Translation of French titles to English for OLDMEDLINE citations.

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Abstract

* **Objective:**

To update MEDLINE by translating OLDMEDLINE French citations to English

* **Methods:**

Translation of the French title to English for many of the most complex OLDMEDLINE French citations. For quality assurance purposes, the translated titles are being reviewed in the Index Section. Once the review is completed, MEDLARS Management Section staff will process the translations to update MEDLINE/ Pubmed by adding the English titles.

* **Results:**

430 of 1000 French titles were translated.

* **Conclusions:**

OLDMEDLINE French citations will appear in MEDLINE/PubMed with English titles.

Introduction

The objective of the project was to translate from French into English, the titles of a selection of OLDMEDLINE French citations from 1946 through 1965 in order to make these citations more accessible to the public. Completion of this project will reduce the total of 15,900 French OLDMEDLINE citations needing English translations.

Methodology

Susan Von Braunsberg of the MEDLARS Management Section provided me, via Rebecca Stanger of the Index Section, 1000 French OLDMEDLINE titles in an Excel file. The main task was to translate the longest and most complex titles. I determined the length of the titles according to the number of words they contained. A long title was one that had more than 4 words.

For complex titles, I considered titles that expressed full sentences, as opposed to just a name of a person, conference or organization.

To translate the medical terminology I used the MeSH database trying to find correspondent MeSH terms to the French medical terms of the citations. I also used some online French/ English medical dictionaries, for example Reverso or sometimes iGoogle translator tool.

I didn’t find these tools reliable because they automatically translate the terms without linking them or respecting grammar and being faithful to the meaning of the titles. Therefore, it was necessary to check the grammar and punctuation which could change the meaning of the title.

Results

400 of 1000 French OLDMEDLINE citations were translated. The titles not chosen for translation were short and simple, for example: a conference title, a scientist’s name or the name of an organization.

The citations could be translated using the igoogle translation tool. The titles chosen for translation were the most complex and difficult. These citations were the ones that required a French and English translator who would be careful with linguistic rules of both languages as it is critical that the meaning of the translated title be exact and not differ from the original.

Examples of complex French titles I worked on:

* *« Attaque phosphorylante du glucose par un extrait enzymatique de Clostridium Butyricum. II. Hexokinase, aldolase, triosephosphate isomerase et triose phospate deshydrogénase.*» Translated as *« Attack phosphorylation of glucose by an enzyme extract of Clostridium butyricum. II. Hexokinase, aldolase, triosephosphate isomerase and triose phospate dehydrogenase”*
* *« A propos de six observations d'adénopathies trachéobronchiques de primo-infection, apparues ou aggravées au cours d'un traitement par la streptomycine et l'hydrazide de l'acide isonicotinique pour méningite et miliaire. »* Translated as *“About six cases of tracheobronchial lymph nodes of primary infection appeared or worsened during treatment with streptomycin and isonicotinic acid hydrazide for meningitis and miliary.”*

Discussion

First of all, from working on the OLDMEDLINE French citations, I acknowledge the huge amount of French articles that exist in OLDMEDLINE. Many of the articles are even about the Maghreb region from French colonial times.

One challenge was to look at all the titles and triage the most complex and longest titles. Deciding which titles were the most complex took a lot of time. One possibility that would maximize the time of a translator is for the project team leader to identify the titles chosen for translation before giving the file to the translator. Also it would have been easier if the NLM had a resource dedicated to translating medical terminology from French to English. I have heard about a MeSH French version but I couldn’t find it. An interlingual database of MeSH translations would be very useful.

Recommendations

I would recommend that the BSD team working on OLDMEDLINE translations contract translators who can work from home or even from a foreign country. As for French, many developing countries have translators who would be interested in working on such projects. Once the French titles for OLDMEDLINE are translated, they can be sent back to the BSD team. In this manner, the 15,500 French titles for OLDMEDLINE could quickly be completed. An even better idea, is that some translators’ stipend from developing countries could be lower than translators’ from developed countries because of the local salary which differs from one country to another.