

**Yating Zhu**

**University of Denver, Denver, CO, U.S.**

**Keren Dali**

**University of Denver, Denver, CO, U.S.**

## WHAT WE MISS WHEN WE CITE EXCLUSIVELY IN ENGLISH: THE CASE OF CHINESE-LANGUAGE SOURCES (Lightning Talk)

### **Abstract:**

Taking advantage of research sources emanating from outside of North America requires researchers' fluency in world languages. Similarly, peer reviewers should be able to evaluate the cited sources while vetting scholarly work. However, given the widespread monolingualism and challenges accessing international scholarship, many critical sources may be missed, which can be particularly detrimental in multicultural studies. Using an example of Chinese-language sources from the federally funded study of multilingual readers in the U.S., the authors highlight essential publications that may be overlooked by researchers unable to read Chinese. This could become a major "stumble," leading to knowledge gaps and biases.

### **Introduction**

English has been the most frequently used language in academic publications, with researchers from English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries choosing to publish their works in English (Garfield & Welljams-Dorof, 1990) for a whole host of reasons, including tenure, promotion, greater exposure to their scholarship and a broader dissemination of results. The preponderance of English-language academic publications results in its disproportionate influence on research across many disciplines (Amano et al., 2016; Bergman, 2012; Hartling et al., 2017), including LIS. Publications in other world languages are cited primarily by the researchers who speak these languages and/or come from the respective countries (Garfield & Welljams-Dorof, 1990). That is to say, to meaningfully integrate sources written in languages other than English, language fluency is paramount. Moreover, peer reviewers should also be able to appreciate and evaluate the quality and significance of sources that originate from outside of the English-speaking realm while vetting scholarly work (Dali, 2021). However, if scholars lack the knowledge of world languages and given the challenging access to non-English-language sources (Hempel, 2013; Rockliffe, 2021), much international scholarship may be missed in North American academia. Using an example of Chinese-language sources from the federally funded study of multilingual readers in the U.S., this lightning talk will interrogate and illustrate the implications of missing non-English-language sources in multicultural studies, especially those that require a nuanced understanding of complex socio-cultural issues and linguistic sensitivity. Grounded in the interdisciplinary scholarship of Education and LIS, the larger project focuses on multilingual patrons in public libraries across the U.S. and examines their cultural, leisure, and reading practices. An overarching goal is to achieve a better understanding of these practices to enhance the capacity of public library staff for the provision of culturally informed and linguistically sensitive services.

## **Presentation Description**

The lightning talk will be presented by a team of researchers that includes a Ph.D. student and a faculty member in the visually accessible format of Pecha-Kucha (6min 40sec) and supplied with commentaries and examples. As part of the study of multilingual readers in the U.S., including Chinese readers, we had to do a comprehensive literature review; had we not had a native Chinese speaker on the team, our review would have been different, replete with gaps and marked by the selectivity of sources rooted in our limited language proficiency. This experience gave impetus to our presentation. We will examine the types of sources absent from our overview of existing research about Chinese speakers' leisure, reading, and cultural practices. We will also discuss potential knowledge gaps and biases resulting from exclusive reliance on English-language sources, which may constitute a serious "stumble" in scholarly research and communication. As our examples will show, sources related to the most recent reading and publishing trends in Chinese-speaking countries, regions, and diasporas and the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on reading practices can be missed. Similarly, absent from the roster of cited research, there might be sources reflecting online reading behaviors, especially behaviors of younger readers from mainland China. Other types of sources that may remain out of sight for researchers unable to access and read Chinese are essential recent and historical statistics, governmental publications, association reports, and papers and compilations produced by non-for-profit organizations in Chinese. Following the discussion of the possible gaps and missing information, we will propose some strategies and approaches that can help researchers access sources in languages other than English and expand the scope of their citations to international scholarship, including publications in languages they cannot read.

## **Takeaways for the Audience**

English-language sources play a paramount role in scholarly communication in North American academia thanks to their accessibility and prevalence. However, given the complexity of multicultural research, including studies in languages other than English is beneficial. It helps to bridge knowledge gaps and enhances the depth of investigation. At the outcome of the talk, the audience will

- become aware of possible knowledge gaps stemming from absent sources in world languages; and
- learn some strategies and approaches for identifying and accessing relevant sources in languages other than English.

## **References**

- Amano, T., González-Varo, J. P., & Sutherland, W. J. (2016). Languages are still a major barrier to global science. *PLoS biology*, *14*(12), e2000933. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.2000933>
- Bergman, E. M. L. (2012). Finding citations to social work literature: The relative benefits of using Web of Science, Scopus, or Google Scholar. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *38*(6), 370-379. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2012.08.002>
- Dali, K. (2021). Ruminations on peer review in the time of social change. *Journal of Documentation*, *77*(5), 1096-1106.

- Garfield, E., & Welljams-Dorof, A. (1990). Language use in international research: A citation analysis. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 511(1), 10-24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716290511001002>
- Hartling, L., Featherstone, R., Nuspl, M., Shave, K., Dryden, D. M., & Vandermeer, B. (2017). Grey literature in systematic reviews: A cross-sectional study of the contribution of non-English reports, unpublished studies and dissertations to the results of meta-analyses in child-relevant reviews. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 17(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-017-0347->
- Hempel, K. G. (2013). Can scholarly communication be multilingual? A glance at language use in US classical archaeology. *Humanities*, 2(2), 128-146. <https://doi.org/10.3390/h2020128>
- Rockliffe, L. (2022). Including non-English language articles in systematic reviews: A reflection on processes for identifying low-cost sources of translation support. *Research Synthesis Methods*, 13(1), 2-5. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jrsm.1508>