

From Bullshit to Mindfucking in Higher Education

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The inspiration for the article comes from three sources: first and foremost, Frankfurt's essay *On Bullshit*, which was first published in the *Raritan Quarterly Review* journal in 1986 and as a book that became the *New York Times* bestseller in 2005; second, Pennycook et al article entitled *On the reception and detection of pseudo-profound bullshit*, and third, to a lesser degree, McGinn's book *Mindfucking* (2008).

Our main aim is to reveal pomposity and vacuous jargon in academic discourse, lack of knowledge in academic essays, and some mechanisms of regurgitation encouraged by pseudo-teaching. Following Frankfurt, we will try to find examples of the academic discourse emptied of all informative content. Last but not least, the purpose of our research is to stress the importance of clarity and intellectual rigor in academic writing.

This, of course, could not have been done without taking into account valuable arguments found in Michael Billig's thought provoking *Learn to Write Badly: How to Succeed in the Social Sciences* published in 2013. His book analyses two things: the conditions under which academics in social sciences are working (massive expansion of higher education institutions, the number of students and teachers, self-promotion, competition between disciplines, which are divided into smaller and smaller circles) and the linguistic nature of their work (technical terminology becomes superior to ordinary language, noun-based style of writing i.e. reification and nominalization, passivization, etc.), which are, to some extent, responsible for the overproduction of bullshit. In conclusion, the author gives some pragmatic recommendations for the improvement of the present situation.

Keywords: academic discourse, academic writing, bullshit, higher education, pseudo-teaching

References

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