



RESEARCH REPORT

Multilingualism and native speakerism in academic journals' language policies: Exploring a potential power of applied linguistics journals in promoting equitable publishing practices

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Abstract

Multilingualism in the context of academic publishing involves beliefs and actions manifested through publications in multiple languages. However, a systematic analysis of how academic journals practice multilingualism has been scant. Therefore, the present study analyzed how indexed journals of applied linguistics promote and practice multilingualism following their scopes and language policies (LPs). Initially, 67 journals underwent screening based on their “aims and scope,” resulting in 11 journals that actively promoted multilingualism. Employing a critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework, the main analysis focused on the assumptions embedded within the journals' LPs. The findings indicated an incongruity between the journals' stated commitment and their practices of multilingualism. Specifically, all the journals mandated submissions exclusively in English with implicit biases toward native speakerism. The study underscores the need for a collective effort within and beyond the applied linguistics community to address linguistic biases and for more equitable and inclusive academic publishing practices.

Introduction

Multilingualism is both a theoretical construct and a real-world issue widely investigated and promoted by applied linguistics journals (Curry & Lillis, 2022). Multilingualism, which can be considered as a “socially constructed phenomenon where languages are sets of resources rather than as fixed linguistic systems” (Cenoz, 2013a, p. 9), has produced an amount of research, indicating researchers' interest in and societal importance of the topic (see Cenoz, 2013b; Rothman & Slabakova, 2018; Wei, 2020). However, despite this “multilingual turn” in applied linguistics research and ideological support for multilingualism (see May, 2013), *promoting* multilingualism and *practicing* may constitute different types of efforts. That is, it is possible that, while promoting multilingualism,

journals may be discouraging authors to share their research in their own language for their linguistic communities. To this end, journals' "aims and scope" stated on journals' websites serve not only as guidelines for authors to consider them as potential outlets for their research (Ahlstrom, 2015) but also as ideological and political stances that journals take (Henitiuk & O'Sullivan, 2015).

In the current study, we considered academic journals as representing a societal multilingualism (Romain, 2012) whereby its members—journals editors, reviewers, and authors—are uniquely positioned to promote multilingualism. Within the multilingual community, journals are arguably the most powerful stakeholder to shape academic discourse. As Hultgren (2019) claimed, "academic publishing could be seen as a field with vested interest to regulate, monitor and uphold standards to protect the privileges of those who successfully participate in it" (p. 6). Accordingly, we narrowly define multilingualism in the context of academic publishing as promotion and practice of scholarly publications in languages other than English. Our inquiry centers on how indexed journals align their promotion of multilingualism with its actual implementation in academic publishing. To delve into this matter, we narrowly focused on examining language policies (LPs), as LPs serve as indicators of their multilingual practices. Our analysis centers on a comparative assessment of the "aims and scope" (promotion) and the LPs (practice). In doing so, we explored the underlying assumptions in the journals' LPs, specifically concerning the concept of native speakerism—a major societal, political, and ideological obstacle against multilingualism (see Jessner et al., 2021).

Background and motivation

Language policy and English in academic publishing

In recent years, academic success and competence is largely determined by academic publications (Rawat & Meena, 2014; Rose, 2019) and the importance of journal publications has been increasingly promoted by academic communities and institutions (Sato & Loewen, 2022).

This exclusive focus on publications is underscored by its role as the most heavily weighted criterion in institutional assessments conducted by university ranking agencies. As a consequence, publications not only facilitate career advancement but play a central role in securing academic positions (Rawat & Meena, 2014; Sato, 2023). Amid this academic landscape, academic journals serve as gatekeepers by determining whether a manuscript is worthy of publication and who is granted this opportunity. To this end, academic journals provide prospective authors with editorial guidelines that encompass not only the manuscript format but also the language specifications for publication. Editorial guidelines are considered to be a part of LPs which may be affected by language ideology (Farr & Song, 2011).

Language ideology is a pervasive force in our behaviors, influencing the way we speak and the attitudes we hold toward particular language uses and users (Heinrich, 2018). It often operates at a subconscious level, leading us to perceive our linguistic choices and beliefs as natural or inherent. Heinrich's (2018) assertion that language ideology remains largely unnoticed by many individuals highlights the notion that once we begin to scrutinize its presence, we discern its influence throughout various aspects of our linguistic interactions. In this sense, LPs in a general sense are representation of language ideology. As argued by Schmidt (2009), LPs pertain to the development of public policies that employ state authority to impact different facets of language status

and usage within a population under the state's jurisdiction. This involvement of the state in LPs arises when political actors perceive significant issues at stake concerning the status and use of languages within their society.

Similarly, in the context of academic publishing, editorial guidelines can be a manifestation of LPs defined by Spolsky (2012) as "a set of rules for language use" (p. 3). These guidelines detail, among other aspects, the language allowed for publication and, thus, LPs impact two dimensions of language planning: a) corpus planning related to norms of standard spelling, and b) status planning related to choices of language (Bright, 1992). On the one hand, "corpus planning" refers to orthography such as the differences between American and British spellings. On the other hand, "status planning" involves the social influence of a language concerning what is proper, correct, or preferred (Wiley & García, 2016). In broader terms, status planning encompasses deliberate efforts aimed at shaping the language codes and behaviors of individuals (Cooper, 1989). Thus, academic journals, by imposing their LPs, hold the authority to influence the linguistic norms and preferences of scholars. Simultaneously, scholars who diverge from these policies risk of not advancing to the external review stage or having their manuscript rejected despite its scholarly contribution (Canagarajah, 2022).

As emphasized in the recent editorial (2023) in *Nature Human Behaviour*, entitled "Scientific publishing has a language problem," the dominance of English in scientific publishing reinforces barriers for scholars whose first language is not English, underscoring the importance of addressing language diversity and fostering inclusivity within the scientific community. Indeed, as current scholars are fully aware, "pressures on multilingual scholars to publish in English-medium journals" has been intensified in recent years (Curry & Lillis, 2019, p. 1). The first step for resolving this issue may be to scrutinize academic journals' LPs on linguistic diversity and scholars' accessibility to academic publishing opportunities. It is important to stress that journals not only present language barriers but also possess the power to alleviate them (Lenharo, 2023).

Native speakerism

A prevailing counterforce to multilingualism, specifically in the realm of academic publishing, is native speakerism. Native speakerism was originally defined by Holliday (2005), with a focus on English teachers, as "an established belief that 'native-speaker' teachers represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the language and of English language teaching methodology" (p. 6). Since then, the concept has widely been applied to other language-related issues, including academic publishing where English is the dominant language. To this end, academic journals have been criticized for (a) publishing manuscripts primarily in English, and (b) their biased editorial decisions against L2-English researchers (see Hamel, 2007). Apart from journal editors' subjective decisions, LPs can encourage or deter prospective authors from submitting their scientific contributions (Schmidt, 2009; Spolsky, 2012). LPs, by stipulating the acceptable language(s) for publication and acceptable writing quality (in English), indirectly reinforce the prevailing language ideology, which may prioritize certain languages, such as English, as the standard or norm. This fixation on a dominant linguistic identity, embodied in the concept of "native speaker," can perpetuate an artificial binary that creates linguistic hierarchies and marginalizes L2-English or multilingual scholars.

The label of “native speaker” (NS) stems from the Chomskyan notion as an “ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly” (Chomsky, 1965, p. 3). According to the current understanding of multilingualism, however, the NS construct is considered artificial and perpetuates a non-real stereotype oriented toward a monolingual ideology (Jain, 2022). As a consequence, the terms NS and “non-native speaker” (NNS) constitute a dichotomy of identity where the binary concept purports the idealization and essentialization of a dominant speaker-listener (Yazan & Rudolph, 2018). According to this view, NSs’ glorified linguistic and social status, being superior and/or normative, constitutes a fallacy (Canagarajah, 1999) and ultimately promotes ethnolinguistic prejudice (Lee & Canagarajah, 2019).

The present study

Based on the discussed literature, the current study (a) compared promotion and practice of multilingualism in indexed applied linguistics journals, and (b) explored signs of native speakerism in their LPs. As Jenkins (2011) rightly pointed out, international journals are called international because there are international readers whose first languages may not be English. However, it is also true that publications written in English have the widest audience because of the language’s status as a lingua franca (St Clair, 2011). English is called *the international language*, overloaded with power (Wright, 2016), and used “as the lingua franca for international communication and dissemination of scholarly work” (Collins & Dagenais, 2010, p. 638). Recent studies focusing on English as the language for academic publications showed such a tendency. For instance, Huttner-Koros (2015) analyzed 21,000 articles indexed in Scopus that were submitted from 239 countries. Results showed that around 80% of academic publications were written in English. Lillis and Curry’s (2015) analysis of editors’ and reviewers’ comments on 95 manuscripts showed that 61% of the comments were related to English being the authors’ foreign or second language. McKinley and Rose’s (2018) study is particularly relevant to the current study. Their analysis of 210 journals across different disciplines (e.g., agriculture, chemistry, medicine, and social sciences) focused on the journals’ positions on language “errors,” “standards,” “norms,” and “nativeness.” Their qualitative content analysis on the LPs focused on rigidity, and the journals were divided into either flexible, rigid, both, or neutral. In terms of nativeness, they conceptualized the journals’ suggestion for consulting an L1-English speaker as a rigid position. Results showed a variety of positions including “flexible” positions that clearly acknowledged the fact that both L1- and L2-English writers can be good writers. In “rigid” positions, native speakers of English were often associated with “error-free” writing and yet the “native-speaker yardstick” (p. 9) was never clearly defined. While McKinley and Rose (2018) reported academic journals’ overall positions related to native speakerism, the current study conducted a deeper analysis on LPs from a critical perspective.

These findings suggest a possibility that academic journals inadvertently maintain the long-standing inequalities, help the NS norm to preserve its status (Pérez, 2018), and/or support “the maintenance of social elites” (Pennycook, 1989, p. 593). In extending McKinley and Rose’s (2018) study, the current study used CDA and analyzed the LPs of leading journals in applied linguistics. Applied linguistics journals are arguably situated to *promote* multilingualism more so than journals in other disciplines.

Our question was how much these journals actually *practice* multilingualism and combat native speakerism. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do indexed applied linguistics journals that promote multilingualism practice multilingualism?
2. What are the assumptions found in the journals' language policies regarding native speakerism?

Method

Data collection

In order to answer the research questions, we focused on journals indexed by Scopus and Clarivate. The analysis was conducted in May 2022. We focused on indexed journals because of their social statuses and power to shape and lead academic discourses and practices within research communities. Several steps were taken to select journals to focus on, with an ultimate aim to identify those that promote multilingualism. The first filter was journal categories. For Scopus, we narrowed down the search in the order of: "Subject area = Language and Linguistics"; "Citescore = 1st quartile"; and "Source type = journals". The search resulted in 189 journals. For Clarivate, we followed: "Core collection = Arts & Humanities Citation Index"; "Current contents = Arts & Humanities"; "Category = Language & Linguistics," which yielded 218 journals. Second, we chose journals that were listed in both indexes and the total number turned out to be 67.

We further analyzed the 67 journals by focusing on their "focus" or "aims and scope" displayed on their websites. We selected journals that explicitly mentioned "bilingualism" and/or "multilingualism" based on an assumption that the statements exhibit the journals' ideological stance toward multilingualism. This final step resulted in 11 journals that served as the main dataset for the current study. We acknowledge the narrow focus in the selection process. Not including "bilingualism" or "multilingualism" in the "aims" statement does not mean that a journal disregards multilingualism. In other words, a methodological weakness of the current study was a lack of tools to comprehensively understand journals' language ideology related to multilingualism. The complete list of the journal is included in the appendix.

Data analysis

In the initial phase of our analysis, we scrutinized the scope statements of the journals to identify their *promotion* of multilingualism. Subsequently, we investigated the languages allowed for publication, examining the actual practice of multilingual writing within these journals. We closely analyzed the LPs provided by the journals in exploring the journals' *practice* of multilingualism. We used CDA as the analytical framework. CDA, a form of qualitative content analysis, directs its focus toward unraveling the intricate relationship between language and its role in shaping ideology and sociocultural transformations (see Preiser et al., 2022). CDA was selected due to its capacity to unveil the intricate connections between discourse, power dynamics, and ideologies, rendering it an ideal choice for contributing to critical social analysis (Fairclough, 2012).

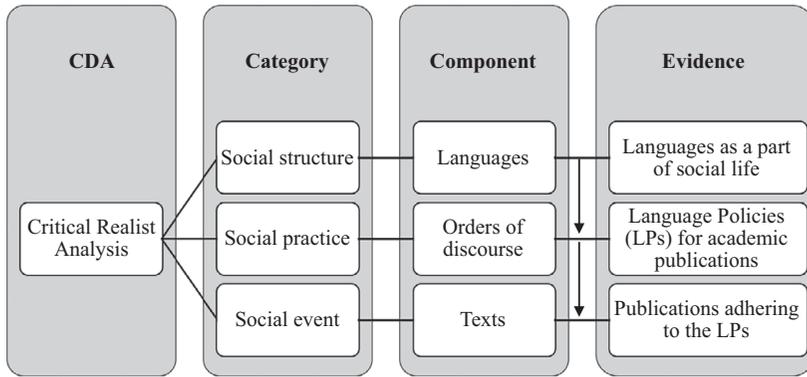


Figure 1. Language policies of academic journals via the lens of CDA

Within the realm of critical realist analysis, which is an integral component of our CDA approach, we considered LPs as conduits of “orders of discourse” and reflection of social practice (see Figure 1). As articulated by Fairclough (2003), “language defines a certain potential, certain possibilities, and excludes others” (p. 24). In essence, language functions as the overarching framework for establishing social practices and events, as it serves as the primary code for communication. Consequently, these linguistic categories govern the generation of “texts” as constituents of social events, with academic publications serving as an embodiment of this category. Fairclough (2003) characterized CDA as an analysis of the dialectical relationship between discourse and other components of social practices. Grounded in this categorization and operating under the belief that “social practices networked in a particular way constitute a social order” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 206), we believed that LPs wield a substantial influence in shaping the social structure of academic publications, along with the broader sociocultural context inhabited by academics as a distinct social group. To illustrate this perspective, Figure 1 depicts a conceptual visualization of how the language of publications can be understood within the framework of CDA.

Fairclough’s (2003) framework encompasses various types of assumptions, including existential (pertaining to what exists), propositional (related to what is, can be, or will be), and value based (concerning what is good or desirable). In the current study, these assumptions were explored within the LPs. We also included the statements within the third-party editing services recommended on the journals’ websites. Through this analytical approach, the aim was to unearth the beliefs or positions that the selected journals endorse and to discern how LPs influence the conditions for prospective authors seeking to publish. Furthermore, this method facilitated an exploration of the intricate relationship between LPs and publisher editing services within the context of multilingualism promoted by these journals. We acknowledge how restricted journal editors are in creating their own LPs, however.

Results

Journals’ scopes and approaches to multilingualism

In response to the first research question concerning *promotion* and *practice* of multilingualism, the findings showed that the journals explicitly endorse bi/multilingualism. In essence, they encourage research on the acquisition of multiple languages

and emphasize its practical applications in real-world contexts. For instance, Journal 1's scope states that, "The Journal is multidisciplinary and focuses on all aspects of bilingualism and bilingual education around the world." This scope shows how the journal encourages academics to submit manuscripts related to educational practices of multilingualism which can be translated into a way of promoting multilingualism in educational settings. The findings also indicate that the journals promote multilingualism from various perspectives. For example, Journal 6 "invites scholarly contributions with strong interdisciplinary perspectives to understand and promote bi/multilingualism, bi/multiliteracy, and linguistic democracy." This scope reflects the journal's encouragement of diverse investigations into languages from a multilingual perspective. Consequently, irrespective of specific research topics that the journals solicit, their scopes collectively support multilingualism in research, both as an educational practice and as an interdisciplinary field. However, when analyzing the languages permitted for publication, all the journals accept English only as the language for publications.

Assumptions in the journals' LP

The second research question addressed the assumptions concerning native speakerism and multilingualism in the journals' LPs. This analysis focused on the LPs and the publisher editing services, by following Fairclough's (2003) CDA categories: (a) existential (what exists), (b) propositional (what is or can be or will be), and (c) value (what is good or desirable). According to the CDA, these types of assumptions can be found only through deep and critical reading of the materials, considering that they are triggered by certain features such as definite articles and demonstratives for existential, factive verbs for propositional, and/or estimating verbs for the value assumptions.

The results showed that there were four main assumptions that were repeatedly seen in the focused LPs: (a) NSs are authority to distinguish between accurate and inaccurate academic English, (b) authors seeking assistance with English language means that they are L2-English writers, (c) L1-English users are privileged to publish because they do not need external resources or extra fees for editing, and (d) English is the only language for academic publications.

NSs as authority was identified in Journal 11 and in two publisher editing services (that were used by eight journals: see Table 1). This means that 9 out of the 11 journals directly or indirectly supported native speakerism. In terms of the assistance recommended for L2-English writers, 10 journals and two publisher editing services implied such a tendency. These sources mention translation and/or English as a language barrier. For instance, the editing services provided by Journal 3 state that they "will ensure that no language barriers stand between you and the research world." Concerning the privileged status for L1-English users, 10 journals and the editing services recommended by Journal 10, which means all 11 journals, appeared to support the privilege; they all state that L2-English writers should use editing services. Finally, English was found to be the only language to publish in all 11 journals (as we reported in the previous section). Table 1 summarizes the assumptions as well as examples from different journals.

Discussion

The current study aimed to identify how indexed applied linguistics journals *promote* and *practice* multilingualism through their LPs and the publisher editing services that

Table 1. Assumptions of journals' LPs and publisher editing services

Assumptions	Example evidence
Native speakers are authority to distinguish between accurate and inaccurate academic English.	<p>"If not written by a native speaker, please have the paper proof-read prior to submission." (<i>Journal 11</i>)</p> <p>"All our native English-speaking editors hold a PhD or Master's degree." (editing service by <i>Taylor & Francis</i>)</p> <p>"If you are not a native speaker of English, please have your contribution carefully checked by a native speaker." (editing service by <i>De Gruyter Mouton</i>)</p>
Authors seeking assistance with English language means that they are L2-English writers.	<p>"Choose from options such as English Language Editing, which will ensure that your article is free of spelling and grammar errors, Translation, and Artwork Preparation." (<i>Journals 1 and 8</i>)</p> <p>"A language specialist in your subject area translates the document into English." (Editing service by <i>SAGE</i>)</p>
L1-English users are privileged to publish because they do not need external resources or paying extra fees.	<p>"Authors seeking assistance with English language editing, translation with editing, or figure and manuscript formatting, to fit the journal's specifications should consider using <i>SAGE Author Services</i>." (<i>Journal 2</i>)</p> <p>"Please ensure that English language proofreading is carried out before submission. No language-related proofing will take place at later stages." (<i>Journal 11</i>)</p>
English is the only language for academic publications.	<p>"Please note that this journal only publishes manuscripts in English." (<i>Journals 4 and 9</i>)</p>

the journals recommend. A particular focus was given on native speakerism as an opposition force against multilingualism. Overall, all indexed applied linguistic journals analyzed in the current study promoted multilingualism in different ways showing that being a user of more than one language is a topic worth researching and publishing about. Some journals stressed the importance of multilingualism in the larger society as well. However, these journals rarely practiced these beliefs in their LPs and/or their third-party publisher editing services. First, English was found to be the only language accepted for publications. Second, the journals showed (implicit) support for native speakerism. These tendencies suggest that, while multilingualism is promoted, it may not be effectively practiced. The lack of practice of multilingualism by applied linguistics journals is rather paradoxical when some journals of other fields, such as medicine and engineering, take a flexible stance for manuscripts written by L2-English academics as well as manuscripts written in languages other than English (see McKinley & Rose, 2018).

This mismatch between theory and practice in favor of multilingualism contradicts journals' objectives (i.e., aims and scope). Such practices may reduce or discourage publication opportunities for L2-English academics (Canagarajah, 1996); as a consequence, L2-English users may be given less opportunity to share their scientific contributions. Paradoxically, some academic journals, which are not indexed, allow publications in different languages. For instance, *Hispania* allows publications in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. *Revista Internacional de Lenguas Extranjeras*

[*International Journal of Foreign Languages*] solicits publications in English, Spanish, Catalan, French, Portuguese, and Italian (see Curry & Lillis, 2013). We choose not to speculate the reasons behind the contradiction between promotion and practice by indexed journals and stay at discussing the current study's findings. Nevertheless, we encourage journal editors and publishers to consider the findings of the current study and to truly practice multilingualism.

The results also showed that the LPs communicated the importance of using "proper" academic English before submitting a manuscript to a journal. Here, it is crucial to distinguish assurance of the quality of writing and promotion of native speakerism. It is understandable, and perhaps necessary, that academics are encouraged to make sure that their manuscript is free of errors. The overall writing quality is crucial as well in order for authors to communicate their research effectively. Hence, LPs should state that a manuscript should be of high quality in its writing and clarity (see McKinley & Rose, 2018). However, it is another thing that authors are encouraged to consult with an NS of English whose qualification as an academic writer is not specified. Here, it is important to note that there's little empirical evidence that L2-English users are less capable of academic writing (see Flowerdew, 2019; Hyland, 2016); rather, it is the experience, not the first language, that matters for becoming a proficient academic writer (see Vasconcelos et al., 2007). This recognition that language competence goes beyond native speakerism is vital for promoting diversity, inclusivity, and equity in academic publishing. By challenging embedded assumptions in LPs and questioning the essentialization of the native speaker norm, academic journals could create a more inclusive platform for knowledge dissemination in line with the contemporary understanding of multilingualism.

Finally, results showed that some of the editing services suggested by the journals were mainly considered for L2-English users who are labeled as non-proper academic writers. Although English could still be regarded as the lingua franca for publications, the LPs could be more inclusive and combat the existence of inequality for L2-English academics. The current study showed, however, the lack of opportunities to publish in a different language, and the status of authority given to an NS (of English), which indicate how the privilege has been given to L1-English scholars without considering the wider populations of different language users and consumers of research.

Conclusion

The current study explored promotion and practice of multilingualism in academic journals. Results indicated the power of English in LPs hidden behind the promotion of multilingualism. In some cases, journals promoted multilingualism but clearly ensured native speakerism at the same time. We argue that this contradiction may lead to less publication opportunity for L2-English academics. We believe that allowing publications in other languages is one (and powerful) way of *practicing* multilingualism. We agree with Curry and Lillis' (2022) stance that "scholars around the world should be free to choose means of communication for their work without worrying about academic evaluation pressures and the dominance of English" (p. 2). The present study suggests that indexed journals have such a power to support multilingual practices.

However, we are also aware that publications in multiple languages require ideological and financial support from the publishers. Journal editors may not be positioned to make such a change, although we are aware that as we write this manuscript (December 2023 for the second-round revision), editors of indexed journals are in

conversation of creating new LPs that truly promote multilingualism. We also acknowledge that some journals publish abstracts in different languages in an effort to practice multilingualism (e.g., *Language Assessment Quarterly*, *Language Awareness*, *Language Testing*). Hopefully, those efforts result in removal of native speakerism in the LPs as well as inclusion of different languages in journal publications. We call for “the sense of perceived solidarity and interaction” (Romaine, 2012, p. 477) within and beyond the applied linguistics communities who hold the social power to practice multilingualism. If publishers and journal editors worked out the logistics of publishing in different languages (e.g., reviewing, editing, and marketing), it is not beyond the realm of possibility that scholars share their research findings more freely and widely in different languages. Applied linguistics is an academic discipline that is uniquely suited for this social change. This way, different languages and their users are given more power and social equity in academia and beyond.

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Appendix

The final list of journals in the dataset

Focused journals (N = 11)
<i>International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism</i>
<i>Language Testing</i>
<i>International Journal of Multilingualism</i>
<i>Language and Education</i>
<i>International Journal of Bilingualism</i>
<i>International Multilingual Research Journal</i>
<i>Language, Culture and Curriculum</i>
<i>Language Acquisition</i>
<i>Language Awareness</i>
<i>Applied Linguistics Review</i>
<i>Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism</i>

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