Introduction

Reading this book has reminded me of a recent email exchange between me and an editor of a publishing company that published one of my papers:

_Editor:_ I had to make an editorial decision on one sentence in your paper (deleted) ... The copy-editor replied that she felt that sentence was a strong and, albeit a quote, somewhat provocative remark and might cause offence where we do not want it to! I replied that the critical tone ... was quite strong throughout the paper ... I also felt that this quote added little to that criticism and agreed that we might be better to play safe and remove it. I hope you do not mind.

_Me:_ If you were to ask me, I would rather not delete the sentence. The author is THE expert in the field ... respected by everyone ... (so) ... ironically, if you take it out, we are missing out on one formidable source which will silence potential critics of my article. In other words, we are actually safer if we keep the quote given the author’s stature in the field.

_Editor:_ Yes I do understand this, indeed, and the author remains very well represented in the paper and the general tone has been untouched, I assure you. Shall we say this suggestion came through from above me and was placed fairly strongly before me as something that was best done. Sorry about that.

As strongly argued and clearly demonstrated by authors of this volume, academic writing in English happens across structures of inequality. In the exchange above, the problem concerned only one sentence; yet, it exposes different layers of political configurations in the whole enterprise of academic writing in English where literacy or knowledge brokering (Lillis & Curry, 2006) occurs in all levels of work. Two decades of empirical work on multilingual speakers in their struggles to publish in English language international journals have revealed structures of marginalization

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_Afterword_

_Crossing Cultures in an Unequal Global Order: Voicing and Agency in Academic Writing in English_

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and disenfranchisement not only due to linguistic, rhetorical, and/or discursive mismatches but also due to material conditions working against these writers (e.g., lack of funds to fund research and developing countries’ overall economic positioning in the global order; Man, Weinkauf, Tsang, & Sin, 2004; Salager-Meyer, 2008; Uzuner, 2008).

It seems that decision-making in the exchange earlier does not come from the sympathetic editor but “from above.” Thus, while we can refer to the problem as a matter of compromise, we can also describe the work of the editor as mediation. He has for the most part of the process “allowed” a largely critical tone to saturate the paper that was to be published in a largely conservative volume with a long tradition of privileging “descriptive,” “neutral,” and “objective” studies. But when it comes to “provocative” statements that could potentially antagonize its prospective audience, he too was willing to yield but not after negotiating the limits of a particular (and arguably dominant) culture of writing at the centre of the world of academic publishing.

In the end, what was produced was a voice that, in true Bakhtinian fashion as espoused by Phan and Baurain in the introduction to this volume and as demonstrated by most of its chapters, was simultaneously personal and social (Prior, 2001). But above all, it is a voice entangled in the infrastructure of power, which lends material shape to the geopolitics of academic writing (Canagarajah, 2002) and which sustains what Piscioneri in this volume refers to as “the corporate imperatives of the globalized/internationalized academy.” Indeed, the academic enterprise is never completely about academic writing only (Tupas, 2004). As the “simple” exchange aforementioned demonstrates, it is subtly or crudely about the search for capital. It is about sustaining, defending, or espousing well-entrenched or dominant ideologies to maintain the same level of readership. It is about creating new technologies of knowledge creation (e.g., the tiering system and journal accreditation processes), which makes sure that particular ways of knowledge creation are favored over others and, more importantly, which allows a few West-based multinational publishing companies to decide what counts as legitimate knowledge.

Look at the devastating effects of the developed world’s promotion and selling of humanistic writing approaches to the rest of the world, for example, the process approach and the socialization approach to the teaching of academic English. On the basis of the Malaysian experience, Mukundan in this volume strongly states that “effective selling” of “developed world writing movements” such as process approaches (Susser, 1994) has resulted in “anarchy in developing world classrooms” because of a huge mismatch between the assumptions of these movements and the specific needs of students in the developing world. Looking at the same issue from a more sympathetic attitude toward writing approaches from the West, You (2004) nevertheless finds that because of the material conditions of teachers in China, which force them take on extra hours of teaching, “most writing teachers have to maneuver in a limited pedagogical space, making their pedagogical choices virtually from no choice” (p. 108).