

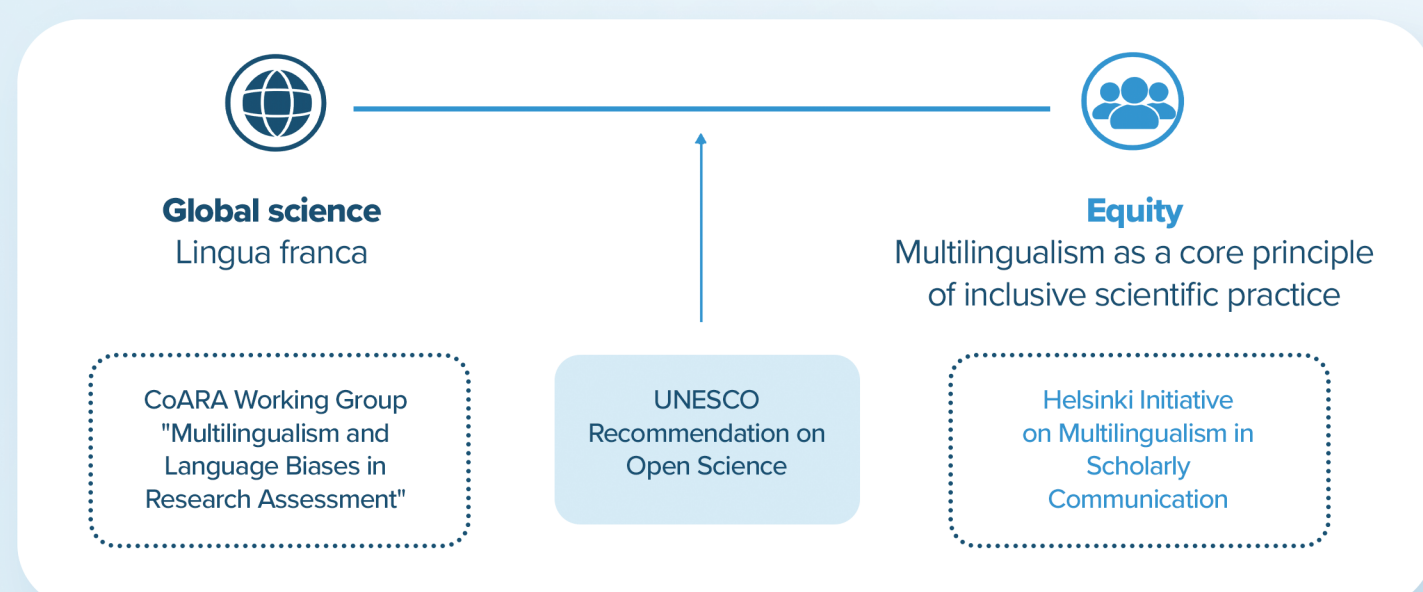
How Language Shapes Research Assessment

A Comparative Survey of Italy and Hungary

Ginevra Peruginelli – National Research Council of Italy (CNR-IGSG) Sebastiano Faro – National Research Council of Italy (CNR-IGSG) Virág Vas – HUN-REN RCNS Institute of Molecular Life Sciences

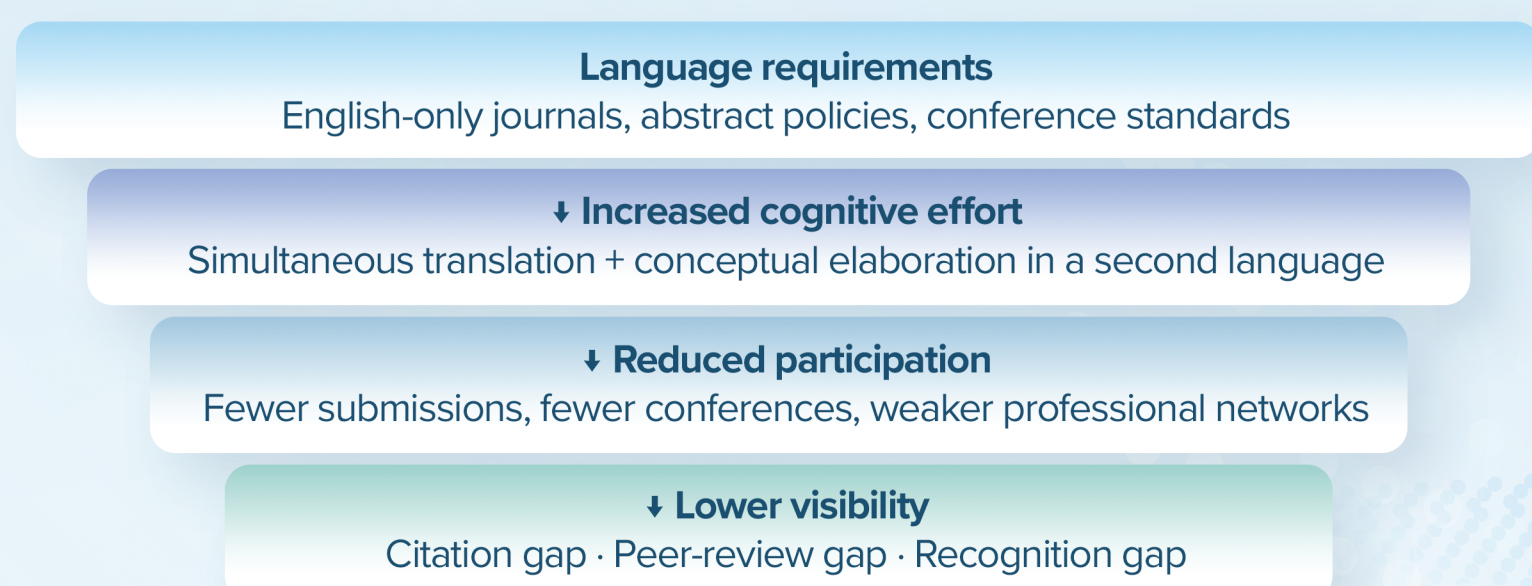
OPENING FRAME

The paradox of global science



The use of English as an academic lingua franca has benefits for international communication, collaboration, and mobility. BUT English is an **asymmetric lingua franca**, as it is "the native tongue and the national language of the most influential segment of the global scientific community, but a foreign language for the rest of the world." [Pradier, C., Céspedes, L., & Larivière, V. (2026) *How multilingual is scholarly communication? Mapping the global distribution of languages in publications and citations*. Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology, 77(5), 699–713. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.70055>].

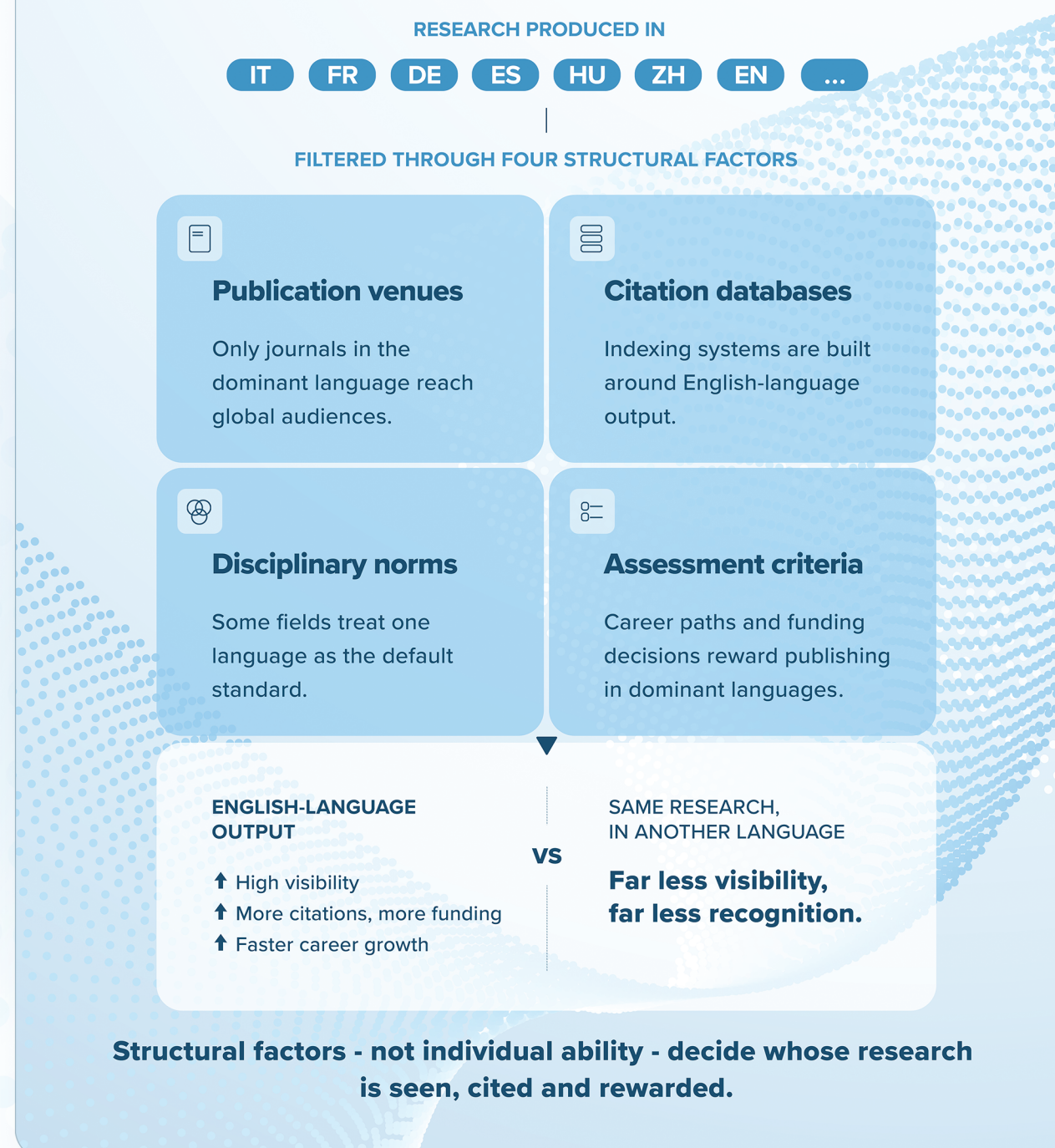
THE COMPOUNDING EFFECT



Language is not a side issue of scientific communication — it is a structural filter on whose knowledge counts, gets cited and gets rewarded.

Which language counts?

Research happens in many languages, but structural factors make it hard to use them all to spread science.



Structural factors - not individual ability - decide whose research is seen, cited and rewarded.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What we set out to learn

How is multilingualism practiced in scientific research?
What is the role of English vs. national languages?
Are there perceived language biases in research activities?
How do language practices impact research performance and opportunities?

THE STUDY

Two surveys, one instrument

Two comparative surveys, developed within the CoARA Working Group on lingualism and language biases in research assessment, tested whether one instrument could travel across two very different research systems.

Italy – CNR · 2024

910 respondents
13.3% response rate

Romance-embedded in multilingual Europe · established system, 6,833 staff invited.

Hungary – HUN-REN · 2025

211 respondents
6.0% response rate

Finno-Ugric · linguistically isolated · EU-supported, widening system, 3,500 staff invited; questionnaire adapted from the Italian version.

THE DATA - What the survey data show

Language shapes who gets heard

IT SSH 13.7% IT STEM 7.8% HU SSH 9.0% HU STEM 7.2%

Rejection due to language affects Italian SSH researchers most — rooted in the system, not individual skill. 45% of Italians see citation-database English dominance as marginalising.

Bids and careers pull in opposite directions

IT grant disadvantage 23% HU grant disadvantage 14.5%

Hungarians feel less disadvantaged applying for grants in a foreign language. But career-level bias presses hardest there: Hungarians feel promotion depends heavily on foreign-language knowledge; Italians feel less need to adapt.

Support services lag behind the problem

63% IT never used editing 56.6% HU never used editing

Despite reported setbacks, uptake of professional support remains low in both countries — a gap assessment reform could help close.

Some free comments: critical issues

ITALY: I am concerned that the choice of multilingualism may risk isolating both research works and researchers, rather than enhancing their visibility in the international arena.

We hope that future advancements in AI will enable reliable translation from Chinese; otherwise, the emergence of two scientific and technological lingua franca in a bifurcated world could place the West at a significant disadvantage.

In some cases, publishing in your own language is a visible act of resistance — a survival strategy under evaluation systems that equate English with quality.

The limited presence of international researchers diminishes the daily need for English, reducing its potential as a tool for professional growth. This issue also affects foreigners learning Italian, which can deter short-term stays due to the need to learn an additional language.

Language in teaching

IT 65.4% consistent use HU 47.2% consistent use

An 18-point gap separates Hungary and Italy in consistent classroom language use, in relation to the trend over time toward using a language other than one's own (as reported by 42% of Hungarians).

National context explains the gap, not skill

IT 87.5% publish 90–100% EN HU 69.7% publish 90–100% EN

IT AI writing 42% HU AI writing 51.7%

Hungarians publish 18 points less in English and experiment more with generative AI for multilingual writing. Both trace back to national infrastructure and EU-funded capacity-building, not individual skill.

HUNGARY: Journals I am interested in accept manuscripts only in English.

Speaking and writing in languages other than my own is not without challenges — but for me, it's a gateway to learning, connection, and global exchange, not a limit to my academic freedom.

KEY MESSAGES

Language is not neutral

Language influences who participates and shapes scientific careers. Not a detail of research.

Cross-country differences are system-driven

Italy vs Hungary: structural conditions. Not individual abilities.

Addressing language bias is essential for fair evaluation

A matter of how the system is built. Not of researcher ability.

RELEVANCE TO COARA

Why this matters

Language bias is widely acknowledged, yet rarely measured and almost never compared across countries. The Italy–Hungary case already shows how the same barriers unfold differently depending on national infrastructure and EU capacity-building. Extending this survey to more CoARA members would help disentangle universal barriers from local ones, test whether reforms actually transfer, and build a shared observatory as reforms unfold. A single national survey can tell CoARA that a problem exists — not whether it looks the same everywhere, or what actually reduces it. The questionnaire is openly available and designed to be adapted to each national context, allowing any CoARA member to run a localized version and contribute to a growing comparative database.

CONTACT Ginevra Peruginelli — ginevra.peruginelli@cnr.it National Research Council of Italy (CNR-IGSG)



Want to know more? Read the full Italian (CNR) survey report
Peruginelli, G. & Faro, S. (2025). Exploring Multilingualism in Research.
Zenodo. doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15262952

