

# The editorial policy of languages is being changed in Medline

By

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## **Abstract:**

After exploring the trend of publications language in a very famous database in the USA (Medline), all publications of three non-English speaking countries (France, Germany, and Russia) in English and domestic languages indexed in the Medline through 1965-2005 were extracted and analysed.

The study showed that the editorial policy of Medline is undergoing change. The policy makers of this database have focused their attention on the literature of science in English.

## **Keywords:**

Bibliometrics, MEDLINE, PubMed, English, French, Germany, Russian

## **Introduction:**

Science and scientific literature is growing and going to be more and more global and multilingual. Simultaneously the core of scientific publications is written more and more often in English.

It is a generally accepted idea that English is the lingua franca of science today. In earlier times, it was Latin or sometimes also French, but now it is without any doubt since the last century English.

If we had a look to the literature of science a hundred year ago, we could find that the languages of scientific literature were few, and consisted of almost 90% of in English, French, and German, Russian and very few other languages.

Currently, we know that the global growth of science literature has brought up in other languages, such as Chinese, Japanese, Persian, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, and many other languages.

Such changes in the world of science would be lead to the transformation of editorial policies for choosing publications to entering the necessary languages data to the databases like Medline, SCI and etc.

On the other hand, the increasing dominance of English on the international relation of scientific collaboration has strongly affected the language of science literature. English is being developed as the main language in the world of science. The reason is clear- a great deal of communication systems are in English. In fact, it should be in English so that it can be understood by international colleagues in the world of science. The scientists even in non-English speaking countries prefer to publish their works in English. It has some advantages; literature written in English attracts a great number of citations. Colleges distributed all around the world are in better collaboration.

Databases, such as Medline and SCI in the USA, have focused their attention on the literature of science in English. Some previous studies confirmed that the editorial policy for such database in the USA is being changed.

Michele Bedard, Jennifer L. Greif and Todd C. Buckley (2004) analysed 13,865 journal articles on trauma published between 1987 and 2001 indexed in the database of PILOTS (An Electronic Index to the Traumatic Stress Literature). Their study showed that 94% of trauma literature was published in English.

Boldt J., Maleck W. and Koetter K.P. (2005) studied the papers published in the 10 intensive care medicine journals indexed in the JCR for two periods, 1992 – 1997, and 1998-2003. They took only into consideration the original papers from German universities. They found out that the total number of publications for German universities during 1998-2003 has 100% increased with compare to 1992-1997. The number of publications for German universities increased from 621 during 1992-1997 into 1,245 during 1998-2003.

Alvar Loria and Pedro Arroyo (2005) classified Medline's journal articles by country of publication and language in 1966 and again from 1970 to 2000 at five-year intervals. Their study showed that English papers increased linearly and non-English paper decreased at a rate of 1,056 fewer papers annually. They suggested that the developing trend of English language in Medline was due to the Medline's editorial policies changing that Medline has been increasingly deselecting journals from non-Anglo countries.

Biglu, M.H.(2006) in a study found that from a total number of 427 journals published in Germany in 2005 and indexed in the JCR only 11% of them were in German the rest were in English or multi language. From 146 French journals indexed in the JCR in 2005, 23% were in French, the rest were in English or multi language.

In another study<sup>1</sup> Biglu, M.H. found that 93.3% of total publications in Tabriz University of medical science were published in Persian, and only 6.7% of them were published in English throughout 1988-1996.

Mauricio L. Barreto (2006) analysed the epidemiological articles produced in Brazil that published in the journals indexed in Medline between 1985 and 2004. They found that there was a predominance of the English language among articles by Brazilian authors indexed in the Medline database.

Méltiz, Jacques (2007) in his essay emphasised that English is on its way to becoming the dominant global language. He believes that the global dominance of English is bad news for world literature, because only those written in English will have a chance of reaching a world audience and achieving 'classic status.'

In another study Zhang Haiqi, Shigeaki Yamazaki and Kazuo Urata (2007) found that the percentage of English-language paper in Medline climbed steadily from 75.3% to 86.3% throughout 1984-1994.

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<sup>1</sup> Biglu, Mohammad Hossein (2005). A bibliometric study of scientific out put in tabriz University of Medical Science. Processing of ISSI 2005, Vol. 2, 650-651. Karolinska University Press, Stockholm, Sweden 2005.

In this context we are interested in exploring the changing of editorial policy of a very famous database in the USA (Medline).

After exploring the trend of publications language in these databases, all publications of three non-English speaking countries (France, Germany, and Russia) in English and domestic language indexed in the Medline and SCI through 1965-2005 were extracted and analysed.

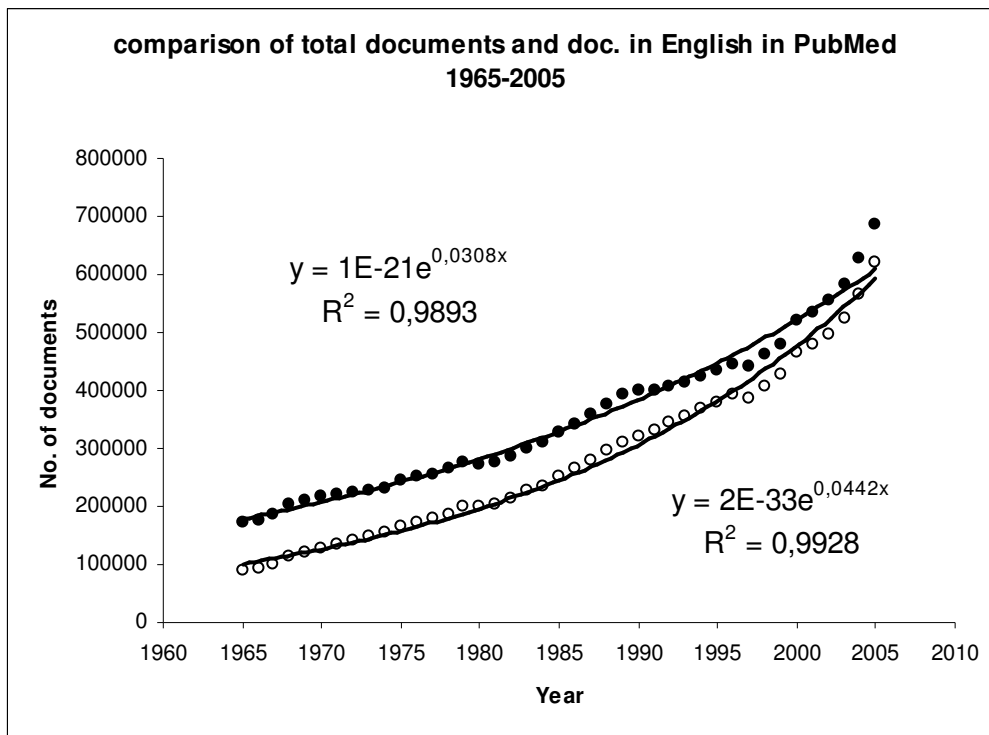
The four languages mentioned above were chosen according to my previous study, showed that English, German, Russian, and French were more frequented languages in the Medline.

**Method:**

Several types of documents indexed in the Medline (PubMed) through 1965-2005 were extracted. The proportion of English and domestic languages for countries were determined.

The trends of English, French, German, and Russian languages in the Medline were expected.

**Findings:**

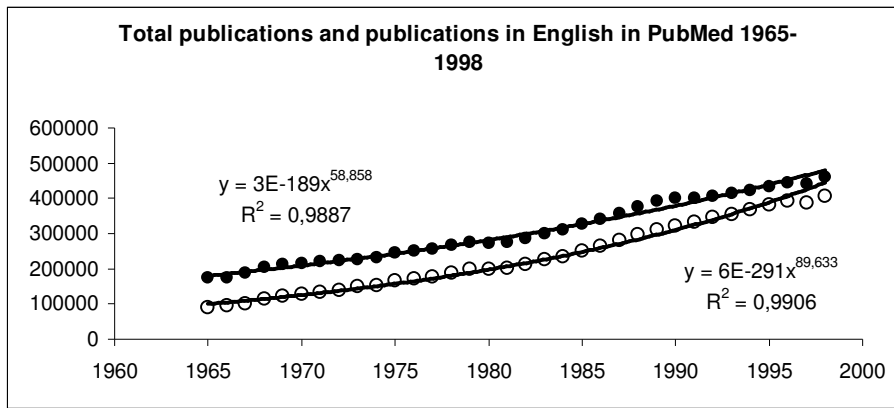


**Figure 1: Comparison of total Publications and publications in English in PubMed 1965-2005**

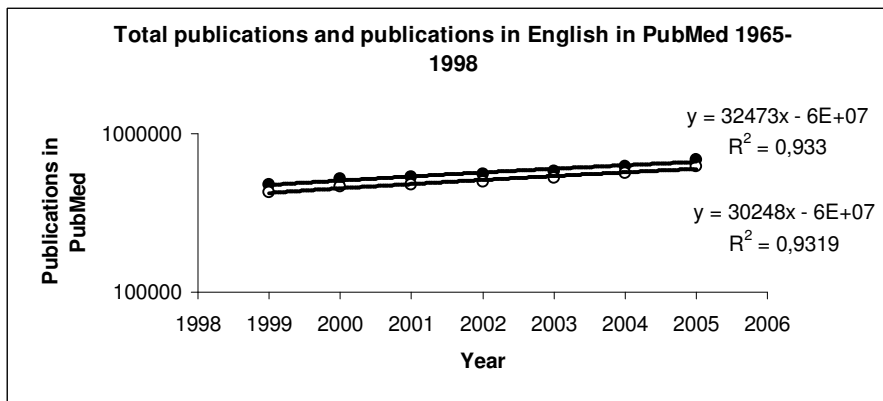
Figure 1 shows the number of total publications and publications in English in PubMed through 1965-2005. The doubling time of total publications in PubMed through 1965-2005 was 22.5 years whereas the doubling time for publications in English was 15.7 years. In other words, the doubling time of Publications in English was 44% faster than the total Publications in PubMed.

The percentage of documents in English has increased steadily through 1965-2005. It reached from 52% in 1965 to 90% in 2005 an increase of 72%.

Accurately the graph may be divided in two stages.

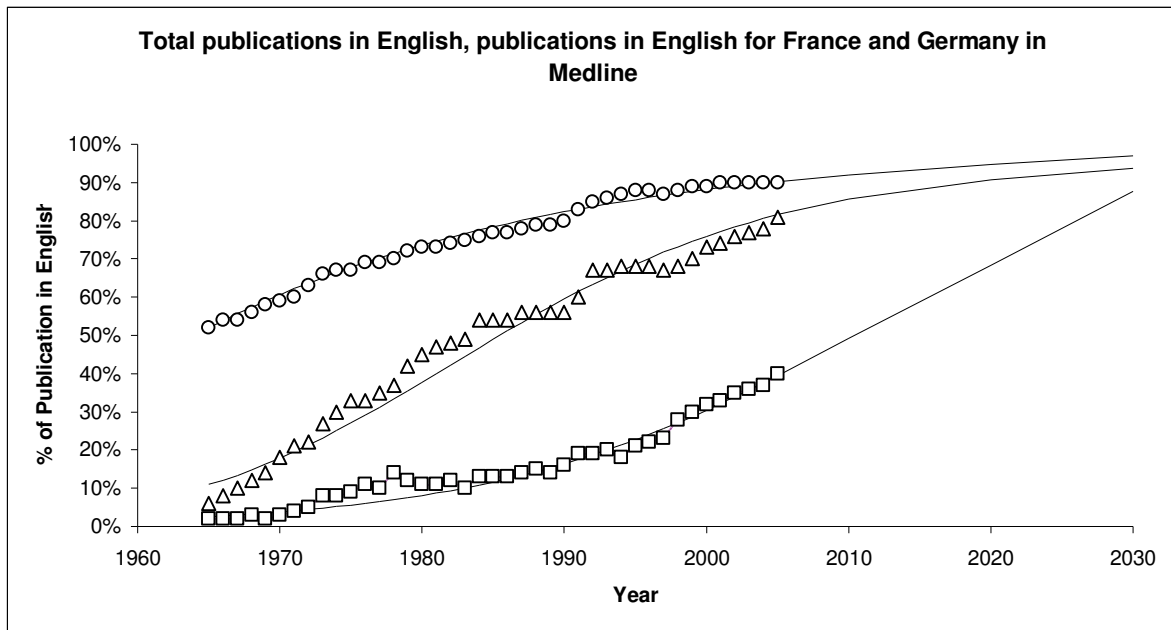


**Figure 2: Number of total publications and publications in English in PubMed 1965-1999**



**Figure 3: Number of total publications and publications in English in PubMed 2000-2005**

Comparison of figure 2 and 3 indicates that the number of total publications and publications in English in PubMed have increased exponential through 1965 and 1998; whereas they shows linear growth through 1999-2005



**Figure 4: The proportion of publications in English in PubMed 1965-2005**

Figure 4 shows the percentage of total publications in English (○), the percentage of publications in English for Germany (△), and the percentage of publications in English for France (□) in Medline through 1965-2005.

The graph predicts that the percentage of publications in English in Medline will reach to the 97% in 2030, and the percentage of publications in English for Germany and France will reach to the 94% and 88% respectively in 2030.

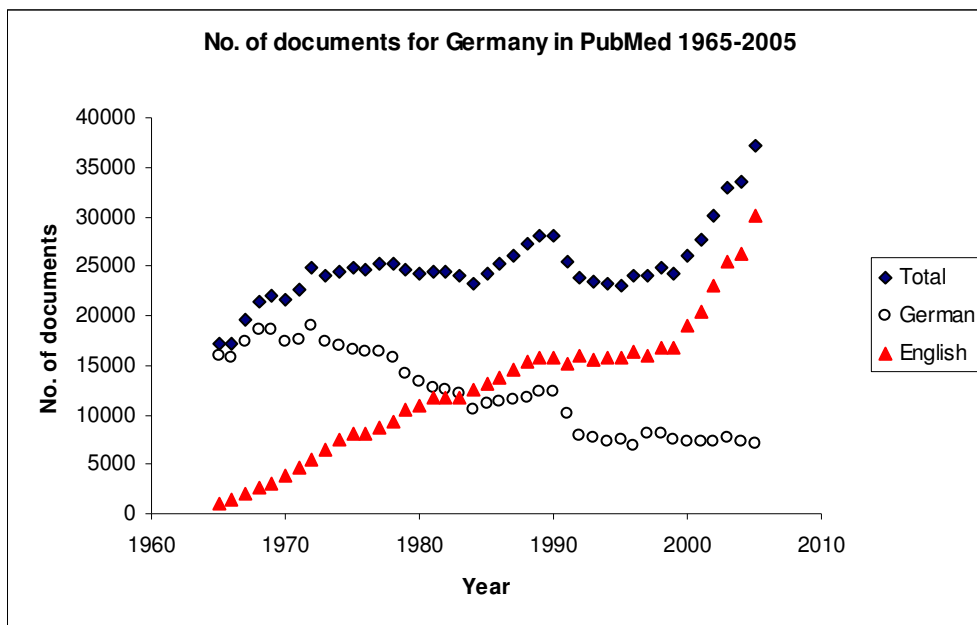
Table 1:

Total number of total documents and documents in English in PubMed through 1965-2005

| Year | Total doc in PubMed | Total doc in English | %of documents in English |
|------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1965 | 173880              | 91188                | 52%                      |
| 1966 | 175784              | 94340                | 54%                      |
| 1967 | 187783              | 101330               | 54%                      |
| 1968 | 204852              | 113748               | 56%                      |
| 1969 | 212030              | 122281               | 58%                      |
| 1970 | 215656              | 128000               | 59%                      |
| 1971 | 220464              | 132776               | 60%                      |
| 1972 | 223932              | 140211               | 63%                      |
| 1973 | 227409              | 149198               | 66%                      |
| 1974 | 230950              | 153703               | 67%                      |
| 1975 | 245273              | 165164               | 67%                      |
| 1976 | 250155              | 171405               | 69%                      |
| 1977 | 256848              | 177589               | 69%                      |
| 1978 | 266627              | 187063               | 70%                      |
| 1979 | 275633              | 198719               | 72%                      |
| 1980 | 273826              | 199480               | 73%                      |
| 1981 | 276184              | 202812               | 73%                      |
| 1982 | 287336              | 213962               | 74%                      |
| 1983 | 301194              | 226432               | 75%                      |

|      |        |        |     |
|------|--------|--------|-----|
| 1984 | 310074 | 235463 | 76% |
| 1985 | 327155 | 251258 | 77% |
| 1986 | 340615 | 263839 | 77% |
| 1987 | 358569 | 280224 | 78% |
| 1988 | 376980 | 296391 | 79% |
| 1989 | 393466 | 310874 | 79% |
| 1990 | 400157 | 322097 | 80% |
| 1991 | 401638 | 332288 | 83% |
| 1992 | 405970 | 345378 | 85% |
| 1993 | 413581 | 354811 | 86% |
| 1994 | 423661 | 368095 | 87% |
| 1995 | 434222 | 380684 | 88% |
| 1996 | 444774 | 391721 | 88% |
| 1997 | 442966 | 387152 | 87% |
| 1998 | 461668 | 407238 | 88% |
| 1999 | 480129 | 426584 | 89% |
| 2000 | 521442 | 466426 | 89% |
| 2001 | 533719 | 478615 | 90% |
| 2002 | 553949 | 497474 | 90% |
| 2003 | 584267 | 524353 | 90% |
| 2004 | 626100 | 564030 | 90% |
| 2005 | 687262 | 621537 | 90% |

The table 1 illustrates that the portion of documents in English has dramatically rose through 1965-2005.



**Figure 5: Total number of documents in Germany, and the number from those that are written in English and German, 1965-2005.**

Figure 5 illustrates the total number of documents for Germany, those written in German, and in English throughout 1965-2005.

The total number of publications for Germany enjoyed relatively a fast growth during 1984-1998. From 1990 it begun to fall until 1996. This fall was simultaneously with the fall of publications in German which showed continues decrease since 1990.

The number of publications in German fell from 93% of total documents in 1965 to 19% in 2005.

The proportion of publications in English rose dramatically since 1999. The percentage of documents in English increased from 6% in 1965 to 81% in 2005.

The increasing number of publications in English has caused to increase the number of total publications for Germany dramatically.

In spite of the decreasing trend of publications in German, the number of publications in English for Germany rose. Accordingly, the number of publications for Germany showed a sharp rise.

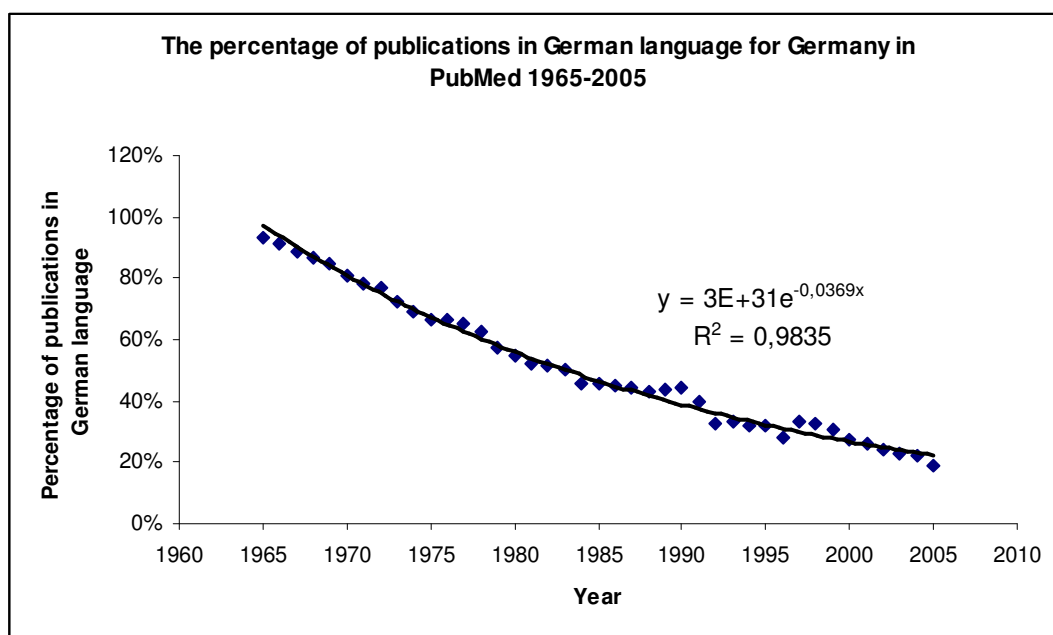


Figure: 6 The percentage of documents in German for Germany in PubMed 1965-2005

Figure 6 shows the percentage of publications in German for Germany through 1965-2005.

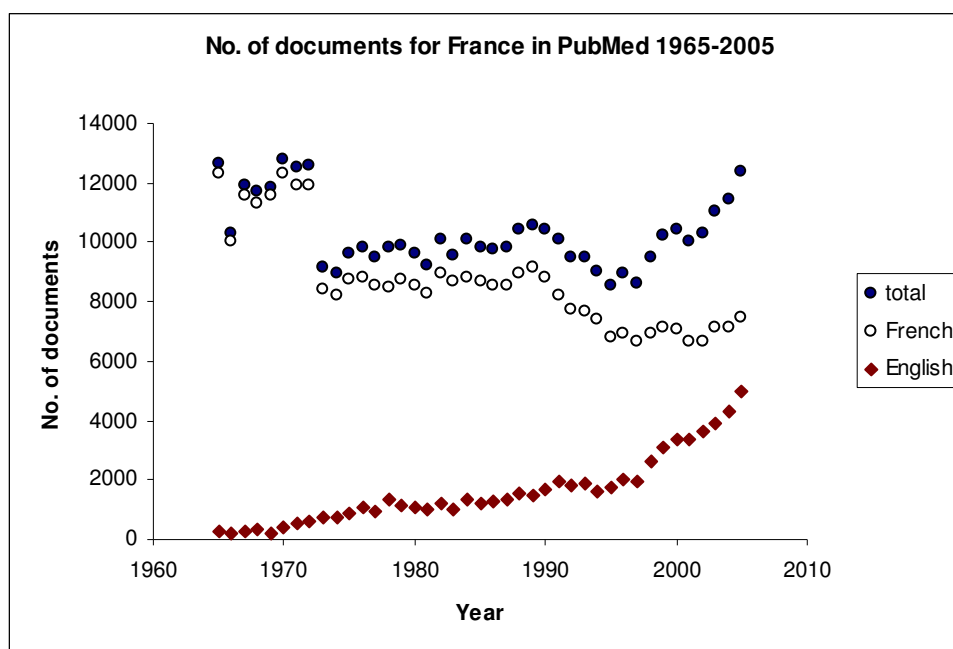
Table 2:

Total number of documents for Germany in PubMed, documents in German and documents in English for Germany through 1965-2005

| Year | Total documents in PubMed for Germany | Total documents in German language | % German | Total documents in PubMed for Germany in English | % English |
|------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------|--|-----------|
| 1965 | 17097                                 | 15922                              | 93%      | 1031   | 6%        |
| 1966 | 17215                                 | 15664                              | 91%      | 1414   | 8%        |
| 1967 | 19570                                 | 17385                              | 89%      | 1973   | 10%       |
| 1968 | 21490                                 | 18597                              | 87%      | 2681   | 12%       |
| 1969 | 21931                                 | 18655                              | 85%      | 3047   | 14%       |

|      |       |       |     |       |     |
|------|-------|-------|-----|-------|-----|
| 1970 | 21579 | 17463 | 81% | 3865  | 18% |
| 1971 | 22561 | 17619 | 78% | 4710  | 21% |
| 1972 | 24796 | 19016 | 77% | 5553  | 22% |
| 1973 | 24103 | 17440 | 72% | 6477  | 27% |
| 1974 | 24432 | 16880 | 69% | 7399  | 30% |
| 1975 | 24833 | 16571 | 67% | 8097  | 33% |
| 1976 | 24552 | 16384 | 67% | 8056  | 33% |
| 1977 | 25345 | 16464 | 65% | 8752  | 35% |
| 1978 | 25212 | 15790 | 63% | 9307  | 37% |
| 1979 | 24716 | 14129 | 57% | 10430 | 42% |
| 1980 | 24323 | 13280 | 55% | 10916 | 45% |
| 1981 | 24540 | 12787 | 52% | 11651 | 47% |
| 1982 | 24390 | 12493 | 51% | 11772 | 48% |
| 1983 | 23999 | 12128 | 51% | 11776 | 49% |
| 1984 | 23163 | 10586 | 46% | 12508 | 54% |
| 1985 | 24299 | 11154 | 46% | 13052 | 54% |
| 1986 | 25193 | 11381 | 45% | 13724 | 54% |
| 1987 | 26049 | 11475 | 44% | 14460 | 56% |
| 1988 | 27181 | 11740 | 43% | 15345 | 56% |
| 1989 | 28110 | 12255 | 44% | 15806 | 56% |
| 1990 | 28157 | 12419 | 44% | 15688 | 56% |
| 1991 | 25400 | 10176 | 40% | 15162 | 60% |
| 1992 | 23909 | 7860  | 33% | 15994 | 67% |
| 1993 | 23355 | 7736  | 33% | 15583 | 67% |
| 1994 | 23229 | 7371  | 32% | 15791 | 68% |
| 1995 | 23116 | 7419  | 32% | 15657 | 68% |
| 1996 | 24139 | 6778  | 28% | 16461 | 68% |
| 1997 | 24040 | 8024  | 33% | 16037 | 67% |
| 1998 | 24804 | 8056  | 32% | 16765 | 68% |
| 1999 | 24157 | 7374  | 31% | 16821 | 70% |
| 2000 | 26060 | 7185  | 28% | 18914 | 73% |
| 2001 | 27704 | 7288  | 26% | 20451 | 74% |
| 2002 | 30107 | 7194  | 24% | 22952 | 76% |
| 2003 | 33002 | 7623  | 23% | 25413 | 77% |
| 2004 | 33557 | 7342  | 22% | 26252 | 78% |
| 2005 | 37111 | 7115  | 19% | 30075 | 81% |





**Figure7: Total number of Publications in France, and the number from those that are written in English and French 1965-2005.**

Figure 7 plots the number of total documents, documents in French, and documents in English for France throughout 1965-2005 in PubMed.

The graph indicates that the number of publications for France decreased steady from 1990 to 1997. Since 1998 it showed a relatively sharp growth.

The numbers of publications in English showed relatively slight rise from 1965 until 1977. Since 1998 the proportion of documents in English showed a dramatic rise.

It is considerable that the number of publications in French showed a fall since 1989. Decreasing trend of publications for France continued to the end of fiscal year 2005.

The proportion of publications for France in English showed dramatic rise sine 1998; consequently caused to raise the number of publications in France.

Table 3:

Total number of documents for France, documents in French, and documents in English for France through 1965-2005

| Year | Total documents for France in Pubmed | Documents for France in French | %in French | Documents for France in English | % in English |
|------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| 1965 | 12685                                | 12348                          | 97%        | 286                             | 2%           |
| 1966 | 10312                                | 10033                          | 97%        | 212                             | 2%           |
| 1967 | 11890                                | 11589                          | 97%        | 240                             | 2%           |
| 1968 | 11735                                | 11319                          | 96%        | 359                             | 3%           |
| 1969 | 11860                                | 11600                          | 98%        | 186                             | 2%           |
| 1970 | 12773                                | 12332                          | 97%        | 381                             | 3%           |
| 1971 | 12486                                | 11905                          | 95%        | 526                             | 4%           |
| 1972 | 12593                                | 11910                          | 95%        | 625                             | 5%           |
| 1973 | 9173                                 | 8417                           | 92%        | 737                             | 8%           |

|      |       |      |     |      |     |
|------|-------|------|-----|------|-----|
| 1974 | 8938  | 8217 | 92% | 731  | 8%  |
| 1975 | 9641  | 8756 | 91% | 876  | 9%  |
| 1976 | 9854  | 8814 | 89% | 1079 | 11% |
| 1977 | 9521  | 8570 | 90% | 933  | 10% |
| 1978 | 9829  | 8506 | 87% | 1373 | 14% |
| 1979 | 9908  | 8771 | 89% | 1154 | 12% |
| 1980 | 9622  | 8554 | 89% | 1105 | 11% |
| 1981 | 9210  | 8259 | 90% | 1012 | 11% |
| 1982 | 10093 | 8967 | 89% | 1228 | 12% |
| 1983 | 9555  | 8654 | 91% | 977  | 10% |
| 1984 | 10094 | 8828 | 87% | 1357 | 13% |
| 1985 | 9847  | 8704 | 88% | 1243 | 13% |
| 1986 | 9780  | 8575 | 88% | 1283 | 13% |
| 1987 | 9818  | 8543 | 87% | 1340 | 14% |
| 1988 | 10410 | 8951 | 86% | 1532 | 15% |
| 1989 | 10548 | 9142 | 87% | 1460 | 14% |
| 1990 | 10439 | 8786 | 84% | 1693 | 16% |
| 1991 | 10094 | 8193 | 81% | 1949 | 19% |
| 1992 | 9507  | 7768 | 82% | 1789 | 19% |
| 1993 | 9467  | 7657 | 81% | 1875 | 20% |
| 1994 | 8986  | 7411 | 82% | 1601 | 18% |
| 1995 | 8580  | 6808 | 79% | 1781 | 21% |
| 1996 | 8975  | 6963 | 78% | 2010 | 22% |
| 1997 | 8599  | 6658 | 77% | 1941 | 23% |
| 1998 | 9510  | 6904 | 73% | 2642 | 28% |
| 1999 | 10203 | 7101 | 70% | 3105 | 30% |
| 2000 | 10423 | 7063 | 68% | 3381 | 32% |
| 2001 | 10022 | 6694 | 67% | 3337 | 33% |
| 2002 | 10304 | 6693 | 65% | 3627 | 35% |
| 2003 | 11062 | 7132 | 64% | 3933 | 36% |
| 2004 | 11445 | 7167 | 63% | 4289 | 37% |
| 2005 | 12397 | 7448 | 60% | 4973 | 40% |

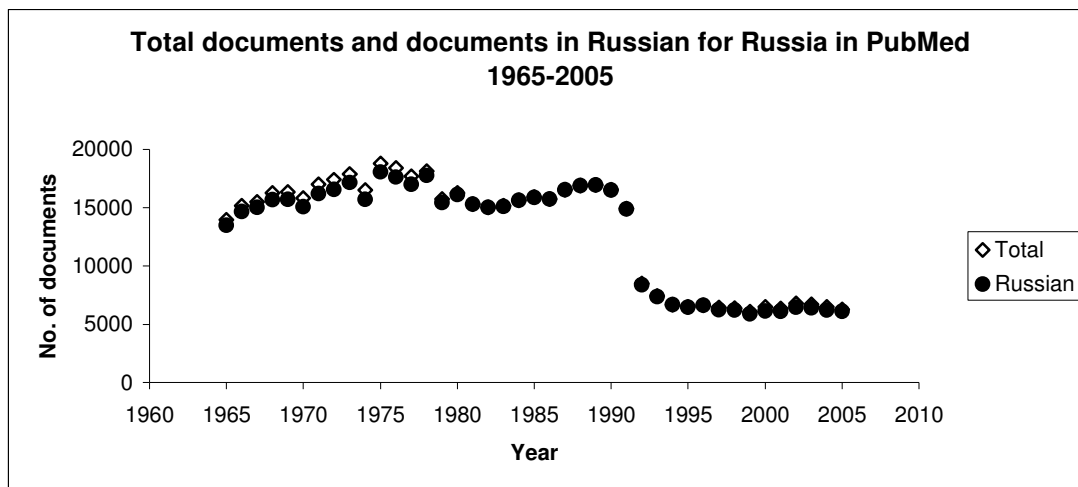


Figure 8: Total number of documents and documents in the Russian language for Russia 1965-2005

Figure 8 shows the total number of documents for Russia, and the number from those that are written in Russian and in English through 1965-2005.

Since 1990 there was a drop for the number of publications for Russia in PubMed. It is clear that since 1997 the number of publications in English rose and consisted at an average of 4% of total publications through 1997-2005.

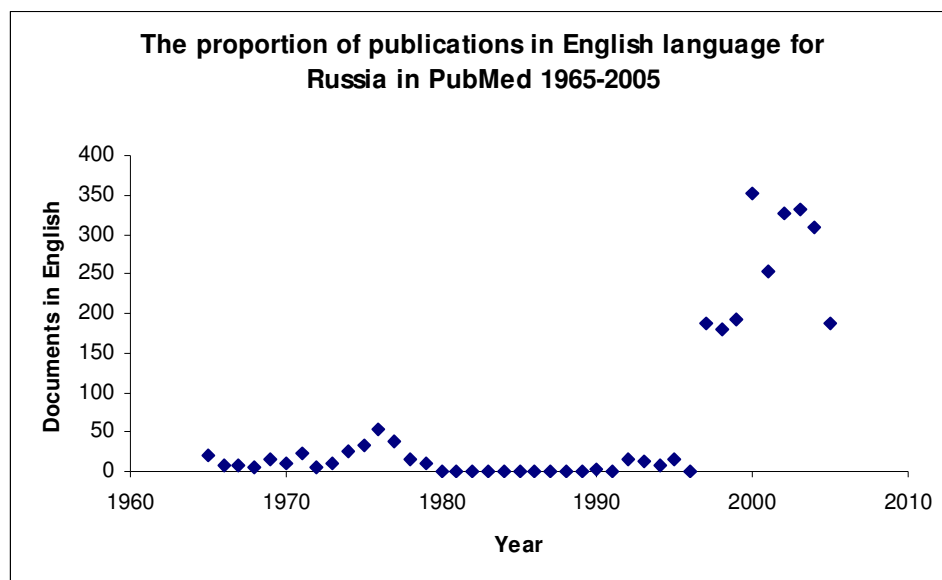


Figure 9: The proportion of publications in English for Russia in PubMed 1965-2005

Figure 9 indicates that the portion of publications in English for Russia has increased since 1997.

Table 4:

Total number of documents and documents in Russian for Russia in PubMed through 1965-2005

| Year | Total documents for Russia in PubMed | Documents in Russian for Russia | % of documents in Russian for Russia | Documents in English for Russia |
|------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1965 | 13939                                | 13491                           | 97%                                  | 19                              |
| 1966 | 15146                                | 14652                           | 97%                                  | 8                               |
| 1967 | 15479                                | 15010                           | 97%                                  | 8                               |
| 1968 | 16257                                | 15668                           | 96%                                  | 5                               |
| 1969 | 16316                                | 15689                           | 96%                                  | 14                              |
| 1970 | 15811                                | 15055                           | 95%                                  | 11                              |
| 1971 | 16991                                | 16196                           | 95%                                  | 24                              |
| 1972 | 17393                                | 16560                           | 95%                                  | 6                               |
| 1973 | 17902                                | 17141                           | 96%                                  | 10                              |
| 1974 | 16497                                | 15707                           | 95%                                  | 25                              |
| 1975 | 18795                                | 18058                           | 96%                                  | 33                              |
| 1976 | 18418                                | 17625                           | 96%                                  | 53                              |
| 1977 | 17711                                | 16977                           | 96%                                  | 37                              |
| 1978 | 18125                                | 17759                           | 98%                                  | 14                              |
| 1979 | 15718                                | 15420                           | 98%                                  | 10                              |
| 1980 | 16257                                | 16103                           | 99%                                  | 0                               |

|      |       |       |      |     |
|------|-------|-------|------|-----|
| 1981 | 15277 | 15275 | 100% | 0   |
| 1982 | 15015 | 15012 | 100% | 0   |
| 1983 | 15150 | 15083 | 100% | 1   |
| 1984 | 15624 | 15621 | 100% | 0   |
| 1985 | 15877 | 15873 | 100% | 0   |
| 1986 | 15738 | 15737 | 100% | 0   |
| 1987 | 16533 | 16533 | 100% | 0   |
| 1988 | 16885 | 16884 | 100% | 1   |
| 1989 | 16933 | 16928 | 100% | 0   |
| 1990 | 16515 | 16494 | 100% | 2   |
| 1991 | 14917 | 14879 | 100% | 1   |
| 1992 | 8485  | 8382  | 99%  | 16  |
| 1993 | 7422  | 7362  | 99%  | 13  |
| 1994 | 6688  | 6681  | 100% | 7   |
| 1995 | 6493  | 6479  | 100% | 15  |
| 1996 | 6633  | 6632  | 100% | 1   |
| 1997 | 6427  | 6250  | 97%  | 187 |
| 1998 | 6386  | 6208  | 97%  | 179 |
| 1999 | 6089  | 5898  | 97%  | 192 |
| 2000 | 6496  | 6145  | 95%  | 351 |
| 2001 | 6356  | 6105  | 96%  | 252 |
| 2002 | 6801  | 6474  | 95%  | 327 |
| 2003 | 6723  | 6418  | 95%  | 332 |
| 2004 | 6493  | 6209  | 96%  | 308 |
| 2005 | 6274  | 6118  | 98%  | 187 |

**Conclusion:**

Analysis of data showed that the doubling time of total publications in Medline (PubMed) in English was 44% faster than the doubling time of total publications in Medline throughout 1965-2005. The doubling time of total publications was 22.5 years whereas the doubling time for publications in English was 15.7 years. The proportion of documents in English showed dramatically increase through 1965-2005. It reached from 52% in 1965 to 90% in 2005 an increase of 72%. Analysis of study predicted that the percentage of publications in English in Medline will reach to the 97% in 2030 (figure 4).

The total number of publications for Germany in Medline enjoyed relatively slight increase during 1984-1990. It showed a slight decline in 1991, this decline was due to the drop of publications in German; whereas at the same time the proportion of publications in English consisted of 60% of total publications for Germany indexed in the PubMed. The number of publications for Germany in German dropped from 93% of total publications in 1965 to 19% in 2005.

The proportion of publications for Germany in English rose considerably since 1999. The percentage of publications in English rose from 6% in 1965 to 81% in 2005.

The increasing number of publications in English has caused to increase the number of total publications for Germany considerably.

In spite of decreasing trend of publications in German, the number of publications in English for Germany rose. Accordingly the number of publications for Germany showed a sharp rise since 1999.

The number of publications for France in Medline decreased steady from 1990 to 1997. Since 1998 it showed a relatively sharp growth. Since 1998 the proportion of publications for France in English showed considerable rise; whereas the number of publications in French showed a fall since 1989. The decreasing trend of publications in French for France continued to the end of fiscal year 2005.

Since 1990 there was a drop for the number of publications for Russia in Medline. Since 1997 the number of publications in English rose and consisted at an average of 4% of total publications through 1997-2005. On the other hand, the number of publications for Russia in Russian decreased dramatically since 1989; whereas the number of publications in English increased dramatically since 1993.

The study indicated that the editorial policy of MEDLIE (PubMed) is being changed and the policy makers of this database have focused their consideration on the publications in English.

### **Acknowledgement:**

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