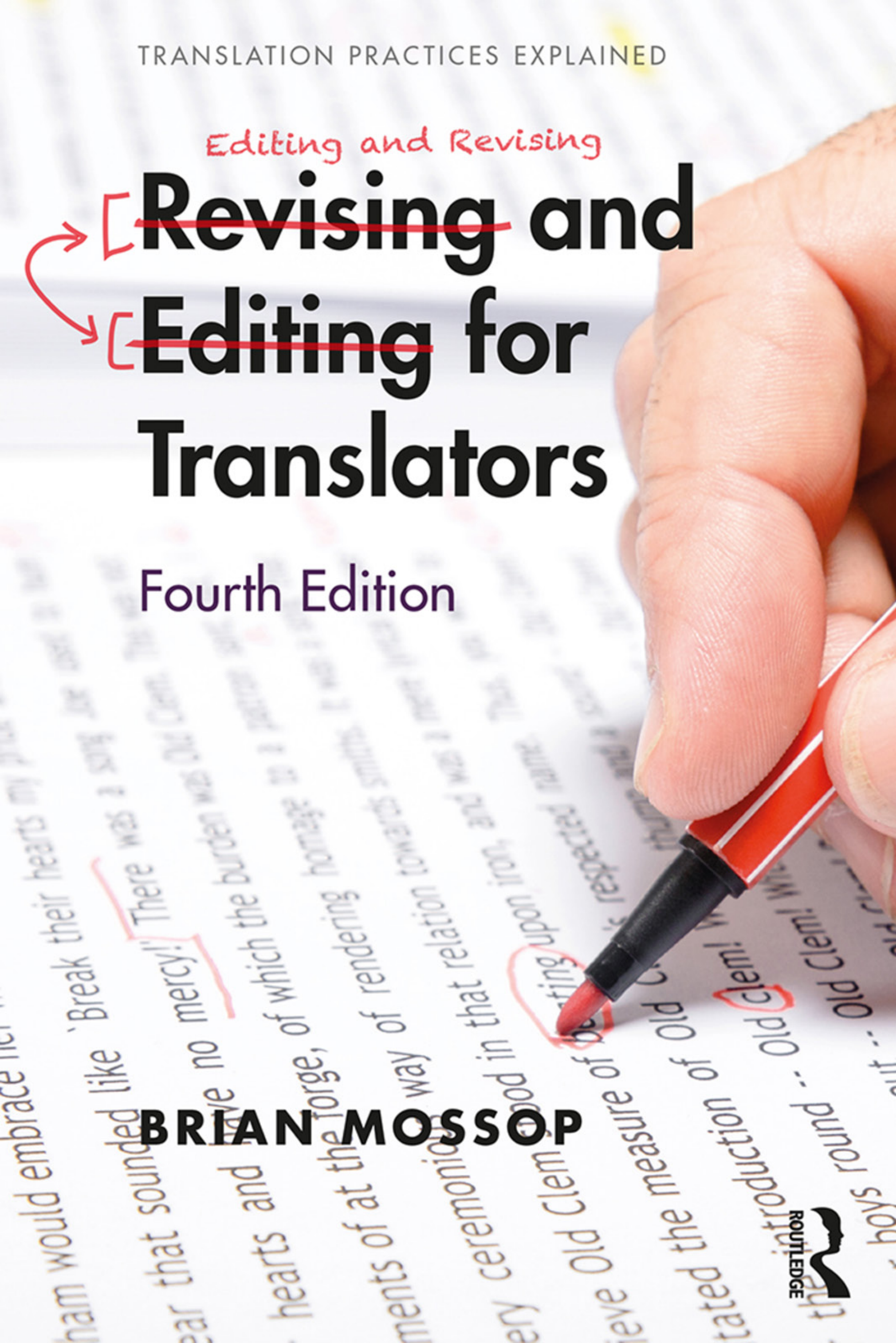
TRANSLATION PRACTICES EXPLAINED

Editing and Revising

~~Revising~~ and ~~Editing~~ for Translators

Fourth Edition



BRIAN MOSSOP

ROUTLEDGE

Revising and Editing for Translators

Revising and Editing for Translators provides guidance and learning materials for translation students and professional translators learning to revise the work of others or edit original writing, and those wishing to improve their self-revision ability. Revising and editing are seen as reading skills aimed at spotting problematic passages. Changes are then made to meet some standard of quality that varies with the text and to tailor the text to its readership.

Mossop offers in-depth coverage of a wide range of topics, including copyediting, stylistic editing, checking for consistency, revising procedures and principles, and translation quality assessment—all related to the professional situations in which revisers and editors work. This revised fourth edition provides new chapters on revising machine outputs and news trans-editing, a new section on reviser competencies, and a completely new grading scheme for assignments.

The inclusion of suggested activities and exercises, numerous real-world examples, and a reference glossary make this an indispensable coursebook for professional translation programmes.

Brian Mossop was a French-to-English translator, reviser and trainer at the Canadian Government's Translation Bureau from 1974 to 2014. He continues to lead workshops and webinars on revision in Canada and abroad. Since 1980, he has also been a part-time instructor at the York University School of Translation in Toronto, teaching revision, scientific translation, translation theory and translation into the second language.

Translation Practices Explained

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Translation Practices Explained is a series of coursebooks designed to help self-learners and students on translation and interpreting courses. Each volume focuses on a specific aspect of professional translation and interpreting practice, usually corresponding to courses available in translator- and interpreter-training institutions. The authors are practising translators, interpreters, and/or translator or interpreter trainers. Although specialists, they explain their professional insights in a manner accessible to the wider learning public.

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Fourth edition

Brian Mossop with Jungmin Hong and Carlos Teixeira

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Finally, many thanks to Jungmin Hong for Chapter 7 on trans-editing and Carlos Teixeira for Chapter 16 on post-editing.

Introduction for all readers

This book aims to provide guidance and learning materials for two groups of users. The first group consists of translation students and professional translators who wish to improve their ability to check and amend their own translations ('self-revision') or translations prepared by others ('other-revision'), whether these translations were generated directly in a translator's mind or with the assistance of Translation Memory or Machine Translation. The second group is made up of translation students who are learning to edit original writing by others, especially by authors working in their second language.

One aim of the book is to encourage you to *think about revision,* not just do it. Thinking about revision is important because that will force you to think about translation *quality.*

Revision is essential because every translator makes mistakes, often big mistakes. Also, national and international translation standards recognize that every translation should be self-revised after it's drafted, and that some if not all translations should be revised by a second translator.

In this book, revising means reading a translation in order to spot problematic passages, and then making or recommending any corrections or improvements that are needed to meet some standard of quality. A source text in another language is always available for consultation.

Editing is this same reading task applied to texts which are not translations, or texts which happen to be translations but are checked and corrected as if they were original writing, with no reference to a source text in another language.

Revising and editing are first and foremost exercises in very careful reading. You can't correct errors until you've found them! It's very easy to simply not notice problems. *The purpose of revision is not to make changes; it's to notice problems. A reviser's most important skill is the skill of spotting problems while reading.*

Revision is done by people such as employees of a translation agency who check translations done by contractors, or two freelance translators who check each other's work. Editing work is done by non-translators such as a publisher's copyeditor or a freelance editor, or by people who happen to be translators but have been commissioned to act as editors.

Self-revision, other-revision and editing have much in common. They all involve checking linguistic correctness as well as the suitability of a text's style for its future readers and for the use they will make of it. Much of what you do when revising is identical to what you do when editing. Whether you are editing original writing or revising a translation, you may decide to amend an awkward wording, for example. In either case, you have to make sure that you do not change the author's meaning while eliminating the awkwardness. That said, there are of course differences. Revisers will often come across wordings that are unidiomatic as a result of interference from the source language—a problem which editors will encounter only if the writer is not a native speaker of the language of the text. Revisers must also find and correct mistranslations and omissions—parts of the source text that were overlooked when the translation was drafted.

Another thing revising and editing have in common is that they are simultaneously linguistic and business processes. They are governed not just by language conventions but also by considerations of cost-effectiveness. If you make your living in part by revising or editing, then you will not be able to think only of linguistic quality; you will also need to think about how many words you are getting through per unit time. These two aspects, you will discover, are not infrequently in conflict.

One can imagine a definition that covers both revising and editing: reading any existing wording and deciding whether to make changes. However, despite the above similarities, 'reviser' and 'editor' are not really parallel terms. Both words can be used simply to refer either to someone who happens to be checking and amending a text, or else to someone whose function it is to do so, but 'editor' is more commonly used to name a profession. In many countries, there are editors' associations which are quite separate from writers' associations, but there are no revisers' associations separate from translators' associations. 'Reviser' is not the name of a profession; the activity or function of translation revision has developed historically as part of the profession of translator, though some translators may spend much or even all of their time revising. The relationship between writer and editor is therefore different from the relationship between translator and reviser, which might be better described as a relationship between the drafting translator and the revising translator.

In addition, in some countries, translators and editors live in completely separate professional worlds, with little contact between translators' and editors' organizations. In other countries, they have close professional relationships, and translators' and editors' organizations may have overlapping memberships: it may be unusual for someone to be a translator and not also an editor.

As will be seen in Chapter 2, a professional editor may engage in a huge range of tasks, from finding authors to discussing typographical details with printers. An editor may decide to recommend or insist on changes which would fall outside the purview of a translation reviser: delete whole sections, or rewrite them with new content. The treatment of editing in this book, however, is restricted to a fairly narrow range of activities: copyediting, stylistic editing and certain aspects of structural and content editing. The selection of editing topics, and the amount of attention accorded them, is governed by a simple principle: to the extent that an editing skill is also needed by revisers of translations, to that extent it is included. That is why this book is entitled *Revising and Editing* ***for Translators***, and it is a feature that distinguishes the book from other treatments of editing.

When translation students graduate, they may find—depending on their language pair and the local translation market—that they cannot earn an adequate income from translation alone. They will be in a better position if they can accept related work such as editing or technical writing. Many people today do several kinds of work. A native English speaker resident in the Netherlands may translate from Dutch to English, revise Dutch-English translations, edit material written in English by Dutch speakers, and write original English material for Dutch companies.

Employers often want to hire 'translator-editors', reflecting the fact that in organizations such as corporations and ministries, translation production is integrated into the general process of producing print and electronic documents. Here are descriptions of two translator-editor positions in Canada, the first in a government agency, the second at a science centre:

> Translate, revise, standardize and re-write public and internal documents such as reports, announcements, decisions, ministerial orders, brochures, press releases, memos, etc. for employees and managers of the Agency. Coordinate requests for translation and revision for the Agency. Coordinate the preparation of briefing notes for the Minister and, when the responsible person is absent, of ministerial and executive correspondence.

> Research, write, edit French copy related to scientific technological exhibits and programs for visiting or virtual public. Produce small publications, write for websites, copyedit, translate English material with extensive scientific content into clear, interesting, understandable French copy and meet deadlines.

The editing sections of this book should be of use to anyone who will be doing work of the sort just described. As for the revision sections, they will assist students in degree or diploma translation programs, practising translators who are assigned to revise others, and self-learners who wish to accept freelance revision work. The revision part of the book may also prove instructive to people who manage translation services but are not themselves professional translators.

Professionals who have a degree in translation may recall their teachers telling them how important it is to check their translations, that is, to self-revise. But if they look back at their textbooks, they will see that little or no substantive advice is given about just how to do this. They may never have learned any actual principles or procedures for self-revision. If they have been practising professionals for some time, they will have developed some procedure or other, but they may never have formulated it and looked at it critically. Is it achieving the desired purpose, and just what is that desired purpose?

The same applies to revising others, and to setting up or implementing quality control systems. It is important to think about the concepts involved (Just what *is* quality?) and about the procedures that will be used to achieve quality. New revisers tend to waste a great deal of time making unnecessary changes in texts. If they are to overcome this problem, and be able to decide what is necessary and what is not, they must clearly formulate in their minds the goals of revision.

In day-to-day work, of course, one proceeds to a great degree without conscious thought. As one revises or self-revises, one does not think: now I shall consider point 5 on my style checklist, and now I shall go on to point 6. However, if you have reason to believe that your procedures are not catching errors, or if you think (or your supervisor thinks!) that you are taking too long to check a text, then perhaps you need to bring your procedures to the mental surface—spell them out and then consider them in the light of certain principles. This book is intended to help you do so.

Translating by revising

With the spread of Translation Memory, learning to revise translations by other people is becoming more important than it used to be. Memories typically contain translations prepared by a large number of other translators. When material from these databases is imported into the translation on which a translator is currently working, he or she must decide to what degree the imported wording is useable in the current context. It may be necessary to make changes for a variety of reasons: the meaning of the imported material is somewhat different from the meaning of the current source text; the imported material is stylistically inconsistent with the translator's own wordings; there is a lack of cohesion between an imported sentence and the previous or following sentence; different imported sentences are not consistent with each other in terminology or phraseology. When a great deal of material is imported from the memory's database, the task of translating becomes, to a great extent, an exercise in revising other people's wordings rather than an exercise in composing sentences in the target language. Translators who use Memory thus need to develop a reviser/editor mentality rather than the mentality of a text composer.

While the above tasks need to be performed even when importing material from a Memory that contains nothing but the translator's own previous translations, the revision burden is greater when importing wordings written by others since there is far less certainty about the reliability of the work done by the other translators. There may be pressure on translators to use the imported wordings in order to save time, even though corporate memories are notorious disseminators of mistranslations. In any situation where there is a growing volume of material that needs translating, but an insufficient number of translators, there will inevitably be a tendency to modify the concept of what counts as acceptable final quality in order to reflect what the translators are able to achieve with the assistance of the particular technologies they are using.

Aside from Memories, translators working in many language pairs and genres now have access to editable Machine Translation output, and this too calls for people to revise wordings that are not their own.

What this book is not

The book is not intended to form the self-editing component of a writing course. The users of the editing chapters are, after all, students in a professional language programme. Presumably they are already quite good at writing in their own language, and good writing of course requires good self-editing. In the revision part of the book, however, self-revision is included because many working translators are not efficient self-revisers, and also because very little has been written about the practical details of self-revision.

This is not a workbook. Many chapters end with descriptions of exercises, and a few include exercises on short sentences or sentence fragments. However there are no complete texts, for that would have made the book much longer (and more expensive!), and my text selection might not have been found suitable by many instructors. Additional exercises will, however, be made available at the Routledge Translation Studies Portal and more will be added as time passes, including full-text exercises and, I hope, revision and editing exercises in languages other than English.

The book presumes a basic knowledge of grammar. It does not explain what a subordinate clause is, or give instruction on how to identify the subject of a sentence. When editing and revising the work of others, it is often necessary to explain why a change has been made, and that calls for some knowledge of grammatical structure and terminology. All translation students would be well advised to take an introductory course in linguistics, for this will give them concepts and terms with which to think about and talk about language.

The book is not a guide to writing do's and don't's. It offers no advice on the correct use of semicolons, on how to avoid sexist language, or on whether a sentence can begin with 'and'. These, and a thousand and one similar issues, are the subject of innumerable writers' handbooks that can be found on the reference shelves of most bookstores. Naturally the exercises in this book call for a knowledge of these substantive matters, but the body of each chapter focuses on principles and procedures.

The book is not a review of the problems of translation. In the course of revising, one is faced with the need not merely to identify errors but also to correct them. To do so, one obviously needs to have the full range of text-interpreting, researching, composing and computer skills that are required of a translator. These matters are discussed only to the extent that they apply in a special way to the revising process as opposed to the translation drafting process.

The book does not cover the creation of a visual form for the text: desktop publishing and page layout of text and graphics are not discussed. Certain matters of visual presentation are mentioned briefly, such as consistency in typography and in the form and placement of headings and subheadings, but the production of the physical print or on-line document containing the translation is beyond the scope of this book. There is also no coverage of the processes of marking up a manuscript (nowadays usually a Word file) for the printer and checking the printer's output (nowadays often a .pdf file).

The book is not concerned with the editing of literary texts or the revision of literary translations. Literary texts can conveniently be defined as fictional or non-fictional writing in which named individuals engage in self-expression on their own behalf. Part of the value of such texts often lies in the particular linguistic forms selected. A non-literary text by contrast is typically anonymous, or else written by a named individual on behalf of an institution, and the linguistic form is of no value in itself; indeed, in current English, the ideal with such texts is for the linguistic form to be transparent—unnoticed by the reader—except with marketing materials. The checking and amending of literary translations takes place within a commercial publishing environment that differs from that of the translation departments and agencies within which non-literary texts are revised.

With one exception, the book does not cover the various kinds of adaptation, which deviate from the norms of accuracy and few additions/few subtractions that usually govern non-literary translation. This sort of work is done under various names: transcreation (of advertising), localization (of websites, software and video games, with attendant technological complexities), trans-editing (of news reports) or even translation (of Wikipedia articles, which often involves a good deal of original writing). Trans-editing is discussed in Chapter 7.

The book is not a review of revision research (though see Appendix 6). When the first edition appeared in 2001, there was only a small amount of writing about revision, mostly in professional translators' publications rather than in scholarly journals. As for empirical research, there was a small amount about self-revision but next to nothing about other-revision. That situation has certainly changed. However, this edition of the book, like the previous three, essentially presents my own views on the subject, which derive for the most part from my 38 years of experience as a reviser in the Canadian Government's translation service. While I have been influenced by the writings of others, I only occasionally mention these or consider differences of opinion (the only significant one concerns the validity of unilingual re-reading: some people think comparison of the translation with the source text is always essential; I do not). As with the previous editions, the views of others can be found in the readings listed at the ends of most chapters.

Insofar as the book is concerned with pedagogical matters, it's with the pedagogy of revision, not the pedagogy of translation. Students in translation practice courses are sometimes asked to revise each other; the purpose however may not be to acquire revision competency but rather to become a better translator by seeing how others translate. Also, translation instructors grade students' translations and this typically involves identifying errors and sometimes correcting them, but this does not count as revision as understood here, and will not be discussed.

Finally, the revising and editing work associated with audiovisual translation and social media translation is mentioned only in passing because I have no experience with such work.

Principles and procedures

Principles versus rules

This book approaches both editing and revising as exercises not in rule-following but in the intelligent application of principles. Neither editing nor revising is straightforward. There are indeed clear-cut cases of right/wrong, but there are many more cases where it is up to you to decide, and for this you will need principles.

Principles are simply guides to action. An example would be the principle of minimizing changes: if in doubt about whether to make a change in the text, don't. You might also think of principles as things you do 'in principle', that is, things you do by default, unless the situation suggests doing something else. 'Follow the paragraphing of the source text' might be a principle in this sense for many language pairs. It is not a 'rule'; when you are revising, you may find that there is a good reason to change the paragraphing.

Formulating procedures

Aside from principles, the main thing you need in order to be a successful editor or reviser is procedures. It is all very well to have a list of error types, but if your procedure does not succeed in finding the errors, the list is not much use.

Eventually, procedures will become second nature, but the point of studying revision and editing is to formulate them. This book aims to help its readers answer, or at least think about, questions such as the following: In what *order* should I carry out editing and revising tasks? Is it always necessary to compare the translation with the source? And given that one can go on perfecting a text endlessly, when should I *stop*?

Principles and language pairs

Do the same principles apply to editing in all languages, and to revision in all language pairs? Many do, but editing work in particular will differ from language to language because the linguistic culture of a society will dictate certain emphases; problems of a certain type will be deemed important that may seem quite unimportant in another language community. For example, if one society is moving out from under the influence of a formerly dominating other society, reduction of the linguistic influence of that other society may be seen as an important aspect of editorial work. Also, one linguistic culture may currently be in a phase where a 'plain style' is the ideal in non-literary texts, whereas another culture may currently prefer a more ornate style. This will obviously affect the work of editors; for example, the concept of readability, discussed in Chapter 4, may differ if an ornate style is preferred.

A further important point is that two editors may be working in different linguistic cultures even though both of them use the same name for their language. In other words, the factors affecting editing work may differ depending on whether you are in Dublin or Sydney, in Paris or Montréal, in Lisbon or São Paulo. Obviously if you are editing texts for publication in another country, you will need to make appropriate adjustments. For example, Canadians submitting material to American or British publications may have to edit out Canadian spellings and substitute American or British spellings. To outsiders, the Canadian system looks like a combination of British and American spellings—'honour', not 'honor'; but 'organize', not 'organise'. To Canadians, it is simply the way we learned to spell our language as children. It is also of symbolic importance—one small way in which we English-speaking Canadians distinguish ourselves from the Americans. Defending the local identity of texts is often an important part of the work of editors and revisers.

The editing sections of this book are very heavily oriented toward the linguistic cultures of countries where the great majority of the population are native speakers of English. For the most part, it is assumed that the texts are written by native speakers and are being edited for reading by native speakers. The special problems of editing texts written in English by non-native speakers will be discussed in Chapter 2, but other cases (texts written for a readership that consists mainly of non-native speakers; texts written in the French-influenced Euro-English of the institutions of the European Union) will be mentioned only in passing. Those who will be editing material written in languages other than English may find that some of what is said about English here is relevant to them because English writing habits are increasingly having an effect on how people write in other languages.

The revision sections of the book are probably more universally valid than the editing sections. Again, though, emphases will vary. If translated texts are widely used in a society, an important function of revisers may be to eliminate any traces of foreign influence. In a society where translated texts do not play such a great role, source-language influence on the wording of the translation may be more tolerable.

The revision sections of the book will be applicable when the target language is the self-reviser's second language, or when the source language is the source-text author's second language, or when revising translations of translations. However, little attention will be paid to the special additional problems of these cases, such as the difficulty of assessing idiomaticity when the self-reviser is not a native target-language speaker. For those who are advanced learners or near-native speakers of English, self-revising English is much easier than it was in the pre-computer era because they can check wordings of which they are uncertain with the help of computer programs (see Chapter 9), and because there are now good advanced learner's dictionaries which provide vital information that is not given (because it is assumed to be already known) in dictionaries aimed at native speakers.

Outline

The book begins with a consideration of why editing and revising are needed in the first place, and of what quality is (Chapter 1). Chapter 2 concerns the work done by people employed as editors. This is followed by four chapters (3–6) devoted to the various kinds of textual amending work: copyediting, stylistic editing, structural editing and content editing. Chapter 7 is about large-scale structural and content editing by journalists who translate (some translation students may become journalists!). Chapter 8 is concerned with the question of how much consistency an editor or reviser should seek to achieve, and Chapter 9 with computer aids for editors and revisers. Chapter 10 looks at the work of people who function as revisers. It is followed by three chapters that look at the following questions: What are the features of a draft translation that may require revision (Chapter 11)? To what degree should I revise a translation (Chapter 12)? What procedures should I use to revise (Chapter 13)? Finally, Chapter 14 looks at self-revision, Chapter 15 at the problems of revising others, and Chapter 16 at the revision of machine outputs. The book closes with a list of readings, an index, and six appendixes: a review of key ideas about revision, a brief look at systems for assessing the quality of translations, a method for marking exercises, a sample revision, a glossary of editing and revision terms, and an overview of empirical studies of revision.

New in this edition

For this fourth edition, aside from checking, correcting, improving and updating the entire third edition, I have asked two colleagues to write new chapters on topics that were mentioned only briefly in previous editions: Chapter 7, by Jungmin Hong, is about trans-editing while Chapter 16, by Carlos Teixeira, is about fixing translations generated by Machine Translation and Translation Memory. In Chapter 1, there is an expanded treatment of the notion 'fitness for purpose'. In Chapter 10, there is a new section on reviser competencies. In Chapter 11, I have added two parameters to the original twelve in order to take into account client specifications and employer policies, and I have rewritten the sections on the Completeness and Tailoring parameters. In Chapters 4 and 12, I have redefined the terms 'clear' and 'intelligible'. Appendix 3 offers a completely new grading scheme for revision and editing assignments, and Appendix 6 a discussion of revision issues requiring research. The Introduction for Instructors includes a revision course outline as well as an expanded treatment of professional development workshops on revision. Finally, there are very brief treatments of a few topics not covered in the previous editions, such as editing of User Generated Content (Chapter 2), uniformity among revisers and crowd-sourced revision (Chapter 10).

Introduction for instructors

This book aims to be of use to three types of instructor:

- those giving courses with an editing or revising component to students at translation schools;
- those leading professional development workshops (PDWs) in revision or self-revision for practising translators;
- those assigned to train junior translators or supervise students doing a practicum at a translation workplace.

The outcomes sought by PDW leaders and workplace trainers are immediately practical: the people they are training want principles and tips which they can immediately put into practice in their professional lives. For those teaching students at translation schools, the situation is different. In some classes, none of the students have practical experience of professional work. Even those who do are not just being trained (prepared for the workplace); they are also being educated in matters linguistic. The course should be an opportunity to acquire an awareness of issues through lecture-discussions, readings, student presentations, and exercises designed to stimulate thought.

Instructors of translation students

When programmes offer instruction in editing or revision, the topic is introduced at different stages of learning in different countries and at different schools. Opinions differ as to what is appropriate, in part because translation degrees are sometimes offered only at the master's level, sometimes at the undergraduate level as well, or instead. At the master's level, some of the students may have prior experience as working translators, or even as revisers. Also, some students may have had access to practicums during which they may have received guidance about self-revision and will certainly have had their work revised by a professional.

Since there is as yet no basis in translation pedagogy research for deciding when or whether to introduce modules or full courses on editing, self-revision, other-revision or post-editing, individual schools and instructors will to some extent have to do what they think best, and see what the results are. That said, there are certain facts that must be borne in mind.

First, every student who takes a course in translation practice will presumably be self-revising, and instructors will be well advised to provide suggestions on how to go about this task. Second, once students enter the work world, there is an increasing likelihood that they will be faced with revising wordings which are not their own because they will be using Translation Memory or Machine Translation. Revising wordings that are not your own is quite different psychologically from revising wordings that are. Some sort of instruction in other-revision would seem to be important in order to prepare students for this situation. Third, in some workplaces, translators revise each other. Special competencies are required to check other people's translations, and students can begin to acquire these competencies by revising each other's work.

An important distinction when teaching translation students is that between *things they need to know about* and *things they should actually be able to do* upon graduation. For example, students should know *that* a big problem in revising is deciding the extent of revision effort to be applied to a text: should one do both a comparative and a unilingual re-reading or just a single reading? should one read all or just part of the translation? The ability to actually make such decisions cannot really be acquired until one starts working, since it depends on familiarity with particular kinds of texts, particular clients, and particular quality control policies.

A related issue is the connection between *what is to be taught in class* and *what happens in the workplace*. Since different professional editors and revisers work in different ways, there is no point in teaching as if one best way were known. Indeed, there is no particular reason to try to duplicate any of the procedures of professionals. The procedure that is best for learning to edit or revise is not necessarily going to be the procedure that an experienced professional actually uses. This is certainly true of exercises. For example, it is doubtful that anyone in the workplace would ever have occasion to edit a text solely for problems with inter-sentence connector words. But an exercise focused solely on this issue is nevertheless of great pedagogical value.

The two matters just discussed (doing versus knowing and workplace versus classroom) are related to a more general pedagogical issue: achieving results versus learning procedures and principles. What students mainly need to do is learn principles and procedures for editing and revising. They should also become aware of contentious issues and of problems—the things that can make written communication difficult. However, actually becoming good at applying the principles and procedures and at solving the problems (that is, turning drafts into high-quality output fairly quickly) takes quite a long time. That is because you cannot revise or edit well until you are familiar with the procedures of a workplace and have had a good deal of practice interacting with real clients and working under real contractual deadlines.

I strongly suggest, therefore, that instructors use classroom exercises to focus the attention of students on problems, principles and procedures. Do not focus on results ('right' versus 'wrong' answers). Do not get bogged down in substantive details such as whether it is alright to start a sentence with a conjunction. If this latter question arises, just point out that some people allow it, at least in some text types, while others don't. The important thing to learn about such matters is that the answer depends on the particular writing project, on the general approach taken to English usage (see Chapter 3), and on the standards set by employers, publishers and professional associations.

In master's programmes, especially ones where students work in a variety of language pairs, instructors may decide to increase the theory component of the course by having students read selected articles from the research literature on revision (see Appendix 6).

Marking

When it comes to marking, results inevitably take precedence over principles and procedures. The rather obvious reason is that it is hard to grade procedures. Empirical studies have been conducted in which students' translating sessions are recorded and the students are then shown what they did and interviewed about it, but many procedural decisions made in the mind leave no trace in recordings and the subjects of such studies often cannot remember why they took a certain action, or they simply invent a reason (there is a natural human tendency to rationalize and prettify what one has done). Quite apart from these drawbacks, making and listening to such recordings and interviewing students are far too time-consuming to be practical for everyday marking purposes.

Still, one assignment could be the preparation of a diary, which may give the instructor a degree of insight into the student's approach. Each pair of students is given a different text to edit/revise. They make a class presentation, in which they diagnose 5 or 10 problems they experienced while editing/revising the text, and explain what they did. They then prepare a diary for the instructor, describing how they went about solving problems and taking the class discussion of their presentation into account.

Appendix 3 sets out a suggested marking scheme. It assumes that you have chosen to assign marks to the student's treatment of individual words and phrases, rather than simply assign an overall mark based on your general impression.

If you instruct both students who are just beginning a translation programme and those near the end of a program, you might consider using two rather different approaches to marking. For the junior students, use a more 'humanistic' approach that rewards strengths, rewards good approaches (even if the results are wrong) and gives encouragement on weaknesses. For the senior students, use a more realistic approach focused on penalizing weaknesses such as making too many unnecessary changes, making the original translation worse, and not noticing problems.

Paper or screen?

If you are handing out a text-based assignment on paper, make sure the text to be edited or revised is triple spaced, and that the margins are wide enough for adding annotations or comments.

If the assignment is distributed in electronic form, you might give students a choice between printing it out and hand-writing changes or using Track Changes;

alternatively you might insist on one or the other of these possibilities. Both are used in the work world (see Chapter 9), but since there may not be a choice, every student should learn how to use Track Changes and the Comment function. You may find either the paper or the electronic approach more personally congenial, or one approach may be better suited to your marking system. If your system consists in simply writing comments on the student's work, and then assigning an overall grade, you can do this using the Comment function of your word-processing program. If on the other hand your system requires positioning a variety of symbols in various locations on the student's text, that may be easier to do on paper.

With most of the marked assignments in my own courses, I insist that students print their changes on paper (no long-hand writing!) because that will slow them down and make them think more carefully before making a change. They may then make fewer unnecessary changes. It's too easy to make changes on screen!

Students should under no circumstances prepare an edited/revised version on a separate sheet of paper or e-document, first because that will encourage over-editing/over-revising (or worse, complete rewriting/retranslating), second because that is not the way things are done in the work world, and third because the students will not then be able to visualize the relationship between the original and edited/revised versions. (It will also be harder for you to mark!)

Computer aids

If students cannot edit or revise with a pencil, they will not be able to do so with computer tools. By this, I do not mean that students should do all their editing and revision exercises on paper (though a great many professional editors and revisers do still work on paper). I mean that the central skills to be learned are no different whether students are working on screen or on paper: Can they recognize a problem in a text when they see one? Can they decide whether a change is needed? There's no app for that! No computer tool can recognize a mistranslation or an inappropriate level of language. Also, it is important to bear in mind that while professional writing, editing and translating work has become computer-assisted over the past thirty-five years, it has not been automated. All the knowledge and skills that were needed in the days of manual typewriters are still needed. The existence of Spellcheck does not mean that editors and revisers no longer need an independent knowledge of spelling in order to decide whether a change is needed and if so, to what.

In cases where students are using Track Changes, suggest that they avoid working with the tracking invisible on screen (operating in the background). That way, they will be aware of how many changes they are making, and this may help reduce unnecessary changes.

Learning outcomes and exercise types

What are realistic outcomes for a course in revision at a translation school? It is extremely unlikely that after a single semester, students will actually be able to revise well. The most important thing is that they should have a clear awareness of the issues: the need to avoid unnecessary changes so as to get jobs completed as quickly and cheaply as possible, the need to be able to justify changes, the need to develop positive and ethical interactions with other parties involved in translation (original translator, commissioner, source-text author, etc.). They should also have tried out various revision procedures (see Chapter 13) and begun to develop a personal systematic approach.

Every in-class exercise and take-home assignment should of course be related to the desired outcomes. Never simply ask students to revise a text. Always provide information about the readership and intended use of the translation. In addition to the revision itself, students should write out justifications of some of the changes. They should report passages where they considered making a change but then didn't, explaining why not. They should prepare commentaries on pre-revised texts (see Appendix 4 for an example). They should prepare explanations of what they would do in cases where loyalty to one party conflicts with loyalty to another (see the scenario exercises at the end of Chapters 6 and 10).

Unilingual revision exercises (where the source is not provided) are very important for students because they focus attention on the important text (the translation as opposed to the source). It's more difficult in comparative exercises to keep students' attention focused on the translation.

Aside from text-based and scenario exercises, you can try plenary or small-group discussion exercises. For example, during comparative revision, revisers can either read a sentence of the source first or a sentence of the translation. To start discussion, members of the group each say which method they use and why.

Language of text-based exercises and examples

Some revision and editing instructors will find themselves in front of a class where not all students have the same first language.

If everyone knows the same pair of languages, but some are native speakers of one and some of the other, then the situation is easily handled, provided the instructor is at ease with the two languages: give examples in both languages, and ask students to edit texts in (or revise translations into) their own language.

If, on the other hand, there are native speakers of several languages in the class, no common language pair in which they work, and the instructor does not know all the languages in question, the situation is much more complicated. There will of course have to be a common language known quite well to all the students. However some students may be hesitant about speaking in that language, and when the instructor gives textual examples in that language, some students who are not native speakers may be at a disadvantage: they may not see why a change in the text is necessary, and they will probably find it harder to come up with a new wording than native speakers.

For text-based exercises done in class, it may be possible to organize the students into simultaneous working groups based on native language. They can edit texts in that language or revise translations into that language, though the instructor will not be able to assist all the groups: members of a group will have to help each other.

Marked exercises will obviously have to be in a language the instructor knows, unless he or she has access to, for example, graduate students who can be paid to mark exercises in languages not known to the instructor. Exercises in unilingual re-reading of translations in the common language can be used, though the marking scheme may have to allow for differences in the various students' knowledge of that language. If participants work in a very small number of language pairs, it may be feasible (perhaps with the aid of other instructors or graduate students) to prepare several short translations, one for each language pair/direction, so that everyone can do a source/target comparison exercise on an equal footing.

Instructors in such many-language situations can also make more heavy use of scenario exercises that do not require reference to the actual wording of a text. There are many common editing and revising situations that can be discussed in the abstract: what if one sentence seems to contradict another? what if….?

The local variety of a language may be an extremely important issue with languages other than English. It will depend on the geographical origin of the participants in a course or workshop, the variety of the language in which they were educated, where they are or will be working, and who their clients are or will be.

In countries where 'small' languages are spoken, editors and revisers may find themselves correcting and improving texts written in or translated into their second language, often English. In other countries, translators will often have to work in both directions (to and from their own language). Instructors in these countries may feel they should be preparing students for such work. However, if this is not the situation in your country, avoid using texts written in or translated into the students' second language, since editing issues will then get mixed up with language-learning issues.

Texts for exercises

In selecting exercise materials for editing and revising, an important consideration is the number and type of errors they contain. There are two possibilities: you can find texts with errors, or insert the errors yourself. With the first of these approaches, you will need to find texts of a suitable length that have neither too many errors nor too few. A text with only four errors in thirty pages isn't much use. Neither is a text with five mistakes on every line; as is pointed out in Chapter 1, some texts are so bad that they are not worth editing or revising. Avoid really dreadful pieces of writing or translating.

The big problem with using texts in their natural state is that they will most often contain a wide variety of problems: punctuation errors, idiom errors, poor sentence connectors, mistranslations, errors in level of language and so on. While some exercises should certainly aim at identifying and correcting a wide range of error types, many should focus on a single type of error, or a group of related types of error. To create texts for such exercises, you will need to eliminate all other types of error, and possibly add some errors of the type in question.

For revision exercises, you can use the same source-language text more than once simply by preparing different translations, with different errors.

Editing instructors may wish to use draft translations for exercises (or published translations of dubious quality), but in order to avoid the danger of retranslation, they should be sure not to distribute the source text. Another type of text worth using is one originally written in the students' first language but by a writer who is not a native speaker of that language. In the case of English in particular, the work of editing such texts is becoming an increasingly common professional assignment (some people now make a living from it). However, once again, avoid using really dreadful writing.

Where can texts be obtained? Leaders of revision workshops may be in a position to use weak translations by junior translators or freelances, or poorly translated Wikipedia articles (see Chapter 10.8). Editing instructors may be able to obtain samples of poor writing from teachers in other departments. Texts written by non-native speakers can be obtained on the Internet, or from teachers in other departments who have foreign students. Newspapers often contain poorly edited articles. Texts selected will of course be anonymous and it is best to select texts that were written a few years earlier, to avoid any possibility that their authors will be present at the session!

A word of warning if using translations produced some time ago: make sure that well-revised versions of these translations have not been published on the Internet!

Professional development instructors

The pedagogical approaches suitable for instructing students are quite different from those suitable for professional development sessions with practising translators. Professional translators attending workshops on revision are already producing work for the translation market. The workshop or seminar is about a familiar activity, to which they can mentally refer as the session proceeds. If the workshop deals with other-revision only, it's best that participants already have a few months' experience revising others so that they can refer to that experience during the session.

I have had occasion to lead workshops on revision where all participants had over 15 years' experience. As workshop leader, I was not really teaching revision. Such workshops serve three purposes. First, participants become more self-confident when they discover that others too are having a particular sort of problem, or have not found any better solution to that problem. Sometimes the most important function of a workshop is therapeutic—to relieve participants of a certain burden of anxiety: 'Am I the only one having this problem?' Second, since a workshop requires participants to formulate procedures that may have become semi-automated, they may become aware that their revision or self-revision procedure is not as good as some other procedure. Third, workshops are an important social occasion for those participants who spend their days working alone.

In preparing exercises for workshops, remember that an exercise is not a simulation of the workplace. The whole point of a workshop is to look at issues that participants may never have explicitly considered, or matters that remain below the level of consciousness during everyday revision work. Such issues can often be brought out best not through text-based exercises but through scenario exercises.

A very important thing to practise in revision workshops is justification of changes, that is, saying why the existing wording was not suitable. It is not sufficient for a reviser to say 'It doesn't sound right the way you have it'. Justifying changes calls for a fairly high level of awareness about linguistic and textual structure, as well as a set of terms for discussing the changes. This book assumes that users already have an understanding of grammatical concepts and terms (main verb, subject, subordinate clause), but it does introduce terminology for talking about the different kinds of changes which revisers make.

The greatest danger in a revision workshop (and for that matter in a revision course) is that it will turn into a translation workshop. I strongly recommend that during exercises with texts, participants should simply be asked to underline wordings that need change, but *they should not make any changes.* If they make changes, the workshop can easily degenerate into a discussion of the best replacement wording. This is not a revision question but rather a translation question. It's true that the correcting work of the reviser is not exactly the same as the work of drafting a translation, in that one is not writing on a blank screen but rather reworking an existing wording. Indeed, given this difference, it may be worth having an exercise on minimizing the extent of rewording (i.e. making small changes rather than recasting an entire sentence). However, going by my own experience, if the instructor asks participants to make changes during an exercise, much time will be wasted discussing competing alternative translations and trying to decide which is the best. The instructor needs to keep the participants focused on *revision issues: finding the passages which might need change, deciding whether they do in fact need change, and stating a justification for making a change*.

Do exercises alone or in groups?

Translation is essentially a solitary occupation. In the workplace, a text may be divided among several translators, or translators may consult each other in person, by telephone or by e-mail, but the bulk of the work goes on in the individual's mind. In translation offices, texts are not revised by groups ('What does everyone think of the first sentence in the second paragraph?').

For pedagogical purposes, however, the situation is quite different. Both professionals and students can learn faster in groups. In workshops for practising professionals, all exercises can be done in groups if so desired. With students, the situation is complicated by the need to give them marks as individuals. Thus some assignments must be done alone, in preparation for tests.

One big advantage of dividing into groups is that each person then spends more time in active rather than passive participation. If each of 15 people gives a 3-minute presentation on their self-revision procedure to the other 14, he or she is passive for 42 minutes out of 45 (93% of the time). If the 15 people are divided into groups of 3, and each group member gives a 3-minute presentation to the other two, he or she is passive for only 6 minutes out of 9 (66% of the time). Also, the exercise will be completed much sooner (in 9 minutes instead of 45!). There is no need for each of the 15 participants to hear all 14 of the other presentations. With some exercises, a plenary session will be needed after the groups have completed their work. Thus each of 5 groups might be assigned one-fifth of a text for a justification-of-changes exercise. When all groups have prepared their justifications, one member of each group presents to the plenary.

Working in groups is important because participants can learn as much from each other as they can from the instructor (perhaps more, according to some). A workshop instructor should spend perhaps a quarter or a third of the time on presentations about revision; the remainder of the time should be spent on group exercises and discussion of issues. With translation students, the greater difference in knowledge between instructor and learner, especially in introductory courses, will necessitate more direct input from the instructor both before and after exercises. With advanced students, however, some sort of group work should take up a fair chunk of classroom time.

On-the-job trainers

The main value of this book for those training junior translators or students doing internships is that it can provide a vocabulary for discussing translation with the trainee.

You will also have to report on the trainee's work, for which you will need some system of diagnosis (see Chapter 15.2). And you will want to offer advice (see Chapter 15.3).

You might want to record some of the trainee's work so as to get some idea of how he or she self-revises (see Chapter 14.1), with a view to suggesting other approaches if problems are found.

When revising the trainee's texts, it's a good idea to distinguish changes which are necessary before the text can be delivered to the client from changes which simply show another way the passage could have been translated. Use pen for the former, pencil for the latter; or if revising on screen, use a Comment box for suggestions about other ways of translating.

Finally, senior revisers in some workplaces may be training those who are just beginning to revise other translators' work. They will need to diagnose problems with the trainees' revision work and report on their progress. They may want to conduct group revision exercises with the trainees so that everyone is on the same page: the trainees get a sense of what the instructor sees as too many or too few changes, or the wrong types of change, or poor justifications of change.

Syllabus suggestions

Some chapters of the book concern revision only (10–16) and some concern editing only (2–7). The remaining chapters (1, 8 and 9), as well as the 'Introduction for all readers', concern both.

Thus for an editing course, use the 'Introduction for all readers' and Chapters 1–9. Copyediting, being the easiest type of editing, should be taught first, but of course in the actual process of editing a text, it comes last: there is no point copyediting a passage which will be deleted during content editing.

For a revision course, use the 'Introduction for all readers' and Chapters 10–16, plus 1, 8 and 9. You might want to supplement the book with readings on quality assessment (touched on briefly in Appendix 2). When you discuss unilingual re-reading (where the translation is checked without reference to the source text, as described in Chapter 12), you might add materials on the four kinds of editing discussed in Chapters 3 to 6.

I use the following order of reading in my 12-week revision course for final-year undergraduate students, meeting for 90 minutes twice a week. Several of the 24 meetings are taken up with tests, student presentations and discussion of marked revision assignments.

1) 'Introduction for all readers' & Chapter 1 (with a fit-for-purpose exercise)
2) Appendix 4 (with a unilingual revision exercise)
3) Chapter 11.1 and 11.2 (with a comparative revision exercise)
4) Chapter 13
5) Chapter 11.3 and 11.4 & Chapter 6
6) Chapter 11.5 to 11.7 & Chapter 4 (with a stylistic editing exercise)
7) Chapters 5 & 7 (with a trans-editing exercise)
8) Chapter 10.1 to 10.7
9) Chapter 11.8 and 11.9 & Chapter 3 (with a copyediting exercise)
10) Chapter 11.10 to 11.14 (with a general editing exercise)
11) Chapter 10.8 to 10.17 & Appendix 2 (with an exercise on assessing a reviser's changes)
12) Chapter 8
13) Chapter 9
14) Chapter 16 (with a post-editing exercise)
15) Chapter 14 (with a self-revision exercise)
16) Chapter 2 (with an exercise in editing non-native English)
17) Chapter 12 (with an exercise in revising to different degrees of writing quality)
18) Chapter 15.1 and 15.4
19) Appendix 6

For a professional development workshop on revision, which will typically last just one day, there will be no readings by participants. You, as workshop leader, will prepare speaking notes (drawing on the chapters of this book which you wish to cover), plus exercises, and perhaps a slideshow presentation. A workshop can focus on self-revision, on other-revision, or on post-editing, or cover all three. However, note that a self-revision exercise will have to be prepared before the workshop because such exercises are rather time-consuming (see Chapter 14).

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

Hansen (2009b); Hine (2003); Klaudy (1995); Kruger (2008); Künzli (2006a); Mossop (1992); O'Brien (2002); Pietrzak (2014); Robert & Brunette (2016); Robinson (2006); Schjoldager et al (2008); Scocchera (2014); Shreve et al (2014); Thaon (1984)

1 Why editing and revising are necessary

Why is it necessary for someone other than the writer or translator to check a text, and perhaps make changes, before it is sent off to readers? A very general simple answer is that we human beings do not do perfection. In every realm of activity, we make mistakes, sometimes serious ones, regardless of how experienced we are. Indeed, highly experienced people can be overly confident in their ability to avoid error. Translation agencies often refer to their 'impeccable' translations, but this can be put down to advertising hyperbole.

Of course, the impossibility of perfection also applies to editing and revising: no matter how carefully or how often you check a text, you can be sure that you will not find every single problem. As I went through the third edition of this book, I found a few out-and-out mistakes that had not been caught by me or by my editors.

In this chapter, we'll look at several more specific reasons why editing and revising are necessary. First, it is extraordinarily easy to write sentences that are structured in such a way that readers will misunderstand them or have difficulty understanding them. Second, it is easy, while writing, to forget about the future readers and write something which is not suited to them or to the use they will make of the text. Third, a text may fail to conform to linguistic norms or to the reigning ideas about the proper way to translate or to write in a particular genre. Finally, what the author or translator has written may conflict with the publisher's goals.

To deal with these problems, revisers and editors amend texts in two ways. First, they act as gatekeepers who ensure that the text conforms to society's linguistic and textual norms and achieves the publisher's goals. Second, they act as language therapists to ensure ease of mental processing and suitability of the text for its future users. This latter function is certainly important in the English-speaking world, but some language cultures do not value reader-orientation as highly; readers are expected to do more of the work of understanding themselves, bringing their background knowledge to bear on the task. In this kind of linguaculture, one would not start an article by giving the reader a helpful overview of its structure (first I shall do this, then that); to do so would seem patronizing.

Editors and revisers often find themselves faced with conflicting demands and needs. There are demands from the client—the company, ministry or publishing house which has commissioned a writing or translating job. Then there are standards required by professional associations to which the editor/reviser belongs, and edicts from language-standardization or terminology-standardization bodies. Authors too make certain demands, and finally, editors and revisers must constantly keep in mind the requirements of readers. The need for revisers to deal with conflicting demands is discussed in Chapter 10.12.

Editing or revising is thus not a matter of a vague 'looking over'. There are specific things the editor or reviser is looking for. Here are just a few of the many different ways in which a text might be defective:

- There are many typing errors.
- Sometimes the main numbered headings are bolded, and sometimes they are italicized.
- There are unidiomatic word combinations.
- You often have to read a sentence twice to get the point.
- You often come across a word like 'it' or 'they' and you cannot tell what it refers to.
- The text contains a great many words which the readers won't understand because they are not very highly educated, or because they are not experts in the subject matter of the text.
- The text is not written in a way appropriate to the genre. For example, it is a recipe, but it does not begin with a list of ingredients, it is rather vague about how to make the dish, and it is full of commentary on the history of the dish and the chefs who are famous for making it.
- If the text is a narrative, it is hard to follow the sequence of events. If it is an argument, it is hard to follow the steps.
- There are passages which contradict each other.

1.1 The difficulty of writing

In this section, we'll look at why texts need therapy to help readers. Writing is difficult work. In this it is quite different from speaking, which is easy (despite being highly complex in terms of the physiological processes involved). We all learn to converse, without any formal instruction, during infancy. Writing, on the contrary, requires long years of apprenticeship and even then, many people never learn to do it well. Indeed, even the best writers and translators make mistakes—sometimes serious ones. There is no point in seeking out writers and translators who are so good that their work never needs to be checked.

Why is writing so difficult? There are three main reasons. First, there is *no immediate feedback from readers*. If you are conversing, a question from your interlocutor or a puzzled expression on their face will lead you to repeat or rephrase in order to make your message clear. If you are writing, however, you may create an ambiguous sentence, or use a word the reader doesn't know, but there is no one there to react to the problem, so you do not notice it. This is part of a larger difference between speech and writing: a conversation is jointly constructed by at least two people who are together in a situation, while in writing (other than text messaging) the main burden of successful communication falls on the writer. The writer must imagine the reactions of an often unknown reader in an unknown future situation, anticipate the reader's problems in receiving the intended message and act to forestall them.

The clerk who posted the message 'back in 30 minutes' on the shop door failed to anticipate the reader's problems. If I come along and read this message, I don't know whether the shop will re-open in 1 minute, 10 minutes or 29 minutes. The clerk should have written 'back at 10:45'.

To write successfully, it is necessary to be constantly aware of what your future readers do *not* know (it's not part of their likely background knowledge or you have not already told them earlier in the text). Poor writers forget this. They treat writing as self-expression rather than communication with others. They seem to operate on the principle that if they have a certain meaning in mind as they write, that meaning will automatically come across to readers. Many examples can be found in Wikipedia: the articles are supposed to be 'accessible and understandable by as many readers as possible' (Wikipedia: Writing better articles), but contributors to the encyclopedia often seem unable to put themselves in the shoes of likely readers. The result is articles that are very hard to understand and need major editing!

A second reason writing is difficult: written documents tend to be lengthy. When speaking, you typically need to organize what you are saying over a stretch of a couple of words to a couple of dozen words (the delivery of lengthy monologues such as formal speeches is usually assisted by speakers' notes or scripts). In writing, things are quite different. Unless you are tweeting, preparing a grocery list or sending a very brief email, you typically need to organize a stretch of a few hundred or a few thousand words in the case of a report or article, or a few tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of words if you are writing a book. Despite my best efforts, you may find inconsistencies from one part of this book to another!

Third, it is easy to forget to compensate for lack of intonation and gestures. In conversation, much meaning is conveyed through intonation, and to some extent also by gestures (facial expressions, body posture, hand movements such as pointing). It is very easy to forget to compensate for the lack of intonation in writing, and the result will be ambiguity, or an unclear connection between successive passages. Consider this sentence:

> As these studies tend to show the form translation has taken in Canada, both on an institutional level and on the level of the actual practice of translation, is specific to our particular national context.

Here the reader might wrongly take 'the form' to be the object of 'show', whereas in fact, it is the subject of 'is specific'. In speech, the voice would drop slightly when pronouncing the word 'show' and there would be a slight pause. The writer forgot to place a comma after 'show' to ensure a correct reading.

Writing a translation, aside from being subject to the three difficulties just described, is also difficult because of the need to convey someone else's meaning. The translator is often not a member of the intended readership of either the source text or the translation. As a result, it's easy to convey to readers a meaning not present in the source text, or to write in a way that will confuse the intended readership. In addition, it is very difficult when translating to avoid undesirable linguistic influences seeping in from the source language.

Good writers and translators recognize how easy it is to err. To minimize errors in their final output, they engage in some combination of planning and self-editing. One study of writing strategies found four basic strategies:

Writing strategy	*Planning before drafting*	*Self-editing*
Architect	Major	Minimal, after drafting
Bricklayer	Major	Major, during drafting
Watercolourist	Minimal	Minimal, during drafting
Oil painter	Minimal	Major, during & after drafting

Some writers ('architects' and 'bricklayers') forestall error by thinking through their message carefully before they start composing; sometimes they will even prepare a detailed outline. A few of these writers—the 'architects'—are apparently so good at planning that they manage to produce good writing on the first draft, writing that requires only minimal self-editing after they have got the draft down. 'Bricklayers', on the contrary, do major self-editing as they draft.

Quite different are the 'watercolourists' and 'oil painters'. They tend to think *by* writing, so there is little planning. They simply start writing, perhaps with just a theme or a single idea in mind, or a few scribbled notes. Watercolourists, in addition to their minimalist planning, also engage in little self-editing. As a result, watercolourists are generally not very good writers. Oil painters compensate for their lack of planning by engaging in major self-editing both during and after drafting. The first edition of the book you are now reading was oilpainted: planning was limited to preparing a rudimentary outline for the publisher. Then I wrote each chapter fairly quickly, though with a fair amount of editing as I went along. After completing a chapter, I made major changes, often completely rearranging the order of presentation of the material, and then I made changes to those changes.

Translators too use different writing strategies, which will be discussed at length in Chapter 14.

Exercise 1

Take a few minutes to consider the following questions and then tell the group about your approach to writing.

a) When you are writing in (not translating into) your own language, which of Chandler's four strategies do you adopt? Are you an architect, bricklayer, watercolourist or oil painter? Or do you use more than one of the strategies, depending on the nature of the writing project?

b) Do you identify with none of the four strategies? Say why not.
c) If you identify yourself as, say, a bricklayer, have you always been a bricklayer? Did you learn one strategy at school and then switch later?
d) Do you use similar strategies when writing and when translating? For example, if you plan your writing extensively, do you also do a lot of preparation before you begin to draft your translations? If you make many changes while writing, do you also make many changes while drafting your translations?

1.2 Enforcing rules

In this section, we'll consider why texts need gatekeepers. Writing differs from speech in that it is usually subject to external regulation in a way that conversation is not. This is so in two senses. First, texts are usually written in a standard language, which has more or less clear-cut rules set out in dictionaries, grammars and recognized usage authorities. (Exceptions may be allowed for innovative work, often called 'creative' writing, but the editing of such work will not be considered here.) Publishers of texts may also have special rules about a host of matters such as when to write 'eight' and when to write '8', whether 'he or she' should be replaced by 'they', and whether quotations are to be separated from the main text and indented. In addition, writing in specialized fields is subject to standardized terminology. Finally, every language community or subcommunity has rhetorical habits and genre traditions; there are widely accepted principles for constructing an argument or for writing a recipe.

The second kind of external regulation stems from the fact that much writing is commissioned; that is, there is a publisher who has asked the writer or translator to prepare the text. The publisher has certain goals, and someone has to ensure that these goals are achieved. For example, corrections may be needed to deal with departures from appropriate content, such as political or sexual content. The rules here may be current social conventions (or laws!) or they may be imposed by a particular publisher. Publishers will also want to maintain a certain reputation, and this will require correcting inaccuracies (factual and mathematical errors, erroneous quotations). Editing will of course be especially important if the text is to be sold rather than given away.

Much commissioned original writing at workplaces (e.g. minutes of meetings, progress reports) does not need to be edited because it is ephemeral and circulates within a very restricted group of readers; no great harm is done if no one checks and corrects such writing. Also, private writing (diaries, personal letters, shopping lists) is not edited because there is either no audience at all or none beyond the writer's immediate circle. Editing is important when a text bearing a message deemed important by its publisher is being prepared for a large audience of strangers, or for audiences who will be reading it over a long period of time. Editing gives such a text the ability to reach out into space and time, by ensuring that it carries enough contextual information to enable people outside the immediate world of the writer to interpret it in the intended way.

Before the computer age, it was very hard to make writings available to a wide audience without going through the editor of a newspaper, magazine or publishing house. To get around editors, you had to type up and copy leaflets, or take them to a printer, and hand them out in the street or mail them out through the post office, or else make posters and paste them up around town. Now however, through blogs and the like, it is very easy, quick and cheap to self-publish to a potential readership of millions. This has democratized public writing, by taking it out of the hands of editors and publishers with their various biases, though it has also dramatically increased the volume of writing which has not been checked for language or facts, and may not have been self-edited at all.

Turning to translations, since they are almost always commissioned, there will be a client to satisfy. People who decide on their own to translate a Wikipedia article must still meet Wikipedia's publishing rules even though actual revision by a second person is optional. Also, some degree of revision is needed even with ephemeral texts to correct errors which are peculiar to translational writing: mistranslations, omissions, and the strange unidiomatic language which is so hard to avoid when translating (odd word combinations or sentence structures inappropriately calqued from the source text). Finally, someone is needed to ensure conformance with current norms governing translation in a given genre: Must the translation reflect the source-text message in tiny detail or only in broad outline? To what extent must the actual wording of the source text be reflected?

1.3 Quality in translation

Translations need to be revised in order to achieve quality. But just what is quality?

Stated and implied needs

The International Organization for Standardization, in its 2015 standard ISO 9000, entitled 'Quality management systems: fundamentals and vocabulary', defines quality as the degree to which the inherent characteristics of an object fulfil a set of stated or implied requirements, with 'requirements' defined to include needs, expectations and obligations. Implied requirements are those which are common practice or customary.

There are two important things to note here. First, quality is always relative to needs. There is no such thing as absolute quality. Different jobs will have different quality criteria because the texts are meeting different needs. In one job, an editor or reviser must improve the readability of the text to a very high level; in another job, a lower degree of readability will suffice. Sometimes several degrees of quality are recognized, sometimes two; in the latter case, a frequent distinction is between information-quality (the document will be used in-house, usually by a small number of people for information only, and then be discarded) and publication-quality (the document will be read by a large number of outside readers over a fairly lengthy period of time).

The second thing to note in the ISO definition is that needs are not just those stated but also those implied. The most important implied need in translation is accuracy. People who use the services of translators don't ask for an accurate translation; they just assume that it will be accurate. Ensuring accuracy is a key task of revisers. Accuracy is discussed in detail in Chapter 11.1.

Another implied need is successful communication of the text's message to the readers. Achieving this may require an editor or reviser to override the publisher's or client's instructions (sometimes called the brief or commission). This is particularly true in translation, because clients unfamiliar with the target-language community may have a mistaken or incomplete understanding of the cause-and-effect involved. For example, the client asks the translator to follow the paragraphing of the source text, but the paragraphing habits in the target language are quite different for the genre in question. In no profession can one always bow to the client's wishes. Imagine some people who are renovating their house. They tell the architect that they want a certain wall removed. When the plans come back, they see that the wall is still there. Why? Because the architect has determined that it's a bearing wall—the house would fall down without it. Similarly in translation, it is up to the reviser to ensure that communication will not break down when the message is read by members of the target-language community.

In some cases, it may be possible to change the client's stated expectations through education. Most clients know next to nothing about what translation involves, how much can be translated in a given time, why translators need documentation, and so on. However, educating clients is not easy, for a variety of reasons (lack of interest, frequent changes in the person who represents the client in dealings with the translator). Consequently, education should probably not be seen, in most instances, as a way of overcoming problems related to clients' stated needs.

Three concepts of quality

There are several broad concepts of quality current in the world of translation, and these lead to differing 'philosophies' of revision. Note that 'quality' here means for the most part linguistic quality. We will not be much concerned with visual quality, quality of service or the technical quality of electronic files (though these matters are briefly discussed in Chapters 10.17, 11.10, 11.11, 11.12 and 13.6). Also, translation companies and the organizations representing them have in recent years advanced a procedural concept of quality that is focused not on the relationship between the source text and the translation, or on the quality of writing in the translation, but on the process used to prepare the translation, the idea being to forestall errors before they are made. This is discussed in Chapter 10.17.

One common concept of quality is that achieving acceptable quality means satisfying clients. This may lead you to pay most attention, when revising, to finding errors that will be easily noticed by the client, such as typing errors and client-related terminology. This approach has a contractual version in which an actual agreement is prepared between translation provider and client. The U.S. standardization organization ASTM, in its 2006 document F2575 (second edition 2014), entitled 'Standard Guide for Quality Assurance in Translation' defines translation quality as 'the degree to which the characteristics of a translation fulfil the requirements of the agreed-upon specifications'. This concept is satisfactory only if it is understood that the translation provider cannot agree to specifications that conflict with professional standards.

An extreme version of such agreements would see quality as being achieved if the benefits to client and provider in terms of price, revenues and repeat business outweigh the cost of production. This is ethically dubious since the actual characteristics of the translation are not considered. For example, the practice of requiring translators to accept 100% matches found in Translation Memories without revision (see Chapter 16) will certainly reduce production costs but it will also pose an unacceptable risk to accuracy and language quality.

An extension of the client-satisfaction concept of quality in the Web 2.0 age is reader satisfaction, since it is now possible for a 'crowd' of translation readers on Facebook or Twitter to 'vote' on proposed translations.

A second concept of quality sees it as doing what is necessary to protect and promote the target language. This view will typically be found in language communities where translators want to counter the effects of a formerly or currently dominating foreign or majority language—these days very often English. Revision then becomes a quasi-literary writing exercise in language and style improvement. Revisers working under this concept of quality will keep making changes in texts until they fit a certain ideal of authentic and excellent writing in the target language, regardless of the time that takes, and thus regardless of the added cost. Here quality refers more to how well the translation is written than to its correspondence with the source text.

A third view of quality is that a translation is of acceptable quality if it is 'fit for purpose'. This means that in the reviser's view, the translation is suited to the people who will be reading it and the reason they will be reading it, as specified by the client. A reviser working under this concept of quality will read the draft translation with the client's purpose in mind, and then make *only such changes as are needed to make the translation suitable for that purpose*. The translation needs to be 'good enough' to serve its purpose, and no better. The notion of quality as fitness for purpose is endorsed by the International Organization for Standardization in its 2015 standard ISO 17100 'Translation Services – Requirements for Translation Services', which says that 'The reviser shall examine the [translation]… for its suitability for purpose'. This is the quality concept on which this book is based.

Some people speak rather disparagingly about this approach to quality. They say that we should be aiming at 'good' translations, implying that 'good enough' is second best. In my view, the concept of a 'good translation' is useless for revision purposes because it is almost entirely subjective: what one person considers to be a good translation someone else may find mediocre. The concept 'good enough', on the contrary, implies the question 'good enough for what?' and the answer to this question can pick out a set of fairly objective criteria for deciding whether changes in wording are needed; for example: Are the wordings suited to the education level or subject-matter knowledge of the potential readers? A translation that is intelligible and fairly accurate but has awkward and unidiomatic wordings may sometimes be 'good enough'; in other cases, extreme accuracy and very high writing quality may be required if the translation is to be 'good enough'.

The purpose of a translation can to some extent be read off the target-language genre: the purpose of an obituary is obviously different from the purpose of a patent or a tourist guide, and wordings will be acceptable or unacceptable accordingly. To sum up on fitness for purpose: there are not just two kinds of quality: excellent and dreadful. Rather, the criteria for acceptable quality vary with the type of text and its future readership.

The various quality concepts provide a focus for the reviser's work: will it be on the specifications for the job, on language protection or on appropriateness for users and use? The chosen focus will dictate what happens during revision. If your focus is language protection, you may make a change which you would not make if your focus were appropriateness or specifications. The concept of quality also has an influence on how you handle 'accuracy' and 'readability' as goals. If you are operating under the concept of language protection, readability may be sacrificed to some degree in order to follow the prescriptions of a conservative language-regulating body. On the other hand, if what you mean by language protection is keeping target-language genre-related rhetoric free of English influence, then readability may be your highest value. If you are operating under the concept of fitness for purpose, accuracy may either be extremely important (with legal texts, where extreme accuracy may be required even at the expense of readability) or it may be not so important (for the in-house employee newsletter of a multilingual government ministry, the reviser may well accept wordings where the translator has added to or subtracted from the source text message in order to make it more lively or funnier, if that seems appropriate for target-language readers).

The concept of quality under which revisers work may vary from country to country, or from language pair to language pair. It may even vary by direction. In Canada, for example, English-to-French revisers tend to be quite concerned with the 'language protection' aspect of revision, whereas this is not the case for French-to-English revisers, except perhaps for those who work in Quebec, where English is a minority language influenced by French. Revisers and editors who work in countries where their language of work is not the local language (say, English speakers working in the Netherlands) may also be more concerned with the 'protection' aspect of translation than those who work in majority English-speaking countries.

Note that the 'fit-for-purpose' concept cannot be expanded to include the other two concepts. Protecting the target language and pleasing the client are not 'purposes' in the intended sense because they are not specific to the text at hand. Suppose a translation is to be read by subject-matter experts who are starting a research project and have come across the source text, written in a language they don't know, during their literature search. The question for the reviser then is whether the draft translation is suited to these expert readers and to their need to find out what their colleagues, writing in the source language, have discovered on the subject of the research project. The wording suited to this may not please guardians of the target language or conform to what the client specified.

Note too that with the contractual, please-the-client view, you may end up after revision with a translation that is less than fit for purpose (depending on how detailed the contractual specifications were). With the target-language protection view, on the other hand, you may well end up with a translation that is more than fit for purpose, since many of the changes you have made will not be necessary for fitness.

A difficulty with the fit-for-purpose conception of quality is that it may be hard to determine the purpose. In addition, some readers who are not members of the audience which the reviser had in mind may nevertheless retrieve the translation from an electronic archive, possibly months or years later, and use it in a way which the reviser was not contemplating. However this is simply a risk one takes when using the fit-for-purpose approach. The purpose in question has to be the currently known purpose. One cannot revise a text to be suitable for any possible use or readership now or in the distant future.

A final point: it may be psychologically handy, when editing or revising, to think of quality in negative terms: don't ask yourself whether a passage is fit for purpose, for example, but whether it is not fit; does it diverge unacceptably from expectations, however defined?

How important is accuracy?

Aside from different general concepts of quality, there may be differences about which aspect of translation is most important: Is accuracy the prime quality of a good translation, that is, the translation conveys more or less all and only the meaning which the reviser believes to be present, explicitly or implicitly, in the source text? Or is the most important quality of a good translation that it satisfies the agenda of the commissioner, regardless of correspondence to the source text? A rather inaccurate translation of a tourist guide (one with several additions and subtractions) may nevertheless be very well written and be found to be very useful by the tourists who buy it, quite possibly more useful than an 'accurate' translation, because the translator will have a good idea of the culture-based interests of target-language readers who are visiting the country or city in question. Some people refuse to call such texts translations, and insist they be called adaptations, but since many translators produce them, the distinction seems pointless in the world of translation practice (though it may be useful in theoretical writing). An 'accurate' translation can be of high quality, and so can an 'agenda-based' one.

Quality and computer tools

Computer tools seem to be having an effect on the notion of what counts as acceptable quality. Once a freelance translator, translation company or organization with a translation department has committed to using such tools, and invested money in them, the concept of quality will tend to be drawn towards what can feasibly be produced with the tools. The result may be either 'higher' or 'lower' expectations by comparison to a previous time. For example, expectations about subject-matter research are now much, much higher than they were in the pre-search-engine era, when translators had to depend on telephoning experts and on the very slow process of reading paper documents in libraries or the occasional document sent by the client to the translator by traditional stamped mail or (at considerable expense) by courier or fax. On the other hand, it's possible that expectations about inter-sentence cohesion are declining because Translation Memory by its nature tends to generate problems in these areas to an extent previously unknown (see Chapter 16.1). And if Machine Translation continues to spread, it may become acceptable to eliminate only nonsensical wordings and gross mistranslations, as well as the worst instances of wrong collocations, wrong prepositions and unclear pronoun antecedents, because MT still has considerable difficulty with such matters.

A rather alarming development is that, under pressure to use computer tools, many translators are relying too much on suggestions from Memory rather than doing their own research, making their own judgments about accuracy, and composing their own wordings. There may be a deskilling process at work.

The advent of computer tools may also affect the concept of quality in the minds of revisers. Thus terminological consistency could come to be seen as more important than other aspects of a translation simply because computers are good at detecting problems in this area.

Finally, many people who are not professional translators are now revising machine outputs, or translating and self-revising, on a volunteer basis. It is worth noting that concepts of quality that reign among professional translators may differ from those found among volunteers. For example, volunteers (along with many of their readers who are aware they are reading a translation) may expect the final result to 'sound like a translation' and be suspicious if it does not.

1.4 Limits to editing and revision

Theoretically one could edit or revise any text until it fits a given quality ideal. However, from a business point of view, some texts are not worth editing or revising. They are so badly written or translated that it would take a very long time to edit or revise them and, consequently, it would cost too much. Consider this badly written version of a passage near the beginning of the section entitled 'The difficulty of writing' in this chapter:

> Its hard to write but speaking is very easy even though its complicated, we all learned to speak as children without any insrtuction. But it takes a very long time to learn to write and many people's writing is still awful.

If an entire article of this quality were submitted for publication in a magazine, it would probably be rejected. The problem is not so much the mechanical errors (its, insrtuction, the comma after 'complicated'); even large numbers of mechanical errors can be corrected easily and fairly quickly. The problem lies in the lack of flow and poor focus—an ordering of words that does not bring out the logic of the argument. A few such problems scattered through a long text are fixable, but if almost every sentence needs recasting, then it simply would not be economical to proceed. The above passage does not call for editing; it calls for rewriting—preferably by a different writer.

Some clients may wish to proceed with the editing of bad writing despite economic considerations. Perhaps some political or ideological concern is more important than cost. Or perhaps the author is an Important Person. You may therefore find yourself editing the work of people who need help writing: learners of English as a second language; people who had insufficient or ineffective schooling and have still not mastered the differences between speech and writing; or people who think that they will impress readers if they write very long sentences chock full of subordinate clauses, clauses within clauses, and parenthetical expressions.

Just as editing is not rewriting, so revising is not retranslating. If a translation is full of unidiomatic word combinations, if the sentence structures are so influenced by the source text that the result is unreadable, and of course, if the translator has clearly misunderstood numerous passages of the original text, the solution is to retranslate, not revise.

Exercise 2

Machine translation (MT) output is often unrevisable. Create your own example by pasting a paragraph from an online news article (written in your second or third language) into the source-text box at www.babelfish.com, translate.google.com or any other free site you can reach by entering 'machine translation sites' in your search engine. Ask for a translation into your first language. Does the output seem revisable? Try to actually revise it, removing only the worst mistakes. Does this confirm your initial impression about its revisability?

1.5 The proper role of revision

Revising is necessary because translators make mistakes, but it is important not to place too great a burden on it. It should not be the main way of ensuring quality. Quality is best ensured by *preventive* action: hiring translators whose training and talent has given them the skills required for a given workplace, using the right translator for a given job, making sure the specifications for the job are known to the translator, passing on any client feedback from previous translations, making sure the translator has access to appropriate technological tools and to the necessary documentation, terminology resources, previous translations on the subject and subject-matter experts.

When working with a new translator, the reviser should forestall predictable errors. For example, if the text is a set of instructions, point out that the source language may convey instructions in the passive ('the green button should now be pressed'), but in the target language, the imperative is probably best ('now press the green button').

Revision should be seen as a necessary final resort to clean up the inevitable errors that will occur despite such precautions. Unfortunately revision is often—perhaps increasingly—used as a way of dealing with the problems that arise when translation is outsourced to cheap but unqualified contractors. The main burden of ensuring quality should fall on translators (once they have sufficient experience), not revisers.

Now, while there can be too much emphasis placed on revision, there can also be too little. Many translation services and agencies see the reduction of revision as a way to increase productivity and thus income; perhaps many freelances do so as well. Revision by a second translator is applied to fewer and fewer texts, or entirely replaced by self-revision, except for novices. Perhaps even self-revision is reduced. From a financial point of view, the revision process is very different from the drafting process. If you have a 20-page source text and so far you have only translated 5 pages, obviously the translation is incomplete and cannot be sent off to the client. However, once you have translated all 20 pages, you have a complete translation, which could be sent off to the client with little or no revision. The temptation to do this is great; one wonders how often it is happening.

Summary

1. It is very easy for things to go wrong during writing, and there are a great many different kinds of things that can go wrong.
2. Editors and revisers amend the text so that it conforms to the norms governing writing, and so that the writing project achieves the publisher's goals.
3. Editors and revisers amend the text to fix problems that will hinder mental processing of the text, and to tailor the writing to its future readers and the use they will make of it.
4. Editors and revisers must somehow resolve any conflicts among the needs or interests of clients, readers, source-text authors and other parties.
5. Revisers work with a variety of concepts of translation quality.
6. Some original writing and translating is so bad that it is not worth fixing.
7. Revision should not be a substitute for measures to prevent errors occurring in the first place.

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

Need for revision: Lafeber (2012)
Speech versus writing: Baron (2000); Halliday (1989); Hirsch (1977: ch. 1 and 3)
Norms governing language and translation: Chesterman (1997/2016: ch. 3)

Quality: Chakhachiro (2005); Drugan (2013); European Commission (2015); Hansen (2009a); Martin (2007); Matis (2011); Mellinger (2018); Moorkens (2018); Svoboda (2017)

The former European standard EN 15038 (on which ISO 17100 is based): Biel (2011); Parra Galiano (2016)

Writing strategies: Chandler (1993)

2 The work of an editor

A full description of the organization of work within publishing organizations is beyond the scope of this book; in this chapter, we'll just look briefly at the jobs of people who work as editors. We'll then distinguish editing from adapting and rewriting, and look at the editing work done mentally by translators when their source texts are poorly written, as well as the editing of non-native English. Texts are of course also edited by people who are not professional editors or translators, but this topic will not be considered here. The chapter concludes with a discussion of degrees of editing.

In this book, editing means reading a text which is not a translation in order to spot problematic passages, and making or suggesting any corrections or improvements needed to achieve some concept of quality. In some cases, the text may happen to be a translation but the editor either does not know this or does know but treats the text as if it were not a translation. For example, someone familiar with the subject matter of a machine-produced translation may edit it without consulting the source text or even knowing the source language.

2.1 Tasks of editors

Dictionary definitions of the verb 'edit' present a considerable variety of meanings. Here is a sample, culled from various dictionaries:

- assemble, prepare or adapt (an article, a book) so that it is suitable for publication;
- prepare an edition of (a literary author's work), especially by researching manuscripts;
- be in overall charge of the content and arrangement (of a newspaper, journal, etc.);
- reword, revise or alter (a text) to correct, alter the emphasis, etc.

As for the occupation 'editor', here is what we find in the 2016 National Occupational Classification published by Canada's employment ministry:

> Editors review, evaluate and edit manuscripts, articles, news reports and other material for publication, broadcast or interactive media and co-ordinate the

> activities of writers, journalists and other staff. They are employed by publishing firms, magazines, journals, newspapers, radio and television networks and stations, and by companies and government departments that produce publications such as newsletters, handbooks, manuals and Web sites. Editors may also work on a freelance basis.

Here, attention will be restricted to print publishing as opposed to e-publishing or broadcasting. In some sectors, notably news, the advent of electronic media has created financial problems for print publishing because advertisers have migrated away from print, and one result is that there is less money for editorial work on text and, consequently, more uncorrected errors.

Editors have many duties, and different editors have different duties. An editor's daily routine will be rather different at a newspaper from what it will be at the office of a firm publishing a medical journal. The description of a particular editor's job might include one or more of the following:

- deciding what kinds of materials will be published (e.g. at a newspaper, selecting stories for coverage);
- finding or assigning writers and handling relations with them;
- evaluating the suitability of manuscripts and recommending changes in content, style or organization;
- dealing with reviewers (subject-matter experts who comment on the content of specialized writing);
- scheduling the publication process;
- designing page layouts, with incorporation of graphics;
- marking up manuscripts with instructions for printers;
- ensuring permission has been obtained to use copyrighted material, and dealing with other legal concerns such as libel;
- managing the financial and material resources, and the employees, of a publishing enterprise or department;
- amending the text submitted by a writer.

An editor's work will also vary greatly with the type of writer being edited. Editing the work of professional writers is quite different from editing the writing efforts of, for example, scientists writing articles for a journal or employees who are required to prepare reports as part of their job but do not actually like writing or are not very good at it. For many editors, relations with professional writers may be the most difficult feature of their work.

In translation, the situation is rather different. While literary translators must often negotiate rather carefully with living source-text authors, non-literary translators—the great majority—are usually dealing with non-professional writers. The translator is therefore the writing expert in the relationship, and in addition, often enjoys the advantage of being a native speaker of the target language. In non-literary translation, difficulties tend to arise in the relationship between translator and reviser, or translator and client, and not so much in the relationship between translator and author.

Types of editing work

Notable in the job description for editors near the beginning of this chapter is that editing in the sense of checking and amending a text is mentioned as just one among many tasks. In this book, we will not be looking at the full range of editors' duties or the various situations in which they work. Instead, we will be concerned almost entirely with the checking/amending task—a task that some people with the job title Editor do not perform at all. There are four broad types of checking/amending work, which will be considered in the next four chapters:

- *Copyediting* (Chapter 3). This is the work of correcting a manuscript to bring it into conformance with pre-set rules—the generally recognized grammar and spelling rules of a language community, rules of 'good usage', the publisher's 'house style', and page layout and typographical matters. The copyeditor must also ensure a degree of consistency in such matters as terminology and the positioning, numbering and appearance of section headings and subheadings; consistency is considered as a separate topic in Chapter 7. As a result of the above-mentioned financial difficulties being encountered in some sectors of print publishing, the effort devoted to copyediting may be reduced.
- *Stylistic editing* (Chapter 4). This is work done to improve rather than correct the text. It involves tailoring vocabulary and sentence structure to the readership, and creating a readable text by fixing awkwardly constructed sentences, ensuring the connections between sentences are clear, and so on.
- *Structural editing* (Chapters 5). This is the work of reorganizing the text to achieve a better order of presentation of the material, or to help the readers by signalling the relationships among the parts of the message.
- *Content editing* (Chapters 6). This is the work of suggesting additions to or subtractions from the coverage of the topic. The editor may (perhaps with the assistance of a researcher) personally have to write the additions if the author for some reason cannot or will not do so. Aside from such 'macro-level' work, content editing also includes the 'micro-level' tasks of correcting factual, mathematical and logical errors. Correcting logical errors is part of the broader task of ensuring that every passage in a text is intelligible.

If you have simply been asked to 'edit', you should inquire about which kind(s) of editing are wanted, so as to avoid wasting large amounts of time on unwanted editing; stylistic editing, in particular, can be very time-consuming. It's also a good idea to know where you fit into the overall scheme of preparation of a document for publication. Perhaps structural editing has already been done, in which case decisions about combining or splitting paragraphs, or other matters discussed in Chapter 5, may already have been made. Perhaps a copyeditor will be working on the text after you, in which case you do not need to worry about things like consistency or compliance with house style.

Note that in some editing situations, changes are made without consulting the author; in others, the text is sent back to the author with suggested amendments and perhaps comments next to certain passages (either handwritten or made with the Comment function of a word processor), or else separate sheets are sent containing specific or general suggestions and questions.

One final type of amending work is making changes of all kinds to produce a new edition of a previously published work. Somewhat confusingly for our purposes in this book, the term 'revise' is sometimes used to refer to the process of reviewing the original edition with an eye to such amendments, or to refer to both the reviewing and the consequent amending, the final result being a 'revised edition'. Occasionally, 'revise' is used in this sense for translations, usually when someone makes amendments to a previously published translation of a literary work.

In large organizations, a similar process may go on *before* a document is published: a draft is prepared and sent out for comment; amendments are made on the basis of the comments, the outcome being labelled 'version 2'. The process repeats until a satisfactory result is achieved. 'Version', like 'revision', is a term which has a different meaning in the worlds of editors and translators; for the latter, it is a synonym of 'translation', mostly used in combination with a language name ('the German version').

Division of labour

In large publishing companies, and in corporations or government ministries that have a publications department, there may be a considerable division of labour—a hierarchy of employees working under a variety of titles such as senior editor, assignment editor, editorial assistant, copyeditor, production editor, fact-checker or proofreader. The title Editor is often used just to designate the person in charge of some area of work, such as the photo editor or the sports editor at a newspaper. Also, titles do not necessarily reflect tasks: a copyeditor may also do stylistic editing and micro-level content editing. This may happen unofficially: an editor's official task may be copyediting, but in practice, they may see that other types of editing have not been done and will intervene.

Senior editors

A senior editor will oversee a publishing project, deal with authors and reviewers, and suggest macro-level content changes in texts. All the more detailed textual work, as well as the layout and printing work, will be left to others. Senior editors at publishing companies and newspapers often find themselves at the interface between the creative and the commercial aspects of publishing. They may want to promote a certain writing style or certain innovative ideas, but the marketing department (responsible for selling the publication) or in some publishing sectors the advertising department (responsible for perhaps much of the publisher's income) may not be supportive, or the budget for hiring a sufficient number of good editors and writers may not be available.

Senior editors in the publication departments of government ministries, churches or other institutions may often not be bothered by such commercial considerations, but like newspaper editors they will be responsible for ensuring that publications are consistent with, or actively promote, the political or ideological goals of the publishing organization. As a result, the editor may from the outset exclude all or most authors whose ideas are not acceptable to the publisher.

Thus, far from simply dealing with words on a page, the editor becomes the focal point of negotiation among the sometimes conflicting interests of publisher, writers, marketers and buyers (readers).

Subject-matter reviewers

When it comes to highly specialized documents, some publishers will draw on the services of experts; for example; a manuscript in the field of atmospheric physics will be looked at by a meteorologist. Such an expert may review the manuscript, prior to acceptance for publication, in order to determine whether it is original work and represents a contribution to the field, point out gaps in the argument, and so on. Experts may also be employed to do content editing for factual and conceptual accuracy and any other matters calling for specialist knowledge. Alternatively, such a text may be edited by someone who specializes in editing scientific texts. 'Scientific and technical editor' and 'medical editor' are now occupations engaged in by people who are not themselves technicians, engineers, scientists or medical researchers. This is less often the case with other specialized areas: people who edit specialized works in law or music will usually be subject-matter experts themselves.

Proofreaders

After a manuscript (usually in the form of a Word document) has been edited, it goes to the publisher's production department for page design and typesetting (the old term is still used, though nowadays literal setting of metal type is an artisanal pursuit; typographical decisions are made on a computer screen). In some publishing sectors, authors are given electronic templates into which they must insert their text, so that no further page layout and typographical work is required.

The outcome of the design and typesetting process, the 'proof', may then be compared with the original Word document in order to catch any remaining errors in the Word document, or errors introduced during design and typesetting. This task, known as proofreading, may be assigned to the author, the editor, or a specialized proofreader employed by the publisher. Nowadays the proof most commonly takes the form of a PDF file. Adobe Reader and Adobe Acrobat contain tools that make it easy to mark up this file.

Proofreaders working on paper use special paired marks to indicate errors: one mark appears within the text itself (the copymark) and the other in the margin, to draw the printer's attention to the change. Note that not all proofreaders in the English-speaking world use the same set of marks. For exercises, use the copymarks your instructor recommends. Proofreading per se lies outside the scope of this book.

> *Terminology note*. The term *proofreading* is sometimes used by translators to mean copyediting, the topic of the next chapter. It is also used by some translators to refer to the procedure called *unilingual re-reading* in Chapter 13. It is even used as a synonym of *revision.*

2.2 Editing, rewriting and adapting

Editing needs to be distinguished from rewriting and adapting. When editing, you start from an existing text and make changes in its wording. Sometimes, however, the existing text is so badly written that it is easier to abandon the existing wording and re-express the text's content with newly composed sentences and possibly a new text structure. This is rewriting. In *Complete Plain Words*, Ernest Gowers provides a treasure trove of real examples of bad bureaucratic writing, and discusses the principles that should be used in rewriting them. Here's an example that illustrates the single greatest problem with such writing—overuse of nouns and sequences of nouns:

> This compulsion is much regretted, but a large vehicle fleet operator restriction in mileage has now been made imperative in meeting the demand for petrol economy.

This sentence may not pose a problem for specialists in road transportation, but non-specialists will find it easier to read:

> We much regret having to do this but we have been obliged to greatly reduce the use of our fleet of large vehicles in order to meet the demand that we economize on petrol.

Clearly this second sentence was not created by adding, subtracting and moving words in the first sentence. Sometimes such rewriting is needed only in the occasional sentence; sometimes most of a text has to be overhauled in this way.

Now, both editing and rewriting aim to create a text that is maximally suitable for the *original* intended audience. Sometimes, however, people don't want to replace the old poorly written document with one that is better written; instead, they want to prepare an *additional* document for a *new* audience. In this case we'll call the activity adaptation. This may involve either complete recomposition (as in the above example of rewriting) or relatively minor rewording of the existing sentences (as in editing).

First, let's look at a case where adaptation will typically require complete recomposition. English legal documents traditionally address an audience of lawyers and judges; a legal editor would check that such documents were suited to that readership. However in recent decades the English-speaking world has seen a movement demanding 'plain writing' of legal documents so that they can be read by non-lawyers. In some jurisdictions, there has even been 'plain writing' legislation, requiring for example that consumer financial documents such as mortgages be in readily understandable language. This will generally call for complete recomposition of sentences in order to achieve a high level of readability, perhaps at the expense of precision. Legal language is often hard to read because the writer was trying to be extremely precise, eliminating as much vagueness and ambiguity as possible; often this cannot be accomplished without sacrificing ease of reading.

Now, let's look at two cases where minor rewording would probably suffice to adapt a text:

- Start from a document originally written for a British audience and adjust it for an American audience (e.g. make adjustments in vocabulary and spelling).
- Start from a document originally written for an audience of native readers and adjust it for an international audience that includes mainly non-native readers.

These cases exemplify two common procedures for document adaptation. In the first, features are added to a document that are specific to a local readership, while features specific to other localities are subtracted. In the second, all local features are subtracted, in order to address the broadest possible, international audience. Preparing a document for such a broad audience is especially difficult for adapters who are native speakers of the language in which the text is written and also members of the culture from which it originates. That is because they must have a knowledge of what others do *not* know, whether it be difficult aspects of the language or local history. Thus a reference to the '44th president' (of the United States) is likely to be obscure to readers in other countries.

A final case of preparing a supplementary document through adjustment of an existing one is repurposing. Here material is adjusted for use with a new medium. For example, text might be adjusted for use in a printed brochure, on a Web page, or in a slideshow presentation. The adjustments might include changes to the wording but also to visual appearance (e.g. some fonts work better on paper, others on screen).

Finally, it should be noted that the distinction between authoring (original writing) and editing is becoming blurred. It has become common to 'write' by editing bits and pieces of existing text from various sources and pasting them together, with or without original additions. Some of the existing text may be rewritten or adapted.

> *Terminology Note*. The terms *adapt* and *rewrite* have been used here to denote activities within a single language. The terms are also used, with a variety of meanings, by translation theorists.

2.3 Mental editing during translation

Another activity which is similar to editing is a regular feature of professional translation. It is often noted that translations are easier to read than their sources. That is because experienced translators of non-literary texts tend to produce translations whose writing quality is much superior to that of the source text. To accomplish this, they do not actually prepare an edited version of the source text; instead, they engage in what might be called mental stylistic editing and mental structure/content editing *while they translate*. Three examples (with an English gloss of the source text):

- If the source text has ‘necessary pre-requisites’, the translator will just write ‘pre-requisites’, eliminating the redundancy.
- If the source text has ‘fish and animals’, the translator will write ‘fish and other animals’, since fish are themselves animals.
- If the source text has ‘with a view to the need for a clear definition of the concept of violence at the very outset of the preventive work, an inclusive definition is to be preferred’, the translator will write something much simpler, such as ‘the first step in prevention is to define violence clearly, and the definition should be an inclusive one’.

In each of Chapters 4 to 6, there is a short section devoted to this quasi-editing work. Just how much such cleaning up is permissible? It’s not possible to formulate any precise answer. There is a permissible range: some translators do more cleaning up than others, just as some translate more freely than others. You learn the permissible range through advice from experienced translators in a particular translation service or agency. The most common type of improvement is paring down the convoluted, verbose sentences and eliminating the high-flown vocabulary or jargon commonly used in bureaucratic writing to express rather simple ideas. The obvious limitation here is that clients might wonder about a translation that is only half the length of the source text!

In some cases, large-scale structural and content editing is required while translating. This activity, known as trans-editing, is discussed in Chapter 7.

One view often voiced is that the burden of editing should not be placed on the translator. That is, the source text should be edited before submission for translation. In some cases, this is just a matter of timing. The source text is going to be published and does have to be edited; the only question is whether this will occur before or after translation. In other cases, the situation is quite different. Within a multilingual bureaucracy, someone who is either a poor writer or not a native speaker writes a document which will be circulated as a draft rather than a final version. Spending time and money to edit it is not thought worthwhile by the powers that be. In these cases, the translator’s desire for a well-written source text is likely to remain a dream.

2.4 Editing non-native English

In many organizations and countries, texts are very frequently written in English by people who are not native speakers. For example, as the Web site of the South African Translators' Institute mentions in its definition of editing: 'In a country like South Africa, where many people are forced to write in a language that is not their mother tongue, the work of editors is extremely important.' (This is a reference to speakers of Afrikaans and of the indigenous languages such as Xhosa and Zulu, who find themselves having to write in English.)

More often than not, texts written in English within the European Union bureaucracy are written by non-native speakers; the Directorate General for Translation at the European Commission has a unit to edit these writings before they are sent for translation into other EU languages.

Then there is the case of science writing. These days, scientists very often write directly in English rather than in their own language. Many scientific and other scholarly publications insist that such writers have their work edited by a native speaker of English prior to submission. Here is a sentence from an article written in English by a French-speaking scientist:

> Activity levels were not correlated to brains or bodies mass.

A native speaker would never use the plurals 'brains' and 'bodies' here. One has to write 'brain or body mass', even though the meaning is 'mass of the brains or bodies'.

People who attempt to write in English as a second language are often quite good or even excellent *speakers* of English, but poor *writers* of the language. Their justified confidence in their speaking ability may lead them to overestimate their writing ability. They make all sorts of elementary errors (they fail to capitalize the days of the week if their native language does not do so) as well as errors in such matters as language level (they use overly informal language that is acceptable in speech but not in writing, or odd mixtures of formal and informal language). Also, if their native language is historically related to English in some way (Dutch or French for example), they may frequently use 'false friends': a French speaker might use 'library' to mean 'bookshop' because the French word 'librairie' means 'bookshop'.

The biggest problems seen in non-native English are not micro-errors such as failure to capitalize or a wrong lexical choice. The biggest problems are failures in English composition: since the writers were not educated in English, they may never have learned how to organize sentences in an English manner, using English methods of ensuring inter-sentence cohesion and positioning of focused information (see Chapters 4.2 and 4.4 for examples of cohesion and focus problems). They may also not have learned how to organize paragraphs, or entire arguments or narratives, in the English manner. Instead they will inappropriately use the sentence-organizing, text-composing and rhetorical devices of their own language which they learned as children at school. As a result, you may have to do a good deal of structural editing, such as reorganizing paragraph divisions (see Chapter 5).

If you edit non-native English, you may be employed directly by the author of the text, not by the publisher. You are acting as an 'author's editor' rather than a 'publisher's editor', but you will still want to know about the intended publisher's requirements, since your task is to increase the likelihood that the manuscript will be accepted for publication.

Ideally, editors of non-native English should be native speakers who were educated in English. However in many countries, it is not always practical to find such a person, and the editor may be someone with near-native ability. It is also a good idea for the editor to know the native language of the writer, since it will then be easier to reconstruct what the writer had in mind in passages which are obscure (the writer may have been engaging in literal mental translating from his or her own language). Translators who work from that language are obviously well positioned to accept such editing work. Thus a translator who works from German to English, or at least has some knowledge of German, will have an easier time with a passage such as the following, taken from a text written by a German speaker about how to design roads in a way that will reduce accidents:

> Some new opened roads unfortunately show accident concentrations (black spots) in a short time. In these road sections have to be done a Road Safety Inspection to detect the deficiencies causing accidents.

In the first sentence, a native English reader who knows no German might think that the writer is talking about new roads, but that is not the intended meaning. They can also be old roads that have been closed for modifications or repairs and have now been newly opened. 'New' needs to be understood as an adverb modifying 'opened', not as an adjective modifying 'roads'. The German word 'neu' (new) can function either as an adverb or an adjective, whereas in English, the adverb form 'newly' is needed to make the meaning immediately clear. The second sentence manifests the so-called 'verb second' construction that is compulsory in main clauses in all the Germanic languages except English. In the other Germanic languages, one says 'yesterday saw she an elephant': since 'yesterday' is occupying the first structural position in the sentence, the next position must be occupied by the verb ('saw'). An editor who does not know another Germanic language may well become confused upon reading this sentence, especially since the verb 'have' does not agree in number with 'inspection' (this is not an influence of German but just a plain old mistake on the writer's part, perhaps arising from the plural noun 'sections' that immediately precedes 'have'). The sentence needs to be edited to read '…a road safety inspection has to be done in these…'. In this particular case, an editor will probably be able to deduce the meaning from world knowledge, that is, by relating the words 'sections', 'inspection', 'deficiencies' and 'accidents' to what he or she already knows about road safety. But that will not always be the case, either because the editor does not have the requisite world knowledge, or because he/she makes an incorrect deduction from world knowledge. At any rate, the failure of syntax to signal the meaning in this sentence will slow down the editing process for editors unfamiliar with German word order.

Here is a case where the editor will probably not be able to work properly unless he or she knows the writer's native language:

> To be effective, the committee should be subjected to the support of local management.

The ideas expressed by 'subjected to' and 'support' do not fit together. However if you know the writer's native language, French, you will recognize a word that may have inspired the English, namely 'assujetti'. This word is indeed often translated by 'subject(ed) to'. However it also has the sense 'secured', as when a boat is secured to a dock. By extension then, the committee here can only be effective if it has a secure tie to management, which supports its work. Unfortunately this meaning cannot be borne by English 'subjected to'. Even if 'subjected to' is changed to 'subject to', it still sounds like local management is constraining rather than assisting the work of the committee.

If as the editor you are not familiar with the writer's native language (and sometimes even if you are), there is an important technique you can use to identify the meaning of obscure passages. Consider this baffling passage from a text about weather observations in developing countries:

> …the difficulty of maintaining observation sites with recordings homogeneous with development

What does 'recordings homogenous with development' mean? In such cases, the best approach is to hope that the writer repeats the point using a different wording later in the text. You should therefore keep an eye out for such wordings. In the case under consideration, a later passage reads:

> With economic and social development, it is difficult to maintain observation sites in operation, protect them from deterioration and maintain homogeneous data series.

Here are some general things to watch for in non-native writing. The writers may not know that a word or turn of phrase is very formal, very informal, old-fashioned or infrequent. They may not know that a certain phrasing may be viewed as impolite or, conversely, overly polite. Languages differ in how direct one can be: in the writer's language, one might need to write 'we wonder if you might not possibly send us a letter' whereas in English that seems overdone; 'send us a letter' would be normal, or at most 'please send us a letter'. In a text that praises an individual (an announcement of a promotion for example), it may be customary in the writer's language to keep repeating praise expressions like 'absolutely outstanding' and 'incomparable'. In English, such effusiveness will seem insincere, defeating the purpose of the text. Non-native writers may also not know about genre conventions: a French speaker writing up the minutes of a meeting may use the present tense, not knowing that minutes are written in the past tense in English (not 'Mary suggests postponing the decision' but 'Mary suggested…').

Aside from such 'rhetorical' editing, you may also have to do some content editing if the writer has made cultural assumptions that will not be shared by readers, or has wrongly assumed certain kinds of factual (for example, geographical) knowledge.

One possibly important question that arises when editing non-native (and sometimes native) English is: which regional variety of the language should the editor adopt? The answer is fairly simple. If the readers will be speakers of your own variety, use that. If the readers will be international, then avoid usages which are specific to American, British or some other local variety.

Like any other text, one written by a non-native can be stylistically edited or simply copyedited (see Chapters 3 and 4). In some cases, non-native English which is very badly written may be treated like the output of machine translation (even though the types of error will be quite different); the text will be edited just enough to make it intelligible (see Chapters 12.2.2 and 16.2.3).

A final word of warning: when editing non-native English, the risk of accidentally changing meaning is far greater than with native writing. The problem is not the truly opaque passages where you are simply baffled about the intended meaning. In these cases, you can consult the author (if available) or a subject-matter expert, or place question marks around the passage. The real problem is that with non-native English, much more of your attention will be devoted to language and style matters, and as a result, you will more frequently find yourself making guesses about what the author intends without realizing that you are guessing, and that other meanings are possible. Ideally, your edited version will go back to the author, whose reading knowledge of English will be much better than their writing ability, and they may be able to spot your incorrect guesses about what they meant. Another possibility is to have both the unedited and edited versions of the text read by a subject-matter expert, who may be able to spot places where you have written something which is unlikely to be what the author intended. In the end, however, you are bound to make more editing mistakes with non-native than with native writing.

2.5 Crowd-sourced editing of User Generated Content

With the advent of social media and Wikipedia in the first decade of the 21st century, it became easy for anyone to make their own writings public without going through a publishing company's editorial process. Such User Generated Content, as it is called, may nevertheless be edited. Wikipedia articles can be edited by any registered Wikipedia user, with a few restrictions. Editing is thus crowd-sourced rather than being performed by an official 'editor'. Any article not conforming to the posted writing guidelines can be marked as needing correction:

a box appears at the top of the screen stating that the article is in need of certain kinds of correction.

2.6 Degrees of editing

Professional editors do not apply equal editing effort to every text. In the first place, an editor may only have time to read through a particular text once, doing all four kinds of editing simultaneously, or perhaps just copyediting to eliminate the most obvious errors. With other texts, it may be possible to perform two or more separate edits. Additional factors are the nature of the publication and the reputation of the publisher: the editors of a scientific journal whose publisher wishes to be known internationally for readability and freedom from factual error will need to edit very carefully.

Since editors may well have several jobs going at once, they need to consider whether all merit equal attention; there is not much point in spending vast amounts of time on the stylistic editing of a text which is relatively ephemeral, like a report which only a limited number of people within an organization will look through, fairly quickly, and then discard. Readers will likely have a higher tolerance for uncaught errors in this type of text.

Another important consideration is the reaction of writers. If a freelance editor hopes to work for a writer at some time in the future, it will be a good idea to keep changes to a minimum. The editor may have thought of a brilliant new wording for a sentence, but if the writer's sentence is satisfactory, it may be best to leave it. Writers will be more inclined to work with an editor who appears to be helping them get their message across, and less inclined to work with one who appears to be competing with them as a substitute writer.

Some books on editing refer to a specific number of degrees of editing. For example, a distinction may be made between light, medium and heavy editing, each being appropriate to a particular type of job. As many as nine degrees may be distinguished, with particular tasks specified for each degree. This approach is a kind of summary of the experience of people who have been editing for a long time. If you want to read more about the factors involved in selecting a degree of editing, see the Further Reading section at the end of this chapter, or read Chapter 12 on degrees of revision. Terms such as 'light' and 'heavy' are a bit misleading since they may seem to refer to the number of changes the editor makes—something which of course depends on the quality of the text submitted for editing. The actual intent of the terms is to refer to the number of aspects of a text which are checked: in a light edit, you might just check for grammar, spelling and punctuation errors.

Another interesting way to look at the issue of degrees is to consider the writing effort required of the editor, as opposed to the reading effort. Here are five degrees of increasing writing effort:

1. make no changes
2. make changes for correctness

3. make changes for intelligibility
4. make changes for writing quality ('style')
5. rewrite

Left aside here are structural editing issues such as reparagraphing as well as content editing issues (unless one wants to consider intelligibility as a content issue).

Level 1 involves no writing by the editor, who simply reads a sentence, thinks about it, and then decides to do nothing. Level 2 requires some writing effort but less than at level 3: it takes more effort to make an unintelligible sentence intelligible than it does to make it correct, since correcting (i.e. making changes during copyediting) is simply a matter of applying rules. As for level 4, it will usually take a very great effort to achieve a high level of writing quality if the author has failed to achieve it. That is because the effort may well be required over much of the text rather than in just a few sentences here and there, as is typical with levels 2 and 3 (if almost every sentence needs to be corrected or made intelligible, then the text is probably not worth editing!). Finally, the degree of writing effort required at level 5 will vary with the editor: some editors may find it easier to cross out a sentence and write an entirely new one (whether for reasons of intelligibility or for reasons of style) than to achieve the desired quality by making small changes here and there in a sentence.

2.7 Editing procedure

When you are just learning, the first step is to master each of the types of editing. This will be done here through exercises in individual aspects of copyediting, stylistic editing, structural editing, content editing and consistency checking. Thus in Chapter 3, you will be practising punctuation editing in one exercise and spelling correction in another; then you will practise doing all aspects of copyediting at once.

The next step is to do a full edit of a text several pages long. Do this in separate run-throughs of the entire text. Begin with the structural editing of the whole text, then proceed to check the content for factual, mathematical and logical errors, then do the stylistic editing, then the copyediting and then a consistency check. At the very end, run Spellcheck to catch any typing errors you may have missed (or introduced yourself while editing!).

The third step might be to try a combined edit in which you correct errors of all types as you come to them. Move back and forth in the text as necessary. When you've finished, put the result aside. Then, a few days later, correct the same text using separate edits. Compare the results. Look in particular for the following in your combined edit:

- errors you missed;
- wasted work: copyediting changes that were overridden by stylistic or structural changes;
- errors you introduced.

Alternatively, work with a partner. You do a combined edit while your partner does separate edits. Exchange copies of your edited texts and compare the results.

Practice

Exercise: *Copyediting non-native writers*

Your instructor will give you a document written in English by someone who is not a native speaker of English, but whose native language you know. Find and correct linguistic errors.

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

At the websites of the Society for Editors and Proofreaders (UK) and the European Association of Science Editors, you'll find links to editors' associations around the world.

At the website of the Editors' Association of Canada, you can download the document *Professional Editorial Standards*, which describes the various kinds of text-amending work

Also of interest is the Mediterranean Editors and Translators website.

Proofreading: Samson (1993: chs. 3 and 9) gives editing and proofreading marks and sample texts, as do Dragga & Gong (1989: ch. 3), Judd (2001: ch. 2) and O'Connor (1986: ch. 9).

Editors' strategies: Bisaillon (2007).

Degrees of editing: Samson (1993: ch. 6); Rude & Eaton (2011).

Editing at newspapers: Bell (1991); Vuorinen (1997).

Plain language: Steinberg (1991: pp 59–80 and 148–203).

Writing for an international audience: Kirkman (1992: ch. 7).

Typography: Dragga & Gong (1989: ch. 5).

Samples of editing: Almost every chapter of Samson (1993) and of Dragga & Gong (1989) contains samples of various kinds of editing.

Editing non-native writers: Burrough-Boenisch (2003, 2013a); Murphy (2013); Van de Poel (2012); Ventola & Mauranen (1991).

Authors' editors: Burrough-Boenisch (2013b).

3 Copyediting

In this chapter, we'll look at copyediting under five headings: 'house style'; spelling; syntax and idiom; punctuation; correct usage. Checking for consistency, which is also an aspect of copyediting, will be considered separately, in Chapter 8.

Copyediting may be defined as checking and correcting a document to bring it into conformance with pre-set rules. The second last word of the sentence you are now reading must be 'says', not 'say', because there is a rule in the grammar of standard written English that says so. (Several forms of spoken English omit this –s.) In the case of correct usage, the rules to be enforced are controversial, and involve matters of authority, ideology and tradition. In the case of punctuation, the rules are often not clear-cut. The sections dealing with these two topics are therefore rather lengthy.

Copyediting requires close attention to small details; you can't do it properly if your mind is on other things. Sometimes you may find it a relief from the more demanding (less clear-cut) aspects of writing and translating work, and sometimes you may get satisfaction from those copyediting decisions that do require some thought. But unless you derive pleasure from correcting other people's errors, or creating 'order' out of untidiness, you may find this necessary task somewhat unattractive.

Ultimately, you may discover that you can combine copyediting with stylistic, structural and content editing, but while you are still learning, you should do it separately. Perhaps try thinking of it as a game: How many mistakes can I find? Can I score better than last time?

Copyediting is line-by-line, 'micro-level' work. It is therefore done after the author and editor have completed 'macro-level' changes to the content and structure of the text. There is no point copyediting a paragraph which will later be deleted.

Copyeditors also check certain typographical and layout features, especially for consistency: Are all paragraphs indented? Are all headings bolded? However, some of these features are really a matter of stylistic editing or structural editing. For example, italics are commonly used to indicate to the reader that mental stress should be placed on a particular word. This is a matter of readability, and more specifically, smoothing—a stylistic matter which is dealt with in Chapter 4.

Similarly, headings may be underlined and indented as a way of signalling the structure of an argument to readers—a subject discussed in Chapter 5.

> *Terminology notes.* The term *copyediting* is used by some editors to include stylistic editing in the sense of Chapter 4. Indeed, some editors use *copyediting* to include fact-checking (see Chapter 6) as well as any other tasks which are performed on a 'line-by-line' basis. These are all 'micro-editing' tasks, as opposed to such 'macro-editing' tasks as rearranging the order of presentation of topics in a document.
>
> Where British and American terminology differ, this book uses the American term: 'period' instead of 'full stop'; 'parenthesis' instead of 'bracket'; 'typo' instead of 'literal'.

3.1 House style

The word 'style' is unfortunate in that style sheets deal with mechanical matters, whereas 'stylistic editing', to be discussed in the next chapter, refers to matters which are very far from mechanical. Here are some of the instructions from the style sheet prescribed by the editors of the Routledge journal *Translation Studies*:

- In general spell out numbers under 100; but use numerals for measurements (e.g. 12km) and ages (e.g. 10 years old). Insert a comma for both thousands and tens of thousands (e.g. 1,000 and 20,000).
- Keep capitalization to a minimum. When possible, use lower case for government, church, state, party, volume etc.; north, south, etc. are only capitalized if used as part of a recognized place name, e.g. Western Australia, South Africa; use lower case for general terms, e.g. western France, south-west of Berlin. Books or films referred to in body of text have capital letter on all main words.
- Either UK spelling (but 'z' rather than 's', e.g. 'modernization' not 'modernisation') or US spelling can be used, as long as it is consistent. UK punctuation conventions will be applied throughout, for consistency.

In addition to (or instead of) a style sheet, editors will often direct writers to follow a particular published style manual or guide, such as the Chicago Manual of Style. These manuals may be hundreds of pages long. A style manual gives instructions on a wide variety of matters, including spelling (advertise or advertize?), capitalization, hyphenation, numerals (eight days or 8 days?), Latin or English plurals (fungi or funguses?), acronyms, use of italicization and bolding, presentation of quotations, footnotes and reference works, treatment of place names (Montreal or Montréal?), transliteration of names from languages that use a different script, what if anything to do about non-gender-neutral language, and much more.

Sometimes style manuals give a choice of approach, and simply demand consistency (e.g. spell numbers up to nine, then use figures from 10; or spell up to ninety-nine, then use figures from 100). Note, by the way, that if you follow the first of these two rules about numbers blindly, you may end up writing sentences like:

> There was one case of 11 people in a car and 12 cases of nine in a car.

where form does not match meaning: the number of people should be either '11…9' or 'eleven…nine'.

Style manuals are published by governments, newspapers, university presses and editors' associations. A few are listed at the end of the chapter. You may find it useful to compare manuals for English with manuals for your other languages, noting differences in matters such as comma use.

Style manuals and style sheets help create a distinctive institutional voice and visual image for a publication—a 'house style'. They also create a degree of consistency in journals, magazines and collections of articles, where several different authors are contributing to a single issue or book. Once the contribution arrives, it is up to the copyeditor to check that the instructions have been followed.

In multilingual countries or institutions, style manuals may give instructions on how to handle wordings in another language that are being reproduced. Unfortunately, writers are usually left to their own devices when they decide to write a few words of their own in another language or translate a quotation. In Canada, English-speaking journalists frequently write short phrases in French but don't bother checking the gender of nouns or the positioning of French accent marks, and editors fail to make corrections. As for translations produced by journalists, these tend to be extremely literal to the point of being unidiomatic. The British newspaper *The Guardian* once quoted France's president as saying, about Brexit, that what was needed was a 'retirement agreement', which an editor should have corrected to 'withdrawal agreement'.

3.2 Spelling and typing errors

Why should a text be correctly spelled and be free of typing errors? Even asking this question may seem odd. The need for correct spelling was drummed into us at elementary school, and we may never have given a moment's thought to its rationale.

Spelling errors are bad because of the effect on the reader. Mispelings and tpying errors produce a very bad impression. They suggest that the author and editor are sloppy thinkers, and that the publisher tolerates carelessness. As a result, readers may lose confidence in the actual content of the work. Of course, it does not follow logically that if there are spelling errors, there must also be errors in the facts or arguments presented, but subconsciously at least, that is what readers will suspect. Misspellings and typos are also distracting, and therefore they slow down the reading process. Finally, typos can directly affect meaning, both when keys get pressed in the wrong order (have you read about the artist who fearlessly attacked scared cows?) and when the wrong word is transmitted from the mind to the fingers: there is a big difference between adopting a plan and adapting one, between having an aptitude and having an attitude.

The work of searching for misspellings and typos is greatly facilitated by the Spellcheck utilities included with word processing software. If you are not already in the habit of using Spellcheck, then get into the habit immediately. There can be no excuse for htis tpye of mistake. Run Spellcheck after all other changes have been made.

Spellcheckers do have weaknesses and pitfalls, which are discussed in Chapter 9. One of the most notable weaknesses is proper names; you will need to independently verify that the names of people and places are properly spelled. Consider this sentence from a funding proposal:

> Our health centre worked in partnership with Merck Frost.

Since 'frost' is a correctly spelled English word, it would be easy to let this sentence slip by unchecked. In fact, the correct spelling of the former name of this pharmaceutical corporation is Merck Frosst. You could easily find this spelling by entering 'Merck Frost' in your web browser.

One aspect of English spelling is highly variable. Which is correct: life style, life-style or lifestyle? The answer is: all three, depending on which dictionary you consult. Also, usage may vary with the field; for example, the Canadian Government's terminology bank Termium says that 'caseworker' (one word) is correct in the field of social services but 'case worker' (two words) is correct for the person who works with inmates in a penitentiary. If you are doing freelance editing for a corporation or government ministry, documents on the subject of your text may reveal your client's practices regarding common compounds.

If your style sheet prescribes a particular dictionary, then the compounding problem will often be solved. However compounding is a highly productive process in English; that is, writers can make up new compounds at the drop of a hat, and these will not appear in your prescribed dictionary. The easiest principle to follow here is consistency: make your choice for each compound, and then make sure you stick to it throughout the text. You can also try using Google to investigate the relative frequency of the two-word versus one-word treatment of a compound. See Chapter 7 for a discussion of problems in the use of Google for such purposes.

In general, there is a progression over time from open spelling (two words) when a compound is first introduced, through hyphenation, to solid spelling (one word) as a compound becomes established in the language. The Americans tend to move through this progression more quickly than the British. Hyphens are less common in U.S. English; words written with a hyphen in Britain will tend to be written solid in the United States or (less often) as two words. (There is also a trend, more advanced in the U.S., towards omitting the hyphen in prefixed words like 'coordinate', 'cooperate' and 'preeminent').

A final point, concerning another use of hyphens: if your style sheet calls for breaking long words at the ends of lines, note that American practice is to break at phonetically natural points ('trium-phant') whereas British practice tends to draw on morphological considerations ('triumph-ant'). Check to see which principle the automatic hyphenator in your word processor follows. Note that some automatic hyphenating utilities may produce wrong or even bizarre results (bat-hroom).

3.3 Syntax and idiom

If the text you are editing is written by a reasonably well-educated native speaker of English, and is not a translation, there is a good chance that it will be syntactically correct and idiomatic. That is, it will not contain sentences like

> He washes frequently his teeth, sometimes after every dining.

in which the adverb 'frequently' is in a position it cannot occupy, the word combination 'wash teeth' is unidiomatic, and the word 'dining' is used in a meaning it does not have. These are errors of a kind which native speakers normally do not make. However there are several exceptions:

1. People attempting to write in fields with which they are not familiar may have problems with the specialized phraseology of that field. Similarly, if you are just beginning to edit in a field with which you are not yet familiar, you must be careful not to replace the customary phrasings of that field with more universal ones. For example, when editing a work in the field of meteorology, you might come across the term 'summer severe weather' and you might be tempted to normalize the word order to 'severe summer weather'. That would be a mistake; the phrase is correct as it stands, 'severe weather' being a defined concept in this field. When a severe weather event occurs in summer, it is 'summer severe winter'; when it occurs in winter, it is 'winter severe weather'.
2. Since the advent of word processors, mechanical slips during composition often create serious errors in sentence structure.
    (a) There may be word missing (or an one unwanted extra word) if during self-editing the writer pressed the delete key once too often (or not often enough). Did you notice the missing word and the extra word in the previous sentence?
    (b) Cut-and-paste or click-and-drag operations, during which a passage is moved within a document or pasted in from another document, often produce imperfect transitions between the pasted passage and what surrounds it. The structure of the pasted portion may not fit into the sentence properly, or there may be a word missing at the boundary of the pasted portion, or there may be an extra word—commonly a double double word. (Spellcheckers catch double words, but be careful not to automatically correct the sequence 'had had'; 'he had had a bad time' may be an incorrect doubling, or it may be correct if the sentence calls for the pluperfect tense of 'have'.)

(c) Partly amended sentences such as the following are now common:

> It would be appropriate for computational terminology researchers would do well to investigate the potential usefulness of existing knowledge-engineering technology.

The writer decided to add 'would do well' but forgot to delete 'it would be appropriate for'. In the days of typewriters, such sentences were hardly ever produced. Changing the structure of a sentence once it was down was a very time-consuming (and messy) operation. As a result, people either spent more timing planning their sentences, or else they made changes in handwriting during a separate self-editing phase, when their attention was on the sentence as a whole. (Then someone else—a typist—would prepare an entirely fresh copy.) Nowadays, it is very easy to make changes as you write with a computing device, and there is a tendency to focus only on the bit you are changing.

3. Writers sometimes make present-tense verbs agree in number with the nearest noun whose combination with the verb makes sense:

> The legacy of the social service cutbacks of previous governments remain with us.

4. The mind sometimes retrieves the wrong word from the mental store:

> Bank machines, photocopiers and central heating are a few examples from an almost infinite list of technologies and products that are an inexhaustible feature of modern life.

Here, 'inexhaustible' (perhaps triggered by 'infinite' earlier in the sentence) does not make much sense; the writer may have meant 'indelible' (in the sense of 'permanent') or 'irreducible'. Words that sound like the word having the intended meaning ('inedible' in the case 'indelible') may also be retrieved. And sometimes two words or phrases are retrieved at once:

> Beyond a question of a doubt, this enhanced our cynicism in parliament as an effective instrument of government.

Here 'beyond any question' and 'beyond a shadow of a doubt' have been retrieved together.

5. When people are translating into their native language, they often write ungrammatical and especially unidiomatic sentences, under the influence of the source text. When the source language is one whose vocabulary includes many cognates of words in their native language (e.g. any Romance or Germanic language in the case of translation into English), translators may use words in meanings they do not have ('he was invited to give a conference' for French 'conférence', which often means 'lecture' or 'talk'). Such unidiomatic usages may also appear in the original writing of people who work in a multilingual environment. If the readers also operate in such an

environment, there may be no problem. But if they do not, then the editor must take action.

These then are the syntax and idiom problems found in the work of well-educated native speakers. But you may also find yourself having to edit writing by people who are not well educated or not native speakers. The problems found in the work of non-native speakers were discussed in Chapter 2.4. A syntax-related problem in the writing of less well-educated people is discussed briefly in connection with punctuation in Chapter 3.5.

> *Terminology note:* The word *idiomatic* is used in this book to cover a variety of phenomena which are sometimes distinguished: collocations such as ‘brush one’s teeth’, prepositional idioms such as ‘depend on’ and phrasal verbs such as ‘put up with’; set phrases such as ‘not on your life’; or clichés such as ‘please be advised that’. Similarly, expressions like ‘wash one’s teeth’ or ‘depend from’ are all described as *unidiomatic*. The term *idiomatic* is also sometimes used in a broader sense to refer to ‘the way we say things in our language’, that is, to refer to stylistic/rhetorical preferences such as the English preference for the plural rather than the singular in generic statements (‘students must obtain a mark of C in order to pass’ rather than ‘the student must…’). Here copyediting shades into stylistic editing.

Syntactic change and variability

Syntax and idiom are not eternal; they change as the generations pass. As a result, what older editors see as a clear error may be perfectly acceptable to educated younger speakers. Once innovations have begun to spread, editors have to decide whether they are now acceptable or still have to be edited out. A recent syntactic innovation is that in some versions of standard written English, the pronoun ‘which’ is no longer acceptable in restrictive relative clauses. Editors will automatically change ‘the term bank which we use’ to ‘the term bank that we use’. A common type of innovation in English is the conversion of adjectives and nouns to verbs: ‘pockets of downtown that are *resurging* as fashionable addresses’; ‘an escaped convict *upheaves* the lives of a businessman and his wife’. These could be one-off innovations by the writer, but you may want to check the most recent edition of your dictionary. Some publications insist on removing anything that is not recognized in an authoritative dictionary (unless it’s in a quotation); others take a more relaxed attitude and allow considerable room for authors to innovate.

Quite apart from innovation, notions of what is acceptable always vary somewhat from person to person. A writer may have used a structure or word combination which you find odd or impossible; but that does not mean it is wrong. For example, the pronoun ‘whom’ is slowly disappearing from the written language; many find ‘the man who we met on the bus’ perfectly acceptable; others do not. Some people find the use of ‘whose’ with inanimate antecedent (‘the book whose cover was so striking’) perfectly acceptable; others do not. I once discovered, through a Google search, that one can say 'underhand deal'; previously I thought it had to be 'underhand*ed*'. It seems that the two forms vary with geography, with most hits for 'underhand' coming from the UK, Africa, India and Pakistan, and most hits for 'underhanded' coming from the United States and Canada.

A further danger with using yourself as an authority is that you may end up introducing your own personal linguistic idiosyncrasies into a text. A few years ago, I discovered to my surprise that the expression 'she favours her right arm' does not at all mean 'she tends to use her right arm rather than her left' but rather the exact opposite: 'she avoids putting too much strain on her right arm, by using her left arm instead'; her right arm is 'favoured' by being given a rest! A further discovery: I had always thought that 'fulsome praise' means abundant praise, but recently I discovered that for many people it means excessive praise.

A related problem is that your mental lexicon may have changed over the years under the influence of translating from this or that source language. As a result, the meanings you attribute to certain words and phrases of your first language may be rather different from their meanings in the minds of non-translators.

It's always important to keep in mind that you are working on someone else's text. You must not replace their voice with yours. This is especially a danger with older editors. You may not care for certain recent innovations, such as the use of 'demographic' as a noun ('the problems of marketing to a younger demographic'), but that is not a reason to prevent others from using them.

Acceptable syntax also varies with genre. For example, in cookbooks, ellipsis of articles and pronouns is common: 'Slice onions. Then saute on high heat' rather than 'Slice the onions. Then saute them on high heat'. Such ellipsis is also often accepted in lists of points, which may diverge in other ways as well from the rules that apply to continuous prose (e.g. no capital letter at the beginning or period at the end).

To check idiomaticity, consult the combinatory dictionaries listed at the end of this chapter. For example, if the text you are editing has the phrase 'sorry choice', and you are uncertain whether this is an idiomatic word combination, the Benson dictionary will confirm that it is (you will learn that a choice can be bad, sorry, wrong, careful, difficult, good, happy, intelligent, judicious, wise, random or wide). The dictionaries by Wood and by Cowie & Mackin are entirely devoted to prepositional idioms, which often pose problems even for educated native speakers (report *to* or *for* work? compared *to* or *with* Paris?). To check the syntactic structure used with a word, try the *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary*, which always gives a full-sentence example for each sense of a word; it's available free online at www.collinsdictionary.com. To check whether a word has a particular sense, or can be used in a certain syntactic structure, or in combination with a certain other word, you can also try on-line concordances, some of which are free or have free versions, such as the American National Corpus at www.anc.org or the British National Corpus and Corpus of Contemporary American English at corpus.byu.edu. Be aware however that a corpus does not tell you what is 'correct', only what is actually in use by native speakers and writers. On grammar-checking software, see Chapter 9; on concordances, see Chapter 16.

A final type of variability that may be important for editors in some geographical areas is dialect differences. Standard languages are historically based in certain local forms of speech as opposed to other local forms, which are deemed 'non-standard'. As a result, some people's natural syntax and idiom may be unacceptable in writing, and children are taught to avoid using them. Thus, to many native speakers of English in Ireland, the following are all perfectly natural sentences, inherent in their language: 'Is this car belonging to you?', 'They were after leaving a gym across the street', 'It does be colder at nights'. Even if such syntax is not currently acceptable in formal writing, that could change. In a given geographical area, people who use a non-standard dialect in their everyday speech may want to start using that dialect in books and newspapers (and not just in quotations for 'local colour'). At that point, editors have to decide what to do.

3.4 Punctuation

Punctuation, in a narrow sense, includes the familiar marks: the comma, the period, the quotation mark, the dash and so on. In a broader sense, punctuation includes a variety of other indicators that provide guidance to readers: the space between words, the indentation introducing a new paragraph, the capital letter that begins a sentence. didyouknowthatatonetimetextswereunpunctuatedthere werenodemarcationsbetweenwordssentencespartsofsentencesorparagraphs A few aspects of punctuation (paragraph divisions, some uses of the comma) are really stylistic or structural matters, and will be considered in the next two chapters.

Some very common errors are opening a parenthetical remark but forgetting the closing parenthesis, and inconsistent punctuation in point-form presentation.

The rules governing punctuation are not as clear-cut as those governing spelling. The British and U.S. rules differ somewhat, for example in the positioning of closing quotation marks. Also, while sentences inside paragraphs have a highly standardized punctuation regime (initial capital; period or question mark or exclamation mark at the end), words in other parts of texts do not. Section headings, points in lists, captions of graphics and column titles on tables may take a wide variety of regimes: all keywords capitalized, first word capitalized or no words capitalized; various punctuation marks or no punctuation mark at the end.

Most uses of the English comma are not bound by rules at all. Using commas well calls for thought. There are two main types of variation:

- Some writers use many commas, others use few.
- Some writers use commas to mark speech features such as pauses and emphasis, others to mark the boundaries of syntactic structures.

Regarding the second of these differences, it seems that there are three principles upon which comma use in English has historically been based:

(A) When writing a sentence, use commas to indicate where someone should pause when reading the text aloud.

(B) Place commas at the boundaries of the syntactic constituents of the sentence.
(C) Imagine the sentence being spoken, then place commas to reflect your mental pauses or emphases (which may or may not occur at syntactic boundaries).

Approach (A) was historically first. Until a couple of hundred years ago, most literate people did not read silently. Aside from documents such as records (tax lists, property titles and so on), writing was a sort of script for reading aloud, either to oneself or to others. Punctuation indicated places to breathe, or to pause for rhetorical effect. Commas, colons and periods seem to have indicated increasing lengths of pause.

During the late 18th century and throughout the 19th century, approach (B) was widely advocated, though the older rhetorical tradition never died out. In this approach, thought to be suited to silent reading at great speed, commas help the eye by picking out syntactic structure, and thus clarify meaning. Finally, during the 20th century, approach (C) grew in importance, though it has not yet displaced the syntactic principle. The upshot is that people often use a combination of approaches (B) and (C).

Here's a very simple example of the difference between the two approaches:

> **approach (B):**
> Marilyn was the best translator available and, as soon as she returned from holiday, she was chosen to head up the prestigious project.
>
> **approach (C):**
> Marilyn was the best translator available, and as soon as she returned from holiday she was chosen to head up a prestigious project.

In the first sentence, the commas visually mark off 'as soon as she returned from holiday' as a clause interrupting the conjoined structure 'Mary was…and…she was…'. In the second sentence, the comma reflects how someone might have mentally imagined speaking the sentence. A further point of interest here: if you ever had occasion to read the first of these two sentences aloud, you might revert to approach (A) and use the commas as indicators of when to pause, or perhaps lower the voice. However this would be a case of 'pronouncing the commas', as opposed to using them to reflect a prior imagined speaking, for the position after 'and' is just not a natural place to pause during speech.

An important point about approach (C) is that sometimes the addition of a comma to indicate a mental pause has the effect of adding attitudinal meaning. Consider:

> He was apparently willing to support you.
> He was, apparently, willing to support you.

The second sentence expresses a bit of surprise, or casts doubt either on 'his' motive for supporting 'you' or on whether 'he' really was willing, as 'you' may have alleged.

More generally, the choice of a comma rather than some other punctuation mark (or no mark) can be used to reflect varying degrees of some attitudinal feature:

> I went to his house and I found him there.
> I went to his house, and I found him there.
> I went to his house. And I found him there.

As we move from the first sentence to the third, an increasing degree of surprise at 'his' presence 'there' is expressed. Now, according to some versions of punctuation rules (perhaps those you learned at school), the last two of the above sentences are impermissible. However if you rigidly exclude sentences beginning with 'and', you will not be able to obtain the effect achieved in the third sentence. Indeed you will often find that if you follow the most rigid version of rules, in any area of language, you will reduce the number of semantic options open to you. Worse than that, if you try to implement rigid rules with word processor tools, you may create a disaster. One editor decided that the word 'however' must always be followed by a comma, and implemented this decision using the Search & Replace All function. The result, in one passage, was a sentence which began 'However, much you enjoy translating…'.

A final important point about the two conflicting principles (B) and (C): some uses of the comma to reflect mental pauses are still quite strictly prohibited despite the rise of approach (C). If you are editing the work of people with relatively poor education in the standard written language, you may find such sentences as the following, from a report written by a health and safety officer:

> The beeping of the alarm at an interval of thirty seconds or a minute, is a warning you should attend to. It means the batteries are dying, you need to replace them with fresh batteries.

The first sentence has a comma functioning to separate the subject of the sentence from the predicate. Although people do often pause at the subject-predicate boundary in speech, this use of commas ceased to be permissible in the written language during the 19th century. The second sentence has a comma where there should be a period or semi-colon. This usage is particularly common in the writing of less well-educated people. A written sentence is not a natural unit corresponding to a structure of the spoken language, and as a result it takes children some time to learn where to place periods. Some people never succeed and you may find yourself having to correct their errors.

Turning now to the second type of variation in comma use, let's look briefly at heavy versus light punctuation. The heavy punctuation of the 19th century was associated with the use of commas to mark grammatical boundaries. Over the course of the 20th century, punctuation became lighter, especially in the U.S.. This was partly because sentences became shorter; obviously, short sentences usually do not need as many internal boundary markers as long ones. But in addition, commas became optional at many boundaries. In the lightest use, a comma will only appear when absolutely necessary to avoid misunderstanding. Four of the six commas in this paragraph you are now reading could be eliminated.

When you are not sure whether to use a comma, do not agonize. Avoid the situation Oscar Wilde describes: 'I was working on the proof of one of my poems all morning, and took out a comma. In the afternoon, I put it back.' Instead, follow this handy rule of thumb: *If in doubt, leave it out.*

3.5 Usage

Copyeditors are widely expected to make texts conform to something variously called 'correct usage', 'good grammar', 'correct English' or 'proper English'. This is something quite different from the problems of Syntax and Idiom discussed earlier. There, the task was to make sure the text conforms to rules which are inherent in the spoken language, and don't need to be stated or taught to children (e.g. the possible positions in a sentence of an adverb like 'frequently'). Occasionally people fail to observe these rules (for example in long sentences with complicated structures, or when translating) but there is no debate about them; as soon as an error is pointed out, people immediately recognize it as an error. No native speaker, of any educational level, thinks 'he washes frequently his teeth' is acceptable English.

Correct usage, on the contrary, is a matter of debate. It is overtly prescribed in publications by various 'authorities' as well as in angry letters to the editor by private individuals. These prescriptivists, as I will call them, condemn certain usages as wrong, but many people do not agree and simply ignore the various prescriptions in their own writing.

Webster's Dictionary of English Usage defines usage as 'a collection of opinions about what English grammar is or should be, about the propriety of using certain words and phrases, and about the social status of those who use certain words and constructions'. These opinions are voiced with a view to standardization, that is, the elimination of variants. If some people write 'it's me' and others write 'it's I', only one—in this approach—can be right; the other must be proscribed. It's worth noting that this idea—there is only one right way—is not as widely accepted in the English-speaking world as it is in some other language communities. A common view among English-speaking writers is that one should certainly consider all opinions regarding a point of usage, but each person should then decide for themselves what is best.

Now in every speech community, variants are constantly appearing in the spoken language. People in one geographical area start to pronounce a word differently; members of the younger generation start to give a word a slightly changed meaning. Obviously there are limits to such variation if communication is to be maintained. As a result, every language community has a process, operating below the level of consciousness, whereby some variant usages are rejected and others accepted. However, greater variation can be tolerated in speech than in writing. Written language needs a higher level of standardization so that texts written at one time and place will be understandable at other times and places, possibly by readers not known to the author.

The question is: what degree of standardization should be enforced and on what principle should a proposed standard be accepted or rejected? More specifically for our concerns in this book: what should be the attitude of editors to matters of correct usage?

Consider the following sentences and ask yourself whether you would make any corrections in them:

(1) If everybody minded their own business, the world would go round a good deal faster than it does.
(2) A flock of birds were alighting here and there around the field.
(3) Hopefully this text will be translated by tomorrow.
(4) The volume can be increased by turning the blue knob.
(5) Their mission is to boldly translate what no one has translated before.

There is nothing in any of these sentences that violates any syntactic rule inherent in the English language. Yet they all contain features that continue to be condemned in angry letters to the editor. According to some people:

In (1), *their* is wrong because *everybody* is singular; it has to be *his.*
In (2), *were* is wrong because *flock* is singular; it has to be *was.*
In (3), *hopefully* cannot be used as a disjunctive adverb; it's always a manner adverb, as in 'he looked at me hopefully'; the sentence should read 'it is to be hoped that this text…'.
In (4) the subject of *turning* must be the same as the subject of *can,* but it is not the volume that will be turning the knob; the sentence must be reworded to 'You can increase the volume by turning…' or 'The volume can be increased if you turn…'.
In (5) *boldly* must be moved because it is 'splitting' the infinitive 'to translate'.

For an editor, the first thing to notice about all these complaints is that they have little to do with successful communication. None of these sentences are hard to read and none will be misunderstood.

A second point worth noticing is that prescriptions sometimes mask ideological agendas. Consider sentence (1). Those who demand 'everybody minded *his* own business' instead of '*their* own business' claim that this is a matter of grammar ('everybody' is grammatically singular), but there is obviously an ideological agenda at work as well—a resistance to gender-neutral language. In fact, the use of *their* as a gender-neutral pronoun goes back to the 14th century when the singular antecedent is indefinite, as in sentence (1), or generic ('if the student wishes to receive their grade sooner…'). This usage was not proscribed until the late 18th century. Recently, 'they' has also come to be used with definite singular antecedents either to avoid attributing gender ('The translator I asked to work on this report said they wouldn't have time') or because the person in question does not wish to be referred to with gendered pronouns. You may have noticed that 'they' and 'their' are used with singular antecedents throughout this book. For more on this, see the Wikipedia article 'Singular *they*'.

The 18th century was a time when many notions of correct usage were first formulated, and Latin was often used as the model for what proper English should be. This is the origin for example of the rule prohibiting so-called split infinitives (see sentence 5 above). If a Latin sentence containing an infinitive is turned into English:

> Nec quicquam est philosophia, si *interpretari* velis, quam studium sapientiae. (Cicero)
> Philosophy is nothing other—if you wanted *to translate*—than the study of wisdom.

the part of the English corresponding to the italicized Latin infinitive has two words (*to translate*). Grammarians therefore decided, taking Latin as a universally valid model, that in English the infinitive is two words long ('to X'). Since obviously no adverb can be placed in the middle of the Latin infinitive, it 'followed' that no adverb should be placed between the two parts of the English infinitive. Expressions like 'to boldly go' were proscribed, even though they had been in use for centuries in written English. Split infinitives have in fact never ceased to be in widespread use; most people simply ignore the proscription, probably because it has no bearing whatsoever on the successful communication of ideas. Moreover, many sentences read awkwardly if the adverb is moved from its position between *to* and the verb: 'You can choose to cooperate always with colleagues inside and also outside your work unit' ('you can always choose to cooperate…' is not awkward, but it has a different meaning). Overly zealous avoidance of split infinitives can even create ambiguity: 'He asked us clearly to underline the main points'; this could mean either 'ask clearly' or 'underline clearly'.

Prescriptions sometimes actually create 'incorrect' usage through a process known as hypercorrection. This occurs in particular when they are taught in primary and secondary school classrooms, but not fully understood. You may recall being told not to write 'Gwendolyn and me translated this text together'; it should be 'Gwendolyn and I…' because 'I' is the proper form for the subject of a finite verb. Many people have taken in the injunction itself (don't use 'Gwendolyn and me') but not the explanation. As a result, one now frequently comes across sentences such as 'This text was translated by Gwendolyn and I'. The 'correct' usage is in fact 'Gwendolyn and me' because 'me' is the correct form for the object of a preposition; you wouldn't say '…translated by I'.

Not only do prescriptions sometimes create error, and not only do they have next to nothing to do with effective communication, but also they may actually hinder communication, by reducing the semantic options available to writers. Consider the rule that requires present-tense verbs to agree in number with their subject. Purveyors of correctness insist on a very rigid application of this rule.

They prescribe ‘A flock of birds *was* alighting’ and rule out ‘*were* alighting’. This makes it impossible (without expanding the sentence) to distinguish two different situations: the ducks all alighted together at one spot (‘flock…was alighting’) as opposed to the situation where some alighted here and others there, at different times (‘birds were alighting’). If as editor you change ‘were alighting’ to ‘was alighting’, you may well be preventing the writer from saying what they want to say. More generally, usage ‘rules’ can become a crutch for editors. It is so much easier to mechanically apply pseudo-rules like ‘never start a sentence with a conjunction’ than to ask whether starting a particular sentence with ‘but’ is communicatively effective.

Another criticism one can make of the prescriptivists is their arbitrariness. For example, they rule out the use of ‘hopefully’ as a disjunctive adverb—see sentence (3) above—but they do not criticize other such adverbs. They have nothing to say about a sentence like ‘Frankly, this text will not be translated by tomorrow’. Yet the sentences are exactly parallel in meaning: I tell you hopefully/frankly that this text…

The prescriptivists also distinguish themselves by not being there when you need them. They complain about usages which do not impede effective communication, but fail to complain about usages which do impede it. For example they do not draw attention to a use of ‘may’ which is often ambiguous, even in context: ‘Helicopters may be used to fly heart attack victims to hospital’ can mean either that it is permitted to so use the helicopters or that it is possible that they will be so used.

A final criticism is that sometimes prescriptivists do manage to pick out a point that really can lead to misunderstanding, but their recommendations are not helpful. An example is the position of the word ‘only’. The written sentence ‘His condition can only be alleviated by surgery’ is ambiguous; it can mean either that his condition can be alleviated but not cured by surgery, or it can mean that the alleviation can be accomplished through surgery but not by any other means. In speech, this distinction is made by placing stress on *alleviated* for the former meaning and on *surgery* for the latter. The prescriptivists correctly say that in writing, ambiguity can be avoided if ‘only’ is always placed directly before the expression it modifies: ‘only be alleviated’ for the first meaning, ‘only by surgery’ for the second. The problem is that if we followed this rule all the time, we would be forced to write awkward and unnatural sentences; instead of ‘I only wanted to talk to her’, we would have to write ‘I wanted only to talk to her’. There is simply no easy way to avoid ambiguity with ‘only’; you need to think about the possibility of misinterpretation every time.

Now prescriptivists often say that a certain usage should be followed because it was observed by the best writers of the past. Such references to writers of the past lend a patina of objectivity to their claims, but in reality, the prescriptivists do not do any research to determine the usage of ‘the best writers’. Sentence (1), for example, is by Lewis Carroll—surely a good writer—and many usages condemned by prescriptivists can be found in Milton and Shakespeare. In practice, the ‘best writers’ turn out to be those who follow the critic’s prescriptions!

Why do some people get angry about what they perceive as incorrect usage? For some, the motivation is social liberalism; they believe that if the children of poorly educated parents, or parents educated outside the English-speaking world, could learn a certain version of Standard English usage, this would help pave the way for their social advancement. Indeed, it may have been a political concern to eliminate differences among immigrants and among social classes that originally led to a much greater interest in prescriptive grammar in the United States than in Britain. There continues to be much greater resistance in the U.S. to the idea that dictionaries and grammars simply describe the language. There is a demand—both from the linguistically insecure and from the self-appointed saviours of the language—that such publications serve as sources of authority, that they prescribe what is right. Quite different are British authorities such as Henry Fowler and Ernest Gowers, who tend to take a relatively moderate and reasoned approach; they do not rule out split infinitives, for example. They tend to be more focused on effective communication than on correctness.

American linguistic conservatives like John Simon, on the other hand, tend to ban certain usages outright and fail to give reasons for their prescriptions; such and such a usage is just wrong, indeed barbaric, and shame on you for not knowing so! There is often a strong moralizing tone in their writings, suggesting that incorrect usage is on a par with sexual permissiveness and other conservative bugbears. English, in this view, is not merely changing; it is in decline and needs to be saved. Linguistic conservatives are motivated by various combinations of snobbery (any cultured person would know that you don't start a sentence with 'but') and despair that the younger generation is not emulating the older.

All these criticisms of the prescriptivists are not meant to suggest that there are no problems standing in the way of effective communication. Of course such problems exist; indeed, that is why editors are needed. As we saw in Chapter 1, writing lends itself much more than speech to misunderstanding. The problem with the prescriptivists is that they generally do not draw attention to the problems that hinder effective communication. In the next chapter, we'll be looking at features of writing which really do cause readers problems, features which prescriptivists practically never mention, such as poor inter-sentence connections.

Does all this mean that editors can ignore the prescriptivists? Definitely not. That is because many people think 'correct' usage is important and they expect editors to serve as sources of authority, defending the language against 'incorrect' usage. Also, many readers of your edited text will be displeased by 'incorrect' usages. They may very well make the condemned errors themselves, in their own writing, but they believe in the idea of maintaining the standard.

How far should you go, as an editor, in enforcing 'correct' usage? Since the various published authorities often do not agree on particular points of usage, you will need to adopt an approach to each contentious point. Sometimes your employer's style guide, or a senior editor, will decide the matter for you, but more often you will have to decide yourself. You must bear in mind that if you adopt a conservative position, you risk being branded as out of touch with the younger generation, with current social movements, and other sources of linguistic innovation. On the other hand, if you adopt a more liberal position, you risk annoying conservative readers and being branded as an agent of declining standards. You won't be able to satisfy everyone.

A point to bear in mind in this regard is that translators and editors, by virtue of their self-image as 'servants', or by virtue of demands made on them to be 'language guardians', probably have a tendency to lean unconsciously toward a conservative approach to usage. A special effort will be needed if you want to counteract this and take a more liberal or even innovating approach to language when appropriate.

One possibly comforting thought is that as the number of people who write in English as their second language increases, editors may become less fussy about correctness because these writers, being members of other cultures, will not have any particular allegiance to traditions of correctness; they will be concerned only with communicative effectiveness. This will of course also be true of the constantly increasing number of *readers* of English who are not native speakers. They will in all likelihood never have heard of split infinitives, and be blissfully unaware of their incorrectness. On the other hand, the situation may be quite different with those non-native users of English who have spent long years studying the language and have achieved a very high level of mastery. They may have been taught a rather rigid and conservative version of English, and may be shocked at the 'laxness' of many native users. As a result, they may provide added support for native-speaker traditionalists.

To make usage decisions, rely on sources whose judgments are based on actual investigations of what appears to be acceptable and what not. If you are wondering, for example, whether 'they substituted x with y' is acceptable, Webster's Dictionary of English Usage will tell you that 'substitute with' is standard but that one may wish to avoid it because of the potential for negative reaction. The Canadian Oxford Dictionary is somewhat more negative, saying that this is a disputed usage and should be avoided in standard English: use 'they substituted y for x' or 'they replaced x with y'. The New Oxford Dictionary of English, on the other hand, says that despite the potential for confusion, 'substitute with' is well established, especially in some scientific contexts, and though still disapproved of by traditionalists, is now generally regarded as part of normal standard English. This suggests that an editor who wishes to appeal to either a traditionalist or a Canadian audience will avoid 'substitute with', but that otherwise a writer's 'substitute with' need not be altered.

Practice

In copyediting, there are a great many different kinds of error to catch, and you may find it difficult to attend to them all at once. In particular, you may find it hard to pay attention to errors that affect individual words or short phrases and at the same time to pay attention to errors that affect larger units of the text. For example, if you are attending to very small units, you may not notice that a lengthy parenthetical expression has no closing parenthesis, or that some paragraphs in the text are indented whereas others are not. Sometimes your attention may be so focused on individual words that you do not even notice errors such as ‘funds to assist towns rebuild their sewers’, where ‘help’ was changed to ‘assist’ but the needed accompanying change in syntax was not made (‘in rebuilding’). This problem of what you are attending to affects all types of editing (and revision), not just copyediting.

You may find it easier, at first, to work through a text twice: once paying attention to micro-level problems and once to macro-level problems. Some of the exercises suggested below go even further: you will be asked to copyedit for just one feature, such as specific punctuation marks, ignoring all other problems. If you are a student who missed many errors on your first marked assignments, go through the (presumably short) text many times: once for punctuation, once for layout, once for inter-sentence connections, and so on.

Later, when you are practising ‘full’ copyediting (that is, for all types of error), count the number of problems of each type which you missed: typos, inconsistency of format, closing parentheses and so on. It may be that mere awareness of what you are missing will help; subconsciously, you will start paying more attention to that type of problem. Otherwise, if you continue to miss a significant number of errors, you should make a practice of going through a text more than once.

Regarding the speed with which you move through the text, your instructor will give you some time-limited exercises to do in class. However, you may also find it useful to experiment with speed at home. For example, before you prepare the final version of an assignment (one that will not be graded), work very quickly through the first half of a text and much more slowly through the second half. Then, when the class goes over the text, see whether you caught more errors when working slowly.

A tip on micro-editing: you may find it useful to place a ruler or sheet of paper under the line you are working on. This will direct your attention to the words on that line, and ensure that your eye does not skip lines. By the way, it is much easier for the eye to miss problems if you work on screen (see Chapter 9.3), so for now, do all your copyediting work on paper.

Exercises can be speeded up if you simply underline places in the text where a change is needed, without actually making the change. Remember that the difficult thing in editing is finding the problems. Correcting copyediting problems, once you have found them, is usually fairly easy.

Exercise 1. ***Following style sheets***

Using the style sheet your instructor gives you, find (but don’t correct) the features of the practice text that deviate from the style sheet.

Exercise 2. ***Punctuation – commas***

Your instructor will give you a text from which all the commas have been stripped. Add just those commas which are necessary for clarity.

You will then receive a text that does contain commas. Remove all those not necessary for clarity. If necessary, reword sentences if you feel there are too many commas.

Exercise 3. ***Spelling – spotting the errors***

Your instructor will give you a text containing spelling and typing errors that would not be detected by Spellcheck. Find them but don't correct them.

Exercise 4. ***Usage***

Many usage authorities require the so-called 'serial comma' (use of a comma before the final 'and' or 'or' of a list, as in 'height, width, or depth'. Others disapprove it, while still others allow or recommend it under certain circumstances. Read the Wikipedia article 'Serial comma', which lists the views of a considerable number of style guides. What is your opinion?

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

Copyediting guides: Butcher (2009); Judd (2001); O'Connor (1986); Rude & Eaton (2011 Part 3)
About style sheets and manuals: Samson (1993: ch. 7)
The Chicago Manual of Style
Wikipedia Manual of Style
Council of Science Editors, *Scientific Style and Format: the CSE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers*
European Commission English Style Guide
European Union *Interinstitutional Style Guide* in any of the 24 EU languages:
United Nations Editorial Manual
The Canadian Style (Canadian Government's style manual)
List of dictionaries, grammars, style manuals and usage guides: Dragga & Gong (1989: 101–106)
Combinatory Dictionaries: Benson et al (2010); Cowie & Mackin (1975); Oxford (2002); Rodale (1947); Wood (1967). Or enter 'combinatory dictionary' or 'collocation finder' in your search engine
Usage: Milroy & Milroy (2012); Bodine (1974); Hirsch (1977: ch. 2); Crystal (2007); Marsh (2013); Pinker (2014); Gowers (2014)
Diversity of English, Standard English: McArthur (1998); Greenbaum (1996: ch. 1)
Punctuation: Baron (2000: ch. 6); Halliday (1989: 32–39); Gowers (1987: ch. 14); Samson (1993: ch. 12); Greenbaum (1996: ch. 11); Nunberg 1990
Spelling: Greenbaum (1996: ch. 12); Baron (2000: ch. 4)
Typography: Lupton (2010).
Copyediting at newspapers: Westley (1972: ch. 3)
Influence of the Internet on English: Crystal (2011).

4 Stylistic editing

In the last chapter, we looked at corrections that bring the text into conformance with pre-set rules. In this chapter we will look at two types of editing work that are more difficult because they do not involve applying rules:

- Tailoring vocabulary and sentence structure to the particular readers of a text and to the use they will make of it.
- Creating a smooth-flowing text by fixing problems such as poor inter-sentence connections, wrong focus within sentences, confusing verbosity, and awkward (difficult-to-follow) sentence structures.

Bear in mind that the style improvement principles described in this chapter pertain to English and may not apply to other languages.

4.1 Tailoring language to readers

Editors of original writing (unlike revisers of translations) usually know who is going to be reading a text. The readers may be identified in two ways. They may be projected, that is, the author imagines (or is asked to imagine) a certain type of reader and then the editor ensures that the book is suited to this ideal reader (e.g. a middle-aged reader interested in exotic holidays, in the case of a travel book). Alternatively, the document may be aimed at a known set of real readers (e.g. the book-keepers in a company's accounting department, in the case of a financial manual). Tailoring for known readers is easier since more is known about their characteristics, which we'll now look at.

Motivation

The intended readers of a document may or may not have a prior motivation to read it. If they are motivated (as when they are extremely interested in the topic), they will have a greater tolerance for poorly edited text, though obviously there are limits beyond which they will be left with an unfavourable impression of writer and publisher. If the intended readers are not already motivated, then one task of the editor may be to liven up the writing in order to make the reading experience more enjoyable, more 'receivable'.

Knowledgeability

To what extent are the readers familiar with the concepts, terms and phrases of the particular field with which the text is concerned? Texts written by and for specialists in a field must contain the 'hard words', peculiar usages and odd turns of phrase specialists use, or else the readers will wonder if the author is really one of them. Also, texts aimed at specialists should be less redundant and less explicit than a text aimed at a non-specialist readership. Specialists will not feel they are being addressed if concepts familiar to them are repeated and spelled out.

Redundancy—the repetition of concepts—is important to make a text readable by people with no specialized knowledge of a subject. It will often be helpful to repeat concepts using synonyms and paraphrases; that way, a reader who did not understand the first wording may understand the second one. The same applies to explicitness; with a general readership, you need to make sure concepts are spelled out the first time they are invoked: not 'document readability checker' but 'software for assigning a score to documents in order to indicate how easy they are to read', or more briefly 'utility for checking the readability of a document'.

Where the readership needs a high level of redundancy and explicitness, that will obviously place a limit on conciseness. We often hear that texts should be concise, the implication being that editors should remove excess verbiage. But the shortest way will not always be the best, in particular for non-specialist readers.

Some documents will be for a mixed readership—both specialists and non-specialists will read them. For example, an engineering project document may have an executive summary, a section on financing and a scheduling section aimed at non-engineers, as well as several much more technical sections aimed at engineers. Alternatively, all parts of the document may be aimed at both specialists and non-specialists. For example, this chapter you are now reading was written mainly for translation students who are learning to edit, but it may also be read by experienced translators who have never actually formulated their ideas about stylistic editing, and may find something of interest here as well.

Generally speaking, editing for non-expert readers is much harder than editing for experts, who because of their subject-matter knowledge will often be able to puzzle out the meaning of poor writing.

Editing for the knowledgeability factor overlaps with content editing, i.e. not just the language but the coverage of the topic needs to be suited to the knowledge of the readers.

Education

Readers without post-secondary education will generally find it harder to read texts full of very long sentences with many subordinate clauses (and clauses within clauses); nominal structures ('in the event of your being evicted' instead of the verbal structure 'if you are evicted'), and words derived from Latin or Greek (e.g. 'cognition' rather than 'thought'). This factor is to be distinguished from the knowledgeability factor discussed above. People without higher education who are specialists in their field (a trade such as plumbing for example) will know its terms even if they are derived from Latin or Greek.

If the text will have a mass readership—one that includes people with relatively low literacy—the editor must ensure that all intended readers will in fact be able to read it, especially if it contains crucial information (e.g. public health documents). It may be a good idea to test the edited version on some members of the intended readership.

Language

If a text is intended for an audience that includes recent immigrants who are not yet good readers of the language in which the text is written, then editors may want to seek advice from specialists in second-language learning, who will know which sorts of wordings in a text are likely to prove difficult. An English example would be phrasal verbs, the meaning of which is not predictable from the meanings of the parts: 'She ran into Professor Plum on campus yesterday' does not mean that she was running across the campus and crashed into Professor Plum. This could be changed to 'She met Professor Plum…', or (since 'ran into' implies that the meeting was accidental rather than by appointment) 'She happened to meet Professor Plum…'.

Other texts are for international audiences who have a very good reading knowledge but may not be familiar with expressions originating in informal speech, recent expressions, or local culture. For this type of readership, editors will want to eliminate, for example, metaphors drawn from local sports: 'those suggestions are really out in left field' (baseball); 'she got knocked for six at the supermarket' (cricket); 'they stickhandled their way out of a difficult situation' (hockey).

Time and place

The geographical location of readers may differ from the geographical location of the author you are editing. As a result, it may be necessary to eliminate Australianisms, Americanisms, Britishisms, and so on. Thus a non-Canadian reader may be at least momentarily puzzled by a reference to 'the government's inaction on the Indigenous land claims file'; perhaps you should change 'file' (which originated in this meaning as a literal translation of French 'dossier') to 'issue'. Or you might want to replace a British usage with an American one: 'revise', meaning go over course materials in preparation for an examination, would become 'review'.

Turning from place to time, you may be editing material that was written decades ago and contains obsolete words that readers will not know. Perhaps you need to make the language more contemporary so that the readers will understand, or so that they do not have the perhaps unconscious reaction ‘old language—old ideas—not interesting’. Another possibility is that a present-day writer uses old-fashioned language (e.g. ‘moving pictures’ instead of ‘movies’; ‘I shall’ in cases where almost everyone now uses ‘I will’). You may want to eliminate such wordings if you think the effect is unintentionally or inappropriately pompous or comic, though you might retain them if they seem intentional or appropriate in context.

Writer-reader relationship

The formality of the language needs to reflect the relationship between writer and reader. For example, with an in-house employee newsletter, the relationship is taken to be one of equality and familiarity. This calls for chatty language with direct address (‘take a look at the bulletin board’, not ‘employees should consult the bulletin board’), contractions (‘isn’t’ rather than ‘is not’), and, more generally, features of spoken conversation.

When the writer is not known to the readers except through the wording of the text, it is especially important to attend to the impression this wording creates. Let me illustrate with a feature of my own writing which I find I often have to correct while self-editing, namely my tendency to overuse the expression ‘of course’, as in ‘Split infinitives have of course never ceased to be in widespread use’—the original form of a sentence which you will, of course, recall from Chapter 3. ‘Of course’ implies that readers are simply being reminded of something they already know. If in fact they do not already know, they may have one of two opposite but equally undesirable reactions: they may feel intimidated (why didn’t I know that? maybe this book is too advanced for me) or angry (this guy seems to think I’m an ignoramus because I don’t know the history of split infinitives). Such an emotional reaction will (of course) distract the reader from the message.

Reader’s use of the text

So far, the discussion has been about characteristics of the reader, such as knowledgeability and education. Also important is the text’s use: how, where and why it will be read.

- How: Will the document be read aloud or silently? Will the readers be reading the document through from start to finish, or will they be consulting sections of it?
- Where: Will the reader be walking past a sign that provides information they need? Watching a slide presentation? Referring to a document while installing newly purchased electronic equipment? Sitting in a coffee shop or on a bus reading a Web page on a handheld device?
- Why: For enjoyment? To pass the time while commuting to work? To make a decision? To obtain instructions?

The how, where and why are mainly important for content and structural editing, and for page layout and typography decisions. However these factors may also bear on style. Take instruction manuals. These may occasionally be read aloud, by one employee to another who is engaged in the activity the manual describes. The instructions should therefore be given in sentences which are short and addressed directly to the reader/listener ('press the button', not 'the button should be pressed' or 'the operator will press the button'). Instruction manuals are also not read from start to finish, so that readers of section 2.a.ii may not be able to draw on information provided earlier in the manual to help them interpret what they are reading. That by the way is why several points made in the editing chapters of this book are repeated in the revising chapters.

A special case is the use of a text as the source for a translation. Some organizations such as the UN and the European Commission have special units where English texts are edited to make them easier to translate, often because the authors are not native speakers.

4.2 Smoothing

Readers need to be able to process a text easily. They should not find the wordings getting in the way of the meanings. To put this in negative terms, the sequence of words must not give rise to the 'huh?' reaction. Readers should not have to go over a sentence two or three times just to see how the parts of the sentence are connected to each other and to get the basic point. And they should not be distracted or misled by unintended ambiguities.

Features that make for a smooth-reading text are:

(a) It is clear what-goes-with-what within each sentence

It is generally a good idea to put a modifier next to what it modifies. Consider:

> Parents with children who want to be at the front should arrive at the parade early.

The writer may have meant 'parents who want to be at the front' but the reader may take it to mean 'children who want to be at the front'. More often, it is not a matter of two completely different interpretations; rather, careless positioning simply makes mental processing more difficult than it needs to be. Consider this passage from a text about paroled offenders who are not sent back to prison even though there is a risk they will commit a fresh offence:

> …keep individuals in the community whose risk calls for special supervision.

This should be changed to 'keep in the community individuals whose risk calls for special supervision', so that in processing the sentence, the reader's mind does not waste time considering (and rejecting) the possibility that 'risk' goes with 'community' rather than 'individuals'. The sentence should not be changed to 'keep individuals whose risk calls for special supervision in the community', since this puts the wrong word in the focal position (the author's point is not that supervision be in the community as opposed to somewhere else).

However the principle of putting modifier next to modified does not always work. You would not want to change 'legislation on the meat industry that comes into effect on December 31' to 'legislation that comes into effect on December 31 on the meat industry'. The change avoids the sequence 'industry that comes into effect' but that is a very unlikely interpretation, and the result of the edit is the unhappy sequence 'on….on…'. After moving a phrase, re-read the sentence to ensure you have not made it worse.

Indicating what-goes-with-what is the single most important function of punctuation, especially the comma. Consider these two sentences:

(1) Frequently bored translators need to be given other assignments.
(2) Frequently, bored translators need to be given other assignments.

(1) says something about translators who are frequently bored; (2) says that bored translators frequently need to be given other assignments. A common error here would be to write (1) when the author is in fact thinking of the meaning which is properly expressed by (2).

Here is a case where adding commas solves a what-goes-with-what problem:

> The effects on virtuous insect species such as bees of plants that have had natural pesticides engineered into them should continually be monitored.

The reader is liable to become puzzled upon reaching 'of plants'. Inserting commas after 'effects' and 'bees' clears up the difficulty.

Here is a somewhat different case:

(3) In addition to the fact that more than 30 percent of immigrants speak English, when they reach Canada 95 percent of those who are not of British or French origin show a marked preference for English as their home language.
(4) In addition to the fact that more than 30 percent of immigrants speak English when they reach Canada, 95 percent of those who are not of British or French origin show a marked preference for English as their home language.

In (3), 'when they reach Canada' means 'after they reach Canada'; in (4), it means 'before they reach Canada'. It is unlikely that a writer would err during the original drafting of such a sentence. However, the comma might well get moved to the wrong position (after 'English') during self-editing, when attention is often parcelized—the self-editor focuses on one part of a sentence rather than on overall meaning (sentence (3) fails to convey the fact that 30 percent of immigrants *already* speak English before arriving).

Sometimes commas prevent misreadings; in many other cases, they simply prevent stumbling by the reader and the need to re-read. For example, readers will stumble when they come across a 'garden path' sentence such as the following, already seen in another connection in Chapter 1:

> As these studies tend to show the form translation has taken in Canada, both on an institutional level and on the level of the actual practice of translation, is specific to our particular national context.

At the beginning of this sentence, the reader is 'led up the garden path' to the incorrect interpretation that the studies show the form translation has taken.

(b) The subject and verb of the main clause are easily located, and are also fairly close to each other

Generally speaking, the easiest sentences to read are those which start with the subject and verb of the main clause. The later the main clause comes, and the further apart its subject and verb are, the harder the reader's task will be. Actually, to be more accurate, the real problem is not so much the number of words preceding the main-clause subject, or intervening between subject and verb, as the structural complexity of these preceding and interceding passages. Here is an example of a grammatically perfect sentence which is extremely difficult to read:

> Although the procedure provides that at all times when the inmate is being escorted outside the custodial unit, from the time he is taken out of the escort van to the time he is locked in the custodial unit, or during the time he is escorted within the other areas of the hospital, he is always to be taken in a wheelchair with his hands and feet restrained, the officer-in-charge is indeed alone with the inmate outside the custodial unit while proceeding through the foyer of the emergency wing which leads to the custodial unit.

Readers may have lost track of the structure of this sentence by the time they reach 'he is always to be taken…' (the subject and verb of the clause beginning 'that at all times…'). They will almost certainly be baffled by 'the officer-in-charge is indeed alone…' (the main clause of the sentence). Here is an edited version that solves the problem by splitting the sentence in two, moving 'he is always to be taken…' to a position near the beginning of the first sentence, and replacing two of the commas with parentheses:

> The procedure does provide that the inmate is always to be taken in a wheelchair with his hands and feet restrained when he is being escorted outside the hospital's custodial unit (from the time he is taken out of the escort van to the time he is locked in the custodial unit, or when he is being escorted within the other areas of the hospital). Nevertheless, the officer-in-charge is indeed alone with the inmate, outside the custodial unit, while they are proceeding through the foyer of the emergency wing which leads to the custodial unit.

(c) Each sentence is properly related to the preceding one in terms of information flow and focus

Consider the first two sentences of the section in this chapter headed ‘Reader’s use of the text’:

> So far, the discussion has been about characteristics of the reader, such as knowledgeability and education. Also important is the text’s use: how, where and why it will be read.

Originally there was no comma after ‘reader’. As a result, the focus was on ‘knowledgeability and education’. This is undesirable because the next sentence does not go on to discuss some new category of reader characteristics (the first category being one that includes knowledgeability and education). Rather, the next sentence introduces a contrasting topic—the text’s use as opposed to its readers. The comma after ‘reader’ keeps the focus on that word, in preparation for the contrast with ‘use’ in the next sentence.

Now consider the following passage from a text on acid precipitation; it appears at the transition between a discussion of sulphur dioxide and a discussion of carbon dioxide:

> …This study has begun to give us a good idea of the extent of transport of fossil sulphur put into circulation by human activity, but there has been little advance in our understanding of the relationship between sulphur and free acids in rainfall.
>
> It is also difficult to tell whether carbon dioxide is or is not a pollutant. …

The last sentence would normally be read with the following mental stress:

> It is ALso difficult to tell whether carbon dioxide IS or is NOT a pollUTant.

Now, the argument here is ‘as with sulphur dioxide (just discussed), so with carbon dioxide’. For the reader to get this meaning, the word ‘also’ would have to be read as going with ‘carbon dioxide’ only, not with the entire expression ‘difficult to tell whether carbon dioxide is or is not a pollutant’. To obtain this result, the sentence would have to be read:

> It is ALso difficult to tell whether carbon diOXide is or is not a pollutant.

But that is not the stress pattern which a first-time reader will use. So the sentence has to be reworded to move ‘carbon dioxide’ into focus:

> Another substance which may or may not be a pollutant is carbon dioxide.

Simplifying somewhat, the focus position in English comes at the end of a sentence.

(d) Connector words (but, therefore, etc.) are not misleading

It is very important that readers be able to see how each sentence is functioning with respect to the previous sentence. The connection may be left for the reader to fill in or it may be signalled by a special connector word. Among the possible functions are: restating in a more elaborate way what has just been said; saying what happened next; giving evidence for what has just been said; saying something that contrasts with what came previously; giving the cause, purpose or result of what has just been said (it must be clear which). Here's an example where the second sentence is giving the cause, but this will not be immediately apparent to the reader:

> The dominant natural disturbance in most Canadian forests is wildfires, whose frequency in the past three decades has increased markedly. Longer and warmer summers, a phenomenon that has been exacerbated by human-induced climate change, are widely thought to be the reason.

The second sentence should be changed to:

> The increase is widely thought to be due to longer and warmer summers,…

Here the word 'increase' creates an immediate connection to the 'increased' which appears near the end of the first sentence, and 'due to' informs the reader that this sentence is explaining the increase.

(e) Parallel ideas are expressed through parallel forms

If the text has parallel inserted comments, make sure the punctuation marks are parallel. Watch for sentences like 'The boys—whether or not they exercised regularly—had similar percentage weight increases, whereas the girls (whatever their diet) did not'.

In point-form writing, watch for instances where points lower in the list do not have the same syntactic form as the earlier points:

> The incumbent of this position must be able to:
> - translate difficult texts rapidly;
> - carry out terminological research on the Internet;
> - have a sound knowledge of editorial practices;
> - good relationships with clients.

The third and fourth items in the list do not fit into the sentence structure: 'must be able to have a sound knowledge…', 'must be able to good relationships'. Perhaps the last two items were pasted in from another document, and the writer did not think to check for parallelism of form.

(f) The antecedents of pronouns are immediately clear

A sentence which appeared in an earlier version of this chapter read as follows:

> It is also important to anticipate reader reactions to the person addressing them, their entire knowledge of whom may well arise from the wording of the text.

Who is 'them' and 'their'? The only preceding plural noun is 'reactions', and that cannot very well be the antecedent, since reactions don't have knowledge. While the problem could be fixed by using the possessive plural (readers' reactions), mental processing of the sentence will be easier if 'reader reactions' is changed to 'the reactions of readers'. In passing, note here the danger of the editor introducing an error in the opposite case, where the writer has used 'the reactions of readers' but the editor decides to 'tighten the sentence up' by substituting 'reader reactions'.

(g) The correct interpretation of noun sequences and other ambiguous structures is clear from context

Consider 'check the translation against customer specifications'. Is it clear from context whether 'customer specifications' means specifications *from* the customer (e.g. use British spelling) or specifications *about* the customer (e.g. this is a Class A customer—one who gives us a lot of work)? If not, insert the appropriate preposition. Notice that such noun sequences can be problematic in two different ways: context does not make the right meaning clear, or readers may not interpret correctly because they are not subject-matter experts (as in the case of 'document readability checker' mentioned earlier in this chapter).

Interpretation may also be problematic in the elliptical style which omits words like 'the' (as in point-form writing):

> Voltage values are seen through small windows in panel. Switch ranges from 100 to 240 in six steps, and is positioned by turning…

The reader, having seen that 'the' has been omitted in front of 'panel', may well assume that it has similarly been omitted in front of 'ranges'. That is, the reader will take 'switch' to be an imperative verb: you should switch the ranges. However, upon arriving at 'and is positioned', the reader sees that this interpretation is wrong, and must reinterpret with 'ranges' as the verb: 'the switch ranges… and is positioned'.

Every language has its common ambiguities that must be watched. In English, the structure exemplified in 'more structured supervision' is often not disambiguated by context: more supervision that is structured, or supervision that is more structured?

4.3 Readability versus intelligibility and logic

Readability must be distinguished from intelligibility and logic. The latter are features of the meaning of a text, rather than its wording. A text may be readable in both the senses we have discussed—its language may be smooth-flowing and it may be suited to the intended readers—but it may still be illogical or even unintelligible.

First, a text may contain some slip in logic, for example it is self-contradictory, or effects precede causes, or there is an error in deduction. Consider the sentence 'Your wait between planes will last up to an hour or more'. At first we seem to be told that our wait will be an hour or less ('up to'), but then we learn that it may be more than hour. The sentence is both contradictory and tautological (uninformative): the wait could be any length of time. Perhaps the writer was trying to say that the wait will most likely be under an hour, but may be more.

Second, a passage may fail to be intelligible: its intended readers will not be able to make sense of it for some reason other than logical error; it comes across as nonsensical or it is only meaningful in the light of information that comes later in the text. Machine translation often produces unintelligible wordings: '…a dialogue between the peoples based on the value respect divided by all' (the meaning of the source was '…based on the respect of values shared by all'. With some kinds of writing, a passage can be deemed intelligible even if its meaning is not *immediately* apparent (some thought is required). Note that a passage can be perfectly intelligible despite the presence of errors in language and style.

A passage which has all three characteristics—it is readable, logical and intelligible—is 'clear'. Clarity should not be confused with simplicity or familiarity. A document may seem clear because its ideas are simple or because it contains nothing but familiar notions. Notoriously, simple and familiar ideas sometimes turn out to be laden with obscurity when subjected to closer inspection. Conversely, a text which contains complex or challenging new ideas will not necessarily be unclear. It may be perfectly clear even though it has to be read slowly, or re-read with considerable thought, as long as this need to re-read is due to the inherent complexity or novelty of the thought, rather than to a lack of smooth sentence structure, or language that is unsuited to the readers (including unnecessary terminological innovation), or lack of logic, or unintelligibility. A legal text may require several readings because the writer's aim was not to lighten the reader's task but to state things in a completely unambiguous way.

4.4 Stylistic editing during translation

Translators often engage in smoothing work as they translate; they 'clean up' poor writing. Consider the following extract from an annual report on forest pests and other sources of damage to timber:

(5) The spruce budworm and the hemlock looper were the principal insects defoliating evergreen forests in 1999. In deciduous forests, the main problem was

the tent caterpillar. The pine shoot beetle became a major concern at plantations. Several severe wind storms also caused heavy damage in the summer of 1999.

(6) In 1999, the principal insects defoliating evergreen forests were the spruce budworm and the hemlock looper. In deciduous forests, the main problem was the tent caterpillar, while at plantations a major concern was the pine shoot beetle. In the summer, there was also heavy damage due to severe wind storms.

(5) gives the translation as it might appear if the source-text phrase order were to be observed, while (6) gives the translation as it might appear if the translator engaged in mental stylistic editing while translating. We'll assume that this is not a case where rearrangement is needed despite a well-written source text; that is, the changes shown in the mentally edited version (6) are not a result of the normal differences between the ways the two languages organize the information in a sentence.

Note how sentence constituents have been positioned in (6) so that the causes of damage are in focus position at the ends of sentences and clauses. As a result, all three sentences have the same structure (place or time of year followed by cause of damage). Note too how the year number has been deleted in the last sentence: placing it in a high-focus position (at the end of a sentence) is confusing because it suggests that the year is of some special importance (perhaps as contrasted with another year), whereas in fact it is understood throughout the text that we are talking about events during 1999.

Another important type of stylistic editing during translation is elimination of verbosity. Some people appear to delight in saying simple things in a complicated way. Consider the following sentence from a translated job description, where (7) follows the wording of the source but (8) is the result of mental editing while translating:

(7) Adapt technical issues and complex regulations and information in order to present these issues and this information in a way that is at the same time simple, accurate and comprehensible.

(8) Explain technical issues, complex regulations and other information in a way that is accurate but comprehensible.

Aside from reducing verbosity, the translator has also made explicit the logic of the message, by bringing out the nature of the problem which confronts the incumbent of this job: when addressing non-experts, there is a conflict between being accurate and being comprehensible (hence 'but' rather than 'and'). 'Simple' does not add anything to what is already expressed by 'comprehensible'.

4.5 Some traps to avoid

There is a great temptation when engaged in stylistic editing to rewrite sentences, that is, to compose a completely new sentence with different vocabulary and sentence structure. You may find that such a new sentence is what comes to mind first, once you have spotted a stylistic problem. However, you should resist rewriting and instead ask yourself whether the sentence can be fixed by a much smaller alteration (change a word here, move a phrase there). At first, this may take more time than complete rewriting, but once you become good at making minimal changes, you will be able to edit much faster. Consider:

> The abundance of overmature black spruce stands leads to an increase in logging costs because the trees are often small and the merchantable volumes are low.

This logical structure of this sentence is ‘X causes Y because Z’, which is confusing. You could completely rewrite the sentence:

> In the many overmature black spruce stands, trees are often small and merchantable volumes low; logging costs are consequently higher.

But the problem can be fixed much more simply:

> Given the abundance of overmature black spruce stands, there is an increase in logging costs because the trees are often small and the merchantable volumes are low.

This is perhaps not quite as good as the complete rewrite, but it does eliminate the confusion.

A second danger when editing style is paying exclusive attention to very small bits of language and losing track of meaning. Consider this sentence fragment from a text on operations in a port:

> Original:
> …the relationship between freight unloaded and operating time…
>
> Edited version:
> …the relationship between unloaded freight and operating time…

The editor perhaps thought that ‘unloaded freight’ is easier to read than ‘freight unloaded’. However context makes clear that the author meant ‘freight that has already been unloaded’. Unfortunately the edited version, ‘unloaded freight’, is more likely to be interpreted as ‘freight that has not yet been loaded’—a very different idea.

Here’s another example:

> Original:
> Government health inspectors must be able to explain the rationale for
> inspecting establishments registered under the Act and specific foods.

Edited version:
…must be able to explain the rationale for inspecting specific foods and establishments registered under the Act.

In the original, ‘specific foods’, the second of the two phrases joined by ‘and’, is hanging awkwardly at the end of the sentence. Usually if there are two conjoined phrases, one long and one short, it is best to have the short one first. The edited version clears up this problem but creates a worse one: the change in order means that ‘specific’ now applies to both ‘foods’ and ‘establishments’. The edited sentence seems to suggest that inspectors need to justify their habit of picking on certain establishments rather than dealing even-handedly with all establishments. A further change is needed: ‘…for inspecting specific foods and for inspecting establishments…’.

And a final example: perhaps you think that ‘obtain documents required for clearance’ can be shortened to ‘obtain clearance documents’, but is the meaning the same? In one text it may be, but in another text it may not; perhaps one needs certain documents (which are not themselves clearance documents) in order to apply for a clearance document.

Practice

Since stylistic editing is not as cut and dried as copyediting, there is a danger of making too many changes. Do not make a change simply because you would have expressed an idea differently had you been the author. You are not the author. You are editing someone else’s work, and you must respect their individual style of writing. So whenever you make a change, be sure you can justify it. ‘It sounds better’ does not count as a justification. You must be specific: this word is too informal; there is a confusing ambiguity in the structure of this sentence. Exercise 1 is explicitly an exercise in justification, but you should always be able to justify your changes.

Exercises can be speeded up if you simply underline places in the text where a change is needed, without actually making the change. Remember that the difficult thing in editing is finding the problems. Correcting stylistic problems, once you have found them, can be quite time-consuming.

Exercise 1. *Justifying changes*

Your instructor will give you a printed text, with a variety of handwritten stylistic changes. For each change, say whether you think it is justified, and if so, why. If the editor has completely rewritten a sentence that needed changing, try to think of a smaller change that would suffice.

Exercise 2. *Verbosity*

Reduce the verbosity of two samples of bureaucratic prose which you have found or which your instructor has given you. The first sample should be addressed to a reader outside the bureaucracy, the second to a reader inside. See how few words you can use to express the ideas, bearing in mind the needs of the two types of reader.

Exercise 3. ***Smoothing***

Newspaper articles are often insufficiently edited for smoothness. Find some examples of unsmooth sentences or paragraphs in a newspaper and smooth them, paying special attention to pronouns and intersentence connecting words (this, they, also, but, etc.).

Exercise 4. ***Tailoring***

Your instructor will give you a text and a description of the intended readers (in terms of their knowledge, education, etc.). Tailor the text to the readers.

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

Inter-sentence connections: Halliday & Hasan (1976); Dragga & Gong (1989: ch. 3); Greenbaum (1996: ch. 7)

Readership analysis: Dragga & Gong (1989: ch. 2); Samson (1993: ch. 4); Bell (1991: ch. 6)

Readability: Greene (2013); Gopen & Swan (1990); Hirsch (1977: ch. 4 and 5); Kirkman (1992: ch. 2)

5 Structural editing

Texts have two types of structure: conceptual structure and physical structure. An example of the former would be an argument structure: presentation of problem, tentative solution, arguments for, arguments against, conclusion. An example of physical structure would be the parts of an article: title, summary, section head, sequence of paragraphs, inserted table, next section head, and so on. The structural editor's job is to help the reader follow the conceptual structure by making adjustments in the physical structure. This may involve large-scale work re-ordering paragraphs or even sections and larger units. However, in this chapter we will be concerned with smaller-scale changes, because that is the kind of work translators most often need to do.

5.1 Physical structure of a text

Documents typically have several distinct structural parts:

- Prose: a continuous sequence of sentences and paragraphs. Wordings in e-texts may be clickable, that is, linked electronically to other parts of the text or to other texts.
- Headings, often hierarchical and sometimes numbered: chapter titles, sections heads, subsection heads, and so on.
- Lists: the main types are point-form lists, which may be numbered or lettered (or bulleted like the list you are reading now), and tables (a table is a series of parallel lists, usually called columns). A table's boxes may themselves contain prose sequences. There may also be locator lists to help readers move to specific places within the document: the table of contents at the front, and one or more alphabetical indexes at the back listing topics dealt with in the document, names of people mentioned, and the like. Finally there may be linking lists to help readers move outward toward other relevant works: a list of references (works referred to in the document); sometimes a separate list of readings (works of interest on the subject of the document).
- Graphics: diagrams, photographs, drawings, maps, embedded videos and other such entities, usually referred to in the consecutive prose. These are

often intermixed with the consecutive prose but sometimes they are located in a separate part of the document devoted specifically to graphics.
- Isolated items: footnotes, endnotes, captions of graphics and tables, labels on diagrams, column or row titles on tables, etc.

In the remainder of the chapter, we'll look at several problems that may arise with the prose and with the headings.

5.2 Problems with prose

Missing markers

A paragraph begins 'There are four factors that lead parolees to re-offend. First…'. The reader continues and then realizes, a few paragraphs later, that he is now reading about a second factor. The writer forgot to insert the important structural marker 'second'.

A related error is a sequence like 'There are four factors…first,…second,… third,… lastly,… finally'. When the writer had completed her rather lengthy discussion of the fourth factor, she thought of a further factor meriting mention. Having lost track of the numbering, however, she introduced her discussion with 'finally'. The editor will make the required changes: 'There are five factors: first…fourth…finally'.

Unfulfilled announcements

The writer announces 'Let us first look at the arguments in favour of this view, and then at the arguments against'. A couple of pages later, the arguments in favour terminate, and so does the section; the author moves on to another matter, and the arguments against appear 10 or 15 pages later in another section of the document. The editor will have to either amend the introductory sentence ('Here we will look at the arguments in favour; the arguments against will be discussed in section 9') or else move the material from section 9 back to the earlier section.

Empty backward references

In the 4th paragraph of the text, there is a reference to 'this committee', but no committee has been mentioned in the text so far. Perhaps there used to be such a reference, but it was deleted. The editor should amend to 'a committee'.

False backward or forward references

A sentence refers the reader to 'page 27' for more information on the matter under discussion. But that page contains no such additional information. The information in question is in the first paragraph on page 28. That is because the material is being circulated as a Word document, and some factor such as a larger default font or wider margins at the reader's end results in the material appearing on page 28 rather than page 27 (on screen or on a printout). Solution: remove page number references. Refer instead to section numbers (if any) or to headings or subheadings ('as mentioned earlier under *Heading*'). This practice is also wise for documents that will be printed, since at the time of editing, there may be no way of knowing the page number on which a passage will appear.

Unexplained acronyms

In the 3rd paragraph of the text, the reader learns that the NBRS will be disbanding. What, the reader wonders, is the NBRS? Three pages later there is a reference to the North Bambridge Roselovers Society, which the reader may or may not connect with the mysterious acronym earlier in the text. The writer forgot that not all readers would be familiar with North Bambridge and its renowned rose gardens. The editor will adjust the first mention to 'North Bambridge Roselovers Society (NBRS)', and then adjust later uses to 'the NBRS' or 'the Society'.

However, if several pages go by with no mention of the Society, it may be best to revert to the full name. This is especially important if chunks of the document are likely to be consulted independently of the rest of the text, as with reference works. In such cases, the reader may not have looked at the first occurrence of the acronym. There are two solutions: spell out the acronym on its first occurrence in each section, or append a list of acronyms for ready reference.

References to graphics and tables

The editor will often need to eliminate expressions like 'the following table' or 'the chart opposite' because page designers will want to have flexibility in placing graphics and tables. Instead, tables and graphics should be numbered and referred to in the consecutive prose by those numbers: 'Table 14 shows…'; '…as seen in Figure 5'.

Poor paragraphing

Paragraph divisions are important markers that guide the reader through the text's structure. Suppose you find an extremely long paragraph followed by a rather short one. On inspection of the content, you notice that the last third of the long paragraph discusses the same topic as the short paragraph. The writer was working along, decided that the paragraph was getting too long, and simply started a new one at an arbitrary point. You should divide the long paragraph at the point where the topic changes, and then adjoin the short paragraph to the new second paragraph.

Quite independently of the unity of a paragraph's content, the length of paragraphs appears to have an effect on ease of reading. Readers who are less educated, or less knowledgeable about the text's subject matter, will find shorter paragraphs easier to handle. On the other hand, a long sequence of short paragraphs (especially one-sentence paragraphs) is not optimal; rather a mixture of long and short paragraphs appears to be best.

Ideally, the length of paragraphs should be correlated with topic: use a short paragraph, for example, to sum up at the end of one phase of an argument. However, there are no natural places to end paragraphs. It is more a matter of what the writer wants the reader to consider as going together. For example, I could have combined this present paragraph with the preceding one. By not doing so, I have separated the question of ease of reading from the question of the relationship between meaning and paragraphing. I could have pointed to this distinction even more clearly by turning the first sentence of the previous paragraph (which mentions both content and ease of reading) into a paragraph of its own. Finally, I could have moved the first sentence of this present paragraph to the previous paragraph, and deleted ‘however’ from the second sentence. That would have given more prominence to the sentence ‘There are no natural places to end paragraphs’, and made it a fresh topic rather than a contrast with the thought in the previous sentence.

5.3 Problems with headings

Misconceived headings

The heading of a subsection reads ‘implementation of the guidelines’, but the material in the body of the subsection only mentions the guidelines in passing at the outset, and then moves off onto some other topic. The writer wrote the heading, then got off-topic and forgot to amend the heading to suit the section.

Confusing heading system

On one page the main headings are numbered and bolded while the subheadings are indented and underlined. Two pages later, a main heading has been indented and a subheading has been italicized. Consistency in the positioning, numbering/lettering and typography (bolding, underlining, italicizing) of headings is important because these features are visual signals of the structure of an argument.

Readers may also be confused by a many-layered system of headings, one with sub-subheadings and sub-sub-subheadings. Such a system is appropriate for manuals and other documents that are not meant to be read from start to finish, because it assists quick referencing (‘see section III.A.5.b)ii of the Manual on Administrative Policy’). However, if your author has used an elaborate system in a document which is not a manual, try to reduce the number of layers in an article or chapter to one or two. Also, signal these layers by position and formatting (e.g. the italicization used in this book) rather than by numbers or letters unless the Style Sheet for a publication requires sections of articles to be numbered, or there is considerable cross-referencing (‘see section 2 below’).

Lack of subheadings

It is easier to read a text in which subheadings appear every few paragraphs. Subheadings signal a change of topic and also remind the reader of the structure of an argument: 'we are now moving on to the next factor in the list which appeared a few pages back'. The reader is relieved of the task of trying to relate the first sentence of a new paragraph to what precedes; the subheading makes the relationship explicit.

Errors in numbering

As a result of the author's self-editing work, chapters or sections may be misnumbered. Section 6.2 may be followed by section 6.4 instead of 6.3. Or section 6 may be followed by another section 6.

Headings that do not match the table of contents

If the numbering of headings within the consecutive prose differs from the numbering in the Table of Contents, or if the wording of a heading differs significantly from the Table of Contents wording, the reader may be misled or become confused. Ideally, the writer has used the word processor's automatic Table of Contents generator, which makes it easy to change the Table when changes are made in the body of the text. However, many people find this utility hard to use. If the writer has not used it, then you as the editor must check that the section 6.7 mentioned in the Table of Contents really exists, that it does indeed start on page 94, and that it is in fact entitled 'How to Fire Employees', not 'The Human Aspect of Downsizing'. The Table of Contents should be checked after all other editing work is complete.

5.4 Structural editing during translation

Some people new to translation think that the structure of the text has already been created by the source-text author, and that there is therefore no work for them to do in this respect. That is not the case. During translation, you may sometimes find that you need to make structural adjustments: change the order of sentences for example to bring out the argument; change the paragraph or sentence divisions; turn a point-form list into consecutive prose or vice versa. The reason may be poor writing in the source text, or simply different rhetorical habits in the target language. For example, English tends to avoid the rather lengthy headings sometimes seen in French writing, so as the reviser you might replace a lengthy translated heading with a two- or three-word heading that is appropriate for the section that follows.

The case of paragraphing is of special interest, since many people ignore this. Clients sometimes ask to have the paragraphing of the source text imitated, but that is not always advisable. Paragraphing habits may differ in the corresponding target-language genre; for example, if you are translating English newspaper articles for a corporate or ministerial clipping service, you may want to eliminate the one-sentence paragraphs which are common in English journalism. Conversely, if translating a news story from another language into English, for publication in a newspaper (not just for information), you may want to split long paragraphs, and even create some one-sentence paragraphs.

Large-scale structural editing during translation is discussed in Chapter 7.

Practice

Exercise. Your instructor will give you a text in which the paragraph divisions and any headings have been eliminated. First, divide the text into paragraphs. Then add headings and possibly subheadings.

Compare your paragraphing with that of other members of the class. Are the differences small or large? Do there seem to be differing principles at work? Do the paragraphing differences affect meaning?

Compare the positioning, wording and typographical treatment of the headings added by various class members. Do some of the heading decisions make it easier to follow the chain of thought? Do some heading decisions focus the reader's attention differently from others?

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

Dragga & Gong (1989: ch. 3); Van de Poel (2012: ch. 7)

6 Content editing

Content editing is checking and amending a text for its ideas—what it says about the subject matter. As with structural editing, content editing takes place both on the large scale (the macro-level) and the small scale (the micro-level). This chapter will be principally concerned with those micro-level tasks which translators are most commonly called upon to perform, namely the correction of factual, logical and mathematical errors. No hard and fast boundary can be drawn between outright errors of fact on the one hand and problems such as obscure passages or confused theoretical notions on the other; these will all be discussed together under the heading 'factual errors'.

6.1 Macro-level content editing

Editors may suggest or require major changes in the coverage of a document's topic. Major additions or subtractions may be requested in order to make the text suitable for the audience, in order to include the latest developments in the subject, or in order to distinguish a book from others on the same topic. Sometimes major subtractions will be needed in order to make the text fit the available space.

With some texts, macro-level content editing is closely tied to the social-gatekeeper function of editors. That is, editors may be acting on behalf of an institution with an ideological purpose. They may be employed to censor written materials before publication, by removing passages that are ideologically unacceptable: governments for example may employ editors to reword texts with a view to covering over unpleasant facts with euphemism or vagueness. Or editors may simply reject submissions to the publication outright: newspapers of particular political complexions come to mind in this connection;

One often hears these days that the Internet is full of websites through which people address only like-minded people, but there was no golden age in which single publications offered a general forum for all views. Anyone who wanted to read a wide range of views in the pre-Internet age had to buy several daily newspapers as well as small alternative weeklies or monthlies expressing the views of minorities or new social movements.

Editors may engage in deliberate falsification on behalf of their employers. In his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell takes this to its logical extreme: the central character, Winston Smith, is a content editor at the Ministry of Truth who edits texts *after* publication. As chapter 4 opens, we find him 'editing' the already published *Times* account of a speech by Big Brother promising an increase in the chocolate ration. After the destruction of all existing copies of that issue of the newspaper, the historical record will show that the great leader in fact announced a considerable *de*crease in the ration. Interestingly, fiction has now become reality: with the advent of pure e-publishing (i.e. there are no paper copies of a publication), it *is* now possible to engage in post-publication content editing. Archives are available of earlier states of websites, but most people will never bother to look at these or do not know of their existence or how to consult them.

Falsification of content also occurs during translation. Until the 1960s, translations of the Greek and Roman classics regularly featured expurgation of sexual content—either prettification or outright omission.

The ethical content editor has a professional commitment to truth. There are two aspects to this. One is the avoidance of unintentional falsehoods. For this purpose, many publishing organizations employ special fact-checkers. The second aspect is the avoidance of deception, by ensuring that the published item tells 'the whole truth and nothing but the truth'. Also, if there are certain well-known objections to the author's arguments, these are at least admitted, if not answered.

It should be borne in mind that the selecting function of editors (accepting or rejecting whole texts, or parts of texts) is a two-edged sword. On the one hand, the editor may select in order to conceal truths (which may be deemed dangerous or simply offensive); on the other hand, the selection may be made in the service of quality. For example, many people prefer to join Internet discussion forums which have a moderator (i.e. a content editor) because they do not want to spend huge amounts of time wading through material that is either of no interest or obnoxious. They trust the moderator to select well written and well thought out contributions, representing a diversity of views. Thus another characteristic of the ethical content editor will be trustworthiness.

6.2 Factual errors

One reason specialized texts need to be content-edited by subject-matter specialists is that others may not recognize factual errors. But factual errors may also come up in otherwise unspecialized texts, and it will not always be obvious (for example through self-contradiction) that there is an error.

Read the following passage and decide whether, if you had not read it in a chapter about correcting content errors, you would have recognized the problem:

> In a plain-looking shop in the untouristy 19th arrondissement, a 1930 second edition of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in dust jacket recently sold for $10.

This certainly was an unusual find, since the first edition of Orwell's novel was not published until 1949.

Factual errors also include more mundane things such as incorrect street addresses; incorrect website addresses; not-quite-right book titles or names of organizations (North Bumbridge Roselovers Society instead of Roselovers Association of North Bambridge), and incorrect references (the quoted material was on page 406, not page 306 of vol. 3 no. 2 of the *Journal of Xology*). Such fact-checking used to involve some rather tedious searches through almanacs, yearbooks, telephone directories and other reference works, but nowadays much of the information is available on the Internet. To check that a Web address is correct, try to go to the site using your browser. If the translation is to be posted at a website, links should lead readers to a target-language site, if possible and appropriate.

A final and very important type of fact that has to be checked is the accuracy of quotations. If the source of a quotation cannot be tracked down, then the quotation marks should be removed, and indirect speech used instead. If the quoted material was spoken rather than written, the quotation does not normally need to be a verbatim transcript: hesitations (…um…) and false starts can be cleaned up, and some publications replace professional jargon or dialect with more readily understandable wordings. Sometimes awkward wordings are improved to spare the quoted speaker embarrassment: ‘The architecture down there is some of the best in the city. A greater degree of people are wanting to be down there’ might be changed to read ‘…More people want to live there’.

Conceptual errors and obscure passages

Non-expert popularizers frequently make conceptual errors. For example, science columnists in newspapers often discuss evolution in non-Darwinian, teleological language: giraffes developed long necks ‘in order to’ reach leaves higher up on the trees. Normally, people writing in their own field of expertise do not make errors in field-specific concepts, though sometimes experts writing for lay audiences do not express concepts as well as they might. Thus ‘greenhouse gases absorb heat and then radiate it back to the Earth’ should perhaps be changed to ‘absorb heat emitted by the Earth which would normally go into space, and then send it back to Earth’. Here we see content editing overlapping with the audience-related concerns of stylistic editing.

Another common problem is passages where, as a result of poor writing, it is hard to see what the author is trying to say. In some editing situations, the author may not be reachable for clarification, and you must then decide on a course of action. Consider the word ‘restive’ in the following sentence from the gardening column of a community newspaper, discussing ornamental grasses:

> The varied colours and textures of their foliages and swaying flower spikes offer a colourful and restive scene which can rival any field of golden wheat or waving green oats.

What has happened here? Does the writer think ‘restive’ means restful? Is there a misprint: ‘restive’ for ‘festive’? Perhaps the best thing would be to delete ‘and restive’.

Introducing errors

Worse than failing to see an error is introducing an error where none existed. At the end of Chapter 4, we saw two cases where a conceptual error was introduced in the course of stylistic editing. Conceptual error may also be introduced if you fail to take the author’s wording seriously. Consider a text in which a prisoner is described as doing something ‘for fear of being congratulated by the warden’. An editor unthinkingly assumed this was an error and changed ‘congratulated’ to ‘punished’. But the text made perfect sense as it stood: the prisoner did not want to be seen by other prisoners as the warden’s pet.

6.3 Logical errors

This category of error includes contradictions, nonsense, tautologies, impossible time sequences, and confusions of cause and effect. Sometimes these errors can only be fixed by asking the author what was meant. In other cases, you may be able to resolve the problem yourself.

Here’s an example of nonsense:

> The mother tongue of nearly 650,000 Canadians of English ethnic origin is English, and this represents more than 10% of Canadians of French origin.

The meaning is easily recovered from context: ‘the mother tongue of nearly 650,000 Canadians of French ethnic origin is English’.

Tautologies are quite common in careless writing:

> Parole supervisors give offenders instructions, monitor their behaviour, and give them assistance and supervision.

The final phrase tells us that one thing supervisors do is…supervise—a not very informative statement.

Here’s an example of a contradictory time sequence:

> At a news conference today in San Francisco, IBM and Apple said they will disclose further details about their plans for linking computers, creating new software and advancing computer chip technology. The news conference will be held at the Fairmont Hotel.

In the first sentence, it appears that the news conference has already occurred; in the second sentence, the conference seems to be in the future. A little thought shows the problem can be solved by placing a comma after the word ‘said’.

Once again, you need to be alert to notice the errors exemplified above. It's very easy to skip past them if your attention is not on meaning.

6.4 Mathematical errors

Editors and translators are language people, who perhaps thought that they would never have to deal with math again after graduating from secondary school. They avoid scientific and technical translation, but in fact mathematical issues arise in many texts which are not scientific, technical or financial.

Sometimes a mathematical error just arises from carelessness. For example, the decimal point is in the wrong place, or the addition is wrong: 68% of the respondents to a survey were men and 42% were women! Harder to spot are cases where writers who are not mathematically inclined have tripped up conceptually, like the journalist who wrote:

> Today the Canadian dollar was worth 66 U.S. cents. That means a $100 hotel room in the U.S. will cost you $133 Canadian.

Wrong. This is a ratio problem: $US 0.66 is to $CAN 1.00 as $US 100 is to $CAN x. Solution: 66 cents is two-thirds of 100 cents; $100 is two-thirds of $150. The room will cost $150.

Very common are problems with percentages: An increase in weight from 2 grams to 7 grams is a 250% increase but a drop in weight from 7 grams to 2 grams is not, as one writer seems to have thought, a 250% decrease; it's a decrease of 5 out of 7, which is approximately 70%. Another example:

> The number of errors in transactions improved by 23%, dropping from 37% of sample transactions in April to 14% in May.

This is actually an improvement not of 23% but of 23 percentage points. If there were 200 sample transactions in each month, then the improvement was from 74 erroneous transactions in April (37% of the sample) to 28 in May (14% of the sample), and this is an improvement of about 62%: ((74-28) / 74) x 100.

Precision is another problem area. If the text has '7.0 cm', this can't be edited to '7 cm' because there is a difference in the fineness of measurement. With 7 cm, measurement is to the nearest whole centimetre (the actual length would between 6.5 and 7.4 cm), but with 7.0 cm, measurement is to the nearest tenth of a centimetre (i.e. the true value lies somewhere between 6.95 and 7.04 cm).

A related issue is the need for rounding off during conversion between imperial and metric measures. After Canada metricated in the 1970s, one often found, for example, signs that had formerly read 'no smoking within 20 feet of building' changed to '…within 6.1 metres…''. This should obviously be edited to '6 metres'.

Here are two further common errors, the first related to time, the second to space. When clocks go *back* an hour from summer time to standard time in the autumn, you *gain* rather than lose an hour. If a map's resolution has been changed from 15 km per cm to 10 km per cm, then the resolution has gone *up,* not down. Each centimetre of the map now represents a *smaller* real geographical area, and hence *greater* detail can be seen.

Life expectancy figures are frequently misunderstood. If the life expectancy of women in a certain country is 48 years, it does not follow that a woman of 45 has only 3 years to live, or even that the average 45-year-old woman will live for only another 3 years. Life expectancies for countries are averages *at birth*. In countries with high infant mortality, the life expectancy at birth may be 48 years, but the life expectancy of 4-year-olds (i.e. those who survived infancy) may be, on average, a further 60 years.

Unawareness of the difference between inclusive and exclusive counting can lead to problems. If the source language (unlike English) counts inclusively, then the source text is not wrong when it says *On Tuesday, she bought a sweater; three days later, on Thursday, she returned it.* With inclusive counting, Thursday is three days after Tuesday, because Tuesday is included in the count. But if your target language counts exclusively, then this same span of time will be *two* days, not three!

A final issue: when you use the English word 'billion', do you intend it to mean 'a thousand million' (the American and now most common meaning) or 'a million million'? Assuming that you have determined which of these was intended by the author, and that your readership is international rather than local (so that confusion is possible), you can clarify by using 10^9 or 10^{12} the first time the word appears, if the text is a scientific one: '213 billion (213 x 10^9)'. With non-scientific texts, you might write '213 billion (billion=a thousand million)' or '213 billion (213,000,000,000)'.

6.5 Content editing during translation

The factual, logical and mathematical errors discussed above may of course be present in your source text when you are translating. Unless instructed otherwise, you should correct logical and mathematical errors in the translation and append a note to the client pointing them out so that action can be taken to correct the source text if the client will be publishing the source along with the translation. Factual errors should be corrected if they seem to be inadvertent but not if they are important as indicators of the author's ignorance of the facts. In the latter case, you may want to indicate that the error is due to the author, not the translator, by writing [sic—Tr] in the body of the text.

Sample correction of a logical error: the source text has 'we evaluated, analyzed and gathered the data'; the temporal sequence here makes no sense, so mentally edit to 'we gathered, analyzed and evaluated the data' before translating.

Translators may have to subtract material from the source text in order to make the translation fit into the available space. Sometimes it's possible to avoid this by typographical means, by eliminating redundancies in the translation, or by leaving meaning implicit, but on other occasions actual eliminations of content may be required.

Translators may also need to make minor additions to explain, for example, geographical or cultural features that may not be familiar to target readers; for example, change ‘the Rockies’ to ‘the Rocky Mountains’. Larger-scale additions and subtractions are discussed in Chapter 7.

6.6 Content editing after translation

Unfortunately, when translations of scientific and technical texts are published, the task of content editing may be omitted. The source text may be sent for translation before content editing, and then no one thinks to have the translation edited for content. Alternatively, if the source text *has* been content edited before translation, it may be assumed that there is then no *need* to content edit the translation: it will automatically be correct. This assumption is wrong since translators often do not have the relevant scientific/technical education and are prone to inadvertently introducing factual or conceptual errors.

Where scientific editors do not know the source language, they should work with the translator so that when they have queries about some point in the translation, the translator will be able to tell them whether the query pertains to some feature of the source text or to the translator’s interpretation. (Editors, like most people, tend to be somewhat naive about translation; they think they are reading some sort of direct transcript of the source text, not realizing how much transformation is involved.)

Practice

1. **Discussion**. Leaving aside the correction of unintended factual errors, do translators (as opposed to editors) have any obligations regarding truthfulness? Is it alright to pass on an untruth (intentional or not) without comment? Is it alright to omit a truth while translating, on the ground that it may give offence?
2. **Scenario**: At the request of a research funding body, you are editing an application for funding and discover that the author has made a serious mistake in reporting the results of a previous study. Do you leave the error and not mention it to anyone? Do you help the funding body by pointing out the mistake, or do you help the researcher by correcting the error or asking the researcher whether a change is needed?
3. **Exercise**. Your instructor will give you a text containing factual, logical and mathematical errors. Find them and correct them, doing any necessary research in the case of factual errors.

7 Trans-editing

by Jungmin Hong

7.1 Trans-editing versus translating

Trans-editing as used here means editing during translation that is not restricted to the small-scale changes discussed in Chapters 4 to 6. Extensive changes are allowed, recommended or even required. This chapter will focus on editing work at the macro-level, beyond words or phrases, and more specifically on major structural editing (such as rearranging paragraphs and sections) and major content editing (adding or subtracting a large amount of content). In professional settings, a combination of such large-scale structural and content editing is common.

Trans-editing is most often discussed in connection with news translation, and the examples and discussion here will mostly look at journalistic trans-editing between English and Korean. In South Korea—as in many other countries—news is translated either by professional translators or by journalists. Journalists tend to be more active in intervening in the source texts than translators since journalists are usually given more discretion while translators are often reluctant to transform source texts.

Example 1 shows two translations of an English source text, the first by a translator, the second by a trans-editing journalist.

Example 1

English source:

> Apple Inc. and Goldman Sachs Group Inc. are preparing to launch a new joint credit card, a move that would deepen the technology giant's push into its customers' wallets and mark the Wall Street firm's first foray into plastic.
>
> The planned card would carry the Apple Pay brand and could launch early next year, people familiar with the matter said. Apple will replace its longstanding rewards card partnership with Barclays, the people said.
>
> (*Wall Street Journal*, 10 May 2018)

Translated Korean version:

> 애플과 골드만삭스가 신규 제휴 신용카드 출시를 준비 중이다. 이러한 움직임은 기존 고객을 신용카드로 유치하려는 애플의 조치를 가속화할 것이며 골드만삭스의 첫 신용카드 사업 진출이 될 것이다.
>
> 해당 사안에 정통한 소식통들에 따르면 신규 카드는 애플 페이 브랜드로 출시될 것이며 시기는 내년 초가 될 가능성이 있다. 애플은 오랫동안 유지해 온 바클레이즈와의 리워드 카드 제휴 관계를 대체할 것이라고 이 소식통들은 전했다.
>
> (my translation)

Translated Korean version (back-translated into English):

> Apple and Goldman Sachs are preparing to launch a new joint credit card. This move would accelerate Apple's drive to attract its existing customers to a credit card and help Goldman Sachs make its first move into the credit card business.
>
> According to well-informed sources, the joint card would be launched under the brand Apple Pay and the timing could be early next year. Apple will replace its longstanding rewards card partnership with Barclays, the sources said.

Trans-edited Korean version (back-translated into English)

> Apple is teaming up with Goldman Sachs to launch a new credit card next year in an attempt to expand its influence in the financial services business.
>
> According to the U.S. Wall Street Journal of the 10th (local time), Apple plans to cooperate with Goldman Sachs to launch a credit card as early as next year, multiple sources said. The credit card will be launched under the brand Apple Pay, Apple's mobile payment service. …

Trans-edited Korean version:

> 애플이 금융 서비스 부문에서의 영향력 확대를 위해 골드만삭스와 손잡고 내년에 새 신용카드를 출시한다.
>
> 10일(이하 현지시간) 미 월스트리트저널(WSJ)에 따르면 애플은 골드만삭스와 제휴해 이르면 내년 초 신용카드를 출시할 계획이라고 복수의 소식통이 전했다.
>
> 신용카드는 애플 모바일 결제 서비스인 애플 페이(Apple Pay) 브랜드로 출시된다.
>
> (*Yonhap News Agency*, 11 May 2018)

In the first paragraph, the translation, like the source, gives equal weight to both companies, whereas the trans-edited version focuses on Apple. Similarly in the second paragraph, the trans-edited version omits the bit about Barclays (and there is a minor content edit, adding an explanation of Apple Pay). Goldman Sachs and Barclays do not provide consumer banking services in Korea and will therefore be of less interest to readers, while Apple is a very popular smartphone brand. Also in the second paragraph, the trans-edited version, unlike the translation, mentions the *Wall Street Journal* as the news source.

7.2 Structural trans-editing

Trans-editors (journalists or others who engage in translating) restructure source texts for various reasons: differences in rhetorical and genre conventions; differences in readers' knowledge and interests; ideological considerations.

Journalistic conventions may differ in the target language. A case in point is the convention for attribution—the act of identifying news sources. In English news, a general description of sources is typically placed in the first sentence (e.g. '…, according to government authorities', '…, an official at the company said on Monday') and then the next sentence gives more detail. Korean-language articles, on the contrary, provide the first reference to sources in the second paragraph. Example 2 illustrates the difference.

Example 2

English source:

> A measure of future U.S. economic growth edged up last week to its highest level since April 2011, while the annualized growth rate held steady, a research group said on Friday.
>
> The Economic Cycle Research Institute, a New York-based independent forecasting group, said its Weekly Leading Index rose to 131.3 in the week ended July 19 from 131.2 the previous week.
>
> The index's annualized growth rate was unchanged at 4.5 percent.
>
> (*Reuters*, 26 July 2013)

Trans-edited Korean version (back-translated into English):

> A U.S. economic leading indicator for the last week rose to the highest since April 2011.
>
> According to U.S. independent economic forecasting organization Economic Cycle Research Institute, the Weekly Leading Index this organization compiles increased over the week ending July 19, from 131.2 the previous week to 131.3.
>
> The index's annualized growth rate was unchanged at 4.5 percent.
>
> (*Newspim*, 27 July 2013)

You may also need to change the order of paragraphs to foreground specific information or change the angle of the story. For example, you may want to not just explain cultural, social and institutional concepts but also move them to an earlier position in the text. The same may apply to background information on current issues that will be unfamiliar to target-language readers. Consider the following news article about U.S. gross domestic product (GDP).

Example 3

English source:

> The U.S. economy grew at a much slower pace during the fourth quarter last year than the preliminary figure estimated because consumer spending and exports increased less than initially reported, according to the U.S. government.
>
> The U.S. Department of Commerce announced on Friday that gross domestic product, the broadest measure of goods and services produced across the country, grew at a seasonally adjusted rate of 2.4 percent in the three-month period ending December last year, compared to 2.5 percent in the preliminary report.
>
> …
>
> The U.S. Commerce Department releases the country's gross domestic product estimate for a quarter three times: preliminary, revised and final estimates.

As indicated in the last sentence, the GDP estimate for a quarter is announced three times in the U.S., i.e. preliminary, revised, and final. However, in South Korea, quarterly GDP data is released only twice. Unless the U.S. announcement system described in the last paragraph is moved up (to a position either before or directly after the second paragraph), Korean readers will probably understand the figure of 2.4% to be the final estimate rather than the revised estimate: since only two estimates are published in Korea, and 2.5% was clearly the first estimate, 2.4% must be the last, so readers will reason.

You can also relocate sentences or paragraphs on the basis of the target readers' interests so as to attract their attention. Consider Example 4:

Example 4

English source:

> Reuters Top 100: The World's Most Innovative Universities – 2017
>
> Tiger economies and competition from China will undoubtedly be forces to reckon with, but anyone looking to find the most influential research leading to the most transformative technologies should look

> West, not East. That's the conclusion of Reuters' annual ranking of the World's Most Innovative Universities, a list that identifies and ranks the educational institutions doing the most to advance science, invent new technologies and power new markets and industries. …
>
> … And the most elite institutions are almost all large, well-established universities based in the United States and Western Europe. Rounding out the top three are MIT and Harvard, which have held onto their respective 2nd and 3rd place rankings for the past three years. …
>
> In contrast, there are only two Asian universities in the top 20, both of which are based in South Korea, and one of them actually teaches the majority of its classes in English: South Korea's KAIST, formerly the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, ranked #6. …
>
> Of course, while Japan struggles, other Asian nations are growing fast. China has gone from one university on the list in 2015 to two in 2016, and now three in 2017. The two Chinese universities returning to the list this year both made significant gains (Tsinghua University climbed 15 spots to #51, and Peking University climbed 10 spots to #60); the third, Zhejiang University, appears on the list for the first time at #100. But given China's massive population and economy, just three universities out of 100 still represents significant underperformance. …
>
> (*Reuters*, 27 September 2017)

If you are trans-editing this for Chinese readers, you should place the paragraphs about the Chinese universities ahead of the others. For the rest of the information, geographical proximity can guide your choice: you can foreground the universities in the countries close to China and then move on to those in the U.S. and Europe.

Finally, the ideological disposition of the organization you are working for may require you to restructure a text. For example, if you are working for a conservative media organization, you may have to move downward any sentences or paragraphs that favour a politically progressive group.

7.3 Content trans-editing

Trans-editing of content involves macro-scale additions or subtractions. The latest developments, background information or a brief description are added, or perhaps a few paragraphs are deleted. At the same time, micro-level tasks can be performed: correcting factual, logical and mathematical errors as discussed in Chapter 6. As in the case of structural trans-editing, trans-editors' decisions about content will be affected by differences in rhetorical and genre conventions, by readers' knowledge and interests, and by ideological considerations.

In writing English news, journalists typically add a phrase describing the most distinctive feature of a company, organization, country or city after the proper name, but Korean news provides no further information, particularly when the name is well known. For example, in English news, 'Intel' is often referred to as 'Intel, the world's second-largest chipmaker' or 'U.S. chipmaker Intel' whereas news written in Korean (whether trans-edited or not) tends to say 'Intel' without further description. Another example: as the second paragraph of Example 3 shows, English news gives the definition of a specific term (GDP) right after the term, whereas Korean news often provides no information on familiar terms such as GDP. Thus English-to-Korean trans-editing of GDP news will require omission while Korean-to-English trans-editing of such news will require addition. To add a description of a company, for example, you can refer to its official website or relevant news articles, while the definition of a term can be drawn from an encyclopaedia, website or book.

Another important journalistic convention concerns attribution. English news writers are advised to attribute sourced information every time it appears and to provide much more detailed information on the sources than Korean-language news producers. As a result, Korean-to-English trans-editors sometimes have to add sources of information, as in Example 5.

Example 5

Korean source (translated into English):

> …The 182 seriously or slightly injured passengers are entitled to compensation for medical treatment, trauma and after-effects. Most of the injured suffered light fracture or bruising and about 49 were seriously injured with the possibility of suffering after-effects.
>
> (*Chosun Ilbo*, 2 August 2013)

English trans-edited version:

> …The 182 injured passengers of flight 214 can be compensated for medical costs, damages and after-effects. According to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, most of the passengers sustained light fractures or bruising, and about 49 were seriously injured with the possibility of having to live with a crippling aftermath.
>
> (*Chosun Ilbo*, English Edition, 2 August 2013)

The second sentence of the English trans-edited version adds the source of information on the status of the injured. However, trans-editors do not always know or have access to the sources. Also, it may not be compulsory, and sometimes it can be risky, for them to provide the sources. Still, trans-editors should make an effort to provide accurate and detailed sources by consulting the reporters or searching relevant websites or archives, because an increasing number of media organizations expect them to play a role similar to that of reporters.

Unfortunately there is a lack of dedicated training on relevant journalistic conventions, but trans-editors can refer to journalism textbooks and news organizations' style guides for detailed principles of news writing, including attribution.

Trans-editors often add a considerable amount of information to make up for lack of knowledge on the part of target readers. If you are trans-editing a text on economic policy or the social security system in the U.S., and general information on the policy or system is not given in the English source text, you should add a few sentences or even paragraphs. You can also provide a few paragraphs of background information on a specific event in a foreign country to help target readers assess the significance and implications of the event. When making such additions, be sure the sources of the information are authentic and reliable ones such as official or government websites, credible news articles or a widely used encyclopaedia.

On the other hand, a large amount of content can be cut in order to remove information which is irrelevant to target readers, highlight more significant information, or provide space for additions. In Example 4, you could delete everything except the information about China in order to focus on the rise in Chinese universities' ranking. You could even cut the last sentence, which may underestimate the country's performance. Such cuts are often made when trans-editing articles about surveys or studies conducted on a global scale since your target readers are likely to be interested only in information related to their own countries, regions or cultures. Also, with articles containing diverse or opposing views, you can delete all or most of the information that is not in line with the ideology of the news organization you are working for, rather than simply moving it downward (as mentioned in 7.2).

In today's digitalized media landscape, the demand for prompt transmission of information requires trans-editors to cut a large amount of text. This is often the case in trans-editing news articles for online newspapers or print newspapers' websites, where the main concern is near-real-time delivery of news. A case in point is Example 2 from *Newspim*, South Korea's online news provider. It deals with the latest U.S. economic data that arrived overnight in Korea and is therefore likely to affect Korea's financial markets on the day of the news report. Since prompt delivery of key information is the most important consideration, the trans-editor could delete less newsworthy information: the second half of the first paragraph in the source can be removed since the annualized growth rate is unchanged and may therefore have little impact on the market. The last sentence of the source could also be removed, for the same reason. The effect would be to focus attention on the rise in the Weekly Leading Index.

When omitting content, knowledge of journalistic conventions can help your decision. News stories—particularly hard news (about politics, economics, crime) as opposed to soft news (about entertainment, lifestyles)—commonly have an inverted pyramid structure which puts the most newsworthy information at the top and then the remaining information in order of importance with the least important at the bottom. As a trans-editor, you can simply remove information starting from the bottom.

7.4 Combined structural and content trans-editing

In professional settings, you will likely perform content and structural trans-editing at the same time. Suppose you are trans-editing the following text for Korean readers. The English source is from the *Korea Herald*, one of the country's major English-language newspapers, whose main readers are native English speakers.

Example 6

English source:

> Mirae Asset craves for U.S. titans despite recession
>
> Mirae Asset Global Investments Co., one of the nation's major financial firms, is pushing for an aggressive merger and acquisition of U.S.-based assets, while other brokerages are casting doubt citing market maturity.
>
> The Korean firm is considering forming a consortium with U.S. private equity fund investors to purchase the L.A.-based coffeehouse chain Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf.
>
> But the deal can be overturned at any moment, Mirae Asset officials said, refraining from disclosing details related to the purchase proposal.
>
> Besides the Coffee Bean deal, Mirae Asset has made purchase deals on a variety of U.S. sports titans and real estate properties amid the global economic slowdown.
>
> But Mirae Asset stressed that it will continue looking out to overseas assets.
>
> 'The ratio of our overseas portfolio has been in fact small. We are more eager than other domestic securities firms to make deals abroad, with our biggest clients, including large pension providers, in mind,' a Mirae Asset spokesperson said. …
>
> (*Korea Herald*, 16 August 2014)

The article focuses on Mirae Asset's ambitious move to purchase U.S. companies amid the global economic slowdown and passiveness among its competitors. This focus is brought out by the text's structure and content. The first paragraph starts with a general statement on the company's aggressive move toward overseas merger and acquisition as opposed to other companies' conservative stance. The second and third paragraphs illustrate this with the example of the company's move to buy out Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf. The fourth paragraph provides information on previous deals and the context of the sluggish global economy, while the fifth and sixth paragraphs offer the company's statement on its greater willingness to continue compared to its rivals, all of which shows how ambitious the company's plan is.

When you trans-edit for Korean readers, you should relocate the paragraphs and cut or add content based on the knowledge and interests of your readers. First of all, Mirae Asset's ambition is not new to them while the particular buyout of

Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf is. Moreover, the brand name of Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf can grab readers' attention since it is one of the most popular coffeehouse franchises in South Korea. That means you can remove the passages on the company's aggressive move to purchase overseas assets and foreground the Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf deal. The trans-edited version below illustrates one of the possible options. The first, fourth and fifth paragraphs of the source have been deleted. This changes the focus from the firm's aggressiveness to its purchase of Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, which now appears in the first paragraph.

Trans-edited Korean version (back-translated into English):

> Mirae Asset seeks to buy U.S. Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf
>
> Mirae Asset is seeking to purchase U.S. popular coffeehouse franchise Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf.
>
> However, Mirae Asset says nothing has been decided, refraining from disclosing specific purchase price and timing.
>
> 'The proportion of our overseas business has been small so far. Therefore, we are considering a more aggressive overseas expansion along with our clients,' said an official at the company.
>
> …
>
> (*Korea Herald*, Korean edition, 16 August 2014)

Here is another example of combined content and structural trans-editing.

Example 7

Korean source (translated into English):

> The New York stock market rose to close higher on the expectation that the quantitative easing program will come to an end later than the market anticipates.
>
> On the New York Stock Exchange on the 13th (local time), the Dow Jones industrial average rose 31.33 points (0.2 %) to 15,451.01, the S&P 500 went up 4.69 points (0.28 %) to 1,694.16 and the Nasdaq composite increased 14.49 points (0.39%) to 3,684.44 respectively, compared to the previous day.
>
> The comment made this day by Atlanta Federal Reserve President Dennis Lockhart drew the attention of the market.
>
> '…' said President Lockhart.
>
> This comment was interpreted to suggest that the beginning of the exit from the quantitative easing program can be delayed …

> Apple soared 4.75 percent. Carl Icahn, known as ‘corporate raider’, announced that he purchased a large amount of Apple shares since they were undervalued, spurring investor sentiment.
>
> (*Maeil Business Newspaper*, 14 August 2013)

This source text is about the New York stock market closing on a particular day; since the closing figures may have an impact on financial markets around the world, the trans-editor should focus on prompt delivery of the key information: the day’s closing prices of major indices compared to those of the previous day, and the major driver of the stock market rise.

Here is the English trans-edited version:

> U.S. stocks closed higher Tuesday, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average and the S&P 500 index halting a two-session slide, as a rally in Apple helped boost technology shares.
>
> The Dow industrials gained 31.33 points, or 0.2 percent, at 15,451.01. The S&P 500 index rose 4.69 points, or 0.3 percent, to 1,694.16. The Nasdaq Composite added 14.49 points, or 0.4 percent, to 3,684.44.
>
> (*Maeil Business Newspaper*, English edition, 14 August 2013)

There are two major drivers—the expectation of the delayed exit strategy and the surge of Apple shares due to Carl Icahn’s announcement. The former takes up three paragraphs in the Korean source and the latter just one. Even though the exit strategy is the more important driver, the trans-editor has picked the shorter statement about Apple, in order to transmit the information as soon as possible. As a result, the trans-edited version has just two paragraphs instead of seven, and the main driver of the stock market rise has been changed. To further shorten the translation, the trans-editor could have removed the points or percentages figures. The trans-editor has, however, added a bit of content that is not in the source, in order to enhance the newsworthiness of the story, i.e. ‘halting a two-session slide’. This addition conveys by implication the significance of the rise in the market: the change in market direction may signal a change in investor sentiment. Since this can easily be inferred from the widely available movements of the market index, it does not require much time and effort on the trans-editor’s part.

7.5 Trans-editing with changed text-type

The discussion so far has concerned trans-editing that results in a translation whose text type is the same as that of the source. However, trans-editors are often required to change the text type. Suppose you are given the source text in Example 4 and asked to produce promotional material based on the news about KAIST, one of the two South Korean universities among the top 20 entries. With regard to content trans-editing, you should select the content which can most effectively highlight the achievement of the university. Specifically, you should identify whether the ranking changed from the previous year, and if so, how many steps it moved, and where the university stands compared to other universities in the region and around the world. KAIST's higher ranking than the other Korean university should be clearly stated. You could also add information which is not given in the source in order to serve the purpose of the translation. As it happens, the source provides a hyperlink (not shown) to a function that compares any two universities and you could click on it to retrieve the necessary information for the addition. You could also add information on the methodology and credentials of the survey-makers to enhance readers' knowledge about the accuracy and impartiality of the ranking; this could improve the image of the university. Since the process of deleting and adding a large amount of content requires you to reorganize the content selected from the source and to fit in the new content you have collected, extensive structural trans-editing is also needed. In terms of style, you could replace 'KAIST' with 'we' to engage those target readers who are or may become KAIST students.

7.6 Trans-editing from multiple source texts

The degree of your intervention will be even greater when you produce a translation based on more than one source text, and the text-type of the translation differs from that of any of the sources. This type of trans-editing involves so much content and structural transformation that the result might be considered a new text rather than a translation. News organizations often combine several articles into one to provide a comprehensive yet brief picture of an event or accident in one country for readers in another country, or to highlight an ideology they support. Similarly, research institutes publish papers based on a number of research articles written at home or abroad that will support their argument or findings. Governments produce foreign-language promotional materials on tourism or policies by trans-editing a number of book chapters, news stories or research papers. Trans-editors are asked to select content from multiple sources and organize the information in a way that fulfils the purpose of the translation. The amount of content extracted from each source varies from a word or phrase to a few paragraphs or an entire text. Non-verbal content such as images, sounds or web links can be added as well. With regard to structure, the trans-editor organizes the selected content regardless of the logical flow of any of the sources. With such assignments, your role as a trans-editor is similar to that of an author and you therefore need text-authoring skills.

Exercises and discussion

Your instructor will give you 3 or 4 news articles on the same topic and a description of the target readers (in terms of their knowledge, interests etc).

1. Choose one of the articles and trans-edit the structure and content separately and then at the same time. Compare your trans-edited version with your peers' versions to see the extent to which the source text has been transformed and defend your version based on the characteristics of the target readers.

2. Trans-edit all the source texts into a single text of a different text type. Compare your version with your peers' versions in order to discuss the degree of transformation and defend your version.

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

Trans-editing: Schäffner (2012); Schrijver (2012); Stetting (1989)
News translation: Bielsa & Bassnett (2009); Cheesman & Nohl (2011); Hursti (2001); Lu & Chen (2011); Kang (2007); Schäffner (2018); Van Doorslaer (2009); Van Doorslaer (2010); Vuorinen (1997)
Journalism textbooks: Fedler (2005); Keeble (2006); Mencher (1984); Mayeux (1996)
News organization guides: Winkler (2012), Associated Press (online), Reuters (online)

8 Checking for consistency

The American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in 1841 that ‘a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds’. In 1923, U.S. newspaper editor William Allen White delivered a similar opinion: ‘Consistency is a paste jewel that only cheap men cherish’. Now, Emerson and White were talking about consistency of opinion: if you change your mind, say so; there is no virtue in keeping to the same view if new facts come to light. However the sentiments they express are to some degree applicable to an insistence on consistency when editing and revising. We need to ask whether consistency is always necessary, and how much effort revisers and editors should put into increasing the degree of consistency in a text. Creating consistency is a purely mechanical task that requires little thought, yet gives a feeling of accomplishment. As a result, some editors and revisers are tempted to devote considerable time to this task.

There are two kinds of consistency you could check. First, there is consistency in a given respect: consistency in the way a word, term or phrase is translated, consistency in layout, consistency in register, consistency in matters specified on a style sheet. Second, there is the range of texts over which you will check consistency: will you ensure consistency in this or that respect just within the present text, or with other texts you have edited or revised in the past for the same client, or with all other texts that have been produced for that client in your translation service, or with original writings of that client available on an intranet, or with all the texts emanating from your service for all clients? Obviously the greater the range you choose, and the more features you choose, the more time you will end up spending on consistency. With long texts, achieving even text-internal consistency in one or two respects can be quite time-consuming, even with computer aids.

In this chapter, there will be only passing mention of consistency in matters such as page layout or the treatment of numerals. Achieving this type of consistency is the chief purpose of the house style sheets and style manuals already discussed in Chapter 3, and once again, editors can waste a great deal of time if they try to achieve complete consistency, especially with long texts. Just how much does it matter if a text has ‘eight’ on page 5 but ‘8’ on page 39? Who will notice? Even if someone does notice, will communication be impeded? And might it not have been more worthwhile to devote the available editing/revising time to something else? Also, if a proofreader or copyeditor will be going over the text, then it would be a duplication of effort for an editor or reviser to seek a high degree of consistency in the matters covered by style sheets.

The focus here will be on consistency in the way an expression is translated, within a text or over a range of texts. Achieving total consistency in translation work would mean: (i) never translating a given source-text expression in one way in one passage and in another way in another passage (assuming the concept is the same in both passages), and (ii) always translating differing terms or phrasings in the source text in different ways (even if they are being used as synonyms or paraphrases by the source-text author). Spelled out in this way, the notion that consistency per se is a Good Thing seems extremely dubious. Probably no one would seriously advocate it in this extreme form. That would create real problems; for example, it would prevent authentic translation from a language which often repeats noun phrases over the course of a paragraph ('the instruction manual… the instruction manual…the instruction manual') to one that does not ('the instruction manual…the manual…it').

8.1 Degrees of consistency

A consistency problem unique to translation is recurring wordings in successive source texts. If you work for a corporation or government ministry, documents such as successive annual reports or descriptions of similar jobs will contain passages of identical or almost identical wording. When you come to revise such a document, the question will arise: does this passage occur in a previous source-language document, and if so, how was it translated last time? If a previous source-translation pair is available in an easily searchable database, the problem is solved. If not, do not unthinkingly initiate an exhaustive search in order to check whether the draft wording is consistent with previous translations. Instead, ask yourself how much effort it is worth devoting to this task. It may be very important to use the same wording this time, or it may be quite unimportant. For example, if the document is a contract, and the translation will have legal force, then it may be very important. But in others cases, it may not matter. The important thing, after all, is that the meaning of the source is adequately conveyed.

The same applies to consistency of the translation with existing documents originally written in the target language. Sometimes the source text contains passages that are themselves translations of original target-language material. Such passages may or may not be identified in the source text as translations (i.e. there may or may not be quotation marks or references). The translator whose work you are revising may have back-translated this material rather than searching for the original target-language wording. You must now decide whether it's worth spending the time to locate this original wording, or asking the translator to find it. The mere fact that you *can* search documentary databases for this purpose is not a reason to do so. (For more on the drawbacks of such searches, see Chapter 9.)

Consistency should never take priority over Accuracy. If you see that the previous translation of a passage contains an error, do not reproduce the error for the sake of consistency, even if the client has given you the earlier translation as a reference.

8.2 Pre-arranging consistency

The ideal approach to consistency, for both editors and revisers, is to arrange for texts to be consistent ahead of time, before the writing or translating begins.

Regarding layout and typography, a certain amount of editing/revising effort can be avoided if the writer or translator is given either an electronic template or specific settings for use with the Styles option of their word processors. In the case of translation, if a client wants the layout to be consistent with that of the source text, the translator can simply be instructed to enter the translation on top of the source text, using the word processor's Typeover feature. Of course this will only work if the source wording is available as editable e-text (not for example, an uneditable .pdf document, or a .jpeg image with captions).

Regarding terminology, consistency is a problem when several writers or translators are working on a single document. Some decisions can be made before the project starts; in other cases, one member of the writing/translating team can carry out research while the others start writing, and that person can then enunciate terminology decisions as the work proceeds.

When a text is divided in this way, questions of style arise as well. For example, how will the reader of the text be addressed: in the second person (press the green button)? the third person (the user will press the green button)? the passive (the green button must be pressed)?, the impersonal active (it is necessary to press/one must press the green button)? or the first person plural (we then press/let's now press the green button)? One option will give the text a certain tone, another option quite a different tone. It is important to decide this sort of thing ahead of time; achieving consistency at the editing or revision stage will be very time-consuming.

Translation software suites typically contain a terminology-management component that can help ensure consistency in the translation of terminology at the start of a project. It can also check, at the revision stage, that each target-language term is one of the members of a pre-approved list of allowable equivalents for the source-language term in question. While this is certainly useful, keep in mind that the importance we attach to a revision or editing activity should not be based on the ease with which we can accomplish it using computer aids. Computers are much better than brains at many things, but it does not follow that those things are important!

8.3 Translation databases and consistency

With the advent of databases of previously completed translations, whether stand-alone concordancers or databases available within Translation Memory (see Chapter 16 for the main discussion of this technology), consistency looms larger as an issue than it used to. Achieving consistency is now more practical, but there are problems using databases for this purpose.

Since a database typically contains material by several translators, unless they were themselves consistent with each other, or someone weeded out inconsistencies before the translations were loaded into the database, then you will find a variety of translations for a given source-language expression. Perhaps one translator used ‘lifestyle’ and another ‘life-style’; perhaps one selected term x and another term y in the target language for a given term in the source language. Under such circumstances, how will you use the information in the database to achieve consistency? All you can do is select the most popular target-language expression, if there are many instances of it in the database. But why is this expression the most popular one? Is it because several translators independently researched the matter and came up with that expression? Or is it because one translator originally chose that expression, and then a few others copied it from the database, and then everyone else saw that it was a popular translation?

A further problem will manifest itself if you use the database to check correspondence between the translation wordings and the wordings in original target-language writing. Suppose you have a database that allows you to view both Spanish-English and English-Spanish translations for a single client or set of clients who commission work in both directions. Consider a Spanish expression S in the source text you are now working on, and its English translations E1, E2, E3 in the Spanish-to-English material contained in the database. Then look at that same Spanish expression S in the translations *from* English (in the English-to-Spanish material in the database). Did the writers of the English source texts use any of the expressions E1, E2, E3? When I have carried out this exercise, I have not infrequently found that the answer is no. Furthermore when I did a separate search for E1, E2, E3 in English source texts, I have often found that none of them were translated by Spanish S. (In other cases, I have found that E1 was used in original English, but not E2 or E3. This suggests that if I had selected E2, perhaps on the grounds that it was the most common rendering of S in the Spanish-to-English translations, then I would have made a poor choice.) The upshot of this is that relying on previous translations in a database to achieve consistency can result in consistently using expressions that are not in fact used in original writing in the target language.

8.4 Over-consistency

Usually when people think of the problem of consistency, they are thinking of its lack—too *little* consistency. But it is also possible to be *overly* consistent. In recent years, studies that compare a large corpus of translations with a corpus of texts in the same field that were originally written in the target language have suggested a number of interesting ways in which translations differ from original writing. For example, it appears that translators spell out connections between ideas that original writers leave implicit. They also tend to avoid specific words and prefer more general ones (‘take’ rather than ‘grab’), even when the source text has a specific word. It would be interesting to find out whether translations are also more internally consistent (have fewer synonyms) than original writing. They certainly will be if extreme consistency is enforced by the reviser.

It’s false that the use of synonyms by its nature creates confusion. Were you confused when I referred, at the beginning of this chapter, to the *American* essayist

Emerson and then to the *U.S.* editor White? Did you find yourself wondering whether I was somehow referring to two different national origins? Probably you did not notice my use of synonyms at all. Such use of different words or phrasings to convey a single concept is a natural feature of human language production, and if you really want to write authentically in the target language, then you should not strive to eliminate all synonyms. Indeed in some languages (not English), writing which repeats words instead of using synonyms is considered to be inelegant.

Often when you are revising, you may find yourself wondering about phraseology. The translation in front of you has *evaluate the language capacity of employees*, and you think: should it be *assess the language skills of employees* or perhaps *evaluate the linguistic capabilities of employees*? Certainly it is possible that your client has a preference or even a set usage, but then again, it's possible that the client's original target-language documentation sometimes uses *assess* and sometimes *evaluate*, with no intended difference in meaning; and likewise for *capacity/skills/capabilities* and for *language/linguistic*. I suspect this situation is extremely common, perhaps the norm, given the natural human proclivity to use whatever word comes to mind first.

Now, what about terminology? Should we not always strive for consistent cross-textual use of the 'correct term'? The fact of the matter is that if you read several documents originally written in the target language on the topic of your text, you will discover that different authors use different terms for the same concept, and that a single author will use synonyms within a single text. *This is even true, contrary to widespread belief, in technical and scientific writing.* Editors of scientific journals may remove certain inconsistencies but often they will ignore synonyms because they know that all the intended readers will recognize the different expressions as synonymous. Of course, you need to know what the recognized synonyms are, as well as the extent of the synonymy (in some contexts, terms x and y may be interchangeable, in others not).

If synonymy and paraphrase were not available to language users, people would find themselves tongue-tied if the single existing term for a concept failed to come to mind. Experts often make up their own terms or use a paraphrase if the 'correct' term does not come to mind. And when they are asked about a proposed translation containing a term invented by the translator, or a paraphrase that explains the concept, they will often say 'well, I know what you mean', and that is the end of their interest in the matter, especially if the translation is being prepared for information only. Editors of specialist journals will naturally have a somewhat different attitude, combining linguistic issues with subject-matter concerns. As 'language people', editors and translators certainly need to keep an eye out for possible failures of communication; however it is simply false that successful communication requires the elimination of synonyms, explanatory paraphrases or terminological inventions.

Synonyms may be very helpful to non-expert readers; those who did not fully understand a concept when it was first introduced in the text may understand it if another expression with the same meaning is used later on. Revisers who devote effort to eliminating synonyms in the name of consistency may then be doing the reader a disservice. On the other hand, it is true that non-expert readers may well find synonyms confusing. If a computer manual sometimes refers to the Trash and sometimes to the Wastebasket, non-expert readers may wrongly think two different things are involved. Or, conversely, they may wrongly take the instruction to 'enter' information to mean the same thing as the instruction to 'input' information, when different meanings were intended (perhaps 'enter' was intended to mean 'press the Enter button in order to incorporate the information you have just input'). A reviser might decide to eliminate such synonyms in texts for non-expert readerships, even though this means reducing the authenticity of the text (it will then not have the synonyms typical of original writing).

One major hazard to keep in mind concerning terminological consistency is that the term which you have found in previous translations may be the wrong one. This danger is amplified when databases of previously completed translations are easy to consult. Perhaps one translator did poor research and made a mistake, then others copied that mistake, and now you consult the archive and see that most previous translations used that term. You then proceed to make your own contribution to this chain of errors, and you end up being consistent in the worst possible way…consistently wrong!

Another matter frequently mentioned in discussions of consistency is level of language. We are often warned to make sure that a text has a consistent degree of formality or technicality. Once again, it is possible to be overly consistent. For one thing, some types of writing typically do mix levels of vocabulary. In some English medical writing, for example doctor's notes, it is not uncommon to find medical terms of Greco-Latin origin mixed with lay language. So if you are revising the English translation of a medical text written in a Romance language, and authenticity is desirable, it may be important not to reproduce all the Greco-Latin terminology of the Romance text (perhaps write 'muscle pain' rather than 'myalgia').

It may even happen that a single concept is expressed at different levels of language within a single text. For example, a doctor's letter (consulted to help revise a translation into English) referred at one point to 'pneumectomy' and then later to 'resection of the lung' and later still to 'removal of a portion of the lung'—all of which have the same meaning. Perhaps the author was aware that he was addressing a mixed audience of doctors and insurance agents. In addition, doctors are often somewhat conflicted when addressing lay people: on the one hand, they want to seem scientific and authoritative (hence 'pneumectomy'); on the other hand, they want to be understood (hence 'removal').

Even in fairly formal writing, many writers and translators find themselves using a mixture of contracted and uncontracted verb forms ('is not' versus 'isn't'). The editor or reviser must then decide whether to spend time changing every contracted form to its uncontracted counterpart. If the problem exists only with contractions of 'not' other than 'won't', then the change can be accomplished with a single Replace All (change 'n't' to '[space]not'), but if there are other contractions ('I'd', 'we've', 'they'll'), the process could be quite lengthy.

More generally, editors need to recognize that over the course of the 20th century there was a shift in what was considered acceptable regarding mixing of levels in English. This was in line with a general cultural trend (mixing of 'high' and 'popular' culture) and an increased influence of the oral on the written (under the conversational influence of email and especially texting, forms of address to strangers shifted from 'Dear Mr Jones' to 'Dear Peter Jones' to 'Dear Peter' to 'Hi'). Wordings which at one time were acceptable only in the spoken language came to be accepted in more and more types of writing. If I had written this book in 1950, the editor would rightly have considered it to have both unacceptable informality and unacceptable mixing of the formal and the informal (for example, I have mixed the various forms of address discussed in section 8.2). Such mixing still causes some older people discomfort, but if they are editors, they must realize that eliminating what they see as informality would constitute a markedly conservative editorial approach. Of course, as time passes, if the trend continues, then eventually a generation will appear that no longer experiences the combination of 'one should' and 'you should' as an inconsistent mixing of levels.

To sum up: consistency should not be treated as an end in itself. Inconsistency is a problem if it creates a communication barrier. Some kinds of consistency are very important, others not important at all. It is especially a concern when a single text is divided among several translators, or when several texts of similar genre and topic for the same client are distributed among several translators.

Practice

1. **Discussion**. Do you think you spend too much time on consistency? Too little? Just the right amount? If you are not sure, do you think it's important to look into this matter further?
2. **Exercise**. Examine two or three completed translations which you have revised. Or examine a revised translation in a group. See if you can find any inconsistencies. Did you find any serious ones? Did you find many small ones? Decide whether, in view of the brief, it would have been better if you had focused on particular kinds of inconsistency (e.g. in terminology, in level of language).
3. **Exercise.** A short quotation in a text contains the word 'analyse' spelled with an 's', because it was spelled that way in the source being quoted. However in the first line of the text after the quotation ends, the word 'analyze' spelled with a 'z' appears, because the style sheet so dictates. What will you do about this visual inconsistency?

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on this publication.

Merkel (1998); Sorenson (2019)

9 Computer aids to checking

This chapter looks at the following questions: How can Internet search engines, multilingual sites and databases of old translations help me edit and revise? Shall I revise/edit on screen or on paper? How can word processors and other translating environments help with editing and revision? (Translation Memory and Machine Translation are discussed in Chapter 16.)

9.1 Google to the rescue?

New technologies both solve and create problems. The advent of Internet search engines in the 1990s certainly brought us new ways of solving translation and revision problems, but it has also given rise to new issues for editors and revisers. In what follows, I refer exclusively to Google, the most popular search engine used by translators.

Throughout this chapter, 'wording', 'word combination' and 'expression' are to be taken as synonyms; they refer to any sequence of words, including the special terminology and phraseology of a field.

Authenticity of language

Imagine a situation in the pre-Google era, say around 1990, where a trainee translator has written a sentence containing the word combination 'at the service of'. The reviser has made a change, substituting 'in the service of', and when challenged on this, replies in an authoritative tone: 'You can't say that in English'. It being highly unlikely that the translator can supply a large number of instances of 'at the service of' from original English texts, the situation was simply one of conflicting intuitions, and the reviser would prevail if he or she was the one responsible for the linguistic quality of the translation.

Nowadays the situation is quite different. If a word combination is idiomatic, it will be easy for the translator to enter the expression in Google and supply a large number of instances within seconds. It may be that all or most of these are in texts not written by native speakers, or in texts which are themselves translations and thus suspect. But there may also be a great many instances of the expression in what are clearly original texts by native speakers. In that case, if the reviser still wants to make a change, it will no longer suffice to pronounce the expression in question ‘wrong’. After all, an idiomatic expression is by definition a combination of words frequently used by native speakers, and the possible combinations in a language are not fixed forever; new ones arise regularly. So to justify a change, the Google-era reviser will need an argument: the samples you have found in Google are from a different genre; they are on a different topic; they have marks of orality whereas the translation is a piece of formal writing; there are no instances on Australian sites, and the text is for an Australian audience. With regard to this last point, it is often useful to restrict the scope of Google’s search: if you want to see examples of (mostly) Australian English, add ‘site:.au’ at the end of your search string; if you want to see samples of the client’s usage, add ‘site:*myclient.com*’.

If you are working in a language pair that has many ‘false friends’ (e.g. Dutch/English or French/English), you may find yourself wondering whether a certain expression in the translation is really idiomatic. If your intuition does not supply an immediate answer, Google may help. Suppose that in working from French to English the translator has referred to the ‘progressive introduction’ of a procedure, but you think English ‘progressive’ may be a false friend of French ‘progressif’. Google gives you 57,000 hits for ‘progressive introduction’ but 297,000 for ‘gradual introduction’. Does this result justify revising ‘progressive’ to ‘gradual’? The answer is no: 57,000 is a large number, and there is no reason why idiomatic English should not use both ‘progressive’ and ‘gradual’. The fact that one synonym is less common is not a reason to reject it. Google tells us that ‘wrong answer’ occurs about seven times more frequently than ‘incorrect answer’, but that is not a reason to replace the latter with the former. However if the hitlist for ‘progressive introduction’ had been considerably shorter, and several of the items near the top of the list had been from sites in non-English-speaking countries, that might justify revision to ‘gradual’. (Bear in mind that asking for ‘pages in English’ does not limit the search to majority English-speaking countries, and does not distinguish native from non-native writers.)

When using Google, the engine’s peculiar features must be borne in mind. Suppose you want to know whether ‘the application he presented’ is alright. Does one *present* an application? On the day I searched, there were indeed a vast number of hits for this expression, but almost all contained ‘…the application. He presented…’. Google does not ‘notice’ punctuation and capitalization.

A further difficulty is that while Google can tell you whether an expression exists, it cannot tell you how readers will understand it, that is, which meaning of the expression’s constituent words they will select. For example, in some contexts, ‘the application he presented’ might be taken to mean the application which he ‘showed’ rather than ‘submitted’.

A final word on word combinations: while care must be exercised when using Google, the ability it affords to check authenticity of language can be a great benefit to anyone self-revising a translation into their second language.

When it comes to syntactic structures, the situation is somewhat different than with idiomatic expressions. It's hard to check the occurrence of many structures, because you have to select a particular wording. Consider this sentence: 'It's not because you are in politics that you forsake the right to protect your reputation'. If you ask Google for the sequence 'it's not because you are', you will find that none of the hits contain the above structure ('it's not because x that y'). If you ask for 'it's not because you are in politics that', you will get 0 hits, but that does not prove that the structure itself does not occur, only that it does not occur with the particular wording '…you are in politics…'. There do exist special databases of English texts that have been grammatically parsed, so that you can ask directly for all the sentences in the database that have a certain structure, but learning how to ask the corpus questions will take considerable effort (for more information, enter 'International Corpus of English' in your search engine). So if you are uncertain about a sentence structure, either rely on intuition (if you are a native or near-native speaker) or simply change the sentence structure to one you are sure exists.

Also to be borne in mind, if you do succeed in finding many instances of a sentence structure using Google, is that mere occurrence of a structure does not by itself create 'correctness' in the sense of Chapter 3.6. The structure 'accept to + infinitive' ('he accepted to translate my text') can be found, but it should nevertheless be changed to 'he agreed to …'. Certainly frequency is a factor to consider: at a certain point, a structure becomes so common in published work that it will be deemed standard by all but linguistic conservatives. However 'he accepted to …' has not yet reached that stage.

Terminology and phraseology checking

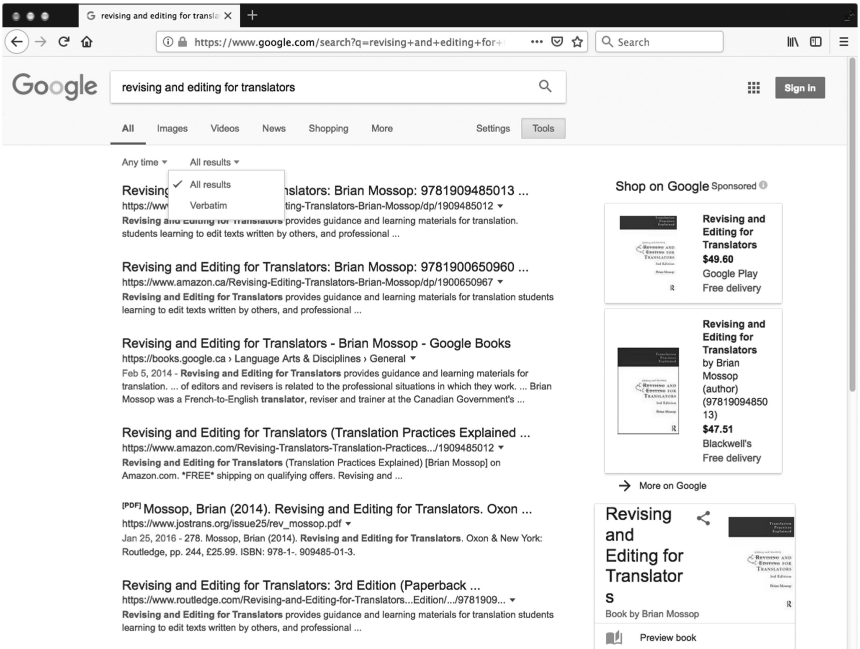
Checking terminology and phraseology is rather different from checking idiomaticity. If the translator has used a term or phrasing which Google cannot find, that does not make it wrong. It may be a client-specific term. Also, bear in mind that engines do not search the Web directly; they search a database of selected pages. The Google database contains only a portion of all Web pages, though the actual percentage is no longer publicly available information. So the term you are checking may well exist but not be available through a Google search. On the other hand, if you find, again and again, that Google cannot locate the translator's choice of term or phrase, or worse, that it is found mainly on sites in countries where the target language is not the most common native language, then there is probably something wrong. Thus a Google query revealed that the word 'halieutic' does occur, but almost all the hits are bilingual dictionary sites rather than texts, or else they are English texts on sites in French-speaking countries, and the texts at these sites were thus probably written in English by French speakers or by careless translators (the French adjective 'halieutique' means 'having to do with fishing').

Sometimes you may suspect that the term the translator has chosen is not the most *frequent* one. Is a certain portion of the backbone called the 'dorso-lumbar spine', as the translator has written, or is it 'thoraco-lumbar spine', the term you found in a term bank? You can try a 'Google vote' to compare frequencies of occurrence, but care must be taken in interpreting the results. Consider three cases:

- You get approximately equal numbers of hits for both terms. Leaving aside the possibility that one of the terms mainly appears at non-native-writer sites, this result suggests leaving the translator's term unchanged, all other things being equal. (An example of other things not being equal: have you considered the possibility that the two expressions are not really synonyms? Since you are not a medical specialist, you cannot be sure. It may be that only one of the two items conveys the correct meaning.)
- There is a striking difference in frequency, say 300 hits for the translator's term and 12,000 for the term you found in a term bank. This certainly seems to suggest making a change, but there is another possibility: the translator's term is not used much in most parts of the English-speaking world, but locally, it is in common use. If you were to use a 'site:xx' restriction when querying Google, you might get a very different answer about frequency.
- The translator's term has 9,000 hits as opposed to 18,000 hits for the alternative in your term bank. Here the point made earlier in the discussion about 'progressive introduction' applies: 9,000 is plenty to justify use of that variant, all other things being equal. If you were translating yourself rather than revising, you might decide to 'play it safe' by choosing the term with 18,000 hits, but when revising someone else's work, the situation is different (see Chapter 15).

A further consideration with 'Google votes' is that many hits are duplicates. There may be 5,000 hits, but if you go to the fourth page of hits, you may find a warning that 'we have omitted some entries very similar to the 34 already displayed'. In other words, there were really only 34 *different texts* found; one or more of those 34 texts appears at a great many sites. Also bear in mind that even if you place an expression within quotation marks, Google may try to be 'helpful' and find related expressions for you: it may include synonyms in the search, find results that match terms similar to those in your query, search for words with the same root and make spelling 'corrections' (which, you may have noticed, result in searches for completely different words). To avoid this, when you arrive at the hitlist, select 'Verbatim' (its location on the Google screen has varied over time). This should restrict hits to sites containing the exact wording you entered.

A general consideration regarding term research is that you are a reviser, not a terminologist. You do not have the time to do all the research a terminologist would do before establishing a terminological equivalency as correct. Indeed, you cannot spend as much time on research as you do when you yourself are the translator, for revisers are expected to move through the text far more rapidly than the original translator. This need to move along quickly does unfortunately create a problem because overly rapid Google research can easily lead to error. For example, if you inquire about the term 'shoreline development', the hitlist will suggest



Location of Verbatim on a Google hitlist screen, late 2018.

to you that it refers to the outcome of human development activities along a shoreline. You might then think that the translator has erred in using the term to mean the degree of irregularity of a lake's shoreline. However more thorough research would have revealed that this is in fact another meaning of the term.

When considering a hitlist, you also need to be sure that the items you have found do indeed correspond to the term you are searching. For example, suppose the translator has referred to a tree that has a 'true collar'. You wonder if such an expression exists. You get a lengthy hitlist, but on closer examination you discover that the hits mostly contain expressions like 'true collar rot', which may turn out to mean 'collar rot that is genuine' rather than 'rot in the true collar'. Another possibility is that the term the translator has used is very common, but in a completely different field from that of the text; perhaps the translator failed to look at the field designation in a term bank entry. So it's important to examine the first page of hits fairly carefully to make sure you are looking at relevant material.

Finally, Google can be used to find on-line bilingual or multilingual glossaries. Enter the words 'forestry' and 'glossary' to get forestry glossaries. Enter a particular forestry term plus 'glossary' or 'definition' to find a forestry glossary that contains your term. To find a bilingual glossary containing your term in both source and target languages, use Google's Advanced Search page. Enter the source-language term, along with 'glossary', then go to the languages menu and select the target language. You will thus be looking for all the target-language pages that contain your source-language term. The resulting hitlist will often include bilingual glossaries in your field.

Subject-matter research

Ideally, revisers only check work on subject matters with which they are familiar. Sadly, we do not live in an ideal world, and such a limitation may not be realistic. Internet search engines can then provide a means of rapid familiarization with the concepts of a field, allowing you to make up, to some extent, for the difference between your knowledge and the knowledge the translator has acquired through research while translating. You may find especially useful for this purpose the vast number of photographs, diagrams and videos available by selecting the Images or Videos option below the search phrase area on the Google screen. If your text describes the three-toed sloth, you can quickly call up to the screen a still or moving picture of the beast.

As with term research, there is a danger in concluding concept research too soon or in reading the material you find too quickly. Suppose the translation you are revising says that the leaves of the butternut tree are composed of 11 to 17 opposite leaflets. You then look up information on the butternut tree and discover that its leaves are in fact not opposite each other; rather they alternate sides as you move along a branch. You decide there must be something wrong, but in fact the problem is your careless reading; the leaves are indeed alternating, but the individual leaf*lets* which *compose* each leaf are opposite each other *within* a leaf. The Internet seems to encourage overly hasty decisions.

The main problem with the Internet when it comes to concept research is that most material is unedited for content. Wikipedia articles can be improved by editing, but this can be done by anyone, and the result is a mixed bag, ranging in quality from excellent to awful. It's generally thought that the quality of any one Wikipedia article improves over time as it gets edited and re-edited by new contributors, but you have no way of knowing whether the article you are currently reading, about the latest advances in particle physics, was written by someone who knows what they are talking about. So if you are revising a natural science text, it might be better to restrict yourself to sites whose URL contains the name of a university or ends in .edu.

Searching within sites

Much information is available only through searches within a site. However this can be very time-consuming because the site's own search engine, unlike Google, may not display the hits in a useful order, and may not show a relevant passage from the various items it finds. As a result, you have to visit individual hits to see whether they contain anything useful. Revisers do not have the time to carry out such lengthy searches. Fortunately, many site owners are now employing Google technology for site-internal searching.

Multilingual sites

There are many sites on the Web where pressing a button on a page will give you a version in one or more other languages. Government Web sites in officially multilingual countries as well as the sites of multilingual organizations like the European Union or the United Nations typically have such a button on each Web page. There are lists of such sites by topic at www.multilingual.ch. Google can be used to retrieve from these sites material that may help you revise. For example, if you are checking the English translation of a French agriculture text, you can enter an expression from the source text in Google, then enter 'site:agr.gc.ca' and if that phrase occurs in any French text posted on the site of Canada's agriculture ministry, the relevant item will appear on the hitlist. Once you arrive at the site where the item is located, it is simply a matter of clicking a button, and the English version of the text will (usually) appear. Once you find the relevant phrase, you can compare it to the one in the translation you are checking. And of course other information or links on the English page may be helpful.

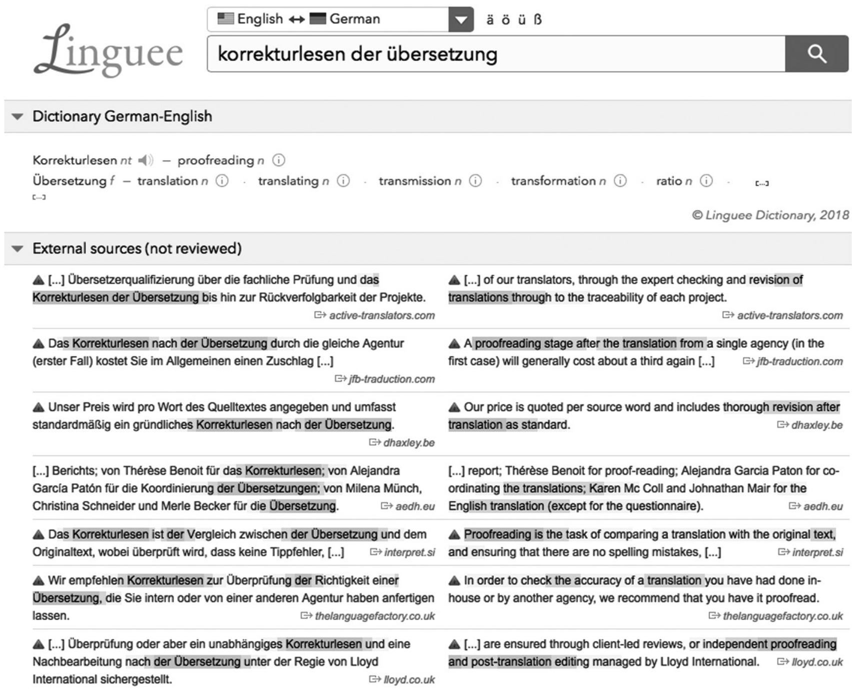
Online dictionaries

If you are looking for information on the meaning of a word, Google will take you to all sorts of on-line dictionaries if you enter '[word] define'. Many of these dictionaries accept contributions from anyone. These may prove useful for recent innovations in the source or target language, but in general it's best to rely on trained lexicographers, which means visiting, and perhaps subscribing to, the on-line site of a traditional dictionary-maker such as Oxford, Collins or Merriam-Webster in the case of English.

9.2 Bilingual databases

You may find it helpful while revising to consult databases that contain old (that is, previously completed) translations and their source texts, with each phrase of the latter aligned with the corresponding phrase in the former. For a few language pairs, such bitextual databases can be accessed free of charge. Try for example Linguee at www.linguee.com. In addition, some Translation Memory programs allow direct access to their databases. You can enter problematic expressions as search strings and then view extracts from texts in the database which contain that expression, alongside the corresponding expressions in the other language.

With the right computer skills, you can create your own database of texts on a given subject, possibly paired with texts in another language, but this is time-consuming, and only worthwhile if you are very frequently editing or revising (and translating) in that field. Unless this is the case, only pre-constituted corpora will be of use to you. So for example if you are revising a translation of a Canadian law text, you can check terminology and phraseology against the aligned French-and-English corpus of court decisions available (for a fee) at www.tsrali.com. The same site provides an aligned concordance of Hansard, the proceedings of Canada's



The Linguee bilingual database site showing some results of a search for a German expression.

House of Commons, from 1986 to the present. Here you will find an edited version of everything Members of Parliament said in French or in English, with a translation into the other language. Such a database of everyday English and French can function like a bilingual dictionary, but with far more contextual information.

When you retrieve documents in this way, and compare them to the text you are currently revising, you always need to consider whether the contexts really match. The subject matter may be the same, but the writer of the present text may be saying something which is somewhat different from what the writer of the retrieved text was saying. The difference may be rather subtle, but it may nevertheless be significant. Perhaps it would be better not to revise the text you are working on by substituting the expression found in the retrieved text. When you find material of interest in a database, often a mouse-click will take you to the full source text or translation, if you need more context.

You can use a bitextual database to check authenticity of language, provided that it tells you which text is the source and which the translation (not all do, though often you can make a good guess). If the translator has rendered SL expression X by TL expression Y, can Y be found in the database in texts on the same topic that were originally written in the translator's target language?

Retrieval of wordings from databases gives rise to the following question for revisers: What shall I do when the translator has invented a new wording, but an old wording is available? Let's first consider the case where the text retrieved from a database is clearly a TL original rather than a translation. One might argue that, whatever the merit of the draft translation you are revising, the wording used in the original English document, presumably written by someone who works in the field of the document, is by its nature more 'authentic'. This argument has considerable merit, though objections can be raised. If a quick check in Google yields only a few examples of the wording in question, it could be a minority usage, or simply careless writing; if Google yields only a single example, it could be an idiosyncrasy of that particular writer.

Now let's look at cases where the old wording is in a translation into English, rather than a piece of original writing in English. (We'll assume for the sake of argument that you are able to decide whether a document you have found is a translation into TL or a TL original.) Two cases can be distinguished: (1) the expression of concern is field-specific and the question is whether the translation you are revising contains an expression that is indeed used by TL subject-matter experts in the required meaning; (2) the expression is not field-specific and it is simply a matter of deciding whether a new wording should be used in the current translation when a different wording has been used in previous translations.

Case (2) can be dispensed with fairly easily. If there are no issues of field-related authenticity, and if the translation being revised captures the meaning of the source text and is well written in the target language, and if the passage is not a quotation from a publication or legal decision, it is hard to see why an old translation should be privileged over the new one. You might wonder why the translator failed to draw on the material in the old documents. However, now that the translator has spent time preparing their own translation, rather than using an existing wording, why would you want to use up even more time replacing those new translations with old ones? If you make many such substitutions in a text, one can argue that you are engaging in pointless, time-wasting activity.

Turning now to case (1), amending draft translations on the basis of old translations brings with it the risk of *perpetuating errors*. *There is no particular reason to think that old translations are necessarily good translations*. In other words, the problem may be with the old translator, not the current one. Possibly the old translator was having a bad day and failed to do necessary research, or relied on faulty memory; possibly no one revised the old translation, or only checked passages other than the one currently of interest.

If you find several old translations of a relevant expression, and they all agree on the TL wording, this may be a good reason to substitute that wording for the one in the draft you are revising. Of course, it is also possible that all the old translations were done by the same person, or by a group of translators who work together and copy each others' 'finds'—including their erroneous finds!

More commonly, the old translations will not agree with each other. Some will have wording x and some will have wording y for a given SL expression. Archives of old translations, and institutional Web sites, are not overseen by super-editors who ensure overall consistency. Possibly some of the old translations are good ones, while others are not. Possibly some were done by neophytes in the field in question, and others by translators with considerable experience, but which is which?

If the old translations already include three different TL wordings for some SL expression, and the translation you are revising has a fourth wording, it might be argued that one of the old wordings should be substituted simply to cut down on proliferating synonyms. But then which of the old wordings should be used? Perhaps they are all valid, but then again, perhaps one of them is not. The reviser will need to do more research to determine which of the old translations is valid. It might be faster to verify that the new translation is valid, and if it is, leave it.

9.3 Work on screen or on paper?

In *The Myth of the Paperless Office*, Abigail Sellen and Richard Harper write: ‘People tend to turn to the computer when they need flexible tools for a writing task and turn to paper when they need flexible support for a reading task. Very often, they use both together when doing combined reading and writing tasks’.

If this is true, as I think it is, then it would follow that revisers and editors will work both on screen and on paper. And indeed this is just what happens. According to Dayton (2011), editing work on paper is still a common practice, and indeed best for certain jobs. He points out that flipping through pages is still an easier way to navigate through a document than scrolling on screen. Indeed it might be noted that the metaphor of a scroll is very apt in this regard: it was always much harder to consult a passage in a scroll than a passage in a book of pages.

There has, nonetheless, been a decline in paper editing. Dayton’s surveys of Society for Technical Communication members asked about their primary editing method and found a decline in exclusive paper editing from 54% in 1999 to 27% in 2008, and a decline in those who do both paper and e-editing from 10% in 1999 to 3% in 2008. Use of Word’s Track Changes or Compare (see section 9.4), or the similar features available in Adobe Framemaker, rose from 11% in 1999 to 33% in 2008.

Translators—to judge by self-descriptions given at professional development workshops—are divided on this issue. For self-revision, some work on screen, simply entering corrections as they go; others work on paper and then input any changes when finished. However, when it comes to revising someone else’s translation, some on-screen self-revisers switch to paper because their handwritten changes will be easier for the translator to spot than tracked changes.

Another possibility, if you are self-revising, is to work partly on screen and partly on paper: check a printout of the translation, but if you decide to make a change, enter the change directly on screen rather than first handwriting it on paper. One problem with handwritten changes is that there is an opportunity for introducing error when you are inputting these changes later. Your eye may skip over a change, or you may misread small or sloppy handwriting. Such errors can of course also occur if you are revising someone else's work on paper, and then that person (or a member of the office support staff) inputs your handwritten changes.

A survey of Belgian translation agencies found that two-thirds of respondents revised entirely on screen (they read the source and the translation on screen and they input all changes directly on screen), while fewer than 10% worked entirely on paper (Robert 2008).

What are the factors to consider when deciding whether to revise on screen or on paper?

Speed

On-screen work may be faster because there is no handwriting followed by inputting of changes. However the quality of screen displays is such that reading speed on screen is significantly lower than on the printed page (this has been established through empirical experiments with editors).

Error-spotting and concentration

There is clear empirical evidence that errors in the text are more likely to be missed on screen, once again because the quality of screen displays is still not equal to the quality of print. If you are required to work on screen, it's possible that double-spacing the text will make it easier to spot problems. In addition, you may find that making the background colour of your document yellow instead of white will improve legibility. There is also some reason to believe that a deeper understanding of a text is achieved when it is read on paper because concentration is easier (you won't be distracted by arriving emails or temptations to press buttons leading to unrelated applications!).

Eye strain

Print is easier on the eyes than the flickering screen image. In the case of translation, moving back and forth between two paper documents (source and translation) may be easier on the eyes than moving back and forth between one paper and one screen document.

Geometry

Revisers and self-revisers may work in a word-processing environment (usually Word) or they may work in a Computer-Aided Translation environment such as SDL Trados Studio. The latter is good for comparative work since each source segment is lined up right next to the corresponding translation segment. In a Word environment, comparative work is impractical unless you have a very wide screen, because you will not be able to see full lines of text without horizontal scrolling. Solving this problem by using two screens may clutter your workspace, or be unaffordable. One popular solution is to prop a print version of one text vertically on a paper holder next to the screen containing the text in the other language. However, you will not then be able to line up the corresponding passages of the two texts.

A further 'geometry' consideration is that when revising, you will often be using more than just two documents. Aside from the source text and the translation, you may need to consult earlier versions of the source text (and possibly translations of those earlier versions), subject-matter documentation, dictionaries/term banks, databases of old translations, and so on. Theoretically, you could have all these on one screen, in different windows. In practice, however, flipping back and forth among six or seven windows is very likely to prove a nuisance. The option of splitting the screen among several documents will reduce the space devoted to each of them so much that you will be wasting a great deal of time scrolling. If you do need to consult multiple items at once, you will probably find it easier to work with a combination of screen and paper documents arrayed in front of you. Your eye can move back and forth faster than you can switch windows, and it can take in more of each paper document at once than you can display on a small section of screen.

If you are frequently consulting a reference document as you revise, it will often be easier to flip manually through a printout than to scroll through the on-screen version. The exception is when you are looking for a specific word, or a specific numbered section. Then it will be faster to use the Find option with an on-screen document.

Economics and environment

Penny-counters will of course favour maximizing work on screen, to save money on purchases of paper and ink for the printer. Environmentally, the picture is not so clear: working on screen may save trees, but manufacturing a computer requires mining and transport of minerals.

9.4 Editing functions of word processors

Most of the functions useful to editors and revisers can be found under the Review tab of the Word for Windows 2016 interface.

Spellcheck

The Spellcheck function is valuable because it automatically catches typing errors which the eye can easily miss (e.g. institututional). However, it is important to remember that Spellcheck software is only an *aid.* It does not automate the process of correcting misspellings and typos. As a matter of fat, there are many types of error which Spellcheck will not catch at all: 'fat' is a correctly spelled English word, and therefore Spellcheck will not signal the error in the fifth word of this sentence. Also, proper names (people, places, rivers and so on) will often not be in your Spellcheck dictionary, especially if they are source-language names.

Certainly you can add to the Spellcheck dictionary the names of people and places that come up frequently in your work, but even then, you will need to check every single one of the proper names. For example, the draft may contain the proper name Macdonald, and Spellcheck will pass it by, but it may be that this particular individual spells her name McDonald.

You may also need to modify your Spellcheck dictionary to ensure that it signals spellings that fail to conform to the style sheet you are using, or else fail to conform to local spelling standards in your country (the country-specific spelling checkers provided with Word are not always accurate).

To set preferences for Spellcheck, click Options under the File tab and choose Proofing.

Find & Replace

This is probably the single most useful revision/editing function, but you have to be very careful when you enter the Find string. If you are not careful, the computer will make a search that is either too broad or too narrow. You will then have a revised/edited version in which either too many or too few words have been changed. Because it is so easy to make a mistake while specifying the Find string, it is probably best to avoid using the Replace All option (i.e. the computer automatically replaces all instances of the Find string with the Replace string you have specified). It is usually safer to examine each instance of the Find string, and decide whether you want to replace it.

Let's look at some examples of how problems can arise if you use Replace All:

- A word belongs to more than one part of speech, or has homonyms. If you are changing 'firm' to 'company', you don't want to change 'a firm commitment' to 'a company commitment'; if changing 'bank' to 'shore', you don't want to change 'data bank' to 'data shore'; if changing the plural noun 'acts' to 'facts', you don't want to change 'he acts funny' to 'he facts funny'. Sometimes you can get around this problem by entering long Find and Replace strings: replace 'bank of the lake' by 'shore of the lake'. The problem is that if the original text has 'on the south bank there are trees', this will then not be changed to 'on the south shore there are trees'.
- The Find string occurs as part of other words. If you change 'act' to 'fact', you will end up changing 'fracture' to frfacture' and 'action' to 'faction'. You need to specify the Find string as [space]act[space]. Of course, you will then have to do separate runs to change 'act' to 'fact' before a punctuation mark such as a comma or period; in the case of commas, the Find string will be '[space]act,'.
- One form of the Find word is not included in other forms of that word. For example, since the plural of 'activity' is not 'activitys', if you want to change 'activity' to 'action', you will need to do a separate run to change 'activities' to 'actions'. The same applies to many verbs: you can change 'think/thinks/thinking' to 'know/knows/knowing' in one run, but that won't change 'thought' to 'knew'.

- In translating the source-language phrase X, the translator has used the target-language word Y, but you decide that Z should be used instead. So you replace all Y by Z. Disaster! You failed to notice that not every instance of Y was being used to translate X. The translator had also used Y when rendering other source-language phrases.

Be sure to determine how your word processor handles capitals during Find & Replace. In most cases, you will want the Replace word to have the same capitalization as the Find word (e.g. capital letter at the start of a sentence; all caps in titles, etc.). Experiment to make sure this happens. If on the other hand you want to change from upper to lower case or vice versa, then you will need to specify the appropriate case for the Find string, the Replace string or both. Again, experiment to make sure that you do not end up lower-casing the first word of a sentence.

Finally, Find & Replace provides a handy way of removing any instances of double spaces between words that may have crept into the text when the translator/writer Cut & Pasted or during your own revising/editing operations. Simply specify double space as the Find string and single space as the Replace string. (This assumes you also want to eliminate any double spaces between sentences.)

The Find & Replace area in Word 2016 is located at the far right under the Home tab.

Grammar and style checking

The grammar checking utility contained in Word is by and large not very useful for finding errors in English syntax. For example, all too often it signals perfectly correct subject-verb number agreement as an error. And all too often it fails by omission, passing over a real error in number agreement. It is also quite useless at detecting mistakes that arise from accidental deletion of words. As a test, I randomly deleted words from the first two sentences of this present paragraph:

> The grammar checking utility contained Word is and large not very useful for finding errors English syntax. For example, all too often signals perfectly correct subject-verb number agreement an error.

When I passed this through the grammar checker in Word 2016 for Windows, it found no problems whatsoever!

Grammar checkers often double as style checkers. Unfortunately, the concept of readable style they embody is an oversimplified one. They tend to stop at every instance of the passive or every sentence with more than a certain number of words—useful if you are editing work in a genre that calls for short sentences and no passives (for example, instructions), but otherwise a nuisance. Most genuine style problems will not be highlighted.

In Word 2016, you can turn off features you do not want signalled by scrolling to the bottom of the Options – Proofing box under the File tab. Among the grammar features you can choose are capitalization, misused words, punctuation and subject-verb agreement; among the style features are cliches, wordiness, use of first person, sentence structure and 'sentence begins with And, But, Hopefully'!

In this same box, you can ask for what are called 'readability statistics' to be displayed once the spelling, grammar and style checks are complete. According to these statistics, the chapter you are now reading has an average of 3.3 sentences per paragraph, 22.9 words per sentence and 4.7 characters per word, and 8% of the sentences are passives. These figures are only useful if the texts you are editing are for children or for immigrants learning the language, or they need to be understood by people who may not have completed secondary school. For other readers, long words and passives are not difficult, and it is sentence structure rather than sentence length that will pose a readability problem. The statistics also provide something called the Flesch Reading Ease score (55.2 for this chapter) and the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (10.9). The latter means that the text will be hard to read for anyone who has not completed the eleventh grade in the U.S. school system (usually reached around age 16). The Reading Ease score of 55 supposedly means that the text will be somewhat difficult to read (the idea is to aim for a score between 60 and 70). However the formula for calculating the score is based on sentence length and word length (in terms of syllables), which are not helpful indicators for the readership of most texts which editors work on. A problem with this whole approach to readability is that you could score very high by editing a text into a monotonous succession of short sentences containing one- and two-syllable words, but such writing is unlikely to hold your readers' attention if they are much over eight years old. Also, note that an acronym like FRE (Flesch Reading Ease) is very short, and therefore highly desirable in Flesch terms, but a text full of acronyms will certainly be difficult to read!

There are several stand-alone or add-on style checkers on the market. The one I tried signalled all sorts of non-problems, and at the same time was no good at finding the kinds of style problems that arise in translations, such as wrong focus, poor inter-sentence connections and wording unsuited to the target-language genre. Another style checker's website claims it can eliminate bureaucratic wordiness ('you must *make full declaration* of all sources of income within *the period of* the last tax year' changed to 'you must fully declare all sources of income within the last tax year').

Displaying changes

As an editor or reviser, you may need to be able to show the author or translator the changes you are proposing. To enable viewing of both the original and revised wording, click Track Changes under the Review tab and choose All Markup in the Display for Review menu just to the right of Track Changes. When your revised or edited text is received, the translator or author will be able to Accept or Reject each change using the appropriate button.

You can decide to hide the changes you make as you work by choosing No Markup in the Display for Review menu. This is handy if you are making many changes, which can be distracting if you then try to read a passage that has already seen several changes. In addition, you may find it tricky to insert the cursor at the right spot if you are inserting or deleting material near visible tracked changes. On the other hand, if you leave the changes visible, you will be more aware of how many changes you are making, and this may help you avoid unnecessary changes.

You can choose what the deletions and additions will look like by clicking the small arrow at the bottom right of the Track Changes area. This will open Track Changes Options. Click Advanced Options. You can also choose whether to display revisions inline or in balloons by choosing Balloons in the Show Markup menu to the right of Track Changes. The balloons appear in the right margin or pop up when the cursor is positioned at the relevant wording.

One disadvantage of Track Changes is that, despite the colour used to highlight changes, the contrast between the original and the revised/edited text is never visually as striking as it is on paper. This is because the changes appear in the same typeface and on the same line as the original wording, whereas on paper, your handwriting appears above or below the original printed wording. Another problem is that if you are training someone, and you want to distinguish necessary changes from suggestions, you will need to keep changing the highlighting colour—a very awkward procedure. It's much easier to put down your red pen and pick up a black one. On the other hand, if your procedure calls for emailing the revised/edited text to the translator/author, you will have to use Track Changes.

Inserting comments

You can write a comment to the translator or author using the Comment feature under the Review tab. You may want to make suggestions using the Comment feature, reserving Track Changes for corrections and improvements you deem necessary. The comment will be displayed in a balloon when the cursor moves over the word where the comment was inserted. You can also display comments at the side of the page, by choosing Comments in Show Markup. Make sure the comments are deleted before the text is delivered to the client.

Many editors and revisers find the Track Changes and Comment method of annotating texts highly unsatisfactory, and for that reason prefer to use paper. It is possible that e-editing will not replace paper editing until it becomes feasible (technically and financially) to handwrite changes and comments with a light pen on a large graphics tablet.

Comparing documents

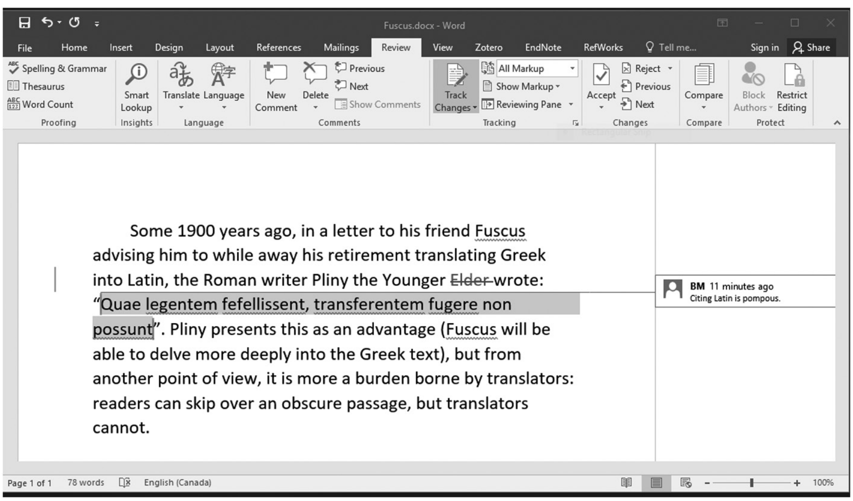
Even if Track Changes has not been used, you can still compare revised and unrevised versions by using Word's Compare function under the Review tab. The unrevised version will have to be available under a different filename from the revised version.

When you choose Compare, you will be asked which two files you want to compare. You will then see a display in which the differences between the two documents are shown in colour (though depending on the nature of the changes you have made, sometimes you will find that the display does not accurately reflect the changes). The Accept and Reject buttons can be used with this display.

The Compare feature can also be handy for self-development or for training others. You can use it to see how many and what kinds of changes you are making, or a trainee is making. You can also see the differences between a text that has been partially self-revised (say for accuracy but not style) and a text that has been fully self-revised. Of course, you can also avoid resort to Compare by saving a private copy of a revised text with all tracked changes and comments before returning it to the translator.

Inspection before delivery

Before a text is delivered to the client, it's important that someone check to see that all tracked changes have been removed (unless the client wants to see edits), as well as all comments (unless some of these are intended for the client). Simply hiding them with No Markup will not eliminate them; they will appear when the client opens the text. Each tracked change needs to have been either Accepted or Rejected and each comment needs to have been deleted. To be double sure that this has been done, choose File—Info—Check for Issues—Inspect Document. When the Document Inspector appears, choose Comments, Revisions, Versions, and Annotations and click Inspect. If the Inspector finds unwanted comments and tracked changes, click Remove All. The Inspector is also available in PowerPoint and Excel.



An early version of a passage from Chapter 11 of this book, showing an amended word, an inserted Comment, and the choices available under the Review tab.

9.5 What kind of screen environment?

Editors and revisers should be able to see each sentence in context just like the final readers, who will be seeing formatted paragraphs and pages. In a Word environment, you can see a considerable amount of formatted text surrounding the sentence you are considering. However in CAT environments, you may be able to see nearby sentences only in boxes containing one sentence. To see formatted paragraph sequences, you have to switch to a new (and possibly read-only) window.

9.6 Tools specific to revision

Word functions such as Track Changes, Comment, Find, Spellcheck, Compare and Document Inspector are certainly useful to revisers, but no computer tools are available to assist with the central task of spotting mistranslations, and existing stand-alone language checkers for English (discussed in section 9.4) are not good at flagging the kinds of style problem commonly found in translations.

No amount of automated searching in a database of paired SL/TL texts will tell you whether a source/target correspondence in the translation you are checking is acceptable; the fact that a source-language wording was previously translated in a certain way does not mean that the target-language wording was correct in those past cases, and even if it was, it may not be suitable in the case at hand. Stand-alone language checkers cannot tell you whether a wording is stylistically suited to the genre or audience (e.g. expert or non-expert) of the particular translation that is being prepared, or whether a sentence is properly connected to the previous sentence, or whether the right words are in the focus position in a sentence.

That said, automated translation checking utilities, usually called Quality Assurance (QA) checkers, are available either alone or more commonly as part of CAT tools. However they are extremely limited in their scope. They can spot failures to translate terms in accordance with a pre-approved list of terminological equivalences, as well as passages that appear not to have been completely translated (because the translation is much shorter than the source). They can flag possible ‘false friends’ in language pairs where that is an issue. They also perform limited proofreading tasks such as checking for the presence of both parts of paired punctuation marks (parentheses, quotation marks) and for the correct transcription of numerical expressions. These tools are perhaps useful in that they may catch the kinds of error which a human eye may miss, but users often find that there are too many false positives (perfectly good wordings are flagged as errors) as well as undetected errors (of the type which are supposed to be detected).

Generally speaking, the kinds of error which computers are good at finding are the less important errors. The mere fact that computers are good at something does not make that something important!

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

For detailed information on technology tools for translators, visit linguistech.ca.
For detailed information on Google searches, visit www.googleguide.com/advanced_operators.html
Computer tools: Bowker (2008); Corpas Pastor & Durán-Muñoz (2018)
Paper versus screen: Baron (2015); Dayton (2003, 2004a and b, 2011); Sellen & Harper (2001); Robert (2008)
Use of a corpus, including the Web as corpus: Bowker & Pearson (2002: ch. 11); Olohan (2004: ch. 10)
Translation checking tools: Drugan (2013)

10 The work of a reviser

Revising is that function of professional translators in which they find features of a draft translation that fall short of what is acceptable, as determined by some concept of quality (see Chapter 1.4), and make or recommend any needed corrections and needed improvements. The concept of quality may be derived from various sources, possibly different sources for different jobs: the translation or revision brief, professional standards, employer's standards, the reviser's own concept of what is important in translation.

The job of a reviser is not to achieve the best possible translation. It's to eliminate wordings that fall short of whatever quality standard is relevant. A change may improve a translation in some abstract sense, but if it is not necessary to achieve the quality standard, then it is bad revision.

With some texts, the reviser's job is restricted to correcting: fixing significant omissions, major mistranslations, gross translationese, nonsensical passages, terminology errors, and departures from the rules of the standard language. With other texts, revisers must also improve the translation: make the writing quality better (i.e. engage in stylistic editing; eliminate minor translationese) and make minor adjustments in meaning to better reflect the source text.

'Translationese' means overly literal translation: the wordings 'sound like a translation'; they read as if the translator were trying to teach readers the source language by stating, in the target language, the meaning of individual, source-language words with little regard for context, and imitating source-language syntactic structures if that is possible. Translators sometimes stop attempting to figure out what the source text means, for a variety of reasons (the text is poorly written or complicated; the translator is tired at the end of the day; the deadline is fast approaching); they then start substituting bilingual dictionary equivalents of the source-language words because this is the easiest and fastest way to translate.

In this chapter we'll look at revision as an exercise in reading; revision terminology; reviser competencies; revision and specialization; the revision function in translation services; reliance on self-revision; reducing differences among revisers; crowd-sourced revision; revising translations into the reviser's second language; quality checking by clients; the role of the brief; the problem of balancing the interests of authors, clients and readers; measuring the quality of revision; the trade-off between time and quality, and the quantity of revision that a reviser can be expected to complete in a day's work. We'll also look at how revision differs from certain related activities such as quality assurance and quality assessment.

In Chapters 10 to 13, the term 'revision' will be used to include both self-revision and revision of others, unless the context makes clear that only one of these is intended. Chapter 14 looks more specifically at self-revision, and Chapter 15 at revising others.

10.1 Revision: a reading task

Drafting a translation is half a reading exercise and half a writing exercise, but revision is very different. Sometimes there will be little or no writing involved.

In Chapter 1, I mentioned that there are various concepts of quality: it may be thought of as pleasing the client, creating a fit-for-purpose text, or protecting/promoting the target language. Under this last concept, revision will to a great extent be seen as a writing task—almost a literary exercise in improving the writing quality. Under the other two concepts, however, revision is primarily a reading task, that is, an exercise in spotting passages that may not please the client or may make the text unfit-for-purpose. Spotting problems is not easy. It is a mistake to think that errors will simply jump out at you as you cast your eyes over the draft translation. It is in fact extremely easy to overlook problems, even major ones (more on this in Chapter 13).

There are two keys to successful revision: having suitable procedures and having the right mental attitude, the right answer to the question 'what am I doing?'. Procedures will be discussed in Chapter 13. In order to have the right mental attitude (i.e. you are reading, not writing), don't have your correcting pen poised or your fingers on the keyboard ready to make a change. Your aim is not to make changes; it's to find problems, which is very different. Also, as a reader you must try to read the text as future users of the translation will read it. In particular, be on the lookout for possible *mis*readings by those users.

> *Terminology note.* Unfortunately the English word 'revise', as used outside the world of translation, is not helpful when it comes to conceiving revision as a reading exercise. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as 'to look or read carefully over (written or printed matter), *with a view to improvement or correction; to improve or alter (text)* as a result of examination or re-examination'. Thus in everyday English, revising a text means making changes in it; it's a writing exercise rather than primarily a reading exercise.

10.2 Revision terminology

There is no generally recognized English terminology for revision activities. Terms such as *revise, re-read, check, edit, proofread, review* and *quality-control* are each used in a variety of meanings (see Appendix 5). Within a translation service, people will know what is meant by a given term, but when addressing outsiders, it will always be necessary to specify what is meant.

Those who distinguish *checking* (your own translation) from *revising* (other people's work) and from *post-editing* (machine translation output) are emphasizing the differences among these activities, by using three unrelated words. In my view, this is a bad idea. The similarities are more important than the differences, and ideally this would be reflected in the terminology: *self-revision*, *other-revision* and *MT-revision*. The term *self-revision* is further discussed in Chapter 14.3. The term *MT-revision* is never used; *post-editing* originated among computational linguists who specialized in machine translation to distinguish human editing of machine output from human editing of machine input ('pre-editing').

In this book, the terms 'revision', 'quality control', 'checking' and 're-reading' are all used, but they are virtually synonymous. To 'check' a translation is to revise or quality-control or re-read it, unless the context indicates that 'check' or 'quality-control' specifically refers just to the process of finding the errors and does not include making corrections. 'Re-read' is mostly used here in the phrases 'comparative re-reading' and 'unilingual re-reading', where the emphasis is on the distinction between revision that involves comparing every sentence of the translation to the corresponding bit of the source text and revision in which the source text is consulted only when necessary to resolve a problem found in the translation. Finally, while 'quality control' and 'revision' are synonyms, a distinction is made between 'quality controllers' and 'revisers'. The latter category consists entirely of qualified translators; the former category is broader, including anyone who performs a checking and correcting function. Thus non-translators (such as proofreaders or subject-matter experts) who do only those forms of checking and correcting that do not involve comparing the translation to its source, are quality controllers but they are not revisers. Many people use the term 'reviewer' to refer to a subject-matter expert.

Some translation services distinguish 'revision' from 'quality control', with the latter being used for the business-oriented (as opposed to text-oriented) activities which are discussed later in this chapter under the headings 'quality assessment' and 'quality assurance'. Alternatively, 'revision' may be used to refer to a full re-reading of the translation for accuracy and language quality, with each sentence being compared to the corresponding part of the source text; 'quality control' is then used to refer to less-than-full revision. A designated 'quality controller' may subject the draft translation to a partial check: only portions of the text are read, or there is no comparison to the source text unless a passage of the translation sounds odd, or the check is restricted to copyediting and layout matters. In this book, however, full revision (all aspects of the entire translation are checked, with comparison to the source) is simply the highest degree of quality control; lower degrees of quality control are still referred to as 'revision'. Degrees of revision are the subject of Chapter 12.

'Proofreading' is often used in translation services for any kind of linguistic checking, or in a more restricted way to checking for mechanical slips (typing errors, missing words, errors in page layout). Sometimes it is used specifically for the work done by professional proofreaders who work in a translation office but are not themselves translators. Finally, some people use 'proofreading' for the activity here called 'revision', i.e. checking and correcting translations.

The distinction I have made between 'revising' and 'editing' in this book does not always reflect the terminology used in the professional world. Thus many translators use 'editing' to refer to the process of reading a translation without referring to the source text, whereas I call it 'unilingual re-reading'. (The 're-' refers to the fact that the translation has presumably already been read by the translator.) Meanwhile, others restrict the term 'editing' to the work done by professional editors after translations are submitted to publishers. Finally, many translators, especially in the United States, use 'editing' to mean the revision of translations.

Outside the world of translation, the term 'revision' is used in ways that may create confusion when revisers interact with non-translators. Writing teachers often use it to mean self-editing. Professional editors use it to refer to changes made in a text by its author. For example, when I wrote the first edition of this book, I submitted my manuscript to the editor, who returned it to me with suggested changes. The work which I then did in response to those suggestions is commonly called revising. Similarly, the publisher has now decided to bring out what some would call a 'revised edition': a new version of the text in which I have made various additions, subtractions and updatings in response to new developments in the field and in my own thinking about revision.

In large bureaucracies, drafts of documents may be circulated for comments and they may go through many versions before reaching their final form. If you translate for a multilingual bureaucracy, you may be asked to 'translate the revisions'; that is, to update an existing translation in order to make it conform to the latest version of a document in the source language.

In literary translation, situations arise when the term 'revision' (in the sense of correction and improvement of a translation) should be used but isn't. A publisher may bring out a 'new translation' of Proust, but it is not really freshly translated from the French; it is a revision of a previously published translation, which is treated as a draft.

10.3 Reviser competencies

What abilities, knowledge, experience and personal qualities—other than those required of a translator—are required of a reviser?

- First and foremost, the ability to detect problems in translations.
- Experience as a translator.
- Knowledge of revision procedures (see Chapter 13).
- Ability to make decisions quickly.
- Ability to revise to varying degrees (see Chapter 12).
- Ability to justify the need for changes and the related ability to avoid unneeded (unjustifiable) changes.
- Ability to correct through small changes rather than retranslation.

- Ability to appreciate other people's approaches (or stated negatively: the ability to avoid judging other people's translations by their similarity to one's own).
- Ability (as a trainer) to diagnose a translator's weaknesses (and strengths!) and give advice on how to improve.
- Personal quality: Diplomacy to deal with conflict (in some workplaces, revisers act as buffers between translators and other parties such as managers and clients).
- Personal quality: Leadership to organize a group of translators working on a project.
- Personal quality: Cautiousness to avoid making the translation worse and to keep in mind one's own limitations.

As can be seen from this list, the ability to interact with others is more important for revisers of other people's work than for self-revisers. All but the first five of the items on the above list call for such interpersonal ability (making small changes rather than retranslating manifests respect for the translator, though it is also a time-saving skill).

The second item on the list is vital: revisers must possess the various kinds of knowledge and skill that come from experience as a translator, as well as experience in a specific workplace. In the absence of such experience, a reviser will not be able to recognize adequate translations or know when a change is needed.

The sixth item—the ability to avoid unneeded changes—is especially important in the current neoliberal era, where cost-consciousness reigns supreme. Peter Arthern, head of English translation at the former Council of the European Communities, stated that such changes are not so important because while they waste time and annoy revisees, they don't affect quality. Wasting time was apparently not a major concern when he wrote this in the late 1970s. Nowadays, however, a reviser's quality-seeking effort has not only a lower bound (below which the revised translation would be deemed unacceptable) but also an upper bound (above which the reviser's work is not cost-effective).

The final personal quality refers to the reviser's limitations. Especially important here is the fact that the translator may know more about the subject matter of a text than the reviser and will certainly know more about that particular text than the reviser knows when he or she tackles the first paragraph.

10.4 Revision and specialization

With specialized texts, that is, texts written by and for experts, and often concerned with the latest developments in some area of science or technology, revisers will need to decide whether they are qualified to revise the draft translation. If the translator is known to be, or seems to be, highly experienced in the field, the reviser probably does not need to check field-specific concepts and terms. However if that is not the case, then unless the reviser has some independent knowledge of the field, or considerable experience with specialized texts in that field, it is best to find another reviser who does have such experience or, failing that, discuss the translation with a subject-matter expert.

With some assignments, you may be told that a subject-matter editor will check the field-specific content, so that you only need to check other aspects of accuracy. If you have occasion to discuss the text with a subject-matter expert who does not know the source language, be wary. Some of them insist on the interpretation which fits in with their own ideas on the topic; they may reject unorthodox concepts which are in fact present in the source text, or notions with which they are not familiar even though these may be commonplace among experts in the country where the source language is spoken.

As a reviser in a translation department or agency, you may find yourself wishing that the manager had declined to accept the job. By the time it reaches you for revision, it's too late; the job has been accepted and time has been spent preparing the draft. If you do not feel qualified, and you cannot find another reviser, or a subject-matter expert, you must signal to the client that the translation may well contain conceptual errors and needs to be seen by a subject-matter specialist for content and terminology before it is published.

10.5 The revision function in translation services

Sometimes, a few people at a translation agency, or in the translation department of a government, corporation or publisher, are designated as revisers. They occupy official 'reviser' positions and devote all or much of their time to revising the work of translators. Such designated revisers may also have training, administrative and management responsibilities; they may be charged with training new translators, distributing texts to the other translators, and supervising junior translators (writing their annual appraisals, recommending them for promotion and so on). It may be a bad idea for people to spend all their time revising year after year, because it is important to have a lively sense of the context in which revised translators are working, especially after new tools or policies are introduced.

In other organizations, work is distributed by the manager of the service, a project manager or a member of the administrative staff rather than by a senior translator. Some of the senior translators may be assigned to training juniors or quality-controlling the work of other staff translators. Alternatively, experienced translators may simply revise each other 'on request' (each translator decides whether to have a given text revised by a colleague).

Revisers may also check the quality of work done by contractors, and make any needed changes. Indeed, in some organizations today, all or almost all work is contracted, so that members of the translation staff spend their time checking the quality of contracted work and co-ordinating the members of teams of contract translators working on large projects.

In some organizations, the manager of the translation service is a qualified translator (rather than a professional administrator) and may act as a second reviser, taking a more or less detailed look at some or all translations. The manager may make changes and then take these back to the reviser or translator for action, or simply give them directly to a member of the clerical support staff for inputting.

10.6 Reliance on self-revision

A common issue today is the extent to which a translation service will rely on self-revision as opposed to revision by a second translator.

Freelances working directly for clients (not on contract for an agency) obviously need to pay special attention to self-revision since typically no other translator will see the text before delivery to the client. However with the advent of discussion and job-posting websites for translators, many freelances have developed contacts with each other, which may include revising each other's work using email.

For staff translators, things have been moving in the opposite direction. Some translating organizations have sought to save money by reducing the amount of time that highly paid senior translators spend revising the work of juniors. One way of doing this is to emphasize self-revision. Experienced translators are given instruction in revision techniques and then asked to be more methodical about checking and correcting their own work. The result may then be subjected to some degree of quality control (e.g. someone checks a randomly selected passage; see Chapter 12), or it may simply go out to the client with no further examination. Self-revision is then no longer a check made before handing the text to a reviser; rather the 'self-revising translator' has final responsibility for the quality of the work. Indeed, in some translation services, such a translator is not allowed to ask peers to take a look at their drafts.

Replacing other-revision with self-revision plus some degree of quality control can make translators more self-reliant; they will then take greater pride in their work, and most will produce better translations and achieve greater job satisfaction. An interesting side effect is that, having gained more control over their work, staff translators become more like freelances.

A disadvantage of reliance on self-revision is over-confidence in one's ability to avoid error. This is especially a problem with people who are highly experienced. A further disadvantage is that fewer errors will be detected: translators have a certain blindness to their own translations. They may be especially proud of certain passages and not see an error which someone else will spot immediately. This second translator can act as the first 'reader' of the text—a role the original translator is not really in a position to play.

Ideally, self-revisers allow time to pass between completion of the draft and self-revision, so that the wording of the translation seems somewhat unfamiliar. Otherwise, the self-reviser's mind may assign to a passage a meaning misremembered from the drafting phase rather than the meaning of the wording which is actually there on the page. Unfortunately, surveys of translators suggest that in order to meet deadlines, self-revision must often begin immediately after drafting. Still, the translation can even then be made to seem unfamiliar if the font type, font size, margins or line spacing are changed on screen, or the draft translation is printed out and read on paper, or the draft is read aloud. If you want to focus on linguistic form, you can try reading the text backward, beginning at the last sentence; that way, you won't be distracted by meaning.

Despite the problems of self-revision, it does not follow that other-revision is always ideal. The need for other-revision is discussed in Chapter 12.1. The disadvantages of other-revision are discussed in Chapter 15.1.

10.7 Reducing differences among revisers

A common problem in larger translation services is that each reviser has his or her own approach to revision. The United Nations translation service once conducted a study which found much greater than expected differences among revisers. This problem arises in part because translator training usually does not include revision training. As a result, one reviser will make many stylistic changes while another will focus on copyediting changes; one reviser will make changes in response to small nuances of meaning while another will change only major mistranslations.

One solution is a group revision session, in which participants do two kinds of exercise. First, a translation with hand-written changes is distributed, and participants criticize the revisions: were they necessary? were any needed changes not noticed? Second, an unrevised translation is distributed and each participant takes a turn announcing which wordings need to be changed. After discussion, a senior person in the organization may make a pronouncement: this or that change was or was not necessary.

It may also be useful to produce a revision manual. This will contain, amongst other things, a text in the source language along with a translation shown three times: once appropriately revised, once over-revised (with explanations of why certain changes were unnecessary) and once under-revised (with explanations of why some wordings should have been changed).

10.8 Crowd-sourced revision

Just as Wikipedia allows anyone to edit its articles, so does it allow anyone to revise translations of articles (they call it 'proofreading' or 'cleanup').

In English Wikipedia there is a page entitled 'Wikipedia articles needing cleanup after translation'. These are translations which a Wikipedia administrator has decided need improvement. The page contains links to articles that have been translated from over 60 source languages into English. Similar pages are available in the wikipedias of other target languages.

In addition, volunteers who have translated Wikipedia articles can request revision of their translations. You can volunteer to be a reviser by visiting the page entitled 'Category: Available proofreaders in Wikipedia'. Click the link for your source language to find instructions for volunteering. Again, similar pages can be found in the wikipedias of other target languages.

Volunteer revisers may or may not restrict themselves to correcting mistranslations or language errors. Some of them also change the content.

10.9 Revising translations into the reviser's second language

It is often said that revisers should be native speakers of the target language, but this may in fact not be necessary. It depends on which features of the translation are important. If revision is mainly for accuracy and completeness, it does not matter which language is the reviser's native language. Indeed, it may be easier for a native speaker of the source language to spot a mistranslation! However, if writing quality is important, and the translation is to be published, then the reviser should be a native or near-native *writer* (not just speaker) of the target language.

A problem can arise when non-native revisers (or editors) do not live in a country where the target language is spoken; they may impose old-fashioned usages because they are not in daily touch with current usage. Even native writers of the target language can be susceptible to this if they have lived abroad for many years.

10.10 Quality-checking by clients

Often clients treat translation as a professional service and therefore rely on the translation provider (and indirectly, a professional certifying body if any) to ensure quality. However clients may also subject the translations they receive to some kind of quality check, using their own criteria. In addition, clients may put the completed translation through an editing process. For example, if the client will be publishing the translation of a scientific work, there will ideally be a scientific editor to check the content and terminology. It is a good idea to determine whether a subject-matter editor will be looking at the text you are revising.

One form of quality checking sometimes used by clients is back-translation: the client has someone translate your revised translation back into the source language. Back-translation may have its place in the process of testing questionnaires that are to be answered in several languages, but otherwise it is a dubious method, even for checking accuracy, let alone other aspects of translation. For one thing, the back-translator may well make a mistake, and then any discrepancy between the original source text and the back-translation will be the back-translator's fault. For another thing, the first translation may have been so literal that the back-translator will arrive at a wording almost identical to the original source text; the client may then think the translation must be very good, when in fact it is almost unreadable because it is so literal.

If you hear from a subject-matter expert before you complete your revision work, and there is a conflict between the wording they want to see and the wording you believe reflects the source text, then you must keep to the wording you believe to be correct, especially if you are certifying a translation under your country's legislation. The Translator's Charter approved at the Dubrovnik Congress of the International Federation of Translators in 1963 makes the following statement that is relevant to these cases:

> The translator shall refuse to give to a text an interpretation of which he/she does not approve.

Since the final translation belongs to the client, they are of course free to change what you have written (unless you are being identified as the translator, or you have signed a certification of the wording you submitted). However you should never yourself make a change to reflect a view (about intended meaning, terminology, language usage or any other matter) with which you do not agree after careful consideration of other views. The function of a professional in society is to give his or her informed opinion, not repeat someone else's.

10.11 The brief

The work of both translator and reviser is ideally governed by a brief from the client. The brief is a set of specifications including such matters as who will be reading the translation, whether it is a publication, and preferred terminology. It may include instructions about revision (e.g. a full comparative revision is expected), though this is rare. Even if there are no revision instructions, you still need to be familiar with the instructions that were given to the translator.

The various parts of the brief may be obtained in three ways:

- They are explicit: the client states them orally or in writing when the request for translation is made.
- They are unstated but already known from previous similar jobs from the same client.
- They are elicited by the translation service, which takes the initiative of inquiring about this or that aspect of the brief.

The brief needs to be known in order to decide on the appropriate translation strategy. Many clients simply 'want a translation'. The idea that there may be several ways of carrying out this task does not occur to them. Or they may think that the nature of the source text implies the brief. As a result, they fail to specify who will be using the translation and why.

Suppose for example that an immigration official wants a translation of a prospective immigrant's medical records. To him, the purpose of the translation is obvious: it will be used by doctors to determine whether the person will be a burden on the country's health care system. However the translator and reviser may or may not find this obvious. It depends on how much information accompanies the text. It may not even be clear who is asking for the translation. If the request for translation comes with a form mentioning that the client is a 'hearings board', or if the form mentions an upcoming hearing date, it can probably be assumed that the translation will be used to make a decision. But questions still remain: Will someone with medical training read the translation and then summarize it for the board? Or will the translation go directly to the board members for their use before or even during the hearing, and if so, does the board include people with medical training?

It is hard to revise successfully or efficiently unless you have familiarized yourself with the brief. For example, as we'll see in Chapter 12, some jobs call for much more thorough and time-consuming revision work than others. That said, cases will certainly arise where you simply cannot find anyone able to tell you who will be reading the translation and for what purpose. You will then have to make an educated guess, perhaps in consultation with other more experienced revisers.

As a reviser, you may or may not be the one whose job it is to actually determine the brief, in case it is not explicit. When you are distributing work to a trainee, or to a team of translators who are working together on a job, determination of the brief may be up to you. In other cases, it may be up to the translator, the project manager or the manager of the translation service. You may then find that you disagree with the translation strategy that has been adopted, but by the time the text reaches you, it may be too late to do anything about it, since the revision stage is not a good time to change strategy. Turning formal writing into informal writing, or a free translation into a close one, would be a very time consuming and wasteful exercise.

Some clients actually specify a translation strategy in the brief but this is really a matter for the translator to decide. Analogy from dentistry: it's up to the patient to decide whether she wants root canal work on a decaying tooth or a simple extraction, but once that decision is made, she does not tell the dentist how to perform the work. Given the users and use, the client's specified strategy may not be appropriate. For example, it may be better to use a less formal style than the source, rather than preserve the same style; or to summarize extremely verbose writing rather than write a verbose translation. Other specific instructions may also have to be politely ignored, or discussed with the client with a view to altering them. It may be best not to use the terminology requested by the client, if you believe it is liable to confuse the readers. And obeying the client's instruction to exactly follow the paragraphing of the source text may be disorienting if paragraphing habits in the target language differ. The client is not always right.

Consider this scenario. A written request is received for a 'verbatim translation' of a sworn statement related to an immigration matter. But how can a translation be verbatim, that is, 'in the same words'? Perhaps the intent was 'word-for-word'. But this would be in conflict with professional standards: translators render messages, not out-of-context words. A call to the client is unhelpful; the only person available is a clerical go-between who cannot clarify matters (this is a common situation). The text is to be handled by a new translator or student trainee, so the supervising reviser provides advice on strategy. One solution might be to prepare a translation which is as close as possible to the lexical-grammatical structure of the source text while still being readable. The word 'verbatim' is then being interpreted as reflecting a view of translation very common among the general public—that a translation is a kind of transparent transcript of the source text, perhaps even slightly unidiomatic precisely to point to its status as a translation.

Postscript to the scenario: the originator of the translation request is finally reached. It turns out that 'verbatim' means a complete as opposed to a summary translation. The client has had bad experiences with court interpretation in immigration matters: the interpreter has summarized, and lawyers have argued that this invalidates the proceedings. Of course, in written translation, completeness is the norm; summaries are usually provided only on special request.

10.12 Balancing the interests of authors, clients, readers and translators

The final text a reviser produces may be seen by several people: the translator, the author of the source text, a proofreader, a subject-matter expert, an editor, the client, the employer, the project leader and of course the readers. Depending on their expectations and needs, their reactions may differ considerably. One task of the reviser is to reconcile interests if possible, or if it is not, then decide whose interests to favour.

Suppose you are revising a draft translation that is not close to the source (the translator has engaged in considerable stylistic and structural editing while translating, and perhaps even done some adapting). You realize that the translation will be communicatively successful, but you also know that the source author will see the translation and will probably not be pleased. As long as the source author is not also the paying client, then his or her pleasure is a minor consideration. But if the author is the client, then you have a real conflict. If you cannot persuade the author that a close translation is undesirable, then you may have to either decline to do any more work on the job (and risk non-payment) or revise the translation back to a close one. Ideally, such conflicts are cleared up before translation starts; perhaps the job is not accepted unless the author-client agrees to editing and adaptation.

Here's a scenario where the draft translation seems to be successful from the reader's point of view but not a success from the client's. A request has been received from the head of a company's building maintenance department to translate a new edition of a repair manual. You observe that the translator has not used the new terminology which has just been decreed by a terminology-standardization body. The translator tells you that the technicians who will be the sole readers are not familiar with the new terms, so she has used the old, no longer approved terms with which they are familiar. However, the organization for which both you and the head of the maintenance department work has decided to introduce the new terminology, and the translators' association to which you belong supports the goal of having translators help disseminate new official terminologies. So in order to meet the standards of the client and your professional association, you must use terms which the readers will not understand. What will you do? The solution in this particular case might be to prepare a temporary pull-out glossary, to be removed a year later once the new terms have been learned; the glossary would list the familiar terms in alphabetical order, with the new standard terms in a column opposite. That way the needs of all parties can be met.

Translators and revisers have an interest in creating respect for their profession, and this will place a limit on the degree to which they can comply with instructions from clients, even if it means some clients may go elsewhere for future jobs. Thus as a reviser you could not let pass a draft translation that reproduces inadvertent nonsense in the source text simply because the client has asked for a very close translation. It happens not infrequently that people end up unintentionally writing the opposite of what they clearly mean. The revised translation must then convey the clearly intended meaning, though a note might be sent to the client signalling the presence in the source text of such problems.

Apart from inadvertent nonsense, there is the question of how very poorly written source texts are to be handled. What should the reviser do if the translator has tried to reproduce the poor quality of writing in a job application, arguing that he wanted to help the reader by making clear the poor quality of the writing in the source text. But this is not a proper function of translation: if a multilingual organization is hiring, and one criterion for the position to be filled is writing ability in language x, all the members of the panel judging the application must be able to read language x. If any of them are reading a translation of the applicant's writing, they will be forming an opinion about the writing ability of the translator rather than that of the applicant. Also, it is next to impossible to create an equivalent that reflects the degree and nature of the poor writing. Translators who attempt this generally end up merely producing translationese, but a unilingual target-language speaker who is a poor writer would not produce translationese.

A distinction must be made between poor writing or careless mistakes in the source text on the one hand and factual, conceptual or logical errors on the other. If the latter are discovered or suspected, neither the translator nor the reviser should simply correct them, with the idea that they are helping to smooth the passage of the source author's 'true' message into the target language. If the source author is also the client, then there is no problem; one can simply ask the author about changing the wording of the problematic passage. But if the client is not the source author, then the reviser's duty is to the client, not the author: if the translator has made a factual 'correction', then it must be undone, for the client (and the reader of the translation) has the right to see the factual, conceptual and logical errors that were made; these are part of the message. In official multilingual contexts in particular, people who are reading a document in translation have as much right to see factual and conceptual errors as people who are reading the document in the original language. It may be a good idea to send a note to the client, so that factual errors in the translation are not attributed to the translator.

You can be sure that situations will arise when you cannot satisfy everyone. You will have to decide whose requirements take priority; you may even have to decide whether your economic interests (as an employee or freelance) will always take precedence over other considerations. Will you always give preference to the interests and wishes of whoever is paying you? Or will you sometimes give preference to the interests of other parties? Or seek a balance where possible, with something for everyone as in the case of the repair manual discussed above?

10.13 Evaluation of revisers

The Roman poet Juvenal asked *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Who will guard the guardians? The implication is that no one will be overseeing the work of people in positions of power. A related question arises with revisers: how will these evaluators be evaluated? Will they be evaluated by translation department or agency managers not just for their output (how many words revised, how many deadlines missed) but for the way they revise translations (how they apply their revision skills)?

A translation agency or service may want to know how much value it is deriving from the time translators are spending on other-revision. For every hour of revision effort, how many of the necessary changes are being made? How many errors are being introduced? How many errors are being overlooked? How many inadequate corrections are being made? How many unnecessary changes are being made?

To answer these questions, a translation service may find it useful to conduct audits. To conduct a simple audit, collect a small sample of revised translations delivered to clients over the past few months and count the number of errors that were not caught in a chunk of convenient size, perhaps 500 words for each text. Or count only serious errors, though this will take more time because you will have to keep stopping to consider whether an error is serious (see Appendix 2 on major, minor and critical errors).

To find out the extent to which the quality of the translation is due to the reviser rather than the translator, you will need to arrange to have draft translations saved so that they can be compared to revised versions. You can focus either on 'good' revision work or 'bad' work, or consider both. For good work, calculate the percentage of the errors in a 500-word chunk of the draft translation that were properly corrected during revision. If you feel more ambitious, you can distinguish types of error. For example, you could calculate the percentage of properly corrected mistranslations in a 500-word chunk and separately calculate the percentage of properly corrected linguistic errors in that chunk. You may find yourself having to stop to think about whether an error is a mistranslation or a language problem; it's not always obvious.

Rather than consider the value that was added, you might want to look at the value that was not added, or was actually subtracted. Count the number of errors introduced by the reviser in a chunk of given length (good translations made bad, or bad ones made worse) plus the number of errors not noticed. A more complete audit would consider not just errors introduced or not noticed, but also unnecessary changes and inadequately corrected errors.

Individual revisers can also audit their own work for self-development purposes. If you are new to revising other people's translations, and there is no senior reviser who can look over your work, or no one with the time to do so, make a copy of a draft translation and then, a few months later, revise it again. Then compare the two revisions. The changes should be at more or less the same locations in both revisions, though of course the new wordings you selected on the two occasions may well differ. If the changes are at very different locations, then your work is clearly unsystematic.

Appendix 3 suggests a method for assigning a numerical score to students' revision work. The method can also be applied to professionals.

10.14 Time and quality

A central issue for all translators, and in particular for revisers, is the trade-off between time and quality. From an economic point of view, time is money, and the faster a translation is completed, the better. The problem is most easily seen in situations where clients are billed (as opposed to situations where they receive translation as an apparently free service from the company's or ministry's translation department). Billing may be in textual units (the number of words or pages) or in time units (the number of hours spent on a given job). If a job takes 15 hours, someone will be worse off economically than if it takes only 12. If the client is being billed in hours, the bill will be 25% higher, and the client may look elsewhere next time. If the bill is so much per word or per page, the freelance translator (or the staff translator's employer) will have less total income over a given period of time. Suppose translator and reviser together take 15 hours to complete a 3000-word job. They are then working at 200 words an hour, whereas if they take 12 hours, they are working at 250 words an hour. If the client is paying 15 cents a word, the first pair are bringing in $30.00 an hour, the second $37.50.

But is the text completed in 12 hours as good as the text completed in 15 hours? Does it serve its purpose adequately? Are there more undiscovered errors in it, possibly serious ones? There is no getting around the fact that *quality takes time.* Achieving accuracy in particular is time-consuming for both the first translator and the revising translator. On the other hand, it does seem to be false that the longer you spend on a translation, the better it will become; there is a point beyond which no further significant improvement is being made, and time is simply being wasted, not to mention money!

Time-saving should primarily be a concern of the reviser rather than the translator. That is why in this book I suggest a variety of ways to reduce the time spent on a revision job. A full revision, covering all the features to be discussed in Chapter 11, is very time-consuming. Sometimes, as discussed in Chapter 12, less than full revision is perfectly acceptable. Also, time can be saved if revisers learn to avoid unnecessary changes. Finally, translators may be able to produce higher quality drafts more quickly, and leave more time for self-revision, if they have access to (and training in!) the latest technological aids, or if they can use the services of documentalists to track down quotations, titles and the like. However there are limits to these efficiencies. For example, when a new technology is introduced, the translation process may speed up: the research process was certainly speeded up by the advent of Internet search engines in the final decade of the 20th century. However, after a while a limit is reached in what the new technology can achieve. Meanwhile, expectations about speed will now be higher. As a result, there will continue to be a conflict between ethical demands for quality and economic demands for ever more speed.

There is a temptation under these circumstances to define quality in terms of client complaints. A translation is of adequate quality if the client does not complain about it. This is a very weak argument, indeed an unethical one that evades the professional responsibilities of revisers. Most obviously, few clients have independent bilingual checkers. As a result they may well not notice if, say, the forty-fifth paragraph of the text is missing (the transition from paragraph 44 to 46 of the source text may make sense). They may be in no position to recognize a major mistranslation (the translation as it stands may make sense, but not the sense the source-text writer intended). And if the text contains odd uses of target-language vocabulary, they may think that all translations are like that.

In the struggle between time (that is, money) and quality, revisers face a dilemma: as employees or contractors, they must consider their employer's financial concerns, but as professionals (perhaps certified under legislation or by a professional association), they must give priority to quality. Clearly, there is no easy answer.

10.15 Quantity of revision

How much revision of someone else's translations should an experienced reviser be expected to complete per hour or day? This is a difficult question to answer: someone who spends much of the day revising translations in a single field, with well-written source texts, and very good translators, will get a lot more done per hour than someone who spends much less time revising and often works with less-than-excellent translators, poorly written source texts, and materials in a variety of fields, some of them unfamiliar. Still, a useful answer can I think be given in terms of a multiple of translation time. With most European languages (those that do not have very long compounds that are written as single words), a translator with at least 5 years of full-time experience, working with a mix of familiar and unfamiliar, poorly written and well-written texts, should be able to complete (i.e. draft, research and self-revise) 1600-2000 words of source text in an 8-hour day, or between 200 and 250 words an hour (this is an average taken over a lengthy period such as a year). It should be possible for an experienced reviser to do comparative re-reading and correction of such a mix of texts at three times the translation speed (600-750 words an hour), and unilingual re-reading and correction at five times the translation speed (1000-1250 words an hour), assuming a mix of abilities among the translators revised. Comparative re-reading does not take twice as long as unilingual, even though there is about twice as much text to read. Using the above figures, a comparative re-reading of 1000 words would take somewhere between 1 hr 20 and 1 hr 40 minutes, or a third to two-thirds more time than unilingual re-reading at 1000 words an hour.

10.16 Quality assessment

In addition to performing quality-control work, your duties as a reviser may include the very different task of quality assessment. Unlike quality control, which always occurs *before* the translation is delivered to the client, quality assessment may take place *after* delivery. Assessment is not part of the translation production process. It consists in identifying (but not correcting) problems in one or more randomly selected passages of a text in order to determine the degree to which it meets professional standards and the standards of the translation provider, with respect to one or more of the parameters discussed in Chapter 11.

Whereas quality control is text-oriented and client/reader-oriented, quality assessment is business-oriented. It is a part of the work of managing a translation provider's current and future operations (payments to contractors and monitoring of their performance with a view to future contracts; hiring, firing and promotion of staff translators; determination of training needs; deciding on the balance of in-house versus contracted work, and so on).

Assessments may be done on a single text for hiring purposes, for certification of translators, or as a point of reference if a contractor complains about a rejected translation. Or several texts by one translator may be assessed, for annual performance appraisals or for promotion decisions.

Assessment may also take the form of quality auditing: a sample of texts produced by a translation service is assessed in order to determine how well the service as a whole is doing. The purpose may be to identify areas that are weak so that training can be provided, or it may be to report to the senior body which funds the translation service. The results of quality assessment will also tell an organization whether its quality control system is working. If the assessment reveals less than the desired quality, then something is wrong either with the quality control procedures themselves or with their implementation.

Sometimes assessments must be quantified (for example to compare the results of candidates during a competition). On other occasions, assessments are qualitative; for example, as the supervisor of a new translator, you may have to formulate their strengths and weaknesses in order to help them improve (such diagnostic work is discussed in Chapter 15).

Note that contracted work needs to be both quality controlled (prepared for the client) and quality assessed (in order to determine, for payment purposes, whether the contract conditions have been met). These two tasks may be performed simultaneously by the same person, who assesses the text and also makes any needed amendments.

Some of the problems of quality assessment are discussed in Appendix 2.

10.17 Quality assurance

Quality assurance (also known as quality management) is the full set of procedures applied not just after (as with quality assessment) but also before and during the translation production process, by all members of a translating organization, to ensure that quality objectives important to *clients* are met. Quality control and quality assessment are in part contributions to quality assurance. Quality assurance includes procedures to ensure:

- Quality of service: Are deadlines met? Is interaction between clients and translators or support staff pleasant? Are complaints dealt with in a satisfactory manner? Is each job tracked so that the client can be given a progress report? If the client has lost the electronic version of a translation done a few months ago, can the translation service provide a fresh copy?

- Quality of the physical product: Is the page layout satisfactory? Is it in side-by-side multilingual format if so requested? Has it been delivered in the manner specified—by e-mail, by uploading to a client site? as a Word, PDF or HTML document?
- Quality of the translation: Is the client satisfied with the terminology and with the writing quality?

To improve client satisfaction, it may be useful (albeit time-consuming) to keep records that provide measurements of success: how many late texts? how many complaints from clients per month? how many unsatisfactory jobs from contractors as opposed to in-house translators?

In organizations which have cut back the quality control function (less time is allowed for quality control; fewer texts are given a full comparative re-reading), it is important to assure quality for clients by *preventing errors from occurring in the first place*. This means paying extra attention to the earlier stages in the translation production process: Does the translator have the names of resource persons, access to the best possible documentation, a clear idea of the brief, and suitable computer technology? Errors can also be prevented if the right translator is chosen for the job. This may mean looking at a translator's record with previous texts (in general or for texts in the same field) or looking at their credentials: are they certified or otherwise recognized by some professional association or educational institution?

Since the turn of the century, there has arisen a trend toward standardizing procedures for the contractual relationship between the client and the translation provider (freelance or translation company). The idea is that if certain procedures are followed before and during production of the translation, that will increase the likelihood of good quality. To this end, some translating organizations are applying or seeking certification under a variety of guidelines and standards which have been issued in recent years. It should be noted that the documents in question tend to originate from committees which in the main represent owners/managers of translation services as well as major buyers of translations. Input from organizations of professional translators and from translation schools may have been minimal, though the International Federation of Translators has an ISO Standards Committee and it does have official liaison status on translation-related ISO standards.

The standards and guidelines typically cover such matters as: qualifications of translators and others working on a project; the process of negotiating a translation contract; interactions between the translation provider and the client during and after the project; and steps in the translation process, including of course the various types of checking work.

China's General Administration of Quality Supervision issued a document in 2003 entitled 'Specification for Translation Service' (GB/T 19363, revised 2008). It is based in part on the 1996 German standard for the conduct of translation projects DIN 2345 (which was superseded by EN-15038, described below). Concerning revision, the Chinese standard provides that 'the intended use of the translation as specified by the client will determine how many times the translation is revised' (and, interestingly, that 'the reviser should use a pen of different coloured ink from the translator'!). Another document entitled 'Target text quality requirements for translation services' (GB/T 19682) was issued in 2005.

The ASTM (formerly known as the American Society for Testing Materials) published a 'Standard Guide for Quality Assurance in Translation' (ASTM F2575) in 2006 (2nd edition 2014). It 'identifies factors relevant to the quality of language translation services for each phase of a translation project'. Its definition of quality is contractual: 'the degree to which the characteristics of a translation fulfill the requirements of the agreed-upon specifications'. Regarding checking of translations, the document distinguishes editing, proofreading and quality control. The editor does a comparative reading for accuracy and completeness, as well as terminology, and also does a complete reading for readability. The quality controller reads randomly selected passages, or may read the entire text again. The proofreader checks for errors in formatting, typos and the like; proofreading can be combined with either editing or quality control.

Also in 2006, the CEN (European Committee for Standardisation) issued standard EN-15038, entitled 'Translation Services—Service Requirements'. It defined quality indirectly, in its statement about the task of the reviser: 'the reviser shall examine the translation for its suitability for purpose'. The wording of the standard is unclear as to whether the revision must include a comparative re-reading, and if so, whether it must be a reading of the entire text. The document does however specify that every translation must be revised by a second translator. In 2015, the CEN standard was superseded by ISO 17100 from the International Organization for Standardization. Entitled 'Translation services—Requirements for translation services', it too requires that every translation be seen by a second translator.

In 2008, the Canadian General Standards Board issued CAN/CGSB 131.10, entitled 'Translation Services', which was an adaptation of EN-15038; a new version was published in 2017. It differs from the European standard in some interesting ways, most notably in not requiring revision of every text by a second translator. Instead the standard says, 'The Translation Service Provider shall identify the need for revision, taking into account the abilities of the translator, the requirements of the client and the nature of the assignment'. However the wording is clear that if there is a decision to have a second translator revise the translation, then a comparative re-reading is required, though whether the entire translation must be so read is not specified.

In 2012, the International Organization for Standardization issued ISO/TS 11669 entitled 'Translation Projects—General Guidance'. Like the ASTM guidance document, it defines quality by the degree to which the translation conforms to a project's pre-determined specifications. Specifications are to be agreed with the client for 21 suggested parameters. Thus the parameter 'file format' might be specified as 'HTML'; the parameter 'in-process quality assurance' might be specified as 'review' (the target content is evaluated by a subject-matter expert). Concerning revision, which is defined as comparative re-reading for content, this is one of the things that may or may not be identified as a requirement for a given project. It should be done by a second translator, but self-revision is acceptable if the first translator is the most qualified person available for that project. Concerning revisers, the guidance document suggests that they should ideally have subject-matter knowledge.

In 2017, ISO 18587 'Translation Services—Post-editing of machine translation output—Requirements' was issued (see Chapter 16). A further ISO document was still in preparation in mid-2019: ISO 21999 'Translation quality assurance and assessment—models and metrics'.

Practice

1. Write out the sequence of quality assurance measures which you use (if you work alone) or which are used by the institution you work for (translation agency or department). Think carefully about each and every aspect of the work, from receipt of a request for translation to post-delivery (response to complaints from the client).
2. Scenario: You work for an organization which has moved from full revision of most texts to less complete forms of quality control together with more emphasis on self-revision. The result is that more text is being produced per employee-hour (income is up!), but when you look through a file of completed translations, you see several serious mistranslations. One day you tell the manager of the translation service that the text you are quality-controlling requires a full comparative re-reading rather than a cursory scan. You suggest informing the client that the text will be two days late. The manager is not happy and lets it be understood that you might want to spend a couple of evenings doing (unpaid) overtime. You discover that other quality controllers have received similar hints. What will you do?
3. Describe a time-versus-quality conflict that has arisen in your work. What was the resolution? If the problem was one that arose frequently, did you decide (or did your agency or employer decide) to make some changes in policy or procedure? If you are attending a workshop or taking a course, present the problem as a case study to the other participants.

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

Revision in general: Jakobsen (2018); Mossop (2011, 2018); Robin (2016); Scocchera (2013)

Revision as reading: Scocchera (2017)

Quality assessment: see Appendix 2

Quality assurance: Svoboda (2017); European Commission (2015)

Briefs and approaching translations on the basis of their future function: Allman (2008); Nord (1997, especially ch. 3 and 4)
Revisers' loyalty: Feinauer & Lorenz (2017); Künzli (2007b)
Revisers' domain knowledge: Allman (2008)
Office procedures: Mossop (2006); Nordman (2003)
Balancing interests: Ko (2011)
Revision manual: European Commission (2010)
Crowd-sourced revision: McDonough-Dolmaya (2015)
Revision competence: Hansen (2009a and b); Rigouts Terryn 2017; Robert (2017a, 2017b, 2018); van Rensburg (2017)
Negative aspects of revision: Martin (2012)
Cost of poor quality: European Union (2012)
Evaluation of revisers: see Appendix 3

11 The revision parameters

The revision parameters are the things a reviser checks for. An exhaustive listing of things that can go wrong when translating would be very lengthy indeed. In order to think about and talk about revision, it is convenient to have a reasonably brief list of error types. The shortest possible list would contain just two parameters: is the translation accurate and is it well written? A longer list might be: accurate, linguistically correct, smooth-reading, adapted to readers.

However, I believe a bit more detail is required. Below is a list of fourteen parameters, divided into five groups. Each parameter is expressed as one or more questions about the translation, followed by a single capitalized word for convenience of reference. Within some of the parameters, there are several different questions; these are for use when explaining to translators precisely why a change had to be made.

Group A—Problems of meaning transfer (Transfer)

1. Does the translation adequately reflect the message of the source text? (Accuracy)?
2. Have any elements of the source text been left out without warrant, or left in the source language without justification? Have unwarranted additions been made? (Completeness)

Group B—Problems of content (Content)

3. Does the sequence of ideas make sense? Do any passages manifest logical errors? (Logic)
4. Are there any factual, conceptual or mathematical errors? (Facts)

Group C—Problems of language and style (Language)

5. Does the wording of each sentence clearly relate it to the wording of the previous sentence? Is each sentence structured to focus its new and important information? Are the relationships among the parts of each sentence clear? Are there awkwardly structured or overly wordy sentences? (Smoothness)

6. Is the language suited to the users of the translation, the use they will make of it, and the medium in which it will appear? Is the right register being used? Is the tone right? (Tailoring)
7. Is the language suited to the genre? Does the phraseology match that used in original target-language texts on the same subject? Has correct terminology been used? (Sub-language)
8. Are individual words being used in a meaning they actually have in the target language? Are all the word combinations idiomatic? Does the translation observe the stylistic and rhetorical preferences of the target language? Are any words or phrases being used in rare or archaic meanings without warrant? (Idiom)
9. Have the rules of grammar, spelling, punctuation, house style and correct usage been observed? (Mechanics)

Group D—Problems with the visual and organizational aspects of the text (Presentation)

10. Are there problems with spacing, indentation, margins, columns, positioning of footnotes, the relationship of text to graphics, or the positioning and alphabetization of lists? Are genre rules for page layout observed? (Layout)
11. Are there problems with bolding, underlining, italicization, font type, font size, colour or CAPS? (Typography)
12. Are there problems with the way the document as a whole is organized—problems stemming from failed structural editing? (Organization)

Group E—Problems related to specifications and policies (Specifications)

13. Have the client's specifications been complied with, regarding terminology, layout, use of designated documentation, or other matters? (ClientSpecs)
14. Have the employer's or agency's translation policies been complied with, regarding use of Memories, spelling practices, or other matters? (EmployerPol)

One final thing revisers typically look for is Consistency, the topic of Chapter 9. It could be treated as a fifteenth parameter but I have not done so because all Consistency issues are related to other parameters: the reviser searches for inconsistencies in terminology, in register, in layout, etc. (This is also true of some but not all Specifications issues: use of Memories or designated documentation does not fall under other parameters.)

The above list of parameters is for discussion and reflection about revision practices. It is not for use as a checklist while actually revising in a professional setting (though it might be used as such in a classroom setting). Obviously, you are not going to go through each sentence fourteen times! As we'll see in Chapter 13, however, you may want to refer to the five groups of parameters before you begin, in order to decide the degree to which you will revise.

Some translation departments and agencies do give their translators revision checklists containing items such as ‘all translatable text has been translated’ and ‘client’s terminology has been used’. While such lists are useful as reminders, it is hard to see how they could be used in any practical revision procedure. If the checklist contains twenty items, there is no time to consider each of them in turn after reading each sentence of the translation.

You may want to read some of the earlier chapters of this book for more information on some of the parameters that are of concern not just to revisers but also to editors (parameters 3 to 14). Chapter 3 looks in detail at the various aspects of Mechanics as well as Idiom. Chapter 4 has sections on Tailoring and Smoothness. Chapter 5 covers some aspects of Presentation. Chapter 6 covers Logic and Facts.

If you work in a situation where a proofreader (who is not a translator) will look at the translation prior to publication, you may not need to worry about the Presentation parameters or about Mechanics, except for those aspects which affect meaning: you must always check commas, which can have a serious impact on smoothness and on how a sentence is interpreted by the reader; and you must always check words and phrases which are bolded, underlined or italicized, since these features will affect semantic focus. If there is no proofreader, then you the reviser must deal with these parameters, and ensure a certain minimum ‘beauty’ of presentation.

Let us now look at each of the parameters in detail.

11.1 Accuracy

Unless you have specifically been asked to prepare an adaptation, or your client is paying a premium for extra high writing quality, accuracy will be the most important feature of the translations you are revising. Generally speaking, the primary task of a professional translator is to guarantee that the translation means (more or less) what the source means (or to be more careful—what the translator thinks it means). In particular, you must ensure that there are no major mistranslations—passages which could seriously mislead the reader about an important feature of the source text’s message. This requires imagining how readers are likely to interpret the translation—a task that has considerable limitations since each reader interprets from within their own mental context. When considering possible misinterpretations by readers, be sure that you are not considering out-of-context readings.

Beware of wasting time on what seem like subtle differences in meaning between translation and source. Another reviser might well not see a difference, or you yourself might no longer see one if you took another look a few hours later!

Accuracy is not limited to the level of words, phrases and sentences. One of the most important aspects of accuracy is the correct rendering of the overall structure of the message: the sequencing of events or arguments must be the one in the source text. So when checking for accuracy, you need to pay special attention to words like ‘however’ and ‘then’.

When texts contain graphics, the Accuracy parameter includes matters related to graphics. When checking the translation of a graphic caption, or the description of a graphic within the main text, be sure to actually look at the graphic in order to make sure that the target-language wording makes sense in relation to it. Sometimes translators try to render such descriptions and captions without looking at the relevant graphic, and the result may look like a good translation of the source text, but not be a good 'translation' of the graphic.

An accurate translation does not have to be a close translation. Accuracy has nothing to do with whether the translator has used vocabulary and sentence structures of the target language which are as close as possible to those of the source text. Accuracy has strictly to do with the message in a passage. More particularly, accuracy certainly does not mean reproducing poor writing; many translators consider it their duty to improve the quality of the writing.

Accurate does not mean source-oriented. A translation in which more formal has been replaced with less formal language can still be considered accurate. A translation in which you have replaced or eliminated a metaphor, added a cultural explanation or used a functional equivalent of a cultural feature (sport, cuisine) can still be considered accurate, though there are limits (see the next section on Completeness). Also, Accuracy does not require that a bit of information be conveyed at the same location in the translation as it was in the source text. Perhaps the information is better conveyed in the preceding or following sentence or paragraph, or even further away.

The Italian physicist Enrico Fermi is said to have told his daughter, 'Never make something more accurate than absolutely necessary'. So just how accurate does a translation have to be? Not as accurate as possible, but as accurate as necessary, given the type of text and the use to be made of the translation. Ephemeral texts, which will be read and discarded, and not used to make important decisions, do not need to be as accurate as publications which will be so used, or texts where mistranslation could have negative health, safety or financial repercussions. There is no point spending five minutes searching for the *mot juste* which conveys the exact nuance of the source if the translation is going to be read quickly and tossed away. Suppose the source is the minutes of a meeting. It mentions that an official gave an interview to a journalist at lunch-time. The draft translation says 'spent his lunch hour giving an interview'. This is not quite accurate—it implies that the entire lunch hour was spent giving the interview. But the key point has been made: an interview was given. What percentage of the official's lunch hour this occupied is utterly irrelevant. It would simply be a waste of time revising the draft.

On the other hand, one does have to keep an eye out for passages where the translator has 'read in' their own ideas, perhaps because of interest in or strong feelings about the subject matter, or because the translator's mind raced ahead and incorrectly filled in the next bit of a narrative. An alleged child murderer's 'statement' in the source text may have become his 'confession' in the translation. The translator may have wrongly thought that he or she was simply explicitating something implicit in the source text.

In written translation, unlike oral, it is possible to go over and over a text, making it more and more accurate, so that not only the primary and secondary aspects of the message but even tiny details are reflected in the translation. But the fact that this is possible is not a reason to do it. Not only may it be a waste of time, but over-attention to Accuracy can result in an unreadable text. Almost every scrap and nuance of meaning may have been crammed in, but the resulting sentence may be hard to read. Readers of some texts (e.g. certain legal documents) may prefer such extreme accuracy, but others will simply stop reading or—if their jobs require them to read the document—they will be distracted from the message by the language.

More generally, there is a trade-off between Accuracy and the Language & Style parameters, especially Tailoring, Smoothness and Idiom. It is probably wishful thinking to imagine that a translation can be both extremely readable and extremely accurate. At the higher levels of accuracy, a degree of readability is inevitably sacrificed, while at the higher levels of reader-friendliness, accuracy must suffer somewhat. The trick is to identify the right balance for the job at hand.

Quite apart from that, there is a limit to how accurate a translation can be, even in principle. Italian author Umberto Eco wrote a book about translation entitled *Dire quasi la stessa cosa*: to translate is 'to say almost the same thing' (as the source text). It has to be 'almost' for a long list of reasons. First, the cultural connotations of a word that means, say, 'bread', will differ in the other language, which makes total accuracy impossible in any passage that evokes such connotations. Second, everyone makes mistakes in composing or revising the translation because of inattention, fatigue, rushing to meet a deadline or some gap in linguistic or subject-matter knowledge. Third, source writers may not be available to clarify their meaning in passages the translator finds obscure. Fourth, texts typically have at least some passages that lend themselves to several interpretations, and the translator (or the reviser!) may pick the wrong one or not even notice the right one. In Canada, where the French and English versions of every federal statute have equal validity, judges quite frequently find passages where they see a difference in meaning between the two language versions of the law—despite the best efforts of expert legal revisers.

The question whether a translation is accurate is actually two questions:

- Has the source text been correctly understood?
- Does the translation express that understanding?

The most common kind of inaccuracy arises from incorrect understanding of the source. But inaccuracy can also arise when the source has been correctly understood. The translator may believe that this understanding has been expressed in the translation, but in fact it has not. The readers are likely to interpret the wording the wrong way. This problem most often arises because the translator has written a syntactically ambiguous sentence.

Finding such potentially dangerous ambiguities is a good example of the superiority of revision by a second translator over self-revision. A second pair of eyes is more likely to see the incorrect reading, because there is no prior bias toward the correct reading.

Sometimes inaccuracies are actually necessary, for political or ideological reasons. Consider the institution in Quebec City whose official name until recently was ‘Bibliothèque nationale du Québec’ (national library of Quebec). It was sometimes just called the ‘Bibliothèque nationale’ (national library), but it could not be called the ‘National Library’ in English because that name would evoke, for English-Canadians, the institution in the federal capital Ottawa whose official name used to be ‘National Library of Canada’. The problem for the reviser here is not simply that of ensuring the reader is not confused about which institution is being referred to. There’s also an ideological problem, because the names reflect different understandings of the country: the French reflects the belief in a Quebec nation which happens to be part of a federation called Canada; the English reflects the belief in a Canadian nation consisting of three territories and ten provinces, one of which is Quebec. With some clients and readerships, the reviser may need to ensure that the translation reflects the English-Canadian outlook: ‘Quebec provincial library’ or something of the sort. Some might call such deliberate inaccuracy a minor form of censorship.

A final point on accuracy: numbers are often an important part of the message. If the translator has turned an unemployment rate of 6.8% into a rate of 8.6%, that is a major Transfer error if unemployment is an important topic in the text. In any text where numbers are central to the message, it’s a good idea to make a separate check for their accurate reproduction.

11.2 Completeness

Unless specifically asked to write a summary or a gist, translate only a part of a document, or provide an adaptation (i.e. make changes in content), translators are usually expected to render all the message, and only the message, of the source text—No Additions, No Subtractions (NANS). As Andrew Marvell put it in ‘To his worthy Friend Doctor Witty upon his Translation of the Popular Errors’ (1651):

> He is Translation’s thief that addeth more
> As much as he that taketh from the store
> Of the first author. …

Some 1900 years ago, in a letter to his friend Fuscus advising him to while away his retirement translating Greek into Latin, the Ancient Roman writer Pliny the Younger wrote: ‘What might have eluded your notice while reading cannot escape you when translating’. Pliny presents this as an advantage (Fuscus will be able to delve more deeply into the Greek text), but from another point of view, it’s a burden borne by translators: readers can skip over an obscure passage, but translators cannot. Translators must try to come up with an interpretation of every expression, and, with few exceptions, this full interpretation must be reflected in the translation.

Completeness might at first be thought to be an aspect of Accuracy, but there is an important difference. Accuracy is a qualitative matter: it's about correspondence of meaning in individual passages. Completeness on the other hand is a quantitative matter: is the whole of the source text there in the translation, and nothing more? And has anything been left untranslated, that is, still in the source language, without warrant? Revising for Accuracy is a semantic exercise but revising for Completeness is a mechanical matter. Will you notice that the translator's eye skipped over a point in a long list of bulleted points, or that a whole passage was skipped when a phrase was repeated in successive sentences or paragraphs: the translator's eye, returning to the source text from the translation, went to the second occurrence of the phrase, even though the material accompanying the first occurrence had not yet been translated.

If the translation was produced by typing over the electronic source text, then paragraphs, or items in a point-form list, may have been left untranslated but it is unlikely that they will have been omitted. However if the translation was produced from a paper document (a printout of a .pdf file for example), then there may simply be nothing there in the translation corresponding to a chunk of the source text. You may not notice this if you are revising by reading sentences of the translation first and then looking for the corresponding passage in the source text. And whichever order you choose during comparison—source first or translation first—your eye may skip over a passage when you return to work on the next chunk. So it may be a good idea to make a count, in order to ensure that no paragraphs or list points have been forgotten. If you do find a mismatch in the number of paragraphs, however, keep in mind that it may not be a case of omission, because the translator may have decided to combine or split paragraphs. Some revisers who work on paper place a ruler under the line of text on which they are currently working so that their eye returns to the right spot after the other text is checked.

If the source text is provided electronically, there may be various forms of hidden writing which are not immediately displayed on the screen, and may not appear even on a printout. If the translator is not too familiar with the software, whole chunks of source text may have been missed. A very simple example: the translator is looking at the Normal view of the text in Word, and as a result does not see the headers and footers, which are visible only in Page Layout view. More complex forms of hidden text occur with presentation software such as PowerPoint and in .html files. You can find any hidden text in Word by selecting File—Info—Check for Issues—Inspect Document—Hidden Text.

Related to the problem of hidden text is the problem of isolated wordings: the translator may have forgotten to translate some of the captions of figures and tables, labels on figures, phrases in table boxes, or footnotes.

The NANS principle should not be taken too literally. First, it applies only to *relevant* meaning. Some of the information in the translation will be very important to the readers, some less important. Thus if the text is a complaint containing a great many expressions of the complainant's emotional state, some of these can be omitted if the point of the translation is simply to allow an official to determine the substance of the complaint. Or take a text on the causes of avalanches which begins with a description of the researchers arriving in an alpine village and lists some of the flowers growing in the meadows. The whole passage could be summarized or omitted.

Second, always keep in mind that the NANS principle refers to the text's message, not to its wording. Completeness does not require the reproduction of the repetitiveness typical of poorly written source texts (as opposed to repetitions used by the writer to emphasize a point or remind the reader of a point). Usually the reviser should ensure that repetitiveness has been eliminated. However if this is likely to be a time-consuming task, and excellence of style is not a consideration in the job at hand, repetitions can be left in the translation.

Third, Completeness does not require explicitness. Elements of meaning which are explicit in the source text can be left implicit in the translation. There is no problem of Completeness as long as a reader can recover these elements by drawing either on general or expert knowledge or on knowledge conveyed earlier in the text (not later!). Now, it is not always obvious whether this condition of recoverability is met. You may err in either direction, thinking that the element is recoverable when it is not, or thinking that it is not recoverable when it is. The former error is more serious, since there will then be an omission in the final translation. The latter error merely leads to a needless (and therefore time-wasting) revision, as you make the element of meaning explicit. Obviously if you are in doubt, you will ensure that the element is explicit.

Leaving message elements implicit, together with elimination of redundancy, is important when only a small, predetermined amount of space is available for the translation. If these techniques do not work, then perhaps a different font or smaller font size, a change in margins, or reduction of interlineal spacing, might solve the problem. But in some cases, it may be necessary to simply omit material.

Fourth, there is the converse issue: the translator has explicitated message elements thought to be implicit in the source. This too is sometimes permissible, sometimes not. Revisers dealing with expert-to-expert texts will usually remove any explanations of technical concepts that have been added by the translator.

Sometimes revisers will find themselves dealing with what are really additions—elements of meaning that are not really implicit in the source. Now, small additions (and subtractions) are inevitable; there is usually no point going through a translation with a fine-toothed comb searching for tiny nuances of meaning that have been inadvertently added (or subtracted). Also, some small *deliberate* additions and subtractions may be justified and even necessary to make up for differences between the source and target cultures. For example, perhaps the reviser should add a geographical elucidation: change 'near the Ob' to 'near the Ob River' in a translation from Russian, since many readers will not recognize Ob as the name of a major Siberian river; context may well not make that clear, or could even mislead readers into thinking that Ob is the name of a sea or a desert. Conversely, if the source text happens to refer to the country of the target-language speakers, geographical explanations in the source text may need to be removed from the translation (it may seem odd to the readers to be informed that a certain city is the capital city of their country). The source may also contain incidental remarks on religious or political matters which target-language readers in a very different culture will not understand, and the reviser may decide to remove these if the translator has not already done so.

It is important to bear in mind that beyond a certain point, additions and subtractions can result in a text which will not count as a translation in the eyes of a receiving society or in the eyes of its professional translators. Major additions and subtractions are commonly permissible only in adaptations. For example, a tourist guide may have been used as a springboard for composing a guide in another language: much material has been left out because it was thought not to be of interest to target-language readers, and much else has been added to make the destination attractive to these readers. Or a dreary text may have been made more lively and interesting, perhaps through addition of metaphorical comparisons or humour throughout the text. Or there has been significant content editing because there are big differences between what it is appropriate to say in an obituary in the source-language community and in the target-language community. The person who checks such work is more an editor than a translation reviser, and the Transfer parameters, Accuracy and Completeness, become irrelevant.

The 17th-century poet and translator John Dryden put the matter of additions and subtractions this way in his preface to *Sylvae* (1685):

> …I must acknowledge that I have many times exceeded my Commission; for I have both added and omitted, and even sometimes very boldly made such expositions of my Authors, as no Dutch Commentator will forgive me. Perhaps, in such particular passages, I have thought that I discover'd some beauty yet undiscovered by those Pedants, which none but a Poet could have found. Where I have taken away some of their Expressions, and cut them shorter, it may possibly be on this consideration, that what was beautiful in the Greek or Latin, would not appear so shining in the English; and where I have enlarg'd them, I desire the false Criticks would not always think that those thoughts are wholly mine, but that either they are secretly in the Poet, or may be fairly deduc'd from him; or at least, if both those considerations should fail, that my own is of a piece with his, and that if he were living, and an Englishman, they are such as he wou'd probably have written.

Dryden was writing about literary translation, but 'of a piece with his' (for addition) and 'not so shining' (for subtraction) are more widely applicable.

11.3 Logic

We are now moving on to the Content parameters—those that concern what the text says about its topic. While a translation may well express ideas you find silly or outrageous, there should usually not be any contradictions, impossible temporal or causal sequences, or other errors of logic in the narrow sense. In a broader sense of logic, the translation must be intelligible: the sequence of ideas must *make sense* to the intended readers of the translation; there cannot be any 'non-sense'. Also, the reader must be able to interpret each sentence correctly without having to draw on knowledge that is imparted only in a later sentence.

One way to ensure the intelligibility of the flow of ideas is to keep in mind the question: what is the author trying to do here (in this article; in this section; in this paragraph; in this sentence)? Describe? Persuade? Point out a gap in knowledge? Move to the next step in an argument or procedure? Give the cause of an event described in the previous sentence or paragraph? Attract the reader's attention to a key point? Restate an earlier point for emphasis?

Lack of logic can take two forms:

1. The source text itself is illogical, and the translator has not done anything about it.

One can usually assume that the author intended something which makes sense, but poor expression or poor self-editing has resulted in nonsense or contradiction as the reader's most likely interpretation. Sometimes the intention will be very clear from the context, as when an author accidentally self-contradicts by claiming that the unemployment rate has gone up from 9.8 to 8.9%. However care must be taken in such cases: either 'up' is correct and the figures should be inverted, or 'up' is wrong. If the figures as written are confirmed by an accompanying graph, or by a reference to a smile on the face of the employment minister, then 'up' can confidently be changed to 'down'.

Here's an example of a passage that will likely be read as contradictory:

> Search the patent website to determine whether there are any inventions similar to yours. If your preliminary search is negative, you can either drop your invention or make an improvement to it.

The source-text word rendered as 'negative' makes sense if 'negative' is taken to mean 'disappointing' (i.e. someone has beat you to this invention), but many readers will take it, on first reading, to mean a negative search outcome (i.e. no one has beaten you to the invention). If no one has beaten you, why should you drop or improve the invention?

Now consider this sentence:

> The short-term consequences are temporary and do not last very long.

If this is taken out of context, the writer could be saying that the short-term consequences are not permanent (they are not also long-term consequences), which makes sense. However in context, it was clear that 'short-term' meant 'short-lived'. So the first part of the sentence is a tautology; it tells the readers, regarding the short-term consequences, that they are short-term. Also, the word 'and' suggests that further information about the consequences is about to be imparted, but 'do not last very long' is nothing but a re-statement of 'temporary';

the second part of the sentence is redundant. Revise to 'The consequences are temporary'.

The logical connections between sentences in a source text may be very unclear because the author composed it by stringing together a collage of sentences from a variety of materials found in a database of corporate documentation, and then failed to do appropriate editing to create a logical sequence of thought, or worse, added connectors without careful thought (for example, adding 'consequently' even though there is no cause-effect relationship between two sentences). In some cases, the lack of a logical link between two sentences can be solved by starting a new paragraph at the beginning of the second sentence. However in other cases it may not be possible to create logical links unless the author is available and willing to clarify their intent.

Occasionally authors do contradict themselves because they have not fully worked out their own arguments. If the translator has done nothing about this, it may be best for the reviser to leave the contradiction since it is part of the text's message: readers of the translation are just as entitled as readers of the source to see the error in logic. However, in a few cases, it may be better to smooth things over.

2. The source text makes sense but the translator has introduced nonsense or contradiction.

Among students and trainees, such nonsensical passages often arise from lack of source-language knowledge, or from the habit of picking a dictionary equivalent of an inter-sentence connector word rather than considering what works in the target-language context. Among experienced translators, nonsense is more likely due to inattention when rushed or tired. Consider this passage that crept into a translation from French about the medical consequences of excessive coffee drinking:

> There was fear of playing the game. Americans reduced their consumption of coffee.

A gloss of the source text for the first sentence would be 'fear played' (French 'la peur a joué). The meaning is that fear (of negative health consequences) was at play and (therefore) Americans reduced their consumption of coffee.

Here is an example of contradiction being introduced by the translator:

> We are making use of innovative technologies because these latest advances are not affordable.

Now, if you cannot afford the latest technologies, how can you make use of them? Here the source text was actually discussing how to make innovative use of technologies, that is, how to use the older technology more cleverly. The translator was reading quickly or not being attentive, and read 'innovative' with 'technologies' instead of with 'use'. (The French was 'utilisation innovatrice des technologies', which means 'innovative use of technologies', but the word 'utilisation' appeared at the end of one line and 'innovatrice' at the beginning of the next line, bringing it visually closer to 'technologies'.)

Sometimes what appears to be a contradiction actually makes perfect sense. This often happens with highly specialised texts where both translator and reviser lack the subject-matter knowledge required to see that there is in fact no contradiction. Consider:

> The water used to cool the ship's machinery has to be heated.

This may seem contradictory to the non-expert, but in fact it makes sense: if the ship is operating in the Arctic in winter, the cooling water may freeze and would then not be useable; it must be heated sufficiently to keep it above the freezing point.

A final point: while some wordings are not actually illogical, it can be difficult to follow their logic, for linguistic reasons. Sequences of negative words can be hard to understand, for example: 'The minister refused to deny that he would resign if no agreement were reached'. It can take some time to realize that this means: 'Suppose no agreement were reached. Would the minister then resign? When he was asked this question, he did not take the opportunity to state that he would continue in office even without an agreement'.

Logic is also discussed in Chapter 6.3.

11.4 Facts

Although checking a text for factual as well as conceptual and mathematical errors is not a central task of translators, such errors are obviously of communicative importance; they will be spotted immediately by readers of the translation who are knowledgeable about the subject matter. Clients will appreciate it if these errors are not simply skipped over in silence. They are most often present in the original, but they may sometimes be introduced inadvertently by the translator. If they are present in the original, you need to ensure compliance with the client's wishes, which may vary: make corrections in the translation; list and describe the errors in a separate document; call the author of the source text and get agreement to changes in its wording.

In some cases, the source text author's ignorance of the true facts may be significant. If the translator has made a correction, it should be uncorrected. However it may be necessary to indicate in some way that the error is due to the author, not the translator.

Here's an example of a translator introducing a conceptual error while translating the findings of an administrative tribunal:

> The common law courts have already dealt with the charges of robbery and extortion in the matter before us.

The intended readers will all be knowledgeable about the law, and will immediately see that there is something very wrong here: robbery and extortion are matters of criminal law, not common law. Furthermore, the reference is to a trial in Quebec, which does not use English common law but French civil law derived from the Napoleonic Code. A glance back at the French source text reveals that there was no error in the original, which referred to 'les cours de droit commun'. This means 'courts of ordinary law'. (The French term for Canadian courts outside Quebec that deal with common law matters is 'cour de common law').

Note that this is not merely a mistranslation. There is an important difference between the Transfer parameters and the Content parameters. For someone comparing the translation to its source, there may not seem to be much difference, but the effect on the readers of the translation is not the same. Transfer errors will often pass unnoticed, if they make sense, but the same is not true of Content errors. Errors in logic and in non-specialised content will be noticed by many if not all readers, while errors in specialised content will be immediately obvious to subject-matter experts. Such errors may call into question the competence of either the source-text author (if the reader does not know the text is a translation) or the translator.

Another difference between Transfer and Content errors is that the former are detected by comparison with the source text, whereas errors in logic and mathematics, as well as many factual and conceptual errors, are detectable without reference to the source text.

For more on factual and conceptual errors, see Chapter 6.2. For mathematical errors, Chapter 6.4.

11.5 Smoothness

This parameter and the next two (Tailoring and Sub-language) cover the area commonly called 'style'.

Generally speaking, the meaning should come across to the reader of a translation on first reading at normal reading speed. If it does not, the problem will often be one of awkward sentence structures or poor connections between sentences, perhaps due to careless imitation of the word order or the connector words ('this', 'therefore') of the source text. An example of a common problem is poor sequencing of verb tenses from sentence to sentence, as well as improper selection of tense. In translation from French, for example, a common form of the verb can be rendered in English either by the simple past or the perfect (a translator was hired / a translator has been hired); both may be perfectly grammatical, but often only one will fit the flow of a narrative.

Unsmooth writing in the source cannot justify unsmooth writing in the translation. Varying degrees of smoothness are acceptable, but the appropriate degree is determined by the user and use of the translation, not the smoothness of the source text.

One thing that can definitely interfere with a smooth reading experience for the typical reader (i.e. one who does not know the source language) is the presence in the translation of wordings in the source language, such as names of institutions and titles of publications. In some genres, notably legal documents, source-language names may be required. In others, action should be taken to reduce them. Since the first duty of a translator is to translate, it is important for the reviser to check that the translator has minimized source-language words.

Another interference with smoothness is sentences that contain several acronyms. 'TS scholars often mention how ST and TT matching with TM is problematic': even if the meaning of each acronym has been spelled out earlier in the text (TS: translation studies; ST: source text; TT: translation text; TM: translation memory), reading a sentence like this places a severe burden on the reader's memory.

Punctuation or its absence sometimes interferes with a smooth reading experience. It may be necessary to insert or remove commas, parentheses and paired dashes.

Smoothness has become a more pressing concern in recent years because many translations now include passages pasted in (manually or using Translation Memory) from previous translations or from client documentation that was originally written in the target language. The joins between the pasted parts and the translator's own work may not be smooth.

Smoothness is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.2.

> *Terminology note*: The literature on translation sometimes uses the term cohesion to refer to Smoothness and the term coherence to refer to Logic. Simply put, cohesion is the flow of words, coherence the flow of ideas. The problem with these two terms, which have been borrowed from linguistics, is that they are so similar. The result is that if you find a reference to 'cohesion', you have to stop and try to remember whether it refers to Smoothness or Logic.

11.6 Tailoring

A translation has to be suited to its readers and to the way they will use it. Translators and revisers often do not know who will be reading the translation, and if they are unable to identify the readership, they must make an educated guess. It is not possible to write in a way that can successfully address 'everyone'.

The translation must have the right register ('level of language'): given the relationship between writer and readers (and the genre), the language must have the right degree of formality and the right tone (commanding, persuading, requesting, informing, suggesting); given the education level of the readers and their knowledge of the subject matter of the text, the language must have the right degree of technicality. Sometimes the wording will also have to be adjusted for the benefit of readers such as immigrants who have only an intermediate level of reading ability, or international readers who may have advanced reading ability but lack relevant cultural knowledge.

Sometimes the style of the source text should not be imitated, given cultural differences. Wordings similar in tone or formality to the source may not be suitable. For example, the very blunt tone acceptable in the source language for criticizing someone may be highly unsuitable in the target language.

Sometimes the language of the source may have been fine for non-expert readers but the same may not be true of the translation. Thus, it may be necessary to revise the translator's 'fleet operator requirement' to 'a need for people to operate a fleet of vehicles'. In other cases, the style of the source may *not* have been fine for non-expert readers, and the translator has failed to make suitable adjustments. Consider a translation which reads:

> While no cure has yet been found for AIDS, there are a number of treatments which can prevent the opportunistic diseases from appearing.

An opportunistic disease is one of the diseases which people are prone to if their immune systems have been impaired by HIV. The expression is well known to doctors, nurses and AIDS activists, but is not really suited to a general readership. The source may well have used this term, but if the translation will appear in a pamphlet to be distributed to the general public, it needs to be tailored to its audience, perhaps by replacing the term with a definition: 'prevent the diseases which HIV-positive people often get'.

The readership may be very narrow or very broad. With narrow readerships (that is, all intended readers are subject-matter experts), you may need to check that the translator has used what would normally be undesirable language, for example, the latest fads of bureaucratic jargon. Otherwise, the text may not appear to be addressed to its intended audience.

Even if the readership of the translation will be similar to the readership of the source text, the way the translation will be used may differ from that of the source text. For example, the English translation of a Belgian law about criminal proceedings will not itself have any force of law; perhaps it will be used simply as information by someone conducting a legal study in another country, say Canada. It may then be a good idea to make sure the translator has not used Canadian legal terminology, so as to avoid creating the impression that the Belgian justice system is just like Canada's; if French 'procureur du roi' or Dutch 'procureur des Konings' has been translated by the customary Canadian expression 'Crown prosecutor', revise to something like 'king's prosecutor'.

Source and translation may also differ in medium, and this may call for some tailoring. For example, the source text may be a transcript of oral proceedings—the spoken words were used to make an argument in court—but the translation will be read silently as a reference by attorneys working on another case. You need to check that certain features of spoken language (false starts, repetitions) have been removed, since they are liable to cause confusion or slow the reading process. Just the occasional repetition or interjection should be left to remind the reader of the oral nature of the source text ('he…he said that, well, …').

Tailoring is also an issue when the translation is being produced many years after the source text. For instance, if you encounter generic 'he' in a translation of a text written 70 years ago that uses a similar sexist pronoun, will you leave it or tailor it to the expectations of current readers?

A final kind of tailoring occurs when the reader will be a translator who will turn the translation into a third language. The reviser will be on the lookout for wordings that will make that translator's job more difficult.

Tailoring is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.1.

11.7 Sub-language

Each genre (text type) and each field of writing in the target language draws on a different selection of the lexical, syntactic and rhetorical resources of that language. A syntactic example: minutes of meetings are normally presented in the past tense in English; French, on the other hand, uses the present. Thus minutes would be grammatical but inauthentic if they contained a sentence like 'Mary reports on client complaints'. Genres may also differ in the degree to which they prefer noun-based syntax ('the exigencies of penury') or more speech-like verb-based syntax ('the things you have to do if you're poor'). Finally, every genre in the target language will have its own structure: there is a typical way of structuring recipes or academic papers that may differ from what is found in the source language.

The most obvious aspect of sub-language that requires checking is field-specific terminology. In most translation jobs, the terminology has to be that used by specialists who are native speakers of the target language, or else the in-house terminology specified by the client. However, with texts being translated for information only, clients may accept wordings that convey the meaning even if correct terminology is not used. Many revisers believe that subject-matter experts will be annoyed if they find anything other than the correct term in the translation. I think that in general this is not true. The subject-matter experts who read our translations are not 'language people' like us; the typical forest scientist is interested in trees, not the language used to talk about trees. Experts tend to 'read through' language to the non-linguistic world in which they are interested. We should not project onto them our own interest in linguistic matters. The same applies to phraseology, especially in translations that are not for publication: subject-matter experts will probably grasp the meaning even if the phraseology to which they are accustomed is not used.

One common problem is that it may not have occurred to the translator that a sequence of ordinary words of the source language is in fact a term. In meteorology, French 'vents en altitude' should not be translated 'winds at high altitudes' or 'high above the ground'. Instead one speaks of the 'upper winds' or the 'winds aloft'—an expression which sounds faintly poetic/archaic in everyday English but is quite neutral and very common in meteorology journals.

In some translation jobs, revising to create authentic phrasings would be a waste of time. For example, if the authorities who decide on eligibility for disability benefits have asked for translations of an immigrant's old medical reports, the important thing is to get the medical content correct. The users of the translation know perfectly well that they are reading a translation, so there is no need for it to sound authentic, i.e. just like original writing by doctors in the target language. In other texts, however, authenticity may be essential and even call for the use of slang, dialect and the like, especially in quotations.

'Correct' terminology should actually be avoided in some cases. For example, if revising the translation of an inquiry from a citizen about a legal matter, make sure it does not contain legal phrasings that would only be used by a lawyer, so as to avoid creating the impression that the writer is a lawyer. If revising a translation of a letter from an unemployment insurance recipient, use the expression 'apply for benefits' even if the civil servants who deal with this matter use 'apply for benefit' (with 'benefit' in the singular) in their own writings.

11.8 Idiom

In every language, only some of the grammatically possible combinations of words are actually used. These are the idiomatic combinations. If a text contains unidiomatic wordings ('intelligent phone' instead of 'smartphone'; 'Immigrants are needed to match gaps in the workforce', instead of the idiomatic 'fill gaps'), that will distract native speakers of the language from the informational content of the text. In some cases, an unidiomatic turn of phrase may also make them wonder whether something different is intended (perhaps 'match gaps' means something different from 'fill gaps'). The problem of distraction will not be so important if most of the readers will not be native speakers (as is quite often the case with texts in English these days).

In editing work, lack of idiomaticity is usually not a problem unless the writer is not a native speaker. However in translation, the situation is very different. Notoriously, translators—even good ones—are prone to producing, under the influence of the source text, unidiomatic combinations such as 'washed his teeth'. This combination of words is perfectly grammatical in English, and understandable, but it is not used. In English, you clean or brush your teeth. There is no rhyme or reason to idiomaticity; you simply have to know which combinations are the idiomatic ones. This is perhaps the main reason why those revising the work of others should normally be native speakers of the target language.

Some instances of unidiomatic language may be considered creative or witty by native speakers (innovative language is by definition unidiomatic). However, outside literary and marketing texts, or humorous passages that call for unusual language, this is not a consideration in revision work.

After years of translating, you may sometimes find that you are not sure whether a certain expression really is idiomatic English, rather than an unidiomatic calque of the source language. A good dictionary will then reassure you that, for example, 'set (something) in train' is definitely English, not an unidiomatic calque of French 'mettre en train'. Or simply google the uncertain expression (though see Chapter 9.1 for cautions in this regard).

A translation may also be unidiomatic because single words are used in senses they simply do not have in the target language. English 'actually', unlike French 'actuellement', does not mean 'at present'. This phenomenon is not limited to language pairs that have many such phonetically similar words resulting from either common origin or borrowing. Every language that has served as a target language will have so-called 'translation words'—words (or senses of words) that appear only in translations (or in texts produced by non-native writers who are mentally translating from their own language).

In an extended sense, checking for idiomaticity also includes checking for anything that 'we just don't say' in the target language, or anything not consistent with its rhetorical norms and preferences. Consider this passage from a translation about peregrine falcons:

> Despite the various protective measures that had been taken, there was a slight unexplained decrease in the peregrine population in the area. This clouded the previously hopeful outlook and was feared to be the sign of a new and this time disastrous decline of our peregrine, possibly leading to extinction.

In French, 'notre pèlerin' (literally 'our peregrine'), meaning the peregrine populations living in 'our' area of the world (in this case, French Switzerland), is perfectly acceptable. But in English, we don't use the first person plural possessive adjective this way, at least not in an article in an ornithology journal (perhaps it might work in a birding column in a local newspaper). 'Our' needs to be replaced with 'the'.

Another matter related to idiom is differences among geographical regions. A word may have a somewhat different meaning in Mexico than it does in Spain, or be used frequently in Brazil but rarely in Portugal. For pairs of words (e.g. railway vs railroad), quantitative results for regional differences among the four main European languages of the western hemisphere (English, Spanish, Portuguese and French) can be found with the application Diatopix.

Also important are differential frequencies between source and target language. For example, a sentence structure may be perfectly grammatical in the target language but not as frequent as in the source language. Generally speaking, the less frequent a feature, the more it stands out, so the effect in the target language will in such cases be too strong. In translations from French, one often finds sentences like the following, already discussed in another connection in Chapter 9. It comes from an English-Canadian newspaper reporting, in translation, what a Quebec judge had written in French:

> It's not because you are in politics that you forsake the right to protect your reputation.

This structure is grammatical in English, but it simply isn't used much. It appears in draft translations as an imitation of the common French structure 'ce n'est pas parce que x que y' (it is not because x that y). French sentences with this structure should usually be inverted: 'You do not forsake the right to protect your reputation simply because you are in politics'. Or, if the word 'reputation' needs to be stressed: 'The fact that you are in politics does not mean that you forsake the right to protect your reputation.'

The question of frequency also extends to checking matters that may be ranged under the broad heading of comparative stylistics. For example, French often uses rhetorical questions where English would not; it frequently repeats a sequence of nouns where English would use a shortened version of the noun sequence or a pronoun ('your request for legal opinions…your request….it'); and French has a tendency to express a point in the negative where English would use the positive ('The fact that he controls less than 40% of the shares doesn't mean that he doesn't control the company any more' would more commonly be expressed as 'He may still control the company even though he controls less than 40% of the shares'.)

Finally, a word or phrase may be becoming more or less frequent than it was in the past. If it is becoming much less frequent, its use may come across, especially to younger readers, as archaic, and thus not very idiomatic. Quantitative results for changes in the frequency of words and phrases over time can be checked in the Google Books Ngram Viewer (but see the Wikipedia article about the Viewer for its shortcomings).

Idiom is also discussed in Chapter 3.4.

11.9 Mechanics

Aside from finding errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation and usage, you may need to ensure that the translation conforms to a specified style manual or house style sheet if the translation is to be published.

It is especially important to find mechanical errors when revising text that will appear on homepages, on public signage and in prestigious publications.

If the translation has been prepared by typing over an electronic version of the source text, be sure the punctuation and number-writing conventions of the source language have been replaced with target-language conventions. For example, in French-to-English translation in Canada, the shape of quotation marks must be changed from «…» to '…', the space before a colon must be eliminated, and 4 000,21 $ must be replaced with $4,000.21. There are, unfortunately, dozens of such small mechanical details that may need to be checked, depending on your language pair.

Capitalization may require special thought when it comes to the translation of proper names, titles of articles and so on, in order to avoid misleading the reader. For example, if the title of a book is referred to in the source text, and this title is then translated and capitalized in the English translation, that will lead the reader to think, possibly wrongly, that the book is available in English.

A general problem is that your two languages may differ in the way they use punctuation. Consider:

> Glass walls must offer a good view from the guard post in order to ensure security (riots, suspect parcels, etc.).

where the material in parentheses has no syntactic link to the rest of the sentence. This is common in French but not acceptable in English. The wording needs to be changed to something like: '…from the guard post so that staff can handle security problems (riots, suspect parcels, etc.)'. With this change, 'riots' and 'suspect parcels' are in apposition to 'problems'.

A tricky question that may not be resolved by style manuals is references in a text to minority groups. Members of minorities (especially different generations) often do not agree about how their group should be described; both self-descriptions of minority members and descriptions by outsiders may change as the decades pass (homosexual—gay—queer—LGBT; coloured—negro—black; Indian—native—aboriginal—indigenous). If the source text uses an older term, and the translator has retained an older term in the target language, will you leave it or update it? What if the source text was written many years ago and the translator has used the most recent description of the group? Will you leave it or replace it with an older term in the target language? These questions have no general answer. Sometimes clients or your employer will make the decision for you, via a style sheet or manual, but often you will have to decide. You may have a default solution, but even then, you will need to decide on the circumstances when you will depart from the default.

Mechanics are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

11.10 Layout

Parameters 10 and 11 deal with what we might call the visual as opposed to the linguistic aspects of a text. To revise, you will need to be looking at a version of the translation that shows its final formatted appearance.

It is often important to check the way the text is arranged on the page. A page crammed with type is hard to read, so check for adequate margins and adequate spacing between sections. If there are lengthy footnotes, make sure that no footnote is partly on one page, partly on the next. Also make sure the footnote indicator is on the same page as the footnote itself.

Check too that layout is consistent. Are all paragraphs either indented or not indented (or as in this book, all indented except for the first paragraph in a section)? Are parallel headings similarly placed on the page (e.g. are all chapter titles centred)? Are all point-form listings similarly positioned with respect to surrounding text? If lists are alphabetized in the source, alphabetize the translation *after* you've done a comparative check for meaning or style. Translators whose work will be revised should be asked not to alphabetize, since this will make comparison difficult.

Check the relationship between text and graphics. If text that wraps around a graphic in the source says something about that graphic, the corresponding passage of the translation should not be on the page following the graphic. Also, the translation (and ideally the source) should avoid wordings such as 'the table below' or 'the graph opposite'; it should instead refer to graphics by number.

Checking the layout is particularly important if some readers are likely to compare the source and the translation (for example, the text in both languages is to be published as a single document). If the texts are both simultaneously visible, and one is noticeably shorter than the other, some readers may think elements of meaning are missing. You may want to avoid this by using layout devices that give the illusion of equal space being devoted to each language (for example, if the texts are side-by-side, use a slightly narrower column or slightly larger font for the shorter text).

Clients may specify as part of the brief that the layout should follow that of the source text. Revisers should check that this has been done, unless the genre rules of the target language dictate a different layout (as in letter-writing).

If the translation will be published, there may be a proofreader who will check layout, which the reviser can then ignore (except for the semantic relationship between text and nearby graphics).

11.11 Typography

The main things to check for here are moderation and consistency. It will be hard to read a text in which too many words are **bolded**, *italicized*, underlined, coloured or in ALL CAPS. Also, be sure each device is consistently used for the same purpose (e.g. bolding for section heads; underlining for emphasis; italicization for any source-language words retained in the translation).

Where the source text uses bolding, italicization or underlining for emphasis, make sure this has not been wrongly repeated in the translation. The emphasis must make sense in the target language, which may well position focused words differently from the source language. Even if there is a proofreader, this aspect of typography needs to be considered by the reviser because it can affect meaning.

Check that all headings of the same depth (e.g. subsections) have the same typographic treatment. For example: Are they all bolded? Are they all the same font size and type? If font size changes for indented material, does it change back to the original size after the indent ends? If the translator has pasted in some wordings from other documents, there may be sudden changes in font type.

11.12 Organization

The organization of the translation as a whole is important in enabling readers to navigate through the text and perceive its structure. Organizational matters such as paragraphing, section numbering and cross-references are discussed in Chapter 5, and what is said there applies to translations as well as original writing. If organizational problems are found in the source text, report them to the client.

11.13 Client specifications

Some clients provide instructions on very specific matters: use certain terminological equivalents; use the phraseology found in such-and-such a manual or other document in the target language; leave quotations in the source language and add a translation in brackets after it; do not add any translator's footnotes.

Sometimes client specifications are unsuitable because the client lacks knowledge of writing practices in the target language. Ideally, such problems were negotiated before the translation was started. If not, then the reviser must adjudicate between loyalty to the target language and loyalty to the client.

11.14 Employer policies

Employers of salaried translators, and agencies using the services of freelances, may issue statements about how they want their translators to approach the task. For example: use a certain dictionary in cases of alternative spellings; use 100% matches found in Memories without change; translate fairly freely in order to remove all signs of source-language rhetoric.

Sometimes revisers may not agree with employer policies. Some employers insist that translators and revisers focus on Mechanics and other matters where clients will easily see mistakes, but a reviser may think a translation needs Tailoring and Smoothing where 100% Memory matches have been used. They must then adjudicate between loyalty to the employer and loyalty to their own professional standards.

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

Error types and terminology: Delisle (1999); Hansen (2009b); Rasmussen & Schjoldager (2011); Robin (2018)

Translating punctuation: Rodríguez-Castro (2011); Wang (2018)

12 Degrees of revision

To revise or not to revise. That is the question to be considered in this chapter. Will a translation be looked at by a second translator, and if so, will the entire text be revised or just parts of it? Will it be compared to the source text or be re-read without comparison? Will all parameters be checked or just some?

If you look hard enough, you will always be able to find more things to change. Imagine that you are taking a final glance through a lengthy English translation. To your horror, you notice that some subheadings have all words capitalized while some have only the first word capitalized. Does this mean that quality control has failed, and that you should immediately set about making the capitalization consistent? No. The question is: just how important was it to catch this problem? With one text, it may be very important; with another, not important at all. Many readers may not notice, and even if some do, it may not create a bad impression in the case of a relatively ephemeral text, one which will be read by only a few people within the organization for information purposes, and then discarded. Tolerance for errors, awkward writing, even minor mistranslation, varies with the type of text. It may also vary with urgency: the client will prefer to have an awkwardly worded document *before* the meeting at which it will be used than a beautifully worded document *after* the meeting.

As we saw in Chapter 1, there are a great many things that can go wrong when writing or translating, and consequently there is a very long list of things you might check—or not. In this chapter, we'll look at how to determine the degree to which you will revise a text, and the consequences of less-than-full revision.

12.1 The need for revision by a second translator

Having a second translator look over a translation is costly, especially if a comparison is made with every sentence of the source text and all parameters are taken into consideration. Such revision work is usually done by a senior, more highly paid translator, and every minute devoted to revising someone else's translation is a minute not devoted to preparing a new translation. A 'second look' becomes time-wasting and therefore even more costly if the reviser has not been properly trained and makes large numbers of unnecessary changes. The whole exercise becomes largely pointless if the reviser misses many significant errors, and it becomes positively harmful if the reviser introduces errors—and there is some reason to believe that these things happen with alarming frequency.

The predominant view, as expressed in the policies of translation services and agencies, and surveys of translators, is that not every text requires a second look, and that even when it is required, the revision can sometimes be partial (less than the entire text is examined), need not be comparative (a simple reading of the translation is sufficient), and need not cover all parameters.

It should be noted that actual practices may vary considerably from policy. Interviews with revisers show that it is not always practical to do everything that policy requires, usually for lack of time or non-availability of personnel. Or the opposite: the policy calls for less checking work than the revisers think is necessary; they may then ignore the policy. Some translation services and agencies emphasize checking certain micro-aspects of a translation where errors will be immediately visible to clients: spelling, grammar, punctuation, client-specific terminology. However the revisers may not actually follow this preference strictly, and instead devote quite a lot of time to readability. That is because professional translators tend to see this as important, regardless of any policy.

How is the decision made about whether to have a text revised by a second translator? Here is a table summarizing the 'revision philosophy' at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, as set out by two of their translation service's revisers. Bear in mind that such policies may not work in particular instances because clients impose unrealistic deadlines or because demand increases but there is no corresponding increase in the number of available in-house or contract translators.

Translator has→ Text has↓	*High reliability*	*Good reliability*	*Fair reliability*	*Poor reliability*
High importance	1/2 Revision (re-reading) recommended	2/3 Revision important	3/4 Revision essential	5 Do not assign text to this translator
Medium importance	0/1 No revision	1 Decide case by case	2/3 Revision recommended	3 Revision important
Low importance	0 No revision	0 No revision	1 Decide case by case	1/2 Revision (re-reading) recommended

In this approach, the need for revision by a second translator (as opposed to reliance on self-revision) is based on the risk of negative consequences if errors are not found. Risk is seen as a function of the importance of the text and the reliability of the translator; 0 represents very low risk, 5 very high risk. As can be seen, the main factor is the importance of the text: the top line on the chart, representing texts of high importance, is the only one where the risk ever rises above 3. Even with a translator of poor reliability, revision is not seen as essential (only ‘recommended’) with texts of low importance. And even with high importance texts, if the translator is highly reliable, revision is also only recommended (not ‘important’ or ‘essential’) and it takes the form of re-reading the translation rather than comparing it with the source. This system assumes that the identity of the translator is known, something which is not always the case with outsourced material.

Translation services and agencies often have lists of text types which are deemed to be of high importance. Typically this will include laws and regulations, documents in which errors could have negative health and safety implications, and documents in which errors could harm the image or reputation of the corporation or government which has commissioned the translation (e.g. the front page of a Web site, or a pronouncement by a Very Important Person). Translations that are for information only (not publications) will have medium or low importance, though they may still require revision by a second translator if the drafting translator was inexperienced (as a translator, or in the field of the text). In addition, translations supplied by contractors will need to be checked to at least some degree in order to determine whether the work is satisfactory before payment is made. Finally, clients may specifically request a full comparative revision by a second translator, though they may have to pay a higher price for this service.

For self-employed translators, the key factor in deciding whether to have a second translator take a look is self-confidence. Are you confident in your own translation, or do you feel uncertain about it? Of course, one can be over-confident, especially if one has years of experience. It is therefore probably a good idea to have your work looked at occasionally, but you will need to find someone with an equal or preferably higher level of subject-matter knowledge.

12.2 Determining the degree of revision

In professional work, one does not have all the time in the world. The client is expecting the revised text by a date which is often not far off. You (or the translation service you work for) must therefore consider whether you are going to do a time-consuming full comparative revision of the text, checking for problems in all five groups of parameters discussed in Chapter 11 (Transfer, Content, Language, Presentation and Specifications).

If you have several jobs going at once, you must also consider whether they all merit equal attention. Better to devote the available hours to texts which merit more work. There is not much point in spending vast amounts of time on the stylistic editing of a text which is relatively ephemeral. If you do a less-than-full revision of these texts, you will have more time for a full revision of texts that merit it (those which will be read by many people over a long period of time, or by people outside the organization, or possibly by a few highly placed people who may get an unfavourable impression of the translation service if they find errors).

Here are the choices available to you, expressed in the form of questions:

1. Shall I check one, two, three, four or all five groups of parameters?
2. Within each group, shall I examine all parameters or just some of them? Within Transfer, you might decide to focus on Completeness; within Language, you might decide to focus on Smoothness. Within Specifications, you might decide to focus on use of client-specified documentation.
3. What overall degree of accuracy and writing quality should I aim at?
4. Shall I check the entire text, or just part(s) of it?
5. Shall I compare the translation to the source text or just glance at the source text as the need arises?
6. What degree of consistency shall I enforce, and for which aspects of the text? (On consistency, see Chapter 8)

12.2.1 Which parameters will be checked?

How will you decide which parameters to check (Questions 1 and 2)? Here are some of the factors, again expressed as questions:

A. Who will be reading the translation?
   With some types of reader, it may be important to pay special attention to Tailoring (see Chapters 4.1 and 11.6): readers who are not experts in the field of the text, those with less than secondary education, immigrants still learning the target language, and readers in other countries who are not native speakers of the target language. If people outside the commissioning organization will be reading the translation (i.e. it's a publication), then all parameters become more important. If the author of the source is likely to read the translation, it may sometimes be necessary to cater to this person by checking that the translation is not only Accurate but also as close as possible to the source in terms of syntactic structure and correspondence of vocabulary items, though obviously there are limits to this.
B. Why will the translation be read?
   If some of the readers are going to make decisions based partly or entirely on the content of the translation, then Transfer and Content are more important than the other parameters. If the translation will have a readership consisting of a single person, who will use it as a source of information for writing a further document in that field, then it may not be necessary to check Sublanguage (terminology); readers who are subject experts will know the right terms, as long as the ideas have been correctly conveyed.
C. For how long will the translation be read?
   If the text will probably still have readers many years hence, then it is worth looking at all the parameters, and being fussy about Consistency. If the text is ephemeral, there is no point in worrying about Presentation.
D. How will the translation be read?
   Will the readers skim through it quickly, or will some of them read very carefully, and possibly re-read? Skimming will be easier if the text is highly

readable in the sense of having good inter-sentence connections, and plenty of structural signposts. Careful readers will be disturbed by logical problems that may not be obvious on a quick first reading (a contradiction between two successive sentences; a use of 'therefore' where there is no cause-and-effect). If the text is a manual for consultation (i.e. it will not be read from start to finish), then you must ensure that each section is understandable on its own, and does not require a knowledge of the preceding sections. If the translation will be read aloud (it's a speech, for example, or repair instructions that will be read aloud to the person who is performing the repair), then Smoothing (including euphony) will be especially important.

E. Where will the translation be read?
Will it appear in a book? A manual for consultation while doing something else? On a webpage? On signage? The issue here is whether the readers will be sitting in a quiet environment as they read. Or will they be consulting the text in a busy environment with many distractions, perhaps performing some other task as they read, or walking past a translated sign, or reading their smartphone screen as they amble down the street? In these cases, brevity and simplicity of language will be extra important.

F. Am I familiar with the work of this translator?
If you have looked at the translator's work before, you know the kinds of error they are prone to. If you are self-revising, then you will hopefully know the kinds of errors likely to be present in the draft.

G. Is the deadline tight?
If the translator was rushing to meet the deadline and the reviser must also rush, then pick just one or two parameters, perhaps Accuracy and Completeness, or Sub-language (terminology).

H. Will anyone else be quality controlling this translation?
If a proofreader will be looking at your revised translation, then you can ignore house style sheet matters and the Presentation parameters, except for those aspects directly related to meaning (commas to signal sentence structure, bolding for emphasis).

Determining which parameters to check for is a matter of experience and common sense. Theoretically, one could attempt to set up a complicated system based on the above eight questions (A to H) about user and use. Such a system would tell you that if the answer to the first question is such-and-such, and the answer to the second question is such-and-such, and so on through the questions, then quality control should consist of spot-checking for Language and Presentation parameters. However, in the absence of any empirical evidence that a given degree of revision is best suited to a particular answer to the eight questions, such a complicated approach seems pointless.

Knowing the answers to questions A to E amounts to knowing the brief. Before you revise someone else's translation, it is vital that you know at least the answers to questions A and B: who are the readers and why will they be reading the translation?

Here's a chart showing the OECD's policy on which parameters to check.

Parameter→ Text has↓	*Accuracy*	*Additions and omissions*	*Grammar*	*Style*	*Terminology*
High importance	H	H	H	H	H
Medium importance	H	L	H	L	L
Low importance	H	L	L	–	L

As can be seen, the decision about which parameters to check depends primarily on the importance of the text. The letter H means that there is a high requirement to eliminate problems; the letter L means a low requirement; in other words, undiscovered problems related to that parameter can be tolerated. Thus errors in terminology can be tolerated in medium and low importance texts, as can a few additions or omissions of insignificant meaning elements. As for writing style, it receives no attention at all in low importance texts! Problems with accuracy, on the other hand, require careful attention at all levels of importance.

Bear in mind that this policy is being applied to the particular type of text that is translated at the OECD. For example, it seems that the audience of the translation always consists of the same type of individuals as the audience of the source, so tailoring to a different audience is not an issue.

12.2.2 What level of accuracy and writing quality is required?

Aside from picking out the parameters of interest (Questions 1 and 2), you need to consider how accurate and complete the translation needs to be and what writing quality is called for (Question 3). Here are four possible levels, though you may want to define your own:

Commissioner's Purpose	*Accuracy and Completeness (correspondence to source text)*	*Writing quality (readability and correctness)*	*One-word descriptor*
For speedy, basic understanding	Roughly accurate and more or less complete	Minimally readable	Intelligible
For information	Fully accurate and complete with respect to primary and perhaps secondary meaning elements	Fairly readable and mostly correct	Informative
For publication	Fully accurate and complete with respect to primary, secondary and most other meaning elements	Very readable and fully correct	Publishable
For image	Fully accurate and complete	Finely crafted wording and fully correct	Polished

In terms of the parameters discussed in Chapter 11, this table covers Groups A (column 2) and C (column 3). The table does not apply to adaptations such as marketing materials, where a high degree of writing quality may be required, but a high degree of correspondence to the source text is not a consideration. With regard to accuracy, the table distinguishes 'roughly' from 'fully' accurate, and within the latter, it distinguishes primary, secondary and other elements of meaning. Some texts with legal, financial or health & safety implications may require accuracy down to very small details, beyond both primary and secondary elements. In addition, some texts such as decisions of high courts may deserve finely crafted wording.

So to be really complete, one might add two rows to the table:

For publications with legal, financial or health & safety implications	Accurate down to very small details	Very readable and fully correct *or* Finely crafted wording and fully correct
For marketing	Accuracy not an issue	Finely crafted wording and fully correct

Let's look in more detail at the first four combinations of accuracy and writing quality requirements.

Intelligible

Depending on the user and the use of the translation, you may be aiming for a revised translation which makes sense but has a bare minimum of readability, may contain incorrect language, and is only roughly accurate (it will not seriously mislead or mystify the reader about primary elements of the message of the source text). There may be question marks in the final product indicating passages where meaning remains uncertain because you decided that additional research was not worthwhile. At this level, there is no point applying house style rules, worrying about Presentation, correcting unidiomatic expressions, or creating even text-internal consistency, never mind consistency with other texts.

Post-editing of machine translation output may aim at this level (see section 2.1 in Chapter 16). In some situations, it may also be the level expected of translators who occasionally produce translations into their second language which are not going to be published.

Informative

At this level, the final product avoids misleading the reader about primary and perhaps secondary elements of the message of the source text. It need not be more than fairly readable and mostly correct. This is suitable for translations that will not be published, or for less important published texts, or for texts required urgently. If you are revising the first draft of a document, there is no point in creating a nice smoothed version of a sentence which may later be deleted or completely altered. At this level, do not spend a lot of time on writing quality, Consistency or Presentation, and perhaps do not bother with house style rules.

Publishable

The final translation is fully accurate with respect to primary, secondary and perhaps other elements of meaning, and the language is fully correct, well tailored and smooth. House style rules are applied, Presentation is checked and corrected, and a reasonable level of text-internal Consistency (and perhaps some degree of consistency with other texts) is sought. This level is suitable for more important texts, whether or not they are actually published.

A clarification about 'publication' is in order. A 'publication' is to be understood as a document which will be available to an audience outside the organization which commissioned it. As the term suggests, it's a document for the 'public', or some segment of it. To put it another way, there is no such thing as an 'internal publication'. An organization may well publish full-colour documents on expensive paper that are distributed only in-house, but this glossiness does not turn such documents into 'publications' as understood here.

Polished

At this level, the reading experience is in itself interesting and enjoyable, quite apart from the content. Creating such a finely crafted text can be extremely time-consuming even if you are not aiming at that ultimate level of craftsmanship where you become the new Flaubert, re-writing a dozen times until each sentence is just perfect.

This level of writing may be sought when the client's image is at stake. You will also be aiming for this level if you are self-employed and your pricing strategy is to charge a high price and become known for exceptional writing quality, for example in commercial translation.

To clarify the concept of levels, here's an example, from a translation of an in-house newsletter that discusses a company's response to public complaints about a possible removal of trees from their property:

> The firm does not intend to remove the lime trees but it is necessary to carry out pruning of the trees to keep them healthy

Does this need to be revised? Perhaps you could change it to:

> The firm does not intend to remove the lime trees, but to keep them healthy, they will need to be pruned.

This is certainly a better quality of writing, in particular because it places the key word 'pruned' in focus position at the end. But there is no need for the change, because the translation will not be published; a 'fairly readable' translation will do. There is a tendency for revisers to enter an abstract mental space in which they are always aiming at the 'publishable', or worse, the 'polished' level, when this is not at all necessary.

Note that no wording inherently belongs to a particular level of writing quality. I would say that the first of the above wordings is 'informative' while the second is 'publishable', but that is just my opinion. The point is to have some concept of levels in your mind and apply it when you are revising.

Most revisers will mainly find themselves working at the 'informative' and 'publishable' levels, but it can be useful to have the other two levels in mind to help you keep your bearings. If you are aiming at 'publishable', you need to have in mind that you are not aiming at 'polished'. If you are aiming at 'informative', you need to have in mind that you are not aiming at 'publishable'. 'Informative' is perhaps the hardest level to work at, because you need to refrain from making a great many improvements that occur to you. To help you refrain, it may be useful to have the 'intelligible' level in mind: while you are indeed not making sentences smoother or more concise, you are certainly not sinking to the merely 'intelligible' level!

As 'language people', translators may find it hard to refrain from improving writing quality. You see that a sentence is wordier than it needs to be; the idea could be expressed in 13 words instead of 20. But will you stop to ask whether any useful purpose is being served by making the sentence more concise? It's important to bear in mind that the people who read our translations, especially those who are subject-matter experts, are interested in the world, not in words. If an agronomist is reviewing the literature to see what work has previously been done on wheat yields, and finds something in a language she cannot read, she may ask for a translation. You must keep in mind that she is interested in crops, not in language. It probably does not matter to her whether the sentence you are revising has 20 words or 13.

There may be a problem justifying less-than-publishable quality if clients are paying a set rate per textual unit, whether it be the word, the character, the line or the page. Why would someone pay a certain amount for 'informative' quality when 'publishable' quality costs the same? Ideally, a client who submits large numbers of texts for translation could be persuaded, at a given price level, to accept 'informative' quality for certain pre-determined text types, especially if they are told that the translation will then be ready sooner. However a 'levels' approach is most easily justified with in-house translation departments where clients do not pay, or when billing is by the hour, since it should take less time to achieve 'informative' than 'publishable'.

12.2.3 Full or partial check?

Will you read the entire text or just parts of it? Rasmussen and Schjoldager (2011) found in interviews with revisers that although a company's policy may be to always compare source and translation, the revisers do not necessarily perform a comparison for the entire text. Similarly, the revision manual of the Spanish department at the European Commission's translation service (EC 2010) says that 'In principle, the whole text must be revised, but in certain circumstances (e.g. if the translator is an expert in the subject) partial revision may do'. The Canadian Government's translation service used to have a policy of checking one, two or three 400-word segments of outsourced work (depending on the length of the text); if these were satisfactory, no further checking was done. Later the policy was changed: it was up to the reviser to decide how much of the text to check, unless the client was paying extra for full revision.

Here are some of the possibilities on this question of how much to read:

A. Full reading
   Read the translation in full. If you are checking for Accuracy and Completeness, compare each sentence to the source text. Otherwise do a unilingual re-reading, that is, refer to the source text only when a passage is questionable (you have found what seems to be an error in Logic or Facts and you need to see what the source says). When self-revising, you should always do at least a full unilingual reading
B. Spot-check
   Read the title or the cover page and the first paragraph, then read either at regular intervals (e.g. the first paragraph on every other page) or randomly selected paragraphs or pages spread over the entire text. Be sure to read passages at the end of the text since the translator may have been rushing to meet a deadline and so may have made more mistakes. Compare the selected passages to the original, or just refer to the original when a passage is questionable.
C. Scan
   Read the title or the cover page and the first paragraph, then read by 'following your finger' across each page, focusing on just one or two parameters. Refer to the original when a passage is questionable.
D. Glance
   Read the title or the cover page, the first paragraph and the last page.

Reading the title and first paragraph is a bare minimum. Why? Because if there are any typing errors or missing words at the very start of the text, that will immediately create a bad impression on the reader or client.

The choice of scanning or spot-checking is only a starting point. If you are using one of these methods and discover several language errors, or several cases where a check with the original reveals mistranslation, then you will want to revert to method A, or even return the job to the translator for further self-revision.

If time permits, it is a good idea to scan the text for accurate reproduction of numbers in any text where numbers are important to the message. Scanning can also be used to look for those errors that you know are common in translations from language x into language y. For example, when I am scanning an English translation from French, I keep a lookout for the expression 'by (verb)ing', because very often the formally similar French expression 'en (verb)ant' does *not* necessarily indicate 'how' something was done (the manner or the means used).

'He gave a speech during the opening conference at the university, by presenting the historical context' is nonsensical: presenting historical context was not the manner or means of giving the speech. Either the 'by' should be deleted or it should be replaced by 'in which (he presented)'.

12.2.4 Compare or re-read?

Unilingual re-reading (i.e. not looking at the source text unless a passage seems suspicious) can be very effective. At workshops, participants who have never tried it are often surprised at how many errors can be detected in this way. In particular, one can get quite good not only at spotting probable mistranslations in the draft but also at avoiding the introduction of mistranslations while correcting. You may at first worry, while making a change, that you have departed from the meaning of the source. However if you regularly check the source to avoid this, and keep track of your findings, in all likelihood you will discover after a while that almost all your changes are consistent with the source. You will develop a sixth sense about when you really do need to check the source.

That said, it is true that with unilingual re-reading, you may miss omissions and mistranslations. The text may read smoothly even though a sentence or paragraph has been omitted, and it may make perfect sense—but not the sense expressed in the source text.

If you keep discovering mistranslations when you check the source during unilingual re-reading, then you will of course switch to comparative re-reading. However, while comparative re-reading does no doubt increase the number of mistranslations and omissions that will be caught, it has its own disadvantages. The back-and-forth between source text and translation creates an unnatural reading process which may make it difficult to properly monitor readability. Comparative reading tends to focus attention at the sentence and sub-sentence level, so that errors in 'macro' features (e.g. pronouns referring to a previous sentence, the logic of an argument) may not be noticed. Consider the following translation about the problems which members of a ship's crew may have when they are under stress because they are trying to get passengers into lifeboats in an emergency:

Negative effects of stress

- Lack of concentration
- Recourse to improvisation at the expense of established procedure
- Focused attention
- Alternative solutions ignored
- Inability to solve complex problems
- Inflexibility

If you are doing a unilingual re-reading, and paying attention to meaning, it will be fairly easy to notice that 'focused attention' does not fit because it is not 'negative'. However during comparative re-reading, you will probably compare each item in the list with its source-text counterpart, one item at a time. If the source text contains the same error, you will likely accept it as a good translation of the source, and not notice its lack of fit with the other items in the list. (Perhaps the intention was 'overly focused attention', that is, not seeing the forest for the trees.)

Appendix 4 contains a sample unilingual re-reading with commentary.

12.3 Some consequences of less-than-full revision

Acceptable risk

There is a greater risk of letting serious errors pass uncorrected with any quality control system that does not require revision of the entire text for all parameters as well as a full comparison with the source.

Comparison and unilingual reading each have their attendant risks, as seen in the previous section. If you do not do both, you may be increasing the risk of uncorrected error (depending on your ability to notice inter-sentence flow problems during comparison). If you do two readings, revision will take longer.

In the case of partial revision, your system may assume that if there are no errors on pages 1, 5, 10, 15 and 20, then there are no errors elsewhere. Of course, this is just a probability. The translator's attention may have lapsed on page 13, with the result that a whole paragraph was omitted. Furthermore, this can happen to anyone; even an experienced translator working on an easy text of a familiar type can make such mistakes. To err is human.

It is usually impractical for revisers to do both a comparison and a unilingual reading of the entire text with every job, especially if all parameters are to be considered. So for each job, you (or your employer) need to define an *acceptable level of risk*. This may be done on economic grounds: are clients coming back or going elsewhere? Or it may be done on professional grounds: what will the impact of an error be on the translation's user? The worse the potential impact, the higher the degree of quality control you should apply. An error in a document that will be used as evidence in court is more likely to have negative consequences than an error in the minutes of a routine meeting. An error in a document that will be used by a great many people over a long period of time is more likely to have negative consequences than a document that will be used only once by a handful of people.

Generally speaking, unilingual re-reading can be justified as a time-saver unless the longer comparative procedure is dictated by a combination of serious consequences and a greater likelihood of mistranslation or omission being present (the translator's ability is unknown, the text was translated very quickly, the text was difficult either because the source was very poorly written or because the translator was inexperienced in the field of the text).

Types of error sought during partial revision and unilingual re-reading

In addition to the problem of errors in passages that are not checked, there is the problem of the type of errors sought in passages that *are* checked. There is a great temptation, when doing partial revision, to devote one's time to looking for relatively superficial, easy-to-spot errors. How satisfying to have found another case where the translator left a space between the last letter of a sentence and the period! But just how important a find was this? It would have been better to notice the mistranslation in that sentence! Unfortunately, you cannot instruct your mind to notice only serious errors. If you have time for only one read-through, you will inevitably see all kinds of errors: grammar mistakes, sentences that are not concise, and so on. (If you have time for two read-throughs, you can try fixing all these less important things on the first read.) Still, perhaps you will notice more of the serious problems if you avoid adopting a mental stance that puts you on the lookout for relatively trivial problems. Try to become aware of whether you are spending a lot of time on relatively unimportant things.

The same danger arises with unilingual re-reading. It can easily degenerate into proofreading, in the sense of a hunt for errors in Mechanics and Presentation: typos, wrong indentations, grammar mistakes, and the like. But *re-reading means reading for meaning* first and foremost, and secondly for writing quality. Does the argument, description or narrative make sense and is it easy to follow and suited to its intended readers?

What is the psychology behind the tendency to look for proofreading errors? Perhaps unconsciously one is thinking: 'I've been assigned to find mistakes, so I must find some. I'm not earning my pay if I just leave the text the way it is. But there's not a lot of time available, so I'll look for things that are easy to spot.'

If you do spend most of your time searching for errors in Presentation and Mechanics, then you are definitely *not* earning your pay. This is work that can be done by a copyeditor or proofreader, whose time is probably much less expensive than yours. Your services are required only if the quality control includes at least one of: Accuracy, Completeness, Logic, Smoothness, Tailoring, Sub-language, Idiom or Specifications. In some circumstances (if you are a freelancer working alone), you will have to check Mechanics and Presentation because there is no one else to do so, but if you are combining this with unilingual revision, make sure you are still reading for meaning. Ideally (if you have time), you will proofread in a separate step.

12.4 The relative importance of transfer and language parameters

This chapter has been concerned with how the features of a particular translation job determine the appropriate degree of revision. However there is a factor that goes beyond the particular text at hand. Revision is traditionally thought of as being concerned with two things: accurate transfer and good writing in the target language. Now, the relative importance of these may vary not just with the particular text but with the general social-historical situation in which translation is being done. For example, there have been times in history when accuracy was not deemed especially important; what was important was to create a beautifully written text in the target language.

The situation in Canada is interesting in that while accuracy is important whether one is translating from English to French or in the opposite direction, things are different when it comes to the importance of the language parameters. This is partly a matter of different attitudes toward language in the French- and English-speaking worlds. In English, we have long accepted a more relaxed (some would say sloppy) approach in non-literary writing, where language is seen as a means to an end, not something important in itself. In the French-speaking world, language has been valued more for itself (some would say it has been excessively and obsessively fussed over), though this is now changing as U.S. cultural norms become ever more influential.

In Quebec, however, there is an additional factor at work. To simplify somewhat, revision in Quebec has traditionally been first and foremost concerned with the quality of French. This is partly because such a large percentage of what Quebeckers read has been translation rather than original French, so that the quality of language in translations has a significant effect on the quality of the written language in Quebec society generally. In addition, the writing of Francophones (including junior translators) has often been laden with anglicisms to an extent unknown in Europe—and this has met with strong disapproval by French-speaking members of the translation profession. Defence of the quality of French has therefore been the central concern of revisers with all texts, not just the more important ones. It has also been a central concern in revision courses for Francophone translation students.

The situation in English-speaking Canada is completely different. Only a very small percentage of what people read is translation, and (with the exception of the small English minority in Quebec) people's speech and writing are hardly influenced at all by French. So revisers of French-to-English translations need only be concerned with eliminating those linguistic features that arise from the influence of the source text. They can focus on Accuracy, on Language, or on both, as the brief dictates.

You would do well to consider the relative importance of the language parameters in the social/historical context within which your readers will be receiving the product of your revision efforts.

12.5 A 'good enough' approach to revision

During workshops on revision, a few people always express shock at the idea of 'degrees' of revision and varying quality targets. Their goal, they proclaim, is excellence or even perfection. The first thing to say about such proclamations is that if most of the translations produced in the world were 'good enough' for their purpose, that would represent an enormous improvement on the current situation. Making 'fit for purpose' a reality is a difficult enough goal without aiming for the best possible translation every time. Second, a distinction needs to be made between self-revision and other-revision. If some translators want to make excellence their personal goal with their own translations, that's fine, but when they are revising others, they should take the goals of the first translator (or the first translator's employer or the commissioner) as given. If the first translator was aiming to create a translation that is fit for purpose, then the reviser must work on the basis of that purpose.

Note that 'good enough' is not being used here in the same sense as in Chapter 16.2.1, where it concerns the process of fixing machine translation outputs.

Practice

1. If you currently use varying degrees of revision, try to formulate the factors you consider.
2. Exercise on revising to different levels. Take the draft translation given you by your instructor and make it 'informative'. You will need to consciously ignore awkward wordings for example, or wordings that are not very concise. Stop for discussion. Then continue revising to make the text 'publishable' (but not 'polished').

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

Quality in relation to purpose: Samuelsson-Brown (2010 ch. 8.2); Wagner (2005)
Revision policies: Rasmussen & Schjoldager (2011); United Nations (2003), Annex 6
Types of revision: Matis (2011)

13 Revision procedure

Almost all discussion of revision tends to focus on the types of error the reviser should look for—the parameters of Chapter 11. But that is not enough. You need to know not only *what* to look for, but *how* to look for it. To state the obvious, *you cannot correct a mistake until you have found it*. It is all very well to know that the translation should have a level of language suited to the readers. The question is: will you *notice* that a particular phrase has an unsuitable level of language? You need to have a *procedure* that increases the likelihood that you will find the errors in a translation. And when you arrive at a passage that you think perhaps requires correction or improvement, you also need some *principles* to help you decide whether in fact to make a change.

Noticing the problems in a translation is the most difficult aspect of revision. Revisers frequently overlook clear-cut problems. Why is that? Two possible reasons are that they are working too fast and that they are not paying the right kind of *attention* to the text. The reviser's mind may be focused (perhaps to some degree unconsciously) on language and style problems, and the result is that transfer problems are not noticed, or vice versa. So in this sentence:

> Customers are reminded that the sale of tobacco products are limited to those 18 years of age and younger.

you might notice the error in number agreement (*sale…are*) but not notice that the sentence says the opposite of what is intended. Or, depending on your focus of attention, you might notice the meaning problem but not the grammatical one (the plural verb *are* is right next to the plural noun *products,* so the error might escape your notice, especially if you are reading quickly). If you think these problems are obvious, keep in mind that you would normally be reading the sentence as part of a longer text, and no one would be directing your attention to it.

If you are going to spot errors, you need to be wide awake. It's probably a good idea to stand up every once in a while, walk away from your computer, do some stretches or other exercises, perhaps have a brief chat with someone or have a snack. Some people find it helpful to listen to music while revising.

13.1 Procedure for finding errors

We'll assume that if you are revising someone else's work rather than self-revising, you have already determined who the users of the translation will be and what use they will be putting it to. We'll also assume that you have selected a degree of revision (as discussed in Chapter 12); that is, you've answered the following three questions:

- Am I going to check the entire text, or just parts of it?
- Am I going to check Transfer parameters, or just Content, Language and Presentation (CLP) parameters?
- Am I going to check any aspects of Specifications and Consistency? (These aspects will often pertain to Transfer or to CLP.)

Suppose you have decided to check Transfer parameters (Accuracy and Completeness) as well as some CLP parameters. In other words, you are going to make a comparative check, not just a unilingual check of the translation itself. The following questions then arise:

- Shall I check the CLP parameters at the same time as I make the comparative check, or shall I make two separate checks?
- If I make separate checks, shall I make the comparative check first, or the CLP check first?
- If I make separate checks, shall I do the entire text at once (for example, read the entire text for CLP, then for Transfer) or shall I work a paragraph or two at a time, or a section at a time (for example, read a couple of paragraphs for Transfer, then read them for CLP, then move on to the next few paragraphs)?
- Shall I read the source text first or the translation first during comparative checking?
- How many words should I read at one go during comparative checking?

These five questions will be considered in the sections that follow.

One check or two?

If you have enough time, you may find it best to perform separate checks for Transfer and for CLP. The reason is that detecting one type of error can get in the way of detecting the other type. For example, you are less likely to spot a lack of Smoothness in the transition from one sentence to the next if you are comparing sentences one at a time against the source text to find mistranslations.

Unfortunately, even if you do two separate checks, you may still encounter a difficulty we'll call the micro/macro dilemma. Some CLP errors involve just a single word or phrase. Is this term right? Is this word combination idiomatic? Other errors manifest themselves over stretches of text larger than one sentence. Is the sequence of tenses right from one sentence to the next? Are the inter-paragraph connections clear? Are the headings consistently formatted? You may find it hard to focus on problems of the former kind (micro-problems) at the same time as you check for problems of the latter kind (macro-problems).

The micro/macro dilemma mainly affects the unilingual check, where you are reading the translation without comparing it to the source. (Comparative re-reading by its nature tends to have a micro-level focus.) Consider the Logic parameter. A contradiction may not come to your attention unless you are reading the text through with a specific focus on the flow of the argument or narrative. If you are also looking for micro-problems of Language and Presentation as you read along, your attention may be distracted from a contradiction in the thoughts being expressed.

If you have time, you could do two unilingual checks, first looking for macro-problems, and then for micro-problems. Even then, you may not be able to attend to all macro-problems at once. Consider consistency of Layout. If you are focused on Logic, will you spot the fact that, starting at the top of page 20, paragraphs are no longer indented? (Perhaps the translator started page 20 one morning and forgot that the previous day they had been indenting.) This argument suggests yet a further separate check, but of course that will most often be completely impractical! With practice (and depending on your own psychology) you may be able to attend to several types of macro-problem at once, or, hopefully, both macro- and micro-problems at once.

If you want to focus on microlinguistic problems, without getting distracted by the overall message of the text, try reading the text backwards, beginning at the last sentence.

It is perhaps worth bearing in mind that there is as yet no empirical confirmation that doing two or more checks yields a better result than a single check. Many translators are sure that it does, and it would certainly seem that it should, but the whole point of empirical testing (see Appendix 6) is precisely to determine whether what seems obvious is in fact true. One researcher found that the final quality resulting from comparative re-reading was higher than with unilingual re-reading, but she also found that doing two re-readings, one of each type, failed to make a further significant improvement. Presumably many of the errors that would have been corrected during a separate unilingual re-reading were corrected during comparative re-reading. This by the way suggests that anyone who wishes to focus separately on accuracy and on language and style, and to that end decides to do two re-readings, should do the unilingual re-reading first. If the comparative re-reading is done first, there will be a tendency to make language and style changes as soon as they are noticed. Let's look at this question of the order of readings in more detail.

Comparative check first or last?

To answer this question, there are three considerations, which unfortunately may not all lead to the same conclusion.

First, all other things being equal, you should read the translation alone first, without comparing it to the source text. This is especially so when you are revising someone else's work, because you have a golden opportunity to see the translation from the user's point of view. You are not burdened by prior knowledge of what the text is supposed to be saying—knowledge which the translator possessed from reading the source text. Your knowledge of the message is coming from the translation alone.

A second consideration is the problem (discussed in greater detail later in this chapter) of introducing errors while revising. Suppose you do the CLP check first, and then the Transfer check, but during the Transfer check you introduce Language errors. There is no further check that would enable you to find these new errors. So it may be worth determining which type of error you are more prone to introducing—language errors or mistranslations. If you are more prone to introducing language errors during the Transfer check, then check for language errors last. If you are more prone to introducing mistranslations during the Language check, check Transfer last. Determining which type of error you tend to introduce is unfortunately not easy. In the course of revising a half dozen texts, you will have to save a copy of the text after you complete the first check, then save a copy after the other check, then compare the two using the Compare function of your word processor (see Chapter 9.4).

The third consideration is related to the second. Quite apart from your own error-introducing tendencies, there is the question of whether the job is one in which language and style are especially important. If they are, you may want to do the CLP check second, to ensure you catch any Language errors that you introduced during the Transfer check. Of course this runs counter to the first consideration mentioned above: you will not be reading the translation the way the user will, without benefit of prior knowledge of the source text.

Read the whole text or work a few paragraphs at a time?

Once again, if you want to try to duplicate the final user's experience, you will start by reading through the entire translation from start to finish. If you come to an odd passage, where you wonder what the source text says, make some kind of mark and come back to it later during the comparative check. If you keep interrupting your reading to make a comparative check, you may lose track of macro-features such as the flow of the argument. Your attention to flow is going to be interrupted enough as it is whenever you stop to make a correction.

Read source text first or last during comparative checking?

Here, happily, almost all considerations point in one direction: Read a sentence of the translation first, then the corresponding sentence in the source text. Reading the source text first has several disadvantages:

- If you are checking Language at the same time as you check Transfer, your reading of the source text may influence your judgment about the translation.

In particular you may fail to notice that the translation is unidiomatic or nonsensical as long as it seems to correspond to the just-read source.

- Reading the source first may make you think of your own translation—the last thing you want to have in your head when revising someone else. You should never compare the translation in front of you with your own mental translation.
- Your reading of the source text will put in your mind the meaning which the translation is supposed to have. When you come to read the translation, you may project this meaning onto the translation. You may not see that the user of your translation will probably interpret the passage another way. This is particularly a problem if the target-language sentence happens to be ambiguous: it has two possible interpretations. Reading the source sentence first may have the effect of cueing in your mind the interpretation which corresponds to the source, whereas the reader of the translation may take the other interpretation.
- You will not see the text from the user's point of view (the user will not be reading the source text first!)

The only small disadvantage of reading the translation first is that if the translator accidentally omitted a sentence or paragraph, you may not notice this. Your eye will probably alight on the portion of the source that seems to correspond to the chunk of the translation which you have just read.

In the absence of large-scale empirical studies of this issue, we must rely on logic, deducing a recommended procedure from a hypothesis (in this case, the hypothesis that reading the source first will make it more difficult to make an independent judgment of the translation). One study found that revisers who start their work by paying attention to the translation rather than the source, whether by unilingual re-reading or by reading the translation first during comparison, did a better job. It can't be overemphasized that the two texts are not equal: as a translator or reviser, your product is the translation, not the source text!

Size of unit to read during comparative checking

The answer to this question partly depends on individual psychology. How big a unit of text in one language can you keep in mind while you read the text in the other language? One general principle does seem valid: avoid reading a *very* small unit in one language and then turning to the text in the other language. Such a practice will not give you enough context, and it will increase the likelihood of your overlooking bad literal translations. Consider this sentence:

> Given the concentration required by translation, and the numerous details a translator must deal with, often within more or less reasonable deadlines, one cannot expect a perfect translation.

If you read the whole sentence paying attention to meaning, you can immediately see that something is wrong: 'more or less reasonable' means 'fairly reasonable' and this doesn't fit. Given knowledge of the topic, we expect to read 'often within unreasonable deadlines'. Now if you were reading this sentence phrase by phrase, and you compared 'often within more or less reasonable deadlines' to the French source text ('souvent dans des délais plus ou moins raisonnables'), you might not detect any problem. The match seems perfect: at the word level, 'plus ou moins' equals 'more or less'. However, French 'plus ou moins raisonnables' means 'not so reasonable', emphasizing the negative, whereas English 'more or less reasonable' emphasizes the positive. If you are lucky, a warning bell goes off in your mind every time you come across 'more or less' in a translation from French, but a surer way to avoid disaster in such a case is to avoid reading small bits of sentences.

13.2 Principles for correcting and improving

Having looked at procedures for finding errors, let us now look at some principles for making changes as you check. It is important to keep checking and correcting (or improving) distinct in your mind. Revising is checking a translation for problems and then *possibly* making changes. You may identify a passage as a candidate for a possible change, but then decide not to actually make any change. For example, you see that a sentence is somewhat awkwardly structured, or not as concise as it could be, but you decide not to do anything about this.

It is best to use a three-step process: 1) spot a potential problem; 2) decide whether a change is merited; 3) make a change only if you deem it necessary. Step 2 is the crucial step.

The first two correcting/improving principles we'll look at concern cases where you absolutely must make a change. The remaining four tend in the opposite direction; they are variants on a single principle: Minimize changes.

1. If you cannot understand the translation without consulting the source text, a correction is definitely necessary.
2. If you have to read a sentence twice to understand it correctly, a correction is needed. For example, if you need to read a sentence twice to see how it relates to what precedes, that means there is a problem of Smoothness. Or again, if a passage sounds nonsensical on first reading, but then you realize that the translator's wording could make sense after all, there is nevertheless a problem of Logic, for the future reader may at first make the same 'mistake' you did.

This principle does not apply to certain texts which are by nature difficult to read: the extremely long sentences of English legal texts are very often hard to read; some passages in a scientific text may have a very complex argument which you may find hard to follow if you are not a subject-matter expert.

Try as much as possible to read at normal reading speed in order to capture the future reader's experience. Obviously there are limits: unlike you, the future reader is not trying to detect problems and does not have to stop to make changes.

If the future reader will be reading aloud, then read the text aloud yourself.

3. Avoid perfectionism.

As you go through the text, avoid asking yourself: *Can* I improve this? Of course you can, but that's not the question. The question is: Do I *need* to improve it? Your aim is not to achieve a flawless text. Your client or employer cannot afford to have you revise, re-revise and re-re-revise. And there are diminishing returns on revision effort: your fifth re-reading will take almost as long as your first, but will probably reveal few if any errors. What you can do is guarantee that you will correct, free of charge, any mistakes the client finds. Your goal as a professional is to achieve adequacy—a text that meets needs. Perfection is a personal goal, not a business goal.

Achieving adequacy is no mean feat. Because there are so many things that can go wrong, and it is so hard to attend to all aspects of a text, it is in fact quite difficult to get everything adequate, and to do so from first page to last. This last point is very important. What is the use of a brilliant translation of the first three pages of a text if the last three contain many errors because you ran out of time?

So do not even *think* about an alternative wording until *after* you have decided that improvement is needed.

4. If in doubt about whether to make a change, don't.

In case of uncertainty, make no change and move on. This is the default revision action: do nothing. Unless new research, or newly discovered evidence from elsewhere in the text, has revealed a definite error, any change you make while you are in an uncertain state of mind about its necessity is just as likely to make your translation worse as it is to make it better.

5. Satisfice.

Once you do decide to make a change, use the first adequate alternative wording that comes to mind. Don't be the earnest reviser who goes on generating several more wordings in hopes of finding one that may be even better. To borrow from Oscar Wilde, learn the vital importance of not being too earnest! If you've already found an adequate wording, then you're finished! That wording suffices because it satisfies needs. This is 'satisficing', a combination of 'satisfy' and 'suffice'.

6. Don't retranslate! Don't retranslate! Don't retranslate!

Work with the wording that is already there. Try to fix problems with small changes, or if not, then somewhat more extensive changes, but *do not restart the drafting process* by working from the source text and inventing a whole new translation of a sentence. If a whole new translation does pop unbidden into your mind, ignore it, no matter how absolutely fabulous it may be.

If you are new to revising other people's work, you may find it faster to retranslate, that is, to substitute your own translation of an entire sentence. But it's important to make the extra effort to solve the problem with a small change. The translator will certainly appreciate not seeing an entire sentence deleted!

Write 'do not retranslate' on a piece of paper and post it in front of you; recite it 100 times before going to bed; play a quiet recording of it while you sleep so that the idea enters your subconscious. A reviser who constantly retranslates is an economic burden on the organization and a cause of low morale among the translators, whose work is being wasted. If after a year of revising others you are still recasting large numbers of sentences, perhaps you are not cut out to be a reviser.

There are of course occasions when, unfortunately, there is no choice but to retranslate some or even many passages of the text. First, the translator may simply be unqualified; the job should never have been assigned to them. Second, the translator was wrongly informed about the level of quality required (as discussed in Chapter 12.2.2): they were working to the 'informative' level but should have been working to the 'publishable' level. (The opposite case is far more common though: the translator was rightly working to the 'informative' level, but you—perhaps not entirely consciously—are thinking of 'publishable' as you revise.)

If you are self-revising a translation from your first language into your second, you may find it much easier to re-translate a sentence than to work with the existing wording. When you come across a sentence you have doubts about, the quickest procedure may be to mentally paraphrase the corresponding sentence in the source text (which should be easy for you as a native speaker of the source language) and then prepare a whole new translation based on that re-wording.

7. Beware of introducing errors.

> Striving to better, oft we mar what's well.
>
> —King Lear, Act I Scene 4

Introducing Accuracy errors: As you re-arrange a sentence to achieve Smoothness, you may unwittingly remove an important bit of content, or unwittingly change the meaning (see example in Chapter 4.5). If at that point you have not yet done the comparative check for Accuracy and Completeness, there is no problem. But if you have already finished the comparative check, then you have done the worst thing a reviser can do: you have made the translation worse. If you discover that you do tend to introduce mistranslations, you may want to recheck Accuracy right after you re-arrange a sentence, or always do your Accuracy check last.

Introducing Language errors: Language errors tend to be introduced when you are focusing on one small segment of a sentence and you are not attending to the surrounding text. A very common error in English is to change a singular noun to a plural (or vice versa) and then forget to make corresponding number changes in words like 'this' and 'it' (which may be in the next sentence, referring back to the noun you have changed). Another type of error that results from parcelizing your attention is lack of euphony: you change 'took place' to 'occurred' in 'the exodus of Iraqi Kurds took place last week', and you fail to notice the uneuphonious and unintentionally humorous result 'Kurds occurred'.

You may also introduce a Language problem while correcting for Accuracy. For example you change 'administered environmental management systems' to 'instituted environmental management systems'. Unfortunately, the sentence as a whole then reads '…instituted environmental management systems within penal institutions', with two occurrences of the root 'institut-' that have very different meanings. If you find you are making such mistakes, the solution is simple. After making a change, re-read the whole sentence, and possibly the next and previous sentences.

Deleting too many or too few words while correcting: With the advent of electronic writing in the 1980s, missing words became more common because it is so easy, when you are removing part of a sentence, to press the key combination that deletes words once too often, or to select too lengthy a string of words for deletion. Conversely, you may not press the delete keys often enough, or you may select too short a string of words. Again, the solution is to re-read sentences after you delete portions of them.

8. Minimize corrections of features you are not currently checking.

Suppose you are doing more than one check, and currently you are checking Accuracy. You spot a Language problem and decide to correct it, thinking perhaps that you may not notice it later, during your unilingual check. Making such a change is harmless provided that you do not then get diverted by other Language problems, to the point where you find yourself tailoring and smoothing the sentence in question. This defeats the point of separate checks. Some people have no problem shifting mentally back and forth from accuracy-checking to language-checking, but others will find that they miss errors if they keep shifting their focus of attention.

13.3 Order of operations

Below is an ideal but very lengthy order of operations, for use when making corrections directly on screen rather than on paper (see Chapter 9.3). Such a procedure would be suitable with texts that will be used for many years, or for making important decisions. If you are self-revising rather than revising someone else's work, you may already have made some of these checks while drafting (see Chapter 14.1). If so, then you need to decide whether to recheck. It is also a good idea when self-revising to do an initial Spellcheck to remove annoying typing errors. You don't want to be distracted by the temptation to correct these manually as you move through the text. (But don't forget to do another Spellcheck when you have completed all your revision work, in order to catch spelling and typing mistakes you introduced while revising!)

1. Read the entire translation for Logic, Smoothness, Tailoring, Sub-language and Idiomaticity, as well as those aspects of typography and punctuation which are important for meaning, and any related Specifications from clients or employers.
2. Do a comparative check for Accuracy and Completeness.
3. Read the entire translation from start to finish for Mechanics (other than spelling) and Layout (including related Specifications), Consistency, and any Language errors introduced during steps 1 and 2.
4. Do a separate check for numbers if they are important to the message. Also check section numbering for proper sequence, and make sure any references to section numbers are correct.
5. Check the document's Organization.
6. Run Spellcheck after all changes have been made in case you have introduced any errors.
7. Press Control-S to make sure you have saved all your changes.

Never forget step 7, which is important in *any* revision procedure, however brief. Before you print out a copy of the text, or send it off by e-mail to your client or to the translator, you must be sure that you are indeed printing or e-mailing the *final* version of your revision, *with all corrections included*. If you print from screen, you will be fine, but if you print or e-mail from the list of files on your hard drive, you will be printing or e-mailing the last version that you saved. The best practice is to save frequently. You may have set your computer to make a timed backup every so often, but if you don't actually press Control-S, then your final version, with all corrections included, will be in the backup file, not the main file.

Now, very often (indeed, perhaps almost always, depending on your own situation), it will not be practical to carry out the lengthy procedure described above. Here is a selection of shorter procedures. At the end of each, run Spellcheck and press Control-S.

A. Do two read-throughs—one unilingual and one comparative—in whichever order you think best.
B. Do a single comparative check. Don't stop for style changes (problems in Smoothing, Tailoring and Sub-language); correct only gross language errors if found. Don't use this procedure if working into your second language; you have more need than native speakers to do a separate reading for Language only, so use (A) or (C).
C. Do a single reading of the translation for the CLP parameters. Look at the source text only if this is necessary to clear up a Logic problem (the translation does not seem to make sense).
D. Check Presentation and Mechanics. Also count paragraphs and lists of points to ensure there are no gross omissions. You may also want to pay special attention to correct reproduction of proper names, dates and other figures. With this procedure, you are essentially functioning as a proofreader.

While revisers generally work through a translation from start to finish, many people check the front matter (title, summary, table of contents) last. This is especially common when revising the work of others, since the summary will make more sense once the reviser has become familiar with the text. Also, the reviser needs to ensure that the table of contents reflects all the revisions made in the body of the text, especially if the automated table of contents feature is not being used.

13.4 Handling unsolved problems

What if the deadline is approaching, there is no time for further research, the author cannot be reached (or is simply unknown), and you have been unable to solve a problem? If creating the final version for delivery to the client is your job (not the original translator's), then it is your duty as a professional to admit that you have failed to find a solution. A professional is not someone who knows all the answers; a professional is someone who knows how to go about finding answers, but if they fail, they admit it.

Ask the client how the problems should be signalled: translator's notes incorporated into the body of the text? translator's footnotes? a separate page of notes? translator's notes in Comment boxes? question-marks or highlighting incorporated into the text? If the client will do more work on the text before it goes to a printer or to readers, then highlighting or Comments or a separate page of notes will often be acceptable. Similarly, if the text is being translated for information only (it will not be published), the client may be quite happy to have question-marks indicating uncertain passages. Otherwise you will need to prepare a finished version with translator's notes.

One difficulty with incorporating question-marks is that they may be misinterpreted by the reader. If a doctor reading my translation of a medical text comes across '?no foraminal encroachment?', he or she may think I am not certain whether there is such an expression as 'foraminal encroachment'. But that was not the problem. The problem was that I was not certain whether the source-text author was in fact saying that there was no foraminal encroachment. In such a case, you might use the Comment function to distinguish 'term uncertain' from 'meaning uncertain'.

Finally, remember that many clients do not want to spend a lot of time discussing problems in the translation. Clients who happen to be the author of the source text may be very happy—indeed anxious—to do so, but many others will want *you* to handle the problems.

Here are four common situations:

1. You understand the concept but can't find the right way to express it in the target language.

Write something which conveys the concept. Or take advantage of context: if the translator has referred to something called a 'blanky knife' and you cannot find any evidence for the existence of this term, perhaps you can write 'use an appropriate knife'. If the text is one where correct terminology is important, signal your problem to the client.

2. You can't decide which of two interpretations is right.

Fudge, that is, write something which has both meanings. This can often be accomplished through an ambiguous syntactic structure: a certain word order or punctuation device will allow the sentence to bear both meanings. If fudging is not possible, or the text is one where fudging is unacceptable, provide both possible translations. Here's an example using an incorporated translator's note:

> It is possible that helicopters will be used [*or perhaps*: use of helicopters is permitted] when ferrying heart-attack victims to the hospital.

3. You can't resolve a contradiction between different passages of the text.

If you are sure the contradiction is a genuine one (you have made every effort to resolve it, or every effort possible within the time available), you must somehow indicate the problem. Otherwise, readers who know the text is a translation may wonder if the contradiction is due to the translator rather than to the source-text author.

4. You don't understand the passage at all.

One solution is to make an intelligent guess. Here's an example using question-marks:

> He said that ?boldness? was the secret to moving ahead.

When using question marks, it is best to use two marks: one at the outset of the uncertain passage and one at the end of it, to signal the extent of the problem to the reader. It may also be a good idea to italicize the question marks, or place them in square brackets, or highlight them in colour, in order to distinguish them from indicators of interrogative sentences.

Another possibility is to signal such problems with literal or unidiomatic translation:

> He said that the audacity of our abilities was the secret to moving ahead.

When you really do not understand a passage, literal or unidiomatic translation is actually better than smooth-reading, idiomatic translation, because you want to be sure that the reader recognizes the passage as a translation. Conceptual errors expressed in idiomatic language are more likely to be (wrongly) attributed to the source-text author than to the translator.

Question marks and literal translation can also be combined:

> He said that ?boldness? [*literally*: the audacity of our abilities] was the secret to moving ahead.

If question marks are unacceptable, use a suitably vague word suggested by context. Suppose you are in a rush to revise the translation of a source text that contains this passage:

> The strike sent a very strong message to the government that its workforce was becoming radicalized, with poignant implications for future relationships in the workplace.

The translator has inserted a question mark in her translation. Now as it happens, one of the dictionary meanings of ‘poignant’ (‘distressing’) does fit, but suppose you only know the meaning ‘profoundly moving’. To save time, you could mentally substitute an uncontroversial word that fits the context (say ‘significant’) and translate.

Occasionally, if you are in doubt about the meaning of a passage, you can simply delete it from the draft translation. Sometimes it is obvious that a word or phrase is of no importance and could have been omitted from the source text. For example, if there is a parenthesis containing four examples of the author’s point, and you can’t understand the third one, omission will cause no harm. Another example: connector words can often be omitted if you cannot see how one sentence is related in meaning to the next; it may be better to leave it to the reader to fill in the connection rather than write something misleading.

If the obscure passage is a complicated description of a natural or technological object or process, the solution may be to simply delete the description and refer the reader to an accompanying diagram or photograph.

If entire passages are obscure in their detail, but clear in overall intent, you can sometimes substitute a summary for the full translation which appears in the draft. This approach, along with omission and fudging, will be necessary if the brief is to produce a text whose status as a translation is to be concealed; in that case, obviously, no alternative translations or translator’s notes will be possible.

13.5 Inputting changes

When corrections and improvements are made on paper, they have to be input on the computer. The question arises: who does this work and who is responsible for ensuring that it is done accurately? There is no point in painstaking revision work followed by sloppy inputting of changes.

With student trainees and new employees, the matter is clear. They input the changes, and then the supervising reviser checks that this has been done properly. One of the points to cover in evaluating trainees and new employees is how good they are at this task. Skipping over some of the handwritten changes is a not uncommon problem.

In other cases, changes may be input by the translator, the reviser (with contracted work), a proofreader or a member of the clerical support staff. In a large organization, a particular approach to this task may be laid down by senior or local managers; alternatively, it may be left up to teams of translators to decide on a system. The important thing is to have a definite system with clear-cut responsibilities.

The best system, if workable, is to have the translator input the changes (or Accept/Reject changes in a Track Changes display). That is because there is always a danger that the reviser, who is less familiar with the text, has unwittingly introduced errors.

13.6 Checking Presentation

Checking certain features of Presentation is especially important if your revision falls at the end of the production process; that is, after you input corrections, the text will not go to a proofreader, or a secretarial support unit or page layout designer within the translation department. Indeed, the client may use your output as such, printing it for distribution, or turning it into a PDF file and placing a link to it on a Web page. Here are some common problems, expressed as questions:

- Are there any section headings isolated at the bottom of a page?
- Are there any widows (first line of a paragraph isolated at the bottom of a page) or orphans (last line isolated at the top of a page)? You may find that the widow/orphan protection option in your word processor does not in fact prevent widows and orphans.
- Are there any unintentionally blank or almost blank pages? (The translator may have unintentionally introduced a hard-page code that causes the next word to appear on a fresh page.)
- Are tables or columns skewed?
    - Are some lines of point-form lists indented more than others or less than others?
- Are there pages where all words are bolded?
- Are the last few words of a footnote on the next page?
- Is the footnote indicator on the same page as the footnote?

You might also want to check the legibility of the text. Of course, clients and readers can manipulate e-text themselves to make it legible, but they may find the need to do so annoying, or worse, they may receive printouts of hard-to-read text rather than adjustable e-text. To make it easy for the reader's eye to follow the text, you should ensure that:

- It uses a serif font (serifs are fine lines finishing off the main strokes of letters, as seen in this book).

- The font size is no smaller than 10 points.
- The lines are not too long. Long lines make it hard for the eye to keep its place when returning to the next line. When producing landscape text (text parallel to the long side of the paper), use two or three columns in order to achieve shorter lines.
- The text is not full-justified (lined up with both left and right margins). Without added manipulation, full-justified text may have irregular spacing between words, and this is hard on the eyes. Check how your word processor handles justification; there may be no problem. If you do use full justification, make sure it is turned off for the last line of the paragraph; otherwise this will happen.

13.7 Preventing strategic errors

A considerable amount of correcting work can be eliminated if the translator avoids making strategic errors. A strategic error is a wrong decision about how to handle a certain category of translation problem. This decision then leads to multiple errors that cannot be quickly corrected with Find&Replace. For example, suppose a new translator is working on a lengthy text that contains large numbers of names of organizations, companies or committees in the source language. There are many ways such proper names can be handled, but it may be that some of them are not appropriate in the text at hand. It is therefore important to find out, at an early stage, how the translator is handling this issue. In the case of a contractor, you can send instructions about strategy along with the text, for example: ‘leave all organization names in the source language, italicize them, and add a translation in brackets’. Another scenario: suppose you are heading a team of translators working on a very lengthy text. You do not want a situation to arise where one translator regularly uses the personal pronouns ‘I’ and ‘you’ but another translator favours impersonal forms (‘Earlier I suggested that you avoid rewriting’ versus ‘A suggestion was made earlier that rewriting should be avoided’). Once again, you need to decide early in the translation process how formal the writing should be and advise the translators accordingly.

13.8 Getting help from the translator

Ask translators to signal passages which they found especially difficult so that you can concentrate on these if time is limited. If they have translated an expression in a way you might find odd, they should write a note or use an agreed-upon mark to signal that in their view this is a good translation, despite its oddness. If they have obtained confirmation of a technical term, they should check-mark it so that you do not need to recheck it.

It’s also a good idea for translators to check-mark confirmed terminology in long texts, so that when they come to self-revise, possibly a week later, they will know what they have already checked and what remains to be checked.

13.9 Procedures, time-saving and quality

In this book, there has frequently been occasion to distinguish things that are matters of rule-following from things that require judgment. Spelling is rule-governed, but tailoring a text to readers requires judgment. Now, when a reviser (or a translation service) creates a procedure, in the sense of a predetermined sequence of steps for checking translations, what happens is that rules replace judgment. If the procedure calls for just scanning a particular kind of text, or a job done by a senior translator, rather than giving it a fuller check, then one does not stop to consider what would be best in that particular case. If the text is of type x, or it has been done by translator y, then it is scanned because the approved procedure says so.

Generally speaking, it takes less time to follow a rule than to make a judgment and act on it. So every time you leave room for judgment, you increase production time. On the other hand, you probably also increase the number of errors caught. Thus in deciding what procedures to adopt, and how rigidly they will be applied, the time/quality trade-off discussed in Chapter 10.14 comes into play once more.

Summary of techniques for spotting errors and avoiding introduction of errors

1. In self-revision, leave as much time as possible before starting the post-drafting phase. (See Chapter 10.6.)
2. In self-revision, change the appearance of the text on screen, or print it out, or read it aloud.
3. In comparative re-reading, read the translation before reading the corresponding bit of source text.
4. Read separately for the kinds of things you tend to miss.
5. Do one reading with a macro-focus, one with a micro-focus.
6. To help focus on micro-linguistic problems, read the text backwards, starting at the last sentence.
7. Read draft translations on paper, not on screen. (See Chapter 9.3.)
8. After a stylistic change, check that you haven't changed the meaning.
9. After any linguistic change, check whether this calls for change elsewhere in the sentence or in the next (or previous) sentence.
10. After deleting part of a sentence, check that you have not deleted too many or too few words.

Practice

1. Try to formulate the revision procedure you use. Does it vary with the type of text?
2. In a workshop or course, divide up into groups and have each group take a different approach to revising the same draft translation. For example, one group might do a single check for Transfer and the CLP parameters, another

group two or even three separate checks. Members of each group then exchange their revised versions with members of another group. Examine the revised translation you receive and compare it with your own. Discuss the results with other members of your group. Can you correlate procedure with types of error found or not found? Each group then makes a presentation on its conclusions to all participants.

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on this publication.

Samuelsson-Brown (1996; 2010, chapter 8.10)
Comparative versus unilingual revision: Brunette (2005); Marashi & Okhawat (2013)
Order of comparative reading: Ipsen & Dam (2016)

14 Self-revision

According to the international standard ISO 17100, translators must check their draft translations 'for possible semantic, grammatical and spelling issues, and for omissions and other errors, as well as ensuring compliance with any relevant translation project specifications'. Skipping self-revision is simply unprofessional. The minimum acceptable is a full unilingual re-reading of the translation—no scanning or spot-checking. If time permits, a comparative re-reading may be done instead or in addition, depending on how confident the translator is about the accuracy of the translation.

Self-revision enables you to check the text-level features of the translation. During drafting, attention is mainly at sentence level, and there is therefore a need to consider whether the sentences and paragraphs hang together and reflect the rhetorical norms of the target language.

When the translator is a freelance producing directly for a client (not for a translation agency), this may be the only check the translation receives, unless the translator has another freelance look at it. When the translator is an employee, self-revision is still very important because in many translating organizations today, designated quality controllers most often do not carry out a full revision of the draft translation. In some organizations, senior staff translators operate like freelances in the sense that their self-revised translations may go straight out to the client.

Many of the matters discussed in Chapter 12 (degrees of revision) and Chapter 13 (procedures) are applicable to self-revision.

In Chapter 1, I pointed out that it is easy to make mistakes when writing or translating, and easy not to notice these mistakes. Now I should add that it's probably harder to notice your own mistakes than the mistakes others have made. That is because the wording is yours, so that you have a familiarity with it and a certain personal attachment to it. As a result you may fail to notice problems that will be obvious to others.

14.1 Integration of self-revision into translation production

In this chapter, we'll be concentrating on an issue that is peculiar to self-revision—the different ways you can integrate checking and amending work into the overall process of producing a translation. How do professional translators integrate checking into their work? Self-descriptions by translators during workshops on revision, as well as empirical studies of self-revision (see Appendix 6), suggest that there is no one recognized approach; different people do the job quite differently.

The production of a translation can be described in terms of three phases and five tasks:

Three phases of translation production
(1) pre-drafting (before sentence-by-sentence drafting begins)
(2) drafting (with or without the aid of translation memories and machine translation)
(3) post-drafting (after sentence-by-sentence drafting is complete)

Five tasks to be performed
(1) Interpret the source text.
(2) Compose the translation.
(3) Conduct the research needed for tasks 1 and 2.
(4) *Check* the draft translation for errors and amend if necessary.
(5) Decide the implications of the brief. How do the intended users and use of the finished product affect tasks 1 to 4?

Different translators distribute the tasks over the phases differently. Perhaps they will develop a default strategy for texts with which they are familiar (say, texts in the field of finance that are reasonably well written, under 3000 words, and have a deadline that allows 4 hours per 1000 words). They will vary the strategy when confronted with unfamiliar texts: those in other fields, or not well written, or much lengthier, or with a shorter deadline.

I should make it clear before proceeding that, in speaking of strategies, I am referring only to what translators do more or less consciously. By ‘more or less’, I mean that some things have become so much a matter of routine that a translator may not be immediately aware of them. But apart from that, much that goes on in the mind when we use language is completely inaccessible to our awareness, and is therefore not part of ‘strategy’.

There are two types of strategy: for comprehension of the source and for composing the translation. For comprehension, the default strategy may be to do considerable preparation before beginning sentence-by-sentence composing of the translation. Translators who adopt this strategy may read the source text through entirely or at any rate in some detail, mark difficult passages, do a considerable amount of conceptual research (i.e. research needed to understand a passage), and perhaps even jot down some possible target-language wordings—all, of course, with the brief in mind. Other translators work quite differently: they take a quick glance at the text (perhaps to see if they need to ask for reference documentation) and then start composing the translation. They may do a certain amount of research as they go, or simply leave a blank, write down alternative translations, or take a guess at the meaning preceded by a question mark; they then do further research after drafting is complete. Thus the post-drafting phase may not consist simply in checking-and-correcting; it may include research and composing work as well.

There are several default approaches to drafting the translation. Some translators we may call ‘Architects’, borrowing a term from the study of writing strategies discussed in Chapter 1.1, but using it somewhat differently, to refer not to a strategy for creating an entire text from the pre-drafting to the post-drafting phase, but rather to a strategy for composing individual sentences during the drafting phase. Architects are so called because they do a lot of planning: they consider several possible target-language wordings in their minds before finally picking one and typing it out; they then move along immediately to the next sentence of the source text.

Others, whom we may call ‘Steamrollers’, type out something as soon as they have read the source sentence, and then proceed immediately to the next sentence of the source text. They do not ponder possible wordings in their minds before their fingers begin moving on the keyboard.

A third group—the ‘Oil Painters’—also type out something (often a rather literal translation) as soon as they have read the source sentence, but they immediately revise it, perhaps several times, before proceeding to the next sentence. They translate-by-revising so to speak. They are called Oil Painters because they lay down one wording, then another on top of it, and then another. Oil Painters and Architects both try to get down a fairly finished translation during the drafting phase, the former through revision, the latter through mental planning.

Thus the term ‘self-revision’ does not refer only to checking-and-correcting that takes place during the post-drafting phase (though many people do use the term that way); the drafting phase includes some degree of checking-and-correcting work as well, this being especially true of Oil Painters.

Some translators need to Oilpaint (revise during the drafting phase) because they do not read whole sentences before beginning to compose, just enough to get started. It is then sometimes necessary to backtrack because the unread portion of the sentence forces changes in the already translated part. Consider this sequence:

> Source text:
>
> Le nombre d’évasions a diminué dans la majorité des pénitenciers à sécurité minimale durant la première moitié de l’année fiscale 1999-2000.
>
> Gloss:
>
> The number of escapes has diminished in the majority of the penitentiaries with minimum security during the first half of the financial year 1999-2000.

After reading as far as the French for ‘minimum security’, the translator wrote:

> The number of escapes has dropped at most minimum-security penitentiaries

Then after reading the remainder of the French, it became necessary to backtrack and change the tense ('has dropped' to 'dropped') because the text was written during the 2000–2001 financial year, and the perfective was therefore not permissible. Presumably some people use this approach because they have found that only a few such changes are necessary after the remaining portion of the sentence is read. As a result, time is saved, and the translator can compose more continuously, with relatively short gaps for reading. Those revisions which do prove necessary are not terribly time-consuming; even a bigger change (e.g. moving 'at most minimum-security penitentiaries' to the front of the sentence to improve the link with the preceding sentence) is simple using the word processor's click-and-drag option.

Translation Memory (see Chapter 16) disrupts the Architect and Steamroller strategies to a greater or lesser extent depending on how much target-language material has been found in the Memory's database. The translator tends to become an Oil Painter, constantly stopping to revise bits of target-language material that have been pre-inserted from the Memory, or to read wordings proposed by the Memory and decide whether to use them. (Memory may also slow you down if you are spending a lot of time reading suggestions which you then decide not to use.)

People who speak their translations using a dictation machine appear to be either Architects or Steamrollers; Oil Painting is impractical because it calls for frequent backtracking, which is awkward with such a machine. For those who dictate using speech recognition software that turns speech into text, there is a need to speak very clearly or risk having the machine fail to recognize words. But it is hard to concentrate on speaking clearly if you do not know exactly what you are going to say, so you must plan a good stretch of translation before opening your mouth; otherwise there will be a great deal of on-screen correcting required. Thus users of such software will probably be Architects.

After drafting is complete, Steamrollers will often find that they need to do a considerable amount of revision. Architects and Oil Painters will probably have less to do at the post-drafting phase, the former because of their careful consideration of several possible wordings before writing, the latter because of all the revision they have already done during the drafting phase. Of course, during the post-drafting re-reading of the translation, translators get a more synoptic view of the text, and certain macro-level problems that were not evident when focusing on individual sentences may be identified as needing revision. Those who dictate may discover during this phase that unwanted features of the spoken language have crept into their drafts.

One empirical study found that highly experienced translators tend to make most of their changes during the drafting phase; students, and translators with only 2–3 years' experience, more often wait until the post-drafting phase. Another such study found that professionals spend more time on the post-drafting phase than students but make far fewer changes during that phase than students; their effort is devoted to very careful reading, rather than to writing.

Another aspect of the drafting phase where translators may differ is focus of attention. Some focus on the Language parameters (especially Idiom) when working on familiar texts. That is, their aim during the drafting phase is to set down readable, flowing prose, perhaps a rather free translation. They do not want to pause to work in every single secondary idea in the source text, as this interrupts the composition process. Then they use the post-drafting phase to bring an idiomatic but not entirely accurate or complete translation into closer conformance with the source text.

Some people do the opposite: in the drafting phase they try to get down a very accurate and complete translation, though perhaps one which is somewhat literal. Then they use the post-drafting phase to fix up the Language parameters. You may not be aware of having a focus on Transfer during the drafting phase, but it is useful to *become* aware of it in order to spend your post-drafting time wisely. During post-drafting, you should pay special attention to Language. You may find that this is not easy, because you will tend to accept wordings you have already composed unless they are truly awful.

Another function of the post-drafting phase may be to correct the effects of 'automated' drafting. It is well known that as translators gain experience, they increase their speed by automatically translating source-language expression X by target-language expression Y. Ideally, a bell goes off in the mind if Y is in fact not appropriate in a particular passage, but sometimes this bell may not be functioning properly. The post-drafting phase affords an opportunity to correct the resulting errors.

You might also consider whether some of the revision work you are doing during the post-drafting phase could be avoided. For example, if the source text is poorly written, are you improving the writing as you compose your initial draft, or are you leaving such improvements until the post-drafting phase? The latter approach is probably more time-consuming overall. Another example: the post-drafting phase is not a good time to make decisions about things like the level of formality of language. Changing the level will be very time-consuming; it is not something you can do by search-and-replace. Better to come to a final decision about such matters early in the drafting phase.

With longer texts, you may be wasting time during the post-drafting phase because you are checking points you already checked—perhaps days earlier—during the drafting phase but have now forgotten about. If you often find yourself checking a point and then realizing that you have already checked it, place a mark on that passage of the translation the first time you check it.

To sum up, people differ in how they integrate the checking task into the translation production process, and as a result there are differences in how much checking remains to be done in the post-drafting phase, and which parameters need to be checked during that phase. We do not know how many people use one approach, how many another, though informal shows-of-hands during workshops reveal that Steamrolling is very common when translating familiar texts.

Is there a best way to work? No one knows, because empirical studies have not yet advanced to the point where we can say that one particular way of integrating the checking task into the translation production process is superior (that is, it results in a translation which is better, or is produced more quickly, or both). In all likelihood, the best way to work will vary from one person to another. So the question is whether you have found the way that is optimal for you. Perhaps if your default strategy is to be an Architect, you should give Steamrolling or Oilpainting a try.

14.2 Self-diagnosis

If you think there may be a problem with your current approach to self-revision, you could attempt a formal diagnosis of your work methods. Here are some of the questions you will need to answer:

(a) What are the weaknesses in my draft translations? That is, what types of problem are typically present at the end of my drafting phase? Your self-revision procedures should focus on these. There is no point wasting time on your strengths. In other words, you don't want to be *over-checking*. Why check consistency of heading treatment if your drafts are already consistent?

To diagnose the weaknesses in your drafts, save a copy of your translations at the end of the drafting phase. After a while, you will have accumulated a body of drafts which you can use for diagnostic purposes. (See Chapter 15.2 for more on diagnosis.)

(b) What are the weaknesses in my final output? That is, what types of problem are typically still present at the end of my post-drafting phase? These are the weaknesses which your checking procedure is not currently catching. So you need to change your procedure to deal with them. If you discover that your inter-sentence connections are still not very clear at the end of the post-drafting phase, then you need to be spending more time on unilingual re-reading of your translation.

(c) To what extent am I *over-correcting*? How much time do I spend making unnecessary changes in my draft? Can I justify each change to myself, in terms of the revision parameters ('I've left something out', 'that's the wrong level of language'), and more particularly in terms of the readership and future purpose of the translation ('that won't be understood by the non-expert readers', 'this is a prestigious publication'). To some extent, over-correcting arises from a lack of self-confidence. Inexperienced translators find it hard to quickly decide that a wording is alright. Being uncertain, they make changes that are in fact not necessary.

(d) To what extent am I *introducing errors* while self-revising?

To answer questions (c) and (d), you will need to save several versions of your translation as it comes into being during the drafting and post-drafting phases. You can then compare the versions using the Compare function of your word processor (see Chapter 9.4); as you examine the changes you have made, you can see whether you are over-correcting or introducing errors.

(e) How *systematic* is my work?

To answer question (e), save one of your draft translations in a separate file before you proceed to the post-drafting phase. Six months later, open the file and self-revise again. Compare the changes you made with those you made six months earlier. While your new wordings may well be different, the locations at which you made changes should be more or less the same. If they are not, you are not working systematically.

If you are very ambitious, you can install on your computer a video recorder or screen logger such as QuickTime Player, BBFlashBack, SnagIt or CamStudio. You will then be able to record everything that happens on your screen while you work. You can play the recording back and observe your self-revision habits. There is also software that will record all your keystrokes and play them back (for more information, enter the words 'Translog' and 'translation' in Google).

14.3 The term 'self-revision'

Some people may prefer to reserve the term 'revision' for the process of checking someone else's translations (discussed in Chapter 15), for two reasons. First, there is a significant difference between checking the work of others and checking your own work. While the former usually takes place after the translation is complete, the latter, as we have seen, is distributed over two phases: the drafting phase and the post-drafting phase. The ISO 17100 standard uses the term 'checking' for the self-revision work which occurs in the post-drafting phase and makes no reference at all to self-revision during the drafting phase. Many people may regard the self-revision work done during the drafting phase, especially by Oil Painters, as simply a normal part of the writing process rather than a distinct process: as you compose sentences, you monitor what you've written, and occasionally you recompose.

Secondly, some translators do not approve of the decision by the managers of many translation services and agencies to replace revision by a second translator with 'revision' by the original translator, once people have acquired a certain amount of experience. For them, the very term 'self-revision' implies that the substitution is acceptable. They think, on the contrary, that since everyone makes mistakes, possibly serious ones, most texts should be given some degree of revision by a second translator. Or at any rate, translators should always have the option of having a colleague look at their work. Ultimately, this is a question of acceptable risk, given the importance of the text and who has translated it. It is also an empirical question: how many significant errors are found when a translation is seen by a second translator rather than being self-revised?

In some workplaces, the term 'self-reviser' is used to designate those translators whose work normally goes out without being seen by a second translator. Thus there are two kinds of translator: those who 'check' their own work and then pass it on to a reviser, and those who are autonomous. In other workplaces, there is no such designation: whether a translation is seen by a second translator will depend on the factors discussed in Chapter 12.1.

Practice

1. Write down how you think you distribute the tasks over the phases. Do you do a lot of comprehension work before you start or do you try to understand-as-you-go? When it comes to drafting the translation, are you an Architect, a Steamroller or an Oil Painter? Do you focus on Transfer or on Language during the drafting phase?
2. If you are one of those who make quite extensive changes during the post-drafting phase, do you think this means there is something wrong with the way you work during the drafting phase?
3. Do you think your self-revision procedure varies with any of the following factors:
   - length of text?
   - urgency of translation request?
   - topic (familiar or not)?
   - quality of the writing in the source text?

   If so, how?

4. Before a class or workshop session, draft a translation of a short text. As soon as you have finished, read and answer a set of questions prepared by your instructor about your drafting phase. Then print out your draft and revise it. As soon as you have finished, read and answer your instructor's questions about your post-drafting phase. Do not read the questions before you draft or revise your translation.

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

Integration of self-revision into the translation process: Breedveld (2002); Carl et al (2011); Dragsted & Carl (2013); Englund Dimitrova (2005); Jakobsen (2002); Lehka-Paul (2018)

Self-revision procedure: Mossop (1982)

15 Revising the work of others

When revising others, you may have two different functions. You will always have a business function: preparing the text for delivery to the client, and perhaps writing performance appraisals for the personnel department. In addition, you may have a training function: showing people where their strengths and weaknesses lie, and advising them on how to improve. In both functions, interpersonal relationships are very important.

The great danger when revising others is to treat the task as similar to self-revision. In self-revision, you naturally feel free to change your own wordings, even though that may mean wasting time (self-revisers who are perfectionists or do not yet have sufficient self-confidence may also replace their own perfectly good translations). However when revising others, you have to keep in mind that they probably take pride in their work and will not be happy if you have made large numbers of unnecessary changes. The result will be poor working relationships.

In this chapter, the focus will be on the interpersonal aspect of revising translations prepared by colleagues or contractors. However, increasingly machines are among the 'others' whose output must be revised. Revision of Translation Memory and Machine Translation outputs will be discussed in Chapter 16.

15.1 Relations with revisees

When you revise the work of others, you may be in one of a number of different situations:

(1) The person you are revising (the revisee) is a colleague (usually at your own rank) or another freelance. You are revising each other's work.
(2) The revisee is a colleague (usually at a lower rank). If he or she is a new employee, you may be responsible for on-job training, so that your revision also has a didactic function.
(3) The revisee is a student on a practicum whom you are training.
(4) The revisees are members of a team translation project which you are heading. They are each contributing to a single text, and you are ensuring the unity of the final product.
(5) The revisee is a contractor.

In situation (1), you will give the revisee your suggested changes and perhaps have a discussion about them. The revisee may or may not accept your revisions. The translator, not the reviser, bears the ultimate responsible for the quality of the translation.

In situations (2) and (3), the revisee has no choice but to accept your changes, though your employer may require you to always discuss the revisions (as part of your training function) and perhaps try to come to an agreement. However you have the final say, because you—not the translator—are the one with responsibility for the quality of the translation. *Despite this, you should still see the text in front of you as someone else's translation, not yours.* If the deadline is imminent, there may not be time to come to an agreement, and discussion will have to take place after the translation is delivered. In situation (4), some members of the team may be colleagues at your level, but if there are disagreements, someone has to make final decisions, and that someone is you. With lengthy texts, whether or not divided among several translators, revision may have to start before the translation is complete in order to meet the deadline.

In situation (5), you may simply revise the translation and then send it out, not informing the contractor of changes you have made unless they complain about a financial penalty. Some organizations, however, strongly encourage their revisers to provide feedback to contractors. Such feedback will help eliminate future errors arising from the fact that contractors usually have less familiarity with the client (they are in the same position in that respect as new staff translators).

In all these situations, you may be making unnecessary changes. Why? One reason is that, somewhere at the back of your mind, the thought is lurking that if you do not make changes, you are not earning your pay. This idea needs to be rooted out: you are being paid to read, not specifically to write.

There is also a tendency, when revising others, to replace a perfectly good translation with the translation which the reviser would have produced. 'No passion in the world is equal to the passion to alter someone else's text', wrote H.G. Wells. You need to remember that you are not competing with the translator to see who can produce the best translation. You are helping the translator to achieve acceptable quality. So the proper idea to have in mind while you are revising is 'this is not my translation', not 'I can do better than this'. As a reviser, you have to learn to accept what you may see as sub-optimal translation. That said, if the translator asks you how you would have translated a passage, you can certainly answer if you have a training function. Indeed with new translators, your training function should lead you to take the initiative and show the translator other ways in which a passage could have been translated even though you are not actually replacing the translator's wording.

To avoid unwarranted changes, one thing you must do is recognize the validity of approaches to translation other than your own. For example, different translators tend to work at different points on the literal-free scale. There is a certain acceptable range, recognized by professional organizations and by translation providers. It is important not to unconsciously define acceptability in terms of your own habits with respect to this range.

You may find revision more difficult if the translator tends to translate quite freely compared to you. Generally, it is easier to do a comparative re-reading of a close translation, because it is easier to coordinate the two texts with your eye. However, that is not a reason to encourage a free translator to adopt a closer approach. The translator is working for the client and reader, not for you. Each person must be left to find the approach that suits them, within the range generally recognized as acceptable.

Many translators tend to favour superordinate words: they will write ‘take’ when the source text has a more specific verb. That may be perfectly acceptable; don’t rush to change it to ‘grab’. A few translators tend to do the opposite: write ‘grab’ even though the source text has a general word. That too will often be perfectly acceptable when translating into English, a language that likes specificity in verbs of motion. This illustrates an important difference between revising others and self-revision: in self-revision, you might want to stop and change a general term to a specific one if it occurs to you; it’s your work after all. But when revising others, the situation is quite different: it’s someone else’s work, and you must respect their approach unless the word they have used could mislead the reader about the intent of the source text.

Another way to avoid unwarranted changes is to bear in mind, when you start a job, that the translator knows more about this particular text than you do. If you come across a wording that strikes you as odd, especially near the beginning of the text, you should consider that the translator may have had a good reason for that wording, a reason which is not yet apparent to you because you have not yet advanced very far into the text. The translator may also have consulted the client, the author or a subject-matter expert about the passage, or the translation may be based on some documentary source with which you are unfamiliar.

Don’t rush to impose your own interpretation of a passage. Bear in mind the inherent vagueness of language. For example, the source text may contain one of those words which is more general in meaning than any word in the target language. A more specific target-language word must be used, and the translator has selected one possibility. You would have selected another, but really when you think about it (and it is important to think about it when revising others), the context allows for both interpretations.

Another point to bear in mind is that the translator is a qualified writer just like you. It is important not to impose any personal linguistic preferences: perhaps you tend to write ‘keep in mind’ rather than ‘bear in mind’, but that is not a reason to change the translator’s ‘bear in mind’; there’s no difference in meaning or style between these two expressions. Also, avoid getting the reputation of being a linguistic fussbudget: perhaps you don’t like so-called ‘split infinitives’ but they are in fact perfectly grammatical and acceptable. More generally, it is important to make language and style changes only when these are warranted by the communicative goal. Revisers have often been seen in a bad light because they have attempted to impose a single absolute notion of language quality based on literary tradition. In professional translation today (at least as far as work into English is concerned), there can be no place for the notion of a single, universally applicable language standard. You must operate with a multiplicity of standards corresponding to differing communicative purposes.

If one of your functions is to train the revisee, then a good way to avoid ruffling feathers is to make a visual distinction between necessary changes and suggestions. For suggestions, use a pencil or a different colour of ink, and instead of crossing out the draft translation, simply write the suggestion above it. If revising on screen, place suggestions in a Comment box. The suggestions will show revisees how a problem might have been better handled, or just differently handled, without labelling their work as 'wrong'. This activity, where both necessary changes and suggestions are made, is sometimes called training revision (in workplaces) or didactic/pedagogical revision (in translation schools).

You may also want to visually distinguish major from minor problems within the necessary changes.

A final way to avoid unwarranted change is to ask yourself the question: can I justify this change? A good rule of thumb is that you should be able to justify 9 out of 10 changes by reference to some authority (e.g. a dictionary), or by invoking some specific category of error (e.g. wrong level of language) or principle of translation (e.g. 'it's not sufficient to include the same points as the source text; you have to have the same focus') or instruction from the client ('use these terms'). 'It sounds better my way' is not a satisfactory explanation for a change you have made (unless the problem really is a matter of euphony!). Notice that justification does *not* mean a reason for the proposed new wording; it means *a reason for making a change in the first place.*

Why 9 out of 10 instead of 10? The answer is time constraints. For example, the translator has written 'cropland' and you would need to do research to determine whether this is right. You are certain, however, that 'farmland' would be correct. If the deadline is looming, you may not have time to do the research or ask the translator why 'cropland' was chosen. You should make the change to 'farmland', even though 'cropland' may well be perfectly acceptable.

Justification of changes is important not only to avoid unnecessary changes but also to win the respect of those you revise. If you can explain why you made your changes, you will be seen as someone the revisees can learn from; if you cannot, you will be seen in a negative light, as arbitrary or authoritarian.

In order to justify your changes, you will need a set of categories and a vocabulary for talking about translation. You could start with the parameters of Chapter 11 ('not smooth', 'not the right sub-language for this field'), and then make up more specific categories if you need them. You may find it difficult to explain changes if you do not have a knowledge of basic translation theory. Also, if grammatical instruction was not part of the curriculum when you studied your mother tongue at school, you may be at loss to explain certain language-related changes you have made.

All these cautions should be especially kept in mind by anyone new to revising others. The main mistake new revisers make is over-revising, not under-revising. And of course, the more revisions you make, the greater the risk that you will introduce errors, and make the translation worse. Revisers would do well to adopt as their motto 'First, do no harm'! Your default revision action should always be to do nothing. (This is not to say that under-revising is never a problem. A desire to get to the end of a long and dreary text may lead you to overlook wordings which you really should change.)

Even if you take precautions to minimize changes, and even if you give reasons for your changes, there will inevitably still be cases where the translator just does not agree with you. Sometimes this is just an inability to accept correction—a stubbornness which new translators must get over if they are to succeed. However if the translator has a good counter-argument, and time is available, you might try submitting the dispute to a third party. If the dispute is over the meaning of the source text, the third party could be a native speaker of the source language, such as a colleague who works in the opposite direction (from your target language into your source language). If time is not available, just point out the practical realities: the deadline is imminent and someone has to decide; it may be that you are wrong and the translator is right, but given your greater experience, the opposite is more likely. If it does turn out that you were wrong, don't conceal this fact. The same applies if you are discussing a change you want to make and you suddenly realize that the translator is right after all. Admit this immediately. Most people will think more highly of someone who admits mistakes, and they will then be more open to accepting criticism of their work.

Criticism is of course governed by cultural conventions. In some cultures, fairly blunt criticism is acceptable; in others, it's necessary to be more indirect.

One way to reconcile junior translators to revision is by occasionally asking them to revise the work of senior translators. This creates an appreciation for the difficulties of revising, and it shows that everyone makes mistakes. It's also an excellent way to learn about the fields with which the translation service deals, the translation strategies appropriate to the service's clients, and the tricks senior translators have acquired.

Something else you can try if you have a training function, and the text is not too long, is to sit with the translator and have them read their translation aloud while you follow along in the source text, making comments and suggesting changes as you go. To avoid the added cost of having two people working simultaneously during the revision phase, the translator could skip the self-revision phase and simply make comments on his or her own translation while reading it aloud to the reviser. Even if the reviser works alone, the training function will ideally include sitting with the translator and pointing out weaknesses (and strengths!).

While newly hired translators must learn to accept revision, it is important not to create a dependency; these translators must take responsibility for their work. You do not want them to think 'I don't need to bother checking this point because the reviser will figure it out' or 'There's no point making stylistic changes because the reviser will just make a different set of changes.' To avoid such a situation, it's important to identify, as soon as possible, one or more types of text which the translator does well, and announce that these texts will no longer be revised (unless there has been a specific request from the client to do so). If you go on revising every text, long past the time where this is really necessary, that will be seriously demotivating for the translator.

In larger organizations, junior translators are often annoyed when they are assigned to a new reviser, and the new reviser makes very different kinds of changes. For more on this, see Chapter 10.7.

In some situations, you will need to keep in mind two distinct tasks as you revise the translator's work: preparing the translation for the client and training the translator. The two functions call for a different attitude toward error. In preparing a translation for delivery, an error is just something that needs to be corrected. For training purposes, however, you will also want to consider matters that are completely irrelevant when preparing a text for delivery:

- The type of error. Which types of error is the translator most prone to?
- The cause of error. What can the translator do to avoid such errors in the future?

The next two sections of this chapter will be concerned with these issues: diagnosis of a translator's strengths and weaknesses, and advising juniors and student trainees on steps they might take to improve.

15.2 Diagnosis

For purposes of delivery to the client, there is no reason to assign an error to a particular category. For training purposes, however, some sort of categorization is needed in order to formulate the translator's strengths and weaknesses.

Organizations that have a need to evaluate (translation schools, professional associations that test translators and so on) have developed classifications of errors and corresponding terminologies. However, no standard terms are in use by revisers in the English-speaking world. Individual revisers simply devise their own ways of talking about draft translations.

To prepare yourself to give oral or written assessments of someone's work, it is perhaps best not to start with a long list of error types. The main purpose of such an assessment is to identify the main areas of strength and weakness. Decide whether the translator's problems are mainly with Transfer or mainly with Language, and then go into more detail, using the parameters of Chapter 11. Here are two sample diagnoses, as they might appear in a formal appraisal addressed to personnel managers. Each identifies a main strength and a main weakness, and then adds a couple of other points.

> Her drafts read well but tend to be full of minor departures from the meaning of the source text. The formatting is sometimes inconsistent, and she keeps forgetting to use the client's special terminology.
>
> His drafts are accurate but there are too many un-English turns of phrase. Also, the connection between sentences isn't always clear, and he sometimes skips over parts of sentences.

The first translator is strong on Smoothness, but weak on Accuracy, and there are some problems with Layout and Specifications. The second translator is strong on Accuracy, but weak on Idiom, and there are problems with Smoothness and Completeness.

In formulating a diagnosis of a particular translation for discussion with the translator, avoid quantitative statements. It is not very helpful to tell someone that their draft translation had 3 omissions, 6 unidiomatic word combinations, 2 mistakes in number agreement and 11 minor mistranslations. Some of these mistakes may be accidental—the product of momentary inattention rather than a symptom of an underlying problem in the translator's methodology. The question is not how many mistakes the translator made, but what general areas they need to work on. Perhaps the minor mistranslations are not so important but the lack of idiomaticity is egregious and needs immediate attention.

Diagnosing a translator's problem areas is not easy. Not all revisers are good at it. Perhaps it ought to be a qualification for anyone applying for a reviser position that will have a training function.

15.3 Advice

It is all very well to point out someone's mistakes in a particular text, or to provide a general diagnosis of their weaknesses; it is certainly useful for junior translators to be aware that they are making certain kinds of mistakes. But there is not much point in them merely resolving to 'do something about it'. The main problem for juniors is not *that* they made mistakes, but *why.* What was it that led to the mistakes being made in the first place? A good training reviser should try to point out possible causes, and then give suggestions about how to avoid that type of mistake in future.

Obviously before giving advice, you have to identify problems. Some problems can be seen in the outcomes (the draft translations you revise) but others arise from the way the translator was working. To identify these latter problems, you could agree with the translator to record a couple of their translating sessions with a video recorder or screen logger. You can then see whether the translator researches terminology in the best way, whether they endlessly dither about the wording of sentences (even though their first or second wording was fine), and so on.

Some of the common problems of junior translators are easily remedied. If there are frequent omissions of a paragraph, a sentence or a point in a list, the translator should get into the habit of counting paragraphs, sentences and listed points. The methodological sources of many problems, however, may not be so clear; what goes on in a translator's mind remains more or less a mystery.

One possible way you may be able to help is by ascertaining the translator's work procedures. Junior translators have often not yet developed an order of operations that will help them avoid error (see Chapter 13). For example, suppose the problem is lack of Idiomaticity. This problem can be tackled in two ways: avoid writing unidiomatic wordings in the first place; or notice unidiomatic wordings once they are present. Now many new translators claim that they do indeed read their translations over without looking at the source text; in theory, this should reveal unidiomatic passages, especially if the translator is a native speaker of the target language. If this is apparently not working, then the effort should focus on the original composing stage. Perhaps the translator should attend less to Accuracy at this stage, and more to Language. If they focus on composing a good sentence, and don't worry too much about Completeness and Accuracy, then they will have less need to keep looking back at the source text, and hence it is less likely that the source-text wording will negatively influence the translation. In this approach, Accuracy and Completeness can be checked during the post-drafting phase.

If a translator has a problem with speed, it may be that they are wasting time by making many pointless changes during the original drafting of the translation. Suggest that they try Steamrolling through the draft, not stopping to make changes (see Chapter 14.1). Checking and correcting/improving will then be concentrated in the post-drafting phase. The translator may also find it easier during the post-drafting phase to identify the weaknesses of the translation, especially in the areas of Logic and Smoothness, because a continuous text is now available in the target language.

If the translator is a student trainee, it is especially important to give advice about self-revision procedure. Since assignments at translation schools are typically rather short, the practicum may be the student's first encounter with the problems of checking a lengthy text.

15.4 Research during revision

How much term and concept research will you do while revising the work of others? If you are training a newly hired translator, or checking the first translation submitted by a contractor, then unless you are fully familiar with the field, you may need to repeat much of the translator's research in order to check that it is being properly done. In other cases, you should strive to minimize research. It's the translator's job, not the reviser's. If you suspect a problem, research it yourself for just a couple of minutes, starting with the translator's wording. Then, if unsuccessful, send the matter back to the translator for further research. Junior translators can be asked to indicate their sources, so that you do not end up repeating their research. Experienced translators can be asked to put a checkmark beside any passage where they believe you might have doubts, to indicate that the translation, despite appearances, is correct.

Practice

Texts used for exercises on revising others should be ones that require no research (except in dictionaries or other wordbooks). That way, participants can focus on the problems of revision and not be distracted by the need to carry out conceptual and terminological research. Instructors or workshop leaders should set time limits that will encourage participants to keep moving through a text rather than get fixated on specific points. In some exercises, there is no need to think of a replacement wording; it's sufficient to underline the problem expression.

Exercise 1. Receive from the workshop or course leader a draft translation with handwritten revisions, along with a statement of the brief (the intended user and use), and the source text. Answer the following questions:

(a) Was each change needed? If so, did it adequately correct the problem?
(b) If the change was adequate, how would you justify it, either with reference to general translation principles or to the parameter list in Chapter 11?
(c) Have any errors been missed?
(d) Have any errors been introduced?

Half the group could be given one brief (e.g. translation is for publication) and half another (e.g. translation is for the information of a committee).

See Appendix 4 for a sample unilingual re-reading with corrections and commentary.

Exercise 2. Receive a draft translation, the source text and a statement of the brief. Diagnose the *main* problem with the translation in terms of the parameters of Chapter 11. If working in small groups, each group receives a different translation of the same text. The instructor modifies the text ahead of time so that a particular class of problem (e.g. accuracy, idiomaticity, smoothness) is most frequent.

Exercise 3. Receive a draft translation, the source text and a statement of the brief. Revise the draft for training purposes. Using one colour, make changes necessary to achieve the goals of the brief. Using another colour, make changes to show the imagined trainee other or better solutions. Each participant presents a sentence to the group.

Exercise 4. Receive a draft translation, the source text and a statement of the brief. Find 5 wordings where you are not sure whether to make a change. State the factors that would lead to a change and the factors that would lead to leaving the wording unchanged. Justify your final decision.

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

Relationships between revisers and revisees: Allman (2006); Scocchera (2018); Siponkoski (2013)

16 Revising computer-mediated translations

by Carlos Teixeira

This chapter will explain the two main types of technology that allow computers to generate draft translations—Translation Memory and Machine Translation—and it will give you advice on how to interact with these computer-mediated translations.

16.1 Translation Memory

A Translation Memory is a database where past translations are stored. Think of it as an Excel table where each row has a source sentence under the first column and the corresponding target sentence under the second column. Then you can have additional columns to indicate the languages of source and target, the date and time when that translation was produced, who produced it, and any number of additional details—or metadata—about each of the sentences (see Table 16.1).

Table 16.1 Fictitious table representing the idea of a Translation Memory

Source text	*Target text*	*Source lang*	*Target lang*	*Creation date*	*Author*
Ojalá pudiesen ver lo que yo veo.	I wish they could see what I see.	es_es	en_ca	27/03/2018 12:07:09	jzapata
A veces, tienes que ir hasta lo más alto para entender lo pequeño que eres.	Sometimes, you have to go to the top to understand how small you are.	es_es	en_ca	27/03/2018 12:08:36	jzapata

To operate a memory, there are several Translation Memory (TM) tools available, also known by the broader name of Computer-Aided Translation tools. CAT tools include additional features such as project management, terminology and quality assurance (on the latter, see Chapter 9.6). TM tools 'segment' the source text for you (divide it into sentences or paragraphs), store translations in the database and retrieve translations from the database when the source segment you are translating is similar to a source segment previously stored in the database. For any given segment you are translating, the tool can retrieve either one or several matching segments from the memory. The level of similarity can vary from identical, in which case we say there is an exact match, to only major parts of the segments being identical, in which case we talk about a fuzzy match.

The most common example of the usefulness of memories is the translation of documents such as technical manuals that contain many wordings found in previous documents. Exact matches could be section names, names of machine parts that appear on tables, or instructions such as ‘If you still encounter the same problem after restarting the device, please contact our technical support’. Then there are fuzzy matches: imagine that you have translated this passage of the source text: ‘Section 4.1—Installing and setting up RTT on Windows’. A few hours later, when you have finished translating section 4 of your client’s manual, you come across this new segment: ‘Section *5*.1—Installing and setting up RTT on *Linux*’. The TM tool will identify the similarity in the database and will display the suggested translation for you, indicating the differences (which appear in italics). If you trust the previous translation of the segment, you just need to replace ‘4’ with ‘5’ and ‘Windows’ with ‘Linux’. Most tools are actually ‘smart enough’ to automatically replace the numbers for you (these are called ‘placeables’), so you just need to check that it was done correctly.

When displaying a suggestion from the memory, a TM tool indicates whether it is an exact (100%) match or a fuzzy match; if the latter, then a percentage of similarity is displayed. It has been determined in the industry that matches below 75% or 70% are not beneficial, because they can take longer to repair than translating from scratch. Therefore the tools usually only display percentages between 75% and 99%, though most tools allow the user to adjust the lower threshold. In addition, the differences between the current source segment and the similar source segment found in the memory are displayed, to make it easier for the translator to identify where the repairs need to be made.

The possibility of ‘leveraging’ previous translations has prompted the translation industry to introduce a payment scheme known as ‘fuzzy match discount’. A translation buyer will typically pay 100% of the word rate for segments with no suggestions from the memory but will only pay a ‘discounted’ rate for those segments with fuzzy matches. When it comes to exact matches, a client might decide not to pay for them at all, in which case translators are not expected to even look at them. There are shortcut keys in TM tools that let you skip exact-match segments automatically, and sometimes those matches can also be ‘locked’ to prevent translators from changing them. Alternatively, the client might decide to pay a much lower rate for exact matches, say 25% of the regular rate.

Table 16.2 shows an example of fuzzy match discounts. Assuming that the base rate agreed with the client is \$0.12 per word, we see that ‘no matches’ are paid at the full rate, as are low fuzzy matches in the 50–74% range. Then all fuzzy matches between 75% and 99% are paid at 50% of the base rate (\$0.06), and exact matches are paid at 25% of the base rate (\$0.03). Notice also that, in this example, repetitions (recurrences of segments in the text being translated) are not paid,

Table 16.2 An example of fuzzy match discounts.

Match type	*Total words*	*Percentage paid*	*Weighted rate*	*Price*
Perfect Matches	0	0%	0.00	0.00
Repetitions	4,939	0%	0.00	0.00
Exact Matches (100%)	884	25%	0.03	26.52
Fuzzy (95%–99%)	106	50%	0.06	6.36
Fuzzy (85%–94%)	229	50%	0.06	13.74
Fuzzy (75%–84%)	540	50%	0.06	32.40
Fuzzy (50%–74%)	2,812	100%	0.12	337.44
No matches	20,047	100%	0.12	2,405.64
Total				2,822.10

and neither are ‘perfect matches’. This last type of match occurs when the entire source segment appears in a file with the same name as in a previous version of the document being translated. That is because there is little likelihood that the suggested translation will have to be changed in this latest version of the file.

Even if there are few or no segment matches for your document, TM tools can still be helpful in identifying how specific words or terms were translated previously. This is typically done using a feature called Concordance, which is very useful for maintaining consistency in terminology. To use this feature, select just part of a sentence and press a key combination to have it searched for in the database. The tool then shows you all the segments containing that expression and the corresponding translations, as seen in Figure 16.1.

Translation memories (databases) are often stored, combined, maintained and updated by the translation buyer or by intermediate language service providers (LSPs), so the memories you receive for a particular project may contain segments that were produced by different translators. The ‘author’ of an entry in a memory is usually unknown to the translator or is hard to identify (the author may be indicated simply by a user name, such as ‘johng’). When fixing the translation produced by a fellow translator, you learn how that translator operates, what types of mistakes they make, what you must focus more attention on.

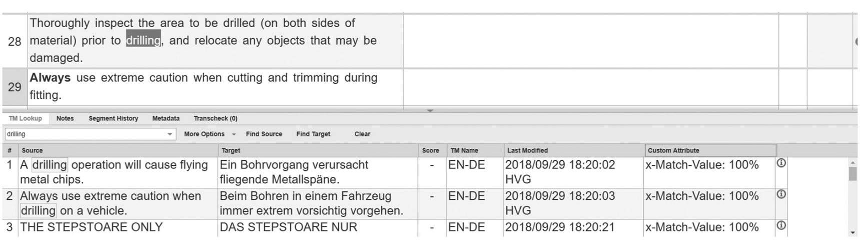


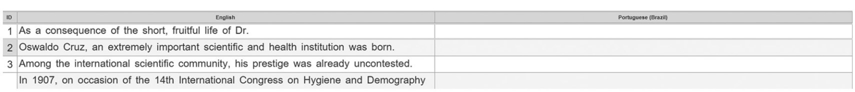
Figure 16.1 An example of the Concordance feature. The translator highlights the word ‘drilling’ in the source segment (on the upper left part of the image), then presses a key combination to retrieve all segments in the memory that contain that word (indicated by the highlights at the bottom left).

When fixing the translation suggestions retrieved from a memory, it may happen that one segment will have been produced by one translator and the next one by another translator, so you will have to adapt your attention mechanisms to the changing 'authors' (translators) of the suggestions. Also, as mentioned in Chapter 8.3, the different people whose translations are in a memory may not have used the same terminology and phraseology, and you will need to ensure consistency. Additionally, apart from the very real possibility of mistranslations in the database, sentences written by a great many other people, each in a different style, may require changes to create an even style from sentence to sentence.

In a Translation Memory environment, segments are presented one at a time. As a result, even though the adjoining segments are usually visible, translators may lose track of context and produce translations with coherence and cohesion problems, as will be seen in Example 3 in the next section. Another problem with segmentation is that sentence boundaries may not be properly identified. You may then need to split or join segments. Such operations may be needed even if the TM tool correctly identifies boundaries, either because of differences between source language and target language rhetoric, or because the translator judges that the source is poorly written. Splitting and joining can typically be done within the TM tool itself, although in some cases translators need to export the target file from the TM tool to a word processing tool such as Word in order to fix the segmentation. This is a cumbersome process and research has shown that translators tend to follow the segmentation proposed by the translation tool, unless it causes an obvious disruption in the translation.

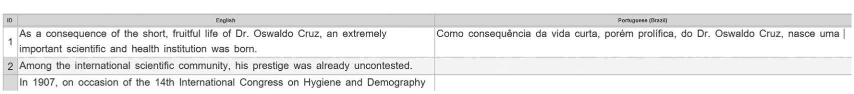
Figure 16.2 shows a case where a tool interpreted the period after 'Dr.' as the end of a segment, and the translator joined two segments so as to be able to translate the full sentence and store it properly in the memory.

These basic segmentation errors are becoming less frequent as tools evolve and allow you to configure segmentation rules, but you should expect to come across such cases, especially with unusual file formats or when many tags are present. Tags are special elements that are inserted together with running text to indicate different things to the program that will later process the text. For example,



ID	English	Portuguese (Brazil)
1	As a consequence of the short, fruitful life of Dr.	
2	Oswaldo Cruz, an extremely important scientific and health institution was born.	
3	Among the international scientific community, his prestige was already uncontested.	
	In 1907, on occasion of the 14th International Congress on Hygiene and Demography	

(a)



ID	English	Portuguese (Brazil)
1	As a consequence of the short, fruitful life of Dr. Oswaldo Cruz, an extremely important scientific and health institution was born.	Como consequência da vida curta, porém prolífica, do Dr. Oswaldo Cruz, nasce uma
2	Among the international scientific community, his prestige was already uncontested.	
	In 1907, on occasion of the 14th International Congress on Hygiene and Demography	

(b)

Figure 16.2 An example of segments that need to be joined. (a): The first sentence was interrupted after the word 'Dr.'. (b): Segments 1 and 2 have been joined into a single segment.

in HTML files, tags can indicate how text should be formatted (font type, size, style) or where a link should be placed. In other types of files, tags might be used as placeholders for text coming from other files, such as brand or product names. Tags can usually be shown with different levels of detail, from the full content of the tag down to just an indication that a tag is present at that position (e.g. <tag>); you can see the full content of the tag by hovering the mouse pointer over the tag indicator.

Finally, when you are revising other people's Translation Memory-assisted translations, you should bear in mind the psychology that stems from this technology. The translator may have been tempted to use a sentence proposed by a memory simply because it was there. Using an existing sentence is less time-consuming than creating a new one, and there is some evidence that translators tend to accept wordings suggested by a memory without noticing and correcting errors. Matches that are marked as '100%' (exact matches) are especially problematic because they may well look like accurate translations at first glance, but closer inspection (if such an inspection is made!) not infrequently reveals departures from the meaning of the source text.

16.1.1 Repairing Translation Memory suggestions

Example 1

<u>Segment of the Spanish source text currently being translated (the active segment):</u> 'Alguna limitación del hardware podría causar un problema de rendimiento.'

Here is the first suggestion proposed by the TM tool:

#	Source	Target	Score	TM Name	Last Modified	Modification User
1	A~~Por ejemplo, a~~lguna limitación del hardware podría causar un problema de rendimiento.	For example, a performance problem might be caused by a limitation of your hardware.	90%	ES-EN	2018/03/21 12:15:03 HPG	SUSANN

The tool found a fuzzy match with 90% similarity (as indicated in the 'Score' column); the difference was that the match started with the words 'Por ejemplo,'. This is indicated through a 'diff' visualization, similar to what you find in Word with Track Changes. The translator can insert the suggested English translation (seen in the 'Target' column) into the active segment and delete the words 'For example,'. Note that the previous translator ('SUSANN', as indicated in the 'Modification User' column) chose to invert the order of the sentence, transforming the original active voice in Spanish into passive voice in English. You should leave this inverted order unchanged unless you prefer the English active voice (or the client's style manual dictates it). Remember that you are being paid only for the 10% of text that needs changing, so any unnecessary changes are made at your own 'expense'. When making this type of decision, it is also important to keep in mind the text type and domain; for software manuals, stylistic nuances tend to be irrelevant.

Example 2

<u>Source text (active segment):</u> ‘Puede suscribirse a la notificación por correo electrónico sobre consejos del producto y correcciones publicadas recientemente a través del portal de Soporte.’

Suggestion proposed by the tool:

#	Source	Target	Score	TM Name	Last Modified	Modification User
1	Puede suscribirse a la notificación por correo electrónico~~email~~ sobre consejos del producto y correcciones publicadas recientemente a través de~~l~~ ~~la~~ portal~~ágina~~ de Soporte.	You can subscribe to e-mail notification about product tips and newly published fixes through the Support webpage.	82%	ES-EN	2016/02/14 10:14:58 HPG	dermoc

This fuzzy match is just 82% similar to the Spanish segment now being translated. The first difference we notice is that the source text in the memory has ‘email’ while the source text in the active segment has ‘correo electrónico’. This probably means that the source text was updated to reflect a new terminological decision by the client, and no change needs to be made to the existing English translation ‘e-mail’ (unless the current English glossary or style guide recommends ‘email’ without the hyphen). Note that this segment in the memory was translated by a different person (‘dermoc’) about two years earlier than the segment in the previous example (‘Last Modified’ column), which supports the assumption that there has been a terminological update in the meantime.

The second difference in the Translation Memory match is that ‘página’ in an earlier version of the document has now been replaced with ‘portal’. The new word in Spanish might reflect an actual expansion of the Support area within the company’s website or it might just reflect a new marketing preference, to make it sound ‘fancier’. Unless we want to double-check the reasons behind the change with the client, it might be safer to update the English translation from ‘webpage’ to ‘portal’.

Example 3

As mentioned previously, in some cases a target-language sentence found in a memory may not cohere with the previous and following sentences in a document. In order to make sure your translation is coherent, it is advisable to check the adjoining segments for context. Most modern TM tools have a preview pane, where you can see what the formatted translation will look like as you progress through the text.

Consider the following passage from a translation, where the second sentence has been inserted from a memory:

> *At 1403Z, the crew declared an emergency because of an engine problem and requested clearance to return to Montreal. It landed without incident at 1249Z.*

In the second sentence, doubtless the word ‘it’ made sense in the text from which this match was taken. However now, ‘it’ has no antecedent and needs to be replaced by 'the aircraft'. In addition, in the text from which the second sentence was retrieved, the aircraft landed at 12:49 pm Greenwich Mean Time (Z stands for the Zulu military time zone, which is essentially the same as GMT). Obviously that cannot be the landing time in the text being translated, since the emergency was not declared until 2:03 pm (1403Z). The time of landing will need to be taken from the source text being translated, but this will only happen if the translator or reviser notices the problem.

A modern TM tool can automatically look at the source text currently being translated and adjust 'placeables'—items such as numbers and dates. In the current case, however, it could not find the correct landing time for the aircraft, probably because the presence of the Z prevented recognition of 1249Z as a time.

To help eliminate coherence problems, modern translation tools include match types that are 'more than exact', called 'context matches' (or similar names, depending on the tool). With context matches, the previous (and sometimes also the following) segment in the memory is identical to the previous (and the following) segment in the source text being translated. This gives the translator an increased level of reassurance that the match proposed by the tool is right for the context.

16.2 Machine Translation

In contrast with Translation Memory, which is a repository of translations produced either entirely by human translators or with at least some level of human intervention, Machine Translation (MT) is the process through which a computer produces translations from previously unseen source texts.

While there is no special term for the process of repairing suggestions made by Translation Memory, the task of turning Machine Translation output into final translations has traditionally been called 'post-editing' (though see sections 16.3 and 16.4 on the question of whether this distinction is still applicable).

How the machine produces the translation depends on the type of Machine Translation engine. The 'paradigm' behind each type of engine has consequences for the type of translation it produces—and consequently for the types of edits that need to be made by translators. Until the turn of the century, the dominant type of engine was Rule-Based Machine Translation (RBMT), which as the name implies was based on a set of linguistic rules stating correspondences between the source and target languages. An RBMT engine had to be created for each language pair and direction (one engine for English into French, another for French into English, another for Italian into German, and so on). Such engines required a considerable amount of time and human effort to be built and they very seldom produced results of acceptable quality. Typical problems in the RBMT paradigm were untranslated terms, grammatical errors, and a lack of Idiomaticity and Smoothness (or 'fluency', the term used in the machine translation industry).

In the late 1980s, Statistical Machine Translation (SMT) was proposed, based on an extensive use of electronic corpora. In this model, large amounts of bilingual and monolingual data are fed into a statistical system, which then generates a list of translation candidates and picks the best candidate using probabilistic rules. Thanks to the increasing availability of digital corpora and higher computational power, from the mid-2000s SMT systems started to produce an output that was on the whole of higher quality than the output of RBMT systems. This improvement expanded the adoption of Machine Translation post-editing in the translation industry.

Recent years have seen the rapid rise of Neural Machine Translation (NMT), which is based on the concept of artificial neural networks—Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems that learn from data using machine learning techniques. NMT systems require even larger amounts of textual data and processing power, but produce much more natural-sounding (Smooth and Idiomatic) translations overall. NMT has turned post-editing into a viable option for some languages for which SMT systems had not produced satisfactory results.

There is a vast range of Machine Translation engines available, depending on the language pair and the field. From generic engines such as Google Translate, Microsoft Translator (Bing) and DeepL to specific engines provided by companies such as Tilde, KantanMT and Tauyou, most of which can be tailored to the client's specific needs through domain adaptation and the use of existing term bases. There are also some open-source Machine Translation toolkits that the tech-savvy translator can install and configure on their own Linux server. The commercial tool Slate Desktop offers the same possibility on Windows. Note that some clients and agencies specifically prohibit their translators from using engines like Google Translate because of confidentiality concerns (Google will then have access to the source text).

The following sections cover some of the many factors that affect the types of edits that need to be performed on MT output.

16.2.1 Different 'levels' of post-editing

When a translation is needed only to give readers an understanding of the basic idea of the source text (e.g. for the description of mobile apps at app stores), using 'raw' (unedited) Machine Translation output is an option. However, most commercial uses of translation require some level of human intervention to improve the machine output. The level of intervention will depend on two factors: the quality of the raw output and the quality expected for the final translation.

The Translation Automation User Society (TAUS) provides guidelines for achieving '*good enough* quality' and for achieving 'quality similar or equal to human translation'. In the first category, the 'syntax might be somewhat unusual, grammar may not be perfect but the message is accurate'. This is what TAUS recommends to a post-editor who is instructed to achieve just '*good enough* quality':

- *Aim for semantically correct translation.*
- *Ensure that no information has been accidentally added or omitted.*

- *Edit any offensive, inappropriate or culturally unacceptable content.*
- *Use as much of the raw MT output as possible.*
- *Basic rules regarding spelling apply.*
- *No need to implement corrections that are of a stylistic nature only.*
- *No need to restructure sentences solely to improve the natural flow of the text.*

In the second category, the translated text should be comprehensible, accurate, stylistically fine, with normal syntax, and correct grammar and punctuation. These are the TAUS guidelines for higher-quality post-editing:

- *Aim for grammatically, syntactically and semantically correct translation.*
- *Ensure that key terminology is correctly translated and that untranslated terms belong to the client's list of 'Do Not Translate' terms.*
- *Ensure that no information has been accidentally added or omitted.*
- *Edit any offensive, inappropriate or culturally unacceptable content.*
- *Use as much of the raw MT output as possible.*
- *Basic rules regarding spelling, punctuation and hyphenation apply.*
- *Ensure that formatting is correct.*

In the translation industry it is also common to talk about 'light post-editing', where the goal is 'to obtain a merely comprehensible text without any attempt to produce a product comparable to a product obtained by human translation' (ISO 18587:2017), or 'full post-editing', where the goal is 'to obtain a product comparable to a product obtained by human translation'. Between the two extremes, intermediate levels of post-editing may be required, although there is no consensus on the definitions of such levels, which can vary from 2 to 3, 5 or 7 depending on the source.

Notice the inevitable tension between producing an output which is indistinguishable from human translation output and using as much of the MT output as possible, especially when the Machine Translation output is of lower quality.

One way of ensuring that full post-editing is equivalent to the quality you get with human translation would be to look at the source text first, then close your eyes, think about the translation in your head, then open your eyes and keep the words that are in the places you imagined while moving the other ones. Sometimes you might be surprised to see words that are better than or equivalent to the ones you had imagined; if so, you can keep them as well. This process of closing your eyes is not what tends to happen in practice, so you (and your client) should expect that you might be influenced at least to a certain extent by the MT output as soon as you see it.

With both levels of post-editing, before starting to make changes you should decide whether it will require more effort to reuse the MT output or to delete the suggestion and translate the entire segment from scratch. As a rule of thumb, this decision should not take longer than two seconds. In other words, if you sense you will spend too much time thinking about whether or how you can improve the machine translation, it probably means the output is not worth fixing. The following tips may be useful:

- Full post-editing: If in doubt, change it.
- Light post-editing: If in doubt, don't change it.

The demand for different levels of quality is the result of a business strategy that has long been adopted in the translation industry as well as in other industries: cost-benefit analysis. Even before the advent of CAT tools, companies would provide project-specific revision guidelines that dictated the level of quality they were willing to pay for, or they would hire translators with different levels of expertise, assuming that the more experienced translators would charge higher fees for their services. With the introduction of Translation Memories, clients had to decide how to pay for exact matches and fuzzy matches. Now, with Machine Translation, they must decide what level of post-editing to request. An unsolved question here is how to pay for post-editing services, since the quality of the MT output cannot be determined with certainty. Some clients choose to pay the same rate they use for, say, 75% fuzzy matches; others prefer to pay by the hour using a rough estimate, or they identify the rate of pay after the fact, by looking at how much post-editing effort was actually invested in editing the MT output.

As a translator, you may feel frustrated if you are asked to produce less-than-maximum-quality final translations, and this is indeed a common complaint against post-editing voiced by translators (see also Chapter 12 on degrees of revision). Translators should decide whether to accept a specific job based not only on the expected income but also on the satisfaction and intellectual reward associated with it.

16.2.2 Types of edits required

The types of edits that need to be made to the Machine Translation output will depend on the expected level of final quality and on the types of errors produced by the Machine Translation engine, which in turn will depend on three factors:

i) The type of engine (RBMT vs SMT vs NMT)
   - RBMT tends to perform well for closely related languages (e.g. across Romance languages or between those languages and English). It tends to produce consistent translations (the same input will always generate the same output) and is thus good at keeping terminology consistent. Edits required from post-editors usually involve translating untranslated words and fixing literal (unidiomatic) translations.
   - SMT tends to produce better results for certain language pairs for which RBMT is poor, especially where large corpora are available, but

consistency is not as high as with RBMT (the same input can produce different outputs). Term consistency can be improved by feeding the engine with custom glossaries. Idiomaticity and Accuracy (called 'adequacy' in the industry) tend to be higher than with RBMT.

- NMT has turned Machine Translation into a useful aid for even more language combinations (e.g. East European languages into and from English). General consistency is comparable to that of SMT but term consistency is harder to obtain. Idiomaticity tends to be even higher than with SMT, although Accuracy can be lower. Sometimes the translation sounds very natural, so it is important to check the source text to make sure the correct meaning is being conveyed. There are cases of omission that can cause serious errors if not fixed.

ii) The engine's level of customization. Generic engines such as the ones freely available online are good at translating general-purpose texts, but may fail to identify specialized terms. A typical example would be a British text containing the word 'theatre' for operating room, which could be translated with the word in the target language for 'the place where plays are performed'. A customized engine trained with data in the medical field for a particular client would certainly be able to handle the relevant terminology more appropriately. Training a statistical or neural engine means setting its parameters so that more weight is given to the desired subset of data (e.g. corpora or glossaries in a specific subfield).

iii) The language pair: some language pairs are more challenging for Machine Translation, sometimes in unexpected ways (NMT from English to Japanese is poor but NMT from Japanese to English can produce excellent results). This can be due to the lack of linguistic resources for training engines in some languages or the particular differences between the linguistic structures of the two languages.

When revising a human colleague, you expect that the same errors will not keep occurring after a round of feedback. With Translation Memory, you expect a memory to start presenting fewer instances of wrong translations as you update it with your fixes; there is also the possibility of cleansing the memory with bulk fixes (find and replace incorrect translations in the database). With Machine Translation, however, the engines tend to produce repeated errors; they do not 'learn' from your edits, so that one source of frustration is the need to correct the same errors over and over again. That said, certain Machine Translation implementations offer the possibility of improving the engine based on the data from your post-editing work. This can be done at the end of a project (so that the engine will perform better for the next project), or at short intervals—even instantly, in what is known as Adaptive Machine Translation. This is still a new feature at the time of writing, which is only available with certain tools and for certain language pairs.

16.2.3 Examples of post-editing

Because of the various factors affecting the quality of the Machine Translation output, as described in the previous sections, it is difficult to generalize about the types of edits that will be necessary when post-editing. Still, here is a list of the items that you will need to fix most often:

- grammar errors (number, gender, case inflexions)
- extra or missing words
- term inconsistencies
- translation of proper names
- stylistic problems (depending on the post-editing guidelines)

Example 1

Machine Translation post-editing is of considerable interest because it poses the twin questions of intelligibility and rapidity in making changes. It suggests the question: How, with the fewest possible keyboard operations, can I achieve at least the low end of the readability/intelligibility scale? Consider the following passage of machine output for a source text about what happens after a government accidentally overpays or underpays a beneficiary of a social programme:

> *Recipients will be notified of any amounts being paid or claimed to them.*

A post-editor's first inclination (short of completely retranslating the sentence) will be to fix the sequence 'claimed to'. The problem will likely be analyzed in terms of the common error of conjoining two words that require different prepositional complements. The corrected version might then be:

> *Recipients will be notified of any amounts being paid to or claimed from them.*

This wording could be achieved in two ways: add 'to' after 'paid', then move the cursor to the 'to' following 'claimed', delete it, and add 'from'; or more simply, delete 'or claimed to' and add 'to or claimed from'. However the fastest solution is simple deletion of the last two words in the machine output:

> *Recipients will be notified of any amounts being paid or claimed.*

Now, depending on how the preceding sentences are worded, it may or may not be immediately obvious that it is the recipients—not some other party—who will either receive more money or be asked to return money. The sentence will probably be correctly understood, albeit with some effort.

Example 2

The following examples show the different types of changes that are expected depending on whether you are doing light or full post-editing.

Running the French expression 'Habileté à écouter et à comprendre afin de recevoir et répondre aux demandes des traducteurs et des clients' through one online Rule-Based Machine Translation program yielded as output:

> *Skill to listen and include/understand in order to receive and answer at the requests of the translators and the customers.*

This translation can be made intelligible by deleting the words 'at' and 'include/'. Note that the program was unable to 'decide' which of two common meanings of the French verb 'comprendre'—'include' and 'understand'—was contextually relevant, and two possibilities were provided (this is a typical behavior for RBMT). A more acceptable translation would read 'ability to… respond to requests from translators and clients', but these additional changes are not needed if you are only performing light post-editing.

ST	*Raw RBMT*	*Light PE*	*Full PE*
Habileté à écouter et à comprendre afin de recevoir et répondre aux demandes des traducteurs et des clients	Skill to listen and include/understand in order to receive and answer at the requests of the translators and the customers.	Skill to listen and understand in order to receive and answer the requests of the translators and the customers.	Ability to listen and understand in order to receive and respond to requests from translators and clients.

The full post-edit reads more naturally. Note that both post-editing approaches use as much of the raw MT output as possible.

Example 3

Running the same expression through a Statistical Machine Translation program yielded:

> *Ability to listen and understand in order to receive and respond to requests for translators and customers.*

This time, the Machine Translation engine was able to resolve the ambiguity of French 'comprendre', by looking at the statistical probabilities of past translations in its training corpus. While this is also a much more Idiomatic translation, it contains an Accuracy error. So the issue for the post-editor is not creating intelligibility but correcting a gross mistranslation: it should be 'requests *from* translators and customers'.

ST	*Raw SMT*	*Light PE*	*Full PE*
Habileté à écouter et à comprendre afin de recevoir et répondre aux demandes des traducteurs et des clients	Ability to listen and understand in order to receive and respond to requests for translators and customers.	Ability to listen and understand in order to receive and respond to requests from translators and customers.	Ability to listen and understand in order to receive and respond to requests from translators and clients.

In this case, both approaches to PE would be the same, correcting the mistranslation 'for' to 'from'. The text is otherwise accurate and useable. The full PE also changes 'customers' to 'clients', assuming this is the commonly used term.

Example 4

Finally, the same sentence translated by a Neural Machine Translation engine gave:

> *Ability to listen and understand in order to receive and respond to requests from translators and clients.*

For this sentence, NMT produced a perfect output requiring no post-editing, though that is certainly not always the case.

Example 5

Let's assume we are given the following MT output without the source text:

> *Skill is needed to motivate staff, staff positions, promote the work of team,…*

For light PE, no changes are required since the sentence is correct and intelligible. For full PE, changes are made to improve Idiomaticity and reduce repetition:

Raw MT	*Light PE*	*Full PE*
Skill is needed to motivate staff, staff positions, promote the work of team…	Skill is needed to motivate staff, staff positions, promote the work of team…	Skill is needed to motivate employees, staff positions, promote team work…

This example shows that many of the errors in Machine Translation output can be corrected without looking at the source. However, as noted previously, the apparent naturalness of NMT output may be misleading; not all errors can be spotted by looking at the translation only.

Example 6

Now let's take a different French source sentence with the corresponding MT output and two levels of post-editing.

ST	*Raw MT*	*Light PE*	*Full PE*
Mettre le chocolat dans un grand bol. Réserver. Laisser tiédir puis refroidir au moins 6 heures au frigo.	Put the chocolate in a large bowl. Book. Let cool and cool for at least 6 hours in the fridge.	Put the chocolate in a large bowl. Set aside. Let cool and cool for at least 6 hours in the fridge.	Put the chocolate in a large bowl. Set aside. Let cool and then refrigerate for at least 6 hours.

Thanks to Sabine Lauffer for this example as well as some of the comments elsewhere in this section.

The raw MT sentence is understandable except for the incorrect rendering of 'réserver' as 'book'. This is due to the statistical approach to the text where the verb 'réserver' is most commonly translated as 'to book'. In a light PE, only 'book' would need to be changed. Although the repetition of 'cool' is not ideal, the correct meaning is conveyed.

As can be seen from the above examples, the effort required to make decisions while post-editing can be substantial, and this adds to the frustration of correcting repeated errors. The ability to quickly assess the quality of the output is an important skill to be acquired by post-editors (remember the 2-second rule of thumb). The good news is that the more you post-edit, and the more you know what to expect from the Machine Translation engine you are working with, the more automatic the decision-making process becomes.

16.3 Integration of Translation Memory and Machine Translation

It is common practice for translation customers or service providers (translation agencies and freelance translators) to first 'analyze' the source text against any existing translation memories rather than passing the entire source text through Machine Translation. The segments that have no 'good' matches (usually greater than 75%) are then passed through a Machine Translation engine. So, as the translator opens a segment in a CAT tool, they will either see one or more matches from Translation Memory or they will see a pre-translated segment generated by Machine Translation. The repairing/post-editing process thus becomes more complex, since from one segment to the next the translator may need to perform different types of changes (those typically required for Translation Memory versus those typically required for Machine Translation). Notice here an important difference between the two types of suggestions the translator will be confronted with: Translation Memory matches carry metadata (author's name, creation date, diff, etc.) to help translators identify what needs to be repaired (see section 16.1), while Machine Translation suggestions present no extra information (over and above an indication that MT is the source of the suggestion) to help identify wordings that may require particular attention. If you are translating in a scenario that includes suggestions from both sources, take note of the indication telling you the provenance of each suggestion. It is advisable to look at that first and then activate your corresponding strategy. Although empirical evidence is still scarce, it is believed that the constant alternation between the two types of suggestions may cause additional cognitive strain.

Translation Memory and Machine Translation are also connected in other ways. First, the most recent approaches to Machine Translation (SMT and NMT) rely on large amounts of bilingual data (existing translations), so that Machine Translation is in a sense a repository of past human translations just like Translation Memory. The main difference lies in how the two technologies retrieve translation suggestions from that vast repertoire.

Second, as already mentioned, Machine Translation engines can be customized by providing them with domain-specific translation memories and glossaries; similarly, the latest CAT tools can automatically 'enrich' or 'repair' Translation Memory matches by retrieving chunks of text that are shorter than an entire segment and 'assembling' them using algorithms that are similar to those used for pure Machine Translation.

16.4 Interactive Machine Translation

Interactive Machine Translation offers a novel way of dealing with Machine Translation output. In Lilt, the only commercially available tool to have implemented this feature (for a restricted set of languages), once you activate a segment, you see an initial suggestion from the Machine Translation engine. You can accept the suggestion word by word, or by chunks, but if you decide to change something, the program takes into account your edits and updates the remainder of the suggestion accordingly. In the example below from a German-to-English translation, Figure 16.3(a) shows the initial suggestion proposed by the tool. I accepted the first three words by pressing the Tab key three times (alternatively, I could have clicked on the word 'SDGs'); then I typed 'are'. A few milliseconds later, the Machine Translation suggestion updated to what is shown in Figure 16.3(b), which I considered to be an accurate translation of the source text.

This seems to be an interesting new way of interacting with Machine Translation, although there is still not sufficient empirical evidence of actual benefits in terms of time-saving and reduced cognitive effort. Bear in mind that in this more complex scenario, you may need to make more effort because

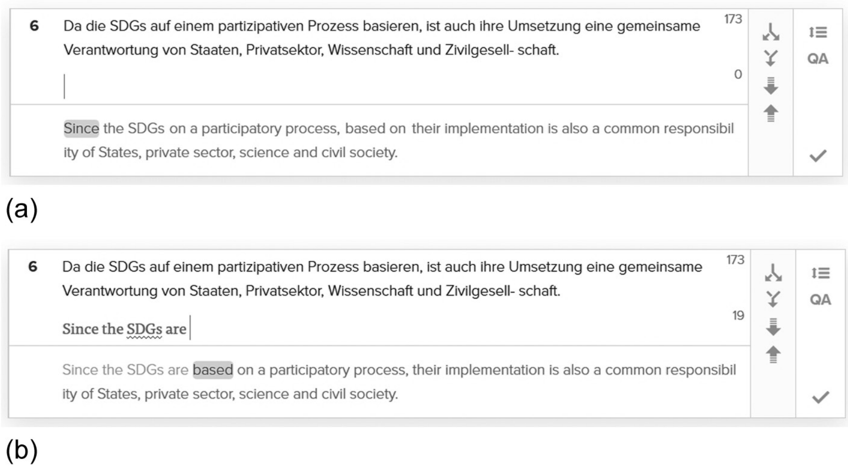


Figure 16.3 The Lilt interface, showing how a Machine Translation suggestion adapts to the translator's edits.

you will need to consider more than just the source text and several suggested translations: if the chosen suggestion keeps changing, as in the above example, it will have to be regularly re-evaluated and you will then need to make new micro-decisions.

The best way to gauge how a certain combination of technologies will work for you is to try it out for a reasonable period of time and then assess the results in terms of productivity and satisfaction.

16.5 Final considerations

The distinctions between revising translations generated by the minds of human translators, repairing translations retrieved from Translation Memories, and post-editing translations generated by Machine Translation engines tend to be accepted by the translation industry without much consideration. Although the distinction between repairing and post-editing may be relevant for didactic purposes, in practice the boundaries between these activities and revising human-generated translations are becoming increasingly blurred as technologies develop.

There are indeed certain differences when it comes to fixing translated text from different sources, but do they call on different skills? Or are they all part of 'translating'? This question has no clear answer. What is clear is that in highly technologized translation workplaces, translating is becoming a kind of revision task since the translator is mostly examining and adjusting wordings inserted from Translation Memory and Machine Translation rather than composing his or her own sentences. Translation then ceases to involve any composing work unless the machine output is completely useless.

The distinctions among sources may or may not be important when you are revising a translation that was produced by another translator based on suggestions from Translation Memory and/or Machine Translation. Will you simply decide whether the translation is a good one, or will you check whether the translator has used the computer-generated suggestions to the extent possible?

Finally, while Translation Memory tools work in a comparable way for all languages, the personal experience you have with Machine Translation will vary substantially depending on the language pair(s) you work with. If you work between English and the Romance languages using a good Machine Translation engine, you may find post-editing to be a rewarding activity. If you work with languages at the other extreme of the MT quality spectrum, post-editing might not even be a sensible option, considering the number of changes required.

Keep in mind that one goal of these technologies should be to help you translate faster, and another goal could be to make your job more enjoyable. If you notice that the technologies are slowing you down or making you feel bored or frustrated, this may be due to the poor quality of the translation suggestions but another possibility is that you are not using the tools properly (e.g. you are over-editing) or else the tools are not suitable for the type of text you are translating.

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

Translation Memory and revision: Christensen and Schjoldager (2010); García (2008).

Post-editing: Allen (2003); Garcia (2011); Guerberof (2009); Guzmán (2007); Koponen et al (forthcoming); Krings (2001); O'Brien (2002); O'Brien (2014); Teixeira (2014); Temizöz (2013); Thicke (2013); *Journal of Specialised Translation* Issue 31 (2019).

Appendix 1: Summary of revision ideas

Twenty tips for revisers

1. If you find a very large number of mistakes as you begin revising a translation, consider whether the text should be retranslated rather than revised.
2. Make the fewest possible changes, given the users of the translation and the use they will make of it.
3. If you cannot understand the translation without reading it twice, or without consulting the source text, then a correction is definitely necessary.
4. Make small changes to a sentence rather than rewriting it.
5. Minimize introduction of error by not making changes if in doubt about whether to do so.
6. Minimize revision time through unilingual re-reading unless the longer comparative procedure is dictated by the likelihood of mistranslation or omission (difficult text, untried translator, etc.) or by the consequences of such errors.
7. When you make a linguistic correction or stylistic improvement, make sure you have not introduced a mistranslation.
8. When you make a change, check whether this necessitates a change elsewhere in the sentence or a neighbouring sentence.
9. Do not let your attention to micro-level features of the text prevent you from seeing macro-level errors, and vice versa.
10. Do not let your attention to the flow of linguistic forms prevent you from seeing errors in meaning (nonsense, contradiction, etc.), and vice versa.
11. Check numbers as well as words; they are part of the message.
12. Adopt procedures which maximize your opportunity to see the text from the point of view of the first-time reader.
13. Adopt procedures which allow you to strike a suitable balance between the degree of accuracy of the translation and the degree of readability.
14. In the final analysis, give preference to the reader's needs over the client's demands.
15. Avoid creating an immediate bad impression by making sure that there are no spelling or typing errors on the front page of the translation.

16. Do not make changes you cannot justify if revising the work of others.
17. Do not impose your own approach to translating on others.
18. Do not impose your linguistic idiosyncrasies on others.
19. Make sure that client and reader receive full benefit from revision work, by ensuring that all handwritten changes are properly input and that all changes are saved before the text is sent to the client.
20. If you have failed to solve a problem, admit it to the client.

Six bad attitudes of revisers

1. I wonder if this passage can be improved. (Of course it can, but does it need to be?)
2. There are two ways of saying this ('bear in mind' or 'keep in mind'). Which one is better? (Why does one have to be better?)
3. I'm revising, so I have to make some changes. (No, you don't.)
4. This sounds better, so I'll substitute it. ('Sounding better' isn't a valid justification.)
5. (when revising others) I would have done it this way, so I'll just substitute that. (It's not your translation.)
6. I've just thought of a better translation, so I'll substitute it. (Is a better translation needed, or will the existing one do?)

Two benefits of other-revision

1. Revision by a second translator provides a fresh look at the text, somewhat similar to the final user's experience (though not completely, because the final user is interested in the subject matter, not the language).
2. It's harder to see your own mistakes than for someone else to see them.

Seven disadvantages of other-revision

1. Revision by a second translator costs more than self-revision.
2. Unnecessary changes are more likely than with self-revision because the reviser thinks 'I'm not earning my pay if I don't intervene'.
3. Introduction of errors is more likely because the reviser is less familiar with the text than the translator.
4. Revision can end up as a substitute for proper training and for assigning the right translator to a job.
5. Revision can make for bad working relationships with other translators.
6. Revision can create dependency.
7. Revising the work of others is, for many people, not enjoyable because there is no opportunity for creativity.

Two disadvantages of self-revision

1. Because the wordings are yours, you may be so attached to them that you will not see errors.
2. Self-revision can lead to over-confidence in your abilities.

A philosophy of revision

1. Revision is an exercise in reading, not writing.
2. It is an exercise in spotting significant mistakes.

Appendix 2: Quality assessment

This appendix expands on the discussion of quality assessment in Chapter 10.16. It concerns assessment by a translation provider rather than by clients or users.

Quantification of error

Assessments can be impressionistic (excellent! awful! not too bad; borderline), holistic ('this translation is fit for purpose, accurate, readable and reflects adequate terminological and conceptual research') or 'objective', meaning that the assessment takes the form of a score that is typically obtained by counting errors. Ideally, objectivity will also mean that if two assessors examine the same set of translations, they should usually arrive at more or less the same assessments. For this purpose assessment guidelines are needed, and ideally assessors within an organization will attend workshops during which participants examine two or three texts together, and the workshop leader indicates who is being too severe, and who not severe enough. It would be too expensive and time-consuming to have more than one person assess a given translation as a routine practice.

Much of the literature on quality assessment concerns marking the work of translation students. These writings often recommend assessment schemes with an extremely elaborate typology of errors. This is not suitable for professional situations, because it would take too long to assess a translation. Many of the error typologies devised by translation schools are concerned as much with causes of error as with error itself. For example, they may distinguish calque, borrowing and false friends (inappropriate use of source/target cognates), but these are just different causes of the same error, namely, unidiomatic use of the target language. Also, while student work may be marked partly on the basis of process, professional work is assessed solely on the basis of outcome (a good outcome achieved by a wild guess is better than a bad outcome after lengthy systematic research). In this Appendix, we will be concerned with the assessment of work done by professionals for the market. Assessors should always be familiar with the work of the translation service so that they will know what counts as acceptable for the various kinds of texts the service translates.

The simplest error typology has just two types: language errors and transfer (source/target correspondence) errors. Whatever typology is used, it is important to avoid a system in which one is frequently wasting time wondering whether a particular mistake is of type x or type y.

Quality assessment is typically performed by randomly selecting one or more passages of the translation, adding up errors of various kinds, and expressing the result as a numerical or alphabetic score or a descriptive ranking (acceptable/unacceptable; or superior/acceptable/borderline/unacceptable). The ranking is derived from a count of errors; for example, more than x minor mistranslations in a 500 word passage may make it 'unacceptable'.

The rankings are devised in such a way that the result is interpretable in operational terms. For example, a ranking of A (or 90%, or superior) may mean 'deliverable without further revision'; B may mean 'deliverable with just a few revisions'; C 'requires major revision work'; and D 'undeliverable; needs retranslation'. The rankings have obvious financial implications: in the case of contracted work, an in-house reviser will have to spend more time on a 'C' text than on a 'B' text; if a staff translator often does 'C' work, that again is going to call for many hours of work by a highly paid reviser (though with novices, 'C' work may unavoidably be common at first).

As more and more texts by a translator or work unit are assessed, a running score can be calculated that will reflect trends in the quality of work produced. In the very simplest approach, where each translation subjected to assessment is rated either acceptable or unacceptable, if four out of five assessed texts are acceptable, the translator or work unit has a score of 80%. Later, if 18 out of 20 have been found acceptable, the score rises to 90%.

It may be desirable to give more than one score to a text—perhaps a score for the quality of the translation itself, a score for deadline-meeting, and a score for physical presentation. That way, one can see that a certain translator produces superior translations but sometimes does not meet deadlines and often submits work with poor physical presentation. This can be important in deciding which of many contractors will be given a certain job in the future: if deadline meeting is extremely important, the job might be given to someone who has less than superior quality but always meets deadlines.

Multiple scores can also be used for the quality of the translation itself. So for example, a translator may be rated superior with respect to accuracy, acceptable with respect to terminology but unacceptable with regard to minor language errors (the translations are full of typing mistakes). This translator will then be easily distinguishable from someone who has perfect spelling but makes many minor mistranslations. Of course the more separate ratings, the lengthier the work of the assessor.

Major, minor and critical errors

It is important to distinguish major from minor problems when making a quantified assessment. Suppose the translator has translated the word that means 'red' as 'yellow' (perhaps her eye wandered to another place on the page where the word for 'yellow' did indeed appear). Is this a major or minor error? A language teacher would say major, but as an assessor of translations, you are not a language teacher. The question is whether the reader will be misled about an important aspect of the message. If the text is a police report about a stolen car, then its colour is vital, and the error is a major one. But if an in-house employee newsletter mentions that the boss arrived at the staff party in a red car, then the colour probably plays no significant role in the message; it could just as easily have been left out. The error is then either minor, or not counted as an error at all. (Remember that we are talking about assessment here, not revision. If you are revising a text prior to delivery, naturally you will change 'yellow' to 'red').

This example shows that the major/minor status of an error cannot always be identified at the microstructural level, as a spelling mistake can. To see that 'yellow' is a minor error, you need to consider the genre (in-house newsletter) and the topic of the relevant passage (boss arriving at party).

An interesting question is what type of negative consequences of error are to be considered. The most common type of consequence which assessors will consider is misunderstanding of the message. The error is 'major' if such misunderstandings bear on some central aspect of the message (a key point in an argument; a key event in a narrative). An out-and-out mistranslation found in a footnote is unlikely to be serious since footnotes rarely contain central aspects of the message. Such a mistranslation would thus probably be a 'minor' error.

Some assessment systems distinguish 'critical' errors from 'major' errors, the former being ones which potentially have negative impacts not just on readers' understanding of the message but on health and safety, finances, the legal liability of the client who publishes the translation, the client's reputation, or the usability of a product.

If the assessor is making a sentence-by-sentence comparison of source-text and translation, it is vital not to overlook the linkages in meaning *between* sentences: if the current sentence begins with 'therefore', is its link to the preceding sentence really one of consequence? Inter-sentence errors are a frequent source of serious misunderstanding, and are easily overlooked. More generally, 'macro' issues, such as the flow of an argument, need to be taken into consideration.

As for language errors, these will rarely have a major negative impact (unless they happen to change the meaning or result in nonsense). If I had accidentally left out the word 'to' in the previous sentence, that is minor because the (native or near-native) reader could easily recover the missing word. An example of a major language error would be a single spelling mistake on a public sign.

Minor errors are mainly of importance when diagnosing and advising a translator, or writing a performance appraisal. If translators commit many minor errors, that suggests inattentiveness: perhaps they are working too quickly or not self-revising properly. Minor errors do also need to be counted when making a quantitative assessment, but mainly for purposes of reference when selecting a translator for a future job. One might not want to give a closely argued legal text to a translator who is prone to many minor errors. Also, when a fairly large number of minor errors are accompanied by a major error, this suggests that the translator's inattentiveness could sometimes have serious consequences.

Multiple minor language errors may give rise to complaints and political problems in an official multilingual context, where speakers of the language in question could feel that their language, and by implication their nation, is being slighted.

Assessing aspects of a translation

Instead of counting individual errors of each type, an assessor may simply rate the various aspects of a translation taken as whole. A given aspect might be rated as acceptable or unacceptable, or be rated on a descriptive scale. This might be done for such aspects as target-language quality, correspondence of meaning to the source text, handling of specialized content or suitability to future readership. The aspects considered might vary from one text to another. Colina (2009) provides a descriptive scale for correspondence of meaning:

- The translation reflects or contains important unwarranted deviations from the original. It contains inaccurate renditions and/or important omissions and additions that cannot be justified by the instructions. Very defective comprehension of the original text.
- There have been some changes in meaning, omissions or/and additions that cannot be justified by the translation instructions. Translation shows some misunderstanding of original and/or translation instructions.
- Minor alterations in meaning, additions or omissions.
- The translation accurately reflects the content contained in the original, insofar as it is required by the instructions without unwarranted alterations, omissions or additions. Slight nuances and shades of meaning have been rendered adequately.

Each item on this scale corresponds to a numerical score. If such a scale were applied for each of the four aspects of translation mentioned above, then it would simply be a matter of combining the four scores to get a final score for the translation. This approach to assessment is much faster than error counting, though it might turn out to be more subjective. If that proved to be the case, the subjectivity could be reduced by having a translation assessed by several people, but this would be expensive.

Relative assessment

Translations may be far from excellent yet still serve their purpose. The importance of a given feature of the translation (correct terminology, consistency of layout, idiomatic language, even accuracy) varies with the job. If a translation will be used for information only, clients may tolerate considerably less than excellence. For example, a client may have told the translator that he didn't care about correct terminology as along as the meaning was clear. If the translator was aware of such special instructions, and of the use to be made of the text, it would be odd to assess the job as if the translator had been trying to prepare the translation for publication. Failure by assessors to take account of the brief may create a false picture of the quality situation: if all texts are rated as if they were being done for the most demanding clients and the most demanding uses, then it may seem that standards are not being met even when they are.

How can the use factor be incorporated into a formal assessment system? It would not be a good idea for the assessor to sometimes overlook a particular type of error and sometimes not, depending on the use to be made of the translation. Such an approach would make a rating of, say, '90' or 'B' impossible to interpret: sometimes 'B' would mean practically no mistakes, sometimes quite a few. Future users of the organization's quality records would not be able to tell how good a translator is. One solution would be to assign each text to a category (based of course on the use to be made of the translation, not the source text). For example, one category might include prestige publications where even a few minor errors cannot be tolerated; another might include in-house reports, where many minor errors can probably be tolerated. A text in the former category might be given a relative rating of 'acceptable' if the score were 90 or more; a text in the latter category would need only 70 to achieve a relative rating of 'acceptable'. Future users of the system would then see, for example, that a certain translator had achieved the following results: in category 1, 75% of texts were acceptable; in category 2, 95% of texts were acceptable, and so on. If users of the records want to know which translators are capable of doing well on the most demanding texts, they will look at the percentage acceptable for the corresponding category.

If a relative assessment is to be made sometime after the job is completed, or is made by someone other than the original quality controller, then a record will have to be kept of the brief from the client, so that the assessor can assign the text to the appropriate category.

One thing the system as so far described does not mention is the field of the text being assessed. A translator may do extremely well on texts in finance or law. It does not follow that they will do well on medical or engineering texts. Anyone using the system to choose a contractor will have to somehow be able to determine the candidates' fields of competence.

Accounting for factors beyond the translator's control

A final issue in assessment is the role of factors beyond the control of the translator or the translation service. For example, a client does not allow nearly enough time to do a proper job, does not provide necessary reference materials or names of resource people, or provides a text that is not fully legible, yet insists on receiving a translation anyway. The question of whether the job ought to be have been refused is now irrelevant; it was not refused, and the issue is now one of assessing a translation which may well be rather bad. Future users of the ratings would be misled if such translations were given poor (absolute or relative) ratings. The translator would appear less competent than they actually are. One solution might be to leave these jobs out of the reckoning if a running score is being kept. The running score will then reflect only those jobs in which the working conditions were adequate. Alternatively, a flag could be attached to the rating for that particular job to indicate that the poor result was not the fault of the translator.

The cost of revision as an evaluation measure

If we regard translation as a business, then we could decide to use the cost of revising a translation as a way of evaluating it, or at least as one component of the evaluation. Now, every text will take a certain amount of time to read even if it turns out to be 'perfect' (does not require any changes). However any additional time taken to make necessary changes could be represented as a monetary value: if one hour, then the reviser's salary for one hour, or some other set amount. It's true that under such a system, a text with five major mistranslations that takes only 15 minutes to correct would be deemed to be four times as good as a text (of the same length, hence billed the same amount) that has dozens of small language errors and takes 60 minutes to correct. This approach to evaluation tells us nothing about the seriousness or nature of errors. Still, time is a vital consideration in any business; the difference in revision time between the two texts is 45 minutes, and during those 45 minutes, the reviser of the text with five mistranslations had moved on to new texts whereas the other reviser had not.

A further difficulty with evaluation by revision time is that one reviser may take 30 minutes to correct a given draft translation while another may take 60 minutes (over and above the base amount allowed for reading and a couple of corrections). This difference may be due to a lesser knowledge of the subject matter, or less experience as a reviser. Thus if the text is assessed by the first reviser, it will be deemed to be twice as good as it would have been had the second reviser assessed it. Some corrective factor would have to be devised, based on the organization's knowledge of its revisers' experience and areas of knowledge.

Quality assessment for social media translation

The quality of translations prepared for social media can be assessed by the degree of engagement they elicit. Social Media Marketing tools make it possible to compare the number of Facebook likes or Twitter retweets for sources and translations; if the number of likes or retweets is much lower for the translation, that could be taken as an indicator of poor quality translation. For example, a hashtag may have been translated in a way that did not elicit much engagement.

Users may also directly comment on Facebook posts. Comments on translated posts can be compared to comments on sources. Comments sometimes directly concern poor translation quality.

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

Brunette (2000); Hague et al (2011); Moorkens et al (2018); O'Brien (2012); Thelen (2019); Williams (1989; 2009)

On inter-assessor reliability with non-error-counting assessment: Colina (2008; 2009). For an application of Colina's assessment method to MT output and to translations by students and by professionals: van Rensburg (2012). For a combined qualitative/quantitative approach: Mateo (2017)

The defects (inapplicability to professional situations) of theoretical writings on quality assessment are discussed in Lauscher (2000), Drugan (2013) and Hajmohammadi (2005)

Cost of poor quality: European Union (2012)

Social media, crowdsourcing and quality: Desjardins (2016) Chapter 5.5; Jiménez-Crespo (2017) Chapter 5

Appendix 3: Quantitative grading scheme

For better or worse, schools require instructors to assign grades. Assuming the instructor wants to be as objective as possible, some sort of quantitative scheme is needed for text-based assignments and tests. The following scheme for translation revision exercises not only yields numerical marks but also serves to indicate to students their areas of weakness and strength.

The coding system described here can also be used for pure copyediting and stylistic editing exercises, and to evaluate some of the revision competencies of professional translators, especially those new to revision.

The scheme is based on the competencies needed by revisers, as set out in Chapter 10.3. To use it, you must identify certain wordings in the translation as *definitely* needing correction. There will be some subjectivity in this exercise, since you will inevitably find borderline cases. You may wish to ask one or two other instructors for comments on your decisions, or even ask them to identify necessary changes themselves. Then adjust your own decisions in light of what they say.

Marking up the revised text

The first step is to go through the student's revised text and mark it up with codes:

G (for 'Good change'): the translation needed to be changed, and the change adequately improves the quality.

N (for 'didn't Notice'): no change was made but you think a change is needed.

W (for 'Worse'): the change introduced an error in an adequate translation or made an inadequate translation Worse.

U (for 'Unnecessary'): the translation was fine as it was *even if the revised form is in your judgment better*

I (for 'Inadequate change'): the translation needed to be changed but the change, while not making the translation worse, does not adequately improve the quality.

R (for 'unnecessary Retranslation'): the wording needed to be changed and the change sufficiently improves the quality, but a small change would have sufficed.

It's important to bear in mind that you are not rating the revised translation; you are rating the changes (or failures to change). A student could produce a wonderful translation by making many unnecessary changes or even retranslating many sentences. But in the professional world for which students are being prepared, these are *time-wasting* activities and must therefore result in loss of marks.

Sometimes a change in one place calls for a change elsewhere in the text. For example, the student changed a singular noun to a plural noun but failed to change 'it' to 'they' in the next sentence. Code the singular to plural change as G, W, U or I, and the failure to change 'it' to 'they' as N. Alternatively, if the change was unnecessary, you could use code W for the combination of the singular/plural change and the failure to change the pronoun.

The code R is used where fairly lengthy passages seem to have been completed reconceived or retranslated from the source. Early in a course, you could decide to ignore the distinction between R and G, since learning to revise through small changes to the existing wording takes many students quite some time.

In borderline cases (you were not sure whether a change was necessary), just skip over that passage, leaving it uncoded. This avoids wasting time on minor stylistic changes.

If the same mistake is made several times (e.g. a particular wrong term in the draft translation was not noticed more than once), you only assign code N once.

Within W, you could distinguish between UW (the translation was fine and the change made it worse) and plain W (the translation needed a change but the change made it worse).

Notice that the scheme nowhere refers to the revision parameters. For example, there is no code 'failing to notice omissions'. If you want to focus on Transfer, give students a draft translation that contains transfer errors but no language errors. Or simply ignore students' treatment of all non-transfer errors when coding their work. Students often spend time fixing typing problems (e.g., they notice that there is a space between the end of a word and a following comma), but you may want to ignore such changes.

Similarly, the scheme does not account for the seriousness of an error that the student overlooked or failed to adequately correct. If you wish, apply the coding only to major errors in the draft.

If you try to incorporate parameters and degrees of seriousness, you will need a lengthy set of complicated codes (NMT: student failed to Notice the need to correct a Major Transfer error; WmL: student made a minor Language error Worse).

Once you have entered the codes, write the number of instances of each code on the student's paper so that they can see their areas for improvement. For example, a student who has 5G, 2N, 0W, 10U, 2I and 1R on an initial 250 word text with 10 needed changes is doing quite well on noticing problems (5G, 2I, 1R), making adequate changes (5G), and avoiding changes that make the translation worse (0W), but has a serious problem with unnecessary changes (10U).

Formulas for calculating the mark

Once you have coded the text, there are several ways of using the codes to calculate a mark. During the first part of a revision course where the students have no experience in the world of professional translation or editing, try the following approach. Calculate two scores:

Score 1: G+I+R/x multiplied by 100: the percentage of needed changes (x) which the student **noticed** regardless of whether the correction was adequate and regardless of unnecessary retranslations. You could even include those instances of W where the draft translation did need a change.

Score 2: 100 – yW – (U – z): 100 minus y times the number of cases of making the translation **worse** minus the number of **unnecessary** changes exceeding z. (The values of y and z will vary with the length of the text, the number of assignments the students have previously done, and perhaps other factors. I use 2W and U – 5 on the first 250-word assignment.)

The proportion of the grade attributed to each of these two scores can be adjusted as the course proceeds. I have found that near the beginning of the course, adding 1/3 of score (1) and 2/3 of score (2) yields a nice high class average and thus avoids discouraging students. If you consider only score (1), you will probably get a very low average, with many students failing, because students new to revision typically only notice half the necessary changes.

If one assignment is considerably longer or shorter than another (and therefore affords more or fewer opportunities to make undesirable changes and to not notice errors), adjust the final mark accordingly. If one assignment has 200 words, another has 250 words and a third has 300 words, choose perhaps 250 words as a standard and adjust the other two marks to reflect the increase or decrease of 20% in the length of the text from one assignment to another. Thus a student who achieves 75 on a 250-word translation, 65 on a 300-word translation and 85 on a 200-word translation will receive adjusted marks of 75, 78 and 68 respectively.

As the course proceeds, you can change the factors you consider as well as the weightings of the factors. For example, you could consider only adequate corrections that are not Retranslations in score (1): G/x multiplied by 100. You could penalize W errors more heavily and reduce the number of 'free' unnecessary changes. Towards the end of the course, I give students a translation that needs no changes, to see whether they can recognize a good translation; I score it using 100 – 3W – 2U.

Once the students have been introduced to the revision parameters (Chapter 11), you should ask them to explain why they thought the wording of the draft translation needed a change. If a student makes 17 changes, and I decide there are 9 good explanations, 5 so-so explanations and 3 poor explanations (or no explanations), then the explanations receive a score of (9×1) + (5×0.5) + (3×0) divided by 17 and multiplied by 100 = 68. This score can be combined with the other score(s); for example it might count for 20% of the final mark on the assignment.

Notice that there are no marks given for explaining the merits of the student's proposed new wordings. The skill being tested is the ability to explain why a change was needed in the first place. Explanations related to instances of U will by the nature of things usually get a 0 but in borderline cases may be considered so-so.

By a 'good' explanation, I mean one that pins down the problem. A bonus mark can be given for a very precise explanation. Thus a student who correctly identifies a wording in the original translation as defective with respect to 'Sub-language' would get 1 mark; a student who mentions 'Sub-language unsuited to the genre' would get a bonus mark. It's not a good idea to mark explanations before the parameters have been introduced, though you can certainly ask for oral explanations during unmarked in-class revision assignments right from the start of the course. You will probably find that students often give rather unsatisfactory explanations using their own categories. For example 'calque' of the source text is not a valid explanation of the need for a change. Some calques are perfectly fine. When they are not fine, the problem could be with Accuracy, Tailoring, Idiom or Sub-language.

Another useful exercise is having students explain their decisions in, say, 5 cases where they were not sure whether the translation needed a change. For example: 'I could not decide whether the register of such-and-such a wording was right (parameter 6 – tailoring): was it too informal? I eventually decided to leave it unchanged because I found several instances of that wording in similar texts originally written in English.' You award marks for the student's reasoning regardless of whether you agree with the final decision. Of course, the problem has to be a plausible one: no marks for 'explaining' why the word *raven* was not changed to *writing desk*!

Finally, you may find it hard to predict what students will find difficult and what they will find easy, unless you are using the same draft translations you have used in the past. If the average mark in the class is low, say 61/100, you could try adjusting your scoring formula, though that can be time-consuming. Much simpler is to just add a set number of points to every student's mark; this has the effect of giving students with lower marks a proportionally bigger boost than students with higher marks (adding 5 points to a mark of 60 is an 8% increase; adding 5 points to a mark of 80 is a 6% increase).

Using the code with professionals

When using the code to evaluate new revisers in a professional setting, the focus will be on specific problems:

Failing to notice the need for a change: 100 – aN over a passage of x words
e.g. 100 – 3N over 500 words
Time-wasting: 100 – aU – bR over a passage of x words
e.g. 100 – 2U – 3R over 500 words
Contributing to quality: aG – bW over a passage of x words
e.g. 3G – 5W over 500 words

Here is a copyedited and stylistically edited text showing the codes. The aim here was to make the text 'publishable' though not 'polished' (in the sense of Chapter 12.2.2).

N
1 The civilization taking shape around us can be seen as embodiment of Galileo's
famous U the G of mathematics.
2 ~~celebrated~~ insight that nature is written in ~~mathematical~~ language. The techniques
W dreamed up G centres N
3 and ways of thinking ~~conceived~~ at ~~centres of~~ research are ~~becoming,~~ with increasing
U becoming I impacted
4 rapidity, a part of daily life. This process has, in turn, ~~reacted on~~ the organization of
performed at universities by
5 science itself. Seventy years ago, research was ~~an individual activity carried on by~~ R
individual professors and their students
6 ~~professors and students as a part of university education~~, but more recently, a new
G
7 type of institution has been proliferating—huge private or public research
8 organizations with vast resources at their disposal.
9

Line 1

The editor failed to notice the missing definite article 'the' before 'embodiment'.

Line 2

The change from 'celebrated' to 'famous' was unnecessary but the change from 'mathematical language' to 'the language of mathematics' was necessary to put the keyword 'mathematics' in focus position.

Line 3

'dreamed up' makes the draft worse because it is pejorative, for which there is no cue elsewhere in the text.
'centres of research' is unidiomatic; 'research centres' is the usual expression.
'with increasing rapidity' has unnecessarily been moved to the position before 'becoming'. In moving the expression, the editor deleted the comma after 'rapidity' in line 4 but forgot to delete the comma after 'becoming'.

Line 4

'reacted on' is not English but the change to 'impacted' is inadequate because this transitive use of the verb 'impact' is still only acceptable in business and commercial writing.

Lines 5 and 6

The rewriting here is unnecessary, though the addition of 'their' before 'students' was necessary to avoid the implication that students were carrying out the research on their own. The re-write is more concise (it eliminates 'as a part of university education', which is left implicit), but there is no particular reason to write more concisely here.

Lines 7 and 8

Some editors may think it necessary to do something about the discrepancy between 'type of institution' (singular) and 'research organizations' (plural). There will always be cases where editors disagree.

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on these publications.

Evaluation of revisers: Arthern (1983, 1987, 1991); Van Rensburg (2017)

Appendix 4: Sample revision

This appendix gives a sample unilingual re-reading, since a comparative re-reading would require reference to a text in a language which many readers of this book would not know. A draft translation with a fairly large number of defects is used so that several problems can be illustrated in a short space. The French source text introduced a series of articles on environmental ethics. The translation was done by a student trainee on a work placement. The brief was to prepare a translation for publication in a ministry magazine that would be distributed mainly within the civil service. One of the magazine's functions is to make employees aware of the ministry's outlook on various issues; the editor of the magazine therefore emphasized, in the brief, the importance of readability. In order to focus on language and style matters, the reviser began with a unilingual re-reading.

The revisions can be seen in handwriting. The number next to each revision refers to the commentary which follows the passage.

Note that the revised translation shown here could be used in a class or workshop as an exercise in justification of changes. Simply ask participants to mark up the text using the code in Appendix 3.

Commentary

1. Deletion of 'our' is an unnecessary change. Note that it doesn't much matter what the source text says. If the passage went on to contrast 'our' society with other societies, eliminating 'our' would create a minor omission, but in fact that is not the case.
2. The perfective is needed because (as the subsequent text makes clear), there is present relevance. It would be tempting to further revise to 'have idealized', but a glance at the source text removes the temptation: the wording suggests that the optimists did in fact have to overcome some opposition, and this is reflected in 'succeeded'.
3. The style sheet requires –ize rather than –ise in all words where both spellings are possible.
4. The draft is verbose. In a translation for information only, the draft could have been left as is. Given the brief, it is not necessary to have the highest level of writing quality, but some of the verbosity should be removed.

...I would like at this time to share with you a few thoughts on the future of environmental management.

Optimists in ~~our~~ (1) society have (2) succeeded in idealizing (3) the promise (4) ~~possibilities~~ of ~~for~~ the year 2000. In their view, (5) all aspirations, both individual and societal, ~~could~~ can (6) be realized—technological innovation (7), economic growth, social equality and environmental quality. (8) But objective~~ly speaking, the reality of the present~~ analysis shows that (10) ~~is far from being able to meet~~ ~~cannot~~ (9) these (11) expectations of the past are not in fact being met. The economy is more ~~fragile~~ volatile (12) than ever, inequalities and dissidence (13) among peoples are omnipresent, world population growth seems ~~increasingly~~ more and more (14) ~~unbearable,~~ untenable (15) and ~~pollution~~ the biosphere is increasingly facing disturb~~ing~~ed ~~the biosphere~~ pollution (16).

Admittedly, (17) ~~during~~ over (18) the last few decades we have created a tremendous ~~ability~~ capacity to ~~handle~~ process (19) information, to communicate with one another and to ~~widen the scope of commercial~~ (20) extend our markets. ~~Thus, amongst other things~~ (21) (22) We have ~~broken down~~ seen (23) the barriers which separated us break down and developed technologies at a frantic pace. However, we have neglected to include in this equation (24) the fact that this planet is a closed system with limited resources (25). Ironically, even as we have drawn closer to each other through the many means of communication we have created, we (26) have distanced ourselves from our one common denominator (27): the Earth's ability to support life in all its forms.

5. Without this introductory phrase, it is not immediately clear who is speaking, the author or the 'optimists'. A problem of intersentence flow. (As it happens, there is no such phrase in the French, but the grammatical structure makes it clear that it is the optimists who are speaking.)
6. Sequence of tense problem here: the present is required to match the perfective in the previous sentence. This type of change is easily missed if you are focusing entirely on the current sentence.
7. The aspiration would be to innovation in general, not specific innovations.
8. This is the key point of the paragraph, so it merits a sentence of its own (regardless of what the source text has).

9. 'is far from being able to' is unidiomatic. Revision to 'the reality of the present cannot meet' seems close enough to the same meaning. This fails to capture 'far from' but that is a minor omission of no importance.
10. 'reality…cannot meet' is obscure. One possibility would have been for the reviser to guess that this sentence simply contradicts the view of the optimists as stated in the previous sentence; this could be expressed by 'objectively speaking, the present cannot meet the expectations of the past'. In fact, the reviser looked at the source text and decided on something more elaborate, which unfortunately required structural change of the sentence. However, looking at the source text was a good idea because the point being made in it is not that the present *cannot* meet the expectations of the past, but that it *is* not meeting them. Whereas *cannot* suggests that if we made changes we might be able to meet the expectations, *is* better suits the argument which will be made, namely that there is something wrong with the expectations themselves. Literal translation of the source text: 'in all objectivity, the balance-sheet one can draw from the present is far from meeting these expectations of the past'.
11. Changing 'the' to 'these' creates a better link to the previous sentence, making it clear that the expectations are for innovation, growth and so on. It doesn't matter whether the source text has such a linking word.
12. 'fragile economy' is an odd word combination to express what the reviser correctly guessed is just a cliche in the source text.
13. The reviser missed 'dissidence'. Once again, a more ordinary word combination (perhaps 'conflicts among peoples') is required, because the thought is a commonplace.
14. Perhaps after reading 'increasingly' in the next phrase, the reviser decided to eliminate the repetition. Is this a needed improvement? One could argue that the repetition of the word is effective. If in doubt, make no change.
15. 'Unbearable' does not go with 'population growth'.
16. The reviser has placed the key word 'pollution' in focus position, but the effort required does not seem worth it. The draft was readable. And unfortunately, after moving 'pollution', the reviser forgot to put 'by' in front of it.
17. Is 'admittedly' really the right word to introduce this paragraph? The argument in favour is perhaps that the previous sentence described some negative features of the current scene, and the writer is now 'admitting' that the picture has positive features as well. However, while the second sentence of the paragraph continues with the positive features, the third sentence takes us back to the negatives. The argument of a text can be hard to follow if it contains too many 'but'-like words, and 'admittedly' is just such a word. If we delete it, then the first two paragraphs will have simple and parallel structural signals: positives—however—negatives; positives—however—negatives. There is no need for a linking expression at the beginning of a paragraph in English. Indeed, if the entire segment shown here had been a single paragraph in the source text, it would have been a good idea to create a paragraph break in the translation at this point, precisely in order to avoid having to use a 'but' word.

18. Changing ‘during’ to ‘over’ is an unnecessary improvement.
19. Changing ‘ability to handle’ to ‘capacity to process’ introduces words which fit better with ‘information’. It’s on the borderline of being a necessary change, given the brief.
20. ‘widen the scope of commercial markets’ is verbose, slightly unidiomatic (scope of a market?) and contains a redundancy (commercial market). A worthwhile change.
21. ‘Thus’: a pointless linking word, probably present in the draft only because the source text has a linking word. French is much less friendly than English to sentences with no linking word.
22. ‘Amongst other things’: French frequently specifies that the items being mentioned do not constitute an exhaustive list. In English, this is much less common; the non-exhaustivity of lists is usually left implicit.
23. Changing ‘we have broken down…’ to ‘we have seen…break down’ is pointless. A glance at the source text confirms that it does not improve the accuracy of the translation.
24. What equation? Nothing equation-like has been mentioned. This is an empty buzzword, which should be removed.
25. ‘Sources’: fast typing or a brief lapse in attention resulted in a wrong word in the draft. Spellcheck would not catch it.
26. The reviser spotted the missing ‘we’. It may have disappeared when the translator pressed the delete key once too often while re-arranging the sentence. The reviser could easily have missed it through over-attention to the immediate context, since the structure ‘we have created, have distanced…[and…]’ is a perfectly good one.
27. This writer seems to like mathematical metaphors. Is Earth’s ability to support life a ‘common denominator’? But there is a bigger problem: what is the connection between the two aspects of the ‘irony’? A look at the source text does not help: the thought, whatever it is, is just as poorly expressed in French. There seem to be three ideas: (a) we are now more closely linked than ever with each other, but (b) we have lost touch with the one thing we were all previously close to, namely the planet which (c) supports life in all its forms. Should the reviser have intervened to help the writer? Probably not, since it might take quite a while to rewrite the sentence, and anyway these are only opening remarks. Readers will be more interested in the next part of the text (which specifically concerns the ministry they work for).

Appendix 5: Revising and editing vocabulary

The following list defines terms as they are used in this book. It does not report on the meanings given to these terms by other writers. Some of these other meanings are indicated in terminology notes in the body of the book. Words in a definition are italicized if they are themselves defined (with the exception of a few words such as *revise*).

There is a copious literature on editing, but the terminology is far from standardized: terms like *copyedit, proofread* and *rewrite* are used in a variety of overlapping or contradictory ways. There is only a small published literature on revision in English, but in what does exist, as well as in spoken usage, terms such as *re-read, quality control, proofread, review* and *check* are, again, not used in any consistent way.

The terminology of revision is discussed in Chapter 10.2.

adapting Composing a new text that re-expresses, in the same language, the content of an existing text in order to make it suitable for a readership differing from the intended readership of the existing text.

amending, amendment Rewording a text to either *correct* or *improve* it.

architect strategy A drafting strategy in which the translator reads a source sentence, ponders possible target-language wordings at length, then writes down one of them and moves on to the next sentence without making any changes.

authentic Quality of a translation which reads like a target-language original not only in its grammar, *idiom* and terminology, but also in its use of phrasing and rhetoric typical of target-language texts of that genre.

brief The client's explicit and implicit instructions for a translation job. Sometimes called the commission.

check Read to identify *errors*.

clear, clarity Characteristic of a passage which is *readable (smooth* and *tailored), logical* and *intelligible.*

client The purchaser of the translator's services, or the agent of an institution who asks for the translation. Sometimes called the commissioner.

Client specifications Requests from clients regarding terminology, layout, use of documentation or other matters. One of the *Specifications parameters* of revision.

coherence, coherent See *Logic*

cohesion, cohesive See *Smoothness*

comparative re-reading Type of *revision* in which sentences of the translation are compared to sentences of the source text. The main purpose is to detect inaccuracies and omissions. Often accompanied by a check of one or more *Content, Language, Presentation* or *Specifications parameters*. Also called 'bilingual re-reading'. Compare: *unilingual re-reading.*

Completeness Quantitative characteristic of a translation in which no source-text information has been omitted in such a way that it cannot be recovered from context, no information has been added that is not even implicit in the source text, and no text has been left in the source language without warrant. One of the *Transfer parameters* of revision.

consistency Characteristic of a translation or a set of translations in which any given word, term or set phrase in the source text is normally translated in the same way (assuming the concept is the same), a uniform register is used, *Presentation parameters* are used in a uniform manner, and a single alternative is selected where variants are available within the *Mechanics parameter*.

content editing Checking a text for its ideas. At the macro-level, includes changes in the coverage of the topic. At the micro-level, includes correction of factual, logical and mathematical errors.

Content parameters The following two revision parameters: Logic, Facts.

copyediting Checking a text to bring it into conformance with pre-set rules, including the publisher's house style, rules of *correct usage*, and the grammar, punctuation and spelling rules of the language.

correct usage Rules explicitly stated by some authority that prescribe certain ways of using a language while proscribing others.

correction, correcting (1) An amendment that is required by a rule, such as a rule of spelling, punctuation or grammar, an instruction in a *style sheet* or *style manual*, or a widely accepted rhetorical or genre-related principle of the target language. (2) Rectification of a straightforward terminology mistake, significant mistranslation or gross translationese. (3) Rectification of a factual or mathematical error. Compare: *improvement, check*

draft translation In *self-revision*, a translation, or passage of a translation, which has not yet been through the *post-drafting phase*. Otherwise, a translation which has not yet been checked by the revising translator.

drafting phase The period of time when the wording of a translation is first put down. It may or may not include *self-revision* work.

editing The process of reading a text that is not a translation (or is not being treated as a translation) to spot problematic passages, and then making or recommending any corrections or improvements that are needed to meet some standard of quality. There are four types of editing: *copyediting, stylistic editing, structural editing* and *content editing. Editing* is used by some translators to refer to *unilingual re-reading* of a translation, or to *revision* in general.

Employer policies Policies of translation companies and of employers of salaried translators. One of the *Specifications parameters* of revision.

error Any feature of a text which requires *correction* or *improvement*.

Facts Content of a text, including concepts and mathematical statements as well as factual information. One of the *Content parameters* of revision.

fit-for-purpose A text which is worded adequately for its future users and for the use they will make of it.

flow Synonymous with *smoothness*.

full revision (1) Check of the entire translation rather than just selected portions. (2) Check of all *parameters* rather than just selected ones. A revision can be full in one or both senses.

gatekeeping A function of editors and revisers, who must *correct* the text so that it conforms to society's linguistic and textual rules and achieves the client's goals.

glancing Revising a translation by reading only the title or cover page, and the first paragraph.

house style A list of rules, issued by a publishing organization, which writers are to follow when preparing a manuscript. Takes the form of a brief style sheet or a longer style manual.

Idiom, idiomatic, idiomaticity A passage is unidiomatic if it contains a combination of words that is not in use by the native speakers of the language, or if a word is used in a meaning it does not have. In a broader sense, a translated passage is unidiomatic if it fails to observe the stylistic and rhetorical preferences of the target language, if it fails to sound 'natural'. One of the *Language parameters* of revision.

improvement, improving The process of making a necessary amendment other than a *correction*. Improvements mostly consist of *tailoring* and *smoothing*. Given a text's purpose, it may not require checking for needed improvements, whereas all texts require checking for needed corrections. *Improve(ment)* is also used in the more general sense of 'make better'.

informative Combination of writing quality and accuracy in which the aim is to achieve a translation which is fairly *readable*, mostly *correct*, and accurate and complete with respect to primary and perhaps secondary elements of the source-text message. Compare: *intelligible, publishable* and *polished.*

intelligible (1) Characteristic of a passage where the ideas and their sequence are understandable, even if there are errors in language and style. (2) Combination of writing quality and accuracy in which the aim is to achieve a translation that has a bare minimum of *readability* and is roughly accurate and more or less complete. Compare: *informative, publishable* and *polished*.

Language parameters The following five revision parameters: Tailoring, Smoothing, Sub-language, Idiom and Mechanics.

Layout The arrangement of the text on the page. One of the *Presentation* parameters of revision.

level of language The degree of formality or technicality of the language. Formality must suit the relationship between author and audience, and the occasion and purpose of the document. Technicality must suit the readers' knowledge of the subject matter.

Logical, logic More narrowly: characteristic of a passage which is free of tautology, contradiction or other errors in logic. More broadly: *intelligible* in sense (1). One of the *Content parameters* of revision.

macro-level checking Checking a text for *errors* in matters concerning units larger than a pair of consecutive sentences. This would include things such as the logic of an argument or the level of formality of language used across an entire text.

Mechanics Linguistic features subject to relatively strict rules such as those of spelling and grammar, as well as house style requirements. One of the *Language parameters* of revision.

mental editing Correcting or improving the writing quality of a text while translating it.

micro-level checking Checking a text for *errors* in matters concerning individual words, phrases or sentences, or the relationship between a sentence and the one that precedes or follows it.

norm of translation The approach to translation generally accepted by a society as a whole, or a subculture of it, including that of professional translators.

nonsense, nonsensical Passage which is uninterpretable for some reason other than the difficulty of the subject matter.

oil painter strategy A drafting strategy in which the translator reads a source sentence, quickly writes down a wording, amends that wording (with or without reference to the source text), possibly several times, and then moves on to the next sentence.

Organization The overall structuring of a text. One of the *Presentation parameters* of revision.

other-revision Revising a translation prepared by another translator.

parameter One of the fourteen text features which may be checked during revision.

partial revision (1) Check of selected portions of a translation rather than the entire translation. Includes *scanning*, *spot-checking* and *glancing*. (2) Check of selected parameters rather than all parameters. A revision can be partial in one or both senses.

polished Finely crafted and fully correct writing quality that makes the reading experience enjoyable in itself. Suitable for literary and some commercial translation, and for prestige publications. Compare: *intelligible, publishable* and *informative.*

post-drafting phase The period of time after the draft translation is complete. It includes *unilingual re-reading* and possibly *comparative re-reading* as well as the related corrections and improvements.

post-editing Revising the output of machine translation.

pre-drafting phase The period of time before the translator begins to set down the wording of the translation, during which the translator may read all or part of the source text, conduct research or jot down translation ideas.

Presentation parameters The following three revision parameters: Layout, Typography, Organization.

procedure A pre-determined sequence of steps used in editing or revision.

proofreading (1) In the publishing industry, checking an edited text for any *errors* remaining after page design and typesetting. (2) In the translation industry, checking of a text for *Mechanics* and the *Presentation parameters,* often by a non-translator. (3) In the translation industry, sometimes used as a synonym of *unilingual re-reading* or *revision*.

publishable Combination of writing quality and accuracy in which the aim is to achieve a translation that is very *readable*, fully *correct,* and accurate and complete with respect to primary, secondary and most other meaning elements of the source-text message. Compare: *intelligible, informative* and *polished*.

quality In general, the totality of the characteristics of an entity that bear on its ability to satisfy stated and implied needs. With regard to a translation, (1) the set of characteristics that make it fit or unfit for its future readers and the use they will make of it. (2) the set of characteristics required by an employer, client or translation agency.

quality control Synonymous with *revision*. Quality control may involve checking either all or part of a translation, and either all or just some of the *parameters*. It may or may not include comparison with the source text.

quality assessment A check of selected parts of a translation, often after delivery to the client, by someone other than the translator, to determine the degree to which professional standards, as well as the standards of the translating organization and the client, were met with respect to one or more *parameters*. No corrections are made. The result of the assessment may be quantified for such purposes as rating employee performance or selecting contractors. Also called 'quality evaluation'.

QA tool A computer tool that checks Mechanical errors and Consistency

quality assurance The whole set of procedures applied before, during and after the translation production process, by all members of a translating organization, to ensure that quality objectives important to clients are being met. Objectives may pertain to quality of service (deadlines met, clients' interaction with the translation service pleasant), quality of the physical product (layout, electronic form), and quality of the text (style suited to user and use, proper terminology, correct language).

readability, readable Characteristic of a passage which is *tailored* to readers and has a *smooth* sequence of sentences and paragraphs. Compare: *clear, logical, intelligible.*

re-reading See *comparative re-reading; unilingual re-reading*.

repurposing Making changes in a text so that it can be used in a different medium.

reviewer, review A subject-matter expert who examines a manuscript to determine whether it makes a contribution to its field, to suggest additions or subtractions from coverage of the topic, or to identify conceptual or terminological errors.

revising, revision The process of reading a translation in order to spot problematic passages, and then making or recommending any corrections or improvements that are needed to meet some standard of quality.

rewriting Composing a new text (or sentence or passage of a text) that re-expresses, within the same language, and for the originally intended readership, the content of a manuscript. May be unnecessary if the manuscript was editable. Compare: *adapting*.

retranslating Composing a new translation (of an entire text or, more frequently, a sentence), starting from the source text. May be unnecessary if the draft was revisable.

satisficing When amending a text, the strategy of choosing the first wording that suffices because it satisfies needs.

scanning Revising a translation by focused reading for just one or two *parameters*.

self-revision An integral part of the translation production process in which one checks and amends one's own translation.

Smoothness, smoothing The quality of a text in which sentences are well focused and have an easily perceptible syntactic structure, and in which paragraphs have easily perceptible connections between sentences. A contribution, along with *tailoring,* to *readability*. One of the *Language parameters* of revision. Other terms for a smooth text are 'cohesive' and 'flowing'. Compare: *logical*.

Specifications parameters The following two parameters: Client Specifications, Employer Policies

spot-checking Revising a translation by checking either regularly spaced or randomly selected paragraphs or pages spread over a text.

steamroller strategy A drafting strategy in which the translator reads a source text, quickly writes down a translation and then moves on immediately to the next sentence without making any changes.

strategy of translation A general approach used for a translation job in order to comply with the brief, such as giving preference to accuracy over readability, writing in a conversational style, summarizing verbose sentences, or retaining source-language terms for cultural references with bracketed explanations.

strategic error An error in the approach to drafting a translation that requires a large amount of time to correct, such as writing the draft in too formal a style.

structural editing Checking the physical structure of a text to help readers follow its conceptual structure.

stylistic editing Checking and improving a text to ensure it reads *smoothly* and is *tailored* to its readers.

style manual See *house style*.

style sheet See *house style*.

Sub-language Subset of the lexical, syntactic and rhetorical resources of a language which are typically used in a given genre and field. One of the *Language parameters* of revision.

Tailoring, tailored Adjusting the wording of a text to make it more suitable for its particular readership. One of the *Language parameters* of revision. A contribution, along with *smoothing,* to *readability.*

training revision Revision of a translation in which two types of change are made (and visually distinguished): changes needed to prepare the translation for delivery to the client and changes designed to show a trainee or student translator other (and possibly better) solutions to translation problems.

trans-editing Making large-scale structural and content changes in texts while translating them.

Transfer parameters The two revision parameters: Accuracy and Completeness.

Typography Treatment of the typeface, such as bolding and size. One of the *Presentation parameters* of revision.

unilingual re-reading Type of *revision* in which the translation alone is read unless a passage is nonsensical or there is some other reason for the reviser to look at the source text. Also called 'monolingual re-reading' or just plain 're-reading'. To be distinguished from the *editing*, outside a translation service, of texts which happen to be translations. Compare: *comparative re-reading.*

writing quality The extent of a text's readability and correctness. Four degrees are recognized: *intelligible, informative, publishable, polished.*

Further reading

See the Readings list near the end of the book for details on this publication.

Shuttleworth (1997): see the definitions of adaptation, rewriting, norms, post-editing, pre-editing, verifiability, sub-language, rewording, idiomatic, naturalness, commission.

Delisle (1999); Brunette (2000)

Appendix 6: Empirical research on revision

There is now a considerable, and rapidly expanding, research literature on revision. This appendix takes a brief look at the methods that have been used to investigate revision as well as the issues that need to be explored.

Research methods

There are three kinds of study: direct observation of students or professional revisers at work; analysis of survey and interview results; analysis of unrevised/revised translation pairs.

At the time of writing, four observation methods have been used, sometimes in combination: (i) Think-aloud studies ask translators to speak aloud their thoughts while they are revising. The translators' comments are recorded and analyzed. (ii) Keystroke logging studies rely on software that records all keyboard actions by the translator, including of course changes made to the draft translation; the record can be played back or printed out and analyzed. (iii) Video recording studies show the translator at work, perhaps stopping screen work to consult paper documents or make a phone call (or stare out the window!). Screen logging studies show how translators move from window to window (as they do research for example). (iv) Eye-tracking studies record translators' eye movements, making it possible to know what wordings of source and translation they were looking at, at a given time, and for how long. A more recent method (which may have been used for revision by the time you read this) is neuro-imaging: brain scans taken while subjects are translating.

Some aspects of the translator's work process can be directly observed (for example, the translator switches from a Word window to a Web browser window); others have to be inferred (for example, mental processes inferred from the self-reports produced in think-aloud studies).

Most studies concern self-revision rather than other-revision, and combine discussion of self-revision with other aspects of translation drafting. These studies confirm that different people take different approaches. There is some evidence that as people gain experience, they become able to do most of the needed self-revisions during the drafting phase, whereas less experienced translators tend to rely more on the post-drafting phase. For pedagogical purposes, however, it is not a good idea to teach students the approaches that have been observed with very experienced translators. There are probably natural stages people go through as they learn to translate, and there is no point in trying to skip to the final stages. Much of what experienced translators do arises from confidence—something which can only be acquired through lengthy experience.

The studies are worth reading because they will enable you to compare your own methods with those of others, but they are not yet sufficiently advanced to demonstrate that some particular approach is better than others, in the sense that it results in a higher quality translation or in greater speed or both. In addition, some people have expressed doubts about the methods: do eye-tracking and neuro-imaging really provide a 'window on the mind'? doesn't thinking aloud interfere with the translator's usual mental processes?

Some of the results of the studies are expected and some unexpected, and many are rather alarming: if these results are confirmed, then all is not well in the world of revision. Two subjects revising the same text make changes at quite different locations; a reviser thinking aloud states the need to avoid unnecessary changes but then makes many such changes; errors are not infrequently overlooked or introduced.

Early studies, in the 1980s and 90s, mostly used translation or language students as subjects. Later there was a transition to using professional translators, sometimes with comparison to students. Most studies have been conducted at university facilities rather than in translators' workplaces, and the researchers may have given their subjects texts of an unfamiliar type, or asked them to perform tasks which they have rarely or never performed. Thus a question of realism arises: do translators revise in the same way in a 'laboratory' setting as they do when working in their normal surroundings with familiar text types and with a paying client's deadline looming?

Keep in mind that almost none of the findings have been confirmed through repetition by other researchers and that most studies have very few subjects (typically fewer than 10, because it takes so long to process and analyze the data). Also, some studies may have methodological problems. Finally, researchers usually have a panel of revisers or specialized translators to assess the revisions produced by subjects, but different studies are most often not comparable because the panel members in one study were not given the same instructions as those in another study.

Turning to interview and questionnaire studies, one type of interview study takes a retrospective look, asking the translators interviewed why they did what they did, including perhaps questions about revision. Questionnaire studies ask individual translators about their revising habits, or ask translation services about their revision policies.

Finally, studies that compare unrevised and revised translations are sometimes simply case studies of a single text, but they may also be based on a large computerized corpus of texts, so that they can reveal interesting tendencies in revision work.

Research issues

What do we need to know about revision? The two main things that go wrong during revision are failing to detect errors and making unnecessary changes. In addition, sometimes revisers actually introduce errors, making the draft translation worse! We know little about the reasons for such failings.

On the first problem—failure to detect—we need to know more about how attention works during the reviser's reading process. Is the problem a matter of inattention or a problem of mixed attention (inability to attend to both micro problems like number agreement and macro problems like the flow of an argument)? During discussion in a revision course, or during workplace revision training, there will sometimes be disagreement on the need for a change, but in a surprising number of cases, everyone or almost everyone will agree that a change was needed. It seems that revisers see things during discussion which they do not see when they are revising.

On the second problem, we need to identify the factors that lead a reviser to make an unnecessary change. To what extent are such changes triggered locally, by the wording currently under consideration, and to what extent are they triggered by revisers' general stance toward the job, such as the belief that since they have been assigned to revise a text, they must make some changes? In particular, many people completely retranslate whole sentences which were perfectly good or else needed only a small change. Were they perhaps thinking of how they themselves would have translated the sentence?

On the third problem—introducing errors—does this happen because the reviser did not achieve as deep an understanding of the text at hand as the translator? Or does it happen because of poor methodology (for example, the reviser makes a stylistic change and does not notice that the meaning is also being changed)?

Aside from these three issues, which concern the mental process of revision, we need on-site observational studies of revision-related procedures in translation offices so as to find out about what might be called the social psychology and economics of revision. How do revisers actually relate to those whose work is revised? To what extent are quality issues controlled by revisers and to what extent by managers responsible for costs? We need to know not so much about revision policies but rather about the revision 'culture' in translation workplaces.

Another matter about which little is known is the usefulness of revision. What proportion of the problems in translations produced by a translation service are being corrected? How many errors, especially major and critical errors, are being corrected per hour of revision effort? Do the more experienced revisers do a better job than the less experienced ones? What is the difference in quality when a translation is simply self-revised and when it is also revised by a second translator? What is the difference in quality when a translation is checked by a second translator and when it is checked instead by a subject-matter expert or proofreader?

Also under the heading of usefulness, we do not know the extent to which revisers provide feedback, either to in-house or contract translators; without such feedback, errors are very likely to be repeated. Finally, what is the impact on professional development of having one's work revised? To what extent does revision help translators produce better translations in less time? To what extent are good translators demotivated if all or most of their work is revised, and do they then stop improving, becoming dependent on the reviser to make up for their shortcomings?

A final matter that needs more investigation concerns the relationship between revision and the so-called universal tendencies of translators. It has often been proposed that translators tend to explicate ideas implicit in the source, tend to not use syntactic structures of the target language which have no counterparts in the source language (such as the progressive form of the English verb), and tend to use target-language words that are more general in meaning than the corresponding words in the source text. Do revisers undo these tendencies? Do they enhance them?

Some studies in English

Overview

Mossop (2007); introduction to Koponen et al (forthcoming).

Methods

Göpferich & Jääskeläinen (2009); Muñoz Martín (2014); Scocchera (2015)

Interview and questionnaire studies

Marashi & Okhowat (2013); Rasmussen & Schjoldager (2011); Robert (2008); Scocchera (2014; 2015; 2017); Shih (2006)

Comparison of revised/unrevised translations

Munday (2012); Robin (2014); Toury (1995)

Observational studies of self-revision

Alves & Vale (2011); Asadi & Séguinot (2005); Dragsted & Carl (2013); Englund-Dimitrova (2005); Jakobsen (2002); Koby (2007); Pavlović & Antunović (2011); Schaeffer (2019); Shih (2003, 2013, 2015)

Observational studies of other-revision

Brunette (2005); Krings (2001); Künzli (2005, 2006a, b; 2007a, b); Robert (2013, 2014a, b)

Studies of revision of Memory- and MT-assisted translation

Bundgaard (2016); Ipsen & Dam (2016); Mellinger & Shreve (2016)

Readings

This list contains items mentioned at the ends of chapters as well as other readings on revision, editing and related matters in English. It should not be understood as 'recommended reading'; it simply points the way to what is available. Items listed are of varying degrees of difficulty. Be sure to look at the references at the ends of articles and books to find other works of interest.

A frequently updated bibliography on revision and editing, including publications in seven other languages, can be found at www.yorku.ca/brmossop/RevisionBiblio.htm.

I have attempted to give complete coverage of (print or online) publications up to early 2019 that deal solely or mainly with revising other people's translations; these items are marked (R). On self-revision and MT post-editing, as well as revision pedagogy and translation quality assessment, I have given only a small selection from the literature. Items preceded by an * concern either editing or language in general rather than translation revision in particular.

To save space, I have omitted all but the names of the first author or editor for publications with more than two, as well the publisher's name and place of publication, and links to websites. Many of the readings can be viewed free of charge on the Internet, sometimes in Google Books or Google Scholar: to find out, simply enter the title in your search engine, or enter the author's name to reach their site, where you may be able to download articles.

The translators' networking and job offer site ProZ.com has a discussion forum on revision (http://www.proz.com/forum/proofreading_editing_reviewing-418.html). A further source is the Techniques forum at http://www.TranslatorsCafe.com, another such site.

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