



REVIEW

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# JUNE WORKSHOP SERIES AT THE KAZAKH NATIONAL ACADEMY OF ARTS: A REVIEW OF CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WRITING

## **JUNE WORKSHOP SERIES AT THE KAZAKH NATIONAL ACADEMY OF ARTS: A REVIEW OF CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WRITING**

**Abstract:** This is a review of a series of workshops presented by scholars from the United States on translation, academic writing, and publishing in English-language journals at the Kazakh National Academy of Arts during June 2018. Written by one of the presenting American scholars, this review outlines our conversations about writing and teaching with KazNAA faculty over the course of the seminar to explore critical questions of translation and experiential approaches to publishing research in high-impact journals.

**Keywords:** composition, pedagogy, publishing, translation

In June 2018, my colleagues Anna Oldfield, Benjamin Sota, and myself landed in Almaty, Kazakhstan for a month-long visit at academic institutions across the eastern region of the country. We were initially invited by the T. K. Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of the Arts and came bearing a menu of writing and theatre workshops to share and open conversation about our academic

specialties with the scholars and teachers we encountered. The workshops included presentations and practice in Academic Writing, Translation, Publishing in High-Impact Journals, Physical Theatre, and Contact Improvisation and Writing. Shortly after we landed we met with the Vice-Rector at KazNAA, KabyI Khalykov, and began our journey through North-eastern Kazakhstan. This review focuses primarily

on the Academic Writing and Publication workshops offered at KazNAA, which took place on June 27, 2018.

The Academic Writing Workshop was preceded by two full days of workshops on Physical Theatre, led by our fellow traveler, Ben Sota. These presentations introduced aspects of the field of Physical Theatre to faculty at KazNAA, most of whom specialized in the performing and visual arts. The workshops included numerous exercises, performances, critiques, and discussions that covered mask work in the tradition of Commedia dell'arte, practice in

contact improvisation, and an afternoon of clown. Participants were invited to explore the physical and emotional dimensions of movement and pause throughout these two days, coming together on campus to play with how the body and mind communicate together through performance. The brief and improvised performances by faculty members over the course of these workshops were raw, exploratory, and vacillated from sadness to joy to wonder in their emotional and physical journeys (Figure 1,2).



Figure 1 – KazNAA faculty member performing with Commedia dell'arte mask during workshop, T.Zhurgenov KazNAA, Almaty. 2018.

Our next series of workshops asked our participants to switch gears from the creation of artistic pieces to alphabetic expression through analysis of their scholarly interests, which addressed Poetry and Translation and Publishing in English-language Academic Journals. Anna Oldfield and I were responsible for

this sequence and while these workshops focused more on traditionally academic work, we strove to utilize experiential learning for the participants involved. In this way, we made it a goal for attendees to leave the presentations with something concrete to take back to their writing.



Figure 2 – Group photo with KazNAA faculty, and students with Oldfield, Sota, and Howes at the end of the workshop T.Zhurgenov KazNAA, Almaty. 2018.

To begin, Dr. Oldfield ran a session on the art of translation, calling upon the poetry of Abai Qunanbaiuly and translation theorists including Lawrence Venuti. The lively and rich discussions that resulted from examining multiple translations of Abai's work flipped our workshop space to honor the linguistic expertise of participants in working with the Kazakhstani poet's literary works. Together, we highlighted the processes behind choosing language during translation, which requires translators to decide between maintaining rhythmic elements of a poem or the content expressed by a writer. In this way, we also discussed the ethics of translation, which ask us to make decisions that will follow a work's life into other languages as well as other cultures.

During the second half of our day, we tackled a topic of great interest to

most academics: scholarly writing and publishing with emphasis on English-language journals. Many universities push faculty to share their work in high-impact venues, increasing the value of globalizing scholarship and reaching a wider readership. This kind of publication is often a part of tenure and promotion for academics all over the world and can prove a challenging – and incredibly rewarding – element of our work. In addition, an increased interest in publishing in English is a growing part of Kazakh academic culture following the nation's expressed goals towards trilingualism, including the Plan of Enhancement of Trilingual Education of 2015-2016. As interest continues to grow in reaching English-speaking audiences, faculty are exploring new venues for their work, some of which may hold different expectations of

writing. This laid the foundation for our conversations with participants.

When writing for an English-language journal, we outlined steps to begin a project, including: 1) selecting a journal; 2) looking at articles in that journal to determine their tone, audience, and style; 3) identifying submission guidelines and calls for papers for the journal; and 4) looking for special issues of a journal that might be a good match for scholarly projects. Participants began by reporting their expectations of academic writing, responding to the prompts:

- If you are reading an academic article, what do you expect you will find there? What form do academic articles take? What is their content?
- What conventions of writing do you expect to find? You may even consider describing what an academic article looks like? How does it appear on the page? What elements make up an academic journal?
- What do you think are differences between English-language journals and Russian-language journals?

In response to the first two questions, participants reported their expectations of academic writing to include: decisive and rational claims, clear viewpoint, a presentation that is interesting and creative, reporting of information that moves the field forward, new information as well as a general picture of the topic, definitions and incorporation of terminology and key words, writing that wrestles with difficult questions, and an invitation to dialogue or conversation. They generally felt that articles in English-language journals were bolder in their ideas, more global, and longer than those in Russian-language journals.

The first two prompts framed the rest of the workshop, as we focused on

the elements of decisive claims, new information, and keywords or terminology in academic writing. These are a few of the characteristics that make a particular paper stand out to both journal editors and targeted audiences. Our goal in the workshop was to encourage participants to consider how highlighting these elements in their writing might sharpen their focus in the revision process. In this way, we modeled in our presentation how we teach writing as well as how we practice it ourselves.

After our discussion, we completed hands-on guided exercises, which included creating an audience map to more fully flesh out faculty projects and make time for participants to share scholarship with the group. To create an audience map, we first prompted everyone to think about either a current scholarly project or one recently completed. Then, they were asked to write down 3-5 keywords or phrases that directly related to their project, with special focus on the ideas that were new to the field or specific to the project. These keywords, along with a single sentence that articulated their purpose in writing, made up the center of the map, which they were asked to place in the middle of a piece of paper and put a circle around. By distilling a large-scale research project to a few keywords and a purpose statement, faculty could see the skeleton of their work without the weight of the data, artifacts, or evidence they had collected. It also encouraged them to look explicitly on what they hoped to accomplish in their writing, with attention towards a specific – in this case academic – audience.

As we began our day talking about Poetry and Translation, we used this topic as our common example to create an audience map in the workshop. Keywords for this topic, could include the name of

the poet (Abai Qunanbaiuly); key terms in translation that analysis focuses on (diction, syntax, rhyme); and languages involved in the translation (Kazakh and English). Additional keywords produced by the group included consideration of time period, place, genre, and research methods, though this list is certainly not exhaustive. A purpose for this project might include maintaining important features of Kazakh culture through the

translation process to help international readers better understand Abai's poetic work. From this information – a distilled summary of the project through keywords and a sentence explaining the purpose of the piece of writing – we brainstormed possible audiences: poets, scholars, readers in Kazakhstan as well as those in English-speaking countries, students. The map looked something like this: (Table 1)

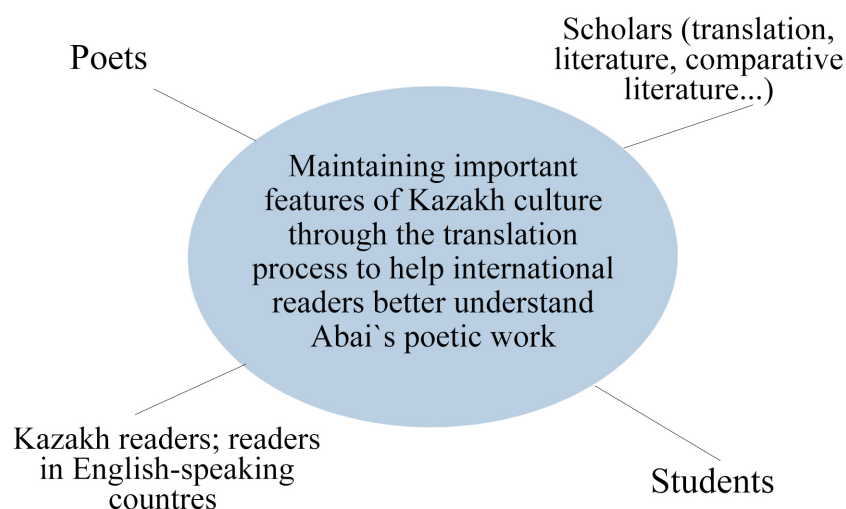


Table 1 – Audience map of a project translating the work of Abai into English

While most participants had academic audiences in mind, this exercise develops multiple publication venues that may include alternative disciplines or open scholarship to more general audiences. For example, an article on translation may be submitted to a high-impact journal focusing on Comparative Literature or Translation Studies. But when we consider a wider range of audiences, we may also submit this work to a journal focusing on the study of poetry, multilingual classrooms, regional studies, or pedagogy and teaching translation to students. Each

of these would obviously require revision from an original text, but our hope was to provide participants with a broader view of their work, which we are not always able to see from the borders of our computer screens or past the walls of our offices.

A follow-up exercise to the audience map could include identifying specific journals or publication venues for each audience as well as rewriting one's purpose the different venues identified. The benefits of being able to manipulate a topic within a variety of contexts (audience and purpose) create appreciation for how

our scholarly work exists within multiple spheres of interest and can be framed in multiple ways for publication. It also encourages us to stretch our boundaries as writers and thinkers, even if the pursuit of these avenues goes no farther than this exercise.

After participants completed their maps, they were invited to share their projects and the results of their workshopping. Projects ranged from genre analysis to film and music studies, historical retrospectives, and cultural explorations through visual and performance art. Through the exercise, participants shared with one another their work, as well as dedicated time and space to thinking about a range of possibilities for their writing,

an action that we hope was valuable for considering how each scholarly project we create takes on (and can take on) multiple manifestations to speak to a variety of audiences and venues.

Our experience with KazNAA was celebrated our last day with food, drink, and an exchange of gifts. The abundant generosity of the University and its faculty, staff, and students was an incredible introduction of Kazakh culture for Ben and me, who had not visited Kazakhstan before, and a welcome back to Anna, who had visited previously. We were incredibly grateful for the opportunity to spend time with the vibrant artists, scholars, teachers, and students we met and left with eager anticipation of returning again soon.



Figure 3 – From left to right, Anna Oldfield, Benjamin Sota, and Emma Howes enjoy a meal in celebration of their visit. T.Zhurgenov KazNAA, Almaty. 2018.

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## **ҚАЗАҚ ҰЛТТЫҚ ӨНЕР АКАДЕМИЯСЫНДАҒЫ МАУСЫМ СЕМИНАРЛАРЫ: АКАДЕМИЯЛЫҚ ХАТТАР ЖАЗУ БОЙЫНША СЕМИНАР ТУРАЛЫ РЕВЬЮ**

### **Аңдатпа**

Бұл 2018 жылдың маусым айында Қазақ ұлттық өнер академиясында АҚШ ғалымдары ағылшын тіліндегі журналдарға аударма, академиялық хаттар және мақалаларды жариялау мәселелері бойынша өткізген семинарлар сериясына шолу. Жетекші американдық ғалымдардың бірі жазған бұл шолуда біздің ҚазҰӨА факультетімен оқу және сабақ беру туралы сұхбатымыз сипатталады. Сонымен қатар, семинар барысында аударманың сыни мәселелерін зерттеу мен импакт-факторы жоғары журналдардағы зерттеу мақалаларының тәжірибелік тәсілдері де талқыланды.

**Тірек сөздер:** композиция, педагогика, жарияланым, аудармалар

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## **СЕРИЯ ИЮНЬСКИХ СЕМИНАРОВ В КАЗАХСКОЙ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ АКАДЕМИИ ИСКУССТВ: РЕВЬЮ О СЕМИНАРЕ ПО НАПИСАНИЮ АКАДЕМИЧЕСКИХ ПИСЕМ**

### **Аннотация**

Это обзор серии семинаров, проведенных учеными из Соединенных Штатов по вопросам перевода, академического письма и публикации в англоязычных журналах в Казахской национальной академии искусств в июне 2018 года. В обзоре, написанным одним из представленных американских ученых, описывается наши беседы о письменной речи и преподавании на факультете КазНАИ. В ходе семинара также обсуждались изучения критических вопросов перевода и практического подхода к публикации исследований в журналах с высоким импакт-фактором.

**Ключевые слова:** композиция, педагогика, публикация, переводы

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