

The Problems of Medical Translation and Interpretation in Health Sector: A Comparative Study Between Arabic and English

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Abstract

This study sheds light on the problems of the medical translation and interpretation between Arabic and English as a contrastive study. It also sheds light on the role of translation played importantly in the medical sector. The research discusses the role of translation in the medical sector and how translation and interpretation display a great way of communication with the patients inside the hospitals or within the medical documents. It also seeks to find out proper solutions to the translation issues.

English and Arabic in this research are the core subject of the study. Since there are two different languages used in the medical sector, these differences between the two languages raise many questions on how to find out a proper equivalent between the source and target and solve the linguistic gaps during the process of translation and interpretation. These problematic features must be solved by the translator and the interpreter to facilitate the process of communication during the process of translation and interpretation.

In this study, a broad analysis focuses on the medical translation problems, and the ways of solution the translator produces to the text. At last, this study aims to show the proper solutions between the two languages and how the translator and interpreter can find a proper equivalent.

Keywords: Medical Translation, Problems, English, Arabic, Terminologies.

Introduction

The interpretation and translation in the medical sector is considered one of the most important ways of communication that occur in this field. The importance of medical translation lies on the process of nearing the linguistic gaps between the two different languages.

In one hand, it is quite clear that most used terminologies in the medical sector are Latins. Some of these words in one language has no equivalent in the target language. This means that the translator must use certain strategies to bridge the gap between the two languages. In another hand, the type of the medical documents are very critical and sensitive because it is connected with the life of the patient. Any mistake or error in the interpretation and translation may affect negatively the determination

of the treatment [1]. Thus, the translator must be aware of the medical terminologies and its meanings to render it accurately. Lack of accuracy in the translation of the medical sector is considered one of the most common problems that the translator or the interpreter face.

What is Medical Translation

Medical translation plays a vital role in facilitating communication between medical professionals and patients around the world. With the rapid development of medical sciences, the need for accurate and reliable translation of medical terms has become paramount. However, translation between Arabic and English faces many challenges, most notably the problem of medical terminology, which may lead to confusion of meaning or loss of accuracy in conveying information, which may affect

the quality of healthcare and patient safety.

Problems of Medical Translation

The problem of terminology is due to several factors, including the linguistic differences between Arabic and English, the influence of Latin and Greek on English medical terminology, in addition to the lack of standardization in translating many terms into Arabic[2]. This research aims to shed light on these challenges, analyze their causes, and propose practical solutions that can contribute to improving the accuracy of medical translation between the two languages.

Importance of Medical Translation

Medical translation represents a bridge between different health systems around the world, as doctors, researchers, pharmaceutical companies, and even patients rely on accurate translations to understand medical instructions, diagnoses, and scientific research. Medical translation covers many areas, such as translating medical reports, drug studies, instructions for medical devices, patient records, and other important documents.

Any error in medical translation can have serious consequences, as misunderstanding can lead to misdiagnosis or inappropriate treatment, which can threaten patients' lives[3]. Some studies indicate that errors resulting from poor translation are responsible for a significant percentage of medical accidents, especially in multilingual environments where it is difficult to ensure effective

communication between doctors and patients who do not speak the same language [4].

Problem of Medical Terminology Between Arabic and English

The translator or the interpreter may face certain problems in the translation of the medical terminologies because of many features. These are some of them:

Linguistic Complexity and Differences in Linguistic Structure

Medical terms represent a major challenge when translating from English to Arabic and vice versa, due to the difference in the roots and structure of the language. English is mainly based on terms of Latin and Greek origins, while Arabic is based on Semitic roots. This disparity sometimes leads to difficulty in finding an accurate Arabic equivalent for some terms.

For example, the term (Hypertension) translates to “high blood pressure,” which is a descriptive translation rather than a literal translation, as the English word consists of two parts: Hyper (high) and Tension (pressure), but in Arabic a literal translation such as “hypertension” cannot be used, as it may not be clear to non-specialists [5]. These mistakes are analyzed and categorized into 3 semantic groups. The examples that are displayed in the research are three. The examples are below:

Example	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation
مدل طغض عافترا	High Blood Tension	Hypertension
Hypertension in English is formed from two parts (high) and (tension). Hence, مدل طغض عافترا in Arabic is incorrect to translate it as (high blood tension) because it will refer in Arabic as ((لأع مد رتوت)). Literal translation in the medical terms in Arabic can make grave lethal mistakes. The correct translation into English is (Hypertension).		
Example	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation
Placebo	مدول ءاودل	يمهولا ضيرملل يطعي جال عل نم عون وهو * يوتحي ال فيتحب ضارغال
Placebo is translated into (يمهولا ءاودل). It is commonly used translation, but it may not accurately reflect the concept of a drug that is given to a patient for research purposes without containing any active substance. Sometimes, the term is kept as is with an explanation added to clarify its meaning. The strategy of addition and footnotes in translation is used.		

Example	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation
CT Scan	يعطقملل حسمل	نالكس يتيس
CT Scan is translated into Arabic as يعطقملل حسمل, but it would not be understood well what it is medically. Hence. A direct translation is adopted by using “transliteration” strategy. The correct translation is adopted by using “transliteration” strategy. The correct translation is نالكس يتيس.		

Literal Translation Versus Conceptual Translation

One of the biggest challenges in medical translation is the balance between literal translation and translation that relies on conveying meaning. There are terms that can be translated literally without a problem, while there are other terms that may lead to ambiguity or confusion in understanding.

For example, the term (Placebo) is sometimes translated to “dummy treatment,” which is a commonly used translation, but it may not accurately reflect the concept of a drug that is given to a patient for research purposes without containing any active

substance . Sometimes, the term is kept as is with an explanation added to clarify its meaning.

Multiple Translations and Different Terms Between Arab Countries

There is a difference in the use of medical terms between Arab countries, as some countries may rely on Arabization, while others prefer to use foreign terms as they are. For example, the term CT scan is translated to "computed tomography" in some countries, while "CT scan" is used as it is in other countries. This difference creates a kind of lack of uniformity in terminology,

which may affect communication between specialists in different Arab countries.

Lack of Updated and Unified Medical Dictionaries

Although there are some Arabic medical dictionaries, many of them are not constantly updated to keep pace with rapid developments in the medical field. Some dictionaries may also contain inaccurate or non-standardized translations, which contributes to the exacerbation of the terminology problem [6].

Strategies of Improving Medical Translation

The translator or the interpreter may find certain solutions to solve the problems of the equivalents in the target language. These are some of them:

Unifying medical Terminology at the Arabic Level

It is necessary for health and linguistic bodies in Arab countries to adopt unified efforts to adopt unified official medical terminology. Some organizations, such as the World Health Organization and the Arab Language Academies, have started in this direction, but there is still an urgent need to expand these efforts and enhance commitment to them in various Arab countries.

Using interpretive Translation instead of Literal Translation when Needed

In cases where literal translation may lead to ambiguity, interpretive translation should be used that clarifies the actual meaning of the term. For example, translating Stroke to “stroke” instead of “stroke” is an example of how to choose the most accurate and easy-to-understand term [7].

Promoting of Teaching Medical Terminology in Arabic alongside English

To bridge the translation gap, the teaching of medical sciences in Arabic alongside English should be promoted. This does not mean dispensing with English, but rather developing rich Arabic medical content that can help standardize medical terminology and establish its use among students and specialists. Having reliable and regularly updated medical dictionaries and references helps reduce confusion and ensure the use of accurate terms. Universities and medical institutions can contribute to the development of interactive dictionaries based on artificial intelligence to provide accurate and fast translations [8].

Leverage Technology and Artificial Intelligence

Modern technology, such as specialized translation applications, can play a role in improving the quality of medical translation. However, it cannot be relied upon alone, but there must be human supervision to ensure the accuracy of terminology and the integrity of meaning [9].

Conclusion

Medical translation between Arabic and English is a complex field but is essential to ensure that accurate medical information reaches all Arabic speakers. The main problem lies in linguistic differences and the lack of standardization of terminology, which can lead to translation errors and misunderstandings. Therefore, adopting strategies such as standardization, promoting medical education in Arabic, and developing updated dictionaries can contribute to improving the quality of medical translation and ensure the accuracy of health information transmission.

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