



J-BILD and the Open Movement: A Grassroots Journal Pushes against Standardized Quality Metrics

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In this editorial, we share thoughts and commentary on how *J-BILD* fits within the complex and dynamic landscape of scholarly publishing. We begin with a focus on our stance on the use of particular research metrics, including acceptance rates and impact factors, before exploring how we position ourselves in relation to the Open Access movement.

We begin with some reflections from recent conversations with members of our academic community about research metrics, particularly impact factor and acceptance rates. As an editorial team, we have the pleasure of regularly participating in panel discussions about scholarly publishing at various academic conferences. We value these opportunities for open and transparent dialogue with the academic community, especially as the audience at these sessions is often largely represented by graduate students and early-career researchers for whom participation in scholarly publishing can be challenging. As such, many of the questions that we address during these sessions are about how to navigate this complex landscape. These are fascinating exchanges and highlight that the world of scholarly publishing is vast and varied. The question of where to publish, and how to get there, has many answers; it depends on what you want to say, how you want to say it, and who you want to say it to. There are also practical matters, such as how much a publication in a given journal counts on your CV. It is not only at conferences that we engage in this discussion. On occasion, we have had a *J-BILD* author write with a question about how we validate the quality of our journal using standardised bibliometrics, such as impact factor or acceptance rates.

These are learning moments for us in terms of how we communicate the positioning of our journal and the values we promote vis-a-vis scholarship and the production and communication of knowledge within a discourse community. We absolutely recognize that the world of academia is often defined and driven by pressures to publish in top-tiered journals. We also appreciate the pressures emerging scholars may be facing from their institutions



and funding agencies, which are typically firmly rooted in the culture of quantitative bibliometrics as measures of quality and relevance. When we founded *J-BILD*, it was never our intention to join that particular stream of academia; rather, we intentionally positioned ourselves in critical response to the mainstream system of scholarly publishing. As such, *J-BILD* occupies a marginal space in the world of publishing. We are strong advocates for where we stand and what counts as scholarship in the production of knowledge. In the interest of openness and transparency, we feel it is time to be explicit with our authors and potential authors about what they can expect from us as a journal. Unlike many top-tier journals, we are a grassroots, community-operated, and volunteer-run journal. We do not have a business model nor a funding structure. We espouse a *service* model. We believe strongly in what we are doing. Our peer mentors and copy editors, who serve the journal and support our authors, do so because they believe in what we are doing as well. We do not have an impact factor and are not likely to go in that direction, nor do we track the acceptance rate of our manuscripts. We share concerns articulated elsewhere (e.g., Paulus et al, 2018) about the inappropriate use of bibliometrics, such as Journal Impact Factors (JIFs), to evaluate the quality of individual researchers' work.

Acceptance rates refer to “the percentage share of formally submitted full manuscripts that end up being published in the journal in question” (Björk, 2019, p. 2). In other words, acceptance rates can signal to an author the likelihood that their manuscript will be accepted for publication in a given journal. While there is some *correlation* between lower acceptance rates in older and/or higher-ranking journals (Sugimoto et al (2013), it is inappropriate and problematic to assume a *causal* relationship between quality or prestige and acceptance rates. In other words, researchers should not assume that a journal with a lower acceptance rate is a higher quality or more prestigious journal, although some of the top-tier commercial journals may want us to do so; for example, Elsevier includes acceptance rate as one of its measures of impact (see: [Biomaterials Journal Insights](#), Elsevier, 2023). However, drawing conclusions about a journal's quality based on its acceptance rate is a problematic and inappropriate “proxy for perceived prestige and demand as compared to availability” (Metrics Toolkit, 2020). Acceptance rates vary drastically between disciplines, country affiliations of the editors, number of reviewers per article, and Open Access status (Sugimoto et al, 2013). To conflate acceptance rate with quality can be seen as a classic application of the scarcity principle of economics, which posits that the rarer or more difficult something is to attain, the more valuable it is perceived to be (Darity, 2022). In other words, people assume that because something is in short supply, it must be valuable. In fact, the scarcity principle is a key tool that can be leveraged to persuade consumers towards making certain choices (W.P. Carey News, 14 February, 2007). This is alarming when applied to the context of scholarly publishing because it further highlights how commercialised this space has become.

While we could estimate the percentage of manuscripts that are accepted each year for publication, the number itself would be meaningless or misunderstood, in isolation; each manuscript that we receive at *J-BILD* has its own unique journey. We provide feedback to all authors who submit a manuscript, regardless of how that journey unfolds. When we accept a manuscript for peer mentoring, our collaborative model of developing a piece for publishing, some manuscripts take more than a year to prepare for publication, while others get part way, and for various reasons, the process stops; other manuscripts may be ready for publication within six months or fewer. We



have also published several special issues, which have altered how many manuscripts we can accept and publish in a given year. From an operational perspective, our editorial board has seen several leaves-of-absence, including three maternity leaves and a sabbatical, since starting the journal in 2017. For these reasons, we don't set targets and each year is very different. We feel that it is important to recognize that, behind the journal website, is the work of humans in community with one another; we share this because our approach is driven by our commitment to transparency and openness. In fact, top-tiered journals could likely benefit from greater transparency, in terms of how they calculate acceptance and publication rates, and in other ways. Many of those journals remain behind expensive paywalls, which limits access.

The *J-BILD* model is different; we are open-source and Open Access. Open Access refers to journal articles that are free to read by anyone, rather than sitting behind paywalls that require institutional access, usually paid for by library subscriptions. There are several models to achieving Open Access; as a grassroots, not-for-profit, community-run journal, *J-BILD's* approach fits best within the Diamond model of Open Access, which is free for both authors to publish in and free for readers to access (Open Access Australasia, 2021). Interested readers are encouraged to see the recent report entitled *The OA Diamond Journals Study* (Bosman et al, 2021) commissioned by cOAlition S, to better understand the role of Diamond Open Access journals in the academic publishing landscape.

These conversations about journal impact factors and acceptance rates are timely, with many of us in the scholarly publishing community looking ahead to International Open Access Week in October. This year's theme is "Community over Commercialization," intended to encourage "a candid conversation about which approaches to open scholarship prioritise the best interests of the public and the academic community—and which do not" (International Open Access Week, 2023). In reflecting on questions about our bibliometrics, especially within the context of the theme of the upcoming Open Access week, we encourage the academic community to recognize that Open Access publishing is part of a bigger philosophical movement; the Open movement traces its roots back as far as the advent of public education in the 17th century, with significant growth in the uptake and adoption of Open education practices since the 1970s (Zawacki-Richter et al, 2020). Open can be understood as an umbrella approach, informed by the core values of transparency, collaboration, access/participation, and co-creation.

Expanding our understanding of Open as more than free-to-read journal articles is essential in the current academic climate because the landscape of Open scholarly publishing is becoming increasingly commercialised by for-profit journals, who have cunningly aligned themselves with the Open Access movement. Commercial publishers have done this by shifting paywalls, which were previously paid by libraries in the form of subscriptions, to researchers, who pay Article Processing Charges (APCs) to make their research Open Access. At the same time, federal funding agencies are recognizing the social value of research that is openly shared, by adopting policies that mandate Open Access publishing for funded research. This places authors in a difficult position, whereby the cost of Open Access is pushed onto the individual researcher who is compelled by funding requirements to publish their work in an Open Access journal. When an individual APC can run into the thousands of dollars or Euros, there are significant issues related to who can participate in the commercially driven Open Access model. And academics are pushing back; recently,



the entire editorial board of *NeuroImage*, a top-tier neuroscience journal published by industry giant Elsevier, resigned *en masse* in protest against the rising cost of APCs (Fazackerley, 2023), events which were expertly explored in a [recent Guardian podcast](#) (see: Bury, 2023). These issues of access and participation underscore significant contradictions between the core values of the Open movement and the way that the commercial publishing industry has positioned itself within the movement.

Our stance on journal impact factors reflects our broader commitment to the values of the Open movement as a journal and a scholarly community. When we founded *J-BILD*, we were motivated by a desire to increase access to and participation in scholarly publishing. Indeed, we have shared our stance on the problematic distribution of access and power within the current model of scholarly publishing in previous editorials as well as in published works of our own (Halcomb-Smith et al, 2020). It has always been our approach to consider the concept of Open more broadly than the financial, to also include the core values of the Open movement: transparency, collaboration, access and participation, and co-creation. These values have informed our operating model at every level, positioning *J-BILD* as something of a fringe journal, existing in the liminal spaces between Open Access and Open Education, between publishing and pedagogy (Halcomb-Smith et al, 2020). For us, Open and the values inherent to the Open movement have informed our decision to adopt a peer-mentorship model, which is not only Open in the sense of transparency, in that authors know who is reviewing their paper, but is also Open in a broader sense: collaborative, co-creative, and accessible. We look for opportunities to actively create a supportive community of scholars.

These are big conversations that are emerging and unfolding in real time. The landscape of scholarly communication is dynamic and shifting rapidly. We look forward to opportunities “to join together, take action, and raise awareness around the importance of community control of knowledge sharing systems” (International Open Access Week, 2023), both during and beyond Open Access Week in October.

ARTICLE SUMMARIES

Research Studies

We lead off this issue with **Willa Black and Alexandra Krasova**'s study, “The story of two female native and non-native TESOL instructors: A duoethnographic look at convergent and divergent language teacher Identities.” Willa and Alexandra use art-based research techniques to explore the similarities and differences between their experiences becoming second language teachers in the United States and Russia respectively. Central to their exploration is the much-debated concept of the “native speaker.” Though the two co-authors are at the same university in Pennsylvania and have much else in common both personally and professionally, the fact remains that Black is an American native English-speaking teacher (“NEST”) and Krasova a “NNEST” (Non-Native English Second Language Teacher) whose first language is Russian. This has coloured their professional identity formation and determined much about the way they have been perceived by their colleagues and students, despite their



comparable training and qualifications. Drawing on the Language Teacher Identity research tradition and on their work with art-based pedagogy, Krasova and Black craft a series of duoethnographically-grounded conversations through which the reader experiences, as it were at first hand, the differing pressures on NESTs and NNESTs in the wider international world of ESL teaching. We are taken to Mexico, Spain, South Korea and the UK, as well as to the authors' homelands, and made to feel the continuing power of the native/non-native binary, as well as the need to resist it; this study shows us one way of doing so. To expose discrimination by naming it is to begin to break it down.

The issue continues with a valuable contribution to the body of Canadian official-language research on language identity by **Nicol Garzon and Elena Nicoladis** in their research report, "When linguistic identity and language choice diverge: Francophone youth in a minority setting embrace their francophonie and still prefer to speak English." In Canada, as many *J-BILD* readers will know, language choice is highly politicized where the two official languages, English and French, are concerned. Although the politics of language choice tend to be more intense and more confrontational in the French-majority province of Quebec, Garzon and Nicoladis show that in English-dominant Alberta, young people from French-speaking backgrounds have fully internalized the language politics so characteristic of Canadian Francophones. The authors draw on the Language Identity literature and on "L2 Motivational Self System" theory as developed by Dörnyei and colleagues (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009) in their study of a dozen Francophone-identified adolescents in the cities of Edmonton and St. Albert. In peer interviews and focus groups, these youth discussed their use of French and their sense of belonging to Alberta's French-speaking community. Their families' diverse origins (Africa, the Caribbean, and others) contrast strongly with the traditional *Québécois de souche* background envisioned by Canada's language policymakers; they were nevertheless all fluent and comfortable in French at home and at school. However, all these young people admitted to speaking English far more often than French in their daily lives and indeed to being more proficient in Alberta's majority language. Garzon and Nicoladis explore the complexities and contradictions inherent in the linguistic identities of their participants, making it clear that when language policy interacts with real-life language practice, language use in minority-language communities may be far more complicated and interesting than some theories might lead one to expect.

Continuing the theme of second language teacher identity and the way it develops across different contexts, **Josée Le Bouthillier and Paula Kristmanson** report on their study of French second language teacher identity in the officially-bilingual Canadian province of New Brunswick (NB) in "Teacher candidates of French as a second language and the construction of a professional identity." French-English tensions in New Brunswick differ in both kind and in degree from the summering political undercurrents that inform linguistic interaction in neighbouring Quebec; they are nevertheless present, as Le Bouthillier and Kristmanson explain in their helpful introduction to the landscape of French second language (FSL) education in New Brunswick. This is the only province in which the demand for French Immersion (FI) education has grown rapidly in the last ten years (at a rate as high as 9.6%, as opposed to less than 1% across Canada in general). The demand for FSL teachers in both French Immersion and regular programs (in NB called Intensive French, or IF) far outstrips the supply. Administrative decisions at Ministry and school board level to allow FSL teacher candidates to enter their programs with lower levels of French at the



point of entry have put concomitant pressure on New Brunswick universities to increase the ways in which they support pre-service teachers, not only in improving their FSL proficiency, but also in developing their professional identities as confident FSL teachers in their practicum classrooms. Through their analysis of focus group interviews with 13 teacher candidates at the University of New Brunswick, Le Bouthillier and Kristmanson demonstrate the feasibility of offering this kind of support on both fronts, and allow us to hear the teacher candidates' voices as they reflect on their linguistic insecurities, their relationship to the native/non-native binary, and the ways in which they are working toward mature identities as FSL teachers in this particular Canadian context. Those interested in official-language bilingualism in Canada will perceive the wide applicability to other contexts, and to the teacher identity literature generally.

A very different kind of bilingualism/biculturalism is the focus of "Chinese Student Newcomers' Transition to a Canadian Postsecondary EAP (English for Academic Purposes) Program: Bicultural Responses and Acculturation" by **Chuanmei Lin and Cameron Smith**. Drawing on Lin's master's thesis work and on her closely related collaboration with Sylvie Roy (Lin & Roy, 2019), the authors report on the adjustment and acculturation experiences of ten international students from the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the EAP (English for Academic Purposes) course they were required to take before being allowed to embark on their regular program at the University of Calgary. Students from the PRC make up an increasing proportion of the total number of international students in Canada and face culturally specific challenges in their academic programs and in their daily lives as students. Lin's insider status with respect to this population enabled her to draw her participants out in sensitive and insightful detail about their experiences integrating (or not) into the international graduate student community in which they found themselves after arriving in Canada. Some of these Chinese international students went to considerable length developing what Lin and Smith term "Canadian-dominant biculturalism," in which the participants reported important processes of identity loss, transformation, and reclamation as they struggled to develop close contacts with Canadians and to acquire more idiomatic English. Others chose to remain in relative isolation, socializing mainly with other Chinese international students, although they of course did have to succeed in their university-mandated EAP program; they seem to have done so with less emotional involvement. Lin and Smith term this form of interaction with Canadian society "Chinese-dominant biculturalism," and suggest that more attention be paid in future to the ways such students are prepared for their international experience before leaving home, as well as to the acculturation opportunities available to them in the host country after arrival.

In another research report drawing on the author's master's thesis work, this time at the Université de Québec à Rimouski, **Samantha Van Geel** takes us back to the realm of FSL teacher identity in "Les conceptions et les pratiques enseignantes inspirées du Cadre européen commun de référence d'enseignants de français langue seconde en Ontario." As Van Geel points out, the theoretical complexity of the *Cadre européen commun de référence* (which we will refer to here by its English acronym, CEFR, for Common European Framework of Reference), as well as the sheer length and quantity of the documents generated around the CEFR to try to help second language teachers implement CEFR principles in their teaching, have largely prevented second language teachers in Canada from drawing on it in the manner intended by its creators twenty years ago. Van Geel set out to see what a sample of



French second language (FSL) teachers in Ontario got out of the CEFR and how they used it in their teaching. The eight teachers who agreed to be interviewed all did so *because* they knew about the CEFR and said they had been using it for at least a year. Their professional interactions with the CEFR have been overwhelmingly positive; they use it to conceptualize, design, implement and evaluate their language teaching on many levels. The well-known evaluative component of the CEFR with its straightforward breakdown into “levels” (A1 through C2) seemed to be the easiest part of the CEFR for these teachers to relate to; some of them used only the levels, and only for evaluation. However, the many creative ways in which several of Van Geel’s teacher-participants took advantage of the vast array of CEFR-derived teaching tools and teaching concepts (such as, for example, the importance of using authentic materials in the classroom) leads Van Geel to conclude, along with the teachers, that much more effort should be given to putting teacher-friendly training sessions into place for second language teachers across Canada (and, I would venture to say, elsewhere where it is not well known). The recent publication of a supplemental volume (Council of Europe, 2020), intended to make the original CEFR document more accessible to teachers, and to lay readers generally, makes this conclusion, and this article, particularly timely.

Critical Literature Review

The critical literature review we feature in this issue, “Pluricultural perspectives on plurilingual identity: A critical intersectional literature review” by **Rebecca Schmor**, uses an innovative approach to extract a broad sample of 114 articles from the literature published on topics of plurilingual identity between 1995 and 2023. Schmor’s intent is to demonstrate the biases inherent in the way scholarly publishing works in this area (as, indeed, is ours in this editorial). By using a complex design to ensure that she reviewed articles across a range of languages (French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish, as well as English), geographical regions, and, to the extent possible, gender and ethnic affiliation of authors, Schmor succeeds in showing that work by scholars in “peripheral” locations and/or non-dominant languages is underrepresented in the literature on plurilingualism and identity. Her close analysis of a subset of 18 of the articles reveals that the theoretical frameworks used to understand plurilingual identity—if indeed they were used at all—were wildly divergent across her sample. This section of Schmor’s review is particularly valuable, as it will direct readers to a wide international selection of research reports they would likely not come across otherwise. Schmor points out as well that researchers in non-mainstream contexts are less likely to receive adequate funding or to find a broad readership for their work. Through her “methodology of intersectionality,” Schmor amply substantiates her opening and closing statement that “a literature review is a political act.” We concur, and would encourage *J-BILD* readers and authors to undertake more work along these lines.

Research Proposal

Finally in this issue, **Reshara Alvarez**, in “Bridging the Divide: In pursuit of access to Language Friendly education in Trinidad and Tobago,” proposes a timely and important investigation into the interaction of official language policy with actual language use by children in the educational system of Trinidad and Tobago. In North America, many of us may think of these islands as being idyllic English-speaking vacation destinations. While (British) Standard English is indeed the official language of Trinidad and Tobago, as well as being *the* language needed for success in the local



school system, the linguistic make-up of the islands is far more complex than policy documents would suggest. Alvarez takes us on a tour through the history and geography of Trinidadian Creole, which is English-based and well-documented (Winer, 2009); the local French-based *Patois*; and the recent, increasingly significant arrival of Spanish-speaking immigrant and refugee families from the nearby Venezuelan mainland. She proposes a plurilingual approach to the study of Early Years classrooms, in which she will document language use patterns and attitudes among educators and families alike. The need for a more “Language-Friendly” approach to education for the children of the islands, one that will allow them to bring their entire language repertoires into the classroom, is one that readers in many other places will recognize. The study Alvarez proposes will have value far outside its local Caribbean context.

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