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## Preface

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“We are all full of discourses that we only half understand and half mean.”

Rae Armantrout

### Power, Control and Domination: Reflections on the Constraining Power of Socio-cultural and Institutional Discourses

This quote from Rae Armantrout, an American author associated with the avant-garde group of Language poets, sheds light on the alienating power of discourses we participate in, but do not always identify with. It follows that what makes us credible and convincing speakers or writers is not just the content of our stories, but also a skillful use of culturally, socially and institutionally available resources to tell them. In varying degrees, depending on the communicative situation,

we assume attitudes, behaviours and rhetorical patterns which resonate with our discourse community's needs and expectations. Indeed, language is only properly applied when it is deployed from a socio-cultural and institutional perspective shared by interlocuters in a given communicative event which determines how people order their thoughts and ideas to create a coherent and meaningful argument. In this context, discourse can be conceptualised as being shaped by the orientational standpoint we take toward others and ourselves, and disseminated in the rhetorical style typical of our discourse community. What happens when this orientational compatibility is missing is well evidenced in the stories of people who cross cultural and linguistic borders, and do not have necessary resources to become competent members of their new discourse communities. The Polish linguist Anna Wierzbicka is a case in point. Wierzbicka studied consciously Australian English and the Australian ethnography of communication. The following excerpt from her book, *The Double Life of a Bilingual: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, documents her struggle for successful participation in Australian culture, which required her to make not only rhetorical adjustments but also led to changes in her personality:

I had to learn to 'calm down', to become less 'sharp' and less 'blunt', less 'excitable', less 'extreme' in my judgments, more 'tactful' in their expression. I had to learn the use of Anglo understatement (instead of the more hyperbolic and more emphatic Polish ways of speaking). I had to learn to avoid sounding 'dogmatic', 'argumentative', 'emotional' [...]. Students' course assessment questionnaires have often thrown light on my cultural dilemmas. Thus, while often very positive and praising my 'enthusiasm', for a long time they also often included critical accents referring to my 'intensity', 'passion' and 'lack of detachment' [...]. But these weren't just changes in the patterns of communication. There were also changes in my personality. I was becoming a different person, at least when I was speaking English [...]. Thus, I came to feel that by learning the Anglo ways I could enrich myself immeasurably, but I could also 'lose myself' (Wierzbicka, 1997, pp. 119–121).

Power, control and domination are inscribed in discourse production and dissemination. As such, it is necessary to always ask:

· who has access to the fundamental power resource of public discourse, who  
· has access to political discourse, to media discourse, educational discourse  
· and scholarly discourse... Because once you control part of the production of  
· public discourse, you also control part of its contents, and hence, indirectly,  
· the public mind – maybe not exactly what people will think, but at least what  
· they will think *about* (van Dijk, 2008, p. vii, original emphasis).

Educational settings are no different from other institutions with regard to such phenomena as: the concentration of power, the existence of dominant and subservient discourses as well as issues around the appropriation of the means of production and reproduction of knowledge (see also Bourdieu, 1991).

In academia, the concept of having “power over” something or somebody is manifested in the ways scholarly discourses address social and intellectual concerns, needs and expectations. For example, the hegemony English language enjoys has ramifications for research production and dissemination. Van Weijen found that roughly 80% of all the journals indexed in Scopus are published in English (van Weijen, 2012). This development has affected how universities and governments approach their roles in the international academic world, with some Central and Eastern European (CEE) administrations introducing legislation to direct scholars to publish exclusively in English. A recent instance of this was the introduction of the reform of the science and higher education system in Poland (2017–2019), which prescribed that only publications from indexed databases would be considered in promotion and appointment of Polish scientists. However, because of linguistic and economic barriers, there are CEE scholars who are often unaware of the most important conversations within their disciplines. This means that their participation and research outputs do not always resonate with the current conversations or debates in their global disciplinary communities.

## Diachronic influences on discourse construction

Although scholarly discourse provides the dimension of flexibility in a discipline's rhetorical armoury, intellectual legacies of a given discourse community do exist and will influence how scientific research is done and reported. This is reflected in Halliday's two expressions adopted from Malinowski's (1935) anthropological work: "the context of culture" and "the context of situation" which refer respectively to the socio-historical factors which influence the linguistic choices that writers make to construct meaning in a given communicative situation. For example, despite the fact that the term "academic writing" is used globally to encompass almost all written output within specific domain contexts, for CEE scholars the notion of what scholarly writing is and does is not so clear. The art of writing, which came to be known as "composition" in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Britain and the United States, and is today practiced in a variety of genres and text types, with standardised writing norms and rules, has no equivalence in CEE. The lack of rhetorical writing tradition made CEE countries develop prescriptive and normative standards of an academic writing style (see also Hyland, & Lehman, 2020). In their seminal analysis of the relationship between cultural values and scholarly writing patterns, Czech linguists, Čmejrková and Daneš (1997) argue that the main purpose of Czech, Polish and Russian academic discourse is to provide readers with the following:

- 1) knowledge, theory and stimulus for thought;
- 2) gnomic statements of truth and general knowledge;
- 3) a text which is attractive due to the employment of contemplative, narrative and story-like features (see Čmejrková, & Daneš, 1997, pp. 42-44).

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1 The terms were coined by Malinowski (1935) in his anthropological research. In linguistics, they were first used by Firth (1968) whose work was developed by Halliday (1978).

Consequently, CEE scholars rely on a collection of idiosyncratic, preconceived rhetorical and ideological assumptions that govern how they present themselves in their texts and what constitutes their authorial voice.

## Cartesian and non-Cartesian models of scientific discourse

In the absence of established written discourse tradition, CEE academic writers' authorial voice tends to be influenced more by a general and traditional method of doing and reporting science. As Hyland and Lehman (2020) point out, the rhetorical academic legacies which influence CEE academics' scholarly writing originate in the Cartesian (individualistic) model of scientific discourse. Grounded in Cartesian pragmatics, this scientific paradigm invokes metaphysical and epistemological-methodological commitments and claims that prioritise rationality, depersonalization, deductive reasoning, objectivity, empirical support for premises and the superiority of the "knower" over the "known" (see e.g. Bazerman, 1984, 1988; Kopytko, 1995, 2001). The tendency to follow the Cartesian approach can be still found in Polish research and is evidenced in the predominant presence of theoretical aspects of linguistic study, such as syntax, word formation, onomastics, and language theory grounded in structuralism. For Duszak, this lack of a more pragmatic perspective on language and discourse among Polish linguists demonstrates how "little recognition is given to the interactive properties of texts, academic texts included" (Duszak, 1997, p. 30).

Anglo-based written discourse blurs the boundary between the Cartesian and non-Cartesian paradigms. It certainly embraces the latter of these approaches' emphasis on contextualised and social constructed knowledge. In so doing, it allows for variability, negotiability, emotions and motivations to play a role in the writing process. Indeed, a non-Cartesian scholar's cognition is "social, context-dependent, interactive, collective, dynamic, and embodied" (Kopytko, 2001, p. 796; see also Clark, 1997).

Today scholars rarely embrace purist commitment to a single epistemology. As such, their choice of approach is typically somewhat hybridised. However, the binary conceptualisation of Cartesian and non-Cartesian rhetorical legacies provides an enduring dichotomy. It goes a substantial way to explaining differences that exist in textual self-representations of Anglophone and CEE scholars which result from disparate standards regarding what makes a scholarly discourse good or valued. A writer coming from a Cartesian tradition, with its emphasis on the “knower” over the “known,” is likely to adopt an authoritative, “telling” style. By contrast, a more situated, context specific, non-Cartesian style entails that the author considers not only the “what,” but also the “who for they write.”

The multi-faceted nature of discourse has meant that it has been studied in disparate disciplines and from different perspectives. For van Dijk, the critical study of discourse should be based on “a multidisciplinary theory explicitly relating discourse structures with societal structures and thus describe and explain how structures of power and power abuse are discursively enacted and reproduced” (2017, p. 121). Inspired by this observation, writers in this volume bring together a variety of perspectives from the fields of Social Sciences and Humanities to the issue of how relations of power are communicated and/or embedded in a range of social contexts and what happens when they are absent from the process of discourse production. The specific focus is on how power relations and inequalities are communicated in academic discourses. The main line of enquiry followed by the contributions addresses the ways power relations influence conception, production and diffusion of academic knowledge. It adopts a broad conceptualisation of the ways in which knowledge can be produced for and presented to target audiences.

In their contribution, *Failures in Sensemaking: An Exploration of Sadean Heterotopias*, **Duncan Pelly and Rachel Brandon-Hopper** deal with a problem of sexual harassment and abuse on campus through the lens of heterotopias inspired by Marquis de Sade. By interweaving prose with poetry, they create a scenario in which the readers have an opportunity to experience some of the trauma associated with unwanted advance within a hypothetical university setting. The authors make us aware that the university, with its

power dynamics, can easily become a dystopic space with its own rules that harm students. They suggest further enquiry into Sadean behaviour within universities through autoethnographic or ethnographic studies.

The destructive power of discourse in educational setting is also recognised by **Adam Świątek** in his article *Have contemporary students lost their identity? The impact of new technologies on today's education*. The Author sheds light on the power relations that exist between new technological developments and the student-teacher dyad. Świątek analyses the influence of students' involvement in social networking on their potential to learn and how their system of values is modified by collecting "likes" and gaining virtual popularity. Referring to a diminished learning potential of contemporary students, Świątek poses a rhetorical question: "Is the *zombie generation* the outcome of our own actions?". Based on his study findings, he offers a specific pedagogic advice how to use new technologies to enhance teaching and learning.

In her paper *Toward the mythologisation of political power*, **Marta Strukowska** demythologises powers of whatever sources by emphasizing the mythical nature of these powers. The underlying premise of this contribution is that myth is a structurally hardwired and functionally driven linguistic practice that underlies the construction of political power. In exploring the nature of this power, the author raises the question of how power gets mythologised in society and contends that this involves the process of getting to terms with the world in a schematic and structural way.

The the role of contextual inspiration and motive in persuasive creativity based on the theory and practice of performative art improvisation is the topic of **Michał Szostak's** paper *Contextual inspiration and motive in persuasive creativity: Lessons from artistic improvisation*. Szostak explores the notion of artistic improvisation which lacks sufficient scholarly interest. In so doing, he revises the concepts of inspiration, motives, aesthetics, artistic creativity management – fundamental to the analysis of the meaning of artistic improvisation. The Author concludes that since the improvisation process does not give the possibility of repetition (and therefore correction), the creator can "manage the process of persuasive artistic creativity, realising

different motives and appropriate igniting inspirations towards specific audiences, and developing his/her identity as a conscious creator.” Szostak’s contribution enables us to see what happens when the process of creation is not constrained by dominant discourses which impose received and preconceived assumptions on us. Liberated from their “telling power,” we are able to see things as they really are, not as others want us to see them.

## Book review

**Antony Hoyte-West’s** book review of *Scholarly Publication Trajectories of Early career Scholars: Insider Perspectives*, edited by Pejman Habibie and Sally Burgess, addresses the complex topic of writing for scholarly publication by early-career scholars. Hoyte-West begins his review by outlining distorting factors which pervade doctoral education today, including a requirement to publish in prestigious disciplinary journals, and in English. Although the author’s presentation of the chapters differs from the order of appearance in the book, he provides us with a concise account of success stories, failures, and challenges that are inscribed in academic trajectories of both Anglophone and non-Anglophone novice scholars in writing for publication.

He concludes that the book will be of interest to early career researchers from across the humanities and social sciences.

## Diary

“The only thing that we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history” (Hegel).

This famous dictum from Hegel at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is still valid. Indeed, it is especially germane in July 2022. Hitler and Stalin invaded Poland days apart in September 1939 and Putin, the Ukraine, 83 years



later. Part of the reason nations go to war is to be found through studying the psychology of power and the myriad ways that the drive for power entails conflict and subjugation. Such an exploration is not our purpose here and is not addressed in **Tomasz Krzeszowski's** diary *Kaleidoscope and harmonica*. What Krzeszowski shares with readers is the toll war takes on civilians, including children, in particular. His diary chronicles the terrible reality of war, presented through the eyes of a five-year-old boy imprisoned in a basement for sixty three days during the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. The author does not describe the atrocities committed by Nazi soldiers, but rather everyday life of his family in a war-torn Warsaw. The kaleidoscope and harmonica, captured in the title, were his favourite toys. For the little boy, the kaleidoscope created an enchanting and colourful world to which he could escape from the terrible reality. And yet, using Krzeszowski's words, "this reality did break into my dreams at the end of The Uprising, not only in the form of round-ups, German soldiers with rifles and incessant shooting, but also as terrifying, though very colourful, kaleidoscopic, dream-like abstractions that still haunt me many years later." The harmonica, for a music-sensitive child, was the instrument he used to play the songs that he heard the freedom fighters sing in the basement and backyard.

We dedicate this volume to those scholars who, through their work, resist dominant disciplinary discourses and present diverse possibilities of disseminating scholarly knowledge and belief claims.

Iga Maria Lehman (University of Social Sciences, Warsaw,

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2092-8119)

Anthony Morven Gould (Université Laval, Québec,

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2599-3235)

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