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THE INTERRELATION BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND COOPERATION IN THE SPACE INDUSTRY:
A STUDY OF THE NAMES OF SPACE MISSIONS

Abstract

An important step involved in the process of planning a space mission consists in selecting the name with which it will be known.

This decision may appear as a simple and secondary task, but it is not. It entails a wide range of activities and allows the different countries belonging to the global space community to use creativity and take into consideration their own traditions, social conventions and culture. This results in having names referring to specific objects, concepts, characters (both real and mythological) or even places, which may sound familiar to a specific country or a few others.

The final decision has an impact on the whole space community since it affects and defines the way the mission is received and known in the rest of the world.

This paper would like to detect and provide examples of the names of different space missions coming from various parts of the world, such as Russia, China, India, Canada, to mention a few of them.

The aim of the paper is to verify how these names have been understood by others. As a matter of fact, a foreigner may find it hard to explain the real meaning of the name of a space mission due to a lack of a deep and thorough knowledge of that specific country.

In the long run, this partial understanding may lead to a not-so-fulfilling cooperation among actors in the space industry.

The paper intends to question whether these names have been transliterated/translated, and with what level of accuracy, or kept in the original form. In particular, this analysis will be carried out especially with respect to the Italian context.

The analysis will also highlight some aspects of the culture and traditions of countries that, otherwise, would remain hidden. Consequently, it will study the way they have been welcomed by the scientific community, also questioning the level of ambiguity they may have raised.

In conclusion, the paper seeks to demonstrate whether the relations among countries part of the global scientific community are affected by the choice of mission names. It will be investigated if they have a positive influence at diplomatic level, successfully impacting future cooperation, or if they have a negative effect, generating misunderstandings.

Keywords: language, cooperation, positive/negative impact, mission names