

Forum: The case for reflexive writing practices in management communication and organization studies

Iga Maria Lehman
University of Social Sciences in Warsaw, Poland
Corresponding author: ilehman@san.edu.pl

Janne Tienari
Hanken School of Economics, Finland
janne.tienari@hanken.fi

Ken Hyland
University of East Anglia, UK
k.hyland@uea.ac.uk

Audrey Alejandro
London School of Economics, UK
a.alejandro@lse.ac.uk

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Iga Maria Lehman is head of the Department of English Studies and Department of Intercultural Communication at the University of Social Sciences in Warsaw. She is the editor-in-chief of the multidisciplinary journal *Discourses on Culture*. Her research focuses on discourse analysis across academic disciplines, with particular focus on identity construction in scholarly writing. In her work, she adopts an interdisciplinary and humanities- and social sciences-based approach. In recent years, she has been developing the concepts of “reflexivity” and “reader inclusion” in the process of scholarly texts construction.

Janne Tienari is Professor of Management and Organization at Hanken School of Economics in Helsinki. His research and teaching interests include strategy work, gender and diversity, feminist theory, managing multinational corporations, mergers and acquisitions, branding, media and social media, and academic writing and changing academia from a critical perspective. Tienari’s work is published in leading international journals.

Ken Hyland is an Honorary Professor at the University of East Anglia. He has 86,000 citations on Google Scholar and the Stanford/Elsevier analysis of the Scopus database found he is the world’s most influential scholar in linguistics in 2022 and 2023. A collection of his work, *The Essential Hyland*, was published in 2018 by Bloomsbury.

Audrey Alejandro is an Assistant Professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Department of Methodology. Her research focuses on the role of discourse and knowledge in society and world politics. Methodologically, she is interested in developing methods to produce discourses and knowledge to help create a world consistent with our values.

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Abstract

Following criticism about the quality of writing in management communication and organization studies, this Forum presents arguments for change in how scholarly knowledge is communicated. The expectation today seems to be that, to get published, academic writing requires monologic and complex ways of expression. However, using formulaic and reader-exclusive language in publications limits their accessibility to a wider readership, including not only more diverse members of the disciplinary community—such as non-Anglophone scholars and junior researchers—but also those we study and write about. In our respective contributions, we argue for more meaningful communication between writers and readers achieved through writers adopting reflexive practices when crafting their texts for publication. Specifically, we suggest considering reflexivity through the following concepts: conformity and individuality, socialization, tenderness, and respect. These, we argue, help make our academic writing more accessible and meaningful.

Keywords: academic writing, reflexivity, conformity, individuality, socialization, tenderness, respect.

Forum Introduction

Iga Maria Lehman and Janne Tienari

Readers of management communication and organization studies journals may find themselves asking the question: What is the author trying to say? This dilemma arises from, or is compounded by, a dominant academic writing style that has been criticized as complex, abstract, authoritarian, and jargon-ridden (see e.g., Gilmore et al., 2019; Grey & Sinclair, 2006; Kiriakos & Tienari, 2018; Tourish, 2020). As readers, we often feel we are reading “pretentious articles where commonsense is camouflaged,” but as writers we feel pressure to master conventions and rituals to produce this jargon (Alvesson et al., 2017, p. 9). We propose that one reason for the dominance of inaccessible texts is the absence of reflexivity in the writing process that would enable us to exercise our agentive power as scholars. Reflexivity highlights the fact that, throughout the process of text production, both the value of what we intend to communicate and how we communicate it are central.

Using jargon is characteristic of publications in our field. A look at articles published in mainstream journals shows that some degree of jargon is difficult to avoid and perhaps can be effective when writing for specialists on a topic of mutual interest. Beyond such narrowly defined audiences, however, jargon and obscure technical expressions may impair text processing and hamper reader engagement. Alvesson et al. (2017) point to the tendency to use “grandiose nominalizations” in social science writing. These often conceal “what are quite simple ideas, whilst the complexity of ideas is best served by striving for simplicity of expression” (Grey & Sinclair 2006, pp. 447-448).

This Forum draws on the concept of reflexivity to challenge rhetorical orthodoxies and propose ways to move beyond them. The rhetorical academic legacies that influence our writing originate in the individualistic model of scientific discourse (Hyland & Lehman, 2020) with its epistemological assumptions concerning the importance of cognitive

rationality, depersonalization, deductive reasoning, objectivity, empirical support for claims, and the priority of the “knower” over the “known” (Bazerman, 1988). Scholars are expected to adopt a stance of authorial neutrality which contributes to the development of writing characterized by a monologic style that employs complex grammar, technical lexis, and a formulaic text structure.

We argue that in reproducing dominant rhetorical norms, academic writing today serves purposes of legitimation rather than innovation. It seems incidental whether our texts are read or not. What is important is that our “soundbites”—cleverly crafted key sentences in article abstracts and introductions—are cited. At the same time, something of a paradox is evident. While scholars such as Alvesson (2012) complain of the shortage of novel ideas in our scholarly writings, journals force writers to frame their alleged contributions as new to a specific audience. Citable “soundbites” seem to substitute dialogue in the contemporary politics of academic knowledge production.

We further argue that for academic texts to be accessible and meaningful to a wider and more diverse readership, writing needs to be approached as a shared and relational process (Helin, 2019) and as a form of communication that resonates with the reader (Meier & Wegener, 2017). Thus, in this Forum, we propose concepts such as conformity and individuality, socialization, tenderness, and respect to offer ways to think about and practice academic writing in management communication and organization studies. This approach involves questioning our taken-for-granted assumptions, judgments, and practices while crafting and reporting our scholarly work. The proposed concepts and perspectives are all inscribed in the notion of reflexivity.

Exercising reflexivity requires writers to aim for a dialogical engagement with the readers. To achieve this, we need to work to incarnate our readers by addressing questions such as: who are they and what are their needs and expectations? Employing dialogical

rhetorical features in writing is appealing to readers who appreciate the writer's efforts to "acknowledge their uncertainties" and "include them as discourse participants" (Hyland, 2005, p. 176). As writers, then, we must seek connections with our potential readers (Meier & Wegener, 2017).

Gail Fairhurst and David Grant articulated the significance of this relational scenario, proposing dialogical communication as an effective way to "describe, analyze and theorize the complex processes and practices of interest" (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010, p. 174). They proposed dialogue as a "medium by which the negotiation and construction of meaning take place" and a space for contestation and resistance (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010, p. 174). They then called for combining dialogic communication with reflexive practices where we "become aware of how our assumptions, ways of talking, and our practical theories help shape, and are shaped by, our responsible interactions with others (Cunliffe, 2002, p. 46)" (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010, pp. 185-186). Effectively engaging an audience of our disciplinary peers involves using language that demonstrates that we are competent members of the community. This is a delicate balancing act if we simultaneously wish to open our writing for broader audiences.

The extent to which these ideas have caught on in management communication and organization studies is debatable. Concepts such as reflexivity are occasionally used and are understood in a multitude of ways. The August 2023 issue of *Management Communication Quarterly*, for example, included ten articles with a variety of topics and approaches as well as notable geographical diversity in the empirical studies. Reflexivity featured in only one of the published articles, where Prado Saldanha et al. (2023) investigated how a non-profit organization creates spaces where members of deprived communities can elaborate counter-narratives to deconstruct dominant narratives.

The issue of “rigor” in qualitative research was covered in many of the articles, including Prado Saldanha et al. (2023). Discussing the ethical implications of their participatory research design, the authors mentioned reflexivity as one of three “well-known criteria for rigorous non-positivistic research” alongside authenticity and plausibility (pp. 486-487). The word “reflexive” featured five times in the article, referring to (theoretical) discussion, epistemology and knowledge, methodological questions, and actors’ accounts. In the August 2023 issue of *MCQ*, the word “reflexive” was mentioned in two other articles, referring to reflexive practice in one of them and denoting the author’s reflexive assessment of issues within the researcher-participant relation in the other. Reflexivity was not discussed in any of the published articles in terms of writing and communicating the authors’ ideas. While we cannot say whether this means that no such reflexivity was practiced in writing these articles, we suspect that the fact that it was not mentioned means that it was not consciously done.

Against this backdrop, we argue that there is a case for debating what reflexive academic writing practices mean in management communication and organization studies. As Ken Hyland suggests in his essay below, scholars in the field have not consistently explored reflexivity through language and discourse. Hyland approaches writing as a balancing act between demonstrating membership of a community and taking an individual stance. He argues for viewing reflexivity as the writer’s conception of self and audience as realized in the interactions created through rhetorical choices. In a similar vein, Audrey Alejandro shows how writing can be understood as socialization. She offers the concept of linguistic reflexivity to develop our writing practices, using the reflexive review as an example. Iga Maria Lehman argues that, as writers, we need to become sensitive to our audience’s needs, expectations, doubts, and fears, and she urges us to create a relationship with the reader based on equality and commonality through tenderness. Finally, Janne Tienari moves beyond reflexivity and

suggests that we consider our writing through respect not only for our readers but our co-authors and those we write about.

While Hyland and Alejandro draw our attention to rhetorical and linguistic choices, offering hands-on advice for reflexive writing, the essays by Lehman and Tienari are more freely formulated to encourage those who read this Forum to imagine what their writing could be(come). Demonstrating sensitivity to our audiences is a practice that is difficult to pin down unequivocally, and it warrants more general scrutiny, as Lehman argues. Promoting a sense of respect in academic writing, in turn, is idealistic but it enables us to think through our relationship with our (assumed) readers, co-authors, and subjects of inquiry so we can craft more accessible and meaningful texts.

Together, we aim to initiate a conversation that focuses on discursive aspects of academic writing to make it less ambiguous and more reader-engaging and persuasive. In doing so, we support the path for the future as outlined by Fairhurst and Grant (2010), among others, which focuses on the importance of dialogical communication and interaction between different scholarly traditions and disciplines. We come to this debate from diverse disciplinary, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. We embody the multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural essence of what it means to write reflexively on management and organizational communication. This enables us to envision broader audiences for our writing. Collaboration with practitioners, for example, always entails researcher reflexivity and awareness of their positionality within the process of inquiry (Barge & Wolfe, 2023). We suggest that reflexive writing practices help authors produce texts that are more accessible to wider audiences and help bridge the gap between theory and practice. Reflexive writing practices can potentially facilitate the practical application of academic research.

Some go as far as to claim that all knowledge is produced from a particular power position and the researcher's lived experience (Albu et al., 2023) and that research cannot

stand apart from the conditions that produce it (Lockwood Harris, 2023). We support these arguments. While offering a plethora of valuable ideas, however, recent contributions in the field have not explicitly focused on the practices of academic writing. In these essays, we strive to show how our different takes on reflexivity provide opportunities for change. We aim to engage our readers in a dialogue on how to craft and disseminate disciplinary knowledge and beliefs to an ever widening and diversifying readership.

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Conformity and Individuality

Ken Hyland

Writing, it goes without saying, is reader-oriented. While genres such as shopping lists and adolescent diaries may be addressed to the author, we generally write for others; to amuse, entertain, inform or persuade them, and we do this in ways that we believe they will most likely recognize, understand and accept. This is often referred to as “authorial reflexivity,” or a writer’s sense of self and of audience: how we consider what we are writing about and how our audience is likely to respond to it. This means crafting our work in ways disciplinary colleagues will find appropriate and persuasive; it involves a balance between demonstrating membership of a community and taking an individual stance towards an issue. In other words, we seek to negotiate an appropriate stance between conformity and individuality, or, as I shall discuss here, between proximity and positioning.

Reflexivity, reader awareness and “academic language”

The concept of reflexivity has gained some prominence recently in management communication and organizational studies following critiques of published writing in the field, which is said to lack such reader sensitivity (e.g., Gilmore et al., 2019; Lehman, 2022; Tourish, 2020;). Academic inquiry, of course, requires theory, abstraction, and even “technical jargon” to avoid simply applying “common sense” to social problems. Academic language names new concepts, approaches, and physical entities to avoid mistaking appearance for reality while organizing arguments to disguise the writer. This tends, however, to make texts obscure, pretentious, monologic, and difficult to refute.

A key problem is the increasing use of nominalizations, noun sequences, and acronyms which dominate texts in the social sciences. In MCQ, for example, new entities

are invoked with terms such as *Transactive Memory Systems*, *Post-qualitative Inquiry* and *STARA competencies* which may help writers present arguments for faster, more efficient processing by insiders, but they also create abstractions which grow increasingly removed from concrete experience. Current writing practices thereby generate knowledge which has become ever-more specialized, making texts opaque to all but the initiated, thus excluding a wider public and reproducing a context of inequality (Billig, 2013). This is problematic when fields such as management communication and organization studies, and *MCQ* itself, are seeking to reach wider professional and lay audiences outside of the ivory tower and beyond disciplinary experts (cf., *MCQ* journal description). This is particularly problematic, moreover, when academics in many disciplines are not only being encouraged to engage in “outreach” beyond their specialisms, but also to make their work accessible to non-specialists on committees making grant, promotion and tenure decisions. Considerations of audience are an increasingly complex issue for academic writers.

Reflexivity is a way forward here. In management communication and organization studies, however, the term is generally restricted to discussions of qualitative research methods, ethical decisions (e.g., Peterson et al., 2022), and how research may affect participants (Brummans & Vézy, 2022). More generally, the term is used as a way to encourage scholars to question who they are as researchers and to understand how assumptions guide their work (e.g., Jamieson et al, 2023). This encourages us to reveal the “backstage” elements of research (Tracy et al, 2014) and recognize that knowledge is produced from particular power positions and is the result of the researcher’s background and beliefs (e.g., Albu, et al, 2023). But while this literature has long acknowledged a view of the researcher as an interested reporter of observed reality (e.g., Axley, 1984; Peterson et al 2022), it has not consistently explored reflexivity in discourse.

Instead of using the concept of reflexivity to illuminate the construction of texts, work in management communication and organizational studies too often biases the inner world of the researcher. The stress on a writer's internal dialogue and his/her assumed analysis of place, biography, self, and so on underplays the importance of what is on the page. Instead, we need to rebalance the concept to explore the network of linguistic and rhetorical choices which offer evidence of the practices, structures and personal beliefs of writers. Such choices shift the focus of reflexivity from individuals to their engagement with the collective—how we use language to enact our academic identities and get things done in the world.

Put simply, we need to regard reflexivity as the writer's conception of both self and audience as realized in the interactions created through rhetorical choices. This means seeing academic writing as an internal negotiation between, on one hand, the individual's desire to create a compelling and novel contribution distinguishable from that made by others, and on the other, relating work to a disciplinary context of assumed reader knowledge and expectations. I use the term *positioning* to refer to the relationship between the speaker and what is said and *proximity* to talk about the relationship between the self and community (Hyland, 2015).

Reflexivity here, then, is not simply authorial self-awareness, an internal construct, but the concrete expression, in texts, of an agentive engagement with a community which shares certain assumptions about how things should be conceptualized and discussed. It is through the accumulation of experiences gained by interacting with others that we co-construct and re-construct both ourselves as academics and our social communities. Reflexivity helps capture this dimension of routine engagement and allows us to see, on the page or screen, how we see ourselves and others and how, through relationships with

others, we identify similarity and difference and so generate both group and individual identities.

Proximity and receiver-orientation

We must, I believe, see the use of routine *rhetorical* actions as central to reflexivity and the performance of self, particularly the performance of a *disciplinary* self where language ties us into webs of association which allow us to become part of the collective and to identify with others. Seeing others as similar or different allows group members, for practical purposes, to create a sense of self through consistent engagement with those like them. Over time, they construct a recognizable and valued identity through competent participation in the common genres and discourse forms of a discipline. *Proximity*, then, refers to writers' control of these practices to manage themselves and their interactions with others.

The idea of proximity highlights the importance of disciplinary discourses in how reflexivity performs identity work by focusing on the shared social representations which provide broad templates for how people see and talk about the world. But proximity is not the whole story as it downplays personal creativity, biography and what the individual brings to a writing situation. While processes of identity formation draw heavily on disciplinary schemata to both shape and enable particular "speaking positions" and disableness, how individuals actually occupy these positions is more variable.

Positioning and identity

Academics, like anyone, pursue individual as well as collective goals. They want to make a name for themselves and stand out from the crowd, and while this involves engaging with others in ways they understand and value, it also means staking out a distinctive territory. So, while we become who we are only in relation to others, our personal backgrounds shape how we assemble the elements we need for this. *Positioning*

refers to the fact that while we recognize “the ways things are done,” we also see these as the enabling conditions for individuality. Essentially, positioning is a way of understanding how we experience and construct identities by appropriating the discursive categories of our communities as our own. Identifying ourselves as an undergraduate student, research assistant, or lecturer, for example, does not involve stepping into a pre-packaged self. It always entails negotiating overlaps with other simultaneously held aspects of identity (such as being a black, working, single-mother postgraduate student or a middle-aged celebrity professor) and making meaning in interaction with others.

Discourse is the representation of ourselves. It is reflexivity made concrete and demonstrates our claims to membership of a discipline by participating competently in the texts of our field. The patterns of options made available by our communities allow us to accomplish an identity actively and publicly through discourse choices. There is, in other words, always potential for transformation as well as reproduction in academic discourses. *We are positioned* in terms of what disciplinary Discourses allow but can also *position* ourselves in terms of personal stance and interpersonal alignments. In short, positioning is made possible by proximity and the routinization, or habitualization of behavior which results from regular participation in a community (e.g., Berger & Luckman, 1991). Not only do familiar patterns of discourse, values, and other practices get laid down through repeated experiences, so that individuals display membership through their proximity to them, but this routinization opens up space for deliberation and reflection so every situation does not need to be reconsidered as novel.

Revealing reflexivity

Reflexivity in the sense used here means balancing the desire to convey a personal perspective and make a name for ourselves with the need to gain community recognition for this perspective. To understand the concept as including these dimensions we need to

turn to texts and become familiar with the meanings embedded in the language choices we make. This involves:

1. Being aware of key features of writer involvement in a text and understanding the impact of the use of first person, expressions of attitude and taking a stance towards material by either boosting or withholding commitment to statements (Hyland & Jiang, 2016). Perhaps one way of understanding the impact of these devices is to reflect on passages from one's own and other's published work, highlighting language features to better understand the effect of their presence or absence on the meaning, tone and clarity of the text and effectiveness of the argument.
2. Understanding the range of linguistic devices we use to explicitly organize texts for reader comprehension, deciding to spell things out or leave them implicit. These devices concern the ways writers signal the organization of their texts based on their understanding of the reader's likely knowledge and understandings. Examples include "transitions" such as *next*, *then*, and *however* which mark connections between ideas; frame markers (*in this section, I will now do this*) which sequence material, label text stages, and indicate shifts in the argument; endophoric markers, which refer to material elsewhere in the text to support the current argument (*see table, refer to appendix*); and features used to gloss propositional meanings (e.g. by placing a definition in brackets or by use of phrases like "*in other words*" and "*for example*"). These allow writers to manage the information flow to establish their preferred interpretations and at the same time influence the "reader friendliness" of a text.
3. Becoming familiar with language features such as questions, imperatives, references to shared knowledge, and reader pronouns, all of which seek to involve the reader collaboratively in the development of the text. These mark the writer's clearest

acknowledgment of the reader's presence to focus their attention or include them as discourse participants. Consider the different effect of these two sentences, for example, the second of which dispenses with the reader:

- a) But what is the effect of making these changes to our writing? Our research suggests a possible additional piece of the puzzle as to why engaging our readers matters.
- b) This paper discusses the advantages of an engaging writing style.

Collectively, these features are referred to as metadiscourse, the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactions in a text and assist the writer in expressing a viewpoint and engaging with readers as members of a particular community (Hyland, 2005). Such metadiscourse allows writers to take a stance and engage with readers and so establish a position towards their arguments and allows readers to display their proximity or distance to their disciplinary community. While authors in management communication and organization studies may not want to become discourse analysts, a conscious awareness of the effect of their language choices provides important insights into how we engage with our texts, with our research and with others.

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Socialization

Audrey Alejandro

Management communication and organization studies have long problematized the idea that writing can be reduced to the mere transmission of information based on clarity (Axley, 1984; Christensen & Cheney, 2015). This field has debated the relevance of approaching writing as a relational process through which writers engage in interactions with readers and how this relation needs to be considered throughout the research design (Mengis & Nicolini, 2021; Tracy et al., 2014).

We identify two bodies of literature that contribute—either directly or indirectly—to addressing this challenge methodologically. On the one hand, literature on the methodology of writing has promoted the diversification of writing styles, for example through creative writing techniques (Abdallah, 2017). On the other hand, literature about reflexivity has advocated taking responsibility for the relational dimensions of writing, such as the ethics of protecting participants' identities when writing research results (Jensen et al., 2020; Peterson et al., 2022). More broadly, this literature emphasizes the need to reflexively account for our “emotional responses” to participants' positions, especially when conducting ethnography or other methods involving direction interactions (Albu & Costas, 2018, p.107; Brummans & Vézy, 2022).

While these ideas set a new agenda for writing in management communication and organization studies, it seems that reflexivity, and especially reflexivity for writing, remains largely inaccessible to a large audience. We think here of junior scholars who need practical guidelines regarding where to start, audiences who do not use the qualitative research methods in which the literature is often embedded, or audiences not interested in doing creative writing. This short intervention is a modest attempt to address these gaps. Namely, I introduce concepts such as linguistic reflexivity and writing as socialization to help readers

focus their attention, then offer a step-by-step method that builds on these conceptual foundations. Among the methods I have developed to make reflexivity more accessible for writing (Alejandro, 2021a, 2021b), I focus here on the Reflexive Review (Alejandro & Knott, 2022) as it is the most accessible to a broad audience (with no prior text analysis skills required), and not bound to any specific methodology or epistemology (i.e., qualitative or quantitative, post-structuralist or positivist).

The method of the Reflexive Review adds a reflexive dimension to the traditional practice of the literature review to guide researchers in identifying the implicit meanings of common words and how these meanings might inadvertently end up embedded in our writing. In contrast to other approaches to writing that identify problematic writing practices and aim to suggest alternative styles, such a process represents a preparatory step prior to writing.

Methods for linguistic reflexivity

I define reflexivity as the practice of making conscious and explicit our practices, beliefs and dispositions. By highlighting the social and political origins and consequences of what we do, reflexivity questions what appears to be normal or taken for granted. It enables us to put into perspective how we have been socialized, and allows us to expand the range of choices available to us; for example, alternative ways of speaking about things. As such, reflexivity is often considered to have two main objectives: to help produce more rigorous and nuanced empirical and analytical work, and to acknowledge and address the potentially harmful and unethical dimensions of research. How do we go from this general definition of reflexivity to doing reflexivity in practice for writing?

I develop the idea of *methods for linguistic reflexivity* to refer to a set of practices that aims to structure and guide our reflexive work through a particular focus on our use of language. Indeed, we may agree that reflexivity is needed but often we do not know what to do about it and where to start. Such methods aim to shift reflexivity from meta-reflections on

the situatedness of the researcher into a distinctive practice of research and writing that can be learned and taught alongside other research practices. The next section introduces concepts that will help us focus our reflexive attention on specific dimensions of language, as an analytical background to introduce the method for linguistic reflexivity developed in the third section.

Writing as socialization

It is considered good research practice to define the keywords we use in our writing. Indeed, our readers might not attach the same meaning to words as we do. Making explicit how we use words enables us to address their fuzziness, vagueness, and ambiguity. This practice also enables us to clarify *for ourselves* how we use a word. Indeed, while language socialization is an active process that spans from language acquisition in early childhood to learning specialized ways of speaking (Duranti et al., 2011), it is largely implicit (suggested though not directly stated). Only a minority of words and meanings are acquired “metalinguistically” via explicitly talking about language (e.g., when we ask someone to define a word). As a result, it requires effort to make conscious what is meant by the words we use.

Accordingly, most words used in academic research are never defined and slip through the net of conscious disambiguation. To illustrate this point, I picked a term commonly used in passing in social sciences and which, through the use of the Reflexive Review, I identified as problematic both in terms of empirical validity and regarding the implicit unethical dimensions it potentially carries (see next section): the adjective “local.” In the initial project from which this essay stems, we showed that out of the 404 articles including the word “local” in their title in the JSTOR database for “International Relations” journals, only one offers a definition. This same is true for management communication studies: while 30% of publications in *Management Communication Quarterly* include the word “local” (340 out of

1134), the word is not even defined once.¹ The definitions produced by English dictionaries for a general audience encompass different meanings such as “characterized by or relating to position in space: having a definite spatial form or location” (Merriam-Webster 2020a), “from or connected with a particular area” (Cambridge Dictionary 2020), or “existing in or belonging to the area where you live, or to the area that you are talking about” (Collins Dictionary 2020). While these definitions vary, they do not capture the diversity of ways scholars use the term “local” in their professional fields. For example, how do the uses of the adjective “local” found in the literature—e.g., “local employee,” “local group learning,” or “local farming”—fit within these definitions? Does the existence of “local” farming mean that, as a dictionary definition might imply, there is another type of farming that exists without a spatialized form?

In academic (and other specialist) fields, the understanding of such words commonly relies on what is referred to as “linguistic conventions” (Gotti, 2003). The meaning of a word is conventional to the extent that members of social groups are socialized to “associate the word with that meaning in the production and comprehension of language” (Devitt, 2021). Socialization refers to the lifelong process of acquiring the meanings and other (linguistic) dispositions that enable individuals to participate in society. Written texts are an important vector of socialization, including socialization to specialized academic uses of language. Through the written relations we have with colleagues, students, and broader society audiences, we are socialized through the texts we read and socialize others through our writing.

This situation raises two challenges when it comes to the taken-for-grantedness of the common words we use to write. The first challenge concerns the efficacy and rigor of academic communication. To what extent do collective understandings of the words we use

¹ The search was concluded on 10/08/2023 and comprises item categorized as “Research Article,” “Introduction,” “Book review,” “Review article,” and “Other” in the journal.

reflect the description/analysis we aim to communicate? The second challenge is ethical. Within shared understandings rests what we accept to be true, normal, or obvious, but which may also be false or discriminatory not only toward others but ourselves. To address these challenges, I suggest using linguistic reflexivity to identify patterns of word uses, i.e., the shared understandings that are collectively adopted and coexist about each word. Specifically, I advise identifying these patterns within bodies of text that would comprise the literature review of a specific project.

How to do a Reflexive Review

To enable linguistic reflexivity to be practicable, we formalize the Reflexive Review as a four-step method that structures reflexive linguistic work, introduce guidance for each of these steps and offer different options according to different levels of expertise (Alejandro & Knott, 2022).

Build a List of “Priority Words” Relevant to One’s Research Project

It is important to carefully prioritize the words about which we want to be linguistically reflexive. To build this list of “priority words” within the scope of a specific research project, we suggest considering words that:

- Are at the core of your analytical/theoretical framework (e.g., concepts)
- Are often used and never defined
- Are the building blocks of your research question and argument
- Are explicitly identified as problematic by the literature
- Seem to be used in different ways without being acknowledged
- Cause you trouble at any stage of the research but that you resist giving up (e.g., you may struggle with not using this word despite feeling that the word neither “fits” your case nor works as a category for measurement)

Look for Metalinguistic Statements

Reviewing metalinguistic statements within the literature means investigating how the literature has explicitly discussed and/or defined these words as a first way to potentially pinpoint the shared patterns of use in this field. For example:

- Are there explicit definitions of these words in the literature?
- Has the literature produced empirically-grounded analysis about these words (e.g., using methods of text and discourse analysis)?
- Have scholars produced reflexive statements regarding these words (e.g., do they share how these words prevented them from adequately describing a phenomenon or were associated with prejudices they became aware of)?
- Does the literature describe these words as problematic? If so, how and why?

Identify Patterns of Word Uses

We suggest two strategies scholars can adopt depending on their methodological experience in text analysis. The first strategy does not require specific expertise. It is inspired by summative content analysis and involves searching texts for occurrences of words and then analyzing the sentences surrounding these words. Because the objective of the Reflexive Review is to identify word uses in context, we suggest searching for the priority words in the literature you review (e.g., using CTRL+F) and looking for what linguists call “context clues” that capture meaning in uses in the sentences surrounding these words. For instance, context clues include:

1. Synonyms; for example, in the sentence “Bill provided qualified agreement to the statement (“that’s kinda it”) while providing his own description of how local responders (“the local guy”) were doing “work.” (Castor & [Bartesaghi](#), 2016, p. 489).

2. Oppositions; for example, the words “local/limited” and “mass/public” are polarized in these sentences: “An organization and its members with a primarily *mass/public* audience may attempt to promote or conceal itself broadly to the general public. However, an organization and its members with primarily *local/limited* audiences tend to focus their identity communication efforts to more immediate others, such as a community, family, and friends.” (Askay & Gossett, 2015, p. 621).
3. Explanations; for example, while the sentence “As employees move to and work in another country, their relationships with local employees (i.e., host country nationals; HCNs) play an important part in their expatriate success” (Wyant & Kramer 2021, p. 125) does not define “local” per se, it provides information about what the author means by “local employee.”

The second strategy for identifying patterns of word use invites authors familiar with discourse analysis to use this method as a complementary approach to unpack the discursive mechanisms at play in the textual segments analyzed. There are plenty of discourse analysis tools useful for the Reflexive Review, and we introduce one here as an illustration:

“collocation”. *Collocation* focuses on how “certain words tend to regularly occur next to or close to each other” (Baker & Ellece, 2011, p. 18). By studying the “associations and connotations” of words via collocations, we can also explore their ideological effects by illuminating the “assumptions which they embody” (Stubbs 1996, 172). For example, the word “local” is often collocated with words such as “business” or “communities” raising the question of the assumptions conveyed by these collocations: how is a business perceived when it is framed as “local”? What does the framing as “local” add to our representation of communities? Whose interests and values do these framings serve?

These examples illustrate a diversity of uses of the word local which we might have been socialized into and which, without reflexive effort, we unconsciously embed within our writing and thus socialize others.

Using the Reflexive Review for Writing and Reflexivity

Once we have identified different patterns of word uses, we compare these patterns with our own use of language. This comparison can be informal as we go through the different uses of a word and check with ourselves regarding which resonate with our interpretation of the word and which do not. The comparison can also be more formalized: we can analyze texts we have produced (e.g., previously published manuscripts or drafts) as part of step three and alongside the literature reviewed. For example, in our initial project, we identified four implicit uses of the word “local”—as a class of actors, as a level of analysis, as community, and as experiences of the everyday. Each created analytical blinders and raised ethical concerns we were unaware of; understanding this helped us become more precise and rigorous in our use of this word (for more details: Alejandro & Knott, 2022).

In a project focusing on the environment and the fishery sector in Senegal (Alejandro 2021a), I showed how my socialization to “local” got me into trouble both in terms of empirical rigor (validity of my claims and capacity to communicate them) and socio-ethical dimensions (potential priors that I was not aware of and might not align with my values and socio-political objectives) until I reflexively questioned it. Namely, I found myself a priori qualifying the fishermen in my study as “local actors” and therefore opposing their “local discourse” to the alleged “international discourses” I found in the academic literature and non-governmental organizations. However, neither my use of “local” or “international” was justified empirically. Indeed, similar discourses were shared among these different types of actors but the assumptions carried by the binary gave me the illusion that these discourses were actually spatialized and that I could interpret my results as if there was some kind of

triangulation at play. Reflexively, this not only revealed a confirmation bias, it also raised the ethical question of why some types of actors are de facto more likely to be identified as “local” while others are not.

In this short intervention, I aimed to provide an overview of what a method for linguistic reflexivity developed as a preparatory stage for writing might look like. However, the conditions of feasibility of linguistic reflexivity go beyond methodological considerations when it comes to writing. Departure from academic linguistic and convention norms, despite being grounded epistemologically, may raise resistances from part of our audience, including those in position of assessing the quality of our work and enabling our career progression (e.g., reviewers, committees). Thus, doing things differently by being reflexive about the way we write presents a trade-off similar to other forms of innovation in academic settings. Within these structural constrains, I hope to help individual authors and, cumulatively, the management communication community, develop practical strategies for improving writing by focusing on how we contribute to each other’s socialization into patterns of meaning relative to the common words we use.

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Tenderness

Iga Maria Lehman

According to Tokarczuk, “Tenderness is the most modest form of love” which enables writers to “tell stories honestly in a way that activates a sense of the whole in the reader’s mind, that sets off the reader’s capacity to unite fragments into a single design” (2019, p. 22). The literary skills necessary to engage the reader require development of the writer’s sensitivity to their audience’s needs, expectations, doubts and fears. In this relationship, the author and the reader play equivalent roles, the former by creating and reality framing² (Fairhurst, 2011), the latter by making interpretations which are confirmed, challenged, or resisted during the reading process. When interpreting, we rely on familiar contexts for reconciling new input. However, when new input is especially alien or may be startling or resisted, there is an increased role for a special kind of tenderness, one which emphasizes “the bonds that connect us, the similarities and sameness between us” (Tokarczuk, 2019, p. 24). Such a conceptualization of scholarly writing not only minimizes a misattribution of intention, but ultimately provides a more satisfying experience for both writer and reader.

The undertaking of writing as an affective and relational activity based on tenderness has compelling parallels with the desire of management communication and organization studies researchers to be more authentic in reporting their qualitative work. For Ellis, authentic ethnographic practice entails, “being more consciously open to ambiguity, complexity, and relatedness of experience” and “more likely to call on the ethics of care, empathy, personal relationships, community, and personal accountability to access my knowledge claims” (1995, pp. 94). To these maxims, Peterson and McNamee add the concept of “engaged scholar” which they find “distinctly valuable to the study and practice of organizational communication” (2020, p. 120). They envisage the role of engaged scholar as

² Framing is a term coined by Fairhurst and at its most basic level, framing reality means describing “the situation here and now’ in ways that connect with others” (Fairhurst, 2011, p. 3).

constituted in three interconnected qualities involving intimacy, partnership and commitment, as well as empathy and identity issues inscribed in this engagement (Peterson & McNamee, 2020).

Considering the relational process underlying most qualitative research, Richardson raises the question: “How do we write (explain, describe, index) the social?” (1990, p. 15). Then she sadly concludes that the officially sanctioned style for writing about research “institutionalizes behavioristic assumptions about writers, readers, subjects, and knowledge itself. ‘The prescribed style grants all the participants exactly the role they have in a behavioristic universe’ (Bazerman, 1988, p. 126)” (Richardson, 1990, p. 21). Tracy et al. mirror this remorse when they observe that, “Although research journals, including *Management Communication Quarterly*, increasingly welcome qualitative research, most journal articles continue to be written in a deductive style that camouflages the messy, inductive processes by which most qualitative research unfolds” (2014, p. 423). Specifically, knowledge needs to be constituted as “focused, problem (i.e., hypothesis) centered, linear, straightforward. Other thoughts are extraneous. Inductively accomplished research is to be reported deductively; the argument is to be abstractable in 150 words or less” (Richardson, 1990, p. 21). Consequently, as Scarduzio points out, ethnographers’ actual fieldwork becomes “invisible when journals force us to write in a dispassionate and quasi-realist tone” (2014, p. 425). This raises the ethical issue of “writing ‘right’ but doing wrong” (Ellis, 1995, p. 69) to both our research subjects and to our readers. Following from these observations, it is clear that reflexivity, referred to by Sinclair and Grey as “recognizing and making explicit the relationship between the writer and what, how why they write” (2006, p. 447), and extended here to include “who we write for,” is a fundamental aspect of how we report our scholarly work.

Indeed, reflexivity (and the tenderness inscribed in it) stems from the desire of the writer to project a convincing *persona* and reader-engaging authorial voice. This is achieved through the employment of ethos-based (moralizing) and pathos-based (emotion-evoking) language (also see Brown et al., 2012, p. 298) in which the centrality of the reader is emphasized. As Hyland and I argue “text has no life of its own, it is incomplete until it is read and it is the reader who brings ‘something’ to complete it” (Hyland & Lehman, 2020, p. 9).

My purpose in this essay is to challenge the dominance of complex, abstract, jargon-ridden, and authoritarian language often employed to write about management and organization issues and to argue for tenderness in our communications with the reader. This can be achieved through the adoption of reflexivity when constructing a text, which involves (1) dialogical communication between the writer and the reader, and (2) an awareness of the existence of diverse readers and contexts.

Who is the reader?

When we sit down to write about our scholarship, we almost always do it with the intention to publish. However, as we all know, the process of writing for publication is challenging and complex and passes through different stages. At each stage, the meaningful and dialogical communication between the writer and the evoked reader is critical. The stages involved in this process are: 1) text produced and submitted, and 2) text revised and resubmitted following feedback. The different stages also imply a different audience, one with less or more specifically defined expectations and needs. In considering these changing audiences, a sensitive writer (in other words, a tender narrator) needs to find the language that can engage the reader both intellectually and emotionally and guide them to accept the writer’s argument at each stage of the evolving process.

In stage one of the text production, academic writers attempt to imagine an audience who they want to persuade and influence. Typically, as writers need to feel they are writing

for an informed, critical but hopefully appreciative reader (Huff, 1999), the evoked audience usually consists of members of the disciplinary community. Writing with tenderness at this stage means that in crafting the text, we aim to demonstrate that we are one of them: a competent member of the disciplinary community who, through the strategic use of available rhetorical resources, is able to “focus their attention, acknowledge their uncertainties, include them as discourse participants, and guide them to interpretations” (Hyland, 2005, p. 176).

Stage two also involves a dialogical communication, but one which is more focused and interactive than at stage 1. The audience at this stage consists of reviewers and editors who are not only our disciplinary peers, but also experts in the propositional content of our work and in the exigencies of the journal chosen for publication. In this way, they act as gatekeepers and the dialogue entered into with them becomes tangible. Unlike the imagined audience in stage one, these readers give direct feedback, criticism and guidance on the content and rhetorical structure of the text. In this way, the written dialogue between author and the gatekeepers can have a critical impact on the subsequent propositional and linguistic choices we make.

Marginalization and exclusion in academic writing

The opportunities to agentively construct our authorial voice to meaningfully engage in dialogue with our readers are not available to all writers in the same way. This concern is particularly relevant to a scholar like me who has become a bilingual (Polish-English) academic writer, working at a Polish university located outside the Anglophone disciplinary center of my field. To be published in English language journals necessitated constructing an authorial voice aligned with the requirements of Anglo-American academic writing. What has been lost in this trade-off? Clearly, my unique writer identity and how I constructed my relationship with the reader. I had to suppress the rhetorical techniques, typically employed in Polish scholarly discourse, which require inductive ways of reasoning and intellectual effort

on the part of the reader to interpret the meaning being conveyed. I also had to abandon the branching development of argumentation (which usually goes in depth rather than sideways) and which, for Polish audiences, is evidence of an inquiring and learned mind (Duszak, 1997). The following examples taken from Polish academic texts show variation in (a) the degree of linearity in argumentation, (b) presenting one's own claims and (c) providing critique:

a. Chodzi nie tylko o to, że z pojawieniem się liter znikły stopniowo żywe akcenty i gesty, jakie przedtem tak mocno torowały mowie drogę do serca; nie tylko o to, że wskutek pisma zmniejszyła się liczba dialektów, a tym samym też charakterystycznych narzeczy poszczególnych szczepów i ludów, ale o to, że kunsztowny środek pomocniczy w postaci z góry określonych form myśli osłabił pamięć ludzi i żywotną siłę ich ducha.

(Herder, in Kossowska, 2021, p. 66)

[The point is not only that with the appearance of letters, lively accents and gestures gradually disappeared, which before had so firmly paved the way to the heart of speech; not only because of writing did the number of dialects, and thus also the distinctive dialects of particular tribes and peoples decrease, but also the ingenious aid of predetermined forms for thought weakened the memory of men and the vital force of their spirit] (translation mine).

b. Nie zajmuję się tu.... Nie zajmuję się tu także Próba ta nie ma pretensji do jest raczej naszkicowaniem problematyki. Są to w dużej mierze luźne uwagi, chodzi jednakże o nakreślenie pewnych tendencji we (Bralczyk, in Duszak, 1994, p. 307)

[I am not dealing here with ... Neither am I dealing here with ... This attempt does not aspire to ... but only outlines a problem. These are largely loose remarks, yet it is also my purpose to draw out certain tendencies in ...] (translation Duszak, 1997, p. 14).

c. Nie negując przydatności, a nawet owocności takiego stanowiska dla określonych celów [...], czujemy się w obowiązku zauważyć, że jest to jeden z punktów nie zawsze dodatnio wpływających na... (Furdal, in Duszak 1994 a: 308)

[Without negating the usefulness, or even the fruitfulness of such a position for definite purposes [...], we feel obliged to notice that it is one of the elements that does not always have a positive influence on... (translation Duszak, 1997, p. 14).

Undoubtedly, the “underrepresentation” issues are related to the exclusion of alternative ways of presenting and developing argumentation in many journals across academic disciplines, including management communication and organization studies. What is needed is for academia to break with the commonly held belief that there is only one (Anglophone) way of writing about scholarly work. First culture rhetorical conventions and literary practices should be recognized as equally valid ways of reporting research. As Norander and Harter claim (2012) there needs to be a “decolonizing” in the dominant, extant tradition of organizational communication which “reproduces and legitimizes hegemonic colonial discourses and practices” (2012, p. 75).

Pal et al. (2022) also seek to challenge the literary status quo in the field focusing on the relational aspect of academic writing that resonates closely with the notion of tenderness which, I contend, should underlie each act of academic text production. Similarly to Pal et al. (2022), I reject the notion of writer as “conquering hero” in favor of writer who is sensitive to the needs and feelings of all involved in this process, including the writer themselves, co-authors, the reader and research subjects. The relational approach to doing research involves struggle for equity by mobilizing “values of *collectivity*, *care*, *accountability*, *reflexivity*, and *holism*” (Pal et al., 2022, p. 555). After all, an academic text should be a space for collaboration, where rhetorical variation is accepted and differences reconciled. The conclusion to this essay is an example of such transformative practice.

Authorial voice created in this text

When exercising tenderness in the process of crafting a text for publication, I believe that two reflexive rhetorical interventions need to be activated:

- (1) dialogical communication between the writer and the reader
- (2) an awareness of diverse readers and contexts.

To illustrate what I mean by dialogical communication between the writer and the reader, I will reflect on my own authorial voice created in this text. With the purpose of engaging my audience emotionally, I used pathos-based rhetorical strategies. Specifically, I employed a variety of reader-sensitive rhetorical devices, including attitude markers, a rhetorical question, a reference to the shared experience, and reader pronouns. Attitude markers (e.g., fundamental, key, challenging, complex) were used to express my affective position toward what is being said, and were conveyed in attitude verbs, adjectives, and adverbs (also see Hyland 2008). The rhetorical question (“What has been lost in this trade-off?”) was used to stimulate my readers’ curiosity and empathy. A reference to the shared experience (“as we all know”) as well as reader pronouns (inclusive “we” and “our”) were to enhance my efforts to create a sense of commonality and equality between me and my audience. For my argumentation to be accepted by other disciplinary peers, I established an expertise-related authority in the text. In writing with authority, I employed ethos-based rhetorical devices, such as authorial self-mention pronouns (I, my) and boosters (e.g., contend, always, undoubtedly, clearly) to express my certainty and suppress alternative opinions to what was stated (also see Hyland 2008). There was also a carefully balanced use of more technical lexis such as “praxis” and “inductive reasoning.” What is more, I cited myself to show my readers that I had an established academic credibility.

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Respect

Janne Tienari

While there is tremendous pressure for novelty in academic work, including management communication and organization studies, we must comply with strict standards that guide us to specific forms of writing. Dealing with this entails reflexivity, or awareness of how our beliefs and judgments influence what we do when we write for specific audiences. To complement contributions on reflexivity, I argue for respect in academic writing. What I mean by respect is relating to and being concerned with what we study and write about and doing it with due regard. It is about respecting those we write for (our audience), those we write about (our subjects of inquiry), and those we write with (our co-authors). I challenge ceremonial nods to reflexivity and build an argument for practicing respect in and through academic writing.

Reflexivity with respect?

Elena Antonacopoulou and Haridimos Tsoukas (2002, p. 858) put it elegantly:

If we are aware of the partiality of our accounts, then we need to find out in what ways we are partial, how our accounts incorporate assumptions we are not ordinarily aware of – we need, in other words, to reflect on our reflections, to be reflexive.

In reflecting on our reflections, we, as academics, can seek to offer multiple perspectives on our subject of inquiry. We can give room to different voices and ground our position and its specificity in a transparent manner (Alvesson et al., 2008). This means shifting the focus to how we can act reflexively in conversation with others (Barge, 2004) and enable dialogue as a relational practice that facilitates building “richly textured connections with one another through language” (Barge & Little, 2002, p. 376). In academic writing, we

can be open to alternative readings, show our vulnerability as writers, and avoid closure in our argumentation (Pullen, 2018).

However, there is a distinct risk that reflexivity ends up as a “dull academic ritual, another formula with which to elicit the yawning approval of one’s peers” (Gabriel, 2017, p. 137). For example, in management communication research, mentioning reflexivity in passing and listing it alongside authenticity and plausibility to justify the “rigor” and “reliability” of one’s research (Prado Saldanha et al., 2023) does not say much about what reflexivity is and how it informs the research, let alone its outcome, the written and published article. It is silent about the intricacies of crafting research reflexively through writing.

This is where respect enters the scene. I argue that for academic writing to be meaningfully reflexive, it needs to be respectful. I propose a move from respecting standards (or “rigor”) to respecting those we write to, those we write about, and those we write with. Respect, then, is something that we can practice reflexively (cf., Barge, 2004). It is like love, inspired by bell hooks’ (2000) idea about love as action rather than an instinct or feeling. For hooks, love includes willingness and intention. We can choose to love – and we can choose to write with respect.

Respect in academic writing

Together with Carol Kiriakos, who is an academic writing coach, we built on bell hooks’ (2000) work and proposed that love helps make sense of the physical, sensuous, emotional, social, and identity-related dimensions of writing that tend to pass unnoticed when academic writing is practiced and discussed. We argued that our love of writing is expressed when we approach it with dedication (Kiriakos & Tienari, 2018). Respect is intimately connected with this. Respect is based on dedication, and it must be lived real. Respect is a lot about how we choose to write. What and who we write about matters, too. The how, the what,

and the who are difficult to disentangle. Respect thus transcends the distinction between form and content in academic writing. Ultimately, it is about what stands in the text.

First, we must respect those we write for, our readers, as Iga Maria Lehman suggests in her essay above. While I respect attempts to challenge established dogmas in academic writing, and I respect plurality in thought and expression, I cannot help thinking that writing can turn obscure or cryptic. As an example, a management communication scholar started their article by making a claim that rested on a new concept that they seemed to have invented. The claim was followed by another where another two new constructs were presented. I respect the author and usually enjoy their work, but this text was very hard for me to understand. I read it twice and asked myself: what is the author trying to say? I was lost when the author shared what they had done to accomplish their aim: it stood on yet another new concept and construct. For me, the article overall was self-congratulatory and impossible to decipher. I thought it was about something I have studied myself. It was published in a journal for which I have done editorial and review work, so I considered myself as part of its intended audience. Due to its conceptual ultra-sophistication (or jargon), however, the text felt elusive, and it alienated me as a reader. I felt disrespected ... but maybe I should have understood the point. Feeling ignorant contributed to my anxiety.

The practice of respecting our audience entails a careful consideration of the level of sophistication in the text. Our style of writing matters. As the reviewers for this Forum pointed out, to some extent jargon is inevitable and arguably acceptable in academic writing. This can relate to theoretical constructs and to our aim to show our specialist readers that we know what we are talking about. However, it seems to me that sophistication (and jargon) gets annoying when coining new terms seems to become an end in and of itself, and when the complexity of the text exceeds the reasonable level expected by those who consider

themselves to be part of its target audience. This is when the text starts to feel disrespectful of its readers.

Respecting our assumed or potential readers (our audience) to argue and articulate our thoughts clearly and coherently is for me a key virtue and always worth striving for. I am not alone in this, of course. Michael Billig (2013) wrote a book titled *Learn to Write Badly* where he discussed what he thought was wrong with the way academics write. Billig spoke for clarity and criticized the jargon we are lured into producing. He highlighted how academics not only use complex terminology to exaggerate and to conceal, but also to promote themselves. Later, Billig (2019) connected clear writing with social commitment and extended his criticism to academics' tendency to overtheorize their findings.

Second, and relatedly, it is important to respect those we write about. Reflexivity can be connected to “mutual understanding” between researchers and those they study about the goals of the research, and to “the principle of transparency, to guarantee that all participants (including the reader) can trace the aims and techniques of the research process” (Prado Saldanha et al., 2023, p. 487). Referring to collaboration with practitioners, Barge and Wolfe (2023) advise us to manage the meaning making process in research so that we can generate knowledge that is useful to all parties. However, making sure that we do not harm our collaborators, we must also be prepared to ask critical questions and be mindful of their possible positions of relative privilege (Connaughton et al., 2017).

These ideas on the research process can be extended to academic writing. How we choose to portray our subjects of inquiry matters because we could always write in other ways. I thought this through in my treatise on academic work and imagination (Tienari, 2022). I reflected on the many different research collaborations I have engaged in, offering an outsider perspective to studying and writing about empirical materials that others have generated. I have been close to our subject of inquiry (when we have studied academics), felt

sameness (when we have studied corporate managers in the Global North), and experienced difference and otherness (when we have studied minorities or people in the Global South). I realized that these different positionings vis-à-vis our subjects of inquiry offered different vantage points for me to try to understand and give voice to others' experiences. Being mindful of this variety has led me to take respect seriously and to consider different ways to write with respect about others (assuming they do not do serious harm to others and/or the environment), together with different others.

In a study of a performing arts organization (Johansson et al., 2023) I encountered people who were labelled different or “diverse” due to their color of skin and (assumed) ethnic background. This included people who had lived all their lives in the Western country in question. Studying the experiences of these people and writing about them with respect—not categorizing them but recognizing them on their own terms—was a learning journey for me, guided by one of the co-authors who did the ethnographic study and represents a minority themselves. Engaging in a study about male drivers in an online ride-hailing company in an Asian country that was unfamiliar to me (Dinh & Tienari, 2022) was another humbling experience. Together with a native of that country who collected the materials, we explored how men in dire circumstances interacted on social media. We aimed to give the drivers a voice in our writing and treat their experiences with respect. I can only hope that it is a voice that they can recognize and identify with.

Third, respect is about respecting our co-authors. A few years ago, I took part in an intriguing initiative, which materialized in an article with 22 authors (Ahonen et al., 2020). It was about “writing resistance together.” The initiative began in a workshop on academic writing. We worked intensively together for two days, discussing different and alternative ways of writing. We agreed that the fruits of our joint labor should be shared with others, too. We started to discuss different ways to do this, going back and forth with a variety of ideas,

and eventually settled for a text where we all wrote ourselves in. We did not conceal our different selves and we did not hide our different takes on writing and resistance. Traces of these differences can be found in the published text. Still, we could all agree to be its authors. For me, this whole endeavor was built on respect for each other. We could respect our differences as authors so that we could relate to each other in meaningful ways, and to offer a unified voice beyond our differences. The experience was strangely liberating.

Reflexive and respectful writing as a craft

I argue for respect in academic writing and suggest that respect is an expression of the craftiness of reflexive academic work. Emma Bell and Hugh Willmott proposed that understanding research as craft helps in “disclosing the presence of ethics and politics, as well as embodiment and imagination, in the doing and representation of scientific activity” (2020, p. 1366). My ideas on writing and respect are crafty. They emerge from the relational practices of research and writing that involve and concern others. They challenge academic standards that are always relative (rather than objectively “rigorous”), and work to destabilize the seemingly disembodied and apolitical idea of research that is somehow value-free. What Bell and Willmott call disruptive reflexivity “amplifies doubt by breaching convention and challenging the basis of knowledge claims” (2020, p. 1370). For me, respect lies at the heart of such worthy endeavors where we take seriously our connections with others and engage in reflexive conversations with them (Barge, 2004).

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