

## ADVICE COLUMNS OF EDITED RESEARCH ARTICLES: ACADEMIC WRITING TIPS AND COMMENTS OF IRANIAN EFL TEACHER CONVENIENCE EDITORS TO AUTHORS IN MEDICAL SCIENCES

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### Abstract

**Background & Aims:** Increasing pressure for having scholarly publications in accredited English medium journals emphasizes the need to enhance academic writing ability by author-researchers in various fields, especially, in medical and hard sciences. In order to enhance the language of manuscripts, many authors seek assistance from editors prior to submission to high-status journals. Various types of editing assistance are provided by English teachers who act as convenience editors through a range of editing strategies. One of these strategies is putting consulting comments on authors' Manuscripts (MSs) to provide them with necessary explanations when there is a frequent or serious inaccuracy in the manuscript. This teaching-based study aimed at tapping a very underexplored area of the types of consulting comments Iranian author-researchers receive from English teacher editors in the process of manuscript editing. In this way, it is possible to find out the main language-related or academic writing-oriented problematic areas in Iranian medical and hard sciences researchers' MSs.

**Material & Methods:** To this end, consulting notes put by five Iranian English Teacher Convenience Editors (TCEs) on thirty manuscripts written by Iranian academia in medical and hard sciences were carefully analyzed. Data coding and data analysis were done according to co-operative principles (significant aspects of and requirements for conducting a successful conversation whether in spoken or written form).

**Results:** The findings revealed that Iranian authors' edited MSs received marginal tips and comments on ten major areas of language or academic writing. These areas were *redundancy reduction, informativeness, rechecking, citation, maintaining the author's intention; consistency, relevance; orderliness, disambiguation, and structural* issues. A good number of genuine problematic extracts from the corpus along with the consultation comments were provided in the results section. Moreover, the classified comments included precious teaching-based explanations in any area that editors diagnosed problems or inaccuracies.

**Conclusion:** This study concludes that through paying more attention to these areas, Iranian authors' academic writing ability and rate of acceptance for their MSs could be improved.

**Keywords:** Editing consultation comments, English teacher convenience editors, Iranian author researchers, Writing for publication

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## Introduction

In recent decades, researchers have emphasized the significance of the teaching and learning of writing in English, especially, in countries like Iran where English is not the first language. It is because English plays a fundamental role for better performance in professional milieus (21) (24). Although it is true that choosing one language of science can help to disseminate novel ideas, Non-native English Speaker (NNES) researchers (whose their mother tongue is a language other than English) cannot often publicize their scientific findings and the phenomenon of "lost science" would occur (25) (27). What exacerbates this issue is top-tier journals adherence to tough stringent criteria for accepting MSs one of which is submitting a text written in native-like English. Such a demanding requirement cannot be feasible because most of Iranian author-researchers' writing proficiency may not be at a level to meet this criterion. Therefore, authors need to get editing assistance, perhaps, from editing institutions or people who are proficient enough in terms of English language.

However, as Luo and Hyland (24) mentioned, there is a growing body of professional editing centers available around the world. Nevertheless, these centers are mostly expensive and non-affordable for many authors (28). What is more, such companies are not fully trustable by authors in terms of accuracy or quality and ethical issues (18) (22). Correspondingly, as put by Luo and Hyland (24) and Hivistendahl (20), some editing services demand an unethical authorship for an already accepted manuscript by prestigious journals written by other authors and sell this valuable authorship for a soaring fee at times.

These infelicitous turn of events and the related concerns have drawn more attention to English teachers acting as editors (24) (36). As put by Willey and Tanimoto (36, p. 249), "[English] teachers may be consulted not because they are believed to possess editing expertise, but simply because they happen to be

the only native[-like] English speakers". The authors of this article refer to such English teacher editors as "convenience editors" because they can provide editing assistance more conveniently and for more reasonable fees. Convenience editors might improve the language of MSs in terms of spelling, grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, style, and genre, (36).

According to Flowerdew (11), publishing in international journals is considered as a socially constructed endeavor requiring a significant amount of negotiation and co-construction among convenience editors, author-researchers, and journal reviewers. In order to alleviate or eliminate the authors' writing errors, editors resort to an amalgamation of mental processes, namely, recognizing errors, detecting challenging areas, and selecting an appropriate editing strategy to improve the text (10). Consultation with authors via telephone, Skype, or even through inserting notes and comments on authors' manuscripts is one of the main editing strategies utilized by convenience editors in order to raise authors' attention to a problematic part or an incorrect item. Therefore, they can upgrade the language of the manuscripts in a way that it can convey what the author intended to say (14) (39) (36). However, to the best knowledge of the researchers, there is not a systematic study focusing on consulting comments put by English Teacher Convenience Editors (TCEs) while accounting for author-researchers' academic writing errors in medical science research articles. This study aims to examine and classify what academic writing tips and suggestions Iranian English language teachers provide to the authors in medical and hard sciences in the margins of the edited articles.

## Materials and Methods

In this study, principles from qualitative research (9) were applied in data collection and analysis. Most qualitative studies discover the theory inherent in data and deductively and inductively follow an emergent

methodology. Therefore, the authors sought to concentrate on the insightful concepts that elicited from the consulting comments through adopting the procedures proposed by (5) (15) (26). This was reinforced with an in-depth content analysis (7), a method that allows researchers to delve into data transcripts (e.g. consulting comments) analytically and assign codes to the emergent notions (7).

**Table1.** Participants' academic rank, publications and CE experience

| Participants | Major | Academic rank  | Gender | Years of CE experience   | Genre of edited works   | Frequency of CE practice per month |
|--------------|-------|--|--------|--|---|------------------------------------|
| 1.           | TEFL  | PhD/ Associate Professor running ESP/ essay writing, and EGP courses | Male   | 10 (more often in the last 6 years after employment in the university) | Full papers<br>Case reports<br>Abstracts<br>Conference papers | On average four MSs                |
| 2.           | TEFL  | PhD / Adjunct Lecturer running EGP courses                           | Female | 2(on an on-off basis)  | Full papers<br>Abstracts<br>Thesis abstracts                  | Around two MSs                     |
| 3.           | TEFL  | MA/ EFL teacher running EGP courses in Private language schools      | Female | 3 (more systematically in the last two years)                          | Full papers<br>Case reports<br>Abstracts                      | Around five MSs                    |
| 4.           | TEFL  | MA/ EFL teacher running EGP courses in private language schools      | Female | Less than 2  | Abstracts   | One or two MSs                     |
| 5.           | TEFL  | PhD/ Adjunct Lecturer running EGP courses                            | Male   | Around 4 years   | Full papers<br>Case reports<br>Abstracts<br>Conference papers | Three or four MSs                  |

### 3.2. The corpus

Thirty manuscripts edited by our participants and written by Iranian author-researchers from 11 universities in medical and hard sciences obtained from the editors. To provide sample extracts in this study, we acquired authors' consent through sending emails to the corresponding authors. The corpus restricted to Research Articles (RAs) were prepared for submission to international top-tier journals. The obtained MSs were quantitative research studies all including Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion (IMRD) (23) in medical fields (13 MSs), biology (6 MSs), chemistry (4 MSs), agriculture (3 MSs), astrophysics (1 MS), physics

### 3.1. Participants

Five English teacher convenience editors including three females and two males (one associate professor, two lecturers, and two public and private language schools) affiliated to three major universities in Iran participated in this study (See Table 1 for their demographic information).

(2 MS), and computer engineering (1 MS), and all these manuscripts received consulting comments inserted by TCEs drawing upon track changes tool feature of Microsoft Office Word.

### 3.3 Data categorization and data analysis

Adopting the co-operative principle or Gricean maxims (16) in linguistics, this study attempted to unravel the main gist of editors' comments. According to this principle, in order to conduct a successful act of interaction (whether written or spoken), people have to inform adequately not more or less (quantity maxim); people should not lie or say something without evidence

(quality maxim), they also should say or write relevantly (relation maxim); and finally, they should say or write clearly and orderly.

## Results

As explained and discussed in this section, the investigation on editing remarks put by English teacher editors on Iranian authors MSs in medical and hard sciences indicated that TCEs put their utmost efforts to upgrade the manuscripts in terms of ten major themes. These themes were found to be redundancy reduction, informativeness, rechecking, citation, maintaining the author's intention; consistency, relevance; orderliness, disambiguation, and structural comments. In reporting the findings, we attempted to put any of these themes under a sub-heading based on co-operative principles of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Under each theme, a sufficient number of extracts together with the comment/ comments inserted by TCEs are provided.

### 4.1 The quantity maxim

#### 4.1.1 Redundancy reduction

1. "- BTNa transmembrane glycoprotein **found in milk...**"

Comment: *This phrase is redundant because it has been mentioned in line 1.*

2. "... is the most common type of non- Hodgkin's lymphoma DLBL with heterogeneous genomic entity".

Comment: *It seems redundant.*

3. "The result **of averaging in Eq. 3** is denoted".

Comment: *It seems redundant. If it is not technically necessary, then delete it.*

4. "... controller designs based on nonlinear models are required".

Comment: *It is redundant.*

5. "Based on our knowledge, there are few studies on GBS among pediatric population in the literature."

Comment: *This issue was mentioned before in introduction section. No need to repeat it here in discussion.*

6. "**Also**, it has been suggested..."

Comment: *you can also use: moreover, furthermore, in addition. Do not repeat a word when it has synonyms.*

7. "As the results **indicated**,..."

Comment: *avoid repetitions when there are many words conveying the same meaning.*

#### 4.1.2 Informativeness

8. "... from Merck."

Comment: *Where is **Merck**? You should mention it.*

9. "One of the most important electrochemical **properties** is its catalytic effect."

Comment: *Properties of what????*

10. "... by **dispersing** in DMF solvent."

Comment: *Dispersing what?????*

11. "... so it was not **suitable** enough."

Comment: *Suitable for what????*

12. "... by reducing the over **potential**..."

Comment: *Potential of what????*

13. "... quantum neural networks are studied **to identify and control**."

Comment: *To identify and control what?? Complete it.*

14. "Controlled conditions such as **pH, temperature**..."

Comment: *Explain what kind of controlled condition you mean for ph and temperature. For example: Controlled ph, zero. Temperature.*

15. "in patients sample against lymph node reactive **as a normal**"

Comment: *As a normal what? Normal is an adjective, so it should be followed by a name.*

16. "**some** 8-10 week female BALB/C mice were **prepared** from animal laboratory"

Comment: *How many?*

Comment: *Were purchased????Mice came from? Were taken???*

17. There is a weak, linear, direct, and partial **correlation**

Comment: *between what and what???*

18. "Based on this and other experiments, **WHO**"

Comment: *The abbreviation should be stated out for the first time. What does WHO stand for??*

19. "The rough morphology originates from intergranular fracture, and has been connected with higher ductility [23]."

Comment: *Connected to what?*

20. "... CV method was used for calibration curve."

Comment: *For what? For **drawing** the calibration curve?*

As it is evident from the extracts and the consulting comments put by editors, one can find out that TCEs attempted to eliminate redundancy and repetitiveness by suggesting other alternatives instead of one specific item. Also, they consistently asked for more information when they felt there was a lack of required data. According to co-operative principles (16), the quantity maxim is related to being informative enough without being redundant. Delving into the types of comments, we realized that "what questions" were posed by editors to elicit more and necessary information frequently. Recommendations:

In order to enhance their academic writing, authors are encouraged to bear in mind the following recommendations:

- ✓ Avoid redundancy and excessive explanation about one thing.
- ✓ Get benefit from various words or forms for one thing, for instance, instead of using also (meaning too), they can write its synonyms: furthermore, in addition, additionally, what is more, likewise, etc.
- ✓ Be as informative as possible through providing sufficient information about anything they write.

## 4.2 The quality maxim

### 4.2.1 Rechecking

21. "The neuron **state z...**"

Comment: *Of state z or z state. Plz check.*

22. "Its neighbored nodes..."

Comment: *I think you should change all to neighboring nodes as I found it to be commonly used when I googled it.*

23. "... a **phase shifting** gate.

Comment: *I checked, it is phase-shift gate*

24. "... optimized **to be** 7.0, 2 mg mL-..."

Comment: *Optimized **at**?????*

25. "... five controllers **to** a three-phase fault"

Comment: *Plz recheck. **In** seems to be better proposition here.*

26. "A **Y-shaped** joint..."

Comment: *In the Farsi version it is T-shaped not Y-shaped. Please check and correct.*

27. "... **failure** mode considered in this article is **failure...**"

Comment: *Plz check the application of the word failure since it is used two times in this sentence.*

28. "... size and **polyhederal** shape."

Comment: *Check the spelling, it may be **polyhedral**.*

29. "The **die that sheared** a circular disk from the specimen..."

Comment: *Plz recheck if the **die sheared** or the act of punching.*

30. "The ct parameter was **defined** as the cycle number at which the amplification plot passed a fixed threshold."

Comment: *I checked this sentence in other papers and I found **defined** is used in all of them.*

#### 4.2.2 Citation

31. In discussion section of a manuscript:

Comment: *You need to cite some references, in my views.*

32. Again in discussion section of a manuscript:

Comment: *Better to give more than one reference here because you said **some studies**.*

33. "... and annual employments were investigated in the north of West Azerbaijan." (Maku), Iran.

Comment: *Reference/ Citation needed*

#### 4.2.3 Maintaining the author's intention

34. "... can be calculated **from** the SPT data (منظورم) In this regard, in order to avoid ill condition, the researchers added a  $\mu$  parameter".  
ماتریس همانی می باشد. درسته؟

Comment: *By???*

Comment: *I checked in the net and found that in terms of vocabulary choice it is correct.*

35. "First and fourth schemes are exactly equivalent of CNAPSS and QNAPSS structures, respectively, as indicated in section 4.2.3. For more accurate comparison, as an example, all of structures have investigated for a specific fault like the three-phase fault in infinite bus in OP1 as shown in figure 18. Based on this and other experiments, the transition and stable states of curves show the superiority of schemes t in which quantum network is used more (QNAPSS).

(جمله بالا می خوام این معنی رو بده. درسته؟ میتنی بر این آزمایش و دیگر آزمایشات، حالات ماندگار و گذرای منحنی ها نشان میدهد برتری طرح هایی را که در آنها از شبکه کوانتومی، بیشتر استفاده شده است.)

Comment: *Yes it is correct*

36. "... but micro array based Locke nucleic acid (LNA) is an efficient methodology to screen, in a parallel fashion, for the expression of number of miRNAs, through which reliable expression profiles and limited yield of a several – fold – increased hybridization signal can be obtained. This method is, also, more sensitive in comparison to similar methods."

Comment: *Plz recheck the content and make sure that the changes do not affect the content.*

37. "These down regulations may induce, and mediate transformation of normal cells to cancerous form."

Comment: *Plz check the content after the changes.*

38. "... for imaging and diagnostics tumors..."

Comment: *Do you mean **diagnosing**?*

39. "Total number of micro RNAs analyzed 726 by the mi RCURY..."

Comment: *Do you mean: the total number of micro RNAs (726) analyzed by the mi RCURY LNA<sup>TM</sup> RNA array.*

40. "As to target oncogene of miRNAs,..."

Comment: *Do you mean: Regarding the target oncogene of miRNAs.*

41. "Because of protease inhibitor activity of  $\alpha$ 2M, the increase in the productions of this protein in hepatic stellate cells, resulting in enhance fibrosis by reducing the destruction of extracellular matrix proteins."

Comment: *Did you mean: Protease inhibitor activity of  $\alpha$ 2M increases production of this protein in hepatic stellate cells, resulting in enhanced fibrosis through reducing the destruction of extracellular matrix proteins.*

42. "... and digitoxin have been purified from foxglove and have a long history used in the treatment of congestive heart failure...."

Comment: *Choose one of the bellow:*

*and have a long history in the treatment of congestive or*

*and have long been used in the treatment of congestive*

43. "The effect of the type of copigment on anthocyanin stability was **accessed** using similar concentration...."

Comment: *The effect of the type of copigment on anthocyanin stability was **accessed (assessed/ measured/ gauged?)** using similar concentration....*

44. "As a result of the initial ischemic,..."

Comment: *initial ischemic what???? initial ischemic stroke/ event/ attack???*

45. "Aborigine of..."

Comment: *Do you mean **original** or **basic**?*

46. "Expression pattern for bcl-2 and bcl-xl at their transcriptional and translation levels in the brain of the rats subjected to transient global ischemia."

Comment: *This sentence is incomplete. Do you mean:*

*Expression pattern for bcl-2 and bcl-xl at their transcriptional and translation levels in the rats' brain was subjected to transient global ischemia.*

*Or:*

*Expression pattern for bcl-2 and bcl-xl at their transcriptional and translation levels in the brain of the rats which were subjected to transient global ischemia was what???*

47. "...**any** reducing peak is observed"

Comment: *Do you mean **no** reduction peak?*

48. "In **continues** study..."

Comment: *the **present** study????*

49. "... over the pH 6 to 10."

Comment: *Is it PH interval of 6 to 10?*

50. "And, in the concentration range of  $1 \times 10^{-4}$  -  $1 \times 10^{-3}$  M with equation..."

Comment: *And, **it is also linear** in the concentration range of....???*

51. "... and another range with regression equation of..."

Comment: *It was also shown in another range ....???*

According to Grice's quality maxim, the users of language should not lie [19] and have to say correct ideas with adequate evidence (38). Adhering to this principle, TCEs did not accept any entity in the written texts if they were not sure this was accurate. They recurrently invited authors to recheck and reevaluate their texts regarding various aspects from verb choice and collocations to spelling or even technical terms. Also, they themselves conduct net searches to get ascertained of correct use of language. As Willey and Tanimoto (36) and Zeinolabedini and Gholami (40) found out, searching the net and reading related MSs in

the field are among the mostly-used editing strategies by convenience editors. Moreover, in order to provide sufficient evidence to support the notions pointed out in the texts, especially, in discussion sections, editors insisted on accurate citations without leaving any idea unsupported. Maintaining authors' intention is assumed as a highly significant aspect of editing (2, 40). In fact, one of the main reasons editors consult with authors through their editing is to avoid altering the authors' intentions. It is interesting that some authors write their intentions in Persian together with its translation in English to get assured that what they intended to say was conveying correctly. Similarly, it is outstanding that some TCEs write long paragraphs conveying the same meaning with some variations to ask authors which paragraph suits more to their intended purpose.

In order to enhance their academic writing, authors try to consider following recommendations:

- ✓ Prior to write something, check its correctness in similar papers or Google/ Google Scholar.
- ✓ Read English-written papers published in accredited journals as much as you can.
- ✓ Avoid mentioning anything, if you are not sure about it either a technical term or correct use of a grammatical feature such as a preposition.
- ✓ Pay attention to collocations, for example, "to come up with an alternative".
- ✓ Pay attention to correct spelling when writing.
- ✓ Do not claim any idea without correct citation or referencing. Otherwise, authors' unsupported claims might seem as plagiarism.

### 4.3 The relation maxim

#### 4.3.1 Consistency

52. Comment: Please make them consistent, all capital words (*Fruit, Summer*) or small words (*fruit, summer*).

53. "... **data** was significant in all."

Comment: *Data can be followed both by a singular and plural verb, however since you have used it with singular verb for the first time in the abstract, maintain consistency throughout the paper.*

54. "There are some **indices** and markers."

Comment: *In the text you have use indices. Though both are correct, you should use one of them and consider consistency throughout the paper*

55. "... is because of lower **R&D**"

Comment: *It is better to spell it out since you have not used it before or after its first usage in previous paragraph put this abbreviation in parenthesis.*

56. "...mRNA in the **drug group**..."

Comment: *Once you have used **test group** and here **drug group**. It is confusing. Choose one of them and maintain consistency throughout the paper.*

57. "... of **naïve**..."

Comment: *Though this spelling is also correct, it is better to keep consistency and use English letters.*

58. "... disease (Hepatitis B FAQs for the Public — Transmission". U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). **Retrieved 2011-11-29** and Hepatitis B Fact sheet N°204". who.int. July 2014. **Retrieved 4 November 2014**)."

Comment: *Plz be consistent: In the previous format you used Retrieved 4 November 2014 but now the month is written with numbers. Choose one of the formats: either by letters or by numbers.*

#### 4.3.2 Relevance

59. "... - BTNa transmembrane glycoprotein found in milk..."



Comment: *Previously in line 1 you have introduced BTN; therefore it is better to combine the definition and bring it in line 1: butyrophilin (BTN)- a transmembrane glycoprotein which shares cross-reactive epitopes with myelin oligodendrocyte glycoprotein (MOG).*

60. "...to PBS and/or bovine milk. Alternatively, all rats both in...."

Comment: *Plz consider the relation of the paragraphs; it seems that you have sent me different parts of a paper, if not consider their relation.*

61. "**Figure 3.**The results also showed that the *bcl-xl* gene expression declined in ischemia group as compared to the extract and control groups."

Comment: *This sentence is an explanation for the Figure 3. Therefore, it should be written after the Figure not as the caption of the Figure. Figure caption should describe the figure.*

62. "Enh2-2 (rs841848), HaeIII (rs1385129), and HpyCH4V (rs710218) have been studied. However, **these results** have generated considerable controversy."

Comment: *Which results? You have not talked about any results in previous sentences.*

As the name implies, Grice's relation maxim deals with adhering to consistency and relevance when using the language. In order not to violate this principle, the English-teaching editors read through the texts carefully and whenever they found a discrepancy, cautioned the authors with illuminating explanations in the form of comments. Perhaps, some features in the language take more time to become internalized (17) because of that some authors forget to pay attention to consistency in their texts (e.g, using both plural and singular verbs for the word "data" throughout the MS instead of only one type). According to Swales (35), becoming successful in

academic writing and publications occurs through gaining experience. This is true that further investigation in this regard is required to unravel the correlation between experience and Iranian authors' writing ability. However, one can argue that form-focused teaching whether in ESP and writing courses or through English teachers' to the point explanations via consulting comments might assist authors to enhance their writing abilities (34) (33) (37).

In order to enhance their academic writing, authors try to consider following recommendations:

- ✓ Try as much as possible to write consistently. If a word is used in capital letters, continue writing it in capital letters and vice versa.
- ✓ Write coherently. In other words, consider the relation and smooth flow of the paragraphs and sentences.

#### 4.4 The manner maxim

##### 4.4.1 Orderliness

63. "**Keywords:** multi-walled carbon nanotube; copper nanoparticles; nicotine; cyclic voltammetry; nano-biosensor."

Comment: *It's better to **arrange** them in alphabetic order.*

64. "Pillai, T.M.M, & Parasad, A.M. (2001). "Fatigue Reliability Analysis in Time Domain for Inspection Strategy of Fixed Offshore Structures". Journal of Civil Engineering, vol.28"

Comment: *You should mention the **page** number.*

65. "Yong Bai (2003). 'Marine Structural Design', Elsevier"

Comment: *The **name** of the journal and **page** numbers should be mentioned.*

66. "Mahsuli, M. & Haukaas, T. (2013). "Computer Program for Multimodel Reliability and Optimization Analysis." **J. Comput. Civ. Eng.**, 27(1), pp.87–98."

Comment: Please recheck the **name of the journal**.

67. Comment: In parentheses, avoid using '**and**'. Change all to &.

68. "... Martinez-Sykora et al. (2011)."

Comment: Mention all the authors if you're referring to them for the first time.

69. Ref. [3]

Comment: You could name the author(s) if they are the subject of a sentence (e.g. Davis[3] has solved....).

70. "[12] studied anthocyanin in red carrot."

Comment: You need to name the author here since it is the subject like: Ellis (12) studied.....

#### 4.4.2 Disambiguation

71. "The most critical function of the extent to which members of axial force was binding obtained confidence interval recommended in a regulation of the approximately (1.2 1.6).That is reason for true research results..."

Comment: These two sentences are vague. There was no Farsi version to correct them. Please rewrite them.

72. "It occurs in lymphatic development."

Comment: This sentence is vague, Plz rewrite. It is not clear whether PTP occurs in lymphatic development or cellular processing????

73. "... *bcl-xl* gene expression declined in ischemia group as compared to the second group (Figure 3)."

Comment: It is confusing in this way. It is better to define which group you mean.

#### 4.4.3 Structural

74. "To identify nicotine **Several techniques have** been employed..."

Comment: You'd better say: Several techniques have been employed to identify nicotine. Otherwise the sentence will be a dangling one.

75. "... the researchers MWNTs in dimethylformamide (DMF) were sonicated for 30 min."

Comment: You'd better say: the researchers sonicated MWNTs in dimethylformamide (DMF) for 30 min. Otherwise the sentence will be a dangling one.

76. "In order to prepare the hydro-alcoholic extract, the researchers washed, dried, and grounded the whole plant samples..."

Comment: We need a subject here unless it will be a dangling modifier. For more information on dangling modifiers refer to this website: [https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/gram\\_dangling\\_mod.html](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/gram_dangling_mod.html).

77. "The researchers evaluated its effects on mRNA expressions of..."

Comment: In this sentence we cannot use passive voice to avoid using "we" because it will end in a dangling sentence; instead we can use "the researchers". To read more about dangling modifiers you can refer to these websites:

<http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/danglingmodifier.htm>

<http://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-dangling-modifiers.html>

78. "To have a better idea of exact size and the size distribution of QDs, TEM technique was used."

Comment: You'd rather write: To have a better idea of exact size and the size distribution of QDs, the

researchers used TEM technique. Otherwise the sentence will be a dangling one.

79. "After skin scraping using a safe detergent (to remove stratum corneum), rats in both control and treatment groups will receive topical administration of phosphate buffered saline (PBS), bovine milk, exosome, **or** MFGM, **respectively**."

Comment: You'd rather use "and" instead of "or" with *respectively*. "**And** MFGM, *respectively*". *Respectively*" is preceded by "and". If you insist on using "or" plz delete "*respectively*" from the end of the sentence. Unless you mean: buffered saline (PBS), bovine milk, and exosome or MFGM, *respectively*.

80. "In mammals, hundreds of miRNAs are expressed in tissue – specific."

Comment: *tissue – specific* is an adjective, so it should be followed by a name may be you mean: are expressed in tissue-specific genes or are expressed in specific tissues.

81. 0.05 µm alumina slurry was used for polishing and nitrogen

Comment: Do not start a sentence with a number: Alumina slurry (0.05 µm) was used for polishing and nitrogen

82. **D** "Although these therapies have improved..."

Comment: *Despite* is used with a noun or gerund not a clause. You can add 'the fact that' to use *despite* with a clause: *Despite the fact that these therapies.....*

83. "...e.g, Pb (II)/ i.e. pH in the..."

Comment: Inside the parenthesis we use abbreviations but outside they should be spelled out.

84. "The **present** authors..."

Comment: The authors are not present now so correct this phrase all through the paper.

85. "Even though BTN content of MFGM is significantly higher than exosome [10], but..."

Comment: *even though* has the meaning of *but* in itself. Do not use *but* in such sentences starting with *even though*, *though*, ...

86. "... particularly with EGFR **which results** in effective activation..."

Comment: Constant reducing of adjective clauses, though not wrong, confuses the reader.

87. Abstract: In this regard, the present **study aims** to investigate..."

Comment: Since you have started working on this project before it is better to use past tense: The present study aimed at investigating....

88. "...along with the localization of BTN- reactive antibodies in cerebrospinal fluid (CSF)- **suggests**..."

Comment: *Along with* does not change verb agreement, I along with Ali was in the garden. But I and Ali were in the garden.

We could classify co-operative manner maxim into three interrelated subsections of orderliness, disambiguation, and structural aspects of consultations. As defined before, the motto of manner maxim is "be clear, brief, and orderly" (38). In order for adherence to this principle, TCEs pay attention to correct form of referencing such as mentioning the name of the journal, the page number, and the author/s' name/s, etc. as well as the requirement of writing keywords alphabetically. Under the theme of disambiguation, clarity seems to be the major aspect of editing comments. TCEs try to alleviate vagueness by detecting unclear parts of the texts and then by warning authors to rewrite them.

As far as structural or grammatical correctness matters, it seems that the most problematic areas in Iranian author-researchers' MSs were related to dangling structures, use of conjunctions (e.g, although, despite the fact that, even though extract no. 80.), correct tense

of the verbs (e.g, the necessity of using past tense verbs in abstracts, extract no. 85), use of prepositions (e.g, along with, extract no. 86), reducing the adjective clauses (extract no. 84), use of adjectives (e.g, the necessity of being a noun after an adjective, extract no. 78). TCEs provided brief and to the point explanation for each grammatical issue and even they introduced websites to help authors acquire grammatical features.

In order to enhance their academic writing, authors try to consider following recommendations:

- ✓ Respect academic writing norms and style.
- ✓ If referencing style requires putting numbers instead of the names of researchers, be careful if the name is located at the beginning of a sentence as the subject. In such cases, name and number should be written without the year.
- ✓ Keywords should be written in alphabetical order.
- ✓ It is preferred to mention the names of all researchers involved in one study when cited for the first time. Then, "et al." should be used.
- ✓ When using "although", "despite the fact that", "even though" do not write "but".

## Conclusion

This study explored what editing comments and suggestions English teachers offer to Iranian medical and hard sciences scholars in the process of language editing their MSs. We identified a diverse range of editing notes and the main point each comment addressed to improve the language of MSs. Through content analysis, we could classify the comments in terms of ten themes of redundancy reduction, informativeness, rechecking, citation, maintaining the author's intention; consistency, relevance; orderliness, disambiguation, and structural notions. These comments provide a vivid snapshot of Iranian scholars academic writing needs when writing their MSs in English.

Graduate students and young researchers in medical sciences and similar disciplines could draw upon the findings of this study in crafting and reshaping their research articles.

In line with (14), we believe that it would be highly beneficial if there is more liaisons between English professors and field specialist scholars. Moreover, authors in need of writing assistance could get help from initiatives such as Collaborative Interdisciplinary Publication Skills Education (CIPSE) first proposed by (4). CIPSE is a program that provides collaboration opportunities among experienced editors, authors of scientific articles and English teachers. According to Basturkmen (3), due to this collaboration, English teachers act as a mediator between field knowledge and language to convey the message. Similarly, we would like to mention AuthorAid program (30) (31) (32) in which language and academic writing assistance is provided for medical sciences authors. AuthorAID projects intend to diminish inequalities in getting access to publication assistance through augmenting contacts among researchers, scientific experts, editors, professional language editors, and journal reviewers.

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