of collaboration with the same language editor to receiving the edited text as quickly as possible from any service provider that can offer the quickest turnaround.

### ***Familiarity with disciplinary knowledge, discourse and research writing***

The language editor's familiarity with the field of the scholar's manuscript emerges as valuable in this study. It is clearly related to continuity of collaboration discussed above in that establishing a long-term collaborative relationship with the scholar also helps the language editor become

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<sup>17</sup> VK.P1.V1

<sup>18</sup> The language editor's in-text comment on VK.P1.V1, (17 December 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Veera, in-text comment in response to the language editor's in-text comment on VK.P1.V1, 18 December 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Iris, scholar profile writing session, 17 November 2022

more familiar with the disciplinary discourse and content over time. Similarly, Luo and Hyland (2016) point out that one of the participants of their study had gained confidence after successful experiences of mediating the work of one academic, and as a result of her growing familiarity with the discourse of the client's discipline began to "extend her agency in her relationship with authors by making more extensive revisions to the papers she mediated, reorganizing the presentation of their content." (Luo & Hyland, 2016, p. 49)

The language editor's growing familiarity with the scholar's specialist field is reflected, for example, in the following wish expressed by Veera when placing an order for language editing of one of her manuscripts: "I would like you [the language editor] rather than someone not in-house to do the [language] checking, because you are already so familiar with my research."<sup>21</sup>

In addition to experience gained over time, the language editor's educational background and engagement in research also contribute to the collaboration relationship. Luo and Hyland (2016, 52) have found that if language editors hold higher education degrees in English-related fields, are academics themselves, and have research experience, they have "greater familiarity with the generic expectations of research writing". Similarly, in my study, Veera mentions the language editor's research engagement<sup>22</sup> in positive terms: "Probing for nuances in different ways of expressing things also contributes to theory development. And your [the language editor's] being research-oriented is of course a great help in this!"<sup>23</sup>

Sometimes the dialogue between the language editor and the scholar can directly involve the content of the manuscript if the language editor has subject-specific knowledge about the field the manuscript deals with. This aspect is also identified as significant in the talk around texts analyzed here. For example, the language editor's familiarity with phenomenology emerges as valuable in her work on one of Veera's manuscripts. In her feedback given after language editing, Veera comments: "It is great that you [the language editor] understand the content [of the manuscript] and are able to comment on phenomenological language, which I personally find rather hard to understand."<sup>24</sup>

In connection with language editing of another manuscript, Veera refers to a content-related question the language editor has asked:

*For example, your [the language editor's] question regarding whether the bokashi leachate is a product or a by-product was a really good point. It is indeed so that, unlike with most other waste treatment methods, the leachate is not considered a harmful substance, and not even a mere by-product, because for many it can even be the most important reason for making bokashi!!<sup>25</sup>*

The above examples suggest that both the scholar and the language editor can arrive at new ideas and learn from each other through the dialogue about and around the manuscripts.

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<sup>21</sup> Veera, e-mail, 20 January 2022

<sup>22</sup> The language editor (the author of this article) holds a master's degree in Translation Studies (English) and is active in conducting research in Translation Studies and some related disciplines.

<sup>23</sup> Veera, e-mail, 6 April 2022

<sup>24</sup> Veera, e-mail, 9 March 2022.

<sup>25</sup> Veera, e-mail, 11 November 2020.



### *Meeting the requirements of international academic publishing*

English as a Second Language (ESL) scholars are under pressure to meet the requirements of high-quality international academic publishing, and language editing at universities must be aligned to meet these requirements. The scholars of this study bring the requirements of academic publishing to discussion in various ways. Quality of language editing for them seems to be directly connected with success in getting published and the language editing efforts are expected to be geared towards achieving this goal.

In one e-mail, Veera reflects on the significance of language editing to successful research publication as follows:

*High-quality language editing is an absolute prerequisite for getting high-quality international research texts published, and translators, of course, differ in terms of the breadth of their professional vocabulary and their degree of familiarity with academic writing styles.<sup>26</sup>*

The requirements of academia are present in the talk around texts by the scholars throughout the language editing process both in the form of mentions the scholars make regarding language editing during different stages of the language editing process and in their feedback given to the language editor after getting their work published successfully.

When ordering language editing for her manuscript intended as a book chapter, Veera mentions the publisher's requirements regarding language of the manuscript:

*The book will be published by Routledge, so there is some pressure regarding language 😊 Of course they also have their own publishing editors who will go through the text carefully after I have submitted it.<sup>27</sup>*

Sometimes the language editor is invited to contribute to the discussion with the gatekeepers. For example, the language editor may be asked to evaluate the scholar's responses to peer reviewers' comments (particularly ones regarding language). In the following extract, Veera invites the language editor to discuss the language-related comments of the editors of a book for which she is writing a chapter: "I could also send you the [publishing] editors' comments that have to do with language so that we can discuss them a bit."<sup>28</sup>

The scholars sometimes mention discussions they have had with gatekeepers of academic publishing and feedback they have received from them, and even share their successes with the language editor. Upon receipt of one of her revised manuscripts from the language editor, Iiris refers to her previous experiences of the language editor's work on her manuscripts that have already been published: "By the way, I must mention that, for both texts that you [the language editor] checked, I have received feedback from the journals particularly regarding the high level of language :=)"<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Veera, e-mail, 6 April 2022

<sup>27</sup> Veera, e-mail, 20 January 2022

<sup>28</sup> Veera, e-mail, 20 January 2022

<sup>29</sup> Iiris, e-mail, 16 August 2022

Similarly, upon acceptance of one of her manuscripts for publication, Veera comments:

*It was surprising that the text in question [a manuscript worked on by the language editor] was accepted as is, without any changes (!), so if there are no surprises during the [publisher's] proofreading stage, this text will not necessarily return to you any more.<sup>30</sup>*

With such comments and feedback, the scholars invite the language editor to join them to respond to the requirements of the authority that ultimately evaluates the work: the gatekeepers of academic publishing. This is in line with previous research by, for example, Solin and Hynninen (2016, p. 507) who found that the researchers whose writing practices they studied “oriented most strongly towards a global disciplinary community than to their organisational community.”

### ***Improving clarity, flow and readability of text***

In their interview study, Solin and Hynninen (2018) found that researchers using language editing services are aware of the fact that different levels of language editing exist, and they do not only expect “technical and superficial” corrections to the text, but often prefer a greater focus on “how the text flows and what parts are difficult to understand.” In my study, this point also emerges as valuable in the talk around texts produced by the scholars. The feedback shows that the scholars have appreciated the comments made by the language editor and have found them useful, as illustrated by the following examples: “Very good comments that, in my view, clearly improved this [the manuscript]”<sup>31</sup> and “Great points and formulations once again! I adopted all of them.”<sup>32</sup>

When ordering language editing for her manuscripts, Veera often expresses her wish to have the flow and readability of her texts improved, as illustrated by the extract below:

*This time it is about a text authored by me as the sole author that I think is not an impossible workload for a language editor. It deals with themes of bokashi and embodied ethics that I have written on extensively, so it [the language editing] will mainly be about working to make the text flow better, to improve the flow and readability.<sup>33</sup>*

Iiris has mentioned<sup>34</sup> that the language editor’s in-text comments have helped her identify parts of the manuscript where the relations between the text elements or ideas are unclear. The commenting has made her reflect on these links more carefully, which, in turn, has helped her clarify her argument. This also shows that even when the language editor is not able to provide direct answers, the very act of commenting can be valuable because it identifies problematic points in the manuscript.

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<sup>30</sup> Veera, e-mail, 6 April 2022.

<sup>31</sup> Iiris, e-mail, 16 August 2022

<sup>32</sup> Veera e-mail, 11 November 2020

<sup>33</sup> Veera, e-mail, 20 January 2022

<sup>34</sup> Iiris, scholar profile writing session 17 November 2022.

Appreciating language for language's sake is evident in some of Veera's feedback about language editing: "It is great that you not only understand grammatically correct language but also appreciate its beauty and flow."<sup>35</sup> Veera's language awareness also comes up in the discussions, and she has, for example brought up the point that every writer, including language editors, have their mannerisms, and it is worth reflecting on them to avoid bringing them to every text worked on.<sup>36</sup>

### *Retaining or enhancing the scholar's sense of agency*

The point discussed below should perhaps be seen as related to the others already discussed in this section. The talk around texts produced by the scholars suggests that they perceive collaboration with the language editor as empowering in some ways. For example, the analysis shows that the language editing process allows the scholars to retain their sense of agency. This is illustrated, for example, by the comment made by Iris that she feels that the language editor respects her academic voice—the way she presents herself in her written academic work—although her approach is unconventional in her discipline in that it combines two discourses: that of law and that of philosophy.<sup>37</sup>

Sometimes the language editor's intervention helps the scholars not only retain but even *enhance* their sense of agency, as suggested by the mention by Veera discussing the language editing process as something that gives rise to new thinking and even influences theory development:

*When working with you [the language editor] I feel that we both think that words do matter. I am always inspired when reading your suggestions. Our collaboration testifies to the fact certainly well-known to translators that language editing, despite its mechanical name, is not a neutral but creative activity that spurs new thinking. Probing for nuances in different ways of expressing things also contributes to theory development.*<sup>38</sup>

In another occasion, Veera mentions that "the suggestions for correction and additional questions you [the language editor] make are often to the point and even give me new insights."<sup>39</sup>

The analysis of the scholars' talk around texts suggests that they perceive the language editor's contribution to their research writing as significant and, by extension, they also seem to be ready to acknowledge it. This is concretely manifested as the language editor's visibility in one of the published articles: In the Acknowledgements section of one of her articles<sup>40</sup>, Veera has thanked the language editor for the "insightful and generous comments and suggestions which brought this article alive." (Kinnunen et al., 2020, p. 669). Similarly, Iris has mentioned that with her increasing awareness of the role of language editors in academic text production,

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<sup>35</sup> Veera, e-mail, 11 November 2020

<sup>36</sup> Veera, scholar profile writing session, 18 November 2022.

<sup>37</sup> Iris, scholar profile writing session 17 November 2022.

<sup>38</sup> Veera, e-mail, 6.4.2022

<sup>39</sup> Veera, e-mail, 11 November 2020

<sup>40</sup> *Transformative events: Feminist experiments in writing differently*, DOI: 10.1111/gwao.12606

she has started to think that perhaps the language editor's contribution could be mentioned in acknowledgements to research articles.<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

This study has offered a glimpse of the collaboration between a language editor (the author of this article) and two scholars authoring English-medium research articles.

This article opened with a reference to the traditional way of conceiving of language editing as a merely technical activity beset with instrumentalist assumptions. Although language editing of research articles generally does involve making edits (corrections) directly to the text, it cannot simply be equated with 'fixing something that is wrong' or providing facts. To expand this perspective, I have sought to explore the language editor's role and agency *beyond making edits* by analyzing dialogue between the language editor and the scholar. In this study, language editing emerges as a highly collaborative process characterized by the participants' dialogue and sustained engagement in the writing process. The cases analyzed clearly suggest that individual agency can be enhanced through joint action. Taken together, the perspectives of the language editor and the scholar are illustrative of the relational agency of both participants and their mutual responsibility for the manuscript intended for publication.

Dialogue with the scholar expands the language editor's possibilities for exercising agency beyond making edits. Making edits and giving comments are clearly different dimensions of language editing. While the former presupposes that the language editor *must know* the solution to the problem before any edits can be made, the latter also includes the element of *not knowing*—something that the language editor can use to her advantage. Presenting comments is not 'something extra'—a mere add-on to the language editing process—but should be conceived of as a dimension of the language editor's skill set whose function is different from making edits. The language editor's activity of asking and commenting should be seen as *a tool* that can be used to seek solutions to problems that require engagement of the scholar. This tool can be used to *facilitate* the scholar's research writing. The language editor must know and decide when presenting questions and comments can bring added value.

A distinction must be made between the language editor's knowledge of the practice of language editing and the knowledge the language editor can have 'for' the scholar. While it is clear that to be able to perform the activity of language editing successfully, one must be a skilled practitioner of the art of language editing, the language editor must also be open to the acceptance of *not knowing*. In this study, the limits of the language editor's knowing become visible precisely when she *thinks she knows more than she really does* and makes content-related suggestions that are based on misinterpretations. The language editor is not in a position of authority and not in control of the scholar's writing process. Indeed, because the language editor cannot know 'for' the scholar, she must also ask questions to which she herself does not know the answers. However, as part of the language editor's skill set, the act of asking questions and

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<sup>41</sup> Iris, scholar profile writing session 17 November 2022.

presenting comments can help and empower the scholar to make progress with their writing. Thus, the ‘not knowing’ quintessentially entails acknowledging that while the language editor may lack specialist knowledge of the field of the scholar’s manuscript, it is still possible to help the scholar express their ideas.

While language editing of research articles might appear as something that merely involves working on a text reporting research that has already been ‘done and written up’—a view that positions doing research and language editing as two entirely separate processes—the analysis presented here allows us to rethink the language editing process as something that partly overlaps with doing research and might contribute to shaping knowledge in various ways. This idea is closely linked with the language editor’s role as a *co-writer* identified in this study. This role becomes clearly visible in the examples of the scholar actively engaging the language editor in sharing ideas. However, the role is also present in other kinds of suggestions and comments the language editor makes on her own initiative. Indeed, suggesting revisions to manuscripts involves walking a fine (imaginary) line between language and content. It is practically impossible to avoid discussions related to content because, although language editing is—at least in principle—targeted at improving the quality of the language of the manuscript, language is inextricably intertwined with substance. This is exemplified by word choices that reflect foundational aspects of the text, for example, the scholar’s stance on as well as underlying assumptions regarding various aspects of the research.

The collaborative relationship between the language editor and the scholar is not simply about giving and receiving information. The textual trajectory analysis shows that many of the language editor’s suggestions appear in the published article almost verbatim. However, not all of the suggestions have been accepted, and some suggestions have been partly accepted. While this means that the language editor has clearly contributed to the text in ways extending beyond the merely superficial level, the way the scholars have responded to, or acted upon, the suggestions is also indicative of their agency, and indeed, their language awareness, i.e. their ability to consciously reflect on what is appropriate language use in their specialist field.

What the scholars identify as benefits of the collaboration relationship seems to be more closely related to the nature of the language editing process itself rather than merely receiving answers from the language editor. The analysis suggests that the scholars appreciate the dialogic language editing process in that it respects their academic voice and lets them retain or even enhance their sense of agency. This includes gaining greater control over various aspects of the text and the writing process, including clarifying the argument, improving the flow and readability of the text, and responding to the requirements of international academic publishing. In the analysis, the language editor’s background in research emerges as supportive of the scholars’ research writing. This may be related to the fact that, as a researcher herself, the language editor also identifies with the international research community and is familiar with its requirements.

The idea of retaining or enhancing the scholar’s sense of agency is linked to the language editor’s role as a facilitator and a co-writer, which, instead of making direct edits (corrections), emphasizes giving comments and asking questions with the purpose of pointing out parts of the manuscript that need to be revised, and suggesting alternative expressions. While making

edits may leave it unclear why something has been changed, the language editor's questions and comments create a space of openness in which the scholar can examine the foundations and assumptions underlying their own practices of writing and reflect on how language shapes their knowing. In a sense, then, the language editor's active engagement in dialogue with the scholar can be viewed as a means of creating an encouraging presence that facilitates the writing process in various ways, and also ensures that the sense of authorship and ownership of the article remains with the scholar. Overall, the analysis suggests that the dialogic approach to language editing is considered valuable by the scholars of this study. However, conducting a similar study with more participants would most likely reveal different roles and different dynamics of agency between the language editor and the scholar.

This study has examined language editing from two complementary perspectives—that of the language editor and that of the scholar. In many ways, the two parts of the analysis point towards similar findings, for example concerning agency of the participants involved in the language editing process. Analyzing more than one dataset in parallel has also lent credibility to the most challenging part of the analysis— examination of the language editor's role and agency in her own work—in that the same points often resurface across the different datasets. For example, the language editor's act of commenting on some aspect of a text can be mentioned in the scholar's response to the language editor's comment or brought up in the scholar's feedback given by email. Tracing the textual trajectories of the manuscripts parallel to the analysis of talk around texts has also enhanced the analysis through offering concrete proof for how the manuscript has changed in response to the language editor's comments, which has also made it possible to analyze the many 'silent' revisions, i.e. changes made to the manuscript by the scholar in response to the language editor's comments that the scholar has not mentioned in discussions.

This study is unique in that no previous studies exist where clients and language editors have openly revealed their identities and disclosed their private communication about actual language editing commissions and the related research article manuscript versions. This has allowed in-depth investigation into an elusive topic that has been seldom studied. The scholars of this study are advanced writers of English-medium research texts. The perspective provided here could be further expanded by conducting similar studies with scholars who need more language support to examine how they benefit from dialogue with the language editor.

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## The manuscripts analyzed in this study

### *Author: Iris Kestilä*

#### Publication 1 (IK.P1.)

Kestilä, I. (2021). Confession as a Form of Knowledge-Power in the Problem of Sexuality. *Law and Critique*, 32,195–216. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10978-021-09287-x>

#### Publication 2 (IK.P2.)

Kestilä, I. (in press). Law, space and power: spatiality in the European Court of Human Rights judgments on homosexuality. *Gender, Place & Culture*.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2022.2072815>

### *Author: Veera Kinnunen*

#### Publication 1 (VK.P1.)

Kinnunen, V., Wallenius-Korkalo, S., & Rantala, P. (2020). Transformative events: Feminist experiments in writing differently. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 28, 656–671.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12606>

#### Publication 2 (VK.P2.)

Kinnunen, V. (2021). Knowing, living, and being with bokashi. In C. Brives, M. Rest, & S. Sariola (Eds.), *With Microbes*, (pp. 64–83). Mattering Press. <http://doi.org/10.28938/9781912729180>

#### Publication 3 (VK.P3.)

Kinnunen, V. (2022). Corporeal Ethics in the More-Than-Human World (Rosalyn Diprose). In C. Hunter & N. Kivinen (Eds.), *Affect in Organization and Management*, (pp. 92–107). Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003182887>

## Appendix 1

### SCHOLAR PROFILE:

**Iiris Kestilä**, law

Iiris Kestilä is a doctoral researcher at the Faculty of Law of the University of Lapland.

She describes her research as follows:

*The research focuses on practices through which a homosexual subject is produced in legal praxis. These practices consist of intertwinement of, for example, power, sexuality, law, knowledge and space. The purpose is to read legal cases through Foucauldian lenses in order to make sense, how law is part of multiple societal arrangements, which affect the ways in which homosexuals become produced as legal subjects. In other words, my research interest is: how is a homosexual subject produced in legal praxis, for what reason and what do these practices tell us about legal system.*



She has published in journals such as *Law and Critique* and *Gender, Place and Culture*.

When reflecting on using English in her research work, Iris says that she has accepted the fact that her English is not—and does not have to be—perfect. Some of the particular challenges of English-medium research writing she experiences are the challenges of having to rely on English translations of works by philosophers writing in French, since she is aware that languages are different and all meanings are not necessarily translatable. In her research writing, she brings together the language of law and the language of philosophy—two very different discourses. She feels that finding a balance between the two is not unproblematic. Iris is aware of the ethical and political aspects of writing and the need to reflect on linguistic choices in her research writing. In her research, she takes philosophies as tools with which she seeks to develop something new. She wants to bring philosophical texts to real-life contexts to actually do something with them, instead of merely presenting readings or interpretations of them.

Iris first began to use language editing services because it was a recommended practice at her faculty. She feels that language editing services are useful and also something that “practically everyone [in academia] is using”. She sends her manuscripts to language editing when she feels that the text is ready in terms of content. After the round of language editing has been completed, she submits the manuscript directly to the journal.

Iris points out that she first expected language editing to be something rather technical and was surprised to find out that it actually involved a rather intensive dialogue between herself and the language editor who presents questions and comments that help her develop and clarify her arguments. When reflecting on the significance of language editing to her research work, Iris mentions that what she finds particularly valuable is that the language editor respects her voice as an author and does not try to change it, although her writing style, which she describes as “essaylike”, is rather unconventional within the discipline of law. With her experiences of language editing, she has become increasingly aware of the relational and collective nature of research writing and sees it as a collaborative process.

## Appendix 2

### SCHOLAR PROFILE:

**Veera Kinnunen**, sociology, environmental humanities and social sciences

Veera holds a position of university lecturer of sociology at the University of Lapland. She has been working in different research and teaching positions at the University of Lapland for more than a decade.

Her disciplinary background is in sociology and cultural history, and her research contributes to the field of environmental social sciences and humanities. Her research interests cover material culture of dwelling and everyday life, and mundane relations with outclosed non-human others, such as clutter, dirt, waste, and microbes. Methodologically and theoretically she draws from more-than-human ethnographies, and feminist naturecultural thought.

Currently, Veera works as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oulu as part of a trans-disciplinary research programme Biodiverse Anthropocenes (ANTS). ANTS sets out to investigate biodiversity loss currently threatening planetary wellbeing, and to generate future-oriented solutions. In ANTS, Veera's research centers around bokashi composting as an emerging, regenerative waste handling method, and therefore, as a means of making different futures.

Veera considers herself as a language-oriented person, and enjoys honing her thoughts both in Finnish and English—languages she works with on a daily basis. She has published scientific articles and popular texts (blogs, articles) in both languages. Her long-term aim is to publish a monograph in English.

Veera considers herself “moderately fluent in written [academic] English” and she is clearly aware of the role of language in shaping academic thought. Reflecting on her use of language editing services and the reasons why she uses such services, she states:

*In my field of research, language in general is not considered merely a neutral vessel for passing on objective knowledge, but rather, a world-shaping force. Therefore, it matters how I formulate my thoughts. I use language editing services in every publication process in English. In an ideal situation, every manuscript goes through language editing twice: the first round takes place before I submit the manuscript to peer review, and the second round before submitting the final text to the publishing process.*

*For me, language editing is not just about proofreading for grammarly correctness. I have experienced that language editing often gives a vital final touch to the text by adding eloquence, vivacity and fluency to my often clumsy and perhaps lazy formulations. The text becomes more approachable and enjoyable. Language editing also matters for theory: a language specialist provides her expert understanding of lingual and cultural nuances and adds conceptual clarity to the manuscript. I feel that I do theory together with my language specialist, because she makes tough questions and suggestions, and thus forces me to clarify my thoughts and arguments. Therefore, it is most fruitful to work with the same language specialist, who has become familiar with my personal style of writing and the theoretical concepts that I work with.*