'Talking the Talk'

A Case Study in Teaching about Jargon in an Undergraduate Writing-Intensive Anthropology Course at a University in the Northeast United States

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Abstract

Jargon is frequently considered 'bad' in the realm of professional writing because of the way it can obscure meaning. For novice student writers who are just beginning to hone their skills writing in a specific academic discipline, how can they learn to emulate the writing of professionals in concrete, achievable ways? In this paper, I use experience from teaching an undergraduate writing-intensive anthropology course to argue that effective use of discipline-specific vocabulary, which is important for students to become more confident writers of anthropology, is not discussed often enough for students to practice and incorporate into their own academic voices. This paper outlines techniques used in a writing-intensive introductory anthropology course and seeks to raise more dialogue about writing pedagogy in anthropology.

Introduction: Does Everyone Hate Jargon?

A letter to the editor of *Anthropology News* (formerly *Anthropology Newsletter*) noted that the use of unintelligible jargon in the discipline's journal articles was increasing to the extent that only the book reviews and the obituaries in *American Anthropologist* could be readable (Siskin 1988). In the same letter, Siskin praised British journals for not being as mired in jargon, which may speak to differences in writing across anthropological traditions and subdisciplines. An author of another letter complained that 'even potentially interesting articles are sometimes written too obscurely to too technically to be apprehended by colleagues who do not share the almost private language' (Kutsche 1987: 2). These writers are expressing anger and insult at prose they should be able to understand, yet they cannot because the language is too dense. The authors of the dense works are excluding their readership, most likely because they wrongly assume that their readers' knowledge base is exactly the same as theirs.

Indiscernability is one issue; overuse is another. Using a tone of avoidance, advice about jargon in style guides across social science disciplines and instructions for authors submitting publications to journals frequently and emphatically discourage its use (e.g. Strunk and White 1979; Johnson Jr et al. 2004; Smyth 2004; Cooper and American Psychological Association 2011). The message transmitted by these sources is curt: 'Don't use jargon'. But perhaps what the sources are really saying is: 'Don't be a jerk and unintentionally alienate your readers by making them work too hard to understand you'. The implication here is that the use of jargon is always negative. Students in anthropology courses with a focus on writing might be very confused about how to responsibly incorporate anthropological jargon in their papers, particularly if they encounter proscriptive kinds of advice from instructors or from style guides.

I argue that although anthropology as a discipline is mindful of writing, the scarcity of discussions about responsible jargon use, particularly at the student level, represents a significant blind spot in anthropology writing instruction and causes more confusion and stress for student writers than is necessary. This paper is not a comparison of anthropological writing across different national traditions. This paper also does not originate from ethnographic fieldwork; instead it comes from a place of pedagogy and the potential difficulty of simultaneously introducing students to anthropological concepts *and* providing opportunities for students to address those concepts in their own writing. This paper describes my experience working with undergraduate students in a writing-intensive anthropology course to teach them about anthropological thought and encourage critical

thinking about jargon in their own writing styles. The course took place at the University of Connecticut, a large public university in the northeast United States, in an anthropology department committed to the American four-field approach. Some of the department's courses also satisfy general education requirements for graduation. The writing-intensive social anthropology course I taught, for example, had an introductory English prerequisite, not an anthropology one. Since the writing-intensive versions of courses satisfy university writing requirements for graduation, students who registered for the course came from a diversity of majors, and anthropology majors were in the minority, although it was possible for students to become anthropology majors afterward. For some students, this class was their first and only anthropology course. While the students were not first-year students, the majority were new to anthropological concepts. Pedagogically, it means teaching anthropology concepts as well as writing in the discipline. It became my task to encourage student writers to decide which writing skills, acquired from previous courses or from their majors, they could feasibly employ in the assignments for my course, and which writing skills they should suspend in order to better approximate anthropological writing. While it is possible that a student might become an anthropology major by taking a course, it is more likely, and certainly intended, that students take with them the tenets of anthropology, such as holism and cultural relativism, to other courses and future life experiences.

It is difficult to know whether or not anthropologists would agree that we have a 'standard language', to use Bourdieu's (2003: 48) term, since we study situated knowledge, question categories of meaning, and contextualise phenomena. It appears that we operate as a 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger 2009: 64-65) with the assumption that we mean generally the same things when we write. In anthropological writing, however, the operationalisation of terms is sometimes absent, and we in turn build more boundaries than we remove. Use of technical language *without* defining terms is a problem of assumption; the writer assumes too much of the readers' familiarity with the content being written about (Zorn and Campbell 2006). Here, the important and delicate relationship between writer, reader, and the message/content is imbalanced, and the use of language that complicates instead of simplifies can exacerbate this problem. First, I should discuss what jargon might be.

Associate Professor of Technical Communication at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville Russel Hirst identifies 'jargon' as a word with two meanings: 1) 'the specialized language of a trade, discipline, profession' and 2) 'the pretentious, excluding, evasive, or otherwise unethical and offensive use of specialized vocabulary' (2003: 202). The first definition addresses the sentence-level issues of vocabulary and diction. Wilkinson argues that jargon is 'essential for designating new entities for which the language has no name' (1992: 319).

In other words: sometimes, no existing word will do. The second definition relates more to the emotional, negative reaction to the use of that vocabulary and the structure of power and knowledge. Jargon can be used to 'intimidate outsiders', as a banker participating in an anthropological study said about his own field (Luyendijk 2011). Indeed, jargon serves as an identifier of which academic 'tribe' a scholar belongs. Brian Martin argues that, given the fact that many academic disciplines are only one to two centuries old, scholars use jargon as the credentials for excluding people from other disciplines as well as the lay public: 'Jargon may serve as a convenient medium for practitioners, but it also serves as a way of excluding interlopers, those who have not served their time in study and research' (1992: 20). Thus, anthropologists getting angry at other anthropologists for their jargon use might be considered cases of 'friendly fire', the inadvertent attack on an ally while trying to attack a foe. Jargon is not just a sentence-level, technical issue of word choice but a broader act of power that anthropologists seem to inflict on each other.

Jargon is much more than the technical language that Hirst (2003) describes, because it is situated in particular communicative contexts. I have found it increasingly difficult to maintain a neutral stance toward jargon. I originally believed that the word 'jargon' could be repurposed in a way that could be positive for students to gain some agency as they developed their own voices, authority, and argument. I now believe that the well is too 'poisoned' and I appear unable to use this term in a neutral way without encountering some resistance from my peers. As an anthropology instructor, I see myself as having two primary responsibilities: 1) to represent anthropology and its writing products fairly, and 2) to facilitate students in building critical reading and writing skills. I believe that focusing on language provides students with a way in to anthropological thought and developing new ways of thinking, and vice versa. I lean on Bourdieu, Passeron, and de Saint Martin (1994) who focused on linguistic exchange between professors and students in order to show how language and skills are taught. These authors also identify a gap between what professors say and what students understand. To close this gap, students may exhibit 'communication accommodation' (Giles, Coupland, and Coupland 1991) by adjusting their writing to reflect their anthropology classroom environment, where they are interacting with a professional anthropologist and other students, both majors and non-majors. This paper is also framed by Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic domination' (2003: 50) since students are generally understood to be the subordinates in the professor-student relationship and may be intimidated by the activities they are being asked to complete. For Bourdieu (2003: 118), language establishes arbitrary boundaries; by the end of the 16-week semester, the students who take anthropology courses are separate from students who are unfamiliar with the tenets of anthropology, such as ethnography and cultural relativism. In this paper, I begin with a critical look at anthropological approaches to jargon use and then examine how

this professional knowledge can be conveyed to student writers. I describe my experience with teaching a writing-intensive anthropology course and how I assessed students' ability to use jargon responsibly. I end with descriptions of the students' thoughts about their own writing progress and implications of teaching writing in anthropology.

Jargon in Anthropology

Writing in anthropology values a holistic and comparative style. Anthropologists rightfully worry about critical distance, reflexivity, representation of their key informants, and the accuracy of field accounts. In their writing, anthropologists provide context in patterns of human behavior. When anthropologists converse with each other about writing within the discipline, the topics include genre and style, primarily surrounding writing ethnographies, and the difficulty in reaching a broader audience (Galanti 1997). For example, *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986), 'Writing against Culture' (Abu-Lughod 1991), *Women Writing Culture* (Behar and Gordon 1996), *Anthropology off the Shelf* (Waterston and Vesperi 2009), and most recently, *The Anthropologist as Writer* (Wulff 2016) as well as *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read* (Ghodsee 2016) have strengthened intra-disciplinary conversations about the interplay between the anthropologist as writer, fieldwork, and the written text.

There is no doubt that anthropology is rich in jargon; ten years of words in titles published in the journal *Cultural Anthropology* have even been represented on a quilt to address 'overuse of jargon and the inaccessibility of anthropological writing to those outside the discipline' (Rego 2013). This quilt displayed words such as, neoliberalism, affect, embodiment, and postcolonial as a word cloud, separated from their contexts. Although some of these words might be familiar to the average non-anthropologist, the ways that anthropologists use these terms could constitute jargon. Some anthropologists have tried to delineate and define theory for their readers. One book on development anthropology by Gardner and Lewis (2015) includes two different glossaries to differentiate between development jargon (such as empowerment, participation, and targeting) and anthropological jargon (such as acculturation, functionalism, and indigenous). In *Reimagining Global Health: An Introduction*, Hanna and Kleinman (2013) create a 'toolkit' of social theories on global health for their readership. I have also identified the prefaces and first pages of several books written by anthropologists that reassure readers that they, as authors, have been very careful about jargon and have consciously taken steps to minimize its presence (Pickering and Bachman

1997; Van Tuerenhout 2005; Kiefer 2007). Reviewers of anthropology textbooks consider it an advantage and an important selling point that a book is 'jargon-free'. Numerous examples abound on the websites of book publishers, one recent review praises a book of essays on ethnographic film as 'speculative, judicious, lucidly written, and mercifully jargon-free' (Princeton University Press 2017). 'Good' anthropological writing seems sanitised for the reader's protection.

Embedded in the issue of jargon use is a broader, ongoing discussion about whether or not anthropological knowledge should be able to be understood by the general public, or even by scholars in other disciplines. At the *Anthropology Now* blog, Alex Posecznick (2009) likens jargon use in anthropology to secrets on the following two levels: 1) the finer nuances between words that most people simply do not have time to separate, especially when they are outsiders to anthropology and 2) jargon acts as a part of constructing one's identity as a scholar, using jargon to conceal what one doesn't know well. Perhaps some of the anxiety surrounding jargon is part of how one sees interdisciplinarity and whether or not this dilutes anthropology's brand. Jargon is intended to 'preserve boundaries' (Macfarlane 2015: 37). There are, however, circumstances that require accommodation of an audience with a broad knowledge base. To achieve comprehension by the widest readership, guidelines for grant submissions dictate that proposals should be devoid of jargon or at least define all terminology. The Wenner Gren Blog offered this advice to proposal writers: 'It is essential to avoid excessive jargon and present your work in the clearest possible fashion. We occasionally have expert reviewers comment that a particular proposal was so jargon-laden that they had no idea what the applicant was going to do and how they would achieve it' (Wenner Gren Foundation 2012). These discipline-specific tensions have real implications for what happens in classroom settings with student writers of anthropology.

What Jargon Means for Teaching Academic Writing to Students in Anthropology Classes

Across the disciplines, effective academic writing means adopting the discourse, style, and correct use of terminology of a discipline in a way that is intelligible to experts in that discipline and ultimately meets the standards of peer review. By investing time into this particular way of thinking, certain knowledge becomes accessible. Expert knowledge then is knowledge only accessible to experts, to the exclusion of others. When students are taught an academic discourse, the goal is for their writing to meet these narrow standards. What is the objective of a writing course? Is it to make a student into an anthropologist? To

make a student into an academician? To make a student into a better *writer*, no matter their discipline? Sometimes, the course goals may be misaligned with the students in the seats; a course designed to familiarise anthropology majors with anthropological writing genres may be taken by students who are not interested in becoming professional anthropologists.

Writing classes act as sites for socialising students into discourse practices, particularly US academic values, such as learning writing genres, discourses, and pedagogical approaches and behaviors such as active participation in class, interacting with peers and the instructor, and interacting with texts (Godfrey 2015). Students are forced to assimilate into the academic discourse (White and Ali-Khan 2013). A critical discourse analysis of a community college writing classroom revealed that academic discourse is hierarchical and requires conformity and showed 'how little space there was in the classroom for students to interrogate how language means and what that means to them as learners in an educational institution' (Osborn 2009: 261). Six rhetorical moves were identified by Thonney (2011: 348) as mandatory in academic writing across disciplines:

1) Writers respond to what others have said about their topic.
2) Writers state the value of their work and announce the plan for their papers.
3) Writers acknowledge that others might disagree with the position they've taken.
4) Writers adopt a voice of authority.
5) Writers use academic and discipline-specific vocabulary.
6) Writers emphasise evidence, often in tables, graphs, and images.

Any one paper that a student writes must meet a variety of indicators including clarity, voice, authority, high quality research skills, ability to form a logical argument, support that argument with evidence, and ability to evaluate the work of others. This is a lot to master, and it is entirely possible, as Itua et al. (2014) discovered, that students and instructors simply do not share the same views on what constitutes academic writing, which is exactly why discussions about writing need to be integrated into course structure. Some of these conversations are happening in particular academic disciplines. In managerial communication professor Daphne Jameson's business course at Cornell University, students worked on improving readability by learning about flow and logical construction of arguments, as well as choosing terminology and abbreviations (Jameson 2006). Most students receive mixed signals and little guidance on how to use discipline-specific terminology, and conversations on the political implications behind jargon use are probably not happening often enough in classroom settings. It is also important, however, not to focus too much on terminology but connect terms to concepts and ways of seeing in that discipline. Given that students need a

connection to their assignments, instructor, other students, and to themselves (Greco 2006), these in-class discussions and writing feedback are important ways to connect students to their writing, especially when they have not yet acquired the academic discourse.

Students may experience confusion about learning to write in a discipline in the same way an international student acquires the US academic discourse (Angelova and Riazantseva 1999) or the way new employees experience difficulty acquiring cultural knowledge of their new workplace (Kohn 2015). Students may feel further excluded because they are only beginning to recognise the language and style of anthropology and then have to emulate that style to satisfy the requirements a writing assignment. Students end up adopting an inauthentic academic voice that is not a representation of their true selves or their true beliefs. Anthropology *is* a field where there are additional voices to the standard, dominant, male, heteronormative Western European or North American one. But when we teach students to write, those 'alternative' voices are pushed out of the way in order to teach conformity to academic style. Through writing, students learn to negotiate their authority and voice, even though it might mean subjugating their authentic or vernacular voice (Ball and Lardner 2005) in exchange for a standard academic English voice in the Anglo-American tradition. Academic discourse largely ignores the diversity of students, who learn to hide and exchange their identities for those that approximate the status quo (Osborn 2009). This is especially true for non-native English speakers and racially marginalised students (Kynard 2008). For some students, appropriating the academic discourse constitutes 'acting White', which may cause students to cling to their cultural and linguistic patterns in opposition to that of their teachers (White and Lowenthal 2011). For students, the intersection between student voice and academic discourse (Moragh 2007) can be a very grey and highly controversial area that should not be ignored.

Context:
Case Study in Teaching Terminology in an Anthropology Course

Professional anthropologists who have internalised the preference for simple prose (even if they don't really write this way themselves) may encounter difficulty teaching appropriate use of terminology to student writers. If the course is designed to teach a topic as well as writing, time management can be an issue. Because class time is limited, little time may be spent on terminology, which may be relegated to minutiae. This phenomenon is likely magnified for graduate students who may feel the pressure to find their professional voices early in their graduate training. The assumption by anthropology professors who

do not focus on teaching writing is that if graduate students read enough articles and books written by experts in the discipline, they will eventually 'naturally' adopt their way of thinking, speaking, and writing. This, I assume, is the reason why discussions about proper use of terminology are underrepresented in writing guides and discussions on pedagogy in anthropology.

I am in favor of making students aware of their writing processes, which requires not only making sure students understand the terminology but also showing students how to think critically about how they write, even if that requires learning how to code-switch between academic and authentic voices. At my former university, the University of Connecticut, writing-intensive courses have a two-fold purpose of presenting discipline-specific information while simultaneously focusing on improving students' writing skills. According to the university's General Education Guidelines, writing-intensive courses are meant to provide depth of course material in a discipline and also teach techniques of writing not specific to any discipline, such as organisation and revision. More specifically, all writing-intensive courses assign at least fifteen double-spaced pages of writing a semester with an emphasis on revision, and all students must pass the writing component in order to pass the course. Beyond these guidelines, instructors in different departments have varying levels of discretion to shape writing-intensive courses as they see fit.

A few years ago, I had the great fortune to teach a writing-intensive section of Social Anthropology at the University of Connecticut to a group of nineteen undergraduate students from across all disciplines. The course included readings and discussions about human groupings, culture, and social institutions. The course's objective was for the students to explore the diversity of human culture and experience, develop their critical thinking skills, and learn how to present complex ideas clearly and concisely in their writing. The writing assignments allowed students to attempt writing in several genres: critical reading responses, first-hand ethnographic observations, and a research paper. Most of the students admitted that their initial interest in enrolling in a writing-intensive class was a practical one: to satisfy a requirement for graduation. However, the students were also interested in learning how anthropologists study culture. The students realised early in the semester that not being able to 'talk the talk' of anthropologists was limiting their ability to express themselves, and they communicated an interest in using jargon in their own writing as a specific goal for the course.

My search for guidance brought me to two questions: 1) why is anthropology, a terminology-rich discipline, ultimately silent about how technical language should be properly used in writing? and 2) how could instructors of university students teach responsible jargon use? In response, I designed several workshops to teach students to use discipline-specific terminology such as 'fieldwork', 'endogamy', 'norms', and 'ethnocentrism' in their prose. This paper outlines the techniques used in this course and seeks to raise more dialogue about writing pedagogy in anthropology.

Formulating Assessment Tools for How Students Adopt and Use Jargon

Paxton Moragh (2007: 45) of the University of Cape Town's Academic Development Programme employs the term 'interim literacies' to illustrate the transitional periods when students use previously acquired discourses to develop mastery in an academic discourse. These interim literacies may provoke confusion since students try to apply techniques, such as reliance on figures and tables that may have served them well in their biology course, as evidence for an anthropology assignment. Students may not succeed in these assignments because they are not properly emulating the anthropological discourse. Bloom's 'Taxonomy of cognitive operations' describes how someone moves through six stages of development on the way to mastery (Granello 2001). The movement toward mature terminology use may be cyclical or sporadic, however, as was shown in a study of nine medical students' proper use of medical terminology (Botha et al. 2011).

I devised a systematic approach for teaching terminology use in a United States undergraduate classroom setting. The first step was to create an environment where students were comfortable being creative and taking chances. While this kind of atmosphere should be present in any classroom, it is of especially great importance when students are acquiring and testing new writing skills. For the students in the social anthropology class, fostering this environment meant making sure the students knew their classmates' names and understood the goals of the course, what their assignments would require, and the parameters of acceptable work and effort in the class. We discussed past writing experiences, and several students provided examples that were negative. Their anecdotes became the foundation for their writing trajectory for the course and established some writing goals to be achieved by the end of the semester. By stressing that writing is a creative activity, we would all have many opportunities to write.

The second step was to introduce a range of terms most commonly used by anthropologists. This included providing each term's definition and explaining its context, such as the history behind some of the associated philosophy and the anthropologists associated with it. For example, to introduce functionalism, I also described Bronislaw Malinowski's fieldwork and provided excerpts of his writing. The class I taught met twice a week for a total of 3 hours, providing several chances for devoting even just a few minutes to discussing terminology to make sure the students were comfortable with it. The third step was to present the writing of professionals and allow the students to compare the writers' use of terminology with their own comprehension of the excerpts. So, in the case of functionalism, I also presented excerpts by Radcliffe-Brown. The other readings were from anthropology journals including *Anthropology and Humanism*, *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, *Pedagogy, Culture, and Society*, *American Ethnologist*, and the *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*. The students rated the text from most intelligible to least intelligible and concluded that the text with the clearest prose used technical language sparingly while the passages that contained the most technical language were the most difficult to interpret. Of the readings, students stated having the most difficulty with John G. Galaty's (1982) article on Maasai ethnicity, which they considered confusing and entirely unintelligible; the abstract is as follows:

> Conventional notions of ethnicity are similar to Maasai ideology, which asserts that the term Maasai refers to a nonproblematical, unitary, and given social entity. The term serves not as a simple ethnic marker, however, but as a pragmatic shifter. Its sense and reference vary across the ethnosociological context, signifying economic practice, the social margin, and the pastoral division of labor. The semiotic process, then, generates, rather than simply represents, the social order.

The fourth step was to provide opportunities, both graded and ungraded, for students to craft their own sentences using anthropological terminology. A graded critical reading response to the ethnographic memoir *Guests of the Sheik* by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (1989) asked students to critically analyze the impact of gender roles on doing fieldwork. The assignment required students to develop a 6-page double-spaced essay that reflected an argument about fieldwork and gender roles. Unless an audience is specified in an assignment, a student writer usually assumes the audience is the instructor or grader, someone who would understand the technical language. For developing writing assignments, I use Ed White's (2007) rubric in *Assigning, Responding, Evaluating: A Writing Teacher's Guide*, which highlights the importance of student writers knowing who their audience is for an assignment. Thus, for each assignment, the audience varies. For this assignment,

the description was: *For your audience, write this paper for someone who is interested in culture and is somewhat familiar with anthropological terminology but has not read Fernea's book*. In class, we discussed that some anthropologists do not consider the book a true ethnography and that instead of getting bogged down in subtleties, we would call it ethnography. This writing assignment was the climax of the course because in reading and discussing the text, many of the concepts and terminology presented in class were represented in a real-world context. At this point in the course, students showed the most growth. The students submitted a draft, received my comments, and then using excerpts of the drafts with the students' permission I led a workshop on thesis and argument, word choice, and quoting. The students submitted a final version and we continued discussing terminology through the end of the 16-week semester.

The students' progress was measured in the following ways:

1) Review of essay writing: I analyzed the essay writing for eight of the nineteen students who gave written permission for their papers to be reviewed. Because this research consisted of regular class discussion and an in-class workshop, I did not seek approval from the university's Institutional Review Board, but I did ask students for their voluntary participation in completing the questions and obtained written per-mission from them to review and analyze their responses after the course ended. The essays were analyzed by use of vocabulary in terms of word frequency, the placement and location of words in the paper, how well the vocabulary was integrated into their drafts and essays, and how it changed from draft to final version. This format is similar to Woodward-Kron's (2008) methodology of analysing student writing.

2) Students' responses: Fifteen participating students at the end of the course wrote brief responses to a three-item, open-ended questionnaire about terminology. The students defined jargon in their own words, described any growth that occurred during the semester with their ability to use terminology effectively, recalled discus-sions about jargon in past courses, and described the extent to which they could use the skills they acquired in other courses. Although 'jargon' has a negative connota-tion, the word was used in the questions since this word is most likely how the issue was raised in students' other courses. These responses were coded thematically with the qualitative software AtlasTi 7®[1].

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1   AtlasTi® is an analytical software tool for qualitative research that allows for the importation of text documents, video, and audio so that the researcher can develop or assign existing codes and code families, perform queries, identify co-occurrence of concepts across these media, and visualize the findings.

Students Defining Jargon for Themselves

Kathleen Burke and Carol Nancarrow's (2007) Holistic Rubric for Evaluating Disciplinary Writing was used to evaluate students' level of critical thinking, clear prose, and ability to use effective anthropological terminology for their essay on *Guests of the Sheik*. The rubric identifies performance criteria across five kinds of writers, ranging from novice to professional. The observed quality of writing placed students in the 'Apprentices in the Discipline' category because students could identify and introduce key ideas but they were not as adept at being able to discuss the cultural nuances or dilemmas raised by the book. One criterion in the Holistic Rubric states that apprentices are 'familiar with the writing conventions of the discipline but use jargon to gain credibility and to mask flaws in understanding' (2007: 80). The students, by the time they had written their essays, had already had several class discussions about terminology use, word choice, and concision. Thus, the students' writing exceeded this criterion, but not all eight students met the standard of terminology use attributed to 'Competent Disciplinary Writers' since these writers 'clearly and accurately explain the concepts used in the discipline, and apply appropriate style, format, and quality conventions expected by the audience' (2007: 80). In their drafts, some students would use a term without much explanation, such as 'In El Nahra, polygamy was something of a double-edged sword to the family'. This sentence is further obfuscated by the use of a cliché phrase, making the student's intended meaning unclear. In another example, a student wrote 'Some women see polygamy [as] offensive to the abilities of one wife or the other, which is where many become bitter as well as embarrassed if the possibility of their husband taking another wife should arise'. Here, polygamy is being discussed, but many of the connections are missing, as if the student is asking readers to fill the missing spaces in for themselves (What constitutes a wife's abilities? Is this actually polygyny, not the broader category of polygamy? If some women are offended by polygamy, then what are some alternative arguments for polygamy?).

The word 'ethnography' appeared most often in students' essay introductions to present the book they were critiquing; 'ethnocentrism' and 'cultural relativism' were frequently used terms to compare Fernea's perspective from her arrival as a young newly-married American woman in the fundamentalist Muslim village of El-Nahra, Egypt to her departure to the United States. One problematic student passage conflates culture with nature and promptly ends with the term 'ethnocentrism' stuck at the end of the sentence, as if what came before it appropriately explains what the student meant:

It may be a natural tendency for the Western mind to analyze the position of women in an Iraqi Shiite tribal culture and view the veiling and seclusion as repression rather than protection from strangers and their thoughts; or the act of consummating a marriage, in which the women look at the sheets for blood to determine whether the bride was a virgin, as invasive, rather than necessary to ensure the purity of a family's lineage. Such is the nature of ethnocentrism.

After the students' introductions, the paper topics diverged into more specific arguments about the ethnography, but the terminology use was primarily associated with descent and marriage. For example, the students used 'patrilineal' to describe the villagers' descent patterns and 'polygamous' and 'endogamous' to reflect social norms governing marriage.

The questionnaire asked students to compare jargon to entries found in a thesaurus, since using a thesaurus and using jargon are both related to word choice. Students' responses indicate that a thesaurus provides words that are nearly interchangeable with each other based on their definitions whereas jargon represents terms that are specific to a field. The majority of the students included the detail that all disciplines have their own terminology. One student, Steve[2], wrote that jargon 'gives a more authentic feel' to writing. His comment is relevant, especially since anthropology has unique words and phrases and that by acquiring the terms and using them in original sentences, he feels that he is developing a sense of academic authority by approximating what he believes writing in anthropology should resemble. The students' responses also indicate that discipline-specific words are uncommon to them, compared to words in a thesaurus, which are very common.

To the students, discipline-specific terminology requires context and explanation but also gives context by substituting one word for many. Kyle and Timothy's responses mirrored each other. Kyle wrote, 'A thesaurus is more replacing one word with another. Jargon describes more than just one word; it describes a concept'. Timothy wrote, 'Thesaurus gives another way to say a word. Jargon summarizes an idea into one word. Marriage to multiple partners = polygamy. A thesaurus would simply provide another similar (synonym) for that "jargon" '. To the students, discipline-specific terminology is a means to encapsulate an entire concept into one or a few words.

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2   All names have been changed.

Learning to Incorporate Jargon

In anthropology, discipline-specific terminology can be a gatekeeper for novice student writers. When the students described instances over the semester where their use of discipline-specific terminology in their writing failed, they attributed much of the cause to feeling unsure about what the word means as well as how they should use it in their own writing. Two students stated the importance of defining for their audience the term being used. Jonathan wrote, 'Jargon didn't work when I didn't introduce the idea and define the term for readers'. Although the students indicated in their responses to the questionnaire that defining the term is an important part of appropriate terminology use, they did not define all the terms they inserted in the *Guests of the Sheik* essays, likely because of the imagined audience's familiarity. Instead, the students embedded terms in their sentences and allowed the reader to assume the meaning of the term from its context.

Class discussions about incorporating terminology into writing involved the student-generated concept of 'forcing' terms into sentences, an action that felt unnatural to them. This sentiment of forcing terminology was echoed in the students' written statements about jargon in the questionnaire:

> Irene: In my second paper for this class, I attempted to 'force' jargon into my paper. I over-used terminology that did not specifically support my arguments.

> Victor: At first a lot of times I felt in the beginning of the semester I was forcing words into my papers but through revisions I was able to make adjustments so I wasn't just placing the terms.

For the students, successful terminology use meant the unconscious addition of vocabulary into a paper, when the students knew the words they wanted to use and incorporated them into their own sentences without realising it.

> Andrew: Once I started writing about my ethnographic observations, I realized I did not need to consciously concentrate on trying to add jargon. Rather, I learned how to use it when truly necessary.

Jonathan: It was successful in putting a term to the way people act in a culture by describing the action and providing the term to reinforce my point. When I would describe something that has a direct jargon term then include it at the end of the sentence after realizing what I just wrote.

Students used emotive words to describe their comfort with using terminology, and this perceived comfort increased with their familiarity with the words. It is noteworthy that the students' sense of comfort came at different times throughout the semester.

Allison: After the *Guests of the Sheik* paper, I felt more comfortable with some terms, and in my presentation I believed I expressed jargon correctly and as a tool to bolster my knowledge behind the project.

Charlotte: I felt as if it was incredibly difficult to use the jargon at the beginning of the semester because I did not have a good grasp on the definitions. However, as I learned more about anthropology, I could see how more and more things were interconnected, so I understood them more.

The questionnaire asked students to recall what instructors in other courses had told them about jargon. Four themes emerged: Students were either 1) encouraged to use jargon, 2) advised against it, 3) told nothing, or 4) told that jargon use depends on the audience. Their descriptions of their use of jargon in other courses show that the students are very aware of discipline-specific language. The problem is not so much a lack of talk about jargon but instead an overall lack of talk about writing.

The last question in the questionnaire asked students about the transferability of terminology from the anthropology course to other courses. In other words, to what extent did the students believe that the terminology (or the ability to use terminology) could be applied in other courses that, more likely than not, may not be anthropology courses. This question has implications for what specific writing skills or what anthropological concepts and terms instructors should make sure students understand by the end of the course. The question was interpreted in two different ways. Some students interpreted the question as the words they wanted to transfer to other courses whereas others interpreted the question as the skills about using terminology that they would use in other courses.

Transferability of anthropological terminology:

Chloe: I find that some classes have overlapping ideas where I can incorporate jargon learned in this class. For instance, on my Spanish exam I spoke about ethnocentricity and in art history I wrote about the cultural 'other'.

Allison: I think I can and will transfer my jargon from this class into others, especially as an Art History major in discussing the patrifocal world of classical art making.

Transferability of terminology use as a skill:

Charlotte: I can transfer my abilities to other classes because I have learned to do so appropriately.

Jonathan: I can transfer my use of jargon to other classes by determining if the situation is proper for jargon (audience knowledge, did I introduce their meanings?)

I may be contributing to interdisciplinarity here, but not all students will become anthropologists. They will, however, take other classes, and so rather than teach them something that only seems applicable within the semester of that course and will be discarded after the final exam, anthropology as a discipline should be showing students how to make connections across their courses.

Conclusion

I have discussed the use of jargon in academic anthropological writing, the dialogues among anthropologists surrounding responsible jargon use, and how this may affect students' ability to adopt and integrate discipline-specific terminology in their own writing. We need to be able to teach students what the hallmarks of writing in anthropology look like, so that a student knows when to incorporate jargon and when to ignore advice that runs counter to it. For example, students are frequently unsure about when to use 'I' in sentences. Sable Helvie (2012) writes about her own experiences of being an anthropology student working with a student tutor who was more versed in general academic discourse than the specifics of anthropological writing styles. Helvie disagreed with the tutor's suggestions to remove 'I' from her sentences.

To answer the question I originally posed – 'why is anthropology, a terminology-rich discipline, ultimately silent about how technical language should be properly used in writing?' – I find that this is a case of competing priorities. When confronted with explaining the higher order thinking skills of ethnography such as interpretation and reflexivity, there may not be time to discuss jargon in classroom settings. In addition to a practical time-constraint, jargon may be a low priority for some anthropologists. In writing classes, we argue that students should think about writing to the broadest possible audience, but perhaps not all professional anthropologists do this for their own writing. Anthropologists should not strive to only communicate to their peers in their subdisciplines or even only to fellow anthropologists because the potential audience is still too narrow. I am not arguing that this phenomenon occurs only in anthropology; what I mean is that anthropologists have much to offer in terms of conveying valuable messages about humanity, but the messages seem to pool within the anthropological community instead of writing to those 'broader audiences' we suggest for our students. Just as some anthropologists learn to speak the language of the people they intend to work with, they should also consider learning the language of the non-anthropologists who might read their writing. By not being easily understood by non-anthropologists or even anthropologists from other subdisciplines, it becomes too easy for outsiders, some of whom are key stakeholders in anthropology's future, to declare the discipline irrelevant simply because it is unintelligible to them. This is not to say that other disciplines are more accessible than anthropology, but the perceived accessibility alone should be enough of a reason for professional anthropologists to be more concerned with what using jargon implies and how to use it in ways that do not obscure understanding.

It is possible that the humanities and social sciences are expected to be accessible to outsiders in ways that biology and the physical sciences are not, but each discipline still has its own expectations and distinguishing features. I have come to realise that anthropology is a troubled discipline that tends to rely upon jargon as a vehicle to preserve its identity, but this practice risks excluding too many people, especially students who are critical to the continuation of this discipline, even for the students who take only one anthropology course in their academic careers. There may be too much emphasis on the importance of achieving published works in such small circles when anthropology publishers and Perhaps anthropologists should strive instead for their work to be read more widely by other social scientists and even non-scientists. Perhaps we need alternative ways to evaluate anthropological writing. Here's how anthropology discourse may be positive:

students in an undergraduate anthropology class are unlikely to become anthropologists, and so it is very important for them to be able to explain the utility of anthropological methods and frameworks to others who may never formally take an anthropology course. At her blog *Anthropologizing*, Amy Santee (2013) addresses the importance of practicing public anthropology and of preparing students to speak to stakeholders and prospective employers. Students who are not going to become anthropologists can still benefit from incorporating an anthropological perspective into their critical thinking and writing, and they should take that knowledge with them wherever they go.

To answer the second question I originally posed about how instructors of university students should teach responsible jargon use, I believe that instructors have more options at their disposal than they realise. Hirst (2013: 428) points out that changes can be made at the sentence level to improve clarity for a student's burgeoning academic voice, such as the use of active voice for verbs, the removal of unnecessary words, the substitution of simpler words for more complex ones, disentangling long sequences of nouns and adjectives, or defining terms when the 'jargony' version is the best word to use. Practicing specific skills like paraphrasing text (Shirley 2004) that is heavily laden with terms into simpler language would let students show that they not only know the definitions of words but they also know how to substitute some of the discipline-specific language for the sake of improving clarity. To teach cultural anthropology, Spindler and Spindler (1990) argue that an inductive approach using case studies with text and ethnographic films gives students a way to focus on the nuance instead of attempting to draw broad generalizations about culture. Culture, then, becomes a living, dynamic phenomenon instead of being static. The teaching of writing in anthropology could be done the same way, through collectively and independently reworking jargon-heavy passages. In this way, students might learn to temper their use of newly-acquired terminology and learn to see the value in revision. In this way, students learn to use anthropological concepts and jargon in responsible ways rather than perpetuating the cycle of power and exclusivity associated with jargon.

Familiarity and confidence with terminology are important steps for a student becoming increasingly proficient in the discourse of a given discipline. Terms do not have to be the barriers that prevent an entry to the study of anthropology. We should actively work to remove the stigma surrounding jargon, but this would require some introspection into

our field and how experts use discipline-specific terminology in order to turn terminology acquisition into an important milestone for beginning anthropology students. Students need multiple opportunities to use terminology and work with it so that they achieve the comfort that comes with familiarity as soon as possible. Anthropologists cannot fix how scholars in other disciplines approach or discuss discipline-specific terminology, but anthropology instructors can have a direct and positive impact on the students they teach.

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About the Author

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