

Academic Writing and Politics

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Abstract

Writers challenge the governing traditions and values, beliefs, and interests, so they can take a stand against injustice. Academic writing plays a vital role in the discursive construction and maintenance of the hegemony of the dominant class. The paper purposed to explore the link between academic writing and politics. Thus, we explore how academic writing empowers authors to influence various aspects of their lives using library research method in this paper. Applying Gramsci's social theory, we discuss the relationship between academic writing and politics under four themes: writing in the global context, politics of academic language, writing and ideology, and the power of writing. The findings suggest that academic writing is connected with power, politics, and ideologies to influence and control others through intellectual and moral unity along with the accord of economic and political power. This paper also concludes that academic writing enhances people to organize the multitude of social beliefs about good or bad, or acceptable or unacceptable for them to bring change in their lives.

Key words: Academic Writing, politics, hegemony, ideology

Introduction

Writing is an act of identification in which people associate themselves with socio-culturally shaped possibilities of self-hood and play their part in reproducing or challenging governing traditions and values, beliefs, and interests they represent. Academicians follow a formal and structured writing style aimed at serving other scholars with new information of knowledge. Thus academic writing is writing done by scholars for other scholars. This kind of writing often poses a conflict of identity for writers as the 'self' which is engraved in educational discourse feels aligned to them (Ivanic, 1998). Academic Writing deals with the topics that create or satisfy the academic community's interest. It is also true that academic writing should present the reader with an informed argument, including an introduction, the body, and a conclusion. It addresses topic-based research questions to create interest for anyone seeking research-based and objective information on a particular topic. For Clark and Ivanic(1997), the objective of academic writing is to present new knowledge through a review of what is currently known about a given topic and through the foundation for the author's unique views

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or perspectives. The academic writing topics would be relevant to literary, cultural, historical, political, and social issues.

People need to go through a lot of pain and effort to learn to academic write (Ivanic & Roach, 1990; Ivanic & Simpson, 1992); however, writing skill offers them to enjoy social, economic and political power. Therefore, people desire to learn to write because writing has a deep-down value in searching for philosophies and record-making. Similarly, writing fulfils certain functions of society that other skills cannot, and being able to write is seen as a signal of being educated.

Writing allows a socially prestigious form of knowledge, information, and behaviour that are recorded, stored and handed on in the permanent condition, unchanged by false or mischievous memory. Writing travels through space and time, so we can learn from the past and present to bring change in our lives (Clark & Ivanic, 1997). Those who were educated to write have always been in all kinds of power, either in academia, economy, or politics. They influence major decisions in the academic, financial, and socio-political policies and practices. This is particularly important in our society, where the past is well-regarded as a cultural legacy as if it somehow discusses the nation's magnificence as a whole. Power, status, values, and attitudes towards writing and writers are all closely interconnected. The questions of who writes about what and for whom, why this matters, and why it is like this are the essential things to be explored in this field of writing.

This article applies the concept of Gramsci's social theory to explore how academic writing politically empowers people and influences various aspects of their lives. In doing so, this study intends to discuss the relationship between academic writing and politics under four elements: writing in the global context, the politics of academic Writing, Writing and Ideology, and the power of writing. This paper explores the relationship between academic writing and politics, power and ideologies. To achieve this objective, we seek to answer questions like how is writing associated with politics? What is the global context of writing? And what is the relationship between writing and politics, power, and ideologies?

To make this article feasible, it has been organized into four sections: the following section connects an integration of Gramsci's (1971) social theory as its theoretical framework to deal with the issues of academic writing and politics. Applying the library-based research method, the next sections follow writing in the global context, the politics of academic Writing, Writing and ideology, and finally, the power of writing. Finally, it concludes with the major findings and reflections of the study with some recommendations.

Social Theory

Academic writing expects writers to become flawless in their thinking and explanations, and reasoning, making readers understand and appreciate their ideas or topics and

persuading them to admit their ideologies. Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' is crucial to understanding how the modern representative state functions. It also deals with how some dominant political forces build and maintain their control in modern liberal democratic societies such as Britain. Hegemony is fundamentally a relationship between social classes in which a dominant class or a section of a class exercises leadership over the other subordinate classes of the society through their active consent for the policies and decisions they take (Gramsci, 1971). The hegemonic consent is achieved not by force or coercion but by intellectual and moral leadership, which is possible through writing. Academic writings help create awareness among readers, which Gramsci calls 'civil society'.

The hegemony of a socio-economic class consists of its ability to represent its own interests so that they appear to be the 'universal' interests of the whole society and unite itself and its goals with a group of followers. The struggle for hegemony is continuing, and its consequences are not static for all time. To endure the hegemony of a dominant social group over a series of subordinate groups (Gramsci, 1971), they keep control over others through intellectual and moral unity along with the accord of economic and political power.

Writing in the Global Context

All writing is positioned within the extensive socio-political milieu. Almost all issues and values concerning writing and its dissemination in society are political. The writing issues are based on the roles writers play or are not allowed to play in society. For Clark and Ivanic (1997), the community consists of different social classes and groups with competing and often conflicting interests and ideologies operating in a hierarchy. In such a social structure, the dominant ideologies build the power to project particular meanings and practices as universal, as common sense. This power is established and operates in two ways: via hegemony (in Gramsci's terms) by winning the consent of others and by forcing others either to follow or to avoid certain practices they have established.

As teachers, we have, over the years, realized how important it is to have a sophisticated, extensive understanding of the nature of writing as a political, social, mental, physical and linguistic act. Our writing experiences have also shown that writing is a complex process connected with a broad social context. Most writing concerns the ideas of the political context of society. Writing is associated with power, politics, and societal ideologies and influences human life.

Writing is more than just a mechanical skill. It should make readers curious to understand how writing is part of a broader interest in how society works. Writing covers all facets of people's social-political, educational, and personal lives. Therefore, writing reflects on people's experiences as a writer, politicians, social activists, or others and enables them to bring fresh insights to the tasks they choose to undertake. The search for an understanding of what is involved in writing has taken us on a journey through different subjects. These

areas include social theory, cultural studies, media studies, semiotics, discourse analysis, linguistics, applied linguistics, literacy studies, and composition studies as the major ones. Besides, writing empowers people to create an aesthetic experience by composing in new ways (Grabe, 2001). Thus, this paper aims to bring them together and make connections among ideas that will provide a more broadly based understanding of writing than can be offered within any single discipline.

The Politics of Academic Language

Academic writing gives access to power over others and helps the writers influence the ideas and lives of others. Understanding the politics of academic language begins with acknowledging that all languages are strongly associated with their users' identities and affiliation to the community (Russell, 2018). Bloome (2009) also emphasizes the importance of languages that they are bound to histories, cultures and societies. Through writing, one can help preserve history knowledge, provide guidelines for advancing cultures, and offer clues to developing communities. The languages one speaks reflect their community memberships, and each of these communities requires adopting ways of thinking, feeling, speaking, acting, and valuing. Since language reflects community membership, they do not determine language varieties based on race and ethnicity. As an artful use of language, writing is a source of socialization.

The process of academic writing enriches the writer's knowledge of various subject matters, and this knowledge helps them to influence all aspects of life. Bloome (2009) further states that some languages are more viable than others; accordingly, those languages are esteemed by social institutions and become an issue of politics and power. For Clark and Ivancic (1996), certain functions of society are fulfilled by writing, though other means are also necessary, and being able to write is a sign of being educated.

Most of the academic writings are found in the English language. For Pennycook (2017), the global status of English is affecting the lives and practices of multilingual scholars working in contexts where English is not the official language of communication, throwing into relief the politics surrounding academic publishing. In English and the ability to write academically in any language enables people to get opportunities in all aspects of life. The sole purpose of writing is to store and provide information necessary for the existence and development of a particular society (Gaur, 2000), which also applies to an individual. Thus, writing empowers people with knowledge, skills and power to influence, makes them conscious of their rights and encourages them to fight for their rights. Thus, the ideas expressed in academic writings can help challenge the status quo and offer different meanings and understandings (Clark & Ivancic, 1996). The writers have both status and power to influence other people, to get things done; the more successful they become, the greater their status and the greater their power.

Writing and Ideology

Ideology, which includes a set of ideas constituting one's goals, expectations and actions, has the power to carry out social functions. Whether social or cognitive, ideology organizes socially shared attitudes, feelings, and thoughts. Writing as discourse is the most important vehicle for spreading ideology. Through writing, people can manage many social beliefs about good or bad, right or wrong, or acceptable or unacceptable for them, which helps them guide their behaviour.

Ideology refers to the mental frameworks, including the language, concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and systems of representation (Hall, 1996). He further states that different social classes and social groups deploy these frameworks to make sense of, figure out, and render the way society works intelligible. Academic writing plays a crucial role in the discursive construction and maintenance of the hegemony of the dominant class and its allies.

It is here that significant construction of consent around dominant ideologies takes place and where meanings are transmitted by few and received by many. The readers are informed about the publication of books, journals, or newspapers through the press, and Bell (1991) states that most news stories originate in the written press and are then taken up by the broadcast media. Similarly, Althusser (1971) states that the press is one of the essential ideological state apparatuses. Over the centuries, the recognition of the authority to impact public opinions has meant that newspapers and journals worldwide have been banned, and journalists have been arrested and even killed; such is the power of writing. Thus, writing enables people to bring decisive changes and disrupt society's public good.

The Power of Writing

Power functions as a significant condition and purpose for the development of ideologies. Since it is dispersed throughout the social power, it is a key element in the discussion of all kinds of socio-political, economic, and educational discourses to produce or construct all the knowledge we have. The more one writes, the more they develop thoughts, arguments and logic, making the writer powerful.

In literature and journalism, professional writers are influential people in any society. Writing is so powerful in the sense that the writer is freer to express, influence, persuade and even argue. Writing enhances more forthrightness compared to other mediums of communication, and Elbow (1981) states that the power of writing can affect others with words. Elbow further explains that writing is a very effective tool, as a powerful piece of writing in terms of the ability to move and explain. And at the same time, it also gives access to power over others in terms of being able to influence the ideas and lives of others. People who write for public readerships, such as researchers, journalists, historians, lawyers, novelists and

playwrights, can have enormous power, depending on their position in the wider hegemonic struggle. Through writing, they can help the rulers, administrators, planners and other executives develop prospective policies. Also, they can take advantage of holding prestigious positions to influence these plans, policies and decisions.

Since writing develops power, writers can achieve and hold a better status in society. For Elbow (1981), power and status interact to make it difficult to separate them. Certain kinds of public writing, including academic writing, are highly valued in our society and confers the status of writers. And those who get status through writing have the power to influence other people and to get things done. Success in writing helps them achieve better status and greater power in society. However, some kinds of writing and writers achieve better status and power than others. This is connected to the wider issues of economic and political power, ideological and cultural struggle, and the relationship between writers and the building and maintenance of hegemony.

Conclusion

Politics, power, identity and ideologies are interrelated, and the relationship between academic writing, power, and politics needs to be further explored. It is obvious now that writing is a means to get power and a vehicle to express our ideologies. The vast number of people as individuals but, more importantly, powerless social groups are excluded from contributing to the collective store of knowledge, cultural and ideological activity, from the production and projection of ideas that fundamentally shape society (Clark & Ivanic, 1996). It is also strongly believed that writing helps raise the voice of privileged groups, ethnic groups, and gender issues. Power is the key in different socio-economic situations, and writing makes people powerful and helps them gain a certain status in society. It is also discussed that hegemony is unstable, and there are opportunities for change - sometimes more, sometimes fewer, depending on conditions in the wider socio-economic context. Writing is highly valued as it helps one dominate others and achieve rights and social status. Finally, academic writing helps us construct and negotiate the ideologies that help us build up our identities in society.

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