



**Timothy G. Pollock: *How to use storytelling in your academic writing: techniques for engaging readers and successfully navigating the writing and publishing processes*. Edward Elgar Publishing: Cheltenham, 2021, 200 pp. ISBN: 9781839102820 (eBook)**

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The first sight of the book reminds me of the time when I used to tell a bed-time story to my daughters. Every night, I tried my best to tell a different story about two bunnies ‘Bom-Bom’ and ‘Tom-Tom’. Where Bom-Bom was the brat bunny who does a lot of bad things and Tom-Tom was the good bunny who does always tell Bom-Bom that he shouldn’t do those bad things. I tried to give my daughters some directions on how to take care of their health, to behave and obey their mom and, of course, myself as their dad. In addition, at the end of every story, I asked each of them three questions about the story I conveyed in a way to ensure that the message was clearly passed to them. Surprisingly enough, they had rarely provided wrong answers. This means that either they are smart kids or I am a good storyteller or probably and hopefully both. Applying this simple idea and principle to academic research heartens me to read and review this book.

In his book ‘How to use storytelling in your academic writing’, Timothy G. Pollock takes the reader into a journey about academic thinking, writing and publishing with a story of his own experiences on practising scientific writing for almost three decades. Pollock himself appears, as an author or co-author, on the top-tier management journals such as *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review* and *Strategic Management Journal*. His long and successfully accumulated experience in academic career (including Associate Editorship of the *Academy of Management Journal*) also encouraged me not merely to read his book, but also to give full attention to his writing approaches and advice.

The book is well structured and designed to serve vast majority of academic researchers at any stage of their career. For graduate students, the book can be a good companion when writing their dissertation; however, I would say that it is

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much more beneficial for PhD students and early-stage researchers. For experienced researchers, the book would be a valuable asset for enhancing creative writing. The book can also support mentors during supervising their graduate students as it offers a clear articulation of academic writing process. While reading the book, moreover, you can see the viewpoint of editors or reviewers and most importantly the readers.

For a detailed overview, the book consists of 14 chapters that can be categorised into three parts. The first part of the book involves chapters 1–4. In the chapter 1, Pollock initialises his book by elucidating why researchers should think like a storyteller and how storytelling could make complex theories such as the general theory of relativity simpler to understand. In the chapter 2, Pollock applies one of the most recognisable graphics in drama (Freytag's Pyramid) to academic research. He simply focusses on the macro-structure of dramatic stories and discuss how to apply it within the framework of academic articles. In the chapter 3, Pollock explains how to apply storytelling tools in academic articles. The human face, motion and pacing, showing and telling, and making the writing conversational were discussed among other techniques and tools that could be helpful to make research article more attractive and legible. While in the chapter 4, Pollock discusses several approaches for building blocks of storytelling. Precisely he focusses on clear writing, active writing and the 'sound' of writing (e.g. cadence and rhythm). In addition, he provides his own list of dos and don'ts in academic writing and provides an extensive list of recommended books on writing.

The second part of the book involves chapters 5–9. In the chapter 5, various approaches of hooking attention toward the research article were dismantled. Specifically, the most critical and interesting questions that the introduction should answer and best practices for structuring effective titles and comprehensive abstracts. In the chapter 6, Pollock discusses the most common challenges researchers face with regard to developing theory and hypotheses and best practices to overcome them. Hence, he focusses on founding a clear delineation of constructs, establishing theoretical conversation that highlights the inadequacy the researcher should fulfil and constructing a clear hypotheses statement. In the chapter 7, Pollock deliberates several issues face researcher when writing and discussing their methods and results sections. He discusses the four major types of validity and the three fatal flaws of any research design. Moreover, he discusses each section's purpose and how researcher can overcome their challenges and how they are generally structured. In the chapter 8, Pollock guides academic researchers to effectively discuss their results and structure their discussion chapter and in the chapter 9, he discusses what makes qualitative research articles significantly different than quantitative ones from designing the paper to writing the discussion section; moreover, he also discusses the difference between theory articles and book chapters.

In the third part of the book, Pollock starts to turn to the process of publishing academic articles. In the chapter 10, he delineates the four stages of the writing process using creating a painting as analogy and he provides several practices to enhance writing productivity. In the chapter 11, Pollock touches a critical issue in academic publishing which is co-authorship. He discusses the pros and cons of co-authors, different types of collaborations with co-authors and some practical issues related to co-author team management. Handling the review process is discussed

in the chapter 12. Pollock provides practical guidance to academic researchers on choosing the potential journal for publishing, accepting to learn from rejection and more importantly, how to manage emotions during review process. Before concluding the book, in the chapter 13, Pollock discusses other kinds of writing that benefit any academic researcher: grant proposals, research statements and cover letters.

Earlier research suggests that adopting the narrative approach in education, research and academic writing could enhance learning new academic skills and abilities. For instance, Gregson (2020, p. 8) stated that ‘... storytelling can support language development, motivate writing and encourage the command of many kinds of literacy’. In academic research, however, a writing approach has been criticised for lacking a human storytelling voice (Badley 2017), and for this reason, Pollock’s book adds a value as he successfully provide a balanced viewpoint between academic writing and human storytelling approach. I would say that the book uses a very simple idea in a demanding, daunting and complex task. It is intentionally designed only for academic scientists; however, the book can be also useful to investigative and analytic journalism.

It is my hope, as a book reviewer of this valuable addition to an academic writing, that those current and future readers, authors, reviewers or others of the *WMU Journal of Maritime Affairs* will learn from it and apply those learned ones to their future writings, so that overall quality of maritime research and its deliverability to wide readerships are substantially enhanced.

## References

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