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Thank you for joining us today at Research and Beyond, a podcast that believes science should be accessible to all and its communication is rather necessary. So thank you so much for joining us today. I would like to have your word on how do you feel about joining our podcast today and a little bit on your experience in this whole science communication journey.

Yeah, thank you. Thank you very much for inviting me to your podcast. Very excited.

I was not aware of this podcast which talks about many issues related to science. So a little bit of myself based in Dubai, working for Clarivate for the past decade and I work on different territories focusing on Europe, Middle east and Africa. I'm also a researcher at CWTS, so it's the Center Science and Technology Studies in Leiden University in the Netherlands.

And I'm really interested in how science works, how it is produced, how it is communicated. So I do study different aspects related to science and there are many, many things that can be said and should be, should be covered. So, working on a large territory, I see big differences between countries, regions, different scientific research cultures and, and I understand that also Enago plays a big role in that, in communicating scientific research in the best way.

Absolutely, sure. And like you mentioned, Enago has been working for over 20 years now in order to make science communication better for ESL researchers who are researchers belonging to regions that are not native English speakers. Right.

So today I would like to have everyone's attention into addressing the challenges faced by ESL researchers in communicating their research on global platforms. To begin with, in today's globally interconnected world, effective communication is crucial for researchers to share their findings and engage with diverse audiences. However, for those whose first language is not English, getting the nuances of scientific communication on global platforms can be a significant challenge, which you also may have come across when you have been dealing with a lot of researchers in your experience as well, be it in, you know, interacting them in conferences or meeting them personally other way around.

Today we'll discuss a few strategies and resources to help ESL researchers communicate their research more effectively. Now, speaking of having to deal talk about the strategies, we need to first address some of the primary challenges that ESL researchers face. In my opinion, one of the primary challenges faced by ESL researchers is conveying complex concepts and ideas in a language that is not their native language.

Right. Which can obviously lead to difficulties in articulating their research clearly and concisely, potentially also hindering the impact and reach of their work. What do you think should researchers from ESL regions do in such a case? Yeah, so I Agree with you.

I think the main challenge, main challenge is related to language. So there are many different issues, many different challenges. The first one is obviously the language barrier where there is a tendency to think that if you publish in English, then your scientific work appears to be of a better quality.

So different things there, that's the main barrier to reach a global audience. So if you want to publish and reach global readership, then you have to go for English. So this is how it works these days.

Maybe last century you had French, Russian, German, which had better position in the scientific, scientific world. And then going back in history you had Latin, Greek, where, or at some point Arabic or Hindi, where scientific publications were written in your mother tongue. So that's the, I think the main, the main challenge is really related to, to language and the engagement with peers as well.

So the, again, different issues where you have to work, write a manuscript or even go to a conference. There are many studies around people not going to conference because they are not well equipped to present their work verbally. I'm not talking about manuscripts here.

So language issues, but also different research cultures that we need to be aware of. What might be normal as the way to present some work in a specific country or specific region might be very different from what we have in other continents. So I spoke about the fact that I work in a very large territory, Europe, Middle east and Africa.

So that's more than 80, 90 countries. And all these researchers have to somehow convey their research works in English because that's how the current system works and also how the evaluation works. Especially when it comes to research evaluation that focuses on specific databases or journals that are mainly publishing content in English.

But that doesn't mean we don't have regional or local journals which are also good venues to publish or to present your work. And in some fields, for instance, social sciences or arts and humanities, the field itself is covering topics or subjects that are really nationally oriented. And in this case it makes more sense to convey your work in your own language.

What I see, and I do that quite often, is institutions but also countries addressing these issues by providing, providing writing workshops to ESL researchers. So I guess there's some work of awareness, but also training, education on training and equipping the researchers to make sure that everyone is on the same page on how the scientific publishing works. But again, I think the main challenge is related to language.

But there are other issues, such as I mentioned, the research culture and also the lack of awareness of how scientific publishing works. Yes, absolutely, I agree with you, Jamal, but there Often comes a time when researchers, or let me put it this way, that national journals which are English journals are deemed higher with respect to other native journals. They are said to have higher impact and people tend to forget about the impact that the research could have, but rather focus on just the reach of the journal.

It also depends on the cultural differences and expectations around the directness and, you know, modesty norms and authorial voice, maybe in that sense. So how do you think, you know, in if there are certain conventions that are placed in terms of researchers definitely wanting to publish in international journals which are in English language and not really focus of how far will their research go and especially considering the kind of audiences that their research would want to, that would interest their research. So these are certain other factors also, right.

That researchers should consider rather than only focusing on publishing in high impact journals which are not in their native language but in English. And in that sense they also. I think there is also fear of publish or perish amongst researchers, which is very common.

Right. And in this sense people resort to moving ahead and going ahead with publishing in English journals, like you said. But then as you clearly mentioned, that there are certain subject areas, such as the social sciences itself, which need to be at times published in the native language of the author themselves, if they are from the region.

What do you think would be the difference in the kind of reach that a global or an international journal which is written in the English language would have as opposed to something that is written in a native language? We all know that English is vastly spoken in the entire of world and it is claimed to be the international language and mostly understood by all, most of the people, the literate people, if we put it like that. But what kind of difference do you see would the research impact pose in terms of having to publish it in a high impact international journal which is an English language journal, as opposed to the native journal, let's say. Yeah, so I think it's, it's a very difficult question.

Many people work on trying to make the science system better. I recently published a paper about something that you mentioned several times, which is, you know, the norms or the standards or the convention. Right.

So this is how it works in our field. We publish in those journals and when you dig, you find, you know that those journals are mainly published or publishing content in English and that kind of forces you to adopt those standards. Right.

And it's very difficult to change them because you have, you know, very deep rooted standards or norms or conventions. Many people call them different ways, but I think we need to be aware of different questions. I think my view is that when you communicate science, you have to adapt your language and style for different audiences.

So when you speak to peers, when you speak to policymakers, you speak to the general public, obviously your language is going to be different. Writing a scientific article is very different from having a conversation in a podcast or writing a blog post or having an article in a newspaper. Right? So, and I guess that's something that we've seen that was a challenge during COVID 19, where my major majority of the scientific literature was published in English.

But then you have, you know, billions of people, general public, who might not be 100% comfortable with scientific language or scientific publications published in, in English. So there was a gap between what science was doing and what the population knew about those issues. And that creates some, some gaps, right? That's where you had like, you know, fake news, fake science, different issues around that.

So I guess the, the main, the main objective always is to tailor and adapt your language and style for different audiences. Obviously you have some big fields where, you know, you go for natural sciences, hard sciences. English, I would say, is the major language, and you have some issues that are like global issues.

You want to go for engineering, then I guess English would probably, again, the main language there, the main issue. And you mentioned that around social sciences and arts, humanities. But if you look at social sciences, where, take an example, someone from India or someone from my region studies specific issue about the population.

So the population you study and the target population and the policymakers that you may target might not be 100% comfortable with English. So in this case, I see different practices. One is you publish in English because that might be of interest for, you know, foreigners, and you might have a different version of your manuscript written in the local language.

So of course that creates additional work. That's where translation comes in. That's where specialized translation comes in.

And then you also have, I would say, some techniques where you might have two titles and you have the full text in English, but at least the title and abstract in local languages, in addition to the title and abstract in, in. In English. So these are few ideas to make things easier and perhaps we'll get to more solutions around, you know, automated translation, AI translation.

So I guess there might be some solutions there. Absolutely and rightly said. So like, you know, understanding the audience is very important.

Important for you to publish your research at the right, on the right platform, let's say, right? Or not just going ahead with the language or the journal that would High, high impact, but also understanding that the kind of research that you're doing is getting delivered or targeting the right audience who are going to take actionable steps in terms of making that research into an actual actionable measure or a commercial success, let's say, say. Right. So when we talk about understanding the audience, I would like to believe that the importance of audience awareness has grown as research dissemination has extended beyond just scholarly articles to policy makers and industry media as well.

Like the general public is also now interested into understanding as to. Especially when we talk about space research or other things, climate change, research in climate change, which are some of the major, you know, changes that are happening worldwide. So these things are something that are of interest for everyone and not just the scholarly community.

So in that sense, it is very much necessary for ESL researchers as well to adapt to easier means of communication with the general public and the policymakers, who may not typically be experts in the area of research that the researcher may have conducted. Right. So when we talk about the general public or even the policy makers, we use plainer language or, you know, avoiding jargon and providing context and deploying analogies or examples from everyday life is supposed to be the key.

In that sense, when ESL researchers are not really familiar with common English writing conventions or, you know, such as, let's say, rhetorical styles and discourse patterns used in research writing, these could. Do you think these could sometimes lead to a lack of coherence and flow when they are actually transitioning their ideas into simpler language for audience because researchers are well versed with. Or the terminologies that we typically use in research.

But when it comes to making it easily accessible for the general public, what kind of difficulties would researchers face in that area? Also, how would. How should they navigate through it and get rid of that issue? Yeah, so, yeah, that's an interesting question. And I guess every ESL researchers went through.

Every ESL researcher went through that. A kind of learning of how you write in English, especially when it comes to scientific writing. This is something that I teach in every session that I give.

When it comes to scientific manuscript writing, where you have to use, or it's better to use what we call plain English. Right. So relatively short sentences, no unnecessary words, familiar words.

You know, always the question between active voice and passive voice. This is something that I personally, personally struggled with English being my third language, you know, using the active versus passive voice in different sections of a manuscript. And when you think about that, it goes back to your point of trying to make sure that you convey the message in the best possible way.

So I think there is a learning curve there. Again, goes back to the need for education, raising awareness, training researchers, not only in countries where English is not the mother tongue or the official language. This is something that I've seen in the Netherlands, for example, the institution I'm affiliated with, we have workshops where those concepts are taught to researchers, master students, PhD candidates.

And you learn about, you know, the appropriate style that you. You have to use or it's better to use when you write a manuscript. So this is something, I would say, common.

It's not only for ESL researchers, because scientific writing has its own, you know, style and as you mentioned, conventions. It's all about conventions and norms. So going back to the using, you know, the fact of using idioms and metaphors, I think that's like an advanced level.

I don't see that quite often in scientific articles or conference proceedings or scientific publications in general. But if you use them, then try to make sure that they are appropriate and easy to understand in given context, because not everyone might be aware of that specific metaphor that you use in your manuscript. But again, I think the key point here is learning how to write in plain English and perhaps also working with editors.

I think this is because it is a job, right? Writing is a job. Editing is a job. Translating or translation is also a difficult task.

So that's also where perhaps you can work with companies, editing services. I've also seen that in institutions where you have, you know, translation departments. This is something quite common in China, for example, where you have, you know, specialized translation translation departments that might help in improving your manuscripts.

Yeah. Yes, Jamal, I absolutely agree with you that, you know, you using the language, the kind of language that we use in terms of spreading your knowledge to the people is really important when it comes and it is necessary. Like, of course, idioms and metaphors are not really used in scientific writing.

However, for a layman to understand, it's easy to say that a sun is a sun and not a ball of gas, like, you know, those kind of terminologies? Yeah, but you also mentioned about, you know, ESL researchers or otherwise also having to take support from editors or, you know, professional services. So do you think using publication support services would largely help researchers in terms of, you know, being more publication ready and creating and leading them towards a successful publication journey as a researcher? Yeah, so definitely, I think. So.

My take on that, based on my experience, I see as a peer reviewer lots of very interesting manuscripts in terms of findings. But then sometimes those manuscripts they lack, you know, I would say, editorial requirements that could easily be fixed by someone like an editor or a professional service that provide that kind of service. So, for example, when you submit a manuscript to a journal, you have to understand, and, yeah, you have to understand the journal guidelines, the submission requirements.

So the publisher or the editor, the journal is expecting something in a certain format, right? So that might be related to the writing style, the structure of the manuscript, the format, the style of the references, and all of that is, you know, not technical, it's not scientific. It's editing. Right? So it's making sure that the manuscript is in a good shape and then you have the writing which is more technical from an editing perspective, where, you know, the manuscript has a good flow.

We know about the context, we know about the problem, we know about the research questions. There is a story that is being told in the manuscript and of course, the editing services, professional services, they can definitely help with that. A company like Enago provides such services.

And then those services. The goal is to make your manuscript in the best possible shape before submission so that you avoid desk rejection or rejection related to language, which is a massive problem for ESL researchers. So fixing those issues before submitting your manuscript gives you more chances to be accepted or at least going through the peer review process.

So that's my take on that. I teach a lot about that, where you have guides, you have guidelines, you have, you know, you have, again, those conventions, norms. This is how a scientific manuscript is written.

You use a specific structure with an introduction, method, and, and so on. So, and, and sometimes the journal that you target even has a template that you have to, you know, respect, use in, in writing your manuscript. So again, here the key message is to really respect and making sure that your manuscript has the right shape in terms of journal guidelines.

And that helps to enhance the chances of acceptance or at least going through the peer review, the peer review process. Thank you once again so much for joining today and we hope to connect again soon. Most welcome.

Thank you very much.