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Italian Association for Chinese Studies. Selected Papers 3, 2020

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ISBN 978-88-7543-475-5

This volume of Selected Papers has adopted the method
of double-blind peer review. All manuscripts have been accepted
after a rigorous peer reviewed process.

Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina srl
Dorsoduro 3259 - 30123 Venezia
www.cafoscarina.it

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Published March 2020

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SERENA ZUCCHERI

THE MISUSE OF MEDICAL LANGUAGE IN HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND NON-EXPERTS' COMMUNICATION: AN ANALYSIS OF AN ITALIAN-CHINESE INFORMATION BOOKLET

Introduction

The composition and degree of formalisation of texts and discourses of the so-called specialized languages[1] are classified according to two dimensions: the horizontal one, which emphasizes the content that the specialized language is meant to communicate, and the vertical one, which corresponds to the diaphasic variation, which takes into account the communicative context in which the specialized language is used, the recipient it is addressed to and the types and genres of texts it is used in (Cortelazzo 1994; Dardano 1994; De Mauro 1994; Gualdo and Telve 2011).

As stressed by Gualdo and Telve, "in specialised communication, it is always the expert who sets the parameters of interaction and has the leading role in the exchange" (Gualdo and Telve, 2011, 30). While in an objective communicative setting (referential) of the expert-expert kind, the specialized language is expressed in its entirety, what we would expect to find in the context of an expert-non expert communication is a simplification or "de-technicalization" of the specialized language[2].

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[1] Although 'specialized languages' is today the most commonly used term in Italian Language studies to describe a variety of natural language used in highly specialized contexts and communicative settings (Cortelazzo 1994), in Translation and Language Teaching studies the expressions used are loan translations from French (*langue de spécialité* or *langue specialisée*) or from English (*language for specialized/specific purposes*) (Gualdo and Telve, 2011, 19-21).

[2] The 'expert-expert' and 'expert-non expert' expressions used here refer to two of the three types of communicative settings identified by Pearson in the context of specialized languages: the "expert-expert" and the "expert-non expert communication". If compared to a common language for communication, the expert-expert communication will have unambiguous meanings that depend on the specialist domain the expert works in. Consequently, an expression or a word is a specialist term if it is used in a specialised communication, such as a publication in a sector review, a research project, a legal document or in any other document in which the author writes about his area of specialisation and addresses people who operate in the same field and have the same level of expertise, without feeling the need to provide any kind of explanation. The second

Starting from the definition of "post academic science" developed by Ziman (1998), a number of studies (Beacco et al. 2002; Greco 2004; Greco 2007; Fabbri and Pattera 2007) have highlighted how, within the research field, scientific communication has consolidated in highly specialised structures, while it has differentiated its form, activity and purposes when directed to non-specialists in the sector. If on one hand it is increasingly obvious that the world of experts (the world of science) and the world of non-experts (society as a whole) are no longer completely autonomous worlds, on the other hand we can easily observe that the increasing quantity and quality of relations between these two worlds may also produce ambiguity, given that more and more "non-experts" participate in decisions affecting the work of "experts". Since the non-expert has been able, mostly thanks to the consolidation of the new media, to carve out a participatory and active role for himself in every day's information on public issues and on science, the expert's professional duty is therefore to know the mechanisms, to acquire and learn how to use the techniques of informal communication, of "mass communication", so that non-experts are put in the condition to understand correctly the contents that the scientific community intends to disseminate.

Regarding Italy, the readability and clarity of public and institutional communication has been debated for quite some time (Fortis 2003), both within the specific disciplines involved and within the field of linguistic research. Calvino, back in 1965[3], wrote that hundreds of thousands of Italians have long been forced to practice a daily intra-linguistic translation between their mother tongue and the anti-language, i.e., "the Italian of those who will not say 'I did' but who feel they must say 'I effectuated'" (Calvino 1980, 123), a non existent language spoken and written by lawyers and ministerial officials and widely used by editors of newspapers and television news. What Calvino called anti-language has not entirely disappeared and, although it seems that institutions have started moving toward a tangible simplification in their communication with the common citizen by promoting a progressive cancellation of the anti-language, in fact for Italian citizens, and more so for foreign citizens residing in Italy, the simplification of the Italian used in certain contexts (especially in the medical-health field, which is not only an area of specialisation, but is also and above all a public service)[4] still seems

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type of communicative setting involves experts of a given sector and people who must be helped to understand; therefore, the context is that of texts that are less specialised from a terminological point of view, in which we may hypothesize a significant presence of strategies (paraphrasing, clarification, expansion, etc.) aimed at simplifying the discourse for someone who does not have the given specialist knowledge (Pearson, 1998).

[3] Calvino's criticism of anti-language appeared on 3 January 1965 on the newspaper *Il Giorno* and was published again in 1980 in *Una pietra sopra,* (see the bibliography at the end of the text).

[4] Regarding the medical field, concerns about an unclear communication between medical staff and patients (Bucchi 2001) seem to arise in other contexts besides the Italian context. For further study, see, among many others: Goodman and Edwards 1997; Dyxon-Woods 2001; Wang, Yan, and Jin: 2006.

to be a long way off, especially if we look at it from the point of view of those who have to translate that communication[5].

Using the United States as an example, in 2008 De Mauro recalled how Bill Clinton issued a Memorandum in 1998 which established that government officials were obliged to use "plain language" in written communications: this language aims at maximum comprehensibility, with no unnecessary complexity; it identifies all and only the information which the reader truly needs, and organises the information clearly so that the recipient may understand its content at a first reading. The guiding principle of *plain language* is the reader, because "clarity is not an intrinsic quality of a text: the reader is the only judge of clarity", and "plain language is (...) a way of proceeding by successive approximations until you obtain the desired product: a text that is adapted to the recipient" (De Mauro 2008)[6].

Given this premise, the purpose of this paper is to present, in an Italian-Chinese comparative perspective, the general characteristics of the Italian-Chinese version of a multilingual informative booklet on contraception published by the Emilia Romagna region, and to highlight the textual and communicative strategies used in both languages to facilitate (or perhaps complicate?) the dialogue between specialists in the sector and the lay public [7].

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[5] Italy's first attempt to simplify public communication was carried out in 1993, when the Department of Public Function, upon recommendation by Minister Cassese, produced the *Codice di stile delle comunicazioni scritte ad uso delle pubbliche amministrazioni* (Code of style in written communication to be used by the public administration), followed in 1997 by the more mature *Manuale di stile. Strumenti per semplificare il linguaggio delle amministrazioni pubbliche* (Manual of Style. Instruments to simplify the language of public administrations) by Alfredo Fioritto. Encouraged by these activities, some agencies of citizen services invested in training activities for their employees, in order to provide them with the means to communicate clearly and effectively and to rethink the way they communicated with users. Among these, the institution that worked most intensely on this aspect was ENEL, the company that distributes electricity in Italy. ENEL involved linguist Tullio De Mauro and advertising communicator Annamaria Testa in a structural review of all communications to users (De Mauro and Vedovelli 2001). On a European level, in 2005, upon initiative of the Italian Department of the Directorate-General for Translation of the European Commission, the Network for Institutional Italian Excellence (REI) was created and, in 2010, it approved and drew up *Parole chiare per tutti. Manifesto per un italiano istituzionale* (*In clear words. Manifesto for an institutional Italian)* (Cortelazzo 2015).

[6] The movement for plain language in written communication was born in the United States during the early 1970s as part of a consumer movement. During the middle 1970s, the first plain language laws were passed, such as those passed during the Carter presidency (*Improvement Government Regulations* in 1978 and *Federal Paperwork Reduction* in 1979, both revoked by Reagan in 1981). More recently, we must mention the *Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies* passed by Clinton. In Great Britain, the Plain English Campaign was launched in 1979, and in 1982 the British government initiated an official policy for the adoption of plain language. The British and Americans movements also influenced other English-speaking countries as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. Regarding the European Union, it is important to remember the *Fight the fog* campaign against Euro-bureaucratese, launched by the Translation Service of the European Commission in 1998. As Fortis point out, it is not a coincidence that translators were the ones to promote the campaign: "Many EU documents are drafted in English and then translated into all the other official languages; if the original text is not plain English, we can easily imagine how this translation activity is complicated beyond measure" (Fortis 2003, 10). Almost twenty years after this first initiative, the European Commission published in 2012 (and updated in 2016) *How to Write Clearly*, a guide on how to write any written document simply and clearly.

The booklet: analysis and critical elements

The explanatory/descriptive text here presented was chosen for several reasons: its remarkable lack of contents, made evident by the absence of explanations that would be essential to the recipient's understanding; the textual organization of the information given, characterized by a chaotic communication mode that swings between detachment and involvement of the recipient; lastly, the linguistic choices that seem to recall the spectre of anti-language. All these aspects have inevitably had, as we shall see, an impact on the efficiency of the target text.

The text, in both its original and Chinese versions, is the booklet entitled *Birth Control – Knowledge: the key to making the right choice*[8], designed by different offices of the Emilia Romagna Regional Health Service, including the immigrant women spaces in the region's different provinces. It appears that the design and contents of the booklet were evaluated by an editorial panel made up of officials working in strategic sectors of the Emilia Romagna Region, such as the Department for Public Health Policies and the Ausl (Local Health district) of Modena. The on-line version of the booklet is a first reprint, updated in 2007[9].

The brochure is 16 pages long, including the title page. The distribution of information (textual organization) within the booklet seems to follow the guidelines for a suitable communication on health issues as established by the *Gaining Health – encouraging healthy choices* national program, approved by the Italian Government with a decree of the Prime Minister on 4 May 2007[10].

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[7] The Italian booklet analysed in the following paragraph was translated into Chinese, English, Spanish, Arabic, Albanian, Russian and Romanian. To view the different versions of the booklet, see https://salute.regione.emilia-romagna.it/documentazione/materiale-informativo/pubblicazioni/la-contraccezione-conoscere-per-scegliere (Accessed 06/2018).

[8] Regarding the booklet's cover, all the translated versions only translate the title (Birth Control) but leave the original Italian subtitle (Conoscere per scegliere). However, the first line of the introduction, signed by the Councillor for Health Policies, both the title and the subtitle are translated. For the purposes of this paper, and only in this single instance, we here used the translation provided in the English version of the booklet.

[9] When the Italian source text and the Chinese target text were first analysed, the text was a reprint updated in 2007. As can be seen from the link mentioned in note 7, it appears that the booklet has been further updated in 2010. However, its content and the writing strategies chosen to express it show no changes from the 2007 Italian and Chinese versions.

[10] The health program guidelines partly reflect what already established over the years by authori-

The booklet, divided into blocks of information, opens with an introduction signed by the Councillor for Public Health Policies; the introduction is then followed by three explanatory-descriptive sections which contain micro-narratives, theoretically intended – we believe – to further circumscribe the reader target, entitled "Why choose birth control", "How to choose a birth control method" and "How we are made". The following nine sections, dedicated to contraception methods, are further divided into five sub-sections that, however, are not present for each section: "What is it?", "How to use it", "Pros", "Cons" and "Cost". The booklet specifically seems to adhere to the so-called "5 W model" (who, what, where, when and why) typical of English-speaking journalistic writing, which was adopted by the *Gaining Health* program. The use of this model allows us to determine which elements were considered the key points necessary to ensure an accurate, coherent, clear, relevant to the recipient, and credible communication: "Who"; "Says What"; "In Which Channel"; "To Whom"; and "With what effects". The mentioned national program has adapted this model to the Italian context, in order to identify the five fundamental stages that are considered indispensable in health communication: the recipient (who); the content (what); the language (how); the media (with which means); and the time (when).

In the specific case of brochures/booklets, the program suggests: placing the most important information at the beginning of the text; selecting a maximum of three messages and dealing with one at a time depending on the length of the text; communicating the purpose of the text and the benefits that the recipients will have after reading it as clearly and straightforwardly as possible. In addition, to avoid misunderstanding, it recommends using: plain language words; direct expressions; whole words instead of acronyms or abbreviations. It also advises not to use: specific technical terms (if they cannot be avoided, they must be explained); foreign words; redundancy of adjectives and unnecessary words.

Let us now examine whether the text we are considering meets the criteria defined by the *Gaining Health* program. The introduction lists the text's goals and its recipients: building correct and respectful relationships between operators of the Regional Health Service and its users; ensuring appropriate health services for the protection, care and the recovery of health; providing adequate and useful knowledge so that users may make informed decisions on their health and on the services offered. These objectives are absolutely compliant to the guidelines defined by the World Health Organization for health communication

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tative linguistic studies (Cortelazzo and Pellegrino 2003; Cortelazzo 2015; De Mauro and Vedovelli 2001; De Mauro 1994; De Mauro 2008) and by the steps taken since 1993 by Italy's governments to implement a simplification of the administration's and public communication's language. The health program guidelines regarding the communication on health issues are contained on the dossier *La comunicazione per la salute* (The Communication for Health).

adopted by Italy's health policies. The introduction specifies that the booklet is addressed to "foreign women who live in our region, to provide them with the information necessary to choose, if they wish to, their birth control method". But reading on, identifying the actual recipient of the message becomes more difficult and vagueness becomes a constant in the narrative and this, as we shall see below, is inevitably reflected in the translated version. Perhaps not wishing to exclude anyone, the text in fact also refers to "women immigrants", "single women", "mothers who have recently given birth", "women who already have children", "women who often change partners", "young women". In the constant and exasperating repetition of the groups of women the booklet is addressed to, what we find to be ethically questionable is the authors' need to explain, starting from the introduction, the identity of the addressees. This wide use of lexical variations contributes to generate vagueness and confusion about the actual recipient of the text. This use is also complemented by another trend that we may define as a constant effort to raise the register through lexical and syntactic choices. For example, there is a use of lexical or syntagmatic units that reveal the intention of using an apparently high register, as in the following example, where "*componente*" (component) has been chosen instead of "*parte*" (part): "*La sessualità è componente naturale e vitale di ciascuno di noi*" (Sexuality is a natural and vital component of each one of us); or the choice of *impiego di sostanze medicinali* (employment of medicinal substances) instead of *uso di medicinali* (use of medicines): "*Questi metodi non richiedono* (…) *l'impiego di sostanze medicinali*" (These methods do not require (…) the employment of medicinal substances); "*verificare*" (verify) instead of "*controllare*" (check): "*Prima dell'uso occorre verificare la data di scadenza*" (Before use, it is necessary to verify the expiration date); or, finally, "*fornire una protezione*" (provide a protection) instead of "*protegge da*" (protects from):

> "[*il profilattico*] *fornisce una buona protezione per le seguenti infezioni*" ([The condom] provides a good protection from the following infections).

Or the use of collateral technical terms[11], not even necessarily related to the medical field, but often used in those areas where the anti-language seems to have imposed itself. See the following examples[12]:

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[11] In Serianni's definition, the collateral technical terms are "terms (noun, adjectives, verbs and less frequently constructs) which are characteristic of a certain specialized field, that are not connected so much to actual issues of communication but rather to the chance of using a higher register, distinct from the common language" (Serianni 2005, 127-28).

[12] The English translation of the technical terms above takes into account the meaning and not the form of the terms. Although there is an English version of the booklet, for the purposes of our analysis, I have decided not to take it into account in this paper.

- *funzionale a* (functional to)
"*La sessualità, oltre ad essere funzionale alla sopravvivenza della specie umana, e quindi alla riproduzione*"
"Sexuality, besides being functional to the survival of the human species, and therefore to reproduction"

- *controindicare* (contraindicate)
"[il metodo non reversibile] è usato solo nei casi che controindicano una successiva gravidanza"
"[The non-reversible method] is used only in cases where following pregnancies are contraindicated"

- *deputato a* [deputed to]
"nell'ovaio il follicolo si trasforma in corpo luteo deputato alla produzione di progesterone"
"in the ovary, the follicle is transformed into a corpus luteum deputed to produce progesterone"

- *assumere/assunzione (di farmaci)* [to take/taking (of medication)]
"Necessità di accuratezza nell'assunzione"
"Need for accuracy in taking"
"Gli effetti (...) si interrompono nel momento in cui si smette di assumerla"
"The effects (...) cease when one stops taking it"

- *sospendere l'assunzione (di farmaco)* [suspend the(medication)]
"Raramente può provocare disturbi che possono spingere a sospenderne l'assunzione"
"It rarely may cause side effects that might lead to suspending the medication"

- *mutuabile* [covered by national health insurance]
"(...) solo alcune [confezioni] sono mutuabili"
"(...) only a few [boxes] are covered by health insurance"

Also increasing abstractness, and therefore the vagueness of the information given, are the choices made regarding what to explain clearly and what not to, choices that in most cases reveal some critical elements. For example, the term "reversible" is explained by opening a parenthetical phrase introduced by a colon: "The birth control methods shown in this brochure are all reversible: when one stops taking them, the contraceptive effect ceases".

Four paragraphs later, using italics to capture the reader's attention and to underline the importance of the concept, the authors choose to clarify "non-reversible", by rephrasing part of the preceding information by means of the connective "*cioè*" (that is): "[Non-reversible method], that is, male or female surgical sterilization".

It is however surprising that the explanations of "useful check-ups" and "health personnel" have been preferred to the (missing) explanation of "*medico di* *famiglia*” (family physician), an important figure in Italy’s society: “The meaning and timeliness of some useful check-ups (Gyn visit, breast examination, and pap smear) may be discussed”.

In the section on natural methods of contraception there is a flaw in the hierarchy of information noticeable from the titles of the subsections. The title of the first proposed method is “Ogino-Knauss Method (calendar or counting days method)”. For the second method, there is a reverse mode of clarification with respect to the first: the way the method works is expressed first, and then the name of the method’s creator is given in parentheses: “Method of the cervical mucus (Billings)”[13].

The comprehension difficulties are also due to the way the information is distributed within the individual subsections: where we would expect to find detailed information, often this is missing. As, for example, in the subsections “Cost”, where a minimum/maximum cost for the product is never given; or in the subsection “How” (how and when to take the contraceptive), where, when discussing the pill, no indication is given on when one must start taking it.

Analysis and critical elements of the target text

The vagueness about the recipient in the source text, the many lexical and superficial embellishments, the great use of lexical variations, the frequent use of collateral technical terms and the confused distribution of information – sometimes left implicit in the original text – have created many noticeable difficulties for the translator of the target text. In general terms, the translator alternates strategies of adaptation and of adhesion that try to simplify on a syntactic and lexical level the content of the source text, in some cases explaining information which was left implicit in the original, or adding elements in cases where there was no need for further clarification in the target text since the target language already has suitable equivalents. The cases reported in the tables below are examples of both strategies adopted[14].

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[13] Besides the examples given above, there are other dubious and unsuitable linguistic choices, such as the use of complex syntagmatic units, many cases of nominalization, impersonal verb forms, adverbs used improperly, missing connectives, and in one case a missing subordinate clause.

[14] The examples are accompanied by the Chinese translation of the text and by a reverse translation of the target text in order for the reader to understand the translation and linguistic choices made by the translator. Some of the examples will be further discussed below.

Table 1 Adaptation with clarification effect on the lexical and semantic levels

Source text	**Target text**	**Reverse translation**
Gli effetti (...) si interrompono nel momento in cui si smette di assumerla The effects (...) cease when one stops taking it	一旦停用，妇女即能受孕 *Yidan ting yong, funü ji neng shoyun*	*Non appena se ne interrompe l'uso, la donna può rimanere incinta* As soon as the woman stops taking it, she can become pregnant
Solo alcune [confezioni] sono mutuabili Only a few [boxes] are covered by health insurance	少数避孕法为公费供应 *Shaoshu biyun fa wei gongfei gongying*	*Un esiguo numero di pillole contraccettive è fornito gratuitamente* A small number of contraceptive pills is provided free of charge
Medico di famiglia Family Physician	自选公费医疗医生 *Zixuan gongfei yiliao yisheng*	*Medico gratuito di vostra scelta* Free doctor of your choice

Table 2 Adherence with elucidation effect

Source text	**Target text**	**Reverse translation**
I metodi contraccettivi illustrati in questo opuscolo sono tutti reversibili: interrompendone l'uso cessa l'effetto contraccettivo. The birth control methods shown in this booklet are all reversible: when one stops taking them, the contraceptive effect ceases.	这本小册子里面介绍的各种避孕方法都是在短时间内有效。即，一旦停止使用避孕方法，就能停止避孕功能 *Zhe ben xiaocezi limian jieshao de gezhong biyun fangfa dou shi zai duan shijian nei youxiao. Ji, yidan tingzhi shiyong biyun fangfa, jiu neng tingzhi biyun gongneng.*	*I metodi contraccettivi presentati in questo opuscolo hanno tutti effetto in breve tempo. Ossia, non appena si smette di usarli, la funzione contraccettiva si interrompe* The contraceptive methods presented in this booklet all have effect in a short time. That is, as soon as one stops using them, the contraceptive function is interrupted

Può essere discusso il significato e l’utilità di alcuni controlli utili (visita ginecologica, senologica e pap test) The meaning and timeliness of some useful check-ups (Gyn visit, breast examination, and pap smear) may be discussed	可以了解一下，需要作哪些检查化验（妇科检查，乳房检查，子宫检查） *Keyi liaojie yixia, xuyao zuo na xie jiancha huayan (fuke jiancha, rufang jiancha, zigong jiancha)*	*Può essere approfondita la necessità di quali visite di controllo fare (visita ginecologica, senologica, dell’utero)* The need of which check-up visits should be done (Gyn visit, breast examination, uterus examination) may be discussed further

If, for the examples in Table 1, some of the explanations seem appropriate, especially for those terms or expressions such as “mutuabili” (provided by the national health service) or “medico di famiglia” (family physician), the result of the translation examples in Table 2, on the other hand, seem to us to be unclear. In the first example, what appears doubtful is not the only choice to clarify the term “reversible” (*have effect in short time*) when in Chinese there is an equivalent (*keni* 可逆), but also the use of the word “function” (*gongneng* 功能) instead of “effect” (*xiaoguo* 效果).

Furthermore, as we may notice in the following examples, the adaptation of the source text is often done to assist the reader by reducing the syntactic complexity of certain sentences and the lexical and semantic complexity of some terms, in order to improve the text by making it flow more smoothly in the target language:

1- *Con la parola ‘contraccezione” indichiamo (...)*
With the word ‘contraception’ we refer to (...)
“避孕”一词的意思是 *“Biyun” yi ci de yisi shi* (The meaning of the word ‘contraception’ is)

2- *Il metodo non reversibile [...] è usato solo nei casi che controindicano una successiva gravidanza e solo con l’esplicito consenso dell’interessato o dell’interessata*
The non-reversible method [...] is used only in cases where a following pregnancy is contraindicated and only with the explicit consent of the person involved
只有男女明确要求同意，或者不能再次怀孕的情况下，才采取绝育手段
Zhi you nannü mingque yaoqiu tongyi, huozhe bu neng zaici huaiyun de qingkuang xia, cai caiqu jueyu shouduan (Only with the explicit permission of the couple or in cases where there may not be another pregnancy, surgical sterilization is performable)

3- *Nell’ovaio il follicolo si trasforma in corpo luteo deputato alla produzione di progesterone*
In the ovary, the follicle transforms into a corpus luteum deputed to produce progesterone

> 卵巢中泡变成黄体，产生孕酮 *Luanchao zhong pao biancheng huangti, chansheng yuntong* (In the ovary, the follicle transforms into a corpus luteum producing progesterone)

The raising of the register and the vagueness in circumscribing the actual recipient of the source text have produced in the target text abrupt variations of the register and translation errors regarding the identification of a defined recipient. Consider the following example:

> *(…) Costruire corrette e rispettose relazioni con le persone che a loro si rivolgono*
> (…) Establishing correct and respectful relations with the individuals who turn to them
> 与前来找他们的所有人建立正确的，互相尊重的关系 *Yu qianlai zhao tamen de suoyou ren jianli zhengque de, huxiang zunzhong de guanxi* (Establishing correct and respectful relations with all people who go visit them)

Qianlai 前来 is a verb that, with the meaning of *dao zheli lai* 到这里来 (to come), is often used as a form of courtesy which normally follows a prepositional construction introduced by *xiang* 向. As a verb of courtesy, it should not be followed by *zhao*找, which colloquially we usually translate as “to go look for /to call on somebody”. While a phrase such as *qianlai yu xiang tamen xunqiu banghzu de* 与前来向他们寻求帮助的 (with the people who go to them to ask for help) would have been more correct. If the previous example highlights a swinging selection of register within a single sentence, the repeated use of the courtesy appellative *zhuwei* 诸位 (Ladies and gentlemen/Sirs) seems to respond to the translator’s intention to maintain, even more rigidly than the source text, the distance between the author and the reader.

The uncertainty about who the real recipient is turns into – in the target text – a series of designations that, in some cases, translate the interlocutors correctly, while in other cases are totally incorrect, perhaps because not fully understood. We notice, for example, that in the target text there is no difference between “foreign women” and “women immigrants” that are always translated *waiguo nüqiaomin* 外国女侨民, i.e. “immigrant (female)”; when the source text speaks of a “couple”, the target text oscillates between “spouses” (*fufu* 夫妇), “the two parties” (*shuangfang* 双方) or “woman and spouse” (*funü ji pei’ou* 妇女及配偶) and “woman and husband” (*nüxing he zhangfu* 女性和丈夫).

Finally, as shown in Table 3, there are a number of linguistic-translation errors due to simple carelessness, to a lack of understanding of the source text and to the translator’s extralinguistic knowledge.

Table 3 Linguistic-translation errors

Source text	**Target text**	**Reverse translation**
Madri che hanno partorito da poco Mothers who have recently given birth	产妇[15] *Chanfu*	*Puerpera* Puerpera
Qui le donne, almeno secondo i racconti, dovrebbero avere maggiori disponibilità ed essere più libere Here women, at least according to stories, are supposed to have more possibilities and be freer	**根据她们的自述**，她们应该有更多的机遇，享有更大的自由 *Genju tamen de zishu, tamen yinggai you geng duo de jiyu, xiangyou geng da de ziyou*	***Stando ai loro racconti,*** *le donne dovrebbero avere più opportunità e godere di maggiore libertà* **According to their stories**, women are supposed to have more opportunities and enjoy greater freedom
Spesso conoscenti o amici possono fornire informazioni non precise e scorrette Often acquaintances or friends may provide inaccurate and incorrect information	熟人和朋友**道听途说**，提供不正确或不确切的消息 *Shuren he pengyou daotingtushuo, tigong bu zhengque huo bu queqie de xiaoxi*	*Amici e conoscenti **danno ascolto ai pettegolezzi** e forniscono notizie imprecise o scorrette* Friends and acquaintances **listen to gossip** and provide inaccurate or incorrect information
Le informazioni devono provenire da personale sanitario preparato The information must come from prepared healthcare personnel	**这些情况**应该由训练有素的医疗卫生人员提供 *Zhe xie qingkuang yinggai you xunlian yousu de yiliao weisheng renyuan tigong*	***Le condizioni*** *devono essere fornite da personale sanitario preparato* **The conditions** must come from prepared healthcare personnel
Giorni in cui la fertilità è poco probabile ma possibile Days in which fertility is unlikely but possible	也有些日子**有可能怀孕** *Ye you xie rizi you keneng huaiyun*	*Ci sono anche giorni in cui* ***la gravidanza è probabile*** There are also days in which **pregnancy is likely**

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[15] Fuchan 产妇 (puerpera) is a term used in the medical environment to refer to the puerperium, the period of 6-8 weeks after childbirth during which the woman returns to her normal health conditions. A correct alternative might have been ganggang shengyu guo de muqin 刚刚生育过的母亲 (Mothers who have just given birth).

Le coppie che desiderano evitare la gravidanza si astengono dai rapporti durante tale periodo [fertile] Couples wishing to avoid pregnancy refrain from intercourse during this [fertile] period	夫妇两人如不想要孩子，**就应该这六天内避孕性交** *Fufu liang ren ru bu xiangyao haizi, jiu yinggai zhe liu tian nei biyun xingjiao*	*Se i coniugi non desiderano avere figli,* ***dovrebbero avere rapporti in questi sei giorni per evitare la gravidanza*** If the spouses do not want to have children, **they should have intercourse in these six days to avoid pregnancy**
Come siamo fatti[2] How we are made	**女性生殖器介绍** *Nü xing shengzhiqi jieshao*	***Introduzione all'apparato riproduttivo femminile*** **Introduction to the female reproductive system**
Pap test	**子宫检查**[3] *Zigong jiancha*	***Controllo dell'utero*** **Examination of the uterus**

Conclusions

In recent years, the notion that scientific communication should move in two directions has imposed itself: one direction is the one taken by research activity, that must necessarily be characterized by a high degree of specialization, while the other is that of communication addressed to a general and heterogeneous public, in which the scientific discourse should be structured in a clear and transparent manner to facilitate comprehension by non-experts. For the European Union the dialogue between science and society has become a crucial point in the construction of a European research area. It is a known fact that the channels through which information travels today are many and accessible to the majority of the world population, and this promotes a dissemination of scientific knowledge from the institutions to the citizen. A fortiori, if we look at the text here briefly presented, an institutional text issued by a public service and directed to the citizen, the good intentions for the construction of a 'European research' seem to falter, and some hypotheses on this failure may be proposed: although we do not know the identity, origin and training of the booklet's translator, we can state that if a source text, such as the one here proposed, is not written correctly on a pragmatic and textual level, it is unlikely we will obtain a correct target text. This confirms Calvino's statement: "whoever writes for communication [...] should constantly bear in mind the degree of translatability, i.e. of communicability of the expressions used (Calvino 1980, 119)". If the institutions involved in the planning and writing of this booklet

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[16] Title of a section.

[17] The Chinese equivalent for 'Pap Test' is *pashi shiyan* 巴氏试验

had really been interested in establishing a 'healthy' and clear dialogue with the recipients of the message, it would have been professionally more correct – for the Chinese translation of the text – to seek the opinion of experts and connoisseurs of the Chinese language and culture, who would probably have alerted the groups involved in the design of the brochure of the seriousness of certain mistakes, still present today, despite the second updated reprint of the booklet.

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