

language is obviously not English, and even if I explain that the gatekeeper's "corrections" introduce grammar, syntax, or scientific style errors where the text was perfectly correct as submitted.

I've often wondered if those readers who actually read the Acknowledgements assumed my first language could not possibly be English because of my Belarusian surname, and simply interpreted differences between my way of saying it and their preferred way as evidence that I was wrong and they were right.

When I started doing professional STM translation and author editing in the early 1980s I made it a point that my name would appear in the Acknowledgements to indicate my contribution to the text that was to be submitted. I insisted on this for three reasons: (1) to give credit where credit was due (a New England cultural value, perhaps; I was born and raised in a small town in Connecticut); (2) to take responsibility for "the English" so that gatekeepers would realize that if they wanted to criticize it, they should blame me and not the authors; and (3) to publicize the quality of my work in the hope that readers would notice, and perhaps wish to obtain my services.

After about 25 years in the profession I've realized that all three were interesting working hypotheses concerning readers' reactions to the quality of "the English" in the text, but the evidence – in the form of gatekeepers' feedback and the effect on my business of all those 3000 or so articles with

my name in the Acknowledgements – has not supported any of them.

The provisional conclusions I draw based on what little direct or indirect feedback "the English" has elicited over the years from gatekeepers are:

(1) readers don't read the Acknowledgements very often, and don't care about the pre-submittal language or editing support the authors obtained;

(2) even when a translator or author's editor is thanked explicitly in the Acknowledgements, readers assume the authors were responsible for "the English", and gatekeepers will very often complain about "the English" anyway; and

(3) a mention in the Acknowledgements is not an effective way to publicize your work if you are someone who works with authors.

It's a question of competences. Gatekeepers are, we hope, subject experts who can evaluate the usefulness of the manuscript's contents to its target community of scientists. But an interesting hypothesis for study might be that because gatekeepers come from many different cultural backgrounds and have internalized many different assumptions about "good scientific English style", their perceptions of the language and writing are less likely to correlate than their perceptions about the scientific merits of the work. Gatekeepers may tend to assume they are authorities on "good scientific English style" when they are in fact overestimating their competence in this area.



See page 108 for a report of ESOF2008 and EASE's outreach activity: playing the scientific publication game