ABSTRACT

Price (2001) evokes the constraints of social contexts on language use by this quote from P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann (1967) thus: “I encounter language as a facility external to myself and it is coercive in its effect on me. Language forces me into patterns”. The dissemination of knowledge through established conventions of academic discourse seemingly demonstrates the capacity of the discourse to effectuate the learning and expression of such knowledge (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons 2002). This crucial proficiency therefore means specific practices in academic contexts and communicative behaviours. Academic literacy thus applies to a complex set of skills to which allude Dudley-Evans and St. John (1988), and to a “common core of universal skills or language forms” (Hutchison and Walters 1998; Spack 1988). Inescapably, critical questions arise to wit: Does a Language for Academic Purposes (LAP) exist to delineate disciplines? Is its specificity defensible in heterogeneous academic communities? How inherently different are individual discourse communities and disciplines vis-à-vis their social, communicative and cognitive dimensions?

Keywords: Discourse community; Academic literacy; Knowledge communication and evaluation

RÉSUMÉ


Mots clés : communauté discursive; lecture et écriture académique; diffusion et évaluation de connaissances.
1. PROEM

While they have served useful traditional purposes, constraints imposed on academic expression within the Academy by institutions or peers are a legitimate subject of critical appraisal. Thus, it could be argued that they are stifling to the uninitiated or neophyte who must submit to institutional processes of evaluation for career progress and peer recognition. More importantly, entrenched practices seem deliberately oblivious of the migratory trends among academics from different parts of the world, which fact necessitates at the very least some democratization of established norms of academic discourse. This paper therefore highlights some of the effects of these practices on individual expressions of knowledge, and concludes in favour of a less inhibiting discourse framework in order to maximize individual expression in the Academy.

Price (2001) evokes the constraints of social contexts on language use by this quote from P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann (1967): “I encounter language as a facility external to myself and it is coercive in its effect on me. Language forces me into patterns”. The dissemination of knowledge through established conventions of academic discourse seemingly demonstrates the capacity of the discourse to effectuate its learning and expression (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons 2002). This proficiency ensures that specific practices in academic contexts and communicative behaviours are reinforced and perpetuated. Academic literacy thus applies to a complex set of skills to which Dudley-Evans and St. John (1988) allude, and to a “common core of universal skills or language forms” in the words of Hutchison and Walters (1998), a point also echoed by Spack (1988). Thus, critical questions are inescapable. First and foremost, does a Language for Academic Purposes (LAP) truly exist, and is it necessary to clearly delineate disciplines? Is its domain-specificity defensible in heterogeneous discourse communities? How inherently different are disciplines vis-à-vis their social, communicative and cognitive dimensions? Academic literacy indubitably affects institutional practices such as the hiring and promotion of academics, student awards (Hyland 2000a), success in securing research grants, annual performance appraisals, vision statements and action plans. It equally imposes restrictions and disadvantages on academics in developing countries. Given the magnitude and reach of these consequences, it is therefore difficult to assume that the global academic discourse community is politically and ideologically neutral. Finally, how do institutions and academic communities fashion their own discourses (Hyland 2000b), and should these discourse patterns remain inflexible with regard to regional or national conditions and language varieties?

Personal and anecdotal accounts abound of contemporaries who have struggled to adjust to new demands in the Academy as they settled in to teach and conduct research. Also of some note are my initial personal experiences as a first-timer changing roles from being a doctoral student to one who had to perform in a mutating environment where academic demands and teaching responsibilities have become more complex in novel ways. Hence, the arduous task of periodically documenting scholarship and research as they are defined in many North American universities has forced my hand, literally, in contemplating these reflections.

The most evident and cherished conventional wisdom acquired by a graduate student is that research and dissertation are independent and solitary work, at least in the humanities. This independence, somewhat circumscribed by the limitations on its
expression, is nonetheless treasured. The psychology that is often suggestive of the proprietary rights earned through the defence processes, may all too often inflate the sense of discursive and intellectual autonomy beyond what is sustainable in reality. Perhaps it provides a false sense of preparation and security, given the myriad of institutional constraints that await the freshly minted tenure-track faculty member upon his insertion into the Academy. Personal and professional evolution woven into one indissoluble experience therefore imposes compelling reasons to examine whether I am who I wanted and want to be. Simply put, am I being transformed only within the limits imposed by my social, professional or institutional affiliations, expectations and allegiances? Although I evoke Price’s words in my introduction, it is difficult to generalize for every new entrant into the Academy and state which of the constraints mentioned above is the more coercive for the new member of Faculty. However, in my experience chief among the constrictions are the newly encountered institutional values and mission statements and the governing discourses of individual disciplines.

For the young academic, the choice of subjects of inquiry, or long term research programs consisting of smaller individual projects, is influenced by forces beyond the individual as he or she strives to gain acceptance for both space and work in the domain-specific discourse community. As I mentioned earlier, disseminating knowledge invariably implies the use of established conventions of academic discourses. Such proficiency is therefore deemed to reflect a mastery of specific practices in academic contexts and the adherence to specific academic behaviours. Academic literacy (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1988), thus conjures up a complex set of skills, and alludes to a “common core of universal skills or language forms” (Hutchinson and Walters, 1998; Spack 1988).

It is no secret that institutions rationalize their resources in favour of galvanizing their search for avenues of excellence. There are more and more comparisons being drawn between competing institutions both within and outside of the Academy, of which university administrators are acutely aware (although they may feverishly deny it when ratings are not so favorable). As a direct consequence, (new) faculty members invariably toil and grope for the right devices in the bid to provide an account of performance which purports to document success, one that is subject to periodic peer-evaluation through publications and other institutional instruments of appraisal. For this reason, I will also delve briefly into the issue of academic literacy. Finally, I will attempt to ponder the notion and possible effects of the specificity of a language for academic purposes in heterogeneous communities.

2. SELF AND OTHER IN (AND) THE ACADEMY

Price (2001:2) provides a premise from which to appraise the subjectivity inherent in the process of thought. He theorizes that thinking “validates our very existence”. He credits Descartes with “dismantling philosophical inquiries prior to his lifetime and replacing what came to be considered as metaphysical babble with the simple profundity (of) I think, therefore I am”. This premise accepts and extends the place and value of subjective ruminations into an existential realm and prominence. It affords us the notion that we can experience and value our existence and survival via our own thoughts, though we are “inextricably dependent on the manipulation of verbal symbols” and which act is
governed by conventions agreed or imposed by a specific community. Consciousness therefore is reliant upon the device of language. Taken to the extreme, this revolution in human consciousness almost attributes deific powers to humanity’s most intimate confidant, the brain. Certainly, a mesmerizing thought!

Though, in Price’s own words, “this mental revolution is only a restatement of a primitive mind-set that had gods talking to men”, it remains a fascinatingly new dialectic. The existential import of this formulation arms us with the ability to subtract ourselves from the cultural dependency and control of our mental processes. Hence our unabashed search for individuality through which we plead for the acceptance of our subjective perceptions as the true representation of ‘what is’. It is therefore not unfounded that, given our cherished individuality, we are beset with the propensity to question whatever is pronounced as official. It is not far-fetched either that while we relish our capacity to have thought and expression to match how we perceive the universe around us, it is not always in conformity with standards installed outside of our perceptions. We therefore experience a breach when confronted with externally imposed standards which contradict us. Just as we react to the otherness we suspect in all things external to us, any contradictions that threaten our convictions are viewed as frontal assaults on our very existence and survival. For Price therefore, “heresy is, to us, as much a biological threat as an ideological one. It is a logical outcome of our trust (…) in ourselves”. It would thus seem devastating to our being, to our ego, to the sense of certainty and security longed for by the self, should we contemplate the possibility that we are not in the end faithfully identical to our own thoughts, that they may be mediated by uncontrollable forces that do not inhabit us. It is the equivalent of a blasphemy against our fundamental belief and against the self-coronation of our deified individuality, and given the dogmatic connection “between what we think and what we are, our instinctual reaction is adrenal and defensive”. However, we seem to feel no such instinctual urgency when we step into the other’s lifespace or his “mental chatter” and proclaim their invalidity. As Price notes, we would rather qualify as perceptual deficiencies those disagreeable thoughts expressed by others which we may suppress or repress though a combination of social coercion and institutional restraint. As Price (2001:2) also sagely asserts, “it seems not to occur to us that if one set of perceptions can be judged invalid, so may they all, including our own”.

As individuals, we may be hard pressed to acknowledge that the very thoughts we appropriate and attempt to guard so jealously may not, after all, be all that personal. They are in all likelihood openly or discreetly imposed as external agents by the extent of our access to the grammar and rules of expression or the limited varieties of symbols that govern the discourse in which we partake. This overarching circumscription may or may not be effectuated with subtlety. Most important to this discussion is the likelihood that our thoughts may be hamstrung and predetermined by “something other than ourselves” through “social intervention into the individual psyche” in the words of Price (2001:3). At the very least and at the most elemental level, by using familiar rhetorical devices, we may be content to blur the distinctions that exist between our own thoughts and those superimposed on our faculties by influential external agents to whom we owe some statutory allegiance. The Academy and the various entities that support it are replete with such agents at various administrative and editorial levels.

None can gainsay the common fact that we identify, and are increasingly identified, with the mental constructs that have characterized our training and education. However,
these may not entirely be in consonance with who and what we are and desire to become, although we are constrained to remain within the paradigms that have been prescribed for our performances, like actors on a stage. For instance, when we improvise or choose a different medium of knowledge dissemination, it is called to question, and we are required to defend our choices against existing standards, or to simply acquiesce. For example, not long ago, publishing via electronic media was frowned upon within the Academy. Also, creative writing still confounds many a peer-review committee whose memberships are often drawn from across disciplines. Little wonder that Chubin and Hackett (1990:192) could demonstrate in their survey that only 8% agreed that “peer review works well as it is”. And, according to Horrobin (2001) a U.S. Supreme Court decision has substantiated complaints that peer review may be blocking the flow of innovation and public support for science. The question therefore begs itself whether the thoughts and creativity we have are what we are allowed to harbour and express in ever straitening circumstances. If so, are we simply being who we are permitted to be? When we deviate from prescribed paths, expressions and thinking patterns, are we simply deviants who await sanctions, or simply candidates for some psychological evaluation in order to be coaxed into fitting the bill of some disorder? As Price (2001:3) would ask “could psychosis be the healthy reaction of a mind defending itself from obliteration?” When we choose to be intrepid and challenge consensus by bypassing “internalized injunctions and propaganda”, are we facing special dangers of being characterized as unable to remain cultural artifacts imbued with pre-programmed tools of perception? One thing is clear: we may be endangering our career progress!

The urge to question both academic and institutional authority should naturally be most vivid among newly graduated academics, but it could be curtailed by the sheer necessity for tenure and career growth. The inherent ability to question tyrannical authority is neither a mark of disrespect for authority, nor is it a sign of immaturity. On the contrary, it is a function of a thinking mind that seeks to express itself without the stranglehold of forced conformity. Almost like a spell cast on a hypnotic subject, power relations in social groups are evidently mediated by language and the norms that regulate its use in each group. Price argues therefore that there exists a “fundamental relationship between ritualized forms of language and authoritarian control of language”.

Commands are said to be older than speech, and to be one of the earliest forms of linguistic communication. If it were not so, could we successfully explain why creatures without speech understand commands only after they have received training in human language? Besides, there is a long-standing philosophical tradition (Price 2001), which differentiates humans from animals on the basis of language skills. For this reason, I would also argue that every response to a command, an external conative stimulus, no matter how discreetly it is given, remains alien to the recipient who obeys it. It is also a reflection of the fact that the initiator of the command is in a stronger position than the recipient whose behaviour is expected to change, even if solely on account of the command. Price (2001:3) therefore makes the point that the “evolution of subjective sovereignty (is) developmentally more advanced and mature than the mental passivity and behavioural complacency that is so assiduously advanced and promoted by those entrenched as nodes of power in any society”. Whether or not the listener intends to obey, it is still the intention of the giver of the command to infuse the recipient with ideas
perhaps entirely formed and maintained by the one in authority. The expected outcomes can be summed up as obedience, acceptance or conformity. To exemplify his points, Price compiled a lexical field that applies to these discourse situations, of which we select what applies generally to this discussion.

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In the same vein, Newt Gingrich (1974), former speaker of the US House of Representatives and his GOPAC (Political Action Committee) are known to have circulated a pamphlet comprising a list of psychologically active words to be used by Republicans to gain a majority during an imminent election. What is fascinating is the title of the document, to wit Language, a Key Mechanism of Control.

2.1 Contrasting Words

In the pamphlet, the thrust is on searching and finding the words that help define opponents. Counseling against being hesitant to use contrast, it urges partisans to remember that creating a difference helps their cause. The following are such powerful words that can create a clear and easily understood contrast. The pamphlet enjoins its readers to apply the following words in various ways to describe their opponents, their record, proposals and their party:

decay... failure (fail)... collapse(ing)... deeper... crisis... urgent(cy)... destructive... destroy... sick... pathetic... lie... liberal... they/them... unionized bureaucracy... "compassion" is not enough... betray... consequences... limit(s)... shallow... traitors... sensationalists... endanger... coercion... hypocrisy... radical... threaten... devour... waste... corruption... incompetent... permissive attitudes... destructive... impose... self-serving... greed... ideological... insecure... anti-(issue): flag, family, child, jobs... pessimistic... excuses... intolerant... stagnation... welfare... corrupt... selfish... insensitive... status quo...
mandate(s)... taxes... spend(ing)... shame... disgrace... punish (poor...)
... bizarre... cynicism... cheat... steal... abuse of power... machine... bosses... obsolete... criminal rights... red tape... patronage

2.2 Optimistic Positive Governing Words

On the other hand, using the list below is said to help define your campaign and your vision of public service. These words can help burnish your message with extra power. In addition, they help develop the positive side of the contrast you should create with your opponent, giving your community something to vote for!

share... change... opportunity... legacy... challenge... control... truth... moral... courage... reform... prosperity... crusade... movement... children... family... debate... compete... active(ly)... we/us/our... candid(ly)... humane... pristine... provide... liberty... commitment... principle(d)... unique... duty... precious... premise... care(ing)... tough... listen... learn... help... lead... vision... success... empower(ment)... citizen... activist... mobilize... conflict... light... dream... freedom... peace... rights... pioneer... proud/pride... building... preserve... pro-(issue): flag, environment... reform... workfare... eliminate good-time in prison... strength... choice/choose... fair... protect... confident... incentive... hard work... initiative... common sense... passionate.

Can these rhetorical devices more often attributed to the realms of religion and politics apply reasonably well to the Academy? Of course, there are no opponents in the political sense in the Academy, although there are opposing views. So, it may be forlorn to attempt to draw comparisons between academic diction and these devices meant to inspire crowds and provoke fanatical sentiments and fervor. Nonetheless, I opt for a more nuanced position by stating that our view also depends on how far along we are in our career path. Or do we irretrievably attract condemnation by indulging in these sorts of ruminations when, for all intents and purposes, the Academy appears to be functioning relatively well and providing a safe haven for students, teachers, intellectuals and scientists? The point I make, unfortunately, is that although it may appear innocuous, for most new scholars the Academy can be quite stifling and intimidating.

3. ACADEMICS AS RHETORICIANS: EPIDEICTIC DISCOURSE AND CAREER PROGRESS

I wish to address the use of the language of persuasion employed to promote career interests within the Academy. In so doing, I shall adopt specific processes and practices that govern the evaluation of output in the professoriate in the context of Kennedy’s views (2001) on academic duty. Kennedy points out that the Academy is so different from other workplaces that we have invented the term “ivory tower” to describe it in order to distinguish it from the “real world” in the eyes of inquisitive outsiders (2001:2). Nevertheless, it is no less a mystery within its walls, as little is often said about academic duty to new faculty members, while yet little is to be found in academic literature about faculty members’ responsibilities outside of the obvious ones of teaching and research. Even more experienced academics can only boast a vague understanding of what duty entails institutionally, given the differences inherent in both its diachronic and synchronic
interpretations. This notwithstanding, new recruits are required to concoct a narrative of their accomplishments once in the system. Each academic unit or department, supported by the refrain of academic freedom, is also quick to insist that it has its own practices and traditions. A recent example in my experience is the confusing interpretation of the policy on core language requirements which informs the attitude of some colleagues in the social sciences toward second or foreign languages in the undergraduate degrees in my Faculty.

Performance evaluation is a recurrent subject uppermost in the minds of new faculty members. In cases whereby institutional regulations are rigidly set with deadlines and pre-established formats, the trepidation and confusion felt by inexperienced academics are often overlooked or viewed as an occupation hazard. On their part, new faculty are either ignorant of the far-reaching implications of this annual ritual, or they are timid about asking questions. I will identify the devices that support this narrative process as reflexive epideictic from the Greek epideictic meaning “fit for display”.

Aristotle subdivided classical rhetoric into three parts, to wit: forensic rhetoric is essentially justificatory and apologetic, usually with respect to one’s past choices; secondly, epideictic rhetoric addresses others’ opinions as they relate to blame (vituperation) or praise (encomium) of current actions and behaviours; thirdly is deliberative rhetoric which is prospective, and seeks to persuade in the instance of a future action (Kennedy 1972). As Witherington (1997) underscores, these varieties of classical rhetorical strategies comprise a narration, a proposition and a peroration. It is the second of these tools that is adapted for performance accounts, directed at peers and other evaluators, and meant to put in relief conformity to institutional values and ideals stated as mission statements, visions and goals. For instance, when universities or institutions that award research grants and fellowships enthrone specific academic trends such as multi-, pluri- or transdisciplinarity, academics are judged by their compliance or resistance in their research production which they are required to chronicle.

Epideictic rhetoric, usually defined as the persuasive use of praise or blame, assists in the clarification of values and beliefs, acceptable and undesirable modes of conduct within a cultural group. Epideictic discourse can thus magnify the audience’s adherence to shared values. But it can also be the vehicle for the negotiation of individual subjectivity and social attitudes and beliefs. Thus, one wonders unavoidably if a purported language for academic purposes is sufficiently cognizant of the diversity of modes of expressing knowledge.

Literacy and disciplinary practices, for Johns and Swales (2002), usually become more complex as one ascends the educational ladder, as do the level of sophistication of the resources employed and the profundity of the conclusions reached. However, they also pose the question of how to find the personal voice amid institutional expectations.

English for Academic Purposes (EAP), from which term we extrapolate the broader concept of Language for Academic Purposes (LAP) can claim English for Special Purposes (ESP) as its parent. However, LAP has witnessed an expanded reach from simply teaching English with the singular aim of assisting learners’ study or research in that language, to the more complex process of “tailoring instruction to specific rather than general purposes” and focusing “on the specific communicative needs and practices of particular groups in academic contexts” in the estimation of Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002:2). Thus, it now addresses the processes of “grounding instruction in an
understanding of the cognitive, social and linguistic demands of specific academic disciplines” (by) “equipping students with the communicative skills to participate in particular academic and cultural contexts”. Where these programmes are persistent, they lead up to preparing doctoral students for their dissertations (thus through all proficiency levels), as well as working on article-style writing to prepare the students for life after graduation. At this level, efforts are concentrated on the constraints of social contexts on language use, hence the reference to Price’s citation in my opening paragraph. Within the Academy, instructors go to great lengths to imbue students with the inevitability of adhering to prescribed norms of academic discourse according to a variety of disciplinary traditions.

Academic literacy attempts to equip the student with the sets of skills and linguistic forms and discursive practices that are judged to be indispensable in an academic atmosphere. Of necessity, these skills are conceptualized in relation to individual disciplines and their prevailing ethos. Each community boasts different worldviews, which in turn dictate distinct practices, genres and communicative conventions. As a result, discourse specificity affects the ways knowledge is organized in relation to its target audience and those who have editorial control, although academic challenges and conventions within the same disciplines can no longer be considered to be homogeneous in light of the multiplicity of new audiences and challenges addressed. However, as Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002:6) ask, “where (…) is specificity feasible, and what does it consist of in different fields?”

Communities differ in their character as reflected in ways of talking, argument structures and aims in social and cognitive dimensions, according to Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002:6). The mastery of the characteristics of a particular discourse allows individuals to acquire and display their expertise and competencies which give credence to their professional membership and identity in the community. So, are discourse communities therefore to be understood as disciplines? Do they profess mutually alienating pedagogic agendas?

Bazerman (1994) notes that, “most definitions of discourse community get ragged around the edges rapidly”. Therefore, it is difficult to state with certainty if a discipline comprising a multitude of allegiances, competing theories and methodologies is a community or a series of mini-communities. Is a department or faculty a community? Are whole universities communities, and are they distinct from colleges and other tertiary institutions within the same territorial, political and ideological boundaries? Do all these groupings share communally acceptable genres as academic communities? In my view, without diversifying the discourse regimen, there will remain a silo mentality among academics and in the disciplines. It seems to me that institutions are moving, albeit weakly, in melding disciplinary practices, although entrenched traditions in the disciplines themselves are more reticent and resistant to this progress. It is therefore germane to mention the role of technology in mitigating the threat of exclusion and isolation by breaking down barriers along cultural, linguistic and even disciplinary lines.

The astronomical growth and complexity of new technologies as applied to academic literacy has provoked myriad issues. In the view of Taylor and Ward (1998), it now seems that on-line information is fast becoming the dominant resource for academic writing, particularly for undergraduate students. But to return to the pressing issue of the Academy, it is now also clear that textual processes and manipulations are increasingly
inevitably dependent on these technologies. Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002:7) point out that hirings, performance evaluations and promotions, student selections, grant applications, annual appraisals, institutional visions, plans and statements, now “all come with their own new sets of genre constraints and expectations”. It is almost inconceivable that important lectures and other forms of presentation will avoid media and genres such as PowerPoint, e-mail, web postings and electronic lists.

The facilitation and cost mitigation of access to new knowledge enabled by new technologies also set us apart in real terms from those who lack the wherewithal to acquire these tools. With computers dominating every facet of academic life in the West, it would only seem improbable to many that a substantial swath of the world’s population is yet to be connected to the internet. According to the March 02, 2009 UN press release on the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) study among 154 countries worldwide, Northern European countries, notably Sweden, are the most advanced (Scoop Independent News, www.scoop.co.nz). The ICT Development Index (IDI), produced under the aegis of the UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU), reveals once again the magnitude of the global divide which remains unabated since the last such studies it conducted between 2002 and 2007. The ITU report further notes that 23 out of 100 inhabitants globally used the Internet at the end of 2008, but that penetration levels in the developing countries remained low, with Africa’s penetration lagging behind. York et al. (2005:369) point to consequences of this disparity in that “[c]yber optimists assert that […] access to IT promotes development whereas cyber pessimists assert that such access simply exacerbates global inequality”. A corollary of this problem, often overlooked, is the increasing dominance of North American English as the model of academic writing that is spread by the internet to other English speaking global communities.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a critical interrogation of the discourse community and its practices is not tantamount to its condemnation. Rather, it suggests that it should move beyond the mere replication and justification of its discourse boundaries to incorporate emergent possibilities such as computer-mediated genres and other culturally and linguistically divergent practices. On the former, it is instructive to refer to the recent open debate on the Linguist List started by scholars in developing countries (www.linguistlist.org). They vigorously lamented the exclusionary practices of major editors and publishers who required scholars outside of the West to adopt standards of content and expression that are almost always insensitive to the unique perspectives and situation of scholars in poorer countries. If all scholarship is to be truly reflective of the diversity of our collective human culture, then the points they raised are valid. It is essential to note that although computer-mediated practices promise a panacea to this endemic problem, they are still largely unavailable to those that would most benefit for a host of reasons, including those of distance, accessibility, portability and infrastructure.

Discourse specificity should of necessity be pluralized in order to obtain specificities. Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002:9) theorize that as physical distances become ever more narrowed, a “socio-theoretical stance” should clarify the fact that language use, in the sense of the broader society, is socially situated and should therefore be more hospitable to broader social practices. As a result, it is logical to expect that “issues of individual
competitiveness, alliances among particular groups, the role of gatekeepers, and vested interests and institutionalized reward systems have therefore become legitimate areas” of interrogation. The self-perpetuating relationship between language and power and the limiting character attributed to prestigious academic literacy practices seem for now to enjoy the unalloyed support of institutions and influential individuals within the Academy. While this may be legitimately defended, such an argument will only serve to buttress the claim that the Academy is not yet modernizing itself or reacting quickly enough to new practices and resources, not least its inherent diversity.

I conclude with a reference to Canagarajah (2002) who skillfully deconstructs the inherent complexities and inconsistencies of globalization in the expression, communication and exchange of ideas in relation to non-Western academics. The inequities and unrealistic expectations endured by scholars relegated to the periphery on account of the varieties of English (e.g. of Africa and Asia) in which they express themselves constitute almost insurmountable hurdles. Through a gripping introspection, Canagarajah poignantly describes his predicaments as an academic in Sri Lanka, experiences that clearly typify Euro-American intellectual imperialism, which extends to the control of mainstream publication avenues. As Werry (2005) aptly observes, linguists rarely allow self-reflexive scrutiny, assuming that linguistic discourse is a transparent metalanguage. On the contrary, I am of the opinion that the discourses that characterize disciplinary communities must lend themselves to self-reflexive examination in order to reveal and counter perceived injustices and unfair practices.

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