

Editor-in-Chief's

Introduction

***Arab Journal of Applied
Linguistics: The Way Forward***

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From the month of April 2018 to that of January 2019, (in 10 months), *Arab Journal of Applied Linguistics* received 25 typescripts of full-length articles. Three were accepted and 22 were turned down. A Google Search showed that 7 out of the 22 typescripts got published as articles in other journals and 2 as chapters in two edited books, making a total of 9 publications elsewhere. Four out of the 7 published articles appeared in listed predatory journals¹ and the remaining 3 were published in journals on which the criteria for predation very much apply². The other 13 typescripts could not be traced via Google Search, but the likelihood of their publication offline cannot be ruled out, at least some of them.

In simple statistical terms, the Journal received within 10 months an average of 2.5 submissions per month. Its acceptance rate was of 12% and its rejection rate was of 88%. Out of the rejected 22 typescripts, 32% were published in other journals and 9% as chapters in edited books, making a total of 41%. The remaining 59% have not been traced via Google Search.

Though *AJAL* is at the tender age of 4 years, with 4 volumes containing 16 articles and 6 book reviews in its record, its acceptance rate compares well with well-established and renowned journals in the field. Since its inception in 2015, *AJAL* (e-ISSN 2490-4198) has been making strides, not rapid or spectacular ones though. It is searchable via Google and Google Scholar. It had in *International Scientific Indexing* (ISI) an impact factor value of 1.104, based on the *International Citation Report* (ICR) for the year 2015-2016³.

¹. <https://predatoryjournals.com/journals/>

². <https://predatoryjournals.com/about/>

³. <http://www.arjals.com/ojs/index.php/Arjals2016/announcement>

Last year, the Journal obtained indexation with *The International Research Foundation for English Language Education* (TIRF) and, this year, it has been indexed with *Education Resources Information Center* (ERIC).

The Editorial Team and Reviewers of *AJAL* have mixed feelings about the high rate of publication of the typescripts the Journal turns down. They note that some of the improvements they recommended are made on most of the papers that got published elsewhere. They also note that the improvements are in most cases cosmetic – correcting typos, re-writing or deleting sentences, moving or removing paragraphs, etc. However, the main causes that led to the rejections are often swept under the carpet; and therein lies the rub.

As the authors whose typescripts have been accepted in this Issue or whose work was published by *AJAL* in previous volumes know, the Editorial Team offers generous support and clear guidance. One of our major objectives is to contribute to raising standards among fellow researchers and emerging scholars in the less privileged academic community of linguists and applied linguists. However, the high publication rate of the typescripts *AJAL* rejects is quite disconcerting. Should *AJAL* react by lowering standards and charge contributors publication fees? The answer is in the negative; such policy goes against the Journal's values and objectives, which are detailed in its Home Page.

Is the Journal swimming against the tide? Can an altruistic, free, academic publication movement that takes advantage of low cost information technology withstand the ever rising neoliberalist trend in merchandising knowledge, education, and man? The latest developments in the Western and North American world offer a glimmer of hope. This year, the University of California has ended its subscription to the giant publisher Elsevier (Resnick, 2019). Predatory journals and publishers are bearing the brunt of numerous sting operations that have exposed the seamy side of the academic world, often in the harshest and most entertaining ways (Reville, 2019). Plagiarists are denounced (Brock, 2014) and their research papers retracted⁴. Universities' obsession with climbing international ranking scales and governments' drive to turn

⁴ <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Anatomy-of-a-Serial-Plagiarism/148437>

them into lucrative businesses or to force the public ones among them to attain financial autonomy are lambasted by academics who have seen their colleagues degenerate into burnouts or, in some sad and extreme cases, commit suicide (Frood, 2015).

In the Middle East and North Africa, pressure on universities to obtain higher international ranking is mounting, especially in the Gulf region. Publication is a major requirement for promotion and a valid enough reason to ensure a contract renewal for expatriates. Many academics and students in this part of the world experience difficulties in having access to top quality publications because of paywalls, and other complex causes that are worth investigating. They are driven into reading free-open-access predatory or predation-suspect journals and into citing from them and publishing their work in them. They are, together with many of their non-American and non-European peers, vulnerable preys.

"Making a contribution to knowledge", this expression that freezes serious researchers' blood, is losing its aura among pseudo-academics in the world. Research is often reduced to conducting distorted duplications echoing others' replications – an ad infinitum recycling and diluting of ideas. The famous, now infamous, "Publish or perish" dictum and the universities' frenzy for obtaining better ranking have made research and publishing lucrative businesses for money-makers, contributed to an intellectual impoverishment among many academics, and would-be-academics. One wonders whether a scholar who publishes solo or in chorus a dozen "fast-food (for thought)" papers a year says something worth saying or finds time to prepare lectures and exam questions, design courses, and read students' exam papers, assignments, and research work. More disturbing still, some students and parvenu academics are having their work done for them by writing and publishing companies employing retired academics and academics in action!

It is in this global and regional context that *AJAL*'s mission can be situated, and I hope, appreciated. By not charging authors publication fees nor imposing paywalls, *AJAL* seeks to be part of the campaign of exposing the greed of giant publishing companies and parasitic predatory journals whose number is growing by the day and which pester readers with intrusive and luring e-mail messages (often offensive and

formulated in faulty English). By providing feedback on all the typescripts *AJAL* receives, it hopes to encourage emerging scholars to contribute to their local, regional, and international discourse communities. By providing free access to authors' publications, it aspires to disseminate knowledge and to stimulate peers to thoughts of their own (to paraphrase Wittgenstein, 1958, viii).

So far, *AJAL* has published papers written by scholars on languages, Arabic and English, acquired, used, or taught in the Arab world and on Arabic acquired or taught outside the Arab world. However, in its effort to reduce the centre-periphery divide and to promote dialogue between scholars in the Arab world and the rest of the world, the Journal has included in the present Issue an article that compares Research Papers Abstracts in Biology, Physics, and Chemistry. Samples of Abstracts were written by Chinese scholars and published in high quality journals in China and the other samples were written by peers whose native language is English and published in high impact factor international journals. The paper adopted Hyland's (2005) classification of metadiscourse features into *interactive resources* (content-oriented) and *interactional resources* (audience-oriented). The study revealed that L1 Chinese scholars made use of more interactive resources and less of interactional resources than their counterparts. They "made greater efforts to guide the readers through their papers by explaining, elaborating and organizing their writing, while L1 English scholars were more concerned with creating author identity and engaging their readers by expressing their judgment towards their materials and speaking to their readers" (p.7). Jing Wei and Jing Duan's paper appeared in an *AJAL Forthcoming-Issue* in 2018 following the Journal's newly adopted policy of publishing papers that require minor or no corrections, without much delay. This policy will be maintained.

This Issue also includes a paper that draws speech pathologists' attention to the drawbacks of using translated materials from English into Arabic to assess and treat post cerebrovascular accident (CVA) Qatari aphasia patients. The paper argues that translation is problematic at the linguistic, pragmatic, social, and cultural levels. It represents a call on linguists and speech pathologists to engage in joint projects to

develop assessment and treatment programmes of aphasia, apraxia, dyslexia, and other language impairments among Arabic speakers.

Researchers involved in developing such assessment and treatment programmes for Arabic speaking patients need to take into consideration sociolinguistic variations across the Arab world. They will have to grapple with intricate sociolinguistic issues such as literacy, diglossia, bilingualism, code-mixing, code-switching; geographical, ethnological, and social factors influencing verbal behaviour; and gender and age differences. And, whenever they opt for translating from English, or other languages, into Arabic, they will have to be cognisant of procedures such as transposition, modulation, adaptation (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995; Whittlesey, 2012), and possibly Arabisation.

It is worth mentioning that *AJAL* included in its previous volumes papers broaching several sociolinguistics matters. The papers have a pedagogical perspective, but they can be of interest to speech pathologists treating Arabic speaking patients. *AJAL* welcomes typescripts that tackle issues in Translation Studies, especially in translating materials for speech pathologists and for other professions.

The third article in this Issue deals with the teaching of translation via blending traditional face-to-face classroom activities and computer-assisted teaching/learning activities. As is the case with previous research published in various sources, including *AJAL*, on blended learning, Ahmed and Ibrahim's investigation confirms that the benefits of this technique outweigh its drawbacks.

Students of English (or other foreign languages) do not have to wait till they enrol in an English department to be initiated to doing translation and to savouring its bitter-sweet challenges and rewards. Translation helps secondary school students gain better insights into their mother tongue and into the language they are learning. It reinforces their sense of belonging to their culture and language and motivates them to explore and appreciate the nuances and subtleties of the target language and culture. As far as the Arab world is concerned, having translation courses in secondary school curricula may tacitly contribute to discouraging teachers and students from the often pedagogically

unwarranted uses of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom, as the use of both Arabic and English would be reserved to the translation classes.

In conclusion, after four years, *AJAL* has maintained its responsible autonomy and preserved high acceptance and publication standards. It has obtained indexation with several Foundations and Centres. It has resisted falling in the hands of rapacious publication companies. The Journal is open to researchers from the Arab world and beyond. It encourages and promotes cross-fertilisation of disciplines that benefit the field of applied linguistics and can have a direct effect or potential impact on academic research in the hard sciences or the humanities in the Arab world.

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