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# The celebrity logics of the academic field.
## The unequal distribution of citation visibility of Applied Linguistics professors in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom

**Zusammenfassung:** Der Beitrag untersucht die Verteilung von Sichtbarkeit durch Zitationen unter ProfessorInnen der Angewandten Sprachwissenschaft in Frankreich, Deutschland und Großbritannien. Durch den Vergleich von Google Scholar-Zitationen zeigen wir Hyperungleichheiten zwischen weniger sichtbaren und sehr sichtbaren ProfessorInnen auf. Wir erkennen Ungleichheiten zwischen englisch-, deutsch- und französischsprachigen ProfessorInnen sowie innerhalb von Sprachgemeinschaften, insbesondere im englischsprachigen Sprachraum. Diese Ungleichheiten sind Produkt einer ›Star‹-Logik in der Wissenschaft, d.h. eines institutionellen Transfers von Sichtbarkeit von den Vielen zu den Wenigen. Wir erklären diesen Prozess als ›diskursiven Kapitalismus‹: den institutionalisierten Transfer von Wertigkeit von den vielen Zitierenden zu den wenigen zitierten Mitgliedern disziplinärer Gemeinschaften.

Schlagwörter: Wissenschaft, Sichtbarkeit, Zitationen, Feldtheorie, Subjektpositionen, Angewandte Sprachwissenschaft

**Abstract:** This article investigates the distribution of citation visibility of Applied Linguistics professors in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. By comparing citation counts from Google Scholar, we reveal hyperinequalities between more and less visible professors. We register strong inequalities between English-, German- and French-language scholars as well within languages, especially within the English-language community. These inequalities bear witness to the celebrity logics in academia, i.e. the hyperunequal distribution of visibility between a few ›stars‹ and less visible other academics. We account for such inequalities in terms of ›discursive capitalism‹, which designates the institutional transfer of value from the many citing to the few cited members in disciplinary communities.

Keywords: Academia, visibility, citations, field theory, subject positions, Applied Linguistics

While many pursue a career in academia, not everybody ends up occupying a recognized subject position. All members of academic communities are not equal and one can observe hierarchies even among the most established academics, including full university professors, chairs, research directors, senior teaching fellows etc. Academics work in more or less prestigious institutions, countries and fields. Their research is cited by many or by few peers. They are more or less popular with students and attract more or less third-party funding. And while most full professors are on permanent contracts with a salary normally well above the national average, at least in Western countries, some are paid much more than others (Angermuller 2017; Altbach et al. 2012).

Academia is not a game among equals – this idea is central to those who are inspired by sociological approaches, such as Pierre Bourdieu's field theory of symbolic production

(cf. Hamann et al. 2016). Against this background, the unequal distribution of citations among academics comes as no surprise. Bourdieu's field theory rightly insists that such inequalities cannot be explained by the individual research performance (or ›talent‹) of academics. Rather, it is necessary to understand the underlying distribution of resources (›capitals‹). However, Bourdieu's approach does not account for why citation visibility is concentrated so heavily: how can a few stars monopolize the attention of a whole community?

We explain such hyperinequalities in citation visibility in terms of ›discursive capitalism‹, where the many members of a community give value to other members but credit is taken only by the few who occupy the most visible subject positions. If the hierarchies between subject positions result from the ›free‹ dynamics in academic discourse, discursive hierarchies are legitimised and reinforced by higher education institutions trying to recruit those with the most valued and visible subject positions.

We will illustrate the concentration of valuable subject positions by revealing hyperinequalities of citation visibility in the field of Applied Linguistics. Applied Linguistics is a subfield of linguistics close to the social sciences and to the educational field. Applied Linguists are usually critical of the abstract theorising and intuitive language modelling that one often finds in mainstream linguistics (represented by Noam Chomsky and Ferdinand de Saussure). Applied linguists usually deal with language as a real social practice (e.g. meaning making in professional or political contexts). It also includes those working on language teaching and testing. Applied Linguistics is probably less established than older fields such as semantics, morphology, phonology, syntax… and observers from outside linguistics sometimes have difficulty understanding what it is about.

By matching online profiles of professors in Applied Linguistics with their citation counts in Google Scholar, we will account for hierarchies between Applied linguists in three major European countries – Germany, France, and the United Kingdom (UK). We will ask how symbolic recognition, measured by citation numbers, is distributed among the professors in a field where academics compete for the scarce full positions and few are cited by the many who are not or hardly cited.

Our contribution consists of two parts: in the first part, we will give an overview of citations of professors in Applied Linguistics. Google Scholar's citation numbers testify to the celebrity logics in academia, i.e. hyperinequalities between subject positions. In the second part, we will account for these findings in the light of our discourse theoretical perspective. In this discourse theoretical perspective, celebrity results from the concentration of value given to subject positions which are discursively constructed by all members of a community. To account for celebrity as a result of discursive capitalism, we will need to understand how discursive value is transferred from the many to the few in the discourses of large communities and how higher education institutions help reproduce inequalities between academics through their recruitment practices.

## 1  Applied Linguistics: the unequal distribution of visibility in a subdisciplinary field

What is a disciplinary field? There are a number of challenges for social research investigating disciplinary fields. Disciplinary and subdisciplinary fields usually have no clear boundaries since membership is blurry and often changes over time (cf. Becher/Trowler 2001; Colavizza/Franssen/van Leeuwen 2019). A disciplinary field comprises academics who may be more recognized by the institutions (such as academic staff) or less (such as ›independent‹ scholars) and are therefore difficult to seize. Disciplinary membership of established academics is recognized by diplomas or the institutions. However, subjective perceptions are also important. The disciplinary belonging of an academic can evolve over time and most academics often respond to more than one disciplinary community.

To come to terms with Applied Linguistics as a disciplinary field, we draw on the research of Angermuller and his team[1]. The team identified academics in the social sciences and humanities active in the spring/summer semester in 2015 by manually going through institutional and personal web pages in France, Germany, Malaysia, the UK, and the United States (U.S.). Led by Françoise Dufour, the team captured information available from the online presentations of academics (including diplomas, academic positions, and their research presentations) and entered it into a data base. The present contribution draws on this data set, which includes all linguists with full professorial posts (in spring/summer 2015) in the major research institutions among 74 universities as well as 91 other higher education institutions in France, 185 higher education institutions in Germany and 214 universities and colleges in the UK.

The team developed and applied a set of criteria to decide who is a) a linguist with b) a full professorial position.

a) While there is no standard definition of what makes a linguist a linguist, for academics to be considered as linguists, they need to be recognised as a member of a disciplinary community (cf. Hagstrom 1965; Mulkay 1977). One does not become a member of a discipline by signing up for an association. Rather, disciplines are built on a number of expectations and perceptions through which boundaries are drawn between inside and outside. Relevant criteria may or may not include having followed an educational and professional career, being interested in certain questions, having published in certain outlets. The team identified a set of categories that are widely understood to define somebody as a linguist, e.g. a position as a linguist in a department of linguistics, a PhD in linguistics and publications in journals in linguistics. Since the team decided who is a linguist, our data cannot reflect the more subjective dimensions of disciplinary belonging.

b) If disciplinary categories are allocated to members of communities whose boundaries are never entirely clear, a professorship is a formal status category which usually comes with a title and disciplinary denomination. Considerable differences of what counts as a professorial position can be registered across academic systems (cf. Finkelstein 2015). We considered those who are part of the status group of active professors in the UK (i.e. academic staff above Reader) and in France all active professors (*2ème classe* or higher) and equivalent positions such as *directeurs de recherche/d'études* (e.g. in CNRS and EHESS). In Germany, we included all professors on the W2 and W3 scale (as well as the former C3 and C4 scale) plus the *außerplanmäßige Professoren*, i.e. those who have professorial status without a professorial job.

Since institutions require professors to be listed on their websites, the very large majority can be expected to have online profiles presenting their teaching and research orientations, usually in the local language and another language if it is often used for their research (i.e. mostly English). They usually present themselves on their institutional and sometimes on their personal web pages. The institutional online presentation often follows a standardized institutional template, where one can usually see the official title of their position (e.g. »Professor of Applied Linguistics«), some keywords describing their research interests (e.g. »typology, syntax, Applied Linguistics«), and a research profile (which are usually one paragraph describing their research interests). A few of those professors who were appointed only in spring/summer 2015 may have slipped through. Also, there may be a very small number of professors who are not listed on their university pages, perhaps some older ones in France, where research presentations of some professors are short. And even though we browsed many departments which do not have an explicit relationship with languages (such as psychology, education, anthropology, business schools …), a small number may have fallen through the grid because they are too far off to have caught our attention. We found one professor with a double appointment in departments of sociology and linguistics, which is a common practice especially in the U.S. but rather uncommon in Europe.

In this way, Angermuller and his team found 887 professors in linguistics in the three European countries and entered their institutional and sometimes their personal online profiles (including their CVs, their institutional attachments and their activities) into a searchable data base. Angermuller and Hamann then ran a keyword search with terms such as »Applied Linguistics«, »Linguistique appliquée«, »Angewandte Sprachwissenschaft/Linguistik«, which reflect the major languages used by researchers in the three countries. Professors in this field are likely to show such keywords in the three areas that one typically finds on their homepages: in the research presentation, in the keywords that describe their research, and in the names of their institutional positions. We then went manually through all cases we found and eliminated the few cases that did not relate to Applied Linguistics. Most of the cases remaining in our subsample are located unambiguously within Applied Linguistics even though there are few borderline academics such as one professor who is working on »applied corpus-based discourse linguistics« and another one who mentions »Applied Linguistics« for a previous but not the current posi-

tion. We thus identified 87 individuals who are the professors of the field of Applied Linguistics at the time.[2]

| Number of | France | UK | Germany | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professors of »Linguistics« / »Linguistique« / »Linguistik« | 264 | 127 | 497 | 887 |
| Describing their expertise with keywords such as »Applied Linguistics«, »Linguistique appliquée«, »Angewandte Sprachwissenschaft/Linguistik« <br><br> (share of all professors in Applied Linguistics within linguistics in each country) | 9 (3.4%) | 24 (18.9%) | 54 (10.9%) | 87 (9.8%) |

Table 1: The number of professors in linguistics and in Applied Linguistics

While these professors are the most institutionally recognized group (as of spring/summer 2015) within the broader population of Applied Linguists, it is important to point out the difficulty of demarcating the field through online profiles.

Firstly, the field comprises those who may not use the label »Applied Linguistics« (or its German and French equivalents) but work on related questions in other fields who may or may not be close to Applied Linguistics. Hence, with our method we excluded those who use different words to present themselves (such as specialists in sociolinguistics, of language policy of teaching and learning languages, etc.). Some of the differences we observe between countries result from a politics of labelling and not from ›real‹ differences in epistemological orientations. Indeed, the relative absence of the field in France may be explained by a number of alternative labels existing in France (such as »analyse du discours«, which is well established, or »anglais de spécialité«, which one does not find outside France).

Secondly, our approach covers only those who have full professorial positions. Junior and precarious positions, by contrast, are less likely to be presented online and sometimes they do not yet know themselves whether they want to pursue a career in academia. Given that we did not cover non-professorial academic staff systematically, who are many times more numerous than full professors, we are aware that, to a certain degree, our research design reproduces the structures of visibility that are fundamental to the social dynamics in academia. More research therefore will be needed to account for careers not leading to a professorship.

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2    Even though the information we collected about the professors is exclusively from public online sources, we refrain from mentioning any names of those who we have identified as professors in Applied Linguistics. Producing personalised bibliometric information may risk going against our objective, which is to reveal some of the social mechanisms, practices and structures in a large academic population. What is more, a hit parade of the most and least cited professors runs the risk of reifying relationships of domination, which should be an object of critical reflection. However, we invite interested readers who want to see more detailed data to contact us.

Germany is the country with most professors in Applied Linguistics: 45 use the label »Angewandte Sprachwissenschaft/Linguistik« in their German online profiles, 13 have English-language profiles (»Applied Linguistics«) and four have profiles in both languages. Yet, even though the total number of British professors is considerably lower, Applied Linguistics seems to be most established in the UK, where professors in linguistics are more likely to mention »Applied Linguistics« (18.9% among all profiles of English-medium professors). France has a significant number of linguistics professors with few (3.4%, mostly in departments of English and German) claiming the label of Applied Linguistics, which tends to be perceived as an ›inferior‹ field. In France, eight profiles were in French and the one in English was from a UK-born professor. Even though the acronym of the international association and its conference is French (»AILA – Association internationale de linguistique appliquée«), Applied Linguistics is unevenly institutionalized across countries. With a strong institutional representation in the English-speaking world and many professorships in Germany but not in France, the label is perhaps less universally established than some other subfields of linguistics such as syntax or phonetics, which may be smaller.

A factor that can explain such difference is the organisation of disciplines within the faculties (also known as schools or colleges in the UK or UFR in France). In France and Germany, linguistics is typically situated in letters or humanities faculties whereas it is not uncommon to find linguistics in British or North American schools or faculties of the social sciences. The disciplinary distance between languages and the social sciences may explain why Applied Linguistics has had more difficulty developing in France. It is a characteristic feature of German universities to cover European and some non-European languages and literatures by departments (or *Seminare*) with a focus on a specific region, such as *Germanistik, Anglistik, Romanistik, Slavistik,* sometimes also *Skandinavistik, Sinologie, Afrikanistik* or classical languages. In the UK and France, linguistics is more likely to be understood as ›general‹ linguistics, which is (implicitly) defined by the national language (i.e. English or French); in the UK numerous professors of linguistics can be found in departments of English and in France in faculties (UFR) of *lettres* (cf. Cook 2003; Davies/Elder 2004; Hall/Smith/Wicaksono 2017).

These institutional configurations reflect disciplinary divisions of the academic space just as much as they bring forth and reinforce boundaries between disciplinary communities. Career choices and research interests are structured by those institutional tectonics which are far from being stable (cf. Whitley 1984; Hermanowicz 2009). Universities respond to changing societal demands, especially to students preferring certain disciplines over others, and to policy changes. Academic staff tends to grow (or decline) in line with where students go or where governments define their funding priorities, at least in the long run. Disciplinary fields therefore articulate social processes on individual as well as collective levels. They emerge as a result of many academics pursuing academic careers under conditions of social, economic and political change. As academics progress in their careers, they enter relationships of proximity and distance with their peers and produce and reproduce boundaries between academic communities (cf. Hamann 2018).

Academic communities are enacted in discursive practices, through text and talk (including journal and book publications, conference presentations, emails, discussions, reviews, gossip, etc.) in which academics negotiate their positions in the academic social space. The (sometimes) unintended effect of academics engaging in such practices is to produce and reproduce the social academic order in which some are recognized to belong to this or that group and are relevant for this or that community.

Not all academics obtain the recognition necessary to advance in their careers and to end up in one of the few senior academic positions, i.e. professorships or chair positions in the institutions. As academics move through the social space of academia, they normally follow a two-pronged trajectory: while they build up reputation in the disciplines, they secure and improve their place in the institutions. Academics' careers resonate with disciplinary communities and institutional structures since institutions aim to recruit and promote academics with disciplinary visibility. Over time, academics succeed in their careers if they consolidate their place in the disciplinary communities *and* secure an institutional position (Angermuller 2013).

## 2 Hyperunequal citation visibility among professors of Applied Linguistics

In order to account for inequalities of disciplinary visibility among academics, we produced estimates of citation numbers with the help of Google Scholar. Google Scholar is a free online tool whose algorithms measure citations in academic journal articles and monographs. It comprises a great deal of academic publications in most languages, not only those which are available online but also many of those behind paywalls, perhaps as much as 80%-90% of English-language publications as it is claimed in Google Scholar's Wikipedia entry. Other languages should have less coverage even though we can provide no figures or estimates. Its data base is nearing half a billion documents and is therefore much more comprehensive than the commercial ISI Web of Science indicators, based on a closed set of journals (cf. Prins et al. 2016). Google Scholar allows users to create profiles listing their publications and showing who has cited them.

Since its inception in 2004, Google Scholar has become a widely used tool for academics who use it for their bibliographical research. By producing bibliometric information and making it available for free, Google Scholar has broken the Web of Science monopoly and added to the growing pool of bibliometric indicators. While it has contributed to a culture of academic auto-surveillance through spontaneous ranking practices (cf. Fochler/Felt/Müller 2016; Hammarfelt/de Rijcke/Rushforth 2016), its effects on decision making in academia still need to be investigated more systematically. One should be aware of the specific effects bibliometric citation counts may have on the social sciences and humanities (Najman/Hewitt 2003; Archambault/Larivière 2010; see also Bornmann/Daniel 2008). If academics cite other academics (Angermuller 2009), they may be motivated by many different reasons, which vary across fields (cf. Hyland 1999; Borgman/Furner 2002; Allen 1997).

In order to compare the citations given to the 87 Applied Linguistics professors, we produced estimates of absolute citation numbers (as of November 2018) and grouped them into six tiers: from barely visible professors who are cited less than 100 times to highly visible ones with more than 10,000 citations (table 2).

| Citations according to Google Scholar | English keywords (»Applied Linguistics«) | | | German keywords (»Angewandte Sprachwissenschaft/Linguistik«, all in Germany) | French keywords (»linguistique appliquée«, all in France) | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | Ger | UK | | | |
| ≤ 100 | - | 1 | 2 | 10 (+1 English profile) | | 13 |
| ≤ 1,000 | | 5 | 2 | 23 | 7 | 37 |
| ≤ 2,500 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 8 (+2 English profiles) | 1 (+1 English profile) | 21 |
| ≤ 6,000 | - | | 6 | - | - | 6 |
| ≤ 10,000 | - | 1 | 5 | - (+1 English profile) | - | 6 |
| > 10,000 | - | 1 | 3 | - | - | 4 |
| Total | 1 | 13 | 24 | 41 | 8 | 87 |

Table 2: Citation numbers of 87 full professors in Applied Linguistics in France, Germany, and UK, according to Google Scholar

All 24 professors in the UK, thirteen professors in Germany and one in France had online profiles in English. And these English-medium professors attracted around 4,000 citations on average. The average numbers are considerably lower for German-medium professors (750 citations) and French-medium professors (400 citations). None of the German- and French-medium professors were cited more than 2,500 times while 16 out of the 38 English-medium professors were above 2,500.

Many factors can be cited to explain these differences in citation numbers, which do not mechanically reflect ›research performance‹. One should be aware of varying sizes of research communities, some disciplinary and language communities being larger than others. The chance of attracting many citations in a large field (such as contemporary North American literature) is higher than in a small field (such as Hungarian linguistics). One also needs to take into consideration that not all professors follow the same research-oriented track: teaching and administrative loads vary considerably between positions, institutions and countries. What is more, one can register certain ›cultures‹ of citing peers (on the relation between authorship and visibility, see, e.g., Pontille 2004; Hilário et al. 2018). Some fields (e.g. the more theoretical ones in the humanities) and languages (e.g. research in French) may be less prone to citing. It is also important to reflect on the difficulties of comparing status positions across countries. Professors in the UK are a more select elite in that they represent a smaller share of the total academic population.

The citation numbers also clearly show the effect of the language medium. English is the language that is used in the U.S., which dwarfs any other system in the world. And as a *lingua franca* it is used in many academic systems all over the world. While German is a regional language (mostly in Germany, Austria, Switzerland), French is used in dozens of countries all over the world (including Belgium, Switzerland, parts of Africa, Asia and North America) and it also has strong currency in the Romance language world (such as Romania and Brazil). Yet, while English (just like any language) carries the epistemic traditions from its local contexts, it is widely seen as a more ›universal‹ and less ›national‹ medium than, for instance, French, which is perhaps more likely to be impregnated by cultural references from France. A small group of French academics have been exceptionally successful outside France (e.g., Derrida, Foucault, Bourdieu, etc.; cf. Angermuller 2015; Lamont 1987). Yet, even for non-English academic knowledge to be established as a canonical standard in the disciplines, it nowadays needs to pass through English. This perception may explain why scholars who are based in advanced English-speaking countries like the UK are more ›citable‹ for scholars from other countries.

While according to Google Scholar our 87 professors have generated a total of around 172,000 citations (as of November 2018), more than 150,000 citations (i.e. 86.5%) go to the 38 scholars (43%) with English online profiles, more than 20,000 (or 11.5%) to the German-medium professors and just over 3,000 citations (2%) to the French-speaking scholars (table 3). It needs repeating that Google Scholar is skewed towards English-medium publications (in line with a general hegemony of the English language in academic communication, cf. Ammon 2010). And while these numbers testify to the vast space of English-medium research, it does not follow that French or German is ›threatened‹ by English. And there is no evidence that the conditions for research for French or German scholars are in any way less favourable. Quantity must not be confounded with quality.

English-medium research constitutes not only the biggest space but also the one with the most extreme disparities in terms of the disciplinary visibility for researchers. Among the 38 English-medium professors, we found nine professors with fewer than 900 citations (four in the UK and five in Germany) whereas the nine most cited professors attracted between 6,500 and up to 21,500 citations (seven in the UK and two from Germany with the most cited professor based in Germany). The four (out of 38) most cited English-medium professors were cited 54,000 times altogether (and totalled 36% of all English-medium professors). We have registered less pronounced disparities in German: the 4 (out of 41) most cited professors with profiles only in German totalled around 25% of all citations of German-medium professors. The small group of French-medium professors showed perhaps the least hierarchical distribution of citations: seven attracted between 161 and 500 citations and the most cited one (1,161 citations) may not fit well into our group since her CV mentions »linguistique appliquée« only for an early career step. Decision-making in French institutions may be less responsive to the dynamics in the disciplines, which may lower the disciplinary visibility threshold for professorial appointments but may also contribute to creating a select group of disciplinary superstars (less bound by and invested in the constraints of their institutions). Yet, our population, and the French sample in particular, is small, which prevents us from making more general claims.

| Total number of citations: 172,000 | Total number (share) | Total number of citations of 10% most cited professors |
|---|---|---|
| English-medium professors | 150,000 (86.5%) | 54,000 (36% of all English-medium professors) |
| German-medium professors | 20,000 (11.5%) | 5,000 (25% of all German-medium professors) |
| French-medium professors | 3,000 (2%) | 500 (17% within French if one excludes the most cited professor) |

Table 3: The distribution of citations across languages according to Google Scholar

If we take the entire population across the three countries, the 10% (9) most cited professors, all publishing in English, were cited more (almost 100,000 times) than the 90% (78) other professors in the field (who received roughly 73,000 citations). Although these numbers do not reflect the value the members of this community give to each other, hyperunequal distributions of citations still create realities that no actor in the field can ignore. Hence, given the strong concentration of disciplinary visibility within a small elite of highly cited professors, we can make some general observations about the social organisation of the academic space: Firstly, an academic career needs to be understood broadly, namely as a process that involves not only the progression from one institutional status to another but also as the build-up of one's visibility in disciplinary communities which resonates with the individual's institutional progression over time. Secondly, the data show that the unequal distribution of visibility in disciplinary communities does not replicate institutional status hierarchies, at least not necessarily. As academics progress in their careers, they move through a space characterised by both disciplinary hyperinequalities and institutional status hierarchies. Against this background, we argue for a broad definition of academic careers, namely as the gradual consolidation of one's subject position in academic communities. A subject position designates the bundle of socially established and valued categories that define the place of an academic vis-à-vis other academics. It comprises institutional categories (such as status) as well as reputational categories which are constructed in the spontaneous encounters with other peers. A subject position, therefore, is a set of categories that give value to the individual as a member of academic communities.

## 3  The celebrity logics as a challenge for Bourdieu's field theory

A technology which creates social order among academics (Angermüller 2010), Google Scholar's numbers should be treated with as much caution as any other social metric. By measuring citations, Google Scholar constitutes social realities as much as it reflects them. It is important to point out the responsiveness actors show towards Google Scholar indicators (Espeland/Sauder 2007). Moreover, Google Scholar may reinforce the Matthew ef-

fect (Merton 1968), the concentration of rewards for those who have been rewarded already (Maeße 2017). And Google Scholar should facilitate the »consecration« of the most recognized academics as the official or canonical representatives of the field (Bourdieu 1988). Bibliometric indicators have also been criticised for masking the political nature of academic decision making and for rendering important aspects of academic labour invisible such as management and teaching and non-academic labour (Angermuller/van Leeuwen 2018; Hammarfelt 2016).

Yet, however one may interpret these numbers, they show that hierarchies in the institutions are unlikely to reflect hierarchies in the world of specialised disciplinary communities. This finding challenges the everyday expectation that professors are appointed when they have reached a certain experience in the field. There are vast differences in terms of age of first professorial appointment. And differences between fields have long been known: in some fields, careers (and salaries) progress faster than in others. On average, academics in some business school-related fields, e.g., obtain their first full professorial post more than a decade earlier than in the humanities. As a result, some academics produce much more research before they become professors than others. And even within a field like Applied Linguistics, our findings testify to slow and fast professorial careers. There is much reason to believe that citation numbers can hardly be used to predict institutional success. Does this question the meritocratic idea, deeply ingrained in the academic world, that institutional decision-making is to reward the ›best‹ researchers in the field (see also Leahey 2007)?

Our findings also challenge the theoretical assumption held by many sociologists of science that academics' career success mechanically replicates a given distribution of socioeconomic and institutional resources. One needs to mention Bourdieu's homology hypothesis (Bourdieu 1985, 1988) here, which works well with respect to accounting for the family background. Countless studies have confirmed how higher education contributes to reproducing class structures (Bourdieu 1996; Bourdieu/Passeron 1979; cf. Reay/Crozier/Clayton 2009; Ball et al. 2002). While we have little data about the socioeconomic background of our 87 professors, one can expect a strong correlation between academic status and class structures. However, there is little reason to believe that homology can explain hyperinequalities in citation visibility which we observe within the senior status group of academics.

The distribution of citations within the group of established professors suggests disciplinary hyperinequalities between a very small and select group of international academic stars (who are usually professors) and a large group of academics, a few of them professors, who are cited much less or not at all. Therefore, while we assume that institutional progression makes academics more citable, the premise of homology runs counter to strong inequalities in disciplinary visibility within the most senior status groups. Nor can one assume a strong homology of citation visibility and the class structure even though class certainly has a major impact on who becomes a professor or not. Therefore, neither class nor institutional status predict disciplinary visibility. If homology does not account for hyperunequal citation distributions, we should pay more attention to the very real hierarchies that emerge from the discursive practices of academics whose sub-

ject positions are built up on a ›free‹ marketplace of academic goods few of which meet with a great deal of resonance while many others do not.

Our observations do not invalidate Bourdieu's field theory if one accounts for the complex geometries of the various codes and scales through which social hierarchies among academics are constructed. Yet, one may see also limits of Bourdieu's field theory, which explains academic success by the »capital« that individual producers mobilize to occupy the highest positions in the field (Bourdieu 1988).

1) One difficulty is to demarcate the contours of the field. Even though the vast majority of careers takes place within one country, we identified some cases in every system who have held positions in more than one academic system. For the few professors who have moved between countries, the most common moment is to emigrate before the PhD, which can be considered as the ›entry ticket‹ into a national academic job market. The appointment of non-nationals (with national PhDs) is somewhat more frequent in English-speaking countries such as the UK than in Germany and in France. However, in Germany and in France, one can find a significant number of non-nationals in area- and language-specific fields like *Anglistik* or *études germaniques*, which are less developed in the UK. German professors are more likely to have spent a few years outside Germany during their postdoc phase than in other countries. The British system seems to be more open than many other countries to non-nationals starting careers as PhD students and slightly more open to professorial appointments to non-nationals without national PhDs even though such appointments are very much exceptional in any academic system. Therefore, if one defines the field as the territorial space in which academics move up the institutional status ladder over time, there is a tendency for academic fields to coincide with nationally bounded spaces. The problem with such an institutionalist view on academic careers is that it does not account for the complex geometries of disciplinary communities which are *not* limited by national boundaries (for economics see Maeße 2018; see Go/Krause 2016 on transnational fields).

The language medium plays a critical role and many academics use more than one language in research, teaching, and management. Hence, it is true for the field as it is for any other social configuration that its boundaries exist in the eyes of the beholder. To pursue a career in academia thus turns out to be a process of establishing a place in a space whose perceived boundaries depend on the perspectives and languages, the institutions and disciplines that are considered relevant from the academic's point of view. While the choices academics make are constrained by the possibilities of the space in which they move, they make their academic space just as well as they are made by it. The academic field, therefore, is what an actor who carves out his/her niche, defines relevant relationships and constructs social order achieves through his or her discursive activities.

2) Another difficulty concerns *hyperinequality* of visibility that we can observe among professors. For Bourdieu, »visibility« is a »social capital: to accumulate it is ›to make a name for oneself‹« (Bourdieu 1975, S. 26). Yet how can the field theory account for 10% of professors being cited more than all other professors in the field combined? While academics indeed invest their resources to achieve disciplinary visibility and to advance in their careers, the kind of hyperinequalities we found can hardly be explained by »capital

accumulation« and »investment strategies « of academic producers alone because the dynamics of disciplinary communication often follow a winner-takes-all logic. And while visibility is an asset with real value for academics, is it a capital specific to the academic field? An academic celebrity tends to be cited for whatever he/she publishes because he or she has one of the few names that everybody can cite in a large academic population (cf. Allen 1997, on »symbolic« citations). Celebrity is of no less value to academics than is cultural and economic capital. However, celebrity seems to be of a different nature. Celebrity refers to the most visible and valued subject positions which emerge from mostly free and often spontaneous discursive dynamics which nobody entirely controls. If celebrity academics absorb the discursive labour of large communities, the celebrity logics of academia testifies to certain ways of producing and distributing discursive value among academics, which, concludingly, we theorise in terms of discursive capitalism.

## 4  Conclusion: towards a critique of discursive capitalism

Academics engage in discourse to convey certain ideas. Academic discourse consists of utterances, such as *The earth orbits the sun*, which has become a central tenet in the field of astronomy. By using utterances, academics not only make knowledge claims but they also show themselves and others. *The earth orbits the sun,* credited to Nicolaus Copernicus, has been taken up and repeated again and again by generations of academics. As a result, ›Copernicus‹ has occupied a canonical subject position (Angermuller 2014).

This logic applies to many fields, including Applied Linguistics. For a few to attain celebrity status, many are needed to participate in discourse without being visible. Such is the celebrity logics in academia, which is fundamental to the way ideas, things and people are valuated in academic discourse. Celebrity, i.e. the making of valuable subject positions, is the product of a discursive economy which gives a great deal of value (recognition, reputation, attention, legitimacy…) to a few subject positions in a community. While value is given to subject positions whenever academics engage in discursive practices, the value discursively constructed in a community tends to accumulate, which is why we see a ›capitalist‹ logic of accumulation at work. Academia, in other words, is subject to a regime of ›discursive capitalism‹ that allows few members of a community to occupy subject positions which are made visible in the discursive practices of the many members of the community. By attempting to buy in the most valuable subject positions, higher education institutions reproduce the transfer of discursive value from the many to the few. Discursive capitalism would not work without higher education institutions converting the discursive value produced in the community into the hard currency of institutional status hierarchies including high salaries for a few members (figure 1). Discursive capitalism, therefore, results from the spontaneous discursive value-creating dynamics in the disciplinary communities whose fruits – the most valuable subject positions – are then ›reaped‹ by higher education institutions by giving a status and a salary to some members.
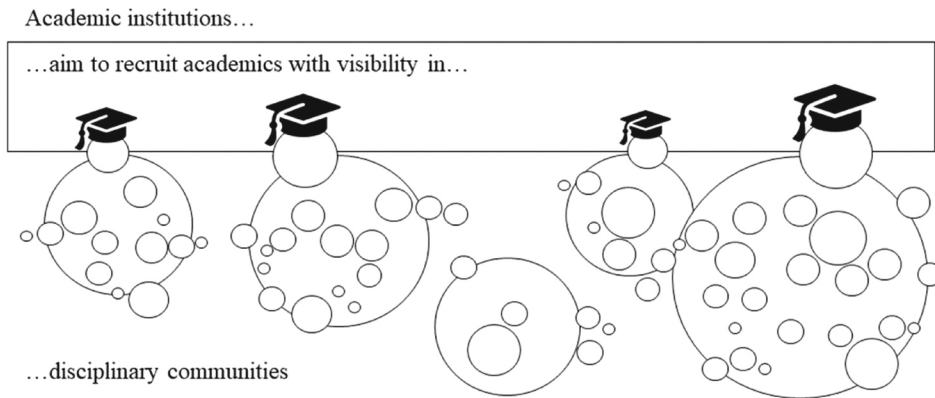
Figure 1: Discursive capitalism as institutions appropriating disciplinary visibility

Citations are just the most explicit, the most formalised, and perhaps also the most superficial way of attributing value to subject positions in academia. Language affords a host of devices and resources that allow its users to define and value their positions vis-à-vis others, and in most cases this is done without naming or citing anybody explicitly (Angermuller 2014). Through language, we form the social no matter what are our intentions – and in many cases we do not pursue deliberate strategies. Thus, discourse must be seen as a social activity of producing and distributing value among the discourse participants. Discourse not only reflects social inequalities but it also constitutes them by giving value to some subject positions more than to others.

While citations are only a small aspect of academic practices, it is perhaps a practice we can change. What if we started to make visible those who haven't been made visible, those working in the less prestigious institutions, in lower status positions and writing in less dominant languages? Wouldn't it be time to start to think – here and now – how we, through our own academic practices, are complicit in reinforcing inequalities that we find unjust or problematical? If we help produce and reproduce hyperinequalities between academics through our own discursive practices, why don't we change our practices and help value the many valuable members of our community who are not sufficiently valued yet? Nobody who makes a valuable contribution to an academic community should be denied the subject position that reflects one's own fair value in academic discourse.

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