

TRANSLATION OF SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES: CHEMISTRY

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Abstract: *The translation of chemistry-related scientific articles is essential for the exchange of knowledge within the international scientific community. Accurate translation allows researchers from different linguistic backgrounds to access and understand complex chemical information. Nevertheless, translating chemical texts involves significant challenges due to the highly specialized terminology, strict nomenclature systems, and the use of formulas and symbols. This study explores the main difficulties encountered in translating chemistry articles, with a focus on how chemical terminology is transferred between languages. A key issue identified in this research is the limited awareness of how linguistic and contextual differences influence translation accuracy, particularly in cross-language scientific communication. The study applies a comparative analysis of original and translated chemistry texts to identify common inconsistencies and errors in terminology usage. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are used to evaluate translation quality, with special attention given to terminological precision. The results demonstrate that achieving accuracy in chemical translation is particularly difficult when equivalent terms do not exist in the target language or when complex naming conventions are involved. The research also emphasizes the importance of standardized nomenclature systems and effective collaboration between subject-matter experts and translators. Overall, the findings suggest that improving chemistry translation requires not only strong language skills but also a solid understanding of chemical concepts. Enhancing translation practices can contribute to clearer scientific communication and better global dissemination of chemical research.*

Introduction

The translation of scientific texts in chemistry is a fundamental area that supports the global exchange of scientific knowledge, especially in an increasingly interconnected world. The accurate translation of chemistry articles is not only a linguistic task but also a highly specialized process that directly influences the understanding and application of scientific information. Chemical language is characterized by precision, standardized nomenclature, and the extensive use of symbols and formulas, making accuracy in translation essential for effective communication across different languages and cultures. Any misinterpretation of chemical terms or concepts may lead to serious consequences,

including incorrect experimental procedures, flawed research outcomes, and miscommunication within the scientific community.

One of the primary challenges in translating chemistry texts is the complexity of chemical terminology, which often lacks direct equivalents in other languages. In addition, chemical nomenclature is constantly evolving due to ongoing scientific discoveries, requiring translators to continuously update their knowledge and adapt to new terminology. Another significant factor is the influence of linguistic and cultural differences, which may affect how scientific concepts are interpreted and expressed in various languages. Differences in educational systems and scientific traditions can also contribute to inconsistencies in translation. Despite the importance of this field, there remains a limited understanding of the specific challenges and effective strategies involved in the translation of chemical terminology. Much of the existing research focuses on general translation issues, without addressing the unique features and demands of chemical discourse. This article aims to address this gap by providing a detailed analysis of the difficulties encountered in translating chemistry-related texts, examining the impact of linguistic and contextual factors on translation quality, and proposing methods to improve accuracy and consistency. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the enhancement of scientific communication and the reliable dissemination of chemical knowledge worldwide.

Literature review

Translation of scientific articles in chemistry is a highly specialized process that requires both linguistic proficiency and a thorough understanding of chemical concepts. Translators face significant challenges when dealing with complex terminology, systematic nomenclature, chemical formulas, and precise experimental descriptions. Accuracy is critical, as errors in translation can lead to misinterpretation of chemical data or incorrect replication of experiments. A major challenge in chemistry translation is the lack of direct equivalents for many chemical terms across languages. Some compounds, reactions, or specialized expressions may not have an exact counterpart in the target language, requiring translators to carefully analyze context and meaning (Baker, 1992). Standardized nomenclature systems, such as IUPAC naming conventions, help maintain consistency, but translators must still ensure that names, formulas, and reaction descriptions are correctly adapted for the target readership (Schäffner, 2004). Terminology and notation in chemistry are constantly evolving with ongoing research, adding complexity to translation. Translators often rely on specialized chemical dictionaries, glossaries, and published articles to maintain accuracy, but these resources may not always reflect the latest developments (Katan, 2004). Furthermore, the precise interpretation of formulas, reaction mechanisms, and experimental methods requires a solid background in chemistry to avoid errors that could compromise the scientific integrity of the text. Cultural and linguistic differences also influence the translation of chemistry texts. Scientific writing conventions, sentence structures, and stylistic norms vary between languages, which can affect clarity and readability if not carefully considered (Nord, 1997). Translators must balance fidelity

to the original text with adaptation to the linguistic norms of the target audience, ensuring that complex scientific information is understandable and precise. Although translation aids and reference materials can support the process, human expertise remains essential. Translators must interpret context, verify terminology, and ensure that chemical concepts are accurately conveyed (Pym, 2004). Accuracy in chemistry translation is not merely linguistic but also conceptual, requiring both language skills and scientific knowledge. In summary, translating scientific articles in chemistry presents numerous challenges, particularly in maintaining terminological accuracy, interpreting formulas, and adapting to linguistic conventions. Effective translation requires a combination of linguistic proficiency and deep subject-matter expertise to ensure that complex chemical knowledge is communicated clearly and reliably across languages.

Methodology

This study examines translation issues in chemistry, with particular focus on the accuracy and consistency of chemical terminology across different languages. The primary aim is to identify the factors that influence translation outcomes, including linguistic, contextual, and subject-specific factors, as well as to address the challenges posed by chemical terms that do not have direct equivalents in target languages. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The sample consisted of 500 chemical terms and expressions, drawn from diverse sources such as research articles, laboratory reports, and academic textbooks. These terms were selected to represent a wide range of subfields in chemistry, including organic, inorganic, physical, and analytical chemistry. Some terms had direct equivalents in the target languages, whereas others were highly specialized or context-dependent and lacked straightforward translations. The selected terms were translated into Spanish, French, and Chinese by professional translators with expertise in chemistry. The accuracy of the translations was evaluated by bilingual chemistry specialists using a 5-point scale, where 1 indicated “inaccurate” and 5 indicated “highly accurate.” The quantitative analysis involved comparing translations across the three languages to identify patterns of inconsistency, terminological ambiguity, or misinterpretation. In addition to quantitative assessment, a contextual analysis was conducted to explore the influence of disciplinary and linguistic context on translation. This involved examining terms related to experimental procedures, chemical nomenclature, and reaction mechanisms, particularly those that could be misinterpreted due to lack of direct equivalents or cultural differences in scientific conventions. Qualitative notes were collected from evaluators to provide insight into the types of errors and their underlying causes. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS. Correlations between translation accuracy and factors such as the use of chemical dictionaries, translator expertise, and complexity of the chemical term were measured using chi-square tests and regression analysis. The results were analyzed to determine which factors most strongly affected translation accuracy, and to identify specific categories of terms that posed the greatest challenges. The findings from this methodology

allowed for a detailed understanding of the difficulties inherent in translating chemistry articles. Terms lacking direct equivalents were found to be particularly prone to errors, while translations completed with the support of chemical experts or standardized nomenclature references demonstrated higher accuracy. The methodology underscores the necessity of combining linguistic skill with subject-specific knowledge in chemistry translation, ensuring precise and reliable communication of scientific information across languages.

Results and discussion

The research indicates that translating scientific articles in chemistry presents significant challenges, particularly in relation to the accurate translation of specialized chemical terminology. The analysis of translations from English into Spanish, French, and Chinese shows that terms without direct equivalents in the target language were more prone to errors. This was especially evident with highly technical or context-specific vocabulary, such as the names of complex organic compounds, reaction mechanisms, and specialized laboratory procedures. For example, certain chemical compounds that are commonly referenced in English-language literature did not have standardized names in the target languages, resulting in inconsistent or approximate translations. Similarly, complex reaction descriptors and analytical methods were sometimes misinterpreted due to structural and linguistic differences, highlighting the importance of domain knowledge in translation. The statistical analysis revealed that translations carried out with the assistance of standardized chemical references, such as IUPAC nomenclature guides and chemical dictionaries, were significantly more accurate. Translations using these resources achieved a mean accuracy score of 4.2, compared to 2.8 for those that relied on general language knowledge alone. This demonstrates the critical importance of up-to-date reference materials and standardized terminology for maintaining precision in chemistry translation. Furthermore, collaboration between translators and subject-matter experts proved to be a key factor in improving translation quality. Translations conducted with the input of chemists or researchers showed an increase in accuracy of approximately 28–30 percent, underlining the necessity of interdisciplinary cooperation. These findings suggest that successful chemistry translation is not solely a linguistic task but also a scientific one, requiring both language skills and chemical expertise. Contextual and linguistic differences were also observed to influence translation outcomes. Certain chemical terms and processes, particularly those with complex mechanistic or theoretical descriptions, were more prone to misinterpretation when the translators lacked sufficient scientific context. This highlights the role of domain-specific understanding in conveying precise chemical information, especially for terms and procedures that are culturally or regionally uncommon in the target language. The findings point to several areas that require further research. First, the impact of linguistic and structural differences between languages on the translation of specialized chemical terminology warrants deeper study. Second, future research could examine the translation of cutting-edge or newly discovered compounds

and reactions, where no standardized equivalents exist, to understand how terminology gaps can be addressed. Finally, the effectiveness of AI-based translation tools in chemistry remains underexplored. While such tools may assist in repetitive or standardized terminology, they are not yet capable of accurately interpreting complex chemical concepts or context-specific expressions. In conclusion, this study underscores that the translation of chemistry articles is a complex process requiring both linguistic proficiency and subject-matter expertise. Accurate translation depends on standardized terminology, collaboration with chemical experts, and careful attention to contextual details. The results emphasize that precision in chemical translation cannot rely solely on language skills; a thorough understanding of chemistry is essential to maintain the integrity, clarity, and usability of scientific information across languages. These findings provide a foundation for best practices in chemistry translation, emphasizing the importance of resources, interdisciplinary collaboration, and ongoing research into terminology and context-specific challenges.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant challenges in translating scientific articles in chemistry, particularly with respect to the accurate translation of specialized chemical terminology across languages. The findings underscore the importance of using standardized chemical nomenclature, reference materials, and ensuring close collaboration between translators and chemistry experts to maintain the precision and reliability of translated texts. The results indicate that discrepancies are most common when terms lack direct equivalents in the target language, with particular difficulties arising in complex areas such as organic synthesis, reaction mechanisms, and analytical procedures. The study also emphasizes the necessity of combining linguistic proficiency with deep subject-matter expertise to ensure accurate and contextually appropriate translations. While technological tools may provide some support in maintaining consistency and managing repetitive terminology, human expertise remains indispensable for interpreting complex chemical concepts and maintaining the scientific integrity of the text. The implications of these findings suggest that improved translation practices in chemistry could facilitate global knowledge exchange, support international research collaboration, and enhance the dissemination of scientific findings. Further research is necessary to investigate the translation of emerging chemical terms, newly discovered compounds, and specialized subfields such as materials chemistry and biochemistry. Continued exploration into terminology evolution, contextual adaptation, and interdisciplinary collaboration will be critical for overcoming language barriers and ensuring precise communication in the international scientific community.

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