

This Anglo-corporate Hegemony Must End

Esta hegemonia anglosajona-corporativa debe terminar

Essa hegemonia anglo-saxônica corporativa precisa acabar

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Abstract: This essay looks at how structures of imperial power characterize the production, distribution, and recognition of academic writing, notably through the hegemony of English. It interrogates questions of language, scholarly publishing, and imperialism, with a particular focus on disciplines associated with the media and communications, in a Latin American context.

Keywords:

Academic publishing, language, imperialism, communications

Resumen: Este ensayo analiza cómo las estructuras del poder imperial caracterizan la producción, distribución y reconocimiento de la escritura académica, especialmente a través de la hegemonía del inglés. Examina cuestiones de lenguaje, publicación académica e imperialismo, con especial atención a las disciplinas relacionadas con los medios de comunicación en un contexto latinoamericano.

Palabras clave:

Publicaciones académicas, lenguaje, imperialismo, comunicaciones

Resumo: Este ensaio examina como as estruturas do poder imperial caracterizam a produção,

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distribuição e reconhecimento da escrita acadêmica, notadamente por meio da hegemonia do inglês. Questiona questões de linguagem, publicação acadêmica e imperialismo, com foco particular em disciplinas associadas à mídia e à comunicação, em um contexto latino-americano.

Palavras-chave:

Publicação acadêmica, linguagem, imperialismo, comunicações

1. The Growth of Literacy

Two hundred years ago, 12% of the world's population was alphabetic; forty-five years ago, the figure was 68%; today, 86% (Roser and Ortiz-Ospina, 2018; UNESCO, 2023). More people are able to read and write than ever before, in their own languages and others. Allied to high-tech translation, this should make for a remarkable cornucopia of scholarly knowledge. It hasn't. Why? My brief contribution to "Studying communication from a decolonial perspective: epistemological, methodological, and political considerations" examines scholarly production and recognition, per my talk for the Nairobi conference of IAMCR.

2. Capitalism and Research

The massive global expansion of literacy has seen a commensurate growth in research, with capitalism a powerful force animating scholarship, alongside a state auditing fetish, an all-consuming desire to manage scholars, artificially-created competition within and between universities, and the lust for profit of private-sector publishers. Their dread hand concerns me most here. In the words of Fernanda Beigel, '[a]cademic publishing is one of the most unequal areas of the circulation of ideas' (2014, p. 743) because:

El Sistema Académico Mundial se fue estructurando en circuitos, a través de un triple principio de jerarquización, construido históricamente en la intersección de la institución de origen, la lengua y la disciplina. Así, se fue jerarquizando el circuito autodenominado "mainstream", sobre la base de la diferenciación entre científicos internacionalizados e investigadores restringidos a circuitos nacionales o "marginales" [The global academic system is based on an historically-constructed hierarchy, at the intersection of origins, languages, and disciplines. A self-proclaimed "mainstream" circuit distinguishes between internationally-recognized scientists versus researchers relegated to national, "marginal" circuits]. (Beigel & Salatino 2015, p. 12)

I have served on panels of the European Research Council (ERC), the Hong Kong Research Grants Committee, and Britain's Research Excellence Framework. The people involved sought to place an emphasis on the quality of texts, not their places of publication, very much against the tide. To its credit, the ERC adopted this as a general policy. But that's unusual. I have also edited *Social Text*, *Social Identities*, *Society*, the *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, *Open Cultural Studies*, and *Television & New Media*. The developing tendency, seen most keenly in work done in the Anglo world and for the Chinese state, is to write essays of minimal socio-cultural-economic-political relevance that are well-suited to petition grants, in order to engage in—more such work (Miller, 2020).

2.1 Publishers and self-dealing

A few years ago, I agreed to guest-edit a special issue of a journal with some colleagues. We were unaware that manuscripts submitted to this thing were automatically excluded if they did not involve computational research and cited articles previously published in the journal. Dozens of renowned and emergent authors had their work mechanistically rejected, because only after ensuring that everything met these bizarre “standards” did the journal proceed to review. Scholars who obeyed these requirements had their work dispatched exclusively to reviewers who a) did mathematical manipulation and b) had cited the publication in question. No need to learn what Karl Marx, Agnes Heller, Sigmund Freud, Max Weber, Juan Flores, Orlando Fals-Borda, Rosa Luxemburg, Georg Simmel, Michel Foucault, Octavio Paz, Sun Tzu, Angela Davis, or Simone de Beauvoir had to say about the world.

Some time after the issue came out, I received an email from the publisher claiming that our editorial had been rejected (untrue) and demanding I pay 500 euros for the privilege of having edited the special issue (news to me). I wrote back showing that the piece had been published and refusing to pay anything. I did not receive a reply. This particular journal's reward for such brazen, bullying onanism? It is rocketing up the charts and claims to be ranked first in SCOPUS, for instance. Meanwhile, we found alternative outlets for people who dared to undertake political-economic, semiotic, or ethnographic analyses.

The journal in question engages in an extreme and obvious form of scholarly self-dealing: researchers cite colleagues and members of editorial boards wherever possible (Baccini *et al.*, 2019; Ul Alam, 2026), despite the practice's exposure by *Nature*, *inter alia* (Chawla, 2019). And

needless to say, these people generally insist on American Psychological Association referencing (per this essay) which hides the gender of authors, a secure means of obscuring women and their exclusion. Some schools have rightly reacted against this tendency, but for-profit companies, the Association, and its manifold followers love it (Pérez, 2021).

Such self-dealing has serious consequences for what counts as knowledge. Over several decades, 90% of social-science authors listed in the Web of Science worked in wealthy countries (Mosbah-Natanson & Gingras, 2014). Publications in different disciplines related to communications saw just 4% of articles between 1975 and 2017 written in the Global South (Demeter, 2019). The two hundred highest-ranked journals basically ignore knowledge from outside the US and its satellites, because US scholars prefer to cite their compatriots over ‘aliens’: from 1983 to 1985, that amounted to 82.9% of cited authors; 1993-1995, 80.2%; 2003-2005, 76.7%. Sometimes they deem Western Europeans worthy of citation (1983-85, 15.8%; 1993-95, 18.3%; 2003-05, 21.9%), but cheerily ignore knowledge from the rest of the world or in, heaven forbid, other languages (Miller & Arroyave, 2021).

The tendency I’m complaining about is also apparent in the quest for commercial/institutional relevance and minuscule precision. C Wright Mills called this ‘abstracted empiricism,’ a ‘fetishism of the Concept’ (2000, p. 50), ‘administrative research,’ as Paul Lazarsfeld famously put it, that favors technological innovation, marketing, and property relations—i.e. capitalist efficiency and governmental normativity (1941). Such instrumental reason seeks ‘means for the goals one adopts at any given time’ without recognizing that a seemingly purely empirical quest is always already a ‘socially conditioned tendency’ (Horkheimer 2012, pp. 4–5), frequently ‘methodologically and theoretically weak and primarily concerned with vocational and/or industry objectives’ (McKay 2015, pp. 547–548). It’s the hegemonic form of social sciences in English.

3. Latin America

Latin America is far from immune to this puerile academic imperialism. For decades, light-skinned elites from across the region have sent their “brightest” sons and, sometimes, daughters to US graduate school for indoctrination into the discourse of factor endowments, monetarism, and anti-Marxism. From Washington to Yale, next-generation Latin scions sidle up

to northern neoliberals, then carry their beliefs home on jetsetter tablets and laptops (Silva, 2009; North & Clark, 2018; Offner, 2019).

Communications research in the region has traditionally drawn on a mixture of positivistic/administrative (US) and quasi-critical (Latin American) paradigms: journalism history, quantitative method, organizational communication, Marxist and feminist theory, and semiotics (Barranquero Carretero *et al.*, 2017). But there is a contemporary movement towards the orthodoxies of research in English: implicitly liberal-reformist politics, minimal cultural theory, limited engagement with labor, acceptance of the status quo, neglect of radical politics, zero political economy, no awareness of environmental/indigenous matters, and so on, as their home universities seek to replicate Anglo norms. For example, environmental communication tends to evaluate how information about the state of our climate crisis is provided to the public (Freyle & Arroyave Cabrera, 2020). Per Anglo neglect, there is minimal address of environmental theory, racism, or the ecological destructiveness of communications technologies (Miller & Arroyave, 2017; Maxwell & Miller, 2012).

I read many manuscripts about and even within the region that cite almost no “local” feminists, Indigenous authors, or people talking about decolonial communication—other than those who work at top research universities in the United States or Europe. They qualify regardless of their racial or national formations by living in the “right” email domains.

3.1 History

The history of media and communication is interwoven with different conflicts and via a cultural platform that was established by Europeans and North Americans during their imperial expansion. Alongside conquest came the putatively civilizing missions of Europe, as imperialists sought to claim the world for themselves. In Hispanic Latin America, invaders wrote tracts celebrating how they killed Indigenous peoples or converted a flock to Christianity to develop and maintain them as a labor force.

Where efforts at rural development failed, this was historically blamed on ‘peoples of low social efficiency,’ who were to be exterminated or ideologically transformed (Kidd, 2009, p. 311). Hence Hegel avowing that Native Americans ‘gradually vanished at the breath of European activity’ (2001, p. 98) and Simón Bolívar speaking of “new” Americans as bicultural products of usurping Spaniards and resistant indigenous folk (2003). As such, they supposedly inherited a

rule-governed struggle to impose empire, religion, and order from one side and a fiercely elemental refusal of invasion and conquest from the other (Villota Galeano, 2017). The reality was that *conquista* violence flourished even following independence, as *criollo* rulers sought to govern and exploit more and more territory, confirming their legitimacy, statehood, and future (Colmenares, 1996), one of the reasons why the Crown established Castilian as a modern form of administration, using language as the companion of empire. The idea was to place many vulnerable peoples and nations “under the yoke”—the expression used by the grammarians of Queen Isabella—and pull them away from their own languages. With physical conquest came linguistic conquest.

These struggles were projected onto Latin American states that had supposedly been free for one hundred years, then onto societies in Africa and Asia as they emerged. Academics elsewhere—and often within—saw these regions as spaces that needed to be guided, as though if they did not pursue freedom, they could at least pursue modernity.

It should not surprise us that the work of many scholars and academics, began with similar desires to the *conquistadores*: conversion and control. You can see it in the shocking complicity of area studies with anti-Marxism and anti-democracy outlined in Benedict Anderson’s memoir (2016), David H Price’s indictment of anthropology (2016), or Christopher Simpson’s tracery of communication studies in the service of propaganda (1994).

4. Institutions

If we look at the bodies of research that claim to study global communication or media, what do we find? An all-too familiar tale, apart from IAMCR. Every Society for Cinema and Media Studies officeholder works in the United States <https://www.cmstudies.org/page/officers>. Almost all those in the International Communication Association are based in the Global North <https://www.icaheadq.org/page/BOD>. The editorial board of its *Journal of Communication* effortlessly excludes virtually anyone working in the Global South https://academic.oup.com/joc/pages/Editorial_Board; the *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* the same <https://www.cmstudies.org/page/jcms>. There is some diversity, but often it is multiculturalism within the US, not diversity rooted in other countries.

My concern is that, even though today we are supposedly seeing commitments to cultural diversity, when we look at the canons of associations, almost nothing has changed, because in

terms of references they still depend on the United States and Western Europe, even when they are dealing with racial, ethnic, or linguistic minorities within those countries.

5. Language

There is a problem with countries colonized by the languages and norms of Europe and subject to the US scholarly imperium. It's clear that 'El uso dominante del inglés como código de interoperabilidad promovería aún mayores asimetrías a las ya existentes, poniendo en riesgo la biodiversidad y el multilingüismo que son sustanciales para el avance equitativo de la ciencia' [The dominant use of English as an interoperability code promotes even greater asymmetries than already exist, jeopardizing bibliodiversity and multilingualism, which are essential for the equitable advancement of knowledge] (Beigel, 2022, p. 163).

We must reject a system that reproduces dominant people, institutions, and forms of thought, a system that makes for sameness and privilege. Against the Anglo power of a 'creciente comercialización de la edición científica' [growing commercialization of scientific publishing] we must support, militate for, and serve 'un circuito de publicación académico autónomo, conducido por instituciones editoras sin fines de lucro, ... en la transición a la ciencia abierta' [autonomous academic publication circuits, run by non-profit publishing institutions, ... and a transition to open knowledge] (Beigel *et al.*, 2024).

We are not in an entirely commercially dominant (which is to say, English-only) world of publishing. There are vibrant options for sharing scholarship in other languages with outlets directly supported by not-for-profit institutions, still exemplified in Latin America. We must spend more time writing, reviewing, editing, promoting, and defending those sites than we do cultivating the garden of corporate knowledge. Otherwise those billions of newly-alphabetic folks will be short-changed.

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