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Local Knowledge When Ranking Journals: Reproductive Effects and Resistant Possibilities

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Abstract: This article is based on the engagement of a US-based scholar and faculty members in a non-Western university in a mentoring exercise on publishing. It demonstrates how the “list” constructed in a particular academic department in the university for ranking relevant journals for publication has reproductive effects on knowledge construction. The ranking of journals shapes scholarly interactions both inside and outside the academic department, offering limited possibilities for developing local knowledge. A micro-level orientation to publishing is first adopted to bring out how rhetorical and textual choices are influenced by the list of ranked journals. Next, a broad lens perspective is adopted to explore how academic interactions and communication among local scholars are also shaped by such productivity targets to reproduce dominant knowledge. In the final section, the article reports on the way mentoring was reconfigured to identify strategic textual spaces for representing local knowledge within existing publishing conventions.

Keywords: scholarly communications; local knowledge; rankings.

Conocimiento Local y Clasificación de Revistas Científicas: Efectos reproductivos y posibilidades resistentes

Resumen: Este artículo se basa en el compromiso entre un docente en radicado Estados Unidos y colegas de una universidad no-occidental en un ejercicio de tutoría para la publicación. Demuestra cómo las "listas" construidas en un departamento académico en la universidad para clasificar revistas relevantes para su publicación tiene efectos reproductivos en la construcción del conocimiento. El ranking de las revistas moldea interacciones académicas dentro y fuera del departamento académico, que ofrece posibilidades limitadas para el desarrollo de los conocimientos locales. Una orientación a nivel micro de la publicación se adoptó para analizar cómo las opciones retóricas y textuales son influenciados por la lista de revistas clasificadas. A continuación, una perspectiva amplia se adoptó para explorar cómo las interacciones académicas y la comunicación entre los investigadores locales también son moldeadas por objetivos de productividad que reproducen el conocimiento dominante. En la sección final, los informes del artículo se reconfiguran para identificar espacios estratégicos para representar el conocimiento local dentro de las convenciones editoriales existentes.

Palabras clave: comunicación académica; conocimientos locales; rankings.

Conhecimento Local e Classificação de Periódicos Científicos : Efeitos reprodutivos e possibilidades fortes

Resumo: Este artigo é baseado numa colaboração para produzir publicações entre um professor radicado em os EUA e colegas de uma universidade não-occidental durante um ano. O artigo mostra como as "listas" construídas em um departamento acadêmico da universidade não-occidental para classificar as revistas relevantes para a publicação tem efeitos reprodutivos na construção do conhecimento. O ranking das revistas acadêmicas molda as interações dentro e fora do departamento acadêmico que oferece possibilidades limitadas para o desenvolvimento do conhecimento local. Uma orientação para o nível micro foi adotado para analisar a forma como as escolhas retóricas e textuais são influenciadas pela lista de revistas classificadas. Em seguida, uma perspectiva ampla foi adotada para explorar como as interações acadêmicas e da comunicação entre pesquisadores locais também são moldadas pelas metas de produtividade que reproduzem o conhecimento dominante. Na seção final, o artigo relata estratégias para identificar áreas chaves para representar o conhecimento local dentro das convenções editoriais existentes.

Palavras-chave: comunicação acadêmica , o conhecimento local; rankings.

Introduction

“We are working like factory workers trying to churn out papers.
Nobody cares about whether you enjoy your research.
The only thing which they care is output.”

In recent years, scholars have questioned the inequalities and biases in publishing practices. In the beginning, much of the criticism was motivated by the disadvantages for developing and non-English speaking communities outside the centers of research and education in the West (see Belcher, 2007; Braine, 2005; Canagarajah, 2002; Curry & Lillis, 2004; Flowerdew, 1999, 2000; Lillis & Curry, 2010). More recently, neoliberal orientations to productivity have caused concerns among scholars in the West as well about the implications for the quality of knowledge constructed under

the pressure of citation indexes, impact factor, and ranking. In a promising development, even editors of respectable journals have begun to question the implications of ranking for knowledge construction (see Byrnes, 2010; Editors, 2012). This article is a grounded perspective on the implications of ranking for knowledge production, scholarly networking, and academic communication in a specific local community.

For this case study I wish to extend the recent theorization of the editors of *Comparative Education Review* (CER) on the implications of ranking journals (Editors, 2012). In considering the increasing prominence of certified expertise, ranking, and quantification of knowledge, the editors situate these developments in the rise of Modernity and the continuing trends towards Managerialism. According to Deem:

Managerialism insists that ‘managing’ and ‘management’ are, respectively, socio-technical practices and the collective agents and institutions responsible for their enactment that are universally required in a modern, economically and technologically advanced society. These practices, agents, and institutions stand above, indeed outside, the wider social moral and political struggles. . . . As such, Managerialism is a general ideology or belief that regards managing and management as being functionally and technically indispensable to the achievement of economic progress, technological development, and social order within any modern political economy. (Deem et al., 2007, p. 6, as cited in Editors, 2012, p. 4)

Managerialism finds new realization in recent neoliberal discourses of productivity and progress. In an interesting paradox, though such discourses believe in the value of unregulated competition according to market forces to facilitate progress, they also assume the role of state and other institutions to create the conditions that favor such competition and maintain productivity measures (see Harvey, 2007).

There are many implications for higher education and knowledge construction from this paradox. As we well know, universities are also becoming corporatized, developing productivity measures to assess the research quality and output of their faculty members and to compare their performance with other universities. To facilitate such measures, we also find the ranking of journals based on citation frequencies. The editors of CER draw from the thinking of a range of social theorists such as Weber, Berger and Luckmann, and Foucault to consider how the institutions designed to manage education and scholarship take a life of their own, get divorced from the real value of inquiry, and then produce knowledge that serves their interests. These institutions develop their own norms, and then reproduce knowledge and social relations to sustain their hegemony. Thus criteria for measuring quality become translated into targets of productivity. These extrinsic targets become more important than the intrinsic worth of the academic products. In publishing, then, aspects such as citation patterns which can be indicators of peer uptake of an article become the objective for publications. Authors often adopt rhetorical strategies to make their articles more citable, and engage in name-dropping to boost the citation rates of the journals and scholars they favor. Editors too insist on writing practices that make the article more citable (such as choosing titles that are more visible for Internet search) and insist on articles in their journals being cited more frequently to make the article publishable.

I extend this perspective to include and interpret the publishing exercise reported in this article. In some ways, the perspective on Managerialism adopts a largely reproductionist orientation to knowledge and social institutions (see Bernstein, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1977). According to such a perspective, the power inequalities in society are maintained and sustained by dominant ideologies working through social institutions. Applied to educational institutions, the orientation powerfully demonstrates how dominant economic and ideological

interests shape the knowledge, values, and skills produced in schools and universities. In publishing, we can adopt a similar orientation to show how micro-textual and rhetorical features in writing academic articles can be shaped by dominant economic and ideological values. In this sense, neoliberal ideologies of accountability, productivity, and measurement, as well as the practices of Managerialism, can be manifest in the micro-level considerations of academic communication and interaction, and thus show the everyday effects of reproduction.

Theories of reproduction have been critiqued for being somewhat over-determined and deterministic (see Giroux, 1983; Canagarajah, 1999). Influenced by poststructuralist orientations, critical scholars attempt to identify spaces for critique, negotiation, and reconfiguration of power structures. Even in contexts of hegemonic institutions, researchers have identified institutional interstices or gaps where there are relatively safe spaces for oppositional thinking and practices. While the editors of CER identify new practices of publishing and refereeing that can counter the damaging effects of neoliberal ideologies and Managerialism, I explore possibilities at the textual level. To some extent, the practices identified by the editors of CER call for needed changes at the institutional level. I focus in this article on textual and discursive resistance within existing institutions and conventions to explore possibilities of a more subtle and micro-level changes from within.

A perspective that informs the discursive practices explored in this article is the distinction de Certeau draws between strategies and practices in everyday social life. De Certeau defines a strategy as:

the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the basis from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research, etc.) can be managed. (1984, pp. 35-36, emphasis original)

The construct explains the role of Managerialism in higher education well. Measures of productivity, and related institutions such as citation indexes and impact factors, are ways of the scholarly community delimiting the norms from which its power can be sustained, preferred knowledge promoted, and alternate forms of knowledge from other institutions excluded. In contrast to strategy, a tactic

is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. . . . The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. It does not have the means to keep to itself, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight, and self-collection. . . . It operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. (pp. 36-37)

What is significant about tactic is that it takes into account the framework set for operation by the strategy of the powerful. In this sense, it is a tactic of resistance from within. It identifies spaces within the existing conventions and practices to renegotiate dominant interests for its own purposes. This is a pragmatic approach, compared to certain orientations to resistance that disregard the status quo. It is idealistic to assume that one can move away from established conventions and practices in a given institution and still speak or act meaningfully. However, it is possible to reconfigure established conventions by taking them seriously and acting within them. Though there is the possibility for status quo to appropriate these forms of resistance through its revised strategies, there is also the possibility for change that is ground up and gradual. However, a minor qualification must be made. De Certeau conceives of tactics as “isolated actions” with an “absence of a proper

locus.” Is it not possible that such seemingly individual, hidden, and spontaneous acts of resistance create shared and evolving cultures of resistance? Elsewhere, I have demonstrated how scholars in the periphery develop shared writing practices meant to overcome some of the inequalities they face in dominant publishing conventions (see Canagarajah, 2003).

In areas of rhetoric and writing, Bhabha’s notion of hybridization offers a useful example of tactic at the discursive level. Since texts and language are not monolithic (despite the strategy of the powerful to define them so), there are spaces within them for diversity. In renegotiating genre and language conventions in their academic articles, scholars may represent local and critical knowledge to pluralize scholarship. Bhabha defines hybridization thus:

“The hybrid strategy or discourse opens up a space of negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal. Such negotiation is neither assimilation nor collaboration.” (1996, p. 58)

“For me, hybridization is a discursive, enunciatory, cultural, subjective process having to do with the struggle around authority, authorization, deauthorization, and the revision of authority. It’s a social process. It’s not about persons of diverse cultural tastes and fashions.” (1999, p.39)

By labeling this tactic "hybridization" rather than "hybridity," Bhabha focuses on the practices behind it rather than the product (as it has been adopted in popularized versions of this notion). In his words, it is a "process not a person." Needless to say, such practices are risky, contingent, and exploratory, open to assimilation or collaboration. In each context (of different journals, fields, and institutions), there might be different scope and avenues for hybridization, based on the fact that their conventions and discourses are equivocal and, thus, negotiable. Scholars have to be sensitive to the dominant conventions and practices in their disciplines and publishing contexts to identify spaces for negotiability and tactically encode alternate discourses.

In this study, I first show how a list, constructed in a particular academic department in a non-Western university for ranking relevant journals for publication (hereafter, the “List”), has reproductive effects on knowledge construction. This situated exploration brings out in greater detail the implications of ranking for the construction and representation of local knowledge. I show how this List shapes scholarly interactions both inside and outside the academic department, with implications for the types of knowledge created. I first adopt a micro-level orientation to publishing, considering how rhetorical and textual considerations are influenced by the List. I then broaden the lens to show how academic interactions and communication among local scholars are also shaped by such productivity targets to reproduce dominant knowledge. While my focus is on a specific academic field in a specific university in a specific country (as befitting a situated case study), I raise broader questions for the geopolitics of knowledge production and disciplinary discourses elsewhere. I hope that situated studies of this nature will help understand how academic managerial practices shape diverse areas of academic life, with different implications for different communities.

The Context

This article derives from my engagement as a US-based scholar with faculty members in a non-Western community in a mentoring exercise on publishing. As a visiting professor, I was assigned to meet with six junior scholars on a weekly basis for a month to work on their drafts for publication. Several other faculty members consulted me on their writing projects outside the mentoring group. Though I later revised my role as the exercise continued, I initially modeled my role along the notion of a “literacy broker.” Literacy brokers are defined as mentors, editors, friends, academic peers, translators, and English language specialists who intervene and influence texts as they move toward publication (see Curry & Lillis, 2010). Participants in the mentoring group each

maintained a journal to reflect on the dilemmas they faced. These dilemmas included such areas as framing the article, interpreting the data, citing relevant sources, and developing the implications of their studies. Participants treated this journal as a means of awareness development on composing and rhetorical practices. They also considered the possibility of publishing their collective reflections on the challenges in negotiating publishing norms, treating their journals, interactions, and drafts as data.

However, when I constructed a first draft of this report based on these sources of data for collaborative revision after the workshop, a majority of the participants reconsidered their decision. They feared that the critical orientation developing from our reflections and experience would prove to be a professional liability. Therefore, they declined to be named as co-authors and refused to grant me permission to quote them directly in the article. The scholars felt that even pseudonyms and anonymity will not provide them sufficient protection, as the details in their drafts and journals can reveal the context and identity. I will discuss below the local political and academic culture that explains their fear of penalization. Furthermore, as junior faculty members going through the tenure process, they found it risky to critique the establishing publishing practices and assessment criteria. On the one hand, it seems ironic that local scholars would be reluctant to articulate views that lead to their own empowerment. On the other hand, it may be a testament to the power of managerial ideologies and institutions that resistance against them is censored by the subjects themselves.

I eventually decided to frame this as a single-authored article based on my own observations and experiences after a version of the paper that went through double-blind review was recommended for publication. The editors and I decided that there was value in representing such experiences of vulnerable faculty members and marginalized scholars, after taking sufficient safeguards to protect everyone's anonymity. We realized that there was no way to fully protect everyone's identity without also masking the name of the country where the scholars reside. Therefore, I am presenting a version of the paper that omits considerable contextual information in deference to the concerns of the other scholars involved in this project. I quote directly from the drafts and journals of a couple of scholars who gave me permission to do so. In the case of others, I provide only my observations and interpretations of their experiences without quoting their words directly. I have to take sole responsibility for the views expressed in this article. Though my own journal, observation, and interactions, together with the drafts and journals of the participants provide possibilities for triangulation, I have to present this article as a narrative of my own situated experiences and perspectives on the publishing challenges for these scholars in this country.

"Nation X" (the label I will use to refer to the country where the university is located) is a good example of a country that measures productivity in efficient and planned ways and makes steady progress towards development. The political culture is very managerial, with all social domains under close surveillance. Some might consider the country as featuring a one-party, or a single-family, rule despite the veneer of democracy. There are much-publicized cases of scholars who published critically on local social realities failing to get tenure or being charged for defamation. The limits on free expression in Nation X came under spotlight recently when an Ivy League American university planned to establish a satellite campuses there to make liberal arts education available locally. However, unlike many other non-Western countries, Nation X is not a poor country. It has the economic and technological resources for local scholars to be networked globally. Two local universities are ranked highly in the international higher education system. Their success is no doubt attributable to the pressure to excel in research and publish in prestigious journals. An example of such measures of productivity and success in many departments in local universities is the tiered list of journals to publish in. Scholars are intensely aware of the need to publish in such

recognized journals for tenure and promotion. The managerial system in Nation X is able to effectively enforce such productivity measures on scholars and universities.

This mentoring experience focuses on a specific area of scholarship that unifies the work of the participants—applied linguistics. This field addresses the interface of education and linguistics. Though not all of applied linguistics has a pedagogical focus, the research of the department in which this mentoring exercise occurred has such a focus. The department also works in collaboration with the Ministry of Education in Nation X. Faculty members have to visit secondary schools to observe classroom teaching and offer consultation to local teachers and administrators.

The mentoring and publishing exercises were constrained by the document of ranked journals circulated internally by the department, titled “International Refereed Journals Relevant to Language Studies.” None of my informants had detailed information on how this List was constructed. One participant said that “a panel of colleagues review journals and rank them.” I gathered that the faculty member overseeing research activities and a few senior scholars in the department had constructed it. The List contains 204 journals. They are arranged into three tiers. Though impact factor seems to influence the ranking of the journals, this is not always the case. In some cases, the “prestige” of the journal (measured by other considerations) supersedes impact factor. For example, TESOL Quarterly has an impact factor of .9069. It appears in tier 1, as it is the flagship journal of the global association for English language teaching (TESOL International). Certain other journals with a higher impact factor—i.e., *Scientific Studies of Reading*, with an impact factor of 1.864—are not in tier 1. Not only is the latter journal from a less known professional organization, this is also because it is a niche journal, focusing on a narrow area of the field. (Other journals in this category include those focusing on corpus research or computer assisted learning.) Some journals (such as *System*) appear in tier 1, though they are ranked lower by other universities in both Nation X and outside. (Some mentoring group members explained that this ranking had ulterior motivations as certain senior members in the committee that constructed the List had published in *System* before. It is not known what other journal got into the List this way.) Furthermore, many journals published regionally (such as *Asian Englishes*, *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*, and the *Asia Pacific Journal of Language in Education*) appear in tier 3. However, other journals “local” to the West (with titles such as the “*British Journal of—*” or “*American Journal of—*”) are placed in tier 1. In some cases, the ranking has little to do with their impact factor of the journals. For example, the *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* with an impact factor of 0.492 is tier 2, but the *British Journal of Educational Studies* with 0.568 is tier 1. These hierarchies reflect other biases in academic communication. Studies emerging in local settings outside the West are often treated as parochial, while those from the West (including those focusing on local policy issues such as *No Child Left Behind*) are treated as universal. While the former studies have to be related to the international conversations to be considered for publishing, the latter seem to enjoy automatic status as matters of global relevance.

Writing Practice

I now narrate how the List shapes writing, textual and rhetorical decisions for members of the mentoring group. To begin with, the List dictated their choice of journals and, in effect, the types of studies to be conducted. Their orientation has been shaped by unsuccessful publishing attempts in the past, when they addressed concerns important for their local languages or communities in their submissions. A scholar who had focused on a local language for her dissertation research reflected in her journal how she had some bad experiences trying to publish a paper on the acquisition of pragmatic norms in that language. The topic was recommended by her dissertation supervisor who said it would be an interesting addition to the current body of L2

pragmatics research, which focuses rather heavily on Western languages as a target language while overlooking non-Western languages. She got positive reviews on her draft from peers and mentors, but unfortunately it was turned down by all the journals she submitted it to. Some rejected it without sending it for review because they felt that it did not fit with the journal's scope and aim. Others said they would not be interested in a topic that they felt did not have much to do with the concerns of scholars in the rest of the world. She was now ready to abandon that manuscript. We must remember that many international journals define their "scope and aims" in terms of publishing studies that contribute to a "global" conversation relevant to scholars everywhere. Their notion of global is influenced by the biases noted above. In this sense, "scope and aims" are already unfair, though they may sound like objective criteria for rejection of an article.

Another member of our group stated that she has started choosing what article to write and even what subject to research based on her choice of the ranked journal. She confessed that she had given up writing on issues that she was passionate about. This is because she found after working on some projects that they did not fit the most current conversations or "scope and aims" of the ranked journals. She wryly reflected that she might reverse the process in the future and first do a "needs analysis" of what was needed by the journals before she started her research. This way, she would write on something that fit the "needs" of the ranked journals. Hers is an ironic use of the term "needs analysis." In language teaching circles, this refers to a survey on the needs of learners in order to design a relevant and meaningful curriculum. In this colleague's case, the term refers to taking stock of the topics a journal is interested in. The dominant conversations on its pages would suggest the "need" of the journal. The scholar thus identifies her research topic and designs her study based on this information. Her research, therefore, is not defined by the pressing concerns of her teaching or social context but the needs of the listed journal.

On the one hand, the fact that the topics and concerns of ranked journals do not relate to the concerns of local scholars can have serious repercussions on the research motivation and passion for writing. Another scholar (willing to be quoted, whom I will refer to as Sean) said, "I'll be honest and say that i hate reading most of the ed research stuff in the countless journals out there. Even the top journals regularly turn out pieces that bore me utterly. I don't want to be a boring writer, but i feel that i must to some degree participate in these tedious conversations by getting published in some top-tier journals. Otherwise, i won't get tenure and advance in this profession." [All texts from data are quoted with minimal editing to reflect the styles of the informants].

Another scholar reflected on the limited possibility of publishing the research he really cared about, "I think it is quite de-motivating. We are working like factory workers trying to churn out papers. Nobody cares about whether you enjoy your research. The only thing which they care is output." Interestingly, such publishing requirements also had implications for other areas of professional life, such as teaching. Sean went on to mention, "Oh, did i mention also that i'm beginning to hate teaching because much of it doesn't seem to be contributing to my research output? No time to write, read, think, feel, etc."

On the other hand, those who did conduct a study in a local context mentioned the efforts they had to make to shape it for publication in ranked journals. They confessed that they made what appeared to be a fabricated and artificial connection with global concerns in order to make the article publishable. A lot of rhetorical strategies go into shaping the study for ranked journals. For certain scholars, the local had to be filtered out as the study is framed in relation to "international" conversations. It often also involves interpreting the findings in relation to non-local concerns. Furthermore, the implications of the findings may not be discussed in relation to local social needs or policy considerations. I discuss below, from the experiences of those in the mentoring group, some of the textual implications of this shaping process.

Much time in our mentoring exercise was spent on the framing of the research article (hereafter RA). As many scholars would affirm, the framing of the article plays a critical role in the publishability of the RA. In recognition of this fact, as ethnographers of writing find, writers expend most amount of time and effort in the opening of the article (Knorr-Cetina, 1981). Swales (1990) has categorized the opening of the RA as constituting three “moves” in his influential CARS (i.e., Create a Research Space) model. The three moves are: Establishing a Territory, Establishing a Niche, and Occupying the Niche. Authors typically identify the disciplinary conversation to situate their article and establish the centrality of their study; then they identify a gap in the conversation to make a case for the relevance and significance of their study; finally, they announce their argument/thesis to show how they fill the gap they have identified.

As we found out in our mentoring meetings, decisions relating to these three moves are shaped by the List. Since authors are compelled to treat the tier 1 journals outside their region as the best venue for their work, they feel pressured to establish the territory of their studies (even though locally conducted) in terms of translocal disciplinary conversations. Consider the example of two scholars who were working on a collaborative article on the acquisition of bilingual pragmatics in family settings. The authors were initially confused as to the territory/centrality of their paper. They were torn between framing the RA in terms of the needs of Nation X families or disciplinary debates in the field. They initially outlined three different disciplinary territories and a contextual/social centrality. In terms of the latter, they made a case for critical information parents needed in order to shape their feedback to their children to facilitate pragmatic acquisition. However, they were not certain that this kind of opening will be persuasive for a journal published in the West. The dominant conventions of RA favor the relevance of an article in terms of new knowledge rather than in terms of social relevance (see Canagarajah, 2002). Centrality claimed on social needs and investment is often treated as irrelevant or biased. Furthermore, the social concerns of non-Western communities would be treated as even less relevant by international journals. The authors doubted that a leading journal in the West would be impressed with a study that helps local parents model their speech for their children’s language acquisition. The authors eventually situated their study within an esoteric disciplinary debate in pragmatics. They opened their article with a review of research on “corrective feedback,” deciding to drop the social relevance from their subsequent drafts.

In terms of making disciplinary niches in the opening, the participants in my group felt they had to be careful in identifying a niche that relates to the conversations in the West. It is an unstated realization locally that the conversations that matter are those in the elite research centers and professional communities in the West. This bias can exclude certain disciplinary niches that speak to the concerns of local communities. In another collaborative article by two scholars on local secondary school teachers’ stated knowledge and beliefs about instructional pragmatics, the authors initially identified a niche in relation to the place of pragmatics in bilingual communication. It is possible to make a niche by arguing for a type of pragmatics that went beyond the L1/L2 (i.e., first language/second language) binaries dominating the field. One could argue that a bilingual pragmatic competence (that developed not in relation to one language or the other, but something in between) has not been considered in language acquisition studies. In fact, some teachers interviewed by the authors did state that they have to teach pragmatics differently because their students use English in everyday life with a mix of local languages. There is thus a good opportunity for the authors to complicate the discourse on pragmatics in mainstream disciplinary circles by drawing from local communicative realities. Notwithstanding this opportunity, the authors chose instead to frame their study in terms of the constructs already available in the field. They established the niche in terms of teacher knowledge in L2 pragmatics instruction. They considered the alternate framing too risky. They felt that it would take too much time and space to make a case for an alternate paradigm,

taking valuable space away from the discussion of their data. Besides, there would be the danger that such a niche may not connect to the existing discourses. In fact, their submission might get rejected outright for not falling under the guidelines of the journals, which currently identify themselves as either L2 or L1 based.

A related issue was what citations were employed to establish one's disciplinary territory and niche. My mentoring group participants felt they should cite publications by scholars in the West rather than studies in locally published books and journals. They mentioned that they often felt a subtle pressure by reviewers and editors of international journals during review process to cite articles previously published in their own pages. In one sense, such citation practices explain the high impact factor that accounts for the tier 1 status of these journals. But this practice affects knowledge construction as well. The choice of citations subtly frames the conversation the study enters into. The centrality of the topic discussed and the niche created relate to the publications cited in the framing of the article. Consider the citations in the previously mentioned article on the teaching of pragmatics in local schools. The authors mostly cite articles from outside Nation X to frame and interpret their study. Although it is possible that some of the studies they cite are from other multilingual communities (similar to Nation X), those authors too do not foreground the cultures and communities where these studies come from. The titles of these papers foreground the disciplinary niches and not the places where they have been studied. Given the reproductive effects of publishing conventions, those authors also probably felt pressured to filter the local out of their articles for tier 1 journals. The authors of the collaborative article cited only one article from their own nation, one which discusses syllabus design in ELT in local classes, not specifically the role of pragmatics. Eventually, it appeared as if the authors were simply using local data to conduct a disciplinary conversation that is denuded of social context. The citations built a discursive world that compels us to read the local data in terms of an "unplaced" disciplinary discourse.

The trouble with this result did not arise because there were no local conversations on issues central to the discipline. Rather, there is such a vast difference between the local and global conversations that scholars may find it difficult to make the connections in their publications. In one case, a local scholar (whom I will call Celia) consulted me on an abstract for a scholarly conference in the United States. It was on critical pedagogy and written, in part, as thus:

Language, Literacy, Criticality: Pedagogical Issues and Possibilities in Critical Applied Linguistics

Applied linguistic scholarship that takes a critical and questioning stance towards issues of power, difference and resistance in relation to language and its contexts of use has gained prominence within the field. . . . Accompanying theoretical applied linguistic work, there have also been attempts to discuss and document how criticality, in Pennycook's sense of the word, can be fostered through pedagogical interventions, particularly in language teaching/learning (e.g., Norton & Toohey, 2004). However, applied linguistic work that focuses on critical pedagogical approaches to language and literacy has been scarce, especially when compared to the body of critical conceptual work seen in the last few years. This colloquium aims to draw attention to the need for continuous discussion within applied linguistics about the possibility of pedagogical responses to issues raised by theoretical critiques of global political-economic arrangements and their impact on language. The papers in the colloquium represent a range of contexts and perspectives. Some raise broad questions of critical pedagogy, situating it within current debates in applied linguistics, while others focus on specific settings, particular issues and contextual responses to them. They are united in

their commitment to reflexive pedagogical practice and in their conviction of the necessity to foster criticality and awareness among language users.

The abstract assumed that critical pedagogy was new in applied linguistics and pedagogical application “has been scarce.” It is framed in terms of tensions between theory and practice in critical discourse. Reading the abstract from an American lens, I found these assumptions problematic. Having been part of the critical pedagogy movement in language teaching circles, I did not think of pedagogical approaches and applications as scarce. I had myself published such studies. Furthermore, I conveyed to the author that I did not write or speak on anything titled “critical pedagogy” lately as there was a sense in the field that critical pedagogy has been accepted as an important movement and become “old news.” In fact, in some circles it has become the orthodoxy. The interest has now shifted to particular challenges in critical pedagogy, such as addressing identities of gender or nonnativity, or accommodating practices such as multilingualism or multimodality.

During Celia's consultation, however, I realized that there were good reasons why critical pedagogy still posed considerable problems locally and generated a different local conversation. Celia explained that in non-Western communities such as hers, where criticality is not valued and often suppressed, critical pedagogy posed considerable challenges for classroom implementation. This may not be the case in the West, where a liberal and individualistic temperament is treated as the norm, at least in higher education circles. Therefore, critical pedagogy has to be realized in a different way, or might take different forms, in local communities. Unfortunately, these legitimate local conversations might go unpublished in the West, being treated as out of date, unoriginal, or irrelevant in relation to their concerns.

The local can get suppressed in other sections beyond the framing. Though their data is steeped in local contingencies and details, authors feel pressured to filter out the contextual information when they interpret their findings. However, if all knowledge is local, the situated meanings and contingencies can add a lot to the findings. Authors may miss the opportunity to bring out significant insights to reconstruct disciplinary constructs. In the article cited earlier on the acquisition of bilingual pragmatics in family settings, the authors chose to frame the paper eventually in the disciplinary discourse on corrective feedback in L2. The specificity of the data obtained in one's locale recedes to the background. Interestingly, there is a brief mention later in an inconspicuous section that local data might not easily fit into the current dichotomy of L1 and L2 pragmatic studies. The bilingual subjects state that as they adopt conventions that are a hybrid of both languages. Despite acknowledging this anomaly, the authors moved on to discuss their data in terms of L2 pragmatics. In personal conversation, they mentioned that it might be a difficult and risky argument to engage with the context-specificity of the data and complicate disciplinary knowledge. Though engaging with the social context and local knowledge can make a profound difference in central disciplinary constructs, the authors chose to interpret the data in relation to dominant disciplinary discourses in the West. In effect, they had imposed a disciplinary grid that failed to address the complexity of their data or realize its opportunity for development.

The conventional “implications” sections that are found in the conclusion of many articles published in *The List* journal can also detract from issues of local relevance. Many authors tended to adopt a largely descriptive focus and conducted “normal science” in a positivistic mode. They stopped with the immediate implications for the disciplinary constructs and rarely proceeded to explore the social and pedagogical ramifications of their findings. In some cases, the social ramifications can actually help reframe the article in a manner that makes a different contribution to the scholarly conversation. For example, some scholars are studying local varieties of English. In a draft titled “Negotiating Grammaticality in [Nation X] English,” where the author (whom I will call Sue) complicates the notion that local English is a monolithic variety and brings out its grammatical

diversity, she frames the paper around a methodological debate. While the internal variation in local English has been observed in qualitative studies, Sue argued that she will show it (perhaps with finer detail to bring out greater internal variation) from a corpus-based quantitative approach. This framing of the paper around a methodological niche helps in many ways. In one sense, Sue was able to move the discussion beyond local concerns and connect the paper to broader disciplinary debates. Those scholars who are not particularly interested in Nation X English may value the study for its methodological contribution. However, from another perspective, this methodological (and descriptive) focus distracts the author from critiquing some of the limiting assumptions in World Englishes studies (see Kachru, 1986). The dominant orientation that there are Englishes organized around nation-state boundaries can be easily critiqued by her study. In a multilingual country such as hers, where diverse languages are in contact with English and subcultural groups use different varieties, the notion of a homogeneous variety of “national” English would be untenable. There are many policy and pedagogical implications deriving from the nation-state orientation to World Englishes that will also come into question.

Outside the Text

In addition to shaping the textual representation of knowledge, the List also had implications for the way in which local scholars positioned themselves in relation to their social contexts as they engaged in knowledge construction. To begin with, the filtering of the local to produce “unplaced”/generic disciplinary knowledge enabled scholars to avoid commenting on local policies. In the case cited above, the methodological focus would help the author steer clear of the official government policy of speaking “Good English.” (I omit the well-known policy slogan, as it will give away the country.) The government is promoting “native speaker” norms (such as British or American English) and trying to eradicate local varieties of English on the understanding that they will improve communicative efficiency for international relations and economic development. Though there are some very talented scholars working on local English varieties, and they understand their sociolinguistic appropriateness in postcolonial settings, they adopt a descriptive focus and avoid commenting on policy issues. There are other controversial local policy issues, such as the promotion of a regional lingua franca over the heritage dialects, that scholars consider forbidden territory. Sue reflected in her journal about

an experience recounted to me by one of our colleagues who wrote a controversial paper on Mother Tongue instruction in She never submitted the paper for publication as she felt that it could be used against her, that it could result in some sort of censure.

Less tragic, but equally disturbing are some of the laundered accounts and interpretations of the social impact of [local] language policies--those that promote [the regional lingua francae] at the expense of the mother tongues of the community here, those that promote “Good English” (Does anybody have a problem with the term “good English”? Can English be good?) and discourage [local Englishes], etc.

Another scholar narrated an example of her research on teacher knowledge. Her findings generated a complicated picture of the beliefs and assumptions of local teachers. An official from the Ministry of Education had expressed discomfort with publishing the study in that form. She feared that the study would present an unflattering picture of local teachers. Later, the local official had suggested that the author provide some suggestions that would make the article more “constructive” and “positive” rather than merely critical. Examples like this explain the reluctance of

local scholars to comment on their implications for local policies of language teaching and education deriving from their research.

In an interesting paradox, this silence on local policy implications in deference to the dominant political discourse is aided by the international publishing discourse which finds the local to be peripheral and even irrelevant. Within this discourse, local scholars can, with good conscience, avoid critical applications promoting alternate policies as they focus on the more abstract disciplinary conversations required by the top-tier journals. In this sense, publishing practices and ranking may unwittingly collude with authoritarian political regimes in moving conversations away from situated and critical local discourses.

The formation of local scholarly networks that could ferment critical discourses was also affected by the List. Local scholars did not exhibit too much motivation to network with fellow scholars on topics of mutual interest, as they were focused on establishing connections with scholars in the West to gain access to publications in ranked journals. I jotted down the following in my journal:

[Rodney] tells me that he is more interested in networking with colleagues and peers in the US or UK. It was important for him to network with scholars in the West who were tuned in to disciplinary conversations in the mainstream. He considered them the primary audience of his studies and writing on [xxx]. Therefore, he derived more benefits in being networked with them. Though there are many local scholars with areas of similar interest—i.e., in topics such as World Englishes—they do not display too much interest in organizing themselves or developing multiplex channels of communication. (I do find some personalized collaboration between supervisors and mentees, or colleagues working on a limited publishing project, such as an article.) In general, local scholars seem to be very “outside” oriented. They are flying out for conferences and workshops in UK or Australia, but don’t have enough time to meet each other in their offices. Office doors are mostly closed, with scholars working by themselves. Faculty members stop by for a quick word in the corridors, rather than engaging in sustained collaboration on specific projects.

In a sense, there was also very little time available for local scholars to network with others in their local institutions. The fact is that local institutions prioritize teaching and teaching-related service (such as classroom observations). In addition, scholars had to teach six courses in an academic year. They have to seek time for research and publication from the precious little time left after those responsibilities. Here is another entry from my journal:

Local scholars appear to be under considerable stress and seem exhausted with teaching and service that they do not have too much time for socializing among themselves or with me. Their weariness is often written on their faces and bodies. They walk around the corridors as if they are exhausted and lifeless. Though [Ruth] and [John] emailed me before my visit and said that they will like to meet with me and discuss some of my publications, they haven’t found the time to do so. And now my visit is coming to an end! They give me “apologies” about being busy when I see them in the corridors. Junior scholars joke about the unfairness in comparing their performance with scholars in elite research institutions for tenure and promotion. Some scholars mentioned their in-group slogan “A teaching university that pretends to be a research university” for their institution. These constraints also seem to make the scholars very individualistic, as they are focused on using the precious little time on working hard to reach journals and

audiences outside their institutions for their academic status, rather than socializing among themselves.

The reproduction of the List, therefore, works in complex ways. To begin with, the preference of the department for international journals with a high impact factor shapes the micro-level rhetorical and textual decisions made by local authors in their articles. Though there are rigorous studies conducted in local contexts with rich local data, they are framed and interpreted in relation to translocal disciplinary debates in order to be publishable in such journals. Local scholars are distracted from making critical contributions for local social, educational, and linguistic life, as they frame their knowledge in terms of disciplinary discourses. As the data and findings get interpreted in relation to the conversations in Western academic circles, mainstream scholarly discourses get further developed. Local conversations are peripheralized and local knowledge remains undeveloped. More ironically, the translocal discourses begin to hegemonize other conversations. The knowledge constructed in the West begins to shape how experiences are perceived locally--not only by the Western scholars, but by local scholars themselves. Local realities are interpreted in relation to discourses from the center. As presumably all local communities shape their knowledge in relation to these centralized and limited discourses, knowledge is developed in terms of the journals and institutions in the West. Such production of knowledge affects the formation of scholarly networks and academic communication. Local communities focus on being networked with scholars in the West and ignore channels in their own setting. This tendency limits the possibilities for the construction of local knowledge that can creatively challenge central disciplinary constructs. Unfortunately, this arrangement is convenient for local power structures also. As local scholars conduct "normal science" or engage in disciplinary conversations in the West, there is no danger of local policies being challenged. All this leads to strengthening the status quo. It results in a self-confirming view of the world and reality that sustains the status of the privileged. Needless to say, as knowledge is constructed in terms of mainstream disciplinary conversations, the impact factor of ranked journals also goes up, further confirming the inequalities in the List.

Ways Forward

As a mentoring group, we did reflect on ways to mitigate the local/global hierarchy, and the impoverishment of local resources, knowledge, and networks in knowledge construction. Despite the overdetermined nature of Managerialism's reproductionist processes, we considered how there might be spaces in the micro-level domains of text and rhetoric for critique and reconfiguration. One of Sean's journal entries provided us some clues. He wrote:

Critical scholarship ought to challenge the neoliberal political economy of academic publishing in both strategic and tactical ways (in a de Certeau-ian sense). What's important for me now is to focus on my intrinsic motivators, focus less on some of the debilitating circumstances here at xxx (esp the lack of any real intellectual community around my areas of research interest), and be "tactical" in doing what the institution wants while satisfying my own agenda for now. I have even contemplated quitting academia once my bond is up. But that's another story....

The idea that we might be able to bring our knowledge into the dominant structures of knowledge production as a form of tactic was interesting to explore. This is a wise approach, as we cannot reject outright the admittedly unfair publishing arrangement in academia. Rejection of such institutional practices is no less than professional suicide. The approach suggested by Sean hints at a possibility of resistance from within. While engaging with top-tier publications to satisfy institutional

requirements, we must also explore how to represent our own interests. It is possible to both engage with the dominant discourses and also find spaces for our agendas to complicate publishing practices? I offer a few examples on how we attempted to move forward in this direction.

Consider how Celia revised the conference abstract cited earlier for submission. Here is her revised version after consultation with me:

Critical Pedagogical Practice: Research from International Settings

It is fair to say that criticality has become mainstreamed in applied linguistic research and scholarship. While prefixing one's work as critical was quite common even ten years ago, it is increasingly difficult to locate published studies that bear that mark explicitly. A critical and questioning stance towards issues of power, difference and resistance provides the basis for current conceptual debates that center around issues of migration, globalization, neoliberalism and their complex linkages to and impacts on language learning, literacy, identity, and access (e.g., Block, Gray & Holborrow, 2012; Blommaert, 2010; Canagarajah, 2013). Being critical is the norm, at least in the liberal sociopolitical contexts of North-American scholarship. As a result, continued problematization of what it means to be critical seems to have become irrelevant.

The debate about the importance and possibility of critical scholarship and practice is far from over in other contexts where political, cultural and educational discourses, traditions and realities clash with emancipatory goals of critical approaches. Researchers and educators in these contexts find themselves confronted with several questions: What exactly does it mean to be critical in diverse cultures? How do teachers initiate critical practice among students who have been socialized not to critique? What are possible forms of agency that can be fostered in settings where tradition is valued?

This colloquium brings together applied linguists working in contexts where a critical stance as a social asset and an educational goal is not the norm. Based on case studies of engaging with criticality in teaching practice, participants will discuss broader conceptual issues related to critical scholarship and pedagogy in these settings. It is hoped that the colloquium will raise awareness within applied linguistics of the need for multi-centered discussions of criticality and, thus, the diversification of discussion within the field.

The writer is tactical in showing how local pedagogical realities can creatively complicate the Western discourses on critical pedagogy. To do this, she first engages with the dominant discourses. She signals an awareness of the status of critical pedagogy in the West (i.e., that it has become orthodoxy, and treated as old news, with rarefied new subjects under discussion) before she makes a case for scholars engaging with non-Western pedagogical contexts. Rather than presenting this project as simply a case of local application, the author shows the theoretical significance and motivations behind this application. From this perspective, local realities can serve as an asset in entering strategically into mainstream disciplinary conversations. This might be an example of the resistant potential in Bhabha's discursive process of hybridization in publishing. In fact, in some projects, we recognized that local conversations and social realities can provide a persuasive edge to submissions. We can try to persuade international journals that an exploration of local realities can fruitfully reconfigure knowledge paradigms and constructs in the discipline. Especially on topics related to World Englishes, Heritage Language maintenance, and Multilingualism, local communities enjoy experiences and knowledge that can make a critical contribution. Of course, this approach is rhetorically risky, and uptake is not always guaranteed. It is understandable therefore that many local

scholars, especially those that are junior and facing the ominous tenure clock, would rather resort to building on established discourses rather than complicating them.

As we continued our critical reflection and struggled with ways of framing our local research in a manner that is both intellectually honest and ideologically empowering, we also reconsidered the nature of the mentoring exercise. The notion of “literacy broker” has been applied in instrumentalist, pragmatic, and linear ways hitherto. The dominant understanding is that literacy brokers help off-networked authors approximate their article to the dominant norms and conventions of their publishing venue (see, for example, Lillis & Curry, 2010). However, we realized in our group that one has to engage more critically in this venture. To this end, I revised the appropriate mission as one of “resistant brokering.” I explored how to tap into my academic insider/outsider identities to help demystify the dominant conventions. As a former editor of a leading journal in applied linguistics (*TESOL Quarterly*), I understood the dominant publishing practices from the inside. But as I come from another multilingual non-Western community, Sri Lanka, I also appreciated the critical possibilities in local knowledge. As I introduced the dominant conventions of RA, such as the CARS model, the mentoring group discussed the ideological implications of these conventions and ways to subvert them for its own purposes. The group read a critical article on publishing (Editors, 2012, cited in the beginning of this article) and discussed the implications for publishing in Nation X. I looked for journals which were open to disciplinary critique and creative new genre conventions while being respectable in the field. To the scholar who expressed an interest in doing a “needs analysis” to figure out what top-tier journals wanted, I wrote the following email: “Rather than doing fresh research to suit the needs of the journal, we can also explore which journal suits our existing research.”

As we worked on our drafts, we considered how we can make spaces for local knowledge and deconstruct dominant disciplinary constructs. Sue mentioned that she sometimes widened her publishing repertoire, opting to submit something to a professional newsletter or less prestigious regional journal in order to address a wider readership. She sometimes sacrificed tiered journals for a sole authored book or a less prestigious local journal as it guaranteed a more relevant readership for her work. Sean, in his journal, also shared with us how he once sacrificed prestige for readership:

i recently found time to write a manuscript criticizing the whole premise of scientifically based research on teaching - a mammoth task (for a beginning scholar like me) that required following a long scholarly conversation among some of the bigwigs in the field. It was a toss up between the *Journal of Curriculum Studies* and *Curriculum Inquiry*. The former has a higher impact factor and arguably more widely circulated, but the latter has a more critical pedigree with work by critical scholars that i've long admired. Eventually, I decided to send the MS to *Curriculum Inquiry*, because i felt that my piece would (a) be better appreciated by the scholars on the editorial board, (b) fit better with the more theoretical-critical "ethos" of the journal, (c) put me in the company of scholars i admired should it get published. To me, these factors were more worth the marginal cost of a higher impact rating with JCS. Eventually, CI published the piece (after subjecting my MS to six reviewers, a process that increased my respect for the journal), so i think this is a happy story for now.

Others shared how they sometimes sought diverse ways to disseminate a previously published work in a high-tier journal to local colleagues through other means. Sean shared an example of this in his journal:

Not many people read what you write anyway, especially if you haven't established a name for yourself. And even if they did, it's not as if this kind of

"critical scholarship" is going to materially change or "heal the world and make it a better place for the entire human race" (to quote the late Michael Jackson). As if to compensate for this sense of futility, I've surreptitiously put up my pieces on academic.org and provide weblinks to my Dropbox copies of my articles in an effort to "promote" my work. Yet I do so with "fear and trembling" - with a paradoxical sense of pride and self-deprecation. Am I really hungry for attention and affirmation when ultimately the people who seem to care about what I publish are precisely those who don't really care about the quality of my publications?

What these examples suggested was that there was already a hidden and undeveloped culture of resistance among these. They were adopting diverse tactics to counter the limiting effects of Managerialism and promote local knowledge. It is interesting to explore if these somewhat intuitive and individual tactics can be marshaled, explicated, and theorized to develop a culture of resistant knowledge on academic publishing.

As we continued our mentoring exercise, we appreciated the importance of progressively reconfiguring academic publishing to facilitate a more democratic conversation between communities. The idea presented by Celia in the abstract cited above, that we should move towards "multi-centered discussions" in our disciplinary fields, provided a model worth working towards. Without adequate representation of local knowledge, the constructs and discourses in our fields will be distorted and illusory. It is ironic that on many issues intensely experienced and lived out in Nation X, disciplinary theorization is done by Eurocentric journals, scholars, and communities. Local scholars too have to work within these paradigms to improve their publishing prospects. However, without critically engaging with the knowledge of local scholars and communities, the disciplinary paradigms will be weak and thin. Consider topics in applied linguistics, such as World Englishes, Multicultural Education, Heritage Language instruction, and Skilled Migration. Nation X experiences these realities qualitatively and quantitatively in different ways from other communities. It can evolve as a "center" for knowledge relating to these experiences. Rather than elite research centers in the West being treated as authorities in all areas of knowledge in all fields, we should consider how certain institutions and regions in other locations can emerge as the hub for knowledge on specific topics, with their own platforms for scholarly communication and knowledge exchange.

For areas like World Englishes or Heritage Language teaching, local universities have enough expertise and a critical mass of professionals to become centers of excellence. If local scholars can network among themselves, collaborate with each other in a more programmatic way, and sustain these areas of research, they will develop a stature that is unique in the field for these areas of inquiry. They can make a radical contribution to knowledge construction by articulating and theorizing local experiences in relation to the central constructs in the discipline. They will also be able to develop journals devoted to sponsoring knowledge unique to these topics. Already, regional journals have the material and resources to develop as suitable platforms for such critical work in these areas. In order to develop this stature, these journals should articulate a conscious mission to promote scholarship and studies on local realities. Currently, these journals publish center-based prestigious scholars to boost their status. For these scholars, regional journals become a fall back option when their articles are rejected by ranked journals. If regional journals perform the mission of promoting local knowledge, it is possible that their impact factor will also rise. Scholars from elsewhere will have to cite their articles for these topics. If such lines of development take shape--admittedly a long-term proposition--perhaps the List will also be revised and reconfigured to reflect the more diversified knowledge and knowledge sources.

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David Post is Senior Policy Analyst with the Global Monitoring Report of Education For All, and is currently based at UNESCO in Paris. He also is Professor of Comparative and International Education who is currently on leave from Penn State University in the USA. He has researched and published about educational stratification, about child labor issues, as well as the politics of educational mobilization. He also investigates the impact of concurrent employment on student academic achievement. He has been a visiting professor at the Colegio de México, at the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, and at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Finally, David served for ten years as editor of *Comparative Education Review*, where he became concerned about the commodification of scholarship and the possible responses to it by intellectuals, for example through peer-reviewed, open access publication of studies like those in this special issue. Last year, the EEPA printed the Spanish version of his commentary, "Los Rankings Académicos." <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/1347>

SPECIAL ISSUE

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