

The challenge of multilingualism in science meeting

*Yukihiro Takahashi¹

1. Department of CosmoSciences, Graduate School of Science, Hokkaido University

Science, particularly in the field of earth and planetary science, requires a strong international focus due to its academic nature. JpGU has developed on the basis of collaboration with AGU and EGU, and has strongly encouraged participants to give presentations in English, or to provide English-text presentation materials even if the presentation is given in Japanese. Currently, the percentage of English sessions in JpGU meeting has risen from the 40% range to 70%, which is a higher figure than for academic conferences in Japan in fields other than earth and planetary sciences. Needless to say, communication in English is the international standard for scientific research, and at present there is no way around it. On the other hand, only around 20% of the world's population speaks English, and of that number, only 1/3 are native speakers, which is not a large number. For people in countries that do not speak English on a daily basis, including Japan, English skills are just as important as scientific research, and it is a fact that this has become a major handicap. Today, there is a significant increase in the number of researchers, particularly in countries classified as Asia and/or the Global South, outside of developed countries such as Europe and the United States, and the percentage of academic papers written in English is slightly decreasing. The recent development of AI is set to change our language environment significantly. The current text-based real-time translation services are not necessarily at a satisfactory level, but I think that improvements will be made at a rapid pace, and I imagine that simultaneous voice interpretation will be realized in the near future. At that time, I expect that scientific research will stand at a major turning point. While keeping an eye on what kind of scientific community will be formed when language barriers are almost completely eliminated, we should strategically promote initiatives as a scientific society so that we do not fall behind global trends.

Keywords: multilingualism, science meeting, automatic translation