

# Scholarly writers who use English as an Additional Language: What can Goffman's "*Stigma*" tell us?

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## Abstract

This paper begins by highlighting the disadvantage that EAL (English as an Additional Language) writers experience in international publishing. It then explores Goffman's (1959, 1968) ideas on stigma and illustrates how, subject to certain caveats, what he has to say provides important insights into understanding the situation of EAL scholars. This would include, in particular, his characterization of stigma, and his suggestions for the management of stigma and for how stigmatization may be resisted. The paper concludes by pointing out that EAL writers and English L1 writers coming together in the promotion of understanding and tolerance of the predicament of the EAL writer, a plan of action recommendable in the EAL context based on Goffman's rationale, may still be a relatively weak one. To effectively alleviate the situation, the paper emphasizes that judgements regarding the acceptability or otherwise of EAL authors' English might better be accorded to individual disciplinary communities. Thus intelligibility, rather than conformity to 'standard English,' might be established as a primary criterion. Large corpora of EAL-authored disciplinary texts might help to identify what is acceptable in terms of intelligibility in written academic English and what is not.

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## 1. Introduction

Fifty years ago scholars did not feel such pressure as they do now to publish in international journals (which are invariably in English). With globalisation and the marketisation of the academy, this is no longer the case – except in some countries and specific disciplines. Scholars increasingly need to publish in English. Given that the majority of the world's scholars do not possess English as their first language, it is not surprising that for many of them their written English does not correspond closely to what might be produced by a native-speaker (henceforth L1 writer) and in many cases they experience great problems in producing manuscripts which are acceptable to international journal editors and reviewers (e.g., Ammon, 2001a; Canagarajah, 1996, 2002; Li & Flowerdew, 2007).

While it is difficult to find concrete evidence that writers who use English as an additional language (henceforth EAL writers) are discriminated against in academic publishing, there is a lot of anecdotal evidence to suggest that they

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may be. In researching the writing practices of EAL scholars, I have attended various publishers' forums at international conferences where such writers have complained of discrimination on the part of reviewers and editors based on their English. In a large scale survey (Flowerdew, 1999a) over a third of the 585 Hong Kong Cantonese L1 respondents reported that they thought they were discriminated against. Li and Flowerdew (2007) cite a number of studies which describe negative attitudes towards EAL writers. For example, Ammon (2000, p. 113), a German editor of a book published in English, reports an in-house review of the manuscript which referred to its "near unintelligibility [because] the grammatical mistakes are so severe." Curry and Lillis (2004) quote a Hungarian psychologist as follows: "if the style or the form of the paper is not native or not current, reviewers think that 'this is a stupid man, this is not acceptable material'. They're not accepted for regional accent, for regional style, absolutely [sic], refusal, this is their attitude." Li and Flowerdew (2007, p. 106) cite the following quotations from reviewers of scientific papers submitted by Chinese writers:

- The clarity of the presentation is poor. Many times this is due to grammatical errors (too many to enumerate), but oftentimes the wording is just too difficult to follow.
- The manuscript requires considerable editing as many passages are poorly written.
- The quality of the language is much below the acceptable minimum level, to such a point that many sentences are simply not understandable. The paper cannot be published as it stands.

Li and Flowerdew (2007) also report how Chinese writers of scientific papers are often requested by editors and reviewers to enlist the help of native-speakers in editing their manuscripts, an impossible request, given the material conditions of these writers and the lack of availability of native-speakers in most parts of China. Of course, the reported cases say nothing about those manuscripts which (perhaps because of language problems) fail to get beyond the initial editorial screening and are therefore not sent for review.

In an empirical study of 228 reviews submitted to the journal *English for Specific Purposes*, Hewings (2006) reports some interesting, although not surprising, findings. Although his conclusion is that language is not the primary reason for higher rejection rates of NNES (Non-native English speaker) contributions, Hewings nevertheless establishes that comments on English language are an important criterion for judging manuscripts, with 60% of reviews (both NES and NNES) commenting on language. In addition, he finds that more reviews of NNES submissions contain comments on language and organization than do NES submissions and that negative comments are much more frequent for NNES submissions. As Hewings notes, these results could be untypical, because many of the reviewers are involved in teaching and researching the English language and they therefore have a greater concern for this aspect in their reviews (p. 61). On the other hand, however, one might argue that those submitting articles are also likely to also be concerned with teaching and researching the English language and therefore their level of competence is likely to be high, providing less scope for criticism of their language. One might speculate, therefore, that language might be a greater problem for those submitting to non-English-specialist journals (see the following for various perspectives: Benfield & Feak, 2006; Benfield & Howard, 2000; Coates, Sturgeon, Bohannan, & Pasini, 2002; Gosden, 2003).

Whether or not they suffer discrimination, EAL writers are certainly at a disadvantage to L1 writers when it comes to international publishing (e.g., Ammon, 2001b, p. vii; and many of the contributors in Ammon, 2001a). As Van Dijk (1994, p. 276) has put it, such writers suffer from "the triple disadvantage of having to read, do research and write in another language." So, as well as having the difficulty of the actual writing, extra time and effort is needed for reading and conducting the research in an additional language. This situation is, of course, likely to exacerbate the problems with producing acceptable manuscripts in English. As Ammon (2001b, p. vii) has put it, writing specifically about the language of science:

It seems almost self-evident that the native speakers of the prevalent scientific language have less difficulty using it passively (in reading, oral understanding) and actively (in writing or speaking) than do non-native or foreign-language speakers and, therefore, have advantages over the latter in communicative situations which require the use of English. It is easier for them to produce utterances and text in line with existing, native-speaker norms. Higher investment in language learning and additional costs of producing linguistically adequate texts are additional problems with which the non-native speakers have to struggle.

In spite of the disadvantage experienced by EAL writers, it should be noted that various scholars in related fields of Applied Linguistics have recognised the situation as a serious one for the global academy. These scholars include

writers who are sympathetic to the predicament of EAL writers in general (e.g., Ammon, 2000; Canagarajah, 1996, 2002; Cargill & O'Connor, 2006; Flowerdew, 1999a, 1999b, 2001; Swales, 2004), proponents of World Englishes as a possible more inclusive way forward (e.g., Jenkins, 2006; Kachru, 2005; Seidlhofer, 2001, 2004), editors who are active in seeking more contributions from EAL writers (e.g., Belcher, 2007; Hewings, 2006; McKay, as cited in Flowerdew, 1999c; McKay, 2003), and proponents of critical pedagogy (e.g., Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 2003).

## 2. Goffman and the notion of stigma

Having sketched the background against which EAL scholars work and some of the related literature, I would now like to introduce the notion of stigma, as it is presented by the American social psychologist Erving Goffman, writing in the mid-twentieth century. In works such as *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), and *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1968) Goffman provides a powerful analysis of everyday motivation and action in social life. In the first of these two books Goffman focuses on what he refers to later in *Stigma* as “normals.”<sup>1</sup> The emphasis is very much on idealized forms of identity and behaviour and the pressures on individuals to conform to these conventions. In *Stigma*, on the other hand, Goffman focuses on people who are not “normal,” but who are marginalized or stigmatized in some way. Goffman demonstrates how such people are under pressure to try to conform to the general conventions outlined in his other work and to present themselves as “normal,” or to “pass” as he calls it (1968, p. 58), and how this pressure gives rise to feelings of alienation and exclusion.

In this paper I would like to explore further Goffman's ideas on stigma and see what relevance they might have for the predicament of scholars who use English as an additional language to write for publication. I will argue that, subject to certain caveats, what he has to say has a lot of relevance for the EAL context. In the main body of the paper I will highlight what I think is relevant and provides insight for the EAL scholar. In the discussion and conclusion, I will focus on the caveats just mentioned and make some recommendations for a way forward in creating a more level playing field for all of those writing for academic publication in English, whether they be EAL or L1 writers.

Stigmatization, according to Goffman (1968), is to establish a negative other or difference:

While the stranger is present before us, evidence can arise of his[sic] possessing an attribute that makes him [sic] different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind — in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak. He is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such an attribute is a stigma, especially when its discrediting effect is very extensive; sometimes it is also called a failing, a shortcoming, a handicap. (p.12)

While some might see it as an exaggeration, it would seem that this description might very well be applied to EAL writers who have difficulty with producing written English at an acceptable level. The EAL writer is the negative “other” who, as Goffman puts it, “possess[es] an attribute [non standard English] that makes him different from others ...” The ironic aspect of this situation is that, given that, in some disciplines at least, there are probably more EAL than L1 writers,<sup>2</sup> the stigmatized group may often well be in the majority. The stigmatized are (by definition) ‘marked’ (the original meaning of stigma was a physical mark or brand, viz. the stigmata of Jesus Christ), but they may nevertheless be the majority. One might think that this is not a usual state of affairs, but, although not mentioned by Goffman, it is not in fact unusual. For example, in colonial times, the number of colonized was invariably greater than that of the colonizers. Where language is concerned this may not be such a surprising state of affairs either. If one considers ‘standard’ languages, such as ‘standard’ British English, ‘standard’ American English, ‘standard’ metropolitan French, the number of users of the ‘standard,’ of the prestige variety, especially if one considers the phonology, is invariably in the minority.

Goffman characterised stigma according to three types (p. 14). First is physical deformity. Second is deviation in personal characteristics (being perceived as weak willed, domineering, rigid in one's beliefs, or dishonest, for

<sup>1</sup> Goffman always puts the term “normals” in inverted commas, but does not use a specific label for those who are stigmatized. In this way he reverses the ‘labelling’ effect and makes the “normals” the marked group. However, see my comments on this below.

<sup>2</sup> Although I do not have any exact data on this, Swales (2004, p. 54, note 18) estimates that in the world of medical science EAL writers outnumber L1 writers by a ratio of three to one. Wood (2001) conducted a study of contributions to 50 issues *Science and Nature*, estimating that “well over half of the papers involv[e]d NNSs” and that just under half had NNSs as first authors.

example), these characteristics being inferred from some record of behaviour such as mental disorder, addiction, unemployment, etc. Third is “tribal stigma” (race, nationality, religion). If we consider EAL writers, then we might say that they fit into the second and third of these categories. While writing ability may not seem to be on the same level as the examples given by Goffman for the second characteristic (e.g., mental disorder, addiction, unemployment), Goffman later makes it clear that stigma may operate at different levels of seriousness, right down to what he refers to as “picayune differentness” (1968 p. 155) (see below). Thus ‘non-standard’ English may be perceived as indicative of some negative characteristic such as laziness, lack of education, low intelligence, etc. At the same time, being a ‘non-native’ writer is something one is brought up with. It is not something one can adopt or discard at will. So it is also a “tribal” phenomenon. One point that Goffman makes is that there are shifts over time in areas which give rise to stigma. If, as already stated, the need for international publication is a relatively recent phenomenon, then so can be the stigmatization of EAL writers.

Stigmatization, according to Goffman, is not brought about by attributes per se, but rather by relationships (p. 13). An attribute which can stigmatize one type of person may be treated as perfectly normal for another. To take an example from Goffman, a middle class boy may feel no compunction about visiting a library, while a professional criminal would be much more likely to be inhibited to do so (p. 13). In language, this situation is well brought out in the more recent work of Blommaert (2005), where he shows how a given text may be perfectly appropriate in one context, but totally inappropriate in another, i.e., in Goffman’s terms the writer is accepted as perfectly normal in the first context, but is stigmatized in the second.<sup>3</sup> An example given by Blommaert is of a young girl writing in English in East Africa and how this writing ‘indexes’ her among her own people as being a part of the educated elite. When her writing is received in Europe, however, where different standards of accuracy, etc. apply and ‘non-standard’ features of her language are scrutinized, her elite status is no longer indexed. The writing may be the same, but the different social relationships pertaining in East Africa and Europe create conditions which value the writing in the first of these two contexts, but stigmatize it in the second. This phenomenon is an example of what Blommaert refers to as recontextualisation (p. 46).<sup>4</sup> If we extrapolate this example from Blommaert to the general situation of EAL writers, one can well imagine cases where a manuscript produced by an EAL research team might be perfectly acceptable to them and to the team’s peers (or that it is the best they are capable of, knowing it is still not written in what might be considered to be the appropriate form), but when it is submitted to a journal editor and reviewers, it becomes problematic because different standards are applied.

In relating this question of relationships to the stigmatization of EAL writers one needs to ask what the relationships which create the stigma are. The most obvious answer would seem to be editors and reviewers. Editors and reviewers who tell writers that they need to have their manuscripts looked over by native speakers, or who even reject manuscripts on the grounds of poor language, for example, are doing just what Blommaert referred to. In applying L1 standards to EAL writing, editors and referees are deciding that the writing (which might be perfectly acceptable in the context in which the paper was written) is not acceptable in the context of international publication. We therefore have a perfect example of recontextualisation in Blommaert’s terms.

Now these editors and referees are not always L1 writers themselves by any means. Many of them are EAL writers. One only needs to look at the editorial boards of most international journals to see that this is the case. To be ‘international,’ international journals need to have an international editorial board, and many of these ‘international’ members will inevitably be users of EAL. EAL editors, editorial board members, and reviewers may well consider their writing to be superior to that of their peers. In an interview study of applied linguistics and language education editors conducted by myself (Flowerdew, 2001) one editor claimed that EAL reviewers tended to be more critical of the writing quality of EAL submissions than their L1 counterparts. It would seem that there is a hierarchy of stigmatization operating here, with the less stigmatized exacerbating the stigmatization of their peers. But the problem probably goes beyond the journals. EAL writers are likely to need to collaborate with other EAL users in research and publication

<sup>3</sup> See also Heath’s (1983) classic study of how a child’s language was perfectly acceptable at home, but not at school.

<sup>4</sup> At one point Blommaert (2005, p. 72) specifically uses the term “stigmatisation” (sic) to refer to the effect of this phenomenon:

The English acquired by urban Africans may offer them considerable prestige and access to middle-class identities in African towns. It may be an “expensive”, extremely valuable resource to them. At the same English, when spoken in London by the same Africans, may become an object of stigmatization and may qualify them as members of the lower strata of society.

and these other users may well decide that the writing of their peers is not ‘up to par,’ thus creating a stigma and possible exclusion from the research team.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Managing stigma

As well as describing stigma, Goffman (1968) also has a lot to say about its management. Indeed, there is a need to manage stigma, which is a general feature of society, at whatever level of seriousness:

It should be seen, then, that stigma management is a general feature of society, a process occurring wherever there are identity norms. The same features are involved whether a major differentness is at question, of the kind traditionally defined as a stigmatic, or a picayune differentness, of which the shamed person is ashamed to be ashamed. (p. 155)

For EAL writers this suggests that however close to L1 norms they may come they are still likely to be stigmatized and there will still be a need for stigma management. The following is one way Goffman (1968) describes how stigmatization may be managed:

How does the stigmatized person respond to his situation? In some cases it will be possible for him to make a direct attempt to correct what he sees as the objective basis of his failing, as when a physically deformed person undergoes plastic surgery, a blind person eye treatment, an illiterate remedial education, a homosexual psychotherapy. (p. 15)

And one might add here, when an EAL writer undergoes English tuition or asks for editorial assistance with a manuscript. One problem for the stigmatized person in adopting this strategy is that they always run the risk of being found out (Goffman, 1968, p. 86). Elsewhere (Flowerdew, 2008) I have spoken about the results of an ethnographic study conducted in Hong Kong concerning the international publication practices of Hong Kong Chinese academics. One of the striking findings of this study was the secrecy that participants attached to any editorial assistance or training in scholarly writing that they received. The following is an account of an editorial ‘exchange’ conducted between an EAL writer and an L1 editor. The account is written by a participant observer who acted as an L1 editor (cited in Flowerdew, 2008):

One particular case suggested the almost clandestine nature of these exchanges. I had been editing some chapters in a book. The author had given me a few vague suggestions that the tenses in the book needed adjusting but had volunteered nothing more forthcoming. He was from another University (referred to by a mutual friend) and the difficulty arose when the completed work necessitated a face to face meeting.

During the telephone conversation that followed I sensed a clear reluctance in him to meeting at my campus, a reluctance that became even more palpable when I indicated that I could travel to his. In the end he suggested we meet at the train station and although I had not met him previously, we nevertheless picked each other out of the crowd, exchanged two brown envelopes (both unopened), shook hands and immediately went our separate ways — no feedback — a cash deal. I am sure that the station cameras recorded it as a kind of academic post cold war reality.

Another example from this same research project is provided by the case of an academic who had been receiving language assistance from the academic training unit at a Hong Kong university. This academic, presumably afraid of the stigma attached to receiving training in English, specifically asked her teacher not to acknowledge her in public in case word got around that she was receiving such assistance.

A rather different way to manage stigma is to seek comfort and help from others in the same situation. By sharing experiences the stigmatized can, on the one hand, help one another with ‘tricks of the trade,’ and on the other hand, provide moral support and reassurance. Goffman (1968, pp. 31–32) reports a case of the hearing

<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, skilled writers, either L1 or EAL, may be encouraged to collaborate specifically because of their superior English writing skills (see Li & Flowerdew, 2007 for the value placed on good English writing skills by Chinese scientists).



impaired to illustrate the relief to be found in group solidarity (emphasis has been added to the context-specific aspects of this example):

I remembered how relaxing it was, at Nitchie School, to be with people who took **impaired hearing** for granted. Now I wanted to know some people who took **hearing aid** for granted. How restful it would be **to adjust the volume control on my transmitter** without caring whether or not anyone was looking. To stop thinking, for awhile, about **whether the cord at the back of my neck was showing**. What luxury to say out loud to someone, ‘Ye gods, **my battery’s dead!**’

To highlight how this might apply to EAL writing, this paragraph might be reworded to put it into an EAL context. Thus, in the paraphrase which follows, the highlighted references to hearing impairment in the above text have been replaced with references to EAL writing:

I remembered how relaxing it was, at Nitchie School, to be with people who took being **an EAL writer** for granted. Now I wanted to know some people who took **using English as an additional language** for granted. How restful it would be **to write in my non-native English** without caring whether or not anyone would notice. To stop thinking, for awhile, **about whether I was using “correct” English**. What luxury to say out loud to someone, ‘Ye gods, **I don’t care whether my English is 100 % “correct” or not!**’

The negative side of restricting one’s activity to collaboration with members of one’s own (stigmatized) group is that, as noted by Goffman, one will be accepting a “half world” (p. 32). For the EAL writer this strategy might take the form of a decision to write only in the L1 or to write in English, but only for the local discourse community, where perhaps “standards” of English are less restrictive. This strategy effectively means ignoring the international audience. Such a course of behaviour, however, is negative not only for the EAL writer (who — given the ever-increasing need to publish internationally — may suffer in terms of career development), but also for the international scholarly community, which is denied access to the knowledge creation of the EAL writer in question (Flowerdew, 2001; Gibbs, 1995; Salager-Meyer, in this issue; Swales, 1998).

Furthermore, in many contexts, such a strategy is highly problematic, if not impossible. This may be for one or more of a number of reasons. First, as already noted, university administrators are increasingly encouraging/requiring publication in English. Second, the number of journals publishing in indigenous languages is decreasing, with more and more local journals switching to English and becoming “international” (Swales, 2004). Third, for some languages the genre of the research article has died out, having been taken over by English (Ammon, 2001a; Swales, 2004). Fourth, there are fewer support materials and training opportunities for research writing in languages other than English (Swales, 2004).

#### 4. Resisting stigma

What attitude should EAL writers take to the stigma from which they suffer? Goffman has quite a lot to say on how stigmatization may be resisted. First, given that the stigma is a creation of others, no shame should be attached to it, nor should compromises be made to conceal it. So in EAL writing terms, if one’s writing deviates from L1 “standards” there is nothing wrong with this in itself.<sup>6</sup> At the same time Goffman advises that the stigmatized should perform according to accepted criteria as far as possible and that this may involve hard work and training. So, EAL writers may need to write with targeted attention and make considerable effort to comply with existing norms. There is nothing very exceptional about this. Nevertheless, to try to comply totally with the ‘standards’ of the other may give the impression that one is trying to deny one’s differentness, to deny one’s very

<sup>6</sup> Here the question of intelligibility arises. As Ammon (2000, p. 113) has noted, however, it is likely that very often EAL writing may be perfectly intelligible without being ‘standard.’

I dare to assume that unintelligibility is not the main reason why texts in non-native English are often rejected or judged negatively by native speakers. One indication is that the native speakers who “corrected” or “polished” my own English language texts have never had serious difficulty understanding them correctly except in a few instances.

identity (Goffman, 1968, p. 140). So total compliance with L1 norms should not be at the expense of EAL identity. An interesting case of the assertion of EAL identity is to be found in the writing of Ammon (2000, p. 115; 2001b, pp. vii–viii) who insists on what he refers to as the “non-native speakers’ right to linguistic peculiarities,” i.e., requiring that editors refrain from editing certain features of their writing that EAL writers consider to be part of their cultural identity (see also Canagarajah, 2002 on this).

Goffman’s recommendations might seem rather accepting of the status quo. Elsewhere in *Stigma*, however, he talks about forms of resistance. He identifies two types of person who work on behalf of stigmatized groups in order to gain greater acceptance and understanding. The first of these types may be members of a given stigmatized group themselves who act as representatives of the group before audiences of “normals” and of the stigmatized. These individuals provide role models of how members of the stigmatized group can be what Goffman calls a “good person” (p. 37). As far as EAL writers are concerned, presumably, these would be EAL writers who have achieved very high standards of writing ability and thus demonstrate that EAL writers may be treated as equals with L1 writers. However, this might be seen as unnecessarily accommodative. Indeed Goffman himself describes such people as “instead of leaning on their crutch, ... get[ing] to play golf with it” and “ceasing, in terms of social participation to be representative of the people they represent” (p. 39) (viz. the EAL reviewers referred to earlier who are highly critical of other EAL writers).

Unfortunately, Goffman does not talk about what might be identified as another type of individual, those people who have achieved a very high degree of ‘normality’ and yet take it upon themselves to argue the case against the requirement for other members of their group to write in the same way or who make demands that marks of individual/cultural identity should be allowed. Within the field of EAL writing, in applied linguistics one might think of a number of individuals who would fit this description, i.e., EAL applied linguists who are able to write at a level which enables them to ‘pass’ as L1 writers, but who argue on behalf of those who write according to ‘non-standard’ ways.

The second type of individual working on behalf of the stigmatized Goffman refers to as “the wise”<sup>7</sup> i.e., “normals” who have insider knowledge of the stigmatized group, particular sympathy with it, and who are accorded a certain level of acceptance within the group (p. 41). Within the field of applied linguistics these would be L1 writers who are sympathetic to the predicament of EAL writers, e.g., proponents of World Englishes, editors who are sympathetic to contributions from EAL writers, and proponents of critical pedagogy, as cited in the early part of this paper.

## 5. Some caveats

Thus far in this paper I have basically tried to show how Goffman’s ideas might be related to the condition of EAL writers. Before concluding, I would like to offer some caveats to the case that I have just made. First, there is the problem of Goffman’s language and imagery. The use of terms such as “normals” and “the wise” to represent those who do not suffer from stigma is unfortunate. These terms may be seen to position the stigmatized as ‘abnormal’ (in contrast to “normal”) and perhaps even ‘stupid’ (in contrast to “wise”). This is in spite of the use of scare quotes for these terms on the part of Goffman, in what may be interpreted as an attempt to make these categories marked and their stigmatized counterparts unmarked. Second, and this is a danger of my own making, not Goffman’s, in comparing the situation of EAL writers to that of stigmatized groups such as the physically deformed, the hearing impaired, the mentally ill and the illiterate, there is the risk of over-stating the case. Associating EAL writers with such groups might be seen as inaccurate and unjust. My defence here is that this allows me to make a strong (perhaps for some exaggerated) case for equality of treatment for EAL writers.<sup>8</sup> Third, there is the implication in Goffman’s analysis that the stigmatized should try to conform to the practices of the “normals,” but there is no corresponding plan of action for changing the behaviour of the normals to bring them closer to the stigmatized (the nearest Goffman comes to this is in referring to those members of the “wise” who are sympathetic to the plight of the stigmatized). Fourth, there is what might be referred to as the labelling effect (Becker, 1963). Labelling a group of people as different from

<sup>7</sup> This is an unfortunate term, in my view, which will be commented on below.

<sup>8</sup> Although, as noted earlier, Goffman makes it clear that stigma may operate at different levels of seriousness, right down to what he refers to as “picayune differentness” (p. 155).

the norm may itself create and reinforce a marginalized social and individual identity. Following from this one might argue that this paper has in fact done EAL writers a disservice by drawing attention to their marginalized status. I would like to make it clear, therefore, that this is certainly not the intention. The intention is just the opposite: to draw attention to a predicament in which many EAL writers find themselves and to argue for remediation of this situation.<sup>9</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

Goffman's recommendation for remediation of the plight of the stigmatized consists of activism on the part of two groups: members of the stigmatized groups themselves, in our case EAL writers, and individuals from among the "wise," in our case L1 writers. Following Goffman, therefore, it would seem to be desirable that members of these two groups come together in the promotion of understanding and tolerance of the predicament of the EAL writer. Their target might firstly be editors and reviewers, EAL and L1, but also academia in general. This to me, while commendable, is rather a weak plan of action. It views the problem from the perspective of the L1 writer and constructs the EAL writer as a 'problem.' A better course of action might be to view the problem as one for all writers, EAL and L1 and for the academic community in general. The situation as it is, in creating barriers for EAL writers, results in an unnecessary impoverishment of global knowledge, because contributions from EAL writers may go unrecognized (Flowerdew, 2001; Gibbs, 1995; Salager-Meyer, in this issue; Swales, 1998).

Recommendations of a more radical nature are therefore called for. Following scholars taking sociolinguistic perspectives on English as a global language (e.g., Widdowson, 1994), we should take the view that English belongs to everyone and that this includes the particular disciplinary communities (very often made up of more EAL than L1 writers) which have their own particular varieties of the language (see Wood, 2001 on this for the language of science). This means that what is acceptable to the disciplinary community is up to the members of that community, whether they be EAL or L1 writers. Perhaps editors should therefore be encouraged to accept forms of English which, as long as they are intelligible, may not conform to "standard English" (Canagarajah, 2002).

The sticking point here is how to evaluate what is "intelligible" or not. Work done on English as a lingua franca (ELF) (e.g., House, 1999, 2003; Seidlhofer, 2001, 2004) may be of value here. Seidlhofer (2004, p. 220) for example, in the context of spoken "general" English, based on data collected in Vienna, has hypothesised that a whole range of common so-called "errors" made by NNEs seem to be unproblematic as far as international intelligibility is concerned. In the long run, therefore, just as spoken corpora may help to characterise ELF in verbal communication (e.g., House, 2003; Mauranen, 2003; Seidlhofer, 2004), large corpora for the various disciplines written by EAL writers might help to identify what is acceptable in terms of intelligibility in written academic English and what is not. Editors would then be able to accept writing according to standards which truly belong to the international academic community rather than just to NESs. Ultimately, we might then arrive at international varieties, intelligible to all, but not belonging to any one particular group. If such a situation were to be reached, then natural justice would prevail and the stigmatization of EAL writers would be a thing of the past. This may be utopian, but it is surely worth at least our consideration.

<sup>9</sup> Of course the label EAL has in fact been introduced as a replacement for NNS, as a way of alleviating the labelling effect of that (for many) derogatory term. Some applied linguists have started to refer to 'international' writers, no doubt in a further attempt to avoid dichotomising. But this, to me, does not solve the problem, because the term 'international' can still be interpreted as 'code' for non-native. Swales (2004, p. 56) prefers not to refer to EAL writers as an identifiable group at all, distinguishing between "junior," or less experienced, and "senior," or more experienced, scholars instead. However, this dichotomy again, for me, is problematic for it ignores the question of language. Of course, that is probably Swales' point, but this to me is to ignore a problem that definitely exists, a problem inextricably tied to language, as evidenced by many research studies, by complaints from EAL writers, and from the number of training courses and calls for training courses in additional language academic writing. This is not to deny, of course, that EAL writers should not be grouped together as one homogeneous group. It cannot be denied that there is a danger of creating binary divisions, which should be avoided. Opportunities for the acquisition of scholarly English vary greatly. For some EAL writers, at one extreme, as far as writing is concerned, English may well be their first language. Their mother tongue, their main language, is the language that they speak in the home and in the street. But they may have been educated from primary school upwards through the medium of English and they may have worked in prestigious English-speaking research universities. In short, a great deal of their professional life may be conducted in English. At the other extreme, EAL writers may have had no exposure to English until university. They may have had no formal training in academic English, and they may have had no access to native English speakers. It is those EAL writers who find themselves at this latter end of the continuum that I am primarily concerned with in this paper.



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