

can save time in case of rejection for the “unethical” reasons mentioned above. “Sloppy science” is a logical consequence of placing scientists between the anvil of limitations caused by international policies and sanctions and the hammer of the pressure to publish. In such conditions, it is only human to rationalise and twist one’s own perception of an unethical act as an ethical one, thus blurring the distinction between the two.

Conflict of interest

Behrooz Astaneh lives in Iran, which is currently under international sanctions.

Disclosure

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Viewpoint

Translation of titles – to be or not to be?

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The title and the abstract are considered the two most important parts of a scientific paper, having great influence on the reader’s first impression and their decision to read further¹. Jacques and Sebire showed that the construction of an article title has a significant impact on how frequently the paper is cited². Paiva *et al.* found that short titles presenting results or conclusions were independently associated with higher citation counts³. The EASE guidelines give the same recommendations about how an ideal title should sound: unambiguous, understandable to specialists in other fields, reflect the content of the article and it should be specific, not general or vague⁴.

The importance of structure, length and informativeness of the title is well known, but what about translation of titles to local languages? There could be three points of view: local reader’s point of view, the global reader’s point of view and the publisher’s point of view. From the local reader’s point of view, titles of scientific papers translated into their language might be useful, but surely this is not crucial for further reading – especially if translation of rest of the paper is missing. From the global reader’s point of view, translation of the title into local languages is of little importance. From the publisher’s point of view, translating titles into local languages is a complex issue, requiring comprehensive analysis and broad interpretation in light of the aims and scopes of each journal. In general, translation of titles into local language forces science editors and translators to develop scientific and professional terminology in their native language, which is very important in fast-changing and developing scientific fields that use a growing number of new terms. But it must be carefully done to avoid the trap of inaccurate and inadequate translations which can cause more damage than benefit. Careful translation of titles is time-consuming and hard to organise, and the only proper way of obtaining

high-quality translations of new terms is a close cooperation between local language experts and scientific editors and translators. Translating titles and abstracts is usually not enough to preserve and develop scientific terminology in the local language. For greater impact, full-text papers should be translated into local languages. Unfortunately, this increases the costs of publishing, which is unacceptable for a majority of journals especially in this time of limited financial possibilities. Publication of bilingual journals (ie in English and a local language) should be supported by scientific authorities in non-English-speaking countries.

The English language has become the lingua franca of science. This makes scientific communication easier and faster, but has a potentially irreversible adverse influence on scientific terminology in local languages, which could potentially disappear altogether. In my opinion, this should be avoided. Publishers have an opportunity and responsibility to prevent this by supporting translation of scientific content into local languages. It is a challenge for authors, publishers, readers and the whole community.

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