international research communications, but also for the dissemination of scientific developments from researchers to practitioners. Local journals published in the native tongue facilitate local public health communication and their very existence helps fostering the cohesion and growth of a native community of researchers and practitioners in public health. As local practitioners of medicine and public health read journals primarily in their native language, it is imperative for us to facilitate publication of these journals.

**Lessons from other regions**

The emergence of nationwide, multidisciplinary bibliographic databases in China is itself a worthy attempt to facilitate knowledge dissemination and minimize the associated transaction cost (in both money and time). Several Chinese databases exist and compete with each other, but they share one common feature—they attempt to cover all academic journals (across all disciplines) published in mainland China, and provide their users with a service that combines bibliography and subscription to one point-of-use. Instead of connecting from the database to the websites of different publishers, subscribers to the databases (mainly universities and their staff and students) have full-text access to all journals available in the databases that cover the vast majority of all mainland Chinese journals. These databases are exploring overseas market too, as academics and libraries in other countries begin to value the wealth of Chinese academic literature.

In Latin America, with its many Spanish and Portuguese journals, the trend is to couple continental-wide databases with Open Access. Databases like LILACS and SciELO have facilitated the use of these journals, of which many are freely accessible online and with English abstracts. Some even provide full articles translated into English. Many Latin American academics actively promote their journals and databases to the international scientific community and have attracted some attention in recent years.\(^4\)\(^5\)

With the consolidation of Chinese and Latin American journals and databases, they are going to form the two major blocs in journal publishing independent of, and yet connected with, the ‘international’ English publication bloc. By harnessing a critical mass of potential readers, these journals can become self-sustainable, and with these databases, they are provided with platforms to outreach to the international academic community.

**Future possibilities**

In the future, automated translation provided by online facilities, e.g. Google Translate, will become more reliable and the language barrier will become less formidable as technology advances. Meanwhile, we can do our parts today to enhance the visibility and competitiveness of non-English language European public health journals.

Could the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) play a role? The EUPHA can consider facilitating non-English European public health journals to be indexed in PubMed, Web of Science and other databases. The EUPHA can also consider the possibility of creating a common portal to all public health journals published in Europe, with abstracts translated into English and other major European languages, and RSS function for quick dissemination of latest news and table of contents. Another possibility of EUPHA is to set-up some programs or networks to help European public health journals, especially those published in the less affluent part of Europe, to attain a higher editorial standard and thus attract more high-quality papers. One example is the Eastern Mediterranean Association of Medical Editors (http://www.emro.who.int/EMAME/) and its facilitation of the improvement of medical journal publication in the Middle East.

These suggestions may help stimulate further discussion, and I am sure that editors, authors and readers have suggestions to help non-English European public health journals to fare better in the years to come.

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**There is room for different languages in public health journals**

Sustaining and promoting a non-English international public health journal may be considered as an impossible task in our 21st century, mostly English-speaking scientific world. However, not only this is possible, but also to me it is a task, for different reasons.

The first of these reasons is ‘diversity’. The fast growing development of internet and World Wide Web communication bears a risk of standardization. Almost all international scientific communication takes place in English, whether it is oral or written. And this is not always (not very often... ) perfect Oxford English. It is often quite a poor or simplified language (as the one used in this viewpoint), used mainly by people originating from non-English-speaking countries. There is no doubt that using this language impoverishes...
the way of expressing complex and/or precise thinking. The easiest way to bypass this difficulty is to simplify our way of thinking. Second, it is to refer to often used or ready made formulas. This promotes the use of standardized words, expressions or metaphors. As epidemiologists, we know that maintaining diversity is the source of maintaining life, including intellectual life. We must, in the same time, promote diversity and communicate together. This is not simple. Each one of us must maintain efforts to be able to understand his/her neighbours and colleagues, especially when they bring to us different hypotheses, different views and different practices. This needs to be specific and precise, relying on very precise oral and written expression. And we must in the same time find ways of communication to do this. We must then share in common a simple language, this is 'scientific English', and allow every one to express himself in his own mother tongue, by maintaining journals in other languages.

The second reason is to allow maintaining ‘communication within different cultures’. Each human culture has its richness, which comprises specificities which must be preserved and expressed. Not only these specificities concern language, which reflects the way of thinking, but they also concern social organization, which is of primary importance when considering public health questions. For instance, health services research or behavioural factors research may be meaningless to scientists working in a different context or social environment. However, considering the impact of cultural or social differences on public health outcomes may be of primary importance, and this needs for researchers to be able to be communicated by using a common language, usually English. This is one of the reasons why the French ‘Revue d’Épidémiologie et de Sante Publique’ (Epidemiology and Public Health) has decided not only to accept for publication papers submitted either in French or in English, but also to translate into English and post on its website most relevant papers accepted and published in French in the print version. This allows these papers to be more easily disseminated, and eventually quoted.

Finally, some persons can neither speak nor understand English. It would be stupid to force them to use dictionaries or automatic translators to be able to catch at least a part of scientific production coming from their own country and addressing the questions they encounter.

Nevertheless, ideas are produced to be refuted, or at least to be confronted to others ideas. One of the best ways to promote our singular way of thinking seems to be to do this in a language which can be understood by everybody, and this is English. This is why we must use English as often as possible. But not always, if we do not want to loose some parts of our common richness!

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A tough tulip: the Dutch Journal of Health Sciences TSG

Dutch is a language spoken by only around 16.5 million people. It is not surprising that this international minority position combined with the economic and cultural will to be a global player, has led most Dutch citizens to be familiar with the basics of speaking, reading and writing in English. Nevertheless, Dutch remains the mother tongue and is also the language in which policies and practice of public health are executed. Since 88 years the community of researchers and practitioners in the field of public health have maintained the regular publication of TSG. Originally, the abbreviation stood for Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geneeskunde (Journal for Social Medicine), but since about 10 years the journal has been renamed as TSG, Tijdschrift voor Gezondheidswetenschappen (Journal For Health Sciences). The journal contains a mixture of peer-reviewed articles on public health and health services research is the only generic journal on these themes in the Dutch language area and is published eight times a year. Every issue contains 3–4 peer-reviewed articles and is published online as well as in a (shortened) printed version. The association for public health and science (V&W) is the owner of the journal (included in membership dues) and proceedings and abstracts of the annual Dutch Public Health Conference are published in TSG.

Over the years, TSG has had a steady readership of mainly researchers and policy makers active in the various public health areas. The journal is primarily a scientific journal but also has sections with practical news, practice oriented contributions and a section called ‘spectrum’ in which a specific theme is presented and then discussed by a series of stakeholders. Alongside the scientific articles, the debates in spectrum are highly appreciated.

The points made in the article of Chun-Hai Fung also hold for TSG. As a non-English journal, it is used to get criticism on its low impact in a bibliometric sense. However, as a national medium for discussions in Dutch on specifically Dutch topics, TSG plays an important role. In both health services research and public health, much debate is going on the effectiveness of the implementation of improvement and this implementation debate is much easier to have with people who now are in the context and speak the language.

The flow of articles is rather steady and even slightly increasing over the past years. Publishing in Dutch also got a kind of boost when the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences, debating the importance of accountability on the societal impact of research, promoted publishing in Dutch. The idea is that publications in the native language have a far better chance to be read by local policy- and decision makers. In addition, having a national medium for publications is also beneficial for (beginning) researchers. Many Dutch public health researchers have published their first article in TSG thus avoiding that the first publication experience was an English language instead of a scientific endeavour. Despite the fact that most researchers are accustomed to communicate in English, for many it is still easier to write an article in their native language. Especially for more descriptive articles dealing with specifically Dutch