



Veeltaligheid in die wetenskap Multilingualism in science

South African Family Practice (SAFP) is trots om veeltaligheid in die Suid-Afrikaanse gesondheidswetenskappe te ondersteun. Ons amptelike redaksionele beleid is dat manuskripte in enige van ons land se 11 amptelike tale vir publikasie oorweeg sal word. Dit is 'n erkenning dat ander inheemse tale 'n belangrike bydrae tot wetenskapsontwikkeling in Suider Afrika kan maak. SAFP besef ook dat ons, as 'n Afrika- en internasionale rolspeler, 'n verantwoordelikheid het om nuwe kennis so wyd moontlik oor te dra. Sommige nuwe kennis is slegs in sekere inheemse tale beskikbaar as gevolg van die outeur se bepaalde taalvaardigheid. As wetenskaplike tydskrifte nie bereid is om sulke manuskripte vir publikasie te oorweeg nie, sal daardie unieke bydraes verlore gaan tot nadeel van die mensdom. SAFP bied opsommings in Engels aan juis om toeganklikheid van inheemse tale vir die groter wetenskapsgemeenskap te verbeter.

Sedert 1998 het SAFP 11 manuskripte in 'n ander taal as Engels ontvang (almal in Afrikaans). Van die 120 navorsingsartikels wat oor hierdie tydperk gepubliseer is, was agt in Afrikaans (bykans 7%). Alhoewel SAFP nie rekord hou van outeurs se moedertaal nie, was dit egter duidelik dat die oorgrote meerderheid nie-Engelse outeurs verkies het om hulle manuskrip in Engels aan te bied. Dit is verstaanbaar dat outeurs verkies om in Engels met internasionale lesers te kommunikeer. Engels het immers die nie-amptelike taal van die wetenskap geword, wat ook tot voordeel strek van vinnige verspreiding van nuwe kennis en tot beter kommunikasie lei. Dink net aan die gemak waarmee internasionale kongresse deesdae gehou kan word met Engels as voertaal.

Daar is egter ook 'n lansie te breek vir veeltaligheid. Sommige outeurs, veral in die Afrika-konteks, het beperkte hulpbronne, en kommunikasie in 'n ander taal as hulle moedertaal is bloot nie ekonomies haalbaar nie. Sommige manuskripte wat in Engels voorgelê word se taalstandaard is ook van so 'n swak gehalte dat die manuskrip eenvoudig nie aanvaar kan word nie. Dit sou beter wees as sulke manuskripte aangebied kon word in 'n taal waarmee die outeur gemaklik is. En les bes, daar is ook die kwessie van respek, iets wat ons in Suid-Afrika op die duur manier moes leer – respek vir 'n ander se kultuurgoed. En hier kan ons by die Kanadese gaan kers opsteek. Die *Canadian Family Physician* publiseer alle hoofartikels in beide Engels en Frans, en die opsommings van alle artikels is ook tweetalig. Ek is oortuig dat die oorgrote meerderheid Franssprekende Kanadese huisartse Engels goed kan lees en verstaan. Maar dit gaan oor respek en die skep van ruimte vir diversiteit.

SAFP wil graag ons lesers en outeurs verseker dat ons tegemoetkomend wil wees; dat ons jou moedertaal respekteer, en dat jy gerus kan skryf in die taal waarmee jy wetenskap gemaklik bedryf. Lank lewe die reënboognasie! Viva!

South African Family Practice (SAFP) is proud to support multilingualism in South African health sciences. Our formal editorial policy states that we will consider manuscripts for publication that are submitted in any one of the 11 South African official languages. This acknowledges the fact that all languages contribute to the advancement of science. SAFP also realises that, as an African and international role player, we have a responsibility to distribute information as widely as possible. Some new information is only available in certain indigenous languages due to the author's language skills. Important and unique contributions may therefore be lost to the detriment of humanity if scientific journals only accept manuscripts in English. SAFP provide abstracts in English to improve the accessibility of indigenous languages for the broader science community.

Since 1998 SAFP has accepted 11 manuscripts in a language other than English (all in Afrikaans). Out of the 120 research articles published over this period, eight were in Afrikaans (almost 7%). Even though SAFP does not keep record of authors' mother tongue, it is clear that most non-English authors prefer to submit their manuscripts in English. One can understand that authors want to use English to communicate with international readers. English has indeed become the unofficial language of science, giving rise to many advantages in terms of better communication and faster dissemination of new information.

There is, however, a strong case to be made for multilingualism. In the African context resources are often very limited and publishing in English may be an economic obstacle. Many manuscripts submitted in English are of such poor linguistic standard that they simply cannot be accepted for publication.

It would be better for these authors to submit their work in a language with which they feel comfortable. And after all, in a multicultural society such as South Africa there is also a need to demonstrate respect for the cultural goods of others. A very good example in this respect is set by the *Canadian Family Physician*, which publishes all its leading articles in both English and French, while abstracts of all articles are given in both languages. I am convinced that most French-speaking Canadian GPs are fully literate in English. But the issue here is respect and creating space for diversity.

SAFP wants to assure our readers and authors that we want to accommodate you, that we respect your mother tongue, and that you are welcome to submit manuscripts in the language in which you prefer to practise science. Long live the rainbow nation! Viva!

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