# Introduction

Filippo Contesi and Enrico Terrone

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In recent years, increasing attention has been devoted to the underrepresentation, exclusion or outright discrimination experienced by women and members of other visible minority groups in academic analytic philosophy. Moreover, there is growing interest in academia and society more generally for issues revolving around linguistic justice and linguistic discrimination (sometimes called 'linguicism' or 'languagism') (see e.g. Van Parijs 2011). Globalization and the increasing adoption of English as global linguistic vehicle or *lingua franca* push these issues at the forefront of much of the world's attention.

The convergence of these two trends suggests the appropriateness of an analysis of the condition of non-native speakers of English in analytic philosophy. On the one hand, one's native language can be construed as an unmerited advantage in analytic philosophy, making the language issue similar to, for instance, the case of disability or socio-economic background. On the other hand, the discipline of analytic philosophy is often described as being characterized by an emphasis on logic and rational argument (which are arguably translatable without significant loss of cogency), rather than on rhetoric and eloquence (which are not) (Contessa 2014e). Yet, linguistic fluency (and stylistic eloquence) may in fact be very important factors in analytic philosophy. Philosophy generally is a discipline with its roots in the humanities. This makes one wonder whether analytic philosophy should be understood as a discipline more akin to literature or rather to science, and how much of it conforms to the cosmopolitan ideal that has informed much of the best philosophy since its beginnings in Ancient Greece.


**1. Diversity**

The inclusivity of academic philosophy has been the subject of intense debate recently. Many have argued that philosophy is seriously lacking in diversity. Amy Ferrer (2012), Executive Director of the American Philosophical Association, put it thus:

> philosophy is one of the least diverse humanities fields, and indeed one of the least diverse fields in all of academia, in terms of gender, race, and ethnicity. Philosophy has a reputation for not only a lack of diversity but also an often hostile climate for women and minorities.[1]

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[1] We are most grateful to Moti Mizrahi for bringing these references and quotation to our attention—along with several more in this section and the next—in our correspondence with him in preparing this Introduction. This correspondence has been helpful in the development of some of the ideas we express here.

Much of this debate has focused on the state of contemporary Anglophone philosophy, which is dominated by the tradition of analytic philosophy (to be understood, here and in what follows, in the contemporary, looser sense than the philosophy done from a logico-positivist, Russellian or ordinary language approach). Moreover, the discussion has focused on underrepresented groups such as women (Paxton et al. 2012) and ethnic minorities (American Philosophical Association 2014). Instead, a group that has received little attention in this debate is non-native speakers of English.

To be sure, there has been some scholarly discussion on the appropriateness of English as the main vehicle for contemporary philosophical work (Rodriguez-Pereyra 2013, Siegel 2014). In this context, Jay Garfield (2017, xx) has for instance suggested that, much as one 'can't run a literature program that reads only works written in English', one should not be able to run a philosophy program that has its students read only works written in English. There has also been some discussion of the problems facing foreign scholars in philosophy (Ayala-López 2017, Erlenbusch 2017).

More specifically, the problems facing non-native English speakers in philosophy have also been the topic of some discussion, though primarily by means of blog posts and newsletter items (Mizrahi 2013, Contessa 2014a, 2014b and 2014c). (Notable exceptions are Wolters 2013 and 2016, which focus on the situation in philosophy of science.) In one of these, from the blog *What Is It Like to Be a Foreigner in Academia?*, erizo (2015) relates the following personal experience:

> I am a graduate student in philosophy in the United States, and English is not my native language. Even though I have no problem communicating with others (at work and outside of it), I struggle with my papers. I am never sure whether my writing is correct, and I even lost track of what "correct" means, for I often see myself taking "correct" for "sounds like it was written by a native speaker." The impostor syndrome has an extra flavour of failure for me; when the feeling of inadequacy knocks on my door, I feel inadequate in the first place because I am a non-native speaker of English, and I know I will drag this limitation forever.

This discussion on the challenges facing non-native English speakers in analytic philosophy has however not yet had much of an uptake in the philosophical conversation. Gabriele Contessa (2014d) even reports that his attempt to start a campaign that would bring attention to these challenges was met with hostility. The aim of this special issue of *Philosophical Papers* is to bring the circumstances of being a non-native English speaker in contemporary analytic philosophy, and their attending issues, to the fore of scholarly discussion. Our hope is that a sustained and constructive conversation will start as a result.

Such a conversation is important in several kinds of ways. First of all, English is the dominant language of analytic philosophy, at least in terms of prestige of scholars, institutions and publications. However, many of those who are interested or actively take part in analytic philosophy scholarship are not native English speakers. These include, but are not limited to,

scholars based in many non-Anglophone parts of the European Continent and of South America, as well as in various parts of the Asian continent including Japan and parts of China. Indeed, influential analytic philosophers such as Tyler Burge (2010, 115 and 17) have even argued in favour of a characterization of analytic philosophy as 'mainstream twentieth-century philosophy', or 'mainstream philosophy' *tout court.*[2]

At the same time, it was starting from Anglophone countries and in English that analytic philosophy exploded as the global philosophical tradition that is now. Moreover, this particularity of analytic philosophy gets combined with (a) the converging trend of setting English as the standard for scholarly publication across most if not all academic disciplines and (b) the superior quality standardly attributed to universities and academic institutions based in Anglophone countries. As a result, the most influential rankings assessing the quality of publication venues (Leiter 2013a and 2015) and of academic institutions (QS World University Rankings by Subject 2018, Brogaard and Pynes 2018) often feature overwhelmingly the English language and Anglophone countries.

Some highly ranked journals publishing in English are however based in non-Anglophone countries. Nonetheless, many of these explicitly stress the importance of English writing quality. For instance, *Erkenntnis*'s Editor-in-Chief is academically based in Germany and the journal is published by Springer Netherlands. Yet, its 'Instructions for Authors' contain the following:

> For editors and reviewers to accurately assess the work presented in your manuscript you need to ensure the English language is of sufficient quality to be understood. If you need help with writing in English you should consider:
> - Asking a colleague who is a native English speaker to review your manuscript for clarity.
> - Visiting the English language tutorial which covers the common mistakes when writing in English.
> - Using a professional language editing service where editors will improve the English to ensure that your meaning is clear and identify problems that require your review. Two such services are provided by our affiliates Nature Research Editing Service and American Journal Experts. Springer authors are entitled to a 10% discount on their first submission to either of these services (Springer International Publishing 2018).

With great prominence on its main webpage, in fact, one of the two English editing services mentioned says the following to its potential customers: 'Improve your written English: sound like a native English speaker with editing from our experts' (Springer Nature 2017). Moreover, another English editing service affiliated with a big publishing company, Wiley's English Language Editing services (which publishes a great number of highly ranked Anglophone philosophy journals), says:

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[2] We are most grateful to Gerald Vision for pointing us to this reference in personal correspondence.

Every year hundreds of papers are rejected due to English language editing requirements. At Wiley we know that language shouldn't be a barrier to getting your quality research published. […] Wiley is confident that our services will improve the quality of your manuscript and increase your chances of publication (John Wiley & Sons 2018).

Accordingly, philosophers who are non-native speakers of English may need to spend more time or more money, *ceteris paribus*, in order to have the same chances of acceptance for their philosophy papers as their colleagues who are native English speakers. Furthermore, some of the cases mentioned raise doubts as to what level of English is, and should be, required in order for philosophy essays to be published in top-level venues. A native-speaker level of English proficiency is in fact in many cases much greater than the level that is sufficient for mere understanding, and it is not evident whether what is required by top-level journals in philosophy is the former or the latter.

## 2. Bias

Another underexplored aspect of the circumstances of being a non-native speaker of English in analytic philosophy is the problem of bias, both explicit and implicit. Philosophical interest in bias has been sustained in recent years (see e.g. Brownstein 2017). Such an interest has often been prompted by empirical research suggesting the existence of bias against stigmatized groups such as women and ethnic minorities. Similar empirical research points to bias against those who speak with non-native accents (Lev-Ari and Keysar 2010, Huang et al. 2013). Some even suggest that linguistic discrimination against non-native accents is both widespread and tolerated by society as a whole (Gluszek and Dovidio 2010, Lippi-Green 2011). As Matthew McGlone and Barbara Breckinridge (2010) put it:

Of the many indignities international students endure, accent discrimination may be the most mortifying, in part because it is still widely accepted in our society. Like skin color or attire, accent is a characteristic we routinely use to identify someone as unfamiliar or foreign. But while most people understand that discrimination based on visual appearance is wrong, bias against foreign speech patterns is not universally recognized as a form of prejudice. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on national origin, but is mum on the subject of accent bias. Moreover, employers who deny jobs to non-native speakers can protect themselves by arguing that a foreign accent impairs communication skills essential to the workplace.

If linguistic bias and discrimination affect society as a whole, there is reason to believe they will affect academic analytic philosophy, too (Ayala 2015). If there is sufficient reason to suspect linguistic bias does affect analytic philosophy, then it might be appropriate, among other things, to work on possible countermeasures. Fostering wider awareness of the problem is one candidate measure. If linguistic bias concerns the written language, as well as accented speech, then it might also be important to rethink peer-review procedures. In particular, while

anonymous review may have efficacy in countering gender or ethnic bias, it may often not be enough to mask an author's non-native speaker status. Alternative solutions may for example involve 'sticker policies' of the kind that some universities adopt to minimize negative evaluations of student written essay scripts in the case of such conditions as dyslexia.


## 3. Representation

Perhaps not surprisingly, the most influential contemporary philosophers in the analytic tradition often are native speakers of English. For instance, no less than 91% of authors on Eric Schwitzgebel's (2010) list of the 200 most cited contemporary (i.e. born in or after 1900) authors in the standard-setting *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* are (or were) native English speakers. Moreover, the vast majority of the non-native speakers of English on Schwitzgebel's list either moved to Anglophone countries in their early years or were prominent figures of the early-to-mid 20th century.

In addition, non-native English speakers authored less than 6% of the 500 papers and books that were most cited by articles published between 1993 and 2013 in (those which are often taken to be) the four most prestigious analytic philosophy journals, namely, *Philosophical Review*, *Journal of Philosophy*, *Noûs* and *Mind* (Healy 2013 and Contessa 2014a).

Moving from prestige of output to prestige of employment, Moti Mizrahi's (2013) data shows that roughly 3 to 4 percent of full-time faculty members at prestigious Ph.D. programs in philosophy, such as New York University and Rutgers, appear to be non-native speakers of English. By contrast, non-native speakers of English make up 30 to 40 percent of the biochemistry departments at the same institutions.

Such, still preliminary, data have been taken to suggest that non-native speakers of English are underrepresented in the most prestigious venues of contemporary analytic philosophy (Contessa 2014b and Ayala 2015). This is true if one takes the world's population as the base rate for calculating (under)representation. The world is currently inhabited by about 7.6 billion people (Worldometers 2018), but English is a native language for only about 5% of the world's population (Statista 2018). Taking the world's population as the appropriate base rate here might be appealing if one assumes a globalized academic world.

However, it is not clear that academia is indeed globalized or that the best base rate to use should be the world's population. Underrepresentation calculated from a global base rate is not necessarily prima facie evidence of linguistic injustice. Substantial levels of underrepresentation are typically taken to be a (defeasible) signal of, say, ethnic or gender injustice when the assumed base rate is national-level population. This is motivated by the assumption that nations, especially in the so-called 'advanced world', are relatively homogeneous in terms of traditions and opportunities. So, it is prima facie hard to explain any significant disparity of outcome between different ethnic, gender etc. constituencies within a certain nation without appealing to ethnic, gender etc. injustice.

Now, a truly globalized world would be as homogeneous as nations are. But there are strong reasons for thinking that academia in general, and analytic philosophy in particular, are not (yet and completely) globalized. For a start, higher education institutions still in many cases seem to operate according to rules and patterns decided at the national level. Such rules and patterns show a significant degree of variability across different nations. Also, it is still by and large the case that higher education is very much continuous with lower-level education systems (e.g. elementary, high school etc.) at the national level. This means that, even within the 'advanced world', it is still in many cases easier for students to follow their educational path completely in their home countries, rather than complete even part of it abroad. To the extent that the most prestigious universities are overwhelmingly concentrated in a handful of, mostly Anglophone, countries, and assuming that at least to some extent prestige tracks quality, it is not unreasonable to expect that the best trained academics will often be native English speakers. Moreover, given the tendency of one's academic pedigree to determine one's later academic career to a significant degree, it is also not unreasonable to expect a large percentage of native English speakers in the faculties of the most prestigious academic institutions.

Philosophy is probably even less globalized than, for instance, scientific disciplines are. These latter are more uniform across the world in terms of curricula and traditions than philosophy is. Moreover, there is a significant degree of clustering of particular traditions according to national, cultural and linguistic variables. It is not infrequent for instance to talk about Western vs Eastern philosophy, Continental philosophy etc.[3]

Analytic philosophy is by no means the only approach to philosophical questions taught and practiced in the contemporary world. It is nonetheless still a large tradition. It is important to expand the breadth and depth of analysis and data collection on the numbers of non-native English speakers in analytic philosophy, the respective numbers in the (physical, social etc.) sciences and in other disciplines in the humanities, and what all these numbers might mean. To the extent that analytic philosophy is understood on the scientific model and according to a cosmopolitan ideal, its doors should be opened to as many minds as possible across the world.

In a recent Dewey Lecture delivered to the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association, William Lycan (2017, 107) identifies this as one of the great problems of contemporary philosophy:

> What do graduate admissions committees look for in an applicant? *Demonstrated accomplishment in philosophy*. [...] That's understandable; what better predictor for success in philosophy graduate study? And nowadays undergraduate majors are encouraged to behave like little graduate students; they write papers on the professional model that sometimes are even published in real philosophy journals. But the result is predictable: their topics, their styles of argument, and their conception of philosophy itself are inherited directly from their teachers, and they self-perpetuate. I am a great

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[3] We are most grateful to Fraser MacBride for helpful discussions on this issue.

believer in the outsider perspective, both in small areas and in the large. An outsider to a small subliterature is more likely than is an insider to make an interesting or even important contribution to it. And the same for an outsider to a whole problematic within an area of philosophy. And possibly the same for an outsider to a whole area. [...] And the outsider perspective is what we're not getting.

To address the problem of the lack of 'the outsider perspective', Lycan proposes to graduate admissions committees to admit more students coming from, or who can demonstrate accomplishment in, disciplines other than philosophy. However, an equally feasible and beneficial way to address the lack of 'the outsider perspective' (and one that is not incompatible with Lycan's preferred solution) might be to increase admissions of students coming from, or who can demonstrate accomplishment in, countries or philosophical cultures different from the Anglophone or analytic.

## 4. The Language of Philosophy

In a *Festschrift* celebrating the sixty years of Diego Marconi, one of the early prominent figures of contemporary analytic philosophy in Italy, another Italian philosopher, Maurizio Ferraris (2007, 251), recalls one of his first encounters with Marconi:

"Does the philosophy of language deal with the language of philosophy?" This was the question, which I took to be so smart, that I asked Diego one day in 1975 or 1976, when I was a first-year undergraduate and he was a young professor who had just come back from America. "Yes, of course", he answered with a smirk, and he kept on walking along the corridor while, obviously, I would have liked to disappear (our translation).

In a sense, Marconi was right in his answer to Ferraris since the language of philosophy is a kind of language and, by dealing with language in general, the philosophy of language also deals with the language specific to philosophy. Yet, in another sense, Marconi's answer was a bit unfair to Ferraris's question. After the logico-positivistic emphasis on the demarcation between meaningful and nonsensical statements, in fact, analytic philosophy has not paid much attention to the nature of the philosophical language. However, analytic philosophy has some conceptual tools that might help to understand the role of language (and languages) in philosophy better. Such an understanding might in turn shed some light on whether contemporary analytic philosophy faces issues of linguistic injustice.

Consider a basic distinction in the philosophy of language, the one between propositions, sentences and utterances. While utterances are particular events that occur in a certain place at a certain time, both sentences and propositions are more abstract entities, which lack a place of their own in the spatiotemporal system. Yet, sentences and propositions are different sorts of abstract entities. Propositions are abstract objects (articulated thoughts on one picture) that do not depend on the particular language in which they are expressed, whereas sentences are individuated by the linguistic terms that constitute them. The proposition 'Water is $H_2O$', for

instance, is not individuated by the English words 'water' and 'is' but only by the meanings of those words. By contrast, the sentence 'Water is $H_2O$' is individuated precisely by the words that appear in the English sentence. Thus, the English sentence 'Water is $H_2O$', the Spanish sentence 'El agua es $H_2O$' and the Italian sentence 'L'acqua è $H_2O$' are distinct sentences that express the same proposition.

One might wonder whether a philosophical work is individuated by a series of sentences or by a series of propositions. This is a point about which there is neither implicit agreement nor much explicit discussion in contemporary philosophy. In other fields of human culture, the situation seems clearer than in philosophy. On the contemporary consensus view, a scientific work or theory is constituted by a series of propositions.[4] The fact that a scientific theory is expressed by means of English sentences instead of by means of Spanish or Italian sentences is completely irrelevant for the assessment of the theory. Conversely, in literary works, the language in which the work is composed bears upon the identity of the work. Dante's *Divina Commedia*, Cervantes' *Don Quijote* and Proust's *Recherche* are most often treated as series of sentences, not as series of propositions. A scholar in literary studies is typically required to understand Italian in order to properly appreciate the *Divina Commedia*, or Spanish in order to properly appreciate the *Don Quijote* or French in order to properly appreciate the *Recherche*. Instead, a scholar in chemistry is not required to understand French in order to grasp Gay-Lussac's laws fully.

It is not obvious whether philosophy in this respect is more like science or literature. On the one hand, there are scholars who learn German in order to understand Kant or Husserl properly and scholars who learn French in order to understand Descartes or Sartre. On the other hand, there is the implicit presupposition, especially in analytic philosophy, that what really matters for the proper understanding of a philosophical work is grasping the propositions that constitute it, and in order to do so we do not need to read the sentences in the language in which they were written. A correct translation, or even an accurate paraphrase, is normally enough.

Jon Stewart (2013, 2) argues that in contemporary analytic philosophy the latter conception of the language of philosophy is the dominant one, and this situation is the effect of three main causes:

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[4] In fact, on the most popular view in contemporary philosophy of science, even the particular mathematical expressions used to formulate a scientific theory are secondary to the abstract types (i.e. the 'structures' or 'models') of which the particular expressions are instantiations. This view is known as the *semantic view* of scientific theories and was originally proposed by Patrick Suppes (1960). As Bas van Fraassen (1980, 44) puts it: 'The syntactic picture of a theory identifies it with a body of theorems, stated in one particular language chosen for the expression of that theory. This should be contrasted with the alternative of presenting a theory in the first instance by identifying a class of structures as its models. In this second, semantic, approach the language used to express the theory is neither basic nor unique; the same class of structures could well be described in radically different ways, each with its own limitations. The models occupy central stage'.

Three closely related, yet distinct, causes have produced our current form of philosophical writing: first, the attempt of philosophy to associate itself with the natural sciences, second, the rise of professionalization in philosophy, and, third, the view of language and meaning promulgated by Anglo-American analytic philosophy.

From Stewart's (2013, 4) perspective, the tendency to imitate the natural sciences leads philosophers to endorse a conception of the work that is dominant in the natural sciences: 'Thus, as philosophy began to imitate the natural sciences, there was a change not only in its subject matter and the type of scholar entering the professional ranks but also in the mode of philosophical expression'.

Stewart locates the core of the scientifically minded conception of the philosophical work in this claim by A.J. Ayer (1936/1952, cit. in Stewart 2013, 7): 'if a work of science contains true and important propositions, its value as a work of science will hardly be diminished by the fact that they are inelegantly expressed'. According to Stewart (2013, 7), the dominant view in contemporary philosophy is strongly influenced by Ayer's claim:

> According to this view, no matter how much writing the analytic tradition does, it does not think that philosophy should be 'written,' any more than science should be. Writing is an unfortunate necessity. In a mature science, the words in which the investigator 'writes up' his results should be as few and as transparent as possible. The question of style is regarded as adventitious and superfluous to the real questions of philosophy […] The very issue of forms of writing or literary style, according to this view, thus belongs to the realm of literature and art and has no place in the work of a rigorous philosopher.

However, some have argued that the conception of the philosophical work as a system of propositions is an idealization rather than the actual situation in contemporary analytic philosophy (Weberman 2016). Richard Rorty (1982, 221), for instance, raised doubts on whether 'post-positivistic' analytic philosophy really abides by the scientific paradigm:

> In the course of the transition to post-positivistic analytic philosophy, the image of the scientist has been replaced by another, though it is not quite clear what. Perhaps the most appropriate model for the analytic philosopher is now the *lawyer*, rather than either the scholar or the scientist. The ability to construct a good brief, or conduct a devastating cross-examination, or find relevant precedents, is pretty much the ability which analytic philosophers think of as "distinctively philosophical."

If Rorty is right, then one question is the extent to which language fluency is important for practicing law. Whether or not Rorty is right, however, two questions remain. The first is what field analytic philosophy is, and should be, most usefully compared to from the point of view of the role of language in it: science, literature, law etc. The second question is the more general one: what is the role of language in philosophy?

## 5. The Contributions

Some of these questions, and many others, are addressed by the contributions in this special issue. The first contribution, by Eric Schwitzgebel, Linus Ta-Lun Huang, Andrew Higgins and Ivan Gonzalez-Cabrera, presents empirical evidence for what they call 'The Insularity of Anglophone Philosophy'. On the one hand, they show that articles in top Anglophone philosophy journals rarely cite philosophers from other traditions who write in languages other than English. On the other hand, they show that articles in elite Chinese-language and Spanish-language journals instead cite articles from a range of linguistic traditions. They conclude that mainstream Anglophone philosophy, unlike other philosophical traditions, mostly tends to interact with other participants in the same academic tradition.

In the second contribution, entitled 'Languages for the Analytic Tradition', Diana I. Pérez argues for linguistic diversity in analytic philosophy. Addressing the question of the role of language in philosophical thought, she contends that analytic philosophers who are non-native English speakers should be able to write in their native languages, so that they can express their theses and arguments as accurately as they can. She also suggests ways in which editors of academic journals and conference organizers can facilitate this.

In 'Linguistic Privilege and Justice: What Can We Learn from STEM?', Vitaly Pronskikh wonders why being a non-native speaker of English has a less significant effect on scientists and engineers than on philosophers. He highlights the structural features that make STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) disciplines less prone to linguistic injustice than humanities disciplines. To the extent that analytic philosophy aims at minimizing rhetoric, Pronskikh adds, it should be considered more like physics than other humanities. Therefore, he suggests that measures taken to mitigate linguistic injustice in physics, such as the loosening of grammatical and pronunciation standards, can contribute to making the practice of analytic philosophy fairer to non-native speakers of English.

In 'On Philosophical Translator-Advocates and Linguistic Injustice', Eric Schliesser argues for the need of what he calls 'philosophical translator-advocates' to overcome the linguistic narrowness of analytic philosophy. Such philosophical translator-advocates, whose nature Schliesser figures out in terms of some necessary and jointly sufficient features, can contribute to widening the horizons of analytic philosophy by translating valuable philosophical works belonging to other linguistic cultures into English.

In 'The Awful English Language', Hans-Johann Glock reflects on the role of language in philosophy criticizing the claim that some languages might be philosophically superior to others. However, he defends the importance of having English as the *lingua franca* of contemporary analytic philosophy since this contributes to making analytic philosophy a truly cosmopolitan enterprise. He also argues that the linguistic inequality between academic philosophers who are native speakers of English and those who are not does not necessarily amount to an injustice. Yet, he acknowledges that such an inequality is a sort of unfairness that requires a levelling of the playing-field.

Finally, in 'Linguistic Justice and Analytic Philosophy', Francesco Chiesa and Anna Elisabetta Galeotti agree with other contributors that, when the *lingua franca* is English, non-native English speakers are at a disadvantage and often face discrimination. However, they argue that contemporary analytic philosophy is not very different from many other academic disciplines in that respect. As in other disciplines, they argue that the fact that, in analytic philosophy, non-native English speakers are at a disadvantage compared to native speakers of English, and so might be the victims of bias and prejudice, does not constitute an instance of proper injustice. Nonetheless, they add, there is in analytic philosophy a kind of 'structural injustice', in virtue of the status of those non-native English speakers who are not yet members of the analytic philosophy community.

As the contributions contained in this special issue show, reflecting on the condition of non-native speaker of English in contemporary philosophy provides a fertile ground for philosophical research. There is a lot more work to do. We hope that this special issue will kickstart an agenda aimed at shedding more light on the relationship between philosophy, language and justice.[5]

Contesi: Temple University, filippo.contesi@gmail.com
Terrone: University of Turin and Collège d'études mondiales, Paris

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