

# Translation Watch Quarterly

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Correspondence concerning the  
**Translation Standards Institute (TSI) and/or Translation  
Watch Quarterly**

Should be sent to

Ali Darwish

P O Box 418, Patterson Lakes

Victoria 3197, Australia

Email: [darwish@surf.net.au](mailto:darwish@surf.net.au)

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Translation Watch Quarterly (TWQ) is an international peer-reviewed journal devoted to translation and interpreting studies, with a special focus on quality assessment and standards. TWQ publishes articles that are of interest to practising translation and interpreting professionals and to university and industry researchers.

The journal aims to promote understanding of translation-mediated cross-cultural communication within diverse multicultural communities and among peoples and nations, through the publication of original research and/or contribution to the existing literature on translation and interpreting standards, practices, and policy.

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# Translation Watch Quarterly

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## Volume 1, Inaugural Issue, December 2005

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## Why Translation Watch Quarterly?

**Mary Vasilakakos**

RMIT University  
Australia

**T**he role and significance of Translation<sup>1</sup> throughout human history and the development of civilization itself need no introduction. What is fascinating to watch is the fact that as the world becomes increasingly “globalized”, the role and significance of Translation also become increasingly important as never before in human history. For all its apparent equalizing effects on the world’s nations, globalization seems to have been particularly ineffective in bridging the cultural divides that still plague humanity. Many world events since and including September 11 provide ample evidence of this fact and need not be laboured upon. One might argue that the phenomenon of globalization, as we are currently experiencing it, is a superficial one, based predominantly on economic and strategic relationships at the geopolitical level, not a cultural one. For it would be “cultural globalization”, if one could use such a term, that might have a hope of really bridging the cultural divides that still fragment and fracture this small planet.

There are many kinds of Translation and many contexts in which Translation takes place or is needed. Perhaps the one context that would be of the greatest immediate interest to international Translation practitioners is the “pragmatic” context—that is, any real life context in which the different participants depend on Translation for basic communication needs; anything from the United Nations to the local community health center. In turn, the Translation approach that would be most relevant to the “pragmatic” context would be the “meaning-based” approach—that is, the approach that attempts to convey the real or intended meaning of the participants. And the meaning-based approach requires that practitioners take the cultural element into serious consideration. There can be no possibility, in the “pragmatic” context, of effective and accurate translation without understanding how the cultural dimension impinges on meaning and its possible Translation.

This new journal attempts to provide a forum for practitioners working with the ‘pragmatic’ and cultural aspects of Translation to raise training, accreditation, practice, standards, and other relevant issues. We look forward to providing an

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<sup>1</sup> I am using the word Translation with a capital T to include both written and oral renderings of texts across languages.

intellectually honest framework for practitioners and other interested parties to raise issues and have a rigorous and lively debate. 🐦

**Mary Vasilakakos** is Senior Educator, Curriculum and Project Design in Translation and Interpreting, at RMIT University, Melbourne, and co-author of Liaison Interpreting. She has twenty-five years of experience in translator and interpreter teaching and training, and curriculum design and implementation at universities in Australia. With a wealth of knowledge and experience, Mary has taught TAFE, undergraduate, and postgraduate courses in translation and interpreting theory and practice, discourse studies, ethics of the profession, cross-cultural communication and professional development. She is also an accredited translator (Greek-English) of outstanding standard. A key figure in Australian Translation Studies today.

She can be reached at [mary.vasilakakos@rmit.edu.au](mailto:mary.vasilakakos@rmit.edu.au).

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# **Audio Description: Professional Recognition, Practice and Standards in Spain**

**Pilar Orero**

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona  
Spain

## **ABSTRACT**

Audio description is the mode chosen to access audiovisual media for those who have sight problems in the new information society. After the Athens Conference in 2003 the European Union drew up some general guidelines for those countries which had not developed a national plan of accessibility. This article looks at the context of accessibility in Spain, and after a general picture of the Spanish reality on media accessibility it goes into describing and analysing the standard for audio description approved in 2005 by the Spanish Ministerio de Trabajo.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Though audiovisual media has existed for over a century, the new social reality has urged governments to readdress the problem of access to those with some disabilities which may exclude them from the new social realm: Information Society. Audio description is the mode chosen to access audiovisual media for those who have sight problems. After the Athens Conference in 2003, the European Union drew up some general guidelines for those countries which had not developed a national plan of accessibility.

This article looks at the context of accessibility in Spain, and after a general picture of the Spanish reality on media accessibility, it goes into describing and analyzing the standard for audio description approved in 2005 by the Spanish Ministerio de Trabajo (Ministry of Labour).

## **AUDIO DESCRIPTION**

Audio description (AD) is the descriptive technique of inserting audio explanations and descriptions of the settings, characters, and actions taking place in a variety of audiovisual media, when such information about these visual elements is not offered in the regular audio presentation.

### **Historical Background**

Audio description is as old as visually impaired people, since they have always had the need for a description of what takes place around them. As a formalized technique for helping people with sight problems to attend cultural and leisure

activities, audio description started around the 1980s in American theatres<sup>1</sup>. In most European countries, AD has also been present for some decades: As a practice within disability associations, such as the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles (ONCE), Asociación Catalana de Ciegos y Deficientes Visuales (ACC), etc. AD is usually broadcast in live representations, such as theatre performances or opera (Matamala 2005).

The historical background of Audio Description in US, UK, Canada and Spain, reveals that these countries all share the same historical trend: beginning with live and open AD for special play performances, moving to recorded AD for films to be sent internally to members of associations, to the hopefully comprehensive, standard, public and professional AD which will be present in digital television (DTV) and commercial DVDs.

### **Social Change**

The information society is rapidly changing from paper format to audiovisual format. Some people see this shift only within leisure activities, such as cinema and television. But ahead of us there is a crucial change: from analog television to digital television (DTV): terrestrial or satellite. This new DTV technology will play a major role in society, and will open up services to all citizens in banking, education, shopping, bureaucracy, etc. While DTV can be seen as a powerful tool, it should be approached with caution since certain social groups can be discriminated against—in this instance, members of the community with different levels of loss of sight. Moreover, the growing number of ageing people in Europe who will also have some sort of sight problems.

Access to the many services offered by DTV will have to be accessible to all citizens at many levels. For many years now this universal media accessibility has already been a major topic in many European directives and actions, such as the “Television without Frontiers” directive, adopted on 3 October 1989 by the European Union Council (amended on 30 June 1997 by the European Parliament) and the Council Directive 97/36/EC, which is the European legal version of the US Telecommunication Act of 1996. Since that date, almost a decade ago, much work has been done in this respect, and it is now the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC)<sup>2</sup> the body responsible for media accessibility in Europe.

### **Professional Recognition**

Who is an audio describer? In most European countries (such as Belgium, France, Germany, and Spain), and because Audio Description (AD) is only done internally at social level, people who do AD are generally volunteers. Some describers have received training, but some of them perform AD because they have relatives with impairments or because they have some sort of interest in amateur theatre.



In some countries, such as the US and UK, the same people who were doing ADs as volunteers set up professional training<sup>3</sup> courses at private or public institutions which can have a duration between 45 minutes to several weeks. In Germany (Benecke 2004:79) training is done in the Bavarian TV station Bayerischer Rundfunk.

In Spain there is now some training offered at postgraduate university level<sup>4</sup>, but since there is hardly any market needs<sup>5</sup> for AD it is hard to organize and promote courses that have no immediate professional future. What is interesting is the academic field which is now paying attention to the subject of media accessibility and its related professions: subtitler for the hard of hearing and audio describer.

Translation Studies, and in particular, Audiovisual Translation, is the field where Accessible Media is now developing as a research discipline (Díaz Cintas 2005, Gambier 2004), and also as training (Orero 2005a, Orero 2005b). International conferences such as “In Other Words” – organized in London in 2004 – and “Media for All” organized in Barcelona in 2005 are clear examples of the growing academic interest in the field, which is firmly setting roots within Translation Studies. Many academic articles have now been published, a PhD research has been conducted (Neves 2005) on the topic of subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDHH), and more research is underway. In some universities such as Universidad de Vigo in Spain, many dissertations<sup>6</sup> have been written on Media Accessibility, which goes to prove that AD and SDHH have left the amateur and social levels to become a profession and a research field with an academic background at university level.

### **Translators/describers**

Audio description and subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing are two media accessibility techniques that may not require the knowledge of foreign languages, since locally produced audiovisual programmes can be made accessible with intralingual transfer: that is from English into English, or Spanish into Spanish. AD and SDHH entail inter-semiotic transfer processes that go well beyond traditional linguistic or even cultural definitions of translation in that they propose to translate the visual into spoken language in the first case, and the aural into written language in the second.

The skills needed for a person to be an audio describer – as stated by The Audio Description Association in conjunction with The Open College Network West and North Yorkshire (provided in their promotional leaflet) in the UK – are:

- The ability to summarize information accurately and objectively
- A good command of the language
- A clear and pleasant speaking voice
- Good sight and hearing (whether aided or unaided)

- The ability to work as part of a team
- The commitment to access for disabled people, and the provision of quality audio description to blind and partially sighted people.

But these skills are drafted from the UK, a country with little import of media products in other languages than English. Other countries where there is a large import of audiovisual programmes, such as Spain<sup>7</sup>, much of the accessible work will have to be done by a translator, or a person with foreign language transfer skills. It will also have to be decided who does the recording of the AD, since in Spain there is a dubbing union which protects the working rights and conditions of those who record voices for films, adverts, documentaries, etc.

Since audio description and subtitling are closely related to dubbing, voice-over and subtitling, it will make sense to include them – when there is a market need – in the specialized training of Audiovisual Translation. In fact, as already pointed out, some academic institutions such as Surrey University (UK), Roehampton University (UK), Universidad de Granada (Spain) and Universidad de Las Palmas (Spain) offer postgraduate courses in audio description and subtitling (SDHH) from the Modern Languages and Translation Departments. Other universities have started research in this area, such as Universidade de Vigo (Spain), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain), Universidad de Deusto (Spain), etc. This academic interest in media accessibility points towards a level of professionalization in the job which will go in tandem with research. Audio describers and subtitlers (SDHH) will soon enjoy social recognition, which they have not at the moment – taking into consideration copyright, working conditions and open market prices. This progressive integration of media accessibility in society will no doubt benefit everyone: the profession and the users, who will enjoy a quality product and ready available accessible audiovisual services.

### **Standards, Norms, and Regulations**

While some countries have a tradition of written standards, norms and laws, others are happy to have only general guidelines. The former is clearly the case for Spain, where before the profession of audio describers ever existed in the open market, or the government had passed any laws, there was already a fixed standard on how to audio-describe. The Standard UNE 153020:2005, "Audiodescripción para personas con discapacidad visual. Requisitos para la audiodescripción y elaboración de audioguías" (audio description for people with visual impairment: requirements for audio description and development of audio guides) was passed on 26 January 2005. It was created by a working group and coordinated by the Spanish Ministerio de Trabajo. The group was formed by representatives of the national association for the blind (ONCE), broadcasters, representatives from the world of industry, and universities.

***The Spanish UNE Standard 1530020:2005***

The twelve-page text starts by listing the many possible programmes, genres and formats, which can be AD:

- TV productions: documentaires, news, films, etc.
- Any recorded audiovisual production such as films, documentaries, etc.
- Films to be shown in a cinema
- Live performances such as plays or musicals
- National heritage buildings: Churches, castles or palaces, etc.
- Museums and exhibitions
- National parks and natural spaces

It then specifies the beneficiaries of such a service, quoting blind people or people with sight problems, and finally the rest of society.

The standard now differentiates between recorded AD, live AD, and audio guides.

***Recorded Audio Description***

The standard provides a general description of how to produce AD scripts where technique, general recommendations, and delivery are mixed up concepts listed under the heading of “the process and requirements to create a script”:

First, it reads: there should be an analysis of the material to be AD where the following requirements must be fulfilled for the work to proceed. Comments on the standard will follow square brackets.

1. There should be some gaps to introduce the AD.
2. There should not be too much AD to avoid the listener getting tired.

[This second point is a *non sequitur* since the amount of AD means that the work fit for an AD has been established, and it is then up to the describer to decide how much AD is created. This point does not fit in the evaluative analysis, which in fact bears no relationship to either evaluative or analysis.]

3. The AD must be done in the same language as that present in the source material.

[As in the previous comment: this third point is related to the finished work, not the evaluative process.]

Once the convenience or feasibility of the work to be audio-described has been established, the following guidelines are to be observed:

- a) The describer has to document the vocabulary to be used in order to match the genre or type of the work to be AD

- b) The final AD script is formed by individual comments.  
[As already mentioned in the previous comments, this point is more of a definition than a step in the creation of an AD script and does not help in creating a script.]
- c) The script will prioritise the plot, then where it takes place, and finally the visual information contained in the image.  
[How can the plot be described? It should be the action which takes place on the screen.]
- d) The information offered must be made to match the audience: children, youth, adults, etc.  
[However, it does not specify what should be matched: the style, the vocabulary, the terminology etc]
- e) The style of the script must be simple, it should flow and be plain, avoiding convoluted construction and cacophonous devices or redundancies
- f) The terminology should be adequate to the genre.  
[It would be helpful to see the difference between the first recommendation on) vocabulary and this one]

The standard then recommends that a person different from the one who wrote the AD should check the script and take notes. The corrections will be included in the final script.

[Here we recreate the scenario where the translator for dubbing or voice-over moves. The translator creates a text which is sent to be adapted for lip-synch and then dubbed, and the translator has no say in the many changes which will be made in this process of synchronization. The describer – as recommended by the Spanish Standard – has no say in the final product either, since it is up to the person doing the checking up.]

The standard takes us now to the location of the AD script.

- a) The location should be made while the voice-talent watches the images which he or she describes.
- b) The type of voice-talent (male or female, young or old) should be chosen to match the genre or type of work. The voice should be clear.

[This recommendation is ambiguous since it is a question of style.]

Note 1. When AD is for children the voice-talent (male or female) should have a tone which is more adequate for children and which can be more expressive.

[This recommendation is ambiguous since it is a question of style.]

Note 2. When either male or female voices are predominant the voice-talent should be of the opposite sex.

- c) The locution should be standard, with neither accent nor intonation; affection should be avoided at all times.

And the standard finishes saying that the final mixed soundtrack should be in accordance with the film soundtrack. It also recommends a final checkup of the final product to make sure it follows all the previous guidelines given by the standard.

While this standard is a first step towards recorded AD standardisation, it leaves many practical questions unanswered:

- 1) When there is an AD script in a different language: should a translation/adaptation be made or should the AD script be created every time? In Germany, for example, there is now the tradition of not translating AD scripts and they prefer creating a new and independent script.

This practice was explained by Bernd Benecke during the roundtable of the International Conference Media for All which took place in Barcelona, Universitat Autònoma, June 2005. Veronika Hyks (2005:8), award-winning voice-artist and describer, also comments “As much as it would seem to make sense to make audio description scripts available to others to save time, translating and reworking can sometimes take as long if not longer than starting from scratch”.

- 2) What should be done when a song is heard? If it is background music: Can some AD be added to it? Should the lyrics be translated?
- 3) What should be done when the song that is heard has the lyrics as subtitles?
- 4) What should be done when any extra information appears as subtitles on the screen?
- 5) What should be done when a character in the performance or work speaks a different language?
- 6) When dealing with the locution: what is meant by a clear voice, an adequate style, a coherent vocabulary?
- 7) When dealing with verbs, which tense is best for the AD?
- 8) Should expressions such as “on the screen it can be seen” be allowed?
- 9) Should film terminology be used when describing? (cf. the standard for live AD and theatre terminology)
- 10) Should AD be interpretative?
- 11) If there is a continuity mistake, should it be pointed out?
- 12) How are characters introduced, and when?
- 13) Should slang be used, if it is used in the film?
- 14) Should the definite articles “el, la, los las” or the indefinite articles “un, una, unos, unas” be used?

- 15) Should colours be described?
- 16) What to do with the credits at the beginning and at the end of the film?
- 17) What if in the introduction there is some action at the same time as the credits appear?
- 18) Should the action be anticipated with AD? Is it preferable to describe after the action has taken place?

These and many more questions are left unanswered by the standard for recorded products.

### ***Live Audio Description***

Under this heading the standard recommends to follow all the previous requirements as for recorded AD plus four specific items:

- 1) The performance should be seen previously, before the day of the live AD delivery, to evaluate its AD feasibility. This recommendation is the same as for recorded AD.
- 2) The AD scriptwriter should be familiar with stage and theatre terminology.

It then goes on to the locution with the recommendation:

- 3) To do the AD from a sound-proof booth.
- 4) The voice-talent must have a view of the stage from the booth.

No more recommendations are made for the style, vocabulary, or what to do in some situations, such as when a sound not part of the plot is made on stage, which makes a person with sight problems wonder what is going on. This is a pertinent case for live opera AD because of the many actors and singers who take part in the performance, moving for example the choir through the stage create some noises which should be described to help in understanding what is going on and give some orientation to the person with sight problems (Matamala & Orero, forthcoming).

The standard is concerned now with the reception of AD stating:

- 1) The AD should reach the listener with a clear sound, and with no interference noise from the AD booth.
- 2) The AD should be listened to through a mono headset, which allows the listener to follow what is taking place on stage.
- 3) Before the performance the programme should be read, along with a description of the stage (set, props, illumination) and the costumes.
- 4) It is recommended to have a programme printed in Braille.

Again, as it is the case with recorded AD, the standard is vague, it does not make specific recommendations and there is a lack of coherence in the classification of

requirements for making a script, the locution and now, in this section, AD reception.

### *Audio Guides*

For the creation of audio guides the standard turns now to those in charge of the museums or exhibitions where the audio guide will be made. It is up to them to decide which objects or spaces will be included in the guide, and to consider tactile availability or cultural relevance of auditory information. Museum or exhibition managers also have to provide the describer with as much information as possible. The information will be created by personnel from the museum or exhibition.

The audio guide will contain the following information:

- 1) How to operate the receptor from where the AD is heard.
- 2) Places within the museum or exhibition which are dangerous or have difficult access. It also should state the emergency exists.
- 3) A description of the space in the following areas:
  - Entrance
  - Exits
  - Itinerary
  - Other facilities: toilets, cafeteria, shop, etc.
  - Where accessible materials are kept
  - Where any other relevant information is kept, such as 3D maps, etc.
- 4) Description of the objects and surroundings paying special attention to:
  - The terminology used and focusing in the most relevant features
  - When there is a possibility for a tactile exploration, a simple guide will be created with a description which should help the tactile experience.
  - When there is no tactile access, such as drawings, the description should concentrate on the most relevant features, avoiding at all times personal interpretation.

The standard closes with a description of the type of receptor, or electronic device, which should be comfortable and user-friendly.

## **CONCLUSION**

Audio description is an emerging mode of language transfer. Although it has been around for many years, most of that time it has been in the realm of associations and live performances. On the professional side, audio describers were mostly volunteers with no formal training, and even nowadays the profile



of audio describer as a profession does not exist in most countries—with the lack of social recognition and legal protection. In recent years, the academic world has shown some interest in media accessibility from the field of Translation Studies. This academic interest has been reflected in research: the publication of articles, dissertations, PhDs, and research projects; the organization of conferences and seminars, and the inclusion of training in the two professional profiles: audio describers and subtitlers (SDHH). With the progressive increase of media accessibility, and the shift from analogue to digital TV, media accessibility will play an increasing role in the audiovisual transfer market, which will be reflected in training professionals at university level.

The Spanish AD standard – as its counterpart the subtitling standard for DHH – will have to be redrafted for DTV (Pereira and Lorenzo forthcoming), and we hope some effort and research will be conducted to have a concise and clear standard that will help in the creation of AD scripts, rather than the disorganised and subjective guidelines as those approved in 2005. 📄

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> This date is vague, since there is no written information regarding the beginning of AD in US but for Benecke (2004: 78) who dates it “at the beginning of the 80’s” and Hernández-Bartolome & Mendiluce-Cabrera (2004: 267) who give the date “1981?” (The question mark after the date is in the original quote).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cenelec.org/Cenelec/CENELEC+in+action/Horizontal+areas/ICT/e-Accessibility+and+TV+for+All.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Such as the training provided in the UK by the National Open College Network [www.wnyocn.org.uk](http://www.wnyocn.org.uk), or Audio Description Associates in the US [www.audiodescribe.com](http://www.audiodescribe.com), or the postgraduate course at Surrey University (UK).

<sup>4</sup> Such as the course which will be offered from 2006 at Universidad de Granada (Spain) “Experto Universitario en Subtitulación para sordos y Audiodescripción para ciegos”, or the Master en Subtitulación para sordos y audiodescripción” at Universidad de Las Palmas (Spain).

<sup>5</sup> Hardly any AD is broadcast in TV, and films are only AD for members of the national blind association ONCE by its own company. At the time of writing this article, July 2005, only one film a week was AD in the national channel TVE1. No other TV station in the Spanish state broadcast any AD, though Catalan National TV3 had in the past done some AD programmes, such as *Plats Bruts* and *Minoria Absoluta*.

<sup>6</sup> Mateos Miguelez, Berta (2002): *O subtitulado para xordos: The Haunting*. Vigo: Facultad de Traducción. Unpublished dissertation.

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<sup>7</sup> The language reality in Spain will also mean much translation work between the four languages which coexist: Castilian, Catalan, Basque and Galician.

**Pilar Orero** holds an MA in Translation (UAB, Spain) and a PhD in Translation by UMIST/Manchester University (UK). She is a lecturer at Facultat de Traducció at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain, and the coordinator of the Online Master in Audiovisual Translation. She has published *The Translator's Dialogue* (1997) and edited *Topics in Audiovisual Translation* (2004) both at John Benjamins, Amsterdam. Her research interests are nonsense literature, audiovisual translation and media accessibility. Pilar is currently co-authoring a new book on voice-over to be published in 2006.

She can be reached at [pilar.orero@uab.es](mailto:pilar.orero@uab.es).

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# **Professional Recognition in the Canadian Translation Industry: How Is It Perceived by Translators and Employers?**

**Lynne Bowker**

School of Translation and Interpretation  
University of Ottawa

## **ABSTRACT**

Canada is home to a number of professional translators associations, including the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario (ATIO), which enjoys legal recognition of the reserved title of Certified Translator. But what does professional recognition actually mean to those inside and outside the translation industry? Following a description of the certification process, this paper explores the perceptions held by translators and their employers with regard to professional recognition. The opinions of translators have been gleaned through a survey of the professional literature published by ATIO, while the opinions of employers have been assessed by evaluating a collection of 151 job advertisements for translation positions. It appears that while translators themselves appear to value professional recognition, certified status is not a qualification that is highly sought after by employers.

## **INTRODUCTION**

As a country with two official languages – English and French – Canada has a long tradition of translation. Early settlers arriving in the sixteenth century came primarily from England and France, and when the new Canadian federation was established in 1867, the British North America Act<sup>1</sup> specified that English and French had equal status in the parliament and courts, and that laws had to be drafted in both these languages. Canada's linguistic policies have since been reinforced by the Official Languages Act (1969)<sup>2</sup>, Quebec's Charter of the French Language (1977)<sup>3</sup> and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982)<sup>4</sup>. Such policies have contributed to the development of a thriving translation industry in Canada; however, one of the most notable ways in which the translation industry in Canada has changed over the centuries has been in its evolution from a sort of cottage industry into an organized profession that includes a number of professional translators associations, some of which have a legally recognized professional status. But what does it mean for a Canadian translator to be a member of a professional association, and how is such membership perceived, both within and outside the translation community?

The aim of this paper is to introduce one of Canada's professional translators associations, namely the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario (ATIO), which is the oldest translators<sup>5</sup> association in Canada as well as the first

in the world to gain legal professional recognition for its members. The paper will briefly explain how a translator becomes a certified member of ATIO, through either an examination or an on-dossier certification process, and it will go on to examine what such membership means to translators with specific regard to professional recognition. The value of professional recognition from the point of view of employers is also explored through the study of a collection of 151 job advertisements for translators. By examining these job ads, we can get an idea of the extent to which the professional status of translators is recognized or valued by employers.

## **PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATIONS IN CANADA: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION**

The following sections contain a brief overview of Canada's national translators' association, as well as an introduction to ATIO, which is one of its provincial member organizations. The relationship between the national and provincial/territorial associations is also explained as this system may be different from that which exists in other countries.<sup>6</sup>

### **Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council (CTTIC)**

The Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council (CTTIC)<sup>7</sup> was founded in 1970 and is the legal successor of the Society of Translators and Interpreters of Canada (STIC), which had been incorporated in 1956 (Delisle 1987:86). CTTIC is a member of the International Federation of Translators (FIT), which is a worldwide organization composed of many national translation associations. CTTIC is itself a federation of eleven provincial and territorial bodies. Individual language professionals do not belong to CTTIC directly; rather, they belong to a provincial or territorial association, which is in turn a member of CTTIC.<sup>8</sup> Separate organizations are necessary because, in Canada, professional qualifications and certification are governed by provincial or territorial laws and regulations.<sup>9</sup>

One of CTTIC's main activities has been to implement standard certification procedures, in accordance with its objective to provide uniform standards for the profession and to ensure the competence of the members of the bodies it represents. To date these have taken the form of examinations under the aegis of CTTIC but which are administered as a co-operative effort with its member bodies. More details about the examinations can be found in an upcoming section.

### **Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario (ATIO)**

ATIO is the oldest organization of translators in Canada. It was founded in 1920 as the *Association technologique de langue française d'Ottawa*, which was incorporated the following year. In 1962, the association adopted its current name (Delisle 1987:64, 75).

## TRANSLATION WATCH QUARTERLY

ATIO is also the first translators' association in the world whose certified members are deemed professionals by law. In February 1989, the Province of Ontario granted a reserved title for certified members of ATIO through the *Association of Translators and Interpreters Act, 1989*. The title of Certified Translator (C. Tran.) is protected by law and can only be used by members who have passed the certification procedure.<sup>10</sup>

The main purpose of ATIO is to promote a high level of competence in the field of translation. It does this in a number of ways, which include:

- protecting the public interest by ensuring the competence of its Certified Members by administering certification examinations or by ascertaining that the applicant's professional dossier meets the requirements for on-dossier certification;
- ensuring that its Certified Members exercise the profession in accordance with ATIO's *Code of Ethics*;
- publicizing the importance of the professional role its Certified Members play in society.

### CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Becoming a certified member of ATIO is not simply matter of paying membership dues and joining the association. Stringent criteria are applied and the following sections outline the two main methods by which professional certification in translation can be achieved through ATIO. These descriptions are based primarily on information provided in the ATIO bylaws (ATIO 2005).

#### Becoming a Candidate for Certification

Translators who wish to become certified members of ATIO must first meet the conditions for obtaining the status of "candidate for certification". To become a candidate for certification, an applicant must:

- hold a university degree in translation or a related field that is recognized by ATIO; or
- have two years of experience in translation or a related field, attested by a recent letter of recommendation from an employer or from each of two clients if the applicant works as a contractor or an independent.

Once candidate status has been granted, the candidate must then acquire several additional years of experience working as a translator before writing the certification examination or submitting an application for on-dossier certification. Note that candidates for certification in translation must apply separately for each particular language combination and direction (that is, separate certification is required for French-English and for English-French translation, as well as for any other language combinations).

### **Certification by Examination**

To become a Certified Translator by examination, a candidate must pass the standardized certification examination set by CTTIC. A Board of Certification, reporting to CTTIC, sets the standards for certification procedures and exercises overall control, though the examinations are administered through provincial/territorial associations such as ATIO. The examination is held annually on the same day in a number of cities across Canada. National correction centers for official language<sup>11</sup> examinations ensure uniformity in the marking process.

These examinations are intended for professionals who wish to have their competence recognized by their peers. They seek not to identify mere aptitude or potential, but rather to attest to a candidate's professional skills. In translation, for example, a candidate who can produce a translation that is faithful and idiomatic and requires little or no revision is deemed capable of practising the profession independently.

A detailed description of the exam process can be found in Douglas (2003). In brief, however, for the exam itself, candidates are required to translate one compulsory text and one of two optional texts. Each text is approximately 175-200 words in length. The compulsory text is general in nature, while the other texts are somewhat more specialized (though not highly technical). In addition, candidates receive a copy of the ATIO *Code of Ethics* and a case study. They are required to read the case study and to identify any breaches of the code of ethics. The time limit for the exam is two hours.

The completed exams are evaluated independently by two Certified Translators who may belong to any one of the provincial/territorial associations, and, in cases where these two examiners disagree, a third examiner is called in. The candidate must receive an average mark of 70 percent or higher to achieve a pass.

According to statistics published by CTTIC (CTTIC 2003), in 2003, only 50 percent of ATIO candidates seeking certification by examination in the English to French combination were successful, while in the French to English direction, the success rate was 79.2 percent. Meanwhile, Sabourin (2000:3) notes that "the failure rate is frequently around 70%." In other words, the standards for passing the examination are quite high.

### **On-dossier Certification**

As described by Sabourin (2000:3), on-dossier certification is intended for practicing professionals who can prove that they have at least five years of full-time experience (or two years experience plus a translation degree). The evaluation leading to certification thus does not rely solely on a single time-limited examination, but rather on a full portfolio.

Candidates who wish to qualify for membership through the "on-dossier" certification process must be sponsored by three members of ATIO. Letters of

recommendation should contain information such as the number of years the sponsor has known the candidate and the degree of knowledge the sponsor has of the candidate's professional activities (quantitative and qualitative evaluation).

In addition, the application must contain samples of substantial and varied pieces of work done by the candidate and confirmed as such (for example, by letters from clients or employers). If desired, the application may also contain documents such as testimonials, letters of reference, or statements from clients or employers. Finally, the application should include an up-to-date curriculum vitae, including the names of three references (different from the sponsors), who can be contacted for additional information about the candidate's career.

The complete dossier is forwarded to the Recognition and Certification Committee, each member of which is a certified member of ATIO. The committee evaluates the contents based on the established criteria, specifically the breadth and nature of experience, diplomas, the relevance of the confirmations from clients, employers and supervisors, the evaluation of the work submitted, the opinions of the sponsors and referees, and finally an overall judgement accompanied by explanations.

In addition to receiving a favourable evaluation of their dossiers, candidates must pass an examination on the *ATIO Code of Ethics* similar to that which makes up part of the certification exam described in the previous section.

### **Certified Translator Status**

Once a candidate has successfully completed the examination or the on-dossier certification process, he or she is entitled to use the legally reserved title "Certified Translator" (C. Tran.). A certified member is also allowed to use a seal issued by ATIO which bears the holder's name and the title Certified Translator, followed by his or her certification number. This seal can only be used on work done in the language combination in which the member is certified.

## **PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TRANSLATORS AND THEIR EMPLOYERS?**

Now that we have explained the process of becoming a Certified Translator with ATIO, let us consider what this type of professional recognition means to translators and their employers.

According to Cadieux (2001a:1), a former president of ATIO, one of the main values of membership in a professional translators association lies in convincing employers and clients to hire only certified professionals. However, he goes on to note that certification can only be made the standard for the profession if the bulk of practicing translators become certified members of a professional association. Once a critical mass of translators holds such qualifications, it is hoped that increased professional recognition from outside the discipline will



follow. During his term of office (1999-2004), Cadieux sought to increase membership, stating “Recruitment of new associates and members is a priority for the Board and staff since the Association’s [ATIO’s] representativeness and credibility depend upon the broadest possible professional membership.” (Cadieux 2000:1). In 2003, ATIO reported a record membership of 1,438, up 20 percent from 1999 (Cadieux (2004:1). However, of these members, only 804 hold the title of “Certified Translator”.<sup>12</sup>

A survey of ATIO members conducted in 2002 indicates that professional recognition is ATIO’s main attraction, with 75 percent of the respondents citing this as the leading reason to join (Cadieux 2002:2). However, while translators themselves may feel that this type of professional recognition is valuable, it seems that employers are not yet convinced of its importance. As observed by the Canadian Translation Industry Sectoral Committee (CTISC) in their 1999 report entitled *Survey of the Canadian Translation Industry*, “clients know little of the Canadian translation industry [...] Moreover, the professional status of certified translators is not widely valued” (1999:12).

In the foreword to the CTISC report, the co-chairs of the Committee state “Having fought hard for professional recognition, translators, terminologists and interpreters must now see themselves – and promote themselves – as an industry.” This is echoed by Cadieux (2001a:1), who emphasizes that the ATIO name can be made synonymous with quality only if the association becomes more widely known by the public. To achieve this, ATIO and other professional translators associations must work harder to raise their profile and to educate employers about the benefits to be gained by hiring employees who have certified professional status.

ATIO has recognized this need and in recent years its Public Relations Committee has launched a series of initiatives to increase awareness – both within and outside the language industries – of the importance and value of professional certification (Cadieux 2001a, 2003). Accordingly, the percentage of ATIO resources used for public relations rose from 15 percent in 2000 to 34 percent in 2003 (Cadieux 2003: 3). Initial activities included disseminating the ATIO directory more widely, expanding the ATIO website, hosting public events (for example, on International Translation Day), reaching out to university students by sending ATIO volunteers to classrooms to raise students’ awareness of the benefits of joining ATIO, and placing a special industry profile supplement in *Les Affaires* newspaper. These activities were followed by two more aggressive campaigns. First, ATIO placed print advertisements containing the tag line “Translators You Can Trust” in approximately 20 Ontario newspapers (with a total circulation of approximately 300,000). Second, ATIO conducted a direct mailing campaign targeting foreign embassies and consulates in Ontario (of which there are many, given that Canada’s capital city, Ottawa, is located in Ontario). In addition, ATIO has been lobbying the Passport Canada office to have certified translators added to the list of professionals who can act as guarantors for Canadian passport applications (Cadieux 2001b). At present, the list<sup>13</sup> includes occupations such as lawyer, judge, doctor, dentist, pharmacist,



chiropractor, veterinarian, police officer, professional accountant, professional engineer, university professor, and school principal, but it does not include certified translators. According to Levine (2003:4), future promotional plans for ATIO include issuing press releases and placing editorials and general interest articles in newspapers.

It appears that ATIO has been making a great effort to promote the translation industry within Ontario, but have these promotional activities, which began in earnest in 2001, been effective in educating employers about the value of professional recognition and encouraging them to hire Certified Translators? This question will be examined in more detail in the following section.

### What Types of Qualifications are Sought by Employers?

In 2002, a survey of salaried translators<sup>14</sup> who belong to ATIO revealed that only 30.5 percent of the respondents indicated that their employer has a hiring policy that favours translators who are members of a professional translators' association (STC 2002). To explore this issue further, we compiled a collection of 151 job advertisements for translators and examined them to see whether employers are seeking candidates with professional certification. As indicated in Table 1, these advertisements were collected between January 2000 and June 2005, and they came primarily from two Ontario-based newspapers: *The Ottawa Citizen* and *The Toronto Star*. A few ads were also collected from *The Globe and Mail*, which is a national Canadian newspaper.

In addition to investigating whether or not employers are seeking candidates who have professional certification, we also identified three other types of qualifications – previous experience in the field, university degree in translation or a related field, and company-set examination – that appear to be of interest to employers. The data is summarized in Table 1 below and will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

**Table 1: Summary of the Types of Qualifications Sought by Employers as Revealed through a Study of 151 Job Advertisements Collected from Newspapers.**

Year	No. of ads	No. of ads requiring professional certification	No. of ads requiring previous experience	No. of ads requiring a university degree	No. of ads requiring a company-set exam
2000	27	6 (22.2%)	23 (85.2%)	23 (85.2%)	1 (3.7%)
2001	28	8 (28.6%)	27 (96.4%)	23 (82.1%)	1 (3.6%)
2002	31	8 (25.8%)	30 (96.8%)	27 (87.1%)	1 (3.2%) <sup>15</sup>
2003	22	7 (31.8%)	20 (90.9%)	16 (72.7%)	5 (22.7%)
2004	25	5 (20%)	25 (100%)	21 (84%)	2 (8%)
2005 (Jan to June)	18	1 (5.6%)	17 (94.4%)	18 (100%)	4 (22.2%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>35 (23.2%)</b>	<b>142 (94%)</b>	<b>128 (84.8%)</b>	<b>14 (9.3%)</b>

***Professional Certification***

An examination of the 151 job advertisements reveals that only 35 of the 151 ads are seeking professionally certified translators. Over the past 5 years, the number of employers who are seeking certified candidates has remained roughly between 20 and 30 percent, with an overall average of 23.2 percent<sup>16</sup>. This means that more than 75 percent of employers who want to hire translators are not specifically seeking certified translators.

Moreover, in studying the language used in the advertisements, it is interesting to note that of the 35 (23.2 percent) ads that indicate that applicants should be certified by a recognized professional association, only 17 (48.6 percent) note that professional certification is a requirement, while the remaining 18 (51.4 percent) suggest that it would be considered an asset. Table 2 provides examples of the wording contained in the advertisements.

**Table 2: Examples of Ads Indicating that Professional Certification is a Requirement vs. an Asset.**

Examples of ads indicating professional certification is a <i>requirement</i>	<p>"be a certified translator in good standing in a provincial association member of the Canadian Translators and Interpreters Council (CTIC)"</p> <p>"Certified member of ATIO and/or OTTIAQ"</p> <p>"La personne recherchée est titulaire d'une attestation de traducteur agréé."</p>
Examples of ads indicating professional certification is an <i>asset</i> but not a requirement	<p>"Certification from a professional translation association as an English-French translator is an asset."</p> <p>"Certification from a professional translation association is a valuable asset."</p> <p>"Certification in translation is an asset."</p>

In addition, it is not clear whether all employers realize that there is a difference between simply being a member of an association and being a certified member. As shown in Table 3, in some cases, employers specify that translators must be certified, but in other cases, the ad simply states that candidates should be a member of an association, which is not the same thing. One can become a member simply by meeting some minimal qualifications and paying the membership dues (for example, student members, candidates for certification, retired members), but not all members have the title of Certified Translator. Clearly, further efforts are required to educate employers with regard to the difference between membership and certification.

**Table 3: Examples of Ads requesting Membership versus Certification**

Examples of ads requesting <i>membership</i>	"Membership in a professional organization (ATIO/OTTIAQ)"
	"Membership in a recognized professional association would be an asset"
	"Atout: appartenance à une association de traducteurs professionnels"
Examples of ads requesting <i>certification</i>	"Certified member of ATIO and/or OTTIAQ"
	"be a certified translator in good standing in a provincial association member of the Canadian Translators and Interpreters Council (CTIC)"
	"être membre agréé de l'OTTIAQ"

Finally, as illustrated in Table 4, some employers are very specific about which translators association they want employees to belong to, which may indicate that they do not fully understand how the certification process works in Canada. Once a translator has been granted the status of Certified Translator within a given provincial/territorial association, this title is portable across all associations that are members of CTTIC. Because the exam is set by the national association (CTTIC), and not by individual provincial/territorial associations, it does not matter from the point of view of certification which association a member belongs to. Therefore, unlike employers who specify membership in a particular provincial/territorial association, those employers who request that candidates belong to a "recognized professional association" or to any member association of CTTIC are not limiting the selection pool of candidates unnecessarily.

**Table 4: Examples of Ads Requesting Membership in a Specific Association versus Any Recognized Association**

Examples of ads requesting membership in a specific association	"Certified member of ATIO and/or OTTIAQ <sup>17a</sup> "
	"Membership in a professional organization (ATIO/OTTIAQ)"
	"être membre agréé de l'OTTIAQ"
Examples of ads that do not request membership in a specific association	"Membership in a recognized professional association would be an asset"
	"be a certified translator in good standing in a provincial association member of the Canadian Translators and Interpreters Council (CTIC)"
	"De préférence, il est membre d'une association professionnelle reconnue"

### ***Previous Experience in the Field***

While professional certification does not seem to be a highly sought after qualification, previous work experience as a translator is a qualification that is requested in 94 percent or 142 out of 151 of the job advertisements. As outlined in Table 5, there are 26 (18.3 percent) ads that want a candidate who is "experienced" but they do not specify precisely how much experience is

required, while of the ads that do specify, the most commonly requested amount of experience is five years (35.2 percent), followed by three years (16.3 percent), and then two years (13.4 percent).

**Table 5: Summary of Previous Work Experience Sought by Employers**

No. of years of experience required	No. of ads	%
1 year	6	4.2
2 years	19	13.4
3 years	23	16.3
4 years	8	5.6
5 years	50	35.2
6 years	3	2.1
7 years	3	2.1
8 years	4	2.8
Amount not specified	26	18.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100%</b>

Of the 35 ads that are seeking certified translators, 34 also want these candidates to have prior experience. Interestingly, 15 (44.1 percent) of these are seeking translators with 5 or more years of experience, which indicates that employers do not see professional certification as a replacement for experience. Of course, as previously indicated in the section entitled *Certification Process*, it is necessary for translators to have a certain number of years experience in the field before they can even apply for certification.

#### ***University Degree in Translation or a Related Field***

According to the CTISC (1999:17) language professionals in Canada have a high level of education, with 81 percent of the professionals holding at least a Bachelor's degree. The CTISC also goes on to indicate that when seeking to hire a translator, translation firms and large companies look mainly for individuals with a degree (CTISC 1999:83). The data in the job ads support this: 128 (84.8 percent) of the ads are seeking candidates who have a degree in translation or a related field.

Thirty (19.9 percent) of the ads are ideally seeking candidates who have *both* a university degree and professional certification, but interestingly, two (0.7 percent) ads are willing to accept candidates who have *either* a university degree or professional certification, which appears to indicate that these companies view the two types of qualification as being equal.

***Company-set Examination***

Some of the ads indicate that another type of qualification is required. Fourteen (9.3 percent) of the ads specify that the candidate will be required to take a company-set examination as part of, or prior to, the interview. One might imagine that employers could be using these company-set exams as a way of evaluating candidates who do not hold professional certification or a university degree or who do not have a significant amount of experience; however, this does not appear to be the case. Ten (71.4 percent) of these 14 ads indicate that candidates are required to have a degree and experience in addition to writing the exam, while an additional 3 (21.4 percent) ads are seeking candidates who have a degree, experience, and professional certification in addition to the company-set exam. In only one ad is it indicated that the company-set exam would be waived if the candidate was a certified professional, and in no case was the company-set exam alone considered to be a sufficient qualification.

In a similar vein to the company-set exam, a single job advertisement (0.6 percent) indicated that the candidate must submit a portfolio of past work for review by the hiring committee. This requirement was in addition to holding professional certification.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Clearly, translators who join a professional association such as ATIO enjoy numerous benefits. For example, ATIO regularly organizes professional development workshops, seminars and information sessions, members benefit from discounts on publications and on various types of insurance, and there are even opportunities for networking and socializing, which is important in an industry such as translation where many professionals work as independents. Nevertheless, as evidenced by a survey of members and by the efforts of the ATIO Board of Directors to promote the association to the public, professional recognition remains one of the most important functions the association.

However, while this professional recognition appears to be well received within the translation community in Canada, it seems to be less well understood by the public. Based on an examination of 151 job advertisements, it appears that professional certification is a qualification that is sought by employers less than 25 percent of the time. This means that more than 75 percent of the time, employers are either unaware of or unconcerned about professional certification for translators.

Even when employers do request professional certification, more than 50 percent of them indicate that such certification would be an asset, rather than a requirement. Likewise, in most cases, it is seen as a complement to other types of qualification, such as a university degree or previous work experience, rather than as a sufficient qualification in its own right. The fact that translators must already have a degree or a certain number of years experience before being allowed to apply for certified status does not seem to be understood by employers. Moreover, it appears that some of the employers who are at least

aware of the existence of professional translators associations may not fully understand how they work, as evidenced by the fact that many of the job ads request that candidates have membership in, but not certification by, a professional association, or that they belong to a specific provincial association.

ATIO should certainly be commended for its efforts to promote the translation profession in Canada, and particularly in Ontario, but it appears that they still have some way to go in raising awareness and understanding of the profession by employers. In spite of their efforts, the number of job advertisements specifically seeking translators that have been certified by a professional association does not appear to have increased by any significant margin over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. 🐼

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> To read the British North America Act online, go to: <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/const/loireg/pl1t1-1.html>. The section dealing with official languages can be found in Part 5, article 133.

<sup>2</sup> To read the Official Languages Act online, go to: <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/O-3.01/>

<sup>3</sup> To read the Charter of the French Language online, go to: <http://www.olf.gouv.qc.ca/english/charter/>

<sup>4</sup> To read the Charter of Rights and Freedoms online, go to: <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> In fact, ATIO is an association for a group of language professionals that include not only translators but also terminologists, conference interpreters and court interpreters. However, in the context of this article, I will discuss only translators.

<sup>6</sup> The country of Canada is divided into thirteen political regions each with its own regional government. These regions include ten provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland & Labrador) and three territories (Yukon Territory, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut).

<sup>7</sup> Formerly known as the Canadian Translators and Interpreters Council (CTIC), the name was changed in December 2003 to include terminologists (<http://www.cttic.org/pressreleases/0304/NEWSRELNameChange.pdf>).

<sup>8</sup> However, as of May 2001, any certified member in good standing with a provincial or territorial association that is a member of CTIC is automatically entitled to use the designation Certified Translator (Canada) and can sign as an “Affiliate Member of Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council”. The decision to create a pan-Canadian title was taken because the names of provincial or territorial associations may not be easily recognizable to international clients (Sabourin 2001:1-2).

<sup>9</sup> This applies to many professions, including doctors, dentists, lawyers, nurses, and teachers, as well as translators.

<sup>10</sup> Although ATIO was the first association to receive legal recognition of the professional status of translators, this had been a long fought battle within Canada, begun as early as 1968 when members of the *Société des traducteurs de Québec (STQ)*, now known as the *Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes du Québec (OTTIAQ)*, began lobbying the Quebec provincial government for professional recognition (Delisle 1987:81). To date, four of Canada’s provincial/territorial translators associations have been granted legal recognition of the reserved title of certified translator by their respective provincial/territorial governments. In addition to ATIO and OTTIAQ, these include the Corporation of Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters of New Brunswick (CTINB) and the Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia (STIBC). Some form of de facto recognition is also accorded by the public authorities to the members of most other provincial/territorial associations, which are currently seeking official recognition of their titles within their respective jurisdictions.

<sup>11</sup> The official languages of Canada are English and French and 80 percent of the translation work carried out here takes place between these two languages (CTISC 1999:15). Certification is offered in many other language pairs (e.g. Spanish-French, English-Arabic), but one of Canada’s official languages must always be either the source or target language of the pair.

<sup>12</sup> Personal communication with Catherine Bertholet, Executive Director of ATIO, July 6, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> See the following website for the complete list: [http://www.pptc.gc.ca/passports/get\\_guarantors\\_e.asp](http://www.pptc.gc.ca/passports/get_guarantors_e.asp)



<sup>14</sup> As opposed to freelancers or independent translators.

<sup>15</sup> In addition, there was one advertisement from 2002 requiring the candidate to submit a portfolio of previous work for evaluation by the hiring committee.

<sup>16</sup> The year 2005, where there appears to be a sharp drop to 5.6 percent, is an exception; however, the data for this year is currently incomplete (to date, ads have been collected only for the six-month period between January and June).

<sup>17</sup> OTTIAQ is the *Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec*, which is a sister organization to ATIO and is also a member of CTTIC.

**Lynne Bowker** holds a PhD in Language Engineering (1995) University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, United Kingdom, an MSc in Computer Applications for Education (1999) Dublin City University, Ireland, an MA in Applied Linguistics/Translation (1992) University of Ottawa, Canada, and a BA (Hons) in Translation (1991) University of Ottawa, Canada. She is a widely published author and researcher in translation studies. Lynne currently teaches a variety of translation courses at the School of Translation and Interpretation, University of Ottawa, Canada.

She can be reached at [lbowker@uottawa.ca](mailto:lbowker@uottawa.ca).



# **From Professional Certification to the Translator Training Classroom: Adapting the ATA Error Marking Scale**

**Geoffrey S. Koby and Brian James Baer**

Kent State University

## **ABSTRACT**

Evaluation of translation quality is a central issue in translation pedagogy. The use of the error marking scale developed by the American Translators Association for the grading of certification exams is discussed as a way to introduce professional standards of error marking into the translator training classroom. The problems of adapting a product-oriented and testing-oriented scale for process-oriented classroom evaluation are explored, as well as the technical details of mathematically adapting the scale to an A-F grading system. An Excel spreadsheet is used to calculate grades and adjust for length of text.

The American Translators Association has been offering certification (formerly called accreditation) by examination since 1973. The revised error marking scale it adopted in November 2002 (Bohannon, no date; Van Vranken, Bohannon, and Hanlen, no date) offers teachers of translation in the United States a method of error marking that is oriented to professional practice, although it assumes a handwritten testing situation. Translator trainers, largely concerned with encouraging both reflective translation practice in students and the appropriate use of computer-assisted tools, would need to adapt this scale to make it an optimally effective pedagogical tool in the classroom situation.

## **PEDAGOGICAL ISSUES**

Evaluation of student work during translation training is one of the central issues in translation pedagogy, as it can either support or subvert the teaching methods employed in the classroom. While American schoolteachers complain that government control has forced them to abandon more creative and student-centered methodologies in order to “teach to the test,” students have always intuitively understood that testing establishes the real learning priorities in a course. Despite the best efforts of the instructor to instill independent learning and exploration, students concerned with effectively managing their time will always “learn to the test.” And while many instructors and theorists understand the importance of evaluation, Sonia Colina has pointed out that “the numerous translation textbooks on the market rarely devote any time to a systematic study

of error evaluation and grading guidelines” (2003: 128). One reason for this might be that the grading of student assignments is without a doubt one of the most odious aspects of translation training, time-consuming for the evaluator and often demoralizing for the student. As Richard Whitaker points out, “The realities of grading are difficult to prettify. There are all those papers in heaps with all these words all over them. Instructors are usually reluctant to begin the process of marking stacks of homework, while students quickly grow wary of this most uncertain and ego-threatening aspect of their academic growth. Yet instructors and students alike know that feedback is essential” (2004: 34). Moreover, the human issues involved in providing such feedback are complex and often difficult to manage. For example, “...the Siemens company implemented machine translation to replace its junior translators because the senior translators felt less inhibited in cleaning up the machine-generated mess than imposing their experience on other human beings. The gains they realized in productivity were not due to high quality machine translation output, but rather to a loss of human-human inhibitions (see Sampson 1992: 89)” (Koby 2001: 16).

Adapting the ATA error marking scale for use in the translation classroom offers, at first glance, some very obvious benefits. First, it can provide a link between professional and educational environments, which may increase the relevance of the grading scale in the eyes of our professionally minded students and may encourage them eventually to take the ATA certification exam and to become active members of the organization. One also hopes that it would improve performance on the exam. Moreover, since every translation process ultimately results in product, this kind of product-oriented assessment forces students to recognize professional standards of quality. (Other existing quality assurance models focus on translation products in specific industries, such as SAE J2450 (automotive) and LISA’s QA Model 3.0 (localization), or on the translation process (DIN 2345, ISO 9000 series, etc.), and as such are less suitable for a general translator training program.) The scale, which provides a solution to the time-consuming task of developing and implementing evaluation categories and criteria, also offers an opportunity for standardization across courses, language groups within a translation program, and even across translator training programs.

However, the drawbacks of employing the scale in a training environment are, perhaps, no less obvious.

- First, the scale was designed to evaluate translation as product, while translator training for the most part concentrates on translation as process, with the goal of fostering in novice translators the self-awareness and self-monitoring necessary for continued professional growth and development.
- Second, the scale assumes rather small units of translation. With the exception of INC (inconsistency), most of the error categories assume units of translation at the level of word, phrase and sentence, while

translator training today, following the “textual turn” in Translation Studies, should attempt to focus student attention on higher, more global units of translation, that is to say, on translation as text (see Neubert and Shreve, 1992).

- And, third, the scale does not address other very important related skill sets, such as the ability to defend translation decisions, to carry out effective translation-related research, and to properly use translation-related software tools.

In the discussion that follows, we explore ways in which the ATA error marking scale can be adopted *and adapted* for evaluation of student assignments in order both to capitalize on its pedagogical benefits and to minimize the drawbacks.

To begin with, there are a number of ways in which the ATA scale can be made to be more process-oriented, that is, adapted for use as a tool of formative not summative assessment.<sup>1</sup> The importance of formative assessment in translator training is underscored by Colina: “Formative evaluation is important in translator training not only because the feedback provided becomes part of the learning process, but also because the test itself can be a learning experience if it ties in with course objectives” (2003: 133). To this end, the scale itself could be discussed in class at the beginning of the semester, in order to introduce the notion that all scales are developed within a specific context and for specific purposes. This discussion could serve as a springboard to a broader discussion of translation evaluation and assessment, and students could be encouraged to offer suggestions for revising the scale, for example, by introducing additional error categories. Furthermore, the instructor could make the scale immediately more process-oriented simply by providing a translation brief with every assignment. This will frame the evaluation, underscoring the idea that a translation can only be evaluated in reference to its intended purpose or function and audience<sup>2</sup>. To support this idea, one can introduce additional error categories such as “IB”: Ignores the brief. Without a brief, Colina explains, paraphrasing Hatim and Mason: “evaluation must be based on some absolute category, usually equivalence of linguistic structure, which means that what is being evaluated is not communicative translation but some comparative structural knowledge of the source and target language.” (2003: 129) The introduction of a brief immediately grounds evaluation in a specific communicative context, forcing students to confront the realities of target audience needs.

The scale can also be employed in a more process-oriented way if errors are coded with no solutions provided. This involves marking the translation unit in question and coding the error on a first draft. Less time-consuming for the instructor, this requires that the student then investigate the nature of his or her errors, which involves higher levels of cognitive processing than when solutions are simply provided or suggested by the instructor. Moreover, the error categories allow students to see patterns of errors, which can then be addressed globally, rather than on a case by case basis.<sup>3</sup> Of course, the ATA scale needn't and, I would add, shouldn't be the only mode of evaluation used. Students can be

required to present a translation log with every assignment that would help them to expose and develop their decision-making processes. Revised translations can be part of an end-of-the-semester portfolio that would include a self-assessment of error patterns and of progress to date. Finally, the ATA scale can be made more process-oriented if certain error categories are isolated or foregrounded in order to focus student attention on particular problems in a text or a language pair. For example, norms of capitalization and punctuation differ significantly in Russian and English, especially in the context of reported speech – and, unfortunately, I find that students consider such errors to be of little importance. The error categories of Case (C) and Punctuation (P) could therefore be graded more severely, or only those categories relevant to the current pedagogical point could be graded in a given assignment.

The focus in the ATA Error Marking Scale on the word, phrase, and sentence level can also be addressed with the introduction of additional categories that introduce broader, more global translation concerns. Such categories might include: Textual Cohesion, Unclear Referencing, and Ignores Text-Type Conventions. While such errors could be accommodated within the present error categories, the introduction of new categories would help to isolate text-level considerations, better focusing the novice's attention away from individual words and onto more global concerns.

The fact that the ATA categories do not address other translation-related skill sets could be addressed through the introduction of additional categories. For example, formatting is an error category that is unnecessary for the ATA certification exam, which is handwritten, but is an important one in a university setting where typically all assignments are word-processed. The evaluation of additional materials, such as the translation log and the selection of parallel texts, mentioned above, would also address these related skills.

## **PRACTICAL ISSUES**

Adapting the ATA error marking scale to the academic setting raises a number of practical issues. First, the scale was developed for the evaluation of a text of approximately 250 words, whereas the texts used in translator training may vary significantly in length. Second, the ATA scale need only produce a mark of “pass” or “fail”, whereas in an academic setting, the scale must be adapted to produce an academic grade. The following section briefly describes a method of adapting the ATA error marking scale to evaluate classroom translation assignments and examinations of varying lengths, and the mathematical calculations required to derive an academic grade, as one part of overall assessment in a translation class. This reflects our experience using this method in a graduate translator-training program since 2002, when this revised scale was announced by the ATA.

Students are usually required to submit files in electronic form, for two reasons. First, of course, in a professionally oriented training program, it gives them practice in sending and receiving electronic attachments. Second, it provides the

instructor with an electronic copy to mark up. This is not absolutely necessary, however; it is equally possible to mark up a hard or paper copy (after all, the actual ATA examination is handwritten). The advantage of electronic submission is that the instructor can use the Highlighter feature to mark the scope of each error, and enter the codes (with discussion, if desired) in footnotes or comments on the electronic text. (It is also possible, but not necessary, to color code the errors so that students can see at a glance where certain categories of errors have occurred. When a different color is used for each of the point scores, students can be instructed to concentrate on the most serious errors first.) An advantage to this electronic markup is that the student's own text is not changed or added to on the surface<sup>4</sup>; instead, an additional layer of comment is added. Some instructors also use a table inserted at the end of each student's text. This article discusses the use of an Excel spreadsheet for grade calculations.

Before a grade can be assigned, of course, each error must be detected and classified, and a point score assigned to it. Table 1 shows the standard ATA error categories, not including any of the possible additional areas of evaluation discussed above. Aside from the first two, which deal with specific aspects of the handwritten ATA exam situation, they fall into two major groups, those that affect meaning, and those that do not. The ATA graders use a series of questions that can be shown as a flowchart (Figure 1) to aid graders in distinguishing between these two groups of errors and in arriving at point values. The answer to the first question determines into which group an error will be classified. Each subsequent question flows into the next until a point score is reached. The point scores per error must then be collected, categorized, and calculated to arrive at a final score or grade. Figure 1 shows an Excel spreadsheet adaptation of the grading categories that automates score derivation.

In Figure 2, the various arrows indicate cells for various types of information. Arrows 1, 2, and 3 indicate the cells for student's name, text file, and word count. These cells can be automated by reference to a master spreadsheet with this data. Arrows 4 through 7 show the cells where the mathematical adjustment takes place automatically, based on the errors entered and the word count of the source text. The errors themselves must be entered manually into the appropriate cells in the grid.<sup>5</sup>

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**Table 1: ATA Error-Marking Categories (adapted from Van Vranken, L., Bohannon, C., & Hanlen, T. (n.d.)**

Code	Reason
INC	Incomplete passage
ILL	Illegible
MU	Misunderstanding of source text
MT	Mistranslation into target language
A	--Addition
O	--Omission
T	--Terminology, word choice
R	--Register
F	--Too freely translated
L	--Too literal, word-for-word translation
FC	--False cognate
IND	--Indecision, gave more than one option
I	--Inconsistency
AMB	--Ambiguity
G	Grammar
SY	--Syntax (phrase / clause / sentence structure)
P	Punctuation
SP	Spelling
D	--Accents, other diacritical marks
C	--Case (upper / lower)
WF	Word form
U	Usage
ST	Style

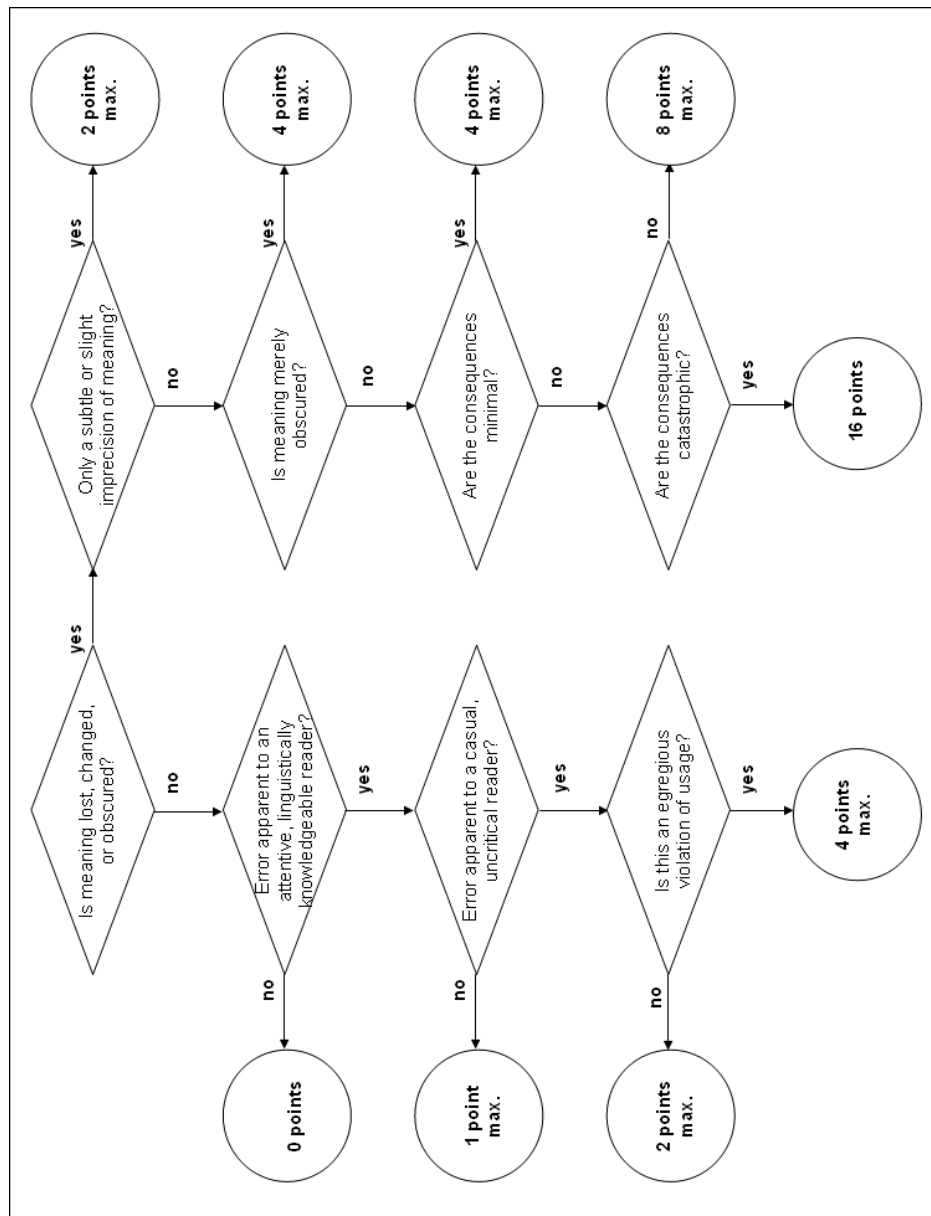


Figure 1 — ATA Assessment Flowchart (Accreditation forum 2002: 57)

American Translators Association  
**Framework for Standardized Error Marking**  
*Draft - Revised May 2002*

Student: _____ {STUDENT NAME GOES HERE}						
1	2	4	8	16	Code	Reason
					INC	Incomplete passage
					ILL	Illegible
					MU	Misunderstanding of source text
					MT	Mistranslation into target language
					A	--Addition
					O	--Omission
					T	--Terminology, word choice
					R	--Register
					F	--Too freely translated
					L	--Too literal, word-for-word translation
					FC	--False cognate
					IND	--Indecision, gave more than one option
					I	--Inconsistency
					AMB	--Ambiguity
					G	Grammar
					SY	--Syntax (phrase / clause / sentence structure)
					P	Punctuation
					SP	Spelling
					D	--Accents, other diacritical marks
					C	--Case (upper / lower)
					WF	Word form
					U	Usage
					ST	Style
Totals					0	0

1

2

3

Text: \_\_\_\_\_  
{TEXT NAME GOES HERE}

Number of words: 250

5 Adjusted error points (C combined score / length factor):

4 Length factor (Number of words / 250):

6 Score (160 - Adjusted error points):

7 Percentage:

Total error points: 0	Quality points: 0
Combined score: 0	Length factor (Number of words / 250): 1
Adjusted error points (C combined score / length factor): 0.0	Score (160 - Adjusted error points): 160.0
Percentage: 100.0%	

Figure 2 — Excel spreadsheet

Using the mathematical adjustment discussed below, instructors need not worry about length of text when assigning errors: each error is assigned its standard point score using the flowchart we just discussed, and the formulas in the spreadsheet take care of the adjustment automatically. Once markup of the file is



complete, the instructor need only enter the scores in the spreadsheet, which does the addition and adjustment. Students receive feedback in five ways:

- Highlighting, which shows the scope of the problematic word or words (or punctuation)
- The error code itself (in footnote)
- Comments on the error (also in the footnote)
- The numeric percentage score and its corresponding letter grade
- Last, but not least, a copy of the spreadsheet itself, which allows students to see the pattern and types of errors found in each text.

Over time, students can discover recurring patterns of errors in the spreadsheets that enable them to address – and hopefully eliminate – their most common sources of error.

Let us now turn to the mathematical adaptation – how to adapt the ATA error marking scale for use in academic courses. Since a number of academic programs are offered at various levels (certificates, bachelor's degree, master's degree, etc.), it is also necessary to look at whether the adaptation would work for both graduate and undergraduate courses. The method discussed here is essentially a pair of mathematical formulae that creates the necessary flexibility to make the ATA error marking scale work for varying lengths of texts and the varying levels of students. Note that this is designed to turn the ATA exam, which is essentially a summative examination, into a formative exercise by providing not only scores, but also grades (addressing relative adherence to a standard, which itself is not necessarily the professional standard – or not yet) and feedback in the form of comments on the individual scores.

There are three factors that need to be addressed: turning an ATA score into a grade, length, and difficulty. The ATA certification examination involves translation of a professional-level text of moderate difficulty ranging in length from 225 to 275 words. Points are taken off exams in a variety of categories, with point scores per error ranging from 1 to 16. A 16-point loss represents a single catastrophic error. Loss of a total of 16 points on an ATA exam, however, would still be a low passing score. Eighteen or more points off is a Fail. This leads to the first assumption guiding this adaptation:

*A 250-word text that scores 16 error points represents the bottom edge of the highest possible grade (in the U.S., an "A")<sup>6</sup>.*

Next, it is helpful to turn the score into a percentage. Since the assumption uses the ATA 16-point error as a baseline,  $16 \times 10 = 160$ . Thus an error-free target text would earn 160 points, 100 percent, and any combination of errors leading to 16 points lost would result in a score of 144.  $144 \div 160 = 90.0$  percent. In this system, then, one catastrophic error or its equivalent number of points in less serious errors would result in a grade of A minus. The other cutoff points are  $128 = 80$  percent, B minus;  $112 = 70$  percent, C minus;  $96 = 60$

percent, D minus. Assuming a professional-level text of ATA exam length, then, such as we assign to our graduate students, the adaptation is a straight percentage of 160.

The second aspect that requires adaptation is the length issue. Again, this is a simple mathematical formula that adjusts the number of error points to the hypothetical norm of 250 words. This is done by dividing the actual word count of the source text by the norm of 250, resulting in a number I call the “length factor” (#4 in Figure 3). The number that results is less than one in case of texts shorter than 250 words, and will generally be a single digit number for texts that are of an appropriate length for classroom exercises. Thus, for instance, a text of 150 words results in a length factor of 0.6, while a text of, say, 1200 words results in a length factor of 4.8. The second assumption guiding this adaptation is thus:

All error marking is adjusted to the 250-word normative length by dividing the text's actual length by 250, resulting in a “length factor.”

Using the length factor approach makes it possible for the teacher to simply assign the standard error points according to the error marking scale regardless of text length, which logically results in more errors marked in a longer text. The teacher then divides the total number of errors by the length factor to arrive at a number of error points normed to the 250-word length. Thus, in the hypothetical 150-word and 1200-word texts mentioned above, deducting a total of sixteen error points results in a much lower score in the former, 150-word text, because the adjustment is 16 divided by 0.6, or 26.7 adjusted points off, a score of 133.3, a percentage of 83.3 percent, a grade of a low B. The same 16 error points deducted from a 1200-word text mathematically results in a much higher score, since there is so much more room for error; 16 is divided by 4.8, resulting in 3.3, which one subtracts from 160, giving a score of 156.7, a percentage of 97.9 percent, an A.

It should be noted that because the ATA marking scale is designed for short texts, there is an inevitable “dilution effect” in longer texts. One feature of the ATA certification examination is that the texts are carefully chosen to include specific challenges that face professional translators working with a specific language pair, pitfalls for the unwary or inexperienced translator. An instructor may choose a longer text in order to give students experience with a wider range of technical issues, and this text will have challenging passages, but inevitably in a longer text, there are stretches of straightforward, even ‘easy’ sections. Since the problems in such a text are not as concentrated as in a carefully selected test passage, student scores on longer texts tend to be higher, since mathematically the higher word count with a lower error count results in better numbers. Some instructors may choose to counter this dilution effect by grading only selected sections of a given text.

The third factor is difficulty of text. This is an area that still needs to be researched more formally. At this point, however, graduate students at Kent State University are assigned texts that approximate in difficulty (if not

necessarily in length) the types of professional assignments that they may be called upon to translate in real-world free-lance assignments, because the texts come from our own professional practice. In our experience, most graduate students working with this scale lose several points, but generally remain in the range of A to B. Although this would seem to imply that our students could be expected to pass the ATA exam once they graduate, it is important to keep in mind that the final target text versions that students turn in for a grade have been thoroughly discussed, translation unit by translation unit, in class – what we call “workshopping the text”. Given that workshopping does not address every line of each student’s text, undiscussed errors can still remain when students have not completely mastered the translation of a given text-type, or may be indicative of areas where linguistic, cultural, or domain mastery has not yet been achieved. However, it is clear that the workshopped text submitted may not be an accurate predictor of student success in an examination situation.

This grading scale has also been used with undergraduate students; the workshopping process is the same, but the linguistic, cultural, and domain-specific complexity of the texts is adapted downwards to account for their lesser skill in dealing both with the source language and with translation. In our experience, selecting texts with lower complexity in this way has been sufficient. The mathematical formulae themselves have not required adjustment to the undergraduate context, although it would be possible to classify texts according to already-existing scales of textual difficulty.

In conclusion, then, it is possible to adapt and adjust the categories of the ATA error marking scale using the factors discussed in the first section in order to transform a product-oriented scale into a more process-oriented one. It is equally possible to adapt the numeric factors to arrive at a score that can be turned into a percentage and an academic grade that fits into a grading system. The ultimate goal of these adaptations is to provide students with meaningful feedback on their translation efforts and the opportunity to assess their own error patterns. 🐼

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**NOTES**

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<sup>1</sup> For a definition and discussion of formative vs. summative assessment in translator training, see Kiraly 2000, pp. 152 ff.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of *skopos* theory, see Vermeer 2004.

<sup>3</sup> See Doyle 2003, pp. 24-25, for a method of summarizing translator errors.

<sup>4</sup> Note that Whitaker (2004) advocates color-coding for similar reasons, although he recommends the use of only two colors.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that in this spreadsheet, since there is a column for each point score, what is entered in each column is the error count – e.g., on the row for category “T”, terminological errors, if a student had four one-point errors, two two-point errors, and one eight-point error, the numbers entered would be 4, 2, and 1 in the appropriate columns, and the summation cells at the bottom of the table do the appropriate calculations to arrive at the correct point score.

<sup>6</sup> If an instructor wishes to use 18 points as the cutoff, or another number reflecting a different grading philosophy, this can be easily accomplished by a minor adjustment in the equations.

**Geoffrey S. Koby** is Associate Professor of German Translation, Institute for Applied Linguistics. He holds a PhD in German (Historical Linguistics) from University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has published numerous articles and papers on translation. His research interests are in Translation Studies (Translation Process Research, Think-Aloud Protocol), Modern German Usage, and Historical Linguistics.

He can be reached at [gkoby@kent.edu](mailto:gkoby@kent.edu).

**Brian James Baer** is Associate Professor of Russian Translation, Institute for Applied Linguistics. He holds a PhD in Comparative Literature, Yale University. His research interests are in Nationalism in Russian Literature, Russian Translation History, and Gender in Russian Culture.

He can be reached at [bbaer@kent.edu](mailto:bbaer@kent.edu).

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# **NAATI Accreditation for Translators in Australia: Theoretical Underpinnings and Practical Implications**

**Leong Ko**

School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies  
University of Queensland  
Australia

## **ABSTRACT**

A mismatch exists in expectations about the requirements of translation between NAATI and those attempting the NAATI test, be they translation practitioners, graduates from translation training programs. This article will examine issues concerning NAATI accreditation for Translators at the professional level in terms of the relevant theoretical frameworks of translation, and assess translation practice in the real translation world, in order to contribute to a better understanding of the NAATI Translator test, its theoretical underpinnings and practical implications.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In Australia, the initial competence level of translators is to a large extent guided and governed by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). Until now, “NAATI accreditation [has been] the only qualification officially accepted for the profession of translation and interpreting in Australia” (NAATI, 2002: 1). Accreditation by NAATI at the level of Translator is generally regarded by translation practitioners, translation clients, translation service providers, and the translation profession at large as a yardstick for measuring a translator’s initial competence. NAATI accreditation is becoming increasingly sought after, both domestically and globally. However, there has been some confusion about the requirements of the NAATI test. As a consequence, many candidates, including some who have worked as translation practitioners for a number of years, have failed the NAATI test. In addition, some graduates who have received their translation training in other than NAATI-approved programs also find it difficult to pass the test.

There seems to be a mismatch in expectations about the requirements of translation between NAATI and those attempting the NAATI test, be they translation practitioners, graduates from translation training programs not approved by NAATI, or candidates from other academic disciplines who want to become NAATI Translators. So what are NAATI’s expectations in the test and why? Are NAATI’s expectations compatible with the requirements of real

translation work<sup>1</sup>? And, if not, why not? This article will examine issues concerning NAATI accreditation for Translators<sup>2</sup> at the professional level (formerly known as Level 3) in terms of the relevant theoretical frameworks of translation, and assess translation practice in the real translation world, in order to contribute to a better understanding of the NAATI Translator test<sup>3</sup>, its theoretical underpinnings and practical implications.

## **SOME OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE PASS RATE FOR THE NAATI TRANSLATOR TEST**

The NAATI Translator test is open to candidates from any disciplinary background ranging from translation, language and literature to economics, engineering and law, provided that they “have general education to degree or diploma level” or “demonstrated work experience attested to by an employer; or evidence of relevant post-secondary studies” (NAATI, 2002: 9). However, the pass rate for the NAATI Translator test is not high. In order to obtain a good understanding of the NAATI Translator test and relevant issues, it will be helpful to get a brief idea of the pass rate for the test. The following observations are based on both the author’s anecdotal experience and official NAATI statistics.

One candidate known to the author is a graduate of the English language and literature department of an overseas university and has been working as an in-house translator in a government body in his home country for about 10 years. He translates in two language directions, that is, from English into his mother tongue and vice versa. The translation tasks include various government documents and reports, business correspondence, scripts of speeches, and so on. At the time of writing, the candidate is studying for a PhD degree at a university in Australia. Although the candidate’s educational background cannot be considered as equivalent to translation competence, it does indicate that the candidate has a good command of both the two languages and translation skills. However, the candidate attempted the NAATI Translator test in Australia twice and failed. He is now reluctant to try again.

Another candidate worked as a journalist and translator in an overseas country. She has done extensive translation work for the media. Her IELTS<sup>4</sup> score is 7, which is acceptable to most universities in Australia for entering postgraduate studies. She has also completed an MA degree in journalism in Australia. Again, the candidate’s background indicates that she has a reasonable level of bilingual competence. She has attempted the NAATI Translator test twice and failed. She later attended NAATI’s workshops on test preparation and translation practice before attempting the test a third time and receiving a low pass.

Official statistics on the pass rates in NAATI tests can be found in NAATI’s Annual Reports.<sup>5</sup> These reports show that in the years 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 the overall pass rate for Translator tests (including annual program tests, special



on-demand tests and overseas tests) into English and LOTE was just below 20 percent. In the Annual Report for 2003/04, NAATI did not provide a breakdown of the number of candidates attempting the test at each level and how many candidates passed the test at that level. Instead, only a total number of candidates sitting the annual test, special on-demand tests and tests at overseas locations was provided, with no breakdown into the categories of Paraprofessional Translator or Interpreter, Translator or Interpreter, and Advanced Translator or Conference Interpreter. The total number of candidates who were awarded accreditation at different levels was then provided. This figure included those who received accreditation based on assessment of their overseas qualifications or by graduating from a NAATI-approved course. It is therefore impossible to work out the pass rate for any particular level or category in this particular year. However, considering the fact that neither the number of candidates for Paraprofessional Translator and Interpreter and Advanced Translator and Conference Interpreter nor the number of candidates who received accreditation at these two levels is large – 317 and 13 respectively, compared with 1095 for Translators and Interpreters – it is still possible to determine an approximate pass rate for Translators and Interpreters after removing the number of accreditations by assessment of overseas qualifications and course graduations. The combined pass rate for Translator and Interpreter tests in 2003/2004 was around 21.8 percent – very close to the combined pass rate for Translator and Interpreter in 2001/2002 and 2002/2003. It can therefore be concluded that the pass rate for those who sat the NAATI Translator test from 2001 to 2004 was around 20 percent.

These observations raise a number of questions about the NAATI Translator test, particularly for those who have attempted the test and failed, and those who plan to attempt the test in the future. For instance, why is the NAATI test so hard to pass? How does the NAATI test relate to real translation work? Does NAATI mark the test too hard? Do candidates who are competent bilingually need proper translation training? Are translation training programs or courses other than those approved by NAATI compatible with NAATI's requirements in terms of the criteria, principles and strategies adopted in translation? Do practising translators followed by different principles and rules in their work from those expected by NAATI? There are no simple answers to these questions without extensive investigation and analysis. However, an examination of the NAATI test and some of the requirements of some examples of real translation work will help lead to a better understanding of the links and gaps between the two.

## **THE NAATI TRANSLATOR TEST**

Translation can be divided into two major types: literary translation and document translation. However, the precise division into literary works and documentary works can be difficult because the same text can contain sentences and paragraphs in different styles. Some researchers, such as Reiss (1977, 1981), have endeavored to provide a detailed classification of text types for translation purposes, but there will always be texts of a mixed nature that cannot



be easily classified. For the same reason, it is almost impossible to draw a clear line between literary translation and document translation. In spite of this difficulty, a broad definition of these two types of translation could help candidates who plan to attempt the NAATI test to understand the requirements of the test and adopt appropriate translation strategies.

In this article, literary translation refers to the translation of literary works, such as novels, plays and poems, where readability is usually strongly emphasized and extensive modification and alteration may be necessary in translation in order to create a similar impact on readers from different cultural backgrounds. Document translation refers to the translation of various kinds of documents which are largely based on factual information, such as brochures and newsletters of community organizations, government policy papers and reports, legal documents, business correspondence, operating manuals, public notices, information sheets and instructions for taking medication. In document translation, translators are required to maintain a high level of accuracy while maintaining the natural flow of expression in the target language. A basic principle to be followed in document translation is that on the one hand everything that carries meaning in the source language – words, tense, mood, etc – must be conveyed without significant distortion of meaning, unjustified addition or omission, while on the other hand, the expression in the target language must be natural and idiomatic. At the same time, other important elements such as style and register should not be sacrificed.

According to NAATI, Translators are expected to “work across a wide range of subjects” and undertake translation work including “routine correspondence, reports, standard text material in the general field of scholarship” and “non-specialised scientific, technical, legal, tourist and commercial subjects” (NAATI, 2002: 6). Basically, Translators are expected to be able to translate all documents of a generic nature, except for literary works and “specialist material for specialists” (NAATI, 2002: 7), and “the passages may be drawn from subject areas including culture, science, technology, health, law, commerce and related fields all aimed at the non-specialist reader” (NAATI, 2002: 22). This is confirmed by the translation passages in NAATI’s Translator Sample Test, which includes, for example, topics such as “Report on the Australian-Japan Relationship: Towards the Year 2000”, “Future Health Options”, “Databases and Privacy”, “Australians and Languages”, “King Cocaine” and “Students, Business and Industry” (NAATI, 1996)<sup>6</sup>. Clearly, the NAATI Translator test is characteristic of document translation, so the principles of document translation described above should apply to translation in the NAATI test.

Furthermore, NAATI expects candidates for the Translator test to “convey *the full meaning* of the information from the source language and into the target language in the appropriate *style and register*” (NAATI, 2002: 3) [emphasis added]. Here, extreme care must be taken by candidates attempting the NAATI test to understand the definition of “full meaning, style and register”, as this is probably an area in which some candidates do not share NAATI’s understanding

of the requirements and therefore make mistakes. The picture becomes clearer if we look at NAATI's guidelines for marking translation tests. According to NAATI,

Marks are deducted in translation tests for:

- mistranslations
- inappropriate vocabulary
- incorrect punctuation
- incorrect grammar
- incorrect spelling
- distortion of meaning
- unidiomatic usage
- stylistic infelicities

.....

Where the use of capital letters differs between English and the other language, candidates must use them correctly in each language. If translations are written using all capital letters, the examiners will assume that the candidate is unaware of the correct use of capital letters and will penalise the translation accordingly.

(NAATI, 2002: 15-16)

Obviously, NAATI emphasizes a high level of accuracy. Even incorrect punctuation and spelling will result in the deduction of marks, to say nothing of wrong word choice or mistranslation of a sentence. This strong emphasis on accuracy should alert candidates to take extreme care in their translation.

While marking translation papers, NAATI examiners, in addition to making individual comments, are required to use a list of items on a result sheet to indicate areas where the candidate has performed poorly. With the permission of NAATI, the relevant items in the result sheet are quoted here:

**Reasons for Poor Performance:**

**Accuracy**

Significant omissions

Significant mistranslations

Significant unjustified insertions

Failure to complete passage

**Comprehension of original**

Misunderstanding vocabulary

Misunderstanding grammatical features

Misunderstanding sentence structures

**Expression of translation**

Inappropriate/inexact word choices

Grammatical errors

Inappropriate/awkward sentence structures

Non-idiomatic usage

Errors of spelling/script/characters

Errors of punctuation/capital letters

**Technique**

Translated too literally in some segments

Translated too freely/paraphrased in some segments

(NAATI, 2005: 5.2-17)

From this list, we can see that NAATI's expectations are actually very detailed and specific. NAATI obviously attaches great importance to accuracy because it puts this heading first on the list. Nevertheless, a high level of naturalness of expression in the target language is also required. Unidiomatic usage and expression, awkward sentence structures and inappropriate use of style and register will result in the deduction of marks. Hatim and Mason (1990: 39) give this pair of sentences to illustrate differences in register: "I hereby declare the meeting open" and "Shall we make a start now?" The two sentences have the same meaning, but are in different registers, the former being formal and the latter informal. According to NAATI's guidelines, the different registers in the two sentences must be maintained in the translation, although in real translation work the change in register between the two sentences may be acceptable, depending on the needs of the client.

Furthermore, in the area of accuracy, NAATI endorses the code of ethics developed by the Australian Institute of Translators and Interpreters (AUSIT) and stresses that this code "represents a national code of ethics", suggesting that it "should be recognized by all practising interpreters and translators in Australia" (NAATI, 2001: 4). The AUSIT code of ethics clearly specifies that translators "shall not alter, make additions to, or omit anything from their assigned work" and should convey even "patent untruths" accurately as presented.<sup>7</sup>

In terms of translation techniques, NAATI does not encourage translations that are either too literal or too free. Indeed, it is sometimes difficult for translators to find a balance between the two. NAATI's expectations in the usage of translation techniques convey the message that NAATI demands a high level of both accuracy and naturalness of expression in its Translator test. So candidates attempting the Translator test should be aware of this and aim to be both

accurate and natural, not only at word and sentence level, but also at the level of the whole text, in terms of lexis, grammar, syntax, style and register.

## **THEORETICAL BASES FOR THE NAATI TRANSLATOR TEST**

Although the NAATI Translator test does not contain any theoretical components, NAATI's requirements of translations are supported by some translation theories. The most relevant theories are those in the field of equivalence, including in particular Eugene Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence (Nida, 1964a, Nida and Taber, 1969), Peter Newmark's semantic and communicative translation (Newmark, 1981, 1988) and Mona Baker's approaches to equivalence in translation at different levels (Baker, 1992).

Nida proposes that in formal equivalence, attention should be focused on "the message itself, in both form and content... One is concerned that the message in the receptor language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language... The translator attempts to reproduce as literally and meaningfully as possible the form and content of the original", while in dynamic equivalence, attempts should be made to "produce a dynamic rather than a formal equivalence... In such a translation, one is not so concerned with matching the receptor-language message with the source-language message, but with the dynamic relationship..., that the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message. A translation of dynamic equivalence aims at complete naturalness of expression..." (Nida, 1964a: 159).

In more or less the same vein, Newmark speaks of semantic and communicative translation, and states that "communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original. Semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original" (Newmark, 1981: 39). Newmark further emphasizes that "in communicative as in semantic translation, provided that equivalent effect is secured, the literal word-for-word translation is not only the best, it is the only valid method of translation".

Baker (1992) gives a detailed description of translational equivalence at various levels, including equivalence at word and above-word levels, grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence in terms of thematic and information structure and cohesion, and pragmatic equivalence.

The theory of equivalence maps out a broad spectrum of text types, from legal documents to literary works such as poems. The NAATI Translator test can be located within this spectrum, but more towards the area of formal equivalence and semantic translation (in terms of Nida and Newmark's strategies), in which a high level of accuracy is emphasized. Of course, when a translator finds that formal equivalence or semantic translation does not work or is likely to sound

abnormal or nonsensical to readers, he/she needs to adopt translation strategies more in the direction of dynamic equivalence or communicative translation so that the translation will be understood by its readers. Candidates attempting the NAATI test should be aware of this, and seek to make their translations both accurate and natural.

The reason that the NAATI Translator test emphasizes accuracy and naturalness to such an extent relates largely to the end products that Translators will produce in their real translation work and the likely impact of the translated documents on the clients and the community. In their real translation work, Translators can be asked to translate legal documents such as witness statements. The accuracy of such translations can have a bearing on court decisions, and Translators may be held responsible for mistranslations. The high level of accuracy required in the NAATI test aims to ensure that such mistakes are eliminated or reduced to a minimum.

## **TRANSLATION IN THE REAL WORLD**

It is important to note that the NAATI Translator test is independent of almost all external influences. The only external factor that could influence the test could be the judgment of examiners. It can be argued that examiners may be subjective and influenced by their personal preferences when marking translation tests. For instance, due to personal preferences, one examiner may consider certain choices of words inappropriate, but these may be considered acceptable by translation clients or fellow translators in the real translation world. NAATI has taken this issue into account, and stipulates that “all NAATI tests are marked by at least two (2) examiners and sometimes by three (3) examiners, who adhere to standard marking guidelines prescribed by NAATI” (NAATI, 2002: 15). In addition, NAATI conducts workshops for examiners every year to discuss various issues relating to the test, including marking, in order to ensure the highest possible level of consistency. Although the issue of examiners’ subjectivity cannot be eliminated completely, NAATI has endeavored to reduce it to a minimum.

However, in the real translation world, translators are subject to many factors. A common factor influencing translators is likely to be the requirements of the client. Although translators will mostly observe the general rule of conveying the meaning accurately and maintaining naturalness of expression, sometimes they may have to bend this rule to meet their clients’ specific requirements. The following section examines two situations that could arise in the real world.

### **CASE STUDY 1**

A translator has received an English document for translation from a local city council. The document is about the council’s plan to expand and renovate its city centre and seeks the support of local residents, many of whom are migrants from non-English-speaking countries and are poorly educated. The document is formal and contains some terms that relate to civil engineering, architecture and

finance. So that the non-English-speaking residents will be able to understand the plan, the council specifically instructs the translator to use simple language in the translation, and to refrain from using long and complicated sentence structures.

## CASE STUDY 2

A translator has received a newsletter from an organization for translation, via a translation agent. The organization has a bilingual employee who believes that he/she has a good knowledge of the business of the organization but is not a NAATI Translator. After receiving the translation submitted by the translator, the organization asked this bilingual employee to check it. Based on his/her understanding of the operations of the organization, the bilingual employee edited the translation extensively, including making some additions and omissions. As a result, the translation was changed to a much freer style than is usual for a document translation. The organization sent the translation back to the translator via the agent, requesting that the employee's changes be incorporated. The translator accepted some of the changes proposed by the bilingual employee, but argued that other changes, such as the additions and omissions, were not accurate translations of the original document. However, the bilingual employee insisted that all of the changes must be incorporated to reflect the practices of the organization. The translation agent also pressed the translator to accept the changes, because otherwise the client would not be happy and the agent might lose the customer.

In Case 1, if the translator follows the instructions of the client and uses simple language to translate the formal document, the register of the source language will be changed or modified. However, the client's request is legitimate and reflects the actual needs of the readership. So if the translator chooses to follow the client's requirements and change the style or register of the original document, he/she is influenced by the client in producing the translation. If we examine this situation against NAATI's expectations and AUSIT's code of ethics, we find that the principle of accuracy has been compromised to some degree in terms of maintaining the original style and register.

The scenario in Case 2 is more difficult for the translator to deal with. Of course, according to AUSIT<sup>8</sup>, translators are advised to quit a job if the code of ethics cannot be observed. The translator in Case 2 could choose to quit, but this may mean that the translator will not only lose any future opportunity to work for this organization, but will also be excluded by the translation agent from future translation work on the grounds of inflexibility and jeopardizing the business of the agent. If the translator accepts all of the changes proposed by the client, he/she is not conveying the meaning accurately.

This said, I do not mean to imply that such a translator is of lower competence and his/her translation is of poor quality. The requirements of clients are real and hard to ignore. External and market factors certainly have a bearing on translation strategies and do influence translators. Some researchers such as



Holz-Manttari (1986, quoted in Munday 2001); Vermeer (1989) and Venuti (1992, 1998) have looked into this area and developed “translational action” and “skopos” (aim/purpose) theories that relate to determining factors in translation. Such theories point out that translation is driven by its outcomes and/or purposes and is controlled by factors such as the needs of the receivers, clients, publishers, readers and translation agents (Munday, 2001: 79-80 and 153-154). However, such practice is different from NAATI’s test requirements. If a translator is doing this kind of translation on a regular basis and has developed a relatively “free” style of translation, it would be difficult for him/her to meet NAATI’s requirements if he/she used the same style when sitting the Translator test.

## TRANSLATION PROGRAMS

Translation training programs play an important role in training translators. However, it is important to note that not all training programs produce graduates along the lines of NAATI’s expectations. In Australia, some translation training programs are approved by NAATI, and these programs strictly follow NAATI requirements in training their translators. Such requirements cover areas such as program duration, minimum number of hours of training in translation, language consolidation, field practice, resources and qualification of teachers (for example, The University of Queensland, 2005; RMIT, 2000; University of Western Sydney, 2005; Deakin University, 1995, 1997). The results of the final examinations in these programs are linked to accreditation, and are moderated by NAATI. Students in these programs receive intensive training in the framework of NAATI’s expectations. Therefore, graduates who have successfully completed the NAATI-approved programs and passed their final examination will be able to meet the threshold competence requirements of NAATI for Translators.

There are other translator training programs or translation courses in other disciplinary programs around the world. Since the NAATI test is unique to Australia, it is yet to be investigated whether NAATI’s requirements are accepted by and incorporated into every translation training program around the world. For instance, some training programs may focus on the translation of literary works and developing the skills needed for literary translation; some training may be conducted to suit the needs of particular disciplinary areas such as the media and film subtitling. It is therefore likely that such training will not be conducted strictly according to NAATI’s requirements for training Translators, and graduates from such programs or courses may not fully meet the NAATI test requirements. This does not mean that these programs and courses are of a lower standard, but that they may observe different principles, adopt different pedagogies, focus on different aspects of translation, and train translators for different areas. Graduates of such programs may therefore need to familiarize themselves with NAATI’s requirements before attempting the NAATI test.

## CONCLUSION

The NAATI Translator test falls into the domain of document translation, in which a high level of accuracy and naturalness of expression is stressed. It is a different form of translation from the translation of literary works. NAATI's expectations in its test do not contradict the general rule of conveying the meaning accurately and maintaining naturalness of expression in document translation. Such expectations are not independent of translation practice in the real world. On the contrary, they provide guidelines for professional performance in the domain of document translation. They are also supported by relevant translation theories. NAATI's expectations may also differ from those in translation training programs that are not approved by NAATI. Furthermore, in the real translation world, there are factors that influence the ideal performance of document translation. These factors may relate to the demands of clients, and are likely to be beyond the control of translators. Such demands may be legitimate from the clients' perspective and may need to be taken into consideration by translators. However, candidates attempting the NAATI Translator test should familiarize themselves with NAATI's specific requirements to give themselves the best chance of passing the test. 🐼

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## NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> “Real translation work” refers here to translation services provided by translators.
- <sup>2</sup> In this article, “Translators” with a capital “T” is used to refer to NAATI-accredited Translators, while “translators” refers to practicing translators in general.
- <sup>3</sup> The NAATI Translator test also contains ethical questions, but these are not discussed in this article.
- <sup>4</sup> International English Language Testing System – a test that measures English language proficiency.
- <sup>5</sup> [http://www.naati.com.au/annual\\_reports.htm](http://www.naati.com.au/annual_reports.htm), retrieved June 12, 2005.
- <sup>6</sup> The actual texts of the Sample Test cannot be reproduced here for reasons of confidentiality.
- <sup>7</sup> <http://server.dream-fusion.net/ausit2/pics/ethics.pdf>, retrieved July 9, 2005.
- <sup>8</sup> <http://server.dream-fusion.net/ausit2/pics/ethics.pdf>, retrieved July 9, 2005.

**Leong Ko** is Lecturer in Chinese Translation and Interpreting at the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies, University of Queensland, Australia. He holds a PhD in Translation and Interpreting Studies from University of Queensland, and MA from Xiamen University, China, a BA, Xiamen University, China, and NAATI Advanced Translator and Interpreter, Australia. He is NAATI Examiner (Chinese Panel) – National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters in Australia. His research interests are in Translation and interpreting studies and Pedagogy of translation and interpreting.

He can be reached at [l.ko@uq.edu.au](mailto:l.ko@uq.edu.au).

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# **Machine Translation in the Arab World: Overview and Perspectives**

**Rana Raddawi and Wessam Al-Assadi**

American University of Sharjah  
United Arab Emirates

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this article is to shed light on the field of machine translation in the Arab world: where it started, its development, drawbacks and future perspectives. The choice to focus on MT in the Arab world is for various reasons. First, it is a domain that remains relatively unresearched. Second, Arabs have yet to ride the wave of one of the most profound technological phenomena in the history of humankind – the Internet. The Arab user's potential inability to access pages in English on the Internet urges the need to translate those pages by machine. Thus, MT is a field that merits examination since most Arabs who have no command of foreign languages and particularly English cannot, in this age of information and knowledge but use translation to keep up with breakthroughs in a competitive global market. It is worth noting that Human Translators' endeavors are never excluded from MT research and technology, as they constitute the driving force for the advancement of machine translation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In today's global economy, as more people increasingly need or want to communicate with their counterparts abroad, they are confronted with daunting cultural and language divisions. The fact that most people in the world cannot communicate in English, the predominate language of international commerce, communication and publication, is enforcing a global digital divide.

Globalism has intensified the demand for translation. To reach customers around the globe, businesses must offer information and instruction in the language of the target customer. If the world's non-English speakers want to be more than passive receivers of information, translation is needed. The impact of the Internet has been significant in recent years. The increasing multilingualism of the web constitutes additional challenges for the translation industry. The global web can only be mastered with the help of multilingual tools. Today, there are many systems designed specifically for the translation of Web pages and electronic mail. The demand for immediate translations will surely continue to grow rapidly and users are already seeing an accelerating growth of real-time on-line translation on the Internet itself, and all this translates into urgent need for more translation. However, there are not nearly enough human translators to cope and the need is urgent for the machine to help.

## **MACHINE TRANSLATION IN A GLOBAL WORLD: OVERVIEW**

When computers appeared at the end of the Second World War, there were great hopes for the potential benefits the imagined powers of these 'electronic brains' might bring. One was the prospect of translating languages to break down communication barriers and to further the cause of international peace.

The early dreams that stimulated research and development efforts were of a machine that would produce high-quality translation from a wide variety of languages at a low cost, (Hutchins, 1999). Even the supporters of machine translation agree that decades of effort have not produced the breakthroughs necessary to achieve this dream. Supporters of machine translation say that we would be closer to realizing this goal if we had not given up so soon. Negative evaluations of machine translation in the sixties were based on the argument that the understanding of text by computer was too difficult. The ALPAC report (1963) by the American National Research Council concluded that the basic technology for machine translation had not been developed, and recommended a focus on long-term research in computational linguistics and improvements of translation methods (Hutchins, 1999). It is assumed that translators, more than any other professionals, feel the real changes brought about by the information age. The globalization of the marketplace, the increase in intercultural contacts and the acceleration of information production, have resulted in profound changes in the way translators work.

Currently, human translators must use an extensive knowledge base to achieve the main task of translation – the transfer of technical and cultural information. As such, translation requires new strategies and a paradigm shift in methodology. "This shift must embrace practice, teaching and research," argues Austermuhl (2001:1).

The concept of globalization in the sense that we, the globe's inhabitants, are citizens of a "global village", entails a debatable question: why bother with more than 4000 different languages if we may do with one language, English? Since English is the dominant language now in business, sciences, technology and international politics, "it is the lingua franca of the global market economy," according to Austermuhl (2001:2). Around 85 percent of international organizations use English as their working language. In Europe, 99 percent of international organizations have English as one of their official languages (Mai and Welch, 1999: 130 cited in Austermuhl, 2001). In addition, around 90 percent of all scientific publications are written in English. Around 98 percent of German physicists publish in English. Even in France, two thirds of scientists use English to publish their research results addressing the global audience (Raethel, cited in Austermuhl, 2001:1).

Moreover, language now is a major factor in the debate over globalization, especially because the Internet has made its political, cultural and economic importance universally clear. In 2001, around 80 percent of the contents of the

over one billion Internet pages on the web were in English. The 8000 on-line databases currently available are extracted from information originally published in the English language. "Concern over the future of linguistic diversity in the Information Age is evident from the currency of such terms as 'language divide', 'extinction of languages', 'linguistic racism', and 'linguistic wars' (UN Arab Human Development Report, 2002:76).

Politically, the experience of the European Union over the last 50 years demonstrates a continuing need for translation. In Europe, multilingualism is a fact of life; each of the 15-member states of the EU is entitled to use its own language to conduct official business within the institutions of the EU (Austermuhl, 2001: 3). Since the enlargement of the European Union on 1st May 2004, nine new official languages have been added to the EU's eleven existing languages. The European Commission already has 1300 translators, who process 1.5 million pages a year in the EU's eleven languages. In two years, that is expected to rise to almost 2.5 million pages – and the staff will almost double in size to cope with the output. The cost will rise from roughly 550 million euros today to over 800 million euros after enlargement ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), 2005).

With the exception of political institutions, in fact, knowledge of foreign languages is not widespread in Europe. Around 28 percent of German executives have very good command of English skills. A university study conducted in 1999 indicates that one in four German university professors would not attend international conferences if English were the sole working language (ibid).

It is relevant to observe here that facility with the English language is waning across the Arab world. "With the exception of a few university professors and educated individuals, real proficiency in English has ebbed, preventing many Arab researchers from publishing their research in international scientific journals", according to the UN Arab Human Development Report (2003). This trend also explains the wide reluctance to make presentations at scientific gatherings in English, or to participate in seminars or even Internet user groups.

It is obvious then that language diversity vis-à-vis English as a lingua franca of the Information Age actually increases the need for translation.

The increasing cross-border communications, the rapid growth of technical and scientific production, and the concept of a global market have led to the accelerating growth in the international demand for translation. Austermuhl (2001) cites Germany as a good example for the size of such growth. The German market, he argues has been witnessing a constant 14 percent annual increase in translation for several years. In 2001, the total annual translation demand from German market reached 30 million pages.

The increase in the demand for translation is also partially due to the shift in the Internet from English language only to a multilingual international platform for communication and information. Although around 57.4 percent of the Internet users were originally English speakers in 1999, there is evidence that the number of non-English speaking Internet users is rising steadily as penetration rates in

non-English speaking countries continue to rise. Austermuhl argues that the non-English speakers are “the fastest growing groups of new Internet users, with a rapidly growing interest in non English sites as the Net becomes genuinely multilingual. Websites in Spanish, Portuguese, German, Japanese, Chinese and Scandinavian languages are showing the strongest growth rates” (Austermuhl, 2001:5).

According to Computer Industry Almanac (cited in [www.escawa.org](http://www.escawa.org), 2004), the number of Internet users surpassed 530 million in 2001 and will continue to grow strongly in the next few years. In 2005, the number of worldwide Internet users exceeded one billion. According to Diab (2003), while the Arabic language population constitutes 18.1 percent of total world population, the estimated number of Arabic language Internet users is 0.8 percent of the total world users. This in turn means that the number of multilingual sites will grow and translation services and software are becoming an integral part of international communication.

Not only have globalization and the increasing numbers of non-English Internet users caused a growing demand for translation, but the digitization of the global economy has also seized the lion's share in the developing industry of translation. Accordingly, translation is now closely related to the changes going on in the field of international business and communication. These changes are in fact influenced by the use of modern means of communication and information technologies.

## MT AND COMPUTATIONAL LINGUISTICS

“Computational Linguistics is a multidiscipline field where computer applications are used to process natural languages” (Hutchins, 1986). This modeling is not limited to any particular field of linguistics. Computational linguists were often formerly computer scientists who specialized in the application of computers to the processing of a natural language (ibid). Recent research has shown that language is much more complex than previously thought, so computational linguistics is interdisciplinary now. It draws upon the involvement of linguists, computer scientists, and experts in artificial intelligence, cognitive psychologists and logicians, among others (Hutchins, 1986).

One of the original aims of applied computational linguistics was fully automatic translation between human languages. Through bitter experience, scientists have realized that they are still far off from achieving the ambitious goal of translating unrestricted texts. Nevertheless, computational linguists have created software systems that simplify the work of human translators and clearly improve their productivity. The expectation that translation machines might replace people has changed to the view that these technologies are instead tools to enhance the efforts of professional translators and researchers. Today the challenges of machine translation improvement illustrate the broader challenges of information technology research, development and use.

Changes in thinking about machine translation reflect the evolution of new concepts of how machine translation systems might be developed and used. Progress in Natural Language Processing Technology, the development of more powerful computers, the increasing availability of large dictionary data sets and advances in some aspects of linguistic theory suggest opportunities for research and development.

Most MT research and virtually all commercial MT activities have initially concentrated on the major international languages: English, French, German, Spanish, Japanese and Russian. The languages of the less developed countries have been largely ignored. Yet it can be argued that the need for MT in these countries is as great as or perhaps greater than in the more developed countries.

Arabic, which is our research focus, meanwhile, has its own dividing line. On the one hand, it can lead to a wider linguistic divide between the Arabs and the rest of the world at various levels including linguistic studies and language computation or, on the other hand, it may constitute a pivotal factor in the establishing of a unifying Arab medium, especially in the field of information technology.

Access to sources of knowledge in languages other than Arabic is mainly connected with translation. Translation into Arabic is still extremely scarce and is not keeping pace with the global knowledge explosion. The lag emphasizes the importance of developing machine translation to speed up the process.

Computation of the Arabic language has been hindered for a long time because Arabic systems were designed according to the model of English processing. This model has proven ineffective when used for Arabic for a simple reason: the computation of the Arabic language, compared to English is much more complicated on every level of the language matrix. This has prompted some Arab researchers to design computerized models using the Arabic language as a superset, supplanting English, (Ali, 1994).

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF MACHINE TRANSLATION IN THE ARAB WORLD**

As stated earlier, the choice to scrutinize MT in the Arab world is attributed to various factors. Despite the ongoing debate among Arabs over the technological revolution brought about by the Internet worldwide, the fact is that the use of Arabic on the Internet is still relatively in an embryonic stage. Even the use of the Internet itself is not as widespread in the Arab world as it is in other parts of the world mainly due to the language barrier. Machine translation can be a major beneficiary as a vehicle to override language problems on the Internet. Furthermore, access to sources of knowledge in languages other than Arabic is mainly connected with translation. Translation into Arabic is still extremely scarce and is not keeping pace with the global knowledge explosion.

According to the Arab Human Development Report (2002) published by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Arab countries annually



translate around 330 books, which constitute one-fifth the amount of books translated in Greece. The accumulated number of books translated since the ninth century is around one hundred thousand books. This number equals what Spain translates in one year.

This attitude to translation is in direct contrast to the status of translation in the Medieval Arab World. At that time, translation, according to Faiq (2000), played a vital role in the establishment of Arab-Islamic cultural and intellectual identity. It "made the Arabic language a world linguistic medium of knowledge for many centuries".

It is possible to compare the present age with the medieval era in terms of the need to adopt knowledge and sciences from foreign civilizations. Medieval Arabs recognized the importance of translation for their endeavors to strengthen their new state, and translation then became a matter of official concern. The Arabs today are in critical need at assimilating knowledge and of building a systematic Pan-Arab translation programs to meet the information explosion of this era in history.

Today, the Arabs have the opportunity to use the electronic tools and media (as compared to paper in the Medieval Age), to help in the assimilation of knowledge. Using machine translation is essential if the Arabs are to compete in this globalized world. If the outcome of MT translation is unacceptable (transliteration, literal and gist translations are some of the strategies used in MT), it is always possible to improve the outcome with human aid. There is an utmost need today for translators, linguists and grammarians to unify their efforts in building advanced MT systems (Raddawi, 2004).

It is obvious then that Arabs are no longer in a position to debate whether they need to use MT systems or not, but rather to improve MT programs to better serve their needs (ibid).

## **THE AUTOMATION OF ARABIC LANGUAGE: ACADEMIA VIS-À-VIS INDUSTRY**

### **Historical overview**

The following paragraphs include a brief history of Arabic language automation.

- 1) In 1962, the National Institute of Planning in Egypt was the first Arab Institute to have a computer (14 years after the first computer was used). As for Arabicization\*, this computer was used for very primitive functions: to

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\* Editor's note: Researchers distinguish between *Arabicization*, which refers solely to language issues and *Arabization*, which is a blanket term covering all sorts of adaptation. Arabization is a pan-nationalistic process aimed at welding national unity and national identity through the adaptation of educational, administrative, legal, economic and other systems to Arab culture and way of life (AD).



type names and addresses in Arabic and to use Arabic letters in substitution for certain Latin letters (Ali, 1988).

- 2) In 1973, a significant step forward was achieved when Said Hayder, a professor at Montreal University (originally from Pakistan) designed a computational system for automatic recognition of Arabic letters. A system was developed to recover the complexities related to Arabic letters recognition which enjoy high degree of context sensitivity. As a result, the number of Arabic letters on the keyboard were minimized to include the main alphabets' shapes only such as ( ل , ن , ع , ك ).
- 3) From 1973 to 1985, some important achievements were made:
  - The Arabic language began to be used in the database and information retrieval systems.
  - Software systems were developed in Arabic, such as Basic and Logos.
  - Preliminary systems for the computational generation of Arabic language were developed.
  - Partial systems for morphological analysis were developed.
  - After ten years of discussions, the unified Arabic code for electronic data exchange on the Internet received unanimous Arab agreement.
  - In mid 1985, the computational processing of Arabic language as a NLP (Natural Language Processing), witnessed a turning point on the word level, when Sakhr succeeded in developing the first software engines or tools for multi-mode morphological and syntactic analysis, diacritization and segmentation.
  - Arabic dictionaries were automated.
  - Text analysis software, which was used in the morphological analysis of the Quran were developed.
  - Spell-checking systems, the basic tool for word processing systems were created.
  - Advanced memory systems where Arabic words are stored in their morphologically analyzed shape, that is using the root and the morphological patterns of Arabic words were developed.
  - Electronic tools for information automatic retrieval of Arabic were developed. These tools facilitate the search inside Arabic texts for words as they appear in the text without looking up their roots.
  - Multi-mode syntactic analyzers were created. Sakhr was able to develop extensive word lists and a body of 20,000 rules for Arabic grammar and syntax.

In the last ten years, the internationalization of the Internet and the proliferation of communication tools in Arabic, as shown earlier, demonstrate the need for a large number of Arabic NLP applications. As a result, more research activities have been launched to address more general areas of Arabic language processing, including syntactic analysis, machine translation, document indexing, and information retrieval.

Research in Arabic speech processing has made significant progress due to “more improved signal processing technologies, and to recent advances in the knowledge of the prosodic and segmental characteristics of Arabic and the acoustic modeling of Arab schemes” (Osborn, 2004). These results should make it possible to further progress in more innovative areas, such as Arabic speech recognition and synthesis, speech translation and automatic identification of a speaker, and his or her geographic identification.

### **ARAB RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND MT COMPANIES**

According to Taher Labib (2004), director of Pan-Arab Center of Translation in Beirut (interview, April 2, 2004), machine translation in the Arab world is still a field to be revealed even for most Arab intellectual elites. In the Arab world, debate over machine translation still concentrates on the ability of the machine to translate. According to Labib, a lot of time and effort are still needed to convince Arab academics, decision makers, and the commercial sector of the advantages in using machine translation in the Information Age. According to Labib, there is no consistent and/or systematic machine translation research in the Arab countries. There are individual programs even within the borders of one Arab country, and it is even hard to scan such programs. The Pan-Arab Translation Center does not have a record for any machine translation programs or applications available in the Arab countries, and although the Center is preparing a plan for a machine translation program; it is still in its preliminary stages.

In the local market, the researchers contacted a number of companies working in the field of Science and Technology including Dubai Internet City in the Emirates, to see what kind of research projects they are developing concerning machine translation, language technology and engineering. However, almost all the companies in DIC are working in sales and marketing, whereas development and programming are taking place in other countries like Egypt and Jordan. In Egypt, Sakhr was very cooperative. Their research center, headed by Chalabi Ashraf, was willing to provide the researchers with the required information.

The American University of Sharjah (AUS) in the Emirates is one of the institutions that is encouraging research in Machine Translation. The researchers are working on a project related to machine translation and interpreting, consisting of web-based software. In addition, the Center of Arab Unity Studies conducted few research activities in the field of language technology and

machine translation in some Arab countries in a book entitled *Translation In The Arab World: Towards Establishing a Pan-Arab Translation Centre*. (2000)

These research activities are listed in the following section.

### **Arab Research Institutes**

#### ***The Institute of Electronic Research: The National Council for Research in Cairo***

The Institute is executing a program for specialized machine translation in coordination with the European Union to translate medical texts. The program is called 'ARAMED'. It follows the transfer technique. It is part of the European CATz program. The Institute of Electronic Research in Cairo is developing the Arabic part of the project.

The Institute is also building a multi-lingual dictionary based on CORPUS.

#### ***The Institute for Electronic and Computational Research (King Abdul - Aziz City for Science and Technology)***

The Institute was established in 1992 to launch research programs on system Engineering, computational engineering, computer sciences and other related fields.

Some of the research activities conducted there in the domain of the computational processing of Arabic language are:

- The establishment of a database for Arabic texts.
- The development of morphological analyzer for Arabic words.
- The development of automatic diacritizer.
- The establishment of a database for Arabic calligraphy.
- The development of a database for Standard Arabic Voice Recognition.

#### ***Lebanese University/The National Council for Scientific Research***

The researcher Anis Abu Farah, from the Lebanese University – now a member of the National Council for Scientific Research (Lebanon) has developed a software program for machine translation for Arabic and French. However, for unknown reasons, this program was not published.

#### ***Syrian Scientific Research Centre for Information Technology***

The Syrian Scientific Research Center established in Syria, Damascus in 1981, has been conducting studies on machine translation (Raddawi, 2004). There is a plan to establish a center for translation and language processing affiliated with Damascus University.

However, in Syria, individual efforts have led to the creation of programs and the development of tools to assist language automation, such as software for Arabic letter recognition. Two systems were developed:

- 1) A system that works on the 'VAX – II' and 'IBM-PC'.
- 2) A system that works on the compatible personal computers 'IBM-PC'.

***The Institute of Arabicization Studies and Research /  
University of King Mohammed V (Morocco)***

The Institute (L'Institut d'Etudes et de Recherches pour l'Arabisation) was established in 1960 to develop Arabicization programs on all levels. Among the other fields of interest, the Institute of the Arabicization Studies and Research has established a department for Machine Translation and Computational Processing of Arabic Language.

In Tunisia, the Regional Institute for the Media and Remote Communication Sciences has developed a Machine Translation System 'Turjuman' which will be launched soon.

It is clear that research and development activities in the field of Arabic Language Technology and the Arabic language Automatic Processing applications are still very few and simple. Arab universities and research centers hardly show any interest in this flourishing field.

**Companies Active in the Field of Machine Translation**

A brief outline will be given for efforts of Arabic and international companies to develop software products of machine translation from Arabic to English and from English to Arabic.

***Sakhr***

Sakhr (a part of Al-Alamiah Group) has developed schemes for machine translation from Arabic into English and English into Arabic. Over the last 20 years, Sakhr has realized the importance of Arabic Natural Processing as a starting point for Language Technology application. In that foundational approach, Sakhr developed teams to write formal grammars and to compile lexicons and corpuses of sentences for developing and testing software "engines" to handle Arabic texts, according to Chalabi (retrieved December 29, 2003). These have provided bases for products as diverse as religious instruction (Arabic versions of the Holy Quran, Hadith databases and Arabic tutorials), Internet front-ends, optical character recognition for scanning Arabic text-to-speech applications and machine translation.

Sakhr has also developed software tools for morphological and syntactic analysis, diacritization and segmentation, plus extensive datasets of words, sentences and grammatical rules. A series of datasets, including lexicons based on monolingual (Arabic and English) and bilingual (Arabic-English-Arabic) dictionaries have been developed.

The Sakhr machine translation engine is mainly based on the transfer model. Its performance has been boosted by a statistical language model contributing in the lexical and morphological disambiguation of the source language, in addition to enhanced word selection on the target language, according to Chalabi. The Sakhr language statistical model is supported by two balanced corpuses one for English and another for Arabic.

***Coltec***

Established in 1990, Coltec is one of the leading companies in the field of Arabic computational linguistic research. According to Coltec (2004), the company's distinguished achievement was the establishment of a new theory of Arabic language processing that would take into consideration the linguistic systems of non-European languages. The Cairo main branch of Coltec developed the spelling checker and grammar checker (used for the first time in 1997 by Microsoft word), tools for word identification, and a linguistic model based on statistical techniques. Heuristic and Artificial Intelligence techniques were developed to build the 'Hidden Markov Models (HMM)' (to extract the Arabic linguistic features required for Information Technology applications, according to Al-Sabah (2003).

***Cimos***

Cimos is one of the leading French companies working on the development of machine translation and which considers the Arabic market one of its crucial commercial markets. Cimos' main interest has always been the development of translation and Arabicization services to be installed by other interested companies. Cimos has developed a number of machine translation software systems, such as An-Nakel Al-Arabi, Al-Kafi, Al-Mu'utarif.

***ATA***

ATA is a pioneer company in the field of machine translation especially for the Arabic language. The company is based in London. It has developed a number of machine translation software programs under the well-known commercial name 'Al-Waf'. Its first software was Al-Mutarjim Al Arabey for professional translation. The company has recently developed a translation 'engine' which uses Artificial Intelligence to solve linguistic problems in translation, according to Al Marzouki (2002), the Director of Al-Marzouk For Technology and Information, the representative of ATA in Riyadh.

**A List of Commercial Arabic Machine Translation  
Software systems**

The following is a list of some of the machine translation software available in the United Arab Emirates market working, either from English-Arabic, Arabic-English or English-Arabic-English:

Al-Mutarjim Al-Arabey: English – Arabic

Golden Al-Wafi v2.00: English – Arabic

Al-Wafi V4.00: English – Arabic

Al-Mu'utarif: English – Arabic – English

An-Nakel: English – Arabic – English

An-Nakel: One way Arabic – English

An-Nakel: One way English – Arabic

An-Nakel Multilingual Translation system

### **Arabic Translation Engines on the Web**

The widely used Arabic translation web portals are:

- Tarjim, the Arabicization tool on Ajeeb.com
- Al-Misbar developed by ATA
- CAT Translator: Bidirectional English – Arabic – English - Sakhr
- On-line Translation - Sakhr

Since companies like Sakhr, Coltec, Cimos and others claim that they have developed their own linguistic and technical research to develop machine translation systems, it is quite important to examine the output of such products in order to monitor their strengths and weaknesses for future improvement.

### **THE CRISIS OF ARABIC LANGUAGE**

Language is today a recurring topic in the debate over globalization, especially now that the Internet has made its political, cultural and economic importance universally clear.

Linguistically, the world of information and communication technology is at a watershed. It can maintain linguistic diversity, a choice that entails difficult communication and hinders flow of information and knowledge, or it can turn to a standard unified language, most probably English.

Likewise, the Arabic speaking world is at its own watershed. Arabic can become a means for Arab countries to catch up the information train, or it can lead to a wider linguistic divide between the Arabs and the rest of the world at various levels, including linguistic studies, lexicography, language education, the professional use of language, the documentation of language and language computation.

Arabic today, on the threshold of a new knowledge society, faces severe challenges and a real crisis in terms of theorization, teaching, grammar, lexicography, usage, and so forth. The rise of information technology presents a real challenge to the Arabic language today.

According to the Human Development Report 2003, published by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), central to the Arabic language crisis are the following: first, there is a marked absence of language policy at the national levels, which diminishes the authority of language centers, limits their resources and eventually results in poor co-ordination among them. Second, the Arabicization of the sciences and various other disciplines has not proceeded according to expectations. Third, there is a chronic deficiency in translation efforts in the sciences and the humanities. Fourth, Arabic linguistic theory suffers from stagnation, isolation from modern philosophical schools and methodologies, and a lack of awareness of the role language plays in modern society. Fifth, the situation of Arabic language is further complicated by the duality of standard and colloquial Arabic. Sixth, Arabic electronic publication is weakened by the scarcity of advanced Arabic software. Finally, the Arabic language continues to suffer from the duplication of research and development projects and the absence of co-ordination among them, “conflicting diagnoses of the ills afflicting the language, and the conspicuous absence of a clear vision of linguistic reform” (UN Arab Human Development Report, 123).

### **Complexities of Arabic Processing as a Natural Language**

Arabic, as a Semitic language, differs from European languages morphologically, syntactically and semantically. There has been much interest recently in the handling of morphologically rich inflectional languages such as Arabic from a computational perspective.

Several workshops in recent years (both regional and affiliated with international conference) have addressed the spectrum of issues relating to the processing of Arabic. The progress over the years has opened the door to advanced computational applications, such as machine translation. Research of machine translation of Semitic languages is still, however, in its early stages. Accurate translation of Arabic and other Semitic languages requires treatment of unique linguistic characteristics, some of which are common to all Semitic languages; others are specific to each of these individual languages.

Natural Language Processing (NLP) is needed because around 75 percent of all information is textual (Ali, 2004). In order to process information computationally, we need first to process texts computationally. In 1983, according to Ali (ibid), Arabic was extremely unprivileged in the computation field, “suffering the limitations of a minimal system at a pure character level and poor printing and display qualities. Thus, it was necessary to shift to a more developed level dealing with larger linguistic units, namely the word, the sentence, and the continuous text”. An expert in the field of MT in the Arab world, Ali said that Arab researchers followed the steps of English as the most established computation example, because “we had to draw on its resources and techniques”. Shortly after starting their research, Arab researchers discovered that these techniques were not suitable for Arabic. This is simply due to the fact that compared to English, Arabic is “much more complex at almost all linguistic levels, with phonology as the sole exception” (Ali, 2004).



Since the objective of research into natural language processing is to make computers deal “intelligently with the diversity and complexity and variation of human natural languages” (Yaseen, et al., 2003), Arabic natural language processing is considered one of the most difficult among the Semitic and non-Semitic languages due to the complexity of its automatic processing. Research in Arabic NLP is very rich in areas such as morphology, moderate in syntax analysis and still not very mature in semantics and lexicon building.

For the last two decades concentration on Arabic language processing has been on the manipulation and processing of the structure of the language from the points of view of morphology and syntax. According to Yaseen, et al. (2003), achieving Arabic understanding requires more than that. In order to achieve natural language understanding a differentiated and deep semantic processing is required.

Chalabi, head of Sakhr Research Centre in Egypt, (personal communication, April 13, 2004) stated that since the Arabic language is computationally one order of magnitude more complex than its Latin counterparts, it is unrealistic to import solutions developed to process less complex languages like English and French so as to adapt them to handle Arabic. On the contrary, Chalabi said that Sakhr, after developing its own Arabic NLP components, which took more than fifteen years, with an average team of fifty linguists, engineers and designers, decided to adopt the same components to process English. While it took Sakhr two years to develop a full-fledged morphological analyzer for Arabic, only three months was needed to develop the corresponding morphological analyzer for English.

According to Chalabi, some of the major problems in Arabic NLP are:

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| On the character level: | a) Character context sensitivity                                      |
|                         | b) Overlapping  |
|                         | c) Diacritics and points  |
| On the word level:      | a) Highly inflectional language                                       |
|                         | b) Different writings for some characters (Alef, Maksoora and Hamza). |
| On the syntax level:    | a) Lack of diacritics in written text.                                |
|                         | b) Free word order  |
|                         | c) Rare use of punctuation  |

The complexity of Arabic at the character level lies in the cursive shape and concatenation of Arabic letters, and above all these letters are characterized by a high degree of context sensitivity. By this, it is meant that a letter's appropriate shape is determined by the surrounding letters (note the changing shape of the “Ain” according to its place: ع, ا, إ). At the word level, the morphology of Arabic is “the most sophisticated of all languages” (Ali, 1994). Complexity in



the Arabic morphology becomes very clear in its acute derivational aspect. Lastly, at the syntactical level, Arabic has no doubt proved to be most difficult, primarily because Arabic is usually written without vowels. Arabic syntax is also recognized for its wide syntactic transformation mechanisms, such as anaphora and cataphora, for example, إذا بلغ الفطام لنا رضيع instead of إذا بلغ لنا رضيع الفطام, substitution and ellipsis (such as using the subject noun instead of the verb) for example, يضرب الولد أخاه instead of يضرب أخاه ضاربًا أخاه.

According to Ali, in order to process English syntax computationally, around a thousand arithmetical rules were used, whereas more than twelve thousand rules were used for syntactic Arabic computational processing. Ali argues that, in essence, written Arabic is “a quasi-stenographic script, and this results in a severe mélange of various ambiguities, which are unprecedented and absent from any other languages” (1994). The morphological ambiguity due to the absence of vowels is intermixed with other types of ambiguities, mainly those associated with word sense, part of speech and syntactical structure. Ali provides an example to explain such a problem:

Assumed sentence: 'some firms lend money'. The sentence as would be written in the Arabic fashion:

“SM FRMS LND MNY” (Ali, 1994).

The result as it appears is a string of consonants, each consonantal form may have a set of alternative vowelized interpretations, and any syntactical processor dealing with Arabic text as its input has to primarily disambiguate such quasi-stenographic script. As a result, an automatic vowelizer became a prerequisite for Arabic computation. To solve this problem, Ali has developed an order to disambiguate the unvowelized text, as well as to substitute the missing vowels. This required the achievement of the three main computational linguistic tasks: (1) the development of an Arabic parser; (2) the development of a lexical-semantic processor, and (3) the development of an automatic generator of the vowelized text. Since parsing techniques developed for English have proved inadequate for the Arabic language, both in function and performance, a parsing system based on a multi level grammar was developed and implemented (Ali, 1994). Ali argues, “This system is capable of handling the previously mentioned intermixed set of ambiguities. The disambiguation mechanism works incrementally at every level of the grammar. Resident ambiguities are resolved heuristically, resorting to preferential principles working on both syntactic and semantic levels”.

Although some linguistic complexities of Arabic language, especially in regard to its computational processing as a NLP have been solved, some problems still need some research. Among them are (Chalabi, 2004):

- Part of speech disambiguation
- Word sense disambiguation
- Pronominal reference solution

- Elliptic personal pronouns detection
- Named entity detection

### **Arabic Language Engineering**

Most mainstream language engineering techniques have been developed for Western European languages. These techniques, though superficially quite distinct, are built according to formal algorithms that a machine can 'realize'.

Hannach, a specialist in the field of Computational Linguistics, told the researchers (interview, April 20, 2004) that unless Arab linguists develop linguistic theories that can cope with the mathematical algorithms of the computer, it will be difficult to develop applications of language technology in Arabic that are efficient and feasible.

In an interview with Al-Khaleej Daily, dated January 12, 2004, Hannach called for a renaissance in the field of Arabic linguistics. According to him, a challenging task facing the research community in the Arab world is to develop computer algorithms and their applications that can process Arabic texts. Unless a linguistic theory is developed according to the metrics of the new machine technologies, the launching of efficient Arabic automatic applications will remain lagging behind.

Since computers are essentially logically programmed systems built on strict mathematical algorithms, linguistic rules must be strict and formal, according to Hannach. Computer engineers in the Arab world, having ignored the linguistic side of information and communication technology, will naturally come up with programs that are unable to compete in the international market and fail to meet the requirements and expectations of Arab users.

Although Arabic MT is more difficult in general, according to Hannach, Arabic enjoys some linguistic features that make its automatic processing a task with few complexities. It is built on specific roots and patterns for verb forms and for nouns and adjectives derived from verbs. Roots constitute the basic skeleton of words in Arabic, whereas patterns constitute their overall structure. According to Hannach (2004), this mathematical architecture of the Arabic language makes it more 'fusional', in contrast to some other languages that are 'affixational'.

In order to develop promising Arabic information and communication technology applications (machine translation among them), there is a pressing need to improve the machine processing of Arabic as a natural language.

### **MT IN THE ARAB WORLD: PERSPECTIVES**

To develop products that will revolutionize machine translation and Arabic computation software technology, money, time, and expertise should be dedicated to integrate efforts exerted by industry to achieve improvements in this context.

Raddawi (2004) stressed the Arab world's urgent need for a team work where expertise from the fields of translation, linguistics, computer science, engineering and economics work together in order to improve advanced machine translation systems and other applications of language technology.

### **Corpus linguistics: a Promising Future for Machine Translation**

Corpus linguistics is seen now as “the study of linguistic phenomena through large collections of machine-readable texts: corpora”, (McEnery and Wilson, 1994:10). These are used within a number of research areas varying from the descriptive study of the syntax of a language to prosody or language learning.

The use of real examples of texts in the study of language is not a new issue in the history of linguistics (Baker, 1995). However, Corpus Linguistics has developed considerably in the last decades due to the great possibilities offered by the processing of natural language with computers (ibid). Today, corpus linguistics is closely connected to the use of computers, so closely that the term ‘Corpus Linguistics’ for many scholars means “the use of collections of COMPUTER-READABLE text for language study”, [emphasis in original] (McEnery and Wilson, 1994).

Corpus-based applications are numerous and include various aspects of translation. As a translation aid, corpora potentially provide solutions to many problems that have traditionally been dealt with in isolation – problems such as the extraction of conceptual information and technology, the identification and clarification of neologisms and acronyms, the identification of meaning and usage through the provision of contextual information, the provision of frequency and keyword data and finally, the provision of style and register information (Maher, 2004).

However, according to Baker (2004), corpus-based research presents a number of methodological challenges. In particular, Baker highlights questions related to the vast amount of data, how one selects the features to be compared and, more importantly, how the findings may be interpreted. “These issues have been extensively debated in the literature on corpus linguistics, but rarely – if ever – in the context of corpus-based translation studies” (Baker, 1995).

As to research involving Arabic language in corpus linguistics, scholars and researchers need to build extensive database banks. In order to do so, texts from encyclopedias, Arabic literature, recent books and newspapers and magazines, or, both general and specialized, must be collected, classified by theme and scanned so as to build up a comprehensive corpora in various fields of knowledge containing parallel texts in English Arabic and French for example. Widely spread corpus linguistics software is currently capable of fulfilling these tasks. Once the texts in concerned languages are scanned, the software can classify them by theme and context. Thus, the translator can use this collection of input texts to help him/her select appropriate terms, collocations, acronyms, idioms, proverbs, abbreviations in the required language. In other words, while translating a specific text, the translator retrieves the collection of parallel texts

that relate to the text he/she is translating. The software used for corpus linguistics will help select expressions and terms in target language from parallel texts. This step can assist MT studies considerably. Whenever a text for translation is entered, the machine, which already stores a considerable amount of readable texts, can recognize that text in terms of context and theme and translate it accordingly.

## **MT: Towards Standardization of Terminology**

### ***Standardization: Definition***

A standard is "established by consensus and approved by a recognized body, that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context." (ISO/IEC Guide 2, 1996).

When applied to terminology, standardization leads to an agreement as to which technical terms will be used in a standard and specifies the characteristics by which the selected terms are to be understood. This provides standardizing groups with the tools to draft terminologically and conceptually consistent standards (ibid).

Terminology standards are generally *de jure* standards that are produced by a standardization or official body. They are the product of an open, well-organized standardization process based on formal production rules. They are equally accessible to all. De facto standards are those established by market share.

In the field of terminology, there are two different types of standards: technical standards, also known as specification standards, and terminology standards.

Technical standards in terminology are like any other technical standard. They lay down the characteristics or commonly agreed-upon specifications of a terminological product, service, process or system.

### ***Terminology Standards***

Terminology standards, on the other hand, are like measurement standards in that they are considered fundamental standards. They specify the commonly agreed-upon vocabulary to be used in a standard or family of standards. Terminology standards, instead of giving the specifications for a product, service or process, specify the preferred terms along with the definitions (specifications of the term) to be used to ensure a common understanding of the key concepts in a given standard.

Terminology standards may stand on their own and take the form of a separate standard containing all the terms and definitions used in a family of related standards or they may be linked to a specific standard and be incorporated in a section within a technical standard.<sup>1</sup>

Since coordination between the academies of Arabic language is at its minimal level in regard to terminology standardization, MT can play an important role in

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this field among Arab countries, and contribute in the process of standardization of Arabic technical terminology. Consistency can be reached through MT software if this technical terminology is input on line and widely accessed.

The following terms frequently used on the Internet pages can be good examples of a standardized terminology when translated automatically in any language over the net:

User name	اسم المستخدم
Password	كلمة المرور
Inbox	البريد الوارد
Outbox	البريد الصادر
Folder	ملف
Toolbar	شريط الأدوات
Junk mail	البريد غير اللازم

The Arab academy in general has not realized the need for such standardization. But some Arab and international companies have realized this and have been exerting tremendous efforts to serve the Arab needs in this context.

## RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that in order to get acceptable results in Arabic machine translation, Arabic software systems must abandon the strict word-for-word strategy and focus more on artificial intelligence applications.

There is a need to improve and expand the syntactic analyzers and the parsing devices used in the MT systems to include all the syntax rules of the Arabic language.

In order to improve the applicability of such rules, examples from the Arabic literature, encyclopedia, newspapers and magazines and other sources should be supplied.

Dictionaries and databases should be expanded and upgraded on regular basis.

The systems should be supported with databases about acronyms, proper names, titles and other important information to abandon easily avoidable mistakes.

In order to improve the ability of the systems to 'recognize' the pragmatic meanings, Artificial Intelligence strategies should be employed. In addition, rich databases and encyclopedias and the adoption of example-based strategies will

help in this aspect of translation, which is very complicated even for human translators.

MT system should adopt interactive translation strategy where human aid is supplied when necessary, either as pre-editing or post-editing during the process of translation.

Corpus linguistics is a promising domain for Machine Translation development and thus should be further researched and emphasized.

Governments, private and public institutions, academia, funding resources, individual and groups of intellectuals, translators, linguists, specialists in various fields of knowledge should all work hand in hand to raise standards of MT technology in the Arab World. Indeed, if well developed and explored the capabilities and potentials of MT, one can reach outstanding levels of assistance to humanity's needs and expectations for an effective global communication.

## CONCLUSION

Machine translation, as it is, the use of the computer to translate from one natural language into another, is a multi disciplinary field of research—it incorporates ideas from linguistics, computer science, artificial intelligence, statistics, mathematics, philosophy and many other fields. MT has developed to the point that it is an effective technology if used wisely. However, it still has significant and problematic limitations.

Machine translation technologies pose a range of theoretical, software, hardware, and even sociological problems that require the integration of technologies and improved interaction among developers and users. For these reasons, machine translation today is more than a linguistic problem. It is a communicative and informational challenge that demands a diverse range of expertise and resources. The major problems encountered during the MT process are in terms of semantic rather than syntactic features. They arise mostly due to the inadequate details of semantic representation and inefficient techniques adopted to represent the ambiguous situations and contextual variations. The most complex NL problems as related to MT are syntactic, lexical and semantic ambiguities and idiomatic expressions, pragmatics or language in context, ellipsis, substitution and anaphoric references.

With respect to the position of MT in the Arab world, a number of issues related to Arabic and the Arab world are problematic and still await solutions. Arabic today, on the threshold of a new knowledge society, faces severe challenges and a real crisis in terms of theorization, teaching, grammar, lexicography, usage, etc. The rise of information technology presents currently a real challenge to the Arabic language.

Arabic, as a Semitic language differs from European languages morphologically, syntactically and semantically. Most words are formed from trilateral roots which fall into specific patterns; a key morphological feature. The Arabic language is also difficult to deal with due to its right to left orientation. Because

the grammatical system of the Arabic language is based on a root-and-pattern structure, a challenging task facing the research community is to develop computer based algorithms and implementations that can process common every day use and a non-sanitized and non-novelized Arabic text.

Unfortunately, Arab countries are still lagging behind because of a lack of interest from the Arab financial sector in information projects. Feasibility studies are normally undertaken on a purely economic basis. Equally frustrating is the fact that there is no pan-Arab policy on Arabicization and on improving the Arabic language to better fit in the Information Age.

The future of MT in the Arab world is bright if we remain realistic. To obtain a translation of suitable quality, hybrid and innovative approaches must be relied upon. This includes using large and comprehensive dictionaries, a wide range of databases, an advanced translation memory and syntactic and morphological analyzers which rely on unexpended base of linguistic rules. Resolving ambiguities related to text in context is possible if we rely upon the interactive involvement of the user in what is known today as interactive systems. In these systems, the user makes final decisions and resolves persisting ambiguities since no program is able to integrate sufficient world knowledge and common sense to resolve automatically all of the ambiguities in any source text, for many years to come. Corpus linguistics is a promising domain for MT development and thus should be further researched and emphasized.

Research and academic institutes should naturally lead in the effort to tackle both the processing and evaluation of the Arabic language in this modern age. The Arab countries need to develop their own models of software systems on several levels. Some of these require on-the-job-training. There is a need to train language and translation graduates in computational linguistics and to retrain engineers to develop Arabic language software. There is also a need for a basic research to build programs to handle the special characteristics of Arabic on different levels (morphology, syntax and semantics).

Today, the Arabs have the opportunity to use the electronic tools and media to help in the assimilation of knowledge in no time. Using machine translation is essential if the Arabs are to compete in this globalized world. Future improvements in computer hardware and software and in language technology and engineering may create machine that can replace human translators. This is a dream not to be realized for years to come.

It is obvious then that the Arabs are not any more in a phase of time to debate whether they need to use MT systems, but rather to improve MT programs to better serve their needs.

This paper is one of a few studies conducted in the Arab world in the field of machine translation. It is but a step with miles to go. 🐾



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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.iso.ch/iso/en/aboutiso/introduction/index.html#one>.

**Rana Raddawi** PhD, is Assistant Professor of Translation and Communication Skills at the College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Language and Literature, American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

She can be reached at [rraddawi@aus.edu](mailto:rraddawi@aus.edu).

**Wessam Al-Assadi** is Adjunct Instructor of Arabic at the College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Language and Literature, American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

She can be reached at She can be reached at: American University of Sharjah, P.O. Box 26666, Sharjah-UAE.

# The Translation Profession in Australia: Viability or Survivability?

Ali Darwish

RMIT University

## ABSTRACT

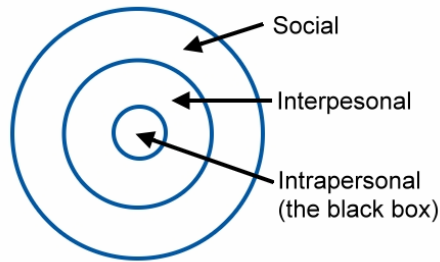
Australia has recently seen an upsurge in translation and interpreting activity on the back of successive waves of refugees and illegal immigrants from war-torn countries in the Middle East, Horn of Africa, Afghanistan, and South East Asia. Ensuing demands have resulted in a flourishing translation market and have turned translation into a lucrative business for many translation service providers, old and new. However, in an unregulated industry that is subject to seasonal fluctuation, most translation and interpreting work has been traditionally carried out by freelancers or “contractors” on behalf of these providers. In a fledgling profession still in the process of defining itself, sustainability and professional recognition become inseparably intertwined and the question of viability becomes a real one in an unstable market.

Translation is certainly a viable industry, as attested by the emergence of several new translation agencies and the sustainability of some of the old translation service providers around the country in the last decade. But is translation a viable profession? Given the current standards and practices that plague the second oldest profession<sup>1</sup> in human history, the answer must be no. Let me explain by touching upon some aspects of this ancient practice.

## SOCIAL TRANSACTION

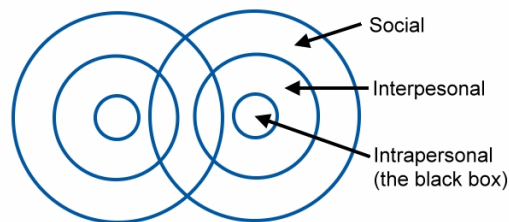
Peoples of the *so-called* Middle East have developed haggling into a social art form and bargaining into a social event. Driven by economic necessities and social interdependence, they have made haggling more than just “an interactive practice in which a shopper and seller produce a mutually created price for merchandise, each bringing judgments and values to bear in determining what an item is worth to them” (Hendon et al, 1996).

Let us consider haggling within the following socio-cultural transactional model of human interaction. Metaphorically, every individual has three concentric circles (or rings) of interaction: social, interpersonal and intra-personal (black box).



The social circle is where most general social interactions take place. Renting a house, talking to the school principal, buying a carton of milk from a cold store—are social transactions that take place in this circle. The interpersonal circle is where closer, more intimate and *less* transient interactions take place. Friendships, workplace relations etc, take place in this circle. The intrapersonal circle is the individual black box, where internal communication (silent soliloquy) takes place. It is here where the most intimate thoughts and darkest secrets are hidden.

When communicators, or actors engaged in the social transaction, enter each other's circles, the degree of overlap of these circles defines in a way the extent and level of communication, which mutually inclusively define the degree of overlap.



## FROM INTERACTION TO TRANSACTION

Within this model, a social transaction begins with communication interaction that involves interplay of transactional power and role definition, and ends with a transaction; "a mutual exchange of information or influence based on negotiation and reciprocity" (O'Sullivan et al, 1994: 318).

Most human interactions take place at the periphery of the social circle. This is culturally driven. Try to buy a soft drink from a convenience store. Take it out of the fridge, and go to the counter to pay for it. Depending on where you are and who you are, the extent of interaction will be determined by how much the culture permits of such interaction and overlap. This will determine eye contact, verbal exchanges, proximity and other social features, governed by the principle of reciprocity. Even in large organizations, again depending on the culture, the

interaction will vary, in most settings confined to the immediate group. Hierarchy and positions play a crucial role.

To people in the West, haggling is something foreign that belongs to another time, place or race, since haggling is somewhat an *Orientalist* trait and often found in the Arab world, Turkey, Greece and, to a lesser extent, in Pacific Asia and Latin America. It is a cultural characteristic of developing countries. As Hendon et al (1996) observe, for many people in these places “the social aspect of making their purchases is at least as important as any economic gains that may accrue” (122).

### CALLING THE SHOTS

In contrast, haggling in the West is restricted to certain situations, such as used car yard sales, Sunday markets, garage sales, vegetable markets, and the like. Even in these situations, the mechanisms and protocols are not quite the same. However, outside of these situations, haggling is frowned upon and is not generally considered a legitimate part of typical business dealings. Most commercial outlets have a fixed price policy in place. This stems from fair trading laws and regulations that are designed to ensure fair prices for goods and services. Discounts and special prices are usually controlled by the vendors through periodic sales for which people queue up in long files and to which they rush in a frenzied stampede as the store doors are opened to the public. Safe in the knowledge that they are not being *ripped off* during the year, they wait for that special occasion or end of season sale to get a bargain. This of course does not mean that bargaining of some kind does not take place. Is this your best price?

### THE BIZARRE BAZAAR

Yet despite the vast cultural differences, and the importance of pricing to professional recognition, translation still follows the bazaar model of haggling of ancient times and the dickering of developing countries.

This model of bargaining, which consists of a series of formal sequential steps, is found in many parts of the Middle East. “It starts with a preliminary period of discussing issues that go well beyond the transaction that is contemplated; subsequently focuses on establishing a personal relationship often with endless rounds coffee and tea; finally the actual bargaining aimed at a compromise position commences. The parties engage in the fine art of haggling, sometimes simply for the fun of it” (Hendon et al, 1996:57).

Not only are prices the heart of the economic system as Eraut (1994) confirms, but they are also at the center of professional recognition. They contribute to defining the boundaries and job classification of the profession. However, no other profession, it seems, not even the first oldest, is known to use this model in the twenty-first century. Astonishingly, while they have been desperately trying to have their status recognized as professionals, translators still accept to be remunerated on a cents per word basis rather than on **time**, **effort** and **expertise**,

as true professionals of full-fledged, respected professions are normally rewarded. This vegetable market mentality has plagued the translation profession for centuries and is still largely responsible today for the mercenary nature of freelance work.

### WORDS SHOULD BE WEIGHED, NOT COUNTED!

This outdated diminutive approach to translation, which has its roots in regarding translation as a corollary to general writing that requires basic word manipulation skills and to the idea of the scribe or wordsmith being “rewarded” for the number of words, is today stunting the professionalization process of the translation profession. The old Yiddish witty saying “*Words should be weighed, not counted!*” is perhaps the earliest documented comment on this sad state of affairs that remains with us to the present day.

Most professions incorporate essential tasks and activities into their charges and bill their clients for time, effort and expertise. Accountants for example, do not charge for calculating a balance sheet, rather for the activities involved from the time they pull the client’s file out of the cabinet, the time they spend researching or talking on the phone to the client and other relevant persons, to the time they prepare the paperwork and invoice. The client is presented with an itemized bill.

In contrast, translators spend a great deal of time and effort talking to the agency (when permitted), researching, and making free-of-charge amendments and maintenance work on request. These so-called timewasters are unpaid work. Not only that, translation work that includes tables, graphics and other artwork, is not factored into the fees these agencies offer, nor are the various tasks that make up the translation production process: pre-translation, translation and post-translation tasks.

A unique translation practices study conducted in 1986 by Digital Equipment Corporation (Smith and Teldesley, 1986) showed the following timewasters in the translator’s work.

Time Wasters	Frequency
Terminology research	77
Problems with original text	43
Typing	27
Formatting/artwork	20
Computer related tasks	20
Getting background information	16
Handling updates	8
Proofreading	6
Indexing	2

## TRANSLATION WATCH QUARTERLY

The situation today is not any different despite the technological advances and computer-aided translation and terminology management tools such as Trados, Déjà Vu, Transuite, Transit and SDLX, becoming more easily accessible and more efficient in some languages, taking away some of the drudgery of repetitive work. Terminology research and problems with the original text remain high on the list of timewasters.

### A PROFESSION PERFORCE

The reason for this kind of backward practice and complaisance lies in the translators' lack of awareness of the correlation between the mode of remuneration and professional status on the one hand and their lack of any real clout in the marketplace on the other. While their fellow interpreters have been able to demonstrate some influence in the market forcing the industry to reconsider their work conditions, translators are still unable to exert the same kind of influence. A *Standards of Practice for Interpreters: An Environmental Scan* study conducted by Marjory Bancroft in March 2004, has concluded that "certainly going on strike sends a professional message" to the industry and society at large. The interpreters' industrial action in Victoria in 2003<sup>2</sup> drove the message home to the translation industry about the market value of interpreters.



However, by its nature, translation is a solitary, individualistic craft. Usually, translators work as freelancers, alone and mostly from home, with minimal contact with other translators. Furthermore, in the absence of language-specific translators associations, or language-specific interest groups in the main professional body of translators and interpreters (apart from online language forums), the sense of individualism is further reinforced and any organized action for whatever purpose is not forthcoming.

### SWEATSHOP OR SAUNA?

For many practitioners, translation is not the profession of choice, rather a profession perforce. The majority of translators in Australia are migrants or second generation Australians of migrant parent. Most of these translators have

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entered the profession because their overseas qualifications are not readily recognized, if ever, by the powers to be. Engineers, doctors, lawyers, etc have found it extremely difficult to find employment in their original areas of specialization, within traditionally demarcated, quota-based systems, and a stratified marketplace, and have found in translation a way to earn a living to avoid the dole queue. For these people translation begins as an interim solution to a problem and becomes a permanent vocation. Lack of professional training in translation standards and practices and harsh economic realities drive most of these practitioners to compete for translation jobs in a money-hungry industry that encourages cutthroat practices. In some languages, these practitioners have been willing to accept as low as three cents per word. The more words you translate, the more money you make. So how many words must one translate to earn a decent living?

Even at the current rate of \$14-16 per 100 words offered by major agencies, translation cannot be a viable profession. The word count of most translation work is often too low to ensure an economically viable regular income. In an industry where a pet culture has taken hold of most business transactions, large jobs are normally given to a handful few favored “translators” routinely and systematically. Any surplus that those favorites cannot handle is passed over by the agencies or subcontracted by these pets, to other translators unbeknown to the commissioning agencies—and no one is any the wiser until dodgy transactions start to show in the often poor quality of translations. However, such exposure is very rare as no one really pays too much attention to translations churned out for the NESB<sup>3</sup> population.

The following table shows pre-tax earnings estimates of translators working nonstop five days a week, four weeks a months and fifty weeks per year. For the reasons already stated, such daily output is not realistic or sustainable throughout the week, month or year. It is subject to workload and productivity variations and lost time.

Daily word count @ \$16 per 100 words	Daily income	Weekly income	Monthly income	Annual income (50 weeks)
1,000	\$160	\$800	\$3,200	\$40,000
3,000	\$480	\$2,400	\$9,600	\$120,000
4,000	\$640	\$3,200	\$12,800	\$160,000
6,000	\$960	\$4,800	\$19,200	\$240,000

### Estimated pre-tax earnings

Freelance translators do not enjoy annual leave, sick leave or superannuation benefits.

## THE BEEHIVE MODEL

In addition, some agencies treat translators with contempt and condescension. They are seen as the worker bees in a beehive—dispensable and replaceable. In the late eighties and mid nineties, fewer translators, interpreters and agencies existed and more work was available. Today, there is a large contingent of translators and interpreters and less work to go around. Consequently, many translators in both high and low demand languages have adopted a generalist approach to translation work; translating any work in any knowledge domain: from agriculture to Zen. Unlike their European and American counterparts, who could afford to specialize and micro-specialize in different streams, Australian translators, with few exceptions such as Japanese and Chinese, cannot afford to work exclusively in specific areas. It is not an economically viable option for instance to specialize solely in legal or medical translation. The competition is too high and the workload is too low.

Furthermore, while multi-specialization is a welcome development in the profession, specialist training and structured development programs for translators remain deficient. Where such programs are available, they are generally half-baked, micro-waved solutions that provide no more than scanty translations in context and hodgepodge lists of “specialized” terminology, provided either by professionals who are not usually aware of the specific needs of translators or by translation teachers who are not fully specialized.

In a study commissioned by Deakin University’s Centre for Research and Development in Interpreting and Translating, Athansiadis and Turner (1994) showed that “all agencies found it difficult, due to a lack of training courses in the languages of lesser demand and in some cases because of a lack of testing, to recruit suitable applicants for these languages” (22), and revealed obvious dissatisfaction with the professional competence of translators and “a lack of I/T training was often evident in the conduct of I/T practitioners, who appeared to display a poor sense of ethics and weak I/T skills” (24). The study recommended expanding the I/T program to include community languages hitherto not served adequately. Notwithstanding, a sharp decline in the number of courses offered in I/T occurred in the nineties, due to cutbacks and rationalization policies, despite studies of this nature and consultations with community interest groups calling for more I/T training.

Renewed market demands towards the end of the nineties spurred certain educational institutions to resume I/T training courses. However, the ensuing mass production of accredited translators by TAFE and other translation and interpreting training providers in the last six years has caused a glut in the market. The commercialization and *productization* of these training courses tailored for the industry and not the profession has meant less and less work is available for everybody and more and more worker bees are available to the translation industry to pick and choose from. Consequently, the potential of developing a viable profession has been somewhat diminished.



## WHY PAY THEM MORE IF WE CAN PAY THEM LESS?

The ensuing nimety of translators has given the I/T industry a sense of power, creating an arrogant, dismissive and suspicious culture at the grassroots and all the way to the top at some of these agencies—heaven help those who are not submissive and compliant enough. These agencies regard translators as nothing more than worker bees and soldier ants, except for the privileged few. Translators working for these agencies do not feel valued and trusted. Patronizing approaches, telephone call filtering and screening techniques (the oldest trick in the book), elimination of face-to-face interactions, and technology-based practices such as online booking and automatic assignment and allocation of jobs with no or barely any consultation with the translators, are further pushing the translators outside the periphery of the social ring of communication described at the beginning of this article and obviously creating a sense of alienation, devaluation and exploitation.

Generally, first-line management is a problem area in Australia. Most managers are often not equipped to manage people and projects, and many managers rise from the ranks of front-line, *coal-face* employees and are often chosen for their technical skills rather than managerial competencies (Duffield, 1992). Most do not receive adequate on-the-job managerial training. Office politics, favoritism, sham interviews, bogus job ads, earmarking, “prearranged marriages”, and back-door promotions and recruitment, reminiscent of condemned third-world country practices, play a crucial role in selecting and promoting managers and other employees.

Consequently, translation project management at these agencies is confined to basic job administration of booking translators in several languages, meting out the jobs to these translators and providing basic instructions, such as “please translate exactly per original”, “as original layout”, “Please keep the same format as the original and return by email as a PDF”, “certification required”, and so on. While the translators are seen as outsiders, they are also expected to have the ability to unravel the mysteries of defective text and cryptic documents produced by self-centered organizations that do not seem to have the slightest idea about translation work. Nonstandard acronyms and abbreviations, ambiguous references and substandard writing styles, which are all symptoms of shoddy work, are dumped on the translator who is expected to produce meaningful translations. It does not matter how experienced and resourceful a translator may be, such original defects are additional distractions and timewasters that go unnoticed by untrained job commissioners who lack basic project management skills.

While perhaps it is not the job of the originators of text to provide a clear glossary of terms, acronyms and abbreviations with the text, however substandard such practice may be, it is certainly the job of the agency commissioning the translators to provide such a glossary to ensure clarity and consistency within each document, and across languages. It is also the responsibility of the agency to provide clear essential translation specifications,

not just a one-liner instruction, to enable the translator to perform a relevant analysis within a Translation Development Life Cycle (TDLC). A TDLC would make a difference between basic job administration and professional project management.

Unfortunately, many agencies do not have the skills in or understanding of TDLC and translation development requirements. Their employees come from areas unrelated to translation and if they ever do, their exposure is largely limited to what they have acquired locally. That is why the bazaar model has been a convenient way of doing business despite the technological gadgetry these agencies now use. Similarly, most home-trained translators are equally unaware of these methods and techniques; they jump into the translation job without due planning and analysis, and they treat the translation process as an act of copy translating of the original text often without even reading the entire text first.

Moreover, vague and incomplete translation requirements, arbitrary price fixing that varies with the job and temperament of whoever is in charge, and amateurish quality assurance practices that are observed—are all symptoms of an industry gone awry! In its drive for “improving the standards of performance” of these foot soldiers, the industry may have unwittingly driven a nail into the coffin of the translation profession. Professional knowledge has not yet translated into streamlined professional practices and standards across the board.

### **SOMETHING’S GOTTA GIVE!**

For some others, translation provides additional pocket money. Low-paid or part-time, casual or sessional bilingual teachers, social welfare workers, and other bilinguals do translation work to earn extra money and in most cases can afford to accept minimal workloads. However, for full-time translators, who have chosen or fallen into translation as a profession, relying on low workloads and solely on one agency for a decent level of translation work is not enough, and many translators register with several agencies and most of them combine translation and interpreting to supplement their income. With access to the Internet, some translators have turned to the international translation market for work— another aspect of globalization. More often, these endeavors are not successful and are fraught with problems—bad payers, con artists and shifty operators. In some cases, international work can be much more rewarding than local work. Time zone differences, lower exchange rates and the impressive range of languages make Australia an attractive destination for American and European international translation and other companies. However, Australian translators could not compete with the developing countries of the Middle East, Latin America and South East Asia, where labour is relatively cheaper and the currency lower.



Notwithstanding, a round-the-clock modus operandi is adopted, which is detrimental to health and life quality of these breadwinners and to the quality of their work. Given the seasonal fluctuation of most translation work, these translators are in peak times inundated with work from several agencies. Unable to cope with the sudden increase in the workload, they subcontract some of it to other translators. In some instances, the whole affair turns into a family venture, where the work is meted out to family members to do. Time permitting, the finished product may be submitted to proofreading and reviews. More often however, such is not the case.

It is said that interpreters<sup>4</sup> never reach retirement age or gracefully walk into the sunset. With translators, something has got to give eventually. So is translation a viable profession? So long as translation work remains freelance, performed as a stopgap measure, and controlled by an unregulated industry, translation will never be a profession. 🐼

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Some researchers argue that translation is the *third* oldest profession right after prostitution and spying. See *The Third Oldest Profession* by James Marcus. Amazon.com.

<sup>2</sup> See Butcher, S (2003). *Interpreters Want Action to Translate into More Pay*. The Age, Wednesday, April 2, 2003. [www.theage.com.au](http://www.theage.com.au).

<sup>3</sup> Non-English Speaking Background.

<sup>4</sup> Said of simultaneous conference interpreters.

**Ali Darwish** is a technical communication, translation and knowledge management consultant with thirty years of experience. He has held positions in information technology, education, and knowledge transfer in the United Kingdom, the Middle East, and Australia. He has taught translation and interpreting theory and practice, discourse studies, and professional ethics at Australian universities for 12 years and has authored several books on translation and cross-cultural and technical communication. He holds an MA in Translation from Salford University (1988), a Postgraduate Diploma in Translation, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Information Management. Ali is founder and director of the Translation Standards Institute and founding editor of Translation Watch Quarterly.

He can be reached at [darwish@surf.net.au](mailto:darwish@surf.net.au).

# Translation of Traditional Chinese Medicine: Problems and Solutions Formula Names as a Case Study

Duoxiu Qian

Department of Foreign Languages  
Beihang University, Beijing, China.

## ABSTRACT

Chinese medicine has gained popularity as an alternative medicine in the West in recent years. Though many translations have been done in this area, many problems may hinder the growing acceptance of it. This case study illustrates such problems as lack of linguistic accuracy and standardization in *The Pharmacopoeia of the People's Republic of China* (2000) and suggests some systematic methods in translating the names of Chinese medicine contained in the first volume of it. It is hoped that through such a systematic improvement, translations done in this area will become more accurate linguistically and acceptable culturally.

## A HISTORICAL SKETCH

Chinese medicine is becoming more and more popular in Europe, North America and other regions and earns billions of dollars for China annually in the global market (Wu, 2001). This inevitably involves translation from Chinese into other languages.

Translation of Chinese medicine into Western languages has had a long history. Among the Jesuit missionaries who came to China in the Ming and Qing Dynasties (1400-1900), some were devoted to the study of Chinese medicine and thus became precursors in its westward transmission. Later, Chinese medicine was brought to the West through the Arabians. From 1640 to 1899, there were already works on Chinese medicine in many European languages and the number of works translated is about 156. Of these, 63 are works on acupuncture and 54 are into English (Li, 1997). Most of the translators then were European missionaries. An example is *The Compendium of Materia Medica* by Li Shizhen (1518-1593), which was translated into both French and English in the eighteenth century. From 1900 onwards, the translation and study of Chinese medicine has become a regular activity in the West and interchanges between East and West have been frequent. Of all the important figures during this period, Joseph Needham is worth special mention. There is a section on Chinese acupuncture in his influential *Science and Civilization in China*, which

systematically introduces the development of both natural and social sciences in China.

But it was only in the second half of the twentieth century that Chinese Medicine began to attract the real attention of the West. This can be explained partly by the natural and holistic qualities seen to be lacking in Western medicine, which is over-specialized and depends too much on antibiotics at the cost of human's natural resistance to diseases. Another reason for this growing popularity is the fact that, ever since the founding of the People's Republic of China, translation of Chinese medicine, like all other branches of knowledge of Chinese characteristics, has been done in a well-organized way under the supervision of the government (Qian, 2002; Qian et al, 2003). By the mid-1990s, about 300 works had been translated into foreign languages, 190 of which were into English (Wang et al, 2000). Translators of these works are mainly China-based, though there are also some westerners outside engaged in this field. However, it is a pity that problems in the translations, such as lack of standardization, linguistic inaccuracy, terminological inconsistency, etc., have been detrimental to the growing acceptance it now gets as an alternative medicine in the West.

In this case study, major problems in the translation of Chinese medicine will be examined and solutions to them will be suggested in some detail.

## **STANDARDIZATION IN TRANSLATING CHINESE MEDICINE**

The first major problem in the translation of Chinese medicine is standardization.

The importance of the standardization of terms in specialized fields in one or more languages has partly led to the emergence of a new academic discipline: terminology. Terms in Chinese medicine have been unified largely in the Chinese original, but far less so in other languages, especially in English, the language into which most Chinese medicine texts are rendered.

However, it is not an easy task to translate terms indigenous to one culture into a distant culture, let alone the standardizing of them. Individual efforts have been many. For example, in China, various dictionaries have been published in order to provide translations of Chinese medical terms since the 1980s. So far, there are more than 20 such works available in the domestic market.

In the West, there have been similar individual efforts, such as Porkert (1974), Unschuld (1985, 1986), Wiseman and Boss (1990), Wiseman and Feng (1998), etc. Based on the linguistic analysis of the two languages, translation theories and practice, their translations are well known for their systematic approach towards translation and standardization. Such translations, with little doubt, are well received and have influenced the teaching and research of Chinese medicine in the West.

Collective efforts have also been made both inside and outside China. The World Health Organization approved of the internationalized nomenclature of acupoints in late 1980s, while a Committee on the Translation of Chinese Medicine was set up by the Association of Chinese Medicine of China in 1996.

Since such efforts are from different perspectives, it is no surprise that disagreements and even disputes exist. So the problem here is that if every translator has his own way to translate Chinese medicine, how can we expect to build up a unified database for the practitioners and other users in the communication of ideas? And how can we expect it to become an established subject of study in the West?

However, even though it is still impossible to standardize the translation of terms in Chinese medicine, it is worthwhile to put forward some constructive suggestions to make the translation of it more accurate linguistically and acceptable culturally. This will be illustrated in the following case study.

### **SOME WORDS ON THE PHARMACOPOEIA (2000)**

A representative example to demonstrate the above-mentioned problems is *The Pharmacopoeia of the People's Republic of China* (2000, the *Pharmacopoeia* hereafter), which is the fourth edition of the English translation of the Chinese version and product of collective effort of 71 people, including both medical experts and translators. As a national standard in the description and production of medicine, it has been commissioned by the Ministry of Health and published by the official Chemistry Publishing House. It consists of 2691 monographs of drugs, published in two volumes. Volume 1 has 992 monographs of Chinese crude drugs (534 kinds) and traditional Chinese patent medicines (458 kinds), while Volume 2 has 1699 monographs of chemical drugs, antibiotics, biochemicals, radio-pharmaceuticals and biological products.

Of special interest to translators from Chinese into English here is the first volume, since the second one deals with modern western medicine exclusively and the target readers in the West will not have too many difficulties in the English translation.

This paper will take a closer look at the first volume of the *Pharmacopoeia* and try to find out, despite the three previous editions published in 1988, 1992, 1997, respectively, what is still lacking in this fourth edition, patent medicines in particular.

### **Problems in the Translation of Formula Names**

Since most target customers of Chinese medicine are supposed to be interested mainly in the name of the medicine, its Action (Function), Indications, and Usage and dosage, these are selected for the present case study.

When comparing carefully these parts in the translation with their corresponding parts in the original Chinese version, we notice that the first weakness in the *Pharmacopoeia* is its low linguistic accuracy. For example, there are omissions

and additions of information in 185 and 195 places, respectively, 78 of all 2,408 word types are misspelt, while mistakes in word choice, part of speech, non-finite verbs, modal verbs, voice and mood, tense and aspect, person and number, articles, placement of modifiers, irregular past participles, etc., are numerous. The second serious weakness is its terminological inconsistency, where one term in the original is rendered with different expressions in the translation.

Besides the above-mentioned weaknesses, the most serious problem lies in the translation of the names of the medicine. Of all the 458 Chinese patent medicines, only 38 have Latin names, with Chinese Pinyin and/or popular English names. The rest are only transliterated in most cases, consisting of Pinyin and the type of the medicine, together with the original Chinese characters. But it is apparent that such translations as Angong Niu Huang Pills (安宫牛黄丸), Angong Niu Huang Powder (安宫牛黄散), Guanxin Danshen Tablets (冠心丹参片), Goupi Plaster (狗皮膏), Qibao Meiran Granules (七宝美髯颗粒), etc, cannot tell the readers anything but that they are some types of medicine. Therefore, the acceptability of the translation is undoubtedly rather affected.

### **Suggestions for Improving the Translation of Formula Names**

Linguistic accuracy in the translation can be improved by human translators, with the help of technological tools, such as the grammar checker, search and replace tools provided by Microsoft Word and the translation memory system. But the translation of medicine names has to be done with greater care to guarantee the acceptability of the medicine.

Though the approach of Wiseman and his colleagues (Wiseman and Boss, 1990; Wiseman, 1996; Wiseman and Feng, 1998) towards the explanation and description can be reliably referred to and has been acclaimed by many in the West, it is not free from weaknesses in the fact that it is too source-oriented and not very user-friendly in the translation of medicine names, such as Carriage-halting Pill for Zhu Che Wan (驻车丸), Left-running Pill for Zuo Jin Wan (左金丸), etc. So some target-oriented references should be used in combination in order to reach a compromise somehow to produce a more understandable and accurate rendition. Dictionaries of this approach include Yuan et al (1997), Zhang et al (1995), etc. that are published in Mainland China.

With these terminological references, the improvement can be made in the following ways.

First, transliteration is to be replaced by a meaning-based translation, which either summarizes the major function of the medicine, or presents the dominant ingredient in its Latin name in correspondence with the original. Sometimes a combined method may be adopted to indicate both the function and dominant ingredient in the medicine, again based on the original.



Here, both function and linguistic accuracy should be considered in order to make the translation comprehensible and accurate. For example, “Bezoare Pills for Resurrection” is better than “Angong Niu Huang Pills” (安宫牛黄丸), and “Semen Biotae Tonic Pills for Mindeasing” better than “Baizi Yangxin Pills” (柏子养心丸) in the fact that the former can provide more intelligible and accurate information than the latter.

Secondly, both equivalence of referential meaning and cultural acceptability should be taken into consideration when a term indigenous to the original culture is translated into the target language. As is mentioned above, there are generally three commonly-adopted ways: (1) the source-oriented method, which is foreignization, for example, Niu Huang Jie Du Wan (for 牛黄解毒丸), Aifu Nuangong Wan (for 艾附暖宫丸); (2) the target-oriented method, which is domestication, for example, Colla Corii Asini (for 阿胶), Colla Cornus Cervi (鹿角胶); and (3) the hybrid method, which takes both meaning and acceptability into account, for example, Granules for Stone-Expelling (for 排石颗粒), Pills for Spleen Fortifying (for 健脾丸).

Since medical translation is not like literary translation, which permits a certain degree of either foreignization or domestication for aesthetic, political or other purposes, the last approach, that is, the hybrid method, should be preferred in translating Chinese medicine. An analysis of the original medicine names shows that they are all at phrasal level and of some regular patterns in their structure and could be translated in the following ways.

146 medicines, about 32 percent of the total 458, are composed of “crude drug(s) + type of medicine”, for example Dai Ge San (黛蛤散), Bing Peng San (冰硼散), etc. Such names could be translated directly as Indigo and Gekko Powder and Borneol and Borax Powder, respectively.

94 medicines, about 21 percent of the total 458, are composed of “crude drug(s) + Verbal Phrase indicating the function+ type of medicine”, for example “Ai Fu Nuan Gong Wan” (艾附暖宫丸), “An Gong Niu Huang Wan” (安宫牛黄丸), etc. Such names could be translated as “Argyi and Nutgrass Flatsedge Pill for Warming Womb” and “Bezoare Pill for Resurrection”, respectively, to keep the major ingredient(s) and the major function simultaneously.

101 medicines, about 22 percent of the total 458, are composed of “Verbal Phrase indicating the function+ type of medicine”, for example “An Shen Bu Xin Wan” (安神补心丸), “An Wei Pian” (安胃片), etc. Such names could be translated as “Pills for Quieting Spirit and Nourishing Heart”, and “Tablet for Comforting Stomach”, respectively.

37 medicines, about 8 percent of the total, are composed of “Disease + type of medicine”, for example, “Die Da Wan” (跌打丸), “Bai Dai Wan” (白带丸), etc. Such names could be translated as “Pills for Traumatic Injuries” and “Pills for Leukorrhea”, respectively.

80 medicines, about 17 percent of the total, are of various types and can be put under the general category of “Adjective + type of medicine”, for example “Lu Si Ka Wan” (鹭鸶咯丸), “Liu Ying Wan” (六应丸), etc. Such names could be translated as “Pills for Whooping Cough” and “Pills for Anti-inflammation”, respectively.

Altogether, there are five major types of phrasal structures of the medicine name, the translation of which should follow the suggested procedure mentioned above in order to have the major function and/or ingredients of the medicine summarized in a very concise way.

After this, all the 458 medicine names could be translated in a systematic way and the original meaning and function are kept in the meantime. The final result, without doubt, is a better translation than the original transliteration or the source-oriented translation and therefore enjoys a higher degree of accuracy and acceptability.

## CONCLUSION

In the last two decades, with the implementation of the opening up policy in Mainland China Mainland, translation of Chinese medicine has been done extensively in order to promote international cooperation and exchange in this field, as is indicated in the Preface of the *Pharmacopoeia*.

In studying and improving the English translations of Chinese medicine, it has been realized that an ideal translation is unattainable even in science and technology. A high quality translation implies that the translator should be translationally, technically and linguistically competent. If a single person cannot meet all the requirements, it is better for him/her to collaborate with experts in the specific field. Only in this way can the translation meet the basic requirement of translation of scientific and technical texts, that is, the accurate transfer of information in an acceptable manner. Only when this is achieved can other issues, such as terminological consistency and intelligibility, be further improved.

When the enormous market of Traditional Chinese Medicine and the great potentials for business are taken into consideration, it is hoped that the problems pointed out in this paper and the solutions suggested here could help shed some light on the translation in this specific field. 🐼

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**Duoxiu Qian** is an associate professor at the Department of Foreign Languages, Beihang University, Beijing. Her research interests include translation theory and practice, translation and technology, and teaching English as a second language.

She can be reached at [qianduoxiu@yahoo.com.cn](mailto:qianduoxiu@yahoo.com.cn).

Editor's Choice

## Working with Interpreters

*An Interactive Training Kit*

As part of its Good Corporate Citizen Program, VITS LanguageLink has recently released an interactive training CD-ROM titled *Working with Interpreters*. This latest undertaking by VITS aims to promote greater awareness of the role of the interpreter, the need for professional services and greater appreciation for the specialist skills provided by professional interpreters and translators.



The CD-ROM comes with a nicely designed handbook that provides supporting information about the role of the interpreter, accreditation of interpreters and translators, identifying the need for an interpreter, working with an interpreter to achieve maximum results, working with a telephone interpreter, code of ethics, and countries and languages spoken.

The CD-ROM itself is an audio-visual interactive tool. Elegantly designed with a cool light-blue background and well balanced, eye candy neutral colours, the CD's Graphical User Interface (GUI) is ease to run and use. The script is clear, crisp, and elegantly read by a female narrator.

The CD consists of thirteen sections. The *Welcome to VITS LanguageLink* introduces the training session by highlighting the importance of language and communication skills in dealing with legal, health, and procedural issues. It reminds us that many Australians, including some Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, do not speak English as their first language and their English skills can easily deteriorate when faced with such complex issues, especially under stressful circumstances. "For many professionals the need to work with interpreters may appear to be cumbersome and time consuming", but we are reassured that "with appropriate training on how to work with professional interpreters, the task can alter from a burden into productive interaction". The reference to "professional interpreters" is an important shift in the paradigm. For quite some time now, lawyers, doctors, and other specialists have been referred to as "professionals" and interpreters as "interpreters" both in the real world and in academic and professional training of interpreters. In the quest for professional recognition, a change in the terminology of how interpreters refer to

themselves and how other professionals refer to them is the first step towards changing the culture of separation and non-affiliation to a fully recognized professional group.

One point to make here, since this section is about the training kit itself, a more indicative title might be *Welcome to Working with Interpreters*.

The interactive exercises include an imaginary non-English speaking world, *Lingua World*, where you find yourself at the airport in a foreign country trying to complete forms in another language you do not understand. You could be signing your life away! This is a clever way to bring home the message about the crucial and sometimes life-saving role of the interpreter.

In the rest of the sections, video clips illustrate liaison-interpreting situations – in natural language and in AUSLAN (Australian sign language). These highlight important aspects of liaison interpreting and pitfalls of using the services of unqualified interpreters. Section 7 *The BYO Interpreter* warns against the risks of resorting to non-professional interpreters.

*“Persons who need to communicate with people with whom they do not share a common language, often have to employ other resources or skills to assist them in conveying their message, sometimes they even rely on what we refer to as a BYO interpreter.”*

It is surprising in a professional training session to see emotive and imprecise terms such as *BYO interpreters*. It certainly does not serve the profession to be condescending in its assertion of its own superiority. Such emotive *them and us* terms are best left to chitchat forums and “water fountain” discussions.

In defining the Professional Interpreter, the CD makes the assertion that “all interpreters must be qualified and accredited because you want someone who will interpret information accurately and objectively [...]. It’s always recommended that you ask the interpreter about their accreditation level, after all, it’s your guarantee that the right person is doing the job [...]. Make sure the interpreter is qualified and accredited”.

However, this simple assertion lacks validity. Not all accredited interpreters are qualified, and not all non-accredited qualified interpreters are unprofessional. Accreditation is no guarantee. It lacks the support of criteria and empirically grounded data.

On the technical side, one minor failing of the natural language video-clip example is that while it is supposed to illustrate liaison interpreting, quasi-simultaneous interpreting is used instead. The producers explain the reasons for this choice in section 8 of the CD:

## TRANSLATION WATCH QUARTERLY

*“For time efficiency in this video clip the voices were overlaid, in community based interpreting settings consecutive interpreting is most commonly used, where the interpreter will interpret after each person has spoken”.*

This is rather disappointing considering the training purpose of this interactive kit. However, the rest of valuable information and instructions make up for this weakness. Less noticeable are the typing errors, such as *principals* instead of *principles*, as well as the occasional run-on sentences. Since the CD is an audio-visual medium, these minor irritations fade out in the clarity of the voice message.



The design and information organization of the CD allow you to skip sections, but this is highly not recommended since the most exciting aspect of this CD is the journey into the unexpected. Perhaps once you have gone through it, you can skip and skim to find the information you need. This is certainly not a one-off presentation you watch and forget about. There will be times when you will need to refer back to the CD for valuable hints and tips on how to work with interpreters and share the information with colleagues and employees. 🐼

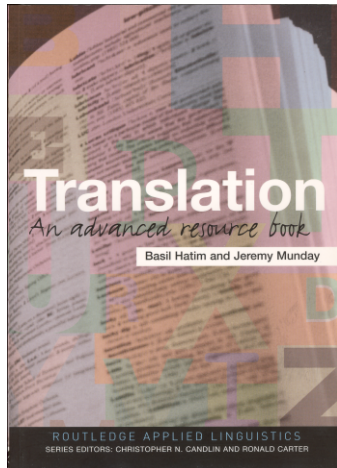
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Book Review

# Translation: An Advanced Resource Book

Book Review by Ali Darwish

12 April 2005



Translation: An Advanced Resource Book

Basil Hatim and Jeremy Munday

London: Routledge, 2004. 373 pp. 17.8 cm x 24.7 cm

“Can translation be taught” is a question that haunts the minds and hearts of sincere translation educators every time they front a classroom full of students of varying abilities, interests and achievement levels. What is the best methodology for teaching translation? What theoretical framework is most suited to the learning needs of such translation students? What are the best ways to develop identified key competencies in translation students? These are some of the many questions raised by the notion of translation teachability, which leaves many a seasoned teacher frustrated by the misgivings of students, who are more often than not already practising professionals, about the credibility of theoretical models.

Capturing this sense of vulnerability, Jeannie M. Woods (2001) recounts in *The Barefoot Teacher*: “as a child I had a recurring nightmare: I was standing alone, without any shoes, on the steps of my elementary school. Being barefoot, I could not walk far, and I felt vulnerable and afraid of being ridiculed. More than forty years later, I had to confront that childhood fear once more, as I found myself barefoot at school both literally and figuratively. But this time I was teaching theater in Taiwan...”

In recent years, the focus in translation studies has gradually shifted from examining the translation phenomenon per se to exploring ways of teaching translation that go beyond traditional second language teaching methods and contrastive analysis of texts. There are now several books dealing directly or indirectly with aspects of translator education that have managed to link successfully theory to practice. The present book falls into this category.

## TRANSLATION WATCH QUARTERLY

In this latest publication, world-renowned translation scholar Professor Basil Hatim teams up with Dr Jeremy Munday, a distinguished scholar in his own right, to present a structured and programmatic framework for teaching translation. The book is an advanced resource book “designed for use by readers from any language background who have an advanced level of English, whether or not they are native speakers”. “It attempts to investigate both the practice and the theory of translation in an accessible and systematic way”. (pp xvii -xviii)

There are no chapters as such in this well written and very interesting book. It rather consists of three major sections: *A. Introduction*, *B. Extension* and *C. Exploration*, with each section comprising fourteen corresponding units dealing with topics old, current and new in translation studies today.

Unit 1: What is translation?

Unit 2: Translation strategies

Unit 3: The unit of translation

Unit 4: Translation shifts

Unit 5: The analysis of meaning

Unit 6: Dynamic equivalence and the receptor of meaning

Unit 7: Textual pragmatics and equivalence

Unit 8: Translation and relevance

Unit 9: Text type in translation

Unit 10: Text register in translation

Unit 11: Text, genre and discourse shifts in translation

Unit 12: Agents of power in translation

Unit 13: Ideology and translation

Unit 14: Translation in the information technology era

Explaining this approach, the authors assert that it allows the book to be read either linearly from beginning to end or thematically through a unit from introduction to extension to exploration.

Following a modular approach to information presentation, each unit consists of introductory paragraphs, tasks, examples and concept boxes. However, this pattern is not strictly adhered to across the three sections, and the thread is sometimes broken rendering the book too cumbersome to navigate repeatedly or quickly. For example, the concept boxes in Section A are replaced with reflection boxes in Section B, without alerting the reader to this shift in the *How to Use this Book* section. This shift tends to disrupt the reader's frame of expectation. Perhaps a graphic map or flowchart at the beginning of each section would make the book easier to navigate. In certain sections of the book, the tasks are stacked one after the other sometimes without introductory text to anchor



each task. This is further complicated by the *before you read* and *as you read* instructions used specifically in Section C, although they can be useful triggers of critical thinking and reflection about each topic.

Some of the tasks are not self-contained. The reader is forced to *flip-flop* between sections to complete the tasks. For example, to complete Task B4.2.2 *How does Vinay and Darblent's definition of literal translation fit with the definition given in Section A, Unit 2?* the reader must first go to section A, Unit 2. Moreover, the use of numeric labels for units, examples and tasks and for cross-references instead of explicit descriptors weakens the frame of reference and navigability.

Reader aids such as margin icons that combine mutually exclusive pictorial and textual elements are used inconsistently for tasks and summaries across the sections, and the spatial arrangements and signposts created by the text design do not provide an efficient search, locate and retrieve (SLR) mechanism for easy access to the contents of each section. Too many features create problems of accessibility and reference. The book's internal organization is confusing. The structure of the sections does not map well to the scheme of the book making the sections' information schema less transparent to the reader.

All the same, these are somewhat surmountable obstacles to the determined student; the approach remains effective in presenting the information modularly, and the richness of the content compensates for these irritations of the form.

The authors conclude the book with a brief summary of their findings. The epilogue *Developing Words and Cultures – Some Concluding Remarks* gives the reader some insight into the process of discovery the authors went through in researching and consolidating their investigation. It highlights the challenge for Translation Studies to encompass a wide range of approaches and integrate them into a meaningful framework. In arguing for their framework, the authors hope that the book "will give translators and new researchers not only the tools to evaluate translation but also the enthusiasm to research new ideas and data related to a complex linguistic, socio-cultural and ideological practice".

Undoubtedly, there is a serious shortage of good practical references on translation that address the needs of students, teachers and practitioners, despite the numerous publications about translation and the renewed zeal in translation studies in the last decade or two. Strangely, educational institutions continue to use old textbooks on their translation programs. Some of these textbooks were originally doctoral theses that did not quite make the cut into proper practical guides or educational textbooks, leaving loose ends and many questions unanswered. Other books are so esoteric and abstract that they largely bear little or no relation to what happens on the ground.

With its reader-centred approach, this new publication, *Translation: an Advanced Resource Book*, lives up to its promise. It is a rich, portable library of translation studies for serious translation students and teachers. It integrates theory and research into the nature of translation learnability and applicability.

## TRANSLATION WATCH QUARTERLY

As the great English poet and translator Alexander Pope once wrote, “True easy in writing comes from art not chance, as those move easiest who have learned to dance”. This latest addition to the translation studies bookshelf will enable both teacher and student to explore translation theories and models with more ease and grace. 📖

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## Call for Papers

**Second Issue:**

***Translation Studies Research:  
Relevance, Validity, and Impact on  
Professional Standards***

**Translation Watch Quarterly** invites submissions for its second issue devoted to examining the current state of research in Translation Studies, its relevance to the translation profession, validity and impact on translation standards.

The issue aims to examine to what extent descriptive approaches to translation are becoming *de facto* prescriptive models, standards and norms in the professional world of practising translators and in the translation industry at large.

Submissions should demonstrate a deep understanding of current issues relating to translation and interpreting practice.

Submissions to this peer-reviewed journal should be between 8 and 20 pages in APA format.

Send enquiries, abstracts, proposals, or completed manuscripts in Word format to:

Ali Darwish

Chief Editor

**TRANSLATION WATCH QUARTERLY**

P O Box 418 Patterson Lakes, Victoria 3197  
AUSTRALIA

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The deadline for submitting the completed manuscript is March **31, 2006.**

Translation Watch Quarterly. Vol. 1, Inaugural Issue, December 2005.  
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## Call for Papers

**Third Issue:**

***Translation in the News:  
Approaches, Editorial Policies and Professional  
Standards of Translation-mediated News  
Reporting***

**Translation Watch Quarterly** invites submissions for its third issue devoted to examining the role of translation in news making and reporting.

This issue aims to examine the approaches, policies, problems and standards of news production where foreign languages form the primary information sources.

Submissions should demonstrate a deep understanding of current issues relating to translation and interpreting practice.

Submissions to this peer-reviewed journal should be between 8 and 20 pages in APA format.

Send enquiries, abstracts, proposals, or completed manuscripts in Word format to:

Ali Darwish

Chief Editor

**TRANSLATION WATCH QUARTERLY**

P O Box 418 Patterson Lakes, Victoria 3197  
AUSTRALIA

Email: [darwish@surf.net.au](mailto:darwish@surf.net.au) or [tsi@surf.net.au](mailto:tsi@surf.net.au)

The deadline for submitting the completed manuscript is March **31, 2006.**

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## About the Journal

Translation Watch Quarterly (TWQ) is an international peer-reviewed journal devoted to translation and interpreting studies, with a special focus on quality assessment and standards. TWQ publishes articles that are of interest to practising translation and interpreting professionals and to university and industry researchers.

### AIMS AND SCOPE

The aim of Translation Watch Quarterly is to publish original research or contribution to the existing literature on translation and interpreting standards, practices, and policy.

Published four times a year, Translation Watch Quarterly is the official journal of Translation Standards Institute, the world's first translation-dedicated standards organization, devoted to the study and promotion of knowledge about translation and interpreting quality standards. Each quarterly issue contains original refereed articles, country profiles, and book reviews.

The Journal aims to publish a blend of theoretical, empirical, and policy related papers addressing the following areas across disciplines and industries:

- Translation and interpreting standards
- Translation and interpreting quality assurance
- Translation Development Lifecycle (TDLC) frameworks
- Localization and documentation globalization
- Policy issues
- Professional standards

In particular, articles with emphasis on translation standards development are encouraged.

TWQ encourages submissions of innovative and original articles in all areas of translation and interpreting. TWQ publishes the following types of article:

#### General Articles

General articles give perspectives on issues, problems or new directions and developments pertaining to translation and interpreting quality in various industries and settings including translation and interpreting education.

#### Research Articles

Research articles present new data, methods, and or theoretical models in translation and interpreting related areas. A research article

## TRANSLATION WATCH QUARTERLY

should include an abstract of no more than 150 words and a maximum of 30 items in the reference list.

### **Country Profile**

A country profile presents issues and matters pertaining to translation and interpreting quality standards and practices in a particular country. Each issue will include at least one country profile and a maximum of two.

### **Book Reviews**

Book reviews present a critique of books related to translation and interpreting and to quality systems and methodologies applicable to translation and interpreting.

Preference is given to articles that address translation and interpreting quality issues and standards across disciplines.

### **Submitting manuscripts to TWQ**

Manuscripts should be saved in Word format and emailed to the editor along with a cover page stating name, email address and where applicable, academic affiliation. If a submission includes graphics and pictures, these should be saved in JPG format and sent as a separate attachment along with the submission.

Ali Darwish

### **Chief Editor**

### **TRANSLATION WATCH QUARTERLY**

P O Box 418 Patterson Lakes, Victoria 3197

AUSTRALIA

Email: darwish@surf.net.au

## **Guidelines for Authors**

Translation Watch Quarterly encourages submissions of innovative and original articles in all areas of translation and interpreting with clear potential and practical application.

Submissions that do not offer an empirical contribution, in addition to theoretical frameworks and models, will not be reviewed.

Submission of an article is taken to imply that the article represents an original contribution that has not been previously published and is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere.

Articles published in Translation Watch Quarterly are subject to the Journal's copyright. Authors must sign the Transfer of Copyright agreement before their articles can be published.

The copyright transfer covers the exclusive rights to reproduce and distribute the article, including reprints, photographic reproductions, other reproductions of a similar nature, and translation. It also includes the right to adapt the article for multimedia application, reproduction or publication in machine-readable form, and incorporation in retrieval systems.

Permission to reprint should be sought from the Editor.

Translation Watch Quarterly subscribes to the professional ethic of peer review and scholarly integrity endorsed by quality journals in the fields of translation and interpreting studies, education, and empirical research. All submissions are evaluated purely and strictly on the merits of their contribution to knowledge.

Consequently, all submissions are blind peer reviewed. Articles considered suitable by the Editor will be subject to blind review and refereed by at least two anonymous referees, and the Editor may recommend revision and re-submission. Authors are therefore required to prepare their manuscripts in a way that does not reveal their identity. Personal details such as the author's name, academic affiliation, country and postal and or email addresses should be supplied on a separate sheet attached to the article.

Where reference to the author's own work is cited in the article, the name of the author should be suppressed. For example:

In previous work, Mason (1998) argued....

should be presented as:

In previous work, the author (1998) argued...

Once the article has been blind reviewed and accepted for publication, the author may reveal his or her name back when they proofread the final copy of their work.

## TRANSLATION WATCH QUARTERLY

Accepted manuscripts are copy-edited and formatted. Authors review edits and proofread their work before it is published.

Commentaries on articles or book reviews previously published in Translation Watch Quarterly will be considered only if they make novel contributions to knowledge. Such submissions will also be blind peer reviewed.

Contributors are responsible for obtaining permission to reproduce any material to which they do not hold copyright, to be used in both print and electronic media, and for ensuring that the appropriate acknowledgements are included in their manuscript.

Primary authors of articles receive two complimentary copies of the journal issue in which their work appears and co-authors receive one copy each. Book reviewers receive one copy.

### CONTRIBUTION BY MEMBERS OF THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Members of both the Editorial Board and Editorial Advisory Board may submit work for publication consideration, subject to the review process described in the *Guidelines for Authors*.

Occasionally, submissions from members of both Boards may be commissioned or invited. In this case, they may be subject to review by the review editor.

### STYLE CONVENTIONS

The *APA Style Guide* should be used in preparing submissions, with the following exceptions.

#### Spelling

British or American English spelling may be used provided it is used consistently throughout the paper.

For British spelling, the following exceptions apply:

- Where applicable, use *~ize* instead of *~ise* for verbs and nouns as in *analyze*, *emphasize*, *organization*, and *standardization*.
- Use *center* instead of *centre*.

Use the Oxford/Harvard serial comma in horizontal lists and enumerations.

#### Headings

Use three heading levels only. Use boldface for all three levels. Heading level 1 is all capitals and centered. Do not skip heading levels.



**Abbreviations**

Use abbreviations sparingly. For nonstandard or new abbreviations and acronyms, expand the first instance.

Use *for example* and *that is* instead of *e.g.* or *i.e.*

**In-text Citations**

Do not use the letter "p" with the page number:

Hatim (2001) argues that "the polarization is historical and is evidence of the misleading demarcation lines that are often too readily drawn between theoretician and practitioner in many disciplines" (3).

or preferably,

Hatim (2001:3) argues that "the polarization is historical and is evidence of the misleading demarcation lines that are often too readily drawn between theoretician and practitioner in many disciplines."

**Footnotes and Endnotes**

At all time, use endnotes instead of footnotes. Use numbers, not symbols to reference the endnotes.

No more than five endnotes per submission will be permitted.

## Guidelines for Referees

Translation Watch Quarterly (TWQ) is an international peer-reviewed journal devoted to translation and interpreting studies with a special focus on quality assessment and standards.

Translation Watch Quarterly subscribes to the professional ethic of peer review and scholarly integrity endorsed by quality journals in the fields of translation and interpreting studies, education, and empirical research. All submissions are evaluated purely and strictly on the merits of their contribution to knowledge.

Consequently, all submissions are blind peer reviewed. Articles considered suitable by the Editor will be subject to blind review and refereed by at least two reviewers, and the Editor may recommend revision and re-submission. Personal details such as the author's name, academic affiliation, country and postal and or email addresses are concealed from the reviewers.

Some reviewers may wish to remain anonymous. Therefore, double blind reviews may be conducted where both the author and the reviewer remain anonymous to one another. Reviewers' names shall not be divulged to the author without the express written consent of the reviewers.

When reviewing a submission, provide constructive feedback to the authors on how their work might be improved. However, this is a newly established international journal, and the editors expect a high standard of articles. Any submissions that do not significantly contribute to research or to professional practice, are erroneous, or poorly written, should be rejected.

All submissions to the journal are reviewed for originality, importance, accuracy, and relevance. As a reviewer, you must:

- respect the deadline you agree on
- maintain the focus of the main objective of the review
- have an adequate level of technical understanding relevant to the subject-matter of the article
- have experience in the type of article you are asked to review
- have adequate time for the review, and above all
- be constructive

Write your comments clearly in the Reviewer's Report Form provided, indicating what is needed, what is missing and how the article might be improved.

As TWQ is published quarterly, we aim for a three-month maximum turnaround for all submissions. Consequently, your review should be completed within six weeks.

Reviews should be returned, preferably electronically to:

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Chief Editor

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AUSTRALIA

Email: [darwish@surf.net.au](mailto:darwish@surf.net.au)

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## Subscription Guidelines

The annual subscription for Translation Watch Quarterly journal is:

### Individuals

Translation Standards Institutes Members	Free
Subscribers in Australia (including postage)	A\$68.00
International Subscribers (including postage)	US\$56.00

### Institutions

Australia (including postage)	A\$102.00
International (including postage)	US\$84.00

All subscriptions to the TWQ Journal are payable in advance and should be sent in Australian currency to the following address:

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## Advertising Information

Translation Watch Quarterly invites sponsorship and advertisement of products and services that serve the interests of the readers of the journal and promote the translation and interpreting profession, in the following translation and interpreting related categories:

- Career opportunities
- Training and educational courses
- Information technology
- Conferences and workshops
- Books and references

The rates per issue are as follows:

Full Page	\$1,000
Half page Horizontal	\$500
Quarter Page	\$250

### Deadlines

Advertising copy is due in the TWQ office by the 28th day of the preceding month of publication.

March Issue	28 February
June Issue	28 May
September Issue	28 September
December Issue	28 November

### Advertising Policy

Subject to editorial approval, advertising will be accepted for all products and services related to the activities of Translation Standards Institute, Translation Watch Quarterly, and the translation and interpreting profession.

By submitting advertising copy for publication, advertisers acknowledge that it is in accord with applicable government regulations.

Advertisements will not be accepted if they are deemed in conflict with the code of ethics of the translation and interpreting profession; contain attacks of a personal, racial or religious nature; are in the opinion of the Editorial Board, indecent or offensive either in text or illustration; are libellous, or otherwise contrary to law.

The Editorial Board reserves the right to refuse or edit the content of the advertisement — with approval of advertiser — prior to publication.

To reserve space or request more information, please contact:

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