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Open Access as Social Practice

The Political of, and Experiences with Applied Linguistics Publishing

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1 Open Science as a Social Practice in Late Modern Publics

The push for open access (OA) to research has become a significant topic in scholarly communication, particularly as digital advancements have made broadening access more attainable yet complex. In the last five years, amid the crisis of misinformation and the rise of populist nationalism, opening access to research and previously excluded knowledge (cf. Chan et al. 2020: 2) has become a cornerstone in countering these discourses. Of the over estimated 3.6 million articles published in 2023, 1.7 million were published either Gold, Green, or Bronze open access, or 48% according to Scopus data in the STM open access dashboard[1] up from 45% of scholarly articles in 2021 (cf. Pollock/Michael 2022). OA is crucial as it aligns with the university's mission to disseminate knowledge and address global challenges. Open research is more accessible and discoverable, fostering international collaboration and engagement beyond academic circles. However, disparities in access remain, influenced by discipline (cf. Quigley 2021) and economic constraints.

Why is open access (OA), and open research broadly, so important? One major reason is the connection to the heart of the scholarly mission. The aims of OA and the mission of the university itself are connected, committed as institutions are "to generating, disseminating, and preserving knowledge, and

1 See https://www.stm-assoc.org/oa-dashboard-2024/uptake-of-open-access

to working with others to bring this knowledge to bear on the world's great challenges" (MIT Ad Hoc Faculty Task Force 2019). Making research open increases the ability of anyone, anywhere, to read the results and output of scholarly research.[2] When research is open and free to read, it is more accessible, potentially more discoverable, and allows researchers internationally an easier pathway to discuss, cooperate, and collaborate (see e.g. the UNESCO's Recommendations on Open Science 2021). There is a general consensus that open research is more widely read and, as a consequence, receives more engagement beyond a narrow academic readership (cf. Hicks at al. 2022), and is potentially more highly cited, although the effect can be disciplinary dependent.

Debates around OA and open research also go beyond mere modes of access and publication and connect to the broader ways that media technologies are intertwined with, and change, our modes of communication, conceptions of the world and the social structures we inhabit and create. As linguists, language sits at the center of how we as authors begin to understand and analyze these conceptions and structures. While there is growing literature on OA practices, there is limited research on attitudes towards OA in linguistics, particularly in areas intersecting language and society (the work of Liu/De Cat [2022] is a rare exception). This article presents a questionnaire study exploring the experiences and attitudes of linguists regarding OA publishing. We hypothesize that while OA enhances access for readers, it may reinforce social hierarchies among authors, particularly disadvantaging those without funding or knowledge about OA pathways. Our findings indicate that language researchers recognize these hierarchies, which could exacerbate global inequalities. For greater equity, open access models for researchers in language and society disciplines will likely need to continue to evolve.

We frame our discussion within current OA debates and Jacques Rancière's concepts of shared space and the "distribution of the sensible" (*le partage du sensible*, Rancière

2 Admittedly, this is no new science practice as Chan et al. (2020: 4) point out: "Between 1852 and 1908, academic journals were regulated by default by open licences. [...] Generally, academic journals were associated with disciplinary associations and published on a non-profit basis" (see also Langlais 2015).

2010: 36), suggesting that OA discussions reflect broader reconfigurations of public space in late modernity (cf. Heyd/Schneider 2019). The article includes our survey methods, data analysis, and concludes with reflections on the implications of our findings.

2 Recent Controversies over Open Research and OA Publishing

Discussions around, and options for, OA publishing, and publishing generally, have become more complex since the advent of digital publishing. The statement of principles of the *Budapest Open Access Initiative* (BOAI), released on 14 February 2002, remain a commonly invoked definition of OA:

> By 'open access' to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.

Furthermore, the BOAI mentions two kinds of strategies to achieve OA: self-archiving of text copies in open archives on the internet, and launching of new online open access journals. Scholars can feel overwhelmed by the constantly changing market – institutions and funding bodies increasingly demand that research results are made available openly, but the constraints on which outlet is acceptable are often confusing. It is not always obvious who pays the price to cover OA publication and what that price is. In addition to the financial cost, there is the labor. It is not always clear whether an OA publication will receive the same level of shepherding, editing, and proofreading as a traditional publication. Some publishers provide clear resources to make this clear, others are less transparent.

In addition, besides an overall lack of consistency, there is a continued suspicion in the social sciences and humanities particularly (see Dalton/Tenopir/Björk 2020) that an open access publication is less prestigious. This is of particular concern where we are in an ever more competitive job market and every publication choice weighs heavily in the tenure and promotion process. At the same time, tenure and promotion processes are slow to accommodate the changes in the market and methods of distribution and access. Can early career researchers risk prioritizing open access, if it means choosing a publication with a less prestigious press or a lower impact factor journal? Are more established scholars making choices to publish open access that will help their younger colleagues choose this pathway, too?

Alongside the expansive possibilities of digital infrastructure on knowledge distribution, a number of pressures accelerated calls for greater access to knowledge and propelled forward the open access and open science movements. The crisis of reproducibility and replicability (cf. Fidler/Wilcox 2018) increased the need and demand for wider access not only to results, but also research data. The desire in some disciplines, in particular the natural and material sciences, to increase the speed of sharing and publication is another factor. The arXiv repository, launched in 1991 and mostly used initially by the physics community, is a clear example of researchers developing spaces and communities for rapid research sharing through preprinting. There has also been an increasing push for research that is publicly funded to be publicly accessible, for example the Holdren (2013) and Nelson (2022) memos in the US. Decreasing library budgets have also seen pressures on maintaining subscriptions and therefore with decreased subscriptions, decreased access for researchers. Pressure for greater access to research and cooperation between institutional and national library consortia has engaged publishers of all types, commercial and non-profit, to evolve business models to ensure openness through agreements that continue access to read closed content and to publish open access.[3] While scholar-led or radical open access movements have argued that researchers should change the system by

3 E.g. in Germany with Project Deal, www.project-deal.de

refraining from publishing with commercial or large non-profit presses that remain closed or do not offer pure open options, there remain the challenges of varying needs of different research areas and disciplines.[4] The challenge in the current environment of increased publishing and research output, the call for transparency, including open data sharing, is also one of scale, discovery, archiving, preservation, and infrastructure. These challenges are resource intensive and it remains to be seen whether they can be managed by universities, foundations, and smaller scale non-profits alone. Diverse options are needed.

Digital publishing and open access, the drive to publish or perish, have also led to a dramatic increase in predatory and fraudulent publishers, as well as fraudulent practices. It can be difficult to distinguish legitimate publishing entities from predatory ones that specialize in open access. There have been attempts to monitor and list predatory publishers and journals, for example Beall's List,[5] but these have not been without controversy (e.g. Anderson 2019). The endeavor of creating lists of these bad actors can also seem Sisyphean, as the rate at which more dubious publishers and conference organizers appear happens with incredible speed (discussed also in the wider public sphere, see e.g. the TV documentary 'Fake Science', Wenning 2018). Novel models that present alternatives to traditional modes and methods of publishing can also get drawn into these lists of bad actors before they are able to fully establish legitimacy or a legacy that might challenge the status quo. There is research that indicates that "for the most part, young and inexperienced researchers from developing countries" are the ones most susceptible to the entreaties of these publishers (Xia et al. 2015; see also Demir 2018). At the same time, there are platforms like Sci-Hub, offering a large share of scientific work for free. The majority of the content on these platforms is gained through dubious means without the acknowledgement of the cost of production. According to most countries' legislation, their practices are illegal. In the case of *Sci-Hub*, there is even the accusation that the Russian secret service is involved (cf.

4 E.g. http://radicalopenaccess.disruptivemedia.org.uk

5 See https://beallslist.net/

Grassegger 2022: 36), with the aim of accessing scientists' personal data as well as research results.

Likewise, there have been increases in bad actors on the authorship side. Paper mills, data falsification cases, plagiarism, and authorship concerns are on the rise and, with the emergence of generative AI and large language models (LLMs) are likely to grow and complexify. The Publishing Ethics and Research Integrity team at Taylor and Francis, for example saw data integrity cases increase by 20% between 2017 and 2022 (cf. Alam/Wilson 2023: 4). The publisher Hindawi suffered challenges with paper mills so severe that the publisher retracted over 8,000 papers as of the end of December, 2023, and has now been shuttered by its parent publisher, Wiley (cf. Retraction Watch 2023).

All this illustrates that the research and publishing industry, not least because of new media formats and digital practices, is in a state of reconfiguration and with it, the entire construction of public space (e.g. Couldry/Hepp 2017; Fraser 2014; Heyd/Schneider 2019) and the structures that regulate and define public authority and the 'hearability' of voices. While the effects of this can be seen along different axes – we may link this to phenomena like transnational community formation but also to forms of hate speech and the destabilization of Western democracy – we are interested here in the perspectives of (applied) language researchers on publishing practice. To get a better understanding of publishing in its political dimension, and connect it to ways of talking about openness, we draw on Rancière's concepts regarding the aesthetic dimensions of politics.

3 Rancière and the Politics of the Sensible

The call to make research free and open to read is fundamentally political, i.e., it touches questions of a normalized socio-political order and its legitimate subjects. A critical evaluation of its opportunities and challenges from a theoretical perspective is essential. Here, we focus on the cultural-philosophical and media-theoretical aspects of OA and open research broadly, addressing two particular dimensions. On the one hand open research and open access can be viewed as practices of publishing, on the other hand

they are discourse subjects. This differentiation should not be considered an ontological one. Indeed, both dimensions cannot be strictly separated from one another as the idea and understanding of open research and OA as practices of sharing knowledge via publishing fundamentally correlate with the discourse and its agents. Nevertheless, making do with this differentiation helps to start with a focus on the general significance of the idea of freely accessible research output as such in order to proceed with specific implications arising from it as they become evident in the discourse.

Starting from the major – and probably in itself most undisputed – aspect of open research and OA publishing, i.e. the general accessibility to academic research, both in finished text and through a wide range of output such as data and code, which goes right to OA's political heart. Perceptibility and access deeply intertwine with political issues of community and the social. Accessibility, of course, holds within its definitions a multiplicity. It can mean not only the ability to read, but also to access the resources, whether linguistic, financial or other, but also the resources to comprehend the research output. The French philosopher Jacques Rancière's reflections around the *aesthetics* of politics are particularly relevant to better understand this, where he understands aesthetics as encompassing the realm of sensory experience, perception, and the distribution of what is sensual (sensible) (cf. Davis 2013). Rancière points to the fact that what is considered as the 'shared' space constituting and cohering societies is basically a system shaped by hierarchies and power relations that includes some while excluding others. His notion of the "distribution of the sensible" (*le partage du sensible*, Rancière 2010: 36) reveals the aesthetic dimension of politics as an establishing of routines and norms of perception that goes along with organizing power, distributing positions and functions and legitimizing them, creating unity and agreement within societies (cf. Muhle 2006: 9). The resulting order of perception fundamentally affects the identity, value and sense of people, things and spaces – in short, their perceptibility, presence, and ability to partake – within the social sphere at a certain time. Discourses, practices, and materialities thus bring into effect a distribution of the sensible, separating those who partake in a community from those who do not.

Open research and open access publishing go right to the core of such an understanding. They reveal that established practices restrict the accessibility to research through financial, linguistics, license, and other barriers, and show that the seemingly 'shared' world of scholarship and academic discourse only includes some while others are excluded and have no part in it (note that other questions of accessibility, for example, those based on language barriers, are typically not discussed in these discourses). In academia in the so-called Global North, as noted at the outset of this paper, the majority of research published with academic publishers remains available only by purchase or subscription. This significantly limits access for those who have no admittance to license-holding institutions or do not have sufficient means to afford to purchase or subscribe themselves, or requires that they are able to gain access through personal or professional networks or illegal means, such as sites like Sci-Hub. The distribution of the sensible that Rancière describes is effective in two respects here:

(1) By being inaccessible due to financial and subscription barriers, restricted research is primarily available for those who are rated as being more prestigious and/or are better resourced than others. This concerns full-time established (senior) as opposed to part-time (junior) or adjunct, non-permanent position, scholars, as well as the so-called Global North versus the Global South. Restricted access to research by various barriers implies that such knowledge and findings remain invisible for 'less established' academic agents and 'less prestigious' spaces and cannot become part of their world of perception and thought. Or it can mean that their access to these closed materials must be done through other means.

(2) Along with that, the thereby excluded have a very limited or no chance to participate in this academic discourse, to bring in their perspectives, findings, and reflections.[6] This is also linked with a (racial, gender,

6 Other aspects apart from publishing opportunities come into play here, such as language of publication, discrimination (or implicit bias?) against authors based in particular countries or at institutions, but these go beyond the scope of this article.

> classicist etc.) bias – be it implicit or explicit – against authors that are attributed a lower academic capital (cf. Demeter 2020; Istratii/Demeter 2021) due to their language(s) or sites of publication, citation rates and impact factors, or being based in a particular country or at a certain institution. However, the biases that such assessments are based on are by no means naturally given facts but the outcome of deep-seated global inequalities that likewise affect academic publishing practices. Due to this inner seclusion and preclusion of outsiders the thereby restricted academic discourse is at risk to homogenize and continuously reproduce established power relations at the cost of those who have no access to, and partake in it because of lacking reputation and available means.

Rancière has defined sensory orders of this kind as policing processes and differentiated them from political action that, in turn, confronts the police order with what it has excluded (cf. Muhle 2006: 9). For him, such moments of dissensus (cf. Rancière 2010: 38) emerge when "those without part" (Rancière 2010: 36) demand or claim their part towards an order excluding them:

> It consists in making what was unseen visible; in making what was audible as mere noise heard as speech and in demonstrating that what appeared as a mere expression of pleasure and pain is a shared feeling of a good or an evil. (Rancière 2010: 38)

This dissensual moment of placing one sensory world in another one contradictory to it, constitutes the genuine realm of politics: "The essence of politics is *dissensus*. Dissensus is not a confrontation between interests or opinions. It is the demonstration (*manifestation*) of a gap in the sensible itself." (Rancière 2010: 38) The already existing partial realization of open research and OA publishing manifests this gap in the sensible of the established order by radically placing itself within, or next to it as something equal. In this "presence of two worlds in one" (Rancière 2010: 37) the increased ability of anyone, anywhere, to read the results and output of scholarly research constitutes a moment of reconfiguring the shared common in academia.

So far, so good. However, it is necessary to grasp the underlying ideas behind open research and OA publishing, its implications as well as the ways it is discursively framed and reasoned. In this regard, María Faciolince and Duncan Green bring up a most relevant question:

> [D]oes inclusion come from access to journals, or from the ability to participate equally in the global circuit of knowledge production? If it is access to journals, the debate would stop at OA. However, if equity in research concerns us [i.e. Southern scholarship, the authors], we must explore the conditions upon which this inclusion is granted, and by whom. (Faciolince/Green 2021: 374)

What the two authors are pointing to is a gap in the reflection on, and structural implications of making research freely accessible. It becomes evident by taking a look at the agents and spaces of the corresponding discourse. What we find here is, in a sense, another distribution of the sensible when those who are most prominent in the discussion are established scholars and publishers of the 'Global North':

> [W]hile the publishing and research communities in the developed world were making steady and positive progress towards universal Open Access based on a 'pay to publish' model, those same communities in the less developed lower and middle-income countries (often referred to as the 'Global South') were being excluded from these discussions. (Powell/Johnson/Herbert 2020: 2) [7]

This has significant consequences for content and conceptual aspects of the discussion about open research and OA publishing. By substantially shaping the discursive arena through their advantaged position, dominant participants focus on issues that bypass the reality of 'less prestigious' stakeholders. As such, asserting the general accessibility of papers by their authors as a universal and unquestioned credo for inclusive scholarship is part of a hegemonic discourse that is primarily occupied and shaped by dominant

7 Note, however, that successful initiatives exist, as, for example, in Latin America where there are investments in open publishing and infrastructure – e.g. Scielo (www.scielo.org) – at the state and federal level that have been tremendously successful and serve researchers through the availability of a cost-free (to authors), multilingual platform.

sites and agents of knowledge production in the 'Global North'. Through financial and institutional resources as well as international networks they have the necessary legitimacy and presence for setting the agenda of the discussion.

Along with this, academia comes with a "publish-or-perish" pressure (Demir 2018) that primarily, though not exclusively, affects less established, junior researchers with few financial or institutional resources (not exclusively) from the 'Global South' or those in more precarious and contingent positions, such as adjunct teaching staff. The premise to promote oneself in academia as quickly and frequently as possible contributes to the hegemonic consensus that open research is important because it is more widely read and more highly cited (cf. Piwowar et al. 2018).

The political dimension of open research and OA publishing as well as the surrounding discourses are highly complex and heterogeneous. Various positions – neoliberal, corporate, anti-corporate or decolonial ones – are confronting one another and "different aspects of open access perform different functions that may align with different political agendas" (Eve 2014: 7). Despite all the ambivalence and complexity, in the end, the question of who is present in the discourse and who speaks is of no small concern if making research free and open to read should reach its full integrative potential. In this connection, deterritorializing and reconfiguring the debate as well as questioning the established Western model of marketized and restrictive knowledge production and dissemination are of major relevance because "accessibility, and thus Open Access, is only one part of a broader challenge over the democratization of knowledge" (Faciolince/Green: 2021: 374). Scholars concerned with studying language and discourse in society are in a privileged position to critically reflect on the politics of the sensible in Open Access, that is, regarding questions on whose voices are heard and which hierarchies of discourse authority emerge or are reproduced. In the second half of our article, we therefore present an empirical study on attitudes of language researchers on OA.

4 Studying Attitudes and Experiences with OA

In our empirical study, we asked how academics who work in the realm of sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, applied linguistics, media linguistics or other socially oriented fields of linguistics report on and evaluate their experiences with OA publishing. Based on our own impressions as people who are working in academia and in the publishing industry, we assume that knowledge about the opportunities and challenges of OA publishing is not fully developed and may be discipline-specific. In this light, asking individuals from a particular academic field about their orientations, knowledge and practices concerning the politics of publishing helps to get a clearer picture of how academics negotiate the complex current situation and which factors may influence their decisions and stances. On a meta-level, this may contribute to the discussion of how reconfigurations in media technologies impact academic publics and structures of authority therein.

In order to collect data on how the applied linguistics community orients towards OA publication, we developed an online questionnaire that asks about demographics, technological competences, knowledge about, experience with and attitudes towards OA. We developed the questionnaire on the basis of our own joint discussions as two academics who do not consider themselves as OA activists and rate their knowledge about the diverse OA publishing opportunities as mediocre and a linguistically trained employee of a publishing house. Before we published the questionnaire, we asked two colleagues who have more experience with OA publishing and of whom we know are interested in the discussions surrounding it, to fill in the questionnaire and give us feedback. After we had updated the questionnaire according to their comments, we advertised it via a blog post[8] on the peer-reviewed sociolinguistics research site "Language on the Move", edited by Ingrid Pilar, and via our own Twitter accounts.

Connecting to the global community we are interested in can be difficult and it can be assumed that those who filled in our questionnaire were individuals who a) have access to the

8 See https://www.languageonthemove.com/open-research-in-language-and-society/

platforms we used and therefore are privileged in the sense of having access to the internet and to particular digital networks and b) are at least interested in the topic. In our call for participation, we emphasized explicitly that professional experience and profound knowledge about OA practices was not required and that we are as interested in those who are knowledgeable as in those who have hardly any idea what OA publishing involves. Still, it is likely that attitudes towards OA may have influenced the decision of participating in the questionnaire in the first place. Secondly, as we disclosed our own names, it is likely that some participants have filled in the questionnaire because of a favourable personal connection. Thus, we do not treat the data that we analyze in the following as representative of the experiences and attitudes with OA in general or in the entire socially oriented linguistic community but as giving insight into tendencies among this community and as exploration that allows for enriching the discussion on the basis of data. In total, 88 individuals responded. In the following discussion, we describe the results and discuss them in relation to the question of what this implies for OA publishing practices. We do not conduct statistical analyses but develop interpretative accounts of the answers. We invite readers to engage in a discussion with us.

5 Data Analysis – Knowledge, Experiences and Attitudes towards Open Access Publishing in the Applied Disciplines of Linguistics

5.1 Demographics – Who Responded to our Questionnaire?

Almost two thirds of our respondents are scholars between the ages of 31 and 50. Younger scholars such as PhD students and older colleagues contributed as well but not as frequently (13% under 31, 21% above 50). 53 of the 88 respondents self-identify as female, 28 as male, two as non-binary or agender, five did not answer the question on gender identity. Respondents derive from different locations world-wide, including places where the majority of our own personal research networks are located, like northern Europe or the US but also from other places, including countries in South America, the Philippines, or Kazakhstan. None of the

488 respondents indicate that they are based on the African
489 continent. A large share (19 respondents) are based in
490 Germany (explicable by the fact that two of the authors of the
491 study are also located in Germany), 14 are located in the UK, 7
492 in the US and four each in Australia and in Italy. It thus needs
493 to be noted that the large majority of respondents works in
494 'Global North' countries.
495 More than one third of respondents hold a professorship
496 with tenure, while respondents in more precarious positions
497 have a smaller share (e.g. up to 15% e.g. in post-doc position
498 and 17% in 'other' positions), which possibly shows that those
499 privileged enough to have a permanent job are more willing
500 to fill in questionnaires and have the 'luxury' to decide where
501 they want to publish as their future job prospects do not
502 depend on where they publish. Thus, they can decide to
503 publish OA even if this is maybe not as prestigious as some
504 non-OA publications. It is furthermore possible that those
505 with tenure are more familiar with OA practices and also to
506 have published a critical mass of research and so were likely
507 to be drawn to answer the survey. It could also be that those
508 with tenure are more likely to be monitoring the places we
509 advertised the survey. In addition, in some countries of the
510 'Global North', some universities have initiatives that support
511 or even mandate OA publication and provide funds to
512 support this (see also below discussion). Particularly those
513 with permanent jobs may have access to such funds and may
514 therefore be interested in the topic. In terms of disciplinary
515 affiliation, more than half of the respondents define
516 themselves as working in the field of sociolinguistics, almost
517 40% in the field of applied linguistics, about 20% in linguistic
518 anthropology and almost 20% regarded themselves as
519 working in Communication/Media Studies. Almost 40%
520 indicated that they (also) worked in other fields – note that
521 several answers were possible and that we therefore can
522 assume that the largest share of respondents had a
523 disciplinary background in the fields that we asked for. Given
524 that in the US it makes a difference to work in a more
525 research-oriented or in a more teaching-oriented institution,
526 we asked where the respondents saw themselves in that
527 dimension. About 40% said that the distinction was not
528 applicable in their environment, a bit more than 40%
529 understood their institution as research-oriented and 16%

said they worked in a teaching-oriented environment. This shows that, probably unsurprisingly, where the distinction makes a difference, it is more important for those involved in research to engage with OA publishing practice.

Overall, the results show that OA is a topic that is particularly attractive for academics in established and prestigious positions, which confirms previous discussions (see section 2) and a particular "distribution of the sensible" (see section 3), privileging certain groups while excluding others, as location, institutional affiliation and job positions interfere.

5.2 Technological Competence and Orientations towards Social Media and Research as Social Engagement

As developments of OA publishing are dependent on technological developments in the realm of digitization, and as we hypothesized that knowledge about and positive attitudes towards digital technologies may interact with engagement in OA, we included questions on this. We assumed that overall moral attitudes towards working in academia may intersect with attitudes towards OA publishing as it allows researchers and interested publics to access academic research without restrictions and irrespective of economic privileges. Questions on the role of academic activities as being related to social engagement were thus also included.

In relation to using technologies, we asked respondents to rank themselves on a scale from 1 to 10, ranging from 'very uncomfortable' (1) to 'very comfortable' (10). Most respondents rank themselves on 8, 9 or 10 (64%). 14% rank their comfortableness as '7', 7% as '6' and all other positions involve percentages below 5%. This implies that mostly individuals who have a leaning towards using digital technologies have responded to the questionnaire, which confirms our hypothesis. At the same time, only a minority states that they are able to code professionally (2,3%), 17% say they have some competence in a particular programming language, a third say they have 'a little' competence in coding and the largest share (47,7%) say they have no coding competence at all. All in all, the respondents thus can be assumed to have positive attitudes towards digital

technologies but do not have a background in professional computing and will be able to use digital platforms but are most likely not able to create them.

We then asked whether respondents make use of social media to popularize their work, wondering whether social media use interacts with interest in OA in sharing a concern for increasing visibility of research. This could not be confirmed. The median on a scale from 1 (never use social media) to 10 (always use social media) is 6,1. Percentages relating to each of the respective ranks are overall low (18% as highest percentage at '10', always using social media to promote publications) and distributed rather evenly on both ends of the scale (12,5% say they never use social media). Whether or not academics use social media is therefore apparently not related to their interest in OA publishing. The final question in this area asked whether respondents regard academic publishing as a type of social engagement. Confirming our hypothesis that moral motivations in doing research and being engaged in academia may interact with interest in OA, we here see that 45% agree to academic publishing being a type of social engagement ('Definitely yes' and 'Probably yes'), 34% that this may or may not be the case and only 15% say that they think that this is 'Probably not' or 'Definitely not' the case.

Taken together, the results of this part of the survey show that respondents feel comfortable with using digital technologies and have a certain leaning towards perceiving academic work as a kind of social or moral engagement. We may thus argue that politics of the sensible, technological competences and attitudes towards research intersect.

5.3 Knowledge about Open Access

As the term Open Access may be interpreted differently, we asked our respondents what they understood as such. The highest number (62.5%) of respondents find the involvement of a publisher necessary for something to be considered as OA. 53,4% believe that a peer review process is necessary for calling something OA. 25% indicate that they understand anything that is found online and can be downloaded for free as OA. This means that the majority of respondents perceives OA to be a quality standard as most assume that a review

process is involved. Yet, critical comment is also found, as, for example, in the accompanying possibility to add free text to this question, where one respondent remarked that OA meant for them that "Writer pays and reader has free access". The fact that OA publishing with an established publisher is related to access to monetary funds on the side of the author is critically remarked upon. One respondent reports, for example: "I am a graduate student so while I am fully committed to OA I do not have funds to pay for it."

It is also interesting that some respondents have rather strong opinions on what they understand to be 'real' OA. This mainly appeared in the final question of the questionnaire, where we encouraged the respondents to add anything they want to add in a free text box. Several comments here serve to inform us (as those who had designed the questionnaire) that our conception of OA is 'wrong' as, according to some of the respondents' conceptions, only particular types of publishing should be called 'Open Access'. For example, individual respondents made distinctions between 'Open Access' and 'Green Open Access', argued that the license is what distinguishes free from Open Access or that offline sources made available online, data sets, and Open Educational Resources should also be mentioned in the realm of OA. Others found it important to distinguish Open Science from a general practice of publishing things online. Given that we had anticipated that many of our respondents would not be aware of specialized discourses on OA practices or more wide-ranging concepts of Open Science, we had decided to include all forms of freely available digital access as entailing the potential to be interpreted as "Open Access" by the community, which was indeed confirmed in our data (as 25% of respondents assume that anything that can be downloaded with no financial cost represents OA). The responses in the multiple-choice answers as well as in the open text answers show that knowledge and interpretations relating to OA publishing practices may differ widely, while some members of the community have conceptions of OA that they understand to be an authoritative norm. The power relations and differential opportunities to be perceived that manifest themselves in this situation are linked to knowledge and to discursive constructions of authority based on it.

5.4 Experience with Open Access

When it comes to experience with OA publishing, 75% say that they have published work OA. Of the rest – those who haven't published OA yet – almost 90% say that they definitely or probably plan/would like to publish an OA publication. Only 2% say that it is unlikely that they will do this. Thus, most of the respondents have either already published in an OA format and if not, they are likely to do so if they can. This implies that most respondents have positive attitudes towards making their research available with no cost for others, or at least see the importance or benefit.

For some OA publishers and journals, editorial and production processes may differ from processes for publishing along traditional pathways. Thus, we asked who was involved in manuscript editing work, for example layout, formatting, and proofreading in the OA publications of those who already have published in this way. About a third of the respondents here say that they, or someone they hired, did the editing, so that the publisher received a final, publishable version. In 26% of answers, the respondents reply that the publisher covered the cost for this work. In this answer, it was interesting that almost a third (29%) chose the answer 'Other'. The respondents here had the possibility to add free text. We received a remarkably diverse set of answers here, ranging from joint proofreading, the coverage of the costs on sides of the publisher, state institutions, third party funding or universities. Some authors note that the arrangement was not transparent to them. Several authors reported on diverse experiences in different contexts and illustrated this, for example, by saying that it was "different for different publications"; either "I did everything" or "publisher did everything and covered the costs". This shows that there is currently no standard procedure in OA publishing. As it seems to be rather common that individual authors feel that they are made responsible for the final shape of the publication and as state or university support for encouraging researchers to publish OA seems to be available only in some countries or institutions, there is a danger of reproducing or even amplifying global social hierarchies. It is not possible from the data to infer the location of the respondents of separate answers, but some mention country-specific funding

bodies, for example from Germany, Australia, or Canada; others say that their funding institutions, their university or their university library have supported them, without saying where these are based. The individual researcher is oftentimes held responsible for final version, typos, layout etc., which implies that those who have staff to support them (e.g. administrative or research assistants) are advantaged. State, federal, and/or institutional support to finance production and editing costs is unevenly spread, for example, more readily accessible at well-resourced institutions or countries in Western Europe with a tradition of this form of subsidy. This implies that OA publishing with a recognized publishing house is more likely to be realized by established academics in privileged contexts.

Relatedly, the unclear or different expectations around the labor and costs of OA that may fall to the author sit alongside a frequent lack of knowledge about opportunities to apply for OA funding. Such funding may differ from country to country, from institution to institution, and from discipline to discipline. In our data, more than 40% of respondents say they do not know where to apply for money and more than 25% said they are unsure about it. About a third knows where funding is available. Authors who did know where funding was available were encouraged, in the questionnaire, to report the names and places they were aware of. Some mentioned state-wide third-party funding agencies (particularly the German research council *DFG*), and, as mentioned above, most reply that their university or library supports OA publication. This confirms the above trend that the opportunity to publish in an OA format is interrelated with working in a privileged setting where either institutional or state support is available. On the other hand, respondents here also mention outlets that involve no costs on the side of the author such as university servers, university-based journals or repositories. In any case, researchers have to have access to information about either cost-free publication opportunities or support of funding, which regularly seems to be lacking, particularly in the disciplines under study here. Researchers who work in contexts where such knowledge is professionally distributed (e.g. via university libraries, publishers, or public funding agencies) are advantaged.

Following that only a third of respondents know where to apply for funding, it does not come as a surprise that it is also a third who report that they have applied for money to publish OA in the past. About a half of these say that the funding covered all costs, 12.5% say that it only covered a share of the costs and more than a third were not successful in their application. The relatively small number of respondents who successfully have applied for funding appears related to lack of knowledge, which also mirrors the fact that almost half of the respondents (44.8%) do not know whether the institution they work at has an OA publication policy. About 15% say that their institution has none. The remaining 40% are aware of their institution's policy. A similar picture appears related to the question of whether the usual funding bodies of respondents require OA publication. A third of respondents here reply with 'Yes', 25.6% say that their funding bodies do not require this and the largest share of almost 45% of respondents say that they are not sure. Again, the issue of access to knowledge comes to the fore, where information on funding opportunities is not equally distributed. The number of individuals who are uncertain about regulations and rules is high. At the same time, funding itself is not equally distributed.

5.5 Factors that May Hinder OA Publishing

Anticipating that many researchers are positive towards the idea of OA publishing but that there may be diverse aspects that may hinder its realization, we then asked what researchers assumed were the factors that hinder or support OA publishing activities. Respondents here could select as many answers as they liked. The three most frequent answers (between 40% and 50%) are that a) authors only publish OA if they don't have to pay for it, b) that they use commercial platforms like Academia or Research Gate and thus don't see a need to publish their work in OA form elsewhere and, finally, c) that they prefer OA publication but make strategic choices and publish non-OA if it is important for their career and visibility. Less than 7% say they only publish OA, 25% say that they only consider content fit and not the method of access, the same share says they have no funds to pay for OA publications. 24% say that their institution does not provide

financial resources for it and 17% assume that OA publications are generally less prestigious and that they anyways only publish in traditional journals with a high impact factor. Only 12.5% say they feel overwhelmed by the different choices and lack the time to understand the system. In the accompanying free text box that could be filled in, there are 16 different comments, seven of which argue that OA discriminates against younger, non-established researchers. A graduate student, for instance, mentions that they have no funds to pay for OA, a tenured professor argues that it is 'a luxury' to publish where one wants, another respondent says explicitly that "Open access discriminates against young researchers just starting out who don't have access to funding". Others who do not have access to funding are also mentioned (unemployed or alternative academics). Some of these comments express strongly negative attitudes as e.g. in "Open Access is the devil. Better to just put the manuscript on some pre-print server." Many mention different online platforms (commercial or institutional) as an alternative (see also next section). The answers to this question show that many respondents consider an arrangement where authors have to pay for OA to be highly problematic and directly link it to a lack of fairness and equity.

5.6 Use of Online Platforms and Repositories

The question on factors that block OA publishing is followed by a question on the use of commercial platforms (Academia and Research Gate). More than 45% say that they use these to upload published versions of their work, 34% that they upload pre-prints or non-final versions and 34% that they use it to connect and to find research of others but do not upload texts themselves. Only about 7% say that they do not use these two platforms at all. Yet, in the free text box to that question, there are several comments that display the awareness of authors that these platforms are commercial and that they might be breaking copyright laws. It is clear from the comments that at least those who comment here do not regard commercial platforms as the ideal solution either, and some are unsure about legal requirements. A similar picture emerges in relation to the (open) question on whether respondents use their institution's repository to upload

publications or data. 31 respondents reacted to this question, most of which simply indicate that they upload their texts and/or data into repositories. Overall, it seems to be a common practice in some countries and institutions and some respondents answer that this is even required by their university. Others admit that they are not aware of current regulations (as e.g., in "I wish I knew – it seems the institution isn't quite sure as the requirements keep on changing..."), that their institution has no repository or that they do not use repositories. Thus, a diversity of practices in relation to university internal or external cost-free digital distribution is also found in the use of institutional repositories – the rules, regulations and practices differ, depending on state policies or institutional policies and we do not observe standards that are in place globally. Therefore, knowledge about publication practices and opportunities is not evenly distributed among researchers.

5.7 Attitudes towards Open Access Publishing in the Realm of Capitalist Orders

In the final section of our questionnaire, we asked how important it is to authors that their publications are available openly and what their estimation is on how important open access is for democratic access to publishing and to knowledge. These final questions show that a considerable majority has positive attitudes towards the idea of making their research available with no costs to the reader – more than 90% tick the boxes 8, 9 and 10 out of ten as response to the question. Similarly, more than 90% assume that open access is generally 'extremely important' or 'very important' for democratic access to knowledge.

These positive attitudes towards making academic research freely available come along with a set of critical comments that are found in the final, free text question where we ask whether respondents want to add comments or thoughts. Here, we find a rather critical engagement with the current practices of publication and with the entire publishing industry. Despite the positive attitudes towards OA, there is discontent with overly complex rules, for example regarding opportunities and consequences of OA publishing but also regarding copyright. Comments in this

direction are partially expressed in an emotional or even angry tone, displaying the degree of frustration with what is perceived as unfair as, for example, in the following statement: "Copyright issues are a total disaster, there is nearly no trustworthy information on what researchers may or may not do with their own work". It is also argued that education regarding publication practices is needed.
Some commentators directly link their experiences with OA to observing the emergence of new social hierarchies, similar to the original motivation to write this article and directly linking to the theoretical notion of Rancière's "distribution of the sensible", discussed above. This can be inferred, for example, from the following comment: "OA is an admirable goal, but without better access for people with non-academic jobs, have we just created a different access issue?" In line with what has been discussed in the theoretical discussion of this paper, it is argued that even though access to a text may become easier, access to the act of publishing, where authors must pay a fee, is not based on equal conditions and may reproduce diverse types of power hierarchies. This concern for inequity is reflected in this comment:

> Open access models are still not fully fit for purpose and more work is required. While researchers from the Global South might now find it easier to access work from the Global North, it is still a selective part and they still cannot easily publish their work due to financial constraints and the fact that many libraries do not have adequate facilities to allow people from the Global South to easily distribute their work online. This whole process requires a lot more critical investigation.

Finally, there are some comments that argue that the entire publishing industry, with the idea of making capitalist profit, is problematic and flawed. The relationship between publicly funded research, academic traditions that value publications by particular publishers and the for-profit publishing industry (which may not only get access to research for free but is also funded by public money for publishing it) in the context of digital media is understood as inappropriate and as exploitative by some, as two particularly vivid examples from the 'open comments' section at the end of our questionnaire show:

> Open Access is the new gate-keeping. FAIR principles are not fair towards institutions that cannot be 'accredited'. Publishers are profit machines that exploit labour to gain profit and gate-keep the products of that labour. (Excerpt 1)

> While the current open access movement is laudable in many ways, the underlying business model strikes me as absurd. As a researcher, I get paid taxpayers' money to conduct my research, which I then give up to a publisher for free so it can be published. If I want it to be open access, I need to buy the product back, which I refuse to pay for out of my own pocket. I can apply for open access funds from my local university library or a funding agency. Fair enough, but where does that money come from? Typically, taxes again. So there are several instances in which public funds indirectly subsidize an entire industry that isn't providing all that much added value to justify this cash flow. As a junior researcher, I am forced to play along with a lot of this if I want to have a career, but it feels wrong and needs to change soon. (Excerpt 2)

The above from a junior researcher also makes clear that there is a greater role for publishers to more clearly discuss the work that is done behind the scenes, the cost of technology and preservation, the work to support and preserve research integrity (as referenced earlier in Alam and Wilson, 2023) and the important of not just doing but showing that work in an OA ecosystem[9] as one example of publishers' attempt to explicate some of the often hidden work). Publishers need to work in closer partnership across silos, between researchers and their editors, as well as between libraries and other parts of the publishers, to support the OA transition and understanding.

6 Discussion

The overall results of the questionnaire show that for researchers looking to publish their work in sociolinguistics, applied linguistics and related disciplines, many have positive attitudes towards OA publishing but, given the complexities and partial lack of transparent or diverse practices (e.g.,

9 See https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2018/02/06/focusing-value-102-things-journal-publishers-2018-update/

regarding who is responsible for proofreading or who pays for it), there is lack of knowledge about how to realize OA publication. In addition, it is problematic that access to funds to support OA publishing with professional publishers differs according to institution and country in these disciplines. Many researchers find this situation unjust and as reproducing or even amplifying social hierarchies. The lack of consensus of what is OA, the lack of standard procedures, the differences of institutional practice and the different access to funds lead to uneven access for researchers to publish their work free to read in prestigious contexts.

Overall, some of the responsibilities of strategically managing publication and distribution are, in a way, allocated from the publisher to the individual researcher, who needs to be aware not only of which publishing outlet fits their work and increases their reputation but also profit from knowing what OA is, what different types of OA exist, whether or not it contributes to their academic status, the distribution of their work and their citation scores and how to finance it (if costs are involved). The individualization of responsibility is a major trend in neoliberal capitalism (e.g. Lynch/Kalaitzake 2020), with the effect that those with more resources typically profit most – note that developing knowledge about the complex publishing industry requires time (oftentimes more available e.g., to individuals with no household/ care responsibilities) and/or access to particular social networks. Our results furthermore suggest that the teaching of future academics should include programmes that make available professional knowledge about the entire topic of publishing policies, which have become so much more complex in the last decades.

Our theoretical discussion as well as the current state of the art and, not least, our survey have clearly demonstrated that OA is a topic that touches broader social, political, cultural and philosophical issues and aspects and therefore can hardly be considered an exclusively academic discussion. It implies questions of discrimination, justice and equality, of cultural hegemony, of power structures and social hierarchies, of challenging profit-oriented capitalism in general and neoliberal logics of academia in particular, etc. Bringing together different perspectives helps to overcome simplistic dichotomies, for instance of merely profit-oriented

publishers vs. helpless researchers. In this respect, the closer look at people's attitudes to and uptake of pathways to open research that we have gained through our (admittedly small-scale) study clearly indicates that the discussion needs contextualization within more general (social) problems and a broadening to multiple contributors. As the entire discussion may be approached as a language-related problem, researchers who study the role of language and of language-based media in society are particularly well equipped to analyze the situation and its far-reaching potential of bringing up new perspectives and models of inclusion and equality in the politics of the sensible.

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