Scholarship 2.0: Countering the Hegemony of English for Making Knowledge Production Locally More Valuable in the Global South

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Abstract

Scholars have shown how the politics of English(es) can perpetuate structures of unequal power, marginalization, and injustice (as well as being used to counter them). Yet, scholars in the global south remain complacent and complicit about the status quo. Focusing on social justice and equity, this paper, based on the plenary given at the Entangled Englishes Conference in Dhaka, will show how we can disentangle ourselves from the hegemony of English(es) and its localized power politics. Sharing what I call a "scholar 2.0" framework, I show how practically confronting the hegemony of English(es) requires transcending individual interest and ego, mobilizing all languages in the interest of local society and professions, and engaging in translanguaging and critical global citizenship. Only by producing new knowledge for our own communities and societies – in many languages and new local venues – can we give life and meaning to our critical perspectives on language.

Keywords: hegemony, English(es), translanguaging, scholarship, knowledge production

In Greek philosopher Plato's allegorical cave, chained humans who inhabit it believe that shadows on a wall in front of them, made by light and objects behind them, constitute the real world. Strangely, two and a half millennia later, scholars across the world measure the "impact" of their knowledge on society as represented by the number of times they refer to each other within a shadow-making process controlled by financially invested entities that are not accountable to society. Scholars in the global south are particularly vulnerable to this odd condition where the worth of knowledge lies not in relevance, application, outcome, inclusion, opportunity, or benefit to society but instead on odd measurements of "quality" by proxy, focusing on medium (English), circulation (citation), number (of publications), scope (international), and gatekeeping (indexing). That is to say nothing about financial barriers (paywalls) against the majority of stakeholders who fund the majority of research. How did we, academics, ostensibly the smartest lot of all, come to accept such a regime? What could we do about it?

The key among the functions of the above situation is the English language, claimed

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to be the link language connecting all scholars across the world. So, I start this article, adapted from my plenary for the conference "Entangled Englishes in Translocal Spaces," by highlighting how the current discourse about the "hegemony of English" (whether accepted or critiqued, as the medium of academic exchange) is essentially three fingers pointing back at ourselves as scholars, our identities and privileges, our self-serving interests and investments in English (which we have gone on to pluralize in discourse and practice). My acceptance to speak at an English-only conference, and to publish this article, in English is no exception. I try to make some feeble efforts at languaging otherwise as well, as I urge us to diversify our mediums, make our scholarship more accessible, and focus on the larger social purpose of our work. I argue that our scholarship and our teaching must be valued not just in terms of what we preach but based on what we practice vis-à-vis our contribution to the communities around us that do not have the same privileges that we do, communities to which we owe honesty as well as access to the knowledge we advance. Sharing what I have learned from working with networks of scholars across South Asia in recent years, I show how we can counter the hegemony of Englishes by rejecting current premises and building new frameworks within which we can do research and publications that are relevant locally first. Based on the shifts I have observed scholars able to make in practice, I propose that we disentangle the reality of English as a medium from the politics of treating English as the very goal of education and scholarship – instead of just pontificating otherwise. I advance my arguments here within a translanguaging framework, one within which we can disentangle ourselves from the power and privileges, investing honest efforts to mobilize all languages for what we might call Scholarship 2.0 – a framework for a more grounded, more just, more meaningful scholarship. Our scholarship's (and our) goals must be to advance and use knowledge for social good, to affect justice, to improve the human condition – indeed, to help preserve the planet – and we do not have to do all these **in** English **only**.

Linguistic-Epistemic Hegemonies

First, the obvious questions about language. For what purpose do we do all the teaching and researching and critiquing of language? Specifically, about English, and Englishes, and some more about its hegemony? Or, any scholarship for that matter? Who do we do it for? To what effect? For what social value? Toward what social-justice outcomes?

Uncomfortable as these questions may sound, how many of us rhetorically (rather than ideologically) determine which language and what combinations we use for which audience in what context and for what purpose and effect? Frankly, I think we just love to cash in on the power of English, including the cultural capital we derive from critiquing it; we do little or nothing about the problems we discuss because the latter is not in our business interest. Some of us blame the est while perpetuating its linguistic and cultural hegemony, inadvertently or not. It is not like the West, like some English-pushing emperor, rewards scholars around the world for their service; the scholars just happen to benefit from perpetuating the hegemony. We localize, replicate, adapt, and find value in cultivating its hegemony – with local spices and flavors. Then we argue a little more about how empowering the whole process of adapting and appropriating the power of English

can be – for some of us, that is, though we seldom admit it. We then go on to cherry-pick *empirical* evidence to justify what we want to – forgetting that our arguments do not apply to the vast majority of members of our societies. We don't paint the full picture, only an urban one, and don't acknowledge that.

The reality is that most of us are complicit and complacent because we cannot break away from our personal privileges and pleasures offered by the status quo. Through our institutions, policies, and frameworks of professional development and rewards, we have adopted competition, persuasion, conversion, and the regime of exclusion – all of which are mediated and maintained by English and its attendant political capital that we invest in and harvest of. We produce scholarship that is mostly inaccessible and therefore largely useless to our local societies – even the scholarship critiquing English or discourse advocating for using all languages, like this article.

> কেন আমরা একে অপরের সাথে ইংরেজিতে কথা বলি? (Keno amra eke oporer shathe Engrejite kotha boli?)

> আমাদের প্রতিবেশিদের জন্য আমাদের প্রকাশনা কোথায়? (Amader protibeshider jonno amader prokashona kothay?)

Second, there is severe imbalance of knowledge production between the global north and global south (Czerniewicz, 2014). And this is correlated to the non-use of local languages in scholarly publication and discourse. In the name of using a more widely **shared** language, we have only connected the cities, the elites, and the privileged – or people like us – who constitute a small segment of our respective countries' populations.

The above imbalance is also quite multifaceted. There is not only an imbalance if we accept the narrow definition of "scholarship" as whatever is published in academic journals and is indexed and counted as such; other forms of knowledge (from oral in medium to informal in form to embodied in practice to communal in ownership) are not recognized as knowledge. It is as if a dominant group of apple farmers in a globalized fruit market decides that only the apple counts as fruit. It is not at all that myriad other fruits are not produced and consumed in the local and global markets; it is just that they are not recognized as fruit – or at least "real" fruit. And the most significant part of the situation is that the more informed farmers among communities that are nourished by all the other fruits are involved in the business of apple that mainly benefits themselves.

Across the world, increasingly, if any research and publication is done in English, it enjoys greater recognition and reward (Lillis & Curry, 2004). From institutional practices to government policies to public understanding and aspiration to the very consciousness of scholars across the disciplines, strangely including those of us who focus on language, the medium (English) measures the value of research instead of its purpose in and contribution to society. It commands respect.

The hegemony of English – which points three fingers at us – is all-pervading and rapidly expanding – thanks to us, the scholars of language and allied fields.

और हम इस की शिकायत अंग्रेजी में करते रहते हैं । (aur hum is ki shikayat angreji me karte rahate hain.)

The hegemony of English, therefore, is entangled with the underproduction and non-recognition of recognized "knowledge" in the global south. And the solution to one must involve tackling the other as well.

Countering the Double Helix

Let me use an example to discuss how scholars in the global south can counter the double helix of the language-knowledge hegemony above. In 2019-20, a few colleagues from Bangladesh, India, and Nepal formed a group of two dozen scholars from these countries and from across the disciplines, helping the members develop research projects that had clear social-impact foundations and goals. We would help them publish internationally if they wished. We provided workshops, peer review support, resources, and a local network of experienced mentors. The participants worked on projects such as an investigation of potato yield in Kathmandu valley, environmental content in ELT in Bangladesh, quality of bricks in Nepal, human-wild animal clashes in the South Asian countryside, and partition-induced violence at the India-Bangladesh border.

After the project's completion, using surveys and interviews, colleagues Nasrin Pervin from Bangladesh, Pratusha Bhowmik from India, Surendra Subedi from Nepal respectively, and I from the US, wrote an article (forthcoming), reporting how scholars, pursuing research with broader social responsibility in mind rather than just for talking to each other, find far greater motivation to do research and publication. Our article shares the findings of the action-research component of the community support, showing that when there is community rather than competition, support as a response to demand, and a higher social purpose, research becomes more enrooted in local social needs and outcomes. That enrootment, in turn, bolsters motivation and productivity among scholars.

By "enrootment," we refer to the process, condition, and agency for taking root in the local world, especially as a condition of finding meaning or making an impact. Enrootment lexically means to "cause (a plant or seedling) to grow roots," to "establish something deeply and firmly," or to "have as an origin or cause." It is suggestive of something being embedded, established, entrenched, or having a gravitational pull toward the local. In the research and writing support community, the mentors and mentoring, collaborators and collaborations were connected laterally; local languages were used where possible; the focus was on process rather than product; and the community was defined by mutual support, purpose, resource-building, and, most importantly, social mission.

Accordingly, our work sought to contribute to the discourse about the academic regime of "publish or perish" spreading across the global south, showing a pathway to what we call a "publish and cherish" framework. In a world where global south scholars are constantly pulled into the global north, physically and intellectually, and where their choices undermine their own local knowledge production (Adriansen, 2019), we have argued for the need to go beyond the dynamics of power and hegemony, using support programs

to disrupt the global-local hegemonic relationship by fostering scholars' agency through localization, social impact, and enrootment of their knowledge production. We must show how to change the way in which the current map of global knowledge production is itself drawn; for instance, as Czerniewicz (2014) has argued, it is not just the amount and quality/rigor of publications but also how they are measured, whose knowledge counts, who gets access, and who has resources that create and sustain inequality. We must focus on the local purpose of knowledge as the basis of quality and rigor, thereby empowering local scholars to publish in global venues if they wish – essentially rejecting the global-local binary in favor of making scholarship locally purposeful as well as globally useful. We must ask not just who circulates knowledge, or how to improve the citation count of scholars in the global south (a point raised by Mazloumian et. al, 2013) but who produces knowledge and for whom. We must develop intervention programs to help local scholars publish internationally, as some scholars have done and reported in local and global literature.

The Paradigm Shift

To create conditions whereby scholars around the world can make their research and publication socially more relevant and valuable, there is a need for a particular kind of paradigm shift. I call this the shift from "Scholarship 1.0" to "Scholarship 2.0."

The term 2.0 comes from a discourse on the evolution of internet technology. Before around 2003-2006, internet technology used to only allow the vast majority of users to read content published by a small number of people who had special coding and ftp-based web-publishing skills. That was web 1.0; that internet was like broadcast technologies such as radio and TV. With the advent of wiki at first, then blogging, then microblogging, and other social networking platforms, the internet started allowing general users to write back, to chat with each other, to post and comment in multimodal formats, and eventually to interact in real time. This was web 2.0.

Imagine that books were not only written by authors because everyone is *potentially* an author, that we all have access to radio and TV stations, and that we are all journalists and publishers. It does not mean that we do a good job of any of these, but we are able to (the potential is there). Web 2.0 is that potential, especially defined by interactivity, flattening of the landscape as to who is authority and who is just a consumer, and the explosion of opportunity for expression and interaction. It is an explosion of new possibilities, which we may now take for granted but it has been a revolution, used and misused in various ways.

Unfortunately, the paradigm shift on the internet – and thereby the mode of communication and collaboration, civic engagement and political power-sharing – has not reshaped academe. Authors are still few, scholars are both feared and ignored by the public, and, even within academe, "researchers" (and not just the lowly teachers and learners) are still up there in the hierarchy. Especially in the global south, and especially in South Asia, our hierarchical socio-epistemic structures and colonial legacies sustain the tradition of Scholarship 1.0 where knowledge is a one-way traffic – and the streets and highways are reserved for the elites only – often by birth as well as educational gatekeeping. This status

quo is where the politics of English does its dirty work, and does it quite well. Or, rather, we do it, through English and Englishes.

Practically confronting the hegemony of English(es) requires, first and foremost, transcending individual interest and ego, mobilizing all languages in the interest of local society and professions, engaging in translanguaging and critical global citizenship, and actually practicing what we preach about language and scholarship. That shift requires that we behave and carry out our work very differently in relation to medium, process, audience, rewards, and recognition. It requires intellectual honesty and social accountability. It requires us to at least allocate some of our time and energies to "publish" scholarship beyond the global neoliberal regime, to challenge and help shape institutional policies that reproduce that regime locally, and to invest time to include and engage diverse stakeholders of our scholarship. Only by producing new knowledge for our own communities and societies – in many languages and new local venues – can we give life and meaning to our critical perspectives on language. From the many collaborative projects in South Asia in the past fifteen years, I have learned that the politics of global English (including Englishes) can best be countered by focusing instead on our social responsibility and accountability as scholars, by seeking to advance social justice through knowledge production and especially knowledge application, locally. Ultimately, global can and must be the totality of locals rather than the other way around.

Unequal access to and fluency in English and its elitist forms undergirds significant discrimination in faculty hiring, professional opportunities, and the general attitude toward and respect for scholars – the latest as seen in the case of unequal treatment of faculty who do not have educational degrees from or even low numbers of visits to "native" English speaking countries. So, without shifting from the current paradigm to one that localizes knowledge and pursues social justice, we cannot disentangle ourselves from the hegemony of English(es) and its localized power politics.

A paradigm shift from 1.0 to 2.0 in academe would put the social worth of scholarship at the center by fostering community rather than competition. It would not encourage the me-me-me scholar bragging about their publication on social media but scholars who are networked and mutually supporting, producing, and applying knowledge for their own community first.

The push for knowledge production away from local venues and audiences is increasingly prompting problematic responses from scholars, such as publications in predatory journals, high frequency of plagiarism and low originality in scholarship, and acceptance of citation index as a goal for new institutional initiatives, if any. In the past decade, the most striking challenges were seen in India, where increased demands for publication (without commensurate infrastructures or support for scholars) led to the annual production of more than a third of the world's 400,000 articles in 8,000 predatory journals (according to a 2019 *Nature* article by Bhusan Patwardhan, the former Vice President of Indian University Grants Commission). Especially countries in the global south are now exacerbating that imbalance and the underlying problems instead of addressing them: by pushing their

scholars to publish in English (which, in fact, is one of the unfortunate reasons for the imbalance), in international venues (another barrier for many), and to meet certain proxy measures of quality (such as citation index, instead of relevance to and impact on society), they are aggravating an emerging neocolonial, neoliberal hegemony facilitated ironically by the internet. As Mazloumian et al. (2013) have illustrated, citation count may only reflect consumption and dependence on others, instead of setting the agenda locally and putting new knowledge to meaningful use (Gerke & Evers, 2006), as well as contributing it globally.

To pursue meaningful goals, we need publication venues and peer review processes that are inclusive and supportive, rather than exclusive and judgmental. We must add layers of mentoring to standard review processes, helping writers better communicate ideas across cultures. We need review processes that redefines quality by diversity, rather than prestige and, too often, prestige by the ratio of rejection to acceptance. Quality must also be defined by meaning and value to readers and writers locally. We must also see quality in variety, sharing, and interaction. Fortunately, we can use the affordances of the web to redefine quality and rigor in ways I just mentioned – but we must change our mindsets first.

Practicing What We Preach

Now, how do we mobilize other languages, alongside English, to facilitate the paradigm shift, to achieve social goals of scholarship?

First, we must honestly admit that the power of English is based on aspirations and ideologies far more than actual benefits for us and for our societies. As scholars have reported from classrooms and communities in global-south contexts like Nepal's (Phyak, 2015; Phyak & Sharma, 2020; Sah & Li, 2020), ideologies about English, as a generic and named language, actually create all kinds of adverse languaging conditions for multilingual users (rather than facilitating resourcefulness and agency). In a forthcoming article, I report how a group of 80+ Nepalese scholars from across the discipline engage with English in the process of writing for academic publication – especially how they struggle with English and feel ashamed to use their home languages – using the latter in hiding and far more frequently than they think they do. Based on an action research integrated into a 6-month long research and writing support program in 2020-21, the article explores power and politics, ideology and myth-making, coercion and stigma in what I call translingual conditions under duress. The analysis and theming of data indicated a lower awareness of multilingual practice relative to practice itself, a tendency to overestimate English use in academic research and writing, and a great deal of appreciation for environments that accorded freedom of linguistic choice (in spite of considerable aspirations, among some, to improve English by not using other languages).

During research and collaborations in South Asia in particular, I have observed that by modeling translingual communication and providing resources in different languages (rather than institutions just enforcing rules or making demands of quality or quantity), providing support and fostering collaboration helps scholars to produce far better research. Fostering agentive (rather than inhibited) translanguaging also seems to require addressing

much broader politics of language and with an understanding of the full languaging condition. It is for institutions and academic leaders to tackle that larger challenge.

Similarly, how do we align the translingual and decolonial frameworks with the Scholarship 2.0 framework?

First, we must pursue collaborative scholarship in and across the global south contexts, contributing to global platforms from the ground up but producing and using new knowledge on the ground first.

Second, we must mobilize the hegemonic impulse for countering that very impulse and to create mutual benefits from which we can advance more meaningful scholarship locally and transnationally in the interest of the marginalized communities, not the minority of scholars who pursue their own personal interests in the name of their communities.

And, third, we must translate ethical principles of research into professionally, educationally, and socially beneficial practices; we must start writing in different languages or for different audiences, conducting and publishing research collaboratively, and using scholarship for teacher training and program development.

What is most needed in the field of language education and communication is not more scholarship about English, Englishes, or even language and languaging. It is a new paradigm that values and mobilizes the languages in which our communities conduct life, professions, and learning. We are as sophisticated as we are self-serving. We are less awkward and more articulate than our less educated neighbors in how we talk. But we are not honest and grounded, not as committed to the common good. So, even a humble turn toward no longer refusing to speak the different languages we know and use in daily life would make a difference.

A little intellectual courage and honesty would take us a long way, from the shadows of citation count in our modern cave, toward the world of reality where we can recognize "social impact" when we see it, where we are challenged to actually make some.

> আসুন আমাদের সকল ভাষায় প্রকাশ করি। আসুন আমরা আমাদের সম্প্রদায়ের কাছে জ্ঞানকে সহজলভ্য করি। (Ashun amader shokol bhashay prokash kori. Ashun amra amader shomprodayer kache gyanke shohojlobbho kori.)

> आइए हम अपने आदर्शों को व्यवहार में लाएं। आइए हम अंग्रेजी के आधिपत्य की अपनी आलोचना को काम में लाएं। (aiye hum apne adarshon ko vyavhar me layen. Aiye hum angreji ke aadhipatya ki apni aalochana ko kam me layen.

> आउनुहोस अब छिमेकीहरुका भाषाहरुमा पनि ज्ञान उत्पादन गरौं । आउनुहोस हाम्रा समुदायकै उत्थान खातीर ज्ञानको प्रयोजन गरौं । (aunuhos aba chhimekihruka bhashahruma pni gyan utpadan garaun. Aunuhos hamro samudaykai utthan katir gyanko prayojan garaun.)

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