

Editorial

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Publishing biomedical research articles in English, but in quality English

Latin American biomedical researchers are increasingly prone to publish their scientific production in indexed scientific journals published in English as this ensures greater visibility and impact, which in turn leads to a greater number of citations. (1,2)

This implies that researchers, in addition to writing articles with the utmost rigor and quality in their native language, should also seek a high-quality translation into English to make sure that the article submitted to the editorial process (editorial and peer review) is correctly written, and also that the contents of the source text are expressed in a clear, precise and natural way in the target language, which will undoubtedly increase their chances of acceptance and publication.

However, not all researchers are aware of the importance of submitting a high-quality translation that meets the requirements made by most of these journals or that improves the chances of publishing their work. Many times, they resort to automated translators that are freely accessible on the Internet, such as Google Translate (3), Traductor El Mundo (4), Cambridge Dictionary Translator (5), DeepL Translator (6), among others. In general, these tools yield a mediocre and literal translation, which may be accurate regarding some specialized terms, but does not ensure the quality of the whole text, particularly in the academic-scientific context of biomedical publications, because in most cases the authors only perform the automatic translation and do not review its logic or its consistency.

Another common phenomenon is that several researchers, either because they have completed studies abroad or have an acceptable level of English, perform the translation themselves relying on these services, without considering that this process requires prior preparation and having a certification of proficiency in the English language, and not only being a native speaker; if this logic were applied, no scientific journal publishing contents in Spanish would hire proofreading services. It is worth noting that people certified or with experience in academic and scientific writing in English should also rely on the authors as experts in the subject matter for the resolution of questions of terminology, among others.

Furthermore, different translation companies that offer their services at different costs can be found online, and in some cases, they also provide advice during the submission process. But these companies do not always provide clear information about the certifications, experience or quality standards applied by the people who will translate the documents, which may lead to an inaccurate translation without the possibility of making a complaint. In general, the costs of these services are high for most Latin American researchers (bearing in mind that they are usually charged in USD or EUR), who do not always include them in the budget of the final product. Others only translate the article but do not guarantee subsequent corrections, feedback or accompaniment in the publication process.

So, what do authors need to do to get an English translation that ensures that the article will be considered, reviewed and successfully published? Needless to say, the quality of the document submitted for editorial and peer review must be as high as possible to be approved, regardless of whether it was submitted in English or will be translated once accepted (both options are allowed by the Journal of the Faculty of Medicine). This requires advanced knowledge of English and biomedical English from the editorial team of the respective scientific publication, in addition to a group of peer reviewers with an advanced level of understanding in this language, as well as a support group made up of professional translators, recognized, certified and specialized in biomedical English, to ensure a high level of quality in the publication of the content in English.

Some universities provide financial support to their researchers to promote the publication of scientific articles in English in journals indexed in the main bibliographic databases. (7,8) For example, the Universidad Nacional de Colombia has opened calls for researchers to submit scientific articles to be translated by official translators, recognized and certified for their quality and command of the English language; however, the requirements are often demanding and the supply does not always meet the demand. (9)

But then, how should authors proceed? Some time ago, the Journal of the Faculty of Medicine decided to take the first step towards publishing its contents in English only. (10) This has been a progressive process that started with the inclusion of articles written in English (reviewed by the official translation team and the journal's editorial team) in recently published issues and the publication of at least one full English issue per volume, as is the case with this issue, which also includes two original articles that reinforce the Journal's final purpose of being a biomedical scientific publication with content in English only. (10-12)

This editorial policy has led some authors to submit their articles to our Journal in English, without meeting the minimum language requirements and thus leading to an initial rejection and recommendation to improve the quality of the text, either by contacting the certified and specialized professional staff with whom the Journal has been working or with an external and certified specialized professional. In this regard, the Journal's guidelines for submitting articles, available at Open Journal System website of the journal (13), offers two possibilities in the letter of commitment for publication in English, which must be signed by the authors: to submit the article in English together with a letter signed by a certified professional (translator, philologist, etc.) stating that the article was reviewed and complies with the required quality for academic and scientific articles in English, or to commit to cover the cost of the translation directly with one of the certified translators of our team in order to avoid processes such as a new proofreading; this option will be discussed in more detail below.

This means that the Journal is currently only accepting articles in English that are supported by a certification from a recognized and certified official translator; however, the articles will always be reviewed by the editorial team to determine if they meet the minimum standards or if they are not accepted. In Colombia, official translators, once they pass the official translation and interpretation exam (14-16), are certified by means of a resolution that is acknowledged by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and allows them to sign and seal any official document.

The second option, for those interested in submitting their articles to our Journal, is to submit them in Spanish or Portuguese, together with the commitment letter to publish in English (13), duly signed, committing to translate the final version of the manuscript, once approved for publication, with one of the official translators who have been working with the Journal and who are duly certified and have studies and have experience in biomedical publications; this service is offered to authors at reasonable rates. (13)

It is important to mention that the Journal still has a large number of articles accepted in Spanish, which were submitted before this editorial policy was established (10); in consequence, they will be published in the upcoming issues, to make way for the complete publication of issues in English. (17)

In this manner, the editorial team of the Journal aims to achieve the publication of scientific articles of the highest quality, meeting the standards of academic and scientific writing in English, in order

to allow for a better understanding and visibility of the work of researchers in our region.

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