Gained in Translation

SECTION EDITOR

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Editorial

Welcome to the Translation Section editorial!

The Italian word *Itangliano* means Italian that is very much influenced by the English language and most of all it refers to the great presence of English words that are not adapted into Italian.[1] Unfortunately, the word is not new and it was first used back in the '70s when Italian business language started to be heavily influenced by English words that were not translated anymore, but rather used in English in an Italian discourse.

Biostatistics is no exception and I have asked an expert in the field to propose a short glossary of terms that are frequently used within the clinical research field. Francesca Paoloni, a biostatistician designing and analysing clinical trials on a daily basis, brings her expertise in the field as a technical language end user.

We do hope this article serves as a starting point for many other glossaries that could be added with time, as these are extremely useful tools for medical translators. Any damage to the *receiving* language represents important food for thought for translators…

Enjoy the article!

Laura C Collada Ali

English to Italian translation: 17 biostatistical terms that we are using in Itanglish that could just be used in proper Italian!

Background

Italians have integrated English words into their common vocabulary to such an extent that the word *Itanglish – Itangliano* in Italian – is well known among the community of linguists. Indeed, Italian is actually experiencing serious difficulties; the absence of norms that force the standardisation of new terms and the belief that a language is self-regulated is granting media and advertising agencies to unduly influence the language's development.

As you may be imagining already, science is not an exception and statistics is a field where *Itanglish* is due to win the first prize in this competition for the language of Dante.

So, is there anything that can be done to remedy the situation? One could say that what's done is done. It would be largely pointless to push out the many foreign expressions that have already entered the vernacular. Nonetheless, what about the many foreign words in use at present?

In our opinion, an effort is needed to translate widely-used technical expressions from English into Italian. Not as an attempt to counter globalisation – as many may think – but as a means of preserving our language, which is the most important vehicle we have for our local culture, identity and history.

The responsibility of translators towards language evolution

The point is not to force some manner of pure Italian, which is entirely free of *foreign barbarisms*. That certain interchanges take place between languages is an entirely natural consequence of globalisation. Yet it also seems absurd to condone the *refined ignorance* that prompts many Italians to pad their conversations with words from a language they barely even speak. Without pretending to be able to change the past, it seems that it would be enough for people to realise that the globalisation of language does not necessarily have to mean complete and unavoidable anglicisation.[2]

That said, translators are obviously responsible for preserving correctness of terms used and proper translation of new concepts into their own language. Translation is one of the most powerful means of communication between different cultures, yet attention needs to be paid if we want to preserve those different identities and cultures. Experienced translators are fully aware of this menace, but new professionals need to be particularly careful!

In February 2015, The Accademia della Crusca – the most authoritative body representing the Italian language – signed a petition to save their language (the so called #dilloinitaliano intervention in change.org). In fact, according to a recent study, the usage

of English terms has increased by 773% in the last 8 years. Quite worrying indeed …[3,4]

A proposal for proper translation of biostatistical terms into Italian

We first analysed a list of almost 200 frequently used terms that may present problems when translated into Italian and, from those, we have extracted the most frequently recurring ones that also coincide in frequently being used in English to Italian texts. Thus, we present a short list of English terms (in bold), the related definition and an Italian translation proposal (in green). We also remind readers of the most familiar translation, which is the one we are trying to avoid here (crossed out). The objective of this list is two-fold:

a. to provide a proposal for translation
b. to raise some polemics and hear our readers' opinions!

1. **attrition bias** > errore di esclusione (~~attrition bias~~)
   A systematic error caused by attrition (loss of participants), such as deviations and losses to follow-up, which may lead to a result that differs from true values.

2. **bias** > errore sistematico (~~bias sistematico~~)
   A systematic deviation from the real value.

3. **censoring** > censura/censorizzazione (~~censorizzazione~~)
   A subject leaving the observation before a certain event takesing place.

4. **cross-over design** > disegno incrociato (~~disegno cross-over~~)
   A study in which subjects receive a sequence of different treatments (also called *exposures*) at different time points. The design aims to evaluate these exposures.

5. **dropout** > abbandono (~~dropout~~)
   A subject included in a study fails, for any reason, to continue in the trial until the end of observation and, thus, drops out.

6. **dummy variable** > variabile binaria (~~variabile dummy~~)
   A variable that assumes values equal to 0 or 1 for absence or presence of a given condition.

7. **hazard ratio** > rapporto tra rischi (~~hazard ratio~~)
   The ratio of hazard rates at a single time, for two different kinds of subjects.

8. **intention to treat analysis** > analisi secondo l'intenzione al trattamento (~~analisi intention to treat~~)
   An analysis based on the initial treatment assignment, regardless of the treatment that patients actually receive.

9. **interquartile range** > ampiezza interquartile (~~range interquartile~~)
   The range between the 25th and the 75th percentiles.

10. **odds ratio** > rapporto delle proporzioni (~~odds ratio~~)
    The ratio of the odds (the proportion between the number of times that an event occurs and the number that it does not occur) for group A and group B.

11. **outlier** > valore anomalo (~~outlier~~)
    A value that lies outside of the expected range of the other values in a dataset.

12. **per protocol analysis** > analisi secondo protocollo (~~analisi per protocol~~)
    Analysis restricted to the population treated with the assigned treatment.

13. **range** > ampiezza (~~range~~)
    The interval between the lowest and highest values.

14. **recall bias** > errore da rievocazione o errore di memoria (~~recall bias~~)
    A systematic error caused by the difference between the cases and controls recalling information on exposure to a past factor.

15. **risk ratio/relative risk** > rischio relativo (~~risk ratio~~)
    The ratio of the probability of an event occurring in two different groups (i.e. exposed vs. non exposed).

16. **scatter plot** > grafico a dispersione (~~catterplot~~)
    A graph used to plot the data points for two different variables in order to show their relationship.

17. **statistical analysis plan** > piano dell'analisi statistica (~~statistical analysis plan~~)
    A document containing a detailed description of the planned analyses for a given clinical trial.

Conclusion

Obviously, not everyone agrees about the impact of dominant languages on other languages and language loss. Some may argue that it is all part of linguistic evolution and, for sure, not a matter of international concern. They contend that languages evolve based on their usefulness and consolidate according to the ability of a language to be a tool to communicate globally, without the burden of translation.

Yet, we are alarmed by the current rapid loss of technical Italian words used on a daily basis. We believe that this correlates with a decrease in the richness of our human expression and, thus, endangers the future of our linguistic identity.

References

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