

*Research Article*

# The Dominance of Standard English and its Impact on Academia: The Investigation of EAL Researchers' Submission Experience to English Medium Journals

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*The research aims to determine the impact of Standard English writing norms and native-speakerism on academia regarding English as an Additional Language (EAL) researchers' experience of article submission to English medium journals. The research reports on interviews with nine EAL researchers to discover their perceptions of and experience toward writing and publishing in English. Recruited participants are from diverse linguistic and research backgrounds, with widely varied article submission experience. Surprisingly, the responses collected throughout the interview present a result different from the past literature, showing that most interviewees do not find themselves in a disadvantaged*

*situation. Most interviewees do not believe that they are inferior to their English-speaking colleagues regarding writing in English for academic and publication purposes. Instead, they believe the potential deficits lie in their lack of familiarity with the norms of the Anglophone academic world, and that their readers and reviewers in the Anglophone countries have difficulties understanding their research context. Thus, this research aims to raise the awareness that periphery EAL scholars have encountered certain predicaments in publishing in English, either linguistic gatekeeping measures or cultural barriers.*

**Keywords:** English as an additional language; English for specific purposes; linguistic imperialism; native speakerism; standard English

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the dominant role that Standard English plays in academia and its impact. Scholars and researchers who do not use English as their first language, namely English as an Additional Language (EAL) speakers, are often required to proofread their papers by first language speakers of English when seeking a publication opportunity in prestigious, world-class English medium journals. Although the research findings provided by these papers are remarkably professional, they may still not be recognised as publishable only because the use of English does not sound 'native' enough (Flowerdew, 2015; Hultgren, 2019). In this regard, the standard norms of academic English in publishing may potentially impair the right of EAL researchers when they intend to have their papers published in English medium journals in the Anglophone academic world. Although EAL researchers' intelligence in the research domain excels, the outcomes of journal submissions may be unsatisfactory because their mastery of written English does not meet a specific criterion. Undoubtedly, English as a

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widely circulated global language is an ideal medium to promote the exchange of knowledge and international academic publishing among researchers around the globe. In this case, English should be used as a scholarly lingua franca to enable scholars from diverse linguistic backgrounds to share their ideas and the latest frontier findings instead of creating linguistic barriers. The over-emphasis on the correctness of language use may not be necessary, especially in the pursuit of having all manuscripts achieve the standard of ‘native-like’ and ‘authentic’ language. Excessive demands may lead to numerous negative consequences, for instance, leaving the EAL scholars in an inferior academic situation. Worse still, it marginalises them from mainstream academia (Flowerdew, 2008, 2015; Hultgren, 2019; Kuteeva & Mauranen, 2014).

This paper intends to determine whether the EAL researchers are disadvantaged due to the high linguistic threshold and the pursuit of native-speakerism. Thus, the paper answers the research questions listed below regarding EAL scholars in international academic publishing by conducting semi-structured interviews with nine EAL scholars:

- 1) What has been the experience of EAL researchers submitting to English medium journals and being rejected due to language-related issues?
- 2) How do EAL researchers respond to the demands placed upon them by reviewers and/or editors in the reviewing process?
- 3) Are EAL researchers disadvantaged due to the impact of Standard English norms and native-speakerism?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Since the global spread of English has become a dominant trend, English linguistic hegemony has become entrenched internationally in academia. As an aspect of this research and publication has become subject to the ideology of native speakers (Holliday, 2006) and the practice of linguistic gatekeeping (Flowerdew, 2022; Hultgren, 2019), particularly in terms of academic journal submissions. The aforementioned contextual factors together have created barriers for EAL researchers in certain aspects, these developments will be discussed from several perspectives in the following section.

### **2.1 Linguistic Imperialism**

The concept of linguistic imperialism was first introduced by Robert Phillipson (1992). In his book *Linguistic Imperialism*, he describes why some languages are valued highly while others are not. Phillipson states, “The relationship between English and other languages is an unequal one, and this has important consequences in almost all spheres of life” (p. 30). Anglo-centricity legitimates English as the dominant language by rationalising activities and beliefs contributing to the structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages. The trend of English being labelled as the only

'language of wider communication' can also accelerate the replacement of local languages in certain EAL contexts, thus "the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities", and further, "the structural and cultural inequalities ensure the continued allocation of more material resources to English than to other languages and benefit those who are proficient in English" (p. 47).

Phillipson (1992) claims that the fixed imperialist structure guarantees the dominant 'Centre', the powerful Western countries, to have presiding control over scientific research and to enjoy the available resources (universities, research institutions, publishers, funding agencies) compared to the 'Periphery', which refers to the less developed countries. In other words, native English speakers from the inner circle countries (Kachru, 1985) assume rights and inherited benefits from being able to define the standard norms of English and so, dominate in determining the forms of English that spread across the world. The ideology of native-speakerism has taken form since then. Popova and Beavitt (2017) describe how the global dominance of English in scientific communication bestows significant advantages on its native speakers. In contrast, many scholars from non-Anglophone communities find themselves discriminated against. This also creates the threat of losing culture-specific ways of understanding reality in languages other than English, described as domain loss (Hultgren, 2016).

## **2.2 Native-Speakerism**

Both linguists (Canagarajah, 1999; Davies, 2004; Phillipson, 2016) and non-linguists use the term 'native speaker' to address someone who grew up speaking a particular language and is fully proficient. Davies (2004) highlights that the power of being a native speaker is hard to attain in any additional language, no matter how successful the acquisition is (p. 439). Concisely, a native speaker is regarded as "the repository and guardian of the language" (p. 447). Phillipson (2013) claims the inequitable hierarchy is formed between EAL speakers and (mostly) monolingual English speakers when native speaker competence is ideologically taken as the authoritative norm. As mentioned in his book, Phillipson argues, "these terms themselves—native/non-native—are offensive and hierarchical in that they take the native as the norm and define the Other negatively in relation to this norm" (p. 40).

What strengthens the native-speakerism ideology is that many EAL speakers themselves are supporters of native-speakerism, as well. Kuo, a Taiwanese scholar interviewed by Holliday (2006), expressed her frustration when she could not reach her expectation in pronunciation. She was strongly motivated to polish her pronunciation and eliminate the first language influence as much as possible to sound more 'native-like'. This is to say, native-speakerism is often seen in the personal goals of English language learners. Kumaravadivelu (2014) points out that the English learning and teaching field remains

dominated by Western “native-speaker” voices, leading to consistent discrimination towards professionals from ‘non-native speaker’ backgrounds. The ideology of native-speakerism is therefore solidified among non-native speakers of English throughout their English learning process.

## **2.3 English/Linguistic Gatekeeping**

Continuing the rebuttal of linguistic imperialism and native-speakerism, many challenge the academic tradition that regards English as a gatekeeping method (Belcher, 2007; Kuteeva & Mauranen, 2014). Instead of serving as the academic lingua franca, English has gradually become an endorsement to its native speakers and became a gatekeeping method for speakers of other languages. Vandergriff (2021) claims that linguistic gatekeeping in its way would be reproducing language ideologies and guaranteeing the authority of ‘native speakers’, which positions L2 participants as ‘learners’ rather than ‘users’. English has been the ‘language of science’ since the late 20th century, especially for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) disciplines and medical sciences (Crystal, 2003; Hyland, 2015)—the growing demand for adopting English as the research language has raised awareness among non-anglophone scholars. Anglophone scholars naturally assume more gatekeeping responsibilities with their greater facility in English, as Ammon (2007) points out in his book. This results in other languages losing their opportunity to develop sophisticated academic genres. In the case of developing countries and minority languages, their chances may be even more scarce.

The overwhelming presence of English medium journals results in the language being granted significant visibility. It thus continues contributing to the hegemony of English as the official language of scientific communication (Englander & Corcoran, 2019). Non-Anglophone researchers are still striving against the linguistic barrier that Standard English sets for speakers of other languages or other English varieties (Flowerdew, 2015; van Parijs, 2007). Scholars who intend to submit their academic outcomes to English-medium journals must meet the writing criterion in a ‘native-like’ style. Scholars from different fields know that the gatekeeping power has been “increasingly concentrated in the hands of mainstream English-only journals” (Belcher, 2007, p. 1).

Mckinley and Rose (2018) find that most author guidelines of academic journals, regardless of their research discipline, need to be more flexible with variant uses of English. They stick to the standard, good English, which is mainly described as American or British English. Some guidelines even position EAL authors as “deficient of native standards” (p. 1). Meanwhile, as they further state, “although the guideline does not explicitly conflate poor writing with concepts of nativeness, it does link good writing with concepts of correctness and adherence to British and American standards” (p. 2). Henshall (2018) indicates that Elsevier and Wiley-Blackwell, two of the most influential international publishers, have such a requirement across all their journals. Thus, it can

be implied that even though Standard (British or American) English is not the dominant factor in accepting a journal article, it still seems to play a vital role as a gatekeeping measure in Anglophone academia.

## 2.4 The Situation of EAL Scholars

Scholars suggest that more ‘off-networked’ and ‘periphery’ scholars’ voices should be brought into the global research conversation (Canagarajah, 1996, 2002; Hultgren, 2019; Kuteeva & Mauranen, 2014). ‘Off-networked’ and ‘periphery’ scholars refer to those geographically based in remote areas with limited resources and do not have peers to collaborate with. In addition, they must compose in an additional language (i.e., English) instead of their mother tongues (Belcher, 2007). The study of English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) aims to alleviate the burdens EAL scholars carry in publishing their research in English (Cargill & Burgess, 2008; McDowell & Liardét, 2019).

Predicaments and frustrations of EAL researchers and writers in international academic publishing, especially in terms of English medium journals, have been addressed intensively by applied linguistic scholars. In a recent ERPP study, Ramírez-Castañeda (2020) presents the disadvantages that result from the (English) linguistic hegemony in scientific publishing by quantifying the extra costs that authors from EFL (English as a Foreign Language) countries need to pay while writing academic articles in English. Meanwhile, Flowerdew (1999, 2001, 2008), Holliday (2015) and Hyland (2016) argue that it is the ideology of native-speakerism, which has been discussed in the previous section, which results in their predicaments and frustrations. EAL scholars are struggling with multilayers of disadvantages, troubled by reading, researching, and writing in languages other than their native language. In contrast, researchers who are native speakers of English enjoy their inherited privilege. Also, it is argued that linguistic and non-linguistic factors shape the ‘uneven nature’ of academic publishing in English (Soler, 2021).

Flowerdew has conducted a series of multi-method research investigating the issues of writing for publication in English from the perspective of Hong Kong based EAL scholars. The study indicated that over a third of participants believed they were discriminated against in their language use by journal editors and publishers. He further claims that the struggles that EAL scholars are suffering from will eventually impair the development of global scholarship. However, Flowerdew’s research (2001), which investigates the attitude of journal editors toward EAL writers’ contributions, shows a surprising result. As mentioned by the interviewees, the fact that these EAL writers failed to show “the relevance of the study to the international community” (p. 135) often made editors and reviewers less generous to them. This finding aligns with Canagarajah’s (1996) statement that cultural barriers, instead of language problems, lead to discrimination against EAL researchers. To avoid the negative impact of

excluding EAL scholars from the global knowledge exchange, Flowerdew suggests that journal editors and reviewers should be more aware of the “problems encountered by contributors from non-English speaking countries and thereby encourage them to take this into account when reviewing manuscripts” (p. 260).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study includes nine researchers as interviewees, targeting those who have multiple manuscript submission experience and are in demand of a proofreading service, either before or after the submission. The participants in the research come from diverse academic fields, highlighting that the outcomes of proofreading processes extend beyond specific subject areas. The study is based on semi-structured interviews with each participant. The interview helps provide a narrative based on these EAL researchers’ experience to imply the dismissive impact of Standard English as a dominant power and the ideology of native-speakerism imposed on academia, especially in a journal submission.

#### **3.1 Participants**

Participants (see Appendix B) were recruited via convenience sampling since it was the most effective way for the researcher, regardless of time and space limitations. Meanwhile, various requirements needed to be met to be a qualified research participant for this study, including the identity of being an EAL researcher, the background of having various journal submission experiences, and the capability of describing their experience and thoughts in spoken English. These complicated conditions made the recruiting process of interviewees more challenging. Thus, convenience sampling was applied in this study. The study was designed to focus on EAL researchers, mostly junior or senior faculty at universities; two of them were post-doctoral researchers.

#### **3.2 Data Collection**

A semi-structured interview was adopted as this research's data collection method, as Dörnyei and Griffee (2010) suggested. This methodology encourages participants to express themselves freely in an exploratory manner with fewer limitations. As Flowerdew has rich experience investigating EAL researchers’ situations and predicaments, his methodology, the ‘reflective interview’ (which provides an ‘insider’ perspective of participants) is also adopted in this study (Flowerdew, 1999). By recounting and reflecting upon their personal experiences, participants are empowered to define themselves rather than being objectified by others.

Interview questions mainly focused on participants' experiences drafting academic articles as EAL writers, the proofreading process, and how they cooperate with proofreaders. It comprised of three sections, including their perceptions of this issue, the problems they encounter, and the strategies they adopt. Spradley (2016) suggested the sequence of interview questions, starting with the initial and then structural questions. Complete interview questions can be seen in the Appendix A.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

This paper drew significantly on the predicaments EAL researchers have experienced while submitting journal articles to English medium journals and their experience cooperating with proofreaders. The collected responses are analysed via narrative inquiry, which aims to provide a narrative based on an 'insider' perspective rather than on observation from an 'outsider' perspective. Narrative inquiry was first brought to the studies of education and social science in the late 20th century, and since then, it has had its roots in humanities and other research fields (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Wells, 2011). However, certain potential risks and dangers should be avoided in narrative studies (Clandinin, 2006). The authors remind us that the capacity of narrative inquiry is a 'two-edged inquiry sword'; one may fake the data or tell a lie as quickly as they present a truth (p. 10).

## **4. DATA PRESENTATION**

For this research, nine EAL academics were interviewed regarding their perceptions and potential challenges when submitting their articles to English medium journals. This chapter presents and analyses the data collected from the research participants via semi-structured interviews. However, due to the limitation of this paper, only the responses of five select representative participants—two new scholars with less than 10 years of experience, Jue and Eddie; a scholar with 10-15 years of experience, Keito; a scholar with over 20 years of experience, Patrick; and a STEM scholar, Hung—are presented here in detail. Pseudo-names were used in this study to de-identify participants and the research institutions they mentioned throughout the interview.

### **4.1 Jue**

Jue is an L1 speaker of Chinese. She received her master's and PhD degrees in the UK and is currently working as a research fellow and a lecturer at a university based in London. Her research interest lies in the psychology of education. She has 14 published papers, 12 of which are written in English, and 2 in Chinese.

Jue frequently used the term ‘non-native speaker’ to refer to herself and other EAL colleagues at the very beginning of the interview. She hesitated momentarily when asked about the ‘native speaker’ versus ‘non-native speaker’ dichotomy and replied, “I agree the label is problematic. I used to feel completely okay describing myself as a non-native speaker since I don’t think I can speak or write fluently as a native speaker does.” She said, “When I collaborate with my ‘English as a first language’ speaker colleagues, I will take their advice regarding language-related issues.” Jue consciously avoided using both ‘native speaker’ and ‘non-native speaker’ in the rest of the interview. Nevertheless, Jue believes some reviewers/editors are unaware of discriminatory practices against EAL writers. As she feels, these journal gatekeepers may not be consciously biased, but they still regard ‘non-native’ language use as of poor quality and expect improvement through revision. Jue claims that some EAL writers should be prioritised since they are “underrepresented” scholars. As she puts it, they should be given more opportunities to be heard by the other members of the academic circle. Jue also suggests journal gatekeepers should focus more on academic content than language use. Editors should assist these scholars with their academic English writing so that they can write in a more academically acceptable manner.

Additionally, as an EAL writer acting as a peer reviewer, she is less concerned about the language used. Still, she focuses more on whether the paper's message has been clearly delivered. She emphasises that it is the clarity, accuracy, and structure of the paper that she is looking for in a ready-to-publish work instead of authenticity. Throughout the interview, Jue emphasised the concept of ‘authenticity’. She believes that ‘authenticity’ is identical to the concept of ‘nativeness,’ which is the normative form of Standard English and the most commonly accepted use of English by its L1 users. Nevertheless, she admits:

If I read a manuscript which is written in really POOR English, even when the findings are really good and with a suitable research method, I still wouldn’t recommend [it] for publication. I still write comments regarding “you need to refine your language”, etc. I don’t think it is biased toward the person per se, but it is still related to the quality of the work.

## 4.2 Eddie

Eddie is an L1 speaker of Cantonese. He has been receiving English-medium education since year 9 in a secondary school in Sydney. He then completed his higher education in the UK and is currently working as an assistant professor at a university based in Hong Kong. He is interested in applied linguistics, with 12 English-medium publications in applied linguistics journals.

Eddie, as an applied linguist himself, naturally adopts the usage of ‘second language speaker of English’ and ‘EAL scholar’ without falling into the native versus non-native speaker dichotomy. His professional knowledge in applied linguistics makes him more



aware of the problematic nature of these labels. He is also sensitive to monolingual ideology in academic publications. As a result, he has higher expectations of his colleagues when they play the role of journal gatekeepers, either in the form of journal editors or peer reviewers. Eddie believes applied linguists should embrace multilingual competence and language diversity instead of adhering to a monolingual ideology in which Native Speaker (NS) norms are upheld. Eddie mentioned that it disappointed him even more when the editors who wanted such manuscripts to be proofread by ‘native English speakers’ were themselves second-language speakers of English. He concluded: “I don’t blame a first language speaker of English for thinking in that way [native-speakerism], but I have much more expectations on second-language speakers of English acting as journal editors. I would expect them to show some sympathy towards other EAL writers.”

Although he has not experienced discrimination personally, he knows that EAL researchers and writers in other research disciplines may have encountered discriminatory treatment due to their linguistic background. In response to this, he explained:

I think this is because applied linguists are pretty aware of the issue of native speakerism. For a second language speaker of English working in applied linguistics, requesting EAL writers to have their manuscript proofread by ‘native speakers’ shows that you are confirming the monolingual ideology by treating native speakers’ language proficiency as the standard.

Regarding the demand for proofreading placed upon his co-authors and himself by journal editors and reviewers, Eddie agrees that he has very “mixed feelings” towards it. He acknowledges that the editorial board is making this request for good reasons, yet he also feels that such a request implies that his English proficiency is not yet recognised. He also thinks that proofreading services are neither necessary nor useful. As far as he can recall, the only time an L1 speaker of English proofread his paper was when his colleague, the first author of the manuscript, decided to pay for the proofreading service. Based on his observation, proofreaders are just making the changes for the sake of making it as they need to show that they have done the work. As a matter of fact, Eddie believes that language-related issues are actually minor concerns since it is always the academic content that matters the most.

### **4.3 Keito**

Keito is an L1 speaker of Japanese. His current position is associate professor at a UK university, specialising in assessing, developing, and teaching adult second-language speech. He has many English-medium papers published in top journals in collaboration with his students and colleagues, many of whom are EAL writers like him.

Keito described his enthusiasm for writing scholarly papers in English. The task, often considered difficult by most EAL scholars, is challenging, exciting, and inspiring for him

to accomplish. Keito feels very much fulfilled seeing his works published in those top journals with a high impact factor. As he further explained:

Writing and getting published in English also means your work will be read everywhere. You are very likely to receive comments and feedback from everywhere on Earth. This joy is so irresistible that I let go of how challenging the process may be.

In fact, as Keito has been recognised as one of the most cited and influential authors in his research field, his achievements make him believe that the journal publication process is, indeed, fair. Thus, he explains that “Language is neither an issue nor excuse. The fact that I’m ranked in the first place indicates the promising future of this field since language is no longer a barrier to EAL writers.” Nevertheless, Keito admits that, as an EAL scholar, he is, occasionally, at a disadvantage compared to scholars whose first language is English; still, he responds to all these predicaments with a very positive mindset. In his own words, “I do feel that sometimes I am slightly disadvantaged, but it is precisely why this [submission to English medium journals] is challenging and inspiring. It shows me how much I’ve grown.”

According to Keito’s experience and knowledge, journal gatekeepers, including both reviewers and editors, can be very demanding regarding language use. Reviewers can get irritated when the manuscript is not written in a style acceptable within Western-dominated academia. Surprisingly, Keito does not oppose the standards set up by these gatekeepers as he understands their purpose, which is to expand the readership of these journals. Keito himself is also ambitious to reach out to more readers. He expects that his papers can be read by people beyond the research field, such as those in public media, policymakers, and other non-subject specialists. The standard, ‘native-like’ language, is required to ensure all potential readers can read these papers regardless of the author’s language use. Keito refers to this ‘compromise’ between journal gatekeepers and authors as a must to achieve the goals of academic publishing. As he mentioned:

They (journal gatekeepers) are biased against EAL scholars in a certain way. However, I understand their logic. You would have to adopt the most standard form of writing if you are trying to reach out to a broader community, and unfortunately, it resulted in native-speakerism. That’s why I accept what they demand.

Additionally, Keito emphasised how demanding the process of journal submission can be. The manuscript’s content must be ground-breaking and surprising, while the language used should be as ‘native-like’ as possible. To make sure the manuscript is as perfect as possible, Keito always has his work proofread by others before submission. Nevertheless, he pointed out that it is not necessary to have a ‘native speaker’ as a proofreader; a second language user of English who specialised in the field can outperform a native English proofreader.

## 4.4 Patrick

Patrick is an L1 user of French and Dutch and a foreign language user of English and Spanish. He is a senior professor at a UK university. His research interest lies in the linguistic, pragmatic, and socio-cultural challenges multilingual speakers encounter. He has been using English, an additional language, for academic purposes for 28 years, with more than 300 papers and 10 books published. As a ‘foreign’ language user, he tries to improve his English writing skills through continuous practice. He admits that as an EAL writer, it has not been easy for him to have mastered the rules of writing and publishing in English. Patrick explained that drafting a cohesive text with a clear argument had taken him many years of practice.

Patrick also shared his experience as a journal gatekeeper. He often requires EAL authors to have their manuscripts proofread. As he puts it:

It’s a fine line between having your unique cultural style and conforming to the cold expectations of the commercial, academic press.... In some cultures, and academic traditions, extremely long sentences are valued. In the English-speaking/writing world, shorter is better, and fluff is to be avoided.

Patrick disagrees that this type of demand placed upon EAL writers is biased. He argues that it is simply a measure to ensure the manuscript is good and clear enough for readers’ comprehension. “With a good or clear manuscript, readers’ comprehension burden could be alleviated, which made it more likely to be cited or have an impact,” Patrick said.

Speaking of his experience cooperating with a proofreader, which was a very long time ago, Patrick admitted that he was not happy to have his text checked by a ‘native speaker.’ He said he had to suppress his unhappiness and carefully reread the text. He was also disappointed that proofreaders sometimes objected to his deliberate use of more informal language or images. However, since he has already acculturated into this academic world, he does not feel he is disadvantaged as an EAL researcher when submitting a paper to English-medium journals. Yet, he realises that it would have been much more challenging if he had stayed in his home country, Belgium, instead of having his career life rooted in the UK.

As a scholar who has spent most of his career discovering the linguistic, pragmatic, and socio-cultural challenges multilingual speakers encounter, he resists the dichotomy of native versus non-native speakers. Instead, he advocates the concept of ‘LXs’, denoting multilinguals’ repertoire of foreign languages, which is more likely to capture the complexity of language use. As for Patrick, he has a good mastery over his ‘L2’, that is, English, to serve his academic purposes. Writing and publishing in English had been a difficult task for him at first when he had to enlist help from L1’ speakers of English; yet, with years of practice and experience, he now declares that he is very confident in his academic writing in English.

## 4.5 Hung

Hung is an L1 speaker of Chinese. He completed his bachelor's and master's degrees in Taiwan and then earned his PhD in the UK. He is now a post-doctoral researcher based in Taiwan. His research focus is physical chemistry. He has more than 20 papers published in English in collaboration with his research fellows. Scientists like Hung have to share their research findings and results by telling stories to their audience. He has been trained to be both a scientist and an author. Scientists should be able to tell a convincing story, which requires high proficiency in academic writing in English.

Based on his previous experiences in journal submission, Hung believes he is very much disadvantaged as a non-English-native researcher compared to native English-speaking researchers who have a better mastery of writing academic papers in English. As a result, Hung claims that the Western-dominated norms in academia do not treat EAL scholars fairly. Hung does not enjoy writing and publishing in English for academic purposes, yet it is the norm of the contemporary scientific field to have the knowledge exchange mediated in English. Thus, Hung has no better option than to adopt the norm. He regards it as an inevitable task that must be completed. In addition, it is also not practical for him to write in his first language (i.e., Chinese) since the research field lacks the corresponding Chinese translation for the required technical terms.

Hung found that his non-native English-speaking colleagues in Taiwan's research institutes also have equally unsatisfactory English language proficiency. He mentioned that the reviewers often had questions regarding their language use in the manuscripts. He said that his research team had even been rejected due to the language they had used. In their defence, Hung claims that even though their proficiency in academic writing in English might fail to meet the highest standard, it still does not make it so hard for their manuscripts to be read and understood by others. He believes it is an excuse those reviewers find so they do not have to read the entire paper.

Even so, Hung and his co-authors do not use professional language editing services before submitting their articles for publication. This is because he assumes that proofreaders may not be very helpful in improving the quality of their manuscripts. Hung claims that proofreaders without professional knowledge in their specific area of expertise will find it extremely hard to comprehend the content of their manuscripts and thus be unable to make further improvements. Hung concludes that he is not opposed to the idea of collaborating with proofreaders, yet he is not very optimistic about the assistance they could provide. Furthermore, Hung admits that despite most of his EAL colleagues and himself being aware of their predicament in academic writing in English, they still will not spend much time and effort improving their writing skills. They prefer to focus more on their research work instead.

## 5. DISCUSSION

English has been the lingua franca of scholarly communication for at least a century and a dominant world language for even longer (O'Regan, 2021). Most academic journals with high impact factors and large readerships are written and published in English. Anglophone scholars thus enjoy an inherited privilege since EAL scholars across the globe have to adopt native speaker norms and cope with the particular style of native speaker academic writing (Gentil, 2005), but not contrariwise. However, not every scholar is good at putting their research findings into words in another language.

Furthermore, the threshold of language-related issues set by journal gatekeepers is sometimes above the average. Manuscripts accepted by world-leading Anglophone journals should provide ground-breaking ideas and be written nearly 'native-like'. Given this situation, some EAL researchers must have their manuscripts proofread by an English-speaking proofreader before or after reviewing. Hence, this research aimed to determine the impact that Standard English norms and the ideology of native-speakerism have imposed on EAL scholars, mainly when writing and publishing in English journals.

Languages with many speakers, such as Chinese, Spanish, and Hindi, are challenging the status of English as the world's most dominant lingua franca. However, it does not seem likely that any of these languages will soon replace English. O'Regan (2021) has argued that the global spread of English and its dominance as a normative form is related to the endless accumulation of capital in a capitalist world system (p. 5). In this way, the global spread of capitalism has solidified the status of English as the global language for international communication and research. English linguistic hegemony still dominates in various domains, and scholarly communication and publication are no exception.

### 5.1 Authenticity/Culturism

According to Jue, authenticity is a concept which is very similar to 'nativeness.' She claims that it is 'authenticity' that she is looking for in academic writing in English instead of flawless language use. Even though Jue does not have a background in linguistic knowledge, her perception of 'authenticity' echoes the findings of several applied linguists (Poltzer-Ahles et al., 2016; Lowe & Pinner, 2016; Pinner, 2014) who are looking at the connection between native-speakerism and authenticity in the English Language Teaching (ELT) industry. Lowe and Pinner (2016) claim that the ideologies of native-speakerism and authenticity are deeply entwined, especially in the field of ELT. As emphasised by the two scholars, native-speakerism and authenticity are constructs of authority, culture, and cultural capital. Authority is granted to those who are referred to as 'authentic users', that is, native speakers coming from the politically and culturally dominant West to represent the kind of English that is acceptable. These scholars argue

that authenticity “often carries either implicit or direct reference to the culture(s) in which the target language is used as a first language, which generally gravitates towards ‘native speakers’” (Lowe & Pinner, 2016). It is widely acknowledged that culture cannot be disconnected from language, as discussed previously in this study (Canagarajah, 1996, 2002). The ‘native-speaker’ ideology still very much informs the conceptualisations of authenticity (Lowe & Pinner, 2016, p. 32).

As suggested in previous studies (Belcher, 2007; Canagarajah, 2002), EAL researchers also encounter specific difficulties with breaking down the cultural barriers between themselves and the journal gatekeepers from the West. Several interviewees of this research project also share similar experiences in this regard. For instance, even though Jue is not troubled about writing in English, she still finds it challenging to get the journal gatekeepers and readers from Anglophone countries to understand the local context of her research, especially when unfamiliar with it. She has to explain the local context to the reviewers within the allowed word limitation. Some of her research has been based in her home country, China, where the social and cultural background differs significantly from the normative West. However, she regards this cultural barrier as a challenge both parties can overcome – authors making an extra effort to better describe the context of their research and journal editors by being more accommodating to these different cultural contexts.

On the other hand, Keito, Patrick, and Hung all mention the importance of coping with the dominant Western academic conventions. Keito explains that journal editors can be very demanding regarding language use and a particular writing style. They may react negatively when the language is not ‘native-like’ enough, or the writing style does not meet their expectations. As a member of the editorial board of two prestigious journals, Patrick is aware of this issue. He claims, “...in some cultures and academic traditions, extremely long sentences are valued. In the English-speaking/writing world, shorter is better, and fluff should be avoided.” If EAL writers wish to have their manuscripts published in English medium journals, following the norms of the English-speaking/writing world is highly recommended. EAL scholars are often trying to adapt to the linguistic demands of the Western-dominated academia instead of simply polishing their academic writing skills in English.

## **5.2 Disciplinary Differences**

Among the nine EAL scholars interviewed in this research project, five specialized either in applied linguistics or Second Language Acquisition (SLA), whereas the other four were specialists in other research fields such as education, physical chemistry, and industrial engineering. The difference in research disciplines also brings out different perceptions of specific issues, such as the sensitivity towards the ‘native’ versus ‘non-native’ dichotomy and their expectation of journal editors.

First, applied linguists and SLA scholars avoid using the terms ‘native speakers’ and ‘non-native speakers’ consciously. Instead, they prefer ‘L1’ and ‘L2 users of English’ in their conversations. On the other hand, the other four scholars do not find the label ‘non-native speakers’ of English problematic. They almost naturally pick up the term ‘non-native speaker’ and use it as a referral to themselves. Second, most SLA scholars do not think that journal editors discriminate against them since most of the scholars in this field are also L2 speakers of English. This does not mean they are more ‘tolerant’ towards poorly written manuscripts, but simply that they are more aware of the predicaments of EAL scholars attempting to publish their research findings in English. In sum, applied linguists and SLA scholars believe researchers in their field should support EAL writers more when they become journal editors. They are expected to show a better and more profound understanding of the ideologies of native-speakerism by tackling these ideologies more carefully when dealing with EAL researchers’ manuscripts.

Lastly, only two STEM scholars out of nine interviewees declared themselves to have had problems with writing and publishing in English for academic purposes. This may be due to several reasons, including each discipline's distinct nature. All the other interviewees are specialists in the sub-fields of humanities and social sciences, which would have scholars who are at least relatively more fluent in English. It can be expected that these scholars studying linguistics and language acquisition are more competent in academic writing. Nevertheless, individual differences in educational and professional background should also be considered. The two STEM scholars pursued higher education and rooted their careers in non-English-speaking contexts. Thus, they naturally feel less exposed to and less experienced in academic writing in English.

### **5.3 Journal Gatekeeping and the Potential Disadvantage of EAL Scholars**

Mckinley and Rose (2018) point out that there is an urgent need for ERPP studies to place more attention on topics such as errors, standards, norms, and authenticity, as EAL authors may face specific gatekeeping measures from editors and reviewers. However, most interviewees in this research do not find themselves discriminated against by either editors or reviewers at this stage of their career life, except for Hung. Most are not opposed to the linguistic threshold these editors and reviewers set since they believe its existence is necessary. They agree that one of the many benefits of publishing in English is that it expands their global readership. As Keito puts it, “...it is our goal to reach out to more readers in other countries; thus, we would have to adopt the most standardised forms. And yet, unfortunately, this is a representation of native-speakerism.”

Most EAL authors understand and accept the purpose and rationale of the demand and thus, try to comply with the norm of Standard English to make their written work

published and understood by more readers. Speaking of EAL scholars as journal editors, over half of the interviewees mentioned that they would accept a paper due to its ‘unsatisfactory’ language use. Nevertheless, they agree that even though the quality of language in a paper is not the primary factor determining acceptance for publication, the quality of the paper would still be questioned if excessive grammatical and expression level errors are found in the manuscript. It may create a negative impression on the reviewer when a paper’s flow is constantly interrupted due to language errors. As a result, they suggest that writers have their manuscripts proofread by others when they feel that their writing is unclear or difficult to follow.

As mentioned in the literature review section, the ERPP studies point out that many EAL authors are frustrated with linguistic difficulties (Guardiano et al., 2007; Clavero, 2010). Thus, they may seek help from literacy brokers, professional copy editing and proofreading services, colleagues, and friends (McDowell & Liardét, 2019). However, most of the interviewees in this study do not have experience collaborating with providers of language editing services. Some of them believe it is not necessary, while others claim that the service will not be very helpful since these proofreaders might not have the required subject knowledge in their research field to properly proofread their papers. Most interviewees stated that they enlisted help from their co-authors and colleagues but did not necessarily seek help from first language speakers of English. Similarly, most interviewees who serve as journal editors or reviewers agree that the proofreader does not have to be a first language speaker of English. In fact, they believe a professional with knowledge of the subject matter and expertise in academic writing is more suitable for proofreading a manuscript. Their responses again echo what is discussed in the first section regarding the demand for authenticity in EAL writers’ manuscripts: most interviewees value clarity, cohesiveness, and better organisation over authenticity in a paper.

Out of all the interviewees, only one, Hung, believes that he is at a disadvantage compared to other L1 English scholars. He claims they can better compose a well-organised, cohesive article, “Good English proficiency is necessary if you intend to write a convincing story to persuade readers, including those journal gatekeepers.” He thus claims that he and his colleagues who are not adequately competent in academic writing in English are at a disadvantage. Meanwhile, some other interviewees acknowledge that it has been challenging for them to write in English for publication purposes at the beginning of their careers. After years of practice, they believe their English academic writing skills have improved satisfactorily.

The responses collected from the interviewees in this study are very different from what has been reported in the previous literature. Two possible explanations exist for why the interviewees’ perceptions and experiences regarding submitting papers to English medium journals differ from what the previous literature records. First, there is a significant difference in the background characteristics of interviewees between the previous studies and present studies. For instance, Flowerdew’s research participants



are mostly Hong Kong based scholars, while Belcher (2007) and others focus on developing countries. Meanwhile, the present research mainly targets scholars with an established career in the UK. Nearly all the participants have an outstanding academic background and have made successful scholarly achievements in Anglophone universities. Their current positions are evidence of their competence in researching and disseminating their research findings through publications. Hence, it is unsurprising that they do not experience such difficulties in writing in English and getting their work published in English medium journals as other EAL scholars do. Secondly, the difference in research contexts also leads to very different research findings. As some previous studies (Flowerdew, 2001, 2008) were conducted about a decade ago, many mentioned problems and challenges that EAL scholars are said to encounter no longer exist within contemporary academia. This study concludes that even though many EAL scholars suffer from unsatisfactory English writing proficiency, most scholars believe the problem lies in the area of cultural barriers and misunderstanding instead of in language-related issues.

This finding echoes Canagarajah (1996), who claims cultural barriers, instead of language issues, lead to discrimination and misunderstanding against periphery EAL scholars. As for EAL scholars' perceptions of journal editors/reviewers and their linguistic gatekeeping measures, these interviewees also reveal a different attitude from those reported in previous literature (Gentil, 2005; Swales & Leeder, 2012). Past literature suggests journal gatekeepers have been unfriendly to EAL scholars and writers outside the Anglophone countries by setting high language thresholds. However, most interviewees believe these standards are reasonable and acceptable since they aim to ensure the quality of published works. Some interviewees even mentioned that they practice the same measures when playing the roles of editors/reviewers.

Nevertheless, EAL scholars specialising in applied linguistics and/or language acquisition naturally reject the excessive pursuit of native-speakerism. For instance, they believe it is not necessary to have 'native speaking' proofreaders to proofread manuscripts; professionals who can comprehend the subject knowledge and academic language are more capable. Also, they accept a paper simply because it does not read 'authentically' enough; what they are looking for in a well-written academic paper is 'clarity' instead. Meanwhile, as international research heavily depends on the use of one-shared language, Academic English, it is seemingly reasonable that cross-cultural and cross-linguistic collaborations influence the structure of this register (Hyland & Jiang, 2022). The increasing interaction and collaborations between EAL and NES (Native English Speakers) researchers have created a "more complex picture of 'acceptable' academic writing" (p. 3).

The different nature of each research discipline also leads to scholars' different perceptions, attitudes, and experiences in the journal submission process. Unlike previously mentioned interviewees, the two STEM researchers believe they are slightly disadvantaged compared to their English-speaking colleagues. They are less confident in

their proficiency in English academic writing and have to spend extra time and effort to polish their English-written manuscripts; sometimes, even extra expense is needed if they are required to use proofreading services. They believe journal gatekeepers discriminate against them due to their use of English at a certain level; this is to say, their experiences in submitting manuscripts to English medium journals are not as smooth as other interviewees'. This might suggest that the language used in higher education (whether English or not), work experience, and many other factors may influence an EAL researcher's perception and attitude toward writing and publishing in English for academic purposes. The differences in these characteristics added to the various responses on whether they felt disadvantaged.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Previous studies (Flowerdew, 2008; Hyland, 2016) include EAL researchers or writers from diverse linguistic backgrounds and research fields to form a sizeable empirical dataset. However, due to time and space limitations, participants for this study were recruited only via convenience sampling. The potential limitation of convenience sampling is that most of the participants are faculty members of world-leading Anglophone research institutions, which implies their competence to pursue highly ranked research in the medium of English is probably at a very high standard in comparison with most EAL scholars worldwide. This could be one of the reasons why most of the research participants in this study claimed that they did not struggle with writing and publishing in English for academic purposes, nor did they find journal gatekeeping a particular issue since they are leading scholars in their research field.

It follows that they might not have earned their positions in these elite universities if they could not already demonstrate outstanding capabilities in researching and writing academic papers in English. Nevertheless, the results might have been different, or a more diverse range of findings might have been presented, if the research had been conducted in universities based in non-Anglophone countries where scholars are still required to publish in English. The admitted limitation has been compensated for in other ways, for instance, by providing a detailed, in-depth narrative of the experiences of the participants as befits qualitative enquiries with smaller numbers of participants.

Even though most of the interviewees of this research did not find themselves troubled by writing and publishing in English for academic purposes, it is undeniable that the dominance of Standard English in academia has significantly impacted many other periphery EAL scholars, as suggested by past literature. Many falls victim to the English linguistic hegemony since their proficiency in academic English writing does not meet the standard set by journal gatekeepers. Thus, this research has aimed to raise awareness among academia that periphery EAL scholars have encountered certain predicaments regarding linguistic gatekeeping measures and cultural barriers. If there were more understanding of periphery EAL scholars and their situation, their burden of

writing and publishing in English for academic purposes could be alleviated to a certain extent. In this way, EAL scholars may be empowered to exchange their ideas and findings via international publications more easily and with fewer gatekeeping constraints, and the academia will be enhanced by means of the more widespread knowledge exchange that is made possible.

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## APPENDIX A

### Interview Questions

#### *Perceptions*

How would you describe your written English?

Do you enjoy writing in English for publication? What do you like/not like about it?

Can you describe your experience of submitting academic articles to English medium journals?

How do you feel when journal editors/reviewers recommend (or require) you to have the manuscript proofread by native speakers? Does this ever happen to you?

Can you describe your experience of cooperating with proofreaders?

Do you think it would be easier to be a scholar in your area if you were given more opportunities to write for publication in your first language?

#### *Problems*

Do you feel you are at a disadvantage as an EAL researcher when submitting a paper to English medium journals?

Do you think some editors and reviewers are biased against EAL researchers like you?

What do you find the most problematic/least problematic for you throughout the publication process?

What do you think are your individual challenges, if any, in writing in English for publication?

What do you think are the particular problems of your discipline in publishing in English?

Which parts of the paper do editors/reviewers most often ask you to revise?

#### *Strategies*

What are your strengths in writing in English?

What strategies have you used for improving your academic English writing?

Do you enlist the help of anyone else, apart from proofreaders, when preparing a paper for publication?

## APPENDIX B

### Details about the Research Participants

<i>Interviewees</i>	<i>First Language</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Academic position</i>	<i>Research discipline</i>	<i>Location</i>
Jue	Chinese	30+	Lecturer	Education	UK
Rui	Chinese	30+	Lecturer	Education	UK
Ming	Chinese	30+	Lecturer	STEM	China
Hung	Chinese	30+	Post-doctoral researcher	STEM	Taiwan
Eddie	Cantonese	30+	Assistant professor	Applied Linguistics	Hong Kong
Keito	Japanese	35+	Associate professor	Applied Linguistics	UK
Hanna	Hungarian	40+	Associate professor	Applied Linguistics	UK
Isabella	Spanish	45+	Professor	Applied Linguistics	UK
Patrick	Dutch/ French	60+	Professor	Applied Linguistics	UK