Advice and Information
for Prospective Translators:

A Compilation of Articles
Gleaned from the Internet

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on behalf of

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Language Translator and Interpreter Careers, Jobs, and Training Information

Language Translator and Interpreter Career and Job Highlights

* These workers enjoy a 20 percent self-employment rate.
* Part-time work is common.
* A bachelor's degree is a typical qualification for job candidates, except for translators and interpreters, who usually complete an M.A. degree.
* Prospects depend on specialized language and training skills.

Translator and Interpreter Career Overview

Interpreters and translators make intercultural communication possible through language, idea, and concept translation. It is important that they understand the substance of translated material in order to do so effectively. They should also be sensitive and considerate to the cultures
in which they work.

Interpreters and translators have similar job profiles that involve having special language aptitude in two different languages. They usually translate into their best known, or "active," language from their secondary, or "passive," language.

Interpreters convert languages into others. They should have a good understanding of what is communicated and be able to make clear and accurate verbal expressions. Strong memory and research skills are also important.

Before an interpreter begins his work, he should research the material and language to be translated. Usually the interpreter will be present at the location where the translation will occur, but it is not uncommon for interpreters to do this over the telephone.

Two types of interpretation include simultaneous and consecutive interpretations. When interpretation is performed simultaneously it takes place at the same time the speaker is talking. Interpreters should be extremely familiar with source language. These kinds of interpreters
usually work with one or more other people in order to segment the interpreting process. Simultaneous interpretation is common at international conventions and in courts.

As opposed to interpretation done simultaneously, consecutive interpretation occurs after the speaker has finished talking. Interpersonal communication often utilizes this form of interpretation.

Translators write, analyze, and edit written material to convert it into another language. Translators undertake work that varies in style, subject matter, and length. This process usually entails making an initial pass-over to get a general understanding of the material, researching any unknown words, and doing additional research on the subject that may be unclear. They also correspond with original source providers or organizations that issue the documents.

To translate effectively, both words and fluid concepts should adequately be replaced with the target language. Translators should also take into account cultural terms, expressions, and idioms that have bearing on the meaning of the content. Often, words, sentences, and expressions have several meanings in other languages, so translators work cautiously in revising final work.

Technological changes have altered the way that translators work, re-orienting focus onto computer and electronic use. Computers and the Internet allow translators mobility in their work as well as to access language and research sources with greater ease. Machine-assisted translation tools also help reduce time and effort by comparing past translations with current ones. Translators and interpreters are found in many different fields and will continue to specialize in needed areas of study. Common fields of interest include areas in social service, entertainment, and business.

Conference interpreters work with non-English language speakers of many organizations. They typically work at international conventions and may be required to know more than two different languages, a necessary requirement to work for such organizations as the United Nations.

The most common type of interpretation at conferences and conventions is simultaneous, although consecutive-type interpreting is not uncommon. Interpreters listen through speakers in booths and then interpret the words into the targeted language through a microphone-headphone relay. When only a few people require interpretation, whispering methods are used where the interpreter simply positions him/herself behind the listener and whispers the translation.

Guide or escort interpreters help foreign travelers to communicate with those of the host country. They work on both professional and casual levels, often working with other interpreters on a single assignment. Typical workdays are 8-hours and involve much travel.

Judiciary interpreters and translators assist people in court who do not speak English. These interpreters should refrain from becoming emotionally involved without altering the substance of what is communicated. They should also understand general and specific legal procedures in both the U.S. and other countries. They work in many different settings, including preliminary hearings, client-attorney meetings, trials, arraignments, and depositions. They should generally have a working knowledge of legal and judicial terms and jargon, and be able to sight-translate written documents by verbally reading them. Literary translators convert literature between different languages. This includes translating books, journal articles, short stories, and poetry. In connection to creative writing, this kind of translation requires sufficiently reproducing the content of work in a certain language. To do this, translators often work with the actual authors to produce the most adequate content translation.

University education professors are the most common workers in this field, although there exists some well-reputed literary translators. Literary translators seek publishing by submitting work samples—approved of by the author—too publishing companies.

Localization translators have enjoyed increasingly large numbers of opportunities. Basically, they completely adapt a product into a different culture and language, whether it is software, Internet, or manufacturing products.

Localization translators should have a strong understanding of the relevant language, technical terminology, and the audience that will receive the product. The chief aim of these translators is to have the prod-

uct appear to have been manufactured in the target selling country. Often, these workers will be computer savvy and have related scientific or software knowledge skills.

Medical interpreters and translators offer language assistance to those receiving healthcare benefits by helping them communicate with medical staffs. They translate medical documents and brochures into targeted languages, and should thus have a good understanding of medical
terminology and cultural awareness. They should express sympathy without becoming too emotionally attached to patients.

Sign language interpreters help those who are deaf communicate with those who can hear. Interpreters should be fluent in both American Sign Language (ASL) and English. In similarity to any foreign language, this kind of interpreting requires both conceptual and substance fluidity along with single-word replacement.

Sign language interpreting involves both regular communication and transliteration, which is based on more English word labels and order. Lip-reading, or oral interpreting, is another common method, along with deaf-blind, tactile, exact English signing, and cued speech interpretation methods.

Cross-cultural communication is necessary in our society, thus requiring the use of interpreters and translators. These workers translate ideas, concepts, and words, to help people communicate effectively between cultures. Interpreters and translators have similar job profiles that involve having special language aptitude in two different languages. They usually translate into their best known, or "active," language from their secondary, or "passive," language.

Despite similarities within job profiles, translators and interpreters have many differences, requiring unique sets of aptitudes and skill levels. Translators, for instance, usually only work in a single source language while interpreters traverses many different languages.

Language Translator and Interpreter Training and Job Qualifications

Interpreters and translators have different educational and language backgrounds. While some may have grown up knowing two or more languages others have not.

Proper high school preparation courses include those in English, foreign language, and computers. Other worthwhile directions include spending a prolonged time in a foreign country or having some form of regular contact with another culture. One should also spend considerable time reading and learning about other cultures and languages, including English.

Many options exist outside of high school for training and education in foreign languages. Translators and interpreters may major in a foreign language although this is not always required. Instead, jobs require training in how to do the specialized translating or interpreting work; many colleges and institutions offer courses, seminars, and programs in these areas. Master's degree programs are available for those with desires to work in technical fields such as engineering, finance, or localization interpreting. Specialty training programs exist for those who wish to interpret in community courts or in health areas.

No standard form of certification exists in the U.S. for translators or interpreters. However, The American Translators Association, The Translators and Interpreters Guild, and the national Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators are three organizations that offer different accreditation and certification programs.

Passage of a three-phase test offered by the U.S. Department of State gives someone the recognition of having adequate skills levels to be successful in a particular field. This test covers simultaneous interpreting, consecutive interpreting, and conference-level interpreting sections.

Recently, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and the National Association of the Deaf have come together to produce an exam, and both associations offer sign interpreters with certification options.

Successful agency workers will typically have three to five years of translation or interpreting experience.

Practical learning experience for translating can be gained through internships, mentoring programs, company residency work, or any informal work available. Other options include escort interpreting when one works beside a more experienced worker. Services with greater demand for work are of course the easiest to enter into, such as health/medical and court interpretation. After gaining ample experience, interpreters typically are able to advance to performing assignments with greater pressure or responsibility, perhaps as an editor or manager.

Language Translator and Interpreter Job and Employment Opportunities

As a result of the growing industry, employment for translators and interpreters is expected to increase at rates faster than the overall occupational average through 2012. Greater numbers of bi-lingual and multi-lingual U.S. residents through expanding international relations will contribute to rapidly growing demand figures for these workers.

Translating and interpreting work has become easier through advances in technology, but this is not expected to affect employment figures dramatically because of the value of productivity already performed by these workers.

Translators who can speak Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, German, Japanese, Korean, or Chinese are in high demand. Changing political and world environments often shift the demand to other languages.

The largest number of job opportunities exists in larger metropolitan areas, but this is likely to change as more people move into rural or smaller communities.

Job competitiveness varies according to specialty. Jobs in localization, law, and health will experience the highest demand due to the rise of technical Internet expansion and international trade. An increasing demand for interpreter and translator jobs will likely grow out of recent Federal Laws that require Federally assisted healthcare service providers to offer language services to those in need. The Civil Rights Act, The Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and others require that interpreters be present in certain circumstances. Interpreters for the deaf will likely continue to have the most open job opportunities as not nearly enough qualified people can perform these jobs. Conference and literary interpreters and translators, however, face declining job opportunity outlooks in the future.

Historical Earnings Information

Approximate hourly wages for interpreters and translators range from $9.40 for the bottom ten percent to $26.00 for the top ten percent. Average hourly earnings in 2002 were $15.70. Highly skilled and trained workers can earn an annual salary of over $100,000.

Earnings and salaries vary depending on skill level, experience, certification, education, and many other character factors. Highest earnings are usually held by those practicing in a language field that is high in demand, such as in Japanese and Chinese which carried the highest
average wage levels in 2001. Additionally, specialized jobs in areas such as localization typically enjoy higher wage earnings. In 2003, the Federal Government tabulated that an annual approximate salary of $64,234 went to language specialists.

Wage earnings vary depending on work availability. Freelance interpreting differs from other kinds of translators in that freelancers are usually contracted out at an hourly rate as opposed to on word or hourly based wages.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. "How many words does the average translator translate per day?"

This varies greatly, but I believe that most translators output between 2000-3500 words per day. This will depend on many factors such as familiarity with the subject, work environment, available resources and experience. Translators who work with translation memory tools and often have similar or repetitive texts may output more than 5000 words in a day.

2. "I've been asked to give a quote for a "large translation" (i.e., about 40,000 words). Should I give some kind of volume discount?"

Some translators do give discounts for texts of more than about 10,000 words, but then there are others who find that texts of that length are not unusual (they mainly seem to translate things like computer or technical manuals) and still others who feel that no discount should be given at all, given that the 33,437th word will require just as much effort on your part as the 5th word. I personally fall into the latter category, so I'm afraid I really don't know what type of percentage might be considered standard. Certainly no more than 5%, I would imagine.

Other things to bear in mind if you're considering offering a discount: Will you be using translation memory tools? (if so, and depending on the document to be translated, how will that affect your work in terms of speed, repetition, recovering investment cost etc?) Will the client be flexible in terms of deadline so you don't have to risk repeatedly turning down all your other clients while you work on this project? Will the client agree to make payments in installments (and are you willing to give a discount for the convenience of having that cash in hand a bit faster?)? Do you think this could turn into a regular and interesting business relationship?

3. "Do you translate into your non-native languages?"

No. I'm an advocate of translating only into your native language. (I've only ever met one person I would consider truly bilingual, and it isn't me!) I know some translators with an excellent near-native command of English, say, and they might well do an overall better job than some native English translators, but I would still always recommend that if you do decide to translate into your non-native language(s), you should always, without fail, hire a native speaker to proofread your work. I personally would certainly never accept work into Spanish myself.

4. "I really underestimated what it would take to finish this job - can I charge the client more than what we initially agreed upon or do I make a loss?"

This is for you to decide, but I personally would charge the client what we agreed upon and swallow the rest as a valuable lesson learned. I've made this mistake before when quoting a direct client a flat fee for a couple of diplomas he needed to have translated. I'm terrible at estimating word counts and it turned out to be almost double what I had thought. In this case, it wasn't major - I only underestimated by about $45, but it was still frustrating. However, I would not charge the client extra, it was my mistake after all. Just as I sometimes have an agency client who asks if I can proofread a text and says they can pay me for a maximum of 3 hours: I'm not going to stop proofreading if I've reached the 3 hours and have one page left, and I would still only charge for the 3 hours we agreed on. I think you have to be a bit flexible in this business.

5. When should you get paid? Some agencies keep you waiting for 60 days. Do you have to go along with that? What is reasonable?"

Only you can decide what you find acceptable or reasonable. If you agree to wait 60 days for payment, that is your choice. That appears to occur more often in Europe - in the US, most standard terms are 30 days net, in my experience. You need to take into account the standard practice of the country your client is in and feel comfortable with the terms you negotiate. Personally, I find anything more than 30 days net, 45 tops, unreasonable but others appear to be much more accepting of long payment terms. It boggles my mind when I read things like the following, which once appeared on a translators' mailing list and had to do with an agency well known for being late payers:

"Most of the projects are very interesting, however, they take forever (up to 6 months) to pay. They do pay eventually but only after several reminders. PMs are very cooperative and nice to work with."

?!?!? Why would you put up with that? SIX months?! Having to waste your time chasing up payment with reminders?! So, to each his own - you have to determine for yourself what you are and are not willing to accept.

6. "I don't belong to any translator association because not having any real work experience as a translator I am a bit reluctant to do so and I don't like the fact you have to pay for it."

I've received a good number of jobs from people finding me on the Northeast Ohio Translators Association's on-line database. The $45 annual fee is certainly worth it (to me). Many local organizations also plan events, such as talks by experts in the field or picnics, and it's a good way to get to know some colleagues and keep in touch with what's happening in our profession. Don't worry about experience - that's not a factor in whether you can join or participate. In fact, it may well be most beneficial to the "newbies".

7. "When I look at your "library" I see a lot of translators' books. I'm sure they're not cheap and I couldn't afford ALL of them instantly. Is there THE book for beginners that you could recommend?"

Books can be expensive but there's no need to get them all right away. With a limited budget, I would suggest spending your money on resources specific to your language combination first rather than on a general translation book. To read about translation as a profession, I would get those books from the library and maybe just take notes or make copies of the sections most pertinent for you. You'll probably read those books once, whereas you'll refer to language-specific resources countless times for years to come.

Good dictionaries in your source and target languages are absolutely essential. Some resources, such as Eurodicautom, are free on the Web and very useful, but especially field-specific ones (legal, medical, technical etc) can cost up to several hundred dollars but are worth every penny when you can refer to it often and be confident that you are producing an accurate translation. I once had a teacher who said you should put at least 10% of your earnings right back into your business to invest in resources, marketing etc.

How to become a freelance translator

Written by Corinne McKay and originally entitled "Getting Started As A Freelance Translator"

Background

I became a translator via a series of happy accidents. After taking French in school since seventh grade, I studied abroad at the University of Grenoble, France, for my junior year of college. There, a professor recommended me for a part-time job as a trainee translator at the University's graduate school of business. This ended up involving work on an international marketing textbook that was subsequently published by Prentice-Hall. Back in the U.S., I taught high school French for 8 years, did a few translations on the side when people asked me, and earned an M.A. in French from Boston College. After relocating to Colorado and having a child, I wanted to find a career that would allow me to use French and work from home, so I decided to try to make a go as a professional translator. Several years later, I'm certified by the American Translators Association and happily employed by a growing list of regular clients. I hope that these tips will be helpful to aspiring translators! Please note that the examples provided here reflect my personal experience; everyone's mileage will vary depending on your language pairs, professional background, geographic location, etc.

First Steps

Although the translation industry is booming, it's hard to find well-paying work if you don't have either a degree in translation, some translation experience, or excellent language skills plus training and/or experience in a technical field.

The easiest way to get samples and references is either to volunteer/intern, or work for low-paying agencies who will hire beginner translators. Organizations such as the American Red Cross, Translators Without Borders, refugee assistance programs, and public health clinics are often looking for volunteer translators and interpreters. In addition, many translation agencies offer unpaid or paid internships, and some low-paying agencies are willing and even eager to work with beginners. For example I was recently contacted by an agency looking for interpreters with "at least some college" and paying $15-$20 an hour, or about half to one quarter of what an experienced, professional interpreter would probably charge. These are all good places for a beginner to start.

In addition, although many people think that anyone who is familiar with two languages can be a translator, this isn't the case, for several reasons. First, translators are also writers. Your translation might be correct "word for word," but sound horrible when read as a whole, which won't make the client happy. Second, there are some conventions in the profession that beginners are often ignorant of. For example, when you translate an official document like a diploma or birth certificate, you need to format the translation as closely as possible to the original, not just type up the translation in paragraph form. Last, but possibly most important, in order to translate subject-specific documents, you need subject-specific knowledge in your own language. If you're translating a computer hardware document and you don't know the difference between a hub and a router in English, you'll be even more lost when reading this type of information in another language.

Once you have a degree in translation, some work experience or some translation samples, it's time to look for clients. Some of my best suggestions, with examples from my experience, are:

* *Be realistic*. When you're looking for a full-time job, all you need is one offer. To work full-time or close to it as a translator, you need a sizeable list of regular clients. Unless you have very marketable skills in an in-demand language pair, it may take a year or more until you are working full time. In my case, I contacted about 400 translation agencies (not a typo) over the course of my first year in business, and it was about 18 months until I was earning an amount equivalent to my previous full time job.

* ***Never quit marketing***. Once you have steady work, it's tempting to think that agencies will keep contacting you, freeing you from the hassle of contacting new prospective clients and touching base with previous contacts. However, this is a bad assumption. Work flows go up and down, agencies go out of business, the project manager who loves you quits and is replaced by someone who brings in his/her own person, etc. Plus, you never know when an "out of nowhere" project offer will be perfect for you, and/or allow you to raise your rates. Even though I usually have about as much work as I can handle, I still send my resume to 3-5 new agencies per week just to keep the ball rolling. Recently, one of these agencies (in Europe) contacted me with a multi-thousand dollar project because I was the only U.S.-based French to English translator in their database, and a client wanted a project translated into U.S. English.

* ***Don't ignore the local market***, especially if you present yourself better in person than on paper. My first clients, who I still work for today, were local agencies who I contacted and offered to meet with to show them a portfolio of my work. Check the yellow pages or Internet under "translators and interpreters." Even if the agencies say that they don't hire beginners or don't have work in your language pair, go visit them anyway and find out what they do. You'll understand more about what your potential clients want, and they'll know you for when your skills are more in line with their needs.

* ***Join some associations***. The American Translators Association and its local chapters (a list is available on the ATA Web site, or Google "translators your state," replacing "your state" with your actual state) are a great way to establish your seriousness as a translator, and to meet other translators.

* ***Ask for advice***. While it's somewhat risky to contact a translator in your own language pair for risk of sounding like you're trying to swoop in on his/her clients, most translators enjoy their work and like to talk about their jobs and how they got started. A freelancers group I'm in (for women only) has a tradition called "Take a successful woman to lunch," where an aspiring translator/writer/web designer/artist, etc. offers to buy lunch for a more experienced person in exchange for a conversation about the profession.

* ***Orient your résumé toward translation***. Especially for people who are native speakers of a language other than English and have specialized professional skills, this is key. Highlight specific skills right away, such as "Spanish-bilingual software specialist," "Native speaker of Arabic with mechanical engineering background," etc. rather than expecting the agency or client to see that you have these capabilities.

* ***Offer services that more experienced translators probably don't***. The translation industry is booming, and many experienced translators with a full house of regular clients don't have a financial need to work nights, weekends, rush jobs, etc. Make it clear to prospective clients that you can fill in a pinch, and be willing to actually do this!

* ***Get certified***. Certification by the American Translators Association isn't a must, but can lead to a big increase in business as the credential becomes more recognized. In my case this happened when, shortly after I passed the certification exam in French to English, an agency I work with was requested by a major client to use only certified translators on certain projects.

* ***Be realistic your earning potential***. While translation is definitely well-paying as compared with other careers that allow you to work from home in your pajamas on projects that are often very interesting, remember that 25-40% of your income as a freelancer will go to things that your employer normally pays for when you have a full time job. Most people count in the biggies- taxes, health insurance, retirement plan contributions and vacation/personal/sick time, but over the years other expenses like dictionaries, office equipment, continuing education and professional travel add up too. Over the course of the 8 years I worked full time, my employer paid for literally thousands of dollars of "extra" stuff like this, including half the tuition for my M.A. degree and two trips to France. These days, I spend about a thousand dollars a year just to attend the annual conference of the American Translators Association, plus various other

workshops. Remember also that the time it takes to do non-translation activities like accounting, collections, billing, updating computer systems, even cleaning your office, is "off the clock."

* *Find the economic advantages to freelancing*. As a corollary to the tip above, freelancing is far from all bad news when it comes to earnings. You may be able to take significant tax deductions for business related expenses, unlike when you have a salaried job (talk to a tax professional about this). Furthermore, if you work from home you won't be paying commuting expenses, lunch out, work clothes, etc. Depending on your particular situation, there may be even bigger hidden benefits. In my case, I have a small child; if I worked 30 hours a week at an employer's office, I would need at least 35 hours of child care, and high-quality child care in my area is $10-$12 an hour. As a freelancer, I'm able to work about 30 hours a week with 15 hours of child care by making up the rest of the time at night or when my child is with a friend. This savings alone, plus the additional time to spend with the family, makes freelancing a very attractive option if you have small kids.

* *Keep in touch*. As you apply to agencies, keep a file of the person you talked to or e-mailed with, and what his or her response was to your inquiry. As you get more experience, periodically contact these people again to let them know a) you're still there and b) you have some new projects to tell them about.

* *Show an interest in the profession*. Once you explore the tip of the translation iceberg, you'll be amazed at the number of translation-related websites, magazines and newsletters out there. Contributing to them allows you to both educate yourself and present yourself as someone who's really passionate about the industry, not just someone who likes to work in your pajamas!

* *Never (never) take on work you can't handle*. Especially in a small community of translators and translation consumers, the surest way to sabotage your emerging freelance business is to take on something that's too technical, too long, or too complex. Clients will appreciate your honesty and use you for projects that you can handle. Sometimes this involves protecting clients from hiring you for work that *they* think that you can do, such as translating into your second (third, etc) language. Politely explain that this work is best handled by a native speaker of that language and offer a referral.

* *Keep your clients happy*. While this could be an article in itself (when I have time!) it's worthy of mention. Finish every project on time and on budget, and NEVER miss a deadline without notifying a client as soon as you realize that despite your good planning, the project won't be done on time. Return all phone calls and e-mails as soon as you can, always within one business day. When you're not available, help solve the client's problem by referring them to a colleague. In all of your dealings with your clients, remain professional. If you encounter a problem, it hurts to have your skills or qualifications questioned, but remember that the client is already in high-anxiety mode if they're not happy with your work, and you need to remain calm rather than making the client more upset. Probably one of the best pieces of advice I've ever been given is "don't hold onto your clients by charging less, hold onto your clients by charging more and proving that you're worth it." Of course there are some agencies and direct clients who only care about getting the work done for one cent per word cheaper than the last translator they used, but most clients care just as much about quality as they do about price. Keeping a good relationship with the client and doing outstanding work proves to them that often, you get the level of service you pay for.

These tips reflect my experience as a translator and my own opinions, not those of my clients. Feel free to use them in your own work, and let me know if they are helpful!

By Corinne McKay
Freelance Writer and Translator
ATA-Certified for French to English Translation

How to find your first translation clients

Where to begin?

I receive a lot of inquiries from people who would like to become translators, and most of these e-mails have something to do with finding those first few elusive translation clients. If you ask 100 translators how they got started in the business, you'll probably get at least 50 different answers. Some picked up the phone and started cold-calling, some turned an old business connection into a client, some volunteered, some went back to school, some were just in the right place at the right time. Following are some tips on how to break into the translation industry, depending on your interests and level of experience.

As a freelance translator, your two basic categories of clients are translation agencies, companies that serve as a middleman between an end client and various freelance translators, and direct clients, where you work directly for the translation buyer with no middleman involved. Each of these approaches has its benefits and costs; translation agencies can sometimes provide a steady flow of work to their regular translators, but also pay the translator as little as 50% of the total fee they collect for the translation. Direct clients can offer higher earning potential, but often require the translator to perform tasks such as quoting jobs, editing, proofreading, etc. that are often handled by agencies.

If you're starting out by applying to translation agencies, remember to play by their rules in order to maximize your chances of getting work. Most agencies have a translator application form on their websites; the "Contact Us" or "Opportunities" sections of agency websites are good places to look for these. Although it feels impersonal to apply for work this way, resist the urge to distinguish yourself by sending in a paper résumé if the agency requests an electronic one; what seems to you like a personal touch will only create more work for your potential client, and may get your application materials tossed without a second look. Along the same lines, most agencies prefer not to be contacted by phone unless you are applying for a specific position that they've advertised. If the online application form includes a "Comments" field, this is the place to ask for an in-person meeting or introduce yourself as a new translator in the area. For translation agencies in the United States, the website of the American Translators Association is a good place to find the agency's web address, and the agency's profile on the ATA website may also indicate if it is currently accepting applications from new translators.

Whether applying to translation agencies or direct clients, there are a few basic rules to follow. You're applying for language work, so your application materials should be error-free. Make sure that everything you send out is proofed by yourself and at least one other person. When sending inquiries by e-mail, use a clear subject line, such as "German-English freelance inquiry." Don't disguise your intentions or make your message look like a response to an e-mail from the agency. State your language pairs prominently. As amazing as it may sound, many people neglect this simple step. Start your e-mail with a sentence such as "I am a freelance English to Spanish translator and I would like to offer my services to your agency/company, etc."

Looking for work with direct clients has some positive and negative points for a beginning translator. As a newcomer to the profession, it can be helpful to have some of the safety nets that a translation agency offers; for example when you work for an agency, your work is almost always proofread before being sent to the end client, which guards against a true disaster if you make a mistake. However, direct clients, especially those located in areas where there are not many translators to choose from, may be more likely than a translation agency to take a chance on an inexperienced translator. Whereas a translation agency has a wide range of translators to choose from with no geographic restrictions, a direct client who wants to work with someone local has a bigger incentive to work with someone new.

If you'd like to work with direct clients, any large businesses, hospitals, or school systems in your area are worth contacting, even if they don't have obvious international ties. Probably the best source of direct client contacts is international business organizations such as international chambers of commerce since you can be sure that the member companies use your non-English language in their business operations. Joining one of these organizations is also an excellent way to network with potential clients. Try Googling the chamber of commerce for your language pair, i.e., "German-American Chamber of Commerce," "Korean-American Chamber of Commerce," etc.

Think locally. Especially if you present yourself better in person than on paper, start out by asking for in-person meetings with every translation or interpreting agency in your local area. By asking for a meeting to learn more about the agency and talk about how you might fit in, you'll both benefit from the interaction. Don't be dissuaded if local agencies "have no work in your language combinations right now." By asking for an in-person meeting, you'll position yourself to step in when their needs change.

Blanket the field. One of the biggest mistakes made by beginning translators and interpreters is to assume that they will be working full-time after sending out five or ten inquiries. On the contrary, you should expect no more than a one percent return rate on your cold-contacting efforts. A good start (emphasis: start) if you'd like to be working full-time would be to send out 300-500 résumés during your first year in business. Your prospective clients may include translation agencies in the U.S., agencies in countries where your other languages are spoken, and companies in your area that could use your services.

Keep in touch Instead of just firing off e-mails or making phone calls and then waiting to hear back from your potential clients, keep a log of the person you talked to or e-mailed with and what his or her response was to your inquiry. As you get more experience, periodically contact these people to let them know that you're still interested and available. Let them know what types of projects you've been working on, and let them know that you would be happy to help them out with similar jobs.

Once you've landed your first few clients, marketing yourself becomes easier in the sense that you have something to tell new prospective clients about, other than the fact that you're looking for work. In general, even a successful freelancer must spend at least ten percent of his or her time on marketing; for beginning translators this figure may increase to as much as 50 percent, and for those who have been in the business for many years, the need to market may fall by the wayside. However, many marketing experts caution that "if you're not marketing, you're dying." While this advice may seem extreme, it's important for even experienced translators to prepare for the loss of a major client or a downturn in the economy by keeping up a steady flow of outbound promotion.

What Every Novice Translator Should Know

Introduction

The nature and importance of translation

Translation is ultimately a human activity which enables human beings to exchange ideas and thoughts regardless of the different tongues used. Al Wassety (2001) views the phenomenon of translation as a legitimate offspring of the phenomenon of language, since originally, when humans spread over the earth, their languages differed and they needed a means through which people speaking a certain language (tongue) would interact with others who spoke a different language.

Translation is, in Enani's (1997) view, a modern science at the interface of philosophy, linguistics, psychology, and sociology. Literary translation in particular is relevant to all these sciences, audio-visual arts, as well as cultural and intellectual studies.

Translation is, in Chabban's words (1984:5), "a finicky job," as it has not yet been reduced to strict scientific rules, and it allows for the differences that are known to exist between different personalities. Translation is a heavily subjective art, especially when it deals with matters outside the realm of science where precisely defined concepts are more often expressed by certain generally accepted terms.

In the final analysis, translation is a science, an art, and a skill. It is a science in the sense that it necessitates complete knowledge of the structure and make-up of the two languages concerned. It is an art since it requires artistic talent to reconstruct the original text in the form of a product that is presentable to the reader who is not supposed to be familiar with the original. It is also a skill because it entails the ability to smooth over any difficulty in the translation, and the ability to provide the translation of something that has no equal in the target language.

In translation, the richness of vocabulary, depth of culture, and vision of the translator could certainly have very conspicuous effects on his/her work. Another translator might produce a reasonably acceptable version of the same text, which, however, may very well reflect a completely different background, culture, sensitivity, and temperament. Such differences cannot, in Chabban's view (1984), detract from the merit of either translator. This is simply because translation is decidedly a more difficult job than creation.

Criteria for a good translation

A good translation is one that carries all the ideas of the original as well as its structural and cultural features. Massoud (1988) sets criteria for a good translation as follows:

1. A good translation is easily understood.
2. A good translation is fluent and smooth.
3. A good translation is idiomatic.
4. A good translation conveys, to some extent, the literary subtleties of the original.
5. A good translation distinguishes between the metaphorical and the literal.
6. A good translation reconstructs the cultural/historical context of the original.
7. A good translation makes explicit what is implicit in abbreviations, and in allusions to sayings, songs, and nursery rhymes.
8. A good translation will convey, as much as possible, the meaning of the original text (pp. 19-24).

El Shafey (1985: 93) suggests other criteria for a good translation; these include three main principles:

1. The knowledge of the grammar of the source language plus the knowledge of vocabulary, as well as good understanding of the text to be translated.
2. The ability of the translator to reconstitute the given text (source-language text) into the target language.
3. The translation should capture the style or atmosphere of the original text; it should have all the ease of an original composition.

From a different perspective, El Touny (2001) focused on differentiating between different types of translation. He indicated that there are eight types of translation: word-for-word translation, literal translation, faithful translation, semantic translation, adaptive translation, free translation, idiomatic translation, and communicative translation. He advocated the last type as the one which transmits the meaning from the context, respecting the form and structure of the original and which is easily comprehensible by the readers of the target language.

El Zeini (1994) didn't seem satisfied with such criteria for assessing the quality of translation. Hence she suggested a pragmatic and stylistic model for evaluating quality in translation. She explains that the model " places equal emphasis on the pragmatic component as well on the stylistic component in translation. This model covers a set of criteria, which are divided into two main categories: content-related criteria and form-related criteria" and expected that by following these criteria, "translators will be able to minimize the chance of producing errors or losses, as well as eliminate problems of unacceptability" (p. xvii).

Translation problems

Translation problems can be divided into linguistic problems and cultural problems: the linguistic problems include grammatical differences, lexical ambiguity and meaning ambiguity; the cultural problems refer to different situational features. This classification coincides with that of El Zeini when she identified six main problems in translating from Arabic to English and vice versa; these are lexicon, morphology, syntax, textual differences, rhetorical differences, and pragmatic factors.

Another level of difficulty in translation work is what As-sayyd (1995) found when she conducted a study to compare and assess some problems in translating the fair names of Allah in the Qu'ran. She pointed out that some of the major problems of translation are over-translation, under-translation, and untranslatability.

Culture constitutes another major problem that faces translators. A bad model of translated pieces of literature may give misconceptions about the original. That is why Fionty (2001) thought that poorly translated texts distort the original in its tone and cultural references, while Zidan (1994) wondered about the possible role of the target culture content as a motivating variable in enhancing or hindering the attainment of linguistic, communicative and, more importantly, cultural objectives of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) education. Hassan (1997) emphasized this notion when he pointed out the importance of paying attention to the translation of irony in the source language context. He clarified that this will not only transfer the features of the language translated but also its cultural characteristics.

The translator's work

These problems, and others, direct our attention to the work and the character of translators, how they attack a text so as to translate, and the processes they follow to arrive at the final product of a well-

translated text in the target language.

Enani (1994:5) defines the translator as "a writer who formulates ideas in words addressed to readers. The only difference between him and the original writer is that these ideas are the latter's". Another difference is that the work of the translator is even more difficult than that of the artist. The artist is supposed to produce directly his/her ideas and emotions in his/her own language however intricate and complicated his/her thoughts are. The translator's responsibility is much greater, for s/he has to relive the experiences of a different person. Chabban (1984) believes that, however accurately the translator may delve into the inner depths of the writer's mind, some formidable linguistic and other difficulties may still prevent the two texts from being fully equivalent. Therefore we do not only perceive the differences between a certain text and its translation, but also between different translations of the same text

On the procedural level, El Shafey (1985:95) states: "A translator first analyzes the message, breaking it down into its simplest and structurally clearest elements, transfers it at this level into the target language in the form which is most appropriate for the intended audience. A translator instinctively concludes that it is best to transfer the "kernel level" in one language to the corresponding "kernel level" in the "receptor language."

Translation skills for novice translators

The present study suggests four main macro-skills for any translator who begins his/her work in the field of translation. These are: reading comprehension, researching, analytical, and composing skills. These macro-skills include many sub- or micro-skills that need to be mastered.

Reading comprehension

While we are translating, we do not think of our activity as being broken down into phases. After doing our first translations, many automatic mechanisms come into play that allow us to translate more quickly; at the same time, we are less and less conscious of our activity.

Osimo (2001) indicates that in order to think about the translation process and to describe it, our essential task consists of analyzing its phases, even if we are aware of the fact that they do not always coincide with perceptibly different or distinguishable moments. If we want to describe a process that often is beyond the translator's own consciousness, we are forced to divide the process into different phases which, in the everyday practice of translation, can reveal the inter-twining, almost entangling, of these phases. The first phase of the translation process consists of reading the text. The reading act, first, falls under the competence of psychology, because it concerns our perceptive system. Reading, like translation, is, for the most part, an unconscious process. If it were conscious, we would be forced to consume much more time in the act. Most mental processes involved in the reading act are automatic and unconscious. Owing to such a nature-common and little-known in the same time-in our opinion it is important to analyze the reading process as precisely as possible. The works of some perception psychologists will be helpful to widen our knowledge of this first phase of the translation process.

When a person reads, his brain deals with many tasks in such rapid sequences that everything seems to be happening simultaneously. The eye examines (from left to right as far as many Western languages are concerned, or from right to left or from top to bottom in some other languages) a series of graphic signs (graphemes) in succession, which give life to syllables, words, sentences, paragraphs, sections, chapters, and texts.

Simply reading a text is, in itself, an act of translation. When we read, we do not store the words we have read in our minds as happens with data entered using a keyboard or scanner into a computer. After read-

ing, we do not have the photographic or auditory recording in our minds of the text read. We have a set of impressions instead. We remember a few words or sentences precisely, while all the remaining text is translated from the verbal language into a language belonging to another sign system, which is still mostly unknown: the mental language.

The mental processing of the read verbal material is of a syntactical nature when we try to reconstruct the possible structure of the sentence, i.e., the relations among its elements. In contrast, it is of a semantic nature when we identify the relevant areas within the semantic field of any single word or sentence; and it is of a pragmatic nature when we deal with the logical match of the possible meanings with the general context and the verbal co-text.

The difference between a reader and a critic is negligible: the reader trying to understand has the same attitude as the critic, who is a systematic, methodical, and self-aware reader. While reading, the individual reads, and perceives what he reads, drawing interpretations and inferences about the possible intentions of the author of the message.

Holmes (1988) suggested that the translation process is actually a multi-level process; while we are translating sentences, we have a map of the original text in our minds and, at the same time, a map of the kind of text we want to produce in the target language. Even as we translate serially, we have this structural concept so that each sentence in our translation is determined not only by the original sentence, but also by the two maps—of the original text and of the translated text—which we carry along as we translate.

The translation process should, therefore, be considered a complex system in which understanding, processing, and projection of the translated text are interdependent portions of one structure. We can therefore put forward, as does Hönig (1991), the existence of a sort of "central processing unit" supervising the coordination of the different mental processes (those connected to reading, interpretation, and writing) and at the same time projecting a map of the text to be.

Novice translators as well as student translators are advised to master the following basic reading comprehension skills.

- Read for gist and main ideas.
- Read for details.
- Identify the meaning of new words and expressions using one or more components of the structural analysis clause; prefixes, suffixes, roots, word order, punctuation, sentence pattern, etc.
- Identify the meaning of new words and expressions using one or more of the contextual analysis; synonyms, antonyms, examples, etc.
- Identify the writer's style: literary, scientific, technical, informative, persuasive, argumentative, etc.
- Identify the language level used in the text: standard, slang, religious, etc.
- Identify cultural references in the choice of words in the text.

Research skills

Enani (2002b) notes that "the most commonly heard advice to translators is 'if you don't know the meaning of a word, look it up in *the* dictionary'. It is the commonest and the vaguest insofar as the definite article suggests that the dictionary is known to both speaker and listener." He indicates that there are different kinds of dictionaries that a translator should refer to: a bilingual dictionary, a dictionary on a historical basis, dictionaries of current English, dictionaries of idioms, specialized dictionaries (dictionaries of common errors, dictionaries of idiomatic usage, slang dictionaries, technical dictionaries) encyclopedic

dictionaries, dictionaries of neologisms, and monolingual dictionaries.

Despite this long list of different kinds of dictionaries, it is a single dictionary that the translator is supposed to refer to each and every time s/he translates. The choice of the *best*, or the most appropriate, dictionary depends on the style of the protext (original text, text before translation) and on the different types of users of the translation.

Calderaro (1998) indicates two major users of the meta text (text after translation) who may use the translated version; the specialist user and the lay user. Identifying the prospective users of the metatext is very important in the process of researching, as this will determine which kind of dictionaries the translator will refer to, which level of information should be presented and to "detect the exact moments when it is necessary to establish a balance between the scientific level of the author and the knowledge the user supposedly has."

Novice translators, as well as student translators are encouraged to use the following basic researching tips;

- Use bilingual dictionaries for looking up meanings of new words.
- Use monolingual dictionaries to check the usage of the new words in the source language and in the target language.
- Use related encyclopedias and glossary lists for specialized terms;
- Use software dictionaries if necessary and available.
- Refer to specialized magazines and journals to help you familiarize yourself with the text, particularly when it is a technical text.

Analytical skills

The translation process is characterized by an analysis stage and a synthesis stage. During analysis, the translator refers to the prototext in order to understand it as fully as possible. The synthesis stage is the one in which the prototext is projected onto the reader, or rather, onto the idea that the translator forms of who will be the most likely reader of the metatext.

The text, according to Bell (1998) is analyzed in two ways: micro- and macro-analysis of the actual text: monitoring for cohesion and coherence, and checking for coherence between the actual text and the potential text-type of which it is a token realization. Micro-analysis has the purpose of verifying text cohesion and inner cohesion of the single units of text. Macro-analysis is aimed at checking for coherence and cohesion between the created text and the model in the category to which the text belongs. For example, if the text is an instruction booklet for a household appliance, or a story for a newspaper, often there are models for such types of text to which we frequently (consciously or unconsciously) adhere.

Such an analytic exam was necessary in order to identify the individual mental processes involved in the above-mentioned activities; we know, however, that such activities are actually carried out in very short time span. During this mental work, there is a constant shift of focus between micro-analysis and macro-analysis, between micro-expression and macro-expression, i.e., a constant comparison between the meaning of the single utterances and the meaning of the text as a whole, or, on a larger scale, a constant comparison between the sense of the specific text and the comprehensive sense of the corpus which forms the "intertext," whether or not the translator is aware of this fact. In this context, "intertext" should be understood as the intertextual universe in which a text is located.

Translators are advised to use the following strategies in the analysis stage:

- Identify beginnings and endings of ideas in the text and the relationships between these ideas.
- Identify the "best" meaning that fits into the context;
- Identify the structure in the target language that "best" represents the original;
- Identify transitions between ideas and the "best" connectors in the target language that represent the original.

Writing skills

At this point, the mental construction resulting from interpretation seeks an outer expression.

Osimo (2002) suggests that, in this expression stage, there are two substages. One is aimed at expression, the other at cohesion. The translator, having finished his/her interpretative work, has two needs: first, to externalize the set of impressions caused by the text and translate into speech elements the impressions the mind produced by contact with the prototext; and second, to make this product coherent within itself, i.e., transform the set of speech elements into a text (the metatext).

 He describes the passage from mental content to written text in these terms:

- pinpointing elements useful for discrimination of the content to be expressed from similar contents;
- pinpointing redundant elements;
- choice of words (lexicalization) and attention to their cohesion (inner links);
- choice of grammatical structure(s);
- linear order of words;
- parts of speech;
- sentence complexity;
- prepositions and other function words, and
- final form.

As a novice translator, or a student translator, you are invited to make use of the following basic strategies:

- Use correct word order as used in the target language.
- Use correct sentence structures as used in the target language.
- transmit the ideas of the text in clear sentences in the target language.
- Rephrase certain sentences to convey the overall meaning translated;
- Make changes to the text as a whole to give it a sense of the original without distorting the original ideas.
- Try one or more of the following strategies when facing problems of untranslatability.

a. Syntactic strategies:
  o Shift word order.
  o Change clause/sentence structure.
  o Add or change cohesion.

b. Semantic strategies:
  o Use superordinates.
  o Alter the level of abstraction.
  o Redistribute the information over more or fewer elements.

c. Pragmatic strategies:

- o   Naturalize or exoticize.
- o   Alter the level of explicitness.
- o   Add or omit information.

Conclusion

This study described the basic skills and strategies that novice translators as well as student translators need to master in their daily experiences with translation tasks. The main skills proposed are: reading comprehension, researching, analytical, and composing skills. The study suggested other sub-skills and strategies for planting one's feet firmly in the land of translation. The skills and strategies presented in this study represent just the basic level for beginners and students. However, advanced and professional translators may find them relevant as well.

What Does An Interpreter Do?

Many people get confused as to the difference between an interpreter and a translator. There is a common tendency to think translators interpreter, or that interpreters translate. In fact, the two are very separate jobs requiring different skills. To explain who and/or what an interpreter as opposed to a translator we set out the main differences between interpreting and translation.

Interpreting vs. Translation

On a basic level it would appear that there is little difference between an interpreter and a translator. One translates spoken words and the other written words. However, the differences in how the job is carried out, the pressures, requirements, skills and talents are many.

A translator must be able to write well and be able to express words, phrases, innuendos and other linguistic nuances between languages on paper. A translator has the luxury of time, resources (dictionaries, etc), reference material and the freedom to take a break when needed. Their pressures are relatively limited.

Translators only work into their native languages to assure accuracy in both linguistic and cultural senses. Translators therefore, it could be argued, are not completely bilingual. They may be able to deal effectively with written sources but when it comes to orally translating, it is a different skill.

A translator therefore has a one dimensional aspect to their work. They deal with written words and language that come from paper and return to paper.

An interpreter, on the other hand, has to be able to translate spoken words in two directions. They do this using no resources or reference material bar their knowledge and expertise. An interpreter is required to find linguistic solutions to problems on the spot. The pressure therefore can be quite intense.

In addition to interpreting, the interpreter must also act as a bridge between people, relaying tone, intentions and emotions. Where an interpreter is caught between cross fire they need to demonstrate great professionalism and diplomacy. Their roles are therefore much more complex as they have to deal with both language and people.

What does an interpreter do?

There are two ways of interpreting known as consecutive and simultaneous.

Simultaneous interpreting involves interpreting in "real time." Many would have seen an interpreter sitting in a booth wearing a pair of headphones and speaking into a microphone at a conference or large diplomatic meeting such as the EU or UN. A simultaneous interpreter has the unenviable task of quickly digesting what one person is saying before immediately translating it to others. One of the key skills simultaneous interpreters must demonstrate is decisiveness. They must think quickly and on their feet.

Consecutive interpreting is carried out in face to face meetings, speeches or court cases. A speaker will usually stop at regular junctures, say every few sentences, and have the interpreter translate, before proceeding. A key skill involved in consecutive interpreting is the ability to remember what has been said.

What do you need?

In short, if you need someone to translate something that is written, you need the services of a translator. If you need someone to translate the spoken word, you need an interpreter.

Beginner's Guide to Translation Errors

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India
English to Hindi translator

This article has been drawn from my personal experience as a professional translator and as a teacher of undergraduate students where I have taught a translation course for the last two years. The focus of this course is bilingual English-Hindi. The article aims to summarize some findings and present them in a succinct form for those who would be venturing out in the world of professional translation.

A translator would make a number of errors during the learning process. They could range from the grammatical, syntactic to larger issues of localization. In this article, I propose to categorize the errors made into four broad types, namely, (i) grammatical errors; (ii) mistranslations; (iii) localization errors, and (iv) errors of inconsistency.

One has told college students, who are beginners in the world of translation, and who study the Certificate Course at the University where I teach that errors dealing with grammar and mistranslations are simply to be avoided even for a novice translator. If these two errors are made, one cannot even be qualified to be called as a translator. Therefore it is essential that these errors should not creep into one's practice.

GRAMMATICAL ERRORS

Grammatical errors would be characterized as errors dealing with the grammar of the target language, including errors of usage, collocation, syntax and tense. It may sound funny to even imagine for a professional translator that someone could make linguistic, grammar-based errors while translating but the fact remains that people do make them. The problem with translation as a profession or industry is that it is largely unregulated and is an empowering process. The moment one translates a document, one feels a great sense of achievement and the client who commissions the job almost rarely knows about the target language, unless the target language is a European one. The problem of grammatical error essentially crops up due to less exposure to the target language but the person who makes the errors is usually unaware of the magnitude of the problem. In the context of Indian languages with respect to English, there are certain typical problems associated with the influence of the 'first' language. [I have deliberately avoided the use of the term 'mother tongue' or 'native language' because in the Indian situation, things can be quite multilingual.] As far as I know in most Indian languages, if not in all, the present progressive tense is normally used in every case but it is not used in English. For instance, one says, 'main tumhe sun raha hun' [I am hearing you] but in English, it gets transformed into 'I hear you'. Even in Gujarati, the same –ing form is used. When one does this exercise in the classroom, one discovers it is true with other Indian languages as well.

But there could be other errors that one may not have factored in. All Indian languages have the structure S-O-V [Subject-Object-Verb] but English has the S-V-O structure, which may lead to syntactical problems in users of English who haven't had a good education in the language. However, these days, with the fast paced growth of the cities, one does not find students making errors of syntax in English but one does find a large prevalence of errors in tenses and prepositions. Errors in prepositions are seen because of a weak formal English education. Moreover, anyone who uses the grammar-translation method for learning English is destined to face problems.

MISTRANSLATIONS

The second category of errors could be classified as mistranslations, simply an oversight or an arrogant act or plain ignorance on part of the translator. At the simplistic level, this would be similar to translating the word 'pen' into the word 'marker' or 'pencil', which is a patent case of mistranslation because the semantics of 'pen' are very different from 'pencil'. This is usually seen as an error that stems from an ig-

norance of the language or the subject matter in the novice or the fact that the novice does not possess sufficient lexicographic tools or is unwilling to be humble and use the dictionary. It is important for the novice to use the dictionary constantly. Other examples of mistranslations would include, 'bus' for 'tram' [it is possible that some countries or cities do not have trams; New Delhi does not have trams but that is no excuse for the error], 'tome' for 'book' or 'booklet'. I have obviously taken simple examples here but in the case of difficult or 'foreign' concepts, this would always be true. One can find examples of mistranslations anywhere, ranging from literary translation [where they seem to abound in great number] to any leaflet under the sun. In literary translations, the problem of mistranslations is further accentuated simply because the translator is ignorant of the source language and culture but refuses to accept this fact.

LOCALIZATION ERRORS

The third category would be errors that are linked to the localization of language. Before one continues, one would like to pose a question: What is the role of translations in the human civilization? The answers should be obvious to any experienced translator. The translator's role is to bind people, countries and races. It is in that sense a very ennobling profession. Moreover, translations have played an important role in the European Renaissance of the Fifteenth century and the Indian Renaissance of the Nineteenth century. Thus, it is important that translations are communicative as far as possible. If a translation is unable to communicate itself to the end and intended audience, it's value must stand diminished.

The errors pertaining to localization take place due to the fact that the term to be translated normally does not exist as a concept in the target language. One such example would be the simple, innocuous looking term, 'subway'. India did not have pedestrian subways few years ago. They did not exist in the major Indian cities. Then the subways were constructed. In New Delhi, the Indian capital and the center of the Hindi heartland, where I live, I saw the term 'subway' written in English, with a picture of the subway, which essentially meant a kind of ladder shown there, and along with it, one found a Hindi translation. It is noteworthy that till subways made their presence felt, the language did not have a single term for it. So, soon, they were translated into 'bhoomigat paidal paar path', which meant 'an underground pedestrian path used for crossing the road'. There were two problems with this translation done by 'official' translators, most probably working for the Government of India as Hindi officers. One, the translation was an explanation of the term but well, that could be forgiven keeping in mind the fact that the term did not exist in Hindi. But there is an even bigger problem here. It is a problem of localization. The subways have been in existence for about ten years or longer in New Delhi and they have always had the Hindi translation alongside the English version. But when I ask my students, who are about 19-22 year olds and have lived all their lives or most of their lives in the city, and who grew up speaking Hindi at home, they do not seem to comprehend what the Hindi translation 'bhoomigat paidal paar path' means. This means that the translation does not reach out well. If it cannot reach out to undergraduate students, even those who join up for a translation course, it should speak volumes about what kind of reach this translation would have for the man on the street, who hasn't been to college.

Another example of the importance of localization is from a personal experience. I was translating an in-flight menu for a major airline company through a translation agency. This was the first job that I was doing for them though I had been translating in-flight menus for over three years when we got in touch. In the menu, there was this simple term 'dessert', something sweet that you eat after your meal. I transliterate it was 'dessert' in Hindi for two important reasons. One, the concept does not exist in Hindi and secondly, the transliteration would make sense to the end audience as this menu was only to be given to business class passengers on an international flight. But when it went to the proofreader, the term, which occurred some three to four times in the menu, was encircled in black as an error. The company asked me to explain. Now, there were semantic problems with the term that the editor had used. The editor had used the term 'mishthaan', which does not denote the various facets of the word 'dessert'. For instance, fruit salad, quiche or soufflé would not be included in the suggested term but they would all be part of dessert.

ERRORS OF INCONSISTENCY

The fourth category of errors that one might observe could be classified as errors of consistency. These could create major problems in certain kinds of translation, whereas they may not be important in other types of translation but at the highest levels of professionalism, a translator should not commit any of these errors.

For instance, while quoting from the experience of translating documents dealing with mobile telephony, one would come across a very simple lexical item, 'light'. The word light could be translated as light in Gujarati as in 'tubelight' or in other lexical items. But it could also be translated as 'prakaash' in Gujarati or even as 'chamak' in a particular context. In fields such as mobile telephony, technical consistency assumes a great degree of importance. Look at this situation where I am working for one end client, a mobile phone company that manufactures mobile phones and they want the Gujarati or the Hindi which I have been translating consistently for them. So, if in January 2006, in a document, I translate the word 'light' as 'light' in Gujarati in one document, I cannot translate the word 'light' as 'prakaash' in the month of February 2006, even though it is a separate document that I might be translating at the moment.

CONCLUSION

Errors concerning grammar, mistranslations and localization errors should be completely avoidable in any translation as they will render a translation unusable. Errors of inconsistency should also be normally avoidable but it is possible that the novice may make them. There are some subjects such as mobile telephony, medicine or law where errors of inconsistency may be fatal. But in certain subjects such as the translation of literary texts, the same 'errors of inconsistency' may even be considered as part of the translator's license or as an embellishment of language. One hopes that novices would find the article of some use and that they would work with more diligence.

Preparing and Organizing a Translation Project

We assume that quality, value, and efficiency are among the goals of any translation project, and that planning and management are keys to success, just as with the production of any other sort of product. Juan C. Sager, in an article on translation quality assessment puts it this way:

> In order to discuss meaningfully the quality of a translator's work we have to consider the process of translation as an industrial process, subject to considerations of time and effort by which any work is measured. Similarly, the result of this process, the translation itself, is a commercial product of the information market, to which a certain price can be attached. It follows that the price and hence the quality of translations should be commensurate with the value attached to an original which is used for the same purpose and with the importance attributed to it in the process of communication.

Quality is the result of concerted teamwork between the original content provider (i.e., the initiator of the translation project, who may or may not be the author) and the translation vendor. This section focuses on what the client organization can do to ensure quality in cross-linguistic written communication.

The translation vendor plays an important role in the process, starting from the point at which the client has decided to undertake a translation (based on the considerations discussed above) and has determined the following parameters, known in the translation industry as the "4 T's":

Text. The source language document(s) to be translated. The desirability of translating a particular text must be determined. Texts are chosen to be translated for reasons of relevance, importance, legality, and other considerations. The client must clearly communicate to the translation vendor the purposes, uses, and overall context of the document(s). Furthermore, it may be useful for the client's technical writing staff to compose (or re-compose) the original text to make it as "translatable" as possible—by following an international style guide, restricting the use of jargon, and avoiding linguistic complexities of English such as compacted noun phrases.

Target. The audience(s) for whom the translation is intended. The form of the translation will be affected by questions of dialect, literacy level, bilingualism, preferred means of communication, and people's attitudes towards their language.

Determining the nature of the target audience so as to communicate in language that is understood and accepted may be more complex than it at first appears. Take the matter of dialect, for example. The intended audience is often comprised of individuals native to different countries or regions. A "language" usually encompasses a number of "sub-languages" or dialects, spoken in different regions or among different social groups. Some dialects of the same language may not even be mutually intelligible. For example, a native English speaker from the Midwest region of the U.S. may well have trouble understanding a native English speaker from New Hebrides, or even from the Southeastern United States.

The same phenomenon of dialect diversity applies to native Spanish speakers of diverse origins, even those from countries located quite close to one another. For example, some words for common objects used by native Spanish speakers in Venezuela and Uruguay are quite different. "Beans" are called *caraotas* in Venezuela, but *porotos* in Uruguay; many Venezuelans call "popcorn" *cotufas*, a word not understood in Uruguay, where the same item is known as *pororó*. Even an object imported from the Western industrialized world, the toilet, has taken on different names in different Spanish-speaking countries: *poceta* in Venezuela, and the borrowed term *(el) water* in Uruguay.

How can a translator solve this problem of mutual intelligibility? One must make a crucial distinction between an audience's *active* vocabulary and *passive* vocabulary. A competent language speaker's *passive* vocabulary—or the range of words, terms, and expressions in the native language that s/he can understand—is typically much larger than the same speaker's *active* vocabulary, i.e., the range of words, terms, and expressions that s/he uses on a daily basis due to habit or preference. Furthermore, while two individuals who share the same native language but speak different dialects may share little *active* vocabulary, the *passive* vocabulary of the same two individuals typically overlaps a great deal. Since the translation is usually intended as one-way communication from a single author to a diverse audience, it makes both theoretical and practical sense to draw on the passive vocabulary common to a wide sector of that audience, as opposed to relying on the active vocabulary of one sub-section or other. Thus, the problems of dialect variation mentioned in the previous paragraph can frequently be avoided in translation by choosing a "neutral" term understood equally well by Spanish speakers representing different dialects. For example, the object "beans" can be recognized by both Venezuelans and Uruguayans under the term *frijoles*; "popcorn" can be called *palomitas de maíz*; and a "toilet" can be referred to either as *excusado* or *inodoro.* Even though none of these terms would necessarily be the one *chosen* by a given Spanish speaker, all of them can be *understood* by the vast majority of Spanish speakers, regardless of national origin.

Of course, other factors besides dialect and the national origin of the audience can strongly affect the translator's choices of style and vocabulary. The audience's social and economic role in the communicative context also needs to be taken into account. Are they applicants for financial assistance? Patients being asked to consent to a medical procedure? Members of the public seeking information on healthy life choices or specific diseases and treatments?

Team. The people who will collaborate on the project during all of its stages. Of foremost concern in this paper is the translation component of the team. The best translators will usually be native speakers of the target language rather than of the source language (English). These translators are more likely to be familiar with the target-language culture and the stylistic norms of the target language itself. Because it is so important for translations to be accurate and stylistically and culturally appropriate, translation should preferably be done by the best available professional translators, not by bilingual staff members who lack training and the specific skills needed for translation. Beyond these basic concerns, useful criteria for selecting translation vendors include qualifications, languages of specialization, markets served, range of services, turnaround time, and price.

In addition to the translator, or group of translators, there need to be others available for evaluation and consultation. For a large project, the client should also designate other key individuals as project managers, content consultants, and/or technical troubleshooters. O'Neill (2002, 152) outlines an ideal process by which a client enlists the cooperation of all its relevant divisions and vendors—advertising, sales and marketing, packaging, technical documentation, software, pre-press, printing—to work with the translation vendor on producing usable, accurate, consistent, and cost-effective documents.

The working relationship among all the people on the team, and the required duties of each one, need to be established before the project gets underway. Guidelines for contracting with translation vendors in particular will be given in the ASTM "Consumer-oriented Guide to Quality Assurance in Translation and Localization" (working title), under preparation by ASTM Subcommittee F15.48.

Tools. The written and electronic source materials, including online resources, which will be used as helps by the translators. As outlined in the MDH protocol cited above, such tools include dictionaries, grammars, and cultural descriptions of both the source language and receptor language. Tools also include any previous translations, documentation, and glossaries that the client may provide. An additional tool that has become more prominent in the last decade is computer-aided translation (CAT) software, which can store and code large bodies of text in the source and target languages, enabling the translator to find target-language "matches" for key terminology and even automatically "regenerate" sentences and paragraphs that had appeared identically in a previous translation.

Once the matters of the text, the target audience, and the team relationships are established, and the tools needed made available, the project is ready to begin.

Since the purpose of this paper is mainly to provide an orientation to theories, methods, and issues that arise in undertaking translation in a health-care setting, the details of carrying out a translation project are not addressed here. See, however, Downing and Bogoslaw (in preparation), intended as a step-by-step guide to translation, including the sequence of tasks that must be carried out by the translation/ editing team in close cooperation with the project manager. These include, at a minimum, studying and determining the meaning of the source text; making terminological decisions about rendering technical or idiomatic expressions, consistent with other texts addressed to the same readership; producing a draft translation; review and editing by a second translator; and pre-final review by a bilingual content specialist (sometimes an attorney) and by a community review panel that can give feedback on the comprehensibility and naturalness of the translation product. Only after these steps have been taken can a translation be considered ready for printing and distribution.

Back-translation is not included in this description of the usual translation process, but it needs to be mentioned. The term refers to the retranslation of a translated text into the original source language (by a different translator). The use of back-translation is considered by some to be a desirable or even an essential element of translation. It has often been cited as a method of checking the quality of the original translation. Some grants and contracts even stipulate that all translated documents be back-translated into the original language.

Since back-translation is so often asked about and discussed, we include here a brief analysis of its effectiveness in three crucial areas that affect translation quality: completeness, accuracy, and naturalness (or stylistic appropriateness for the target audience).

Back-translation is a reliable indicator of completeness. In other words, by comparing the back-translation to the original text, one can readily see whether any sentences, bullet points, or paragraphs have been added or deleted. We should point out that the same type of comparison can be (and customarily is) performed in the process of editing, in which a "second pair of eyes" compares the translation side by side with the original document. However, it may be easier to do this type of comparison with two texts in the same language, rather than reading "across languages."

Back-translation can also gauge the accuracy of a translator's work. Inaccurate terminology can be readily identified if, for example, the word for *bolt* in a technical manual is erroneously translated as *screw*. Moreover, back-translation (combined with a follow-up analysis by a trained consultant) can be useful for revealing cases in which the translator misunderstood the content of the original text.

However, this analysis needs to be performed with extreme care. Because some terms do not "match up" exactly with their counterparts in other languages, the correct translation may seem invalid or incorrect when back-translated into the source language. For example, the Spanish term approved by the U.S. Federal Government to denote *food stamps* is *cupones para alimentos*, or (literally) *coupons for food*. (To complicate the situation still further, neither term accurately describes the actual item, which is generally found in the form of an electronic card.) A consultant who does not know Spanish could easily draw the conclusion that the Spanish translator committed a major error by translating "stamps" as "coupons," when in fact the translation was correct. In addition to flagging such potential "false alarms," back-translation can also fail to reveal some of the literalisms or "false cognates" that often appear in translated drafts. One such example, again from Spanish, is the word *aplicación*, which is commonly used for the English *application* (for benefits, grants, insurance, and other purposes). The Spanish word indicates a cream or lotion that is applied to the skin, but an entirely different word (*solicitud*) would be used in the sense described above.

In the area of naturalness, however, back-translation is of little help. The main reason is that this quality is strongly affected by the stylistic capabilities of both the translator and the back-translator. Even an accurate and well-phrased translation is likely to sound either wordy or wooden when re-translated. In fact, back-translators are often instructed to make their translations as "literal" as possible, without editing them to make them flow smoothly.

Conversely, stylistic awkwardness that stands out to the reader of a translated text can be totally lost in back-translation. For example, the only Spanish word that can denote *parent* in a gender-neutral way is *progenitor*, but community reviews have shown that this word sounds stilted or archaic to some native Spanish speakers, who suggested that instead the two gender-specific options be juxtaposed (*madre/padre*). A back-translation, especially by a non-native speaker of Spanish, would be likely to gloss over such a stylistically important issue.

To summarize this discussion, back-translation is perhaps most useful for assessing whether there are any glaring omissions or additions in a translated text. It can also identify some mistranslations or misunderstandings of the original text, but can let some overly literal translations slip by; errors in accuracy can more reliably be flagged by an editor or consultant who is a native speaker of the target language. Finally, back-translation is quite ineffective in assessing how naturally the translation reads in the target language; stylistic naturalness is best judged by not just one but several native speakers of the target language.

Tips To Help You Start Your Own Translation Business

There is no shortage of translators who take the plunge and set up shop as self-employed freelancers, but few have the ambition or the spirit to start up their own full-service translation agency.

There is no shortage of translators who take the plunge and set up shop as self-employed freelancers, but few have the ambition or the spirit to start up their own full-service translation agency. This is not surprising, of course, as the establishment of a full-service translation agency is a quantum leap compared with what it takes to launch a viable freelance practice. Nevertheless, the intellectual and financial rewards of business ownership can be substantial. Below I will discuss various aspects you will have to take into account should you consider beginning your own professional translation business.

Full-Service Translation Business

Basically, this refers to the scope of your product. As a freelancer your output would be confined to your own language combination and degree of specialization; as an agency owner you will be able to supply your clients with translations across a whole range of source and target languages and disciplines, including commercial, technical, medical and legal documents. In theory, your range would be limited only by the number of staff you would be prepare to contract.

Internal Organization

If you want to establish your own translation company, you would be well advised to find a competent partner first – unless you are willing to hire staff right from the start (which, in most cases, is not a recommendable procedure). Ideally, your business partner should be a person whose qualities are complementary to your own, if only because in such cases the division of tasks is usually quite obvious (and a potential source of conflict is removed). There are good reasons to separate responsibility for product quality (i.e., the quality of the translations) from organizational responsibilities (order processing, account management, etc.). These two roles do not go together very well in practice, and the associated skills are not usually combined within one and the same person anyway.

Find suitable office accommodation that includes at least two rooms: one library-style room where you can work in peace, and one nerve center where the business is done. Make sure you have at least three computer workstations (one spare station is no luxury) and an office printer, a telephone system with at least two outside lines and a fax. Get yourself a straightforward high-quality accounting program with a CRM module, and document your working methods in detailed systematic procedures.

Don't forget to lay down and formalize a number of essential agreements on tasks and responsibilities with your business partner, so as to prevent any misunderstandings.

Business Plan

Once you have gathered all the information you need, you should draw up a business plan. Examples of such plans are available at your local Chamber of Commerce, or can be downloaded (for a fee) from the Internet. These specimen copies are structured in such a way that they will assist you in each step of your own business plan. One of the main advantages of having a reliable business plan is that it will present you with a realistic estimate of the money you will need to get your agency off the ground. If your capital

requirements exceed your private budget (and it is quite likely that they will), you will have to present a thorough business plan to the bank in order to persuade them that your plans will pay off.

High-quality Freelance Translator Network

The main asset of any translation agency is obviously its network of reliable translators. Incidentally, you need not be a networking freak to build up such a freelance network. Many freelancers will present themselves to you spontaneously as soon as they get wind of your existence; alternatively, you can actively recruit them and check out CVs on a variety of collective freelance Web sites, such as Translators Café or GoTranslators. The snag is that you will be hard put to appraise a freelancer's skills if you do not master the language concerned. CV assessment is important, but by no means sufficient: you will need to be able to judge the quality of a freelancer's actual output before entrusting him or her to your clients!

To obviate this problem, check your own network of colleagues or friends for highly-educated native speakers of the language concerned, ask several freelancers to submit (free) trial translations, have them assessed and select the two or three most promising freelancers for each language combination you intend to offer. Carefully document the strengths and weaknesses of each selected freelancer and list the specializations. Note that you won't get a truly reliable picture of a freelancer's capacity and skills until he/she has had the opportunity to do several translation jobs for you.

Once you have a pool of reliable freelance translators for each language combination, you can obviously also ask them to check and assess trial translations submitted by other candidates.

Another point to bear in mind is that the freelancers you decide to work with should comply with all the requirements imposed by your country's tax authorities. Each freelancer should be able to produce a formal statement, issued by the tax authorities, attesting to his/her status as an independent translator.

Reliable Network Of Suppliers

Your freelance translators are obviously your most important suppliers, but the supply network comprises other parties as well that will need to be carefully selected as you will need to use their services on an ongoing basis. These include the bank, the accountant, the printer and the graphic designer.

Marketing

Once the internal set-up of your agency is in place, your first priority should be to recruit clients in a systematic manner. For many start-ups in the translation business, this is the most difficult hurdle. Obviously there is a multitude of strategies that can help you attract clients in the business-to-business segment (which accounts for most of the turnover of any self-sufficient translation agency). One very helpful tool, if used correctly, is direct marketing. In principle, two different direct marketing strategies are available:

1. Internet marketing
One effective and relatively cheap method of generating business in the short term is search engine optimization (SEO), a term that refers to a variety of techniques to help you strengthen your presence on the Internet, and to help prospective clients find you there. A strong position in Internet search engines will increase the number of times you are invited to submit a quote for a translation job, for the simple reason that you will be more likely to be selected if you are easy to find on the Internet.

Some Internet facility agencies have specialized in search engine optimization and will be able to improve your search engine rating within a couple of months. Most of these companies charge annual subscription fees. If you want immediate results, ask for an adword campaign.

2. Database marketing

This a rather more expensive client acquisition technique. Call large international corporations and government agencies likely to produce texts for translation on a regular basis, and ask for the name of the person who is responsible for translation services (usually an official at the Director's Office, Communications or the Marketing Department). Gather the information in a database and mail the contact persons four or five times a year. The mailing could comprise your company brochure, a letter of recommendation, flyers, a magazine for business relations or any other item that will help remind the reader of your name and the level of quality that you offer.

An effective database contains at least 1,000 companies or other organizations, and should also contain the names of the contact persons. It goes without saying that you will also have to invest in continually updating your database.

What Translation Agencies Look for in a Translator

Competition is fierce among freelance translators nowadays. As more people go into the profession of translation they are all seeking the same jobs with the same translation agencies. Many translators become frustrated at not receiving continuous work from an agency, and many cannot even get on the books. These 10 tips for freelance translators will give you an idea of what translation agencies are looking for and how to get a relationship started.

1) Applying

Translation agencies receive tens of applications per day from translators. Do not simply send a speculative email stating you want translation work. People are busy and such a lazy approach would be lucky to receive a reply. Make sure you search the Web site first for information on how to apply. If there is none, send a short email asking for the application process. Make sure you read this carefully.

2) Your details

Translation project managers want quick and easy access to your details. Make sure you highlight your qualifications, experience, rates per 1000 words and always offer two references. It is not uncommon for applicants to forget to add their phone number and email address. Obviously if someone cannot contact you, the chances of getting any work are limited.

3) Accept Small Jobs

Smart translation agencies test new translators by sending them small pieces of translation work. This is to check their language skills and reliability. Once they have trust in a translator they will send them bigger and better pieces of work. If a translator takes the attitude that such small jobs are beneath them, a relationship will be hard to develop.

4) Deadlines

Deadlines are crucial for translation agencies. Missing one gives a bad impression to the client and does nothing to encourage them to send you more work in the future. Ensure you examine work thoroughly before offering a deadline to a translation agency or accepting one that has been stipulated. It is better to be open and honest and keep your reputation intact rather than stretch yourself, miss a deadline and ruin your reputation.

5) Communication

Translation agencies prefer translators who communicate with them. This can mean anything from informing them that a translation may be slightly late to giving them insight into problems they faced with the text. For example, if a translation has been carried out from a source text that was either poorly written, did not make sense in places, hard to read or anything else that prevented a top quality translation, this should be explained. The translation agency is then able to pass this on to their client.

6) Format

When a translator is sent a translation, it is expected to be returned in a format that mirrors the original. This is because the chances are that the translation agency and/or client may not understand one of the languages. They therefore need to be able to look at the two documents and easily see what relates to what. Sending a poorly formatted translation leads to frustration for the agency.

7) If you don't know - ask

Translators may often get stuck on a word, a phrase or get confused over something like the layout. It is always better to ask than guess or ignore the issue. By checking you ensure you cover your back and the translation agency's.

8) Invoice promptly

Translation agencies may differ on how they like to be invoiced by their translators. It may be a good idea to check this before sending your first invoice. Ensure the invoice has all your details, the job details (including any reference you have been asked to use), the number words, the rate and the total amount owed. Also include information on how you wish to be paid. Always remember to invoice promptly.

9) Availability

Once you have a decent relationship with an agency it may be a good idea to start a diary of availability. This may simply be sending them an email informing them of the fact you are working on a large job until a particular date or even having a webpage that indicates your availability on certain dates.

10) Be nice!

Translators need to remember that the agency is their client. Many a translator has been dropped from the books for being impolite or simply rude. As a client, the agency needs to be respected and good customer service offered

The Translator Success Equation

If you have ever watched a skilled professional musician perform or an outstanding athlete play a sport, you probably marveled at how easy they make it appear. An analogy can be drawn between the professional musician or athlete and the professional translator. An experienced, trained and gifted translator can indeed make the process seem effortless to the untrained observer. As well, the "natural" translator can render a text with equal ease and expertise, yet often fails to perceive, either consciously or unconsciously, the linguistic dimensions which distinguish his skill from that of the trained translator. The professional approaches his text with an analytical eye, penetrating beneath the words (like the notes for a musician) and applying all available knowledge in his field to produce a clear, understandable and harmonious rendition. In contrast, the empirical translator can only judge from what "sounds right," a feeling, a subjective interpretation, or past trial-and-error experience. Although both use essentially the same tools ("instruments" if you will), the difference in techniques and interpretation will be quite apparent.

Parenthetically, it should be noted that lesser levels of expertise are not under discussion here. We all know that there are "hacks" in every field. But in musical circles these persons rarely have the advantage of a public hearing and, if so, the critics' or public's derision can have disastrous consequences.

Regrettably, this is not the case for our own profession. The reputation of a professional should not be damaged by the shoddy, ear-grating "performance" of a "streetcorner fiddle player." Yet as translators we find ourselves frequently judged by others on the basis of the lowest common denominator. The public, which generally has at least a modicum of "good taste," whether in its concert-going habits or in selecting various types of goods or services, still persists in seeking out the poorest representatives of our profession under the presumed (and illogical) rationale that cheaper is better.

But are we not to blame for our plight? Have we been persuaded by the very myths which we purport to be combating? Everyone knows that the development of superior skills demands adequate training and guided practice, whether one works as a musician, a doctor, a chemist, a plumber, a secretary, or a translator. It is largely because we have not yet taken a firm stand to support serious and thorough translator-training programs in our country (not necessarily within an academic environment) that our profession continues to lag behind many others which may require even less skill and knowledge.

If we are to succeed in our goals to promote professionalism, we cannot be content to simply ignore the fact that we must guarantee that such professionals are being trained for the future. Perhaps we don't have the equivalent of a "Julliard School of Music" for translators in the U.S. To be sure, some programs are disparate, incomplete or too highly specialized or limited to stand as a model of the ideal training ground for translators. Indeed, many of them serve only to reinforce the empirical approach to translation, but excellent training programs do exist.

Just as for a musician "practice makes perfect," the translator most certainly can and must strive to improve his/her skills through practice. Yet if the untrained translator, like the musician who plays only by ear, lacks the ability and knowledge grounded on a solid theory and methodology to permit a constant vigilance for and analysis of errors, the product will never be totally perfect. As long as so many "translators" are content to work in a relative vacuum without interest in or access to all of the latest advances in applied, contrastive and theoretical linguistics, without a thorough understanding of the nature of language and its role in human communications, and without recognizing that their empirical efforts are often wrong or misleading, then our profession cannot hope to gain the status to which we pay homage.

So, what is the secret recipe for ensuring the success of a translator?

On a very simplified scale, you start by having an aptitude for language, of course. A tone-deaf person rarely succeeds in becoming a musician, and an athlete with two left feet will just be incompetent.

Then you add a suitable level of skill through appropriate training in the requisite translation strategies and techniques, just as a professional musician studies extensively and learns about music theory and performance and the professional athlete will receive expert coaching in his or her sport.

During and after the development of those skills come sufficient practice and experience in translating a wide range of materials. Once again, a successful musician or athlete never achieves excellence without constant practice.

All of this adds up to building competence as a translator, producing someone capable of tackling just about any type of assignment and can "play with the pros."

Therefore, here is our equation for translation success:

Aptitude + Skill + Practice + Experience = Competence

The Translation Process

In the beginning… Even before we attempt to translate a single word, we must read the text carefully and thoroughly. The analysis stage is no less important than finding equivalents in the TL. Anyone who tries to translate without first noting a text's stylistic features faces a futile task. We must always verify the overall distinguishing marks of the text. It is hardly superfluous to insist on this step because a great deal of pragmatic evidence exists to support the popular belief that many translators simply sit down and write without having the foggiest notion of what sort of material is involved, what it demands of them, what language level it reflects, the author's viewpoint, and all the other necessary constituents of the situation. It goes without saying that the consequences of this approach will be a defective translation, lost time from frequent backtracking whenever the translator runs up against some obstacles, plus the need to rewrite a paragraph or even longer pieces of text.

Analysis must entail exploring all possibilities and problems from the translation viewpoint. Some people only read a text out of sheer curiosity or interest in the subject matter, or perhaps to marvel at its novelty and to comment on its literary value, rather than to measure the technical dimensions of the task at hand.

This initial reading must be primarily directed at establishing the situation. As previously explained, the difficulty of any text depends largely on its situation, one of the central concepts of translatology and the basis for theories on translatability (or the absence thereof). To be sure, a translator must have training, but this preliminary analysis step must bring him closer to the possibility, rather than the impossibility, of translating a text.

Thus, the most important result of an initial close reading should be to develop an awareness of what sort of text is involved, as well as its various layers: vocabulary, syntax and inter-sentence grammar. In addition, the translator has to grasp the overall stylistic traits and the text's design and direction.

Textual analysis is quite a complex procedure. Following the identification stage, the next step requires a descriptive analysis directed at pinpointing translation problems and suitable methods for solving those problems. The latter in turn will depend on the text type. If it is for information purposes, a conventional vocabulary and less elaborate discourse style will be in order. Texts of a prescriptive nature (e.g., those giving instructions) will use functional language with certain added psychological effects. And if the work has an expressive bent, the author's personality and creativity must show through in the translation. Most importantly, the translator must perceive the text's characteristics and the entire gamut of factors involved, such as verbal aspect, the significance of tense choice, the manner of typing the discourse together, the frequency and semantic range of exocentric expressions, plus all metalinguistic phenomena requiring adaptation.

One useful, translation-oriented system for classifying different kinds of texts is:

- stresses content: "informative" (e.g., scientific and technical works);
- emphasizes form: "expressive" (e.g., all sorts of literary works);
- seeks to persuade the reader: "exhortative" (e.g., advertising texts).

To these three types we might also add a fourth: "audio-visual" texts, i.e., those which ultimately reach their audience through the public media (theater, film, radio and TV).

In order to handle the diversity of subjects, a translator must have a broad-based educational background in general and specialized fields alike, acquired through formal study, reading and prior translation experience. Few people outside the profession seem to realize that translators always have to keep abreast of every conceivable topic, particularly in new developments and in current events. Experience has clearly shown that in so many cases a translator's decisions are directly influenced by his cultural "maturity" and by the information he must digest on a daily basis. But the task becomes even harder when we realize that it is not merely a matter of assimilating data as such, but rather that it also entails conducting terminology research to locate equivalents for everything learned in the information-gathering process. Nor can a translator limit the type of reading to one level of language, one style or one particular field of application. Needless to say, many translators have been known to use styles inappropriate for the texts being translated. The ability to perceive these differences only comes from reading every conceivable type of material.

Also closely related to the translator's work is information of an extralinguistic nature, as defined in the section on ideal situation. Assuming again that translation involves not just a transfer from one language into another but rather from one culture into another, a translator must be bilingual *and* bicultural. In the case of English-Spanish translation, this does not mean having just a veneer of U.S. culture superimposed on a weak base of Latin American culture, because after a few years nobody can tell exactly which of the two prevails. A bicultural translator is one who has gained total insight into the sociolinguistic phenomena of both the source and the target language.

   Documentation and consultation. Reading and terminology-related research done prior to preparing a translation is what we can call "documentation." Besides having a storehouse of knowledge on general aspects of a subject, the translator must also conduct specific research on the topic covered in any given assignment. This involves reading books, journal articles and previous translations. Glossaries will, of course, prove quite helpful, especially if they list entire phrases and contexts to illustrate the usage of terms. It is essential to analyze the communication context because if we lack information on the exact circumstances under which the original message was communicated, we cannot truly understand the meaning of that message. All of these preliminaries thus help us determine exactly what sort of research we need to do—whether by using printed sources, by consulting colleagues or by conferring with subject-matter experts.

   The second of these approaches can be particularly valuable as an aid to making a translation. Although it might seem logical to assume that every translator would take advantage of such consultation, the fact of the matter remains that it is the least understood and used of all three types of research. Essentially, this is because translators go about consulting others in the wrong way, out of ignorance about how translation actually works. Such errors only prove that intuition or experience alone, no matter how extensive they may be, will not produce satisfactory or correct results. In point of fact, nobody can know something without having first *learned* it. Some translators who have been in the business for over thirty years have yet to understand how to conduct this kind of research.

   When consulting another colleague, a translator should first present the problem in general terms without injecting preconceived notions about possible solutions. Then the colleague should read the text in question without further interruption so that this person, who until then had not been involved in the translation, can fully grasp the situation. Inasmuch as possible, other information should be supplied to help in this task. The colleague should then be left to assimilate everything else from his own reading and analysis of the text.

   It hardly seems necessary to emphasize that the person consulted must not have the situation explained to him in some preconceived manner, or that the possible solution should not be offered, or that any kind of reasoning process involved in reaching that solution should not be revealed. An even more counter-productive attitude is to insist that a better solution than the one already found by the translator seeking help simply does not exist. Translators with sophistic tendencies start defending their views even before they get an answer to their question. If they are so convinced of their infallible judgment, they shouldn't have any reason for seeking help in the first place. The real motive for doing so is to get additional information which will aid us in reaching a decision (but *not* just to confirm a previously made decision).

   Any such interference with the process, as a result of the translator's subjectivity, can cause the person consulted to get the wrong idea about the situation and prevent him from reaching his own decision, since he has no alternative but to jump to conclusions on the basis of suggestions. This sort of consultation can only yield unreliable results because speech is a psychological phenomenon and therefore susceptible to manipulation. In order to offer a useful contribution, the mind of the person consulted must remain total unencumbered by extraneous information or influences.

   The technique used when seeking the advice of subject experts should be directed at getting them to explain the problem terms in their own words without translating or trying to make any of the translator's decisions on meaning and usage. To be sure, full-time salaried translators who work for a given company or institution have a clear advantage over freelancers because they are acquainted with their organization's line of work and are therefore better equipped to identify semantic equivalences in the subject areas translated.

The draft translation. After completing the analysis and documentation stages, the translator can then prepare the draft version. In doing so, all translation principles, strategies and techniques will be applied.

The draft is essential for two reasons. Empirical translators intuitively sense that "two heads are better than one" (this observation having no less validity for being based on empiricism). The draft translation will not be perfect in every respect. Only subsequent editing and revising, as described in the following section, can achieve a higher quality, accuracy and coherence.

This certainly does not mean that the translator has done an imperfect or incomplete job. But it makes little sense to invest more time trying to perfect the draft version at this point because perfection cannot yet be attained. Specifically, the translator's mind is strained by interference and influence from the source language and by problems involved in properly analyzing the message and in coming up with methods required to translate that message into the target language. Those who have done considerable research into this process recommend that the first thing a translator must do is understand what the source text says, then try to forget all about the SL and restructure those ideas in the TL. The translator's main difficulty, of course, rests precisely in being able to forget the SL immediately, in understanding a given passage, and in leaving aside the original language in order to concentrate exclusively on the target language. Thus, the ideal situation is to let the translation rest for at least a day or so before going back to it with a new outlook and a clear mind. Even so, it is hard for the same person who translated a text to view it critically and to make an unbiased evaluation of the immediate problems. This task can be best handled by editors/revisers, who themselves must be competent and experienced translators as well as experts in editing/revising, a process which has its own rules and techniques.

Editing essentially seeks to resolve interference problems and to correct whatever errors may be present as a result of the translator's innate fallibility. A draft translation usually lacks some degree of accuracy, quality and completeness. To become a complete (real) translation, the draft text must be revised or edited, ideally by someone who was not involved in the original translation process and in its immediate and inherent problems. Nevertheless, this division of labor into two phases does not require that two different people come into play. It makes no difference who handles the editing, whether the original translator or a separate reviser, but in any event the first version of the translation will always be just a draft.

There are several scientific reasons for proposing that the work be divided into two stages. The translator labors under various pressures and influences: (a) the foreign language itself; (b) the tension produced between two languages in contact, known as *linguistic interference*; (c) somebody else's ideas that he has to interpret and express in his own words; (d) his own preoccupation with meaning equivalences and correspondences in his native language that constantly act upon his mind; (e) the choice of methods to be used in translating a given text; and (f) in this already overloaded mental state, the impossibility of coping with all these inherent constraints while still carrying out the second stage of the translation activity (revision).

In an analogous situation, a speaker at an international conference once observed that several points passed unnoticed by the experts but did not escape the translators because of their ability to see things that others could not. Similarly, then, editors can perceive certain aspects within a translation because their view remains unhampered by the source language.

On the other hand, the translator should not consider the editor's presence as an excuse for submitting incomplete or sloppy work. The draft translation must be thorough, usable and complete in every detail because, contrary to what many people would like to believe, the editor's task does not involve filling in the gaps left by the translator. The draft translation, therefore, is an almost definitive text. Yet the dividing lines between the two phases are not always clearly defined. The recipient of a draft translation will find it harder to digest and assimilate as a result of the communication overload previously described. The editor's real job is therefore to adapt and shape the draft text so that total comprehension of the message within the given macro-context is ensured.

Critique, evaluation and editing. The Prague school of translation theory provides one of the bases for evaluating translations. It holds that the translation process consists of creating in the TL the closest possible equivalent to the SL message, both in terms of *subject matter* and in *stylistic aspects*.

As a general rule people who are not true translators fail to observe the second part of this definition. They usually think in terms of the first part—rendering an idea from one language into another—and

nothing more. But those who really want to understand the translation process must always bear in mind that the requirement for "the closest possible equivalent" also applies to the style.

The closest *natural* equivalent means that a natural equivalent never produces distortion of the TL usage patterns but rather forms a harmonious whole, which is called the genius of language. The translator operates under the pressure and control of the SL patterns while trying to find TL correspondences. This is why the final product is only a draft. It remains the editor's task to critique and evaluate that product as a whole. This work should not concern itself with minor details and lapses, which are the proofreader's responsibility. Nor should the editor, as many people think, be responsible for verifying the consistency of terminology used in the translation, correcting the punctuation, nor for filling in any gaps left by the translator.

We might compare the editor's work to that performed by the literary critic, who does not concern himself with passing judgment on the author's petty oversights. Rather, his job is to view all dimensions of the work at hand. The translation editor/reviser, therefore, serves as both a "stylist" and a "critic." Translatology thus embraces both the theory and the critique of translation. Consequently, no editor worth his salt finds satisfaction in merely digging for and correcting examples of sloppy writing.

Grammatical and semantic relationships make up an extensive network within the text as a whole. They run a wide gamut of features, from the mere agreement of nouns and adjectives or subjects and verbs, extending out to the complex linking and subordination of sentences and paragraphs, and ending with the literary characteristics and poetics of the translation. All of these depend on the nature of the original text.

At this point the editor can read the original before he begins his examination of the logical development and linking of paragraphs, the thematic movement, syntactic density, sequence of tenses, the manner of presenting and emphasizing major ideas, and all other aspects of the discourse. He must not forget that his principal goal is to check the translation's accuracy. Beyond this basic task, however, the editor's analysis involves both critique and evaluation concurrently, seeking to ensure maximum communication of the ideas. This is where creative skills come into play. In order to make the entire text seem completely natural in the TL, the editor must possess a profound sensitivity to the language and to its literature, plus a high degree of competence in translation techniques in order to judge whether the original translator used those techniques correctly and in accordance with the nature of the text. Contrary to what many editors have been known to do, a word-for-word or line-by-line check of the translation will not achieve this goal.

From the foregoing description of an editor's responsibilities, it should be evident that the editor occupies a more "advantageous" position than the translator does. Yet this fact constitutes the *raison d'être* and fundamental principle behind the editing/revising process. An apt comparison by Julio Casares offers us even greater insight: "Translation is like going through customs; if the inspection officers don't keep a sharp eye on things, more foreign contraband slips past them than at any other linguistic border" (*Babel* 2, 5-7). An experienced translator or editor/reviser who is responsible for this task has a distinct advantage in being able to rid the translation of SL influences, whereas the original translator must be concerned with more immediate problems involved in the micro-contexts, with making the transfer itself, and with using the proper techniques.

Our earlier remarks on the effectiveness of language noted that the translator must not be fettered by any ulterior motives, prejudices or other subjective attitudes which might distort the true intent of the text being translated. His relationship to the subject matter, however, tends to create subconscious biases in his mind, and these can be transferred into the TL text, thus influencing its overall effect. Obviously, then, the translator has to overcome such biased attitudes. Otherwise, maintaining an objective and impartial outlook can become a serious impediment to translation.

This lack of objectivity can result not only from aspects having a direct or indirect impact on the translator's personal interests but also from anything that causes an emotional reaction. In such instances, the translator cannot remain neutral, will get carried away by his enthusiasm (or lack thereof), and will thus become involved in the subject matter and add subjective elements to it. In other words, the translator does not approach the subject in the way we have tried to teach in this book, even though this attitude may well be unintentional. The editor, however, will lack such direct emotional involvement in the immediate translation problems and can therefore view the situation with an open and clear mind. Essen-

tially, then, during the actual translation process the translator operates more at the foreign-language level, while the editor can look at the text in both languages.

Stumbling blocks present in the editing/revising of translations. We are gradually beginning to realize just how many critical and multi-dimensional factors play a role in the critique and evaluation of translations. To be sure, our primary concern will remain the accuracy and fidelity of communication in every aspect. Given the somewhat broad gray areas existing between literal and decentered translation, an editor must come face to face with all the "stumbling blocks" caused by the first type's inherent lack of clarity, as well as the extremes produced by the second approach. The editor's task must then be to seek out and establish some balance; although not absolute, it must be suited to the subject matter.

Less experienced translators will generally erect even more obstacles in the editor's path, especially if they have not learned the essentials of applied translatology. Therefore, the editor must perform all the work required for clarification, explicitation, amplification and compensation of the unclear passages resulting from the use of literal techniques. He must also impose limits if the translator has overstepped or misused the available stylistic options by failing to observe the confines of the discourse.

Few translation users seem to realize just how hard it can be to produce a good style by merely rewriting a draft translation made by an incompetent person (hardly a rare occurrence). Actually, the quality of such translations can be readily ascertained by applying the criteria outlined for the critique and evaluation of translation.

In the absence of proper techniques, the translator will unquestionably make the wrong choices. In all sincerity we believe that these reasons underscore the great importance of this book for all translators. The more we use scientific principles and linguistic-based methods for our translations, the less divergent and chaotic these will tend to be. Good translations never become obsolete. But literary criticism does because each critic takes a different approach. Only bad translations tend to vary perceptibly from one translator to another. Thus it is so important for the translator to have an understanding of not only his own work but also that of the editor. The ongoing and ever-present antagonism among empirical translators largely stems from the fact that none of them really understand their own task. However, translators who have successfully learned and applied scientific methods and procedures have shown a remarkable and radical change in their attitudes. The sort of editing that consists solely of noting errors and criticizing the work of others must be considered outmoded. Translators are fed up with it. We must concern ourselves with principles and methods instead of finding fault with one error or another. Lacking this systematic approach, translators cannot even understand why their initial product is just a draft or why the editor occasionally has to make drastic changes in that preliminary version.

Nevertheless, translators who have received their training in linguistic-oriented translation strategies will only be concerned with knowing the principle behind some particular change so that this knowledge will enable them to perfect their skills. These translators realize what the editor/reviser's role is supposed to be—to act without outside pressures and thus to achieve greater insight into the text's total meaning. Once we arrive at this stage of understanding through the cooperative rather than antagonistic efforts of translators and editors, we will also stand on the threshold of another major breakthrough in effective translation—teamwork.

This approach can greatly benefit companies and other organizations that employ a staff of translators. Both translators and revisers must work together in a cooperative spirit so that they can perform the work entrusted to them. We translators are all responsible for transmitting ideas and viewpoints throughout the world. All nations and cultures come to understand one another better through our work. Thus, our intellectual integrity demands that we make use of every conceivable tool placed at our disposal by linguistic science so that we do not falsify or distort the message which our readers justifiably expect to receive with the highest degree of fidelity, accuracy and authenticity.

The stages of editing/revising. The editing/revising process will take place approximately as follows:

(1)   Reading the TL version (i.e., draft translation) to get an overview of the subject and style.

(2)   Reading the SL text, focusing on its macro-structure (paragraphs and even entire chapters). This overall view is helpful for understanding the general situation. The reader should avoid being influenced by the draft translation and getting sidetracked from the SL text's exact pur-

pose (informative, creative, persuasive or instructive). The use of decentered translation should coincide as closely as possible to the socio-professional language level. As noted in our discussion of compensation and stylistic equivalence, each type and level of text has its own tone. Failure to perceive the total message properly could result in using the wrong tone.

(3)   Comparing the two texts to check the accuracy of equivalents and of the translation as a whole.

(4)   Final reading of the translation, making whatever editorial changes are deemed necessary to produce complete cohesiveness and intelligibility. Special attention must be paid to the dialectic units in order to ensure a logical thought sequence. The editorial changes will also seek to lend fresh qualities to the translation by inserting current expressions. As Emilio Lorenzo has pointed out, language is not static but rather in constant flux. For this reason, no translation should contain lexical or structural archaisms, just as a modern letter should not be written in fifteenth-century formulaic language. In this regard, correct usage and semotactic combinations are extremely important so that the communications channels do not become overloaded with elements which interfere with assimilation of the message. In short, this final reading serves to determine whether communication occurs effectively and naturally.

Another way of evaluating translations is the *back-translation* method. Obviously, this involves translating from the TL text back into the original language. A justifiable margin of freedom or dilution (called *entropy*) will always exist, especially when the translator has made use of compensation. This degree of entropy must remain at a minimum and should never go so far that it causes distortion. Many times entropy can be a dangerous way of gauging translation accuracy because it largely depends on what linking devices, as based on the dialectic units, are used for sentences and themes. These connective elements perform an extremely important role in achieving full comprehension of the text. In fact, they resist checking accuracy by back-translation because they are frequently not reversible due to their lack of systematic usage. Some solutions are relative and require literary creativity. The correct choice in a back-translation proves quite difficult to make because, like prepositions, only a small number of connecting elements exist in any one language and these must therefore perform many functions.

However, despite these disadvantages, back-translation should be used to check the accuracy of relatively short but critical texts such as treaties, laws, resolutions, principles, declarations and others of a political and policy-making nature. Reading a text aloud is not a recommended method of checking its accuracy because written language differs from spoken language. The latter contains elements not present in the former. Such suprasegmental features as intonation, pitch, juncture (pauses), body language and so forth simply do not appear in the surface structure of written language. When a translator reads a text out loud, he unconsciously gives it his own preconceived intonation and juncture features where they occurred in his mind during the translation process. But if someone other than the translator reads the same text without intonation or pauses, he may not interpret the meaning and stresses in the same way the translator did.

One method that has yielded good results is to have the translation read by other translators who were not involved in its preparation. Their reactions upon reading the text to themselves gives a good idea of whether they had any trouble understanding it or if their interpretation differed from what the original said. This approach will work for both brief texts and the more complex and uneven sections of longer works.

But experience has shown that novice and seasoned translators alike remain largely ignorant of this method and even resist using it. Those with a solipsistic bent generally insist on their colleagues telling them that the proposed solution is the only and best one. And if this opinion fails to materialize, these translators try to persuade the other reader with a new line of argument, asserting that they have checked out all the possibilities and could not come up with a better translation. The expert translator's acumen, however, makes him stop to think through his analysis and to make a new translation whenever he discerns even the slightest hesitation on the part of his colleague(s) concerning the interpretation of the mes-

sage. Essentially, then, a translator who works in isolation commits the most errors and most often falls victim to his own subjectivity.

    Last but not least: translating titles. Whether in the translation process or in the editing stage, titles should always be left until last. This little-known and sorely neglected unique science causes the greatest translation headaches. Titles must derive from viewing the text as a whole and therefore fall within the editor's scope of work. They depend on metalinguistic more than purely linguistic factors. For this reason, title translation can only succeed when we apply adaptation, equivalence and modulation techniques. A title purports to encompass the entire semantic universe or the "punch" of a text. However, this does not mean that all titles must necessarily be replaced with others which reveal nothing of the original message, as is so often the case with movie titles. For example, the Spanish "translation" of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* is **Fiesta**, but this hardly constitutes an adaptation but rather a complete replacement of the original. Leaving aside this sort of extreme case, title translation does entail certain decentering strategies.

Translation Misconceptions

Translation is occasionally taken too lightly by some. However, translation is in fact a serious business that should be approached sensibly in order to avoid poor results. Before starting a project that involves translation bear in mind the following misconceptions regarding translation.

If you know a foreign language, you can be a translator.

This is perhaps the most common translation misconception and the most damaging one. Being able to read, speak and write a foreign language does not give anyone license to undertake translation work. Firstly, a translator must have in-depth understanding and knowledge of at least two languages: a foreign language and a mother tongue. Secondly, translating is a skill. You must be able to write well and have an excellent command of the nuances in language use. Thirdly, language is not free of cultural influences. If the culture behind the language which is being translated is not appreciated, an accurate translation is extremely difficult.

Translating is easy.

Translation is far from easy. It can be very intricate, complex and arduous work. Having to simultaneously concentrate on two different texts is mentally exhausting. This is because a translator is continuously moving between two languages and mind frames. A translator must first read and register source information then manage to digest it and present it accurately in the target language. This means having an excellent vocabulary and appreciating the subtleties in language such as phrases, metaphors, tone and intention.

Computers can now do translations.

No translation program can and ever will be able to take the place of a human translators. This is because computers do not understand what language is, how it is used, the subtleties within it and the ever changing use of it. Computers may be able to translate simple one-dimensional sentences but they will never be able to tackle the complexities within literature or technical texts.

Having a professional translation is not crucial.

It may be true that professional translators are not always necessary, however if the translation is to be accurate and professionally prepared and presented then an experienced translator is crucial. Bad translations lead to many problems including people misunderstanding texts which ultimately reflect poorly on a company or organization. If you want your car fixed you take it to a mechanic, not a car salesman. He may know a bit about cars but not enough to address your problems properly.

Writing and Translation

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Writing plays a very important role in any translation. Since a translation happens in a context and implies the transposition of a source text into a target text, this must fulfill the same constraints of an original text written in the target language. (Aksoy 2001)

In translation, a deep knowledge on the source and target language writing system would provide a clear way to decode and properly encode a message. In fact, writing is important for translating, just as important as reading is. Since the former one helps the translator to express the ideas of the source language and the latter one to comprehend the whole message.

Writing should not be understood as a series of words in a page, even when a simple word can work as a complete sentence. It should not be understood as a series of sentences or a series of ideas, but it should be understood as the organization of ideas by means of interjections, words or sentences fixed in a writing system.

If a superficial analysis on the Spanish and English writing system is done, the punctuation aspect would be the first which presents specific as well as notorious differences. For instance, Spanish requires an initial question mark as well as an exclamation mark. In a dialogue, the change of character, in Spanish, is normally introduced by a long hyphen while in English it is introduced by inverted commas or quotations.

On the other hand, there is a sign which is inexistent in the Spanish system and that is the very used one in English, i.e., the apostrophe. Both languages have their own way to call for attention. In Spanish, strange words can be highlighted by quotations, parenthesis or script writing; in English we normally use inverted commas. (Newmark 1988:171)

In dressing the ideas in sentences, each language organizes the words in different form and length. English texts normally have short sentences structured in a passive form and with a compulsory subject/pronoun. Furthermore, in a very rigid structure. Spanish, on the other hand, uses large sentences, explanatory clauses joined by connectors, using indistinctly active structure or the reflexive passive and a complete omission of pronoun unless for emphasis.

These differences go further, in paragraphing Spanish requires larger paragraphs than English. While a paragraph is quite laconic in English, it is more explicative in Spanish. A paragraph in Spanish normally starts with a verb, a reflexive pronoun or any other element, while in English it almost always starts with a subject, an object, a personal pronoun or a gerund. Stylistically, a paragraph in Spanish is always justified while in English it is not a rule.

However, not everything is difference in both languages, and there are, at least three common elements: agreement, coherence, and cohesion. For a text to be understood it must not lack any of these three elements or it would be weird to the reader, and it would represent a great challenge for a translator to translate the message from the source text into the target text.

As a sum, to properly translate, it is necessary to know both writing systems (English / Spanish), be familiar with similar and different use and usage of punctuation marks, translate ideas instead of words, sentences or structures, but fixed in the appropriate writing constraint, write the whole translation in accordance to the target language system, and "[e]very translation should sound as if it never existed in a foreign language." (Brockbank 2001)

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Interagency Language Roundtable
Skill Level Descriptions for Translation

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PREFACE

Translation is the process of transferring information from one language into another. The term "translation" is normally reserved for trans-language renditions of written documents. Translation is therefore distinct from interpretation, which refers to trans-language oral exchanges. While there are correspondences between translation and interpretation skills, the following only applies to document-to-document renderings.

Bilingual competence is a prerequisite for any translation task: the translator must be able to (1) read and comprehend the source language and (2) write comprehensibly in the target language.

Given these prerequisites, the translator must also be able to (3) choose the equivalent expression in the target language that both fully conveys and best matches the meaning intended in the source language (referred to as *congruity judgment*).

A weakness in any of these three abilities will influence performance adversely. Therefore, all three must be considered when assessing translation skills.

As translation tasks run from simpler to more complex, the individual's performance range depends on the degree to which competence in (1) reading the source language and (2) writing in the target language combines with (3) congruity judgment in order to produce a rendition useful to a reader not familiar with the source language.

From the standpoint of the user, a successful translation is one which transfers information or conveys the meaning of the source language as fully and accurately as possible into the target language.

Ideally, translators should be assigned to tasks within their performance range. To facilitate this correspondence, the Skill Level Descriptions for Translation are divided into three bands: Minimal Performance (levels 0+ to 1+), Limited Performance (levels 2 and 2+), and Professional Performance (levels 3 to 5).

Examples of tasks appropriate for each level are provided, and each level implies control of all previous levels' functions. The "plus level" designation is used to describe performance that substantially exceeds the criteria for the next level. At the lower levels, the individual's performance suffers from a weakness in any or all of the requisite skills for translation. It is at the Professional Level 3 (or above) that these skills align to enable production of a translation that is both accurate and reliable. Accordingly, the need for product review and oversight diminishes as the performance level rises. Nonetheless, any translation of potential importance should, to the extent possible, be subject to review for accuracy by another qualified individual.

Throughout the scale, various non-linguistic factors may also affect performance, such as familiarity with the subject matter and the socio-cultural aspects of either or both source and target languages. Given previous knowledge of these factors of appropriate training, an individual at the minimal or limited performance levels may be able in certain instances to produce useful renditions of various texts. On the other hand, an otherwise skilled translator who lacks subject-matter knowledge or who is unfamiliar with certain socio-cultural aspects may provide an unreliable translation of some points.

Moreover, analytical and research skills as well as adeptness in using translation tools and resources (such as monolingual dictionaries and glossaries, on-line aids, consultation with experts) may allow the individual to proceed in a methodical fashion and verify the appropriateness of the equivalents chosen.

It must be noted that language tasks often associated with translation, such as gisting or summarizing a text, are not included as tasks affecting translation skill levels, since such tasks represent skills separate from translation skills, not necessarily related to an individual's translation performance.

The prerequisite bilingual skills for translation (reading in the source language and writing in the target language) can be tested separately from translation skills. Testing these prerequisite skills should provide a preliminary indication of translation capability. However, if a translation score is desired, a translation test should be used that measures the individual's congruity judgment.

■■

Performance Level 0

Has no practical ability to transfer information from one language to another.

Minimal Performance Level 0+

Able to recognize and transfer very little information from one language into another, usually representing isolated words and phrases. Accuracy is haphazard.

Minimal Performance Level 1

Ability limited to word-by-word transfers. May be able to identify documents by their label or headings and scan graphic materials for items of specific interest, but meanings may sometimes be inaccurately rendered.

Minimal Performance Level 1+

Able to scan source-language texts for specific categories, topics, key points and/or main ideas, generally rendering an accurate report on these but often missing supporting facts and details. Can to some extent render factual materials, such as records or databases, often relying on real-world knowledge or familiarity with the subject matter.

Limited Performance Level 2

Able to render into the target language straightforward, factual texts in the standard variety of the source language. Can typically render uncomplicated prose, such as that used in short biographical data documents, police reports, simple letters, instructions and some training manuals. Can normally rely on knowledge of the subject matter to operate within one given subject field, consisting of a narrow body of material that is routine, repetitive, and often predictable. Expression in the target language may be faulty, frequently reflecting the structure and word order of the source language.

Limited Performance Level 2+

Can render straightforward texts dealing with everyday matters that include statements of fact as well as some judgments, opinions, or other elements that entail more than direct exposition. In these types of texts, the individual can read source-language materials and render them accurately into the target language, conveying the key points and/or main ideas, supporting facts, most of the details, and some nuances. Can usually operate in at least two narrowly defined subject fields, using both linguistic knowledge

of the languages involved and familiarity with the subject matter, often relying on the latter to solve any translation problems. A tendency to adhere to source-language structures may result in target-language expressions that may be correct but appear awkward and perhaps non-native.

Professional Performance Level 3

Can successfully translate texts that contain not only facts but also abstract language, some situations and events that are subject to value judgments of a personal or institutional kind (as in newspaper editorials, propaganda documents, critiques of tasks or projects, and colloquial writings) and capture their intended implications and many nuances. Linguistic knowledge of both the terminology and the means of expression specific to a subject field are strong enough to allow the translator to operate successfully in that field. Word choice and expression generally adhere to target-language norms.

Professional Performance Level 3+

Can successfully translate a variety of texts, such as scientific or financial reports, some legal documents and most colloquial writings. Can convey the meaning of many socio-cultural elements embedded in a text as well as most nuances and relatively infrequent lexical and syntactic constructions of the source language. May be able to operate in fields outside areas of specialty.

Professional Performance Level 4

Can successfully translate a variety of complex texts containing difficult, abstract, idiomatic, and colloquial writing, ranging from treaties and diplomatic communications to commentary reflecting someone's culture to analysis and argumentation, capturing subtleties, nuances, tone, and register (such as official, formal, and informal language). Linguistic knowledge and familiarity with the source-language norms enable an individual at this level to read and translate handwritten documents and texts that represent spontaneous expression characteristic of native speakers. Can translate materials outside the individual's specialties, but may not reach the absolute subject-matter accuracy of the specialist in the given field.

Professional Performance Level 4+

Can successfully translate texts that contain highly original and special-purpose language (such as that contained in religious sermons, literature, and poetry). At this level, a successful performance requires not only conveying content and register but also capturing to the greatest extent all nuances intended in the source document. Can produce fully accurate translations in a number of subject fields. When the need arises to perform in areas outside of specialization, a translator at this level is able to reach a successful level of performance given the time necessary for acquiring the corresponding knowledge of the subject matter.

Professional Performance Level 5

Can translate successfully texts where lack of linguistic and cultural parallelism between the source language and the target language requires congruity judgments. A level 5 consistently excels in a number of specialties and is generally regarded as one of the arbiters of translating very high-level language by persons competent in dealing with such material.

TRANSLATION CHECKLIST

You <u>must</u> have a checklist of things to do with each and every translation before you send it off to a client. At the very least, this should include the following:

   1. Terminology research: When in doubt, look it up! (Even when you're not in doubt, it's good to double-check!)

   2. Edit: Check the translation against the original sentence by sentence. Is the meaning reflected accurately?

   3. Read the translation: Does it read well and sound natural? It's best to proofread a printout, not on screen.

   4. Formatting: Is the layout consistent with the original? Have you recreated tables, etc. where appropriate?

   5. Spell check: This is an absolute must! Theirs know reason knot too cheque you're spelling!

   6. Double-check conversions of currencies, measurements, temperatures, etc. where appropriate.

   7. Delivery: Make sure the translation is in the required format and delivered on time!

   8. Request confirmation of receipt from your client.

Invoicing

Correct invoicing for the work that you do as a freelance translator is important. The follow information to be included on your invoice is considered standard and basic. There may be additional information that is needed if you are working outside of the United States (e.g., National Identity number, etc.).

– Your name or company name (if you have your own company)
– Address
– Name and address of client
– Date of invoice
– Invoice number
– Reference number (if your client has one and needs it on the invoice)
– Short description of task and name of document
– Language pair and direction (e.g., Spanish > English)
– Per word rate for translation; hourly rate for editing (if this is the task you are invoicing for)
– Total word count of target language text (unless stipulated otherwise by an agreement between you and your client)
– Total amount billed to client
– Means of payment (check, bank transfer, etc.)
– Payment information, if necessary (e.g., bank name, account & routing number)
– Terms of payment (30 days, 45 days, etc.)
– Penalty for late payment

Ten Basic Principles for Translators

(in no special order of relative importance)

1. Translation is an intellectual process, not a mechanical, non-thinking activity.

2. Not all source texts are 100% perfect, so it's always necessary to be watchful for anomalies.

3. No two languages express the same ideas or concepts in exactly the same way. This includes document formats and punctuation usage.

4. A professional translator must always be aware of the different stylistic alternatives available in the target language, so it's not a good idea to assume that the first option is the only one, the best one or even the most correct one.

5. In contrast to stylistic alternatives, there are many things in any language which are obligatory and not optional. It is therefore essential to recognize the difference when translating.

6. As is the case with second-language acquisition, linguistic interference can often be a serious impediment to achieving a natural-sounding and accurate target-language rendering.

7. Ideas and concepts are more important than words because words are just the *surface* manifestation of thought.

8. Translate with your ears as much as (if not more than) with your eyes.

9. Most source texts (or clients) never give you all the information that you really need for producing a totally accurate translation. This means that you must go beyond the source text and acquire a broad understanding of the contextual framework and subject matter involved.

10. The first and most critical step in any translation project is to analyze and fully comprehend the source text from every conceivable angle (e.g., linguistic, semantic, subject matter, register, etc.).