Linguistic injustice and academic publishing in English
A debate and a case study

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The Debate

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The question

- Is there linguistic injustice in academic publishing in English?

The positions

- No, there is not (Hyland, 2016).

- Yes, there is (Flowerdew, 2019; Hanauer et al, 2019; Politzer-Ahles et al. 2016).

The no linguistic injustice position

- Hyland (2016): too much focus on EAL authors, when it comes to writing in English for publication.

- Too much emphasis on language and on "native" speaker status.

- Too little emphasis on other factors (e.g. access to resources; training and mentorship; level of experience; etc.).

- Result: a "disadvantage orthodoxy" that positions EAL writers at a disadvantage by default.

The yes linguistic injustice position

- Politzer-Ahles et al. (2016): linguistic privilege for L1 English scholars.

  2 reasons:
    – Spend less time working on their texts;
    – Publishing is biased in their favour (see also Politzer-Ahles et al. 2020).

- Flowerdew (2019): L1 background confers L1 English scholars an advantage when they get to the stage of acquiring the specialised jargon for publishing.

- Hanauer et al. (2019): EAL writers report higher degrees of difficulty, dissatisfaction, and anxiety when writing in English than when writing in the L1 for publication purposes.

Limitations of the debate

- The conceptualisation of Language (esp. Academic English / English for publication purposes).
  - A range of resources that exist somewhere in the abstract, detached from social context.
- Discrepancy: whether L1 (English) positions some scholars at an advantage and others at a disadvantage.
- A view of academic literacy in which language is just a mere "conduit for meaning" (Lillis & Curry, 2015, p. 137).

Some nuances

- Hyland (2016, p. 66), on authorial agency and individual experience:
    - "What is apparent is that literacy is not a single monolithic accomplishment but a series of socially situated, discipline-sensitive practices that have to be learnt as needed"
    - "languages are linguistic practices that have evolved to get things done in particular spheres and not cognitive structures existing inside the head of idealized monolingual Native speakers" (Hyland, 2016, p. 67).

The missing extra step

- To recognise that the acquisition of the "series of socially situated, discipline-sensitive practices that have to be learnt as needed" is affected by the writers' social positions in the stratified field of academic publishing.

- This affects both L1Eng and EAL authors, but one's individual agency is unlikely to be enough to overcome the limitations that the structure of the field imposes.

A sociolinguistics of resources

- Language as a range of multiple and fragmented resources (accents, styles, registers, genres, etc.) (Blommaert, 2010; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015).

- Access to and ability to use these resources to index specific types of 'speakerhood' is also fragmented and unequal.

- The speaker at the centre of attention.

- Academic publishing in English: not a simple matter of acquiring the "right" kinds of resources.

Intersectionality

- "Linguistic requirements become an example of **intersectionality**, where **social and economic differences** are **inseparable** from **linguistic** ones, reinforcing the social **stratification** of the academic field" (Martín Rojo, 2021, p. 174).

- "What we see and hear in books, journals, or conferences are the results of **the decisions to accept or reject certain ideas** produced by real people. These **decisions** made by authors, presenters, reviewers, and editors **affect** how many male or female scholars or white, black, indigenous, Asian, and Latinx scholars **appear** in **publication** titles and **conference** programs" (Kubota, 2020, p. 728)

A political economic angle

- Getting published entails developing an authorial voice for oneself, a dialogic process (between writers and readers) developed in complex ways and in the interaction structure-agency.

- The need to acknowledge that the spaces where the specialised forms of English as a resource for academic publishing are unequally accessible.

- As authors access these spaces, coming from various sociolinguistic backgrounds, a process of developing an authorial voice starts that can make some more vulnerable than others (Dołowy-Rybińska, 2021).

Peer-review

- Where the co-construction of an authorial voice is by writers **and** readers is most apparent.

- Readers attend to **marked discursive features** (e.g. inconsistent style, lack of concision) that can reveal **non-discursive characteristics** of writers (e.g. race or gender) (Matsuda & Tardy, 2007, p. 246).

- No direct relation between "unusual features" and rejection of articles, but they can add to the overall rationale of editors' decisions (Lillis & Curry, 2015).

From writers to readers

- More specifically, from "writing-subject" to "reading-subject" positions (drawing on Flores & Rosa, 2015).
  - A degree of resistance to EAL authors' texts and voices will remain by virtue of how the system is structured.
- Journal submission guidelines are still largely inflexible in accepting non-conforming uses of English (McKinley & Rose, 2018), positioning L2 users of the language as deficient (Heng Hartse & Kubota, 2014).

The case study

- Unexpected emails to submit your work: Spam or legitimate offers? The implications for novice English L2 writers (with Andrew Cooper).
  - *Publications* 2019, *7*(1),7; https://doi.org/10.3390/publications 7010007
- Predatory publishers' spam emails as a symptom of the multiple vulnerabilities in academia (with Ying Wang).
  - To appear in: Habibie, P. & Fazel, I. (Eds.) (forthcoming). *Predatory practices in scholarly communication and publishing*. London and New York: Routledge.

Predatory publishing

- A definition:
  - Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices." (Grudniewicz et al., 2019, p. 211)

Unexpected emails: Spam or legitimate?

Table 1. Rhetorical moves of contact emails from predatory journals, with examples from our data.

Move	Example
1. A personalized salutation to the author	Dear ((Last name, First name)) Dear ((FIRST NAME LAST NAME)) Dear Ms/Mr ((Last name, First name)) Dear and ((First name, Last name))
2. A brief introduction of the journal, with its title name, and an explicit reference to its quality attributes.	This is *Journal of [Anonymized]* (ISSN 21XX-79XX), a professional journal published worldwide by Academic [Anonymized] Company, New York, NY, USA.
3. A reference to a paper recently presented by the author at a conference that the journal would be interested in publishing.	We have learned your paper "((Paper title))" at ((Name of Conference)). We are very interested to publish your latest paper in the Journal of [Anonymized].
4. A note of praise to the author.	Through your works, I know you are an expert in this field. We are seeking submissions for the forthcoming issue published in December 2014 currently. Your submission will make an important contribution to the quality of this journal.
5. An invitation for the author to submit any further unpublished material that they may have.	All your original and unpublished papers are welcome.
6. An invitation for the author to become a reviewer or editorial member of the journal.	We are also recruiting reviewers for the journal. If you are interested to be a reviewer, it's our great honor to invite you to join us. … After assessment, the editorial board will decide whether we offer you the position of reviewer or not.
7. An appeal to the author to stay in touch and the establish a stable relationship.	Hope to keep in touch by email and publish some papers or books from you and your friends in USA. As an American academic publishing group, we wish to become your friends if necessary. Expect to get your reply soon.
8. A concluding salutation, and signature of the sender, including their contact details	Best regards, Cindy Journal of [Anonymized] Academic [Anonymized] Company **jmer@[anonymized].us,** **education@[anonymized].us** 228 East 45th Street, Ground Floor, #CN00000267 New York, NY 10017, USA Tel.: +347-XXX-2153, +347-XXX-6798, Fax: +646-XXX-4168, +347-XXX-1986

The fine-grained linguistic details

Table 3. Examples of fine-grained lexical and grammatical issues, and odd formulations.

Odd Phrasing or Word Choice	Example from Our Corpus
Salutation line	"Esteemed Sir/Madam"" Dear Professors/Teachers/Academicians/Research Scholars" "Dear Scholar/Processor"
Concluding line	> Thank you, > With best regards > Looking forward for long lasting academic relationship > With Regards
Aims of the journal	The organization aims at undertaking, co-coordinating and promoting research and development. It provides professional and academic guidance in the fields of basic inculcation, Higher inculcation. Engineering Research Publication mission is to Promote and support, High Quality basic, Scientific Research and development in the fields of Engineering, Technology and Sciences. Generate Public awareness, provide advice to scholar's researchers and communicate research outcomes.
Advertisement: Special offer	Grasp the Privilege for Publishing Paper … Only in 30–50 days, paper with good quality can be published.
Enticing authors to submit their work	> We do not only published papers, but also spread them to other channels to increase their downloads and citations. We also help submit papers to databases and indexes. We have been doing our best for world wide researchers, since we believe science is fantastic and your research is fantastic. > We honestly ask you to submit paper to our newly launched journals. (…) You can publish one paper without APC in one of the our newly launched journals if you submit the paper before 31 October 2016. Here is some newly launched journals.

No straightforward decoding of these emails

- The readers' position within the field of academic publishing plays a key role.

- L2 English writers may be more vulnerable to overseeing the micro-level linguistic details.

- But experience and knowledge about publishing is also key.

- Combined with the senders' good knowledge about the themes and discourses to strike to sound credible.

Spam emails as a symptom of the multiple vulnerabilities in academia

- 810 emails analysed; period 2016-2021; 255,738 words.

- Key themes and topics: (1) visibility; (2) indexing; (3) guarantee; (4) guest editor; (5) editorial board; and (6) fees.

- Fluctuation over time: nowadays, more focus is on visibility and indexing.

- Even if deceptive, these are key factors in academic publishing, and predatory publishers seem well-aware of it.

Conclusions

- Academic publishing in English is very unequally structured.

- We need to move beyond binary opposites (e.g., native vs. non-native English authors).

- Adopt a socially-grounded view of language, where multiple axes of inequality converge.

- Predatory publishing as a perfect illustration of the inequalities present in academic publishing in English.

- Their emails allow us to see how such inequalities are embedded and reproduced in the structure.

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