Total Quality

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Abstract

This session aims at providing a comprehensive understanding of the checks that must be performed to maximize the quality of our translations. Attendees will get detailed information about the international quality standards for translation services (UNE-EN 15038 / ISO 17: 100 / ISO 1858) and the steps necessary to implement a thorough check. Finally, the speakers will share their own model of quality assurance in the different stages of translations.

Nowadays, more than ever with the fast speed of machine and very solid technology tools, we really need to be Game Changers. As linguists, we have to be solidly routed and completely competent to protect our own projects. We have to play our own DNA game. Most translators have been slow to accept technology; many others are still worried about their future and/or feel uneasy about the new developments. Technology is here to stay and in order to survive we have to adapt and go along with it.

We always take pride of our human quality assurance methods. We proofread all our translations at least twice before delivery and frequently hire a proofreader or a technical expert to check our translations. TQA tools are useful for experienced translators as well as for beginners. However, TQA tools cannot replace human translators, editors or proofreaders. They just help them.

As interest in quality management has grown, the translation process has become clearly specified in different quality standards. There are many national, regional, and international standards related to translation and interpreting services. Among others, we have ISO 9001 (for

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quality management), published in 2008; EN 15038: 2006, which was the first regional European standard; ISO 17100: 2015, which was the first international standard specifically applied to translation services and it replaced EN 15038: 2006; and, since last year, we also have ISO 18587 which provides the requirements for the process of full, human post-editing of machine translation output and post-editors' competences. Anyway, for translation services in general, we will still focus on ISO 17100.

So, let us first give you some background information about ISO. The international Organization for Standardization (ISO) is an independent, non-governmental international organization with a membership of 161 national standard bodies that represent ISO in different countries. It is based in Geneva, Switzerland and it has published more than 22,000 International Standards and related documents, covering almost every industry, from technology, to food safety, to agriculture and healthcare.

ISO 17100 has made a great contribution to our profession by adding some new requirements to assure quality. It incorporates the requirement for translations to be subject to revision by a second person. It pays particular attention to the qualification of all parties involved in the production process of a translation. It clarifies that the responsibility for the preparation does not just rest on the contractor, but on the client, as well. It also refers to data protection, which is considered mandatory because translations are sometimes confidential and involve sensitive information from the clients. Finally, as a new thing compared to EN 15038, this standard also requires having a process for handling client feedback, which is necessary and valuable for each translation project as it is used as an indicator for the client's perceived satisfaction and serves as a basis for future improvement.

There is much more in relation to translation than simply typing in a foreign language and using one or two translation memory tools. In order to offer the best quality in our translations we should proofread our jobs. Nevertheless, a quality control stage has to take place. But how can you do this if you are a freelancer? If you are a freelance translator, you should incorporate a quality control stage into the process before delivering and you should never send a job to your client without having checked it beforehand. It is sometimes hard to ask colleagues to invest their precious time in reading your work or checking your terminology. After all, they are busy too. But no translator should really work independently.

Times have changed since the advent of translation memories and related tools that make our work more precise. Nowadays, as translators we have an abundance of information at our disposal on the internet. So, revising their work before delivering and using tools such as XBench or QA Distiller for large jobs is a must when handling many files and having to keep all of them consistent.

As we have just said, translation Standards state that a professional must carry out each stage independently. This means that in the case of an ISO-certified language service provider (LSP), the translator cannot be the same person who revises the translation (the editor) and the proofreader must also be a different person to the editor and translator. Often, this is not practical due to time constraints and translators end up proofreading their own work after receiving the editor's comments.

We can all agree that translating, editing or proofreading are parts of a process and, as such, they require a methodology. If you do not apply any method, you run the risk of being inconsistent and introducing many mistakes. Moreover, if you check everything without using a quality a method, it can be very unproductive.

Most translators have their own quality method, and many of us work in a collaborative environment, which may include as many people as necessary, including a translator, an editor, and a proofreader.

So, what are the best practices for working in a collaborative environment? To start with, it is very important that we handle any kind of interaction in a polite and professional manner at all times. Then, we should make all necessary questions to ensure that nothing can be misunderstood or lead to errors. Besides, it is very important to document our questions and answers. Finally, all members involved in the translation process should trust each other.

A complete quality assurance method may be divided into at least 5 steps: 1) translation, 2) translation review, 3) editing, 4) proofreading, 4) review by client, and 5) final delivery. Anyway, the most important steps are the first four.

So, let us first focus on the initial part of the process, which is exclusively related to the translator. Once the translation is done, the translator is supposed to make the first review of his own job. In the publishing industry, they refer to the author as having a voice and if a text is translated, the translator is the one who will give the document a voice in the target language. As a translator, before we deliver our job we should do the first check, which may include the following actions, among others: a) checking the client's style guide, glossary and TM; b) running a spellcheck and a verification tool; c) checking for missing text, literal translations and formatting issues, and so on.

As translators, we are not in the habit of looking at our own work critically. Fortunately, we can rely on editors, who provide the ability to analyze a text critically and efficiently, as well as a fresh pair of eyes. An editor has a lot more in common with the translator than you may think. In fact, they are both communicators. And, as such, they strive towards the same goal and want to maintain accuracy and appropriateness for the entire audience because they want the target audience to understand the message. If they do not understand it, they have done something wrong. So, what do editors do? First of all, if you are an editor, you have to support your corrections with facts and resources. Second, we should strive to leave the voice of the author and the translator intact. Third, we should try to ensure accuracy in content and terminology. Fourth, we have to verify consistency in tone and register and ensure that the text flows well in the target language. To sum up, good editors do not impose stylistic preferences and most editors have a reason for every change. Above all, we should aim to ensure clarity and readability.

The editing process can be divided into 4 steps: 1) The first step involves a side-by-side comparison of the target language. In this part, we should check for completeness of the text, misunderstanding of the source, mistranslations, inaccurate meanings, grammar constructions, inconsistencies in the tone and register and, last but not least, the logic of the document as well as cultural factors that may need some kind of adaptations. 2) The second step is objective editing. (i.e. exclusively checking for mechanical errors, formatting, etc.) Here is where technology has really taken over with several verification tools. 3) The third step is the final eye. in this case, we should only check our own changes. 3) We should read the whole text again. If you have a very long text, you should use any available technology, including any word- recognition software available on the market. Readability is extremely important in most cases.

Another crucial step in the QA process is the proofreading step. The main difference between editing and proofreading is that the latter is totally focused on the target text. In this step, we are not supposed to use the source text at all, unless we come across something that seems totally wrong. Proofreading resembles very much the objective editing process in different aspects. In this step, we only check our own changes. We verify mostly for completeness of text, clarity and readability.

Then, comes the Post-DTP proofreading, which consists of 2 proofs: 1) a language proof and 2) a graphic proof, which involves checking color, fonts, etc.

After that, the translation may be sent to the client for a final review. And if the client does not have a good knowledge of the target language, it might be a good idea to provide him with a

backtranslation, as an alternative step. The backtranslation is mainly used when the client is very concerned of any deviation and wants to be sure that the text is exactly what they originally wrote.

To conclude, whether you are a freelance translator or a translator working in a team you should always have a method to check your work before delivering your product or service.