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# Collaboration of Translators with Medical Authors: A Qualitative Enquiry into Writing Articles in English

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## SUMMARY

The interaction between non-English authors of medical articles and translators can be considered as a key component in perfect rendering of the content. In the era of rapid spread of research findings throughout the world, some researchers with little knowledge of English look for translation and editing services in order to share their findings in the global dialogue of science production. This paper will closely investigate the protocol analysis of an interview with a medical researcher and an intimate translator who has helped him for almost 10 years in translating his articles and research reports into English. The analysis will be classified in two major areas: language and publishing. Further details will be presented in the conference session.

**Key words:** translation, medical, limited English, translator, Iran

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## INTRODUCTION

The Iranian ministry of Health has recently set rules and regulations to encourage researchers and faculty members to publish articles in ISI, ISC, and other indexed journals. Currently, the status of Iranian research authorship in English is almost unsatisfactory and despite this marked progress. Recent studies have shown that writing research papers in English still remains a major problem for Iranian scientists at universities and research institutes. The disadvantage experienced by scholars who use English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in writing for publication has been well documented in the field of science (1-3). As well as needing more time to write (4-7), EFL writers often encounter difficulties with reviewers and editors if their use of English is non-standard. Not surprisingly, a high rejection rate of EFL authors has been attributed to the high proportion of English errors in their manuscripts (3). Researchers also report Chinese scientists facing a language problem in their attempts at international publication (8). The biggest obstacle facing Chinese scientists attempting to publish their research at the international level seems to be their "poor English" that could obscure otherwise good work.

It is now understood that a published research article, especially if it is written by an EFL author, needs to be viewed as the product of not just those people who have their names on it, but as a product involving a range of other people who participate in the editorial process (7, 9-11). These other people are also referred to as *shapers* of research articles (9). They may include authors' colleagues or supervisors, colleagues' native English speaking (NES) spouses, correctors who may work professionally as editors of manuscripts but are not usually specialists in the field, journal reviewers, journal editors, and copy editors. In this paper, we will consider the views and comments of an Iranian medical scientist who has been publishing his scholarly works with the help of an intimate translator who has helped him publish worldwide for over a decade.

## METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study is intended to report the result of an investigation into the success in getting research articles published in the area of medicine and health by an Iranian scientist. The publication endeavors of an Iranian medical specialist were studied through a semi-structured face-to-face interview. The interview took about one hour and the data were elicited using open-ended questions about how the researcher interacted with the translator. The interview was audio-taped and transcribed. The transcriptions were checked and rechecked for accuracy by the researchers. Scripts were carefully analyzed for probable themes expressed by the interviewee, and the recurrent patterns were grasped and noted for further reporting.

## RESULTS

The interview took about one hour and the verbal protocol contained many details, but for the space considerations this section will present a brief account what the participant said.

"After a couple of publication endeavors leading to the rejection of my articles, I found a proficient English translator and discussed the problem with him. My reports were medically rich and promising but reviewers always rejected my works... My interaction with the translator turned to prove fruitful for a number of reasons. First of all, I came to the understanding that medical knowledge and medical terms did not help me shape out my articles, and that writing is a skill quite separate from my medical knowledge. In other words, his teaching me the way to write systematically was a key factor in raising my awareness of the difference between medical and general English, since communication in English needs both aspects. Second, he taught me the communication skills with journal editors and reviewers. Third, he taught me some translation techniques with current vocabulary and structures suitable for medical communication. Fourth, the format of articles, the rhetorical structure of research articles, the author guidelines, reference systems, and the acknowledgement sections were all among what he taught me.... I know all these now but the final and the most important part of our interaction is that we always need a face-to-face meeting for the translation, editing, correcting and proofreading my works. While I cannot consider his contribution separable from my publication, due to his assistance I am no longer worried about publishing my papers".

## CONCLUSION

It cannot be denied that team work can lead to success especially in publishing articles which makes public the result of well-designed research. The comments of the interviewee in the present article vividly stress the role of general English and language practitioners in the process of publication because few accredited recognized programs are now dealing with the core content of research methodology and editing (12), and translation of articles. Apart from promoting editorial services, in shaping scientists' research articles for publication, an obvious solution seems to be the teaming-up of science specialists and language professionals, a long-standing arrangement in EAP/ESP research and practice. In terms of assisting EFL scientists for publication, we see a few recent and exciting fruitful partnerships between language professionals and scientists (1, 13). Language professionals can identify patterns of difficulties for NNS authors. Professional peers are better than language professionals in helping NNS authors to convey their messages well. However, three stages of pre-preparation, preparation and post-preparation highlight the role of English in publishing articles (14). In general,

neither peers nor language professionals alone suffice to make the best of NNS manuscripts, and so input from both should be obtained. (2) (p. 647). All in all, we may need teaming up the whole enterprise to enhance

the publication rate of science articles. Also, this may serve a model for other specialists, though generalizing this model may not come true without elaborating on the fundamentals.

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## SARADNJA IZMEĐU PREVODILACA I AUTORA MEDICINSKIH RADOVA: KVALITATIVNO ISTRAŽIVANJE U PISANJU RADOVA NA ENGLISKOM JEZIKU

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### Sažetak

Saradnja između autora kojima engleski jezik nije maternji i prevodilaca smatra se ključnom komponentom u adekvatnom prevodenju sadržaja rada. U eri brzog širenja rezultata istraživanja koja se sprovode u celom svetu, nekim istraživačima sa malim poznavanjem engleskog jezika potrebne su usluge prevodenja i sređivanja rada kako bi svoje naučne rezultate podelili sa svetskom naučnom javnošću. Ovaj rad se fokusira na analizu razgovora istraživača u oblasti medicine i njegovog prevodioca za engleski jezik koji mu već deset godina pomaže u prevodenju radova i izveštaja istraživanja. Analiza će biti podeljena u dve glavne oblasti: jezik i izdavaštvo. Ostali detalji će biti predstavljeni kroz konferencijski razgovor.

**Ključne reči:** prevodilac, medicinski, određena terminologija engleskog jezika, prevodilac, Iran