



**BOOK REVIEW: *Teaching and Researching Writing (3rd Edition)*
By Ken Hyland: Routledge, 2016, pp. xiv, 300.**

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Writing has an overarching significance in our lives. We experience this significance in our personal, professional and social activities. Much of who we are and who we wish to become in our social life, in the professional community we belong to and even in the privacy of our individual life is the outcome of what we write and how we write. We are often judged and evaluated by our control of it. The fact that we write for many reasons and purposes, that there are diverse contexts in which written texts are produced and consumed, and that those who wish to learn writing have diverse backgrounds and needs, all push the study of writing into wider frameworks of investigation. *Teaching and Researching Writing* should be seen as a response to the necessity of understanding these wider frameworks and meeting the needs of teachers and learners who belong to totally diverse contexts. As a brilliant reflection of many years of scholarly work of its writer, Ken Hyland, combined with insights from other prominent figures, the book primarily helps us gain glimpses of different social, cultural and institutional dimensions in which written communication operates. In light of these glimpses, the readers are expected to understand how much written communication has become an integral part of the complex webs of human's social, cultural and institutional life. Hyland's admirable applied linguistic perspective¹ links the social, cultural and institutional aspects of written communication to diverse research potentials and finally to multiple dimensions of the classroom practice of teaching and learning writing. This strong cycle of theory, research and practice makes up the skeleton of the book. The logic underlying this structure is a true reflection of an applied linguistic perspective. This perspective invites practitioners and teachers of writing to define and approach their problems with a theoretically-informed point of view.

Following the logic outlined above, the author has organized the content in three major sections which link theory, research and practice together and one complementary section through which the opportunity for communication with the wider community is enhanced.

The three chapters in *Section I* provide a rich conceptual overview of how writing can and should be defined by being linked to a number of key issues including text, writer, reader, context, literacy, expertise, technology, identity, dominance, culture, plagiarism and error. The chapters are expected to raise some of the key issues and questions currently occupying the field. The three chapters in *Section II* attempt to translate this conceptual overview to research potentials and possibilities. The author indicates how our theoretical understanding of social, cultural and institutional

dimensions of written communication can influence the key components of a research activity including the choice of research topics, research designs and research methods. A number of quantitative and qualitative research designs including questionnaire research, experimental research, interview research, protocol research, diary blogs research, keystroke logging research, genre research, corpus research, case-study research and ethnographic research have been introduced and exemplified to help novice researchers better define and characterize their research interests within the dominant traditions of research on writing. *Section III* provides a number of directions through which the theoretical issues raised in *Section I* and research directions and findings raised in *Section II* can find their ways into classroom practices. Here, the author outlines the major approaches to teaching writing (e.g. text-oriented, writer-oriented, reader-oriented approaches), introduces a number of well-established writing courses and draws on some examples of classroom syllabi, materials and practices from around the world. It is expected that this section would act as a clear demonstration of the dynamic relationship between theory and practice and would invite the readers to move back and forth between theoretical concepts and practical problems and solutions. As a distinctive component of the book, the two chapters in *Section IV* outlines a number of significant areas of writing research and practice and introduces some key texts. This section also provides useful information on books, journals, professional associations, conferences, email lists and blogs, online corpora, websites, text repositories and network sites. The logic behind this is that reflective practitioners and researchers of writing should do their best to find their own position in a wider community; this of course necessitates being familiar with major channels of membership and finding enhanced channels of communication with other members of the community. The content of the chapters is also enriched with concept and quote boxes; these boxes create a reader-friendly atmosphere in the text and help the readers approach the topics in an accessible manner. The four major sections of the book are followed by a comprehensive *Glossary* which is meant to help the readers understand how the terms in the book are defined.

The theory-research-practice structure of the book reflects a true applied linguistic perspective; the cycle as developed by the author is meant to tell us that teaching/learning problems encountered in writing classrooms cannot be adequately addressed unless we conduct problem oriented research in light of deep conceptual and theoretical understanding. Of course, what is significant here is that the very conception of the problem should be constructed by the way we define writing. In other words, what constitutes a teaching/learning problem and consequently what constitutes an appropriate solution cannot be the outcome of teachers' pure experience. Experience in light of intimate theoretical understanding shapes teachers' and researchers' vision. Furthermore, much of our understanding of what should be considered as problem and solution emerge from our active membership in a community where researchable topics and appropriate methodologies are negotiated through journals, books, associations, conferences and other channels of communication. Based on such a logic, the book starts from a map of the landscape of written communication and provides deep insights on the main concepts of writing, competing issues and challenging questions. From this departure point,

readers are expected to explore a wide range of practical applications of research into the challenging questions, and then take up the challenge of conducting their own research. Throughout the book, the author tries to develop the strong cycle of theory-research-practice to help the readers see what the main concepts of writing are and how these concepts relate to research and teaching; I consider this a major achievement and I call it a true applied linguistic perspective.

It is due to the above-mentioned perspective that *Teaching and Researching Writing* is highly recommended to both researchers and practitioners of writing. They will find an up-to-date overview of writing theories, research potentials and practical possibilities in a highly accessible format. The book is also highly recommended to postgraduate students interested in research on writing. The literature reviewed in different chapters of the book will provide the novice researchers with a wide range of researchable topics and the established ways of addressing those topics by researchers.

Authors Biography



Dr. Davud Kuhi, a full-time member of English Language Department in Islamic Azad University, is mainly interested in analyzing academic/scientific discourses. A distinctive aspect of his work is that the analyses penetrate into deeper sociocultural process behind the academic/scientific discourses.

ⁱ We have already seen this perspective in Hyland, K. (2006). *English for academic purposes*. Routledge; this resource book is an excellent demonstration of how our practical teaching/learning concerns can be informed by deeper conceptual understanding and findings of research carried out by other members of the community.