Editorial 26(3): Copy editing

Our previous Editorial, for IIER 26(2), concluded with the comment that "Copy editing of reference lists, to correct significant errors in titles, authors and journal details can be time consuming..." [1]. For Editorial 26(3), we feel that an expanded reflection upon IIER's copy editing and its part in our publishing process will be helpful for readers and authors. Whilst copy editing of reference lists is important, it is only one of a number of tasks in the *production* or *publishing* work needed for each new issue of IIER.

From an editorial perspective, what is *copy editing*, and why are we raising it as an issue? IIER's copy editing practices are based firmly upon the extensive definition in *Style manual* 6th edition, which contains a full chapter on "Editing and proofreading" (chapter 14). It includes the topics substantive editing, copy editing, house style and proofreading [2], but here we can use *copy editing* as the best representative term in IIER's context, instead of *editing*. Many people could regard *editing* as associated mainly with processes for selecting articles for a journal, whereas here we are reflecting upon some important features of copy editing for IIER. Copy editing has become a more time-consuming task, owing to IIER's recent 'growth spurt'. After publishing 31 articles in IIER 25 (2015) [3], we are tracking towards 40-42 articles or more for IIER 26.

The first task in editing an article is assessing whether the authors' revisions address reasonably well the advice given by external reviewers, and any additional special advice given by IIER editorial staff, or recorded in editorial file notes. Most authors, but not all, will comply with IIER advice about providing a record and explanation of their revisions in a separate file detailing their actions. We do remind authors that providing a record of their revisions is appreciated as a time-saving measure. Occasionally, a revised version may be returned to the authors for further revisions.

The second and most time consuming part is copy editing which serves the overall aim of improving the standard of academic English. In line with trends being experienced by many other journals, IIER's proportion of articles accepted from authors whose first language is not English ('ESL authors') has been rising over the past decade [3]. Inevitably, the copy editing workload per article has been rising. To develop a perspective, consider the following very approximate and broadly generalised categorisation of responses by journals, publishers and authors to this trend.

1. Some journals appear to have responded by placing greater weight upon standard of academic English as a review criterion, leading to an increase in their rejection rates. High rejection rates may lead prospective ESL authors to concentrate upon submitting to journals that are perceived as more accommodating (as in 2. and 3. below). Increased rejection rates may be characterised as a 'try elsewhere' approach, but it could leave a journal exposed to critical commentary about region of the world representation or lack of it [4].

2. Some publishers encourage ESL authors to pay for specialised translation and copy editing services prior to initial submission, and we guess that many do so. These services may be 'in house', for example Taylor & Francis [5] and Elsevier [6], or external. Some authors work within teams in which one member is the 'academic English' specialist, whose function is to ensure that a rejection is not made on this criterion. Many journals including IIER routinely advise authors to seek proofreading assistance from colleagues who are experienced readers and writers of academic English. These kinds of strategies could be characterised as 'self help'.

3. Notwithstanding 1. and 2. above, many journals simply accept the extra copy editing workload that often is incurred for articles from ESL authors, as is the case with IIER. This approach may be characterised as 'free assistive' or 'free supportive'.

4. On the dark side of contemporary academic publishing, some journals provide no copy editing service, or only poor quality copy editing. Although we have sighted very many examples whilst undertaking the copy editing of reference lists for IIER articles, perhaps it's best to be diplomatic and not cite any illustrative examples or give a characterisation.

To attain the highest possible standard within a reasonable time frame, copy editing for IIER is a five stage process. The revised text is first edited for grammar, punctuation and expression, and the reference list checked both for completeness and for the sort of errors mentioned above and in our Editorial 26(2). Our main references are *Style manual* and *The Macquarie dictionary*, and we make selective use of APA's *Publication manual* [7]. Second, the article is formatted into IIER house style with running text in Garamond 11 point, headings in Arial and bolded. Attention is given at this stage to positioning tables and figures to best suit the page size and page breaks. Punctuation is kept to a minimum and titles reduced in length when necessary. At times extra information is sought from the authors, such as biographical notes or missing references. Third, the edited and formatted text is returned to the authors for proofreading, with an invitation to make any corrections or changes, recorded with 'track changes' set 'on', and to return the article to the Editors as soon as possible. Fourth, an HTML version is created, using a text editor. This is unusual for journal articles, but it adds an extra level of proofreading (usually a number of errors are corrected), and Google-style metatags in the HTML enable a reliable method of search engine capture. And fifth, the final versions are converted to PDF files. IIER has chosen to publish in both HTML and PDF formats, to give readers a choice, as some may feel that HTML is better for online reading whilst PDF is better for printing. Occasionally an error is discovered post-publication, and is noted by a 'last correction' date inserted into the footer for the HTML version.

In Editorial 26(2) we explored "the diversity theme", appropriately citing each of 26(2)'s articles as illustrations. However, it would be inappropriate to illustrate Editorial 26(3)'s discussion of copy editing by reference to specific articles! Let's just restate our aim to achieve a uniformly high standard of academic English, for both ESL and native English authors, whilst heeding some very good advice from *Style manual*:

> When copy editing... an experienced editor will follow the house style intelligently rather than impose it rigidly. This is because each publication - even in the same subject area - has different characteristics and may need slightly different treatment. Authors also expect to be able to express themselves in an individual manner where this is warranted by the context or type of document. (*Style manual*, p. 258)

We regard the two terms *production* and *publishing* as virtually interchangeable in IIER's context, as the process involves a very small team conducting all of the activities after the receipt of peer reviewed, accepted and revised articles. We are proud of the success of our thoroughness, and hope that we are setting a sustainable and high standard service for our contributors and readers.

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