

EDITORIAL

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The two articles that follow this editorial are translations of articles that appeared in *FLM* in earlier issues. They represent an initiative that began a few years ago to translate selected articles from English to French and from French to English in order to make them more accessible to more readers. A number of other articles have been translated and are available on the *FLM* website. If you have suggestions of past articles that you feel should be translated, email editor@flm-journal.org.

FLM has always published articles in both French and English but most of the articles have always been in English. We encourage authors to write in French but many are reluctant to do so. They believe correctly that many readers of *FLM* do not read French and so to reach the widest possible audience they prefer to write in English. This of course leads to a cycle. Fewer articles appear in French so fewer francophones read *FLM*, and so there are fewer readers for whatever French articles do appear. It is a puzzle what to do about this situation. One obvious solution is to simply accept that the world of academic publishing has become dominated by the English language and to stop accepting articles written in French in *FLM*.

The editors of the first journal in mathematics education, *l'Enseignement Mathématique (EM)*, already struggled with the question of what language or languages they should publish in.

Un point sur lequel nous avons eu quelques hésitations, c'est le choix de la langue dans laquelle devrait être publié *l'Enseignement mathématique*. Fallait-il, comme nous l'avons fait, adopter une langue unique ? Fallait-il, au contraire, insérer des articles dans plusieurs langues différentes ? (Laisant & Fehr, 1899, pp. 2-3)

Although they were tempted to publish in multiple languages, they worried that this would limit interest in reading the journal and pose challenges for reviewing and editing articles. As a compromise, they offered to translate articles into French from the “langues européennes d'un usage général” (p. 3).

EM did not remain unilingual, however. In 1908 it became the official journal of the newly founded Commission Internationale de l'Enseignement Mathématique (CIEM) which had four official languages (French, German, English and Italian) and *EM* also became quadrilingual (Furinghetti & Giacardi, 2022, p. 242). Although the vast majority of articles continued to be in French, in Volume 14 (1913) I also found articles in English, Italian and Esperanto.

In 1968 *Educational Studies in Mathematics (ESM)* was launched by Hans Freudenthal. The first issue includes articles in French, English and German. A year later Hans Georg Steiner and Heinz Kunle founded *Zentralblatt für Didaktik der Mathematik (ZDM)*. I have not been able to locate

the first issues, but Volume 29 (1997) includes articles in both German and English and I believe *ZDM* was bilingual from the beginning.

This history is intended to set the context in which David Wheeler founded *FLM* in 1980. Many major mathematics education journals and conferences at that time were at least bilingual. *Recherches en Didactique des Mathématiques (RDM)*, founded in the same year, was and is trilingual (French, English, Spanish).

Since then the linguistic landscape of mathematics education has changed. At some point after the 1990s *ESM* stopped printing French articles. I do not know if this was a policy change or if francophone authors stopped submitting articles in French. Similarly, *ZDM* seems to have published its last article in German in about 2006. For better or worse, English is now the main language of academic publishing in mathematics education. Of the seven top rated journals in Törner and Arzarello's (2012) survey, only *FLM* publishes articles in a language other than English.

I believe David Wheeler had some very good reasons to start *FLM* as a journal that publishes articles both in French and in English. The number of people who can write well in either French or English must be greater than the number of people who can write well in English, so this policy should increase the quality of articles published. Reading another language is easier than writing in another language, so for once I feel some onus can be put on readers to accommodate writers. The language policies of *FLM* will not be changing in the near future. I hope that the prospect of having articles translated might overcome some reluctance of authors to submit articles in French.

I am impressed by the willingness of the editors of *EM* in its unilingual days to consider, and possibly translate, submissions in other languages. This seems like something the editors and advisory board of *FLM* could also do. The home countries of the members of the advisory board (listed on the inside front cover) suggest the range of languages we could perhaps accommodate. If there are prospective authors who are resisting submitting an article to *FLM* because they do not know if the effort of writing their article in French or English is worth it, I encourage them to send us something in their own language. We will do our best to determine if the article is something we would like to see in our pages.

References

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- Laisant, C.-A. & Fehr, H. (1899) *l'Enseignement mathématique, l'Enseignement Mathématique*, 1(1) 2–3.
- Törner, G. & Arzarello, F. (2012) Grading mathematics education research journals. *Newsletter of the European Mathematical Society* 86(December), 52–54.