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COPE: Mind the Gap – International Authors and Editors Intellectual Colonization and Author Issues

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English as Lingua Franca

“...around 27,000 journals included in the Web of Science...indexes – most prominently, the Science Citation index...[mostly]...publish in English. However, more than 9,000 peer-reviewed scholarly journals are being published in other languages, with French (3,500), German (2,700), Spanish (2,300) and Chinese (1400) contributing the highest numbers. Most of these journals are excluded from journal indexes, thus perpetuating the ideology that English is the global academic lingua franca.”

Mary Jane Curry and Theresa Lillis (March 13, 2018)

COPE GUIDANCE FOR PEER REVIEW

Bias and competing interests:

It is important to remain unbiased by considerations related to the nationality, religious or political beliefs, gender or other characteristics of the authors, origins of a manuscript or by commercial considerations.

COPE on Language and Style

Remember it is the authors' paper, so do not attempt to rewrite it to your own preferred style if it is basically sound and clear; suggestions for changes that improve clarity are, however, important. In addition, be aware of the sensitivities surrounding language issues that are due to the authors writing in a language that is not their first or most proficient language, and phrase the feedback appropriately and with due respect.

COPE Council: ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR PEER REVIEWERS, September 2017
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Good advice but...it generally it hasn't worked

Some summary recommendations from Elsevier made to authors in 2014:

1. Be patient and persistent
2. Collaborate with other researchers
3. Imitate the style of others
4. Adhere to journal guidelines
5. Linguistic editing
6. Find the right outlet for your work
7. Increase the visibility of your work (through websites; blogs, etc.)

Daphne van Weijen

However, with English as an Additional Language

"Whichever approach is adopted, one thing is clear, and that is that the official difficulties encountered in the literature...are immense."

John Flowerdew (2007).

Systemic Nature of the Problem and the Limitations of the Current Recommendations

The Problem of recommendations to date:

1. Recommendations are directed at the individual but the problem is systemic and operates across the language and culture of entire nation states
2. Because the problem is identified and directed at individuals, solutions are presented as the responsibility of individual scholars (e.g., pay to get your paper edited by a professional language service which you pay for – which, by the way, often is inadequate because the services are variable and services providers rarely have the scholarly expertise relevant to the specific discipline)

Alternative Directions and Recommendations

1. Journals and publishers should formally adopt directives to reviewers, such as the COPE guideline suggestions, to ameliorate the intolerance of English language reviewers to English as Additional Language scholarship
2. Journals and publishers should provide technical editing services for authors with substantively acceptable articles once they have been accepted
3. Universities and the governments that support them should provide in house technical support for editing of scholarly research articles prior to their submission to journals for review and not make individuals responsible for finding services themselves
4. Federal government research grants should include the costs of technical support as part of granting funds

5. International granting agencies and national granting agencies should make funds available to increase international networks of scholars, conference travel and other opportunities to create venues for ameliorating the linguistic and cultural isolation of scholars in non English as a first language universities.
6. Encourage citation indexes to start including other languages in listing non English language articles

Last comments

It is clear that many of these recommendations are incomplete, onerous and likely not to be implemented. However, like development issues generally, the cost of not addressing problems that proportionally impact a major group of linguistically and culturally different populations of the world is fundamentally not only unjust but contrary to a commitment to research integrity and publication ethics.

Thank you

References

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