1. Greetings

My background (Who I am)

1. former medical student but not a doctor, Japanese translator

My job what I do

1. 3 types of people are involved in a science journal

Editor, referee, proofreader

I proofread for IRCA-BSSA Group Journals & the Chinese Journal Pathogen Biology

1. Why does all this matter?

English is a common language; like Latin

English is the language of computers, math, science

No matter how great your ideas, findings, or thoughts, they only matter if other people know about them; English is the easiest way to tell a large number of people

III. Common mistakes in English made by Chinese authors

1. application → use

apply → use

the Triple Amplification Technique should be **used** to detect HBV when screening blood donors

2. singular vs. plural

always sing. always plural almost always plural

*research data characteristics*

*information properties*

*evidence features*

3. singular and plural matter

a patient was given a drug; a patient was given drugs

4. Unnecessary words

PCR method → PCR

B ultrasound examination → B ultrasound

The gene jhp947 is expressed → The jhp947 gene is expressed

jhp947 is expressed

The Neurosurgery Department → Neurosurgery

5. case vs. patient

A case is a disease or surgical procedure, patients are people

A patient is discharged, a case ends or is concluded

6. use correct terms

floating population → migrant population

Western blot → Western blotting  
 worm clot → parasitic emboli

anaplasma disease → anaplasmosis

toxoplasma disease → toxoplasmosis

schistosoma disease → schistosomiasis

separation → isolation XX strains were clinically isolated

7. know, find out, learn → determine, ascertain

To study, examine, investigate

8. confirm: means you have results, you checked them, and they are correct

9. prepositions matter

infected **by** vs. infected **with**

The patient was infected **with** AIDS **by** an infected needle

10. compare

In comparison to ~

Compared to~

11. ~rate

Positive/negative rate, detection rate, infection rate

The positive rate of serum samples was → Serum samples tested positive at a rate of

12. similarity, homology and identity

When talking about gene sequences

Identity is the degree of correspondence between two sub-sequences

Similarity is the degree of resemblance between two sequences when they are compared

Similarity might be expressed in percent of identity. For example, sequences might have 30% identity. On the other hand, there are no degrees of homology, as there are of similarity. The sequences are either homologous or not.

13. cultivated vs. cultured

crops are cultivated cells are cultured

14. under the condition of ~

In a nitrogen atmosphere

In the presence of saline

15. could, were able

These words mean “probably” or “possibly” in the future

If you had results, then say so:

We could construct a plasmid → We constructed a plasmid

16. Latin & Greek

Et al. short for et alia

formula → formulae

datum → data

cercaria → Cercariae

protozoon → protozoa

17. using a noun as an adjective

cells culture → cell culture

nucleotides sequences → nucleotide sequences

18. word order matters

expression levels of the gene MUC2 → levels of MUC2 expression

19. whose

Should mostly be used when talking about a person or an object with qualities like a person

20. inoculate vs. seed

96-well plates were inoculated →96-well plates were seeded

21. during

furing June to September → from June to September

22. counting something in English

rounds or sessions

2 rounds of chemotherapy

23. Chinese doesn’t translate directly into English

infection season → during periods of heavy infection

experimental teaching, experiment teaching → lab course

garland frequency → rosette rate

24. significant/significance

Two methods were statistically significant differences (P <0.01)

→ There was a statistically significant difference (P <0.01) between the two methods

There were significant differences in cancer rates in patients who drank

→ No significant differences in cancer rates were noted in patients who drank

25. stay current

peasants → farmers; rural farmers

side effect → adverse reaction

tertian malaria → malaria caused by Plasmodium vivax, so vivax malaria

26. Get place names right

Tianjin city → city of Tianjin

Shandong Province

27. indications; eligible for surgery

28. potential subjects

subjects

29. talking about time

On day 30 postoperatively, the patient had~

On day 12 of hospitalization, the patient had~

30. careful using commas

the mRNA levels of ROP2, MIC2 → the mRNA levels of ROP2 and MIC2

patients were given Drug A, Drug B → Drug A **and** Drug B or Drug A **or** Drug B

31. talking about animals

young pigs → piglets

young cows → calves

eggs; larvae; young worms; adult worms

32. influence, impact, effect, effectiveness

Influence can be good or bad

Impact is mostly bad

effects can be good or bad

effectiveness is how big an effect is

33. how to avoid making mistakes

garbage in, garbage out, so use references to check wording in English

read papers by English speaking authors

Google is free; use the word or phrase in quote marks

But make sure your references are good ones

**The Wanfang database is unedited!!!** Abstracts/papers are submitted by authors and most have incorrect English

I like金山词霸, but it has a lot of mistakes, too

My good friend and Chinese tutor hates Google/the Internet because 1) anyone can write anything, right or wrong, and post it 2) a lot of small journals will accept a paper as-is, mistakes included

Be careful with wording you find in papers by authors from India, Eastern Europe, or the Middle East; they are not native English speakers and their papers will have English that is wrong

Most papers by Chinese authors have not been read or proofread by an English speaker, so they often have really bad English **unless the paper has English-speaking authors**

ask someone who actually speaks English

if you don’t know how to say something, post a note on a message board like fanyi

IV. Writing tips

a. the relationship between the abstract and the main body of a paper

the abstract and body of the paper are completely independent

can use first person in the abstract, but not in the main body

b. what is the 3rd person and why do we use it

use it to avoid we did this, we did that

c. how to use abbreviations

define the first time in the abstract and in the main body

how to abbreviate scientific nomenclature

Toxoplasma gondii → T. gondii

d. use spellcheck to at least check

amplificated

administrated

but spellcheck is sometimes wrong

e. use consistent terminology

if you start a paper by saying “lung carcinoma,” don’t switch to “lung cancer” unless you mean something different

the same is true for sensitivity & susceptibility

f. if you write about guidelines, protocols, treatments of a medical society, association, etc. say **which one**

according to the Medical Association, cancer should be 5 cm in size or larger

according to the Chinese Medical Association, cancer should be 5 cm in size or larger

g. if you refer to a guideline, protocol, or treatment, make sure readers outside of China will also know which guideline, protocol, or treatment you are talking about

cancer should be 5 cm in size or larger

cancer should be 5 cm in size or larger according to the Chinese Medical Association

i.) simplify

inhibitory action → inhibition

decreasing action → decreases

Drug A has inhibitory action on cancer cells → Drug A inhibits cancer cells

Drug B has an effect on leukemia → Drug B affects leukemia

the number of patients with cancer was 1 → 1 patient had cancer

j. make sure non-Chinese readers will understand what you are talking about

describe traditional Chinese medicines (or at least their active ingredients)

Sanjun Tuihuang Decoction

explain Chinese words

danwei

give scientific names (Latin) for all plants, animals, etc.

we cultivated rice in test plots of Chinese rice, Thai rice, and Japanese rice

what is “Chinese rice”? Is there only one species?!?

k. describing correlation

I don’t like “positive correlation” or “negative correlation.” I prefer to say if something is correlated or not.

smoking is correlated with lung cancer

Fatigue in lupus is not correlated with disease activity

BMI is negatively correlated with sleep duration

→ BMI is inversely correlated with sleep duration

l. how to use “respectively”

m. Make sure to have someone proofread your paper

V. Concluding remarks

VI. Q and A