Multilingualism

Abstract: English dominates scholarly publishing, but using a single language has consequences for researchers, research and society. Multilingualism is the use of more than one language to disseminate research. This could include translating individual publications, but it also entails a publishing ecosystem where publishing takes place in a variety of languages. Steps to support multilingualism include diversifying reviewer pools and editorial boards, translating websites and resources, and implementing policies to publish in multiple languages.

DIAMAS

Developing Institutional Open Access Publishing Models to Advance Scholarly Communication

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Main text:

In recent decades, English has emerged as the dominant language for scholarly publishing. However, using a single language for research dissemination privileges some scholars while marginalising others, which has consequences not only for individuals but for research and society more broadly. For instance, Non-Anglophone researchers may need longer to read and write in English and may face more revisions and rejections. This may result in a lower volume of research output, which could impact career advancement (Ramírez-Castañeda 2020). What's more, when scholars do choose to publish in a language other than English, their work is less likely to be indexed in prestigious databases, thus making it less discoverable and less likely to be cited (Di Bitetti and Ferreras 2017). Meanwhile, English-speaking scholars, who come mainly from Western cultures, will have more visibility and power, and this could influence which subjects are investigated and which communities benefit from the results (Amano et al. 2016). Their higher visibility and volume of output may also improve career advancement opportunities for English speakers, such as prestigious appointments as journal editors, among others.

As consequences of using a single language for research dissemination become clearer, the movement to make scholarly publishing multilingual is gaining momentum (e.g. Helsinki Initiative 2019; UNESCO 2021). In this context, multilingualism could include translating individual publications into more than one language, but it also means supporting publication in a variety of languages even when the works published are not translations of one another (e.g., one journal or article may be published in Finnish and another in Polish).

IPSPs can help to support multilingual scholarly publishing in a variety of ways:

- Develop or revise journal mission statements and objectives to improve linguistic diversity and monitor progress towards this goal;
- Translate journal websites and resources, as well as calls for papers, into languages beyond English;

- Diversify the pools of reviewers, editorial board members and editors to have greater linguistic coverage, and ask authors whether they can accept peer review or editorial feedback in other languages;
- Audit author guidelines to clarify policies and practices around multilingualism (e.g., which publishing languages are accepted, whether translations are permitted, how to cite works in other languages, whether total word limits can be extended for some languages);
- Provide concrete guidance to help authors write in a way that optimises their text for translation;
- Implement policies to host translated abstracts, plain language summaries or full-texts alongside published articles;
- Create a visible byline or a field in service acknowledgement platforms (e.g., Publons) to recognize translators or multilingual editors;
- Offer low-cost licence agreements that permit authors to translate their publications elsewhere or to publish translations of previously published manuscripts;
- Provide or facilitate translation support alongside editing support;
- Integrate new functionalities into journal platforms, such as the capacity to manage multilingual metadata, or a forum to facilitate peer language translation;
- Support metrics that allow non-English articles or journals to be cited more easily and equitably.

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Related Toolsuite Articles
- Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB)

Related Guidelines and Training Materials
- [Multilingualism: Recommendations for consideration by different actors in scholarly publishing](#)

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Additional resources
- EASE Guidelines for Authors and Translators of Scientific Articles to be Published in English, European Association of Science Editors (EASE)
- Running a journal in a local or regional language, Open Access Journal Toolkit
- Good Practice Advice for Managing Multilingual and Non-English Language Content in Repositories, Confederation of Open Access Repositories
- Ten Tips for Overcoming Language Barriers in Science, T. Amano, C. Rios Rojas, Y. Boum II, M. Calvo, and B. B. Misra
- Language Barriers in Organismal Biology: What Can Journals Do Better? (see Figure 5), B. Nolde-Lopez, J. Bundus, H. Arenas-Castro, D. Román, S. Chowdhury, T. Amano, V. Berdejo-Espinola, and S. M. Wadgymar

Keywords
Language bias; language discrimination; language diversity; linguistic bias; linguistic discrimination; linguistic diversity; multilingualism; translation

Glossary
Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB); Institutional publishing service providers (IPSP); Multilingualism

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
- What do we mean by multilingualism in scholarly publishing?
- What types of linguistic discrimination can occur in scholarly publishing?
- What are some of the consequences of linguistic discrimination in scholarly publishing?
- Who can play a role in supporting multilingualism in scholarly publishing?
- What types of actions can be taken to support multilingualism in scholarly publishing?
- How can I get started implementing multilingualism in scholarly publishing?
- Where can I learn more about multilingualism in scholarly publishing?