

Vesna VUČINIĆ*

PUBLISHING IN ANTHROPOLOGY ON THE NATIONAL AND GLOBAL LEVELS: OUTLINE OF A STRATEGY FOR COMBATING THE HEGEMONY

Abstract: In anthropology, same as in other social and humanistic sciences, a hegemony of English language in publishing results and, consequently, in criteria for academic advancement is clearly visible. Most of the national scientific policies around the globe include classification schemes in which journals and books in English have been placed on a pedestal above publications in other languages. This principle, coupled with quantitative measurements as the only “sound criteria for evaluating scientific production”, have brought about numerous challenges for individual, collective, institutional and disciplinary publishing strategies around the world. This paper draws upon my experiences of serving on the Organizing Committee and as the Chair of the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA), but also of being part of the Serbian ethnological and anthropological community, which was involved in battles for its professional integrity. I will take this opportunity to bring forth the negative and positive aspects of this hegemony, and give some recommendations that would be beneficial for both the national and international publishing strategies.

Key words: *publishing, collective, institutional, disciplinary*

INTRODUCTION

The problem of the English language based hegemony¹ and the consequent inequality in evaluating anthropological production coming from different world regions has often been raised by anthropologists in the past decade (e. g., Lins Ribeiro 2006, 2014; Lins Ribeiro, Escobar 2009; Bošković, Eriksen 2010). These discussions inspired some of the panels and projects organized by the World Council

* Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia

¹ In this text, I use the term “hegemony” in both of its basic meanings — to refer to the “dominancy” of English language, but also to the “social, cultural, ideological and economic influence exerted by a dominant group”, i. e., by the Anglo-American journals and publishing houses.

of Anthropological Associations (WCAA),² but also professional activism in certain national academic settings. This paper draws upon my experiences of serving on the Organizing Committee and as the Chair of WCAA, but also of being part of the Serbian ethnological and anthropological community, which was involved in battles for its professional integrity.³ I will take this opportunity to bring forth the negative and positive aspects of this hegemony, and give some recommendations that would be beneficial for both the national and international publishing strategies.

THE REALITY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE HEGEMONY

In anthropology, same as in other social and humanistic sciences, a hegemony of English language in publishing results and, consequently, in criteria for academic advancement is clearly visible. Most of the national scientific policies around the globe include classification schemes in which journals and books in English have been placed on a pedestal above publications in other languages. This principle, coupled with quantitative measurements as the only “sound criteria for evaluating scientific production”, have brought about numerous challenges for individual, collective, institutional and disciplinary publishing strategies around the world.

This hegemonic condition is best illustrated by the fact that in all social and humanistic sciences, including anthropology, the leading journals in the field are Anglo-American ones published in English and categorized by Thompson-Reuters, a multinational commercial company, which uses the citation index as its only evaluation criteria. Thus, the most competitive journals of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), which were originally founded to serve the US anthropological community, have turned into the most desirable present-day sites of publishing.

The English language hegemony in publishing encompasses an inherent inequality in the circumstances in which researchers work. While the targeted readership for the Anglo-American anthropologists is the whole world, the targeted

² The WCAA is a network of presently 52 national and international anthropological associations. It was founded in Recife, Brazil, in 2004 with the aim of promoting the exchange of anthropological knowledge and stimulating cooperation between anthropological associations and its members. Among the many panels that WCAA organized at various large conferences over the years, one panel within the ASA 2012 Conference, in New Delhi, was devoted to “Publishing, Prestige and Money in Global Anthropology”. The papers in this panel were presented by Reuter (2012), Mathews (2012), and Vučinić-Nešković (2012). In addition, some of the most creative WCAA projects were inspired by the discussions on the need for linguistic diversification. They are *Deja Lu* (the open access electronic journal that reprints the most representative previous year’s articles from journals around the globe), the *WCAA Newsletter* (which is open for use of multiple languages), and the multi-lingual blog forum called *In one’s own terms*. These projects may be found at the WCAA website: www.wcaanet.org.

³ In Serbia, e. g., a war had been waged by anthropologists against the introduction of scientometric evaluation of scientific production, where especially two of our colleagues stood in defense of humanistic and social sciences (Kovačević 2008; Milenković 2009).

readership for all the other language speaking anthropologists is dual — every time they start writing they have to determine for whom they are writing — for international or for national readers/audiences. When they write for international readers, most of them need extra effort — they need to find an appropriate language editor — a friend, a colleague, or a paid professional. Once the hurdle of language proficiency is more or less overcome, they face yet another problem — an encounter with the peer reviewers whose evaluation standards come from the Anglo-American educational and scientific system.⁴ The thematic, theoretical and methodological (even ideological and political) as well as stylistic and formal characteristics of the submitted text need to be in line with the expectations of the “high level Western journal”. Satisfying these demands for most of the researchers whose mother tongue is not English is very hard, while it is much easier for those who had passed through Anglo-American graduate education in the field.

In order to clarify the tension that is built up around the prestigious Anglo-American journals and publishing houses, I would like to make the following point. When an author coming from a country outside the Anglo-American hegemonic sphere submits a text to a highly ranked journal from the USA, or the UK, he/she needs to be aware that this means crossing the national borders, i. e., submitting not to an international journal but to a highly ranked national journal of another country. As is the case in every other country, the journals of the American Anthropological Association are established primarily to measure the quality of domestic/national anthropological production, and thus establish a ranking system for the American anthropological market (Vučinić-Nešković 2012).⁵ Thus, overcrowding in submissions to prestigious Anglo-American journals is the consequence of the pressure exerted on them due to their double nature — they are at the same time national and international journals.

NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE HEGEMONY

It now seems fit to determine the negative and positive aspects of the dominance (hegemony) of English language in publishing. The small and medium size countries, and especially those with relatively small scientific communities, are here taken as the referential framework for determining these drawbacks and benefits.

⁴ More recently, some journals from the US, such as *American Anthropologist*, have invited academics from different world regions into their editorial boards, who, when appropriate, can recommend colleagues from the region they come from or do research in, to act as peer reviewers.

⁵ In the paper presented in the panel on “Publishing, Prestige and Money in Global Anthropology” within the ASA 2012 Conference, in New Delhi, I approached the issue of the production of anthropological journals from the point of view of “hierarchy”, instead of “hegemony”, starting from the assumption that each journal serves to the needs of a particular scholarly community, with its own rules of professional advancement determined by the particular job market.

The English hegemony in social and humanistic sciences has visible negative aspects. First, the scientific texts published in English, for most of the time, will not be available to the representatives of the local societies in which research was conducted, and to whom it is highly relevant. Second, when a researcher publishes in her/his national language and in English, the research results become fragmented in that they are distributed to different readership groups, for whom it is hard to become acquainted with the whole output of the researcher.

Third, the higher quality articles usually end up in international journals published in English, while lower quality articles go to domestic journals, making in a long run the overall national research production inferior to the production in English. Fourth, the flow of the most valuable scientific results into international journals weakens the corpus of knowledge about national culture in a national language, and thus constrains the development of professional language connected to the research field in question. Lastly, this hegemony does not stimulate (it even inhibits) publishing in other widely used world languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian or Spanish.

In this analysis, we should not overlook the fact that English language dominance has certain beneficial aspects as well. First, the prospect that the text written in English be read by the wider (international) public is larger than if written in a national language, particularly when the number of its users is limited (and does not spill into other countries, as in the cases of colonial languages — such as Spanish, Portuguese or French). Second, the continuous use of English language by individuals and research groups in a country intensifies the possibilities for international scientific cooperation.

Third, widespread use of the same language stimulates scientists to link and compare their own studies with similar studies in other parts of the world, and thus make them richer and more relevant. Fourth, it enables the building of a corpus of global knowledge about a country or a region, which may be shared by scientists around the world. Thus, the widely spread use of English language is positive in that it gives a common language platform for the exchange of knowledge and cooperation worldwide.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING POLICIES

I will now try to deduce recommendations leading to a more diversified approach to publishing strategies in social and humanistic sciences, in which both national and global benefits would be pronounced.

First, a national government should invest in translations of carefully selected national works (journal articles, edited volumes, and monographs) into most widely used languages, including English, so that they would become available to the international public. For realization of this aim, the government should establish a central institution, which would comprise a committee to deal with evaluation and selection of the best scientific works as well as the translation service to deal with language editing and translation efficiently. This activity may thus be

organized in both directions — for presentation of the selected national works to foreign audiences and of the relevant foreign works to domestic audience.

Second, the state should also fund “encyclopedic publishing projects” within each social and humanistic science to be realized in the national but also several world languages.

Third, professional science associations and publishing houses in a country outside the hegemonic sphere should be encouraged to change their approach, in which the only scientific work “worthwhile translating and publishing” comes from the Anglo-American sphere. Instead, they should look for worthy scholarship in the neighboring or more distant world regions, where social and scientific concerns are closer to those in their country. The original scientific works and their authors should be discovered directly through academic channels instead through the Anglo-American publications as intermediaries.

Fourth, the professional associations, journal editorial boards and publishing houses within the English language hegemonic sphere should invest more resources (than they presently do) in organizing an objective search for the best scholarship published in other national frameworks (i. e., in other languages), have them translated into English, published and distributed within their own networks. In reaching for the best published work in particular national academic environments, they need to consider universal themes, but also particular nationally relevant topics, which reflect local social and cultural concerns.

Fifth, the research and academic institutions in each country should come up with creative strategies that would expand the spectrum of journals incorporated into the categorization schemes set up by national ministries of science and education. One such possibility is to introduce journals that would fit into space between national journals and the Science Citation Index (SCI) listed journals — which have national and international editorial boards and which publish in both the national language and in a few world languages. Such journals, which would need to be made open access (i. e. published electronically), may then feature articles in the national language, but also in other languages and thus promote particular national but also international scholarship globally.⁶

Sixth, bi- or tri-lateral collaborations between scientists should be established more often, where the use of one language (e. g., Spanish in the case of Spain and Latin American countries), or the presence of bilingual speakers (e. g., in Chinese-Japanese symposia) would be sufficient for mutual communication.

And seventh, we should all stop focusing only on the Western centers of knowledge production and turn to other centers, but also have more self-esteem in what we do ourselves and develop the national scientific communities according to our own social and cultural concerns but constructively integrated into the global scene.

⁶ Such efforts were made by the Serbian ethnological and anthropological community, and have so far been successful, although the battle for the number of the highest ranked national journals within each discipline continues. These journals may be accessed at a common open access platform called anthroserbia.org

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