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The victorious English language: hegemonic practices in the management academy

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Hegemonic Processes in the Management Academy

INTRODUCTION

Management Academics are knowledge workers, who generate and disseminate knowledge. Their work is therefore of an analytic-symbolic character (Reich, 2001), that is to say, they trade in words, data and representation. Thus, successful or unsuccessful participation in the creation of knowledge is dependent on their 'semiotic ability to design, analyse and transform symbols in social settings.' (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996: 66). In other words, the knowledge inquiry of management academics entails the use of language; it is language-bound in its very essence and therefore management academics have to acquire expertise in using and shaping language as part and parcel of their core activity. The language through which much of contemporary knowledge is generated and shared is the English language, to such an extent that English has become the global lingua franca of knowledge (Crystal, 2003). Indeed, the field of management and business is (almost) monolingual (Tietze, 2004), yet little attention is paid to the possible consequences that this monolingual status may have for either the 'players' in the field and their emotional, material and social well-being (de Rond and Miller, 2005), nor for possible consequences that there might be for 'knowledge' itself. Therefore, the empirical inquiry of this paper is based on the 'struggles' experienced by management scholars who are Non-Native Speakers of English (NNS), yet who have to publish and disseminate the product of their labour (knowledge) in the lingua franca of academe, viz. English.

Motivated by initial conversations, we (the authors; both female, one NNS), had about our chequered publication success, which we partly understood as related to issues of inclusion/exclusion, marginalisation/English, in the knowledge dissemination process (publications, in particular), we proceeded to expand this conversation in a more systematic way and included other NNS management academics into our questions and inquiry. In this account we present some perspectives on the nexus of ties between the linguistic (English language) practices of the management academy, the production of (textual) knowledge and the effects on the lives and careers of management academics. We view these practices as language-based and hegemonic. We seek to understand how this hegemony is maintained, to identify any areas of hegemonic struggle and thus to recognize any spaces where there is potential for the transformation of the current academic status quo. We open the paper with an outline of how the English language can be understood as hegemonic and relate this linguistic imperialism to knowledge production as praxis, in the field of management and business in particular. Our empirical study comprises the views and perspectives of 33 NNS management academics, and we have ordered their accounts in terms of the metaphorical expressions they used to capture their experience and 'woes'. We provide commentary on their words as expressive and constitutive of hegemonic processes and point to specific moments of hegemonic struggle. In the discussion we articulate the consequences of hegemonic processes for both the production of knowledge as well as for the knowledge producers, i.e. for management academics themselves. We proceed to advocate how different forms of reflexivity in the production of texts, as well as in forms of academic collaboration may disrupt some of the current taken-for-granted assumptions of academic work.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND HEGEMONIC PROCESSES

Hegemony in a Gramscian sense means the rule of one social class over another by projecting its own particular way of seeing the world, human and social relationships, so that their views become accepted as the common sense or natural order by those who are in fact subordinated to them. Indeed, the thus dominated internalise the norms and ideology of the dominant group or class, even though this is not necessarily in their interests. The idea of hegemony has been applied to a variety of fields (Alatas, 2000), including that of (socio) linguistics where, in particular, Phillipson's postulate of 'linguistic imperialism' (1992) focuses on the spread and use of the English language. Phillipson bases his analysis on the historically and politically situated role of the British Council and, specifically, on the ideology transmitted with, in, and through the English language, and the role of language specialists in the cultural export of English (1992: 16 - 37). He views English as dominant as it replaces other languages or displaces specific domains. He sees English linguistic imperialism as:

(...) the dominance of English [is] asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages. Here structured refers broadly to material properties (for example institutions, financial allocations) and cultural to immaterial or ideological properties (for example, attitudes, pedagogic principles) (1992: 47).

Phillipson's argument has been taken up widely in the literature on political-cultural aspects of English language pedagogy (Block & Cameron, 2002; Hall & Eggington, 2000) and has also informed the debates in post-colonial studies (Kembo-Sure, 2003; Mair, 2003; Pennycook, 1994). While different positions (cf. Anderson 2003 for a more recent summary) have been established with regards to the extent to which the English language is the first and foremost formative basis for hegemonic processes, there is widespread agreement in the field

that the use and spread of English as the uncontested global lingua franca (Crystal, 2003) is not innocuous and to-be-taken-for granted, but expressive and constitutive of processes of domination. The replacement of domains of meaning (see Ljosland, 2007), for example, is constitutive of hegemonic processes, as meanings expressible in English are difficult to articulate and capture in 'other languages', so that it becomes difficult to find alternative ways of persuasively reinscribing meaning that falls 'outside' the dominant ideology (Meriläinen, Tienari, Thomas & Davies, 2008 : 587). English is therefore not an 'innocent' system of syntax through which words and sentences are generated, rather it is a shaping influence on the very meaning of the texts produced (cf. Tietze, 2004: 9 – 10).

However, hegemony is never absolute and there will always exist sites of instability and conflict, which means that there is always an "unstable equilibrium" (Fairclough, 1992). Oppositional or resistant processes may not necessarily be manifest in official discourse. Thus in the case of academic publication, the focus of this paper, it is unlikely that NNS scholars would refuse to meet with the writing conventions required. However, in more private spaces, the authority of the lingua franca may be repudiated. As authors we share the stance that the use of English is not 'innocent', and we were therefore interested in uncovering some such processes in the context of the work of management academics. We proceed to provide a brief overview of publication practices and structures, including commentary about the relative disadvantage of NNS management scholars.

Inequalities in academic publishing

Research into academic publication patterns shows that those groups who are native English speakers and from central geographical locations (chiefly the UK and the USA) are at a significant advantage in comparison to scholars in peripheral locations and who are 'NNSs'.

According to commentators, this 'linguistic disadvantage' is not simply a consequence of a less developed 'technical' competence in writing and speaking in English. Rather, the disadvantage is played out in the material, structural set-up of research communities, which reflects both socio-cultural and economic conditions. For example, it is not only that some journals are more prestigious than others, usually those that are both written in English and based in the USA or the UK (Lillis and Curry, 2006), but also that those scholars that publish in them tend to be from "centre" and wealthy locations (such as the USA, Europe or Japan) (Ferguson, 2007). King (2004) for example, notes that 32 countries, which include many of the most wealthy, account for 98% of all highly cited papers. It therefore seems that it is not only textual features of writing that are difficult for NNS scholars to negotiate and learn (e.g. Swales and Feak, 2004), but that the socio-cultural and economic conditions (i.e. Phillipson's material and immaterial properties) in which scholarly writing and publication is undertaken, play a major role in producing these patterns (Casanave, 1998; Flowerdew, 2000; Morita, 2004). Research has also examined the role of non-linguistic material conditions in scholarly writing and publication, most notably the work of Canagarajah (1996; 2002). In particular, he has focused on how publication conventions take certain material conditions for granted, such as, for example, regular and uncensored mail delivery; access to IT equipment and communication technologies; availability of resources such as paper, photocopiers and so on. Many scholars located in peripheral contexts do not have access to such resources and the material conditions of their existence render it difficult, if not impossible, for them to meet journal publication conventions. Moreover, such scholars frequently lack access to up-to-date publications, which means that when they do submit papers, reviewers construct them as lacking understanding of relevant literature. As Matsuda and Tardy (2007) argue, the identity of an author is constructed by reviewers via the "voice" that is communicated in the text, leading to ascriptions such as experienced, knowledgeable, etc. Clearly, NNS scholars from

materially disadvantaged locations are considerably handicapped by these processes, yet they have to gain access to their respective research communities in order to establish themselves as successful academics. These research communities are "discourse communities" (Swales, 1990) and "communities of practice" (Wenger, 1998), and in order to access them scholars have to learn certain modes and conventions of expression in a given language. Additionally, as they are socialized into that language, they acquire specific identities: ways of perceiving themselves and the world, and encounter different relations of power that have to be both understood and negotiated in order to secure legitimacy within their communities (Flowerdew, 2000; Morita, 2004). Acquiring a language therefore, is more than simply the ability to speak, it is learning the culturally embedded rules and roles that structure a given society and which are mapped onto the language conventions of that society. While all scholars have to learn participation rules (cf. de Cock and Jeanes, 2006: 22, on publication and learning of speech genres and styles), as Curry and Lillis (2004) point out, this is especially difficult for multi-lingual scholars who are frequently engaged in multiple communities, which may lead to the pursuit of different interests, some of which might conflict. In other words scholars have to learn English as the 'given' language of dominant management research communities, as well as conventions and rules governing how to use this language in the context of their work. Casanave (1998) for example, explores the tensions experienced by Japanese scholars belonging to both an international research community, writing and publishing in high prestige English language journals and a local, parochial research community, that stresses the importance of writing in Japanese for specific Japanese audiences. Lillis and Curry (2006) additionally draw attention to the critical role played by what they term "literacy brokers". Literacy brokers are individuals such as editors, colleagues, reviewers, English-speaking peers and so forth, that mediate text production in important ways. They found that academic literacy brokers, particularly reviewers and

editors, strongly influenced not just the linguistic style that NNS scholars adopted when writing for publication in English language journals, but also influenced the content of what was produced, fundamentally influencing the nature of the knowledge production process. The scholars in this study believed that publication success was dependent on their conformity with the advice of literacy brokers, as their work otherwise ran the risk of being perceived as irrelevant or trivial.

Thus, in the context of academic publication, the hegemony of the English language is achieved by structuring the experiences of members of the academy such that to obtain access to career opportunities means having to navigate the cultural, economic and social processes that are conventionally tied to academic publication. However, this "consent" is always partial and unstable, as we will illustrate later on. There is always, as we have already pointed out, some degree of hegemonic struggle, typically around the points of greatest instability. In the management academy, one such point is reflected in what is considered to be a "good" publication.

The increasing importance of publications in particular journals (all of which are English language journals, most of them originating from AngloSaxon contexts) in order to achieve legitimacy and career advantage is of particular importance. The centrality of publication has been produced by globalisation processes, which have introduced competitive market forces into higher education systems (Slaughter and Leslie, 2001), which are rendered visible in league tables of rankings of universities as well as in accreditation systems with global reach (e.g. EQUIS; AACSB). These developments also affect the cultural and normative disposition of academics who work in this increasingly competitive and interrelated field. Being able to express one's knowledge in English, in particular in written English in order to publish in peer-reviewed journals has become *the sine non qua* of a successful academic life and is, on the whole, a 'taken-for-granted' assumption of actors in the field (Tietze & Dick,

2009). Nonetheless, while many academics recognise that a career depends on publishing in the "right" journals, this is not an uncontested terrain (see Willmott, 2011, forthcoming). Indeed, the very difficulties experienced in attempting to publish in prestigious English language journals are productive of the hegemonic struggles that we illustrate in the analysis that follows.

So far, we have argued that the dominant use of the English language in the knowledge production process of the management academe is constitutive and expressive of hegemonic processes, which disadvantage certain groups of scholars, i.e. NNS of English. This disadvantageous position cannot be explained by an individual scholars' ability (or lack there of) to acquire a foreign language (English), rather the reasons are material-structural and linguistic-cultural in origin: They are the product of a particular set of historical and cultural influences and conditions which, together, have produced the contemporary academic status quo. It is this 'taken-for-granted' status quo that generates the activities, goals and understandings of those actors that operate within it and it is through questioning the status quo that hegemonic processes become visible and addressable. In support of out earlier point about how hegemonic struggle may not be apparent in formal settings, there is very little written about language-based 'hegemonic processes' as intrinsic aspects of the knowledge production process and of the ordering of social and collegial relationships. There are, however, two recent pieces (Meriläinen, Tienari, Thomas & Davies, 2008; Thomas, Tienari, Davies & Meriläinen, 2009) which have begun to articulate the role of hegemony in the academic field. They are written by the same author team and report on their experience of knowledge production. In the 2008 paper, the authors investigate their own cross-cultural research collaboration (Finland, UK) and argue that institutions of academic publishing are enacted through hegemonic practices that serve a 'hidden' purpose to reinforce core-periphery relations between the Anglophone core and the peripheral countries. These become

particularly visible in the academic publishing process and disadvantage: Researchers from non-Anglophone countries [which] face an extra burden in building and maintaining the 'hegemonic discursive formation' (i.e. Anglo-American organization and management studies) through engaging in the practices of academic publishing in which texts are discursively constructed in what to them is a foreign language and perhaps also a foreign culture (Merliäinen *et al*., 2008: 587). In their 2009 piece they use the same experience of research collaboration across language and cultural assumptions to parse 'patterns of thinking within the research team that may otherwise remain unquestioned' (Thomas *et al.*, 2009: 313) and they argue for greater critical and radical reflection by research members at all stages of the research engagement. These two pieces are not just extrapolations of navel-gazing academics, rather, through nuanced analysis, the authors show how 'hidden' assumptions regarding language and writing conventions, have consequences for 'what is said', 'what is heard', 'what is considered of acceptable interest to the audience' and of what is therefore considered of to be of interest. Interestingly, all four authors are experienced and established researchers, working within the same paradigmatic tradition and of quite similar standing and position in their respective research communities. Nevertheless, their collegial and emotional ties were tested in attempts to produce research accounts as the very process of producing these accounts was indeed expressive of hegemonic processes, privileging knowledge expressible in the English language and constitutive of 'Anglo-Saxon' perspectives and meanings. The authors call for: '[...] more radical forms of reflexivity [...], [which] involve[s] exploring issues of cultures, language, academic conventions, and preferred interpretive repertoires within the research engagement'. (Thomas *et al*., 2009: 321)

This account of our research takes its departure from this call. We focus in particular on issues of language (the English language) from the point of view of a 'disadvantaged' group, i.e. NNS of English from peripheral locations, who have to find ways and establish practices

to make themselves heard and make a name in the management academy in order to establish and maintain successful careers and lives (de Rond and Miller, 2005) In addition, our account includes the voices of different groups of academics, those in the early stages of their development, those in the middle stages and those at the latter stages of their careers. Differentiating between these groups enabled us to provide a more nuanced analysis which includes (like the work of our colleagues) the investigation of hegemonic processes, but identifies different responses by colleagues at different stages in their life and career development and with different experiences and access of using English as their 'given' language of knowledge. Our research interest was linked to exploration of the above outlined hegemonic linguistic processes: how and to what extent do they affect management academics' publication efforts and successes (or failures); what, if any, are the consequences for the textual production and dissemination of knowledge?

Methods

This paper is written by an author team, consisting of one NNS and one NS of English. As language-conscious researchers we brought our own experiences as knowledge-generating scholars to our enquiry. Specifically, these experiences comprised situations of marginality (e.g. as female management researchers), but also experiences of 'linguistic marginality' (first author) where, despite grammatical competence in the English language, tacit rules of language use remained a source of continued frustration in terms of exercising 'voice' as a competent and recognised researcher. In this regard, our personal history and background influenced our topic choice (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009; Etherington, 2004). In discussing our experiences as native as well as non-native speakers of English in generating and disseminating knowledge, we selected an approach to our study which would provide us with

an opportunity to understand the experiences of fellow academics. In the light of gaps in the literature on the role of the English language in the management academy, we decided to focus our study on non-native speakers of English. Given our personal interest as well as the contextual and institutional factors outlined in previous sections, our first concern therefore was to better understand in what ways Management Academics (MA) who are Not Native Speakers of English (NNS MA and who work in non-English national settings), are subjected to symbolic and material processes which bound both their activities and the potential successful pursuit of their projects. Consequently, our research instrument focused on the production of accounts through which participants could express their thoughts, feelings and experiences of having to establish themselves as competent academics. We were interested in how such academics maintain legitimacy when they have to work in and through the English language in institutional contexts which increasingly sideline knowledge and thoughts expressed in 'other languages'. We invited participants to recount instances and examples of the role of English in their 'everyday lives as academics', but also of ritualistic events such as conferences, meetings and the social and collegial relationships they had to create and sustain with individual and collective actors they deemed to be influential in enabling publication success.

Overall we followed a 'semi-structured' approach, which allowed us to bring our themes into the discussion, but left explorative space for topics to emerge (Bryman and Bell, 2007). It is therefore important to note that the empirics of this paper are based on an 'explorative study' (Robson, 1993: 59), designed to develop an initial grasp on the issues and to enable us to articulate 'follow-on' questions, rather than to provide a comprehensive investigation

In order to achieve systematic analysis of the collected 'welter of data' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) we identified a number of themes suggested by the data. In particular, metaphorical expressions based on 'games', 'game playing' and 'being players' abounded in the data. In this regard the empirical material confirmed Macdonald and Kam's (2007) comment on the role of widespread 'gamesmanship' and game playing in the publication processes of management studies (see also Marafioti & Perretti, 2006). The use of similar images by our respondents was therefore significant for us to understand how institutional contexts such as increasing competition between universities; the existence of ranking systems for journals; national assessment systems for research etc. shape individual thinking and conduct. Through coding such expressions we then explored the extent to which they occurred throughout the data and whether their use differed between different categories of participants. For example, we detected concrete differences between the experiences of respondents contingent on their career stage. Thus, we established a link between early career academics as 'willing players' in the academic 'game'; between 'reluctant players' for mid-career academics and 'liberated players' for senior academics. While our analysis followed a systematic approach, we do not propose to make claims that would reach beyond the parameters of an explorative study. We are aware that our construction of meaning worlds is metaphor-driven (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) and, as such, ambiguous to an extent, and open to potentially different interpretations.

Research Instrument

Based on our epistemological stance of wanting to explore the meanings management academics attach to working and living through a language that is not their native tongue, we used our networks and contacted 53 management academics of which 33 participated in the study. We feel that this number of participants, while to an extent arbitrary, is sufficient to

explore experiences from a variety of perspectives. Participants were from 25 different universities and 14 countries. All respondents are university employees and hold positions within faculties of management and business. Both individual and institutional identities are hidden, as this formed part of the agreement with the respondents. Career stages are differentiated as 'early' (i.e. post-doctoral, untenured or under probation), 'middle' (i.e. as lecturers or senior lecturers) or advanced (i.e. senior academic or administrative roles such as Professor, Head of Division). 16 women and 17 men participated in the study. Although in our analysis we could not find any obvious differences in experiences regarding the use of the English language which might be attributed to gender, issues related to preferred methods and epistemologies which are known to be gendered were raised by participants (Knights and Richards 2003). We return to this issue later.

The research instrument comprised a questionnaire (it was used to provide a general background about the degree of English competence of participants and the extent to which they had to use English across all their work activities. It is not reproduced here as, for the purposes of this paper, its data is not referred to). We use detailed telephone and email conversations when it was not possible to organize face-to-face meetings. We conducted 10 face-to-face semi-structured interviews, which took place at two conference meetings in Europe and during one training event at a European Business School. Each interview took about 45 to 60 minutes to conduct. Interviews were not transcribed; instead, notes were taken during the interviews and detailed reflections/observations were noted and added on immediately after the interview.

Given our view of the English language as a powerful tool to shape careers and lives (Piekkari, 2008), it needs to be formally recorded and acknowledged that the this paper, too, is bounded by the very processes it endeavours to capture: it is written in English and the interviews and data generation/interpretation occurred in English (for extended discussion of

translation in cultural and political contexts in general see Janssen, Lambert and Steyaert, 2004; Venuti, 2003; see Blenkinsopp & Shademan Pajouh, 2010 for translation and management/business knowledge). In other words, the research process and its outcomes are imbued in the very symbolic and material power processes described, explained and critiqued in this paper: It (re)produces the status quo. However, by drawing attention to these processes and reflecting upon their influences on colleagues and on ourselves, we are simultaneously questioning the status quo and thus engaging in hegemonic struggle.

Findings

Willing players

16 participants were in the very early stages of their academic careers, most of them still untenured or under probationary rule, and it was these academics who had to work hardest at learning *how to play the game* (interview 2) in order to establish themselves as legitimate members of their respective communities of practice. 'Playing the game' was never questioned by these aspiring academics, rather they took it for granted that access to the occupation, and advancement within it, were pre-given premises. The acquisition and particular usages of English featured highly in their attempts to achieve such access and recognition. Their relative success or failure was attributed to a variety of factors, such as personal (in)ability at learning foreign languages (*I am no good at languages, so it's hard, harder*, *this English thing*; interview 4); luck (*I was lucky as I grew up bilingual* [Swedish and English], *so writing in English is not impossible for me*; interview 9) and effort (*I am working hard to learn English ... the last two summers I attended classes in England and attended international* [defined as 'English language'] *conferences*; interview 2). There was little articulated awareness of historical or political contexts as influencing factors of language use – problems with language acquisition were attributed to personal circumstances

and ability. Thus, these "rules" to which they need to adhere were not understood as the products of a set of historical and political factors that operate to the advantage of some groups and not others, but they were taken as a 'normal' and 'given' aspects of becoming a management academic: Being able to express their knowledge in English was considered crucial to establishing themselves as successful *'players'* in their field. Similarly, there was no disagreement that knowledge had to be expressed and publishable in English: *Only knowledge expressed in English is publishable* (interview 10); *the actual knowledge may be questioned if the academic does not express it in English* (interview 9) summed up respondents' views. Here, some young female academics struggled, in particular if doing *qualitative-ethnographic* work, to express the subtleties and nuances in meaning they found in their data, particularly if they had to translate from their language of research into English texts: *I abandoned to write my PhD in English…it would have been better* [for my career]*; I just could not get to it and find the right words. Oh, I cannot think in English and I lost what I had found.* Given that it is female academics that are most likely to favour these methodological approaches (Knights and Richards, 2003), it is possible that here we have identified the further disadvantages encountered by being a female NNS English speaking scholar.

In four cases*,* our respondents saw a link between English and privileged topics of research and knowledge. An example was a participant who had developed a new categorisation for small businesses in a particular Italian region, but found that such local/regional knowledge was of no interest to the *journals I need to be in – I have to be both better at English and find a more interesting perspective on my work* (telephone conversation with an early career academic) or *My PhD was on local hospital management – it's not interesting for other people, I need to compare more and find more strategic things in my data* (interview 12)*.*

These comments illustrate two things: a) that there is a nexus of ties between the English language and the content of research topics (cf. Tietze, 2004 on the concurrence of English and Western/Anglo-Saxon management discourse as imbued in universal truth claims, carriers of hidden ideologies and providing specific and exclusive identity construction trajectories for language and discourse users) and b) that particular themes and findings (those that can be amended to accommodate strategic and comparative aspects) are more likely to be publishable and 'heard'.

In terms of evaluating their own competence in English, which they saw as closely linked to their overall competence as a management academic, these 'early players' benchmarked themselves against their peers within their own institutions or as met at conferences or seminars. These 'fellow players' were seen as competitors as '*their English and what they know, if better than I* [sic*], is bad for me'* (interview 7). Consequently, many of our respondents developed practices to become successful academics. These included using literacy brokers (Curry and Lillis, 2004): asking established (successful) colleagues to do editorial reading of their papers in return for joint authorships; paying translators and proof-readers, cultivating relationships with networks, frequently doing routine work, in exchange for access to them and *working hard at English* (interview 4), and closely observing established native speakers of English in order to ascertain how they should act as well as how they should speak.

In sum, the experience of being subject to hegemonic processes, manifested itself frequently in emotional pain, where these junior colleagues had to come to terms with rejection and feelings of failure. Consequently, practices were adopted to incorporate more 'suitable' and more publishable perspectives of their research projects and, by the same token, downplay

and exclude those topics and themes less likely to be 'of interest' and to be published. Furthermore, their work effort and the formation of collegial relationships focused on cultivating those relationships with powerful players 'in the know', who could provide opportunities to be included in the academy.

Reluctant and compliant players

Twelve of our respondents were in the middle stages of their career and had established themselves successfully in their institutions and their fields. They, too, acknowledge the increasing importance of good competence in the English language for their continued *good standing* (interview 8) in their communities and also for career advancement: *You get used to it* [use of English]. *For example, here in the Netherlands we have this new system of assessing us. It is based on points. You get more points for certain journals, the best point for you is if you are in an international journal and they are all in English* (interview 5).

One mid-career academic, as well as one of their senior colleagues, had developed a 'compromise strategy' in that they attempted to publish *one bit in English in the journals that count and one bit for me and the Dutch, in a journal that is only read by other audiences* (interview 3). Yet, these examples were sparse and, in particular, mid-career academics complied grudgingly with the institutional and peer pressure to publish in English, or accepted that their career would stagnate: *I am no good at it* [English] *and will not be. I am happy. I stay.* (telephone conversation with mid-career academic). Despite having achieved a degree of material and symbolic security, the mid-career academics concurred that in future *more and more publications will have to be in English; if it is not in English, it does not exist.*

In two examples, academics had expertise and practice in using both qualitative and

quantitative methods for research. In both cases (one a personnel specialist; one a finance specialist), they commented that they *tend to do quants-based projects these days. They are easier to write up* [in English] *and get published* (interview 6) and *I can do both and have successfully published in different journals* [English language ones]*, but it is tricky to do 'words'. Figures translate easier.* (interview 6). These are examples of 'compliant players', who have adjusted their practices in such ways to further their standing in their respective communities and their career, by privileging the protocols and means through which they generate knowledge. Institutionalised pressures to publish in 'good journals' drive individual and collective practices in the pursuit of peer recognition and career advancement.

These mid-career academics then, do not unquestioningly accept the legitimacy of the dominant academic-linguistic expectation, yet they cannot afford to "self-exclude" from those activities in which it is symbolically profitable. Their investment in the academic game is too deep. This perhaps explains their tactics of publishing both in English and in their own native language, as well as writing papers that require less linguistic competence. Their responses also suggest that they have, to some extent, acquired the "correct" language in that they have achieved a degree of mastery of the English language so that they can position and express their ideas with relative ease and competence.

For this group, the experience of hegemonic processes is manifested in their strategies of compromise - where to publish and in which language; the privileging of particular epistemological approaches – i.e. the ones which 'avoid' the messiness of words and meaning. 'Disgruntlement' rather than 'pain' is their emotive disposition and response to being subjected to the hegemony of the English language.

Liberated players

The five respondents in advanced stages of their careers acknowledged that English language use would be of increasing importance: *Well, yes, it is new and to an extent not fair, but this is the name of the game now and for the future. I think that faculty will be international and English is part of this.* (interview 7). While not always being comfortable with the perceived lack of fairness *for faculty with lower language ability* and in the light of *the additional difficulty to publish in English* (interview 1), open resistance was not considered a possibility in a *world of rankings and competition.* (interview 11)

There were two examples where more active resistance was exercised. One professor refused to write and publish in English – albeit being just some years away from retirement afforded this individual a degree of invulnerability. A further illustration is a Head of Faculty, who expressed his anger at the 'status quo': *These days I have to appraise my colleagues on the basis of number of articles published in particular journals* [all English language based ones]. *Now, I don't want to be someone who does this to people. One colleague has been working at his topic for years. There is likely to be just one or two papers, good papers – in German language journals. Does this make it any less important?! I don't like this whole thing.* (telephone conversation with senior academic). Thus, this senior colleague expressed strong emotive opposition to the exclusionary processes underlying the premises of the appraisal procedure: it excluded knowledge produced in another language than English and it also potentially excluded the appraised colleague from achieving acknowledgement in the performance management system. Yet, practically no open resistance was possible (appraisals had to take place), so resistance took place in spaces away from the public gaze and protocols – amounting perhaps to a localized disruption of institutional space and

hegemonic processes.

Thus, even though these established and senior academic colleagues are more willing to "name the game" and question the rules, their levels of investment mean that, on the whole, they avoid the self-exclusion exercised by the professor discussed above. Notable in the case of this individual is that fact that his impending retirement means he can afford to disinvest in the game. Moreover, in self-excluding, this professor does not succeed in changing the rules – or, more importantly, the game itself. The anger expressed by the second professor discussed in the paragraph above is, again, suggestive that this scholar can afford to distance himself from the rules of the game due to his status and position in the field. The opposition to the rules expressed by these participants is suggestive of a critical stance that challenges the 'status quo' and the hegemonic process of 'excluding knowledge not expressed in English'. These participants do appear to illustrate awareness and circumspection in as much as they recognise a game is being played that is easier for some players than others to win. Yet, the participant above does not refuse to conduct performance appraisals. Thus, while he is prepared to distance himself from these rules during a conversational exchange with the researcher, he is not prepared to act out this distance by refusing to cooperate with the rules that reproduce the very domination he appears to oppose.

Discussion: What's to be done?

The English language, through complex historical and political processes has emerged as the dominant and legitimate language in the 21st century – it has been 'victorious' in so far as its use and the development of English-based institutional practices are taken for granted in the academy and particularly so in the field of management and business studies. Of course, the

existence of such a communicative resource is the prerequisite for the sharing of knowledge, for interaction between different traditions and fields, for debate and challenge. In this regard this paper is not advocating an 'anti-English' stance as having a language of 'mutual intelligibility' is paramount for the exchange of knowledge and ideas. Neither do we presume that there is a deliberate conspiracy of 'senior academics', journal editors, panel members or colleagues firmly rooted in Anglo-Saxon canons of knowledge and the English language. Rather, we were interested in exploring the consequences of 'not talking about the dominance and role of the English language' for both the knowledge producers (in this case management academics) and for 'knowledge itself'. Here, it should be mentioned that the processes we discussed are talked about; yet only in private and personal setting, behind closed doors so to speak. Articulating them in a public setting and rendering them subject to debate is part of making them less powerful and influential. In this regard we want to continue the public conversation and debate started by some colleagues, and we offer, perhaps, an extension of their thoughts on closures of meaning and respective social and collegial relationships.

Emotive Dispositions and Practices

The three groups of knowledge workers we identified experienced and expressed strong emotions about their research and work and about the production and publication of texts. The junior colleagues were beset by anxiety, a sense of frustration and feelings of personal and intellectual failure and challenge. They responded in kind by attempts to 'master' the English language, working harder and cultivating such practices and behaviours to gain access to important networks and 'power brokers'. Colleagues in the middle stages of their careers complied and compromised, sometimes with a sense of disgruntlement and sense of resignation. Senior colleagues expressed anger and frustration at the practices that 'enforced' upon them meaning systems and a language that categorised their staff as 'successful' or

'unsuccessful'. We see these expressions as immediate and genuine responses to hegemony (in the same way that the authors whose 2 papers we previously discussed experienced emotive responses such as 'puzzlement', 'surprise' and a sense of frustration'). Of course, the 3 different groups of our study are not always in a position to act upon such emotions – this is particularly so for younger colleagues who are doctoral students or who are in post-doctoral or untenured positions. Yet, we propose that such emotional dispositions can be used as sensitising mechanisms, which point to the unease and fragility experienced by those subjected to hegemonic processes.

The consequences of hegemony for the production of text-based knowledge are also clear: certain meaning systems gain advantage over others; certain epistemological and methodological positions are favoured as 'messy' epistemologies and approaches are to be avoided. Thus, issues of translation and contextual knowledge can be taken out of the research endeavour. We see these as instances of a 'closure of meaning', where the concurrent existence of English as the 'medium' together with the vocabulary of Western management/business discourses further the use of positivist-realist epistemologies, which are less concerned with the nuances of context and situation; leading perhaps to universal, or at least generalisable, truths. They result in papers that are easier to publish in 'the journals that matter'. Our initial and explorative findings point to the intensification of interest in theories that have universal applicability, which in turn may lead to greater parochialism in management knowledge (Tsui, 2007). This generates expectations that knowledge needs to be formulated/published in English and that scholarship needs to be 'international', i.e. expressed in English. It is increasingly being argued that these expectations are resulting in a homogenization of knowledge itself, such that research questions and genres that are not seen

to be relevant or interesting to those power-holders at the centre, become marginalised and undervalued (Canagarahja, 1996).

Reflecting and Reflexivity

Agents act and, while they do so within an already constituted network of established material and cultural/ideological properties (Phillipson, 1992, p. 47), the dialectical relationship between these properties can be shaped and changed. Hegemonic processes shape these networks and are powerful in doing so, because they are, by and large 'hidden', in as much as they are rarely formally debated or discussed. Therefore, 'talking about it' disrupts its influence by making it subject to debate. We concur with the UK/Finish author team that discussions of the 'power relations' in research networks, including the exploration of culture, language, academic conventions and preferred interpretive repertoires (Thomas *et al*., 2009: 321; 322) are akin to the practice of 'radical reflexivity', where researchers take on responsibility to openly discuss the existence of hegemony and power in the knowledge production process, including the formation of the relational networks between researchers themselves. While Thomas and colleagues are peers in terms of their standing in the research community and organisational positions, we add on to the current state of debate, by pointing to the hierarchical differences between colleagues in the academy. Junior researchers are in more precarious positions than more experienced colleagues. Exposing hegemonic processes needs to be done, we believe, in the first instance by senior organisational colleagues, who are in a position to address issues of hierarchy and performance assessment (e.g. appraisal systems; promotion and tenure decisions – i.e. traditions of 'measuring performance' within the rationality of Western discourses of management). Senior research leaders of cross-cultural research teams can disrupt hegemony within their projects by unearthing some of the 'taken-for-granteds' of research collaborations and remain alert to the potentiality of different

meaning systems and languages. Senior research leaders and managers, editors and reviewers could discuss language strategies and offer assistance, technical and otherwise. Together, these groups of power, knowledge and literacy brokers are in key privileged positions to disrupt the hegemony of the English language. In a forthcoming contribution, for example, one such power holder (Willmott, 2011) critically discusses one such manifestation of this hegemony (a particular journal rankings list). We agree with his analysis and support the stance taken. Yet we also see this emerging contemporary debate (and it is only just entering the public arena) as more far reaching than being about the sense or nonsense of particular lists of journals. We see this debate embedded in continuing processes of linguistic imperialism, i.e. as having deep historical roots, which shape beliefs and values: '(…) speakers of one language come to feel it necessary to use another language, "to the point where they believe they can and should use only that foreign language when it comes to transactions dealing with the more advanced aspects of life"' (Sliwaliwa, 2008, cited in Blenkinsopp and Shademan Pajouh, 2010: 39). The exercise of reflexive textual practices (Alvesson, Hardy & Harley, 2008) thus becomes more than just a means to address unbalanced and 'single voice' research texts. We propose that in multi-cultural/linguistic research groups, addressing issues of 'translation' and interpretation is a means to avoid the hegemonic closure of meaning, not just in the dynamics of the interacting group, but also in the production of the text itself.

Conclusion

Knowledge, however, is of course always produced by human agents who are situated in particular historical, political and cultural/linguistic properties. Here, the academy's function of bestowing legitimacy upon some agents by creating positions of authority for them, but not upon others - needs to be investigated more systematically and seriously:

For example, 'what are the opportunities to disrupt existing institutional spaces'; 'who is in a position to do so'; 'under which circumstances are such attempts successful and develop momentum', 'which discourses and languages help or hinder such disruptions' are questions which need to be asked and addressed.

The scholars we talked to were dedicated to the themes and topic of their research work and also displayed integrity in the pursuit of the themes and topics they were interested in and saw as important. However, they were also constrained as their knowledge could increasingly be expressed only 'in English', or 'in certain journals' as if English and its outlets were the only linguistic/institutional currencies of any value. Yet, our stance is not to boycott English and English-based management journals; this would be counterproductive to the academic project as well as a material impossibility for the vast majority of management academics. Rather, believing our own credo that the social world is enacted and created through symbolic and language-based practices and actions, we propose that scholars should attempt to publish in those journals they feel affinity with, whether they are top-ranked or not; should engage in research that is of local and regional importance; should attend conferences whether international (English language based) or not. Czarniawska (2006: 334) cites a moment of historic significance, when members of the Polish Solidarity party prepared for the Pope's visit '*as if* they were living in a free, democratic country'. In anticipation of changes to come, we will collaborate, research and write *as if* we lived in a world of free and unconstrained flows of knowledge.

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