**Description**

# Bridging the Language Gap

The predominance of English as the global language of science is an easily forgotten blessing for those scientists and researchers with English as their first language. The idiosyncratic and often nonsensical rules of grammar and syntax are of little concern to you, and there's always an experienced editor to catch and correct any bad writing habits you may have picked up along the way. However, when we consider the plight of researchers who do not use English as their first or even a robust second language, a good copyeditor isn't going to be enough.

The most expedient solution can be the services of a translation company (if funds allow) but if their bread and butter business is translating news stories or sales brochures, are they going to make your situation better or worse? Remember, you are looking for research translation; you definitely need the services of professionals.

# Translation as a Research Expense

When working with research data, clarity is critical, and if you are reading an overseas study as a potential source of a follow-on topic of your own, any translation errors in the protocol or analysis could have more significant consequences than simple clumsy sentence structure. For that reason, the services of an appropriately experienced translation company (assuming one is available in your field) should be budgeted as a research expense rather than a luxury item that is dependent on available funds at the end of the project.

# A Longer-Term Solution

As long as we continue to measure research output and journal prestige in terms of citations, non-English research papers will need professional translation if they are to avoid automatic rejection on the basis of poor grammar and spelling.

The likely perspective of the reviewer may be wholly unfair, but "if you can't fix the grammar, what other mistakes did you make?"

If the research output from the institution is sufficient, hiring professional translators with extensive science backgrounds could provide a longer-term and possibly even less expensive solution than keeping a translation company on retainer.

Creating a dedicated role for translation, editing, and even co-authorship, would allow your researchers to focus on what they do best rather than struggling with multiple iterations from a translation company that doesn't understand the science.



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# Take Research to the World

English may well be the predominant language in science, but if we look at the problem in terms of journal readership and potential citations, the world suddenly looks very different. Twice as many people speak Mandarin, with Spanish, Arabic, French, and Portuguese also presenting speakers in the hundreds of millions. On that basis, institutions in English-speaking countries should also be examining the potential for translation of their research papers into other languages in order to boost their readership and citation rates.

**Category**

1. Journal Guidelines
2. Reporting Research

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